

Report on Participation in Field Trip in Germany

Yu Shengfei
Graduate School of: Economics
Kyoto University
2014.12.01-2014.12.08

There are three most impressive words I can think of to describe my experience during the oversea field trip in Germany: Mindset, Diversity and Cooperation. During this field trip we went to several institutions in Frankfurt and Heidelberg, including SMA Solar Technology, Hessen Government, Deutsche Bank HQ, Goethe University, Heidelberg University and a Nursing home in Heidelberg. We did interviews there and exchanged our ideas with people from those organizations. I really learnt a lot about environmental economics, this time during our visit to SMA, Hessen Government and Deutsche Bank HQ and found that both the public sector and private sector are working hard on reducing energy usage. I felt that my views towards the world broadened and my insight greatly improved.

What impressed me most was that the Germans are having a different mindset than us, it was their mindset that decided their actions. The German people these days are investing greatly in developing renewable technology as well as technology to save energy. When I was questioning several times during those visits about the costs and efficiency of investments, I heard different people mentioning the same word: confidence. The Germans have their confidence in their economy and they also believe environmental protection and natural resource saving are urgent because in their mind they are confident to leave the next generation a better living space than to expropriate the resources that should belong to the following generations. And what made me even more surprised was that the ordinary people followed the nation's policy and were willing to pay more for the transformation in an energy shift. It seemed to me that the whole nation reached a consensus. For East Asian countries, when we are talking about environmental protection, we need to ask ourselves over again: do we really get prepared for the shift in mind? It's time to fresh our mind and take action.

During my visit to the two universities, I was really impressed about the diversity among students. The classes were more open under the guidance of professors, leaving a lot of spaces for students from various regions to speak out their ideas and discuss with their classmates. It is the diversity that allows the students to differentiate themselves from others while learning from other students. It is also the real acceptance of diversity that makes people understand the culture differences, be open minded to learn from others and make easier shifts of their mindsets. In the diversified society, talented people, no matter where they come from or what the color of their skins are, are getting more chances to fulfill their potential and make contribution to the development of the economy. East Asian countries need more diversity in our society as well, as economic development by which we think in different ways and stimulate innovation.

Cooperation is also a word that I had heard several times during my visits to those organizations. German people realized that it was not enough to just work on themselves in order to maintain sustainable development and that it was the responsibility of the whole EU to make contributions to transforming their paths of economic development. In my visit to SMA the engineers there told us that they were having close cooperation with neighboring countries such as Czech Republic and Austria sharing infrastructure on producing the energy saving products. In the later visit to Hessen Government, the officer there also mentioned that they were maintaining close cooperative relationship with France to set up renewable energy generation construction projects. The two countries have reached agreement that exploring the renewable energy was an urgent task and challenges on the way to sustainable economic development and that the two neighboring countries would gain more benefits than threats by cooperation. This also inspired me that East Asian countries should enhance the cooperation in sharing technology and encouraging regional investment to reach scale of economies.

During the field trip in Germany I joined the joint workshop organized by Kyoto University and Heidelberg University and presented my personal research on family business in China. I received much feedback and suggestions about how to improve my research, which I believe would help me a lot in revising my research topic and move on towards the right direction. Besides, I got a lot of encouragement from professors from Heidelberg University and it was encouraged to do a case study on family business in Kyoto during my dinner chat with Professor Fuess. Having experienced the academic environment in Germany also inspired me to go further with academic career into a PhD degree in the US where there are the best resources and is the most academic freedom. I would like to extend my research from East Asia family business to that in other developing regions and become an expert in my own area.

I would like to thank the Kyoto University Asia Study Unit for giving me this opportunity and professors to kindly organize this field trip. It was really an enjoyable and rewarding field trip.