



Introducing Trash Collecting as Part of Daily Activities to Enhance Wellbeing through a Local Neighborhood Walk

TSUKUBA – November 5th, 2021: A small group of TIAS2.0 and TAIKU students took part in a short walking activity that aimed to **introduce trash collecting as an enriching activity that could be integrated into other types of physical activity, such as walking or running, to enhance wellbeing (physical, emotional, mental wellbeing on a personal level and environmental, community wellbeing)**. Combinations of **physical activity with trash collecting** have already become popular in different parts of the world, such as “Plogging” (jogging and trash collecting), “Plalking” (walking and trash collecting), and “Pliking” (cycling and trash collecting) and are promoted and shared through social media. **The activity was organized as part of the Internship Course, with collaboration between TIAS 2.0 and Journey for Change (JfC), with the participation of IDS and undergraduate students upon their initiative.** To re-state it’s purpose of this internship, and quoting Ms. Shinobu Hayama (CEO, JfC): *“is to serve as a crossroads for academic and cross-sector collaboration for the cultivation of next generation global citizens – through collaborative studies, research, community development and social innovations – leveraging the value of cross-cultural education, health and sport science in the pursuit of humanity and national-international development for solidarity”* (JfC).

Participants in the event were briefly introduced to the idea of **integrating trash collecting with physical activity** and given a specific route to explore. The students would walk a total of six kilometers, starting from the **Global Sport Innovation Building (GSI)** at the **University of Tsukuba**, up to **Yasaka Shrine**, and then walk back to GSI. Trash bags and gloves were distributed, but no additional rules or guidelines were given, as the students were expected to discover the **difficulties and implications** of trash collecting as a regular activity. Discussion while walking was **promoted to share and reflect** on what the experience made them feel and think.



Students observed that, although streets look clean at first, trash has simply been pushed outside of the main sidewalk space. As individuals are accustomed to only look towards the front, they tend not to notice the details outside of their normal field of view. **Paying attention to these details** implied slowing down the walking pace, extending the walk time to three times the expected duration. Students also learned that trash is not just lying on the ground as a separate recognizable object; many times, different items have degraded and are found in pieces of different

sizes or have “**integrated**” into the landscape in a variety of ways, such as being half-buried into the ground, or

servicing as hideouts or shelters for different small animals and insects. Ultimately, **students reflected on the way trash “moves” around**; litter does not necessarily remain static, but can move around even very long distances, and end up in natural systems such as rivers or the ocean, where they **contaminate** the flora and fauna and degrade and destroy ecosystems. Wind and rain can slowly transport trash to rivers, where they follow the stream up to the oceans. By the effect of waves and wind, plastic materials are broken down into small fragments that float on the water, mix with the sand, or contribute to the creation of large garbage patches. They can also reduce the photosynthetic performance of marine organisms and reduce the growth rate and overall health of corals. According to **National Geographic, as of 2020**, the amount of plastic waste flowing into the oceans each year was predicted to nearly triple to 29 million metric tons by 2040, affecting or killing millions of animals due to entanglement or mistaking for food. **The World Economic Forum predicts that by 2050, there may be more plastic in the oceans than fish.**



A reflection session was held at the end of the day, where participants discussed on how the experience affected them at a personal level. Some of the participants considered that they became more conscious about the city’s features such as the surrounding plant and animal life, and the way it moves and interacts with humans and their byproducts (such as trash). Other participants also considered that the experience helped them feel **more connected**, firstly, with nature, even if the experience took place in the city, and secondly, with themselves and their community, through taking **actions towards a shared social issue** that they care for. Finally, although the activity took longer than expected, all participants felt that the activity was positive and felt overall good after contributing to keeping natural environments and their **neighborhood** cleaner, enhancing the connection of mind, body, nature and community. As such, it was discussed that collecting trash will be incorporated as a **habitual behavior** in any opportunity during future activities throughout the Internship course, as well as in daily life. This also brought the students from different disciplines together (to do and talk) at one activity.

Journey for Change is a social enterprise designing change (behavioral to systematic) for the above with expertise in sustainable development through education and travel – with the perspective that such requires the wellbeing of human (mind, body, humanity) and the globe (environment, society, economy), and either state can only be achieved through its connection. As such, the objective of this program is to drive the above while addressing a relevant **common agenda of the world and our planet – sustainable and shared development through an interdisciplinary perspective – wellbeing on a personal and global level.**



Thank you to all the students (International and Japanese) that chose to be part of the experience and discussions. Their thoughts and reflections were critical to understand the implications of integrating trash collecting with physical activity and the key elements to take into consideration when creating awareness and wellbeing on future participants.

Sincerely Yours,

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Purpose: Create a world where people and nature evolve in harmony.
(Journey for Change is Member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, GSTC)

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