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Research Project: Fieldwork research

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1. Background

Since my case study area is in Tai Lake, it suffered from anabaena pollution since 1950, but actually water pollution not only around the Tai Lake, but the whole Jiangsu province now is facing this serious problem. Jiangsu province, what we call it a "Water City" of China, people used the lake water for living and drinking back in the history, average around 300,000 tourists from Japan will come visit here ever year, and now also is one of the fasted developing provinces of China, Biodiversity is of high value, the coastline consist of large wetlands which are important staging areas for migratory birds. As a consequence of economic growth biodiversity in Jiangsu is currently under threat, mainly due to fragmentation as a consequence of reclaimed wetlands for agriculture and fisheries. Also other environmental factors are at stake such as water pollution.

When I visited Jiangsu in February this year, I travel the main city of Jiangsu province, Suzho city, which covered by lake water over 43%, I could smell the stinky water coming out from the sewer, but people still use the water to do laundries and wash dishes, rice or even drink them. I asked one of the residents who lives near the lake why they still using the water if is already this bad, she told me that, she had lived here for over 50 years, and the lake water use to taste clear and good, but now people do not even want to wash their feet in the lake.

The water quality in the lake is about 4 to 5 according to China's Water Quality standard (Table 1, 2).

1. Table 1. China's Water Quality standard

Level	Way of using
Level 1	Clean water source
Level 2	Drinking water (first class)
Level 3	Drinking water (second class)
Level 4	Industrial use water
Level 5	Agricultural use water

Low level 5	Unable to use

Source: China National Environment Bureau

2. **Table 2. The Percentage of each Quality level**

Level	Way of using	%
Level 1	Clean water source	40%
Level 2	Drinking water (1st class)	
Level 3	Drinking water (2nd class)	
Level 4	Industrial use water	32%
Level 5	Agricultural use water	
Low Level 5	Unable to use	28%

Source: China National Environment Bureau

According to the tables, the percentage of level under 4 is over 60%, and almost 30% of it is lower than level 5, and the quality is even worse in the summer.

1.3 Tai Lake Anabaena Pollution

In the last paper I used second hand information which I searched on the internet about the anabaena incident, and in this paper I would like to use first hand information which I visit the local government of Wuxi city during the fieldwork.

The director had explained that Tai Lake has crossed three provinces and one city, surrounded by more than 700 factories, however, factories cannot exactly discharge the polluted materials into the lake water because the high density of population and the not-floated water. You can see from the picture I had drown, Tai Lake is like a bowl of water, and it gathers water by rainfalls, normally lakes gather water from many small streams, but not Tai Lake. Tai Lake's water is extremely shallow, only around two meters, nowhere to let it flows. It changes its water once a year, unlike other lakes in China, such as West Lake in Hang Zhou, the place my family live now, changes its lake water once a month. This makes the water of Tai Lake easy full of microorganism, which anabaena is one of them. Because of this kind of environment, the anabaena grows even faster.

Why May, 2007? Why media strongly reported it that time? Anabaena not just happened these years, the first time when they found out about anabaena was far back in 1950s. And May is when the weather gets hotter every year in China, so anabaena will have chance to bloom. We know about the "May" part, but why last

year? People thought that it might because the largest amount of anabaena.

But the answer from the local government said is not like that, 2007 is not the most serious year, the amount of the anabaena was even less, but why people thought the other way around? The director said is because the anabaena had got into the drainpipe for drinking water. When the polluted water came out form the people who live around the lake, they could not drink it or use it. The situation was getting worse than before, even the government wanted to cover the truth, but local media had already disclose it. This is the main point of why the accident had exploded in 2007 although even less than before.

2. Fieldwork

2.1 Fieldwork content 1: Visiting

During this fieldwork, I spend some time to visit several places and people that can help me to think a new pattern of my research. First, I went to Shanghai Fudan University's school of Journalism, and visited the director, Mr. Li Liang Rong. He told me to think in a wide way, use a particular example or a small issue such as Tai Lake, to view the whole situation at China's environmental consciousness as well.

Why we paid attention on Tai Lake anabaena accident recently? How exactly serious is this problem has cost to the environment and people? These are only the small objectives that I should find out, but through these, I have to think more broadly on the connection between this and media, after the combination, I can use it for the next step to see the whole picture of China's environmental consciousness.

Why the environmental consciousness in China has to be raised? It cost by many reasons, such as, the fast growing economy, industrialization make China the most targeted country in the world. But also because of these, it turned out to be most polluted country in the world, overtook US in 2007. Although the economy and environment in China has changed a lot in the past 10 years, however the pollution problem has grown at the same time. Not only Tai Lake anabaena accident that news media has focused on, but also some other accidents in the past 10 years, and how they reported it, compare with Tai Lake accident to see the differences.

I went to visit Tai Lake and took some pictures of the anabaena in the lake, it was the end of this winter, and the anabaena has already sunk into the bottom of the lake water. I could not have a clear shot of it, but still can see some "bodies" of anabaena floating around the lake.

The last place that I went to visit was the pollution control center of Wu Xi's Environment Bureau. Director Ms. Cheng Jian Ping told me what she called the "truth" of this accident. Taihu Lake has crossed three provinces and one city, surrounded by more than 700 factories, however, factories cannot exactly discharge the polluted materials into the lake water because the high density of population and the not-floated water. Taihu Lake's water is extremely shallow, only around two meters, and it is just like a basin of water which gather by rain falls, nowhere to let it flows. It changes its water once a year, unlike other lakes in China, such as West Lake in Hang Zhou changes its lake water once a month. This makes the water of Taihu Lake easy full of microorganism.

May, 2007 the anabaena had exploded again, people thought this time was even serious than ever after reading the reports from news media, but actually what Ms. Cheng had told me is, 2007 is not the most serious year, the amount of the anabaena was even less, but why people thought the other way around? Ms. Cheng said is because the anabaena had got into the drainpipe for drinking water. When the polluted water came out form the people who live around the lake, they could not drink it or use it. This is the main point of why the accident had exploded in 2007 although even less than before.

While visiting the pollution control center, I also found out some parts of inconsistency between news reports and what Ms. Cheng had told me.

2.1 Fieldwork content 2: Questionnaires

I had chosen two manufactories companies near Tai Lake, and gave questionnaires to the employees, most of them also live near the lake as well. The purpose of this questionnaire is hope to understand what kind of media they use the most in daily life, and how do they gather the pollution information. Also, are they satisfied with the way how media reported it.

I gave 200 questionnaires and had received 173 of them. Over 45% of the residences live near the lake, and 55% of them use television to get information, 40% use internet. 90% of the residences received the pollution information through media systems, but 40% do not trust the information sources.

The result shows that only 30% of the employees satisfied with the way news reported.

2.2 Fieldwork difficulties

During this fieldwork, I faced some difficulties. First, most of the employees are low educated, and could not understand what the questionnaires were asking about, and did not know how to answer them. Also, my research topic is too sensitive to them, because the local government does not want others to know the situation about the pollution, so they wanted to block the information sources.

2.3 Expectation

Through this fieldwork research, I learned a lot about how to make a good questionnaire, as I did not have enough experiences before, now I know how difficult can be to get the results that I had expected, I hope my experiences will be helpful to my thesis in the future.

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