

Post Event Summary: Thematic Session 4
Regional Landscape on Social Innovation

The fourth thematic session “Regional Landscape on Social Innovation” of the Social Innovation Regional Forum (SIRF2020), organized by Jockey Club Design Institute for Social Innovation (JCDISI) under the PolyU Jockey Club “Operation Solnno” project (“SOINNO”), has concluded on 20 Nov 2020. The event took place from 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm. Slightly different from the three previous sessions, this thematic session focused on a regional comparative study of social innovation. JCDISI gathered revered scholars of social innovation from Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou to share their research findings. The forum was live-streamed on the SIRF website and a Mainland streaming platform. Audiences can watch the forum online and interact with the speakers. The live-stream attracted over 300 participants from the public.

In his welcoming speech, **Mr Ling Kar-kan**, Director of JCDISI, expressed the Institute’s commitment to pushing forward a collaborative network of social innovation between Hong Kong and its neighbouring cities.



Mr Ling Kar-Kan, Director of JCDISI

The thematic session began with the presentation of **Dr Yanto Chandra**, Associate Professor at the **Department of Applied Social Sciences** and Director of the **Centre for Social Policy and Social Entrepreneurship** at **PolyU**. He introduced his research on the predictors of the performance of

social innovation projects. Dr Chandra pointed out that social innovation reaches all aspects of life. For example, the establishment of kindergarten in 1816 during the industrial revolution alleviated the burden of childcare from working parents. Another example of social innovation is the microcredit system for low-income individuals in need. However, not all attempts in social innovation are successful. The key question remains: What are the key factors that affect the performance of social innovation projects?

Dr Chandra's research compared 150 international cases and 60 local cases of social innovation and analysed how social strategies, commercial strategy, social capital, human capital and other factors affect their performance. He specifically analysed through two main perspectives, namely business nature and creativity. In terms of business nature, his research identified several key performance indicators, namely financial sustainability, the founder's prior knowledge and experience in business, as well as their business contacts and access to resources. On the other hand, three predictors of high-performing social innovation projects in terms of creativity are identified, namely creativity in product or service design, creativity in the process of product and service delivery, and creativity in facilitating changes to social relations. He concluded the presentation with six major recommendations for social enterprises: integrate social and commercial strategies, be able to address multiple social problems, be actively engaged with the private sector, acquire diverse sources of funding, be original and creative, and select prudent and competent leadership.



Dr Yanto Chandra, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Social Sciences and Director of the Centre for Social Policy and Social Entrepreneurship at PolyU

Prof Runan Zhou, Associate Professor at the School of Communication and Design, **Sun Yat-sen University and Director of Guangzhou Social Innovation Center**, studied social innovation from the point of view of governance. He compared the social innovation ecology in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Shunde, and analysed the impacts and challenges faced by social innovation incubators. Furthermore, he proposed recommendations for future development. Prof Zhou showed that in the most recent decade, incubators led by the government and civil organisations have become the dominant models for social innovations.

Prof Zhou focused his case study on the incubator ecology of Guangzhou. The majority of the 45 incubators of different scales spanning from the city, district to street level, are funded by the government-run Lottery Public Welfare Fund. Different from Guangzhou, the newly-established statutory body Shunde Social Innovation Center in Shunde, Foshan is run collectively by the local government, high schools and civil organisations.

Prof Zhou further elaborated that social entrepreneurship has been in the spotlight in recent years, with exploration and implementation concentrated within civil society. In 2019, social enterprise was officially recognised by the Chengdu government for the first time, bringing national attention to the city. As an ending remark, Prof Zhou revealed some obstacles in the existing social innovation ecology, such as a lack of top-level design and bureaucracy resulting from the multilevel structure. He believed that a more transparent working relationship between the government and civil organisations can unlock incubators to their fullest potential.



Prof Runan Zhou, Associate Professor at the School of Communication and Design, Sun Yat-sen University and Director of Guangzhou Social Innovation Center

Dr Norah Wang, Associate of the Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation, presented her research on Hong Kong social innovation ecology in two parts. In the first part, Dr Wang introduced the history of social innovation and the evolution of local social innovation ecology in Hong Kong. From as early as the sixties to the eighties, Hong Kong had developed a social welfare service model driven by the collaboration between society and commercial enterprises. The nineties witnessed the marketisation of non-profit organisations; and after the SARS epidemic in 2003, the establishment of the Commission on Poverty formalised social enterprise as a feasible solution for improving employment among the disadvantaged. Dr Wang noted that The Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund) has become the main driver in the development of social innovation ecosystem in Hong Kong.

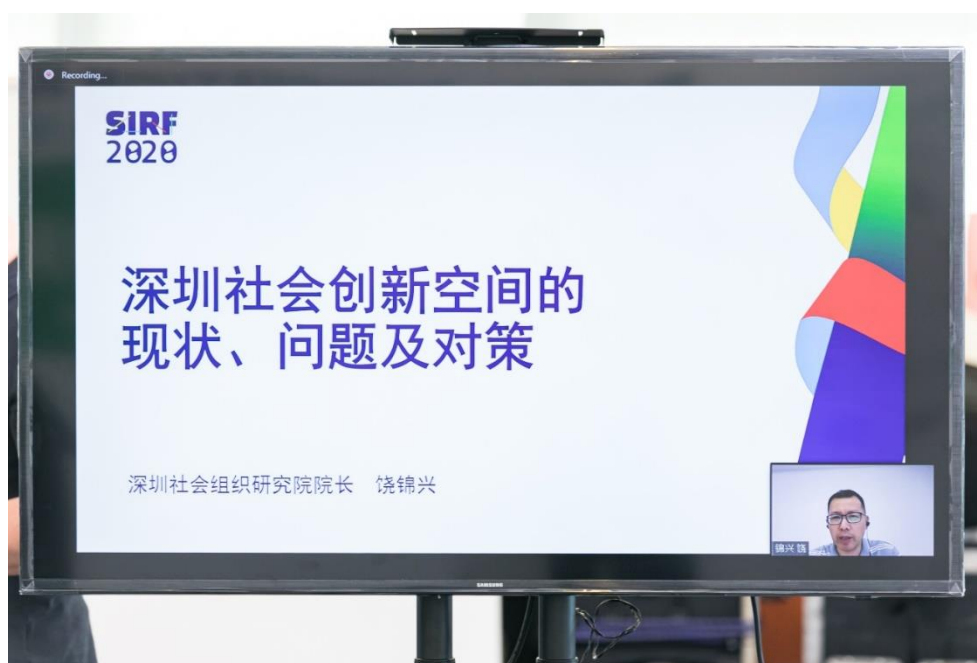
In the second part of her presentation, Dr Wang revealed problems in the existing social innovation ecosystem. She suggested building on the existing ecology by focusing on specific issue fields. Dr Wang's research gathered 268 project proposals from Hong Kong social innovation incubator GoodSeed to analyse the issue fields targeted and solutions offered, eventually tracking their survival rate. Her study shows that social innovation projects focusing on ad-hoc, 'trendy' topics have a lower survival rate. For example, in the area of elderly service, although most projects are centred around the idea of ageing in place, few survive in the long run. Dr Wang emphasised that this phenomenon deserves more attention and further research to explore solutions.



Dr Norah Wang, Associate of the Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation

President and researcher of **Shenzhen Institute of Non-Profit organisations Mr JinXing Rao** defined social innovation as ‘support for civil organizations and social enterprises to adopt an innovative approach towards social challenges’ and studied Shenzhen’s social innovation projects through this analytical lens. Mr Rao introduced the development of civil-organisations-related ordinance and the macro-environment in the Mainland, naming the introduction of the Civil Code of The People’s Republic of China, the Charity Law of the People’s Republic of China and the registry system for civil organisations as examples. He pointed out that the Chinese government has been a major player in social innovation in China.

Next, Mr Rao presented a detailed introduction of the topology and operational models of city-level and district-level social innovation spaces in Shenzhen. For example, Shenzhen’s Futian district has taken the lead in supporting the development of social innovation. The measures include an annual 20-million funding towards social infrastructure, establishing the district as the headquarters of Shenzhen’s social innovation, and incubators and other supporting services for civil organisations. In addition to the recently-launched tri-level social incubator platform ‘2+8+N’ district in Nanshan, Shenzhen has also established the nation’s first ‘social innovation funding platform’, facilitating the matching of capital and philanthropic projects. Backed by the government, these social innovation spaces provide venues, capital and services for social incubators. Mr Rao further pinpointed several weak points he identified in the local ecology, such as the still-nascent industry of civil organisations and public services, the lack of popularity and the homogeneity of offered services. Concluding his presentation, he put forward several directions for future development, such as comprehensive city-wide planning of civil organisations and public service spaces, establishing service standards, an integrated support mechanism for civil organisations comprised of academia, legal, banking, finance and information technology, and the utilisation of digital technology to improve service efficiency.



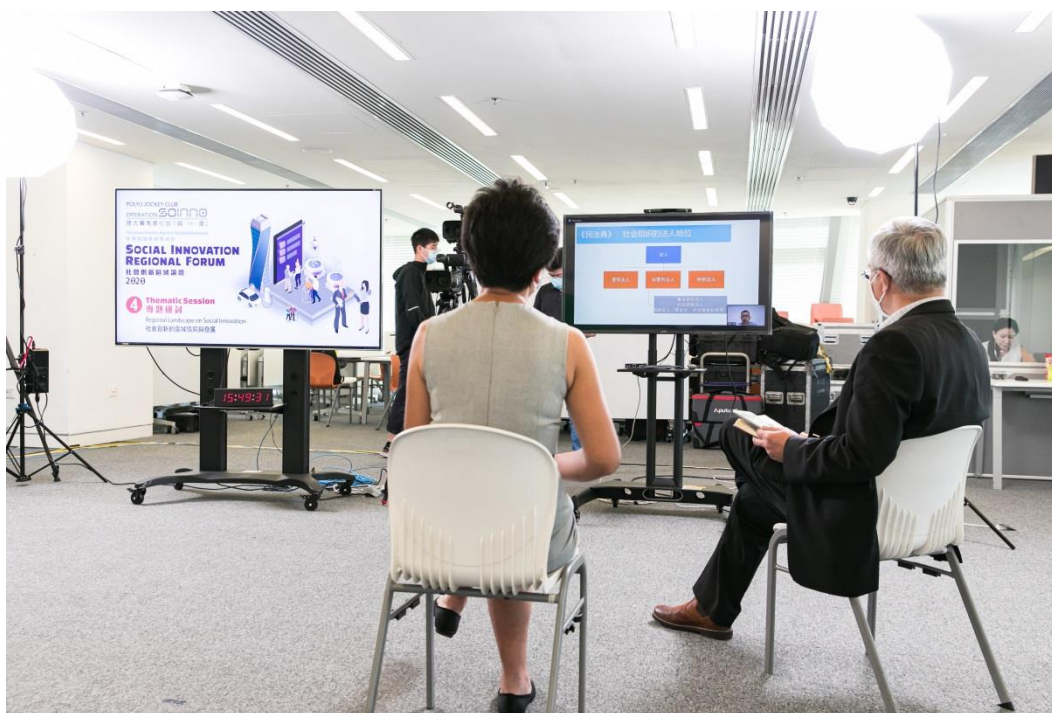
President and researcher of Shenzhen Institute of Non-Profit organisations Mr JinXing Rao

The ending panel discussion was moderated by JCDISI Director **Mr Ling Kar-kan**. He began by reiterating JCDISI's vision to build an exchange platform for social innovation among scholars from Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. The guests engaged in an in-depth exchange surrounding questions such as "How one can resolve the conflict within social innovation that often requires a resourceful leader with extensive experience in commerce and abundant commercial resources, but also encourage youngsters to take part in?" and "the roles of service-oriented government in social innovation".

Following the successful completion of the fourth thematic session of SIRF2020, the main forum, titled 'Tackling Double-Ageing by Double Smart', will take place on 11 Dec at 2:30 pm and will be live-streamed. We invite you to register and look forward to welcoming you to the upcoming session.



The ending panel discussion is moderated by JCDISI Director Mr Ling Kar-Kan.



Mr Ling and Dr Wang listening intently to the sharing of the online audience.