

## **Internship at Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC)**

**Name: Lam Ho Ming**

**Period of internship: July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017 to August 31<sup>st</sup> 2017**

2016 is a year of awakening. We witnessed unexpected changes in geopolitics, and as Thomas Friedman describes in his book “Thank You for Being Late”, this is also the time when we begin to feel alienated from the paces of technological changes. As a student with business and law background, I was curious in exploring how the global community and Hong Kong should cope with the post-awakening context – and this curiosity prompted me to apply for this summer internship. My journey with PECC commenced with a brief, yet enlightening chat at the interview with HKCPEC members. We exchanged our views on trade policies and how Hong Kong should reform its educational policies in enhancing our competitiveness in the fourth industrial revolution. This interview further intrigued my interest in working with PECC, and I was very delighted that I was offered this opportunity. It turns out that these two months in Singapore did not only feed my curiosity, but I achieved unexpected fruitions for my studies and career goal.

### **At PECC secretariat**

I was the only intern working at PECC during the period, giving me more opportunities chatting with the friendly staffs there. My duties were flexible depending on the needs of different staffs. I mainly worked for Mr. Eduardo Pedrosa (Ed), the secretary-general of PECC. As the chief economist of PECC, Ed was busy preparing the annual State of the Region report (SOTR). I helped him on numerous macroeconomic researches, importing data from the IMF, World Bank, ADB etc. and tabulating data for analysis. Ed is a very intelligent person. He has clear pictures of how different issues are pierced together in impacting global economy. I always find it intellectually-challenging chatting with him as he consistently threw us questions that inspired our thoughts on issues we never bothered before.

I also designed the interview questionnaire for SOTR. The SOTR this year features a section on digital economy, so I had to design questions that collect information on the perceived/actual impact of digital economy and the preparedness of each member economy in adopting new technologies. I took this opportunity to read extensively about different technologies, such as blockchain, cloud computing and digital ID. Upon reviewing my questions, Ed shared with me skills on how to design survey questions with precise, objective, politically-neutral wordings. It is at this point that I realized that our language (especially economic terms employed) is so heavily-influenced by our educational/work experiences. I am glad to see some of my questions appeared in the final SOTR survey.

I assisted my supervisor, Betty, and Nor in other SOTR preparation works, such as consolidating recipient list and collection of responses. I also worked on some administrative works including editing the audio of the May 2017 general meeting, proofreading articles written by previous interns. I helped hosting a group of Korean university students who visited PECC in mid-August, arranging the meeting setup and logistics. We had great chats on global economy, university studies and career goals.

### **Event attendances**

This internship gave me opportunities to attend external seminars and workshops to further enrich my exposure and offer me the opportunity to network with professionals from different fields. At the Third Singapore-South Australia Relationship Conference, it is fascinating to realize how South Australia is intending to leverage the latest technology in blockchain and electric cells in improving its competitiveness in primary sectors. I am particular impressed by the positive spillovers these technologies

bring to primary and manufacturing sectors, as they help building sustainable industry practice and quality assurance. I also went to several events hosted by the HKETO office in Singapore and networked with HKETO staffs. Our chief-executive Carrie Lam was at one such event, speaking about the ties between HK and Singapore and the role a free trade agreement between HK and ASEAN would contribute on both sides.

I am grateful for the opportunity to attend the APEC general meeting, held in Ho Chi Minh City in late August. Ed and Zakiah were very helpful in arranging my visas and registering the meetings. I attended the senior official meetings (SOM) in late August. At the SOM, delegates presented their reports on the progresses made by different working groups and symposiums (each focused on a particular area e.g. FTAAP, communications, food security etc.) and exchanged comments. The president of the SOM (represented by the host country, Vietnam) ended the meetings with remarks on several management issues and the upcoming leaders week in November.

The general tone of the conversations was mild, with flatters at times, without much heated debate. While chances for significant agreements this year look bleak, I gained a deeper understanding on geopolitics and each economy's value proposition on international trade policies. The two days in Vietnam was also an incredible opportunity for me to chat and learn from the experienced delegates. Among these chats, I found the conversation with a Malaysian delegate the most enlightening as she shared her views about what governments should do in managing and negotiating with the different domestic stakeholders of trades swiftly. As millennials we are continuously preached the benefits of trade at both the theoretical and overall levels, and yet this somehow obscures us the reality that growth is often imbalanced. It is important for us to have a broader sense on the imbalances so that we can seek solutions out of the anti-globalization sentiment.

### **Beyond work and unexpected achievements**

This internship gave me exposures on issues concerning digital economy and the fourth industrial revolution. Besides drafting the survey questions, some of the events I attended focused on digital economy. The one held at the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) came across many regulatory aspects on competition and data ownership, that are closely related to my studies. These exposures aroused my curiosity in reading about the tech industry, and I decided to write an op-ed on blockchain towards the end of the internship. I explored the potential for Asia Pacific economies to leverage blockchain technology in developing service sector. This op-ed gave me inspirations on what to write for my law school dissertation, due next April. I am now considering a research on the regulatory frameworks for blockchain and digital currencies operation.

Singapore is the regional hub for aviation financing. I have been very interested in this industry, and thus these two months gave me an incredible opportunity to meet with aviation financing professionals. Through coffee chats I learnt more about the industry and its financing/taxation environment. The professionals also gave me many career advices and networking tips.

Singapore is a vibrant and dynamic city. July-August is probably the best period to stay in the Lion City as there will be series of celebrations weeks before and after the national day (August 9<sup>th</sup>). These celebrations are amazing showcases of creativity and artistic talents. The fireworks does not only consist of the conventional firework displays, but this year they incorporated live drone performances which the drones maneuvered in the sky to create different visual displays. I also visited the Singapore Nights Festival and National Design Center to appreciate local arts and designs, which all play strong emphasizes on the Singapore's cultural diversity. I am deeply impressed by how Singaporeans manage to

build a culturally-rich, fun and dynamic city, despite its urban setting and infrastructures are heavily planned.

This summer is the best one for me so far. I would like to thank the PECC secretariat for this incredible learning experiences. Every colleague in the secretariat are incredible hosts and they have all manifested the spirit of inclusivity: Ed for his advice on works and sharing on global economy, Betty for her warm guidance and encouragements throughout the progress, Zakiah for arranging my employment pass and visas for APEC meeting, and Nor and Jessica for their assistances on different matters. I really appreciate the support of the Trade and Industry Department and the HKCPEC in granting me this amazing opportunity, especially Miss Kathy Chan for all the coordination efforts. I look forward to giving back to Hong Kong society in the future.