

Report on Participation in Thailand Field Trip 2015

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Year level: D2
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The Thai field trip, two years ago, provided me a fruitful chance to learn not only about the country but also the cultural diversity in Southeast Asia, globalization impacts on the region and the governance of ASEAN. It helped me to imagine a general picture of the ASEAN community led by the governments and multinational corporations, whereas the latest field trip to Thailand specified its challenges and struggles especially in the level of civil society and international organization.

It started with lectures on the development of ASEAN, followed by a basic Thai class and campus tour at Thammasat University. It was impressive to me that the ASEAN governance set to be remarkably institutionalized for the last few years, especially to settle its regional dispute in the economy, not just relying on WTO (World Trade Organization). Other indoor lectures were about Thai food chains (by BioThai foundation) and free trade impacts on the local (by FTA watch). It reminded me of the process of industrialization and globalization which has been used to overlook a variety of local needs.

For several days, we visited some national and international organizations such as Malaysian Tourism Office, World Bank and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization). It was a good opportunity to look at how the tourism industry has developed in Southeast Asia. I got to more grasp the role and effort of World Bank which requires keeping its neutral political position among nation-states. On the other hand, UNIDO seemed to struggle with how to design and promote good industrial development with a collaboration of governments and (transnational) corporations.

Another impressive outdoor activity was of civil society organizations such as Kao Kwan Foundation and Green Net. Kao Kwan Foundation has played significant roles to promote sustainable agriculture with introducing and developing ecological farming techniques and practices to small-scale farmers in Thailand. Green Net has promoted organic food supply chains and fair trade between farmers' communities and consumers. I was very impressed by their commitment to organic farming, agroecology, fair trade, and community-based development in the local level. As both of the initiatives are very close to my interests in studying, I would hope to set another fieldwork for them next time.

Apart from such lectures and outdoor field research, it held an international graduate workshop among Thammasat, Chulalongkorn and Kyoto University. The participants covered a variety of issues, especially concerning how to conceive of future sustainability, by exchanging different methodologies, approaches, and theories. It was a very good opportunity not only to discuss on the trouble sustainability but also develop such networks of youth graduate students in the international level.

The Thai field trip is very special to me since it encouraged me to go ahead oversea field research for the first time. Upon the field trip next time I would hope to organize a collaborating work with other participants such as publishing an academic paper focusing a specific issue. Finally, I would very thank all the faculty members who contributed to the great field trip.