

Conducting research at the *Mindfulness-Project Thailand*



As part of my minor “Crossing Borders” I joined the Mindfulness-Project Thailand. This project offers a volunteering program which is based on a mindful and sustainable way of living at a land in the middle of nature in the poorest region of Thailand. The project involves the volunteers in yoga, meditation, karma yoga, cooking, natural building, permaculture and teachings about Buddhism. In addition, every evening a talking circle is held in which everyone, including the team, has the opportunity to share their life stories and struggles.

Within my stay at the project I was involved in the daily life of the project and all of their activities such as the talking circle. Furthermore, I researched into the concepts of mindfulness and happiness and their relation towards each other. Correspondingly, I created pre- and posttest questionnaires which I had the volunteers fill in upon their arrival and ten days into their stay. Therefore, I was able to gain a greater insight into the development of mindfulness and happiness levels within volunteers at the project.

The most outstanding aspect of this project was the loving, caring and non-judgmental community everyone was part of. The project is a place in which everyone is involved in gaining a deeper insight into oneself with support of a mindful community. It was amazing to see as well as experience myself under what circumstances, that were super basic living conditions e.g. bucket showers, people can be their happiest and most content versions of themselves. I should outline that the first weeks I had a hard time settling in at the project because I first, had to adapt to the basic living conditions. Second, I had to find a balance between being involved within the project which

simultaneously meant to be involved in introspection, while also conducting research. Not easy tasks by themselves already!

Nonetheless, the project was one of the most wonderful and changing experiences I made. I was able to be involved in a project that creates a space for people to develop themselves and work through their struggles while promoting a sustainable lifestyle. It offered me a way to watch and be part of peoples healing as well as heal myself. The project was the most healing, loving, happy, exciting and of course, mindful experience I ever made and I am beyond grateful to have been able to connect this with my studies.