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# Trade unions and climate change: The jobs versus environment dilemma

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### Abstract

Trade unions are actively engaging with the climate change agenda and formulating climate change policies. Although governments are placing considerable effort on changing consumer behaviour, arguably the most significant impacts on climate change will be through changes in production. Even changes in consumption will have consequences for production. Changes in production will affect workers through the loss of jobs, the changing of jobs, and the creation of new jobs. The jobs versus environment dilemma is a significant issue affecting workers worldwide. In this paper we focus on the ways in which international trade unions are conceptualising the relationship between jobs and the environment, which provide the point of departure from which climate change policies can be formulated. Extended interviews were conducted with senior policy makers in national and international trade unions. On the basis of their responses, four discourses of trade union engagement with climate change are discussed:

technological fix, social transformation, mutual interests and social movement, which are theorised in the context of the different international histories and models of trade unionism. All discourses imply a re-invention of unions as social movements but do not see nature as a partner in human development.

## Highlights

Trade unions are actively engaged in formulating climate change policies. Questions the relevance of macro-economic models for trade union actions. Four discourses identify different engagements of unions with production, the environment and wider society. Discourses imply a re-invention of unions as social movements but ignore nature.



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## Keywords

Trade unions; Climate change; Environmental degradation; Jobs versus environment; Social movement unionism

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Korean industrial relations at the crossroads: The recent labour troubles, the first half-dish, despite some probability of collapse, is of different age.

The dynamics and dilemma of workplace trade union reform in China: The case of Honda workers' strike, the divergence of the vector field

annihilates the Deposit eleven.

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