

## **DIFFUSION OF DEMOCRACY AMONG CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE**

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In recent years, a great number of studies have convincingly shown that diffusion influences states' probability to democratise. The primary interest of most of these studies has been on how diffusion influences democracy at the national level. The effect of democratic diffusion on the local level has largely been neglected. This paper thus investigates how and to what extent diffusion influences the density and conflict orientation of non-governmental labour organisations (LNGOs), comprising a typical case of civil society groups channelling democratic freedoms, in China's Guangdong province. Since the province is close to the relatively liberal city of Hong Kong, there is reason to believe that support from international civil society groups based in Hong Kong may be critical for the survival and growth of conflict-oriented LNGOs in Guangdong. In the article, the research question is studied by both comparative analysis of cross-regional data and qualitative analysis of interview data. Both methods confirm that diffusion – or, more precisely, diffusion through international civil society networks – is a prominent factor for explaining the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in Guangdong. The study demonstrates that democratic diffusion not only has an impact at the state level but also on the regional, intrastate level.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Diffusion has been raised as an important factor explaining democratisation.<sup>1</sup> Protest actions against authoritarian regimes and demands for democracy often spread from one country to the next, particularly if the countries are neighbours and they have significant interaction with each other. The revolution initiated by the overthrow of France's "Citizen King" Louis Philippe in 1848, for instance, quickly spread to the German states, the Habsburg Empire and Denmark. In 1989, the democratic revolution in Poland was followed by a year-long wave of democratic transitions, which swept away authoritarian regimes in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The colour revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine (2000–2014) are recent examples of democratic diffusion. However, a closer examination of the history of democratisation reveals that diffusion influences not only states but also intrastate regions. For instance, the revolution of 1848 reached the West-Prussian city of Cologne, closer to the French epicentre,

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<sup>1</sup> Diffusion refers to how ideas or innovations (in this case, the innovation of democracy) spread.

before it reached the East Prussian city of Berlin (Weyland 2012:917). The fall of the East German regime three decades ago reached its climax in East Berlin, a city which was so close to the West that its inhabitants could hear rock music playing on the other side of the Berlin Wall. Likewise, during the colour revolutions, support for democracy was stronger in Western Ukraine, having denser ties to central Europe, than in the more Russia-oriented Eastern Ukraine (Yekelchuk 2015: 20). In geographically large and populated countries, the effect of democratic diffusion on intrastate regions may vary much more than in the examples described above.

The democratisation literature has mainly studied how diffusion influences states, and to a large extent it has neglected how diffusion influences democratic development at the local level. By treating non-governmental labour groups (henceforth designated LNGOs) in China as an indicator of an incipient democratic opposition, this study aims to investigate how diffusion influences democratic development at the intrastate regional level. The study focuses on Guangdong province in Southern China, as this region is closely connected to the self-ruling and relatively liberal city of Hong Kong. The primary research question is: “How and to what extent does diffusion influence the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in Guangdong?”<sup>2</sup> Given that civil rights are better protected in Hong Kong than in mainland China, there is reason to believe that international civil society groups can use the city as a springboard for spreading democracy to Guangdong. Thus, the hypothesis is that diffusion through international civil society networks is an especially important factor for explaining the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in the province. In order to reach a valid answer to the research question, the discourse and activities of the LNGO community is studied by both comparative analysis and qualitative interviews.

## DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In this section, the dependent variable of the study, democracy in the form of civil society, is discussed and operationalised. Democracy is understood as a non-dichotomous and multi-dimensional concept (Coppedge, Alvarez & Maldonado 2008:632; Lindberg et al. 2014:159). Dahl’s (1998:84–85) liberal and relatively maximalist definition, according to which some basic freedoms (speech, press, organisation and assembly) constitute cornerstones of the concept, is applied to theoretically understand democracy. These political rights have traditionally often been exercised by civil society groups or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), broadly defined as organisations that belong neither to the state nor to the market. Civil society has historically primarily been considered a phenomenon of democratic states. However, in recent years it has also become common to use the concept to describe non-state actors in authoritarian systems (Taylor 1990:98; Wnuk-Lipiński 2007:675–679). In the literature on democratic transitions, the bottom-up democratisation led by civil society has been contrasted against the top-down democratisation led by elite pacts, although it is usually recognised that these are interrelated phenomena (O’Donnell & Schmitter 1986:48; Diamond 1999:234). There is plenty of evidence suggesting that civil society played an important role in democratic transitions during the third wave of democratisation in all parts of the world, not least in Poland, South Korea and Latin America (Bush 2015:67; Grugel 2002:115; Kamrava & Mora 1998:911).

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2 The concept of conflict orientation is used in order to distinguish oppositional groups, regarded as having greater democratising potential, from moderate groups.

In this study, civil society is defined in a liberal way as “the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules” (Diamond 1999: 221). It should be noted that not all civil society groups have a democratising impact (Brysk 2000: 151; Teets 2014: 2). This is especially true in China, where the borders between the authoritarian state and social groups are often blurry (Foster 2001: 84–109; He & Huang 2014: 12; Hsu & Hasmath 2014: 516–534). Inspired by Larry Diamond (1999: 228), this study assesses the democratising impact of civil society based on both its density (that is, the number and size of organisations) and its conflict orientation (that is, to what extent groups exercise democratic rights). The prime analytical tool used for categorising the conflict orientation of LNGOs consists of the six polar (yes/no) questions presented in Table 1. The potential to mobilise protest and exercise freedom of assembly is measured on the basis of the extent that civil society groups encourage, legitimise or mention protest. The potential to increase political competitiveness and exercise freedom of expression is based on the extent to which the LNGOs criticise the political system, local authorities and/or the present social order.

*Table 1* Analytical tool, conflict orientation

RELATION TO PROTEST	SOCIAL CRITICISM
Are protest actions encouraged?	Is the political system at large criticised?
Are protest actions legitimised?	Are governmental actors or policies criticised?
Are protest actions mentioned?	Are any social anomalies or actors criticised?

## DEMOCRATIC DIFFUSION

In this section, the independent and control variables – namely, factors explaining democratisation – are discussed and operationalised. Since the 1990s, much academic focus has been put on the international factor of democratisation, often termed diffusion.<sup>3</sup> Diffusion refers to how ideas or innovations spread; in this case, one can speak of the innovation of democracy (Lehtinen 2014: 124). This article uses Wejnert’s (2014: 35) relatively broad definition of diffusion as “the spread of a practice within a social system, where the spread denotes flow or movement from a source to an adopter typically via communication, role modeling, and/or coercion.” Diffusion usually involves at least two actors, the source and the potential adopter, a communication channel linking them together and an innovation (Rogers 1995: 18). The actors can be large collective actors such as states and polities, small collective actors such as organisations, or individuals. Diffusion scholars have paid considerable attention to diffusion conditions, factors working as conduits or firewalls that either facilitate or hinder diffusion (Rhue & Sundararajan 2014: 43; Solingen 2012: 634; Vanderhill 2017: 2). Since diffusion in most cases is a kind of communication, diffusion conditions are often related to the character of communication channels. Four interrelated diffusion conditions have received special attention in the literature: spatial proximity, cultural proximity, networks and media (Wejnert 2005: 56).

The diffusion condition most commonly analysed in studies on democratic diffusion is spatial proximity. The closer countries are to each other, the higher the potential number

<sup>3</sup> The literature lists similar phenomena as demonstration effect, contagion, snowballing, domino effect or linkage (Chun et al. 2016: 537; Huntington 1991: 100; Leeson & Dean 2009: 534; Levitsky & Way 2005: 23).

of linkages through which democracy can spread (Kopstein & Reilly 2000: 13). When estimating spatial effects, structural – and, in particular, cultural – similarity between a source and a potential adopter must also be considered, as the transfer of ideas occurs most frequently between actors who are similar to each other or homophilous (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook 2001: 416). For instance, ideas and practices spread easily between societies sharing language, religion and/or ethnicity. Media is also considered an efficient facilitator of diffusion (Rogers 1995: 18), and news about democratisation has the potential to spread quickly through both modern mass media and social media. The effect of the Internet and social media on democratisation processes is still uncertain, but it seems like these new media platforms at least facilitate protest. For example, social media seems to have played an important role in mobilising protest against Middle Eastern regimes during the Arab Spring in 2010–2011 (Bellin 2012: 138; Rennick 2013: 170; Wolfsfeld, Segev & Sheaffer 2013: 120). Finally, networks are also of great importance to diffusion. Networks can be of different sizes and different degrees of institutionalisation. Large and institutionalised networks like the European Union or NATO link together large collective actors. Smaller and more informal networks link together small collective actors, such as civil society groups, while interpersonal networks are comprised of individuals. Depending on the networks' structure, ideas can spread through networks either horizontally or vertically (Wejnert 2002: 308). Actors in a network can use influence in order to spread ideas through a variety of means, such as information, conduction, education and coercion (Wejnert 2014: 46; Gleditsch & Ward 2006: 919).

Democratic diffusion is studied here in relation to a number of factors connected to the aforementioned conditions, distinguishing between them if any dimension is especially important, while remembering that they are interrelated. The role of media is assessed by the proportion of Internet users in different Chinese regions as well as on the LNGOs' digital strategies. The role of cultural proximity is evaluated on the basis of the number of visitors from the culturally similar but more liberal polities of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao, as well as the LNGOs' relations with visiting activists from these areas. The role of networks is assessed vis-à-vis the density of international civil society organisations in different Chinese regions and the LNGOs' cooperation patterns with these groups.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these diffusion conditions, two domestic factors are also analysed. The early democratisation literature emphasised modernisation (Lipset 1959: 83; Leftwich 1996: 337; Diamond 1999: 88) and class structure (Skocpol 1985: 9; Moore 1967: 418; Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992: 270) as important domestic factors explaining democratic development. Due to the importance of these approaches in previous research, control variables based on these factors are applied in this study. In the comparative analysis, modernisation is operationalised as the per capita disposable income of households and class power is operationalised as the proportion of urban employees working in manufacturing. These operationalisations have been inspired by the previous practices of Wejnert (2005: 59), Inglehart (1988: 1220) and Doorenspleet (2004: 318–319).

A number of studies have investigated democratic diffusion and convincingly shown that some kind of diffusion effect is in place (Doorenspleet 2004: 326; O'Loughlin et al. 1998: 568; Modelski & Perry III 2002: 360; Kopstein & Reilly 2000: 36; Brinks & Coppedge 2006: 482). Gleditsch and Ward (2006: 916) demonstrate that the probability that a country will transform

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4 Unless stated otherwise, 'China' refers to mainland China and the term 'international' refers to areas outside mainland China, including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

into a democracy is much higher if the majority of its neighbours are democracies than if the majority of its neighbours are not democracies. Wejnert (2005: 54) even shows that the predictive power of domestic variables such as per capita GDP, literacy and urbanisation decreased when the diffusion variable was introduced.

One weakness of the bulk of previous research on democratic diffusion is that it is characterised by a high degree of homogeneity in its methods and material. Kopstein and Reilly (2000: 7), Gleditsch and Ward (2006: 912), O’Loughlin et al. (1998: 548) and Doorenspleet (2004: 322) use data derived from Polity III and Polity IV; Brinks and Coppedge (2006: 468) and Starr and Lindborg (2003: 495) use Freedom House; and Wejnert (2014: 145) uses data derived from Nations, Democracy and Development, 1800–2005. Thus, results are based on how democracy is measured in these indexes. As mentioned by Coppedge et al. (2011: 248), however, there are significant methodological problems with how the democracy indexes are constructed. One problem related to the frequent use of the Polity IV index in diffusion studies is that small variations in the democratic development of the most authoritarian states may be neglected. The index’s main focus is on electoral processes, not political freedoms, and it provides few categories for measuring small variations in the competitiveness of participation between the most authoritarian political systems (Marshall, Gurr & Jaggers 2014). Furthermore, because all of the aforementioned indexes use states as analytical units, they are unable to measure the intrastate regional variance of democracy. Although there are examples of scholars using more qualitative methods (Uhlir 1995: 2) to measure democratic diffusion, as well as a broader range of material including intrastate regions (Lankina, Libman & Obydenkova 2016: 1619), such studies are relatively rare. The homogeneity of the material in previous studies limits the knowledge of how diffusion works on a more detailed level (Yilmaz 2009: 95). With cross-state studies, for instance, it is difficult to know to what extent diffusion is positively correlated with top-down democratisation and also bottom-up democratisation.

As pointed out by Wejnert (2002: 300), democracy as a comprehensive political system is an innovation which entails collective consequences and must usually be implemented at the national level. However, components of democracy such as political freedoms can be exercised by small collective actors without a total transformation of the political system in a polity. Since civil society groups are frequently unevenly distributed in a country, *de facto* levels of democracy can vary between different intrastate regions, even in an authoritarian political system. This idea is not foreign to diffusion scholars such as Wejnert (2014: 112), Gleditsch and Ward (2006: 918) and Brinks and Coppedge (2006: 467), who have recognised that diffusion also impacts the relative power of social groups.

## **SOURCES OF DEMOCRACY INFLUENCING CHINA**

Large public actors such as the USA and the European democracies have historically been important sources and promoters of democracy (Huntington 1991: 86). For many large democracies, particularly in the West, the promotion of democracy is an important part of foreign policy and international aid, which have the potential to influence democratic diffusion through their networks (Bush 2015: 91). While these states are spatially, culturally, linguistically and medially separated from China, which limits the number of communication channels through which diffusion can take place, large democracies can influence small collective actors in China by using as intermediaries their diplomatic missions or business actors affiliated with them (Huntington 1991: 85–100).

One region which, although small, may have a large impact on mainland China is the non-mainland part of the Greater China Region (*da zhonghua diqu* 大中华地区), including Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao. Because Macao's small population and moderate political orientation mean that it is usually considered to play a minor role in Chinese politics (Heilmann, Zhu & Buckow 2017: 94), limited attention will be directed to the city in this article. As a result of the Chinese civil war, Taiwan was separated from the mainland and is today a de facto state and a relatively well-functioning democracy (Gilley 2008: 215). Although the government of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China have fragile and often even hostile political relations, the polities have become both economically and socially integrated in recent years. Consequently, spatial and cultural proximity, as well as shared social networks, should favour diffusion between China and Taiwan.

In spite of officially being part of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong has a much freer political system than the mainland and should thus be analysed as a source of democratic diffusion. Hong Kong may have an especially significant impact on Guangdong, as the city is located in close proximity to the province. It is possible, for instance, to travel by subway from Shenzhen, Guangdong's second largest city, to Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a British colony until it was reunified with the People's Republic of China in 1997. Like most former British colonies, Hong Kong inherited some democratic institutions from its former colonial power, including relatively well-protected civil rights and rule of law (Cheng 2016: 387; Sing 2004: 38). Partly based on an agreement between China and the UK, Hong Kong's constitutional document, the Basic Law, secures Hong Kong as an autonomous Special Administrative Region for 50 years after the reunification. Hong Kong's election system is not based on voting equality, as half of the Legislative Council and the chief executive are selected in indirect elections that favour pro-Beijing candidates (Freedom House 2018). However, the Basic Law upholds freedoms of expression, press, publication, assembly and association. While these rights have become increasingly threatened in recent years (Lo 2017: 116), they are still much better protected than on the mainland, to the point that media, civil society and social movements flourish in Hong Kong. For instance, pro-democracy demonstrations annually attract hundreds of thousands of participants (Lo 2013: 937). The city hosts many prominent political groups and civil society organisations in the fields of labour issues and the promotion of democracy, such as the International Trade Union Confederation, the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, the Hong Kong Labour Party, and the China Labour Bulletin.

The local government of Hong Kong is too controlled by the central government in Beijing to be regarded as a large collective actor promoting democracy. However, the ordinary Hong Kong Chinese people, the media and the city's civil society organisations can be regarded as prominent sources of democratic diffusion when interacting and communicating with potential adopters from mainland China. Given Hong Kong's flourishing NGO community and the fact that freedom of assembly is better protected in the city than on the mainland, it is plausible that international civil society uses Hong Kong as a springboard for influencing and possibly even democratising the nearby Guangdong province. Thus, there is reason to believe that diffusion through international civil society networks mainly based in Hong Kong may be the single most prominent factor influencing the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in Guangdong.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to increase the study's validity, triangulation is used to investigate the research question by means of different methods (Berg 2004: 5). In the first step, quantitative content analysis is used to develop relatively comprehensive nation-wide statistics on all LNGOs, and the comparative method is applied to analyse this material. In the second step, the research question is re-examined based on information derived through qualitative interview sessions with LNGO activists, most of them from Guangdong. The sensitivity of civil society issues in China implies that there is no open and accessible data set revealing a complete list of Chinese NGOs (Hsu & Jiang 2015: 103). Consequently, the collection and compilation of material has been an important part of the basic research in both the first and second steps of the research process.<sup>5</sup>

### *Quantitative method*

The aim of the quantitative content analysis is to produce a relatively comprehensive data set revealing the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in all parts of China. The core of this data was collected in 2014 when an authoritative Hong Kong-based think tank in the field of Chinese labour issues provided me with a compilation on all the LNGOs they had identified in mainland China. I confirmed the accuracy of this list by showing it to two LNGO specialists, one based in Hong Kong and the other on the mainland, both of whom expressed that it was one of the most complete lists they had ever seen. Using this list as a starting point, I proceeded by collecting information on all LNGOs that had been active users of SinaWeibo, China's largest open social media platform, during 2013 and 2014. With 340 million active users in 2017, the number of SinaWeibo users exceeds the community size of its American equivalent, Twitter. Thus, the social media platform should be an appropriate study object for identifying LNGOs' open online discourse. All LNGOs which posted at least 50 messages on SinaWeibo from the beginning of 2013 to the end of 2014 were included in the data. Following the practice of previous studies on social media, keywords were used in order to find relevant content and further limit the material (Hu, Qiao & Fu 2017: 597; Mayr & Weller 2017: 112; Nip & Fu 2016: 129). Four keywords, all having a conflict-oriented connotation (*bagong* 罢工 'strike', *kangyi* 抗议 'protest', *jieji* 阶级 'class' and *douzheng* 斗争 'struggle'), were selected.<sup>6</sup> The SinaWeibo search engine was employed to collect weibo messages with the relevant keywords. If an organisation had posted more than five weibo messages including one of the keywords, five messages randomly chosen were selected for the material. Since four keywords were used, the material contains 20 weibo messages per organisation at the most.

Each LNGO is treated as an analytical unit and each weibo message is treated as an observation point. Following the practice of content analysis, the weibo messages were coded by using the six polar questions elaborated in the theory section (Bauer 2000: 133; Holsti 1969: 94). The coding of the LNGOs' conflict orientation is dependent on the extent to which co-occurring examples of conflict-oriented statements are found in the material. In order to limit reliability-related errors, a LNGO is only considered to have expressed an aspect of conflict orientation if at least three weibo messages supporting such an interpretation are found in the material.

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<sup>5</sup> Due to spatial constraints, supplementary material such as coding guidelines are not provided in this text. However, it is available on my webpage <gustavsundqvist.com>.

<sup>6</sup> The conflict-oriented connotation of the four keywords has been confirmed in discussions with LNGO activists.

It should be noted that the political communication taking place on SinaWeibo is not totally free. SinaWeibo censors their content in accordance with the guidelines provided by China's central government. Methods for studying censored weibo messages have been developed, but it is not yet possible to uncover the entire amount of deleted Internet communication (King, Pan & Roberts 2014: 1). Using the terminology of Erving Goffman (1990: 78), the dependence on censored material means that this study only investigates the front-stage behaviour of LNGOs, not their backstage behaviour. In spite of this limitation, the use of this material has many advantages. The open communication on SinaWeibo can be perceived as a representative case of how LNGOs present their messaging in China's public space. It is a good indicator of the extent to which civil rights, in the form of freedom of expression, can be exercised in practice. Moreover, open communication might have more political impact than hidden communication, since it is accessible by the broader Chinese public.

### *Comparative method*

The quantitative data is analysed using the comparative method. During this stage, the variety of China's different geographical regions are analysed from a diffusion perspective. The dependent variables (the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs) are compared to the selected independent and control variables in order to identify explanatory factors. Relevant domestic and diffusion variables have been collected for all of mainland China's 31 provinces and self-governing cities. Examples of the attributes from seven of the regions hosting the most LNGOs are presented in Table 2 (note that this is not a strategic sample, but a pedagogical illustration).

*Table 2* Variance between an illustrative sample of Chinese regions

	National average	Beijing (BJ)	Shanghai (SH)	Guangdong (GD)	Hubei (HB)	Shandong (SD)	Jiangsu (JS)	Zhejiang (ZJ)
Population* <sup>1</sup>	44.5M	21.7M	24.2M	110.0M	58.9M	99.5M	45.9M	55.9M
Disposable income (¥)* <sup>2</sup>	18,310	52,530	54,305	30,296	21,787	24,685	32,070	38,529
Manufacturing employment* <sup>3</sup>	27%	11.0%	28.8%	49.0%	25.9%	33.2%	37.9%	29.8%
Visitors from Greater China* <sup>4</sup>	1.53M	0.62M	1.18M	25.98M	0.83M	0.91M	1.12M	1.38M
Internet access rate* <sup>5</sup>	53%	78%	74%	73%	51%	52%	56%	65%
INGOs	10	106	71	18 (215)* <sup>6</sup>	4	8	5	2
INGO activities	16	98	14	66	7	1	5	16

\*<sup>1</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017a.

\*<sup>2</sup> Per capita disposable income of households in yuan in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017b).

\*<sup>3</sup> Employed persons in urban manufacturing units at year end (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017c).

\*<sup>4</sup> Visitors from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017d).

\*<sup>5</sup> Internet users as a proportion of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2017e).

\*<sup>6</sup> The number in parentheses refers to International NGOs in Hong Kong.

The heterogeneity and size of China imply that the comparative method may be used relatively successfully to analyse the reasons for differences in the distribution of LNGOs. Per capita disposable income per household in the country's economic powerhouses of Beijing and



Shanghai are more than three times greater than in the Western provinces of Tibet, Gansu and Qinghai. In the most industrialised regions, Guangdong and Jiangsu, 49 percent and 38 percent of urban employees work in manufacturing, respectively. This can be compared against the service-oriented regions of Beijing and Hainan, as well as the relatively rural provinces of Tibet, Gansu and Xinjiang, where this rate is around ten percent or lower. Guangdong is also by far the most popular destination for visitors from Greater China, as there are more Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao visitors to Guangdong than to all other mainland regions combined. While the level of access to the Internet is around 65 percent or higher in coastal regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Tianjin and Fujian, it is lower than 50 percent in inland provinces such as Sichuan and Yunnan. Shanghai, Beijing and Guangdong stand out in particular, due to the high presence of international actors in their vicinity. Although Shanghai hosts the second greatest number of international NGOs (INGOs), there are reasons to believe that the conditions for diffusion through international civil society networks is considerably higher in Guangdong and Beijing than in Shanghai. INGOs have more temporary activities in Beijing and Guangdong than in Shanghai (Office of Overseas NGOs of the Ministry of Public Security 2018). The proximity between Guangdong and Hong Kong suggests that the LNGOs in the southern province should be able to relatively easily develop ties with the around 215 INGOs in Hong Kong, as well as with the many domestic NGOs in the city (Lee et al. 2016). LNGOs in Beijing have an advantage, as they can form associations with the 167 embassies in Beijing. Therefore, according to the diffusion hypothesis, conflict-oriented LNGOs should mainly be active in Guangdong and Beijing, but also to a lesser extent in Shanghai.

The core idea of the comparative method is to select a number of cases that maximise the variance of the independent variable and minimise the variance of the control variables (Lijphart 1975: 164). As comparativists usually do not select cases randomly but strategically, case bias is a common problem associated with the method (Moses & Knutsen 2007: 95). Since this study includes all Chinese regions, not a mere sample of them, the risk of case bias is relatively limited. Still, there is not a perfect variance on the independent variables and control variables, and the results produced by the comparative study should consequently be considered with caution. The problems associated with the comparative method demand that more qualitative methods be used as a complement when examining the research question.

### ***Qualitative interviews***

The second step of the research process is based on qualitative interviews. The prime material consists of qualitative data collected during 15 interview sessions with 14 respondents from eleven LNGOs, as well as some field notes. Nine of the covered LNGOs were active in Guangdong. As the total number of non-state labour groups in the province is estimated to vary between 30 and 50 (Franceschini 2014: 480; Fu 2017: 448; Xu 2013: 246), the generalisability of the interview study is relatively limited. Nevertheless, results may still be valid if they accord with the conclusions of the comparative analysis. In addition to the Guangdong groups, one Wuhan-based organisation and one Beijing-based organisation are used as comparative interview cases. All interviews were conducted during three fieldwork trips in China in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that predetermined questions were used but that I probed beyond the answers of those questions in order to identify unexpected patterns (Berg 2004: 81). The material was coded in two cycles, based on a combination of the more inductive approaches advocated by grounded theorists (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 43) and the deductive perspectives encouraged by

theory-driven scholars (Bauer 2000: 140). Data are examined in order to confirm or reject alternative explanatory hypotheses. The quality of the evidence, rather than quantity, is used to assess the power of the hypothesis (Bennett 2010: 208–209).

In line with the standards of qualitative research on human subjects, informed consent and avoiding doing harm were the two core ethical principles guiding the research process (Berg 2004: 58). Following the advice of Emily Yeh (2006: 104), I also attempted to provide possible respondents with a socially convenient way to deny taking part in the interview if they did not want to. All the interviews were conducted by myself, 14 in Mandarin and one in English. I transcribed the English interview myself but was assisted by a trusted Chinese research assistant when transcribing the interviews conducted in Chinese. In line with the protocol used by Yi Xu (2013: 246), the LNGOs are identified by codes in order to protect their confidentiality (Guangdong organisations are coded as G1, G2, G3, etc., while the Wuhan-based and Beijing-based LNGO are coded as W1 and B1, respectively).

## ANALYSIS

In the following section, the results of the quantitative content analysis are presented and then analysed with the comparative method. This is followed by a discussion on how the results of the qualitative interviews complement the findings.

### *Collection and compilation of quantitative data*

Table 3 reveals that a majority of the LNGOs using weibo were active either in Beijing or in Guangdong. The amount of LNGOs per capita was especially high in Beijing.

Table 3 The geographical distribution of LNGOs active on weibo

REGION	LNGOS WITH AN ACTIVE WEIBO ACCOUNT	THE MEAN OF POSTED WEIBO MESSAGES PER LNGO (2013–2014)
Guangdong (GD)	20 (0.18pmp <sup>*1</sup> )	563
Beijing (BJ)	11 (0.51pmp)	815
Jiangsu (JS)	3 (0.04pmp)	536
Zhejiang (ZJ)	3 (0.05pmp)	656
Hubei (HB)	2 (0.03pmp)	960
Shandong (SD)	2 (0.02pmp)	519
Shanghai (SH)	1 (0.04pmp)	86
Other (O) <sup>*2</sup>	7 (0.01pmp)	442

<sup>\*1</sup> pmp stands for per million people.

<sup>\*2</sup> In addition to the regions above, there is also one LNGO actively using weibo in each of the following regions: Tianjin, Liaoning, Fujian, Henan, Hunan, Chongqing and Shaanxi.

The quantitative content analysis of the LNGOs' description of protest actions reveals that three LNGOs encouraged protest actions in at least three of the weibo messages included in the material. As demonstrated in Table 4, all of these organisations were located in Guangdong. Most of the LNGOs legitimising or mentioning protest activities were active in Guangdong or Beijing.

Table 4 LNGOs mentioning protest actions

	GD	BJ	JS	ZJ	HB	SD	SH	O
Encouraging protest	3 0.03pmp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Legitimising protest	10 0.09pmp	2 0.09pmp	0	0	1 0.02pmp	1 0.01pmp	0	0
Mentioning protest	13 0.12pmp	3 0.14pmp	1 0.01pmp	0	2 0.03pmp	2 0.02pmp	0	1 0.00pmp

Strikes comprise the most common form of protest action mentioned in the material. The weibo messages encouraging protest actions often offer feedback to striking workers. The following weibo message posted by a LNGO in Guangzhou can serve as an example: “do not worry, resolutely struggle against the company to the end.”<sup>7</sup> Strikes are also a very common topic in weibo messages legitimising protest actions. This weibo message is a typical case: “These worker representatives bravely rise up, they have led hundreds of striking and rights protecting workers to reach their goals, but they have faced repression themselves.” There are also many examples of LNGOs legitimising other forms of protest actions. The following weibo message, for instance, supports workers occupying a public space: “Please pay attention to these sisters and brothers who strenuously struggle in the cold wind! They have already been waiting for five days and nights in order to get their own salary and their deserved compensation.” The demarcation between when LNGOs do legitimise protest actions and when they do not is not always clear, however. In many messages, the organisations do not directly legitimise a protest action, but still mention the reason behind the protest. A weibo message posted by a LNGO leader in Shenzhen can serve as an example: “On 12 April the Shajinxinjiahe toy factory without the workers’ knowledge secretly started to move away machines and equipment. When the workers discovered the relocation they initiated a strike.” In this formulation, no normative terms are used to legitimise the strike, yet it is reasonable to assume that the writer, as well as many of the readers of the message, believed the strike to be just. This kind of formulation is nevertheless not coded as legitimising protest actions, due to the uncertainty of interpretation. Finally, some of the LNGOs mentioned protest without legitimising protest actions or even giving details for the reasons behind the protest. In some cases, the content of the protest is still shocking for the reader, like in this example: “because of conflict with the management, workers lie down on the trails in the subway of Hangzhou city protesting”.

The conflict orientation of the LNGOs is also reflected in how they criticise social malpractices in their open discourse. As demonstrated in Table 5, quantitative content analysis reveals that most of the LNGOs criticising social malpractices or local authorities were active in Guangdong or Beijing.

7 All quotations in this article have been translated by myself. I have confirmed the correctness of the translations with a native Chinese speaker.

Table 5 LNGOs expressing social criticism

Target of criticism	GD	BJ	JS	ZJ	HB	SD	SH	O
The political system	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The authorities	8 0.07pmp	2 0.09pmp	0	0	2 0.03pmp	1 0.01pmp	0	0
Any social actor	14 0.13pmp	3 0.14pmp	1 0.01pmp	0	2 0.03pmp	2 0.02pmp	0	1 0.00pmp

In the material, no LNGOs are found repeatedly criticising China's political system. However, it is worth mentioning that a few very critical weibo messages appear, such as this extremely conflict-oriented example posted by a Shenzhen LNGO: "The government is not the place for the legal rights protection of workers and peasants, and legal rights protection is dependent on a united revolution by workers and peasants. The criminal and incapable officials have to hurriedly step down from office, for only then can they [workers and peasants] become lords in their own homes."

The most common form of criticism against governmental actors in the material targets police interventions against striking workers. When the police force of the city of Dongguan attacked striking workers at Yueyuen Shoe Factory with canine units, they received criticism from many LNGOs, as seen in this message: "Facing striking workers, the police sent out wolf dogs. During the last 100 years this has not been seen often in the world." Criticism of the detention of workers was particularly common, as exemplified here: "Oppose the police force's violent suppression of workers! Request an immediate release of captured workers!! Let the strike lead to collective negotiations..."

During the time period under study, some workers involved in strikes were detained or imprisoned. One of the detained strike leaders, Wu Guijun, became a symbolic figure. In the material, there are many examples of LNGOs writing about his case and demanding his release. The following weibo message typifies the sentiments expressed: "To care about Wu Guijun is in fact to care about ourselves, we do not know which day something happens at our factory, and we can become striking workers at any time. If we stay silent about the detention of Wu Guijun, who will help us when we are taken?" Many weibo messages also express criticism against other governmental bodies, such as the labour bureau and the official labour union, as seen in the following message: "The labour bureau is totally standing on the side of the capitalists, and the labour union is not firm and upright..."

Although there are many examples of criticism of the authorities in the material, companies and the management of companies seem by far to be the most common targets of criticism expressed by the LNGOs. The following formulation, used in a weibo message commenting on a factory manager's statement that he "rather would see the money disappear in the Yellow River than give it to workers", can serve as an example: "This leads me to think about the struggle against Diweixin. That boss also threatened to use 10 million to hire lawyers to settle the case with the workers. This inferior acrobatics of threats cannot scare the workers, but will only raise their wrath. Go, go, go!"

Many LNGOs with comparatively less conflict-oriented discourse still expressed criticism of companies. When doing so, they often presented a labour conflict descriptively, framed the behaviour of companies as "illegal", and reposted the weibo messages of other bloggers.

The following weibo message posted by a LNGO in Guangzhou can serve as a typical case: “500 workers from the American company Bell Power strike and protest against the factory’s illegal payment of social security; 500 workers at the Bell Power Solutions & Protection (Shenzhen) strike and protest, and they demand the company to pay the remaining social security and residence aid, raise the overtime compensation and establish a labour union.”

It should be noted that the LNGOs which referred to protest actions generally also expressed fiercer social criticism, and vice versa. Among the ten Guangdong-based LNGOs legitimising or encouraging protest actions, seven expressed criticism of the authorities and the other three voiced other kinds of social criticism. Of the four LNGOs in other parts of the country legitimising protest actions, three also expressed criticism against the authorities.

### ***Comparative analysis***

As all the regions hosting at least one LNGO are richer than the national average, the comparative study indicates that a certain level of economic wealth is a necessary criterion for the emergence and density of LNGOs. However, this relationship does not seem to be linear or related to the LNGOs’ conflict orientation, as the number of conflict-oriented LNGOs is high in Guangdong even though living standards in the province are lower than in Beijing and Shanghai. Furthermore, the size of the working class, although large in Guangdong, does not seem to explain the geographic distribution of conflict-oriented LNGOs, as Beijing’s manufacturing employment rate is the third smallest in the country. The same pattern is true when it comes to the rate of visitors from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as people from these regions visit Guangdong much more often than any other region, including Beijing. Since the level of digitalisation is high not only in Guangdong and Beijing but also in Shanghai, Liaoning, Fujian and Tianjin, this factor can hardly explain the density of conflict-oriented LNGOs. Thus, diffusion through international civil society networks and a certain degree of economic wealth are left as the two factors tested here that have the most explanatory power. Guangdong, Beijing and, to a lesser extent, Shanghai stand out by their proximity to international civil society groups and the high rate of international civil society projects in these regions. Although it is puzzling that the density of conflict-oriented LNGOs in Shanghai is low, the hypothesis is largely confirmed by the comparative analysis. Nevertheless, there is good reason for re-examining the research question through more in-depth methods.

### ***Qualitative analysis***

In this section there follows a qualitative account of how the domestic variables and diffusion variables seem to influence the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs. Proposed causations are exemplified by quotations from the interviews. The most prominent and recurring statements by the LNGO representatives are summarised in the Appendix.

The results from the qualitative interviews provide some clues that may explain why LNGOs are only located in relatively wealthy regions. All the LNGO activists I interviewed worked in a relatively modern environment. For instance, all of them had access to computers or smartphones. The only respondent who did not use a smartphone, the leader of G5, did so because he feared that the authorities might wiretap it. Another indicator of the importance of modernisation was that many of the activists were relatively well educated. Four of the respondents – a lawyer, a scholar and two young employees with university degrees – had good English skills,

and the rest of the activists were fluent in spoken as well as written Mandarin. The relatively good language skills of the LNGOs' staff also seemed to be important for the organisations, as a lot of their communication with funders, partners and workers was done through digital and written means.

Nevertheless, as indicated by the comparative analysis, although a certain degree of economic development seems to be a necessary condition for the density of LNGOs, it does not seem to be related to the conflict orientation of the labour groups. As China has become richer, many domestic foundations, often run by business people, have emerged. However, as stated by one respondent from G3, mainland donors generally only fund less sensitive NGO activities, such as charity: "They support social work, the activities and projects they support are all ... not relatively moderate, they are particularly moderate." As the control of foreign financing has become stricter, many LNGOs have reoriented their activities, not least in order to receive financing from domestic foundations and companies.

The comparative analysis indicates that class structure is also not an important factor for explaining the density or conflict orientation of LNGOs. One reason, which has been noted earlier by Ivan Franceschini (2014: 490), may be that most LNGOs are relatively disconnected from workers, their supposed constituency. For instance, none of the LNGOs I interviewed seem to have received funding from workers. This can be contrasted against the labour movement in Taiwan during the 1980s, which to a high extent was funded by local communities (Chan & Chiu 2015: 169). Only five of the eleven LNGOs I interviewed were established by blue-collar workers. The rest were created and mostly run by intellectuals and social workers. However, experience of workplace violations does seem to have played a role in some of the LNGOs' development, with G9 being the best example. The leader of G9 was recruited by another LNGO (G3) at a hospital, where he was recovering from injuries caused in a workplace accident. After some years working as a volunteer for G3, he was involved in a strike, but then detained by the police and accused of organising an illegal demonstration. The activist told me that he founded G9, a relatively conflict-oriented LNGO that specialised in assisting workers involved in collective cases such as wage disputes and strikes, shortly after being let out of prison: "After I was released I thought that I have to find out how to let the workers' unite... how to let every person's problem become the whole society's problem. How to make everyone communicate and put attention on this topic. So, we started the organisation, and since then we keep on doing this."

The use of modern technology by LNGOs can be perceived both from the perspective of modernisation and from the perspective of diffusion, as ideas and practices easily spread through digital technology and social media. The use of social media seems to have been important for all the LNGOs I interviewed. Respondents from six of the Guangdong-based LNGOs mentioned that their groups used social media to raise the Chinese public's consciousness about social and political issues. As noted by the leader of G1, microblogs such as SinaWeibo were generally the preferred platform for online advocacy: "The more open the case, the less fierce and naked the suppression by the capital and the government... The purpose of microblogs is that information can become open, public and put in the light. If you do a bad thing or a good thing, everyone will know..." In addition to social media, some groups also managed to spread information about sensitive issues through traditional Chinese media and, in some cases, even through traditional foreign media. Closed social media such as Wechat were primarily used for internal communication. Representatives from all but two of the LNGOs told me that they

used closed social media to communicate with workers. In this regard, the leader of G9 was especially committed to it: “During actions we advise the workers in every factory to establish a Wechat group. In this way, I follow perhaps 30 groups on Wechat. I spend a lot of time every day to solve the information flow on Wechat.”

Although the comparative analysis does not indicate that the rate of visitors from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan closely correlates with the local development of LNGOs, information obtained during the qualitative interviews suggests that interaction with visitors from Hong Kong and Taiwan indeed has some effect on the conflict orientation of labour groups. Employees from all but one of the Guangdong-based LNGOs told me that they frequently met activists from Hong Kong, and four of the groups in the province were in frequent contact with Taiwanese activists. Nearness and cheap travel costs were sometimes mentioned as important reasons behind these frequent meetings. I experienced this interaction myself when I participated in a labour activist conference in Shenzhen on 1 May, which Taiwan activists also attended. During the event, I noticed that mainland activists were eager to ask their Taiwan visitors questions about the political system on the island. Although most of the respondents expressed that meetings with Taiwan and Hong Kong activists were of limited importance to their daily work, activists from three of the Guangdong-based LNGOs stated that the interactions encouraged them to believe in a democratic future for China. Moreover, frequent visits from overseas Chinese activists sometimes resulted in long-standing relationships that later gave Guangdong activists opportunities to not only visit Hong Kong but also Taiwan. For some activists, such as for the leader of G7, these visits seem to have had an impact on their ideological development:

How did I perceive the democratic countries I visited, for instance, which country gave me the strongest feeling? When I went to USA or Europe, these countries are in fact not Chinese societies, so they did not give me a strong feeling. I got the strongest feeling from visiting Taiwan... When we talk about democracy, we often think about if Chinese are suitable for democracy, and how should we construct democracy? Many people say, how should Chinese people do this? This is American democracy, that is European democracy, how should China do it? You can do like this, you can do like that, you don't know how to do it. But when I went to Taiwan and saw, wow! These Chinese people, they can do it.

For the leader of G7, visiting Hong Kong had less impact on his democratic consciousness than visiting Taiwan: “Hong Kong is different. Hong Kong has rule of law and protected rights, but it is still not a very democratic place, but Taiwan is very democratic, so it gave me a very strong feeling.” The activist's view of Taiwan's democratic influence indicates that the cultural proximity between the two straits occasionally facilitates democratic diffusion.

However, as indicated in the comparative analysis, the most important factor explaining the density and conflict orientation of Guangdong LNGOs seems to be diffusion through international civil society networks, particularly networks containing Hong Kong-based NGOs. Representatives from seven of the nine Guangdong-based LNGOs told me that cooperation with actors in Hong Kong had been beneficial for the survival and growth of their organisations, and one Guangdong activist expressed that the cooperation had influenced the groups' activities in a democratic direction. Two of the Guangdong-based organisations I interviewed were founded by Hong Kong groups, one in 2003 and one in 2014, and both of them still had very close relations to their founding organisations. The support provided by Hong Kong-based and international organisations had many forms and included consultation, training and ideological inspiration. However, financing seems to have been the most important form of support. According to the interviews, all but one of the Guangdong-based LNGOs receive or

have received financing from foreign organisations. Groups in Hong Kong either functioned as direct funders or intermediaries in these financial networks. Representatives from four of the Guangdong organisations told me that actors in Hong Kong helped their groups to develop financial cooperation with non-Chinese civil society organisations. One activist in G2, for instance, received help from a Hong Kong Chinese friend with good English skills to write a grant application addressed to a Western embassy. Another activist in G3 told me that its Hong Kong-based founding organisation (from now on H1) was often used as an intermediary to facilitate contact with international civil society in Hong Kong, including financial foundations: “H1 is like a bridge, it is like a resource intermediary, because on the mainland, for instance, we do not know the organisations in Hong Kong, but H1 has its characteristics, they both know Hong Kong and the mainland, they can link these two places together.”

In recent years, the Chinese government has gradually increased its control over financing flows between international civil society and mainland NGOs, culminating in the adoption of the Foreign NGO Management Law (*jingwai fei zhengfu zuzhi jingnei huodong guanli fa* 境外非政府组织境内活动管理法), which came into effect in 2017. According to this law, the Public Security Bureau can exert stricter control on NGOs receiving grants from foreign actors, including funders in Hong Kong. The new law and the shrinking political space that preceded it seem to have had a significant negative impact on both the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs. Representatives from seven of the Guangdong-based organisations told me that reliance on financial support had deteriorated their groups’ relations with the government, which represented an unacceptable risk for many organisations. As it has become increasingly difficult to receive foreign funding, organisations (like G2, G3, G6, G7 and B1) had reoriented their activities to less conflict-oriented fields in order to qualify themselves for grants from domestic foundations and companies, as well as to avoid suppression from the government. During 2016 and 2017, the shrinking financial flows from foreign donors meant that activists devoted to conflict-oriented activities, like the leaders of G1 and G5, had no choice but to lay off all their employees and continue their work on their own. Less conflict-oriented groups (such as G6) had also been forced to downsize their personnel. I conducted two interviews with one activist from G3 – one in 2016 and one in 2017 – and noted that just one year of the deteriorating political climate had given him a much gloomier view of the future. The organisation’s largest funder from Hong Kong (until that point) had ceased to provide G3 with financial support, and the activist received a telephone call from the police every time he contacted a foreign foundation. In 2017, he told me that he had even considered completely ending his work with the LNGO and instead returning to his native village. This situation seems far from unique. According to the leader of B1, 70–80 percent of LNGOs all over China have stopped working in recent years as a result of the government’s ever stricter control of transnational financing, as well as the exacerbated repression of civil society.

Financial support from international sources was also important for the non-Guangdong-based groups I was in contact with. Facing financial difficulties, the leader of W1 went to Hong Kong and asked a Hong Kong-based civil society group with international funding for financial support. The request was granted with the terms that W1 had to focus its activities on more collective action, such as the promotion of collective bargaining. Founded by a blue-collar worker in the late 1990s, B1 gradually developed cooperation ties with the many embassies in Beijing. The leader frequently attended meetings with officials from these embassies, and it seems like the proximity to foreign representatives facilitated the cooperation. One



of the Guangdong groups (G2) also received financing from an embassy, but in that case the communication was mainly digital. The leader of B1 mentioned that financial cooperation with diplomatic representatives also had become increasingly sensitive in recent years. In response, he considered reorienting the group's work towards corporate social responsibility-related activities in order to seek private funding.

The qualitative analysis of the interview material confirms that factors related to social class, media and cultural proximity are relevant for the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in some cases. However, none of these factors appear to be necessary for sustaining or increasing the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs. Although a modern environment seems to be a necessary criterion for the density of LNGOs, it seems to almost have a negative impact on the groups' conflict orientation. Financial cooperation with international actors is the only factor that seems to be necessary for both the density and the conflict orientation of LNGOs. The most important evidence supporting this hypothesis is the fact that so many LNGOs have downsized their personnel or moderated their activities as a response to the Chinese government's stricter control of foreign funding. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed by the analysis of the qualitative interviews.

## DISCUSSION

This study has investigated how and the extent to which diffusion influences the density and conflict orientation of LNGOs in Guangdong. The results from the comparative analysis as well as the qualitative interview analysis confirm the study's hypothesis by suggesting that diffusion through international civil society networks is the main factor explaining the high density of conflict-oriented LNGOs in Guangdong. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the density of conflict-oriented LNGOs is especially high in Beijing and Guangdong, regions which stand out by being proximate to international civil society actors. The qualitative interview analysis demonstrates that financing from international actors is necessary for the groups' ability to survive and involve themselves in democracy-related activities. Of the other factors tested, only a reasonably modern environment seems to be a necessary criterion for the LNGOs' density, if not for their conflict orientation.

Both analytical methods used in this study have limitations. The variance in the independent and control variables are not perfect, which weakens the validity of the comparative analysis. Another weakness in this step of the research process is the risk that an important explanatory variable has been omitted. The absence of an LNGO community in Shanghai highlights this risk. It is possible that an omitted factor that is present in Shanghai obstructs the development of LNGOs and hinders the positive impact that might otherwise have been caused by the relatively large international civil society in the city. As I used a very inductive approach during the interviews, the most important omitted variables that may have influenced the LNGO community in Guangdong should have been identified. Nevertheless, more qualitative studies on the civil society community in Shanghai are needed in order to definitively resolve this question. The main risk with the qualitative analysis is to what extent the results can be generalised to the whole LNGO community in Guangdong, as only around one-fourth of the LNGOs active in the province are included in the study's material. As almost all respondents emphasised the importance of foreign financing and because the comparative study also highlights the importance of this factor, I still regard the results as relatively valid.

Comparative studies have convincingly shown that diffusion has an impact on states' probability to democratise. The knowledge of how diffusion works in detail is, however, still

underdeveloped. This study expands the diffusion theory by testing to what extent diffusion also explains intrastate regional variance in democracy. The results show that the density of conflict-oriented Chinese LNGOs in Guangdong can be explained mainly by diffusion and, more precisely, diffusion through international civil society networks. Thus, the study indicates that diffusion influences local levels of democracy. Diffusion theories, primarily used in order to explain the effect of democratic diffusion on states, consequently also seem to be useful for explaining democratic development in intrastate regions. This is not surprising, since the premises of the diffusion theories suggest that ideas and practices can spread between various types of actors, namely, state actors as well as civil society actors. The results are important for the advancement of democratic diffusion research, since they indicate that diffusion not only increases the possibility of top-down democratisation but also facilitates bottom-up democratisation. More research using a wider range of methods and material should be conducted in order to further validate the results of this study and increase its generalisability.

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**APPENDIX: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING WITH LNGOS**

<b>DOMESTIC FACTORS</b>	
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER</b>
Q1. Do the LNGO's employees have access to desktop computers or smartphones?	G1,G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G8,G9,W1,B1
Q2. Do any of the employees at the LNGO have good English skills?	G6,G7,G8,B1
Q3. Was the LNGO founded by blue-collar workers?	G1,G2,G5,G9,B1
Q4. Was the LNGO founded by workers who perceived themselves to have been violated at their workplaces?	G2,G9,B1
<b>DIFFUSION</b>	
<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER</b>
Q5. Does the LNGO regularly use Chinese social media?	G1,G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G8,G9,W1,B1
Q6. Does the LNGO regularly use digital tools such as open social media to raise the salience of political issues?	G1,G3,G4,G5,G6,G9,B1
Q7. Does the LNGO regularly use digital tools such as closed social media to reach out to Chinese workers?	G1,G2,G3,G4,G7,G8,G9,W1,B1
Q8. Does the LNGO frequently interact with activists from Hong Kong organisations?	G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G8,G9,W1
Q9. Does the LNGO frequently interact with activists from Taiwan organisations?	G2,G3,G6,G7
Q10. Has any overseas actor influenced the LNGO's employees' ideological devotion for democracy?	G2,G3,G7
Q11. Has cooperation with Hong Kong actors had a positive impact on the survival, efficiency and expansion of the LNGO?	G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G9,W1
Q12. Was the LNGO founded by Hong Kong activists?	G3,G4
Q13. Does the LNGO receive or has it received funding from overseas actors?	G1,G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G9,W1,B1
Q14. Has the LNGO utilised ties with Hong Kong groups in order to develop relations with Taiwan and foreign organisations?	G2,G3,G6,G7
Q15. Has financial cooperation with overseas actors had a negative impact on the LNGO's relations with the government?	G2,G3,G4,G5,G6,G7,G9,B1
Q16. Has the LNGO changed or planned to change its political orientation in order to avoid repression by the government?	G1,G2,G5,G9,B1