

Final Report: Junior Research Stay at University of British Columbia

Kei Namba

Freie Universität Berlin, Graduate School of East Asian Studies

Water governance in Asia

April 1-April 30 2018/ 1 month

In April 2018, under the UAS' thematic framework of "Science and Sustainable Development", I was given the opportunity to conduct a one-month research at the University of British Columbia. Having submitted my dissertation to the Otto-Suhr Institute of Political Science at FU Berlin, the exchange study at UBC was highly valuable for me in order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter (i.e. water) and the regional and theoretical aspects of my research (i.e. Asia and environmental politics, respectively). Precisely the topic of my dissertation was about water governance across different jurisdictions in urban cities of Southeast Asia (The Philippines, Myanmar, and Cambodia) with the focus on Japan's normative influence through local level partnerships. The main goals of my research stay at UBC were to connect with scholars and learn from their projects; to develop my next project and to work on journal publication.

During the given research project, I have been affiliated with the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs and was given an office space in the C.K. Choi building that is home to the Institute for Asian Research (IAR), the Institute for European Studies and the *Pacific Affairs* Journal. Throughout my stay at UBC I was impressed by the resources available at the institution. Although my research stay was rather limited in time, I had the opportunity to meet many academics from the fields of politics, sociology, economics, law, and engineering, working on sustainability and water (and energy mix or water use in the mining sector). In addition to establishing connections to these professors, I have also had the chance to connect with other PhD students working on projects concerning sustainable development.

Furthermore, during my stay at UBC I have had the opportunity to give a guest talk regarding my research at the Center for Southeast Asia Research (CSEAR), School of Public Policy and Global Affairs. I deem this as a highly valuable experience for me, as during the given occasion I have received feedback on my work and questions regarding my research. Furthermore, through this occasion I have also learned to communicate my research results more effectively by talking to a wider audience coming from different backgrounds.

My primary contact and local host, Professor Julian Dierkes (IAR), was not only helpful for me to get in touch with other scholars, but also provided me with advices on potential case selection for my postdoctoral research. Moreover, he provided me with valuable feedback on my research and also shared his own knowledge with me about the challenges for water use, especially regarding the mining sector in Mongolia and Central Asia.

Furthermore, assistant professor Kai Ostwald (IAR/Department of Political Science) has provided me with additional valuable insights about executing research on the Southeast Asian politics. Learning from his ongoing projects in Myanmar was not only helpful to gain present-day information about the development and political challenges of Myanmar from different perspectives, but it has also made me aware of Canada's engagement with the named country. Additionally, he has also introduced me to research networks of political and social scientists based in North America engaged

in Southeast Asia. I believe that it would be highly beneficial for me to further engage with this research community in the future.

On the more thematic and methodological sides, assistant professor Nadja Kunz (Liu Institute for Global Issues/B Keevil Mining Engineering) has introduced me to issues regarding the water use in the mining sector in Central Asia by using social network analysis. Moreover, she has also provided me with practical advices regarding publication strategy as well as literature recommendations on the topic of water.

Richard Paisley (Director of Global Transboundary International Waters Governance Initiative at IAR) has shared his first-hand experience and knowledge about the Mekong river basin management and transboundary water governance in Central Asia. Specifically, I have learned about conflict resolution and the role of agreements in the context of transboundary water governance from him. He has also educated me about the relevant actors including local officers and major donors, and about the existence of conflicting interests and views among different donors (e.g. China).

Considering that I have been working on the topic of journal publication for environmental journals, the conversation with Professor Peter Dauvergne (Department of Political Science), a founder of the journal *Global Environmental Politics*, has enabled me to receive practical advices on the review process and information about the characteristics of different journals.

Natural disasters or famine triggered by climate change have become increasingly important security threats in the Asia-Pacific. While in the traditional security sector, there are complex links between water and conflicts. On the other hand, water has an explicit place in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is especially prioritized for sustainable development. Furthermore, I have investigated the impact of non-state actors such as multilateral agencies and corporations on water development projects. Therefore, I have highly benefited from the conversation with Professor Brian Job (Associate Director of IAR/ Liu Institute for Global Issues/ Department of Political Science), given his long-standing engagement with Track Two diplomacy to include academics, IOs and civil societies into security dialogues. His insights were helpful not only in understanding the emergence of non-traditional security cooperation and the recent trends of Track Two diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, but also in recognizing Canada's foreign policy towards the region. Similarly, a conversation with Professor Paul Evans (IAR /Liu Institute for Global Issues) on regionalism and multilateralism in Asia - especially regarding the environmental sector, however not solely limited to it - was very inspiring for my work.

The opportunity to be able to discuss my research findings with Professor Yves Tiberghien (Director of IAR / Department of Political Science) was highly beneficial for me in order to refine my argument regarding Japan's normative influence as well as to better define the reasons why Japanese actors stand out in global environmental politics.

Moreover, Dr. Steve Conrad (Institute of Resources and Environmental Studies, IRES and Simon Fraser University) has provided me with tangible examples of the water-energy nexus, especially in the context of North America. In addition, I have also learned from him about how scientific evidence-based data can affect the policymakers and the decision-making process itself through multi-stakeholder platforms in promoting more energy and water efficiency.

Furthermore, I have been fortunate enough to share an office with a visiting Professor Katsura Nakano from Shiga University, a home to Japan's largest lake Biwa. He is an economist and works on the environmental assessment of lakes and water resource management. Even though I have previously incorporated factors such as institutional capacity and human resource management into

my analysis, his viewpoint on including social capital into the environmental assessment of lakes with an emphasis on economic revitalization has certainly widened my perspectives.

Overall, the exchange stay at UBC had a clear advantage for me at this stage of my career. The main outcome of my research stay at UBC was to connect with other scholars and receive feedback on my research. The dialogues with the scholars at UBC enabled me to revisit and refine my analysis and theoretical approach, and at the same time they helped me to develop new ideas for my next case selection. Additionally, I have gained knowledge about different methodological approaches towards water governance. While I have already had the chance to conduct field research in Asia, the research stay at UBC has also assisted me in expanding my knowledge about water supply systems in the North American contexts (different tariff systems, relevant actors). Not to mention their different governance systems and jurisdictions, I have re-discovered the importance of regional and organizational identity and culture of each utility in providing effective water supply services. Since water supply is a local business, those factors are not only important in the context of developing countries, but are also relevant for utilities in advanced countries such as Canada, Germany or Japan. Unfortunately, due to the limited time I had at UBC, I did not have the opportunity to talk to water-related agencies based in Vancouver/British Columbia. However, I believe it would be highly valuable for me to explore the engagement of such agencies and integrate them into my research in the future.

Although my stay at UBC was only a month long, it became clear for me from early on that sustainability is an important part of the everyday life in Vancouver and also at the UBC campus. Living in a city so close to nature (the ocean and the mountains) and staying at UBC even for a short period of time helped me to further my appreciation towards sustainability.

Lastly, in addition to the professors mentioned earlier, I would like to express my gratitude to the other PhD students, faculty staffs and my Canadian roommate engaged in sustainable engineering who have all enriched my stay in Vancouver. In particular, I would like to thank the staff at both the School of Public Policy at UBC and the UAS team at FU for their administrative support in organizing my research stay so smoothly apart from the minor administrative problems I have experienced at the FU.