

# 2022 ISA RC44 Asia-Pacific Conference

Labour Movements in a Post COVID-19 World

27 June 2022



## About the Conference

This conference provides a platform for academics, human rights activists and practitioners to explore labour and workers' rights issues across the Asia-Pacific region.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the risks inherent in precarious and gig economy work, inequalities in access to care, the need for worker voice in creating safe workplaces, the fragility of global production networks and the urgent political demand for the state to ensure social protection. These crises have unsettled established political and economic relations and, for labour movements, given rise to urgent demands for the protection of the health, income and employment security of workers and their democratic rights both in and beyond the workplace. For some movements the crises also are a moment to envisage alternative social and economic models and a required transformation to a more equitable and low carbon economy.

This Asia-Pacific Conference of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Labour Movements provides an opportunity for scholars, based both within and outside the region, to consider the agency and potential of workers and their labour movements to shape and make a post COVID-19 world. In particular we look forward to presentations addressing the following broad themes:

- changing labour regimes;
- worker representation in a post-pandemic world;
- trade unions and climate change;
- union responses to migrant labour in a time of COVID;
- organising in the platform economy;
- organising in supply chains;
- labour movements under authoritarianism;
- and international labour actors in the Asia-Pacific.

Full-length papers are available on YouTube and should be viewed before the conference. Speakers will present a five-minute summary of their key points and the remainder of each session will be available for discussion.

## Conference Organising Committee

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# Program Overview

**Monday 27 June 2022**

Session	Zoom link	Time (IST)	Time (ICT)	Time (SGT)	Time (AET)
<b>Welcome</b>	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44Plenary">bit.ly/RC44Plenary</a>	9:30– 9:35	11:00– 11:05	12:00– 12:05	14:00– 14:05
<b>Plenary: Labour Movements in a Post COVID-19 World</b>					
Chair: Professor Michele Ford	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44Plenary">bit.ly/RC44Plenary</a>	9:35– 10:20	11:05– 11:50	12:05– 12:50	14:05– 14:50
• Amarjeet Kaur					
• Josua Mata					
• Ou Tepphallin					
<i>Break</i>		10:20– 10:30	11:50– 12:00	12:50– 13:00	14:50– 15:00
<b>1.1 – Worker Representation in a Post-Pandemic World</b>					
Chair: Associate Professor Michael Gillan	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P1-1">bit.ly/RC44P1-1</a>	10:30– 11:20	12:00– 12:50	13:00– 13:50	15:00– 15:50
<b>1.2 – Gender, Citizenship and Religion at Work</b>	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P1-2">bit.ly/RC44P1-2</a>				
Chair: Professor Melisa Serrano					
<i>Break</i>		11:20– 11:30	12:50– 13:00	13:50– 14:00	15:50– 16:00
<b>2.1 – Organising in the Platform Economy</b>					
Chair: Professor Ernesto Noronha	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P2-1">bit.ly/RC44P2-1</a>	11:30– 12:20	13:00– 13:50	14:00– 14:50	16:00– 16:50
<b>2.2 – Changing Labour Regimes 1</b>	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P2-2">bit.ly/RC44P2-2</a>				
Chair: Associate Professor Michael Gillan					
<i>Break</i>		12:20– 12:30	13:50– 14:00	14:50– 15:00	16:50– 17:00
<b>3.1 – Labour Movements under Authoritarianism</b>					
Chair: Dr Kristy Ward	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P3-1">bit.ly/RC44P3-1</a>	12:30– 13:20	14:00– 14:50	15:00– 15:50	17:00– 17:50
<b>3.2 – Changing Labour Regimes 2</b>	<a href="https://bit.ly/RC44P3-2">bit.ly/RC44P3-2</a>				
Chair: Dr Tom Barnes					

# Plenary Speakers

**Amarjeet Kaur**

**All India Trade Union Congress**

Amarjeet Kaur is an Indian politician and National Secretariat member of the Communist party of India. She is General Secretary of the All India Trade Union Congress. She is the first woman in Independent India to be at the helm of one of the central trade unions, after Maniben Kara's election as AITUC General Secretary in 1936.



**Josua Mata**

**Secretary General, Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa Progresibong Manggagawa**

Josua Mata is the General Secretary of the national labour centre Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) in the Philippines. He has been a trade unionist for almost 30 years.



**Ou Tepphallin**

**Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation**

Ou Tepphallin is the President of the Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF), an independent union federation of food and service industries organising to improve working conditions, wages, and occupational health and safety. Ou Tepphallin started out her working life as a beer promoter in the entertainment sector. Over the years, she has graduated as a Bachelor of Law, undertaken training courses on human rights and labour rights and worked her way from a general assistant at CSFWF to Vice President and now President.



## **Panel 1.1 – Worker Representation in a Post-Pandemic World**

**Chair: Associate Professor Michael Gillan**

**Remediating Covid Discrimination and Building Worker-Driven Social Responsibility in an Export Zone**

*Mr Benjamin Velasco, University of the Philippines*

**Changes in Organizational Practices during COVID-19 and its Effect on Workers in India**

*Ms Devasmita Jha, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay*

**Achieving Labor's Social Security in Post-Pandemic in Indonesia**

*Ms Estu Putri Wilujeng, Universitas Indonesia*

**'Essential' Workers Speak Out: Employee Voice and Australian Retail Workers in a Post-Pandemic World**

*Ms Laura Good, The University of Sydney*

## **Panel 1.2 – Gender, Citizenship and Religion at Work**

**Chair: Professor Melisa Serrano**

**"We Need Competition, Not Solidarity": Experiences of the Korean Women Workers' Movement**

*Dr Jinyoung Park, Penn State University*

**Gender Regimes and Cambodian Labour Unions**

*Dr Kristy Ward, The University of Sydney*

**A Phenomenological Study on Filipinos in Diaspora: Sense of Belonging and Citizenship**

*Ms Mariam Jayne Agonos, University of the Philippines Diliman*

**Making of a Working Class: A Critical Analysis of Elites' Perception of a Worker**

*Mr Mrinmoy Majumder, IMI*

## **Panel 2.1 – Organising in the Platform Economy**

**Chair: Professor Ernesto Noronha**

**The Post-COVID Resurgence of Associational Power: The Case of Indian Food App Workers**

*Professor Ernesto Noronha, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad*

**Workers in the Metaverse, Unite? Post-Digital (Plat)Forms of Worker Organisations**

*Mx Katjo Buissink, University of Waikato*

**"Workers of the World Reunite": Towards a Mycelium Approach of Working Class Solidarity**

*Mr Mrinmoy Majumder, University for the Creative Arts, UK*

**A Logics Approach to Platformed Domestic Work in New Delhi and Bengaluru, India**

*Mr Tanay Gandhi, Independent*

**Algorithmic Labour Process and its Resistance in the App-based Transport Sector in Indonesia**

*Mr Fahmi Panimbang, Solidar Suisse*

## **Panel 2.2 – Changing Labour Regimes 1**

**Chair: Associate Professor Michael Gillan**

### **Power and Purpose: Union Regulation in Fissured Workplaces**

*Ms Alison Rudman, The University of Sydney*

### **The Future of Unions and Worker Representation: The Digital Picket Line**

*Professor Anthony Forsyth, RMIT University*

### **Social Dialogue in Mergers and Acquisitions in the Metal Sector in Europe**

*Ms Carolina Dantas Madureira, University of Oviedo*

### **Theorising Labour Regimes and the Body in Warehouse Logistics**

*Dr Tom Barnes, Australian Catholic University*

## **Panel 3.1 – Labour Movements under Authoritarianism**

**Chair: Dr Kristy Ward**

### **Working-Class Protests Under Authoritarianism: The Case of Turkey, 2015-2021**

*Dr Alpan Birelma, Ozyegin University*

### **A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rodrigo Duterte's Language on Endo and Labor Unionism**

*Mr Jervy Briones, University of the Philippines Los Baños*

### **After the Coup: Labour Movement Responses to Authoritarianism in Myanmar**

*Associate Professor Michael Gillan, University of Western Australia*

### **The Philippine Labour Movement and Counterstrategies Against Duterte's Authoritarianism**

*Ms Verna Dinah Viajar, University of the Philippines*

## **Panel 3.2 – Changing Labour Regimes 2**

**Chair: Dr Tom Barnes**

### **Precarity and Pandemic: Reflections from a Leather Industry in Kanpur, India**

*Mr Abhishek Dwivedi, South Asian University, New Delhi*

### **Capitalist Agriculture and Agrarian Labour Relations in Punjab, India**

*Dr Navpreet Kaur, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi*

### **The Silent Kinsmen: Thekedar Intermediaries and Labour Regime Compliance in Delhi**

*Associate Professor Suresh Gopalan, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

## Abstracts

### **A Phenomenological Study on Filipinos in Diaspora: Sense of Belonging and Citizenship**

*Ms Mariam Jayne Agonos, University of the Philippines Diliman*

Despite migration being a choice and voluntary movement of the people, Filipinos in diaspora suggests that there is an “involuntary displacement from homeland” and subsequently, “alienation from host land”, either of which evokes victimhood of the individual. The study seeks to illustrate how Filipinos in diaspora pursue and achieve sense of belonging and citizenship in the host country. The study employs Social Capital Theory and the concept of human agency to describe the participation of Filipinos in diaspora in achieving sense of belonging and manifesting citizenship in their journey to integrate within the host country. As a phenomenological study, this research endeavor emphasizes the conscious experience of Filipinos in diaspora. The proposed study is qualitative in nature and will look into the conscious experience of sense of belonging and interrogate the concept of citizenship in the social world of Filipinos in diaspora, particularly in Taiwan.

### **Theorising Labour Regimes and the Body in Warehouse Logistics**

*Dr Tom Barnes, Australian Catholic University*

Much labour research assumes that ‘despotic’ anti-worker workplace regimes are the norm in warehouse logistics, a sector driven to prominence by online consumer ‘fulfilment’, Industry 4.0 technologies and, not least, the COVID-19 crisis. Some recent research has begun to complicate this picture by finding varieties of workplace regimes located in different places. Nevertheless, the conceptual picture of warehouse labour remains under-developed. This paper seeks conceptual advancement by exploring the overlap between the concept of a ‘labour regime’, which ties the workplace to regional labour markets and modes of social reproduction, and the exploitation of the body through technological augmentation in the warehouse labour process. Drawing examples from warehousing in Asia and Oceania, the paper moves toward a concept of labour regimes as assemblages of bodies, institutions, social structures and technologies which can help labour scholarship to understand variegation between new workplaces in different firms, markets and places.

### **Working-Class Protests Under Authoritarianism: The Case of Turkey, 2015-2021**

*Dr Alphan Birelma, Ozyegin University*

*Co-authors: Dr Ebru Işıklı, Dr Deniz Sert*

Neoliberal authoritarianism has intensified since mid-2010s in Turkey. The country has been among the ten worst countries for unions according to the ITUC in the last five years. Despite dire conditions, the struggle of the working class has kept pushing the limits of authoritarianism. This paper presents data on working-class protest between 2015 and 2021 in Turkey. The research builds on similar research on China, Russia, and Egypt, and Silver’s Forces of Labor. Employing protest event analysis, we gathered the data by scanning newspapers. For years between 2015-2020, we found nearly seven thousand protest events organized by workers. Various aspects of the protests such as the type, reasons, duration, union involvement, industry, police involvement were examined and coded. The paper contributes to our knowledge on the resilience and trajectory of the working-class protest under authoritarianism and COVID-19 pandemic.

### **A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rodrigo Duterte’s Language on Endo and Labor Unionism**

*Mr Jervy Briones, University of the Philippines Los Baños*

Since taking power in 2016, Rodrigo Duterte gave numerous speeches and interviews on Philippine labor issues, such as ‘endo’ contractualization and unionism. Interestingly, his perspective shifted significantly from being a working class hero to a status quo defender characterized by his red-tagging of labor unions as ‘communist fronts’

and his refusal to end to seek a so-called balance between labor and capital. In this study, I considered the spoken and written discourse of Duterte on contractualization and unionism which can be found online on the websites of news agencies and the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). The text and talk were explained through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically the socio-cognitive approach by Teun van Dijk. The results show that Duterte's discourse on labor issues exemplifies power and ideology, and reinforces social representations against labor unionism.

### **Workers in the Metaverse, Unite? Post-Digital (Plat)Forms of Worker Organisations**

*Mx Katjo Buissink, University of Waikato*

Platform capitalism is known for how it changes work itself, with the rise of micro-work, gig work, and false self-employment. Yet the rise of the platform is also transforming how workers organise across the economy. This is made possible by the logic of the platform as a business model, which promotes and facilitates workers connecting outside and across workplaces. This paper presents various forms of platform worker organisation, their aims, and relationship to trade unions based on existing case studies. These range from informal digital collectives of workers, often in sectors without unions, to formal unions offering 'representation as a service', where workers can pay a subscription fee to access union helplines, advice forums, and legal representation. This diversity of structures and objectives suggests platforms are neither panacea nor poison. 'Post-digital' use of technology will likely continue to increase in importance for labour without consensus on how this occurs.

### **Social Dialogue in Mergers and Acquisitions in the Metal Sector in Europe**

*Ms Carolina Dantas Madureira, University of Oviedo*

The research concerns supra-national company level social dialogue during mergers and acquisition in Europe, it is based on two case studies: the acquisition of Opel-Vauxhall by the group PSA, and the acquisition of ILVA by ArcelorMittal. It parts from the Political Power Complex Approach, looking at the power dynamics involving European Works Councils representatives and European HR Management during these critical events. The research inquiry is whether the employees' representatives had capacity to influence decision making during these restructuring processes. The conclusion is a negative assessment, the workers representatives had a limited influence due to job losses, intensified management whipsawing, which lead to concession bargaining, creating a downward pressure on wages and working standards. The 'divide to conquer' strategy inhibited effective internationalism via EWCs, dislocating bargaining from regional to plant-level. The EWCs did not react rapidly enough to one restructuring before being hit another, leaving workers uncoordinated and unprotected.

### **Precarity and Pandemic: Reflections from a Leather Industry in Kanpur, India**

*Mr Abhishek Dwivedi, South Asian University, New Delhi*

The COVID-19 outbreak has worsened precarious work conditions for informal workers by enhancing the uncertainty of work and wages. Thus collective bargaining, which already has limited success in the informal economy, has weakened further. For Standing (2011), the 'precariat', a new class in the making, has nothing but labour-power as means of subsistence. However, Breman (2013) argues that informal workers are a composite workforce with multiple social identities instead of a class category. My research among casual workers in the Global South viz., the leather industry of Kanpur, India, helps me see through the overlaps in such formulations. Rather than relying on collective bargaining, which could be more productive, these workers preferred to sneak their way through interpersonal relations, skills and social networks. It compels us to devolve new categories of analysis to understand the connections between work and social life in the current times of global precarity.



## **The Future of Unions and Worker Representation: The Digital Picket Line**

*Professor Anthony Forsyth, RMIT University*

This paper will highlight the key findings of my book charting the path to revitalisation for unions in Australia, USA, UK and Italy. It examines examples of innovation and digital campaigning enabling unions to build worker power, overcoming decades of declining membership wrought by neoliberalism, globalisation, and hostility from employers and the state. The study evaluates the responses of unions to falling membership the 1980s: the US 'organising model' and its adoption in Australia/UK, comparing this with strategies of Italian unions more deliberately focused on precarious and migrant workers. The increasing reliance of US unions on community alliances, as seen in the 'Fight for \$15' and similar campaigns, is scrutinised along with new union prototypes like Hospo Voice in Australia, the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain and SI Cobas in Italy. The book includes an in-depth analysis of union responses to the gig economy and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **A Logics Approach to Platformed Domestic Work in New Delhi and Bengaluru, India**

*Ms Aayush Rathi, Centre for Internet and Society*

*Co-authors: Mr Tanay Gandhi, Ms Ambika Tandon*

We develop an account of social and political practices of platformed domestic work by turning to poststructuralist discourse theory. Our findings build on interviews and focus-group discussion with 55 respondents across multiple stakeholder groups (including 41 domestic workers), across New Delhi and Bengaluru, India. In following a discourse theoretical 'Logics Approach', this paper develops a novel account of platformisation by eschewing the analytical treatment the subject has received in extant scholarship. First, we identify social logics that characterise the regime of social practices of platformed work. We then identify fantasmatic logics that grip subjects within this regime reinforcing the latter and concealing the radical contingency of social relations. Finally, we identify political logics that allow us to grasp how platform workers contest or co-opt regimes of platformisation. Building on logics of equivalence and difference, we explore the ways research participants contest hegemonic formations of platformisation by re-imagining social relations.

## **After the Coup: Labour Movement Responses to Authoritarianism in Myanmar**

*Associate Professor Michael Gillan, University of Western Australia*

After the military coup that took place in February 2021, the Myanmar labour movement has been unified in its resistance to the regime, engaging in protest action, strikes, withdrawal from state institutions and support for comprehensive international economic sanctions. The intensity of its resistance must be understood in light of the historic formation and growth of the labour movement that was enabled by, and contributed to, social and political contestation over the extension of democratic logics and values both within and beyond the workplace. Until 2011, unions were banned in Myanmar. However, over the last decade, unions have grown and assumed a recognized, if often marginalized, role in reformed labour institutions and in worker representation. This paper unpacks organized labour's response to the coup in the context of the unexpected expansion and subsequent contraction of democratic space in that country.

## **'Essential' Workers Speak Out: Employee Voice and Australian Retail Workers in a Post-Pandemic World**

*Ms Laura Good, The University of Sydney*

*Co-authors: Professor Rae Cooper*

The COVID-19 pandemic has recast many workers in Australia's retail sector as 'essential'. They have risked their personal health to provide access to food and basic necessities for the community. Yet this importance is not reflected in the low wages and precarious conditions that workers experience. As we move into the post-pandemic period, crucial questions arise about the future of work in retail, including employees' capacity to have a say about issues that matter to them. This paper presents preliminary findings from a project investigating

the current experience and expected future of work in the retail sector from the perspective of employees. We draw on data collected in a national survey of retail workers and in qualitative interviews with their union representatives to examine retail workers' key concerns about workplace matters and their sense of their own capacity to exercise voice in relation to these matters.

### **The Silent Kinsmen: Thekedar Intermediaries and Labour Regime Compliance in Delhi**

*Associate Professor Suresh Gopalan, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Why do habits of collective acquiescence pervade among migrant workers in Delhi? I propose an explanation focusing on the role of thekedar intermediaries (labour contractors) who are the fulcrum of the labour regime in the construction industry where they recruit, provide temporary residence and wages to workers. As their de facto employers, they exercise personal authority over the labour process and work-site life. Since migrants are either male relatives belonging to the same caste or hailing from same villages or regions, in the city, they are bound by a notion of kinship, either fictive or real. The transactional logic at work in the negotiations between the thekedar and workers are derived from familiar cultural notions of kinship and native place affinities. This keeps modern concepts of rights away from the industrial life of the workers and inhibits the scope for localized collective actions.

### **Changes in Organizational Practices during COVID-19 and its Effect on Workers in India**

*Ms Devasmita Jha, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay*

*Co-authors: Ms Taijshee Mishra, Ms Faiz Naeem*

Employee monitoring and surveillance have become the new normal during COVID-19 through worker activity monitoring and motion/location tracking. These methods are detrimental to workers' democratic rights, making it necessary to investigate the changes in organizational practices. The study analyses these changes by focusing on gig, blue and white collar workers. This study relies on exploratory research, using a rigorous review of the literature on invasive technologies used by employers and the impact these technologies have on workers' freedom and rights in India. In parallel, this study also investigates India's changing policy landscape which has gradually moved from state interventionist approach with protective labor laws, to recent government reforms which aim primarily at an improvement in ease-of-doing-business rankings. This paper also suggests a framework to address the vacuum in India's labor policy landscape and will assist in developing well-informed advocacy around worker rights in India.

### **Capitalist Agriculture and Agrarian Labour Relations in Punjab, India**

*Dr Navpreet Kaur, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi*

*Co-authors: Ms Amanpreet Kaur*

In the state of Punjab, the heart of the Green Revolution in India, a large fraction of agricultural labour is expended by migrant workers. The unplanned lockdown imposed by the Indian government affected paddy transplantation, a labour-intensive activity, primarily due to interstate restrictions on movement. Drawing on a primary survey in a village from Punjab, the paper examines the changes in agrarian relations in rural Punjab due to the COVID-19 pandemic by critically analysing the dynamics of capital labour relations. The restriction on labour movement and unilateral imposition of transplantation wage rates by a few Panchayats in Punjab has intensified class conflict in the state. The government's policies, which are driven by the rural rich, have played a significant role in the increased exploitation of workers. The paper concludes with a brief evaluation of the changes induced by COVID-19 in the agrarian political economy of Punjab.

## **Making of a Working Class: A Critical Analysis of Elites' Perception of a Worker**

*Mr Mrinmoy Majumder, IMI*

The ideal worker is often perceived to be disciplined, neat, docile and so on. The caricature of the ideal worker stems from religious mythologies that further cascade into caste-based segregation. I contest that the perception of the ideal worker is emerging from casteist practices and it is blatantly exploitative in the name of caregiving employers. I attempt to analyse the markers of the ideal worker through qualitative interviews with employers and workers through using framework of dignity at work.

## **“Workers of the World Reunite”: Towards a Mycelium Approach of Working Class Solidarity**

*Mr Mrinmoy Majumder, University for the Creative Arts, UK*

Working class solidarity deserves a new theoretical framework to account for uncertainties associated with the global economy. The global economy now also has a fair share of platform work, where the majority workforce isn't permanently hired on companies' payroll. The workers are involved in a range of tasks like food deliveries and driving vehicles for ride-sharing companies. While workers have been traditionally represented by trade unions that have played a significant role in industrial democracy, here I am attempting to theorise working solidarity from the perspective of vulnerability and differences among the global working class. I am bringing the mycelium concept from plant biology to articulate new kinds of solidarity that could be forged between the global and local workers' organisations.

## **The Post-COVID Resurgence of Associational Power: The Case of Indian Food App Workers**

*Professor Ernesto Noronha, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad*

*Co-authors: Professor Premilla D'Cruz*

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, research on Indian platform workers argued that platform work presented challenges for workers to connect and create networks of solidarity. Platform companies were often isolated, atomized, and placed in competition with one another, quelling any possibility of collectivization and peer-to-peer communication. However, this paper argues that COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown in India provided the much-needed impetus to union organizing. After being deprived of income during the lockdown, food app companies, to cut their losses, revised the payment structure which meant cut in base pay and withdrawal of waiting charges and night delivery charges, while intensifying work and increasing the delivery distance in the context of rising fuel costs. This has spurred a mass mobilization of food app workers across the country, converting mere outbursts into a more sustainable and strategic assertion of associational power even in the face of employer backlash.

## **Algorithmic Labour Process and its Resistance in the App-based Transport Sector in Indonesia**

*Mr Fahmi Panimbang, Solidar Suisse*

In the burgeoning debate on digital platforms and 'gig economy', which absorb millions of precarious labours in many countries, distinctive responses from labour in this emerging sector is particularly important for the theory and practice of labour movement. This paper focuses on algorithmic labour process and labour resistance in two major providers in Indonesia's platform economy, Go-Jek and Grab. It analyses the labour process and working conditions of app-based transport services and discusses labour resistance against algorithms. As the paper reveals, technology is not neutral but rather a site of class struggle. It proposes three existing models of drivers' organising, which are based on communities, associations and unions. It concludes that drivers' practices of collectivity offer invaluable lessons and insights into the development of new strategies for labour solidarity that are relevant for broader labour movements in Indonesia and beyond.

## **“We Need Competition, Not Solidarity”: Experiences of the Korean Women Workers’ Movement**

*Dr Jinyoung Park, Penn State University*

Differing from the global trend of decreasing union density, the Korean labor movement has grown in recent years, increasing from 9.6% in 2010 to 12.4% in 2019. Much of this growth comes from women workers, especially those in precarious jobs. Thus, it is worth exploring the causes and consequences. This study focuses on the experience of the Korean Women’s Trade Union (KWTU), which has led to the organizing drive of precarious women workers in the frame of competition and collaboration rather than solidarity. KWTU, a women-only union, was formed in 1999 out of frustration with existing male-dominated trade unions. Since then, KWTU has made two crucial contributions to the labor movement; making the minimum wage a social and political issue and creating models to organize precarious women workers. Its success stimulated the rivalry of existing unions, leading them to spend more resources on minimum wage issues and organize precarious workers.

## **Power and Purpose: Union Regulation in Fissured Workplaces**

*Ms Alison Rudman, The University of Sydney*

*Co-authors: Bradon Ellem*

What power do unions have in the fissured workplace and how do they understand and harness it? Much scholarship and some policymaking insists on looking beyond unions to reinvigorate labour regulation but, drawing on three bodies of work – scholarship examining the impact of fissuring on labour standards, changes to the regulation and enforcement of labour standards, and on the capacity of unions to exercise power – we argue that unions still have power in the fissured workplace, more specifically, the power to regulate and enforce labour standards. All three of these bodies of work must be brought together the better to understand union strategy and to inform strategy. In particular, our case study research shows that by analysing afresh the sources of power, and the particular nature of the strategy to be pursued, union leaders and activists can find new ways to defend members’ interests.

## **Remediating Covid Discrimination and Building Worker-Driven Social Responsibility in an Export Zone**

*Mr Benjamin Velasco, University of the Philippines*

The research examined the covid-related discrimination experienced by workers in three garment factories that produce for global brands at the Mactan export zone in the Philippines. The stories of 90 workers, 2/3 of whom were women, were gathered through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Using the lens of equality, the study uncovered 13 types of discrimination suffered by workers. The study assessed the repertoire of actions used by workers in their attempt to remediate covid-related discrimination and improve working conditions. The research analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of brand engagement, social media use, worker education, direct action and the tactic of simultaneous unionization of three garment factories. While unionization in all the firms was eventually defeated by covid-related maneuvers of State and non-state actors, the research concludes that worker-driven social responsibility is a viable model in the repressive conditions of export zones.

## **The Philippine Labour Movement and Counterstrategies Against Duterte’s Authoritarianism**

*Ms Verna Dinah Viajar, University of the Philippines*

The pandemic period has unmasked Duterte’s authoritarian grip on power and fascist tendencies even as his presidential term nears the end in mid-2022. Philippines instituted the strictest Covid-19 lockdown in the Asian region, paralysing 85 percent of public mobility and 71 percent in workplaces during the pandemic. The pandemic restrictions, coupled with securitized enforcement, saw more people arrested for violating the restrictions than tested for Covid-19. The economic standstill for more than one year since March 2020, rendered millions of Filipino workers unemployed. The militarized pandemic response, repression of the people’s right to dissent



and institution of anti-democratic policies, has galvanized opposition against Duterte's authoritarian and corrupt governance. The Philippine labour movement protested the enactment of Anti-Terror Law that endangers workers' rights and freedoms. This paper interrogates the implications of Duterte's authoritarianism and workers' counterstrategies to confront the return of authoritarianism and predatory capitalism in the Philippines.

### **Gender Regimes and Cambodian Labour Unions**

*Dr Kristy Ward, The University of Sydney*

Globally, labor unions have been criticised for being highly gendered, patriarchal organisations that struggle to engage with, and represent, women. In Cambodia, the disparity between women's activism and organisational power is particularly acute. Women workers are the face of the labor movement, yet they remain excluded from union leadership despite moves toward more progressive gender policies within unions. Using data from semi-structured interviews with workers and union leaders, I illustrate how gendered narratives and practices of control are mobilized through gender regimes that operate in the household, the workplace and unions. I propose an analytical framework that incorporates these three interlocking gender regimes to draw attention to the contradictory role of unions in advocating for worker rights while simultaneously depoliticizing women's activism and sustaining gender inequity. I argue that it is the contradictory relationship between these regimes that entrenches women's subordination within unions despite their numerical strength.

### **Achieving Labor's Social Security in Post-Pandemic in Indonesia**

*Ms Estu Putri Wilujeng, Universitas Indonesia*

This article explores the worker representation model to achieve laborers' social security in a post-pandemic Indonesia. Laborers' social security has been threatened by the pandemic and the omnibus law, even though the laborers and their representation already resisted and did resilience. Consequently, the laborers will face further issues such as health and the financial crisis and their mechanism survival effects during the pandemic, also the implementation of the threatening regulations. Then, the author argues, worker representation model will be pulled in the everyday life issues as the consequences of the shaken laborers' security, including the implementation of the threatening regulations, even though they have created labor party. By reflecting on the history of the 1918 Spanish Flu and COVID-19 in Indonesia, the author describes a worker representation model that circulates integrated chunks programs with the legal-structure condition.

