

Final Report: Junior Research Stay at Peking University

Jan Philipp LAURINAT

Institute of Sinology at Freie Universität Berlin

Master of China Studies

“Green University Development in China – Student Perception of Sustainability-Related Initiatives at Peking University”

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From April to July 2016 I spent three months at Peking University (PKU) to conduct fieldwork for my master’s thesis. This report will give a brief overview over my research project, the data I collected, the people I was privileged to meet as well as some of the events I was able to attend. Finally, it will also provide a few tips regarding digital tools to facilitate everyday life in PKU in the hope that future generations of UAS-Fellows find them useful.

Overall, the time spent at PKU was very productive and enriching for me – thanks to the openness of faculty members and students and the university’s amazing campus and study facilities.

My research focuses on PKU’s sustainability-related initiatives and student perceptions thereof. I employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the following questions. Firstly, how does Peking University approach the topic of Sustainability in Higher Education with regard to campus infrastructure and management, teaching and research, as well as extracurricular awareness raising events and participatory initiatives? Who are the main actors driving this development? Which obstacles exist? How do PKU’s efforts to become a “Green University” (绿色大学) tie in with China’s national strategy of moving towards an “Ecological Civilization” (生态文明)? Secondly, how do students perceive and evaluate these sustainability-related initiatives? Do different student groups’ perceptions vary?

During my fieldwork, I collected the following empirical data that will form the basis for my analysis:

- Numerous publications in English and Chinese from different sources, including PKU leadership (charter, Five-Year-Plans, speeches, website, ...), NGOs (esp. CYCAN¹) and student clubs, as well as additional Chinese language academic literature.
- 11 expert-interviews conducted in Chinese with members of faculty, administrative staff, student clubs and NGOs
- 12 semi-structured interviews conducted in Chinese with PKU students of different backgrounds

¹ CYCAN: China Youth Climate Action Network (青年应对气候变化行动网络, <http://www.cycan.org/>)

- 858 valid responses to my online-survey from PKU students of 51 different schools and institutes

Since I plan to publish my findings elsewhere, I will not elaborate on them here.

I am deeply grateful to Ms. Katrin Risch (UAS-Program Manager), Dr. Berthold Kuhn (lecturer at Freie Universität Berlin (FUB) and UAS-Senior Research Fellow), Ms. Beate Rogler (Head of FUB's representative office in Beijing) as well as 2015 UAS-Fellows WANG Dongping² (王冬萍学长) and Angela Legget for generously offering their support in introducing various contacts at the beginning of my stay. Special thanks also to Ms. JI Yi (姬懿老师, UAS-Coordinator from PKU side) and to Ms. ZHU Siying (朱思颖老师, PKU's Office of International Affairs) for their excellent support in all organizational matters related to my stay.

The following experts have been very helpful for my research and could be contacted by future UAS-Fellows: Prof. XUE Ling (薛领教授, School of Government), Prof. HUAN Qingzhi (郇庆治教授, School of Marxism), Prof. ZHANG Shiqiu (张世秋教授, School of Environmental Science and Engineering) and Prof. Lü Bin³ (吕斌教授, College of Urban and Environmental Science).

It was enriching for me to also meet Dr. WANG Congcong (王聪聪博士) at Beihang University and learn about sustainability work at her university.

Apart from Beijing, I travelled to Shenzhen to meet with Prof. HUANG Haifeng⁴ (黄海峰教授, HSBC Business School) and Dr. WU Huanan (吴华南博士, School of Environment and Energy) at PKU's Shenzhen campus.

I also had the chance to meet and interview Prof. TAN Hongwei (谭洪卫教授, Chairman of Tongji University's Research Center on Green Buildings and New Energy; General-Secretary of the China Green University Network [CGUN]) at Tongji University in Shanghai. He is one of the leading advisors to the Chinese government on questions related to Green University development.

Apart from faculty members, I also interviewed a number of administrative staff members at PKU's main campus, whom I decided not to name here to ensure confidentiality.

Among the numerous students and student club members I got in contact with, Mr. MA Zishuo (马子朔, Head of the LinGe student club) and Mr. CHEN Wei (陈炜, Leading member of PKU's Green Life Association; Researcher at PKU's Research Center for Environmental Protection and Social Development) were especially helpful and supportive.

To prevent this report from becoming lengthy, I will not comprehensively list or detail all events that I attended at PKU and outside campus, but only briefly mention some of those that I think are of interest to most future UAS-Fellows:

At PKU, two student groups with strong focus on environmental issues regularly organize activities: LinGe (林歌)⁵ and Greenlife Association (绿色生命协会)⁶. Moreover, there have been several

² Please note: For all Chinese names surnames are placed before given names and capitalized.

³ Prof. Lü's surname is sometimes also transcribed as Lu or Lv.

⁴ Prof. Huang is regularly giving block seminars on Green Economy in China at FUB each summer term.

⁵ LinGe is a longstanding recycling project, collecting plastic bottles and waste paper on a bi-weekly basis and handing out products made from recycled material as rewards. In addition, LinGe occasionally invites speakers to give talks on topics related to sustainability.

⁶ Greenlife Association's main events are bird- and plant watching tours on campus and around Beijing. During summer vacation, members also arrange field trips to remote parts of China.

interesting talks and events held by PKU's Research Center for Environmental Protection and Social Development, the School of Environmental Science and Engineering, the College of Urban and Environmental Science and others.

Outside PKU:

- **Beijing Energy Network** (<http://beijingenergynetwork.com/>) (EN)
BEN frequently organizes talks and reading groups on topics related to energy and environment
- **Green Drinks** (<http://www.greendrinks.org/Beijing>) (EN)
Monthly international meet-up for people from the environmental sector (@Bookworm Café)
- **Swanport Café** (鸿芝咖啡) (<https://site.douban.com/208263/>) (EN/ CH)
Hub for local NGOs and socially active people that hosts many events and get-togethers
- **ThinkIN China** (<http://www.thinkinchina.asia/>) (EN)
Monthly talks on various topics at Bridge Café (桥咖啡) in Wudaokou (close to PKU)

Finally, given that there is already a lot of valuable information in previous fellow reports, I would like to only quickly point out three useful digital tools that will facilitate your stay at PKU:

The messaging app WeChat (微信). It is currently the major social media platform in China and literally everyone uses it. Apart from its messaging (and especially group messaging) function, there are two services that I would like to draw attention to: (1) Public accounts (公共账号). Most institutions (including PKU itself), organisations and quite a few private users have public accounts that you can follow to receive news and information. (2) Electronic wallet (电子钱包). You can transfer money into your E-Wallet directly from your Chinese bank account – or by asking friends to send you money through WeChat and give it back in cash. Your E-Wallet can be used for numerous purposes, e.g. pay in many shops and restaurants by scanning the relevant QR code, call a cab, recharge money onto your phone and buy train tickets.

FUB's VPN client⁷. It works much faster and more stable than the VPNs you can get online for free.

Weiming BBS. PKU established the bulletin-board system (BBS) "Beida Weiming BBS" (北大未名 BBS, <http://www.bdwm.net/v2/login.php>) as a platform for students, teachers and the university leadership to communicate and share information. This forum-style platform is a valuable source of information regarding events on campus, student club activities and everyday-life at PKU. There are groups on almost anything. Writing posts is only possible with a full-PKU-account (which UAS-fellows unfortunately are not eligible to), however, most content is open to read for everyone who logs in as a "visitor" (游客).

If you have any questions or think I can be of any help to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at jp.laurinat@posteo.de.

⁷ VPN stands for Virtual Private Network. Using a VPN client allows you to access websites that are blocked by China's authorities, including google, facebook etc. Information on FUB's VPN can be found here: <https://www.zedat.fu-berlin.de/VPN> (German)