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| RGC Reference | 32000015 |
| <i>please insert ref. above</i> | |

The Research Grants Council of Hong Kong
Prestigious Fellowship Scheme under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel
Completion Report

(for completed projects only)

Part A: Project and Award Holder

1. Project Title

Collective Bargaining in the Pearl River Delta Region: Actors, Processes and Outcomes

2. Award Holder and Academic Department/Unit Involved

| Name/Post | Unit/Department/Institution | Contact Information |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
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Part B: The Report

5. Workplan

5.1 Workplan as per original application

The captioned research project had been funded by a GRF grant (241313) in 2014 and this HSSPES grant was used to have one-year teaching relief so that I could carry out fieldwork and concentrate on writing.

This project aims to accomplish the following goals:

1. To examine the socioeconomic context that gives rise to collective bargaining in the Guangdong Province.
2. To explore the process and outcomes of collective bargaining.
3. To investigate how local governments responded to workers' demand for collective bargaining.

During the period of teaching relief, I carried out two tasks:

1. Conducting fieldwork in the Guangdong area

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2. Working on a book project and papers based the finding of the current GRF project (241313) and also the data from previous GRF projects.

3.

5.3 Realisation of the workplan

(maximum 2 pages; please state how and to what extent the work as stated in the workplan has been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

To realize the workplan, I accomplished the following tasks:

Fieldwork:

To realize the goal of the research, I conducted fieldwork in the year of 2016. The fieldwork served two purposes:

(1) Collecting data on worker strikes and collective bargaining. A number of cases were collected through interviews, including 廣東諾基亞, 哥士比鞋厂, 廣東聯盛磨具公司, 深圳威迪信, 勝美達廠, 永隆玩具廠, 佛山工藝總產廠, 番禺恆寶厂, 深圳IBM, etc., with the assistance of labor NGOs as well as my PhD students. The fieldwork aimed to identify the common patterns of worker actions as well as their variations, and examine the process and outcome of each strike.

(2) Investigating the role of labor NGOs in promoting and aiding collective bargaining. For this purpose, I interviewed the Director and staff members of Laowei Firm (勞維所) in Shenzhen, which is law firm but also operates as a labor NGO and played a major role in providing legal aids to workers' collective bargaining. I got opportunities to observe their training sessions for workers who came to seek their advice. I interviewed staff members from 向陽花 and 海哥法律服務; One of my students, following the guideline of my research proposal, interviewed activists from 春風, 小小草, and 番禺打工族. All of these labor NGOs aided workers' collective bargaining in the Guangdong area. We prepared interview questions but often went beyond them when interesting stories and points emerged.

As my research nailed down the focus on the role of what I call "movement-oriented" labor NGOs, the type of NGOs committed to assisting workers' collective bargaining, I conducted in-depth interviews with six leaders and activists from these organizations in this period, under the assistance of the staff of 勞維所 as well my PhD student. The interview was semi-structured, guided by some pre-papered questions. Our interviews mainly focused on the activists' biographical background, work experience, their disputes with employers in the factory, and their role in strikes and collective bargaining.

Writing:

In the year of 2016, I got more time to concentrate on writing, thanks to teaching relief made possible by HSSPES. What I produced are as follows:

1) A co-authored paper entitled "Movement-oriented labor NGOs in South China: Exit with voice and displaced unionism" (published). The paper uses two descriptive concepts to characterize the emergence and role of movement-oriented labor NGOs: exit with voice and displaced unionism. The former refers to the social process by which former workers

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become activists of movement-oriented labor NGOs, while the latter points to a grass-roots labor movement facilitated from outside the factory gates. This article argues that, while having performed a trade union-like role and promoted worker-led collective bargaining, movement-oriented labor NGOs embody a fundamental predicament of the Chinese labor movement, which is that organized labor activism in the Chinese workplace is largely prohibited.

2) A co-authored book chapter entitled “Seeking Solutions: How Chinese governments handle collective labor disputes” (forthcoming soon). This chapter examines different patterns of government’s response to collective labor conflicts, as well as their institutional roots and mechanisms in the context of China’s rapid urbanization. It argues that, although the Chinese government has established a formal dispute resolution system and actively promotes collective consultations, the mobilization of migrant workers has outpaced these institutions’ ability to manage it; hence, local governments have to take a more interventionist stance in dispute resolution.

3) A paper entitled “憲政與勞工集體權利：美國的經驗和啟示”，刊于《復旦政治學評論》。This paper was a by-product of this research. In the literature review during the research, I was exposed to various theories based on the experiences of western labor movements and find that some of them are relevant to our understanding of the contemporary labor issues in contemporary China. This paper examines the relationship between constitutionalism and workers’ collective rights and argues that citizenship rights are the precondition of workers’ collective rights.

4) A book entitled當代中國的國家與勞工：制度、行動與變遷. It had been my plan to complete a book on Chinese labor in Chinese based on my published papers in international journals in the past two decades, so that my research outcomes can be more accessible to scholars in China. A break from teaching in 2016 gave me more time to work on the book project. Now the book manuscript, comprised of 15 chapters with roughly 270,000 words, is under review by Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.

5) I am working on a new paper that examines the role of worker representatives in collective bargaining.

Academic Exchanges:

I visited universities in the mainland including Fudan University, Nanjing University, Sun Yet-san University, etc., during this period and had opportunities to have academic exchanges with scholars doing research on Chinese labor and politics.

6. Dissemination plan

6.3 Realisation of the dissemination plan

(maximum 2 pages; please state how and to what extent the output as stated in the dissemination plan has been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

The paper entitled “Movement-oriented labor NGOs in South China: Exit with voice and displaced unionism” (co-authored) was published in **China Information** in 2017 (SSCI, ranked in the no. 8 in Area Studies, with impact factor 0.966 when the manuscript was submitted).

The book chapter entitled “Seeking Solutions: How Chinese local governments handle collective labor disputes” (co-authored) will be published soon in **Routledge Handbook on Urban China**, eds. Ray Yep and Jun Wang.

I was invited to be one of the guest speakers at a 4-day workshop on “Made in China: Labor and Rights in an Era of Global Precarity—Views from China,” organized by Australian National University, EU, University of Venice and a few European universities and held in University of Venice. The participants of the workshop included graduate students, union officials, NGO activist from different countries. All guest speakers are leading international scholars on China’s labor relations and labor politics. I made two presentations on China’s labor rights, and labor strikes and collective bargaining, respectively.

I was also invited to give guest speeches on labor issues in the seminars for post-graduate students in both Fudan and Nanjing Universities.

7. **Other impact** (e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, knowledge transfer, etc.)

N.A