SEMINAR

Your smartphone kills workers in China

Your smartphone and many of your household items are produced in China. We all know this and we know that it is a consequence of globalisation - of companies from the global North, including Denmark, moving their production to China. We've come to know China as 'the factory of the world'. But few are aware of the staggering numbers of workers employed in this factory – more than 270 million people! That is half the population EU. We know even less about their working conditions, their life aspirations, sorrows and joys. Nevertheless, we carry around and use on a daily basis the products that they produce.

This seminar – which mixes state-of–the–art research and insights from China’s factory floors with readings of workers’ – is concerned with the lives of workers in China and discusses how consumers in Denmark may relate to the life of people who produce our smartphone.

The seminar is free and open to the public. Registration is required.

Register for ‘Your smartphone kills workers in China’.

Date: 17 June
Time: 12.15 – 14.15
Venue: CSS, Øster Farimag’s gade 5, Copenhagen (room: TBC)
Convenors: NIAS-Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, ThinkChina.dk and Omstilling Nu
PUN NGAI, HK POLYTECNIC UNIVERSITY  
**Dying for an iPhone: Apple, Foxconn and the Struggle of the Chinese Workers**

A startling 18 young workers attempted suicide at Foxconn production facilities in China in the year of 2010, attracting worldwide attention. This presentation looks at the historical development of Foxconn Technology Group as a case to demonstrate the advent of rapid capital expansion in China and its impacts on the lives of Chinese workers. It also provides an account of the role of the state that facilitates to Foxconn’s production expansion as a form of monopoly capital. Foxconn is important and typical of this phenomenon due to its speed and scale of capital accumulation in all regions of China which is incomparable to extant enterprises. We argue that this new form of capital generates a global factory regime and a distinctive managerial mode that further leads to workers’ suffering from work pressure, anxieties and desperation at an unprecedented level. In this case, suicide is murder.

CECILIA MILWERTZ, NORDIC INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES, THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN  
**China on your body and in your pocket – a research project on relations between workers in China and consumers in Denmark**

There is worldwide concern today about the impact of the current culture of production and consumption on diminishing global resources and it is broadly acknowledged that there is an urgent need for change to sustainable practices. This talk presents a research project which is concerned with the paradox between, on the one hand, acknowledging how our current system creates inequality and threatens the possibility of a sustainable future on the planet and, on the other our continuing perpetuation of this system. The project will explore this paradox at the micro-level, in the encounter between two groups of actors – factory workers in China and consumers in Denmark. The focus is on how workers and consumers are interconnected in maintaining the system and how they may either promote or obstruct the great transition that is needed to achieve a sustainable and equitable global system.

JIMBUT JUN FENG, POET, PLAYWRIGHT, TRANSLATOR AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE CULTURE ASSOCIATION OF THE NEW DANE JIMBUT

**Reading of song texts by the NGO music group “New Labor Art Troupe”, a group of former migrant workers based in PI Village.**

PI Village is a huge area in the 18th district of Beijing, China, where local people rent out their condemned houses to migrant workers. Jimbut Jun Feng and Gritt Uldall-Jessen have translated the song texts into Danish as a part of the research for the performance “Buyers’ Paradise”. The theatre piece will open on the 3rd of August 2016 at The Passage-festival in Elsinore, the largest Street Theatre Festival in Scandinavia.
GRITT ULDALL-JESSEN, FREELANCE PLAYWRIGHT AND ACTIVIST, MEMBER OF THE ARTISTIC BOARD OF THE CULTURE ASSOCIATION OF THE NEW DANE JIMBUT

Reading of poems by Foxconn worker Xu Lizhi (1990-2014)

Xu Lizhi was a Foxconn worker who committed suicide on 30th of September 2014 at the age of 24 in Shenzhen, China. After his death his friends published a collection of his poems. Jimbut Jun Feng and Gritt Uldall-Jessen have translated the poems into Danish as a part of the research for the coming theatre production, “Buyers’ Paradise”. “Buyers’ Paradise” is a theatre piece about worker-consumer relations. It is an artistic investigation of a possible interconnectedness between 270 million factory workers in China and consumers from Denmark. It works on finding an artistic expression of the worker-consumer relations both in the physical work of the performers and in the textwork. We look for finding interesting expressions of the mechanical human and the anthropomorphized machine. The performance is produced by The Culture Association of the New Dane Jimbut and is supported by the Danish Arts Council.

PRESENTER BIODATA

PUN Ngai is Professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Deputy Director of Peking U-PolyU Joint Social Work Research Center. Her representative work includes Made in China: Women Workers in a Global Factory (the winner of C. Wright Mills Award of 2006) and Migrant Labor in China: A Post-Socialist Transformation (Polity Press: 2016). She also publishes extensively in the areas of China Studies, Labour Studies and Gender Studies.

Cecilia MILWERTZ is Senior Researcher at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, the University of Copenhagen. Together with communication studies scholar Professor Bu Wei from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences she is developing a research project on linkages and inseparabilities between workers in the PRC and consumers in urban China as well as in the Nordic countries.

Jimbut/Jun FENG B.Sc (1986 Shanghai Kina) et BA (1999 SDU) et mag.art. (2002 SDU. Odense Danmark). He was born 1965 in Shanghai, China. After living as a poet in Shanghai 1980’s he was forced to leave his home in 1987, due to police harassments. In 1988 he stayed in a Buddhist monastery and became a novice-monk, so hiding himself from the Chinese authorities. In 1989 he went on foot through Burma and fled to Thailand. He was imprisoned in Laos in 1990. In 1992, with the assistance of UN, he finally came out of prison and to Denmark, where he studied philosophy at The University of Southern Denmark. He was the editor of several literary magazines on the Internet and a co-founder of the ICPC, Independent Chinese Pen Center. In spring 2000 he became a Danish citizen. Today, he works as a writer, poet, playwright and translator. He has translated the Danish poet Benny Andersen’s 100 poems into Chinese (“The other Andersen: The Last poem in the world”, 2014), and he has also translated and published the Danish Philosopher Søren Kierkegaard’s works, among them Enten Eller (Either-Or), Gjentagelsen (Repetition), Kjerlighedens Gjerninger (The Works of the Love), Begrebet Angest (The Concept of Anxiety), Frygt og bæven (Fear and Trembling) and Sygdommen til Døden (Sickness Unto Death) in China. His last translation of Søren Kierkegaard
– Stadier paa Livets Vei (Stages on Life's Way) is published in China 2016. He is the artistic director of The Culture Association of the New Dane Jimbut.

Gritt ULDALL-JESSEN works freelance as a playwright and curator within the field of Contemporary Stage Art. She is educated at The National School of Playwriting in Aarhus at Aarhus Theatre and she also carries an MA in Nordic Philology, Copenhagen University. She is one of the founders (2005) of the Culture Political Organisation Independent Stage Artists and since 2014 their Spokesperson. She is a member of the Artistic Board of The Culture Association of the New Dane Jimbut (since 2009).