



## Faith-based NGOs in HK

A large proportion of NGOs and social service agencies in HK are faith-based

A continuum of types, from purely religious groups to organizations offering social services no different from secular ones.

Innovative groups taking inspiration from faith and spirituality in non-divisive and non-dogmatic ways, to explore new ways to serve society,

## Operationalizing a concept

Some pitfalls in exploring and promoting the role of faith and religion:

- Divisive identities?
- Instrumentalisation of mobilization capacity?
- Religion a highly contested field

## Collaborative research

- Building a conceptual framework together with practitioners of different NGOs and religious backgrounds, and academics of different disciplines
- Grounded in experience, aligned with universal spiritual principles, engaging with and contributing to social scientific theory.

## Interviews

Over 15 faith-based NGOs and community groups in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan

## Focus groups

Returned to some selected NGOs; focus groups to discuss some initial concepts

## Exploratory Forum

Mar 13, 2013: Spiritual Capital: Values and Capacity Building in Third-Sector Organizations

Speakers from 6 different NGOs  
Participatory break-out sessions  
Identified key issues at the individual, group and societal levels

An engaged network came into being, taking ownership of the process

## Mini-workshop

Volunteering and Spiritual Capital

6 researchers conducting field research on volunteers in Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Xichang and Yingde

Explored the continuum between moral, altruistic and spiritual capital

## Interdisciplinary conversations

- Sociology and anthropology
- Organizational culture and psychology
- Social work
- Body-mind-spirit therapeutic approaches

## “Spiritual capital”

Alex Liu: 4 capital and performance:

“The power, influence and disposition created by a person or organization’s spiritual belief, knowledge and practice.”

## A provisional working definition:

The individual and collective capacities generated by a spiritual orientation to life.

Questions:

1. relationship between “spiritual” and “religious” capital?
2. Is there secular, non-religious spiritual capital?
3. Relationship between altruistic, moral orientations to life (whether self-defined as spiritual or not) and “spiritual capital”

**Individual capacities  
generated by a spiritual orientation**  
靈性訴求產生的個人能力

Sense of purpose and direction 目的和方向感

Spiritual perception and judgement 灵性的洞察力和判断能力

Confidence 自信

Emotional balance, peace of mind and joy 平衡的情绪，内心的平静和愉悦

Patience, forgiving, generosity 耐心，宽容，宽宏大量

Desire to serve others 服务他人的愿望

Ability to sacrifice for others 為他人犧牲或付出的能力

Ability to cooperate with others 與他人合作的能力

**Collective capacities  
generated by a spiritual orientation**  
靈性訴求產生的集體能力

Unity of vision, purpose and core values 一致的遠景，目標和核心價值

Interpersonal trust, harmony, conflict management 互相信任，和谐，冲突處理

Intrinsic motivation and mobilizational capacity 內在動機和可調動的能力

## Forms of "capital"

- Capital: wealth, power, capacity, empowerment, a seed that grows and generates more of itself.
- Relationship with other forms of capital: social, human, economic capital.

## Spiritual + capital: an oxymoron?

- Instrumentalization of spiritual and altruistic motivations in the service of economic capital?
- Spiritual capital as a conceptual and experiential standpoint to critique the conceptual hegemony of economic approaches to capital, which assumes that the only true wealth is economic wealth
- Spiritual capital as an "add-on"? Or as a transformative force, changing the significance, purpose and uses of other forms of capital.

## Levels of application

- The individual level
- The group/organizational level
- Societal level

## Fields of application

- NGO leadership
- NGO management
- Volunteer training
- Areas and forms of Social action
- Community empowerment

## Future events

10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China, to be co-hosted at HKU, 10-14 July 2013

Theme: Religion, Spiritual Capital and Civil Society

Panel on the ExCEL3 Spiritual Capital Project

## WeValue

An instrument developed at Brighton University, for organizations to identify their core values, to develop measurement criteria and methods, and to integrate them into their operations.

Workshops and trainings for NGO leaders, staff and volunteers to be held in fall 2013

## Social Innovation Internship

For HKU Social Science students

1. Interns attend a workshop on "A Discourse on Social Action" and on ethnographic methodology
2. Interns participate in projects in faith-based NGOs
3. At the same time, they conduct participant observation on spiritual capital in the NGO
4. Their research papers/videos will contribute to the Spiritual Capital project in the form of case studies.

## Case bank

Develop cases for the Hubert Project

Initial testing and use in the HKU Common Core course on "Spirituality, Religion and Social Change" CCHU9014, second semester 2013-14

## PhD Student

- PhD student in sociology recruited beginning in Sept 2013, to advance theoretical and empirical research on the project

## Educational resources

- For undergraduate and graduate students
- For third sector groups

## Academic papers

- Theoretical and conceptual papers
- Case studies
- Testing hypotheses and developing measurement instruments.

Eventually, a book...

## Finding a common language

Advancing together to share, learn and practice, in a systematic way, the empowering and constructive social applications of a spiritual orientation to life.

## Challenges

- We anticipate that this project will have a significant impact in both theoretical and empirical research and in knowledge exchange -- locally, regionally and internationally.
- But developing quality collaborative networks, research and educational resources, takes time; two years is only the beginning...

Thank you for joining our conversation!

## Spiritual Capital in the Third Sector



Spiritual Capital