Oxford-Lingnan Exchange 2018  
Saturday, 26 May 2018

Thanks to Susana Hancock (2013, DPhil in Anthropology) for the following account of this year’s exchange visit to China by Hall students, in partnership with Chinese students from Lingnan University College, Guangzhou.

?Is this bribery?? asked Senior Tutor Robert Wilkins, looking between the other judges and me as I stepped off the podium to hand the panel various Divine Chocolate bars that I had brought from America a few days prior. ?That depends on whether it works,? I smirked, returning to the podium. Sophie Dangerfield, three Lingnan representatives and I had just finished our presentation on a social entrepreneurial case study of the Divine company and on the prospects of expanding the Fairtrade economic model to the domestic Chinese market.  
Bribery? or simply a taste of the product around which we had framed our presentation? (the latter, of course) worked, and at the gala dinner that night, it was announced that we had won the final round of competition in the Global Leadership Symposium in Guangzhou.
The group (including Sophie and Susana) who won the final competition

Although unable to hear the majority of the presentations as the earlier rounds were held concurrently in small groups (and our group comprised all of the Oxford students, presentations with which we were all somewhat previously familiar), the finals exposed us to themes and social issues relevant in other areas of the world that might not be so paramount in Britain.

Two months earlier, in mid-January, nine students from Lingnan toured the UK, and we hosted them for a few days in Oxford. During this time, we attended presentations by leaders of various UK-based social entrepreneurs; toured the MINI factory and learned from leaders of Oxfam and Opportunity International; had workshops on structuring charities and beneficiaries; and met with faculty of the Saïd Business School to learn about developing microfinance and economically viable social entrepreneurship. This visit cumulated with preparatory presentations that would form the base of those for the Guangzhou competition two months later.

The Teddy Hall group at Tencent

In March, six of us, Andrew Gibson, Bill Chi, Elliot Bromley, Hunor-Chris Bocz, Sophie and I reciprocated the exchange and travelled to Guangzhou to learn about global strategic leadership within China ? undeniably different to how it is understood within England. Our time in China was divided between cultural activities (e.g. visits to the Chen Clan Academy and practising several forms of Chinese art), lectures and visiting businesses throughout the Guangdong province. Some of the companies and business models were very familiar to us. For example, on a trip to Shenzhen, we toured Tencent (the world?s largest investment
company and one of the world’s largest internet and tech firms), DJI (the global leader in drone technology, supplying 85% of the world’s drones) and BYD (an auto and electronics company developing clean transportation systems, notably a sky rail). While these corporations all either cater to Chinese audiences or have found a global niche based within the Chinese market, their methods and applications (and especially in the case of DJI, their products) are practised internationally. However, other companies we visited were less familiar. On another day we toured a Chinese pharmaceutical company that is a merger of traditional Chinese (TCM) and Western medicines. We toured a herb garden and learned about the production of medicinal tea. This was followed by what became a controversial visit to another TCM company – the country’s largest farm of Asiatic black bears. The bears are used for their production of bile, an allegedly detoxifying agent used in TCM that can be reproduced in a lab, but the synthesised version has not been fully accepted into the Chinese market.

While the bear farm was quite the cultural experience, I also confirmed that there is essentially no meat on chicken feet when our guests invited the six of us to a fantastic meal of dim sum in Shenzhen, that postcards are nearly impossible to find (sorry home fries), that security guards run after you when you fly drones around the city with DJI, and that, unlike fog, smog does not burn off as the morning wears on.

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