

Zurich Student Excursion in Sri Lanka

Time: 27th Jan to 12th Feb 2015

Objective: Regional Seminar on Sri Lanka and Experience/apply Qualitative Research Methods

Background/Structure:

The department of Geography, Political Geography of the University of Zurich took the initiative under Dr. Pia Hollenbach to organize a 16- day excursion in Sri Lanka in cooperation with Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya, South Asia Institute Heidelberg/Sri Lanka.

As the excursion had two objectives, the 17 days were divided in two parts:

1. Round trip in Sri Lanka – focus was on various topics on Sri Lanka that are relevant to research projects in University of Zurich. The first half of the excursion therefore was intensive travel which included stops in Colombo, Galle, Kataragama and Nuwara Eliya/Hatton. At each location local research colleagues and partners joined the student group in order to share their expertise and research insights and to guide the group through their respective research areas/field sites and topics.
Research topics covered: urban development and city planning; Post-tsunami resettlement schemes and development induced forced resettlement (the everyday practices of international development); Highland Tamils and workers rights in a globalized economy (Tea Plantations in Sri Lanka); Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and minority politics in Sri Lanka (Muslim politics and religious coexistence)
2. Fieldwork Experience - conducted in partnering with University of Colombo and University of Peradeniya. The second half of the excursion started with a one day seminar on 'Qualitative Research Methods' at the University of Peradeniya where Sri Lankan and Swiss lecturers introduced the topic of qualitative research and research ethics in the field. The seminar was open to all students of the University of Peradeniya and over 20 Sri Lankan students participated. Following the seminar, the Swiss students partnered with eight Sri Lankan students (four from Colombo and four from Peradeniya) who were selected previously to become part of the excursion. During the next four days the Swiss and Sri Lankan students worked in small research teams in two different locations:
 - a) Free Trade Zone Katunayake (garment factory workers rights and health and globalized economy)

b) Mahaweli Resettlement Scheme in Hennanigala, Mahiyangana (Indigenous communities in Sri Lanka and long-term resettlement).

The objective of this exercise was to apply qualitative research methods and to experience the everyday of qualitative research. Students worked in teams by setting up an open ended questionnaire followed with practical application by conducting interviews in the field.

Administrative Logistics:

Funding

The excursion was partly funded by the University of Zurich, Department of Geography (50% of transport costs – flight and bus within Sri Lanka) and the Swiss students who took part in the excursion.

Local experts were paid a lump-sum that was covered through a Research Assistant Position allocated to the excursion and preparation seminar that was held in Zurich (University of Zurich).

The participation of Sri Lankan students was co-funded through the Unit of Political Geography, University of Zurich and cross-financed through the total excursion budget.

Visas

Since this was an academic excursion with workshops and discussions, Swiss students came to Sri Lanka under a business visa. The University of Colombo submitted their visa papers.

Preparation Seminar in Zurich

In order to prepare Swiss students thematically for the excursion, two intensive weekend seminars were conducted and students had to write a seminar paper on a selected topic. The aim was, each participant becomes the ‘expert’ on one topic and will serve as a resource person for the selected topic in Sri Lanka.

Travel Schedule and Topic

Date	Research site	Resource Person	Discussion Topic
<i>Round Trip</i>			
27 th Jan 2015	Introductory workshop at University of Colombo	Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya Prof. Lasantha Manawadu	Meeting local students and respective academics in the Faculty Sharing of Student expectations Issues in Sri Lanka: Geographical perspective Visiting Colombo Campus,
28 th Jan 2015	Badowita, Dehiwala	Dr. Nishara Fernando	Urban planning, City development Urban relocation sites
29 th Jan 2015	Galle Fort and Maritime Archeology Museum in Galle	Mr. Kasun	Guided tour of Galle Fort/Museum
30 th Jan 2015	Galle	Dr. Nishara Fernando	Tsunami resettlements in Galle (Chinese friendship village, Lakshman Kadiragama village and German Harithagama) SOS children's village in Galle
31 st Jan 2015	Travel to Kataragama	Dr. Nishara Fernando	SOS community centre at Gandara Hambanthota new development projects Banana Tissue culture project, Hambantota
1 st Feb 2015	Kataragama	Prof. Premakumara de Silva	Multi Religious Place
2 nd Feb 2015	Travel to Hatton/Nuwareeliya	Prof. Hasbulla	Jailani Sufi Shire, National Buddhism and Minority Politics
3 rd Feb 2015	Wanaraja Tea Plantation, Dickoya	Dr. Chandrabose	Tea Plantation Economy in Sri Lanka, Gender and culture of Tea plantations in SL, Tamil

Experience Report Students Excursion
 Dr Darshi Thoradeniya, Dr Pia Hollenbach

			Minority politics of SL
4 th Feb 2015	Sigiriya		Taste of ancient culture of Sri Lanka, Water systems in SL, Cultural Heritage of SL
5 th Feb 2015	Travel to Kandy via Dambulla		City Tour in Kandy
6 th Feb 2015	Peradeniya University	Dr. Abey Rathnayake, Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya & Dr. Pia Hollenbach	Introductory Seminar on field work and research ethics
<i>Field experience</i>			
7 th to 9 th Feb 2015	Katunayake	Dr. Darshi Thoradeniya	Free Trade Zone and Third World Economy
	Mahiyangana	Prof. Premakumara de Silva	Mahaweli Resettlement Scheme, Indigenous Communities (Vedda)
10 th Feb 2015	Kandy	Dr. Pia Hollenbach	Half day seminar – sharing field work experience
11 th Feb 2015	Visit a model tea factory		Tea processing
12 th Feb 2015	Travel to Colombo and depart		