

Forum Worlds of Labour China and Germany

A forum for mutual understanding on a
grassroot level

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The situation

- Capitalist mode of production is predominant in all countries.
- Labour reserves for capital has doubled and rose from 1.5 to 3 billion worldwide since the end of the cold war .
- The ratio between capital and labour has fallen and led to relative reduction of the price for labour and to a growth of capital profits.
- Readjustments of the capitalist world market after “opening” of China with its population of 1.3 bill.

International cooperations

- Business
- Institutionalised politics
- Academic and cultural institutions
- Worlds of labour disconnected

General aims

Mutual understanding and exchange on *Worlds of Labour* in China and Germany

- how they appear, function,
- are controlled and changed,
- have international impact,
- generate forms of representation
- eventually permit a sustainable quality of life for the people

What are Worlds of Labour?

Labour:

- Creative or productive activities
- Activity to secure material reproduction of humane society

Worlds :

- geographic places/regions/countries
- historically grown cultural, social and economic entities

Grassroots & Cross border

- **Grassroots** approach will focus on (local) experiences and perspectives of self-organisation and empowerment, social movement and transformation
- **Cross border global context** approach repels national chauvinist ideas and agendas, while accepting and respecting different views

Objectives of the Forum

- bring closer the spatially separated worlds
- make socio-cultural commonalities and differences conscious and comprehensible
- uncover and demystify economic processes that cross geographic borders
- relate to each other the actual conditions of capitalist wage labour
- exchange steps to counter its repressive character and overcome it eventually

Social actors, target groups and methodology

- People in China and Germany who are involved in comparable worlds of labour i.e. of same TNCs, industries, production chain, sectors
- Social and labour activists within and outside of formal institutions
- Personal encounter and debate between those concerned and involved people and activists

Framework

- Continuous information and knowledge exchange and publication
- Encounters to exchange experiences and knowledge as well as for cooperation
- Research, analysis and theory building

Information and knowledge exchange/publication

- Continuous exchange of original documents, i.e. translating from Chinese to German and German to Chinese
- Documentation of conferences, workshops and visits
- Films/video on social issues with respective language subtitles

Encounter visits, workshops and conferences in China

- *Exploring worlds of labour* visits by trade union activists and concerned scholars from Germany 2005-07
- Visit and workshop on *Garment supply chain* by trade union activist 2009
- *OSH training* for Chinese activists with German and Brazilian trainers 2010

Encounter visits, workshops and conferences in Germany

- *Campaign against cadmium poisoning with two GP workers (2007)*
- *Globalisation, industrial conflicts and social partnership with TU officials / researchers (2008)*
- *Capitalism in Crisis with labour activists (2009)*
- *New forms of self-organization – concepts and experiences with labour activists (2010)*
- *Precarious Labour - split solidarity? Permanent versus leased workers in Germany, old and new working class in China with labour activists (2011)*

Research, analysis and theory building

- Monitoring post MFA textile/garment industry and supply chain
- German trade union policy towards China
- Further issues for research and debate:
 - German TNCs in China
 - Chinese TNCs in Germany
 - History of labour movements
 - Culture and social movements
 - Visions of alternatives to capitalism

Core Organisations

- Globalization Monitor (GM)
- Labournet Germany
- Transnational Information Exchange (TIE)
- Labour monthly *express*
- Südwind Institut

Thank you for your
attention.