

Proposal for 6th International Conference of Critical Geography 2011 Frankfurt, Germany, 16-20 August 2011

Theme 4 oppositional struggles worldwide

The spatial dimension of increasing labour disputes in China

It is well-known that working processes in different regions of the world are interconnected and interacting. Because of „globalization“ this worldwide nature of society becomes more and more distinct. While the capital side optimizes capital accumulation and profits by an international organization of working processes and global supply chains and is able to transfer (or externalize) social costs, the **international coordination of organizations and movements in the range of labour is obviously quite limited right now.**

The threat of shifting investments and jobs to China and generally the implications of low-wage competition are important issues in many European industries. Knowledge and the mutual understanding of different working conditions as a pre-condition for common actions are not on a very high level so far.

Recently there has been a significant increase of labour disputes and strikes in China. These disputes become more and more successful. On a national level the Chinese labour force has become the largest working class on earth, and it continues increasing fast. One important part of them are „**migrant workers**“ (“peasant-workers”). Up to now they have reached a number of roughly 140 - 200 million people. Their problems and their relevance to the whole society are **comparable to European migrant affairs in a broader sense.**

The contribution tries to analyze the the spatial dimension of increasing labour disputes in China firstly in the global dimension: China has become an **important factor for global development and anti-crisis policy**, but what is the connection of the (post)crisis and the uprising of Chinese workers? Is low-cost production in China implicating low inflation in western countries and securing living standards? Or are higher wages in the direct interest of workers in western countries?

Further the inner China dimension is analyzed: Why do the labour disputes concentrate to the south of China (Guangdong region)? What is the role of migrant workers? Is there a gender issue? From mainstream reasonings we know the hypothesis that new arising middle classes will be the factor of more democratisation in China; but will be the new young working class be the shaping power for China's future?

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