

Final Report: Junior Scholar at University of British Columbia

Milan Chen

Free University of Berlin

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Trading up effect in Taiwan's climate policy making

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It was a sunny Monday afternoon when I first set foot on the UBC campus. The wind from the sea touched my face softly, I smelt the freshness of leaves that bathed under the eternal sunshine, I sensed the openness and the non-stop vibration of this fascinating campus.

I first visited my host institute, Institute of Asian Research (IAR). They offered me a working space facing a beautiful Japanese garden behind the building, which has a unique and elegant style with Chinese temple touch to it. My supervisor, Professor Yves Tiberghien greeted me warmly as well as introducing me to the faculty and colleges in the institute. It was one of the warmest welcome I have ever received.

There were three important objectives that my supervisor and I planned to achieve; first, collecting data on the trading up (or "California Effect") between Taiwan - Canada with international trade statistics and semi structured interviews with scholars and experts based in Canada. Second, attending workshops and seminars addressing cross-strait relations (the Taiwan-China relations), climate change governance and sustainability. Third, exploring opportunities for future research career in Canada and potentially in the US.

For the first objective, collecting Taiwan-Canada trade/environmental data, professor Tiberghien kindly introduced me to senators, professors and experts that have significant experiences in this field. For instance, I was invited to a roundtable talk hosted by the Asian Pacific Foundation (a Vancouver based think tank that is researching on Canadian ties with Asian Pacific countries) and had chances to interview the foundation director and foreign affairs practitioners, including the Canadian ambassador to Taiwan in 2016 and 2017. One of the significant findings that derived from the interviews is that although there were no official diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Canada,



the bilateral trade relations had been increasing for the past five years. Among all the trade deals, the cooperation on renewable energy sector (especially offshore wind turbine) is gradually becoming the highlight of the bilateral relations after Taiwan set up the legal framework for carbon emissions reduction in 2015. According to the interviewees, the trading up effect was not apparent in the Taiwan-Canada trading relations. There was little diffusion of environmental regulations and carbon emissions standards from Canada (which implements higher standards domestically) to Taiwan (with less sophisticated ones), yet there was certain amount of technology transfers from Canada to Taiwan in telecom and renewable energy sectors. However, a common concern that shadowed the bilateral relations was the increasing hostile attitude of the Beijing government against Taiwan. It has become a very delicate and sensitive issue for Canadian public and private sectors to engage with Taiwanese counterparties with the fear to attract negative response from the Chinese government.

The second objective was achieved by attending workshops and seminars offered by the Asian Research Institute and the political science department at UBC. What I benefited the most was less about the content of each seminar and workshop, but experiencing the north American style of discussion among students and professors. I enjoyed very much the non-hierarchical interaction and the highly active involvements of class participants. Despite that there were few occasions with heated debates and intense deadlock, the conversations had always been thought-provoking and inspiring.

While conducting interviews with experts and scholars in Vancouver, I also got a glimpse of north American academia environment and possibilities to carry out my future research. I had opportunities to talk to professors in political sciences and public policy at UBC and they all had kindly shared their experiences of applying postdoc position and junior professorship when they first received PhD degree. I am greatly appreciative to have learnt their experiences and am able to make a career plan for myself. Moreover, I was introduced to scholars that shared the similar research interests as I do and was included into their enormous academic network.

Overall, the experience in Vancouver had been wonderful. The visiting fellowship at UBC has enabled me not only to develop further on my own research, but also to strengthen and refine my research skills sets. More importantly, it also helps me to set a clear and determined career path after the PhD program. I greatly appreciate the University Alliance for Sustainability for providing such an amazing opportunity.