

Report on Participation in Taiwan Field Trip

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This seven-day overseas field research in Taiwan was very impressive and fruitful.

First of all, the research contents were very valuable, which can be summarized by different themes each day, namely, political, industrial, agricultural, academic and cultural research. The agriculture part was especially interesting and inspirational for my research, which I'll discuss later. Secondly, the arrangement of the order was helpful as well, because we learned the historical and political background of Taiwan on the first day, then with the help of these background knowledge we were able to understand the subsequent research from multiple perspectives. Also, the research schedule was tight and effective. Our group joined workshops and lectures related to various topics in the morning every day, then conducted field research and visited a company in the afternoon.

On Nov. 22, the first day of our field research, we started with a lecture related to international relations from political and social perspectives. The lecture was provided by professor Lu of NCCU, the topic was Cross-Strait Relations and the Role of the US under Trump. Professor Lu introduced the complex changes in the international situation since Donald J. Trump was elected as president, which is described as "Trump shock". Then he discussed how Trump sees China under current conditions, and drew a conclusion that Trump is "a man of his word".

On the second day, we got deeper understanding regarding the industrial and technological development of Taiwan. The lecture in the morning provided by Prof. Zheng was about the dual globalization of the Taiwanese economy. We learned how the Taiwanese economy has been shaped by globalization, and how it transformed from a SME based system to a system shaped by globalized large firms and global financial markets. In the afternoon we visited an electronics company, LITE-ON. Under the global trends that the technology industry is now set to welcome a new wave of changes, LITE-ON has been shifting its production focus from IT and communication towards IoT (Internet of Things) applications such as cloud computing, LED lighting, automotive, biotech, and industrial automation.

On the third day, Sanzhi Co-prosperity Community (新北市三芝共榮共同体), which is one of the most successful sustainable agriculture communities in Taiwan, was a huge inspiration from two perspectives. First, it provides me with a successful real-life case of sustainable agriculture. In current dominant agriculture systems, market and companies are driven by capital, which means environmental issues remain a low priority. But the case is different for this community, because it is established by local resident Mr. Lin after his retirement. He felt heart broken when he saw his hometown, a picturesque mountain village, being damaged by industrial development. Therefore, he devoted all his time and money, and decided to build a local community according to satoyama advocates (里山主義) which puts the environment in first place, stresses the co-existence of nature and humans, and puts money at the end of the production cycle. Second, the running mode of this community might also be a potential solution to the aging society problem. The local initiative encourages rural residents, mainly consisting of knowledgeable older people, to market

their vegetables directly to the urban market. Mr. Lin explained to us that the older people involved in the community activities considered that their health and economic situation had been improved through participating in vegetable cultivation and sales.

The next day, we had a graduate student seminar. It was a great opportunity for all of us to communicate academic ideas, make comparisons with Taiwan and also other Asian regions. This activity leveraged our existing knowledge and advantage, allowed us to get important insights in this age of changes and challenges. The last day we visited the National Palace Museum, had an informative and enjoyable day and immersed ourselves in culture and history.

This seven-day overseas research goes beyond simply learning from within the classroom setting, it allows me to apply new skills and knowledge so as to develop on my own research via fieldwork. It is a challenging yet inspiring experience to me because it encouraged me to sample other fields that are not limited to my field of specialization. At the same time, I really appreciate the help and guidance of professors. Our fellow groupmates hail from different countries and diverse walks of life. Putting such curious minds together made this overseas research more fun and engaging.