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Report for 2007 Scott Kloeck-Jenson Pre-Dissertation Travel Award

In the summer 2007, I have fulfilled my preliminary fieldwork in Yunnan Province, China with the support of the Scott Kloeck-Jenson Pre-Dissertation Travel Grant. Generally speaking, my dissertation project aims to address the process and results of the disaster reconstruction after the strong earthquake happened in Lijiang, Yunnan, China in 1996. The focus is to understand the ways by which globalization has been inscribed into the local everyday practices through the disaster reconstruction. Given the fact that China has now inclined to market economy, the long-term post-earthquake reconstruction of Lijiang, therefore, is the arena for investigating the dramatic cultural-political changes imbedded in the dynamic global-local interactions. In general, this project intends to solve two principal research questions: How the nature, as a disastrous power, has been a non-human but active agency to initiate the reconstruction/reframing of Lijiang through the encounters of nature and culture, tradition and modernity, even socialism and capitalism? How have these encounters within the reconstruction process become a “global discipline” relating to today's (re)constructed subjectivities of Lijiang's minority people?

For the preliminary fieldwork, I mainly focused on three methods: archive research in both local academic units and bookstores, in-depth interviews with governmental officials, local scholars and employees of international NGOs, and participant observations by living with a Naxi family (Naxi is the major minority group in Lijiang area). Through each method, I have found different evidences for refining my dissertation inquiries and for adjusting my research directions.

From the archive research particularly looking for the hazard studies in Yunnan, China, I realized that most of the scholarly reports still interpreted natural disasters of Yunnan by referring to vulnerability studies. Therefore, previous studies have made me believe that current hazard research for Yunnan's natural disaster should break through the confinement of vulnerability studies. In other words, while vulnerability studies are still critical for understanding natural disaster, hazard research should extend its scope to emphasize more on disaster reconstruction research. Moreover, even though a few studies propose looking at natural disaster reconstruction from the perspective of resilience, I still found the idea of resilience did not reach the complex power relations and negotiations implicated in the reconstruction process of Lijiang. Simply put, without further enquiring into the power matter, I argue the idea of resilience for Lijiang's post-earthquake reconstruction risks packaging disaster reconstruction as a romanticized organic process completed actively by local minority group of Lijiang. In order to search for the intellectual input for the global-local dialectics within post-earthquake reconstruction of Lijiang, this project will interpret or re-interpret the power struggles embodied by minority people's everyday practices through the process of earthquake reconstruction.

In addition, by conducting in-depth interviews with local officials who are in charge of writing chorography of Lijiang, and scholars who are doing ethnography in the same area, I discovered that natural disaster reconstruction itself is an evidence for re-framing nature-society relation in Lijiang. Furthermore, I also had a chance to interview the employees of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which has an office in Lijiang for promoting the establishment of Laujunshan National Park in Lijiang area. Through the conversations with TNC employees, I sensed the great potential that the studies of disaster reconstruction in Lijiang, by situating the

globalization context in China's evolving transformation, will generate new discussions regarding the global discursive construction and hegemonic inscription in terms of natural conservation and cultural protection initiated or enhanced by the earthquake reconstruction process.

Last, by living with a Naxi family whose ancient house is now one of the tourist attractions in Lijiang, I listened to the multiple narratives regarding Lijiang's post-earthquake reconstruction. With the great assistance from the Naxi family, I was also able to gain trust from local people much more easily, and thus to set up invaluable local networking by knowing people and making friends with them. Most importantly, I participated in the mundane lives of local people for observing the commodity chains of daily practice, the mobility of tourists, and the flowing signs and symbols produced by the media all entangle social worlds that are conventionally regarded as separate before the earthquake. This preliminary fieldwork has reassured that boundaries between places and connections between persons and places are contested, redefined, blurred, disrupted by the reconstruction process of Lijiang.

The preliminary fieldwork is critical for coming up with a solid and practical dissertation proposal, and thus I am very grateful for the funding support from Scott Kloeck-Jenson Pre-Dissertation Travel Award which has assisted me in completing a productive pre-dissertation research. With the concern about the inequality of power relation within the globalized scenario of Lijiang's post-earthquake reconstruction, I expect my following doctoral research, intellectually and practically, will also enrich the voices and understandings in social justice issues of globalization, based on the purpose of Global Studies and the Scott Kloeck-Jenson fellowships.