

## ABSTRACT

Panel 1: Charities: The Invisible Hand in a Globalizing World

### **Trusting Civil Society in Chinese Context**

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This paper discusses public trust towards civil society in China based on a survey conducted in 2011. To illuminate the level of trust the sector achieved, the paper compares the levels of trust people granted to government and enterprises as well as the situations in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The survey was conducted through telephone interviews of 5000 people randomly selected in Beijing, Guangzhou and Kunming of China, Taipei of Taiwan, and Hong Kong. According to Edelman Trust Barometer 2011, civil society enjoys highest level of trust among the three “sectors” followed by enterprises and then government in the world. Our survey finds a different pattern of trust in these three Chinese societies. Though both Hong Kong and Taiwan respondents trust NGOs the most, it is the government that takes the second place instead of the enterprises. In Mainland China, the survey result differs starkly with the world’s that Chinese rate the government as most trustworthy. The charitable group is next reliable while enterprise is least trustworthy. Further analysis shows that there are significant regional differences. While people in Beijing follow the tradition of endorsing a strong central state, people in the south (Guangzhou and Kunming) are more like citizens in Hong and Taiwan - they trust charitable groups most followed by government and business. The paper will analyze this regional difference and discuss how different institutional settings may affect the level of visibility and transparency of NGOs which are crucial factors affecting people’s trust towards the sector.