Research title: Civil Society in Taipei

Research participants and roles:
Walter W. Powell is the director of Civic Life of Cities Lab.
Jean Yen-chun Lin is the leading professor of the Taipei project.
Chih-Chen Cheng and Xiangyuan Zhu are research assistants from National Sun Yat-sen University who facilitate data sorting, survey landing and field research.
As an undergraduate research assistant working remotely from China, I help proofread and localize the survey while conducting research on institutional factors that provides context for the survey.

Research Abstract
This summer, Civic Life of Cities Lab launched its third nonprofits research program in Taipei, following the Bay Area and Shenzhen. In Taipei, a nonprofit organization could be an association of old friends who share the common interest of cycling that mainly relies on the director’s personal funding; at the same time, a nonprofit could be a charity fund-raising organization with effective performance evaluation method and international connection. As Taipei is a place where democracy was born out of strong governmental control and modernization coexists with traditional lifestyle, the nonprofit sector of Taipei embraces a diverse range of focuses and styles as well as a complex relationship with the local authority.
The CLCL research in Taipei hopes to shed light on how the domestic democratic transition and the global trends have shaped the current nonprofit landscape.

The research project started off with collecting responses through a detailed survey we sent to nonprofit leaders. Through online responses and field interviews, we expect to acquire first-hand materials regarding the structure, management, funding, and impact of different types of NPO. Since I am working remotely, my job is to facilitate the project with in-depth research on institutional factors that impact the nonprofit field in Taipei, so that we can better compare cities included in the project. During the research process, I found that Taipei has its very unique nonprofit scene which is very different from the one of the Bay Area. For example, while in US the nonprofit organizations are defined and regulated under the Internal Revenue Service (for tax purposes), civic associations in Taipei have closer relationships with governmental branches that
deal with their focus areas (like environment, consumer, business etc.) Meanwhile, the emergence of nonprofit rating website Smartdonor (similar to US website Charity Navigator) and the international presence of United Way Taiwan demonstrate how Taipei reacts to the global nonprofit trend seeking transparency and efficiency. In the research, the unique role of government in the nonprofit sector in Taipei also stands out. Historically, the number of nonprofit organizations skyrocketed because of the ease of governmental control in 1986 and some special nonprofit organizations, such as community development associations and autonomous associations, function to facilitate the civil management of the authority. Although the large research project is only at its beginning stage, we can start to understand the dynamics of nonprofits in Taipei—organizations operate in a relatively loosely defined regulation structure with recent interests in improving management and public presence using latest technology.

Visualization:

Density distribution of nonprofits in Taipei
Different types of nonprofits share similar growth curve.