

Citation: Murray, Gregor, “Can Multiple Weak Ties Reverse the Social Regulation Deficit? Multinational Companies and Labor Regulation” (2012) 33:4 Comp Lab L & Pol’y J 15

Abstract: The rise of multinational companies (MNCs) and transnational production networks, the redefinition of the national state and the weakening sway of trade unions in many jurisdictions highlight the limits of traditional mechanisms of collective bargaining for dealing with social regulation in global firms. Using the case of Canada, this Article explores major trends in MNCs, how local managers are constrained by the organizational politics of MNCs, and the implications of information asymmetries in MNCs for labor relations regulation. It is argued that public policy target a mix of soft and hard power strategies that embed employer patterns of behavior and employee and community voice in a sticky web of workplace, industry, and community mechanisms of social regulation. Collective bargaining and autonomous worker organizations remain an essential part of this approach but a radical enlargement of voice essential part of this approach but a radical enlargement of voice mechanisms is envisaged, including information and consultation arrangements, developing intangible assets around cooperation and institutional innovation in regional economic and prosperity strategies, creating forums likely to enhance the capabilities of local managers for contentious organizational politics within their multinational companies, and developing stakeholder forums that discuss these issues beyond the classic bilateral labor relations framework. It is further argued that the interaction between hard power, soft power, and actor agency can give rise to experimentation and the heuristics for political action around an emergent but still certain regulatory framework for multinational companies.