

EU-China NGO Exchange on Climate Change 2015

Plant-for-the-Planet & Beijing Envirofriends

Zhang Di, Beijing Envirofriends:

In 2015, the "Friends of Science and Technology Center Beijing" had the opportunity to participate in the EU-China exchange program together with the partner organization "Plant-for-the- Planet Foundation". In September and October Kjell Kühne from the partner organization Plant-for-the-Planet Foundation visited Friends of Science and Technology Center Beijing. The work will be summarized in the second part. In November and December 2015, Friends of Science and Technology Beijing Centre board member Zhang Di went to Europe to participate in the work exchange, which unfolded as follows:

I. The European Part

Plant-for-the-Planet project

Plant-for-the-Planet is a global campaign initiated by a 9-year-old German child: in 2007 Felix Finkbeiner made a report on climate change for his homework. In the course of the investigation, Felix had learned that Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai planted thirty million trees in 30 years. Inspired, he called peers planting one million trees to contribute to preventing climate change. Today, children have been involved in planting trees for climate justice in over 100 countries.

My involvement in the work on the project should be divided into three parts. First, in China with my exchange partner Kjell, we promote the project's concept, and informed partners at three international conferences. More than 50 environmental protection NGOs from the country were introduced to our project and now partners in 5 cities (Hangzhou, Jilin, Xi'an, Tianjin and Beijing) are planning to cover hundreds of acres of woodland with trees. After that, other volunteers and myself promoted the project at COP21 in Paris where Plant-for-the-Planet had a permanent booth. We also distributed a total of nine tons or 90,000 chocolate bars to COP21 participants to call on delegates to participate more actively in addressing climate change. We also called on dozens of volunteers from around the world to take our project home to share. Finally, I went to Munich to participate in Plant-for-the-Planet Foundation's office, identify potential sponsors, and do some research work and tree planting statistics.

Climate Action Day

Compared to other social issues, pollution and climate change are still not considered sufficiently urgent and important in many developing countries due to their own characteristics.

In order to echo the climate change negotiations in Paris and call for more people to actively participate in tackling climate change action, we decided to run a "Day of Action" campaign

through the new social media. We created a photo in accordance with the topic, where “countering climate change” was written on their own hands and invited people to upload them as profile picture on wechat. We received a positive response, partnering with more than a dozen NGO partners forwarding the call to action and reaching more than 40,000 users.

COP21

I participated in the second week of the conference. The main tasks included:

1. Involved in organizing one side event on tackling climate change. The subjects included introducing Mexican actions on climate change and a spontaneous call by an African farmer on people around tree planting to combat climate change.
2. Participation in solar power experience sharing session with participants from around the world led by an Indian solar power expert. Leading the participants on a site visit to the solar power related booths at the COP21 exhibition area.
3. Sharing meeting with Chinese organizations involved in climate change policy, Beijing haze performance art and other activities.
4. Participation in activities of other YOUNGO organizations.

Results, tips and suggestions

First of all, I would like to thank the exchange organizers CAN-Europe from Brussels and C-CAN for doing a lot of hard work so that we got the opportunity to participate in the exchange with our European partner organizations and the Climate Change Conference in Paris. We were able to have access to very cooperative spaces - EU cooperation projects, such as Plant-for-the-Planet to expand in China. We got more material and resources for our climate change education. At the same time in terms of spreading the concern, by using China’s media platforms with vast audiences, our communication activities made great progress. Through the sharing of resources in this exchange, both Chinese and EU partners have made huge gains. At the same time through this platform, both sides got to know information, organizations and communication channels for possible further international cooperation on environmental protection. In terms of the climate change negotiations, the cooperation also increased the influence of our NGOs on our respective national governments, which puts us in a position to continue to advocate in favor of the implementation of climate change actions and strategies.

We hope that the China-Europe exchange program can last long and attract more partners.

Suggestions

- 1: C-CAN could recruit more members to participate in the China-EU exchange.
- 2: Sustainable activities, including support for the original participants’ continued and expanded in-depth exchanges, support more organizations to expand exchanges.

3: Establish good early communication, the necessary training for participants to be better prepared for the exchange as well as follow-up afterwards.

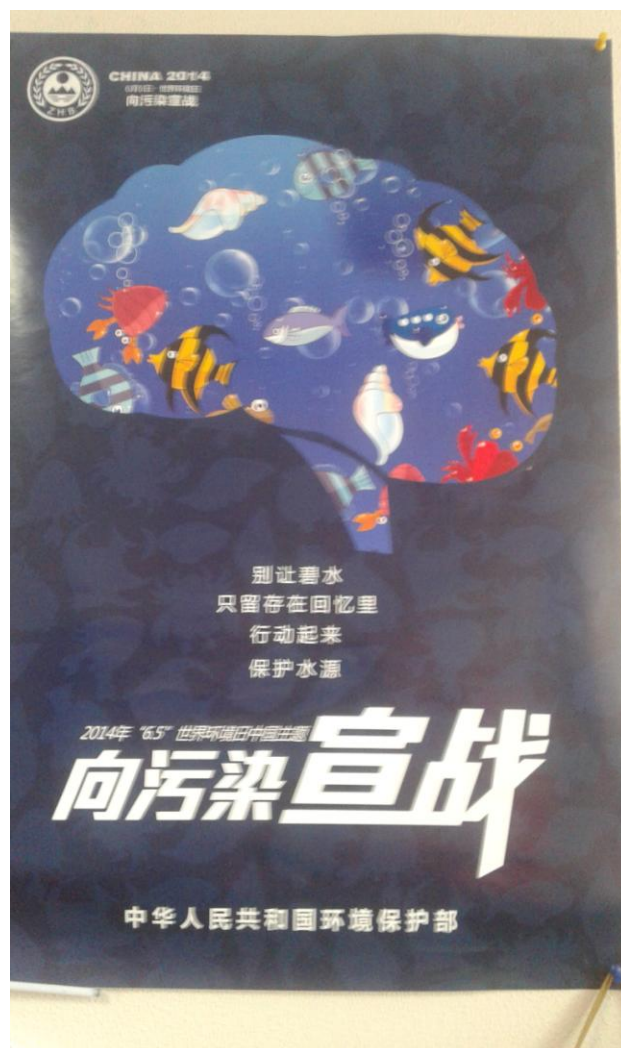
4: More flexible timing. In different countries there are different issues to consider for the actual situation and each season will be different. Selecting a different time or season for each exchange can enhance communication and enrich the programme.

Kjell Kühne, Plant-for-the-Planet Foundation:

In China:

My stay in China started off the morning after I arrived with a national meeting on climate education, organized among others by Envirofriends, my partner organization.

During the two months that I stayed in Beijing, I focussed mainly on one initiative that was born at a Youth Summit organized by Plant-for-the-Planet, but has now outgrown Plant-for-the-Planet strictly speaking: Climate Strike. Since this initiative is global in its nature, much of my time was spent in front of the computer emailing, skypeing and chatting with friends and colleagues all around the world, preparing for Climate Strike on November 30th, 2015.



A poster with a very important concept in China these days: “War on pollution” (向污染宣战)

At the same time, I was able to make good use of the opportunities provided by being in Beijing and interacting with local NGOs and other institutions. Over the course of the two months, I visited and/or held meetings with the following organizations:

China Coal Cap Project, Greenovation Hub, Youthink Center, China Youth Climate Action Network (CYCAN), International Rivers, Greenpeace, Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production, Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, China Carbon Forum, 350.org, German Embassy, Central and Eastern Europe Bankwatch and a Plant-for-the-Planet Programme Coordinator from Lanzhou.



The East Asia Climate Network Conference in Tianjin

The following events filled out the rest of my time: a kick-off workshop of the NGO exchange in Hangzhou, a workshop on “Greening Chinese Overseas Finance” organized by the World Resources Institute, an event on carbon trading set up by Change Partnership and Rock Environment and Energy Institute, an event on the energy transition in Germany organized by CANGO and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, an event on the energy transition in China organized by the Canadian International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), two events by the Beijing Energy Network on particulate matter and air quality and on recycled cooking oil for transportation, an event of the Automotive Roundtable on sustainable transport, a two-day East Asia (China-Korea-Japan) Climate Network Conference in Tianjin, an informal meeting and exchange between Chinese environmental NGOs, a conference on recycling of lamps, a staff meeting of the NGO Nature University. In most of these events I had an opportunity to make an oral intervention or ask questions.



Lunch: Lanzhou Noodles (兰州牛肉面)

I was also invited to give a presentation on the UN climate negotiations at the CYCAN COP21 preparation workshop and held a webinar on zero emissions for a Latin American audience.

A routine that proved very helpful was contacting and interacting with friends and colleagues in other countries via whatsapp while in the metro. Because the Envirofriends office which I also called my home during the two months is quite far in the North of Beijing (though conveniently located close to a metro station), each appointment in the city usually involved at least an hour spent on the metro each way. Whatsapp and the cell phone made it possible to use this time productively for organizing the Climate Strike.



Visit to the Great Wall North of Beijing

The little free time I took was spent playing capoeira, improving my Salsa dancing skills, a visit to the Great Wall, tailoring a suit, celebrating a birthday in a KTV (karaoke establishment), visiting the famous West Lake in Hangzhou, hanging out with exchange partners, improving my Chinese, learning to use Wechat, eating hotpot, mooncakes and other delicacies, celebrating the mid-autumn festival with Zhang Di's family and harvesting fruits in the garden.



Pomegranate harvest from the garden

The logistics of my stay were very convenient, as I was allowed to stay in the office of Beijing Envirofriends which is equipped for such cases. To move around the city I mostly used the metro, sometimes taxi.

A recommendation for future participants is to register with the local policy quickly after your arrival - I got scolded for being a few days late with my registration.

In Europe:

The European part of the exchange started out with the NGO exchange workshop in Brussels where we got to know a bit more about European policy making and I used the opportunity to visit the Young Friends of the Earth Europe, the Federation of Young European Greens, a colleague working on coal projects, a lawyer at Frank Bold a pioneer in climate litigation and Norwegian NGO Bellona.

After two weeks in my two German homes in Radebeul and Lonau, where Zhang Di had an opportunity to get a little impression of German food (Döner, Kartoffelsuppe, Abendbrot,...) and German family life (including the popular Chinese card game 打地主, sauna and cooking some food), the next and final stop was Paris.

The first event was the Conference of Youth (COY11), a youth climate conference that has been held on the weekend before the COP for the last eleven years. COY11 in Paris was a huge event that provided ample opportunities for networking and finding more supporters for this year's and next year's Climate Strike. There was also a workshop on Climate Strike and we shot lots of pictures and some videos of people supporting the initiative.

From Sunday we started a Weibo Campaign for Climate Strike in China (where Climate Strike became known as Climate Action Day) which saw a readership of a couple of thousand people.



Photo used in our Weibo campaign for Climate Strike Day in China

November 30th 2015 was the global Climate Strike Day which saw actions in a dozen countries around the world. In Paris, we held a central event with guests from around the world and a full day's programme focussing on how to strengthen the push back against fossil fuel extraction.



Zhang Di in conversation with Kenyan farmer/film star Kisilu at Climate Strike Day in Paris



Organizer group picture after successful completion of the Climate Strike Day central event in Paris

On Wednesday, December 2nd and Thursday, December 3rd we held a two-day course on solar energy, including a visit to the Climate Generations Space at COP21 where we visited related organizations.

On Friday evening we were invited to a “Zero Waste party”, celebrating 20 years of existence of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA).

In the second week of COP21, Zhang Di had accreditation for COP21 and participated in the distribution of “change chocolates” to the COP delegates every morning for two hours. We started the week with a tour of COP21 by Kjell, who has already participated in five COPs and gave an introduction to the spaces and processes of the negotiations.

Also in the second week, we had a dialogue meeting with other organizations of the China-EU NGO Exchange participating in COP21.