

A Study of the Formation of Coalitions
between Social Movements and Labor Unions in Korea:
The Case of the Associational Committee for Non-regular Workers

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This paper examines the process of coalition formation between labor unions and social movements and its influence on the policy-making process of the Non-regular Employment Protection Act of Korea.

By focusing on the case of the Associational Committee for Abolishing Discrimination of Non-regular Workers and Securing Labor Basic Rights (henceforth, the Associational Committee for Non-regular Workers), the paper looks into the process of coalition formation between labor unions and social movement organizations, especially the participation of civic movement organizations, such as the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) and the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), and its influence.

Previous studies have concentrated only on the role of labor unions; hence, they do not refer to the historical context of social movement organizations in Korea. Accordingly, this study begins by examining the historical background and political orientation of social movement organizations since the Korean Democratic Movement of 1987 and attempts to understand the involvement of various organizations in the Associational Committee for Non-regular Workers. It accomplishes this objective by adopting four elements of coalition building, i.e., the nature of common concerns, the structure of organizational relationships, organizational capacities and commitments, and the scale of coalition activities.

The analysis shows that a variety of social movement organizations were engaged in the coalition formation of the Associational Committee for Non-regular Workers, despite their differing political orientations and activity styles. In addition, it demonstrates that each organization was involved with a different level of commitment. By examining the degrees of commitment, it becomes possible to highlight the active participation of not only labor unions but also civic movement organizations, such as the CCEJ and the PSPD, and women's movement organizations. Furthermore, it clarifies the recognition process of non-regular worker issues as a serious social problem and the political process of setting a policy agenda by the activities of the Associational Committee for Non-regular Workers. This paper extends the research framework by including social movement organizations in our understanding of the policy-making process of the Non-regular Employment Protection Act in Korea.