

## Report on Participation in [Field Research Trip to Netherlands and Germany]

Akkharaphon Thongpoon  
M2 (as of January 2014)  
East Asia Course  
Graduate School of Economics

It was the first time for me to go to Europe. Everything was new; language, people, communication, trees, architectures, systems, sceneries, and etc. I am very thankful for this great opportunity that EA course and KUASU have given me. Also, it was a great chance for me to see what the European education is like in different universities that we went. Also the quality of students and how they are really active in class to express their own opinion critically toward certain topics. Apart from all the presentations and workshops in universities, here are the experiences that I am very impressed by their work;

We went to Lindenhoff farm in the Netherlands. It was an organic farm that hires homeless and put them to work on farm. They pay 10euros per day for these drug and alcohol addicted homeless. This creates lots of impact to their world because no one actually wants to hire them. They are appeared as dangerous, unreliable, unstable, and of course, drug-addicted people. Lindenhoff made contract with the local government in order to reduce the drug-addicted and homeless problem in town, thus, the government also financially supports these homeless with conditions that they have to work on farm. What usually happens is that, in the morning, a van would go into town and pick these homeless up and bring them to farm which is quite close to the city. Then, for the whole day, these homeless would work on farm on the level that they are capable off. The owner and some of the previous workers would teach them how to do things and check whether they can keep up with the work or not. If they succeeded and ready, the owner would give them harder tasks to deal with. The owner said this process of putting the homeless back to workforce actually have an impact on their drug-use behavior. When these homeless started working, in the initial stage, they would get the money from farm, go back to town in the evening, and of course, go straight to the buy drug, alcohol. After a while, when they realize their own accomplishment, these worker gradually feel like they are something, they are not burden to the society anymore and, thus, became more aware of their life situation which bring about the positive impact on their drug and alcohol addiction behaviors.

Not only the social impact that help reduce the homeless problem that Lindenhoff is working on, their meat is, as well, very special. In an industrialized pig farm, they usually feed them for 5 months to make pigs weight 100kgs. However, in the case of organic Lindenhoff farm, it takes them 16 months in order to make the same weight. The reason is that Lindenhoff use only good taste, naturally grown hay and vegetables for the pigs' feeds while the conventional pig farm would feed those pigs with soya in order to boost them to grow as fast as they can. In terms of market price, combine with their reputation among restaurants; Lindenhoff can sell their pork for 4euros per kilogram while industrialized park cost 1euro per kilogram because there are lots of water in this kind of meat, the owner claimed. The owner said that the consumption for good health, better taste, less meat but higher quality, concerns for environment are increasing among consumers. By being organic, not only benefits in terms of health to both the workers and consumers, it also benefits the soil by heightening the quality of wastes these animals produce. He also claimed that conventional (industrialized) animal farming should tern into organic as well because there is no need for the world to be polluted by producing too much food with a high negative externality of the society and environment. He said there are enough lands in the world to give everyone good food without having to rush for it. Although organic produce slower meat to the market and use more pieces of lands, we can use those lands for a long

time. Lindenhoff also grow vegetables (of course organically), have their own slaughterhouse, dairy products manufacturing machines. I am really impressed by their concepts, which come true under their consistent implementations and hard work.

After Lindenhoff, we walk a little farther to a premium sausage factory called "Brandt & Levie; worstmakers." One of the co-owners that gave us the interview told us about his life experiences. He said he worked ad a chef but he had never thought about the source of food. He got himself more and more involved with the concept of slow food which eventually led to the establishment of this business. His sausage is made from a 100% natural raised pig. These pigs grow up with their mothers without using any antibiotic. The pigs are also provided with spaces both outside and inside that barn. As for their feed, they create various kinds of local feed such as potato, grain, vegetable, and more which create a very tasty feed. These entire atmospheres let the pigs live very happily. The business is doing particularly good since the establishment. It grew 300 percent last year and 250 percent this year. They sell their sausages for 12.5euros/kg for restaurants and retails and 24euroes/kg for end consumers. Surprisingly, there are no organic logos on the brand. The owner said he doesn't believe in organic logos because organic pigs in the Netherlands are still fed with soya, which make his sausages even better than the usual organic sausages. Moreover, his vision is not to own the entire value chains because farming is really complex, thus, it may not be the wise idea for I businessmen to take over the jobs that are specialized by farmers. He pays farmers comparatively higher than the conventional kind of farmer because raising happy pigs take more time and caring to the pigs. If he tries to reduce the production cost by cutting down the farmers' wages, then farmer will also tries to reduce their cost but putting the burden onto pigs and the way they treat them. Also, he spent 0euro budget on marketing. He only depends on the words of mouth and media attention to his farm. In the end he gave us loads of sausages and salami, however, it's a pity that we didn't get the chance to taste them and especially we cannot take these kinds of products back to Japan. I am very impressed with the concepts and the quality of the meat they used for production. Including the pig raising process that they tries to keep the pigs as natural as they could which is really rare in meat industry these days. If I were the consumer, I would totally pay more for the better quality and better world for both human and animals.

In the afternoon of the same day, we went to SOMO. SOMO is a CSO that focus their concerns on multinational corporations (MNC) that has impact on the Dutch's social issues such as immigration, labor rights, and other development agendas. The organization comprises of 34 people. Their work focuses on policy level, thus, most of the time concerning the influencing through networks, policy makers, and advocacy. From the first moment I stepped inside their office, I was really surprised by how creative their office is decorated. They have lots of designed furniture, so the first thought that came into my mind is that this CSO is really a nice place to work at. It's not what I expected from a CSO office because they usually focus on functioning and most of the time they didn't have enough money to spend on the creativity of the furniture. Later, however, decided to ask the SOMO representative about it and he said these furniture are for the good atmosphere of the workers; it helps us relax from all the stressful social issue works. Of course, in my opinion, I am really happy for them because they work for other people in the society but their salaries are comparatively a lot lower than in the business sector, so at least they should have nice working environment. Apart from working environment inside the office, the SCO work environment in the Netherlands is highly developed, by this I mean, there are many supportive conditions for such social work in the country. For example, it is comparatively (if compare to Thailand which is my personal background of NGO works' conditions) easier to raise its funding. In the case of SOMO, they receive both from private fund, European fund, and mostly from the Ministry of Foreign Affair (As a consequence of the government policy of annually distributing 0.7 percent of GDP to international development projects). One more supportive condition for social work is that the Dutch has a strong NGO sector that reflects that it is a socially concerned country. This is a very important and possibly the most important factor that would determine the success of any social work. This condition leads to financial possibility for

civil society and make it harder for business sector to execute researchers, and also, in the Netherlands, businessmen and politician are not the same person, or even if they are, one cannot exploit both positions at the same time as much. For me, what is interesting is that in Thailand, we don't have the sense of community; it is very interesting for me to listen from an NGO representative saying that their country is a very socially concerned country, makes me feel jealous of how he is satisfied and so proud of the mindsets of Dutch people. In the end, it does not matter what kind of social problems they are facing, if people are concerned about others, those problems will be solved eventually.

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, we have already travelled to Heidelberg, Germany. Today we have a chance to visit FIAN International the whole day. FIAA international is an international Non-profit organization (NPO) funded by dover agencies such as churches, EU commission, membership fees, and private donations. It also holds a consultant status to the United Nations. FIAN International was found in 1986 as a Food First Information and Action Network. It now employs 19 national officers with more than 50 countries individual members. It focuses on many social issues related to food, for example, access to natural resources such as land, water, and seeds. They also involve in issue like income nutrition and related public policies such as social security, and also involve in the issue of rights to adequate food accountability which concerning monitoring right to food, justifiability of right to food and extraterritorial state obligation (ETO). Most of time they focus on the caseworks of each country. The countries that they are working on are the Philippines, Paraguay, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Mexico, Cambodia, and Mozambique. These projects concern 1. Research and documentation of concrete cases when the right to food is violated 2. Interventions such as letter campaigns and 3. These cases are built upon long-tem implementation range from 10 to 15 years of involvements. Most of the time their tools of implementation and intervention are advocacy, information and education, the use and develop of human rights instruments, and agenda setting such as debates. Each employee in the headquarter of FIAN International is responsible for projects in each country and is specialized differently according to the issues within the country of responsibility. All of them are very professional and capable. All of them, of course, speak bilingual. Many of them can speak tri languages or more. So I am, again, impressed by the NGOs' performance, individual capacity, and work quality in Europe as I have suspected from 2 organizations from both in the Netherlands and Germany.

This trip gave me more than just a mere visit to many places and organizations in Europe. It opened my eyes to a better picture of the world, of the different societies and cultures that contribute to the both the rise and down of each culture. I started to get the sense of their mindsets and what they would prioritize when it comes to social issues, the sense of community that each one of them hold. I am very thankful to be one of the participants of this trip and I hope that what I have learned there would also benefit the program, university, society, Thailand, and Japan throughout my better understanding about the world.