

Labour disputes and organising approaches in the platform economy exemplified by food delivery couriers in China and Germany

Videoconference Saturday 10th December 2022, 09:00 to 13:30 hrs. (CET)

In the wake of the global spread of the COVID 19 virus since the early 2020s and the imposition of month-long lockdowns in most states around the globe, the largely contactless provision of food and prepared meals to people through food couriers has seen a huge upsurge. The expansion of courier services has been fuelled by ongoing digitalisation, which has taken over increasing areas of everyday life, the economy and the work place in many countries around the world in recent years, and which has created its own economic sector in the form of the so-called platform economy. Platform-mediated work is generally characterised worldwide by poor wages, the absence of social security and occupational health protection, and reprisals against union organising. In the food delivery market, circumventing labour protections is also part of the business model.

The conference aims to bring together food delivery workers from Germany and China (mainland and Hong Kong) for an exchange on working conditions and labour disputes in their countries. Taking into account that delivery is done in different ways - on foot, by bicycle, e-bike, moped, motorbike or even car. The exchange will highlight the differences and similarities and reflect on the way people working in this sector organize themselves and how they work together internationally. As part of the working class, the question of their organization arises: in the form of traditional or anarcho-syndicalist trade unions or in collectives beyond trade unions as well.

Questions:

- a) How has the food delivery industry developed in China (mainland and Hong Kong) and Germany in recent years?
- b) What are the working conditions of food delivery workers in mainland China, Hong Kong and Germany?
- c) How have they fought labour disputes and developed organising strategies?
- d) What are their similarities and differences in the two countries?

Programme

Saturday 10 December, 09:00 – 13:30 hrs (German time), 16:00 – 20:30 hrs (China time),
Conference languages are English and Chinese with simultaneous translation.

09:00	Welcome by the convenors Overview of the delivery industry and the platform economy worldwide <i>by Simon Schaupp, University of Basel</i>
09:20	Overview on China: Food Delivery Platforms and Workers in a Strong State <i>by Lee Yu, Researcher of platform labor in China, Hong Kong</i>
09:35	Overview on the situation in Hong Kong <i>by Au Gaawing, Riders' Rights Concern Group, Hong Kong,</i>
09:50	Overview on the situation in Germany <i>by Simon Schaupp, University of Basel</i> Followed by questions and comments from participants

10:30	Break
11:00	Reports on working conditions and labour disputes from activists: A delivery worker will report from mainland China Followed by questions and comments from participants
11:30	<i>Siutong</i> reports on Food Panda delivery workers' struggle in Hong Kong Followed by questions and comments from participants
12:00	Short break
12:15	<i>Elmar Wiegand</i> (Flink, Action against Labour Injustice) Cologne <i>A delivery worker from Gorilas</i> , Berlin Followed by questions and comments from participants
12:45	Final open discussion + closing remarks
13:30	End of the conference

Convenors of the conference

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (<https://www.rosalux.de>)

Thomas Sablowski, e-mail: thomas.sablowski@rosalux.org

Critical China Forum:

Peter Franke, e-mail: forumarbeitswelten@fuwei.de

Registration

Please send a written and binding registration by e-mail for participation in the online conference, stating your name, address, organisational affiliation and e-mail to

Peter Franke, e-mail: forumarbeitswelten@fuwei.de, **until Thursday 8 Dec. 2022 latest.**

Participation will be confirmed by e-mail and an access code will be sent shortly before the conference.

About Critical China Forum:

In the polarised debate on developments in China and its role in the shifts and upheavals in the capitalist world order, differentiated analyses are often neglected. We want to bring emancipatory, internationalist positions into the political discussion and point out possibilities for action in solidarity. It is about addressing the prejudices in the "West" against China as well as the relations of domination, capitalist exploitation and the destruction of nature in China. We oppose racism, chauvinism, simple black-and-white thinking and military escalation, which are gaining in importance in the course of growing world market competition and geopolitical power confrontations and are currently shaping state action.

We offer an information platform and organize public discussion events on China. Our topics include labour relations, social movements, gender relations, environmental policy and international relations. So far, staff from the universities of Erfurt, Kassel, Cologne, Leipzig, Passau, the HU Berlin, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the NGO PowerShift as well as members of gongchao.org, the Forum Arbeitswelten, IG Metall, IG BCE and GEW have taken part in the discussions.