

Report on Participation in 2018 Thailand Field Trip

SHAN YINGHAO

Year level: Master Year 1

**Faculty/Graduate School of: Economics
Kyoto University**

Looking back on the 10-day Thailand field trip, I must say that this was a fruitful and stimulating trip that succeeded my expectations as I could not only learn about Thailand's economy, society and culture but also communicate with open-minded and brilliant peers from both Kyoto University and universities in Thailand (Thammasat University, Chulalongkorn University, and Chiang Mai University).

Most of the days were spent doing various activities as a group, e.g. paying visits to universities, NGOs, government institutions, listed firms, etc.. We also attended lectures on economic development given by scholars and government officials, and could also exchange academic ideas/insights during workshops with students from Chulalongkorn University, the top tier university in Thailand. Each day, we could enjoy learning from the various activities that were planned. In the evenings, we had a chance to explore Thai life on our own. I could taste different delicious Thai-style cuisines, enjoy the relaxing Thai massage and to visit Buddhist temples. More importantly, I could experience Thailand as a local resident, which is very important to observe how, and in what environment people lead their life. Thai people, as what I had observed and perceived, generally lead a peaceful life with strong religious faith in Buddhism and great respect to the king of Thailand. However, we can still observe underdeveloped level of municipal facilities behind the traffic disorder and poorly placed utility poles, as well as a lack of contracts and rules when taxi drivers ask for unfair higher price or even directly refuse to drive you, and, last but not the least, the significant disparities within Bangkok.

When it comes to academic outcomes, this field trip allowed me to get more background knowledge about Thailand's economy, economics issues, such as sustainable development, in developing countries, especially in the ASEAN region. As mentioned above, from the lecture given by the director of the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development at Chiang Mai University, I started to learn about the history and current academic topics, sustainability issues on the Mekong Region, and how complex these issues are. From the lecture on the Thai economy and development in Thammasat University, the lecturer, Professor Chanin Mephokee, first gave us an overview of Thai economy, and then analyzed the challenges Thailand is facing in a global market after a short review of recent economic operations. This was really inspiring and interesting for me not only because of the lecturer's frank opinions, but also a new perspective of analysis on global economics, since I used to think about global issues in the view of economic giants like China, Japan, and the US.

In addition, this field trip also broadened my horizon in terms of research interests. What impressed me most is the Nonghoy Royal Project Farm, which was initiated by one of former kings of Thailand. The farm employed the former hill tribe poppy farmers, and had turned itself into a new agro-tourism and eco-tourism site. It is a successful practice in fighting against opium and drug industry by making use of its location, government policies, business, and natural environment. At the same time, it is also a successful experience for other developing countries to eliminate poverty. It motivated me to think more deeply about what roles finance can play in developing agricultural industry and fighting against poverty, which I had not paid much attention to before.

Through this trip, I realized the importance of field research, as well as what and how NGOs could do meaningful things to promote sustainable development. Based on that, a career in corporate social responsibility is now something that I am considering.