The proposal of “The Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill” in February 2019 by the local government of Hong Kong delivered a jarring blow to the Hong Kong public, because if approved, the bill would establish a mechanism for transfer of fugitives to any jurisdiction with which Hong Kong does not have a formal extradition treaty including mainland China. Hong Kong citizens, especially political dissenters such as pro-democracy/pro-independence/anti-Communist advocates, are afraid of being arrested by the police under the pressure from Beijing and even, more broadly speaking, Beijing’s direct interference with the internal affairs of Hong Kong. As a result, protests and demonstrations broke out in various venues in 2019 and the city, which used to be a peaceful haven, has since then been thrown into roaring turmoil. However, upon closer inspection, we might find that the actual motives behind the large-scale protests are more than the apparent calling for the complete withdrawal of the proposed bill. For instance, it is said that the increasing hopelessness of getting satisfying jobs to maintain a comfortable lifestyle in an expensive city like Hong Kong was also what sparkled the furor of young people, mobilized them to take to the streets, and sustained their long-term protests. Given the diversity of political, economic and cultural backgrounds in Hong Kong, there are definitely multiple causes that ignited outrages and shattered peace. My project “Rebuilding A Peaceful Haven in Hong Kong” endeavors to offer deeper insights into the current situation in Hong Kong and to explore the possibility of restoring the city to its previous status as a peaceful haven.
The major activity I propose to organize through this project is to hold a six-day seminar in late July 2020 for Hongkongers from disparate cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds who have participated in demonstrations or are concerned with the future of Hong Kong to deliberate ways to rebuild peace in the city. To ensure the success of the seminar, I have secured support from the Poetica Sinica Press, a media and publishing branch of English Group Limited in Hong Kong, for whom I had worked for three years from 2014 to 2017. With their help, I will start to send invitations in May 2020 to prospective participants highly representative of diverse backgrounds. The seminar will tentatively be held at the headquarters of the Press and will be divided into two three-day sections. The first aims at systematically unveiling what occasioned the tensions and dissatisfactions in Hong Kong society that led to yearlong rallies and demonstrations; the second focuses on seeking reasonable courses of action that might be conducive to resolving conflicts and reconstructing peace in Hong Kong.

Afterwards, I will coordinate with relevant personnel from the Poetica Sinica Press to publish in late August 2020 an edited volume that records the results of the seminar, which will be the main indicator of success for my project. To date, there has been no publishing endeavor documenting divergent views and feasible solutions on a relatively objective ground. This project attempts to burst out the limits of partisanship and search for possible routes to the recovery of peace in Hong Kong. In the long run, the present Hong Kong protest is in all likelihood to be regarded as a significant episode in the history of China and even of the world. I believe future researchers interested in this historic event will benefit from such a publication made possible by a Davis Project for Peace grant.