



Global Study Program

Collaborative Learning Abroad

2014

Tourism in Local Planning and Development

Chiba University

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Tourism & Development



"For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing."

Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics (II.1103a33). c.325 BC.

Learning is a process. CIRE's Global Study Programs are short-term intensive and collaborative study programs that bring Chiba University students together with students from our sister universities abroad to study and come up with solutions about certain issues related to life in the contemporary world.

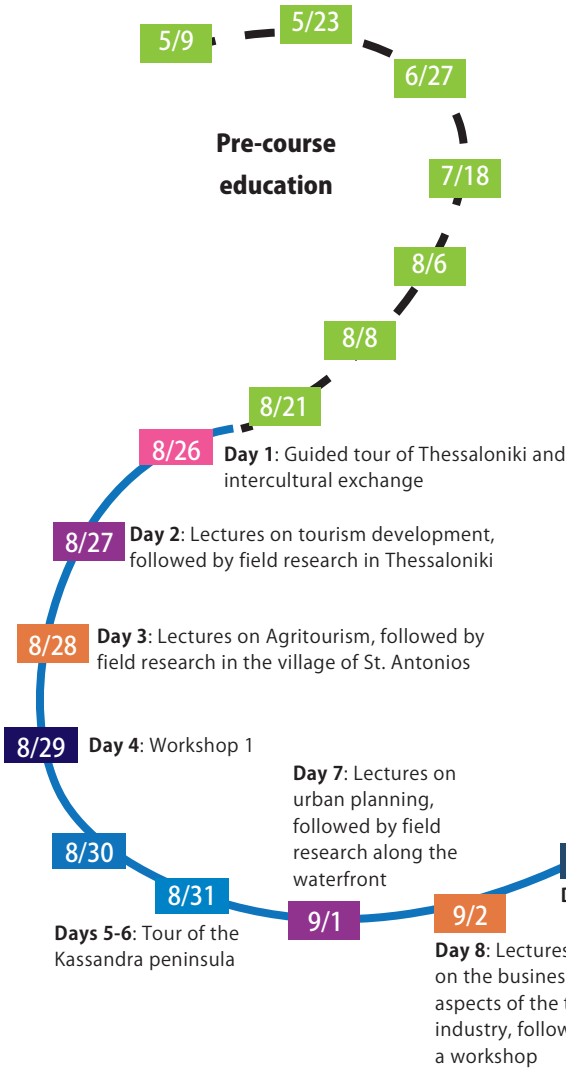
Global Study Program 3 was hosted this year by the School of Spatial Planning and Development, at the Faculty of Engineering of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece). The topic was Tourism in Local Planning and Development. The objective was to use the city of Thessaloniki and its periphery as a case-study for 13 Chiba University students and 14 Aristotle University students to collaboratively learn and think about the variety of issues that arise from, and possible solutions to the impact of tourism on urban and agricultural communities.

The program took almost a year to set up and included two preliminary visits of Thessaloniki by Chiba University staff, in order to establish a partnership with Aristotle University and to discuss the concept and format of GSP with the local coordinator. Subsequently, the schedule, content of lectures and activities, outcomes, administrative tasks and other logistical aspects of the program were decided upon discussion and collaboration between the two universities. A blog (authchiba2014.wordpress.com) was also set up to share photos, videos and short

descriptions of our activities with other students, staff, and the general public.

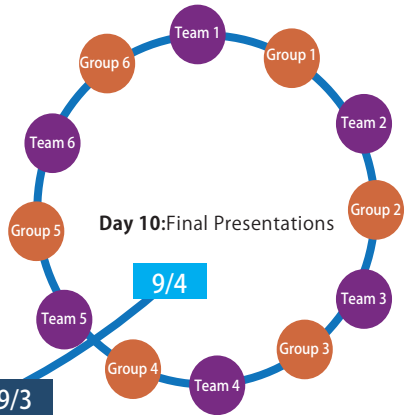
The main program was framed in the following way: in order to start thinking about tourism in local development planning, the students first walked through the city of Thessaloniki and produced a map of how they thought tourists saw the city. They then had to listen and learn to interpret the opinion of the locals, taking as a case-study the village of St. Antonios, which is considered to be hosting a successful example of a tourism business that contributes to the local economy. The following week, they had to experience the urban setting again, and consider how it can be improved in order to make the life of both locals and tourists more convenient. Finally, students had to think of the future, and put the knowledge and experience acquired during their fieldwork into practice, by producing a business plan for an imaginary tourist venture.

In the last day of the program, groups of students presented their findings along two vectors (represented in orange and purple color on the next page) : 1) suggestions for improving the walkability of the city of Thessaloniki, and particularly of its waterfront; and 2) a business plan that would increase the financial benefits of the Women's Agricultural Cooperative of St Antonios. Employing a technique of mixing students, which made sure that every student had worked on both vectors and had collaborated with a maximum number of other students, the program can be said to have been successful in transcending socio-cultural backgrounds and in leading to a really collaborative product.



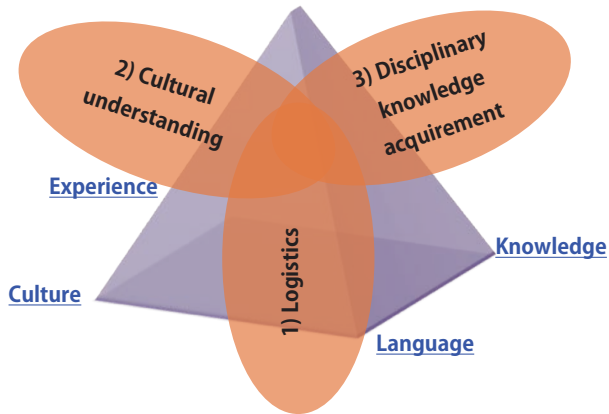
Participants

Keita	Avgerinos
Kazuki	Thanos
Hanako	Alexandra
Akane	Despina
Risa	Dimitris K.
Rika	George
Munetoshi	Dimitris T.
Mina	Yannis T.
Akiyoshi	Elizabeth
Emi	Ioanna
Joka	Yannis A.
Shunsuke	Fillipos
Ohra	Konstantina
	Elli



- Teams presented on Urban planning
- Groups presented on Agritourism

Collaborativity



Pre-course education was held over seven class meetings and was composed of three main parts framed around the four basic targets of study abroad, enhanced by a “third dimension,” that of collaborativity. The first part addressed logistical matters (explanations of the program, buying of airplane tickets and other necessary preparations, and a thorough seminar on

crisis-management). The next two parts, cultural understanding and disciplinary knowledge acquirement, respectively aimed at refining students’ critical perspective both of their own culture and of the other party’s culture, and of ensuring that they come in contact with foundational concepts and terms used by the disciplinary content of the course.





Before going to Thessaloniki, we split into four groups and prepared group presentations on topics related to contemporary Japan: 'vending machines and local communities', 'cameras and the Japanese', 'masked heroes and social capital' and 'chiiku (educational) snack'. These topics were based on the four most popular videos that are listed up on YouTube using 'Japan' (in Greek) as a search keyword. Through our presentations, we expressed our desire to overcome stereotypes about our country, while also offering new ways of looking at Japanese contemporary culture. (Ohra)

We tried discussion training in one of the pre-course education classes. We had to use English and speak one after another, while avoiding silent intervals. The purpose of the training was to become more familiar with fast talking and discussion. It was not usual for us, so we had a hard time. I tried to say just something or other though it might be wrong. After that, I knew the important thing was showing positive attitude around me. (Risa)



Before leaving Japan, AUTH lecturers had sent us academic papers to read in advance of our arrival on the topic of tourism in local planning and development. Although, at first we were not familiar with the issues faced by Greece in regards to tourism, we collaborated on making keyword lists and summaries of each paper, and by doing that work we acquired some basic knowledge on the topic, and started thinking of possible solutions to the problems at hand. (Mina & Hanako)

To further prepare for the discussions and presentations at Aristotle University, we searched for information on case-studies from Chiba prefecture and Chiba city in the following six fields: Urban Planning, Agritourism, Public Transport, Port-development, Trade, and Tourism industry. We were divided into six groups and each group discovered many devices that are in application in Chiba, and which may help us solve some problems in Thessaloniki. Moreover, we could understand more about our own city through this process. (Emi & Akane)



In Greece, we stayed at the University's hostel, which was located on the waterfront. Every morning we had a great view of the Aegean Sea. The building was old, so sometimes the power went off and we fixed it in cooperation with other international students. The temperature was about the same as Japan, but the sunlight was so strong that it was hard to go out between 1 and 5p.m. The local lifestyle was also different to ours; for example lunch starts at 1 or 2 p.m, and dinner starts at 9 p.m., and students were sometimes a bit lax with time. But we got used to it. In the supermarket, it was hard for us to buy foods because every explanation was written in Greek. But actually it was fun. We enjoyed shopping since there are a lot of foods and goods which we don't know. The local food was served in large portions, and was cheap and delicious. I personally like Gyros, a Greek kebab with fried potatoes, and frappé, a coffee beverage with frothy layer on it. In Thessaloniki, it was rare to see Asians, let alone Japanese, so sometimes we felt people's looks. The students in AUTH were very kind. Some students know Japanese culture very well, especially anime, and some even learned Japanese by watching anime. The companionship of Greek students was so excellent that we had a good time throughout the program even on the weekend, when we visited the summer camp of Kalandra with them. (Keita & Hanako)



Our first fieldwork exercise was to make an image map of Thessaloniki. The map needed to reflect how both Japanese and Greek students look at the city, so in-group interactions were a very important part of the task. We saw, for example, lots of graffiti throughout the streets, just next to historical buildings of Thessaloniki. This surprised us, but also allowed us to view the way people experience their cities from a new angle. Listening to the local students' explanations about the Christian heritage of Thessaloniki, and about the atmosphere of each district was also very interesting. And, for Greek students too, this task was an opportunity to see their city from a different perspective. (Akiyoshi & Mina)

Learning and assessing a sustainable urban mobility plan was one of the main points of this exercise. Students working in groups were assigned a walking area, for instance, Thessaloniki's famous waterfront. Then, using checklists provided by the lecturers, each group rated the walkability of their area. Groups tended to be satisfied with the seafront area as it is wide and comfortable enough to walk, while most groups identified the lack of parking space and the ensuing random parking of cars on pedestrian pathways as a serious problem of Thessaloniki's streets. (Kazuki & Akane)



After listening to a lecture on agritourism, we visited a Women's Agricultural Cooperative (WAC) located in the village of St. Antonios, in the outskirts of Thessaloniki. Each of the Japanese students was paired with a Greek student, and every team conducted a street-survey using a questionnaire provided by the lecturer. Most of the women in the village could only speak Greek, so Japanese students had to fully collaborate with the Greek students to do the interviews. After the survey, we discovered some of the issues that St Antonios' WAC is facing today. (Shunsuke)



Based on an analysis of the street-survey, each team came up with a business plan that could help the WAC develop its activities. One of the teams created Mrs.Pie, which is a mascot-character based on the local pie, *perek*, made by the WAC. The idea was inspired by Chiba-kun, the mascot character of Chiba prefecture. Considering that this kind of advertisement is new in Greece, our team thought that Mrs. Pie would help attracting attention to the WAC's products. For devising the business plan, students also made a market analysis and identified a target clientele. (Rika)





On August 30, we stayed at the camp of Aristotle University in Kalandra. It has a very beautiful beach. We swam in the sea and after dinner we went to a local festival, where we watched traditional dances from various regions of Greece. After that, we went to the beach and watched the beautiful stars and the moon. Some students waited until the sunrise. (Emi)





For the final day, groups and teams from the four activities got together to combine their findings into a final presentation. The four activities were aimed to look at space, listen to the people, experience the environment, and produce a business plan for the future. Each group was to find links between the activities, summarize them and establish a connection with the next group's presentation. This process required a lot of interaction between the different groups and it pushed students to actively communicate with each other. One group found out through the survey held in a local village that the activities of the Women's Cooperative were not able to keep the young population within the village. So, after an analysis of the current market, the group came up with a business plan which may help solve the problem. The plan was to build and run a hotel that serves local food. There were three basic targets; the local youth, for whom the hotel would provide a place to work and an incentive to stay in the village, the tourists drawn by the agro-tourist character of the village, and hopefully investors who might take interest in the business once it takes off. Also, the hotel could function as a means of creating connections with the local suppliers, contributing thus to the economic activities of the area. (Munetoshi)

Afterthoughts

The idea of a mascot character like Chiba-kun is familiar to me but not to a Greek student. I found out that things I consider ordinary are not ordinary to others. (Rika)

I realized that just being able to convey my idea was not enough. When it comes to a discussion, I have to convey my thoughts in a persuasive manner. (Keita)

In an exchange of opinions, differences of nationality and language do not matter. It's the interaction of two persons that only matters. (Ohra)

Spending time in Greece with all the members of this program was a great experience. I hope someday we can enjoy Greek meals again. (Shunsuke)

It was a great opportunity to learn both about local tourism and about student life in Greece as we had a lot of opportunities to interact with Greek students. (Kazuki)

Even though I felt that I needed more English language skills, I could enjoy the program because all students of Aristotle University were really kind to me. This was a great experience! (Akane)

Participating in this program broadened my mind. I had several opportunities to better myself, including an unforgettable experience. (Hanako)

It was great to not be treated as a fresher despite me being the only first-year student of the program. And I was moved by the Greek members' *omotenashi*. I think this program was really worthwhile. (Risa)

Learning about Greek customs and talking with Greek students over dinner were the highlights of my experience. Living briefly in a different world provided me also the chance to look at Japan from a different perspective. (Mina)

At first I was afraid of speaking in English. But because my group members helped me, I could participate in the discussions. It was a very good experience for me. (Emi)

There were many differences in thoughts and ideas, even within Chiba University students, but it is through working with all these different people that new ideas were born. (Munetoshi)

This program was an unforgettable and stimulating experience. I realized the importance of expressing my thoughts clearly and listen to my interlocutors. (Akiyoshi)

It was a precious experience for me to meet all those who participated in this program and to learn from them the importance of conveying my opinion with firmness. (Joka)

A long time ago Aristotle wrote "the antidote for fifty enemies is one friend." Thus making so many remarkable friends, I don't have to worry about enemies. (Avgerinos)

I realized that the combination of different scientific fields is very important as it can give a new perspective on an engineering problem like the walkability of a street. (Konstantina)

I feel that the whole process wasn't just a sterile learning of new skills. It was a wonderful experience that led to wonderful friendship ties, overcoming any linguistic and cultural difference. (Thanos)

Language and cultural barriers are not important in communication. What matters is the passion for conveying a message between equally motivated to communicate persons. (Dimitris T.)

