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Class Formation in IT Industry: Notes from South China

Dan Schiller (2005) maintains that China and the IT industry are "the two poles of growth" for global digital capitalism at the beginning of the new century. What then is the actual class formation process on the ground – in places like electronic manufacturing plants, call centers, SMS companies, and online game "gold farms"? How are members of the labor force, from ordinary migrant workers to "gray-collar" employees, from work-injury victims to NGO activists, involved in economic, political, and cultural dynamics of class formation? This presentation addresses these questions based on participatory fieldwork in working-class communities and labor NGOs in South China as well as recent news coverage and academic studies. General lessons from the South China experiences are also discussed.