

Report on Participation in Taiwan Field Trip

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The overseas field trip was a very thought-provoking and eye-opening experience for me. I really appreciate the professors for organizing this fantastic trip for us.

My highlights of the Taiwan overseas field trip are the lecture given by professor Lu in National Cheng Chi University (NCCU), the thought-provoking discussion at Taiwan-Japan Relationship Association, the visit to LITE-ON technology corporation, our presentation at National Taiwan University (NTU) with students from NCCU and NTU, and the cultural trip to the National Palace Museum on the final day.

Our first lecture at NTU given by prof. Lu was called “Three is a Crowd? The cross-strait Relations and the Role of the US under Trump”. Prof. Lu talked about Taiwan-China relations and US-China relations. He shared with us how Trump sees China and Taiwan, which is very interesting for students from non-political or non-international-relations backgrounds. He also gave his opinion that although Trump is unpredictable for all of us, from his book and his actions you can find that he is actually a man of his word. This lecture helped me shape a better understanding of Taiwan-China-US relations.

In the afternoon we went to the Taiwan-Japan Relationship Association and had a round-table discussion. I asked a question related to the outflow of talent from Taiwan and the president of the association told me what the Taiwanese government is doing to tackle this problem. The answers I got are 1) to raise the minimum salary level, 2) to raise the salary for government staff (public sector), 3) to attract more engineers and talents with great techniques to Taiwan with higher salaries. Inevitably we also discussed about China-Taiwan relations and obviously Chinese and Taiwanese hold opposite standpoints and the issue is non-negotiable for both sides at this moment. However, from this very frank talk I understood why Taiwanese hate KMT and preferred the period of Japanese rule.

The next day we went to NCCU for another lecture called “The Dual Globalization of Taiwanese Economy” by Prof. Zheng. He shared with us a lot of numbers and facts about the Taiwanese economy. My takeaways from this lecture are that the Taiwanese economy relies heavily on exports, especially to mainland China and Hong Kong. However, due to the political concerns, exports to mainland China and Hong Kong do not seem reliable. We also learnt that Taiwan basically doesn’t export final products and has few important brands which is not a good sign. Prof. Zheng also taught us about the financialization and financial globalization in Taiwan. I was impressed to learn that in 2015, around 40% market value in Taiwan was contributed by foreign investors. Professor Zheng raised a very good question at the end of the lecture which is “Why wages haven’t followed up while GDP is increasing?”. Although he didn’t give a specific answer, he made us think deeper about the Taiwanese economy.

We also paid a visit to LITE-ON technology corporation that day. The employees introduced to us their diverse products and their current business partners. We had a lot of discussions related to smart life and smart city. Since I visited the headquarter of Baidu before, I was extremely interested in this part and asked questions about automatic driving and their business plan in the future.

We also visited Sanzhi village and Zhuzi Lake to experience modern agriculture in Taiwan. Since my research topic is related to environmental regulations and environmental protection, I was happy that people are fighting for their

living environment and protecting the rural part even if there is interest conflict with the local government. However, I was concerned that farmers in Sanzhi don't know much about the mutual insurance system which is already mature in Japan, so I suggested them to know more about the mutual insurance to hedge farmers' risks.

To wrap up, my personal impression of Taiwan is that Taiwan is losing its competitiveness in Asia. Its comparative advantages such as human capital accompanied by relatively lower labor cost don't seem to be sustainable due to a decreasing birth rate and a huge talent outflow. However, the comparative advantages such as high technology seem to be sustainable, but this area is very competitive and the technology firms in Taiwan are facing many challenges to keep this advantage. This field trip helped me shape a better understanding of the Asian economy and international relations, which will contribute to my future career as an investment banker or financial consultant.