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DOCTORAL THESIS

Labour strikes in Guǎngdōng: A Study on the actors of industrial relations and on
pathways to success or failure of strikes

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Abstract

This PhD dissertation examines the relation between actors and dynamics of labour strikes events in the People's Republic of China's Guǎngdōng province from 2003 to 2021. The thesis reviews the literature on the general subject of industrial relations and labour strikes in advanced economies and then in the context of China since the early 20th century. Two chapters are dedicated to the analysis of a non-representative dataset build on newspapers articles as secondary sources from the decade 2003-2013. An appendix is dedicated to the software used to transform qualitative data into quantitative data in the form of semantic triplets. The first empirical chapter analyses the question of relations between industrial relations actors through social network analysis. The second empirical chapter analyses the dynamics of strikes and the causal pathways to success or failure through qualitative comparative analysis. A last empirical chapter is dedicated to a qualitative exploration of secondary sources – newspaper articles and social media posts – of the same questions in the years 2014-2021.

Questa tesi di dottorato esamina le relazioni tra gli attori e le dinamiche dei casi di sciopero nella provincia del Guǎngdōng della Repubblica Popolare Cinese dal 2003 al 2021. La prima sezione della tesi revisione la letteratura sul soggetto generale delle relazioni industriali e degli scioperi nelle economie avanzate, successivamente revisione le stesse questioni nel contesto cinese dall'inizio del 20esimo secolo. Due capitoli sono dedicati all'analisi di un dataset non rappresentativo costruito su articoli di giornale come fonti secondarie del decennio 2003-2013. Un'appendice è dedicata al software usato per trasformare dati qualitativi in dati quantitativi nella forma di triplette semantiche applicando l'analisi narrativa quantitativa. Sulla base di questo dataset, il primo capitolo empirico analizza le relazioni tra gli attori del sistema di relazioni industriali attraverso la social network analysis. Il secondo capitolo empirico analizza le dinamiche degli scioperi e dei passaggi causali verso il successo o il fallimento attraverso un'analisi qualitativa comparativa. Un ultimo capitolo empirico è dedicato all'esplorazione qualitativa di fonti secondarie – articoli di giornali e pubblicazioni su social media – delle questioni trattate nei due capitoli precedenti negli anni 2014-2021

Abbreviations

ACFTU All-China Federation of Trade Unions

CCP Chinese Communist Party

GLF Great Leap Forward

GPCR Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

GDP Gross Domestic Product

ILO International Labour Office

IMF International Monetary Fund

NGO Non-Governmental Organizations

NPC National People's Congress

OECD Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

POE Private-Owned Enterprises

PRC People's Republic of China

SNA Social network analysis

SOE State-Owned Enterprises

TVE Township and Village Enterprises

UN United Nations

USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

VTsSPS All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions

WB World Bank

Transliteration

All Chinese words are transliterated according to pīnyīn, the official romanization for Standard Mandarin Chinese. This may lead to some discrepancy between the present text and sources when sources used other transliterations such as the Wade-Giles (for example pīnyīn Dèng Xiǎopíng instead of Wade-Giles Teng Hsiao-p'ing).

Administrative Divisions in the People's Republic of China



Map 1 Map of first-level administrative divisions in the People's Republic of China - Source: Wikimedia

The People's Republic of China is divided into:

- First level divisions: 22 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities (Běijīng, Tiānjīn, Shànghǎi and since 1997 Chóngqīng) and 2 special administrative regions (Hong King since 1997 and Macau since 1999). Here we use “province” a synonym to “first level division”
- Second level divisions: prefectures, autonomous prefectures, prefecture-level cities, and leagues. In many translations they are referred as “cities.” Here we use “prefecture” for all second-level divisions.
- Third level divisions: counties and districts, here referred as districts.
- Fourth level divisions: townships, towns, and sub-districts, here all are referred as townships.
- Fifth level divisions: villages and other informal divisions.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2010, news of a strike in a Chinese factory of automotive components reached the Western media. Thousands of workers from the Nanhai Honda Auto Parts Manufacturing Company in the southern prefecture of Fóshān walked out for a protest that endured for more than two weeks, halting the global chain of production of one of the main automotive producers on world-scale. The strike, that ended with a 24% wage raise, recalled images that were long forgotten: masses of workers striking, and winning!, against a major multi-national corporation, furthermore that was happening in a country as China, long considered as country free of (or either dangerously poor of) social conflicts.

Beyond this single startling image of the strike in Fóshān, the academic interest in the Chinese social conflict was already growing and was destined to continue. The interest came from sinologists interested in the peculiarity of the Chinese case, from economists puzzled by the combination of an exploding market economy led by a ruling Communist Party, from social scientists of various disciplines attracted by the opportunity to relive the transition from a rural economy to a modern industrial economy, moreover in the in the county that was back then the most populous in the World.

Traces of many of these reasons to study the Chinese case will be found in the following work, but they cannot explain alone why I designed and carried on this research with the tools of sociology - albeit with an open mind to different traditions.

As I will discuss reviewing the literature in Chapter 1, I agree with those authors that still uphold the necessity to develop a comprehensive theory of strike and that to do so is necessary to cross the boundaries within the broad field of social sciences. Using the words of Franzosi:

“Each theory is limited because it cannot, by itself, account for all the evidence. [...] each theory allows me to fit only a limited number of the pieces of the puzzle. A general explanation of strikes probably would require pulling these different theories together. Which raises the question: How can we combine such different theories in a coherent framework?”

(Franzosi 1995: 346)

The resolution of this puzzle is way beyond the reach of this dissertation. I will not try to produce and test a comprehensive theory of strike able to explain with sufficient precision the phenomenon across time and space. Rather, the scope of this work is to link the general discussion on strike to existing theories of strike in China. The two theories that I will try to test, with the limits to generalization that I will discuss, are

- a general theory of the relations between actors in industrial relations in China elaborated by Bill Taylor, Chang Kai and Li Qi. In particular the hypothesis that I will test are that - due to the particular condition of China -in times of contentious industrial relations a) the three-party system that is common in advanced economies splits into a four-party system in which workers are separated from the official trade union; b) in the frame of this four-party system the Party-State maintains the central role of broker among the actors and potential solver of contentions. This general theory will be put to test through a social network analysis.
- a theory of causal combinations of factors that lead to success or failure of strikes within the Chinese system of industrial relations, derived from the work of Cai Yongshun on contentious politics rooted in the resource mobilization tradition. I will slightly adapt the Cai model to the case of labour strike, basing on theoretical and empirical knowledge of the phenomenon. This theory will be addressed with qualitative comparative analysis.

Both analyses will be carried on a non-representative dataset build on secondary sources, e.g. newspaper articles collected by Manfred Elfstrom's China Strikes Map from 2003 to 2013. A further qualitative exploration will be dedicated to the years after 2013. For this second decade I will discuss whether the results from the previous decade are challenged and which novelties may be of interest for further research.

This program of research brings together different research traditions and different methods. A long discussion will be needed to clarify how these differences may be brought together in a coherent way.

To do so, I will start in chapter 1 discussing what sociology – and in particular industrial relations - has to say on the argument of labour conflict, the actors that take part in it and the peculiar form of conflict that is strike in modern industrial societies. While the basis of the work is in sociology, the reconstruction of theories of strike will require to deal with different research traditions, in particular economics, political economy and political studies.

In chapter 2 I will deploy a brief history of labour conflicts in Continental China after 1978. This brief history is preparatory to introduce the first theoretical model against which I will test the hypothesis: the model of industrial relations in China as a system with four actors (Taylor et al 2001).

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 will discuss each of the four actors, revising their history – when possible since the beginning of the 20th century, with particular attention to their re definition after 1978. This discussion of the four actors will permit to build the knowledge necessary in the following chapters to read and decipher the dynamics of cases.

In the first section of Chapter 7 I will introduce the problem of data in the Chinese case and why I resorted to Quantitative Narrative Analysis to code data starting from newspaper articles from the 2003-2014 decade. The work of the QNA will permit me to build the data set on which I will test my hypothesis in both Chapter

7 and Chapter 8. In the second section of Chapter 7, I will perform a social network analysis to test the relative positions of the four actors and in particular to test the hypothesis of the prolonged centrality of the Party-State in industrial relation.

In Chapter 9 I will introduce the second theoretical framework, re-elaborating a general model of social conflict in China (Cai 2010) and adapting it to the peculiar form of strikes. In the second section of Chapter 9 I will illustrate why I choose to perform a qualitative comparative analysis, then I will test the relevance of the combinations of causal condition derived from the theoretical framework.

In Chapter 10 I will focus on the years after 2013. In this chapter I will perform a qualitative discussion of a selection of cases deemed significant on the basis of theoretical knowledge and results of Chapter 8 and 9. After an extensive reconstruction of each case - using as sources newspaper articles and information derived from social media - I will discuss whether the hypothesis and condition discussed in the previous chapter may be seen as confirmed or challenged in the new decade.

Finally, in the conclusions I will resume the work done and discuss points that still need further study. Eventually I will discuss also broader implications of labour conflicts in the general field of Chinese studies and studies on China.

An appendix will be dedicated to data coding and querying in Quantitative Narrative Analysis using the PC-ACE software.¹ –Labour, representation, and strike

This first chapter is formed by three sections. In the first part I will discuss the point of view of the discipline of industrial relations on labour representation and labour conflict, then I will discuss the most prominent manifestation of this conflict that is strike and then I will present the main indicators used to measure strikes in literature.

In the second part of the chapter, I will discuss the evolution of theories of strike in a cross-disciplinary literature that spans across economic sociology, economics, history and political science.

In the third section, I will discuss briefly labour representation and labour conflict outside the so-called *western countries*, especially in the socialist countries during the second half of the 19th century.

1.1 Labour representation and labour conflict

Within the broader field of social sciences that deals with labour relations, the discipline of industrial relations is peculiar for two reasons:

- 1) for its focus on the relations between labour and management and, often as third actor, the government. These three actors are indeed made up by different subjects;

Labour: composed by employees, unions and other organizations that may represent employees,

Management: owners and shareholders of an organization, top executives and line managers, staff specialized in relations with the labour side;

Government: political bodies from the national to the local level and administrative agencies that are involved in the definition, application, and implementation of industrial relations policies.

- 2) for its view of conflict between the interests of labour and management as physiological and not pathological to the system, due to the conflicting interests of workers in higher payments and job security and of employers in the pursuit of profit.

Besides these three main categories of actors, others may come into play, like international quasi-governmental organizations – ranging from financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to United Nations agencies such as the International Labour Office – and Non Governmental Organizations such as international associations of trade unions or advocacy groups for social and civil rights (Katz, Cochran and Colvin 2015: 3-12).

The perspective of industrial relations – at least in its pluralist and radical/Marxist schools - see the relationship between labour and management as inherently unequal and dynamic. The explanation of the unequal nature of the employment relation may change greatly between schools. According to Colling and Terry, the unequal relation arises because on the one hand most of the population is obliged to work as employee to earn a living and have limited choice among employers. On other hand employers hold a far greater choice among employees and may replace – with constraints that change through space and time – replace an employee with another. This imbalance of power is at the base of the dynamic nature of the employment relation, meaning that in the relation cooperation and conflict are present at the same time and combined in different forms (Colling and Terry 2010: 7-8). A similar explanation is provided also by the radical Richard Hyman that goes directly back to Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* on the incommensurable difference between the properties of capitalists and workers and thus the natural conflict between them (Hyman 2015). Pluralism in Industrial Relations (for a review of its variants see Dobbins et al 2021: 149-159) – stems instead from the pluralist conception that power in society is fragmented in multiple power centers with different interests. Kerr argues that the presence of different groups of interests does not affect the desirability and possibility of a reconciliation of these interests, as a combination of the redistributive possibilities that stems from economic growth and the action of the state that impose rules to limit the most disruptive consequences in this conflict of interests (Hyman 1978: 17-21). The pluralist tradition is not impermeable to the arguments of the radicals/Marxists, as testified by the radical pluralist synthesis born from the critiques to Kerr elaborated by Foxx during the 70s that recognized deeper roots to the inequality of the employment relations and thus highest obstacles to the possibility of a reconstruction of interests. The difference between radical pluralists and radical/Marxists remains the desirability of permanent conflict posed by the latter – and in some case the desirability of a political revolution (Dobbins et al 2021: 150.154).

Trade unions emerged out of the structural imbalance of power within the employment relations as an organizational form of the labour side to rebalance the relationship and obtain bargaining power via-à-vis the management. The trade union movement (sometimes referred to as labour unions) emerged during the XIX century as organizations composed by workers with the goal to *represent* their interests and to re-balance the relations between the actors. With time, the *right* to join trade unions was formalized in many national laws and constitutions and up to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Simms and Charlwood 2010: 125-126).

The history of trade unionism is very different from country to country, it is influenced by pre-existing institutions, historical developments, and social and political conflicts within a country. At least in the western European countries a minimum common path can be traced: labour unions emerged during the process of industrialization, sometimes through a slow transformation of pre-industrial artisans' organizations, faced a period in which its activity was illegal and then got through a process of legalization, recognition by the state and by the management and in some case of incorporation into institutions. As Richard Hyman pointed to, it is in during this process of institutionalization that Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1894 gave their classic definition of trade unions as:

“a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment.”

While the Webbs' definition is still a milestone in the study of trade unionism, Richard Hyman points out that it is only one of the many possible definitions and proceeds to propose the “eternal triangle of trade unionism” in which each vertex is the base of one of the three ideal types of unionism emerged from the western countries. According to Hyman the Webb's definition fits well with the model of unionism based on society. The other two vertices are market and class (see Figure 1).

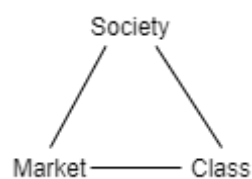


Figure 1 The geometry of trade unionism (Hyman 2001: 4)

While each ideal type relies mainly on one of the three vertices, every really existing trade union is always a combination of the three aspects. The vertices on which a trade union is build provides the standing point from which the organization looks toward the other two point. Hyman points out that trade unions with an identity overwhelmingly based on one vertex may exist, but at the cost of being unstable or short lived.

However, the three ideal types proposed by Hyman are:

- Trade unionism for social integration, based on society. It emerged at the end of 19th as an expression of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church that invited catholic workers to organize themselves to integrate in the society and counterbalance both negative effects of capitalist development and the revolutionary politics of socialism. Moving beyond the religious foundations, a large sector of the trade unionist movement (as well as the Webbs, themselves members of reformist socialist Fabian Society) converged on this model.
- Class-antagonist trade unionism based on class. It was historically dominated by socialists and anarchists and, later by communists. This ideal-type refuses the long-term class compromise encapsulated in the Webbs' definition. In 1902 Lenin published his pamphlet *What is to be done?* In which openly polemized with the Webbs and stated the necessity to organize labour unions as *transmission belts* between the political organization and masses of workers. The unions' goal should be to train workers in a *school of war* on how to organize toward the goal of taking political power. Even when antagonistic trade unions weakened or severed their ties with socialist or communist parties, many maintained a framework in which interests between the sides of industrial relations are not only divergent and uneven, but also never fully reconcilable.
- Business unionism based on market. It rejects both the revolutionary and reformists goals and it explicitly sets itself the objective of obtaining for workers the best possible economic conditions on the market. This ideal type is often associated with north American unionism, but instances of business unionism can be found among many European countries.

As it is implicit in the definition of "ideal type" used by Hyman, these three models do not exist in pure form. Really existing workers' unions need to use both political and economic means, conflictual and cooperative means (Hyman 2010: 6 -66; Katz, Cochran and Colvin 2015: 13-14). Moreover, as it will be discussed later in the chapter, these ideal types are related to the "western" countries in which free market economy and multi-party elections are in place. In "eastern" countries with economic planning and one-party political systems, the Leninist principle of the *transmission belt* was transported in the functioning of the post-revolutionary state and what was called "union" assumed a different role.

We can summarize that industrial relations consider labour conflict as a natural feature of the employment relations system, regardless of the normative viewpoint assumed on how much trade unionism should use conflict as a means to achieve its goals, as opposed to engage in cooperation. Even more importantly, industrial relations can be considered as a system aiming to regulate conflict: labour and management can find a compromise that temporarily sterilize the underlying conflict of interests. Compromises (usually collective negotiations and agreements) are an integral part of employment relations, just as conflict is.

In the following paragraph we will discuss the most important form of labour conflict, that is the strike.

1.1.1 Strike as the prominent form of labour conflict

In 1939 the political scientist Griffin (cited in Hyman 1989: 17) defined the strike as a “temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand”. This concise definition contains certain features of what a strike is and conversely what it is not. The strike is.

- a *temporary* stoppage, because both sides of industrial relations take for granted that the work will eventually resume.
- a *collective* action which cannot be reduced to or explained as individual actions.
- an action collectively enacted by workers (and not by employers). When the work stoppage is enacted by employers, it is called a lockout.
- it is different from other forms of workers collective action that do not interrupt the work process, such as mass voluntary turn-over between workplaces and slowdowns of the work pace.
- it is aimed at certain grievances, even when the list of grievances is general or even political.

One missing element in the definition by Griffin is that strike is a modern form of labour contention. Asymmetrical relations between labour and management and abstention from work as a form of protest are recorded since historical sources exist. However, it is only with the development of industrial economies that the strike became one of the main items in what is defined by Charles Tilly the *repertoires of contention* of popular movements, that is

“the limited set of routines that are learned, shared and acted through a relatively deliberate process of choice” (Tilly 1993: 264).

In industrial economies, the strike shows a complexity of causes, modalities and meanings that cannot be compared to previous modes of production. Strikes are not the only form of labour contention in the modern era, but they are *“the most typical and significant”*, the clearest signal of protest from the workers towards the management. Strikes breaks the normal functioning of production and are, even when initiated for a pure economical reason, a break of the social and political status quo (Bordogna 1979:12-18).

Precisely because of this characteristic of *“exemplary rupture”*, strikes can also be considered a point of reference for the other forms of conflict that occur in society. General or political strikes may be summoned for issues that do not immediately affect the employment relationship. Even other forms of protest such as students’ protests or refusal by tenants to pay the rent, which all lack the element of abstention from work, are named as "strikes". The concept of strike therefore assumes an importance that goes beyond the system of work relations. According to many authors and the ILO, it also assumes the role of indicator of the level of democracy in a society. For instance, the guarantee of the right to strike has historically been associated with the evolution and the involution of democracy (Gernigon, Udero and Guido 2000: 11-12).

Although trade unions were generally legalized or recognized in western countries by the end of the 19th century, the right to strike was a different affair. For example, in the United States of America during the first half of the 19th century strikes were prosecutable under common law as a conspiracy crime. In the second half of that century – after the Commonwealth v. Hunt sentence that recognized labour unions as legal – some judge started to issue more favorable sentences for striking workers. However, at the end of the century, a wave of large strikes in the railroad sector was met with repression by the state. It was only in 1934 – after a series of sentences on the strike as a civil liberty - that the National Labour Relations Act recognized formally the right of workers to collective actions and thus to strike (Bartelett Lambert 2005: 20-42, 84-88).

1.1.2 Measuring strikes

Strike is a multidimensional phenomenon that involves many individual and collective actors and that can be studied with many different methods. There is no clear rule or reason that assigns a particular method to a particular dimension of the phenomenon, although some recurrences can be found.

On the one hand, the vast anthropological and qualitative literature usually focuses on individual behaviors and motivations and also on the relationships between the actors. On this latter topic there is a growing interest in the field of social network analysis (SNA), both because relationships between connected actors are the natural objects of interest for SNA and because the phenomenon of strikes raises issues such as trust and solidarity (see for example Micheal 2008, Siciliano et al 2009).

On the other hand, the quantitative literature has consistently measured the various dimensions of strikes through three main indicators (Silver 1973: 79-83, Bordogna and Provasi 1979: 637-640, Bordogna and Cella 2002: 588):

- *Frequency*, measuring the number of strikes, usually considered as the indicator of the response of labour to shifts in the economic cycle;
- *Incidence*, measuring the number of working hours or working days lost to strike activity, sometimes used as a proxy of union militancy;

Involvement, measuring the number of workers that participate in work stoppages; it must be noted that this indicator may include workers that are not willing to participate in the strike, but are forced not to work as a consequence of the strike itself. In order to take into consideration the size of the economy and the labour market, such indicators are usually related to the size of the workforce.

The collection and publication of data on strikes in many countries started as an element of monitoring illegal activities for law enforcement. With the process of legalization of trade unions and strike activity, many national governments assumed this work as a routine activity carried out by some specific bodies, such as ministries of labour or national statistical offices. These data may also be gathered by international

organization such as ILO and OECD. Indeed, the International Labour Organization carries out a systematic work to gather and possibly harmonize data published in national administrative registers and sometimes in registers by trade unions and employers' associations (International Labour Organization 2020: 25-32).

The collection of these data has often been discontinuous within individual countries - for example Italy stopped publishing data on strikes after 2009 - and varies between countries. This makes comparative analysis difficult, although not impossible, and partially explains the different conclusions drawn from studies based on the same data, as happened for example in the debate on the *withering away* of strikes between Shalev (1992) and Edwards and Hyman (1994).

In particular, there are many differences with respect to which strikes are recorded in different countries. Some state may, for example, record only strikes above a certain threshold of participants or above a certain number of hours lost per worker, leading to smaller conflicts remaining unrecorded. In other countries political or general strikes are not considered. This is the case of France, in which, compared to other countries, this kind of big demonstrative strikes with broad political motivations play a very important role in the **repertoire** of French trade unionism. Finally, it should be noted that not all countries carry out this data collection, especially the so-called "developing countries" and, most notably, in China only the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong publishes some data on strike activity.

1.2 Theories of strike

Since economic science and the social sciences have begun to take an interest in labour relations, various attempts have been made to explain the causes of strikes. What follows is not a complete review of all theories available, its purpose is rather to provide an overview of which variables were used to explain the phenomenon of strikes, so that we can then approach the question of how to study the phenomenon in China. I do not therefore go into the details of the operationalization of the theories; instead, I outline their logic and the variables considered by the authors. Since I focus on the variables, the same models can be discussed on several occasions in the following paragraphs.

1.2.1 The economics of strike

In 1932, the British economist John Hicks argued in his *Theory of Wages* that strikes were nothing but the result of lack of communication in the bargaining process: if the parties were aware of all the necessary elements, they would reach an agreement each time (Hicks 1963 [1932]: 146-148), in the point of equilibrium that twenty years later would be called the Nash Point (Nash 1950).

This vision was then renewed by other economists such as Harsanyi, according to whom, in order to avoid the loss of present profits and future wages, a deal between management and labour would always be possible (Harsanyi 1956: 155-157). In the following years other scholars, explained the occurrence of an

"irrational" fact like strike with the lack of perfect information between the parties or with the assumption that parties themselves are irrational actors (Bishop 1964: 410-412).

Dissatisfied with these explanations, Ashenfelter and Johnson introduced a three-party model in which union's leaders and union's rank and file members are separated actors. In this model, union's leaders are interested in maintaining and strengthening their organization and their role within the organization. These interests are implemented representing workers' interests during the bargaining process. In case the union leaders are not able to conclude an agreement that meets the minimum requirements of the workers, the strike can be proclaimed a) to maintain the political support of the base toward the leaders, b) to gradually lower the minimum demands of the workers until the point where an agreement is viable (Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969: 36-37).

The Ashenfelter and Johnson model therefore assumes that the strike is not caused by ignorance of the counterpart or irrationality, but by precise economic variables. The business cycle, operationalized with disbursements and profits, is theorized to have a positive effect on the frequency of strikes. The authors also discuss a third variable, the rate of money wage change. In accordance to some readings, workers would be victims of "money illusion", so the nominal increase in wages would be taken as a signal to be able to raise their purchasing power, without realizing that the real wage may not be increased due to inflation. However, Ashenfelter and Johnson do not specify whether they expect a positive or negative effect and could not solve the problem even after empirical analysis (Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969: 42-43).

The contribution of Hibbs instead strongly rejects the "money illusion" hypothesis and develops a model in which workers rationally calculate their salary expectations, and therefore the propensity to strike, based on the dynamics of nominal and real wages of previous periods (Hibbs 1976).

1.2.2 The politics of strike

The political dimension of strike may refer to the political role played by labour organizations in a given political system, this role may be underpinned both by the society and class corners of the Hyman's triangle (cfr. Figure 1). On the other hand, the political dimension of strike may refer to the relation between political parties and trade unions.

In their classic work on strikes in France, Shorter and Tilly refused the idea that the high frequency of strikes by French workers, often ending with a failure, was to be explained by irrationality. Instead, the author proposed a political explanation, in which strikes are to be considered as a continuation of politics by other means, symbolic actions aimed more at the state rather than the management. The historical variations in the movement of strikes are explained by succession of different social groups in the position of striking workers, each new group carrying different motifs of political mobilization (Shorter and Tilly 1974: 335-350)

A few years later, Hibbs took a step further combining economic and political variables to his model. On the one hand the political dimension of strike may refer to the political role played by labour organizations in a given political system, this role may be underpinned both by the society and class corners of the Hyman's triangle (cfr picture 2). On the other hand, the political dimension of strike may refer to the relation between political parties and trade unions.

In particular, Hibbs points to the latter conception of the political dimension, mentioning for example the organizational links between the Mediterranean communist parties and the main trade unions as well as the political consequences of a long bus strike in London on the general elections in 1959.

Hibbs maintains that pro-labour non-revolutionary parties use their ties with trade unions differently, according to the electoral cycle. Away from elections, these parties would push in favor of strikes to reassure their rank and file, while getting closer to election they would reduce mobilization in order to facilitate the campaign towards the moderate electorate. The stance of revolutionary parties is instead posed to be always in favor of conflict notwithstanding the proximity of elections (Hibbs 1976).

Cella differentiate the mobilization and regulation aspects of political influence on strike activity. Mobilization regards:

- proximity to years of general elections that – at difference with Hibbs – is not posed to have necessarily a depressive effect on conflict levels. According to Cella there could be either a *Hibbs-like* situation of moderation in sight of the general election or a run up effect between elections and strike actions;
- membership in far-left mass parties - typically the communist parties after 1945, but also the Italian Socialist Party before its illegalization in 1925 – that is posed to have always a positive effect on strike.

The regulation aspect regards the participation in the government of pro-labour non revolutionary parties– either as the only ruling party or in a *grand coalition*. Regulation is expected to have a negative effect on strikes because conflict is dislocated to the political arena (Cella 1979: 617-621).

Cella also deals with the possible organizational influence of trade unions on strike levels. The organizational aspect is mainly operationalized through unionization that is expected to have a positive impact on strikes. A different aspect of union strength could have an opposite effect as incorporation of strong trade unions into the political arena. Strong incorporated trade unions could obtain benefits for their members without having to resort to strike. Given the year of publication, Cella states that the incorporation hypothesis is logical but relevant among the surveyed countries only for Germany after 1945 (Cella 1979: 613-617).

In the following years the issue of incorporation became part of the studies on role of the state in industrial relations, for example Bordogna and Cella 2000 in which the authors pose that “admissions” of trade union by the state is one of the possible tasks of the state that can lead to the obtainment of certain trade unions goals without the use of conflict, such as the availability of certain sectors for collective bargain (29-37)

1.2.3 Labour market and labour force

In the previous paragraphs we have discussed the influence of various variables on the level of strikes at national level.

However, empirical data show that different industrial sectors show a different “propensity” to the phenomenon of the strike. To explain this variation between industrial sectors the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis (1954) indicates that the most strike-prone industrial sectors are those in which workers are isolated from the rest of society and those in which the physical hardness of the work process select workers more akin to conflictual behavior (Kerr and Siegel 1954).

Despite numerous criticisms raised against the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis, it is still a “classic” in sociology of labour that had the merit to raise the issue of social exclusion of certain sectors of workers. In the context of the present review, the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis has the merit to introduce two questions: the issue of the position in work process and the issue of position on the market for both the management and the labour side .

Arrighi and Silver take from Erik Olin Wright the concept of workers’ power, distinguishing between structural and associative power (Wright 2000). The first is based on the ability to build organizations that pursue the interests of workers and the second is the power that derives from the position of workers within the production process. Structural power is in turn divided into power in the market and power in the workplace (Arrighi and Silver 1984). The power in the market includes unemployment (with a negative impact) and considers the possession of relatively rare skills in the labour market (with a positive impact). On the other hand, workplace power is entirely within the production process and concerns the ability to stop production—that is the capacity to disrupt the production process and thereby damage the employers. It should be noted that, unlike the assertion of the Kerr-Siegel hypothesis, this ability can be held by large groups of very cohesive workers as well as small groups, even individuals. According to Silver, the cycles of investment in strategic sectors from one country to another change workers' levels of power and, consequently, influence trends in conflict (see Silver 2003: chapters 2 and 3).

1.2.4 Strikes as social movements

The literature on social movements was mainly developed outside the field of industrial relations. While social movements studies dealt with the conditions under which social movements organizations could emerge and then eventually succeed or fail, industrial relations for many decades took for granted the very

existence of workers' movements and labor unions, focusing instead on the outcomes of these movements and organizations. Notwithstanding this separation, the trajectories of the two fields of study show some remarkable parallel development, until some bridging took place between the two.

For a long time, the emergence of collective actions and social movements was explained with the classical model in which a structural strain in the society leads to a disruptive psychological state in individuals. When a certain aggregate threshold of individuals reaches that threshold, a social movement occurs (McAdam 1999: 6-7). One of the more cited versions of this classical model is Smelser's theory of collective behavior that does not imply that individuals that take collective action are irrational (in terms of their self-interest) *per se*, but are individuals that share generalized beliefs and thus are more prone to respond with the same action to social strains that cause "anxiety, fantasy, hostility" (Smelser 1962: 16-17). In the same year, James Davies put forward the theory of relative deprivation, which contrasted his reading of Marx as a theorist of absolute deprivation. Davies state that revolutions, contra Marx, are not made by absolutely deprived people because these peoples' expectations are kept low by the daily struggle to survive. On the contrary, according to Davies revolutions are enacted by people that enjoy a prolonged state of wellness during which they raise their expectations, widening the gap between needs expected to be satisfied and actually satisfied needs, up to the breaking point where revolution occurs (Davies 1962: 5-8). Many other variants of the classical model exist; what is to be noted is that in all these models collective action and the emergence of social movements are the response to strains in the systems, which affect individuals who in the end deviate from "normal" behavior", as they seek to restore their own psychological equilibrium, rather than pursuing precise political goals (McAdam 1999: 9-19; Tapia et al 2018: 175).

The civil rights movements in the United State kickstarted a new stream of studies that challenged the classic model. McCarthy and Zald (1973) gathered many of the insights to be found in the then existing literature and developed the *resource mobilization* approach. According to the resource mobilization models, the emergence of social movements depends on the material and immaterial resources at the disposal of social movements themselves to create a bureaucracy dedicated to professionally work towards the goals of the movements. The emergence of social movements is therefore explained by their organizational features rather than by the social psychology of individual participants (McCarthy and Zald 1973: 2-3; 1977: 1216-1217).

In the same years, the *political process models* were developed (the name being taken from Tilly 1973). This set of models assumes that the established decision-making processes exclude groups that do not have enough bargaining power. However, when there are changes in the political structure new groups have a *political opportunity* to make their social movement emerge and have a voice in the decision-making process.

Just like the resource mobilization approach, the political process theories imply that social movements are made by groups of people acting together to obtain certain political (or economic) goals. *Contra* the classical model, these theories do not see the emergence of social movements as an immediate response to the trespassing of a certain threshold, rather as the result of a cumulative process of transformation in power relations. As with Gamson (1970, 1990), the achievements of social movements are a function of the strength of protest groups and of the costs of concessions and repression by the authorities. It is to be noted that, in these earlier models, political opportunities are a sort of black box.

Later attempts tried to combine the political model approach and the resource mobilization approach, building a model in which collective action is considered the result of choices made on the basis of economic, political and organizational factors. These attempts included the opening of the *black box* of political opportunities. Collective action is thus to be understood as the result of the presence of:

- a structural lever, or changes in the social and economic structure that objectively open new possibilities for action;
- cognitive cues that give the actors the awareness of being able to act
- a mobilizing structure through which the actors implement the collective action which, in turn, produces new political opportunities and possibly new structural levers.

(McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 1-20; McAdam 1999)

1.2.5 Bridging two research traditions

More recently Tapia, Elfstrom and Roca-Servia (2018) connected certain aspects of the two separate research traditions in social movements and industrial relations. The authors identified three main categories in which a broad coincidence of concepts may be seen.

- 1) Internal mobilizing structures: *“Internal organizational structures have been important for both SM and IR scholars. Whereas SM scholars have focused more broadly on the networks that compose movements – and the strengths and weaknesses of formalization, along with varieties of formalization – IR scholars have emphasized strategic choice and bargaining processes as critical elements that can enhance or prevent (worker) mobilization.”* (Tapia et al 2018: 180).
- 2) External mobilizing structures: on this point the connection between the two traditions is straightforward as both of them have always paid attention to the institutional context and the historical changes that are an essential part of the broad set of transformations that constitute possible political opportunities or, conversely, to the preservation of institutions that constrain the emergence of new actors.

- 3) Mobilizing cultures: case studies of social movements highlight how a precondition for collective action is the framing of a collective identity through the manipulation of symbols, emotions, and other cultural dimensions. The same is true for the industrial relations studies that deal with the ideological work underpinning the construction of class-based solidarity, or for the de-construction of it, in the labour movement.

(Tapia et al 2018: 177-183)

In addition to these overlapping elements of the two traditions suggested by Tapia et al, I suggest that many other concepts and variables that have been used to explain strikes in the previous section can be transferred from and to the social movements research agenda:

Social movements	Industrial relations
Strength of protest groups	Organizational resources, unionization
Costs of concessions	Bargaining power between labour and management
Structural levers and political opportunities	Changes in the business cycle, in the rate of unemployment, in the institutional framework
Cognitive cues	Expectations about wages and working conditions

1.3 The movement of strikes

1.3.1 The movement of strikes in advanced countries

The most complete tests on the explanatory capacity of the theories I have reviewed so far are - for obvious reasons concerning the availability of data - those on advanced economies.

Roberto Franzosi, in his review of the strike waves in postwar Italy, concludes that the cyclical dynamics of strike are partially explained by different factors (“economic, organizational, institutional and political process”) who interact with each other at different times. Regarding the institutional factor, Franzosi investigated how the actions of the Italian state as an independent actor influenced – mainly in the form of repression – the strike activity and the organizational structure of trade unions, and was in turn influenced through by the power exercised by workers through their organizations. Franzosi analyzes the difference between the strike wave of 1959-1963 and 1969-1973. According to Franzosi, the first was not supported by enough power of workers’ organizations and ended with repression of the co-optation of the Socialist Party in a subaltern alliance with the Christian Democrats. The latter strike wave, on the contrary, was supported by strongest organizations both in the traditional area of the Communist Parties and in the area of the *new left*, smaller and fragmented but with a noteworthy influence on certain sectors of the industrial working class. With this stronger support, the strike wave led to victories that were previously unimaginable, such as

the *Statuto dei lavoratori* law, greater influence of trade unions in the collective bargaining and in general better conditions for workers.

As Franzosi notes, a general theory of strike should be born bridging the different theories that competed to explain the phenomenon, but to his judgment this was precluded both by *disciplinary parochialism* in mainstream academy and by inner unresolved contradictions within the Marxist critique. (Franzosi 1995: 343-355)

The empirical analyzes reviewed by Cella (1979) - regarding UK, USA, Germany, France, and Italy, from the beginning of the 20th century to the 70s - show that it is not possible to identify a single set of variables that unambiguously explains the progress of the strikes in each country and in each period. Instead, it is possible to identify a variety of economic, organizational, and political models.

The economic models display three possible combinations of economic variables:

- **a) struggles in expansion**, which is similar to the classic economists' argument about the positive impact of economic upturns on strikes;
- **b) defensive struggles**, in which, once a certain threshold of unemployment is overcome, the latter stops depressing the level of conflict and becomes a positive factor. This model may recall the role of thresholds in the relative deprivation theories;
- **c) run-up effect**, in which the positive dynamics of strikes are due to the growth of real wages, since the most backward economic sectors try to obtain the same increases as the pace setter sectors.

As for the organizational models, Cella et al. propose a *resources mobilization*-like hypothesis: an increase in **unionization** has a positive impact on the number and intensity of strikes, through the increase in material resources at disposal of trade unions.

Cella et al. consider that the political models show a number of theoretical weaknesses, to the point that they cannot specify the positive or negative impacts of a number of variables:

1 the strength of revolutionary anti-capitalist parties, measured through membership;

2 the presence of pro-labour and non-revolutionary parties in the government, that should give place to a displacement effect of conflict from the workplace to the political arena;

3 the electoral cycle, measured through the temporal proximity or distance of the day of general elections. The electoral cycle is generally regarded to have a negative impact on conflict, since pro-labour parties should push their working-class constituency to moderate their demands and mobilization, in order to gain the moderate vote. It is although suggested that it may be also the opposite, so that the working-class constituency could be galvanized by strikes, and therefore strikes could be used to maximize working class mobilization in the elections.

The analysis of strikes different periods - and therefore of their transformation - is constrained by the availability of data and by disruptions caused by the explosion of major wars and the establishment of authoritarian regimes. However, referring to different time periods also serves to approximate changes in the economic cycle and in the composition of the workforce. In all countries data are not available during the two world wars, with the partial exception of Italy, where data are available during the First World War. In Italy and Germany, data on strikes are not available for the duration of the respective fascist regimes. As an example of periodization to approximate economic shifts, data in the United States are broken down around 1933, that is the year in which President Roosevelt adopted the New Deal.

In the Table 1 below, I summarize the main conclusions of Cella et al. about the relative effectiveness of various variables in contributing to explain variation in conflict in the respective periods. In the Table 1 letters **a**, **b** and **c** are used to refer to the possible combination of economic variables as listed above, while number 1, 2 and 3 are used in the same way to refer to the political variables listed above.

Table 1 Summary of Cella 1979: 583-598

	UK			Germany			France			Italy		USA		
Years	'02 '14	'19 '38	'46 '71	'02 '13	'19 '32	'50 '74	'02 '13	'20 '35	'49- '71	'07 '23	'50 '70	'19 '32	'33 '49	'52 '73
Economic variables	a	b	c	a	a	b	Other	a	Other	Other	a	b	a	a
Unionization	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Political variables	NO	NO	<2	NO	<2	NO	>3	>1	Mixed	>1	NO	NO	>2	<2
NOTES a, b and c combinations of economic variables are signaled when there is concordance in their signs and $R^2 > 50\%$ YES and NO signals the influence or not of the variable 1, 2 and 3 are signaled as > when they have a positive impact on strikes and as < when they have negative impact														

(Cella 1979: 583-598)

The most effective variables in explaining the frequency of strikes are the economic ones, even though with important exceptions. In France only the period between the two world wars is explained by the *struggle in expansion*, which also explains strikes during Italy's post Second World War period of sustained economic growth. The *run-up* effect appears to explain only the post-WWII in the United Kingdom, combined with a positive effect of unionization and a negative effect of the Labour Party led cabinets. Unionization is found to have a positive effect in various periods, while it is to be noted that the impact in the same periods in two similar countries like Italy and France is not necessarily the same. The political variables are the most volatile

and do not clearly discriminate between competing theories. This is the case of the US, in which the displacement effect seems rejected during the Roosevelt's administration before the Second World War and confirmed at the time of the Democratic presidents after WWII.

Since the end of the '70s, even with some different timing, there has been a general decline in labour conflicts in advanced economies. As a consequence, the attention of the scientific literature to the phenomenon has also decreased (cfr Baccaro and Howell 2017: 44). Since the 1990s, a number of hypotheses have been put forward that, rather than disappearing, the conflict would move to sectors such as services where, due to the different organization of work compared to the manufacturing sector, conflicts involve fewer workers, for less hours, and may be carried out in different forms than the strike (Shalev 1992, Edwards and Hyman 1994). Bordogna (2010) shows that labour conflicts in advanced economies are following a descending trend, but conflict is shifting towards the service sectors and towards forms of conflict that do not necessarily require abstention from the work – these new features are nevertheless unable to reverse the overall downward trend. In the end, Bordogna suggests that, despite all the criticisms, the old hypothesis proposed by Ross and Hartman (1960) on the withering away of strikes in modern political economies should not be discarded quickly, even though there are signs of a transfer of conflict activity towards the tertiary sector and non-strike forms of protest (Bordogna 2010).

1.3.2 The movement of strikes beyond the West

Most of the studies on labour conflicts and strikes cover advanced market economies that also have a pluralist political system. Clearly, this does not mean that the phenomenon does not exist and that is not relevant in countries with different economic and political characteristics, as the literature on soviet systems shows (Grancelli: 1986). Strikes are easily observed in countries with authoritarian political systems and also in those countries in which strikes are prohibited by law. Historical experience shows that labour conflicts were present also in countries with planned economies.

The relative scarcity of studies on non “advanced democratic” countries is thus mainly due to the absence of data than to the lack of strikes. In “advanced countries”, notwithstanding the problems already noted above, data on strikes are usually available through government agencies (from police reports to data gathered by government agencies), but this may not happen in other countries for many reasons. The ILOSTAT database, established by the International Labour Organization, gathers available data on industrial conflict from 1969 to present days, but it presents many gaps. For example, data on Chile has a break in the series during the first years after the coup d'état that installed the authoritarian government led by General Augusto Pinochet. However, the absence of data on strike activities is not a fixed element in non-democratic regimes, for example the apartheid regime in South Africa has collected them regularly.¹

¹ILOSTAT <https://www.ilo.org/ilostat> - URL accessed on March 31st 2022

1.3.3 India

India is one of the few exceptions to the lack of systematic studies, which are similar to those based on advanced economies. Verma and Kumur (Verma 1978, Verma and Kumur 1992) studied the movement of strikes in the Republic of India. The first study covers the period 1951-1974 and describes an upward trend of episodes of industrial conflict in terms of frequency and volume. Statistical analysis focuses on two different explanations. At Pan-Indian level, following Ashenfelter and Johnson, the variation of the phenomenon is largely explained by inflationary dynamics, while labour productivity and unionization are not significant or they show an impact which is opposite to expectations. On the other hand, by analyzing the federal state and the industrial sector levels, following a hypothesis derived from Kerr and Siegel, the significance of the number of workers employed to explain the differences between states and between sectors emerges. The salaried/total staff ratio is significant for the differences between states and the ratio between wages and productivity is significant for the differences between sectors (Verma 1978). The second study covers the period 1970-1990, and shows a tendency, which started in the 80s, to decrease the frequency of conflicts and increase in their duration, regardless of economic dynamics. The significance of the differences between federal states is confirmed, but also a political-trade union variable, identified in the trade union mediation activity that produces a displacement effect, decreasing the conflict in favor of bargaining (Verma and Kumar 1992).

1.3.4 The Soviet Union and other socialist countries

According to the official doctrine of the Soviet Union, the socialist system eliminated the causes of labour conflict through the coincidence between labour and ownership of the means of production. Really existing conflict were explained either as a mere remnant of ideologies from previous ages or as consequences of illegal behaviors (Galenson 1954).

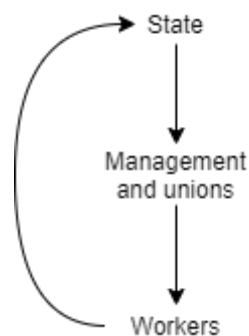


Figure 2. A soviet model of industrial relations

The role of trade unions changed consequently. As already discussed above, Lenin defined unions as the *transmission belt* of the Communist Party into workplaces, as well as *schools of communism*. Trade unions – organized in a single body that has a legal monopoly on the organization of workers – were no longer independent representative of labour interests, rather they became a section of the party-state that aims at

the mobilization of labour in favor of the goals established by the party-state itself. Unions were charged also with the management of firm benefits. It is to be noted that in the USSR the official All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (generally abbreviated as VTsSPS) maintained the function of employee representation as a subordinate function (Grancelli 1986, Courtois 1990). Figure 2 reports a stylization of the soviet model of industrial relation in which in theory workers were the collective owners of the state-owned enterprises and the state in turn acted through management and trade unions to organize the labour process and control/mobilize workers.

The countries that adopted the model of soviet socialism generally assumed this new role for the trade unions. There were some notable exceptions like the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which unions had a wider role in the system of economic self-management, and the Polish People's Republic that, since 1980, legalized the existence of the independent trade union Solidarity.

In reality, labour conflict was not absent in the USSR and the other socialist countries. Obviously, it is not possible to trace here the entire history of these conflicts throughout the different phases of Soviet history. Focusing on the history after the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of 1956, a period for which journalistic news and even sociological investigations exist, we can say that, in the Soviet system, labour conflicts were expressed partly in forms which were similar to those of market economies and partly in ways peculiar to the Soviet system.

A particular form of conflict was defined "individualized" by Burawoy. These are actions in which individual workers circumvent the prohibition to the formation of independent unions by exploiting the characteristics of the Soviet system. These forms are the frequent use of voluntary turnover and the "Italian strike", that is, forms of slowing down or stopping production, while formally remaining within the rules of the company.

Some research conducted between the '70s and the '80s report various causes of voluntary turnover (Grancelli 1985):

- some are typical of labour conflicts in market economies, such as low wages, poor working conditions, lack of career prospects, demotion;
- others related to the Soviet welfare system provided by companies, lack of housing or excessive distance from the workplace, lack of nurseries.

However, the forms of individualized conflict do not exhaust the labour conflicts that assumed more typical collective forms. The use of the traditional means of strike in the socialist countries is documented, with some notable cases when it was used to ask political reforms, such as the strike by the Polish port workers which led to the already mentioned legalization of the union Solidarity (Fowkes 1993).

Given the scarcity of information, any attempt at generalizations is risky. In any case, we can note that reported strikes were certainly a small portion of those actually happened and that the cases reported

concern different production sectors and geographical areas. On these premises, we can legitimately conclude that the practice of strikes was present on several levels and not marginal or specific to certain situations.

The state reaction is often reported within the dichotomy repression/concession, and there was seemingly a tendency to stronger repressive capacity in large urban centers, but also a greater political relevance and visibility of conflicts in these same centers, which could lead to concession and the acceptance of some of the workers' requests.

Finally, it should be noted that workers' demands tended to cover a very wide spectrum, from purely economic ones to political problems with the local state. Obviously forms of political strike against the central state would appear only in the last few years before the dissolution of the USSR (Clarke 1993).

1.3.4 Representation and conflict in post-soviet Russia

The former official union started a process of separation from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1987, along with Gorbachev's *perestroika*, and re-branded itself as the General Confederation of Trades Unions in 1990, one year before the formal dissolution of the soviet state and the first year in which a law was passed to give legal protections to independent labour union. The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) was founded as the branch of the General Confederation operating in the Russian Federation and it abandoned any discourse on class antagonism and adopted an orientation to social partnership (Pringle and Clarke 2011: 22-23).

The influence of the (no more) official union on Russian labour was already put in question in 1989 and 1990 by a wave of economic and political strikes, most notably the long strike in the coal mining sector, once an *aristocratic* sector, whose workers enjoyed higher wages and access to better industrial goods. Miners raised economic, political, and social grievances and entered in a long and contradictory bargaining process with authorities. The strike led to the adoption of the Resolution 608 by the government that, by the words of a contemporary scholar, "*sank into a sea of bureaucratic confusion*". Here it is important to note that striking workers completely by-passed the VTsSPS/FNPR structures and built autonomous workers' committees to manage the strike (Rutland 1990).

The economic transition in the Russian Federation – as well as in other former soviet republics – that is the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy was quick and brutal. The "shock therapy" included rapid privatization of state assets - including the land - with a plan which in theory should have redistributed ownership to all citizens, but which in practice ended up rapidly forming large concentrations of private property. In 1993. Russia experienced hyperinflation, with consumer price up by 874%. Unemployment rose from 5,1% in 1991 to a peak of more than 13% in 1998 and 1999 (World Bank Databank).

Under such pressure and with the example of the coal miners' workers committees, other independent unions were formed and tried to use political leverage with the new Russian state. One of the main examples is the Federation of Air Traffic Controllers' Unions that supported Eltsin in the final political crisis in August 1991 between Eltsin's government and the communist-controlled parliament. The air controllers' union signed a favorable agreement with the government in 1992. After the deal was left a dead letter, the union threatened a strike and Yeltsin's government responded menacing a crackdown (Pringle 2017: 215).

Formally the body of laws enacted after the fall of the Soviet Union granted union pluralism. However, the FNPR used its weight to influence the new Labour Code in 2001, one of the main reforms after the first electoral victory of Vladimir Putin. The new Code established that the right to call a strike and the right to bargain with the counterpart was to be reserved for the most representative union in a given industrial sector or firm, granting *de facto* prominence to the FNPR in most sectors (Pringle 2017: 215-216).

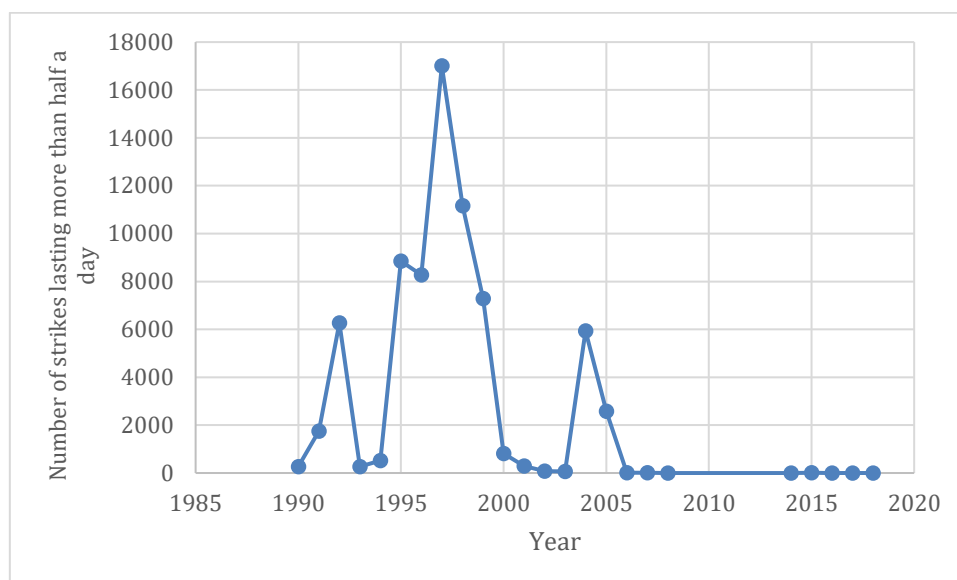


Figure 3 Number of strikes lasting more than half a day in the Russian Federation (ILOSTAT)

One of the effects of the new Labour Code was to radically diminish the frequency of strikes lasting more than half a working day from almost 18 thousand during 1997, the worst year in the economic crisis, to few units in the following years, with the exception of 2004 and 2005 (ILOSTAT, cfr Figure 3).

Concluding remarks: how to explain strikes?

As we have seen throughout this chapter, there is still not a single theory with enough explanative power to explain the phenomenon of strike in the advanced economics. Different fields of the social sciences tried to explain the phenomenon since in the last century, the present review of literature showed a course that starts from pure economic explanations, add the contribution of political and sociological studies up the more recent contribution that tries to build a bridge between two traditions of research such as industrial relations and social movements.

What we can learn from the review on advanced economies is that the economic cycle is a powerful but not exhaustive explanator of the phenomenon. In different periods of time different combination of economic, political, and organizational explanations arise, suggesting that the explanation of the phenomenon of strike is deeply rooted in the changes that occur in different societies through time.

Moving our attention beyond the advanced countries, we can see that developing countries and countries that went through periods of socialist planning of economy show – even in the scarcity of data - the importance of the economic cycle and the impact of the peculiar forms of the work process and of the labour organization.

In the next chapter we will look to the peculiar Chinese context.

2 – Labour and strike, in China

The People's Republic of China was founded on October 1st, 1948, at the end of a bloody cycle of internal and external conflicts. The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted quite naturally the blueprint of USSR-style command economy: priority to heavy and military industry with a quota of investments above 25% of GDP, determination of prices and quantities by the central planners, tendency to economic autarchy. These features were set up in the early 50s and were maintained until the early 80s (Naughton 1995: 27), when the process of "Reform and Opening Up" (gǎigé kāifàng) was introduced and progressively transformed classic state socialism into a new form of "market socialism" or - as it is defined in the Chinese government terminology - "socialism with Chinese characteristics". The debate on the nature of the gǎigé kāifàng process in historiography, social sciences and economic studies is rich and cannot be summarized here. In paragraph 2.1 I will briefly outline some of the key points that led from the command economy to the reform and opening process, focusing on urban labour, on its mobility and on the determination of wages as a guiding thread. In paragraph 2.2 I will discuss the forms of labour conflict practiced in China until the 1980s and the new forms that started to rise since the 1990s.

2.1 Labour from Máo to Jiāng

Under the command economy, labour was one of the economic resources allocated through the five-year plan. In urban areas this meant that wages were centrally determined, and divided into a monetary fraction that was kept low and a more generous fraction provided through services by the *dānwèi*, the work unit around which the whole social life was reconstructed and that provided a life-long workplace. In rural areas collectivization was not pushed too much and the focus was on redistribution of the land to peasants. In 1956 major reforms concerned labour in both areas. In urban China, differentials in wages and benefits were established between different regimes of ownership (state or collective), administrative levels (local or central) and economic sectors. In rural areas, the collectivization was pushed through, partially reversing the reform of land ownership, and agricultural work was reorganized in people's communes that sold virtually all the products to the state. The central government issued in 1958 the regulation on the household registration (*hùkǒu*), re-establishing the institutional discrimination that in various forms was enacted by the dynasties that ruled China and that was loosened eventually abandoned due to the weakness of bureaucracy in the Republic of China (Wang F. 2005: 50-57). The new *hùkǒu* established that all citizens had to be registered in their place of birth as rural or urban and that rural-to-urban migration was subject to formal authorization, leading to an almost-total end of the geographical mobility of labour (Cai et al 2008: 169 – 170).

During the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) some sort of decentralization of the economy occurred, as the revolutionary movement undermined the very basis of the state and of the Communist Party. After the end of the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution, in 1971, there was a gradual return to central management of the economy that was made difficult by ongoing political conflict. In 1976, after the

death of Chairman Máo Zédōng, the CCP under the new leadership of Huá Guófēng tried to turn definitely back to centralization of economic planning. The new ten-years plan was based on the export of oil and gas to obtain foreign currency reserves to be spent in technology import. It became soon clear that estimates of energy reserves were too optimistic and that those reserves could not sustain the industrialization process. This led to increased conflict within the CCP leadership that culminated in the Third Plenum of the Central Committee in December 1978, when the “pragmatist” wing led by Dèng Xiǎopíng eventually prevailed (Naughton 1995: 64-74).

The Third Plenum laid out a general program of four modernizations (industry, agriculture, military and science), but only the agricultural reform started within short time. The household responsibility system was introduced first as experiment in 1979 and gradually expanded to all rural areas in 1983. This system permitted households to rent pieces of land— whose property rights remained collectively owned - and to sell on the market a fraction of their products not destined to state storage. A dual track of prices was thus introduced in which the central plan determined the price of products sold to state storage while other products were allowed to be sold at a price floating within a certain range around the planned price (Bramall 2000: 389). This led to an increase in agricultural labour productivity and a raise in peasant’s income, thus leading to the formation of a surplus of rural labour. Only in 1984 peasants were allowed, under strict regulations, to leave their rural households to work in nearby urban areas and work in the newly established Township and Village Enterprises (TVE) (Cook 1999; Cai et al 2008: 170-171). TVEs were in many cases successors to enterprises owned by communes and production brigades, subsequently their ownership was transferred to the lower levels of rural administration and were put in a market-competitive environment. Most notably, unlike State Owned Enterprises, TVEs were put under hard budget constraints and were left without privileged access to credit (Gabriele 2020: 31-32).

The second step in the reform process was in August 1980 the establishment of Special Economic Zones in the southern Guǎngdōng province, in the Shēnzhèn, Shàntóu and Zhūhǎi prefectures. SEZs were originally designed to attract foreign direct investments and technology transfer taking advantage of the geographical proximity to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. (Yeung et al 2009, Zheng Guo et al 2016). In particular, the construction of a contract-based labour market was pioneered in the Shēnzhèn SEZ (Ip 1995).

Apart from the Special Economic Zones, labour in urban areas was not touched by this first phase of reforms. The first step of reforms in urban industry was in 1984 “Resolution on economic institutions reform” issued by the CCP, that permitted a limited differentiation of wages on the basis of productivity in previous years. From 1984 to 1986 a series of reforms expanded the possibility of rural-to-urban labour mobility. In 1985 the central government issued the Labour Contract Law and in 1986 the *Temporary Regulations on the Use of Labour Contracts in State-Run Enterprises*, introducing formal labour contracts and permitting the layoff of workers for the first time since the early 50s. The effect was that enterprises were able to recruit on the

market certain figures of skilled workers instead of waiting to have them assigned by the plan. On the other hand, layoffs were possible only under precise circumstances (Cai et al 2008: 171-172).

The first great blow to the system of life-long employment in urban industries came after the rise to power of the new generation of CCP leaders led by Jiāng Zémín. In 1994, “grab the big, let the little go” (zhuādà fàngxiǎo) policy was introduced to favor the privatization of smaller, non-strategic and less profitable state-owned enterprises (Zhang and Chen 2009: 37-38). In a complementary way, during the 90s the State Council selected about one hundred and twenty capital intensive SOEs from a pool of enterprises that were already operating as major players in strategic industrial sectors. These state-owned enterprises formed a “national team” that was put under the favors of public policies (Nolan 2001: 16-20): I) the “national team” was protected from foreign and domestic competition with high import tariffs and non-tariff barriers consisting in bureaucratic obstacles against potential competitors; II) these enterprises were permitted to take independent decisions in the pursuit of profitability, especially when dealing with foreign markets; III) enterprises in the “national team” enjoyed privileged lines of credit at the four big state banks.

In 1994, the same year in which the policy of privatization started, the National People’s Congress (NPC, the legislative body of the PRC) adopted the Labour Law that unified in a single law the previous regulations that were spread across a number of different legal sources. Among many provisions, the Labour Law also started the experimentation of the minimum wage system.

In 1995 – eleven years after the last changes in wages- the Ministry of Labour issued regulations that permitted SOEs that met certain parameters to make wages float that is to raise or low wages within a certain range centrally determined (Cai et al 2008: 172-174).

In 1997, the xiàngǎng (literally, *layoff*) policy was set to permit the many SOEs that were suffering a financial crisis to lay off workers. For the first time in decades, mainland China faced the issue of unemployment – and the subsequent protests – with millions of laid off workers that the state had to support with direct subsidies under the xiàngǎng program (Lee 2000). In 1999, an unemployment insurance was introduced by the central government to cover the unemployed people that could not be any more subsidized by the temporary xiàngǎng (Cai et al 2008: 175-176).

2.2 Labour conflict in post-reform China

Notwithstanding the official narrative in which workers were the *masters of the country*, strikes and labour conflict were not unknown under the command economy, especially during periods were political conflicts within the communist leadership surfaced and political movements impacted the whole society. In 1956 Chairman Máo launched the One Hundred Flowers Movement (Bǎihuā Qífàng), promoting a short-lived loosening of political control and encouragement of criticism to the leadership (Teiwes 2011: 77-81). In 1957 a wave of strikes occurred in Shànghǎi (back-then one of the most industrialized prefectures in China)

combining the political movement launched the year before and the long standing grievance for the lowering of real income after the socialization of private enterprises in the early 50s. A decade later, in 1969, Shànghǎi was at the center of a new wave of strikes and workers demonstrations as the urban working class was involved in the conflict of the Cultural Revolution siding with the Commune , the short-lived revolutionary government that tried to take the control of the Municipality against the local leadership of the CCP. The motivation for the 1969 strikes was thus purely political (Perry 1994, Selden 1995). In the following years urban workers were involved in movements for political reforms in 1979 and 1989, as second-line behind students and intellectuals (Selden 1995: 79).

Since the 1990s urban labour conflicts over economic conditions have risen again, as the reforming process started to undermine the institutions of life-long employment in the state-owned sector and a private-sector began its development. Xiàgǎng and unemployment in different forms became an issue for the first time in decades, and, as a consequence, the number of workers' collective actions began to rise. Since China has never published statistics about labour strikes, in order to appreciate the phenomenon and its developments, we have to rely on other indicators. For instance, collective petitions to authorities rose by tens percent each year during the 1990s and records of "mass unrests" (which include strikes, public demonstrations, riots and other items) rose country-wide from 8,700 in 1993 to 32,000 in 1999. President Jiāng Zémín himself recognized the issue:

Workers are the ruling class of our country and are the fundamental force promoting social stability. The Party committee and government at each level must take great care of the lives of laid-off workers and their reemployment. This is a serious political task and should be done by all means.

(Reported in Cai 2006: 33)

The words by Jiāng were reported in the Liáoníng Rìbào, the official newspaper of the Communist Party in the homonym province. This shows a level of preoccupation by the central Communist leadership about the possible social instability that could be triggered in a province like Liáoníng, that was among the provinces that were more interested in the restructuring of state-owned industries (Cai 2006:32-50)

In fact, the process of privatization and lay-offs affected the various provincial economies in different ways, due to different reforms and developments paths taken (or not taken!) at local level, during the 1990s. Following William Hurst (1994: 96-99) we can distinguish between:

- 1) The north-eastern provinces Liáoníng, Jílín and Hēilóngjiāng, whose political economy was based in mining, petroleum and steel production. These provinces were hit hard by the restructuring of SOEs and could not develop a significant private sector to re-employ workers.

- 2) The developing coast: the Shāndōng province and Tiānjīn municipality, the Jiāngsū province and Shànghǎi municipality, the Guǎngdōng province. These provinces were historical gateways of international commerce; under the planned economy, they had diversified industrial sectors (from automotive to textile and shoes, from heavy industries to electronics) and also some sort of underground market that emerged since the beginning of reforms (Christiansen 1992). Private Owned Enterprises developed quickly also due to the well-connected local leadership (Jiāng Zémín himself was mayor of Shànghǎi and his protégé in the CCP were known as the Shànghǎi-clique) and were able to replace jobs lost in SOEs.
- 3) North-centre (Hénán, Shānxī and Shǎanxī provinces) and upper Blue River (Húběi, Húnán, Sìchuān and provinces, Chóngqìng municipality) are two different zones characterized by a tradition of limited industrial differentiation with a strong reliance on some heavy SOE industries such as mining, steel production, machineries and military. These provinces were not able to develop the private sector as quickly as the central coast and in the 1990s there was in a *tentative transition* in which the restructuring of SOEs was much more gradual and the creation of new jobs was sustained by the rise of self-employment.

The reprise of labour conflict driven by xiàgǎng workers in the 1990s was thus an attempt to regain some of the status that SOEs workers had in the Maoist era. This kind of labour movement was not the only one that developed in the same years. In the developed coast the work force that was rapidly exposed to market conditions engaged in forms of conflict that accepted the transition to market and demanded for regulations and/or enforcement of regulations (Hurst 2004: 100-111).

2.3 Development of a system of industrial relations

We have seen in § 2.1 that the creation of a labour market in Continental China was a somehow gradual process that did not involve political reforms in the direction of the end of the party-state system, in contrast to what happened in many other planned economies that staged a market transition as discussed in § 1.3.4. The marketization process slowly proceeded and eventually was expanded to all geographical areas in the country. During this process of expansion, one of the main debates on industrial relations in China was on convergence, that is whether the marketization process would create a tripartite industrial relations system akin to those of advanced market economies, with the state as a third actor between labour (represented by unions) and enterprises (for example, Chan 1995).

The state undoubtedly changed its role in the industrial relations system. Since its foundation in 1921 the CCP regarded himself as the vanguard of the working class in alliance with peasants. After 1948 these two classes were meant to be the *masters of the state*. In fact, the various constitutional reforms changed the stance toward social classes of the Communist Party and of the Chinese state.

Jiāng Zémín - as the last contribution of its theoretical production – from 2000 to 2003, elaborated the “Three Represents Theory” according to which the CCP:

“has always represented the development trend of China's advanced productive forces, the orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people” (Jiang 2007).

Individuals from “all productive forces”, including private owners of capital, were now allowed to become members of the Party and were deemed as legitimate actors in the national economic and political life.

Prior to the reforms, the industrial relations system was seen as a nested system in which the state (in its local and central institutions) owned all enterprises, the management acted under the planning of the state and the interests of workers were enacted by the state and the management. As we have seen in § 2.2 real conflicts existed, but the official theory considered them as “contradictions within the people” (Chang 2017). As the reforms advanced, the state changed its role in the industrial relations system, but never assumed the role of a *third party*. On the one hand, the state maintained a strong influence on the whole economy via the persistence of five-year plans and through the preservation of state ownership. Even though the quota of SOEs on the economy diminished, still the state is the direct employer of some 60 million employees out of a 200 million total. On the other hand, the state upholds a double priority as the promotion of economic development and, at the same time, maintenance of social stability. As a consequence, when there is a trade-off between economic development and workers interests, the latter should not be hit too much in order to not endanger social stability (Taylor et al 2013: 20-24).

As the Party-System was not reformed in its key institution, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions kept its role of sole-legal union. Under the Trade Union Law², ACFTU is the only legal representative of “the legitimate interests of the workers”, but its allegiance is more complex. Beyond - and many argues, before – workers’ interests, the ACFTU is bounded to be loyal to the project of economic development of the CCP (Chang 2017: 53-54). Moreover, the official Union is often dependent on the enterprises for its financial stability.

We already have seen that in the soviet-style industrial relations system government, trade unions, and workers are vertically integrated in a system in which the workers are theoretically owners of the enterprises, the government run the enterprises on behalf of the workers-owners and trade unions act as transmission belts from the government to the workers. With the reform process, the Chinese government formally assumed a role of representative for all productive forces and a goal to lead national economic development. The ACFTU maintained its role as representative of workers and as transmission belt but not in a vertically

² <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/30352/118793/F1165849917/CHN30352%202.pdf>

integrated system. The industrial relations system could thus be converging toward a tripartite system (Figure 4).

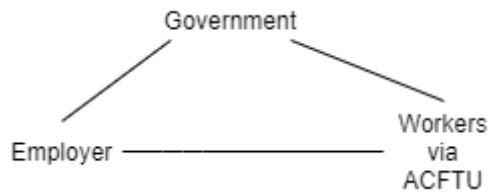


Figure 4 The Chinese industrial relations system, in theory (Taylor et al 2004: 120-122)

In the practice of industrial relations – especially in cases of conflicts that result in strike and other forms of protest actions – the tripartite model is nowhere to be seen. The ambiguous role of the ACFTU is seen by Taylor et al. as the key obstacle to the representation of workers’ interests through the ACFTU itself. This obstacle push workers to independently exercise collective action leading Taylor *et al.* to suggest a four-actors model (Figure 5).

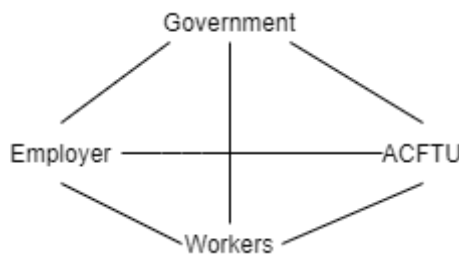


Figure 5 The Chinese industrial relations system, in practice (Taylor et al 2004: 120-122)

The following chapters will discuss each of the four actors. For each actor, we will review the history since the foundation of the People’s Republic with particular attention to the transformations that each actor underwent since the beginning of reforms and to their interaction with the movement of strikes. This discussion will be based on the existing literature, trying to build bridges between economics, social sciences, history and area studies.

3 – Actors of Chinese industrial relations (I): the Party-State

3.1 – Continuities and changes in the Party-State system

It is often said that Continental China underwent economic reform without any political reform. This is partially true, as the People's Republic of China maintained a party-state system in which one vanguard party leads the state on the basis of a certain variant of Marxist-Leninist ideology with the ultimate goal of a transition to an egalitarian society. The Chinese party-state is certainly evolving in something different from the revolutionary party of conspirators founded by 12 persons in 1921 or from the mass party the led 20 years of civil war and assumed state power in 1948, but there is no doubt that it has kept the basic characteristics of a party-state (William 2019: 14:15).

The People's Republic of China formally is not a one-party system as since its founding in 1948 other organizations were included into the United Front led by the CCP. These organizations were represented into the Chinese People's Political Consultive Conference, a consultive body in which the CCP incorporated mass organizations representative of different interests, the so-called "8 Democratic Parties" and individuals. The role of the CPPCC and of the "democratic parties" varied through time and in certain periods political organizations and individuals assumed a significant role in the political process up to ministry positions, but always under the clear dominant position of the Communist Party (Groot 2003, Asnes Sagild and Ahlers 2019).

The CCP always considered itself as a "vanguard party", with a mass line that permitted to incorporate into the Party activities tens of millions of people and use them to monitor and mobilize society at all levels (Lin 2019, Audin and Doyon 2019). Since the beginning of the reforms, membership in the CCCP rose from around 39 million in 1982 to some 91 million in 2019. The vast majority among these tens of millions of people are considered "simple members", without any political role. About one third of the members are thought to be cadres at various levels, from grassroots organizations to the upper levels of the administration (Cabestan 2018, Yan 2019). According to the official statistics, about 9 million CCP members occupy positions in the civil service out of a total of around 10 million civil servants (Zhōnggòng zhōngyāng zǔzhī bù 2019).

The Party and the State bodies largely mirror each other's at the various administrative levels. At central level we may observe a coincidence between the top roles in the CCP Central Committee and the top roles in the National People's Congress – the state's parliament, not to be confused with the CCP Congress - with the former overseeing the latter. The general "CCP over the State" rule may have its own exceptions. For example, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions should in theory be at the same hierarchical position of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. Nevertheless, since the 1990s, the Ministry gained a prevalent position vis-à-vis the Union (Taylor et 2004: 18-21).

While a full scheme of the administrative levels is present in chapter 1, in Table 2 I provide a brief summary.

Table 2 Administrative levels

1	Provincial level, with addition of four municipalities with special powers
2	Prefectural level, usually referred to as cities in common English talk
3	County level, usually referred to as districts in common English talk
4	Township level, usually referred to as sub-district in common English talk
5	Basic level autonomy

At lower levels, the mirroring between the Party and the State bodies may be less precise, but the CCP's control over the state is tightly maintained. At all the levels, each instance of the Party and the State has its own departments working on justice, propaganda and other issues, including labour. Below the 4th administrative level, the difference between the Party and the State vanishes into millions of "grass roots organizations" that are neither non-governmental organizations nor part of the public administration, but are segments of the governance apparatus (Cabestan 2018, Audin and Doyon 2019).

Up to now we have considered some basic continuities in the organization of the Chinese party-state. However, this does not mean that no changes affected the functioning of the state, since the beginning of the *gǎigé kāifàng process*, quite the contrary. Following Tsang's concept of "consultative Leninism", we can describe the Chinese state as continuously reforming its own functioning within the boundaries of the party-state system (*Leninism*), while trying to integrate individuals and organizations not directly affiliated to the CCP into a process of political debate (*consultative*) on issues established by the Communist Party itself. This process of self-reform has also the function of anticipating requests for further political reforms, as happened in the Soviet Union and other post-socialist countries (Tsang 2009, 2016).

One of the main features of *consultative Leninism* is the institutionalization of the party-state politics, as epitomized by the issue of transition from one generation of leaders to the successive. Chairman Máo Zédōng nominated and then discarded during the Cultural Revolution two possible successors such as Liú Shàoqí (died in prison in 1969) and Lín Biāo (died in a plane accident in 1971). The succession to the *second generation* was resolved only after Máo's death in 1976 and the brief interregnum of Huá Guófēng from 1976 to 1981. Dèng Xiǎopíng nominated as his successor first Hú Yàobāng. After Hú's death by natural causes in 1989, Dèng nominated Zhào Zǐyáng as successor and discarded him during the Tiananmen political crisis. Dèng was finally able to manage a *peaceful* transition to the third generation led by Jiāng Zémín in the 1989-1993 period. The same pattern was repeated with the transition to Hú Jǐntāo and only partially in the transition to Xí Jìnpíng. For the first time in decades, the succession from Hú to Xí was characterized by a manifest intra-Party factional struggle, that ended in the sacking of the CCP Secretary in Chóngqìng Bó Xīlái and of the former Ministry of Public Security and member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee Zhōu Yǒngkāng.

After taking power, Xí stretched the limits of the *institutionalization* process, reforming both the constitution of the CCP and of the PRC to lift the two terms limit. Simultaneously, with this reform of the Constitution, the principle of party leadership was reaffirmed in the preamble to Article 1 of the same. The appointment of Wáng Qíshān as vice-president of the PRC broke the informal rule of retirement at the age of 68 (Lin Feng 2019).

3.2 The Party-State as an actor in the industrial relations system.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, under the planned economy, the industrial relations model in urban areas was vertically integrated, with an official coincidence of interests between the two main actors (workers and Party-State) mediated by managers, who were in turn state employees, and by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which was (as still is) a body of the Party.

The reform process changed the role of the state both in theory and in practice, with the building of a labour market, the emergence of a strong private sector and the recognition of different legitimate interests between actors. The state maintained the role of employer in a wide state-owned sector and assumed different roles in regulating: a) individual labour relations via legislation that sets labour standards and collective bargaining standards, and b) collective labour relations via the exercise of administrative power (Tu 2017: 115-116).

3.2.1 The Party-State as employer

The process of economic reforms discussed in the previous chapter gradually changed the proportions between the state owned and private owned sectors as well as between the rural and urban areas.

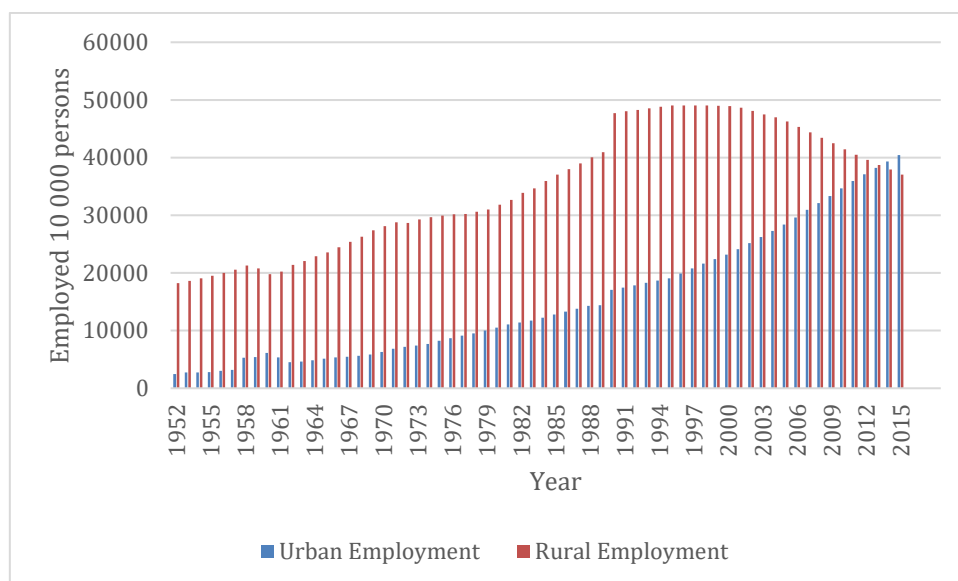


Figure 6 Employed persons in urban and rural areas 1952 – 2015 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

In 1952, 12,5% of the population was registered in urban areas and 87,5% in rural areas, with a minimum overestimation on urban population, as members of the People’s Liberation Army are always counted as

urban residents. As in Figure 7, since the mid-1970s, we can see a slow decline in the percentage of rural population that accelerated in the 90s. While the percentage of urban population conversely increased and it became a majority in 2011.

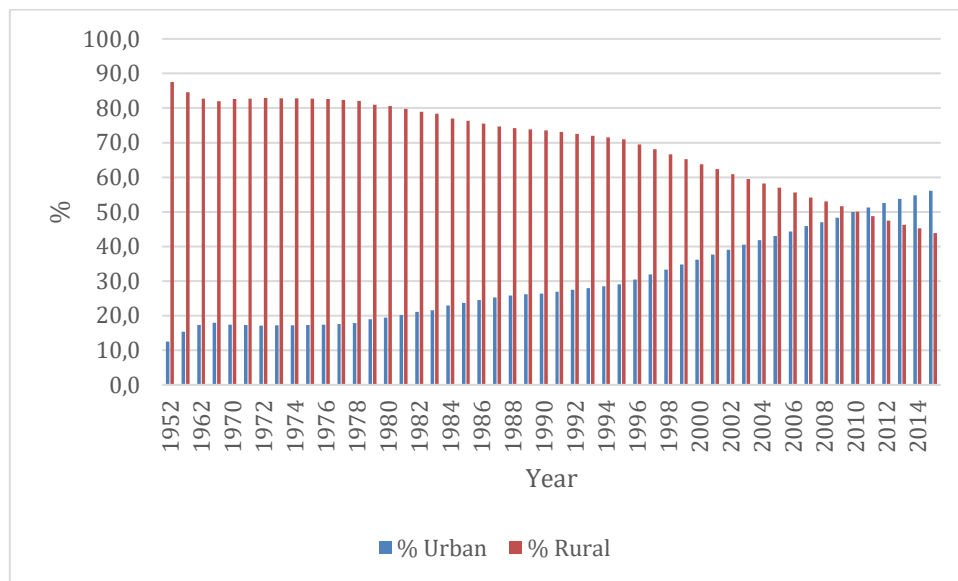


Figure 7 Population by registration 1952 – 2015 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

As shown in Figure 6, the number of urban employed persons dramatically rose from about 184 million in 1994 to about 434 million in 2018. However only in 2014, the total number of urban employed persons superseded the total number of rural employed persons. In fact, rural employment continued to rise from around 300 million in 1979 to a peak of some 490 million in 1997 and 1998. It was only during the 2000s that rural employment started to decline, reaching about 370 million in 2015.

As we noted in paragraph 2.1, a huge industrial sector developed in rural areas, implying that not all rural workers are agricultural workers. In fact, the Township and Village Enterprises sector continued to employ up to a maximum of 130 million persons in 1997 and 1998. The work force in the primary sector peaked in the year 1990, so it can be said that the decline of the primary sector work force started many years before the decline of employment in rural areas (see Figure 8).

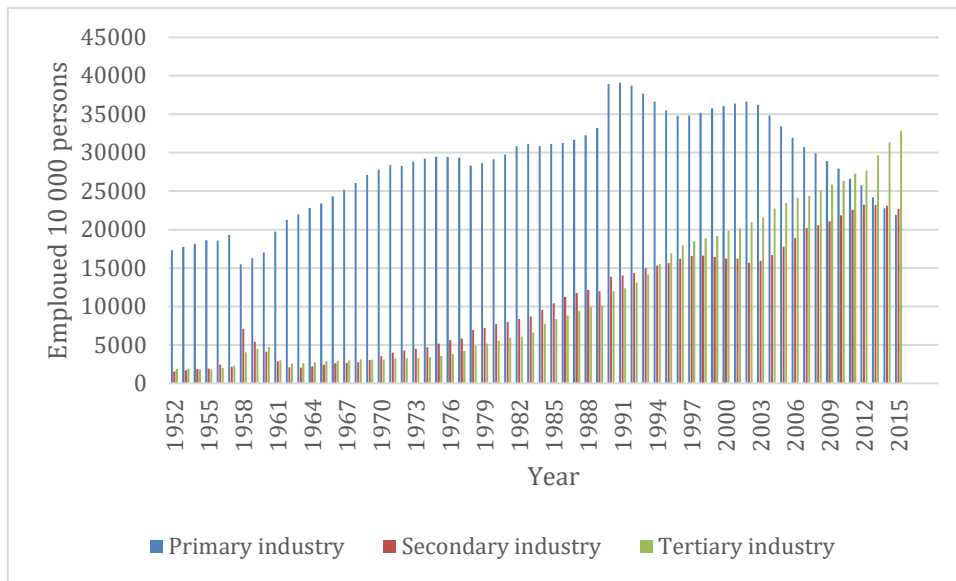


Figure 8 Employed persons in primary, secondary and sectors 1952 – 2015 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

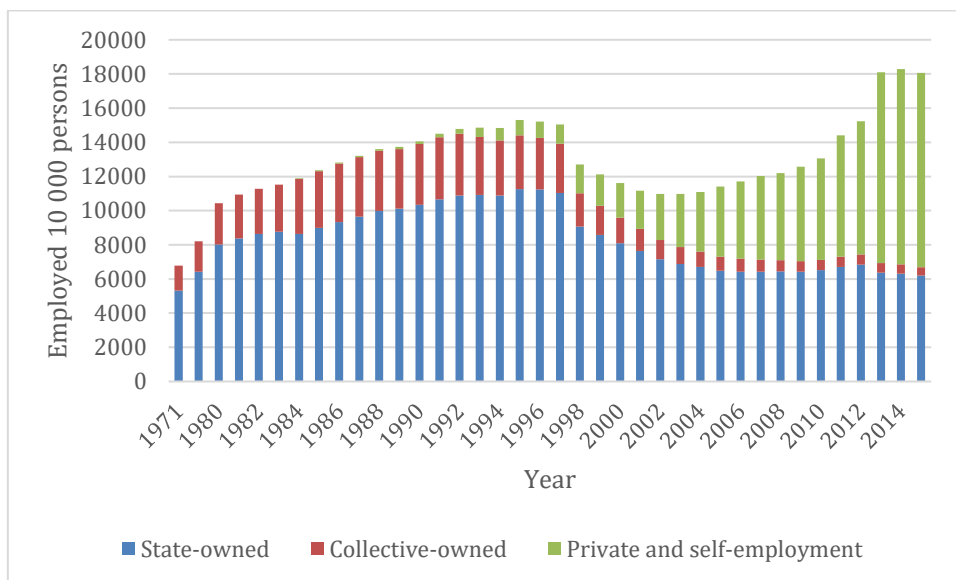


Figure 9 Employed persons per regime of ownership in urban areas 1971 – 2015 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

In figure 9 we can see the evolution of employment in the different regimes of ownership in urban areas. The forms of public ownership (state-owned, collective-owned and cooperatives) was a vast majority of the urban work force in the first half of the 90s, suffered a rapid decline from 1998 to the mid-2000s years and then stabilized in absolute numbers. As a share of the total employment, the private sector and self-employment continued to expand while the total work force expanded. The final result is that, after more than 30 years of economic reforms, the Chinese government is still the direct employer of more than one third of the urban work force (see figure 10).

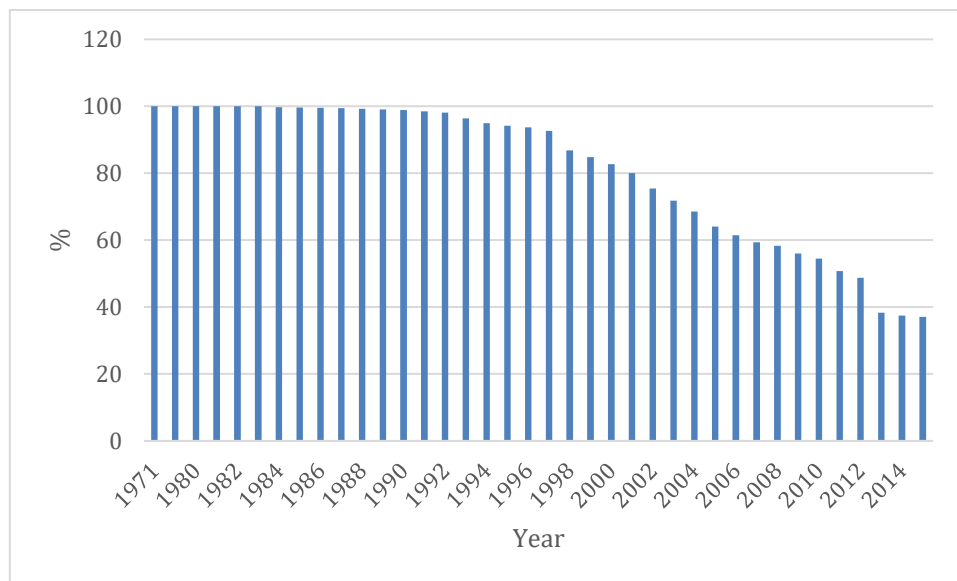


Figure 10 Percentage of urban employed persons in state and collective owned enterprises 1971 – 2015 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

This third of the work force is employed in SOEs that operate across virtually all economic sectors. Among them can be found the SOEs of the “national team” discussed in § 2.1. The favor policies enjoyed by the “national team” on the short run put the state sector in a crisis of profitability caused by the disconnection between SOEs and the real trend of reference markets (Nolan 2001: 83-93, Naughton 1995: 284-287). On the long run, the “core” SOEs in the “national team” were rationalized in what is now the State Asset Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) and evolved into a sector of central SOEs that enjoy monopolistic power and support from financial authorities and is now on the high end of the labour market (Naughton 2008, Lo 2016).

3.2.1 The Party-State as regulator

The central level of the Party-State is nowadays involved in industrial relations mainly as a regulator. During the latest decades, the government gradually moved away from the micromanagement of everyday relations toward the building of general frameworks. The sources of regulation may be both state laws and CCP policy documents.

China and the freedoms of association and strike

The most important source of law – at least in theory - is the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China adopted in 1982 and amended in cycles of five years corresponding to the congresses of the Communist Party. Article 35 of the current Constitution formally recognizes the “*freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration*”³.

³ 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Art.35. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&isn=14753 URL Accessed on April 1st 2022

Notably, the 1982 Constitution dropped the recognition of the freedom to strike that the 1975 Constitution formally recognized in its article 28⁴, although without any implementation law (Chang and Cooke 2015: 443-445). Since 1982, strike actions are thus in a limbo as striking is not illegal per se, but there is not legal coverage for actions taken by workers in the course of a work stoppage. A policy document emitted by the Central Committee of the CCP identified strikes as “people’s internal conflict” – echoing the Maoist definition of *contradictions among the people* - that should be met with “early resolution”. Some regulations for the handling of strike events may surface in lower sources and at lower administrative levels, for example in the Regulations on Harmonious Labour Relations and the Collective Consultation Regulation of Shenzhen Special Economic Zone approved by the Shēnzhèn prefecture respectively in 2008 and 2017. Both documents, however, specify that the Trade Union Law cannot be over ridden.(Chang 2005; Meng 2017: 188-191).

At the supra-national level, the PRC ratified in 2001 the United Nations’ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Culture Rights that, in its Article 8, establishes the right to form unions and to strike, although within the limits of national laws⁵. The Chinese state signed four of the eight fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, and is in the process to sign two furthermore fundamental conventions . The 1948 convention on the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize is among those unsigned⁶. In the ILO’s own process of review, the Confederation raised the issue that the ACFTU monopoly constitutes a negation of the freedom of association. The Chinese government and the ACFTU replied that freedom of association is guaranteed “according to local law”, i.e. that the Chinese government considers the freedom to form a union under the ACFTU umbrella exhaustive of the freedom of association⁷.

The legal environment of labour in China

The central administrative level adopted various laws and policies to establish the legal framework for industrial relations. In 1992 the National People’s Congress adopted the Trade Union Law (TUL) that confirms the All-China Federation of Trade Unions as the only legal union confederation in the PRC⁸. With respect to previous legislation, the TUL abolished the distinction between employment relations in the private, public, and state-ownership sectors (Casale and Zhu 2013: 10-11).

⁴ 1975 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, art. 28
<https://china.usc.edu/sites/default/files/article/attachments/peoples-republic-of-china-constitution-1975.pdf>

⁵ INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

⁶
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312232:NO
⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_629639.pdf

⁸ Trade Union Law of the People’s Republic of China. Art. 2
<http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?id=22786&lib=law> URL Accessed on March 31st 2022

The Labour Law was adopted in 1994 by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress and contains key provisions such as a) the legal definition of collective agreements, b) the clauses that must be included in the agreement itself, c) the mechanism for the mediation of labour disputes inside the company, with the possibility to appeal to the People’s Court and d) the first instructions for the establishment of the minimum wage at provincial level⁹. In 2005, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security adopted the Minimum Wage Regulations that specified comprehensive schemes for the calculation of the minimum wage at provincial level, with the involvement of trade unions and employers’ representatives (Zenglein 2011: 75-78).

The last major law adopted by state bodies influencing industrial relations was the Labour Contract Law (LCL), adopted by the National People’s Congress in 2007. The legislative process leading to the LCL started in 2005; the first draft was made available to the public in March 2006 and opened to comments. In one year, the draft gathered almost 200 thousand comments and a public debate sparked between academics and social actors that demanded either more or less regulations of the labour market (Chang and Brown 2017: 26-27). Among many provisions, the LCL provides: a) liabilities and fines for irregularities in labour contracts, b) collective contracts at enterprise level shall be signed by Trade Union branches, c) that in case of absence of a Trade Union branch workers shall elect representative to sign collective contract agreement, d) the creation of a tripartite mechanism to manage labour relations including the Department of Labour of the People’s Government and representatives of the trade union and of the employers, e) only for mining, constructions and service catering sectors, the possibility to sign collective contracts county-wide¹⁰.

The Labour Contract Law was one of the first laws in the PRC to be opened to comments and public debate prior to its adoption. In this sense, it is an example of “consultative Leninism”, in which different parties representing different interests were involved in the discussion that was concluded by the decisions of the National People’s Congress directly under the control of the Communist Party.

In 2015 the State Council and the Central Committee of the CCP published their joint *Opinions on building harmonious labour relations* that separated “collective work stoppages” from “mass labour relations events”. Under this distinction, work stoppages should be dealt with the activation of tripartite mechanisms for the resolution of labour disputes while other mass events should still be dealt with the Emergency Response Mechanism. The *Opinions* thus remove strike actions *per se* from the realm of “mass incidents” that can be dealt with repression, in order to maintain social stability (Chang 2017: 63). Nevertheless, it is to be noted

⁹ Labour Law of the People's Republic of China <http://en.pkulaw.cn/display.aspx?cgid=6393f2e43412bddbdfb&lib=law> URL Accessed on March 31st 2022

¹⁰ Labour Contract Law of the People's Republic of China https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=76384 URL Accessed on March 31st 2022

that many other actions that are usually associated with strikes, such as public demonstrations, picketing or road blockades, are still dealt with as public order problems.

2.2.2 The Party-State and the use of administrative power

The “local state” holds the administrative power to deal with collective labour relations, especially when they assume the form of labour conflicts. With “local state” here we mean bodies from the province level to lower levels.

The intervention of the local state in labour disputes may come in application of the Provisions for Consultation and Mediation of Enterprise Labour Disputes, promulgated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in 2011, according to which workers involved in collective disputes on pay or injury compensations may appeal directly to competent government departments for arbitration¹¹. More generally workers may appeal to the People’s Governments to send labour inspectors with the power of investigation and the possibility to issue an immediate order to rectify any behavior judged to be contrary to relevant laws and regulations (Tayler et al 2003: 35, Tu 2017: 123-124).

The local state may use its administrative powers also in cases in which labour disputes erupts into the so-called *mass incidents* for which each province has its own regulations for intervention. These province-level regulations are usually quasi-replicas of regulations from superior levels. A distinguished exception is the province of Guǎngdōng that adopted the *Guǎngdōng Corporate Collective Consultation Regulation*. The effect of this regulation is debated: on the one hand, the very existence of this regulation establishes a certain legitimacy for strike actions, on the other hand it introduces several restrictive norms such as the right for police to intervene in the dispute or the prohibition to hold picket lines to block the movement of people and goods (Meng 2017: 190-191).

With the *Opinions* published by the higher levels of the Party-State in 2015 and with the Guǎngdōng province’s *Regulation*, we can see some partial attempt to institutionalize the state reaction to workers’ collective actions. Anyway, the behavior of the local state when dealing on a daily basis with this kind of actions is still up to the discretion of local officials, who have to choose their course of action, on the basis of conflicting rationales.

The rationales of local and central governments

In strike events, local governments are put under different pressures. According to the law, the main goal should be to re-establish *harmonious labour relations*, that is to end the strike. At the same time, under the

¹¹ Labour Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law of the People's Republic of China (Order No. 80 of 2007 of the President of the People's Republic of China). https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=89808&p_country=CHN&p_count=1097 URL Accessed on March 31st 2022

Cadre Evaluation System, since the 1990s, local officials are required to pursue economic growth goals and their promotion or demotion is heavily dependent on these results. (Withing 2004: 102 - 105). The higher hierarchical levels of government are moreover interested in maintaining the political legitimacy of the political regime by ensuring a progressive improvement of people's living conditions (Cai 2006: 4-6)

Local officials are thus subject to these different and often contrasting thrusts, when taking their choices among their repertoires of action and evaluating the economic and political costs of their choices.

The four basic possible reactions of local governments are: a) intervention in a dispute with concessions towards the strikers; b) repression of the dispute ;c) tolerate the dispute, without interventions d) intervention in a dispute with concessions towards strikers and at the same time forms of discipline towards the strikers or, more commonly, towards some of the leaders of the strikers.

The different government levels face decision about concession and/or repression, which can bring political and economic costs. In case of concession, the local government may face different types of costs. On the one hand, concessions may be received by the public as a sign of weakness, encouraging more popular resistance instead of restoring social peace. On the other hand, when the higher levels of the government push for concession, often the local governments are bounded to pay for the concessions, especially when dealing with xiàngǎng workers. Local governments may thus face a lose-lose situation in which they are pushed to choose between worsening their financial troubles or paying the costs of repression. In fact, when local government choose repression, the main cost are mainly political ones. One risk is that ineffective repression may put in question the government legitimacy in the eyes of citizens, leading to an escalation of resistance and increased use of violence by protestors. In similar cases, the central government may blame local cadres that could thus be negatively judged in their evaluation. The central government is indeed more akin to intervene with concessions toward strikers, in order to preserve its own political legitimacy as a government capable of improving the living conditions of citizens. Anyway, the central government is not interested by any protest in the same way: its attention is more probably raised by bigger and, ironically, more violent events. Smaller events are often left to the discretion of local officials (Cai 2010: 6-8, 116-125). More recently local governments -whose financial budget was progressively restricted - were found to increasingly use mediation between workers and employers as a way to cool down conflicts and promote the resolution of the dispute without assuming the financial costs and without paying the political and financial costs of repression (Tu 2017: 130-134).

4 – Actors of Chinese industrial relations (II) – The All-China Federation of Trade Unions

In this chapter, I will briefly resume the history of labour unionism in 20th century China and how the development of organized labour in close contact with political parties led to the foundation of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and its involvement in the civil war between the Communist Party and the Nationalist Party. I will move to discuss the positions and activities of the ACFTU since the foundation of the People's Republic and the re-emerging issues involving the Trade Union, the Party and workers. Then, I will discuss how the process of economic reforms put the ACFTU in an organizational crisis and how, in the latest decades, the ACFTU positioned itself in the industrial relations system.

4.1 From the early trade unions to the end the Chinese Civil War

The organized labour movement in China started to develop at the beginning of the 20th century, when the process of economic modernization, which had started during the final phase of the Qing Dynasty, brought large modern industries into the country and exposed the traditional artisans' guilds to the market forces.

The first recorded trade union was the Guǎngdōng Mechanics Association (GMA), established in 1906 by Mǎ Chāojùn, a follower of the founder of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), Sun Yatsen, who would later become a leading figure of the Party and mayor of the Nánjīng prefecture during the massacre operated by Japanese occupying forces in 1937. The foundation of the GMA by a political leader marks the trend of the early years of Chinese trade unionism. When, in 1911, the Qing Dynasty was overthrown and the Republic of China was established, many new political parties were founded and got involved with the organization of labour. For example, the Republic of China Labor Party supported many strikes in Shànghǎi and its region from 1911 until 1912, when the new republican government introduced a ban on strikes and the Labor Party itself was banned (Perry 1995: 32-43).

This pattern of close links between trade unions and political parties continued along the 1910s, with the various offshoots of the nationalist movement that dominated the political arena until the end of the decade. In 1920, the Shànghǎi Communist Group started to organize unions for machinery and textile workers, while in 1921 the newly founded Chinese Communist Party established the Chinese Labour Secretariat to take the lead in strikes in Shànghǎi. In 1925 the Communists summoned in Guǎngzhōu delegates of the various organizations which, at that time, represented more than half a million workers. The meeting was regarded as the Second National Labour Congress and ended with the adoption of the first Constitution of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, as an umbrella organization including industrial and territorial branches.

While the CCP and the KMT were formally allied in the United Front, tensions between the two parties continued to rise and the building of trade unions under communist leadership was instrumental to the

preparation of the attempt of insurrection in Shànghǎi in March and April 1927. Since the end of 1926, the insurrection was preceded by three armed workers' strikes organized by the Shànghǎi General Labour Union whose leader was the communist Lǐ Lìsān. The insurrection was able to seize control of the city and form a new government along with the KMT and local gangsters. In few days, however, the KMT - in accordance with some of the local gangsters - started to organize an armed labour union alternative to the communist one. On April 12, the Nationalist union along with the Nationalist Army started to attack the communists and pushed them out of the city.

The failure of the workers' insurrection in Shànghǎi marked the end of the formal alliance between Communists and Nationalists, the beginning of a repression of trade unionists that led to the assassination of thousands and the disarticulation of the ACFTU. As a result, the CCP revised its political line rebuilding its organizations on rural bases and abandoned the Lǐ Lìsān's political line to prioritize urban workers' insurrections (Taylor et al: 103, Traub Mertz 2012: 13-14, Franceschini 2015, Perry 1995: 84-92).

The documentation about the government of the CCP in the rural "soviet areas" after 1928 is scarce, in particular when referring to the organization of labour. However, it is known that the leadership of the ACFTU was assumed by Liú Shàoqí between 1931 and 1932 and that, in 1934, the ACFTU organized about three hundred thousand workers, mainly in the agricultural sectors. In 1939, Liú Shàoqí discussed in a document the necessity to re-organize the ACFTU, implying that a certain point in the second half of the 30s the ACFTU would cease to exist. However, already in 1939, the CCP started to gain control of some urban areas and started again to organize factory workers to mobilize them into the war effort. As the Japanese occupation weakened the KMT government, the CCP was able to go back to the cities and, once again, the centre of workers organizing was Shànghǎi. In 1932 the Japanese took control of parts of the Shànghǎi prefecture and the KMT officials fled in the countryside, two unions remained in the city with the same name Shanghai General Labor Union, one managed by underground communists and one by the criminal organization Green Gang. In 1936 the National Salvation Organization (NSO) was founded as a collaboration between the CCP and other anti-Japanese organizations. The NSO goal was to organize blue collar and white-collar workers on nationalist line. The main action was the strike at cotton mills controlled by Japanese firms that ended with a small salary increase mediated by the Green Gang. In the following years the CCP labour organizers sought to maintain a moderate line to appeal to nationalist workers. When the Japanese entered the Second World War, Shànghǎi suffered from the economic blowback, especially in terms of rampant inflation. In this dire economic situation, the CCP started again to organize more traditional economic strikes. The main ones were the one between 1942 and 1944 in the heavy industry. After the Japanese defeat, Shànghǎi went again under Nationalist control until Ma9 1949. During this inter-regnum the CCP established new unions on the organizing skilled workers and white collars more willing to join the new political clash with the KMT and, after 1946, more hit by a new wave of inflation-(Lee 1986: 16-31).

4.2 The ACFTU as the official Union

In 1948 Máo Zédōng proclaimed the foundation of the People's Republic of China and adopted the "New Democracy" line in which four classes (peasants, industrial workers, petite bourgeoisie, and national bourgeoisie) interests coincided with the interests of the revolutionary process.

Under the new regime, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was once again re-organized. The 6th Congress was held in 1948 in the northern prefecture Hārbīn. The 6th congress established the ACFTU as the sole legal union under the principles of democratic centralism and the leadership of the Communist Party. Two years later the Trade Union Reinforced the union monopoly defining the ACFTU as the "highest leading body" of organized labour. From 1948 to 1949 the CCP gained control of the last cities still held by the KMT and doing so the Nationalist unions were integrated in the ACFTU. Lǐ Lìsān came back as National Chairman of the Federation (Franceschini 2015: 70-71; Traub Mertz 2012: 114).

In the following years, the main task of the ACFTU was to mobilize workers in the effort to safeguard and increase industrial production, after the havocs produced by the war. The resolution of the 6th ACFTU Congress, in effect, stated that egalitarian tendencies should have been avoided and established a collaborative approach toward the industrial capitalists. About one third of industry was already state-owned under the Nationalist government and was maintained as such after the Communist take-over. Private industries underwent different paths in different cities. In northern prefectures, such as Tiānjīn, workers organized cooperatives to overtake ownership and control of many factories. The southern zones that went later under Communist control saw the application of the moderate line established at the 6th Congress. In industrial prefectures as Guǎngzhōu and Shànghǎi, the CCP and the ACFTU tried to control capitalism without eliminating it. The main goal was to curb inflation and retain skilled workers and technician from fleeing to Hong Kong and Taiwan. In this process the ACFTU entered in conflict with workers that demanded higher wages and/or control over the work process. The official union tried instead to build institutions for the cooperation between labour and capital both at the level of prefectures and in the workplaces. These institutions however did not prove successful and were abandoned in the following years with the start of the process of socialization of ownership (Frazier 2002: 92-114).

The experience during the first years in government sparked a debate within the CCP and the ACFTU about the relationship between the two bodies and the relations between the working class and the Unions that took form after the foundation of the People's Republic. This debate was made public in July 1950 by Dèng Zǐhuī, a member of the Central Committee of the CCP, that in a speech reported by the People's Daily (the official newspaper of the Central Committee) and the Worker's Daily (the official newspaper of the ACFTU) stated that the emergence of some difference between the role of the Party and the role of the Trade Union was unavoidable. Thus, some "different standpoints" could be adopted by the Trade Union, without failing to keep the essential coincidence of interests between the workers, the Party and the Union. Dèng's position

was supported in March 1951 by Lǐ Lìsān himself, at the time both ACFTU Chairman and Minister of Labor, that, in a public speech, stated that “some small contradictions” between the workers and the union were unavoidable. Later Lǐ Lìsān wrote that under the “New Democracy” these contradictions were not springing from fundamental differences of interests between the parties, but from the differences in “fundamental positions” and “practical positions” over issues regarding the everyday labour conditions. The debate was, however, stopped abruptly by the Minister of Heavy Industry Lǐ Fùchūn that accused Lǐ Lìsān of “fundamental mistakes”. In 1953 the accusations were recognized by the CCP Central Committee and Lǐ Lìsān was definitely marginalized (Franceschini 2015: 71-74).

In parallel with this debate, in 1950 the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was the object of a rectification campaign against *bureaucratism* and for the implementation of the “democratic management of enterprises”. In 1951, the ACFTU brought to the workplaces the “three anti campaign”, against corruption waste and bureaucracy. These campaigns were instrumental to the gradual substitution of the “New Democracy” line with a major push to collectivization. In fact, the 7th Congress of the ACFTU held in 1953 committed the Trade Union to the goals of the 1st Five Year Plan that launched the collectivization of the countryside and the nationalization of industry that in effect started in 1955. In 1958 the 8th Congress of the CCP established a new system for industrial relations in the new state-owned environment, the “system of responsibility of the factory director under the leadership of the Party committee” that extended the authority of the Party in the workplace and established a diarchy between technical decision-makers and political decision-makers.

The consequences of the nationalizations on workers’ wages and bargaining leverage brought to an increase of strikes that was encouraged by the Hundred Flowers Campaign between 1956 and 1957. The Campaign partially loosened political control and encouraged expressions of criticism. In this political environment Chairman Máo positioned himself in favor of the right to strike with his famous pamphlet “On Contradiction” that identified strikes as contradictions among the people, thus, to be treated as legitimate. As a policy effect, the Communist Party issued the document “Directive of the Central Committee of the CCP on How to Handle the Strikes by Workers and Students”, the first official document on the response to give to labour strikes. The document states that it is a duty of the Party, and not of the Union, to work alongside striking workers in order to meet workers’ legitimate requests and to curb the strike itself before workers take extreme behaviors.

In May 1957, the ACFTU Chairman Lài Ruòyú issued an interview on both the Workers’ Daily and the People’s Daily in which he tried to push the official line saying that there could be contradictions between union and management and also between union and workers. Moreover, Lài Ruòyú proposed that, in case of mass actions, the ACFTU should side with workers to prevent the formation of autonomous organizations. Lài claimed that in these situations ACFTU should work under the leadership of the Party, but with autonomous

activities. The debate continued on newspapers, but it was interrupted when Máo put an end to the Hundred Flowers Campaign, taking by surprise Lài Ruòyú and other union leaders that spoke in public in favor of union autonomy. Lài and these leaders were purged and the ACFTU was rapidly re-oriented to mobilize workers towards the productive goals of the Great Leap Forward established by the 2nd Five Year Plan (Franceschini 2015: 78-81).

After the failure of the Great Leap Forward, the issue of the relationship between the ACFTU and politics was raised again in the mid-60s as Máo Zédōng and Lín Biāo began to build departments within the factories to guide workers' and union's political mobilization toward their political line. These departments were stuffed with Army personnel aligned with Máo and Lín. In the early months of 1966 Máo's political mobilization began to mount and Lín intervened directly in the ACFTU leading bodies to make the Union endorse Máo (Lee 1983: 50-51). In August 1966, the CCP Central Committee adopted 16 points on the Cultural Revolution in which no mention is made about the role of trade unions, while it is stated that the political movement should have been carried out without interrupting industrial production (CCP Central Committee 1967). However, in a few months the revolutionary committees started to clash with union officials within the workplace and already in November 1966 the Red Guards formed rival workers' organizations such as the Workers' Scarlet Guards in Shànghǎi. The entrance of the Cultural Revolution in the factories was officially sanctioned by the People's Daily on December 26th. In January 1967, the conflict between ACFTU and revolutionaries escalated until the vice Chairman of the CCP Zhōu Ēnlái abandoned its historical support for ACFTU leadership and declared that unions failed in their roles and became bureaucratic. This led in a few months to the dissolution of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. The 9th Congress of the CCP held in 1969 in practice did not mention any role for any trade union whatsoever (Lee 1983: 52-55; Pringle 2018: 24-25).

The ACFTU would be reconstructed only after the end of the second phase of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Máo. The 9th Congress was held in 1978 and was marked with a speech by Dèng Xiǎopíng (in that moment vice-president of the CCP) that emphasized how the trade unions should have worked to increase labour productivity and to act as managing body of workers' congresses in workplaces (Franceschini 2015: 82).

The issue of the coincidence of interests between the actors in the industrial relations system was raised again during the 80s, as the economic reforms accelerated. The 10th Congress held in 1983 stated that trade unions should be under the leadership of the Communist Party, but with active and independent functions. In practice this never meant the ACFTU could side with workers against policies decided by the Party, as it is exemplified by the absence of unions' activity among xiàgǎng – the workers laid off during the restructuring of the state-owned enterprises (Chan and Hui 2018: 67-68; Clarke and Pringle 2009:91).

In the second half of the 80s, the Federation of Trade Unions came under the influence of reform-minded leader Zhào Zǐyáng that became Secretary General of the CCP in 1987. The ACFTU held its 11th Congress in 1988 and stated four goals: protection of members interests, participation in management, construction of the productive activity and political education of workers. Inside the general framework of the coincidence of interests between the Union and the Party, the Union declared its duty to “protect the general interests of the people and protect even better the specific interests of the working masses”. Under the influence of Zhào Zǐyáng the ACFTU pushed to gain some space of independence from the Party, but this political exposure was truncated by the political crisis of 1989, that culminated with the repression of the movement of workers and students in Běijīng and the political fall of Zhào himself (Chang Cheng 2017: 68-70; Franceschini 2015: 83-84; Pringle 2017: 213-214).

In 1992 the new Trade Union Law established the double function of ACFTU stating that “the Trade Union protects the overall interest of all people of the nation, while it represents and protects the legal rights and interests of workers”. Since then, the issue of independence from the Party was never taken to public and the debate was all on how far the ACFTU could and would push its action in defense of the interests of the workers without hurting its dual function to also protect the economic development and the political line of the Party.

In 1994, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions published the document “General thinking on trade union work” that assigned priority to the expansion of the system of collective agreements. The priority on collective agreements was confirmed in the new Trade Union Law in 2001 (TUL). In 2002 the ACFTU - under the new Chairman Wáng Zhàoguó - published the document “The road of socialist trade unionism with Chinese characteristics” in which the goals of the Federation were established to be the building of model workers, increase the rate of unionization, and cooperate in institution building (Chang Cheng 2017: 68-70).

4.3 The ACFTU today

The economic reforms put great pressure on the Chinese trade unions. It may be said that, just like we have seen in the previous chapter discussing the Chinese Communist Party, the ACFTU plunged itself in the new market environment without a political reform. Despite the decade of discontinuity during the Cultural Revolution, in 1978, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was reconstructed on the same organizational principles that characterized the Trade Union for almost twenty years until 1967 (Traub Mertz 2012: 16-23)

The first principle is monopoly. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions is still the only legal trade union in Continental China, as opposed to other transition economies that legalized independent unions (as the Soviet Union in the last years before the dissolution) or permitted the existence of grassroots organizations outside the official Union (as is the case of Vietnam). The entrance of China in the International Labour Organization and the signing of international treaties created a legal basis for the freedom of association of workers, even

though the ACFTU always replied to ILO that it considers the freedom of association granted by the freedom to associate in a union under the ACFTU umbrella.

The second principle is democratic centralism, that is the classical organizational form of trade unions in socialist states. In this organizational form, the upper hierarchical levels have the veto power on inferior levels, while superior level should in theory consult with inferior levels.

The third principle is the Union shadows the Party and the State at all levels, while the CCP always maintain the upper hand in the relations. Combined with democratic centralism and with the frequent overlapping of leading appointments, the mirroring between the CCP and the Trade Union ensures the leadership of the Party. As we have seen in the brief historical overview, all attempts to assert union independence ended in failure.

The fourth principle is that grassroots branches are organized both on industrial and geographic bases. However, geographical unionism is always prevalent over industrial unionism. This principle was in fact adopted ten years after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, during the 8th Congress of the ACFTU in 1958. As we have seen before, during that Congress ,the ACFTU was re-oriented toward what we could call the fifth principle, that is the duty for the Trade Union to support production. This principle was re-affirmed in the 1990s, with the dual function of protecting workers' interests and the whole nation's interests.

The transition from the command economy put ACFTU's organization under great pressure, as it lost much of its positions in the state-owned companies. As we can see in Figure 11 the membership of Trade Unions stagnated in the 1990s and declined to a minimum of 90 million members in 1999.

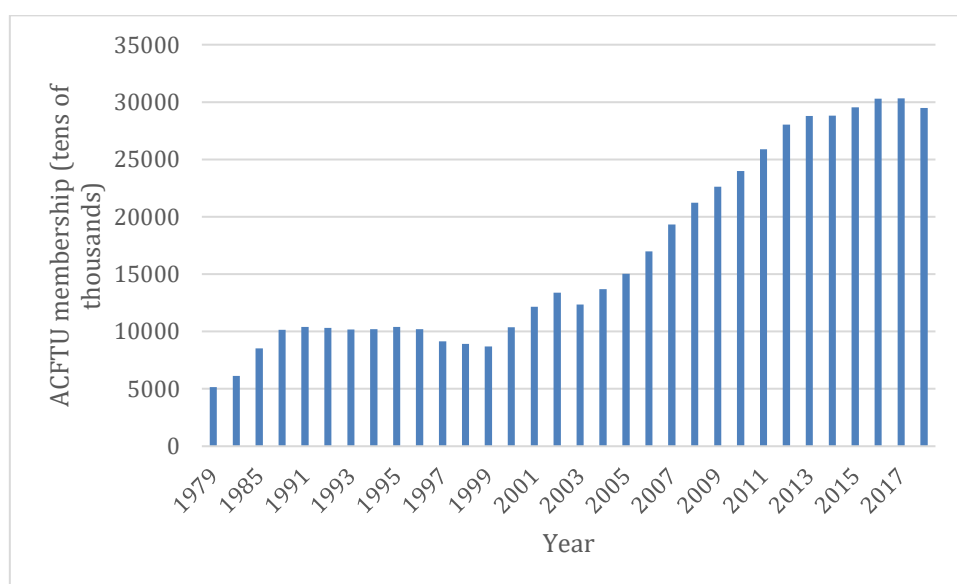


Figure 11 ACFTU Membership 1979 - 2019 (tens of thousands) (China Statistical Yearbook)

The decline of ACFTU was not only in terms of absolute number but also, of course, in terms of relative coverage of workers in the new-born private sectors. While ACFTU membership in 1999 counted about 72,5 million members out of 78,9 total employees in state and collective sector. In the same year in the private sector (both foreign and Chinese owned) ACFTU counted about 2,7 million members out of total of 23,1 million employees. In other words, in 1999 unions density was about 11,7% in the private sector and 91,9% in the public sector (Taylor et al 2003: 125-127).

The ACFTU National Chairman in 2000 stated that:

when there is not even a trade union, what is the point of talking about trade unions upholding the legal rights of workers? Or trade unions being the transmission belt between the Party and the masses? Or trade unions being an important social pillar of state power? (Pringle 2018: 31-32).

This slowly changed with the government-sponsored unionization campaigns from 2001. The unionization campaigns led to a maximum of 303 million members in 2017. The effectiveness of the campaign was widely questioned as the vast majority of new union members were found to be in “paper unions” established with a top-down process in which grassroots branches were created by the higher levels of the ACFTU in collaboration with the management. In many cases, workers’ representatives on the workplaces were selected among the management or team leaders. A paradigmatic case of inefficient “paper union” is provided by Liu Mingwei, that interviewed workers and human resources of a medium-sized factory in Guǎngzhōu. Liu found that in 2003 the factory was selected by the branch of ACFTU at the township level as a target for unionization. At first the management resisted but eventually accepted the creation of a Union branch in the factory after pressure from the cadres of the Communist Party. The factory branch was unable and unwilling to engage in collective bargaining. Moreover, when unsatisfied workers tried to unionize, both the management and the township level union replied that the existing factory branch was the only branch that could exist according to the law (Liu 2010: 38-29). The bureaucratic top-down approach to unionization produced a large number of “paper unions” without workers’ participation and even counterproductive for the defense of workers’ legitimate interests. On the other hand, this kind of unionization made the ACFTU enter for the first private and foreign-owned businesses from which the organization was absent (Zhu, Feng and Warner 2009, Traub-Merz 2012).

As it can be viewed in Figure 11, from 2002 and 2003 ACFTU lost about 10 million members due to the public recognition that “paper unions” existed only in theory. This recognition reached the pages of CCP and ACFTU official journals and led to the suppression of grassroots unions as can be seen in Figure 12.

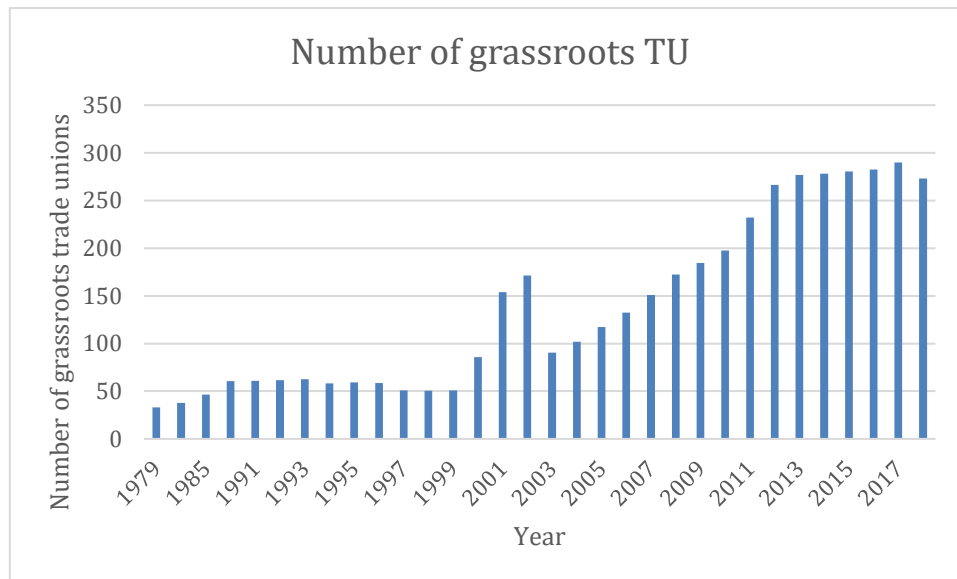


Figure 12 Number of grassroots trade unions 1979-2018. Tens of thousands (China Statistical Yearbook)

The number of grassroots unions spiked from 50 thousand in 1999 to 171 thousand in 2002. In one year more than 80 thousand branches were closed, thus declining to 90 thousand in 2003 and then again starting a slow growth to the peak of 290 thousand in 2017 (Zhu, Feng and Warner 2009).

Walmart is a peculiar case in the push to unionize private firms and especially foreign owned enterprises. After a long period of scrutiny by Chinese media on working conditions in Walmart stores, from 2004 and 2006, ACFTU initiated a public campaign to push Walmart to accept trade unions in their stores, even threatening legal actions. After two years of failures in convincing the Walmart management, in 2006 ACFTU changed tactics and campaigned directly to employees to convince them to appeal to Article 10 of the Trade Union Law under which 25 union members in a workplace can found a grassroots branch. After the foundation of the first Walmart ACFTU branches, the management decided to cooperate with the Trade Union and signed a memorandum to permit direct elections of trade union leaders and bodies in the workplaces. However, after the end of the public campaign to unionize Walmart, the ACFTU rapidly regressed to the top-down approach and the directly elected bodies were left without any effective role-Chan 2011).

Financially speaking, the ACFTU is not totally independent. In fact, in many cases, local federations and grassroots branches are dependent on government subsidies, on members' payment of the 0,5% of their gross wages and the 2% tariff paid by unionized enterprises on their total wage bill. It is reported that in many cases the 2% tariff was a reason for to resist unionization even though it may prove ineffective. Independent ACFTU financing come from commercial and industrial activities owned by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions itself (Chang 2017: 72-73; Pringle 2018: 34).

4.4 ACFTU as an actor in industrial relations

Along with the unionization campaign, with the support of some ACFTU leaders, experimentations on the direct election of workers' representative were carried out on the ground. According to Howell's findings, this support for direct elections was motivated by the necessity for more representative trade unions, with the attempt to expand ACFTU coverage in private and foreign owned sector and with the objective to displace labour unrest toward a more institutional approach. Experimentations with direct union elections in the 2000s were not generalized, unlike what happened with direct elections in villages (the 5th administrative level) due to internal resistance from ACFTU, hostility from employers and also due to lack of breakthrough results as hoped by the initiators of the experimentations. After the 2010 wave of labour unrest, new experimentations were carried out on direct elections, still with mixed results (Howell 2008, Chan and Hui 2018).

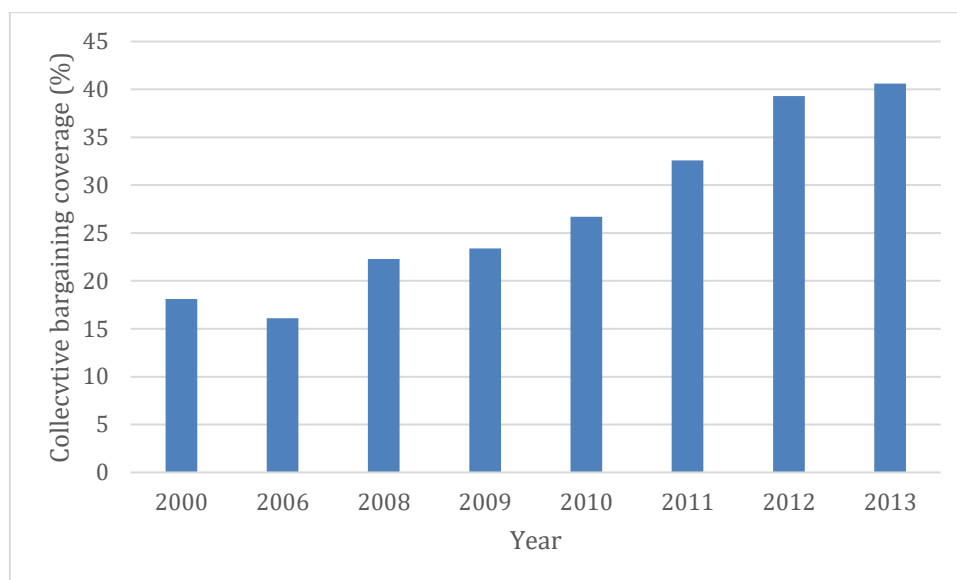


Figure 13 Collective bargaining coverage % (ILOSTAT)

Based on the priority to foster collective agreements, as established in the 1990s and confirmed in the Trade Union Law in 2001, the ACFTU pursues the conclusion of collective agreements at firm level. The coverage of collective contracts has been increasing since the mid-2000s as can be seen in Figure 13, from slightly above 15% in 2006 to 40% in 2013 (ILOSTAT). The quality of collective contracts has been widely questioned as often these contracts did nothing more than to copy-paste the minimum legal requirements, without providing guidelines or standards for wage bargaining (Luo 2011). The process that leads to collective agreements is usually called in Chinese *jítǐ xiéshāng*, that can be translated as “collective consultation”, instead of *jítǐ tánpàn*, that can be translated as “collective bargaining”. This happens because the *tánpàn*/bargaining formula implies a conflictual understanding of industrial relations that still is a political sensitive argument in China. Moreover, some authors propose to use “collective bargaining” precisely to underscore the formal and non-participatory nature of the process (Pringle 2017: 222; Chan and Hui 2014: 226-227).

The formality and lack of specific provisions in collective agreements were in fact recognized by official documents of the ACFTU, as it tried to implement consultation over wages. This change of approach in the ACFTU was prepared by several policy documents as the “Collective agreements provisions” in 2004 and by tripartite agreements with the Ministry and the Chinese Enterprises Confederation such as the Rainbow Plan in 2010. It is however widely accepted that the intervention of the Ministry of Labour, later renamed Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, makes the difference (Blackburn 2015, Lei 2017: 143-146). In workplaces where collective consultation is taken under the pressure of workers’ collective action, it is found to be more effective on wages (Lei 2018: 153; Chan and Hui 2014: 227-232).

The Labour Contract Law in 2008 provided legal bases for industry-wide agreements in certain sectors, such as constructions, mining and catering. In 2011, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions published a document titled “Going deep into the development of collective wage consultation”. The number of collective sectoral agreements started to rise and their diffusion extended beyond the sectors determined by the law in 2008. However, the practice of sectoral consultation seems to be constrained by the weakness of the organization of the ACFTU along industrial lines and, once again, by the tendency to sign collective agreements that merely replicate the minimum legal standards (Lei 2017: 159-160).

The ability of the ACFTU to participate in industrial relations at the firm and shopfloor levels is very segmented geographically and by industrial sector. There are however some commonalities on which there is a consensus in literature. In large state-owned companies, that inherited parts of the traditional socialist model of industrial relations, the ACFTU is still able to play a role in the distribution of benefits and in the integration with the management and the Party committees within the firm. In the private sector there is a range of different situations. In sectors that were privatized or were born out of joint ventures between foreign private capitals and the Chinese state, or are local branches of top-tier international firms, the ACFTU is found to be present and able to sign collective contracts and maintain forms of co-operation with the management. In private born industries and firms controlled or participated by foreign owners, the presence of trade unions may range from a formal presence with formal collective agreements to a complete absence. This decrease in union presence is widely explained by the characteristics of the labour process. Enterprises with most labour-intensive and low-tech productions are associated with the dismantlement of the old soviet-style industrial relations system and with a strife towards atomized and unstable employment relations without the mediation by trade unions (Luthjie et al 2013: 24-29).

5 – Actors of Chinese industrial relations (III) - Employers and management

In this chapter I will briefly describe how employers and management were first incorporated in the political life of the People's Republic of China, then repressed and then again re-habilitated and established as carriers of legitimate interests. Then, I will discuss the current role of employers' associations and their position in the industrial relations system as described in the literature.

5.1 Fall and rise of business owners in socialist China

In China, after 1949, the newly established People's Republic of China set the goal to eliminate private property through a process of socialization of the ownership of the means of production. This process, as gradual as it could be, was named New Democracy and permitted the existence of a bourgeois class under the new socialist regime. It contrasted with the more radical policies experimented in the liberated zones during the civil war.

Within the framework of "New Democracy" policy, the Communist Party created two organizations, incorporated within the United Front to advance the move towards socialization, and co-opted elements from the bourgeoisie:

- the China National Democratic Construction Association (CNDA), sometimes known as National Construction Association. In origins, the CNDA was founded in 1945 to gather "progressive oriented" owners of large firms from all economic sectors, organize them and coordinate their economic actions in the directions desired by the Communist leadership. Later the CNDA became one the eight democratic parties that participate in the United Front and in the People's Political Consultative Conference.
- The All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, founded in 1953, that organized small and medium business owners. Articles 3 and 4 of the original charter of the AFCIC included, in the goals of the Federation, the "the legitimate interests of private industrial and commercial operators " and educate them to "participate in patriotic movements" (AFCIC 1953). The AFCIC gained quite quickly a status similar to the democratic parties and representation within the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. (Groot 2004: 59-60, Sabattini 1972: 217-218; Wen 2017: 101-102).

Participation in the NCA and AFCIC was made compulsory for business owners during the 50s. As China abandoned gradualism, the two organizations were involved in all the major turning points, in particular with the NCA suffering heavy repression during the anti-right campaigns and the Great Leap Forward. During the Cultural Revolution, the AFCIC and all the democratic parties barely survived as organizations under the partial and selective protections of the prime minister Zhōu Ēnlái. These organizations started slowly to work again in 1972 but it was only in 1976, after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the death of Máo Zédōng, that surviving members of the two organizations were called to sustain the new policies of economic reforms

and the rebuilding of both the CNDA and the AFCIC progressed along with rehabilitation of those that were accused to have taken the capitalist road during the previous decade. Members from the CNDA and the AFCIC started to be assigned to minor positions of political responsibility and the organizations themselves obtained roles in the process of attracting foreign direct investments, in particular from the Chinese diaspora (Groot 2004: 99-108131-133).

However, since the Great Leap Forward, private business ownership was officially non-existent, even though at the grassroots level many small businesses continued to operate even during the most radical phases of collectivization, even though under a collective appearance. When the process of reform started and some forms of private business were officially allowed again, the status of private owners was very vague, and it took two decades to gain a full legitimacy in Chinese polity. In 1979 the Chart of the Federation of Industry and Commerce stated that “any work unit and individuals related to the industrial and commercial sector” was eligible for membership. In 1981 a minimum recognition was provided by the CCP Central Committee that defined individual business owners as “socialist laborers”. Recognition of private property as a legitimate form of property subordinated to collective property was given in 1995. Two years later, a new constitutional amendment defined the non-public sector – composed by individual and private property – as a “fundamental component of the socialist market economy”. In 2001, Jiāng Zémín’s Three Represents policy finally recognized private owners of capital as part of the “advanced productive forces” represented within the Communist Party. Business owners were thus permitted to become members of the Party. In 2018 9.8 million members out of a total of 90.95 belonged to the category of business and management personnel (Chen and Huang 2019: 271-272; Xinhua 2019).

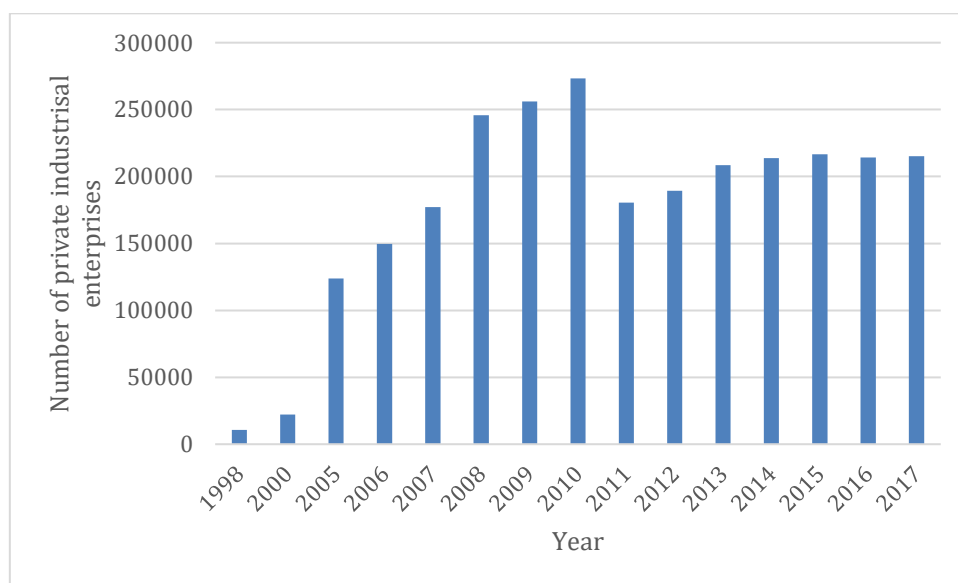


Figure 14 Number of private industrial enterprises (China Statistical Yearbook)

When the Three Represents policy legitimized business owners in the polity, it was following the rise of private sector in the Chinese society. Only in the industrial sector private firms (see Figure 14) doubled from

10.667 to 22.128 from 1998 to 2000. The number of private industrial firms continued to rise to a maximum of 273 thousand in 2010, when the impact of the global economic crisis drastically diminished them to 180,612 (China Statistical Yearbook). During the 1980s employers and management were recorded in official statistics under the voice “staff”, which was separated from the voice “workers”. During the 1990s, the new categories were recognized and a peculiar identity for managers emerged. Managers started to be recruited in a separated labour market with higher wages and a different status. Along with the differentiation of regimes of property, different figures of management emerged: 1) in the public sector and in public-private joint ventures, cadre-managers remained predominant, with relatively lower wages and whose allegiance goes more often to the policy makers responsible for their appointment; 2) owner-managers - typical of private family-owned firms - who exercise a total control over the life of the firm and whose only limit in discretion is the law; 3) professional managers, that can be found across different regimes of property (state owned, Chinese and foreign private-owned firms), trained following international standards of human resources management and oriented towards the operation of the firm in a very competitive market; 4) foreign experts in foreign owned enterprises, which are seldom involved in day-to-day industrial relations (Taylor et al 2003:69-72; Wen 2017: 98-100).

5.2 Business interest representation in contemporary China

The rise of business owners as legitimate actors put pressure on the organizations originally engineered to bring business owners under the influence of the Communist Party. The National Construction Association maintained the official description of a party “founded by patriotic industrialists, businessmen and intellectuals” (Xinhua 2017) but it does not seem to be any more representative of business interests than the other minor parties in the Consultative Conference or the CCP itself. The All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce instead changed its skin and other form of business interest’s representation – formal and informal – emerged.

As it was already noted above, at the beginning of the reforms, the ACFIC vaguely defined its constituencies as both ~~work units and~~ individuals and work units, the social organization that organized both the work process and social life in urban areas. In 1983, the membership was expanded to collective enterprises, allowing Township and Village Enterprise to join the Federation. A decade later, in 1993, the ACFIC specified that its membership was to be based on firms owned by capital from Macau, Hong and Taiwan, Township and Village Enterprises and other firms from the non-public sector. Since 1995, sectorial Chambers of Commerce started to operate in China, in some cases the Chambers were first formed as bottom-up initiatives and only in a second moment they officially joined the ACFIC (Chen and Huang 2019: 272-274).

While the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce evolved to become an association representing private firms, it initially lost its status of official player in the industrial relations. This latter role was acquired by the China Enterprise Confederation/China Enterprises Directors Association (CEC/CEDA, often abbreviated

only with CEDA), founded in 1988 by the merger of the China Enterprises Management Association (founded in 1979) and of the China Factory Directors Research Society (founded in 1984). In theory the CEC/CEDA organizes both public and private firms, in practice private societies during the 90s found themselves pushed into competitions with dominant SOEs and were thus encouraged to form their own chambers of commerce and join the ACFIC. The CEC thus remained dominated by the state sector and retained the formal monopoly of industrial relations, joining in 2001 the National Tripartite Meeting System for Labour Relations Coordination along with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. Moreover, since 2003 the CEC joined the International Organization of Employers. Unlike the ACFTU, the CEC's monopoly on representation did not last long. Between 2008 and 2009 the Federation of Industry and Commerce joined the Tripartite Meeting System breaking the CEC's monopoly (Wen 2017: 100-102).

Whether ACFIC and CEC/CEDA may be interpreted as full representatives of business owners rather than state agencies is still debated. The industrial relations literature traditionally gave little attention to employers' association, both because of the relative lower propensity to participate in studies compared to trade unions and because of the seemingly clear pattern of development. Employer associations (EAs) were widely seen as associations between actors that are in competition among them but are forced to join efforts to counterbalance the associative power of trade unions and the rising regulation by the state. In order to advance the interests of their constituencies, EAs developed a wide range of activities from lobbying governments and negotiating with trade unions to the provision of services to associate, sometimes including a regulation of the relations between employers to curb down competition. The decline of trade unions density and the decentralization of bargaining were met in the literature with the anticipation of decline involving employers' associations too. However, in practice, EAs maintained their role and this was explained with the necessity for employers to keep on lobbying governments to prevent a new rise in trade unions power that could put employers in difficulty in an economic phase in which the market became more competitive (Gladstone 1984, Schmitter and Streeck 1999, Barry and Wilkinson 2011).

Zhu and Nyland (2017

: 4-6) identified two different readings of employers' associations in China. The "civil society reading" states that since the breaking of the CEC/CEDA's monopoly of representation the EAs gained a relative autonomy and both associations started to challenge the state to obtain more pro-business policies (Lee et al 2011). The "statist reading" maintains that both associations are still dominated by state control that allows them to exist and work as long as their interests match with state policies (with a similar reading, see Tayler et al 2003).

The few empirical studies on Chinese employers' associations face the same problem of generalization which affects empirical studies on labour. A study on CEC/CEDA activities found that CEC's own representative consider the organization subject to the state and unwilling to take a confrontational stance with the state and the ACFTU because of its commitment to the official line of harmonious industrial relations. During the process of consultation toward the promulgation of the Labour Contract Law, the CEC/CEDA did not act in defense of business interests and the main opposition to the law was carried out by foreign chambers of commerce. Members are found to join the Chinese Enterprises Confederation marginally for its limited role of business voice within the tripartite mechanisms and mainly for the services it produces for associates. These services range from providing spaces of discussion and networking for associated members to training programs and brokering activity between the state and firms (Zhu and Nyland 2017: 7-12).

Chen and Huang found the AFCIC activities divided between the functions of the Chambers of Commerce and the functions of policy lobbying. With regards to lobbying, in the period 2009-2016, AFCIC brought from to the national Political Consultative Conference hundreds of policy proposal that for the main part were in defense of the interests of the private sectors or specific industrial sectors. Among these proposals there were suggestions from the chambers of commerce. Beyond the participation in the CPPCC, since 2006 the AFCIC started to be permanently invited to CCP discussion forums on the private sector and to State Council's working groups. Other AFCIC activities concerned research initiatives, such as the Chinese Private Enterprises Survey and the annual publication of the Report on Development of Chinese Private Economy (Chen and Huang 2019: 275-284).

The government is in fact pushing for a clearer separation of business owners' associations and government organizations. The more recent push in this direction was the *General Plan for the Separation of Industry Associations and Chambers of Commerce from Administrative Organs* published jointly by the CCP Central Committee and by the State Council in 2015. The General Plan implantation is still in a trial phase, and its results are not yet definitive (Zhou and Zhao 2019: 235-237).

Beyond the participation in the official tripartite mechanisms, employer associations are not found as actors in industrial relations on the shop-floor. In particular, when it comes to instances of strike, negotiations are conducted by the management of the single firm. While in theory both the CEC/CEDA and the AFCIC offer assistance to the associates dealing with labour disputes, empirical studies do not find any real participation of EAs in this kind of activities. On the other hand, informal networks of private firms or private clubs of entrepreneurs and managers are found to be involved. The informal nature of these networks makes it difficult to address the open issues. Existing studies found that these networks - organized at county-and-below level and along industrial or national origins lines – are involved in the dissemination of information to avoid conflicts, and in the formation of cartels to regulate labour costs (Taylor et al 2003: 72-73).

6 – Actors of Chinese industrial relations (IV): workers

In this chapter I will discuss the changes occurred in the composition of the urban workforce and how social institutions and political discourse influenced the composition itself and dynamics of industrial relations before and after the reform and opening up process that since 1978 progressively changed the traditional socialist system into the present days “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

6.1 Masters of the country

At the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the working class was defined as the “master of the country,” with the Communist Party as its vanguard. According to the Marxist-Leninist ideology adopted by the CCP, the vanguard is by necessity separated from the body of the class and prepares the class in itself to be ruler in future (from the class in itself to the class for itself). The Maoist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism revised in many ways the relationship between the class in itself and its vanguard, but it never challenged the need of such relationship, not even during the most radical phases of the Cultural Revolution.

As we have already seen in the chapter about the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the CCP did not take the power via an insurrection of the industrial working class, but through a long civil war fought in rural areas by peasants. Only in the last years of the civil war, and significantly during the first year after the establishment of the PRC, the CCP and the 8th Army re-entered the big cities in the coastal areas, where the more important industrial areas were located.

When the CCP seized the power, it started immediately to use social classification as a means to rule the country. One of the earlier categorizations distinguished between rural and urban areas. According to the CCP, in rural areas a semi-feudal social structure was still in place, while in urban areas the social structure was entirely capitalist. The workforce was thus organized through the hukou system, that, at the end of the 1950s, classified individuals as belonging to either the rural or the urban labor.

The role of “masters of the country” was reserved to the industrial working class, which was a tiny minority within the workforce. In 1949, around 8.2 million people were employed in the state-owned (8 million) and collective-owned (0.2 M) urban enterprises, out of a total of some 180 million workers. However, the enforcement of the hukou system was weak during its first decade, it started to be enforced more heavily after the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent crisis. Due to the policy of heavy industrialization, urban population rose from 57,6 million in 1949 to 99,4 in 1957. The urban workforce rose to 24 million in SOEs and to 6,5 million in COEs.

As the institutional building of the PRC evolved, the definition of “class” was made a function of three different dimensions, thus making the category less analytical and more political. The three dimensions were:

- 1) jiātíng chūshēn, the family origin;

- 2) gèrén chéngfèn, the individual social position in the relationship with the means of production;
- 3) biǎoxiàn, the individual political performance.

In particular, the individual political performance was to be assessed by the CCP and to the People's Liberation Army. Therefore, the Party and the Army became the gatekeepers that allowed to move from one "class" to another, usually during the political campaigns.

In rural areas, the class definition was generally more important than in urban areas, because the class status defined the position of the individual in the political campaigns that accompanied the collectivization of the countryside. The collectivization process often resulted in heavy repressions, with the risk of obtaining a "bad class status." Class was highly important because access to the scarce resources was determined by class status. So, while in rural areas the class status was a matter of life or death, in urban areas it was more an issue of access to life opportunities. Those with a better class status were more commonly allowed to access higher studies, positions as cadres in the Army and the Party, and so on. The internal stratification of the workers was a matter left to the employer. After the end of the "new democracy" period and the sharp turn toward socialization of the means of production, virtually all the industrial workers were employed by political work units (the Party and the Army), public work units (services and civil servants) or industrial work units. Better food and other benefits were awarded to heavy manual workers. Inside the manual workforce, a better treatment was reserved to those employed in the state-owned units (Wemheuer 2019: 51-54). After the crisis sparked by the Great Leap Forward, the hukou system was enforced in a stricter manner, and, from 1961 to 1963 only, 26 million were sent back to rural areas. One of the policies adopted to rebalance the Chinese economy was the dualization of labor. Under this dualization, there was a push to assume temporary workers in collective owned units, because they were far cheaper than the standard permanent workforce in state-owned enterprises.

The dualization of labor created a reserve of angry laborers that exploded during the Cultural Revolution. In Figure 15 we can see the percent variation of certain economic indicators from the onset of the Great Leap Forward, to the economic rebalancing and the onset of the Cultural Revolution. As Wu (2014) points out, in state owned enterprises the average wage stagnated, even though overall workers productivity and gross industrial product grew. The situation was heavier for the "outsiders of the labour market" in the collective owned sector and among those that were sent back to the countryside, where the living conditions and production were harsher. According to Christopher Howe, in the early 1960s, temporary workers made up between 30% and 40% of the non-agricultural workforce (Howe 1974: 235). Between 1964 and 1965, the CCP policies pushed for an even larger use of temporary workers (Wemheuer 2017: 4664-4667).

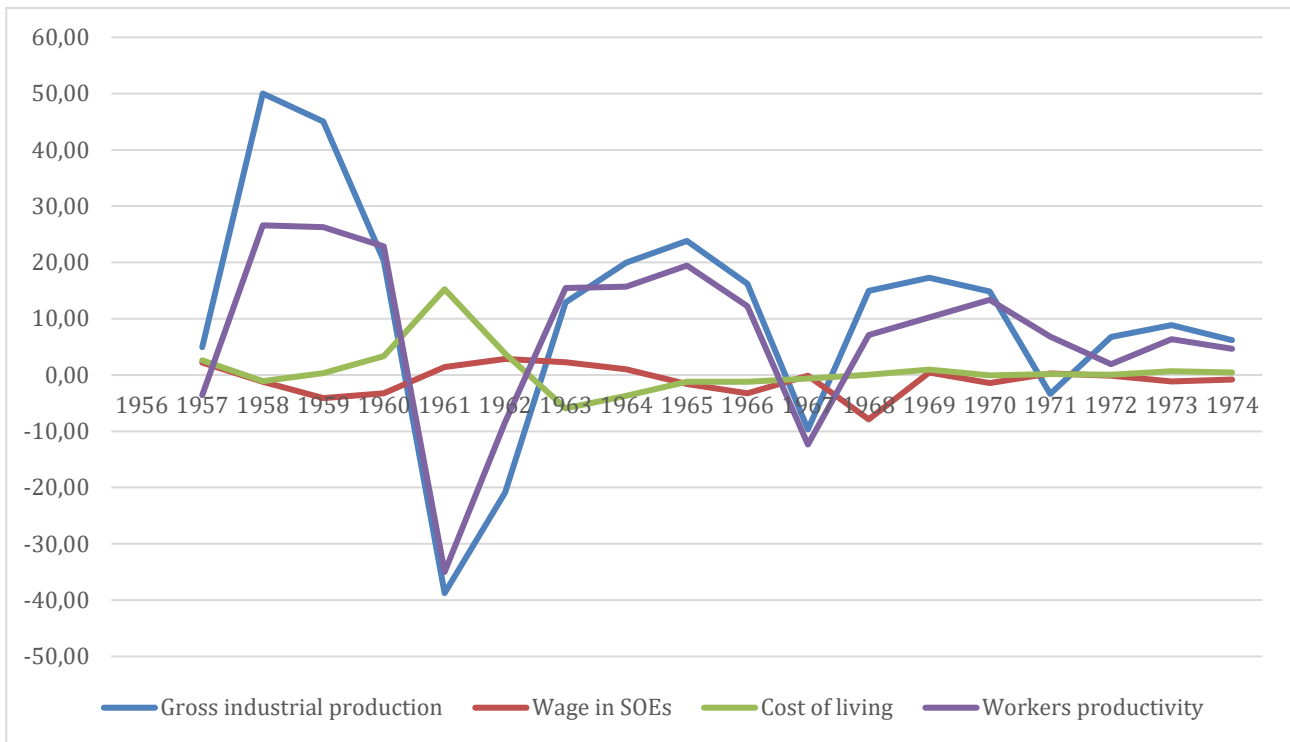


Figure 15- Economic indicators, percent variations year on year in the prefecture of Shànghǎi (Wu 2014: 100)

It should be underlined that, during the first months of 1966, temporary workers were not involved in the Cultural Revolution, as the absolute protagonists were radical students, mainly coming from families with roots in the Party-State apparatus.

While the Cultural Revolution was a chaotic and uneven process across the country, it is safe to say that the first year was centered around Běijīng and the uprising of students. As noted before, initially the CCP resolutions tried to unleash the rage of students, while keeping industrial and agricultural production at bay, having learned the lesson from the disruption in these two fields during the Great Leap Forward.

The unrest expanded to the industrial powerhouse of Shànghǎi in the later months of 1966, initially leading to the dismissal of striking temporary workers. While rebel students concentrated their demands on the political side, temporary workers raised issues about the increase in salaries and the payment of wage arrears. In fact, since the start of labor unrests, these kinds of requests were labelled as “economism.” However, at the end of 1967, after a meeting between the Shànghǎiese temporary workers and the Central Cultural Revolution Group, temporary workers conquered the right to participate in the Cultural Revolution and to form their own mass organizations. On January 1st, 1967, the mayor of Shànghǎi Cáo Dìqīū met with rebel workers and basically accepted their economic demands: the right to return for workers sent back to the countryside, jobs for the unemployed, the stabilization of temporary workers and the transformation of collective-owned enterprises into state-owned ones (Wu Y. 2014: 106-112). The following day, a joint declaration of the red guards, the Ministry of Labor and of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions established the nation-wide abolition of temporary work. This declaration was however declared without

any legal basis by a joint statement of the CCP Central Committee and of the State Council in February 1967, along with the order to dissolve mass organizations, including those of the workers (Wemheuer 2019: 5747-5789).

From November 1966 to February 1968 not only temporary workers participated in the struggles of the Cultural Revolution in Shànghǎi. In December 1967, about 800 thousand people, mainly skilled workers from SOEs and CCP members, were organized in the Scarlet Guards and sided with the conservative factions of the CCP. The entrance of the Scarlet Guards in the conflict meant that the main factories in the prefecture of Shànghǎi were left without enough workers, causing a deep dive in workers productivity and gross domestic production that can be observed in figure 15 for the year 1967 (Wu Y 2014: 134-138).

The literature on the Cultural Revolution has debated whether the involvement of both skilled and temporary workers was a genuine moment of mass participation in the political conflict (see Wu) or a mere result of the conflict among the factions within the central leadership of the Communist Party that mobilized and maneuvered their respective power bases (see Perry and Li). Regardless of the interpretation of the events of January and February 1967, what is sure is that rebel workers were part of the forces that founded the Shànghǎi Commune on February 6th. The Commune, essentially formed by the People's Liberation Army and by rebel workers' organizations, proposed itself as a model for power takeover to other revolutionaries nation-wide, in contrast with the "revolutionary committees" established in other prefectures in which, although they were formed by workers' organizations and PLA, CCP cadres loyal to President Máo maintained a key role. This alternative model lasted only three weeks, as on February 24th the Commune was dissolved into a revolutionary committee, after a series of statements by Máo himself against "anarchical tendencies", that is against the chaos in industrial production caused by the clash between workers militias with different political positions (Wu Y. 2014: 125-131).

The clashes between rebel and conservative workers continued all along the end of 1967, but industrial production was resumed and basically never threatened again. After the instauration of the revolutionary committee in Shànghǎi a nation-wide moratorium on the payment of wage arrears was enacted, and many young workers were once again sent back to the rural areas.

It was only in late 1971, after the death of Lín Biāo, that the requests of temporary workers rose again on the top of the agenda. In fact, the State Council issued a decision to limit the use of temporary workers for seasonal jobs only. As an effect, about 9 million workers changed their status from temporary to permanent. During the following years, the internal composition of the urban industrial working class changed. The female workforce entered the ranks of SOEs workers and the relative weight between SOEs and COEs shifted heavily toward SOEs. In 1978, the collective-owned sector employed about 20 million persons, while the state-owned sector had 74,5 million employees. The limitations to rural-to-urban migration were further

strengthened during the last phase of the Cultural Revolution, while many students from the urban areas were once again transferred to rural areas “to learn from peasants.”

6.2 Defining “workers” in China

The definition of the working class in Continental China was politicized since the founding of the PRC. Moreover, during both the “Máo era” and the “reforms era,” official classifications were and still are today a tool to rule the state and the society (Wemheuer 2019: 24-25, 38-39).

As we have seen in § 3.1 and § 4.1 , during the civil war, the Communist Party maintained a theoretical role of vanguard of the industrial working class, while in practice it built its organization on peasants. Out of this discrepancy, the official definition of “working class” was stretched to include all:

“Urban labourers who did not possess any means of independent production and reproduction of their livelihoods, living primarily from wages based on employment” (Taylor et al 2003:78).

According to this understanding, the main components of the working class were indeed factory employees in urban areas. The category of “working class” included agricultural workers with an urban hùkǒu, but also non-manual labourers, such as schoolteachers, scientific researchers, health professionals and so on. Conversely, all workers with a rural hùkǒu were categorized as not belonging to the “working class,” even when actually employed in industrial production. It can be said that during the “Maoist period” the definition of “working class” was thus purely political.

After the process of reforms started, the political element in the definition of the working class followed the academic debate on the new forms of stratification.

On the political side, a clear definition was never reached. While the theory of three representation bases legitimized other classes in the Chinese polity, the working class remained a central reference in the official Party-State discourse. For example, in 2002, then-President Jiāng Zémín included in the “working class” entrepreneurs and technicians from the private sector, provided that they aligned to the CCP policies (Taylor et al 2003: 79). One year later Jiāng’s successor, Hú Jǐntāo, relied on a more traditional understanding of the “working class,” which included industrial workers and intellectuals, recalling the role of the working class in the revolutionary struggles and, later in the effort to build a “relatively prosperous” society. Two decades later, during an award ceremony dedicated to industrial workers, President Xí Jìnpíng called the working class “the main force to secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society” (China Daily 2003, Xinhua 2020). This confirms what Taylor and co-authors stated in 2003: the political definition of the working class is too important to be established once and for all.

An indirectly official definition of “workers” or “working class” is provided by the Trade Union Law issued in 2009. In Article 2, trade unions are defined as “*mass organizations formed by the working classes of their own free will*”, while Article 3 states that trade union organizations can be established by all “*laborers doing physical or mental work in enterprises, public institutions and government organs within the Chinese territory who earn their living primarily from wages*”. In this way “working classes” are defined as composed by manual or intellectual workers, whose main income comes from wages, partially including migrant workers that still have incomes in the form of agricultural work in rural areas.

A less political and more analytical definition is provided by the China Statistical Yearbook, compiled by the National Bureau of Statistics, operating under the State Council. In the 1999 English edition, the category “staff and workers” was defined as:

“persons who work in (and receive payment therefrom) enterprises and institutions of state ownership, collective ownership, joint ownership, share holding, foreign ownership, and ownership by entrepreneurs from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, and other types of ownership and their affiliated units, excluding the retired persons invited to work in the units again, teachers in the schools run by the local people and foreigners and persons coming from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and working in the state-owned economic units”

The definition provided by the Statistical Yearbook was changed in the following years. The 2000 edition excluded from *staff and workers* “retired persons invited to work in their units again”. These categories include persons employed in Township and Village Enterprises, self-employed persons and retired persons that get re employed. The 2010 edition simplified the definition:

“Persons who work in, and receive wages from their working units, including persons who have their work posts but are temporarily absent from work for reasons of study or on sick, injury or maternal leave and still receive wages from their working units”

This definition was issued one year after the Trade Union Law and changed accordingly the focus on the receiving of wages as the defining characteristics of “staff and workers.” The 2012 edition changed again – and for the last time up to the 2020 edition - the definition to:

“Persons who signed labor contracts with working units and working units would pay wages, social insurance and housing funds for them.”

This last definition excludes outsourced and dispatched workers, whose numbers rose greatly in the previous decade, creating a segmented category for them.

6.3 The changes of workers under “socialism with Chinese characteristics”

The process of reform and opening up, tentative as it was - as discussed earlier, changed the composition of the urban workforce. In figure 16 it is possible to see the change in the percentage of employed staff and workers in different ownership sectors. During the 1980s the slow pace of reforms kept the proportions between the private and non-private sectors steady. Since the 1990s the privatizations of state-owned assets and the expansion of the private sector made the percentage of “staff and workers” employed in non-private sector shrink from 93,5% in 1992, the year when Dèng Xiǎopíng re launched the reform process, to 23,7% in 2016 (see figure 16). Within the non-private urban sector, the number of employed persons started to decline in the 1990s and then rapidly declined in the following decade (see figure 17).

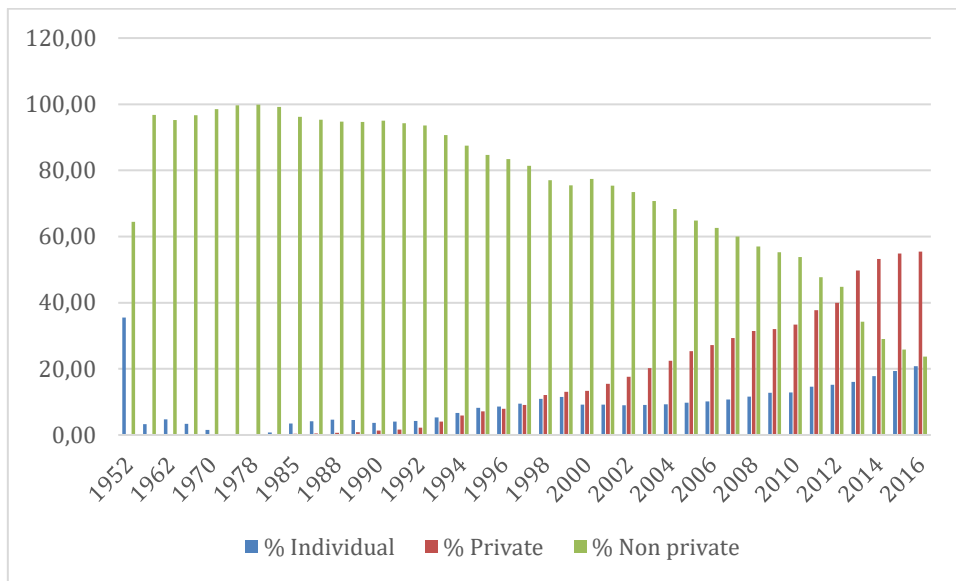


Figure 16 % of employed across ownership sectors in urban areas

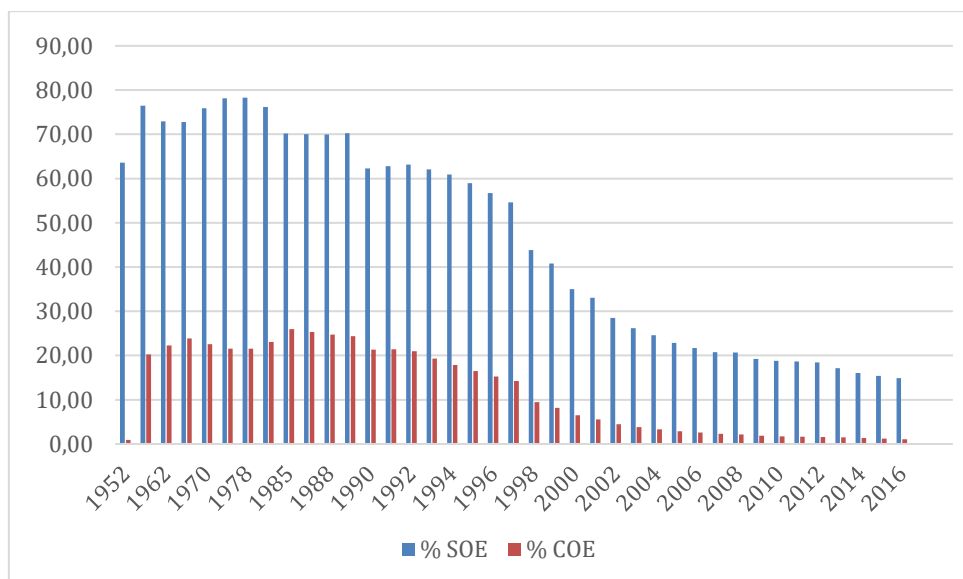


Figure 17 % of employed persons in the state-owned and collective-owned sectors in urban areas

The pace of economic development changed the distribution of the workforce along different economic sectors. The relative weight of the primary sector declined, while, in the early 2000s, the employed persons in the tertiary sector outnumbered staff and workers in the secondary sector (see figure 18).

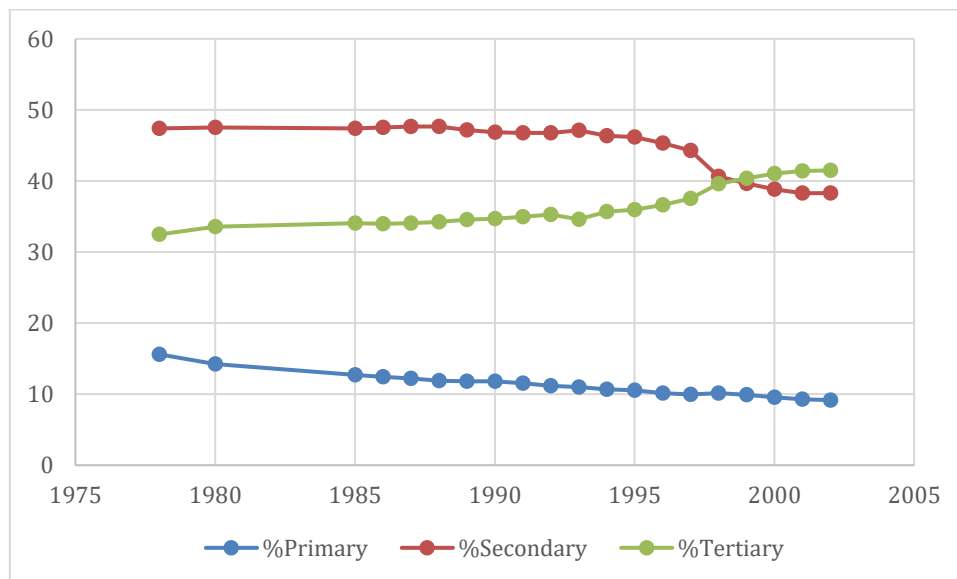


Figure 18 employed persons (10 000s) per sector

The vastness and diversity of the Chinese urban areas implies that, beneath these macro changes, it is possible to identify different and contradictory dynamics taking place at the lower levels.

The political crisis in 1989 was triggered by the conflation of different protests by the students' movement, that demanded political reforms, and, by workers from the great state-owned enterprises that demanded protection from the adverse effects of the first economic reforms, in particular from inflation. As it is well known the crisis was ended abruptly with the decision to crack down on the protesters using the People's Liberation Army (Selden 1995, Li M. 2008: ix-xix) and within the time of three years the paramount leader Dèng Xiǎopíng was able to relaunch the reform process at a higher pace (Weber 2021: 6962-6996).

The reform process in the 1990s impacted in different ways in areas that had different economies. Following Hurst (2004: 94-111) we may summarize this complex process:

- the north-eastern provinces of the country (*Liáoníng, Jílín, Hēilóngjiāng*, and Inner Mongolia) based on heavy industry suffered the failure of big SOEs and de-industrialization, without a private sector able to compensate for the loss of jobs.
- the eastern provinces and municipalities (*Shāndōng, Tiānjīn, Jiāngsū, Shànghǎi, Guǎngdōng*), prior to the reform, already had diversified and dynamic economies, and possibly informal private sectors. These provinces linked their economies to the export sectors and were able to more than compensate the loss of jobs in the public sector, also absorbing internal (and controlled) migrations

from rural areas and internal provinces. These are the provinces on which the central government invests more on promoting the reforms;

- the inner provinces and municipalities (*Hénán, Shānxī, Shǎnxī, Húběi, Húnán, Sichuān, Chóngqìng*). These territories are not as much dependent on declining heavy industries as the North-East, but are nevertheless incapable to kickstart a dynamic private sector and the formation of new jobs relies heavily on small family-run business.

While in the previous decades workers – especially temp ones - that faced hard times still had the chance to go back to rural areas, where they could make a living out of a harsher work on the land, in the 1990s workers that started losing their jobs in the state-sector, especially in the north-eastern provinces faced for the first time in generations the perspective of unemployment. The unemployment rate in urban areas calculated by the ILO rose from less than 2.5% in the early 1990s to more than 4% one decade later (see figure 19)

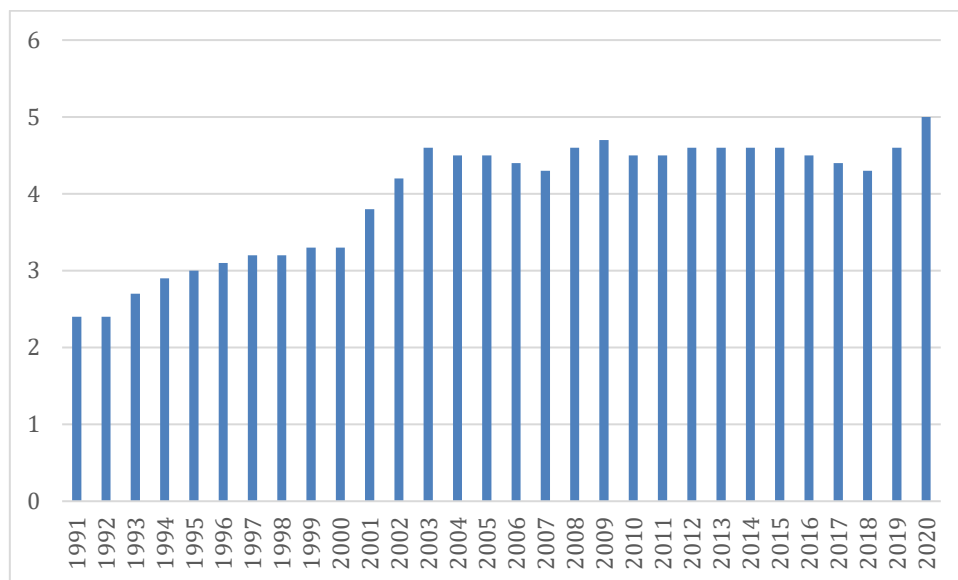


Figure 19 Unemployment rate in urban areas (ILOSTAT)

Out of 15.7 million unemployed persons officially recorded in 1998, 8.8 were registered as *xiàngǎng*, a word that came to be translated as “laid off”, but that initially indicated workers that lost their jobs, but maintained registration with their former work unit and were entitled to forms of basic income through the work unit itself (Yueh 2004: 150-151).

Xiàngǎng workers took part in collective actions against what they perceived as a breach in the social contract that made urban workers the “masters of the country.” Collective appeals and participation escalated dramatically (see figure 20), as well as social unrest (see figure 21). Both appeals and unrest are not exclusively labor-related, but it is widely accepted in literature that labor issues have a great role in shifting to strike activity (Cai 33-36).

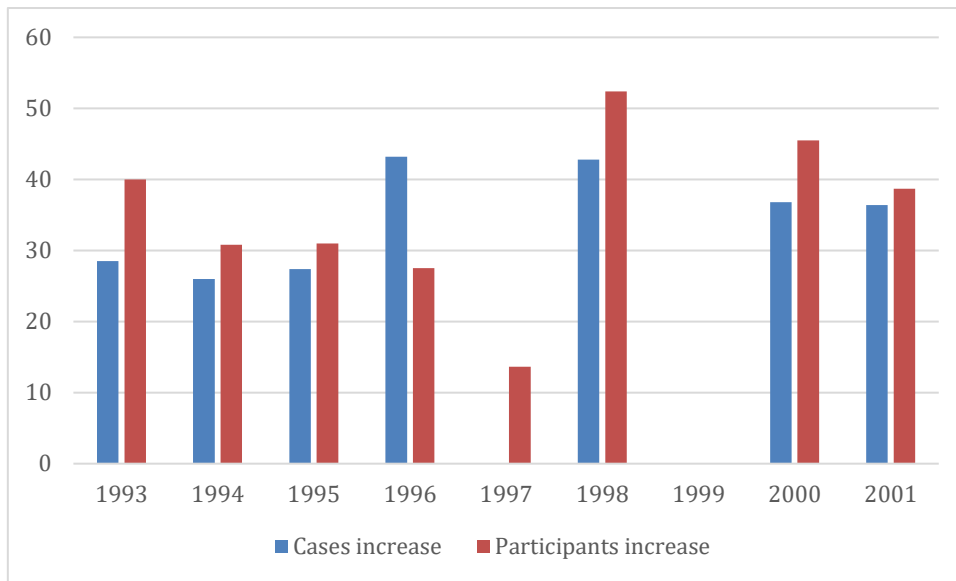


Figure 20 % year-on-year increase in number of collective appeals and participants (Cai 2006)

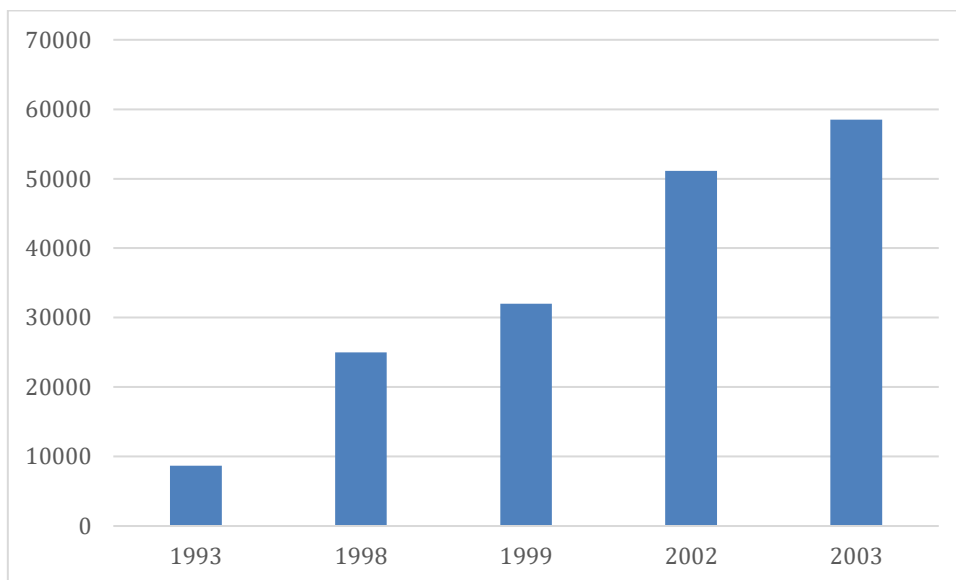


Figure 21 Number of social unrests in selected years (Cai 2006)

6.4 From 2000s: fragmentation and differentiation

The growth of the Chinese economy differentiated sectors across geographical lines, types of ownership and organization of production. As a result, in the 2000s and 2010s, Chinese workers had very different experiences of the day-by-day labor process and different expectations.

The seminal fieldwork by Lee (2007) distinguished between the workers' experiences in the *rustbelt* of the de-industrialized north-eastern province of the Liaoning and of the *sunbelt* in the fast-developing southern province of Guǎngdōng. In the rustbelt, the main change in workers' experiences was permanent unemployment; in the Liáoníng province the number of employed persons in manufacturing fell from 4.6

million in 1990 to 3.3 in 2000, and to 1,4 in 2004. Against the consequences of unemployment, workers' felt themselves legitimated to claim the traditional elements of the social contracts of the Maoist era: housing and job security. These workers expressed the desire to keep protections that come from outside the workplace, as it was under the *dānwèi* system in which the Party-State exercised its protection (and also its control) by influencing the workplace from the outside. In the Guǎngdōng's *sunbelt*, Lee instead found a new working class in the making (along the conceptualization proposed by Thompson 1968) and detached from the Maoist *nostalgia* that characterized the north-eastern working class. This new working class was described as structurally precarious and looking for legal protections on the work-floor. Among the elements of novelty, there was the rise in internal migrations, as the government slowly authorized the movement of labour from rural to urban zones, still maintaining the *hùkǒu* system to regulate labor mobility and discriminate rural labor-force in the access to urban welfare. According to the official census, the absolute number of migrant workers was 6.6 million in 1982, and it rose to 21.6 million in 1990, 43.1 in 1995, 78.8 in 2000 and 221 million in 2010. Up to 2000, virtually all internal migrants moved within the county of origin. In 2010, more than 50 million workers migrated outside the county of origins. The province of Guǎngdōng is by far the most affected by the phenomenon of internal migrations, with 21 million migrant workers in 2000 and more than 31 million in 2010 (Liang et al 2014: 698-699).

We can summarize that Lee differentiated Chinese workers by generation and by geographical origin. Luthjie and co-authors proposed a more nuanced differentiation by adopting the "regimes of production" frame from Burawoy (1985). The regimes of production enucleated by Luthjie *et al.* are based on different types of organization of production, industrial relations, and the composition of the workforce (Luthjie et al 2013: 15-30, 315-342).

The "highest" regime of production is to be found in big state-owned enterprises and big private enterprises either owned by Chinese or foreign capital. In this regime, most-to-all of the workforce is composed by stable workers with a permanent urban *hùkǒu*, with specialized skills, who enjoy relatively high wages and benefits, provided either by the firm itself or by the trade union branches in the firm. In this regime certain parts of the "Maoist social contract" persist, under different market conditions. Labor conflict in these firms is found to be prevented by the trade union or fragmented into individual legal litigations.

The middle regime of production characterizes private foreign and Chinese owned enterprises that adopt modern human resources management policies. In these firms, the workforce is still urban and relatively well educated with high skills; wage and benefits are high. On the other hand, employment is far more flexible, and the basic level of wages and benefits is relatively low, with a large variable share based on production awards. Unionization is found to be scarce and largely ineffective in the distribution of benefits and in the prevention of the conflicts that occasionally occur.

The lowest regime is found in firms that apply more flexible forms of organization of production, with lower technical contents, from the Taylorist model of production to what the authors refer as the *classical sweat shop*, with longer working hours than the maximum established by law. In this lower regime of production, the workforce is precarious, with a large share hired through private agencies for labour dispatch and with a preponderant presence of migrant workers with rural hùkǒu, who do not enjoy urban welfare, at least until the most recent reforms of the hùkǒu system (Zhang et al 2018).

Temporary workers are paid less, receive little, if any, nonmonetary benefits and have short-term labour contracts. The use of agency workers creates in many enterprises a dual employment system, with a group of regular employees and a separate group of temporary workers, working side by side and doing the same work for a different remuneration. The differentiation between regular and temporary workers allows the enterprises to react flexibly to the highs and lows in the cycle of production by hiring more temporary workers only when needed. While the dual employment system is used to create barriers between different sectors of the workforce and thus inhibit solidarity among workers, it is often found that the perception of inequality is considered by temporary workers as unacceptable and that, in the end, it causes conflicts between temporary workers and management (Zhang Lu 2008: 34-41).

6.5 Discussion

In sum, the process of economic reforms started in 1978 produced a complicated segmentation in the internal stratification of the macro category “urban workers”. In the “Maoist period” the internal differentiation within “urban workers” was dictated by political considerations. In certain periods, like the one between the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, policies designed to stabilize the economy produced differentiations in contrast with the general tendency toward egalitarianism. From the beginning of the economic reforms, the segmentation within the “urban workers” were increasingly linked to differences between models of production and by the distinct strategies put in place by private and state-owned enterprises. In parallel, the hùkǒu system, that prior to the reforms produced an institutional discrimination between rural citizens and urban citizens, became a tool to manage the mobility of labor and produce segmentation within urban workers.

During the Mao era, workers alternated periods of mobilization driven by economic reasons and periods in which workers’ industrial action was deeply connected with political mobilization. Policies emanated from the Communist leadership alternatively used workers’ identities and material needs. This interaction between workers’ mobilization and political inputs from the Party-State was particularly evident during the first years of the Cultural Revolution, when permanent workers from the State-Owned Enterprises entered in the political arena with distinct positions from temporary workers from the Collective-Owned Enterprises and students.

As I discuss in this chapter, the start of the economic reforms radically reduced the importance of the working-class identity in China. During the 1980s workers participated in political movements, also with actions of strike, but in a secondary position with respect to other social actors such as students and intellectuals. After the crackdown of 1989, we can say that political mobilization by the working class virtually disappeared. What apparently has been on the rise during the 1990s was economic mobilization, mainly defensive, both in the traditional State-Owned and Collective-Owned sectors and in the emerging Private-Owned sector. In the formers, workers attempted to stop or at least to slowdown the process of industrial restructuring, in the latter workers' economic mobilization emerged from the resistance on the work floor to harsh conditions that were in many cases lower to the standards of law.

From the mid-2000s a new issue seemed to arise: the stark difference between the official rhetoric of economic development that benefited all social strata and the empirical persistence of jobs with low wages and standards. Official political doctrines such as the Harmonious Society and - more recently – the Great Rejuvenation and Common Prosperity were seen by some external observers as hints that the central Communist leadership may have started again to encourage egalitarian tendencies. News of industrial actions in which workers demanded higher wages and advanced requests more ambitious than the minimum standards of law were read as a signal that economic mobilization may have been on the verge of becoming political mobilizations. While the Party-State emphasized the right to increases in workers' wage, working conditions and living standards, it also emphasized its absolute dedication to maintain political stability, the CCP monopoly of political power and the ACFTU's monopoly of workers' representation. Whether from this contradiction may arise an indirect push toward workers' political mobilization is question that will be addressed in the final discussion under the light of the analysis in chapters 7, 8 and 9.

7 - The network of strikes in Guǎngdōng (2003-2012)

In the first part of this chapter, I will illustrate the problem of lack of quantitative data for the study of the phenomenon of strikes in China. Then I will discuss the choice to build a dataset from newspapers articles with the techniques of Quantitative Narrative Analysis and the necessity to reduce the geographical and time horizon of the analysis. In the second part of the chapter, I will perform some basic explorative measures of the dataset. In the third section I will illustrate the results of a social network analysis based on the dataset in order to address the research questions on the relations between the actors of the Chinese industrial relations system and on the changes in workers' demands in the selected time frame.

7.1 The problem of data

In Continental China data about strikes are not public. They are collected as part of law enforcement and the access to them for research purpose is strictly limited (Lee 2016). In the Chinese Labour Statistical Yearbook strikes are included in the item of collective labour disputes (see figure 22), while other kinds of labour collective actions may be included in the item on mass protests or mass incidents (Taylor et al 2003: 175; Research Office of the Guangzhou City Public Security Bureau: 2018).

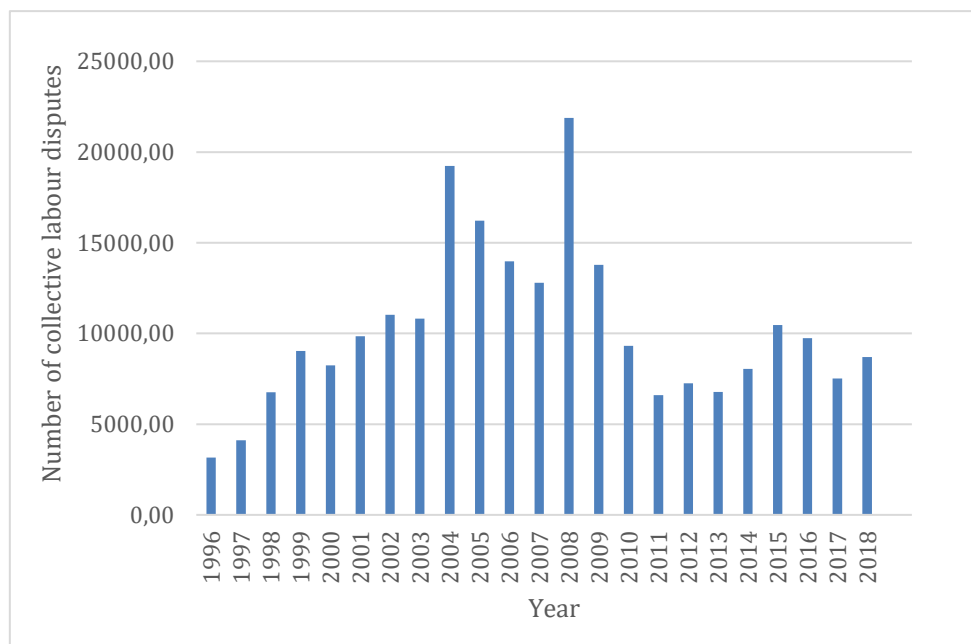


Figure 22 Number of collective labour disputes 1996-2018 (China Labour Statistical Yearbook, various years)

Despite this, it is generally accepted in the literature that the frequency of strikes has been on the rise since the 2000s (Tong and Lei 2010, Traub Merz 2011, China Daily 2014), with a peak in striking activities in 2010-2011 (Pringle 2018). In many cases this assumption is made on the basis of the data from two datasets of news about strikes: the Strike Map by the China Labour Bulletin, a labour NGO operating in Hong Kong, and the China Strike Map (Elfstrom 2013). If the data of CLB and CSM were a representative sample regarding the

frequency of strikes, the People's Republic of China would probably be the first and only country in which the frequency of strike continuously rise instead of being subject to cycles (cfr Franzosi: 1995).

However, Lee Ching Kwan after obtaining access to data gathered from local Labor Bureaus and data from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security heavily criticized the whole idea of a continuous rise in the strike activity. According to the localized data obtained by Lee, strikes in the 2000s-2010s were as frequent as in the 1990s (Lee 2016: 324-325).

As a consequence of this lack of public data, the literature on strikes in China is growing with a number of in-depth studies on single cases of strikes based on interviews with involved individuals. This literature is of inestimable value for the quantity and quality of information and facts reported. It is nevertheless subject to many limitations when used to generalize. A good example is the famous case of the Honda Auto Parts Manufacturing strike in 2010 in the Nánhǎi district, that made its way to international fame as it blocked the global chain of production of Honda automobiles. This strike was subject to many studies that emphasized the political nature of workers' grievance, in particular the request to organize an independent trade union, as a signal of the global change toward an offensive strike movement led by a new working class with political goals (see, among many, Hui 2011, Chan and Hui 2012, Zhang 2014). However, subsequent studies showed that the requests regarding independent unions were raised only at the last minute by the intervention of one worker and that the collective body of workers considered them only a leverage to get attention on the more traditional economical and defensive requests (Wang 2011; Wang and Shi 2014). This case is an example of the limits of research based on one or a few case studies, however deep the case studies may be.

7.1.1 Newspapers as sources

Up to now we have seen that (a) there is a growing literature on industrial conflict in modern-day China; (b) it is mainly performed with qualitative techniques and it is an irreplaceable source of information on the topic; (c) quantitative data are not made available by public authorities or are hardly accessible, (d) it is hard to identify precise patterns of action, nor it is possible to test hypothesis on the basis of a huge but fragmented literature.

Working on secondary sources may be a way out of this maze. Newspaper articles remain the most common source of what happens during conflict episodes. The tradition of content analysis and quantitative narrative analysis provide a method for extracting data from secondary sources and for organizing data for research purposes.

It is indisputable that data obtained from newspapers are incomplete and biased, the problem is to understand the direction and weight of the bias. It is generally known that newspapers tend to report more often (a) large events; (b) events that happens closer to the place where the newspaper or the news agency

are located; (c) events in which violence is involved; (d) events that are of greater interest for the editorial stance of the newspaper (Franzosi 2004: 167-170).

The limitation of public available data on strike limits also some of the strategies pointed out by Franzosi to build “control” data. It is impossible or at least very difficult to access data on strikes collected by “*individual employers, local trade unions and employers' associations, police departments, or civil rights organizations*”, while other collections of data by public officials are, as already discussed, rather incomplete or non-accessible to the public (Franzosi 1987:8). There are anyway some strategies that the researcher can adopt to evaluate and partially obviate to the biases: (a) gather news from newspapers located in different places, with different editorial lines; (b) analyze “hard news”, that is the parts of news that are less likely to be distorted, such as the role in production of the persons involved, the date, the place and so on. In the thematic appendix, I will discuss the rephrasing and coding process that permits to select “hard news” and to keep under control the “description bias” correlated to “soft news” (Franzosi 1987: 7; Franzosi 2004: 172, Earl et al 2004: 72-73).

In order to build a dataset of news of strike, I rely on the China Strikes Map (Elfstrom 2013), a collaborative project that maps labour contention in the decade 2003-2013. The China Strikes Map reports strikes and other forms of contention (demonstrations, occupations, lockouts and so). Prior to 2003 news available on internet are too scarce. A research on the period 1990-2003 would require a more complicated construction of the dataset with paper newspapers.

I decided to incorporate in the dataset only verified news. To be verified, news must be reported from at least two different sources and the reports must not contradict each other on fundamental facts such as the place, the date, the indicative number of participants and so on.

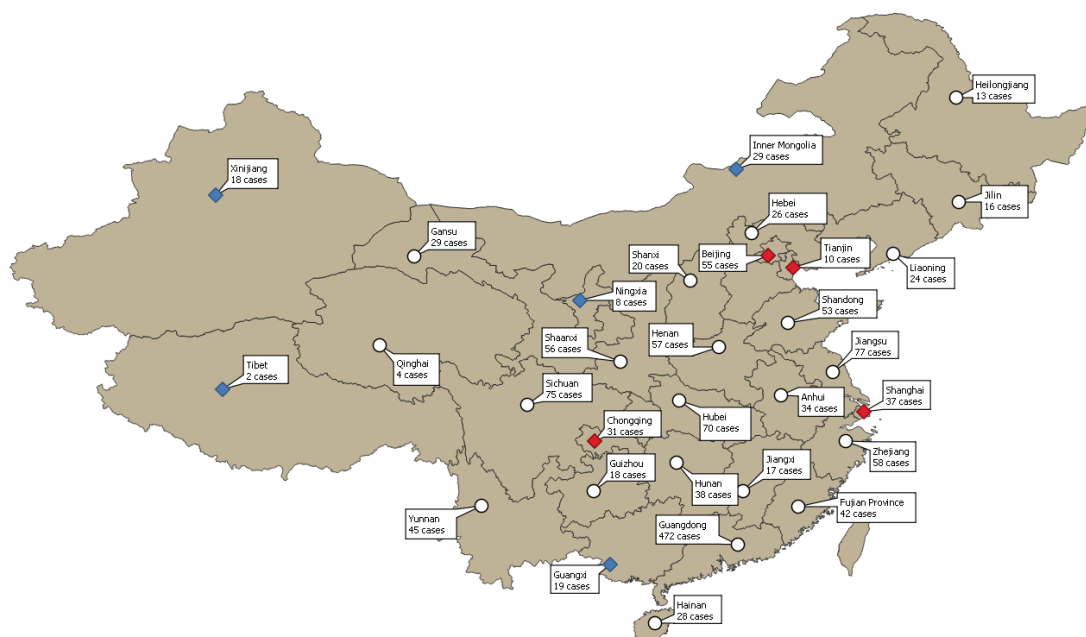
7.1.2 Geographical and time focus

The People’s Republic of China is a vast country and while its polity is centralized, its provinces and lower levels of government enjoy a certain degree of autonomy in dealing with day-by-day governance. Due to the great variation across the country, the study of socio-economic phenomena, including strikes, requires a specific geographical focus. I decided to focus on the southern province of Guǎngdōng, given its historical role in the process of reforming and opening up of China, well exemplified by Dèng Xiǎopíng’s southern tour in 1992 during which the paramount leader visited Guǎngzhōu, Zhūhǎi and Shēnzhèn to relaunch the reforms. These three prefectures were already at that time special economic zones and, in the following decades, they became the core of the export oriented industrial economy of Guǎngdōng. This area could take advantage of the closeness to Hong Kong, back-then still under the British mandate, that acted as a gateway to re-internalize capital from the Chinese diaspora in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan (Arrighi 2007: 351-353). In the year 2000, the province of Guǎngdōng accounted for 35% of the total import-export

activities of China. In 2009, this was “only” 27.6%, as other provinces expanded their activity; nonetheless Guǎngdōng still remains the province with more foreign trade (China Statistical Yearbook, various years).

Some authors have argued that newspapers do not report workers’ demands in case of strike (Luthjie et al 2013: 16). However, a content analysis by Ya-Wen Lei shows that selected newspapers in Guǎngdōng from 2003 to 2006 report critical news more than selected newspapers in Beijing and Shanghai and more than the CPC’s official organ People’s Daily. Lei finds also that the most reported critical news are those concerning “crony capitalism” and “rights of disadvantaged groups”, in which cases of labour contention are included (Lei 2018: 74-76).

In the whole country, the China Strikes Map reports 1464 news of events of contention from January 2003 to December 2012. Guǎngdōng is the province with the higher concentration of news, with 472 of them. Zhèjiāng and Jiāngsū combined with municipality of Shànghǎi reports 137 news, Jiāngsū province combined with Chóngqìng municipality reports 108 news. I assume that this is more a product of the difference of access to news circuit in other province rather than an absolute difference of labour contention between Guǎngdōng and other areas. I assume that the focus on the whole province of Guǎngdōng may help to keep under control the geographical bias.



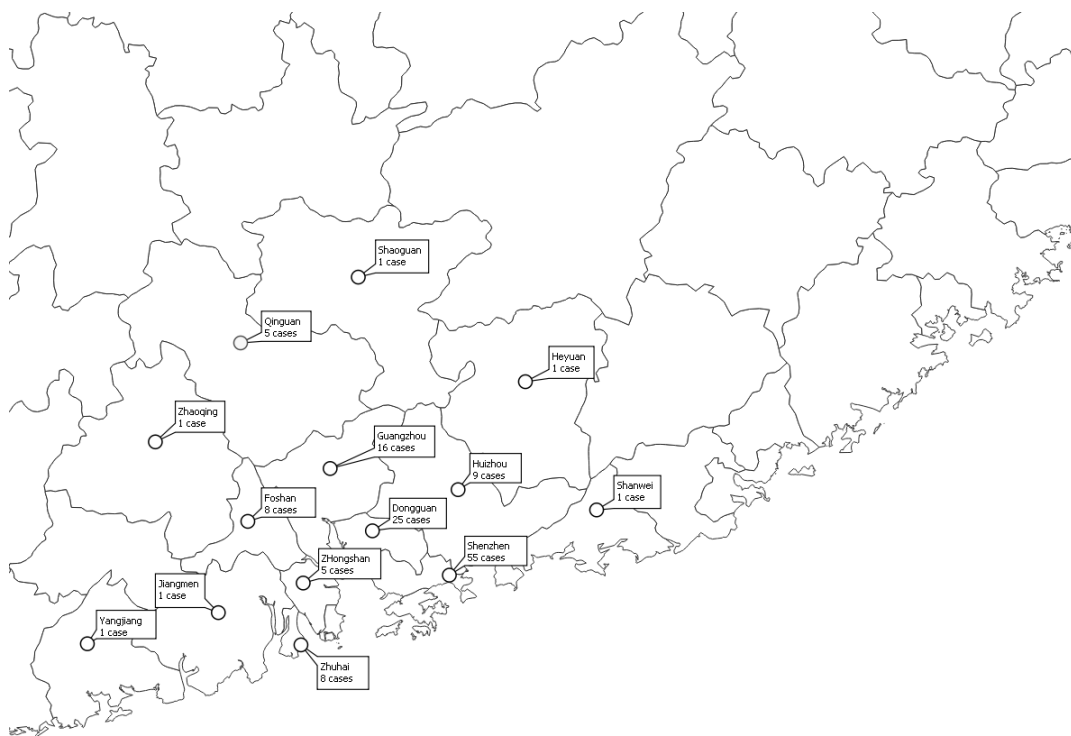
Map 1 Cases of contention recorded in Elfstrom 2017 (GIS Map: United Nations OCHOA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

7.2 Exploration of the data set

Out of all the cases coded by Elfestrom's China Strike Map, I selected 133 cases of strike consistent with the criteria of a) verification of coherent data from multiple sources and b) sufficient information on the event. These cases were selected on the basis of 261 newspaper articles, obtained from 105 different news sources. 105 articles are in Mandarin Chinese language, 100 in English and 5 in Cantonese Chinese. Every single event of strike was codified into the form of Subject – Verb – Object semantic triplets via the PC-ACE software (Franzosi 2009). The final database is formed by 470 semantic triplets. For more details on the Quantitative Narrative Analysis, the coding process and a full list of newspapers used, see the Appendices.

In Table 3 and Map 3, I report the geographical distribution of cases. Cases cover 13 of the 21 prefectures in the province. In 2010, these 13 prefectures included 64,51% of the total population of the Guǎngdōng province. It come with no surprise that the capital Guǎngzhōu and large industrial centers such as Dōngguǎn and Shēnzhèn are over-represented with respect to the distribution of population.

The temporal distribution of cases presented in table 4 shows an increase in the frequency of strikes towards the end of the decade, which is easily explainable with the relative relaxation of controls over the reporting of labour news after the economic crisis hit hard the export-led industry and unemployment became a social concern.



Map 3 Geographical distribution of cases (GIS Map: United Nations OCHOA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)

Table 3 Geographical distribution of cases

Prefecture	Frequency	%	Population 2010	%
Dōngguǎn	25	18.8	8,220,207	7.88
Fóshān	8	6.02	7,197,394	6.9
Guǎngzhōu	16	12.03	12,701,948	12.18
Héyuán	1	0.75	2,953,019	2.83
Hùizhōu	9	6.77	4,598,402	4.41
Jiāngmén	1	0.75	4,447,871	4.26
Shànwěi	1	0.75	2,954,717	2.83
Sháoguān	1	0.75	2,826,246	2.71
Shēnzhèn	55	41.35	10,358,381	9.93
Yángjiāng	1	0.75	2,421,812	2.32
Zhàoqing	1	0.75	3,918,085	3.76
Zhōngshān	5	4.51	3,121,275	2.99
Zhūhǎi	8	6.02	1,562,530	1.5
Total	133	100.00		
			Guǎngdōng population 2010	104,303,132
			% Coverage	64.51

Table 4 Temporal distribution of cases

Year	Frequency	%	Month	Frequency	Percentage
2003	1	0.75	1	11	8.27
2004	3	2.26	2	10	7.52
2005	4	3.01	3	10	7.52
2006	3	2.26	4	12	9.02
2007	15	11.28	5	7	5.26
2008	8	6.02	6	12	9.02
2009	1	0.75	7	15	11.28
2010	18	13.53	8	10	7.52
2011	33	24.81	9	8	6.02
2012	47	35.34	10	8	6.02
Total	133	100.00	11	13	9.77
			12	17	12.78
			Total	133	100.00

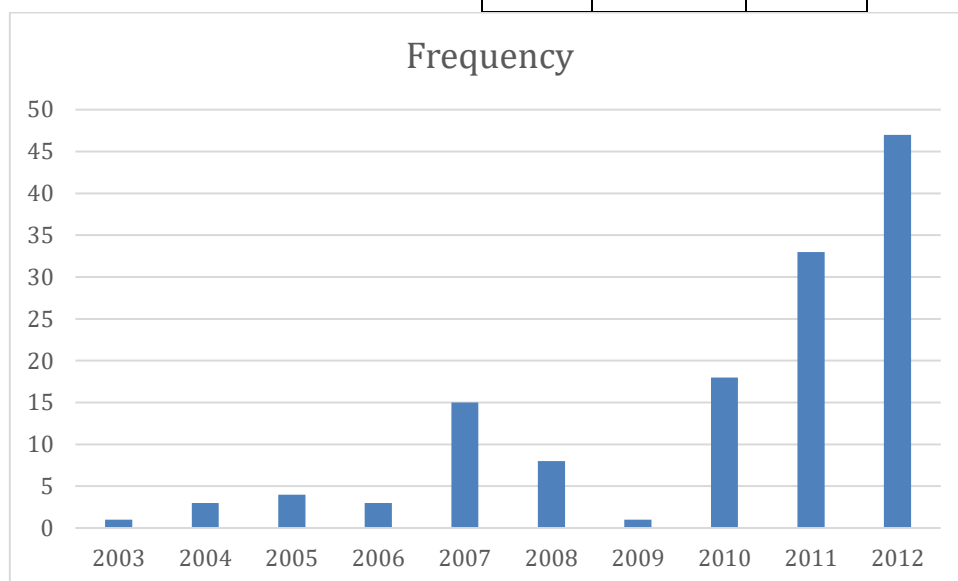
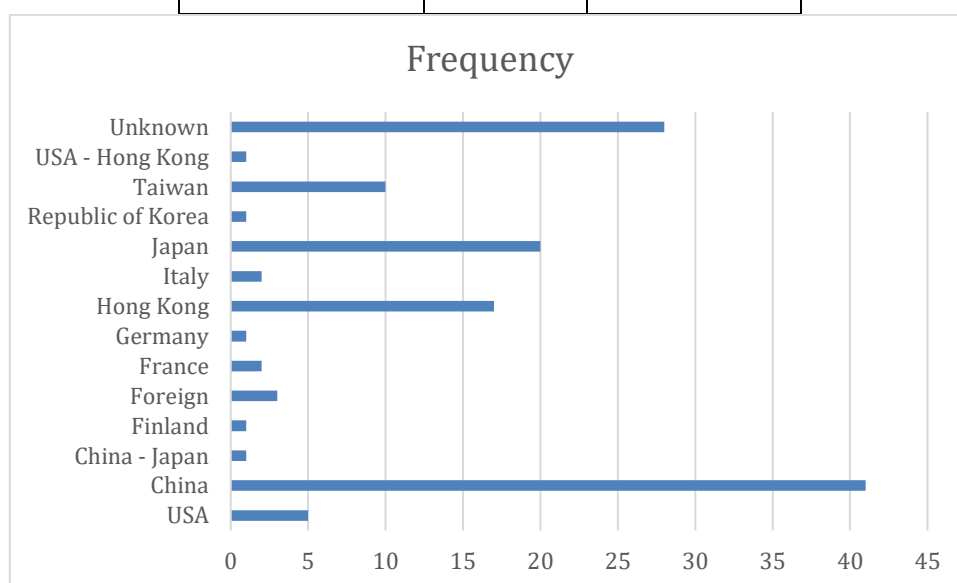


Table 5 Nationality of enterprises

Nationality	Frequency	%
USA	5	3.76
China	41	30.83
China - Japan	1	0.75
Finland	1	0.75
Foreign	3	2.26
France	2	1.5
Germany	1	0.75
Hong Kong	17	12.78
Italy	2	1.5
Japan	20	15.04
Republic of Korea	1	0.75
Taiwan	10	7.52
USA - Hong Kong	1	0.75
Unknown	28	21.05
Total	133	100.00



In table 5, we can see that the relative majority of cases (30,83%) are reported in Chinese enterprises, to which we may have to sum the 21,0% of cases under the “unknown” label since in newspapers it is customary to specify the nationality of foreign enterprises and only in three cases it was impossible to specify the nationality.

Enterprises from the neighboring Special Administrative Zone of Hong Kong and from Taiwan are respectively 12,78% and 7,52%, thus confirming the importance of investments from the greater Chinese area. Among other countries, in 15% of cases the enterprises are funded by Japanese capital.

Table 6 shows the industrial sectors in which the enterprises operate, codified with two digits SIC Codes. It come with no surprise that the most frequent sectors are those of “Apparel and other textile products” and “Electronic and other electric equipment”, which are two sectors widely known in the literature for the harsh conditions of work, leaning toward the sweatshop model, with long working hours and high turnover of a precarious immigrant workforce. It is also worth noting that almost a quarter of cases belongs to the services and public utilities and that among them educational services are the most represented (cfr. Fig 23).

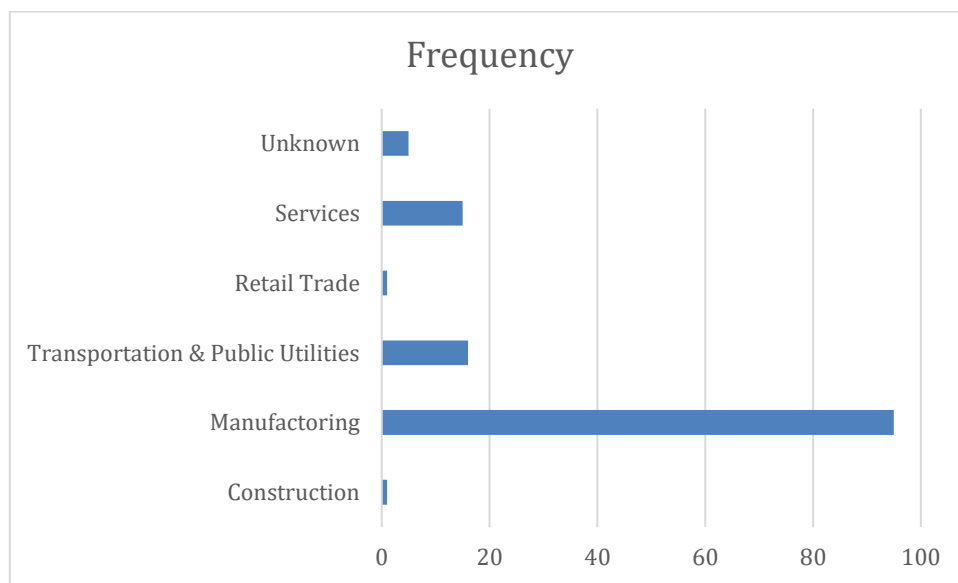


Figure 23 Frequency of cases by macro sector

Table 6 Industrial sector of enterprises

SIC Code	Frequenc y	Percent	SIC Code	Frequenc y	Percent
Unknown	5	3.76	34 Fabricated Metal Products	1	0.75
16 Heavy Construction, Except Building	1	0.75	36 Electronic & Other Electric Equipment	47	35.34
20 Food & Kindred Products	3	2.26	37 Transportation Equipment	2	1.5
22 Textile Mill Products	1	0.75	38 Instruments & Related Products	2	1.5
23 Apparel & Other Textile Products	16	12.03	39 Miscellaneous Manufacturing Industries	5	3.76
24 Lumber & Wood Products	4	3.01	40 Railroad Transportation	1	0.75
25 Furniture & Fixtures	2	1.5	41 Local & Interurban Passenger Transit	8	6.02
26 Paper & Allied Products	1	0.75	42 Trucking & Warehousing	2	1.5
27 Printing & Publishing	2	1.5	49 Electric, Gas. & Sanitary Services	5	3.76

28 Chemical & Allied Products	2	1.5	53 General Merchandise Stores	1	0.75
30 Rubber & Miscellaneous Plastics Products	2	1.5	79 Amusement & Recreation Services	2	1.5
31 Leather & Leather Products	2	1.5	80 Health Services	1	0.75
33 Primary Metal Industries	3	2.26	82 Educational Services	11	8.27
			88 Private Households	1	0.75
			Total	133	100.00

Table 7 Ownership of enterprises

Ownership	Frequency	%
JV	6	4.51
POE	88	66.17
SOE	4	3.01
Unknown	35	26.32
Total	133	100.00

Table 7 reports the ownership of enterprises. The most represented enterprises are private owned (POE). There are 35 occurrences of “unknown” ownership. In 8 of these cases, it is known that nationality of the ownership is Chinese. I find it plausible that the vast majority of the 35 cases with unknown ownership is made up by Chinese nationality and private ownership, since the newspapers tend to treat this combination as the standard, while occurrences of foreign ownership or state ownership are emphasized.

Table 8 Number of workers participating in the strike

Number of workers	Frequency	%
Unknown	20	15
From 1 to 99	21	16
From 100 to 499	25	19
From 500 to 999	23	17
From 1,000 to 9,999	42	32
From 10,000	2	2
	133	100

The number of workers involved is reported in table 8 and varies from a minimum of “more than 20” to a maximum of “more than ten thousand”. The relative majority of cases involves from 1,000 to 9,999 workers, thus in “medium sized enterprises.

Table 9 shows the duration of the strike. In cases in which it was impossible to determine the end of the strike, the duration was codified at the moment of the last verified news. Into the “1” label are codified also strikes that lasted a few hours and were then resolved. We can thus say that in the recorded cases, the absolute majority of events lasted up to 1 day. It is worth noting that an important share of events lasts up to a week and that there are very long events up to 30 days.

Table 9 Duration of the strike

Days	Frequenc y	%
0	1	0.75
1	75	56.39
2	21	15.79
3	9	6.77
4	10	7.52
5	4	3.01
6	1	0.75
7	3	2.26
10	1	0.75
11	1	0.75
13	1	0.75
14	3	2.26
20	1	0.75
30	2	1.5
Tota l	133	100.0 0

Table 10 reports the reasons that led to the strike. The most common cause is the request to obtain wage and bonus arrears (that in many enterprises represent an important share of the total transfers from the enterprise to the workers), combined with protests against the decrease in wages and bonuses.

Significantly, the second cause is the request for higher wages and bonuses that partially confirms the claim in the literature that, in the decade 2003-2012, a shift from the request to respect the legal minimum compensation to the request for higher economic rewards took place. A few cases concern more politicized grievances, such as corruption (a single case in a state-owned enterprise) and nationalism (during a wave of

nationalist protests against Japan economic interests in the wake of the dispute on the Diayou/Senkaku islands).

Table 10 Reasons of grievance

Reasons of grievance	Frequency	%
Contracts	5	3.76
Corruption	1	0.75
Dismissal / Closure	12	9.02
Downward and arrears on wages and bonus	48	36.09
Food / Benefits	1	0.75
HR	3	2.26
HR / Abuses	1	0.75
Health	1	0.75
Higher wages and bonus	35	26.32
Hours / Working condition	7	5.26
Layoffs / Transfers	2	1.5
Nationalism	1	0.75
Other	1	0.75
Privatization / Takeover / Restructur..	10	7.52
Unknown	2	1.50
Wages	3	2.26
Total	133	100.00

The literature differentiates between disputes over rights – whose purpose is to meet minimum conditions set by the law – and disputes over interests aimed to obtain conditions higher than the minimum. Expanding this differentiation, I categorized grievances into:

- Defensive, including disputes of rights, disputes to restore previous conditions and disputes to oppose layoffs and changes to the company structure,
- Offensive, including disputes over interests and disputes over political issues
- Mixed, including cases in which both elements are present without any clear preponderance.

Table 11 shows the result of this categorization. Defensive grievances are still the vast majority of the cases, even though slightly less than a third of cases shows offensive or mixed grievances.

Table 11 Type of grievance

Type of grievance	Frequency	%
Defensive	86	64.66
Mixed	6	4.51
Offensive	36	27.07
Unknown	5	3.76
Total	133	100.00

7.3 The network of strikes

Strikes may be seen as events in which different actors interact through different actions. In other words, strikes may be seen as social networks in which the different actors form nodes with certain attributes and the actions performed by an actor with another actor form ties between the nodes. While usually nodes are formed by conscious actors, they may also be non-conscious living beings or objects.

Using the words of Borgatti, Everett and Johnson, “network analysis is about structure and position” (2002: 19), it is thus a useful framework to analyze data obtained from Quantitative Narrative Analysis about the interactions between actors (see Franzosi et al 2012, Sudharar et al 2015). In particular, I’m going to use SNA to explore the question of the structure of the industrial relations in China as depicted by Tayler et al (2003) and already discussed in the previous chapter.

In order to analyze the social network of strikes, I will work on the semantic triplets queried from PC-ACE with UCINET 6.0 (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman 2009) to build matrices and to make measurements and with NetDraw (Borgatti 2002) to visualize the networks.

7.3.1 The full network

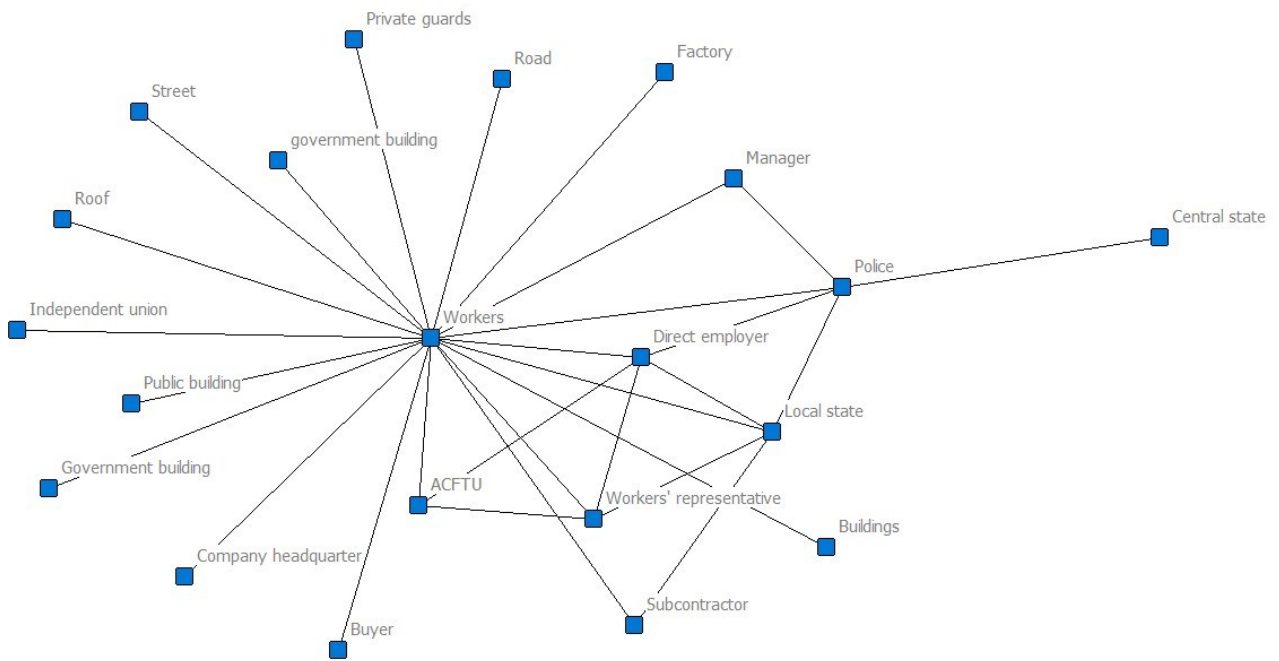


Figure 24 The network of strikes

Table 12 The network of strikes - Density

```

DENSITY / AVERAGE MATRIX VALUE
-----
Input dataset:          RoleRoleRelationUndirected (C:\Users\Paolo\Google Drive\o21\RoleRoleRelationUndirected)
Output dataset:        RoleRoleRelationUndirected-density (C:\Users\Paolo\Documents\UCINET data\RoleRoleRelationUndirected-density)

      1      2      3      4
  Avg Val  Total Std Dev Avg Wtd
  ue
-----
1 RoleRoleRelationUndirected  1.133   476  11.987  22.667

1 rows, 4 columns, 1 levels.

-----
Running time: 00:00:01
Output generated: 04 nov 21 18:54:56
UCINET 6.677 Copyright (c) 2002-19 Analytic Technologies

```

Figure 24 shows the whole network build an all semantic triplets, in the graph all kinds of relations are taken into account. In fact, during events of strike very different relations occur between actors. In order to better visualize the structure of the network I'm moving to aggregate the relations in three macro categories:

- 1) Strike and concession, including only the strike action (from workers to direct employer or subcontractor) and concession (from subcontractor or direct employer to workers);
- 2) Industrial relation, including the actions that were codified as Communication, Election, Hire, Layoff, Negotiation, Order, Refuse/Contrast, Resign, Resume work;
- 3) Repression and resistance, including the actions that were codified as Arrest, Control, Release, Threat, Violence

7.3.2 The network of strike and concession

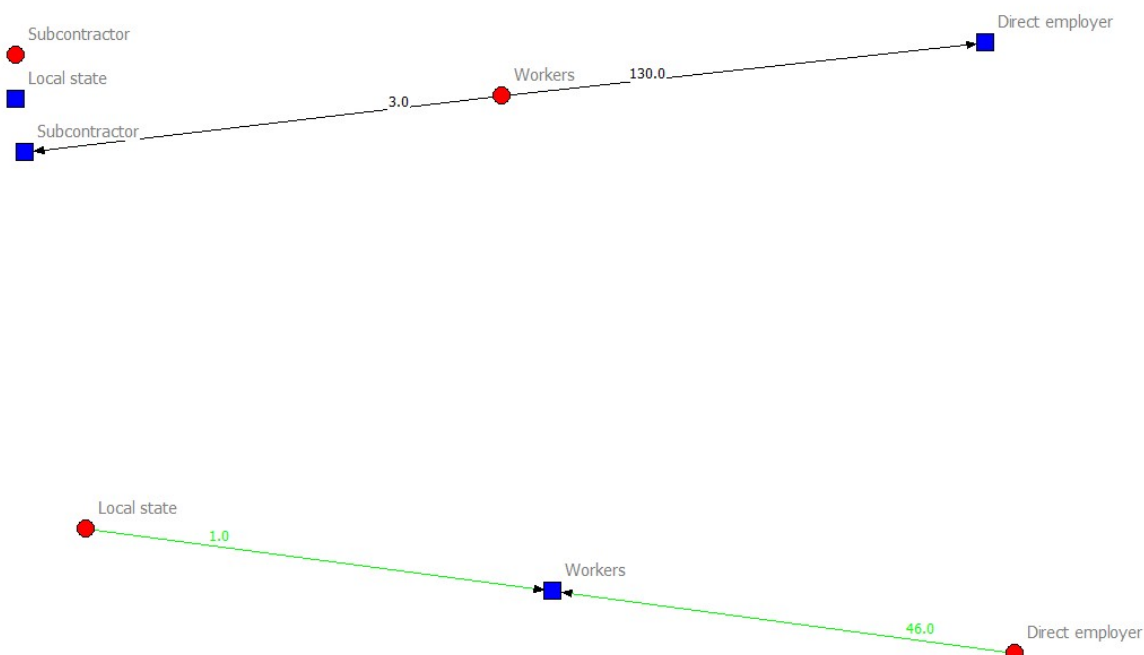


Figure 25 The network of strike and concession

Figure 25 shows a two-mode directed network with red dots as subjects of actions, blue squares as objects of action, black lines as strike action, green lines as concession action. The analysis indicates that a small number of nodes is involved in this network and that the network is disjointed. Workers are clearly always the subject of strike, towards Direct Employer in most of the cases or towards Subcontractor. On the concession edge we can find Workers as object while the action may be performed by Direct Employer in all-but-one cases or by the Local State, in a particular case in which it was the local authorities to step in and responded to workers' grievances.

7.3.3 The network of industrial relation

In Figure 26 the network of industrial relations is visualized as an undirected one-mode graph.

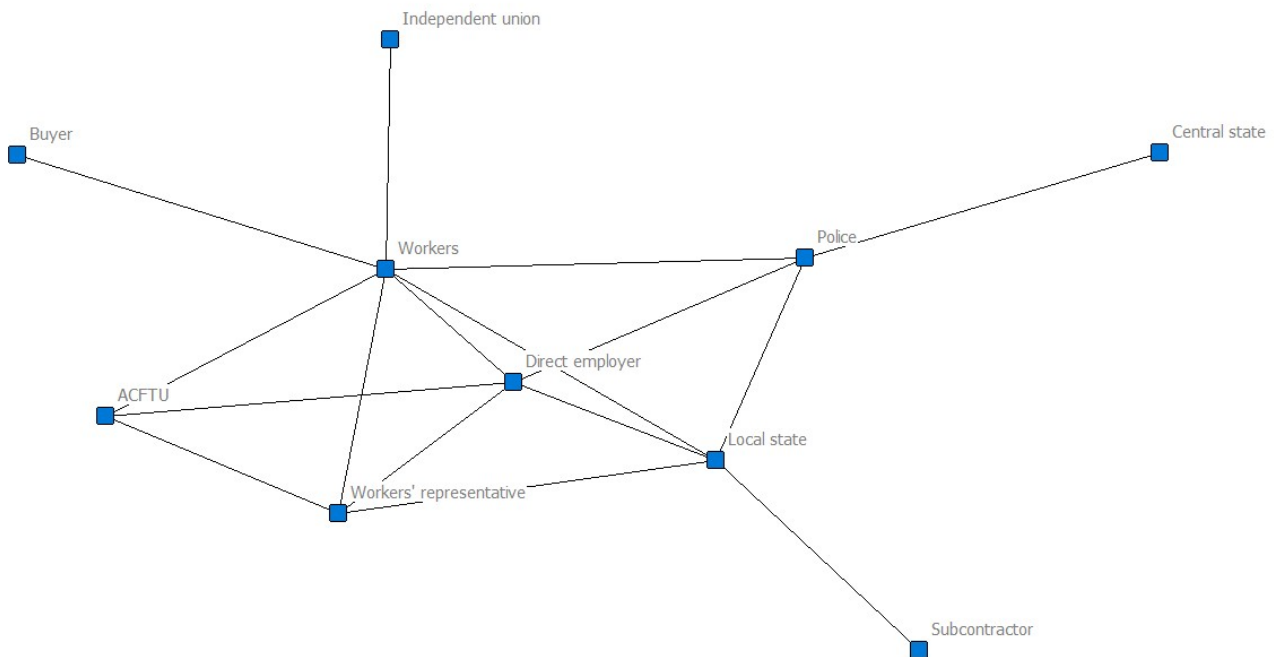


Figure 26 The network of industrial relations

Table 13 The network of industrial relations - Density

```

DENSITY / AVERAGE MATRIX VALUE
-----
Input dataset:          irnb2undirected (C:\Users\Paolo\Google Drive\o21\irnb2undirected)
Output dataset:        irnb2undirected-density (C:\Users\Paolo\Documents\UCINET data\irnb2undirected-density)

      1      2      3      4
  Avg Val  Total Std Dev Avg Wtd
   ue
-----
1 irnb2undirected  1.867   168  8.176  16.800

1 rows, 4 columns, 1 levels.

-----
Running time: 00:00:01
Output generated: 04 nov 21 20:50:48
UCINET 6.677 Copyright (c) 2002-19 Analytic Technologies

```

In Table 13 I show the density of the network of industrial relations.

I choose to take as measures of centrality degree centrality and beta-centrality. Degree centrality is the most basic measurement of centrality, counting how many ties are connected to a certain node. Beta Centrality is a more complex measure conceptualized by Borgatti, Everett and Johnson:

“[...] as a measure of the total amount of potential influence a node can have on all others via direct and indirect channels, where indirect channels are weighted (inversely) by their length, and β controls how much the longer walks are counted.” (Borgatti, Everett and Johnson 2013: 181-83)

While degree centrality is a measure of how much a node influences other nodes through existing connections, beta centrality is a measure of how much a node could influence other nodes.

In Table 14 we can find the normalized scores for both degree centrality and beta centrality with automated beta.

Out of these scores we can see the cardinal role of the four actors of industrial relations as outlined by Taylor, Chang and Li (2004: 120-122, see also § 2.3 and figure 5). In particular, the higher scores are recorded by the nodes Direct Employer and Workers, followed by Local State. Among the four the “less central” is ACFTU, as expected since the existing literature underlines the difficulty of the official union to take part in the managing of strike events. While ACTU scores a very low degree centrality, it gets a higher score on beta centrality, which indicates that ACTU is involved and may influence an event of strike. It should be noted that the node Workers’ Representative – that is, workers’ who are elected as representative as it is legally possible for the time of negotiations - is more central to the network than the node Independent Union. In fact, when restricting the network to the actions codified as “negotiation” (see figure 27), the actor Independent Union disappears. This shows that even when the workers take the action to form a in independent union it is not

involved in the process of negotiation. We can say the forming of union not under the ACFTU is a rare action and is a political statement rather than an action to create a new actor within the industrial relations system.

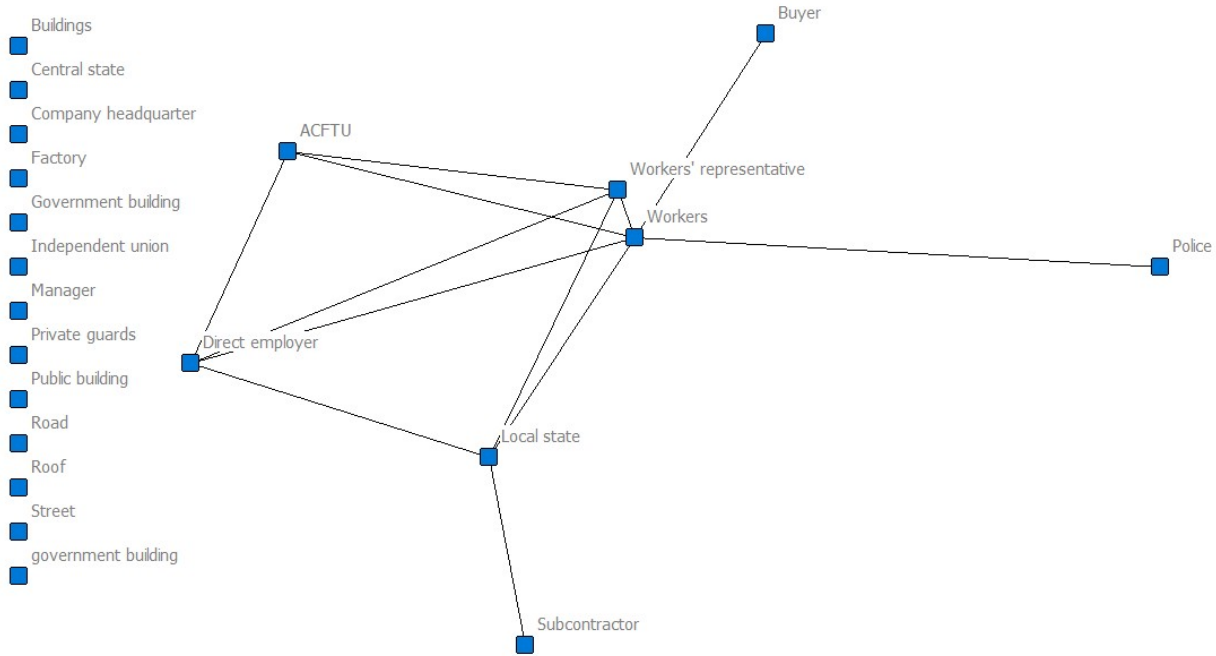


Figure 27 The network of negotiation

With respect to Taylor et al's four parties diagram a difference it is to be noted in the absence of a direct link between the local state and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. This may be explained by the fact that ACFTU officials in many cases are chosen on workplace level from the enterprise management and at level of local branches from local Party-state cadres, especially from those working in Labour Offices. News reports could thus nominate individuals that take part in negotiation only as "management" or "local state".

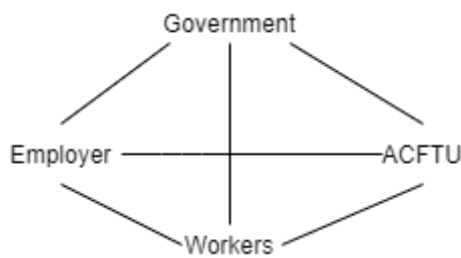


Figure 28 Taylor et al 2004 four party diagram

Table 14 The network of industrial relations – Centrality

MULTIPLE CENTRALITY MEASURES

Input dataset: irnb2undirected (C:\Users\Paolo\Google Drive\o21\irnb2undirected
 Output dataset: irnb2undirected-cent (C:\Users\Paolo\Documents\UCINET data\irnb2undirected-cent
 Treat data as: Undirected
 For valued data: Use tie strengths when possible
 Type of scores to output: Normalized

Value of Beta was: 0,0108876173592031

Centrality Measures

		1	2
		Degree	BetaCent
1	ACFTU	0.778	0.410
2	Buyer	0.111	0.061
3	Central state	0.111	0.002
4	Direct employer	12.556	6.141
5	Independent union	0.111	0.061
6	Local state	10.333	5.464
7	Police	0.444	0.188
8	Subcontractor	0.111	0.060
9	Workers	10.444	5.536
10	Workers' representative	2.333	1.256

10 rows, 2 columns, 1 levels.

Running time: 00:00:01 seconds.
 Output generated: 04 nov 21 20:58:39
 UCINET 6.677 Copyright (c) 2002-19 Analytic Technologies

7.3.3 The network of repression and resistance

Figure 29 includes the 2-mode directed network of the actions of “repression and resistance” and Figure 30 shows the network for the actions codified as “violence”.

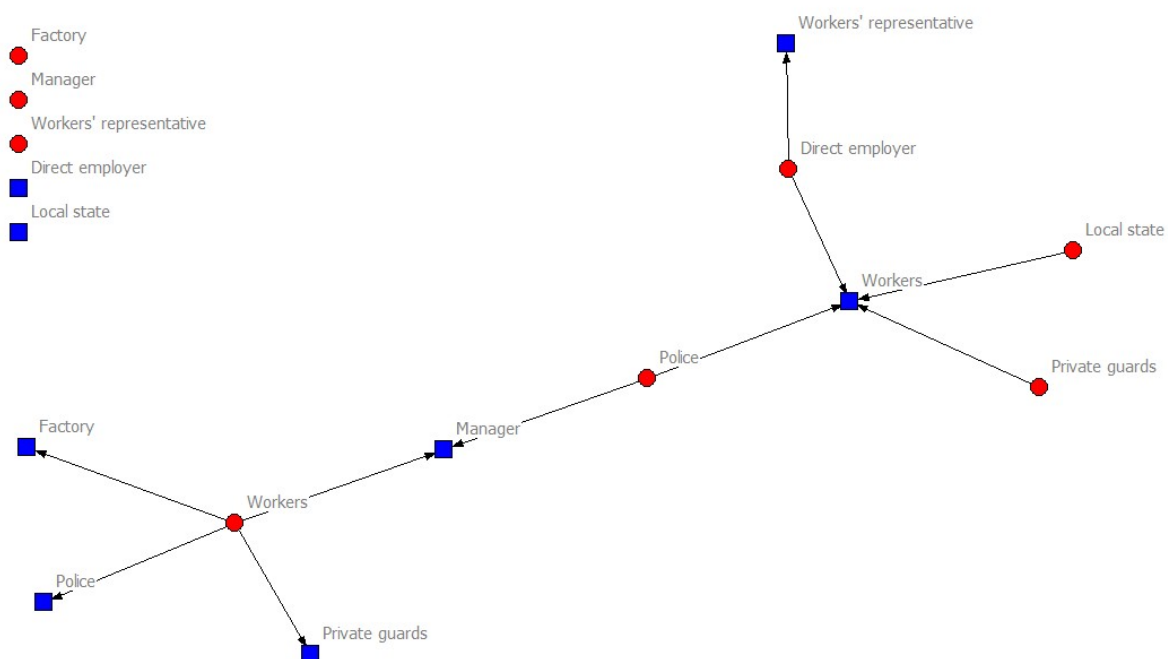


Figure 29 The network of repression and resistance

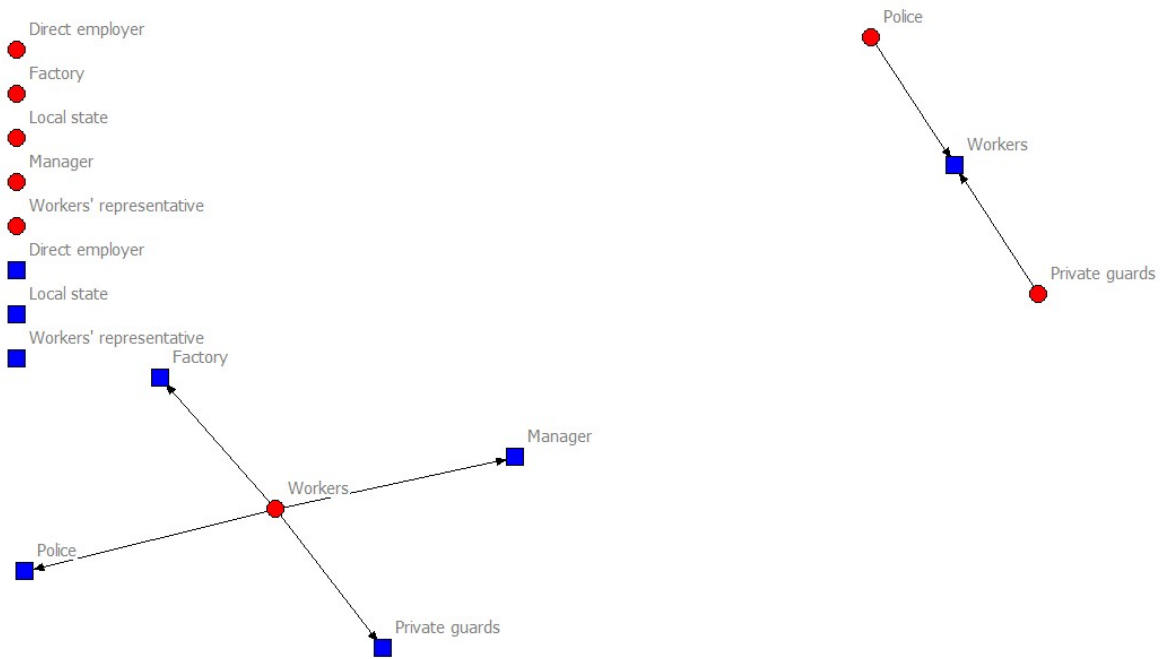


Figure 30 The network of violence

Table 15 The network of repression and resistance - Centrality measures

MULTIPLE CENTRALITY MEASURES

Input dataset: rrvio (C:\Users\Paolo\Google Drive\o21\rrvio
 Output dataset: rrvio-cent (C:\Users\Paolo\Documents\UCINET data\rrvio-cent
 Treat data as: Directed
 For valued data: Use tie strengths when possible
 Type of scores to output: Normalized

Value of Beta was: 0,0503837835124124

Centrality Measures

		1	2	3	4
		OutDe	Indeg	OutBe	InBet
		g	ta	ta	aCent
				ta	t
1	Direct employer	0.286	0.000	0.139	0.000
2	Factory	0.000	0.286	0.000	0.749
3	Local state	0.143	0.000	0.138	0.000
4	Manager	0.000	0.571	0.000	1.015
5	Police	8.000	1.000	7.471	2.621
6	Private guards	0.857	0.286	0.830	0.749
7	Workers	1.857	8.857	2.729	7.415
8	Workers' representative	0.000	0.143	0.000	0.001

8 rows, 4 columns, 1 levels.

The network of industrial relations is undirected because it is formed by ties that represents different action that may or may not be directed. This is true in particular for the actions of negotiation that is bidirectional

per definition the network of negotiation is thus undirected. The network of repression and resistance and the network of violence are both formed only by directed ties, that is by action performed only from one actor towards another actor. It is possible to perform In-Come and Out-Come measures of centrality on directed networks. These measures give us a glance at which actors are central with respect of certain actions being performed towards other actors.

It is interesting to note the different configurations of In-Come and Out-Come measures of centrality in Table 15, that in this case mainly measure how much violence is exercised by whom in direction of whom. As expected, the main subject in violent action is Police. Nevertheless, the presence of violent actions is not as common as it may be imagined.

7.4 Discussion

With this analysis of the social network of strikes we have seen that in the selected cases there is a certain confirmation of the general depiction of industrial relations in China as illustrated by Taylor et al (2004) as it is confirmed the four-party model and the decoupling between workers and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions during times of conflict. Among the four actors depicted by Taylor et al, the ACFTU is the less central, even though it retains a position from which it could exercise influence over the system of industrial relations.

From the selected cases we can confirm that during the decade 2003-2012 in the province of Guǎngdōng there was a certain emergence of disputes with offensive aims, that is disputes with the aim to obtain better conditions beyond the minimums set by the law or with more political aims. This is consistent with what was observed at the national level (Chang 2017), but in the period taken in consideration they do not represent the majority of cases. Most of the cases are still grounded in a “defensive” dynamic to restore previous conditions or to meet the minimums set by law

8 - Outcomes of strikes in Guǎngdōng, China: combinations of conditions

In the first part of this Chapter I will elaborate a model on success and failure of strikes in China on the bases of work by Cai Yongshun on the success and failure of popular protests in Continental China. In the second part I will move to discuss the choice to use Qualitative Comparative Analysis to test the model. In the third part I will give the results of the analysis and I will end discussing the results with relation to the model and with the general model of industrial relations in China by Taylor et al.

8.1 Success and failure of strikes

In his seminal work on the ways to success or failure of popular resistance in China, Cai Yongshun identified several causal relations, on the basis of substantive in depth knowledge of case studies and on the basis of extensive reviews of the existing literature (184-199)

According to Cai, concession or non-concession may spring for a combination of causes:

- when the costs of concessions are not borne by the state, the state itself is more likely to intervene for a successful conclusion of the protest while in the opposite, case the state – especially when the level involved is the local state with a tighter budget – is more likely to not intervene;
- Protests are more likely to succeed when the grievance is focused and does not question the political system in itself;
- Local officials are encouraged to intervene in popular protests before they become too problematic; on the other hand, the use of non-institutionalized modes of protests may be seen by the local officials as “problematic” and thus lead to a state intervention against the protest.

In the explanation of success and failure sketched by Cai, these conditions may combine in different ways. In particular it is possible that negative conditions may lead to both concession and punishment to some participants in the protest.

8.2 QCA

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a method of social research distinguished from both qualitative and quantitative methods for the use of set relations logic, based in set theory and expressed through Boolean algebra. When using the set relations logic, we deal with cases that forms set on the basis of showing certain feature, and we deal with the relations between the sets, for example a set being the subset of another set.

Here I will resume some features of set theoretic social research:

- It relates to integral connections – descriptive, constitutive, casual– between social phenomena. A causal connection expressed through set relations may sound like “the set of cases showing the

feature A is a rough subset of the set of cases showing the feature B, thus the feature A may cause feature B". (Ragin 2008: 14; Ragin and Rubin 2009: 18-21). ;

- It is theory and knowledge dependent to explain the connections between social phenomena (Ragin 2008: 14);
- It *asymmetric*, this means that, for example, in a causal connection in which there is a set of cases that show a feature A and is a subset of cases that show a feature B, we may pose that feature A causes the feature B without implying that feature B causes feature A. It is entirely possible that under the superset of cases that show feature B there may be other subset of cases with different features, this does not undermine the causal connection posed between feature A and B (Ragin 2008: 15)

This case comparative method may be used when the researcher has both a theoretical knowledge of the problem and substantial knowledge of cases.

There are two essential types of set-theoretical relations: necessary conditions and sufficient conditions

In the search for necessary conditions the researcher investigates which cause or combination of causes lead to a certain outcome. In set-theoretic terms, this means verifying whether and to which degree cases with a certain outcome are a subset of cases with a certain cause or combination of causes.

In the search for sufficient condition the researcher investigates cases with the same cause or combination of causes to verify if they also share the same outcome. In set-theoretic terms, this means verifying whether and to which degree cases with a cause or a combination of causes are a subset of cases with a certain outcome (Ragin 2008: 17-20).

Unlike qualitative methods, set-theoretic arguments permit to formalize relations and perform measurements of their validity. The main measures are consistency and coverage, both for necessary and sufficient conditions, even though they assume a slightly different meaning.

When assessing necessary conditions *consistency* measures the degree to which the cases sharing a given combination of conditions agree in displaying the same outcome. Coverage measures the degree to which a causal combination accounts for instances of an outcome, measuring thus how much a causal combination is empirically relevant.

In the search of necessary conditions *consistency* assesses the degree to which instances of the outcome agree in displaying the causal condition thought to be necessary. *Coverage* measures the degree to which instances of the condition are paired with instances of the outcome (Ragin 2008: 44-45).

8.3 Analysis

On the basis of Cai's model and empirical knowledge, I proceed to codify selected cases into crisp-set, meaning that belonging to a certain set is a binary condition, each case belongs or does not belong to a set. In the crisp set notation belonging to the set of cases that show a certain feature is signaled through a letter, belonging to the set of cases that do not show that certain feature is signaled through the same letter preceded by a \sim .

The translation between the general Cai's model on popular protests and the particular dataset that I built is not automatic. To codify the conditions to be used in the Qualitative Comparative Analysis I followed the following considerations.

Conditions

In the dataset I have all, but one cases in which the government is involved with its local level. Therefore, I will discuss only the intervention of the state without differentiating between different levels. Moreover, grievances are always – with only one exception – directed to the employer (also in cases in which the employer is a state-owned enterprise) without direct financial requests toward the state.

Regarding the political cost of concessions, I follow the existing literature and consider defensive workers' request for the respect of legal minimums as a question of preserving the political legitimacy of the Party-State. The State is thus pushed to intervene in favor of the requests to show that its laws are enforced. Offensive demands that go beyond the legal standards may from case to case be read as challenging the political status quo. In a similar vein, I will consider longer strike actions as politically problematic and thus less likely to be resolved. S is the set of cases that lasts up to one day, $\sim S$ is the set of cases that lasts more than one day. O is the set of cases that with offensive demands while $\sim O$ is the set of cases with defensive demands, cases with both defensive and offensive demands are codified into the O set.

State intervention on enterprises with Chinese nationality is to be considered with a lower political cost, while intervention on foreign enterprises yields a higher cost. SI is the set of cases in which the states intervene in any form different than repression while $\sim SI$ is the set of cases in which the state intervenes only with repression or does not intervene at all. F is the set of cases that happened in foreign owned enterprises while $\sim F$ is the set of cases that happened in Chinese owned enterprises. Cases that happened in enterprises with mixed Chinese-foreign ownership are coded into the set State intervention in cases of strikes occurring in state-owned enterprises is posed to be less likely because it burdens the state itself with economic costs. SO is the set of cases occurring in state owned enterprises while $\sim SO$ is the set of cases occurring in non-state-owned enterprises, including cases with mixed state-private ownership.

Regarding the use of institutionalized or non-institutionalized means of protest, we already know that strike actions are in a sort of limbo regarding their legality. Therefore, I will consider “noninstitutionalized” those cases in which workers resorts to “extreme behaviors”, a rhetoric formula used in Chinese media to indicate illegal and forceful actions such as road blockades, building occupations and violence against humans or objects. E is the set of cases in which workers resorts to non-institutionalized behaviors while $\sim E$ is the set of cases in which workers do not use these kind actions.

Outcomes

With regard to outcomes of the events of strike, C is the set of cases in which the strike ends with any form of concession to workers’ demands, $\sim C$ is the set of cases in which the strike ends without concession.

In table 16 I report the expectations of condition combination with respect to the two possible outcomes

Table 16 Expectations according to reinterpreted Cai model

Outcome	Combination of conditions
C	$\sim S^* \sim O^* S O^* \sim F^* S I^* \sim E$
$\sim C$	$S^* (O + \sim O)^* S O^* F^* \sim S I^* E$

Table 16 is read as follows:

- According to the revised Cai model, the combination of conditions that lead to concessions is expected to be the duration of the case not being short, workers’ demand being non offensive, the ownership of the firm being non state, the nationality of the firm being Chinese, showing intervention by the state and workers not adopting extreme behaviors;
- According to the revised Cai Model, the combination of conditions that lead to absence of concessions is expected to be the duration of the strike being short, workers’ demands being either offensive or non-offensive, ownership being state-ownership, nationality being foreign, showing absence of state intervention and showing workers’ adopting extreme behaviors

8.4 Discussion

Table 17 reports the analysis of each single condition with regard to the outcome of Concessions. The table reports consistency and coverage scores. Consistency in this context indicates the degree to which each condition is a superset of the outcome, which is how much the conditions are necessary to the outcome. The highest consistency scores are that for non-state ownership, state intervention and non-extreme behaviors. Coverage scores measure the empirical relevance of each condition. The highest coverage is that for state intervention while non-foreign ownerships show a high coverage but with a consistency score at the 0.5 threshold.

Tables 18 and 19 report two different possible set of truth table solutions – parsimonious and intermediate – that show the possible combinations of conditions that lead to the outcome of concessions. The parsimonious solutions try to boil down the causal combinations to the most essential combinations of conditions, while intermediate solutions try to take into account more conditions. For each combination of conditions, the solution indicates consistency with sufficiency and coverage of how much the outcome is covered by the solutions.

Table 18 shows three different paths to concessions:

- State intervention alone form a path on its own. This path shows the highest empirical relevance towards concessions and is thus an empirical confirmation of how the state retains the role of leading actor in industrial relations, being able to resolve disputes and conflicts;
- A second path is formed by the presence of Chinese enterprises and absence of extreme behaviors, consistently with Cai's model revisited. This combination of conditions is however a ;
- A third path is composed by long strikes, offensive demands and presence of extreme behavior. While this path reports an extremely low empirical relevance, interestingly it shows the possibility that a more conflictual attitude may lead to concessions.

Table 20 reports the analysis of each single condition with regard to the outcome of absence of concessions. Three conditions obtain a consistency score above the 0.6 significance threshold: defensive demands, foreign enterprises ownership and absence of state intervention. However, these significant conditions report low measures of empirical relevance. The presence of extreme behavior has a consistency score slightly lower than the significance threshold but has an empirical relevance similar to the significant conditions. This multiplication of empirically relevant combinations accompanied by low consistency may suggest that there are many ways in which a strike may fail, and more theorization is needed on the side of the failure.

Table 22 reports the parsimonious truth table solution to outcome absence of concession. There are three combinations significant for consistency and with a certain empirical relevance:

- The combination of defensive demands, absence of state intervention, and presence of extreme behaviors;
- The combination of short strike, defensive demands, foreign enterprise ownership and absence of state intervention.
- A third combination, much less empirically relevant, is formed by short strikes, foreign enterprise ownership, absence of state intervention and absence of extreme behavior.

The expected combination of conditions toward concessions is by and large confirmed, with state intervention emerging as a sufficient condition. Chinese ownership and absence of extreme behaviors confirm their role into the causal pathway to success of strikes.

Regarding the outcome absence of concessions, we can observe the presence absence of state intervention having the expected role in failure of strikes. A more problematic role is played by workers' demands: while the revised Cai model have both offensive and defensive demands in the expected pathway towards failure, in the analysis of the selected cases only defensive demands enter the combinations of conditions. Extreme behavior is expected to contribute to absence of concessions, while in the analysis of selected cases both extreme behavior and absence of it enter the pathway towards failure.

Here I stress again that I have performed a qualitative comparative analysis on a non-representative sample, and I was led into this direction of analysis by scarcity of information. On these bases I do not infer on the general population.

What I can conclude on the basis of the qualitative comparative analysis is that the revised Cai's model provides some good indication to explain success in the particular form that is labour strike in the decade 2003-2012 in China's Guǎngdōng province. When coming to explain the failure of labour strikes, the model is not as good, and more theorizations should be done.

On the basis of the QCA, we can see a quite strong confirmation of the general model of industrial relations by Taylor et al, with the state maintaining the "king-maker role" in cases conflict.

Table 17 Necessary conditions for outcome C

Analysis of necessary condition		
Outcome variable: c		
Conditions tested		
	Consistency	Coverage
~s	0.441176	0.75
~o	0.529412	0.72
~so	0.941176	0.78488
~f	0.500000	0.944444
si	0.647059	1.0
~e	0.764706	0.838710

Table 18 Truth table intermediate solution for outcome C

Model: $c = f(e, si, f, so, o, s)$			
70			
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey			
True: 1			
0 Matrix: 0L			
Don't Care: -			
INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION			
Frequency cutoff = 1.0		Consistency cutoff = 1.0	
	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
si*~so	0.617647	0.382353	1.0
~e*~f*~s	0.088235	0.029412	1.0
~e*~f*~so	0.382353	0.117647	1-0
~e*si*~f	0.264706	0.029412	1.0
e*~so*o*~s	0.029412	0.029412	1.0
solution coverage: 0.852941			
solution consistency: 1.000000			

Assumptions for tables 16 and 17
~e (absent)
si (present)
~f (absent)
~so (absent)
~o (absent)
~s (absent)

Table 19 Truth table parsimonious solution for outcome C

Model: $c = f(s, o, so, f, si, e)$			
Rows 2			
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey			
True: 1-L			
PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION			
Frequency cutoff = 1.0		Consistency cutoff = 1.0	
	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
si	0.647059	0.382353	1.0
$\sim f * \sim e$	0.441176	0.176471	1.0
$\sim s * o *$			
e	0.029412	0.029412	1-0
solution coverage: 0.852941			
solution consistency: 1.000000			

Table 20 Necessary conditions for outcome $\sim c$

Analysis of necessary condition		
Outcome variable: $\sim c$		
Conditions tested		
	Consistency	Coverage
s	0.5	0.208333
o	0.3	0.157895
$\sim o$	0.7	0.28
so	0.1	0.333333
f	0.9	0.346154
$\sim s$		
i	1.0	0.454545
e	0.5	0.384615

Table 21 Truth table intermediate solution for outcome $\sim c$

Model: $\sim c = f(e, si, f, so, o, s)$			
Rows: 14			
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey			
True: 1			
0 Matrix: 0L			
Don't Care: -			
INTERMEDIATE SOLUTION			
Frequency cutoff = 1.0		Consistency cutoff = 1.0	
	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
$e\sim si\sim f\sim o$	0.3	0.2	1.0
$e\sim si\sim so\sim o$	0.1	0.1	1.0
$\sim si\sim f\sim o\sim s$	0.4	0.2	1.0
solution coverage: 0.600000			
solution consistency: 1.000000			

Assumptions for tables 19 and 20
e (present)
$\sim si$ (absent)
f (present)
so (present)
s (present)

Model: $\sim c = f(s, o, so, f, si, e)$			
Rows: 24			
Algorithm: Quine-McCluskey			
True: 1-L			
PARSIMONIOUS SOLUTION			
Frequency cutoff = 1.0		Consistency cutoff = 1.0	
	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
$\sim o\sim si\sim e$	0.4	0.2	1.0
$s\sim f\sim si\sim e$	0.2	0.0	1.0
$s\sim o\sim f\sim si$	0.4	0.0	1.0
solution coverage: 0.600000			
solution consistency: 1.000000			

Table 22 Truth table parsimonious solution for outcome $\sim c$

Chap 9 – 2014 – 2021, labour contention in the New Era

In this chapter I will qualitatively present and discuss cases of strike in the province of Guǎngdōng after 2013.

The dataset on which I relied in the previous chapters covered the period between 2004 and 2013, until the end of the administration led by Hú Jǐntāo, that progressively stepped down from the leading position in the Chinese Communist Party, in the State and in the People’s Liberation Army, from November 2012 to the end of 2013. Hú Jǐntāo was replaced in all positions by Xí Jìnpíng, who is still holding the leadership and is probably going to retain these positions past the CCP 20th Congress, to be held in the second half of 2022.

During his tenure, Xí Jìnpíng gradually changed the relations between the State and the Chinese Communist Party, moving away from the relative policies of institutionalization discussed in § 3.1 with the Party launching political campaigns directed both at the State and the Society. Up to now, industrial relations and the role of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions do not appear central to the new set of policies, even though there are signals of involvement of the official Trade Union in the campaign for the regulation of the platform economy (ACFTU 2022)

In the main corpus of the “Xí Jìnpíng thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era”, direct references to the trade union role or day-by-day life in the workplace are rare, if not absent at all. The notable exception being the “All-China Federation of Trade Unions Reform Pilot Program” approved by the Central Comprehensively Deepening Reforms Commission chaired by Xí Jìnpíng. The Reform Pilot Program included four broad-scope goals (Xinhua 2015):

- 1) Maintain and enhance the political, advanced and mass character of trade union activities and trade union organizations;
- 2) Face the problem of "organization, administration, aristocracy, and entertainment"; a formulation that echoed the ongoing campaign against bureaucratization of mass organizations;
- 3) Strengthen and give resources to grassroots trade unions;
- 4) Innovate the functioning of the trade unions and remove institutional obstacles to trade unions activities.

One year later, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions published a document (Xinhua 2016) in which it proclaimed it had followed the instructions of the Reform Pilot Program, while following the study of the “General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches”. The document reports that the ACFTU conducted the Reform Pilot Program increasing the presence of “model workers” and “front-line workers” in its Executive Committee and in its Presidium respectively from 11.6% to 15.4% and from 9.9 to 13.5%. Moreover, the ACFTU promoted a “migrant model worker” to vice-chairman of the ACFTU.

In 2018 the ACFTU held its 17th National Congress and in its final document reiterated the four broad goals of the Reform Pilot Program and added the “hùliánwǎng +” plan to develop internet trade unions services (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China: 2018).

The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress adopted in December 2021 an amendment to the Trade Union Law of the People’s Republic of China. The amendment came into effect on January 1st, 2022. According to the explanation published by the NPC, the amendment is aimed to integrate in the Trade Union Law the “important instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping”. The writing process of the amendment took more than 1 year of communications between the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Standing Committee of the NPC and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and its territorial branches. The period of public consultation was less than one month. The brevity of the consultation stands out even more when compared to the lengthy public consultations on the 2008 Labor Law. The amendment changed the Trade Union Law along the ideological lines of the Reform Pilot Program of 2017, while the main practical novelty appears to be the expansion of the coverage of trade unions work from “enterprises, public institutions and government organs” to “enterprises, public institutions, government organs and social organizations” that permits more workers to become member of the ACFTU (Zhang Yong 2021).

In consideration of these novel policies and more generally the attempt to identify possible trends, it seems useful to perform a qualitative analysis of recent cases of conflict, looking for confirmation or deviations from the results that we observed in the previous chapters.

9.1 Cases selection

Due to the closure of certain news aggregator and the complexity of the task itself, building a dataset from 2014 onwards, comparable with Elfstrom’s China Strikes Map for the previous decade, would not be feasible.

I will therefore use a different source: China Labour Bulletin’s Strike Map. CLB is a labour NGO based in Hong Kong whose goals are disseminating news about labour contention and support of workers’ disputes. While the Elfstrom’s map is an academic project based on newspaper articles, CLB is based on a variety of sources, including newspaper articles, social media posts and direct testimonies.

The CLB’s Strike Map reports 381 cases of strike – from 2014 to 2021 – in the Guǎngdōng province. Among these cases, 67 presents the minimum basis for confirmation of basic facts being reported by multiple sources. This selection cannot be interpreted as representative of the whole population, it is nevertheless possible to comment the distribution of cases. In Table 23 we can see that the majority of cases of strike on which there is confirmed information is still in the manufacturing sector. There are some cases in the service sector and some in the transport and logistics. Regarding the latter it is to be noted that in the previous decade there were cases of taxi protests that were not filed under the category of strike as taxi driver were formally self-employed, while the platformization process made many of these workers formally employees.

As it could be expected, the most of cases (see Table 24) are reported from the industrial powerhouses of Dongguan and Shenzhen, with 20 and 19 cases each, and then from the capital Guangzhou with 9 cases.

In Table 25 we can see the distribution by ownership. As it may be expected reports of strike are quite rare in the state-owned sector and in state-private joint ventures. The relative majority of cases is reported from private companies from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau (21 cases), private-owned Chinese companies (16 cases) and other private-owned foreign companies (17 cases).

The temporal distribution of cases (see Table 26) provides some interesting insights concerning a drop in reported cases with confirmed information. Rather than being the effect of diminishing cases of strike, it is more probable that it is the effect of the closure of certain internet sites that worked on collecting news and of the risen political control over newspapers.

Table 23 Cases distribution by sector

Sector	Number of cases
Manufacturing	55
Education	2
Services	5
Transport and logistics	5
Construction	1

Table 24 Cases distribution by prefecture

Prefecture	Number of cases
Dōngguǎn	20
Fóshān	4
Guǎngzhōu	9
Huìzhōu	2
Jiāngmén	2
Qīngyuǎn	1
Shēnzhèn	19
Zhàoqìng	1
Zhōngshān	4
Zhūhǎi	3

Table 25 Cases distribution by ownership

Ownership	Number of cases
Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan POE	21
Joint Venture	3
SOE	3
Chinese POE	16
Foreign POE	17
Unknown	9

Table 26 Cases distribution by year

Year	Number of cases
2021	1
2020	2
2017	3
2016	16
2015	10
2014	35

Out of these 67 I've selected nine cases in which we can obtain extensive information on the course of events and/or the conclusions of the dispute.

9.4 Cases

2014a

This case happened in the Guānlán township of the Shēnzhèn prefecture on January 11th, 2014, in a Korean-owned factory whose industrial sector is unknown. The event is reconstructed through a series of social media posts collected by an independent aggregator (Wickedonna 2014). The strike erupted after a mistreatment by a Korean manager that slapped one Chinese female worker. This led more than 700 to step out and disrupt the traffic on a nearby motorway. The state response was to deploy riot police that injured one worker (See Figure 30).



Figure 31 Riot police confronting the workers (Wickedonna 2014a)

The beating of the workers was challenged by passing people that were reported to shout “Chinese people do not beat Chinese people”. The beaten worker, among others, was interviewed by a local TV station (See figure 31). While the workers lamented many violations of the Labor Law, the grievance of the strike was mainly nationalistic against the mistreatments by foreign managers. In the end it is reported that the manager that slapped the female worker was moved away, but is unclear whether it was a temporary or permanent move.



Figure 31 Local TV interviewing workers (Wickedonna 2014a)

2014b

Yue Yuen is a shoe factory owned by a Hong Kong based company controlled by a Taiwan company. Yue Yuen is one of the main shoe manufacturers world-wide, working for the major companies in the sector of sport and everyday uses.

The strike at Yue Yuen shoe factory in the Xiāngzhōu district within the Zhūhǎi prefecture started on April 14th, 2014, and lasted two weeks. The case is reconstructed through social media posts collected by an independent aggregator, Chinese and international media outlets and academic publications (Wickedonna 2014b; Chatterjee 2014; Schmalz et al 2017, Bloomberg 2014, Chinaworker.info 2014, CNBC 2014). The factory itself is considered by Schmalz et al to be in the “flexible mass production” type in, which the international-oriented management declares to apply corporate social responsibility principles. A plant branch of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was present as early as of 2010, but in that year a survey showed that 38% of the workers did not even know it.

The 2014 conflict erupted out of a single case of mistreatment, but immediately became a dispute about social security as strikers discovered that the company illegally paid social security duties based on basic salary instead of the real end-of-month salary including overtime.

On the first day, about 1000 workers from the Xiāngzhōu plant – that during the production peak may reach 10 thousand employees - participated in the strike and blocked a road causing a traffic jam (see Figure 32). The roadblock was dealt first with an intervention by police officers in which no violence is recorded, then was resolved by intervention of the Communist Party and of local state officials, who convinced the workers to leave the road.



Figure 32 - Road block by Yue Yuen workers on DATE

In the following days the strike spread to other Yue Yuen plants in the nearby Dōngguǎn prefecture, and the number of striking workers reached 40 thousand. It is reported that workers were beaten by police and that workers refused the invitation of the ACFTU to resume work. During the two weeks of strike the Chunfeng Labor Dispute Service Center NGO stepped in to assist workers but NGO members were arrested and subsequently released after a public call by the labour academic Wáng Jiāngsōng. During the strike, calls to form an independent union appeared, but there were no signs of effective organization.

The turning point of the strike was the intervention of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Security that denounced the company behavior as illegal and ordered a rectification. On April 23rd ACFTU and the local labour department called once again the workers to resume operation and threatened to arrest those who continued the strike. On April 28th the company declared to be fully operative, but on April 29th it was reported that about 1/5 of the workforce was still on strike and dozens of strikers were held by the police.

The dispute was closed with an increase in the monthly wage and the coverage of the shortfall in social security payments. It is however reported that the increase in the social security payments led to a decrease of the direct monthly wage. The ACFTU established a new branch with direct elections of union officials by the workers, but it was later reported that less than 2000 workers enrolled in the Trade Union.

The 2014 Yue Yuen strike reached international resonance, being one of the first cases in which multiple factories in different prefectures went on strike on the same dispute. The economic costs inflicted to internally renowned brands – calculated around \$27 million – also drew the attention of media. Schmaltz et al argued that the interaction between local government and central government is to be understood in the framework of the permanent anti-corruption campaign in which the prefecture of Dōngguǎn was a focus point.

It is to be noted that on March 17th, 2015, rumors of a factory merger led to a strike by 3 to 5 thousand workers in Dōngguǎn Yue Yuen plant. The workers demanded an immediate payment of their housing funds in fear to lose them in the merging process. The strike rapidly vanished as the management replied that the merging was going to interest only clerks. (Reuters 2015, Wickedonna 2015a, Wickedonna 2015b, Wickedonna 2015c, Xiao M. 2015).

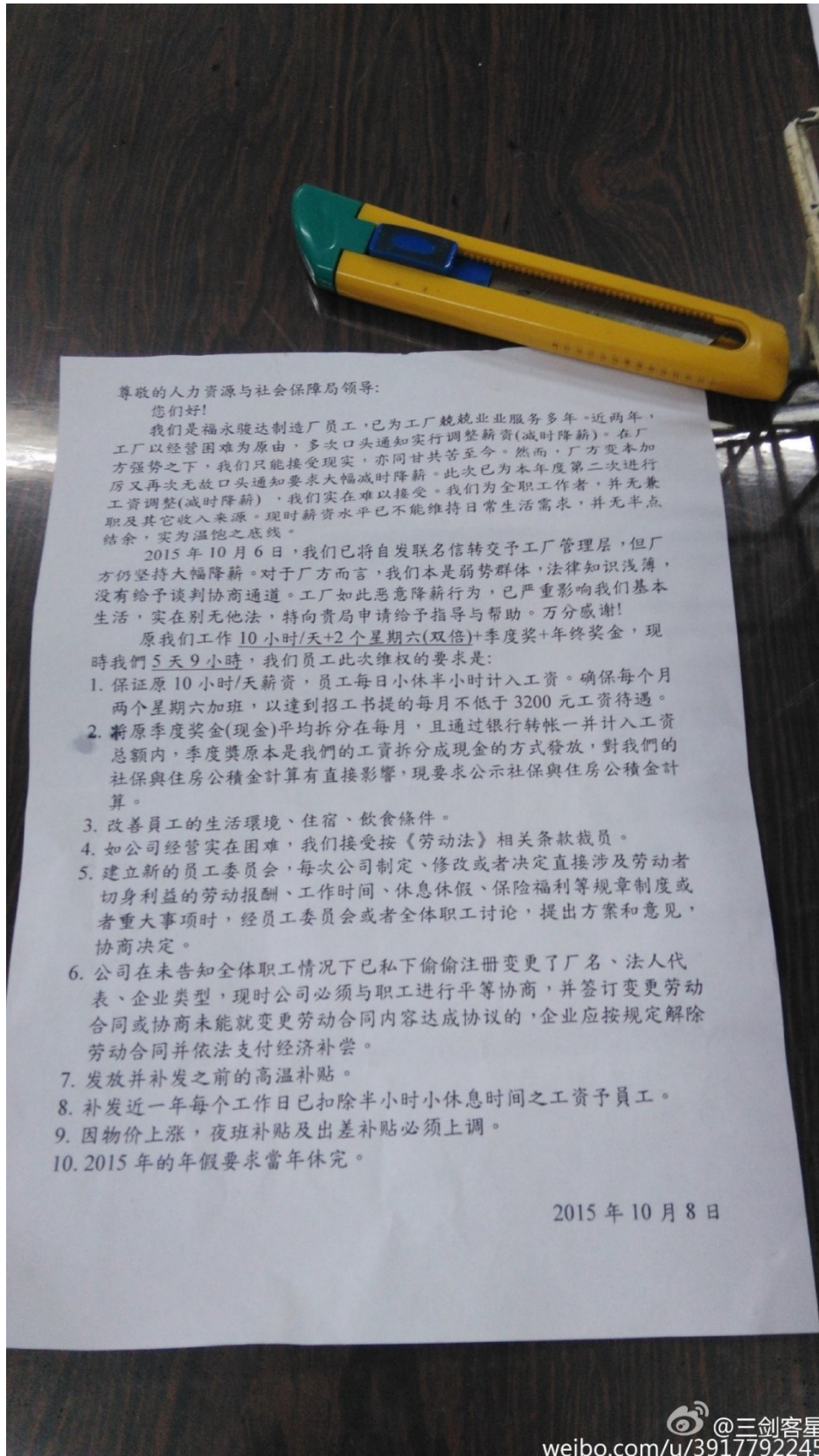
2015

The strike occurred in a Hong-Kong owned electronics factory in the Bǎo'ān district of the Shēnzhèn prefecture and is reconstructed through a series of social media posts collected by an independent aggregator (Wickedonna 2015d, Wickedonna 2015e, Wickedonna 2015f, Wickedonna 2015f).

The strike began on October 7th, 2015 and its cause was that after the establishment of a new company that enacted new contracts, the of overtime work was reduced lowering by some 20% the end-of-month wage.

On October 8th, the workers issued a document with requests (see Figure 33). Among the requests there were:

- to go back to the original hours and pay scheme, with the addition of a paid break;
- According to labour law, establishment of workers' committees to be consulted on matters of "labour remuneration, working hours, rest and vacation, insurance and benefits, and other rules and regulations or important matters";
- Repayment of lost wages and benefits;
- Return to the contract of the old company.



尊敬的人力资源与社会保障局领导:

您好!

我们是福永骏达制造厂员工,已为工厂兢兢业业服务多年。近两年,工厂以经营困难为原由,多次口头通知实行调整薪资(减时降薪)。在厂方强势之下,我们只能接受现实,亦同甘共苦至今。然而,厂方变本加厉又再次无故口头通知要求大幅减时降薪。此次已为本年度第二次进行工资调整(减时降薪),我们实在难以接受。我们为全职工作者,并无兼职及其它收入来源。现时薪资水平已不能维持日常生活需求,并无半点结余,实为温饱之底线。

2015年10月6日,我们将自发联名信转交予工厂管理层,但厂方仍坚持大幅降薪。对于厂方而言,我们本是弱势群体,法律知识浅薄,没有给予谈判协商通道。工厂如此恶意降薪行为,已严重影响我们基本生活,实在别无他法,特向贵局申请给予指导与帮助。万分感谢!

原我们工作10小时/天+2个星期六(双倍)+季度奖+年终奖金,现时我们5天9小时,我们员工此次维权的要求是:

1. 保证原10小时/天薪资,员工每日小休半小时计入工资。确保每个月两个星期六加班,以达到招工书提的每月不低于3200元工资待遇。
2. 将原季度奖金(现金)平均拆分在每月,且通过银行转帐一并计入工资总额内,季度奖原本是我们的工资拆分成现金的方式发放,对我们的社保与住房公积金计算有直接影响,现要求公示社保与住房公积金计算。
3. 改善员工的生活环境、住宿、饮食条件。
4. 如公司经营实在困难,我们接受按《劳动法》相关条款裁员。
5. 建立新的员工委员会,每次公司制定、修改或者决定直接涉及劳动者切身利益的劳动报酬、工作时间、休息休假、保险福利等规章制度或者重大事项时,经员工委员会或者全体职工讨论,提出方案和意见,协商决定。
6. 公司在未告知全体职工情况下已私下偷偷注册变更了厂名、法人代表、企业类型,现时公司必须与职工进行平等协商,并签订变更劳动合同或协商未能就变更劳动合同内容达成协议的,企业应按规定解除劳动合同并依法支付经济补偿。
7. 发放并补发之前的高温补贴。
8. 补发近一年每个工作日已扣除半小时小休息时间之工资予员工。
9. 因物价上涨,夜班补贴及出差补贴必须上调。
10. 2015年的年假要求当年休完。

2015年10月8日

@三剑客星
weibo.com/u/3917792245

Figure 33 Document with workers' requests (Wickedonna 2015d)

After three days of strike, the local labour and social security departments became involved in the negotiations. On the other hand, the company started to hire strike-breaker workers.

After twenty days of strike, workers decided to march toward the Fúyǒng subdistrict government building. While the sources report of “thousands of workers”, the pictures show hundreds of them (See Figure 34). However, there are no signs of effects of this demonstration.



Figure 34 Workers at the Fuyong government building (Wickedonna 2015f)

The strikes came to an end without any sign of further negotiation on November 3rd, when the police break the picket-line at the factory and several workers are beaten.

2016a

The strike occurred in a foreign-owned electronics factory working with semiconductors in the Huángjiāng township in the Dōngguǎn prefecture. The case is reconstructed through newspaper articles and social media posts collected by China Labour Bulletin (2016a). It started on June 6th, 2016, after the acquisition of the factory by another company. 4600 workers were reported to go on strike demanding the new company to recognize seniority. Labour lawyers suggested to the workers to sue the company in order to block the merging process, however the news reports that the workers refused this kind of legal action. Workers

replied that the strike action would be more effective versus a foreign company, quoting the traditional saying "the common people are afraid of officials, officials are afraid of foreign ghosts, and foreign ghosts are afraid of the common people".

The outcome of the strike action is unknown. What is to be noted is that the strike action was reported in the media as a part of the process of concentration through mergers and acquisitions triggered by the commercial war on semiconductors. Newspapers also noted that the strike action could be successful because other actions were undertaken in the same sector and that employers were eventually able to find resources to compensate seniority.

2016b

This case occurred in a food plant in the Shēnzhèn prefecture owned by a state-owned company dominating in the sector.

The case is reconstructed through newspaper articles (Yu 2016) and social media posts collected by China Labour Bulletin (2016b).

The dispute started when the company – that went through a series of financial crisis - fired 90 employees out of circa 250 without going through the consultation process with the company branch of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Subsequently the workers made redundant refused to sign the Notice of Termination of Labor Relations.

On August 22nd, 2016, the factory branch of the ACFTU declared a work stoppage (See Figure 35). In the declaration, the ACFTU branch wrote a long prologue in six points quoting the Central Committee and Government joint *Opinions on building harmonious labour relations* (see § 3.2), the "Guiding Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Deepening the Reform of State-owned Enterprises", and other documents and speeches from officials of the ACFTU and of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission.

After the introduction, the factory union branch elaborated five points in which (1) called the company to restart the layoff process from scratches (2) proposing a reasonable resettlement plan. (3) According to the Union the company did not take the legal steps required by Article 43 of the Labor Contract Law and thus (4) the company management are required to come to the factory to take a round of negotiations.

The fifth and final point declared that "all employees of the company will suspend work from now on until the company gives a written reply to the above points and makes a public announcement".

曾和平总经理、张宝林总经理助理及公司各位管理人员：

中粮金帝食品（深圳）有限公司目前处于资产重组阶段，公司本应该根据下列文件和精神，避免激化矛盾，维护稳定大局，保障广大职工根本权益，妥善安抚员工。

1、《中共中央国务院关于构建和谐劳动关系的意见》——坚持以人为本。把解决广大职工最关心、最直接、最现实的利益问题，切实维护其根本权益，作为构建和谐劳动关系的根本出发点和落脚点；

2、《中共中央、国务院关于深化国有企业改革的指导意见》——坚持全心全意依靠工人阶级，维护职工合法权益，为国有企业改革发展提供坚强有力的政治保证、组织保证和人才支撑；

3、《中共中央办公厅、国务院办公厅关于在国有企业、集体企业及其控股企业深入实行厂务公开制度的通知》——国有企业改革改制方案、兼并破产方案、职工裁员及分流安置方案等均属企业重大决策问题，都应以各种形式及时向职工群众公开；

4、《中华全国总工会关于在国有企业改制中切实维护职工合法权益的意见》——要在国有企业改制过程中依法依规落实职工的知情权、参与权、决策权和监督权，切实保护职工利益；

5、国资委肖亚庆主任在2016年全国两会讲话——国企改革首先要确保现有员工利益；

6、赵双连董事长在中纺中层以上干部大会上的讲话——认识到我们的改革重组是有底线的……不是把员工推向社会了事，不会以损害员工整体利益为代价。要通过深入宣传和耐心细致的思想工作，让广大干部职工放心安心尽心，增强归属感和主人翁意识，自觉做到合心合力合拍，心往一处想、劲往一处使，依靠广大干部职工的力量和智慧做好改革重组工作。

遗憾的是，公司新任管理团队将自己放在广大职工对立面，自4月份停产以来至今未出台员工安置方案，完全不考虑基层员工生活困难的现状，用拖延战术、激化矛盾（上厕所须登记时间、员工正常上下班出入公司须进行搜车、开包检查）等强硬手段，企图逼迫员工自行离开，甚至未经过工会正常流程，未细致调查取证，辞退骨干员工，完全无视央企社会责任及员工利益，置党纪国法于不顾，置公序良俗于不顾，耸人听闻。

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基于以上原因，中粮金帝食品（深圳）有限公司工会委员会决定召集劳资恳谈会，请公司行政方，对以下问题进行回复：

1.要求公司通报后期运营及资产处理情况。

2.要求公司于当天公布合理的员工安置方案。如无合理的安置方案，全体员工有权提出与公司协商解除劳动合同。

3、根据《中华人民共和国劳动合同法》第四十三条及《工会法》实施细则第二十一条规定，企业单方面解除职工劳动合同时，应当事先将理由通知工会，工会认为企业违反法律、法规和有关合同，要求重新研究处理时，企业应当研究工会的意见，并将处理结果书面通知工会。公司于2016年8月16日解除尤国新同志的劳动合同的行为违反相关程序，要求公司重新调查并给出合理解释。

4、要求公司现任管理层成员：总经理曾和平、总经理助理张宝林、人事行政部副总监徐微就上述1、2、3、4点于2016年8月22日上午9:30分至公司培训中心与员工进行沟通及回复。

5、公司全体员工即日起全面停工，直至公司就以上几点给出书面回复并进行公示。

中粮金帝食品（深圳）有限公司工会

2016年8月22日

Figure 35 ACFTU factory branch declaring a work stoppage (CLB 2016b)

After the work stoppage began negotiation were held between the ACFTU branch and management, the outcome of the dispute is however unknown. This is the only selected case in which the official union called a strike and, up to the moment when the cases were selected, is also the only case in which the official union called a strike in the China Labour Bulletin map.

2017

The dispute occurred in a private-owned hospital in the Sānshǔi district within the Fóshān prefecture. The case is reconstructed through newspaper articles and social media posts (Weibo 2017, Zhang Q. 2017)

Employees stopped working on March 29th, 2017, after three months without pay because the parent company had its account frozen. The strike lasted 21 days and impacted on the local community because the hospital involved was the only one in the Báiní township within the Sānshǔi district. In response to the inconvenience created by the strike, the Báiní government considered the opening of a new local hospital.

The Sānshǔi Labor and Personnel Dispute Arbitration Committee stepped in and recognized that 105 workers had wage arrears. For many days the documents issued by the Arbitration Committee were affixed at the entrance of the hospital while employees picketed the entrance (see Figure 36).



Figure 36 Employees picketing the Hospital entrance (Weibo 2017)

The dispute was resolved on April 19th, as the negotiations between the employees and the parent company, with the mediation of the Sānshǔi Labor and Personnel Dispute Arbitration Committee, reached an agreement for the payment of arrears and the case went back to the tribunal to unfreeze the bank accounts.

2021

The dispute occurred in a private-owned electronics plant located in the Shēnzhèn prefecture.

The case is reconstructed through social media posts collected by CLB (2021).

The strike started May 8th, 2021, when some 50 workers did not receive the end-of-year bonus. The workers claimed to be following the example of a previous strike in a nearby electronics plant owned by a Japanese company in which the work stoppage permitted to obtain the bonus.

Initially the company reacted by putting all workers on compulsory holiday. During the first week of strike, the management held a meeting with workshop leaders claiming that the work stoppage is a violation of the labour contract and is causing economic damage to the company, therefore workers must go back to work or be fired. In the following days there were eight rounds of layoffs that went through the legal procedure of notification to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (see Figure 37).

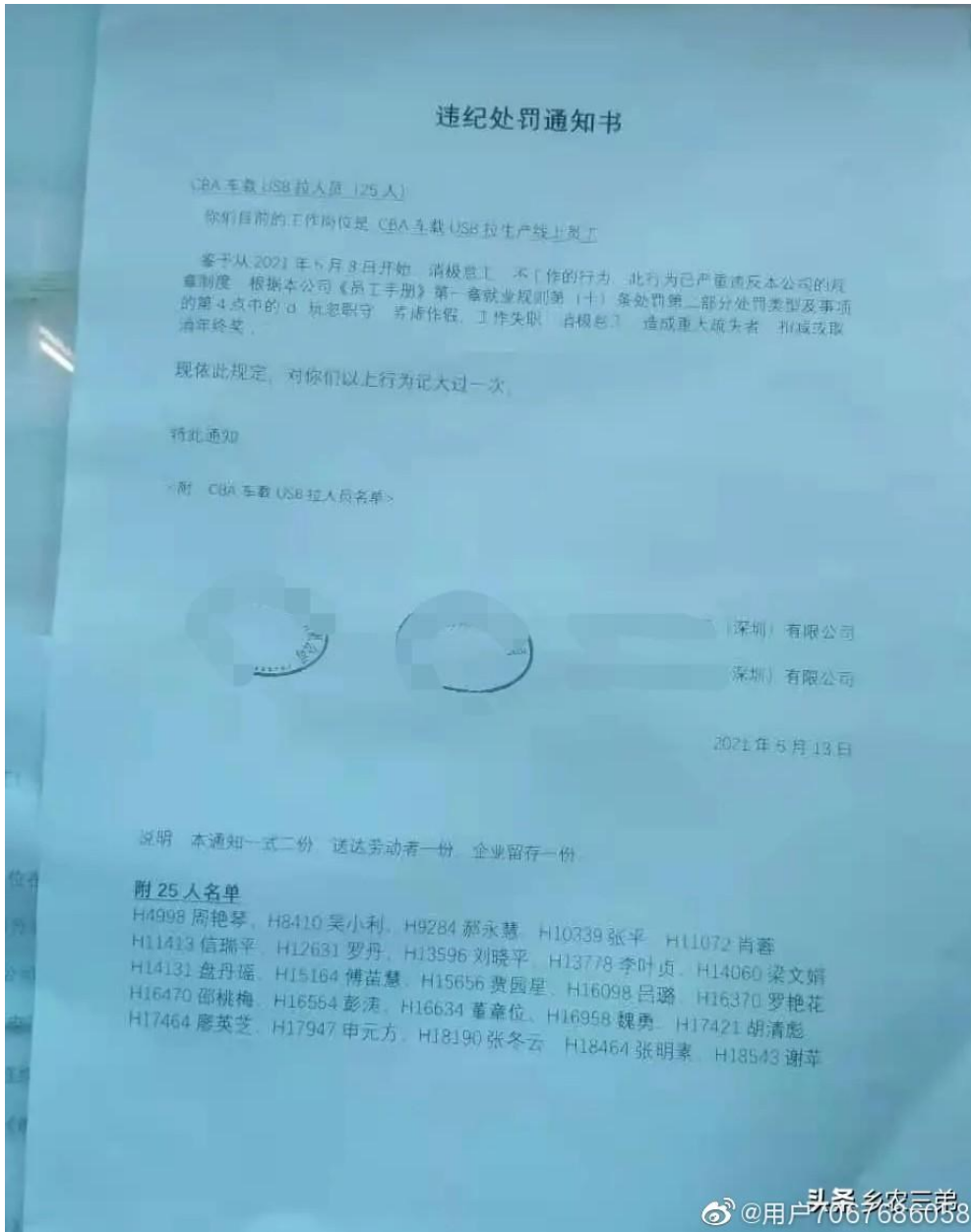


Figure 37 Layoff notification for 25 workers on May 13th

After two weeks of strike, a total of 146 workers were laid off. The company changed its business name, thus resulting without legal obligations towards former employees. During the whole dispute it is not reported any intervention by the ACFTU or by state officials.

9.4 Discussion

As already discussed, the cases that I selected cannot be considered representative of the whole population. What we can do is to compare the dynamics of these cases with the general findings in chapter 7 and 8, in which we performed a quantitative analysis on a wider but not representative sample of cases from the previous decade.

The main findings of chapter 7 were the confirmation of the model of contentious industrial relations with four actors proposed by Taylor et al (2004), in particular with the separation between the All-China Federation of Trade Unions and workers, and the appearance of “disputes of interests”.

The main findings of chapter 8 were the confirmation of the role of the state as kingmaker in disputes, as per Taylor et al (2004) and a confirmation with reservations of the revised model by Cai on success and failure of popular protests in which different pathways are possible. For the success of strike, the necessary condition with a significant coverage of empirical cases may be state intervention alone or the combination of Chinese-owned enterprises and absence of extreme behavior. There is also a combination of long strike, offensive grievances and extreme behaviors, even though it is presented with a low empirical coverage, that leads me to consider that combination more as an exception than as a rule. For the failure of strike actions, a significant coverage of empirical cases is reported by the combination of defensive grievances, absence of state intervention and presence of extreme behaviors and for the combinations of short strike, foreign ownership, absence of state intervention and absence of extreme behavior. With a lower empirical relevance, there is also the possible combination of short strike, defensive grievances and absence of state intervention. Table 27 reports a summary of the cases described above with a schematic confrontation with the findings of the chapters 7 and 8.

Table 27 Cases with respect to the findings

Case	Workers-ACFTU schism	State intervention	Path to Concessions			Path to absence of concessions				
				si	~e*~f	~s*o*e		~o*~si*e	s*~o*~si	s*f*~si*~e
2014a	V	X				V				
2014b	V	V		V						
2015	V	X					V			
2016a										
2016b	X	V	Unknown							
2017	V	V		V						
2021	V	X					V			

Throughout the cases, it appears that the recorded strike actions are still mainly defensive, with disputes of interests a minority both in the 67 cases and in the cases illustrated with some details.

The selected cases from the 2014-2021 period confirms the separation between workers and ACFTU in case of strike, with the one exception of the 2016b case, in which the strike against was declared by the local branch of the Trade Union. It is to be noted that this exception occurred in a State-Owned Enterprises and that the local Trade Union did not challenge the layoffs per-se but the lack of appropriate procedure of consultation with the Trade Union. The document reported in Figure 43 clearly shows how the ACFTU branch used sources from all levels of the Party-State to paint the strike action as legitimate within the Chinese legal frame. The strike action led to rounds of collective bargaining in which the ACFTU negotiated on behalf of the workers, but it was not possible to reconstruct how the dispute ended. The 2016b still is an exception and there is no evidence of other cases with similar dynamics.

In the 2014b case, the ACFTU formed a new branch as a result of the strike, with direct elections of union officers. However, the same company was involved in a strike one year after. The strike was triggered by fears of massive layoffs and the ACFTU branch was not found to be an active party.

I consider the 2014b case as an outlier in many ways, against the assessment of Schmalz et al (2017), who consider it as a paradigmatic case. It is a long and complicated case that caught attention from international media outlets and academics in the following years. At first sight the case presents features opposite to the causal pathways toward success of the revised Cai model: a long and protracted strike with many grievances in a foreign-owned enterprise; during the strike workers had “extreme behaviors” and clashed with police and refused the requests by the local state and by the ACFTU to go back to work. Eventually the strike was resolved by state intervention from the central level, after the work stoppage expanded to many factories and caused noteworthy economic damages to international brands. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security put an end to the dispute by recognizing the illegal behavior of the company and issued a rectification order that led to wage increases and payment of social security arrears.

What is interesting in this case is that the state was indeed the king maker of the dispute, but only after it became a broader political case in connection with a political campaign led by the central state against local officials. In table 27 this case is shown as fitting with the path formed by state intervention alone; but is quite different from the cases of the previous decade with the same path, it rather echoes some dynamics between local and central state during the cycle of strikes of the 1990s in privatized enterprises, in which workers tried to oppose the processes of privatization and layoffs by appealing against corruption. The scarcity of consolidated information on cases in the decade post 2014 makes difficult to say whether this is an exception to a general dynamic. However, the interaction between the central level of the Party-State and its local levels in a context of revival of political campaigns should be more investigated.

The king-maker role of the state is confirmed in case 2017 in which the local Labour Dispute Committee first recognized the requests of the employees as legitimate and then led the negotiations between employees and the mother company, that eventually produced an agreement between the parts.

The 2021 case, on the contrary, shows that the absence of state intervention not only produces the failure of strikes, but also the layoffs of a certain number of workers. The All-China Federation of Trade Unions in the case was not recorded to act on behalf of the workers and various rounds of layoffs passed through the legal procedure of consultation with the ACFTU, resulting in the layoff of workers. The 2015a reports a mixed intervention of the state, on the one hand, with the Labour Dispute Committee, that leads the negotiations between workers and management, on the other with the local government that refuses to intervene when the workers organize a demonstration in front of the government building and eventually deploying the police to break up the picket line.

Another hostile intervention of the state is recorded in case 2014. In response to the nationalistic mobilization by the workers, the state responded deploying the police that forced the roadblock with violence. In both the 2014a and 2021 cases that ended with absence of concessions, it was not possible to assign the cases to one of the paths found in chapter 8, confirming that more theorization is needed on the side of absence of concessions and that there are probably a plurality of paths towards failure that make it hard to generalize a model.

With respect to the four-actors model, in some case emerge the presence of external actors: media and legal assistance.

In the 2014a case, the worker beaten by the police was interviewed by a local tv station. In the 2016 case, some local media supported the decision to go on strike saying that in similar situations in processes of mergers and acquisitions strike actions were useful for workers to make their interests respected. In the same 2016 case, external lawyers offered themselves to take the dispute to the courts but were refused by the workers that chose to continue the strike action. In the 2014b legal assistance was offered by a labour NGO, whose representative were detained by police for a few days.

The emergence of these external actors may be of interest, as a signal of labour disputes becoming more and more social and political disputes outside the single workplace. However, in the cases that we have been able to review, these new actors do not appear to enter conclusively in the dynamics that lead to success or failure of strike actions.

In conclusion, we can go back to table 27 to summarize the main indications of this chapter. From the selected cases we find that:

- the Taylor et al model of industrial relations in cases of conflict with four parties still reflects the empirical cases, with the separation between workers and the official trade union fully in place with only one exception;
- even the king-making role of state in the model is confirmed, both in a positive way with the capability to end the dispute with forms of concessions and in a negative way with absence of intervention in the negotiation process or with active presence in the form of repression;
- the revised Cai model with its alternative pathways outlined in chapter 8 still fits the cases of concessions, but with some indications that the new forms of de institutionalization and re politicization may be starting to change the dynamics of contentious industrial relations. In the cases of absence of concessions, the revised Cai model still points to the pivotal importance of absence of state intervention, but with differentiated pathways.

10 - Conclusions

The nature and forms of strikes, the relations between the actors involved in cases of strike in post-reform China are the general topics of this work. What are the roles the Communist party, local authorities, the ACFTU, workers? Are they changing? Such general questions had to be better defined and clarified to be explored through the lens of social sciences, and sources had to be selected.

In Chapter 1, I started to explore the knowledge about the phenomenon of strike, intended as a disruptive manifestation of the conflict inherent to the relationship between labour and management in employment. I conducted my review by referring to analyses and contributions on the advanced economies and then moved the attention to the past experiences of planned economies and developing economies. A general theory of strike to explain the phenomenon across time and space does not emerge from the literature, but there is a general consensus on the importance of the turns in the economic cycle and, with different combinations, of the organizational strength of labour unions and of their available political opportunities.

In Chapter 2, I presented a brief history of labour organization and labour contention in China, since the founding of the first trade unions during the civil war, the establishment of the CCP government until the first years of the reform and opening up process. I devoted particular attention to the formation of industrial relations through emergence from a traditional system with soviet characteristics, which started to evolve alongside with the economic changes. The literature points to a system based on three actors - state, management, workers through the All-China Federation of Trade Unions - that evolves into a four actors' system when conflict emerges, as workers get usually detached from the ACFTU.

From Chapter 3 to Chapter 6, I presented the details of the history of the four actors and analyzed their roles in the system of industrial relations, as it emerged from the literature on the first decades of the reform process.

After establishing the general framework for both the phenomenon of strike and for Chinese environment and its system of industrial relations, the second part of this work plunges into the exploration of the original question and its re definition.

The general question on the nature and forms of strikes had to be redefined in geographical terms. This led to focus on the province of Guǎngdōng, one of the key provinces in the process of reforms and opening up, an industrial powerhouse, with a huge share in the export-oriented industrial production. Moreover, the proximity to the two special administrative zones of Macau and Hong Kong causes a relative richness of information.

A time focus was also needed. The first focus was set on the decade 2003-2013, corresponding to the Hu-Wen administration, during which there was a huge growth of available information. The results of the

geographical and diachronic focus can be found in the Chapters 7 and 8. In addition to the quantitative, Chapter 9 throws a look, with a different method, to the same province in the years after 2013.

The lack of publicly available quantitative data led to the choice to build a dataset of cases for the decade 2003-2013 through verified newspapers articles, relying on the already existing dataset China Strikes Map. The cases selected for chapter 9 come from a variety of sources, mainly newspaper articles gathered in the China Labour Bulletin Strike Map, social media posts and academic sources.

Both datasets are certainly non-representative of the whole population of strike cases. The results of the present study must thus be read as regarding the selected cases, without direct inference on the whole population.

Despite the limitations, in absence of primary data, newspaper remain the most widespread source of information on episodes of conflicts, even in the Chinese political context. The selection of events with confirmation from multiple sources across several years in a single province (as opposed to the whole country and to a single prefecture) should help to keep under control the well-known newspapers bias.

Data from each event were coded to build a dataset containing:

- General information on the event
- Semantic triplets – subject, action, object - reconstructing the narrative of the event

In chapter 7 I started to explore the dataset. First, I went through a series of simple descriptive statistics that depict how the dataset is composed in terms of:

- geographical and temporal distribution of cases;
- the characteristics of enterprises involved: nationality, industrial sector, and form of ownership;
- duration and participation of workers on strike;
- defensive or offensive nature of workers' grievances.

The selected cases show the emergence of “offensive grievances” or “disputes over interests” in which the workers' demands are set to obtain better conditions well beyond the minimums by law or have – in a few peculiar cases – political motivations attached. The emergence of disputes over interests is signaled by a significant part of the existing literature as a key feature of labour contention since the mid-2000s. The selected cases confirmed partially the rise of these kind of grievances, however the cases also showed the protracted prominence of the “defensive” dynamics in which the grievances are still oriented to obtain the minimum conditions set by law or to walk back from some pejorative changes.

As already noted, the dataset is not built to be representative, but it may be read as a collection of cases that show a certain differentiation and thus keep under partial control the selections biases.

I proceeded by extrapolating a social network dataset from the semantic triplets. In this way, I used subjects and objects of the semantic triplets as nodes and actions as the relations between the nodes. The network obtained was in turn divided into subnetworks on the basis of different kind of relations.

The measurements made on this elementary reconstruction of the network confirms that the four actors – workers, the All-China Federation of trade unions, management, and state – hold a central position in the network, while other actors are maintained in a peripheral position. I read these measures as a confirmation of the structure of the system of Chinese industrial relations in times of contention known from the literature, in particular with reference to the persistence schism between workers and the All-China Federation that – despite calls and hopes for reform – do not appear in the selected cases able or even willing to find a solution to the dilemma between its role as a Party-State apparatus and its role as a representative of workers' legitimate interests.

In Chapter 8, I perform a Qualitative Comparative Analysis on a selection of the cases that I used in the dataset for Chapter 7. From the work of Cai on success and failure of popular protests (2010) I extrapolated – and slightly adapted – a model on causal combinations that may lead to end a strike with concessions or absence of concessions. The revised model stated that the pathway to concessions is made up by a combination of

Through the instruments of QCA I tested the model extrapolated – and slightly adapted – from Cai (2010) on the causal combinations that lead to failure or success of popular protests in China. The testing permitted to confirm that both in cases of concessions and of absence of concession the state maintained a key role. In particular, the intervention of the state as an intermediary in a dispute may be sufficient alone to resolve the dispute in the direction of concessions. On the other, the refusal to intervene or intervention in the role of repressor is always a part of the combinations that lead to absence of concessions. As expected by the revised model, the Chinese nationality of the enterprise in which the strike takes place contribute to the path towards concessions. A more ambiguous role is played by the nature demands and extreme behavior that appears with different signs in the path towards concessions. The presence of extreme behavior in a path towards concessions – contrary to the expectations of the revised model – is theoretically interesting because it shows that a conflictual attitude by the workers may lead to concessions but is still way less empirically relevant than the expected path without extreme behaviors.

In Chapter 9 I performed a qualitative analysis on a small selection of cases from 2014 to 2021. This limited analysis has its interest because of the changing economic cycle, with the establishing of a “new normal” with lower GDP growth, and because of the shift from the Hu-Wen administration to the Xi-Li administration

that showed a reinforcement of the role of the Chinese Communist Party over many fields of the social, economic, and political life. The qualitative analysis confirmed the four actors' system of industrial relations in times of conflict. The selected cases also confirm the presence of disputes of interests alongside with disputes over rights. Broadly speaking, the revised Cai model was confirmed with respect to the pathways towards concession, with a confirmation of the prominent role of the state as the key actor. The pathways to strike failure appears more complicated and differentiated from the ones found in chapter 8, but always with the absence of state intervention.

From the selected cases emerge two possible new features not showed in the dataset from the 2003-2013 decade, in particular:

- An influence from national political campaigns – in particular the anti-corruption campaign that characterizes the Xí Jìnpíng tenure since the very beginning - on singles cases of strike. This interaction is theoretically interesting because it involves the relations between the central state and the local state, while in the analysis on the 2003-2013 period this relation was not under lens;
- The entrance of new actors in the cases of strikes, in the form of labour NGOs and lawyers. If this kind of actor could find a way towards a more central position in the social network of strikes, they may alter the four actors' model for the first time in decades.

These new features are only two aspects on the many that may be further explored. Future projects of research on the topic will suffer from the same limitations of data, partially worsened by the stricter control over newspapers, but also partially improved by the emergence of information on social media. The use of information from social media raises a whole new set of problems over the confirmation of events and about the selection bias. It is however a field rapidly expanding, even in the particular environment of the Chinese internet.

Regarding the actors, there are still many open questions:

- I have assessed the centrality of the state in the selected cases. The interaction between the local state and the central level appeared only occasionally in the selected case. More attention should be dedicated to the relation between the administrative levels of the state and the influence of changes of policy at the central and local levels.
- While a lot of attention was dedicated in the literature to certain cases in which the workers advocated for the formation of independent trade unions, in the selected cases I recorded an extremely limited occurrence of such requests and, above all, no signs of permanence after the end of the strike of the workers' representative elected or nominated to bargain. In-depth research should be dedicated to analyzing the possible institutionalization of provisory workers'

representatives into the ACFTU and whether instances of strikes in a single enterprise may lead to long-term transformations in the work process.

- The virtual absence of actions by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions seems relevant with respect to the hypothesis advanced in the Literature on the possibility of a self-reform that could lead the official union to be more responsive to this kind of events. This does not mean that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions may not play any kind of role in industrial relations, further attention should be dedicated on the one hand to the dynamic of indicated by the literature in certain sectors – especially the state-owned sector and big foreign hi-tech enterprises – in which the ACFTU plays a role of prevention of conflict. On the other, the most recent developments in which the official union was empowered with the political role to elevate the conditions of platform workers should be kept under scrutiny.

In conclusion, I can say that the analyses presented in this work, with their limitations, indicates that the phenomenon of strikes changed during the time period taken into account, but the general model of relations between the actors remained the same forged during the first decades of economic reforms.

In the literature a great attention was dedicated to some startling events that seemingly indicated the way towards an assertive turn in workers' demands and methods, to which institutions may react on the one hand with the classical binomial of concessions and repression and on the other hand with self-reform. The analysis in this work points to a situation in which the assertive turn is a relevant minority of the cases and not a general trend and in which the reaction by the local Party-State remained pretty invariant with the binomial of concessions and repression administrated according to the single cases. In the literature it could be find the prediction, or rather the hope, that a prolonged period of labour contention could lead the Party-State to further review its policy towards the right to strike. At the central level the Party-State produced up to the mid-2010s regulations to institutionalize its reactions to strike, while maintaining strike itself in a limbo. On the local level – that was the level of analysis of this work – the Party-State often proposed itself as a mediator in labour disputes and strikes. Both the central level and local levels of the Party-State maintain the ambivalence on strike activity and did not took a definitive direction towards its legalization. The particular institution that is the All-China Federation of Trade seems to never really have started the process of reform that many times seemed incumbent. As a result, the official union remained in the same position inherited from the 1980s and the 1990s, when its constitutive ambiguity was set, making it virtually impossible for the ACFTU to react to labour contention.

Appendix – Data coding and querying in Quantitative Narrative Analysis

A-1 The grammar of quantitative narrative analysis

Quantitative narrative analysis is built on the basic semantic structure Subject – Verb – Object to organize and transmit information. In fact, newspapers articles are never made up only by narrative clauses, they may include evaluative, descriptive and analytical clauses (Franzosi 2004: 225). It is thus necessary to eliminate from the analysis all the clauses that do not narrate what goes on during a strike, such as evaluation of the legitimacy of workers' actions, praise or critics for the actions of institutions and so on. Narrative clause must in turn be reduced to the Subject – Verb - Object structure. It is possible to add to the rephrased narrative clauses pieces of information not contained in the original clause or obtained from additional research.

The basic feature of a quantitative narrative analysis project is its grammar, that is the expandable tree that from the SVO structure allows to organize the information provided by the narrative text. The grammar-tree is elaborated on the basis of the needs of the research. In § A.3 I provide a brief guide to read the grammar while in §A.4 I report the full grammar used for this project.

In my case I elaborated the grammar for my project following the one provided with the PC-ACE software that was elaborated for a project on lynching in the southern United States. While most of the grammar is still useful for my aims, I had to add (a) complex and simplex objects to code Chinese administrative levels and institutions; (b) complex and simplex objects to code information that emerged in the research design; (c) aggregate codes to aggregate simplex into useful categories to discuss what emerged in the research design.

Here I provide a simple example of the process of coding:

From

Huizhou Zhongkai TCL Legrand International Co., Ltd. employees were dissatisfied with wages and salaries. Nearly 1,000 employees went on strike this morning

To

(Reason of grievance: Wage arrears - downward wage - raised rental fees) (Outcome of grievance: Unknown) (Type of event: strike) (Space: (Administrative division: (Prefecture/county: Huizhou) (Province/municipality: Guangdong)))

(Participant-S: (Actor: (Collective actor: (Name of collective actor: Teachers) (Collective characteristics: (Job: employee) (Number: (Approximate qualifier: nearly) (Quantitative value: (Numeric value: 1000)))))) (Process: (Simple process: (Verbal phrase: went on strike)

(Aggregate code: strike) (Circumstances: (Time: (Date: (Definite date: (Definite date: 01-06-2011)))))) (Participant-O: (Case: against) (Actor: (Organization: (Complex organization: (SIC: 36) (Nationality: Chinese) (Ownership regime: State owned) (Name of organization: Huizhou Zhongkai TCL Legrand International Co. Ltd.) (Type of organization: direct employer))))))

The two simple clauses of the original newspaper article were re elaborated in an initial set of data valid through out all the case, the data on the ownership, nationality and standard industrial code of the company was obtained through additional research.

A.2 Querying data

PC-ACE software allows to code data, but it is not a statistical software. To analyze data coded with PC-ACE it is necessary to build queries in the SQL language and export the results into data sheets. The basic unit from which data is queried maybe the semantic triplet Subject-Verb-Object with all its possible modifiers or other simplex objects attached as characteristics of the single document.

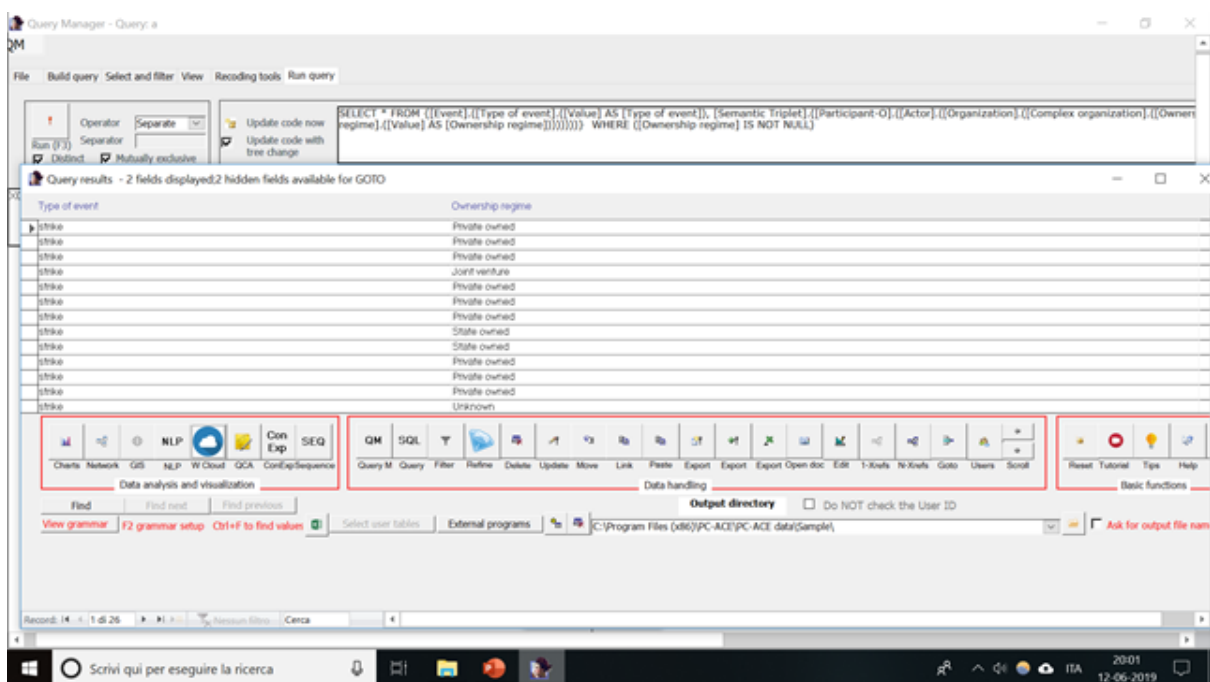


Figure 38 Data query in PC-ACE, an example

A simple example in Figure 38 shows a query in which we recall the ownership regime of enterprises involved in events of strike. In this case the ownership regime is obtained from a simplex under a series of complex objects under the Object in the semantic triplet, while the kind of event is a simplex attached as characteristic of the single document.



Figure 39 Data query in PC-ACE, a second example

A more complicated example is in Figure 39, that shows a query in which we recall which kind of Action is made by the Subjects coded as “direct employer” towards Objects coded as “worker”. In this case as a result with get that Action is coded into two categories: “bargaining/negotiation” and “concession”. The result of this query was exported to the software Gephi and Ucinet, in which I translated S and O as “nodes” and V as “edge”. The final result is the network graph in Figure 40.

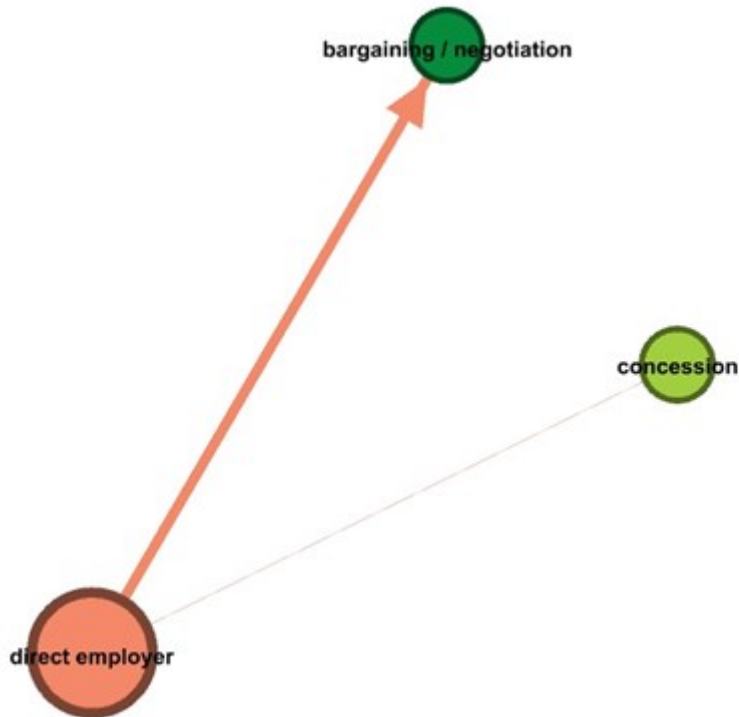


Figure 40 A graph with different actions

In the following pages I report grammar used to code the selected newspaper articles. It is a simplified and reworked version of the grammar included in the PC-ACE software.

A.3 How to read the grammar

- > Rewrite Rule: the object to the left of the arrow is rewritten in terms of the object(s) to the right;
- < > indicates that an object can be rewritten (i.e., is not a terminal element of the grammar);
- [] indicates that an object is optional;
- { } indicates that an object may have multiple instances;
- | indicates a logical OR between alternative values that a simplex can take;
- ++ denotes One-To-Many (Hierarchical) complex objects (complex objects are made up of simplex and complex objects);
- + denotes One-To-Few complex objects (objects enclosed in <> without a + or ++ are simplex objects);
- (1a)(1b)... denote grouped and mutually exclusive objects.

Each case is encoded under the object [**< ++Event >**]

Under [**< ++Event >**] we have the underlying objects [**< ++Semantic Triplet >**] and a series of other underlying objects

Each Semantic Triplet > is composed by a participant-subject, a process and a participant-object. <+Participant-s> and <+Participant-o> are usually actors, either collective or individual or organizations. <+Participant-o> may also be a <+Physical object>

<+Actors>

<+Individual actor>

<Name>

<surname>

<age>

<job>

<nationality>

<affiliation>

...

<+Collective actor>

<Name of collective actor>

<Collective characteristics>

<Number>

<Job>

Worker | peasant | taxi driver | worker's representative | management | ...

<+Organization>

{<+Institution (1a)>}

<state organization>

All China Federation of Trade Unions | Police | Central state | Province-level state | Local-level state

<organization>

<Nationality>

<Ownership regime>

Collective | Private | State | Join venture

<2 digits standard industrial code>

<Name of organization>

<Type of organization>

Direct employer | contractor | sub contractor | supplier | ...

<Physical objects>

<Name of the object>

<Type of object>

Road | Building | ...

<+Process>

<Verbal phrase>

<Aggregate code>

Bargaining/negotiation | concession | control | demonstration | strike | dismissal | threat |
violence | election | occupation | ...

Other underlying objects

[Definite date]

the date of the beginning of the event

[{<+Duration>}]

*duration of the event measured in days (it is possible to measure also in hours, minutes or in any other
time unit we could be interested in)*

<type of event>

Strike | lockout | demonstration | ...

<+Space>

<Village level>

<Township level>

<County level>

<prefecture level>

<Province level>

These are the administrative levels of the Chinese state. In nearly all cases we can go at least at County level

The object [<+Grievance>] includes information about:

<Type of grievance>

Offensive | defensive | mixed

<Reason of grievance>

Benefits – social insurance – bonus | Fuel – prices | Higher wages | Downward wages
– wage arrears | Nationalism | Hours – speed up | ...

<Dispute outcome>

Private concessions | State concession | State repression ! Private repression | No
concession

<Grade of outcome>

Full | Partial

A.4 The full grammar

1:
26: <+Event> --> [<Definite date>] <Type of event> <+Space>
27: [<+Grievance>] [<+Duration>] [{{<+Semantic Triplet>}}]
28: <Definite date> --> 08-02-1888 | 09-02-1888 | 16-06-1894 | 22-03-201 |
21-04-2004 | ...
29:
30: <+Semantic Triplet> --> <+Participant-S> <+Process> [{{<+Participant-O>}}]
32:
33: <+Participant-S> --> {<+Actor>}
34:
35: <+Actor> --> {<+Individual (1a)>} {<+Collective actor (1b)>}
{<+Organization (1c)>}
36:
37: <+Individual> --> <Name of individual actor> [{{<+Personal
characteristics>}}]
38: <Name of individual actor> --> ? | 200 - 400 crane | A female worker |
39: A self-proclaimed deputy director of the Public Security Bureau |
40: a Stella executive | ...
41:
42: <+Personal characteristics> --> [<+First name and last name>] [<Gender>]
[<+Age>] [<Race>]
43: [{{<+Family relationship>}}] [<+Residence>] [{{<Nationality>}}]
44: [{{<Body part>}}] [{{<Type of actor (Adjective)>}}] [{{<Job>}}]
45: [{{<+Organization>}}] [<Party affiliation: Political party>]
46:
47: <+First name and last name> --> [<First name>] [<Middle name: First
name>] <Last name>
48: <First name> --> John | Mary | Michael | Mose | ...
49: <Middle name: First name> --> John | Mary | Michael | Mose | ...
50: <Last name> --> Chapman | Fisher | Herring | Larson | ...
51: <Gender> --> female | male
52:
53: <+Age> --> <Qualitative age (1a)> <Exact age: Numeric value (1b)>
54: <Qualitative age> --> old | young | ...
55: <Exact age: Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
57:
61:
62: <+Residence> --> <+Space>
63:

64: <+Space> --> {<+City (1a)>} {<+Territory (1b)>}
65:
66: <+City> --> [<Village level>] [<Township level>] [<County level>]
[<Prefecture level>]
67: [<Province level>] [<Space qualifier>] [<Spatial direction>]
68: [<+Distance from city>] [<+Locality within city>] [<Locality near city>]
69: [{<+Relation to other location>}]
70: <Village level> --> Baishi | Fuxin | Jiuwei | Mazhigang | Shuidou | ...
71: <Township level> --> Huanzhen Road | Buji | Changping | Dagang |
Dalingshan | ...
72: <County level> --> Baiyun | Bao'an | Binhai | Boluo | Changcheng | ...
73: <Prefecture level> -->
| Dongguan | Foshan | Guangzhou | Heyuan | ...
74: <Province level> --> Gansu | Guangdong | Henan | ...
76: <Space qualifier> --> along | behind | close to | in front of | ...
77: <Spatial direction> --> across | to | towards | ...
78:
79: <+Distance from city> --> [<Approximate qualifier>] <Numeric value>
<space unit>
80: [<Direction: Cardinal/Ordinal>]
81: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
82: <Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
83: <space unit> --> foot | mile | yard | miles | ...
84: <Direction: Cardinal/Ordinal> --> East | North | Northeast | Northwest |
South
85:
86: <+Locality within city> --> {<+Address (1a)>} {<+Building (1b)>}
{<Neighborhood (1c)>}
87:
88: <+Address> --> [<Number: Numeric value>] <Street (1a)> <Square (1b)>
[<Neighborhood>]
89: <Number: Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
90: <Street> --> Clifton Road | Huanzhen Road | ...
91: <Square> --> String
92: <Neighborhood> --> String
93:

94: <+Building> --> [<Headquarters of>] [<Proper name of building>] <Type of building>
 95: [<+Address>]
 96: <Headquarters of> --> String
 97: <Proper name of building> --> Hinesville jail | ...
 98: <Type of building> --> bank | jail | store | warehouse | ...
 99: <+Address> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 88
 100: <Neighborhood> --> String
 101: <Locality near city> --> beach | lake | woods | ...
 102:
 103: <+Relation to other location> --> [<+Distance from Location>]
 <Direction: Cardinal/Ordinal>
 104: <+Location>
 105:
 106: <+Distance from Location> --> [<Approximate qualifier>] <Numeric value>
 <Space unit>
 107: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
 108: <Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
 109: <Space unit> --> foot | mile | yard | miles | ...
 110: <Direction: Cardinal/Ordinal> --> East | North | Northeast | Northwest
 | South
 117: <+Territory> --> [<+Distance from territory>] [<Spatial direction>]
 <+Type of territory>
 118: [<Non administrative unit>] [{<+Relation to other location>}]
 119:
 120: <+Distance from territory> --> [<Approximate qualifier>] <Numeric
 value> <space unit>
 121: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
 122: <Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
 123: <space unit> --> foot | mile | yard | miles | ...
 124: <Spatial direction> --> across | to | towards | ...
 131: <Nationality> --> American | Irish | Mexican | Chinese | Finnish | ...
 134: <Job> --> banker | butcher | doctor | farmer | peasant | ...
 135:
 136: <+Organization> --> {<+Institution (1a)>} {<+Complex organization
 (1b)>}
 137: [<Role in the Organisation>]
 138:
 139: <+Institution> --> <State organisation (1b)> <Other institution (1c)>

140: <State organisation> --> ACFTU | Central-level state | Local state | police |
141: Province-level state | ...
142: <Other institution> --> String
143:
144: <+Complex organization> --> [<Nationality>] [<Owneship regime>] [<SIC>] <Name of organization>
145: [<+Number and level of organizational unit>] [<Type of organisation>]
146: [<+Name of unit>] [<+Number of individuals in unit>]
147: [{<+Locality of unit>}] [{<+Ownership>}]
148: <Nationality> --> American | Irish | Mexican | Chinese | Finnish | ...
149: <Ownership regime> --> COE | JV | POE | SOE | ...
151: <SIC> --> 0 | 20 | 23 | 25 | 27 | ...
152: <Name of organization> --> Alei Siti Auto Parts Company |
153: Baoan Shajing Amifuo Shuomin Technology | ceramic factory |
154: Chuangbaoda Electric Appliance Co | Citizen Holdings Co | ...
155:
156: <+Number and level of organizational unit> --> <+Number of units: Number> <Level of unit>
157:
158: <+Number> --> [<Comparative qualifier>] [<Approximate qualifier>] <+Qualitative value (1a)>
159: <+Quantitative value (1b)>
160: <Comparative qualifier> --> fewer | less | more | ...
161: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
162:
163: <+Qualitative value> --> [<Quantitative qualifier>] <Numeral>
164: <Quantitative qualifier> --> a few | little | much | ...
165: <Numeral> --> many | several | ...
166:
167: <+Quantitative value> --> <Numeric value (1a)> <+Range of values (1b)>
168: [<+Value out of total>]
169: <Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
170:
171: <+Range of values> --> <Lower value: Numeric value> <Upper value: Numeric value>

172: <Lower value: Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
173: <Upper value: Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
174:
175: <+Value out of total> --> <Out of total: Numeric value> <Numeric value>
176: <Out of total: Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
177: <Numeric value> --> 4 | 6 | 15 | 20 | 30 | ...
178: <Level of unit> --> office | sector | ...
179: <Type of organisation> --> Direct employer | subcontractor |
189:
190: <+Number of individuals in unit> --> {<+Number>}
191: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
192:
193: <+Locality of unit> --> {<+Space>}
194: <+Space> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 64
195:
196: <+Ownership> --> {<+Individual (1a)>} {<+Organization (1b)>}
197: <+Individual> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 37
198: <+Organization> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 136
199: <Role in the Organisation> --> deputy sheriff | police officer |
sheriff | ...
201:
202: <+Collective actor> --> <Name of collective actor> [{<+Collective
characteristics>}]
203: <Name of collective actor> --> 1 000 employees | 1 000 workers | 100
employees | 100 security guards |
205:
206: <+Collective characteristics> --> [{<Gender>}] [{<+Age>}]
207: [{<Nationality>}] [{<Type of actor (Adjective)>}]
208: [{<Job>}] [{<+Organization>}]
209: [{<Party affiliation: Political party>}] [{<+Group composition>}]
210: [{<+Subgroup (among which): Subset (among which)>}] [{<+Number>}]
211: <Gender> --> female | male
212: <+Age> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 53
214: <+Family relationship> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 58
216: <Nationality> --> American | Irish | Mexican | Chinese | Finnish | ...
218: <Job> --> worker | workers' representative | private guard | farmer |
peasant | ...
219: <+Organization> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 136
222: <+Group composition> --> <Part qualifier> <+Actor>

223: <Part qualifier> --> among which | ...
 224: <+Actor> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 35
 225:
 226: <+Subset (among which)> --> <Part qualifier> <+Actor>
 227: <Part qualifier> --> among which | ...
 228: <+Actor> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 35
 229: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
 230: <+Organization> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 136
 231:
 232: <+Process> --> {<+Simple process (1a)>}
 233:
 234: <+Simple process> --> <Verbal phrase> [<Negation>] [<Modal verb>]
 <Aggregate code> [<+Circumstances>]
 235: <Verbal phrase> --> agreed | are still in further consultations |
 236: are working on arranging more negotiations | arrested | assaulted | ...
 237: <Negation> --> no | not | ...
 238: <Modal verb> --> can | could | have to | must | shall | ...
 239: <Aggregate code> --> arrest | Bargaining / negotiation | concession |
 control | demonstration | ...
 240:
 241: <+Circumstances> --> {<+Time>} [{<+Duration>}] {<+Space>} [{<+Reason>}]
 242: [{<+Number>}] [{<+Instrument>}] [{<+Content>}]
 244:
 245: <+Time> --> [<Approximate qualifier>] <+Date> [<+Time of day>]
 [<Temporal periodicity>]
 246: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
 247:
 248: <+Date> --> <+Definite date (1a)> <+Indefinite date (1b)>
 249:
 250: <+Definite date> --> [<Temporal direction>] <Definite date>
 251: <Temporal direction> --> after | ago | before | ...
 252: <Definite date> --> 08-02-1888 | 09-02-1888 | 16-06-1894 | 22-03-201 |
 21-04-2004 | ...
 253:
 254: <+Indefinite date> --> [<Temporal direction>] [<Time qualifier>]
 [<+Time expression>]
 255: <+Reference yardstick>
 256: <Temporal direction> --> after | ago | before | ...
 257: <Time qualifier> --> early | late | mid | ...

258:
 259: <+Time expression> --> <Day (1a)> <Month (1b)> <Season (1c)>
 [<Quantitative qualifier>]
 260: <Generic temporal expression (1d)>
 261: <Day> --> Friday | Monday | Saturday | Sunday | Thursday
 262: <Month> --> April | August | December | February | January
 263: <Season> --> Autumn | Fall | Spring | Summer | Winter
 264: <Quantitative qualifier> --> a few | little | much | ...
 265: <Generic temporal expression> --> days | months | weeks | years |
 yesterday | ...
 266:
 267: <+Reference yardstick> --> <Article date: Definite date (1a)>
 <Newspaper date (1b)>
 268: <+Semantic Triplet (1c)> <+Event (1d)> <+Macro Event (1e)>
 269: <Article date: Definite date> --> 08-02-1888 | 09-02-1888 | 16-06-1894
 | 22-03-201 |
 270: 21-04-2004 | ...
 271: <Newspaper date> --> 09-02-1888 | 10-02-1888 | 16-06-1894 | 11-04-2003
 | 22-08-2003 | ...
 272: <+Semantic Triplet> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 30
 273: <+Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 26
 274: <+Macro Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 24
 275:
 276: <+Time of day> --> [<Approximate qualifier>] [<Time qualifier>] <+Exact
 Hour: Exact Hour (1a)>
 277: <+Indefinite time of day (1b)>
 278: <Approximate qualifier> --> about | circa | ...
 279: <Time qualifier> --> early | late | mid | ...
 280:
 281: <+Exact Hour> --> <Hour and minute>
 282: <Hour and minute> --> 00:00:00 | ...
 283:
 284: <+Indefinite time of day> --> [<Time qualifier>] <Moment of the day>
 285: <Time qualifier> --> early | late | mid | ...
 286: <Moment of the day> --> afternoon | dawn | morning | night | ...
 287: <Temporal periodicity> --> daily | monthly | weekly | yearly | ...
 288:

289: <+Duration> --> <+Quantitative Duration (1b)>
290: <Qualitative Duration> --> awhile | ...
291:
292: <+Quantitative Duration> --> {<+Number>} {<Time unit>}
293: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
294: <Time unit> --> hours | minutes | seconds | days | ...
295: <+Space> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 64
296:
297: <+Reason> --> <Name of reason> [<+Semantic Triplet (1a)>] [<+Event (1b)>] [<+Macro Event (1c)>]
298: <Name of reason> --> assault | charge | lynching | murder | ...
299: <+Semantic Triplet> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 30
300: <+Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 26
301: <+Macro Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 24
302: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
303:
304: <+Instrument> --> <Type on instrument> [{<+Number>}]
305: <Type on instrument> --> bullets | fire | gun | kerosene | shots | ...
306: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
307:
317:
318: <+Content> --> <Name of content> [<+Semantic Triplet (1a)>] [<+Event (1b)>] [<+Macro Event (1c)>]
319: <Name of content> --> charge | deed | speech | ...
320: <+Semantic Triplet> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 30
321: <+Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 26
322: <+Macro Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 24
343:
344: <+Participant-O> --> [<Case>] <+Actor (1a)> <+Physical object (1b)> <+Abstract object (1c)>
345: <Case> --> across | from | to | Against | ...
346: <+Actor> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 35
347:
348: <+Physical object> --> <Type of physical object> [<Proper name>] [{<+Number>}] [<+Ownership>]
349: <+Implicit object>
350: <Type of physical object> --> buildings | everything | house | store | tree | ...
351: <Proper name> --> Baoan Avenue | Commercial North Street | National highway 107 |
352: National Highway 321 Sanshui Road | Tangxia section of the Guanshen Highway | ...

353: <+Number> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 158
354: <+Ownership> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 196
355:
356: <+Implicit object> --> {<+Actor>}
357: <+Actor> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 35
358:
359: <+Abstract object> --> <Name of abstract object> <+Implicit object>
360: <Name of abstract object> --> fear | ...
361: <+Implicit object> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 356
362: <Relation to next triplet> --> because | therefore | when | ...
363:
364: <+Alternative triplet> --> <+Semantic Triplet>
365: <+Semantic Triplet> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 30
366: <_verifiedSC> --> True/False
367: <_verifiedIO> --> True/False
368: <Type of event> --> demonstration | lockout | strike | ...
371: <Source of information> --> dispatches |
372: [http //acftu.people.com.cn/GB/67561/7535273.html](http://acftu.people.com.cn/GB/67561/7535273.html)
[http //society.people.com.cn/GB/1062/7385333.html](http://society.people.com.cn/GB/1062/7385333.html)
<Http //www.chinanews.com/fz/2013/02-06/4552813.shtml>
|
373: <http //www.china-labour.org.hk/en/node/100934>
<http //www.aboluowang.com/news/2010/1121/186238.html>
|
374: <Http //www.chinanews.com/edu/2012/03-30/3787149.shtml>
|
375: <http //www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5ivtkOOAJpcGuMtM5z3MCt0fXAfdQ>
| ...
376: <+Space> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 64
377:
379: <+Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 26
382:
383: <+Grievance> --> [<Grade of outcome>] [{<Reason of grievance>}]
[<Dispute outcome>] [<Type of grievance>]
384: [<Reason of grievance>]
385: <Grade of outcome> --> Full | Partial | Unknown | ...

386: <Reason of grievance> --> Benefits - social insurance - bonus |
Competition | Corruption | Fuel - prices |
387: Higher wages | ...
388: <Dispute outcome> --> Arrests | Private concessions | Private violence
| State concessions | ...
391: <Type of grievance> --> Defensive | Mixed | Offensive | Unknown | ...
392: <Reason of grievance> --> Benefits - social insurance - bonus |
Competition | Corruption | Fuel - prices |
393: Higher wages | ...
394: <+Duration> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 289
396: <+Semantic Triplet> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 30
400: <++Event> --> Rewrite rules for this object on line 26

A.5 The list of newspapers

News source	Language	Number
0533jj.com	Chinese	1
21cn.cn	Chinese	1
315jiage.cn	Chinese	1
AFP	English	4
All Job Search	Chinese	1
Ashai Shimbun	Chinese	1
AsiaNews	Chinese	1
Baiducontent	Chinese	3
BBC Chinese	Chinese	1
BBC English	English	1
bbs.163.com	Chinese	1
blog.163.com	Chinese	1
Blog.sina	Chinese	4
Boxun	Chinese	22
Business Week	English	1
Caixin English	English	2
Chengbiancun	Chinese	3
China Daily	English	1
China Fiber Optics Online	English	1
China Labor Watch	English	3
China Labour Bulletin	English	52
China Post	English	1
China Study Group	English	1
China.org	English	1
Christian Science Monitor	English	1
city.tianya.cn	Chinese	1
Club.china.com	English	2
Dayoo.com	Chinese	1
Dongfang.net	Chinese	1
Dongguan 165	Chinese	1
Dongguan Shijian Net	Chinese	1
Dongguan Times	Chinese	1
Duowei News	Chinese	1
Eastday.com	Chinese	1
Edufang.com	Chinese	1
Epoch Times	English	2
ews.hea.cn	Chinese	1
Fiber OFWeek	Chinese	1
Financial limes	English	1
Focus Taiqan	English	1
Foshan Ribao	Chinese	1
Gd309	Chinese	1
Gmw.com	Chinese	1

Guangzhou Ribao	Chinese	3
Guba.com.cn	Chinese	1
hi.baidu.com	Chinese	1
Hong Kong Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy	Chinese	2
Ifeng	Chinese	3
Job5156.com	Chinese	1
JTTP	Chinese	18
kdnet	Chinese	1
Lianda.com.hk	Chinese	1
Libcom.org	English	1
Longgang.net	Chinese	1
Los Angeles Times	English	1
Molihua	Chinese	7
money.163.com	Chinese	1
Nanfang ribao	Chinese	5
News 163	Chinese	2
News Winshang	Chinese	1
newschinamag	English	1
Numble.com	Chinese	1
Oriental Daily	Chinese	1
People's Daily	Chinese	1
Phoenix Weekly	English	1
Radio Free Asia	English	2
Radio Free Asia	Chinese	10
Radio Free Asia	Cantonese	5
Radiovr	English	1
Renren blog	Chinese	1
Reuters	English	3
Sdchina	Chinese	1
Secret China	Chinese	1
Shenxhen Bendi Bao	Chinese	1
Shijie Gongchang	Chinese	1
shoeshr.com	Chinese	1
Socialism Today	English	1
Sohu	Chinese	10
Sound of Hope	English	1
South China Morning Post	English	1
Southern Metropolis Daily	Chinese	7
Sz.szhk.com	Chinese	1
Szxf.net	Chinese	1
Taipei Times	English	1
Takung Pao	Chinese	1
The Age	English	1
tieba.baidu.com	English	3

Tradejiangmen	Chinese	1
Venturedata	English	1
Washington Post	English	1
Weilan Riben	Chinese	1
Weiquanwagn	Chinese	1
Wolun	Chinese	1
Worker Pioneer	English	1
World socialist website	English	4
wqw	Chinese	1
Xiandai Kuaibao	Chinese	1
Xiegang government website	Chinese	1
Xinhua	Chinese	1
Xinkuai Bao	Chinese	1
Yangcheng Wanbao	Chinese	1
yict.com	Chinese	1
Zhidao.baidu.com	Chinese	1
Zhongshan Daily	Chinese	1
Zibb	Chinese	1

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