

Report on Participation in Field Trip in Thailand

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The overseas field trip to Thailand was an excellent opportunity for me to broaden my understanding of the various dimensions of sustainable development as applied by various stakeholders on the ground including government, NGOs, businesses, and academia. My interaction with these stakeholders deepened my knowledge of sustainable development as practiced and beyond the theories I learn inside my classroom.

During the trip, I was immersed with various topics including food security, organic farming, human trafficking, and sustainable tourism to name a few. On the issue of food security, we were able to meet with policymakers from the Food and Agriculture Office, an NGO leader working on food policy and food security, and even people directly involved in the issue including an organic farmer from Chiang Mai. The varied perspectives from these stakeholders provided me with a holistic understanding of food security- that it is not just an issue about access to food but is also tied to how food is distributed and other political dynamics from the entire food chain.

We were also given a chance to discuss investment promotion activities of Thailand with a representative from the Board of Investments of Thailand in Chiang Mai. I enjoyed the dialogue we had with the BOI as it provided us with a detailed overview of the various strategies Thailand is undertaking to promote inward investment with the aim of contributing to the economic development of the country. The BOI representatives were also forthcoming in sharing the challenges that they face and how they deal with these challenges. Coming from a developing country and having a keen interest on this topic, the insights from the BOI representatives were very educational and fascinating and I thought it will be useful in advancing my understanding of this topic. The discussion on actual policies being implemented by Thailand to attract investment complements the textbook theories I learn on this topic.

Another feature of our field trip to Thailand was an international graduate student workshop with students from Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University. This workshop allowed us to present our research papers in an international forum and gain valuable feedback from the workshop attendees. I was given the chance to moderate my session in addition to presenting my paper. Moderating my session was such an invaluable experience. It gave me a glimpse on what goes behind running a workshop beyond presenting a paper. More than the valuable feedback I got from presenting my paper, the networking opportunity the workshop provided was a highlight for me as well. I was able to exchange contact details with other students from Thailand working on a topic similar to what I study with the hope of collaborating with them in the future.

Overall, the overseas field trip to Thailand was an excellent learning experience for me. The lessons I learned from my interaction with the various people I met will help me ground all the theories I have picked up from the classroom to the realities people are confronted with on the ground. The people I have met and new friends I have made have also made the trip a memorable one. The field trip has also made me more determined to develop a deeper understanding of sustainable development and the various issues surrounding this topic.

More than anything else, the field trip solidified my desire to be a social scientist rooted in both theory and practice. I would not have had all these new insights with me had I not joined this trip to Thailand. Truly the overseas field trip to Thailand was a very enriching experience.