Jiang Hu theory of organizing: in-depth study of self-managing of tourism

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore self-management among informal tourism employees in urban China with the theoretical basis of *Jianghu* and reveal the forming process and operation mechanism of China's urban informal organizations' self-management.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper adopts process–event analysis of informal tourism photographers surrounding Guangzhou Tower. Conducting field inspection and in-depth interviews, the forming process is analyzed and typical events are captured to unveil this self-management mechanism.

Findings – The self-management of informal tourism employees in China is based on the *Jianghu* theory, which specifies the role, obligation and responsibility of a member. These above rely on word-of-mouth order or implicit ways to treat newcomers, realize internal communication and deal with public affairs. Brotherhood, benevolence and etiquette make up the core values of the *Jianghu* theory that advises strategies in dealing with different events. This self-management, based on the *Jianghu* theory, has not only effectively solved internal conflicts, but has also achieved the goal of social management.

Originality/value – Informal employees' self-management is extremely important due to the high cost of government intervention. Through China's urban informal tourism employees' *Jianghu*-styled self-management, the paper shows that the government should not crack down on this group indiscriminately. Instead, it should, through the management agent, set up effective *Jianghu* rules to realize regular control over this group.

Keywords Team management, Self-management, Guangzhou city, Informal tourism employee, Jianghu, Self-managing team

Paper type Case study

Introduction

The management of informal employees has been a great challenge for many countries. Since the 1980s, with the political–economical changes brought by the transition from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism, developed cities in the West have unanimously adopted

a harsh attitude of rejection in their public policies toward informal employees (Van Eijk, 2010). National welfare receivers, as they were in the 1960s, are now regarded as the "blocking stone" in the new era of economic development. During the end of the 1990s, the municipal government adopted the policy of spatial resistance and discipline toward the ethnic minorities, homeless people, street vendors, homosexuals and sex workers. These people were treated as those who "stole" the bourgeoisie's public order in the late nineteenth century, and were often charged with the crime of stealing New York and endangering its public space and living quality (Smith, 1998). This new urban geographical phenomenon can be considered to be revanchist spatial politics (Smith, 1996), post-justice spatial politics (Mitchell, 2001) or even heterotopias (Macleod and Ward, 2002). In many developing countries, informal employment is a common phenomenon that is tolerated by local governments (Cheng and Gereffi, 1994; Steel, 2012). However, informal employment is prone to the destruction of social order and damage to legal organizations' rights; its products and services do not guarantee their safety or quality, and can sometimes even pose a threat to the tourists or consumers' life and property security due to frequent internal conflicts and competitions. In light of these issues, some developing countries have pushed regulations to manage quality control. The problem is, informal employees, usually known for their dispersivity, low-entry benchmark and great mobility, can garner heavy costs for governmental management, often with little effect. Some developing countries have even witnessed mass uprisings because of the governments' harsh regulations.

China's informal employment group stands out as a result of its complexity because of its large number of migrant workers going from rural areas into cities in an attempt to find employment. Under the circumstance of limited management resources, it is impractical to implement comprehensive sustainable control over this group and instead campaign-style governance is preferred. Local governments will intensify control over this group on the occasions of big social events or diplomatic activities and lessen its efforts afterward. Table I shows the close correlation between the intensity of urban management over informal employees and the timing of the corresponding year's big events from 1991 to 2014. However, this campaign-style governance is temporary, unsystematic and unprofessional, and thus it should be complemented with regular management (Zhou, 2012; Yang, 2015). Evidently, it is unlikely that the government or private sectors should shoulder this regular management, as China's private sector is still fledging. So, this regular management should stem from the self-management of these informal employees. Then the questions become: how is this self-management formed? What can it rely on to achieve self-management? What kind of operational mechanism should be applied? More importantly, what is the difference between this self-management and the so-called team self-management in the West?

Literature review
Self-managing team
A team refers to a formal group who work together for a certain goal (Robbins, 1994). A team has a specified goal, personnel, position, authority and plans, while a group just emphasizes information sharing. A team focuses on collective achievements, produces positive outcome, while a group is neutral, and its members share responsibility independently. In terms of capacity structure, a group is formed randomly while team members supplement each other (Robbins, 1996). Obviously, the urban informal

Years	No. of vendors being renovated	Major city events
1991	313,200	Women's World Cup
1992	–	
1993	–	
1994	133,000	
1995	180,000	
1996	–	
1997	145,000	
1998	67,900	
1999	380,000	The 50th anniversary of National Day
2000	560,000	
2001	470,000	The 9th National Games
2002	400,000	
2003	–	
2004	340,000	
2005	328,000	
2006	410,000	
2007	539,000	Prepared for the inspection of "State Sanitation City" and the "Asian Game Environmental Improvement Project"
2008	399,000	Won the "State Sanitation City"
2009	340,000	
2010	443,000	The 16th Asian games
2011	647,000	
2012	569,000	
2013	704,000	
2014	–	Passed the review of "State Sanitation City"

Note: Data are from Guangzhou Yearbook (1992-2015)

Table I.
The governance of
vendors in
Guangzhou and its
social background
(1991-2014)

employees belong to the informal group rather than to a team, with no specific goals, stipulated plans or division of rights and responsibility. In addition, the self-management of this group does not have the authority as their counterparts in the West do, nor does it have the problems related to leadership, group structure or capability structure. This group is randomly made up with great mobility, which does not conform to the basic requirements of a team in the West. In this sense, the theory of a Western self-management team cannot be applied to the research on China's urban informal employment group directly. Of course, there are still some common grounds in that China's informal employment group has its leaders and divides its members' roles and hierarchy from within. Though their abilities are not always supplemented, members show mutual respect and the restriction of each other's behaviors through some unstipulated rules.

Self-management can be divided into individual self-management and team self-management. The function-oriented team is more capable of self-management, while individual self-management exerts positive influence on the effectiveness of a function-oriented team (Uhl-Bien and Graen, 1998). An informal employment group is actually similar to a function-oriented team. The theory of classic Western self-management originates from self-control, which refers to one's controllability when

there is a lack of outside restriction and the behavior reaction of lower probability among other behaviors (Thoresen and Mahoney, 1974). Initially, self-management is applied to the explanation of individuals, and now, it has extended its application to the team with successive research (Cohen *et al.*, 1997; Chaston, 1998; Prussia *et al.*, 1998; Castaneda *et al.*, 1999). There are various factors that can affect a team's self-management, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1988), degree of self pride, (Tsui, 1994), motive for achievements (Mills, 1983), power relation among members (Tsui, 1994), interpersonal trust (Tsui, 1994) and mental models (Urchskat *et al.*, 2002). Western scholars tend to focus on individual factors and inter-individual relationships to discuss the issue of self-management while overlooking other factors such as environment, cultural tradition and management mechanism of the team.

In the West, the leader and their role is fundamental in a self-managing team. Some research points out that the team leader should be equipped with specific individual skills and abilities including group task coordination and supporting/developing others (Wolff *et al.*, 2002). Druskat and Wheeler (2003) find that a leader of a successful team should often build relationships within and without the team, source necessary information, persuade their team members and relevant outsiders to support his action and empower their team to achieve success. A team leader should be versatile and capable of playing multiple roles when dealing with internal and external affairs. The team's overall atmosphere and trust are of great significance in addition to that of the leader. Research has shown that a high degree of help and trust and a source of innovation are the most popular factors among team members (Zarraga, 2005). However, other studies also point out that a high level of trust can make members of self-managing teams reluctant to monitor one another. If low monitoring is combined with high individual autonomy, team performance may suffer (Langfred, 2004). Meanwhile, despite its high level of tenacity and adaptability, a self-managing team has its limitations and functional disorder, while conflicts among team members can reduce the level of internal trust (Langfred, 2007). Therefore, it is a delicate move to tackle a team's internal trust relation. It is advisable to set up rules that are impartial in the dispensation of reward and punishment. In fact, a self-managing team is more competitive compared with other teams, as it tends to showcase higher levels of adaptive performance positively and exerts positive impacts on customers' sense of satisfaction and loyalty (Jong and De Ruyter, 2004).

Jianghu and Jianghu rules

There has been a set of stable patriarchal clan system based on "family, clan, the whole world" in China, as well as another set of *Jianghu* rules. The dualistic structure and the social-economic development in traditional Chinese society contribute to the disintegration of the folk world, and then give rise to "Jianghu Society" beyond the control of patriarchal clan system (Wu, 2011). During the Warring States periods, the collapse of the production relations led to a vagrant class, composed of bankrupt farmers, handicraftsmen, vendors, monks and stragglers, which emerged in that turbulent society. Repelled by the mainstream society, these vagrants, therefore, alienated themselves and sought to make their own living (Yu, 2007), which, as a result, caused them to be treated as aliens, or even in some cases, gangs. Under such circumstances, these vagrants gathered together and basically made up their own culture that was somewhat unorthodox, which led them to establish a set of rules completely independent of the mainstream society. *Jianghu*, as a

traditional Chinese word, was therefore used to vividly identify such a kind of society along with certain cultures and rules.

The term *Jianghu* first appeared in Chinese classical literary texts more than 2,000 years ago. This literal translation of the original passage takes the term "Jianghu" by its surface meaning as a denotation of "rivers and lakes"(Wu, 2012). However, it also implies a situation of being excluded by the mainstream ideology, such as a zone on the edge, no longer controlled by the stable patriarchal system. Therefore, there is another hidden meaning of "Jianghu" that illustrates a condition of competing with the government and then attaining freedom. Wang (2005) points out three significant points of *Jianghu* in his research of *Heroes of the Marshes*: first *Jianghu* in nature; second *Jianghu* in the eyes of the scholar-bureaucrat and, third, *Jianghu* of migrants, which is often spoken of. The last is a venue where migrants look to make a living (Wang, 2005). Usually, *Jianghu* scatters its existence indiscriminately, but sometimes it has a formed organization, which is underground, such as secret clubs, underworld gangs, armed groups and forest heads. For instance, Liangshanpo, Erlong Mountain, Shaohua Mountain, Qingfeng Mountain and Duiying Mountain in the *Heroes of the Marshes* are all organized *Jianghu* societies.

Jianghu cannot exist without its people and vice versa. Members of *Jianghu* come from all around the country and then form a group intuitively that may have specified rules or oral consent by its members. No matter which kind it is, it must have a set goal. Besides, it builds a strict structure with certain disciplines to attract more members to strengthen its organization as well as to provide protection, material benefits and a sense of belonging for its members.

Jianghu is run by a set of rules so as to guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of its management. *Jianghu* is the implicit society being excluded by the traditional culture (Wang, 2005). Inside *Jianghu*, there are people with common cultural backgrounds who operated by a set of implicit social management systems, the *Jianghu* rules, and, therefore, *Jianghu* is itself a society. *Jianghu* does not become formed by two or three individuals intuitively but rather from a traditional Chinese culture. Generally, *Jianghu* includes a fictitious kinship network as for organization style. While dealing with daily incidents, members of *Jianghu* always try to get away from the stable patriarchal clan system, especially intervention launched by the government. Instead, they abide by the *Jianghu* rules, which are embodied as the judgment of their own as well as some moralities that every member must comply with. Therefore, *Jianghu* becomes a way to assist the expression of emotion and inner feelings. It conveys a sense of freedom, liberty and mobility, as it is sometimes deemed as an escapist thought to get away from politics, power struggle, official authority and the material world (Wu, 2012).

As for the individuals, the *Jianghu* rules are actually disciplines about competition, that is, primarily that one should struggle for their grades and status. On the other hand, the *Jianghu* rules indicate principles of binary opposition that members only care about the whole group and tend to tell the good from bad depending their own morality rather than laws of society. "Brotherhood, benevolence and etiquette" are the three major *Jianghu* rules; moreover, "brotherhood" is regarded as the highest standard, determining the right and wrong. It regards hierarchical and exclusive "Yi-qi" as ideology, and emphasized that justice upholding is the most important responsibility of each members. In the

Heroes of the Marshes, some individuals helped others even at the risk of their own life simply for the sake of brotherhood, as an individual would lose his/her brotherhood and even social stand according to *Jianghu*. Brotherhood has three tiers of meanings, namely, general brotherhood, chivalrousness and loyalism, with the latter being the ultimate aim (Feng, 2013). *Jianghu* also stresses benevolence by robbing the rich to help the poor and mutual helpfulness, a principle found not only among *Jianghu* people but also among its people and other groups within *Jianghu*. It is commonly seen in the *Heroes of the Marshes* novels that the heroes rob the local squires and tyrants as well as corrupted officials and give the stolen money to the poor. The third principle is etiquette, the most basic tenet in *Jianghu*, which stipulates that people do not easily resort to violence to solve problems. Even if violence is required, it is performed properly and is usually a means of reconciliation. When it comes to incompetent government and tyrannical, people living according to *Jianghu* would always try peaceful means before resorting to force.

Jianghu rules also specifies its members' titles, roles, jargons, morality standards and information channels. Take the *Heroes of the Mashes* for illustration, where each hero has his own unique nickname that reflects people's view toward him. The imposed title and its owner spread their achievements through the *Jianghu* channels. Moreover, the title itself is associated with social hierarchy that represents the owner's identity and social status in *Jianghu*. Therefore, *Jianghu* is also a society with marked hierarchy and anyone who would like to achieve a higher social ranking should make accomplishments that are recognized by people in *Jianghu*.

To date, there are still *Jianghu* societies in China. As the patriarchal clan system is always accompanied by vagrants who are beyond its control, the *Jianghu* society emerges to take in those vagrants and to develop specific rules to realize better management. The notion of *Jianghu* is still commonly used and has been understood in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan over many generations. Toward the (post) modern context, the notion of *Jianghu* crosses the textual border into our everyday life, as *Jianghu* is recontextualized into the realm of triad society under the urban scenario. *Jianghu* is, indeed, portrayed as a secretive space shadowing the formation of secret society as such and making it possible for the activities of this antigovernment society to take place (Wu, 2012).

This paper takes the informal tourism employment group surrounding Guangzhou Tower as an example. It is actually a *Jianghu* society there and the informal tourism employees share many common grounds with members of *Jianghu* to some extent. First, this group does not want standardization and stability in their society which will affect their economic benefits or even survival, second, these people show a spirit of pro-activity to look for benefits within their own or beyond their reach and, third, they only care about its members and the whole group. If someone breaches the group's welfare, the people in the group will take action to protect the group, even if that violates the basic rule of the society. On the whole, informal employees use some mechanisms, such as power relation among members (Tsui, 1994) and interpersonal trust (Tsui, 1994), in common with self-managing teams in the West, whereas they also differ in other aspects including external environment, culture and collectivism, which make it such a special and typical case to discuss how Chinese urban informal employment group manages themselves based on the *Jianghu* rules.

Research design
This paper takes the informal tourism employment group surrounding Guangzhou
Tower as an example, and adopts the process–event analysis to study this group's
self-management formation and its operating mechanism. Since China carried out its
reform and opening-up policy, Guangzhou has experienced rapid economic growth with
its gross domestic product rising from 4.309 billion yuan in 1978 to 1.54 trillion yuan in
2013. During this time, massive urbanization took place with large numbers of the rural
population migrating and evolving into urban residents. Some of the rural labor, failing
to make it into the urban formal sector, ended up in the urban informal sector, becoming
informal employees. According to statistics, by the end of 2010, Guangzhou was home to
a staggering 300,000 informal employees, accounting for 6.4 per cent of that year's urban
employees, reducing the unemployment rate by 2.1 per cent. The fact that, with limited
investment, the Guangzhou government managed its huge informal employees well has
drawn the attention of China's academic circle (Xue and Huang, 2008; Xie *et al.*, 2010;
Huang and Xue, 2011). When dealing with this informal group, Guangzhou adopts a
dualistic model of "Government-led campaign-style management and the informal
group's self-management", and from 1991 to 2014, with the expansion of this informal
group, the government intensified its campaign-style management, corresponding with
major events of each specific year as referred to in Table I.

Guangzhou Tower began operating in 2010 and has become the urban landmark in
Guangzhou. The tourism photographers around Guangzhou Tower are a typical
example of Guangzhou's urban informal employment group. Since the Guangzhou
Tower Scenic Spot was established, some migrant rural workers have made the most of
their business opportunities and begun to take photographs as a way of making money.
Without commercial registration and paying sales tax, this group has formed an
informal employment group and their number has reached more than 100. Such a scale
of an informal group existing beyond the government's campaign-style management
without any serious problems of disorder is a manifestation of its mature
self-management.

Due to its small scale, great mobility and meticulous precautions, it is very hard to
reveal its internal structure and operation mechanisms through the traditional methods
of questionnaires and quality research. Instead, this paper adopts the process–event
analysis method commonly used in the study of sociology. The used method attempts to
get hold of social structure and process in the real world within the time and course of
human behaviors while beyond the scope of society's formal structure, organization and
systematic framework (Sun, 2011). This way of analysis will transform its research
objects into text by switching from static status to dynamic with the composition of
several stories (Xie, 2007). This research will strive to preserve the originality and
completeness of the stories, so as to better reveal the forming process and operational
mechanism of this informal group's self-management.

Therefore, the investigator twice entered into the site where the stories took place in
March 2014 and February 2015, respectively, to carry out in-depth interviews, kept
records and collected second-hand materials to form triangulation, so as to understand
this group and their events more accurately. The research also adopts observation and
table-making to record the status, scale, structure, time-and-spatial distribution,
working hours, inter-members relationship and governmental control with
photo-taking. The investigator, as an onlooker, chose the afternoons and evenings when

the informal group was most active. Places of observation included the East Plaza, West Plaza, Metro Exit and Pearl River Corridor surrounding Guangzhou Tower and each observation lasted about 30 minutes. The semi-structural interview was carried out with the informal employment group, supplemented with owners of formal photography station and governmental departments (urban management bureau). The interview covered four major points: first, the forming, developing and staff structure of the informal employees; second, the group's structure, rules and events related to self-management (such as entering the barrier, mutual benefits and help, competition and cooperation); third, relations of this informal group with governmental departments, Guangzhou Tower Scenic Spot, tourists, formal photo-taking stations and residents living there and, fourth, major events during the development of the group. The investigator took the third-person point of view to gain the trust of one informal tourism photographer by acting as his customer, and then asked that person to recommend another informal employee for further interviews. Through this method, the investigator was able to conduct face-to-face semi-structured talks with two core figures of the group, namely, M03 and M09, 16 sub-core figures and two outsiders, with a total number of 20 people (Table II). In addition, three more formal employees at the photo-taking stations as well as two urban management staff were also interviewed. During this time, the investigator set up a good relationship with M09, and was able to get insight into his private life to know more about this group and details of its self-management.

### Forming of China's urban informal sectors
The traditional society differs greatly from *Jianghu* if examined by Weber's triangulation structure as referred to Figure 1 (Zhu and Liu, 2002). The *Jianghu* society is made up of "making a living, groups and rules", that is, the culture of egoism, composing of values of making a living, organization of the groups and *Jianghu* rules (Feng, 2013). So, it is fair to say that *Jianghu* society is all about making a living beyond the control of laws and patriarchal clan system in the social-economic area. With the increasing number of its informal employment group, this confused world is changing day and night with three marked periods of disruption, resistance and self-governance (Table III). With its expansion, the group has gradually formed its own *Jianghu* rules to implement effective self-management.

There has been no formal photo-taking stations since 2010, so M03 and M09 led more than 30 people of the same profession from Shanghai World Expo Scenic Spot to settle down. However, it was difficult to begin due to its small size. They lacked effective organization and had inadequate communication with governmental departments and community, as most members were not locals. With the increasing number of visitors since 2011, the demand for photography has also risen. As a leader, M09 adopted two measures to improve the disordered situation. One was attracting new members, especially local ones, to expand the team to more than 50 people by 2013. Due to this expansion, the local government was unable to continue its comprehensive management but turned to campaign-style management instead. Second, they set up a group, getting hold of the regularity of the government's control and the spatial–temporal rule of the tourists to formulate rules for its members. Thanks to these two measures, the group was capable of counterbalance with the government and implemented effective management of its members. Because the expansion of the group

No.	Gender	Age (years)	Years of working	Type of working	First time of interview	Hierarchy
M01	Male	35	2	Full-time	March 6, 2014	Sub-core
M02	Male	46	2	Part-time	March 6, 2014	Sub-core
M03	Male	35	5	Full-time	March 7, 2014	Core position. He is called "Wangge", one of the first group members
M04	Female	19	1	Full-time	March 7, 2014	Sub-core
M05	Female	38	3	Full-time	March 7, 2014	Sub-core
M09	Male	24	5	Full-time	February 1, 2015	Core position. He is called "Pangzi", one of the group leaders
M10	Female	46	5	Full-time	February 1, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M11	Male	42	3	Full-time	February 2, 2015	Sub-core
M12	Male	36	5	Full-time	February 2, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M13	Female	25	2	Part-time	February 2, 2015	Sub-core
M14	Male	43	5	Full-time	February 3, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M15	Male	29	5	Part-time	February 4, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M16	Female	37	0.5	Full-time	February 4, 2015	Sub-core
M17	Male	32	5	Part-time	February 5, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M18	Female	38	5	Full-time	February 5, 2015	Sub-core, one of the first employees
M19	Male	22	1	Part-time	Not interviewed	Peripheral, a photography student
M20	Male	28	3	Part-time	Not interviewed	Peripheral at first, and then became a member of sub-core

Table II.
Basic information of
the informal
photographers

Figure 1.
The social structure
of Jianghu
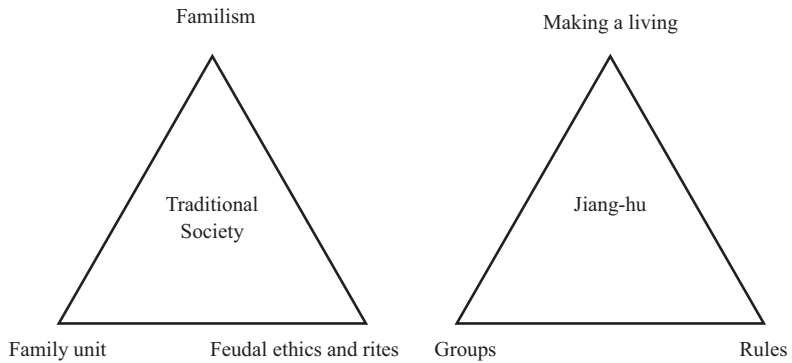
was good for its members' common benefits and in line with the increase in demand for tourism photography, the group has enlarged to between 100 and 200 persons by 2015. In the meantime, with the improvement of the group, local government is looking for management agents, namely, M03 and M09. Both M03 and M09 reach tacit oral agreement with the government, that is, the government will give advanced notice to the group prior to its campaign-style management while allowing their business activity within set times and spaces. Furthermore, M03 and M09 have to formulate and improve its *Jianghu* rules for effective management aiming at self-management. On the division of task, M03 is responsible for internal management, while M09 is for external communication.

Group self-management stems from the *Jianghu* theory with a whole set of orderly rules defining internal and external affairs. People within the *Jianghu* are divided into three categories: the core, sub-core and the peripheral (Table IV). In this case, M03 and M09 are the core for they are the founders, decision-makers and drafters of *Jianghu* rules armed with rights of speech and rallying. In real business, the core figures occupy the best spot in the West Plaza where tourists are most frequent and with the highest profits; others who join the group voluntarily set up business in the sub-core zone, scattering around the West Plaza, East Plaza, Metro Exit and roadsides, with a steady flow of customers where they make more money by working harder. Those who disregard the *Jianghu* rules but try to make a living independently, are driven to the outer ring where the customers flow is unstable. Instead, these outsiders capture some big holidays to do business, such as the Spring Festival or National Day Holiday. The three types of informal tourism photographers represent their own status in *Jianghu*, though are not specified in paper.

Operation mechanism of urban informal sector: *Jianghu* rules

Jianghu rules are essential to self-management. The rules, inherited from China's old *Jianghu* tradition, with some adjustments, are spread and executed through verbal order or age-old usage with strong enforcement. However, the lack of a printed version of the rules renders it impossible to do text-based research. Instead, this paper has to rely on in-depth talks and reports of major events to reveal the fundamentals and operation mechanism of the *Jianghu* rules.

This paper applys QSR NVivo 10.0 to conduct content analysis by the order of open coding and axial coding. While coding, the phrases, sentences and passages are marked

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Time	2010 (Messing-up period)	2011-2013 (Resistance period)	2014-2015 (Self-governance period)
Scale	30	40-50	100-120
Entry mode	People spontaneously came to Guangzhou Tower, served as the first group of informal employees	By following others, a few new members participated in this informal sector	A large number of new members pushed in by introducing through acquaintances
Origin of new members	The old cast of informal tourism photographers around Shanghai EXPO building, most of which were mainly from Henan, Shandong, Anhui and Guangdong	Some experienced informal tourism photographers from other scenic spots in Guangzhou, like the Baiyun Mountain, Tianzi Marina and Dashatou Marina	Mainly the relatives, friends and fellow villagers of the old informal tourism photographers around Guangzhou Tower, which were from Henan, Shandong, Sichuan and Guangxi
Demographics	Most were young and middle-aged males and just a few middle-aged females. All of them were familiar with each other	Both new members and the old ones were mainly young and middle-aged males. The proportion of female was small	Most were young and middle-aged males; however, the proportion of female began to rise, and partners of couple or mother–daughter emerged. Employees were all acquaintances
Type of working	Full-time	Most were full-time employees	Most were full-time employees, but the proportion of part-time ones had obviously risen
Government regulation	Government regulation was so strict during the Asian Games that informal tourism photographers could only grasp the gap during urban managers's shift transition or off-duty time to run business. Informal photographer was in a very passive situation then. Their operating environment was in turbulence, and what's more their prospects are grim	Government regulation was still strict. However, the informal tourism photographers began to resist. For example, they pretended to be tourists in order to get rid of urban managers. What's more, they submitted a joint letter to the government, asking for operation permission. During the resistance period, their operating environment gradually transformed from turbulent to stable	As a result of resistance, government began to deregulate to informal tourism photographers. Only when leaders came would urban managers drive informal tourism photographers away. Otherwise, they did not take any action. Under such circumstance, informal tourism photographers realized self-management

Table III.
The formation of informal photographers around the Canton Tower

Hierarchy	Core	Sub-core	Peripheral
Location	Fixed on the center of West Plaza, where is the prime photography location of the Guangzhou Tower	Wandering around the West Plaza, the East Plaza and the Metro Exit of the Guangzhou Tower	Wandering by the Pearl River Corridor, where is 50 meters away from the Guangzhou Tower
Scale	About 10 people, taking M09 and M03 as the leaders	70-80	20-30
Demographics	All of them are young and middle-aged males	Most are young and middle-aged males, and the male to female ratio is 3:1	Most are young and middle-aged people, with unstable gender ratio
Length of working	More than 5 years	More than 1 year mostly	Just a few months, because most of them are seasonal employees
Feature of working	They are all full-time employees, working for about 12 hours every day, from 11 am to 11 pm. They usually occupy the prime photography location of the Guangzhou Tower in West Plaza so that they usually gain very high reward. Also, they serve as the decision-makers of the whole group of employees as they are very eloquent	Most of them are full-time employees. Their everyday working hours are flexible, ranging from 8 to 14 hours. They usually wander around the West Plaza, the East Plaza and the Metro Exit to attract customers. Therefore, they get more pay for more work done	Most of them are seasonal part-time employees, working during the Spring Festival, the National Holiday and so on. However, they are always squeezed out to the s Pearl River Corridor or the side of road, where less travelled by tourists. Therefore, their incomes are unstable, which leads to high turnover rate

as nodes, and the nodes are then encoded. Altogether, 270 nodes are marked, with 22 primary codes divided into eight secondary codes and, finally, three advanced codes, namely, benevolence, brotherhood and etiquette (Table V), which are the fundamentals of *Jianghu*. "Benevolence" requires members to help each other, treat customers sincerely and take care of the underprivileged. "Brotherhood" is the guideline when dealing with governmental departments, other groups, formal sectors, community and newcomers. "Etiquette" requires members to treat each other and other stakeholders politely and in a non-violent manner. Among the three, "etiquette" appears most frequently, indicating that *Jianghu* rules stresses the priority of politeness. However, when the group welfare is breached, members of the group will try peaceful means before resorting to violence. In reality, the rules are also applied when recruiting new members, carrying out internal help and facing external conflicts.

To newcomers
The self-management is benefitted from the enlargement of the group. However, the increase in members means the common benefits are to be shared by one or more persons because the market demand is relatively stable. To newcomers, the group will treat them politely unless the new comer has lost his loyalty:

> The market demand is relatively stable. Why should I help the newcomer who has nothing to do with me but is here to take the market share from me? No matter how capable or confident I am, I don't want this kind of competition happens to me (M02).

> Without anyone in the group to help, the newcomer has to do everything all alone, including the purchase of a camera, the negatives, albums and printers, etc. So it is not easy for newcomers (M02).

Since 2014, the environment for making a living has become stable and the group, with its expansion, has matured. To control its size, the group leaders M03 and M09 advocated the recruitment of acquaintance rather than total strangers: that the newcomer should be recommended and recognized by the group members. However, there are some exceptions. In the winter of 2013, a college undergraduate majoring in photography, M19, expressed his interest to join the informal group in an attempt to learn more about photography. With the agreement of the leader of group, M19 was admitted into the group with support such as the lending of an album and a printer from other members. Also, M19 was lectured on the *Jianghu* rules such as fair competition and non-fights among group members:

> We feel pity for him as he is just a student who wants to make a living, so we gave him an album and lent him the printer. Of course, we told him the rules so that he followed us to attract tourists (M02).

However, M19 did not abide by the rules and lost his loyalty to the group. Instead of feeling grateful to the group's kind help, he purposefully lured other members' customers and disturbed other members' business, which led to the discontent of the group. So, the leaders decided to expel him in a peaceful way. They took back the album and printer and gave him the order verbally to leave the group. With no further help, and shunned by the group, M19 had to leave in the end:

> It never occurred to us that M19 would be so ungrateful. His action of luring customers out of his own specific zone had incurred a great loss of customers on our side. So within a few days,

Advanced codes	Secondary codes	Primary codes	Examples for nodes	Sources of nodes	Nodes
Kindness (Ren)	Assist peers mutually	Recommend equipments	I told him (new member) to buy those types of equipment that we all appreciated	7	17
		Impart technology	If I introduce this job for you, I have the responsibility to teach you (about some technology)	5	14
		Share customers	Sometimes I would tip others to tout for business on some target customers	2	3
	Be genuine to customers	Provide quality services	We always do our best to serve customers	5	11
		Avoid forced behavior	We won't force customers to take photos if they are not willing to	3	3
	Be willing to help others	Meet multiple needs	We began to find ways to sent photos to customers' mailbox or mobile phones	4	10
		Create jobs for strangers	The student was so poor, so we lent him a printer and a photo album to run business	2	5
				63 (23.3%)	
Justice (Yi)	Defend the collective	Defame official photographers	30% of customers was dissatisfied with their (official photographer) products and then chose us to take photos instead	3	6
		Uphold their dominance	It's no doubt that this business is developed by us	4	10
	Be loyal to the collective	Long time of employment	As soon as the Canton Tower was set up, we began to run business here	5	10
		Low will of changing job	I feel well now so that I have no desire to change my job	4	8

(continued)

Table V.
Content analysis of
Jianghu discipline

Advanced codes	Secondary codes	Primary codes	Examples for nodes	Sources of nodes	Nodes
	Abide by collective rules	Set entry threshold	Only by introducing through acquaintances could you become a member of this group	9	30
		Be clear with one's location	If we ask him to move out, then he must go	3	7
		Unify the price	The price of photo is still 10 yuan, from the first day we run business here till now	5	9
		Avoid over competition	We won't grab customers from others. This is somewhat a rule	5	8
		Set justice reward system	More pay for more work. No one would despoil your reward	6	8
				96 (35.6%)	
Etiquette (Li)	Be polite to stakeholders	Be obedient to scenic spots	We would abide by the rules set up by the scenic spots if it's reasonable	4	24
		Be obedient to government	If urban managers drive us out, then we should obey them and have to go	5	27
		Build alliance with stores	We always buy drinks from those stores, therefore the shopkeeper would take care of our printers	2	4
	Be civilized to competitors	Squeeze out others with non-violence	We took back the printer and the photo album. No help would be provided for him	8	19
		Rationally compete	We reasoned them (official photographers), and persuading them through reasoning	5	16
		Be harmonious with peers	We don't quarrel, we don't fight, either. It's a basic rule in our group	10	21
				111 (41.1%) Total: 270 (100%)	

Table V.

we took back the album and did not lend him the printer, leaving him all by himself. In the end, he had no choice but to leave (M02).

After the M19 incident, the group strictly recruited its newcomers and a member's recommendation became the only way of entrance into the group. Now, it is not just the newcomers who have to abide by the basic *Jianghu* rules, but the introducer also has to shoulder joint responsibility. Though not yet expressly stipulated, when an existent member wants to recommend new one, he or she has to gain the leaders' consent and carry out effective education of the new one on the *Jianghu* rules. This method of introduction has increased the quality of newcomers' as well as maintained the group's overall welfare:

> The market is just that big with a stable flow of customers. It is just natural that old members would like to expel new ones who take away their original market share (M09).

> The best solution is looking for one's fellow-townsmen followed by friend's recommendation. The more they are acquainted with each other, the better. To ensure sustainable development, we all agree to follow these rules (M02).

For those who observe the rules, the group will treat them politely. For instance, in 2013, M20, who frequented Guangzhou Tower Scenic Spot after work, gradually got to know members of the group well. After some experiments, he learned the technique of photography and equipped himself with related devices. Through other members' recommendations, he eventually joined the group. Since M20 was not related to any members via kinship or geographical relationship, he was assigned to the Pearl River Corridor where customers were the fewest and M20 had a hard time making a living. What is worse that the construction of trolley cars resulted in the blocking of the venue where he took photos for tourists. So, M20 had to turn to the leaders for help. This time, taking into consideration of M20's previous performance, he was appointed to the West Plaza, where customers are most frequent. It is evident that, because of M20's observation of the rules, he was well treated, recognized and protected by the group.

The examples of M19 and M20 reveal the *Jianghu* rules when it recruits new members, of which brotherhood and etiquette are fundamental. Violation of brotherhood and etiquette will lead to group expulsion, including of old members such as M19. In contrast, if new member can stick to the rules, he or she will eventually be accepted and protected by the group.

Internal help

Though group members come from different parts of the country and are admitted into the group in different manners, there is a need for them to help and support each other to face challenges both within and without the group. Benevolence and etiquette have become essential among group members. The fact the old members recommend new ones and take the initiative of sharing their business opportunities and benefits is a manifestation of benevolence. Another example is the tailored training and arrangement for newcomers. For instance, the leader M09 often provides technical support to new members; for the young and middle-aged newcomers with strong learning abilities, M09 just needs to recommend the right equipment and teach them simple photo-taking skills; for those who do not learn new things easily, M09 will suggests them buy the similar type of cameras and helps them set the cameras to the easiest mode (day–night mode) for

convenient usage; and once there is something wrong with the camera, established members always offer help based on their past experience; for those older participants who may struggle to learn new techniques, M09 will assign them the job of watching over the printers:

> The aunties are capable of switching the mode from day to night, but claim the camera is single-reflected. Below 50, it is in day-mode; above that, it is in night-mode. Simple as it is, that is all they can do, namely, with the set mode, they simple press the shutter, and the photo is taken. We, younger ones, are different as we are able to operate the camera as we want (M09).

> All printers are placed on the group floor of that building over there (500 meters to the West Plaza). One old man is kept watching over the machines (M06).

Group members do not quarrel, fight or compete with each other over customers. When their own rights are guaranteed, members will recommend customers to each other to facilitate a win–win situation. For instance, M01 (male) once introduced his potential customer to M05 (female) because the customer preferred a female photographer. Likewise, M05 would return his kindness by introducing more appropriate customers to M01. During this course, a close cooperation partnership is formed among group members:

> I will give others the opportunity if I am not able to do it myself (M09).

> That is to say, customers have their preference for male or female photographer. If a young lady insists on having a female photographer, then I will give the case to other female partners (M09).

> Sometimes if I cannot reach a deal with the customers, I will not insist, so that they can find other group members to take the photos (M14).

As the fundamentals of co-existence among members, benevolence and etiquette reflect themselves, not just on old members helping new ones but also regarding the mutual help between members. They are the bond of unity, conducive to building a good image of the group and creating of a harmonious environment that is approved by the government department.

Dealing with conflicts
There are two major challenges facing the informal employment group: one is the government's tightened control that leads to its dissolution and the other is conflict and competition between groups. Therefore, etiquette and brotherhood are extremely important when it comes to conflicts. Two incidents below will prove this point.

There was no officially recognized photo-taking station in Guangzhou Tower Scenic Spot initially. Therefore, informal photographers were accepted by the Scenic Spot with regular meetings with the informal group's agent to discuss agreements beneficial to both parties. To maintain the bilateral relation, the Scenic Spot acknowledged the positive impacts of the informal group, while members of the group agreed to follow the basic rules of the Spot, such as keeping good order, ensuring products and service quality as well as environmental sanitation:

> Before the photo-taking station was open, people in charge of the Scenic Spot held meetings with us at least three or four times a year, telling us that taking photos of the Tower was a good

thing as it helped promoting the reputation of Guanghzou Tower to tourists, who would bring more friends to have a look at the Tower after seeing the photos (M09).

When it comes to the end of the year, there are more tourists visiting the Tower. So for peaceful co-existence, neither people in charge of the Scenic Spot nor the informal employees want to have a hard time for each other. It is that simple (M17).

No fights and no quarrels. Other things are left to us to manage (M12).

At the beginning of 2014, when inspecting Guangzhou Tower Scenic Spot, leaders of the Guangzhou Municipality made a rush decision of setting a formal photo-taking station at the West Plaza after they saw the informal tourism photographers scattering around the whole spot. On October 1 of that year, the formal photo-taking station was open. Naturally, the informal group was driven away from taking photos on the East and West Plaza. The formal photo-taking station also manipulated their prices to get the informal group out of business (see Table VI).

Such measures caused a strong reaction from the informal group. Under the organization of M03 and M09, the group members blockaded the formal station, which prompted the government to send armed forces to dispel the informal group, which then escalated the tension. The confrontation lasted for one month and neither party won. With increasing strong protest from the visitors and the public, both parties had to return to the negotiating table to reformulate new rules. They agreed that, first, the informal group would not be expelled from the Scenic Spot anymore, and instead, normal operation should be restored, and second, the formal photo-taking station should resume business. Obviously, both terms had not only saved the face of the municipal government leaders and reinstated both groups' welfare but also, more importantly, restored the normal order of the Scenic Spot:

Leader of the Scenic Spot ordered security guides to drive us away from the West Plaza and wanted us to leave as far as possible. We protested as the vicinity of the Tower was public space, both tourists and informal employees had access to it. The leader, hearing this, came down and said that he agreed everyone had the right to visit this scenic spot (M09).

The leader claims that the formal photographers belong to the administration of Guangzhou Tower, but that is not legal. If the formal group has the legal commercial license, it is fair to say that they have the right to do business here; the fact is, even those formal employees have no business license, as that of their informal counterpart. So it is just unacceptable that the formal group can do business here while we are denied the qualification (M09).

At the beginning, the leader tried to dispel us. But that was not the intension of the Scenic Spot Administration and he had no right to do it, either. What he argued was that we were not

	Size	Official photographers	Informal photographers
Table VI.	Small	8 yuan/piece, 15 yuan/2 pieces, 20 yuan/3 pieces	10 yuan/piece
Price comparison	Medium	18 yuan/piece, 35 yuan/2 pieces, 40 yuan/3 pieces	20 yuan/piece
between informal	Big	28 yuan/piece, 55 yuan/2 pieces, 70 yuan/3 pieces	30 yuan/piece
photographers and official photographers	Notes	Provide electronic photo to customer if they consume more than 35 yuan	Price could be negotiated

allowed to enter certain area. But that didn't make sense at all. For instance, the road is for public use, all people can use it, right? So, it was natural with each party holding its own views in the beginning, which led to some conflict (M17).

In fact, the formal photography group does not threaten the informal group's business, as it is limited in scale and staff number. Instead, both groups of employees keep the status quo of "silent competition" by pretending to get along well, while, in reality, they often vilipend each other. For instance, the formal group accused the informal group of charging too high a price, poor quality and bad service; in return, the informal employees criticized the bad photography technique and low customer satisfaction of the formal group:

They (the informal employees) charge more with poorer quality and service (M06).

Lots of customers, about 30 per cent of them, turn away from formal photographers even after the photo is taken, and come to us for another shot as our take is much different (M09).

As time goes by, we find that peaceful co-existence is possible like the situation now. It is unlikely that those formal employees would like to attract tourists at the Metro Exit. On the contrast, we do not mind doing that as we suffer more pressure from life (M17).

When making a living in the messy world, the self-managing informal employment group is in a balanced relationship with the government. However, if any party tries to change the status quo by force, it will surely provoke protest from other part. For example, if the Scenic Spot Administration chose to inform and negotiate with the informal employees with due respect, a confrontation could have been avoided. Of course, the balanced state is not static but forever changing, a result of the check-and-counter-check reconciliation between the government sector and the informal one.

As the government's management agent, M09 tried to negotiate with the government department by rallying his members to submit a collective letter, but the result was unsatisfying. However, after the "incident of formal photo-taking station", both sides realized the importance of negotiation. So, on one hand, the government sector allowed normal business of the informal sector with the consensus that good social order should be maintained when they notified the informal group of upcoming campaign-style management; on the other hand, the informal group leader further standardized its members' behavior by removing the printer, originally placed in front of the TV Station to the residential building 500 meters to the West Plaza:

The government head ordered us to move the printer away as it did not fit into the environment. The removal had nothing to do with the urban management workers as they simply did what they were asked to do (M17).

It is not a pleasant scene with so many things pilling up in front of the TV Station. Therefore, we moved the stuff to another place, and that was good for all concerned (M17).

From then on, the government and the informal employees co-existed in an unwritten relationship, namely, the government would continue its daily patrol but not interfere the informal sector with their business. Most of the members adhered to the arrangement by closing their business on specific special days and resumed business after they had passed. But there were some who ignored the warning, resulting in the

confiscation of their printer and were fined 200 yuan each to get their machines back. Of course, the violators were also reprimanded by their leaders:

> If local officials order you not to do business on that day since that place is to be visited by higher officials, you should listen, right? It is unwise to argue with officials as they may just deny you any more chance of doing business here (M12).

> When my printer was confiscated by the urban manager, I bribed him with 200 yuan to get it back sooner rather than later (M11).

The "messy world" refers to the social-economic area that is beyond the confines of laws and the traditional patriarchal clan system. Also, it does neither party good in resolving conflicts via force when one side insists on legal actions and the other the *Jianghu* rules. Therefore, both concerned sides should treat each other with due etiquette at the negotiation table. However, in the event that the informal employment group's welfare is infringed upon by outside forces, its members have to fight against the outside intruders to show their loyalty to the group and safeguard their own interests. Hence, it is of great significance of trying peaceful means before resorting to force when dealing with conflicts, a manifestation of etiquette and brotherhood. Both M03's and M09's position as group leaders and management agents are consolidated after their successful attempts to resolve conflicts.

Conclusion and further discussions

This paper takes the informal employment group in the business of photo-taking surrounding Guangzhou Tower as a case study, and uses the method of process–event analysis to unveil the forming process and operating mechanism of this informal group's self-management. Also, the study shows that, with the expansion of the informal employment group, it is not feasible for the continual comprehensive management by the government, as the costs are too high, while the effects are too little. Therefore, the transition to campaign-style management is the call of the time. This new type of management created a "messy world" ruled by the groups with their own way of ruling in a *Jianghu* society. The self-management of *Jianghu* greatly makes up for the shortcomings of the government-led campaign-style management, creating a dualistic management mechanism toward the urban informal employment groups, namely, the government's campaign-style management coupled with *Jianghu* society's self-management. The basic principle of *Jianghu* self-management is *Jianghu* rules, of which the core is benevolence, brotherhood and etiquette. These core values are implemented through implicit and unwritten oral commands and group members' self-discipline. Even for new members, benevolence and etiquette are essential, as accepted members might be expelled from the group if they violate the two rules, while "strangers" may be admitted and protected by the group if they observe the rules. Both benevolence and etiquette are the guidelines for dealing with internal affairs. In this challenging world, the two guidelines help in unifying a group, improving its external image and creating a harmonious business environment to the effect accepted by the government. When tackling conflicts, using peaceful means through negotiation is the way out; only when the group suffers from outside aggression will its members unite to fight against the aggressors by shoring up their loyalty. The effective organization and implementation of *Jianghu* rules not only meet the demands of informal employees'

request for job opportunities but also the government's control over this group. Therefore, it is a win–win situation for both sides.

This research also shows that informal employment group is capable of self-management as its formal counterpart by following *Jianghu* rules against the backdrop of China's actual situation. The urban informal group can execute self-management through implicit unwritten *Jianghu* rules, though their organization is loose, open with great mobility and the rules for reward and punishment are less rigid and more human-based. This kind of self-management is a far cry from the Western team's self-management, which requires a unified action of the team with rigorous plans and reasonable team structure. This study gives another option for team's self-management. In this mode, the informal group leaders, M03 and M09, are not only responsible for coordination and developing new members (Wolff *et al.*, 2002) but are also the management agents. As the core figures, they have to build relationships with government departments for certain kinds of cooperation, formulate plans and strategies, improve and implement *Jianghu* rules and realize the group's self-management. The leaders' power is not authorized, but has been earned from their achievements in helping the group dealing with various incidents (such as the "incident of formal photo-taking station"). As leaders, they have to discipline themselves, observe *Jianghu* rules and reward and punish group members fairly; in addition, they must be brave, knowledgeable and good at organizing and coordinating with the charisma of appealing to and influencing the members. In this sense, the establishment of an informal group's self-management requires both the traditional *Jianghu* culture and the right leaders.

Finally, the study further indicates that a mature informal employment group is in a dynamic cooperation relation with governmental departments, a result of check and counter-check by both parties. Either party's forced action to change the status quo will cause protest and lead to the defeat of both sides. In this way, the government's one-sided strengthened management does not help, but rather evocates "disorder" of the informal group. The self-management mode of China's urban informal employees, originated from *Jianghu* rules, is not only applicable in China but also other developing countries. It fills the void created by the Chinese Government's campaign-style management and helps realize economical and effective management of the informal employment groups.

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