

If I had to summarize the three-day trip to Guigang hosted by PMSA with an adjective, the word would be “impactful”. During the short stay at Guangxi, I was not only impacted by the various sights I saw, but also discovered the potential impact that the trip would bring to the local community.

Our trip began with an interview with the Duling Primary School Principal. From the interview questions, we were able to gather important pieces of information that would help us better improve different design components. Then we carried on to do practical fieldworks and individual interviews with different villagers.

From these activities, I was able to grasp a clearer understanding of common building materials, construction practices, alternative ideas, and the different expectations from the villagers. I was given ideas that I have not considered before and think from new perspectives.

The most impactful event was the visit to 園中國 on the last day of the trip. 園中國, as the name suggests, is a “theme park” area comprised of numerous small “parks”. These parks were mostly traditional Chinese styled structures built with modern materials. These buildings in the park had radical building methods while preserving the traditional beauty in Chinese architecture. For example, one of the garden designs creatively structured roof tiles and bricks to form windows and floor pavements. This design used rather “outdated” building materials, roof tiles, for practical building elements. Moreover, these designs were aesthetically pleasing. As I walked passed the different buildings, I felt as if the structure themselves were giving a repeated message; Architecture aesthetics do not need to be compromised by the given materials and costs. The sights at 園中國 not only impacted our construction project design, but also my view towards balancing beauty and practicality.

All in all, I gained many valuable insights from this trip. From this trip, I learned not only the practical situation of the projects, but more importantly, alternative perspectives on construction designs.