

Report for Nordplus project

Steven Wang 2014/10/10

Now I know why everyone in Nordic Europe goes on a vacation after the long winter ends. Given the lovely weather of the May when I stayed in Sweden, it would be a crime not to enjoy your life on a sunny coast, in an exuberant forest, or a cosy cottage. The week-long trip to Sweden, during which I visited Linköping and Gothenburg, has already enchanted me to think of the experience from time to time.

I decided to investigate about the migration law for international students in Sweden, as I just came across a Facebook post saying a law change would make it easier for foreign students to stay in Sweden after graduation. I was interested in this topic as an international student myself and I might even consider continue my study there in Sweden. But with the context of the rise of nationalistic political forces and protectionism in Europe, I was a little bit doubtful about the implement of such a reform facilitating foreign students' access to local workplace.

With the Nordplus short-period grant covering most of my travel fees, I was able to talk to international students in Sweden in person to learn about their stories. Two things impressed me a lot during the reporting. One is the how accessible the sources are and the other is different people do have different stories.

The amenity of Swedish people to accept interviewees quite surprised me. In Asian countries like my home country China, people tend to be either coy or alerted to talk to a journalist. It is even more difficult to get interviewees on video records. But here in Sweden, the students were more than willing to share their stories, even more enthusiastically in front of the camera, university professors rearranged their schedule to set time for me, and when I was dialing what I thought was the number of an legislator's office, the person who picked up the phone and began to answer my questions immediately was the legislator herself.

Another habitual thought I have been trying to overcome since I became a journalism student is to treat people as groups or types. At the early stage of the project, I thought I got too many similar sources in the same groups of people, international students to be specific (I did not expect to reach them all without any major difficulties as mentioned before), so it might be a waste of time to interview so many of them. But later I realised everyone did have their own perception of the situation because of different study areas, levels of degree, and culture backgrounds. I got two girls at the same age from the same university expressing totally contradicting opinions towards the new migration law. And the personal stories behind their opinions really reveal how people from different cultures interplay with the local environment and how this interaction between young intelligent

immigrants and the society innovates a creative atmosphere beneficial for both sides.

The trip to Sweden was not as stressful as some of my other projects, but I learnt a lot from the local community besides polishing my journalistic skills.