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Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
Chairman
Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project
Hong Kong Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China

(by email to wmcheung@legco.gov.hk and by fax to 2509 9055)

Dear Mr IP,

Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development

Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project

Your Ms Betty Fong's letter of 14 May 2009 refers. Thank you once again for inviting me to present my views on the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) Project, this time at your meeting scheduled for Friday, 19 June 2009.

As I wrote to you on 27 February 2009, my expertise lies in the study and analysis of public opinion, and I would be most happy to contribute my ideas in this area if and when needed. I therefore would like to take this opportunity to introduce the idea of Deliberative Polling® to your Panel.

Declaration of interests

Just to play safe, I would like to inform your Panel that I as the Director of the Public Opinion Programme (POP) at the University of Hong Kong am/was involved in the following projects/activities related to WKCD:

1. After organizing five consultation forums on WKCD in October and November 2003, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (ADC) conducted a questionnaire survey from 9 to 27 February 2004 to collect public opinion on WKCD. The questionnaire was printed on Sing Tao Daily on 9 February 2004, and readers were requested to return them to ADC. POP was commissioned by ADC to process the returned questionnaires. The survey report dated March 2004 can be downloaded from http://www.hkadc.org.hk/wkcd/surveyresults-dr_en.htm.
2. In September 2004, the Sino Group, which subsequently became a member of the Sunny Development Limited which was one of the three screened-in Proponents of WKCD,

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commissioned POP to conduct an independent opinion survey on Hong Kong people's habit of using the cultural facilities, their satisfaction with cultural development in Hong Kong, and their opinions on the WKCD Project. The survey was released in November 2004, and its full report can be downloaded from the HKU POP Site at <http://hkupop.hku.hk>.

3. On 27 October 2005, upon request I made a written submission to the Subcommittee on WKCD Development of this Council and commented on the public consultation exercise conducted by the Administration in relation to the WKCD Project, and the report of its consultation.
4. In January 2006, two concerned groups, namely, the Hong Kong Alternatives and the Designing Hong Kong Harbour District, jointly commissioned POP to conduct an independent opinion survey on Hong Kong people's attitudes and preferences towards the development of WKCD and harbourfront. The survey was released in the same month, and its full report can be downloaded from the HKU POP Site at <http://hkupop.hku.hk>.
5. On 25 May 2006, upon request I made another written submission to the Subcommittee on WKCD Development of this Council, and discussed the use and misuse of opinion surveys. The Administration by then had decided not to pursue the WKCD under its original Invitation for Proposals process, due to "a significant gap between public demands and market reality".
6. On 4 January 2007, again upon request I made another written submission to the Subcommittee on WKCD Development of this Council, when it sought the views of experts and interested individuals on the work done so far by the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the WKCD, in particular the reports of its Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group (PATAG) and the Museum Advisory Group (MAG). I gave suggestions on the opinion collection process of the PATAG and MAG.
7. Recently, on 12 June 2009, POP became a part of a consultant team bidding for a project to be commissioned by the Performing Arts Committee set under the WKCD Authority to ascertain, through market research, the existing and potential audienceship/clientele of the performing arts venues.

Nothing in the projects mentioned, however, discussed Deliberative Polling®, and nothing discussed in this submission about Deliberative Polling® is related to those projects.

General background

Ever since the establishment of POP eighteen years ago, I have been involved in the design and execution of various types of public opinion surveys. Scientific opinion survey is an important mechanism to study and measure public opinion. There are, however, many other means of public opinion expression which are worth considering when making policies. On the qualitative side, there are observations, focus groups studies, content analyses of public and stakeholders'

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submissions, and so on, while on the quantitative side, civil and formal referendums are very important means of opinion expression.

Other than random public opinion surveys, POP has spent huge effort to introduce and study other forms of opinion expression, like civil referendums and in this case, Deliberative Polling®.

Deliberative Polling® and public consultation

Deliberative Polling® (DP) was developed by James Fishkin, and the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University is the home of it. The Center has conducted numerous projects around the world, most recently in Zeguo Township (Wenling County in Zhejiang Province, China, 浙江省溫嶺市澤國鎮 – February 2009), in Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil – June 2009) and for the entire European Union, with all 27 countries in 21 languages (May 2009). The DP projects have tackled a number of issues including general elections in the United States and the United Kingdom, civil servant career reforms, and climate change. Furthermore, DP projects have made real public policy impact – in Texas, as a result of a series of eight Deliberative Polls, the state of Texas has become the leading state in wind power in the United States. In Zeguo Township, the local government has proposed to conduct an annual DP project for its citizens to deliberate on the Township's budget next ten years.

On 27 February 2009, POP and the Centre for Civil Society and Governance at the University of Hong Kong collaborated with the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University to conduct the first workshop on Deliberative Polling® in Hong Kong. A total of 28 researchers from academic institutes, political parties and non-government organizations attended the one-day workshop. POP would like to help Stanford University spread the idea.

When engaging and gathering public opinion, researchers often face many problems. People are often uninformed about key public issues and have little reason to invest time and effort in acquiring information or coming to a considered judgment. Therefore, when making public policies decisions based on public opinion, it would be nice if the public could be well informed and could provide thoughtful opinions about public policy issues.

At Stage 2 of the WKCD Public Engagement exercise, three Conceptual Plan Options will be formulated by the Conceptual Plan consultants, and the WKCD Authority will present all three Options to the public for consultation. It seems that a Deliberative Polling® would best be conducted near the end of this stage.

To gather the informed and thoughtful opinions of the public, a random, representative sample could first be polled on issues and options regarding WKCD. After this baseline poll, members of the sample would be invited to gather at a single place, say, for a weekend, to discuss in detail the options and issues regarding WKCD. Thereafter, carefully balanced briefing materials about the WKCD and its options would be sent to the participants and would also be made publicly available. The participants would then engage in dialogue with competing experts and policymakers based on questions developed in small groups with trained moderators. During this process, participants would not be asked to reach any consensus or decisions. Participants would only be asked to

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deliberate on the issues at hand and their opinions would be gathered in a final questionnaire at the end of the event. Parts of the events could be broadcasted on television, either live or in taped and edited form. After deliberations, the sample would again be asked the original questions. The resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had the opportunity to become more informed and engaged by the issues.

General remarks

This submission has been compiled after consulting a key researcher at the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University. The undersigned, however, takes full responsibility for what is written, but is most willing to bridge the WKCD Authority and any policymaker with the Center in case more information is needed regarding Deliberative Polling®.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Ting-Yiu Chung
Director of Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong