

Dream a Different Dream of Xi: How Alibaba's Workers Make Sense of their Clashing Goals

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Abstract

The “Chinese Dream” has become the core theme of the political discourse and the Zeitgeist of President Xi Jinping’s China since 2012. In Xi’s words, the vivacious Chinese dreamers have the power to create opportunity for prosperity and success, revitalise the strong nation, and even become a global citizen building a better world in the future. While we know little about how the Chinese Dream is trickled down to and carried through the organisational and individual contexts, this participatory research theorises the dialectics of dream in the context of Alibaba (top technology company in China) and investigates how the official “big dream”, as a result of the interwoven historical, political, economic, social and cultural process, is enacted, negotiated and contested in workers’ day-to-day practices. This refines the simplistic idea of how the ideological apparatus can interpellate people to certain values and mobilise them to take consequent actions at work.