

Names of Partner Organizations

Report on 2016 EU-China NGO Twinning Program

Name of EU Exchange Fellow, Organization, City, Country
Laura De Jaeger – Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken – Brussels - Belgium

Name of Chinese Exchange Fellow, Organization, City, China
Xiaojing Cao – Institute for Sustainable Environment and Energy – Shanghai - China

Brief description of exchange purpose/projects.. (max 100 words)

As the organization knows we had a rather special exchange. We got partnered up very late, but still had a great experience together.

Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken (Network sustainable living) and ISEE (Institute for Sustainable Environment and Energy) are both organizations with a focus on creating a more sustainable lifestyle in communities and creating awareness for people about green products. Our main focus in the exchange was to exchange about how to work on a sustainable lifestyle, especially in communities, and a research project about the sustainability of recovered paper products, from both consumer and producer side.

Name of EU Exchange Fellow, Organization, City, Country

Laura De Jaeger – Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken – Brussels - Belgium

Dates and location of exchange in China
02/08/2016 – 30/08/2016, Beijing, Shanghai

Introduction (Objectives, expectations)

When I got the message from my organization to visit China for an NGO-exchange, I was pretty excited. I had been related to the organization for a few years and felt like this was an amazing opportunity to get to know the way of working in an NGO in a complete different context. I did not know a lot about China before my departure, which made it even more exciting. What are the challenges that NGO's working around sustainable living are facing in China? How does the local population think about this topic? And which goals did they achieve yet?

Challenges (Cultural contrasts)

(What was the most challenging/suprising when you came to work in China? Which hurdles could be overcome/ stayed throughout your exchange period?)

I was really surprised about the language barriers I faced. Since I had experience in working in India for a longer period, I thought it would be similar. Of course this was not the case. I

also got confused with the mix between our western world and the Chinese culture. It was more difficult than my other cultural experiences because I did not know which aspects in China was more like Western Europe and which aspects were not. For example a really simple thing as the way of dressing. These first impressions caused a kind of small cultural shock with me, but also because of some instabilities in the beginning with my first twinning organization. Later on I felt like I figured out the society a little more, although it is impossible to do this completely in only 1 month. I did get more independent and it just works to get to know a culture and to face differences by talking about it in an open and kind way to the right people.

Activities

When I was in Beijing with the Green Woodpecker Association, I participated in a project which activates tourists not to throw garbage at the street. It also goes into confrontation with the taxi drivers about not using public toilets under a certain bridge and creating a not that enjoyable environment by that. I also participated in a lecture about the Green Woodpecker Association where they showed the Green Swapping Space very shortly to sponsors, how it works etc. I also visited a waste mill. I also participated in an upcycling project with kids where they use garbage to make artwork.

In Beijing, I visited the farmers market and community centre. This organization connects farmers from close to Beijing with the city. I had a great talk with the organizer and we arranged a sharing event. Unfortunately due to my change of twinning partner my schedule changed and I could not be back in Beijing on time.

After the workshops in Changsha, I went to Shanghai and visited the organization 'Blue Sky For Children' where I had a sharing event with. She invited her regular participants of activities and we shared on how we work around the topic 'minimalism' and simplifying life on a round table.

In Shanghai, I had a few meetings with Pan Tao and Xiaojing Cao about ISEE and the community garden projects, which would be my new twinning partner from that moment.

Outcome and Impact

The sharing event in Shanghai was definitely a great outcome for the exchange, because it's the topic we are most working on in Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken and it was very interesting to get to know the methods that the Chinese organization Blue Sky For Children is working on.

Next to that, we had this plan of me writing articles on the community website of my organization Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken on different topics of a more simple and sustainable life in China. I wrote 3 articles which were welcomed very well in Belgium and gave them new insights about another country and sustainable living.

But most of all, I guess we all learned a lot about the challenges and possibilities of China considering NGO work and sustainability. What are the needs of this country and how do they try to achieve it? By talking to different organizations and citizen I learned the most of all.

Future Plans and Sustainability of the Partnership

(Please describe the joint follow-up project if one has been planned and reflect on the sustainability of the collaboration. Between the two organizations, other organizations you have met through the twinning as well as twinner themselves.)

Please add your 3 favourite pictures/media coverage of your work





For more information, please refer to the manual's Guidelines for documentation and evaluation

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Name of Chinese Exchange Fellow, Organization, City, China

Xiaojing Cao – Institute for Sustainable Environment and Energy – Shanghai - China

Dates and location of exchange in Europe
15/10/2016 – 21/11/2016, Brussels

Introduction (Objectives, expectations)

I heard about the twinning program in the end of this August from Dr. Pantao, the director of Institute for Sustainable Environment and Energy. He told me that there was an opportunity to exchange with a Belgium NGO (Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken, NBV) on sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption is a very important issue in achieving sustainable development, especially for mega cities like Shanghai. I am very interested in this topic. However from my research experience I also want to know about the sustainable performance of the corporations in Europe especially the paper industries which is related to my Ph.D research. Therefore when Laura came to our office we discussed about the potential cooperated projects and topics. We reached consensus on my observation in the sustainable consumption from both consumer and producer side in Europe.

I worked in several environment NGOs overseas before but more about academic research. It was my first time to observe the best practices in foreign countries. Europe is a leader in promoting sustainable development including circular economy, climate mitigation and adaptation and so on. This twinning program provide me great opportunities to witness the best practices in promoting sustainable consumptions from different angles:

- In terms of consumers, how do NGOs and Governments change people's behaviors into a more sustainable way (e.g. eco-labels on products, waste reduction, sustainable transportation, renewable energy promotion etc.)?
- In terms of producers, how do the recovered paper mills produce the paper products with less resources and environment impact? Do they consider the good environment performance as the competitive advantage? Do the consumers prefer their more sustainable products?

Challenges (Cultural contrasts)

(What was the most challenging/suprising when you came to work in Europe? Which hurdles could be overcome/ stayed throughout your exchange period?)

Most people I met are good at English so I didn't find obstacles in face to face communication. However since English is not official language in Brussels and Germany, most of local governments, organizations and small corporations didn't have English webpages or there are only limited information in English on their websites. Therefore **I felt difficult in browsing websites and contacting organizations without email address.** For example, I planed to attend the Greener Packaging Seminar in Brussels. In its English webpage, I didn't find any information about registration so I guessed it was free to the public. However after writing email to ask for the detailed schedule of the seminar I realized that there were limited information in English webpage and I should check the information about the detailed schedule and registration information in other languages. However at that time I had already missed the deadline of registration. Next time I will be more careful. For contacting organizations and corporations without email addresses, the colleagues in NBV and my former partner in Berlin helped me make phone calls.

The most challenge for me is to confirm the schedule and routine based on the exchange purpose. Since I joined the twinning program very late, there were limited time for us to confirmed the detailed schedules. Before arriving in Brussels, NBV and I reached consensus on the tentative schedules:

- First two weeks: observe the sustainable consumption projects like Repair Café in Brussels and one recovered paper mill in Gent;
- one week in Berlin for the workshop
- The next ten days: visit one recovered paper mill near Berlin, the UPM recovered paper plant in south of Germany, the German Paper Industry Association in Bonn. and the best practices of sustainable consumption in Germany
- Last few days: back to Brussels.

However when I arrived in Brussels, I got bad news that all the three paper mills couldn't accept my visit for different kinds of reasons (e.g. too busy to have a visitor, sold out to new emplor, stoping production for routine maintance) and the German Paper Industry Association didn't reply to us etc. Thus during the first week in Brussels, NBV and I spent most time in contacting related organizations and corporations to complete the work plan. Finally two recovered paper mills in Neitherland and several NGOs in Brussels accepted my visit but there were still some visits to be confirmed. **Thus my routine was different from the initial work plan but it still meet my expectation.**

The last difference I found is the pricing system of train tickets in Europe and China. In China one type of train has only one price for the same journey. Therefore people feel more flexibility in buy the train tickets even at last minutes. However in Germany the price of the train tickets could rise higher and higher even higher than flight tickets. For example our

train tickets from Brussels to Berlin cost us more than 100 euros each. Thus I bought all the train tickets before I went to Berlin. It caused a little inconvenience when the appointments changed.

Activities

(Which activities did the you participate in?)

The activities could be divided into four types as below:

I. Visits to the single project:

I visit the Repair Café in Ieper and the Seeds Library in Mondo-b, Brussels. I heard about Repair Café and Seeds Library from Laura before I came to Brussels. Both Pantao and I were very interested in these two projects. When I visited these projects I was so impressed by the selfless dedication of the volunteers and organizers. However it still needs a lot work to do to localize these two projects in China especially the Repair Café.]]]]

II. Vistits to corporations:

I visited Smurft Kappa paper mill in Roermond and VanHoutum paper mill in Swalmen. Both the mills tried their best to reduce pollution and GHG emissions, and improve the resource efficiency throughout the product life cycle. The Smurft Kappa Roermond paper mill set up the goal of zero waste and circular economy. The VanHoutum paper mill provides carbon neutral products. Both the mills consider the environment performance is their competitive advantage.

III. Visits to organizations:

I visited Taxistop organization to know about their efforts to promote car pooling and car sharing which is quite important for sustainable transportation. The lady told me that the most difficult thing is to change people's idea and habbit.

I visited PEFC office in Brussels and FSC head office in Bonn. PEFC and FSC are the most popular labels for forests and forests related products. Through the interviews with the staff there I knew why and how PEFC and FSC was established. I also learned how to think about the sustainability of the products made of wood or non-wood materials from different angles. It is worthwhile to mention that **I knew the lady from FSC head office during the Berlin workshop.**

I visited CEPI (Confederation of European Paper Industries) office in Brussels. Through the interview I knew more about the overall situation of the paper industries in Europe. When I asked the challenges the European paper industries faced up, the staff in CEPI said "The strict environmental regulations could hurt the competitive advantages of European paper industries when there are no such regulations somewhere else". It was the first time for me to hear people's worry about the economic development because of the environment

regulations in European. When I discussed similar issues with the people from NGOs what they talked most were about the further potential in environment performance improvement.

I visited Wuppertal Institute and ICLEI European Office to know about their projects in resource efficiency improvement and sustainable development in cities and find the potential cooperation opportunities in future. Both the leaders of the resource group and the city group in Wuppertal Institute are willing to keep in touch and find the cooperation opportunities together. They suggested two cooperation patterns. The director of ICLEI European Office gave me the name card of the director of ICLEI Asia Office who is responsible for the activities in China.

IV. Observe cities:

I walked through the old area to the relatively new redeveloped harbor area to observe the sustainable development in Hamburg. The most impression to me is that the city in small scale is more sustainable because it could be more convenient for people to go anywhere by bike or even by foot. Furthermore the harbor area has been really redeveloped for everyone. Anyone could enjoy the time in the harbor area. In Shanghai there are also many redeveloped area but it seems that they are redeveloped for the young fashion people. It is hard for the old people and children to find pleasure there.

I observe Gent with Jana from NBV following the map of Ecoplan Gent, which was developed by NBV. We rent bikes in Gent to experience the biking infrastructure in Gent. It showed that the Gent is a bike-friendly city. We also visited many interesting projects and shops related to sustainable consumption such as Children Bike Sharing project, OXFAM Second-hand shop, another second-hand shop supported by government, No package shop, Bio food market etc. When talking with the volunteers for the free bicycle repair project, one of the volunteer told me they want to kick the cars out of the city. It surprised me a lot. The development pattern in China is still more like car oriented than people oriented. Almost every family has bicycles but the infrastructures are far more bike-friendly.

I walked through the Vauban community in Feiburg. Vauban community is one of the most famous sustainable communities in the world. I visited many sustainable projects according to its green map. The most impressive things are:

Firstly, there are many car-free residents in the communities. They financed a public recreational area featuring a “Weidenpalast” (a tree igloo) and the community garden of the “Wandelgarten” initiative. It has been reserved for an additional car park if the need arises.

Secondly, the world’s first PlusEnergy house is a private house. It is hard to imagine people in China would build such a house by their own. This house produces three times more energy than it consumes.

Thirdly, they tried their best to use renewable energy such as solar energy and the CHP plant using methane and wood etc.

Finally, they have specific parking area for the sharing car.

Besides I also visited Essen and Stuttgart.

Outcome and Impact

(What were the concrete results and accomplishments of the exchange? What “products” came out of your twinning? E.g. reports, events, studies, work models, conferences,...)

Firstly, Laura and I have found that the elements of “Nature, Share, Open, Trust” are a relevant approach in sustainable consumption projects. We shared this approach in Berlin workshop

Secondly, I shared the visit to Smurft Kappa Roermond mill in the discussion group of 1 mi 1 Eco-design Community with 349 experts and the director of 1 mi 1 invited me to write an article about how the paper mill realize close loop production and will push the article though its network (website of 1 mi 1: <http://www.1mi1.cn>). I haven’t completed this article yet but will write it.

I shared my sustainable biking trip in Gent and the map of ecoplan Gent in the discussion group of Citizen Low Carbon Action. This group includes Shanghai local NGOs and the officers from Shanghai Development and Reform Commission who design the activities for Shanghai Low Carbon Day every year. The officer from Shanghai DRC gave the thumbs-up to my sharing. I would recommend the best practices during the meetings for Shanghai Low Carbon Day next year.

Future Plans and Sustainability of the Partnership

(Please describe the joint follow-up project if one has been planned and reflect on the sustainability of the collaboration. Between the two organizations, other organizations you have met through the twinning as well as twinnors themselves.)

Although we didn’t found the cooperated projects with NBV immediately, the Repair Café, Seeds Library and the map of eco-city could be the possible cooperation projects in the future.

Furthermore we have built the connections with Wuppertal Institution and ICLEI. We will keep in touch and find cooperation opportunities. The Wuppertal Institution has already provide two possible cooperation patterns.

Please add your 3 favourite pictures/media coverage of your work



a.



b.

Figure 1-a My visit to Repair Café in leper reported by Robert Bosch Stiftung on its weibo
b I shared news about Repair Café and update other observations in Europe through my friend circle of wechat

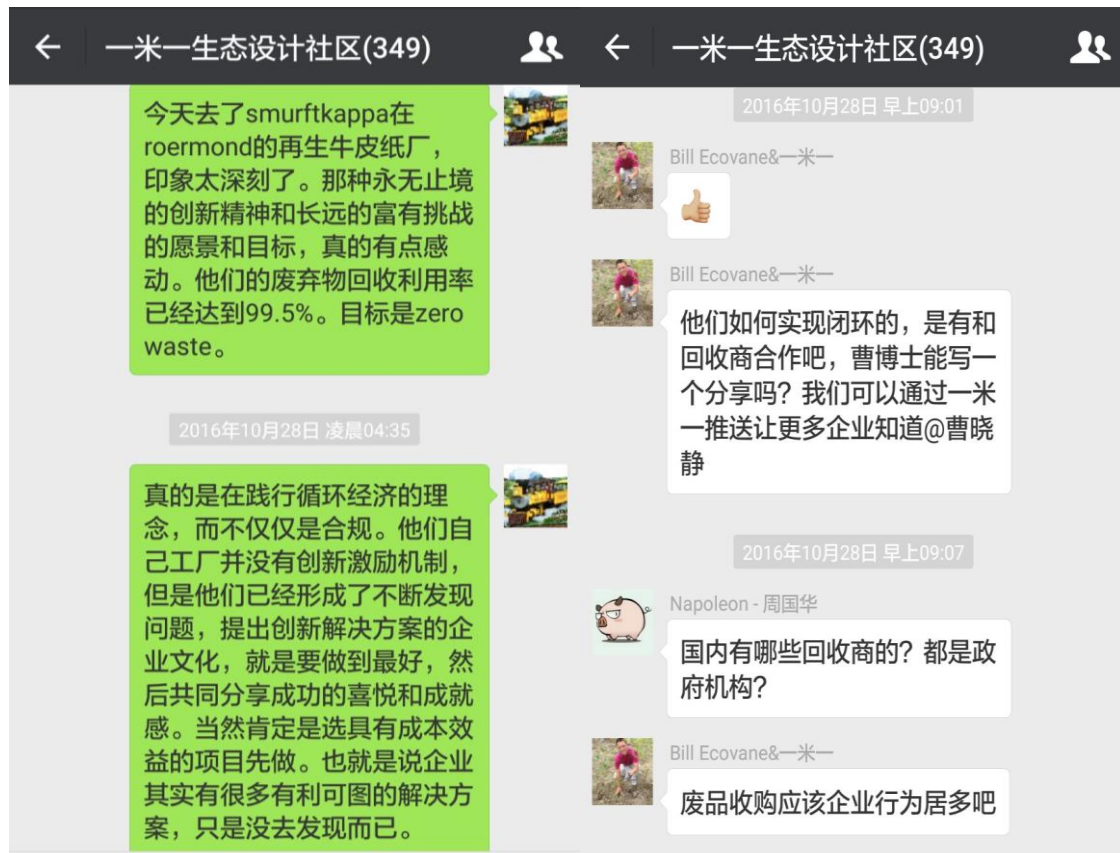


Figure 2 I shared the visit to Smurft Kappa Roermond mill in the discussion group of 1 mi 1 Eco-design Community with 349 experts and the director of 1 mi 1 invited me to write an article about how the paper mill realize close loop production and will push the article though its network.

(website of 1 mi 1: <http://www.1mi1.cn>)

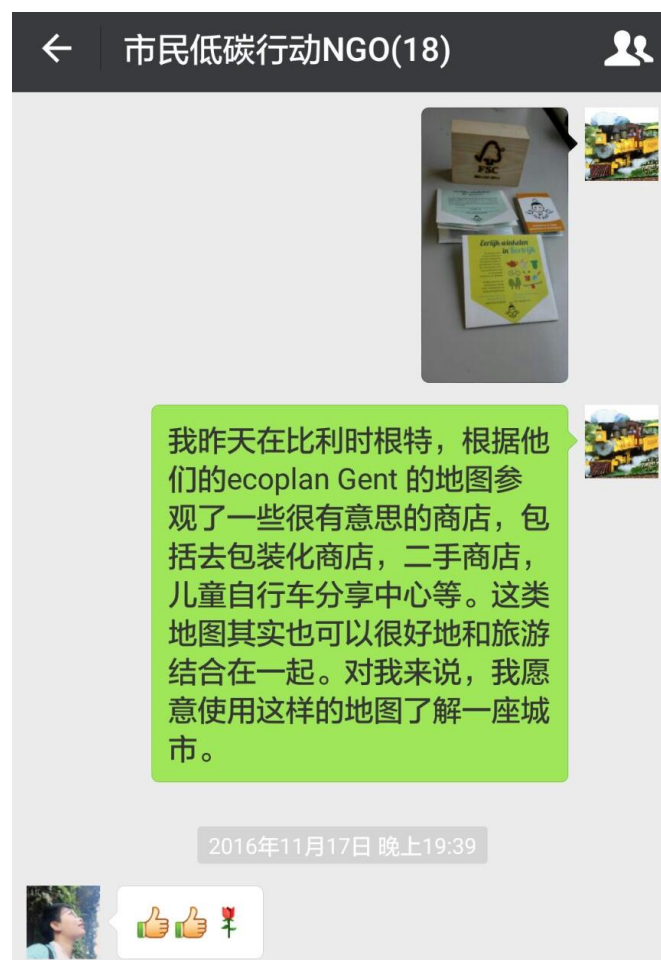


Figure 3 I shared my sustainable biking trip in Gent following the map of ecoplan Gent in the discussion group of Citizen Low Carbon Action. This group includes Shanghai local NGOs and the officers from Shanghai Development and Reform Commission who design the activities for Shanghai Low Carbon Day every year. The officer from Shanghai DRC gave the thumbs-up to my sharing.

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