

Kyoto University Global COE

“Reconstruction of the Intimate and Public Spheres in 21st Century Asia”

Asian ERASMUS Pilot Program for Next Generation Researchers and Students from Overseas Partners Institutions

Name (First, Middle, Last)	CHANG Cheng-Heng	City/Country of the Home Organization
Home Organization (University/Institute, Dept./Faculty, Position/Status)		Taipei, Taiwan
Invitation Period	From September 30, 2011 to January 01, 2012	
Counterpart Graduate School/Center at Kyoto University	Counterpart Professor: Prof. MATSUDA Motoji Counterpart Graduate School/Center: Graduate School of Letters	
Title of Research	Managing a Good Life on Our Farm: Aging Community and Teinenkinō in Rural Japan	
<p>Titles of lectures/seminars which you attended and names of the lecturers. (List up to 5 classes.)</p> <p>Seminar on Philosophy of Agricultural Sciences, Professor Akitsu Motoki Seminar on Sociology, Professor Matsuda Motoji</p>		

Please attach a written report evaluating your results/achievements through the GCOE Asian Erasmus Pilot Program.

(1) Submit a written report in 700 words. (2) Attach reference materials if any. (3) Also, email a digital photo showing your education or research activities if available. (The photo should not infringe on privacy rights.)

The submitted materials will be posted on the web page of this program.

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My doctoral research mainly focuses on local community and cultural economy in contemporary Japan. During my visit to the Global Center of Excellence for Reconstruction of the Intimate and Public Spheres in 21st Century of Asia at Kyoto University, my horizon has been broadened efficiently through several events. In early November, I participated in the inter-university collaborative social investigation in the Kumano. This experience largely improves my understanding of the local development in the traditional area of Japan. After the trip, I was invited to share my fieldwork experience in Professor Akitsu and Professor Matsuda’s seminars. Through the discussion, I have received lots of insightful comments from the audience with varied backgrounds and perspectives that help me develop my writing of doctoral dissertation.

My research starts with the phenomenon that the governance of rural Japan by the state is done in a double structure. On the one hand, the state encourages self-reliant locality by legislation or economic incentives. The autonomy and subjectivity seem to be enhanced and empowered with this kind of discourse. On the other hand, however, the state draws back subsidy and grants to municipalities but invests more in the maintenance and improvement of urban environment. As a result, most of local communities in today’s Japan are declining rapidly, even though the discourses of community and native place are omnipresent in the country.

To probe into the predicament of Japan’s local communities today, I use extended case method to figure out the structural forces that transformed local landscape and social life. The modernist infrastructure such as highways, concrete tetrapods on the beach, and industrialized ports and dairy farms are erected under the guidelines of The Comprehensive National Development Plans (CNDPs). Meanwhile, I found that the revitalization efforts I have witnessed in rural Japan coordinate with the progress of the CNDPs. Thus, I trace the administrative and legislating influence to figure out how a myth of rural revitalization was raised commonly by the state, corporates, and civil agents. Taking this macro-level picture as the reference, I am able to reach a different understanding of my fieldwork experience.

In my dissertation, I mainly argue that the local community divides ethically under the impact of neoliberal regime. Some of the community members believe in the logic of reality. They assert that the local have to figure out the demand and fashion of external market and make an investment in revitalization business in order to become a winner who can make profit from it. They can be seen as the self-responsible subjects that the neoliberal state aims to produce. The other group of residents stick to the principle of resilience. They mobilize a heterogeneous network based on their social relationships. Through the network, they can share emotion and exchange resources, and their

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everyday life is further rooted in the local arrangement of nature. After all, their ethics is unique because it is embedded in their heterogeneous network, a regime of living, the *fūdo*, a community that comprises of persons and natural environment.

After all, I will summarize the significance of my research. Using survey or other quantitative methods, social scientists begin to engage with the study of happiness in recent years. The issue of happiness or good life is important for social researchers, but it is problematic to measure it solely using economic or social indicators. Sociological study on good life, I claim, has to bring the concept of ethics back in. Rather than taking a normative approach to ethics, my approach is inspired by MacIntyre’s communitarian approach to and anthropological understanding of ethics as what Collier and Lakoff term “regime of living”. By taking the ethical perspective in my research on rural Japan, I am able to deal with the question of how autonomous selves can still be, to some extent, possible while the state power has penetrated into the formatting process of subjectivity.