

Rebuilding Workers' Power Beyond Corporate Boundaries in South Korea

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Abstract

Despite the low union density and various impediments to organizing precarious workers and bargaining collectively with user-enterprises, Korean unions have made progress in representing precarious workers and in increasing union presence in value chains since 2000s. Many legal systems such as that of Korea have a limited amount of regulatory interventions into a boundary of separate entities, and this had allowed the principal enterprise to transfer their liabilities to others downwards value chains. Nevertheless, workers have attempted to face the one that retains the real power to control over their working conditions, as Korean cases showed below. This paper illustrates two cases with regard to triangular employment relationship: subcontracted workers of Samsung Electronics Service and cleaners on the premises of university. Through these case studies, we can understand how trade union power was built and rebuilt. In order to develop union power resources, demands as to reducing competition among workers, providing workers with universal platform for security irrespective of employment status and building a strategic coalition for correcting unbalanced distribution of power between capital and labour should have to become a priority in terms of union strategy

Full text (PDF): Rebuilding Workers' Power Beyond Corporate Boundaries in South Korea, by Aelim Yun

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See also "High Level Militancy and Unusual Alliances Bring Rare Victory for South Korean Workers", by Ulrike Putz

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