

# THE PROS AND CONS OF AGRO-ECO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL PROVINCES OF THAILAND.

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## Abstract

The National Tourism Authority of Thailand positions the country as a serene and peaceful destination that is ideal for leisure visits and offers quality, world-class attractions and hospitality services. Tourism is recognized as one of the most dynamic devices in the country's economic development and has become the highest foreign currency earner compared with other industrial sectors. Although landscape design and planning play an important role in tourism development, the need remains to stress the qualities of the destination by studying the carrying capacity and assigning land use that preserves ecosystems and cultural landscapes, both tangible and intangible, throughout the development. This study focuses on the case of agro-eco tourism destinations. The discussion in this paper includes the pros and cons of recent developments in three rural provinces of Thailand.

**Keywords:** Sustainable development; Cultural landscape; Rural; Tourism; Agro-tourism; Eco-tourism; Landscape architecture.

## Introduction: Rural Cultural Landscapes as an Important Resource of Agro-Eco Tourism in Thailand.

Thailand positions itself as a serene and peaceful country that is ideal for leisure visits and offers quality, world-class attractions and award-winning services, presenting an image that is different from other countries in the region. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) targets five markets: 1) beaches and islands; 2) national parks and forests; 3) culture and history; 4) thirteen niche market products, including MICE<sup>1</sup>, cruises, honeymoons, and shopping; and 5) man-made attractions. The most popular tourist destinations in Thailand include urban and rural landscapes. Thailand has a long history with a rich culture that existed continuously without colonization for more than 800 years. Therefore, its unique cultural landscape plays an important role among its urban and rural tourism attractions. However, although a rather small number of academic tourism publications have used the term “**cultural landscape**” and discussed its importance, there are destinations where the key attraction is neither nature nor culture separately but rather a modified rural landscape that includes the people and their lifestyles as a single integrated entity.<sup>2</sup> In a study by Buckley, Ollenburg, and Zhong, the term was used to describe the iconic marketing image and core tourism experience in the Mongolian region. Similar to other regions in developing countries, there are also links between tourism and agriculture in both expansion and diversification of agricultural production. Unfortunately, at the same time, tourism development harms local agricultural production in some cases by attracting land and labor away from the agrarian sector.<sup>3</sup>

Many definitions of agro-tourism have been proposed. For example, the business of agro-tourism is viewed as a form of alternative tourism that is individualized, as opposed to mass conventional tourism, and that emerges along the intersection between culture and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Agro-tourism combines agricultural production and tourism services that encourage short- and long-term visitors to farming and rural areas for purposes of enjoyment, education, and/or active involvement in the activities of agricultural production and farm life. Agro-tourism also fosters a demand-supply relationship between urban and rural areas and offers varieties of nature and the integration of local products, cultural attributes, and rusticity into tourism.<sup>5</sup> Although the programs suggested in Thailand's tourist guide include visits to tangible cultural landscapes such as important temples, palaces, and monuments, and those emphasized by individual “alternative” journeys to visit living cultures,<sup>6</sup> the intangible rural landscapes and rural life associated with agriculture become attractive

values or products of so-called “**agro-tourism and eco-tourism.**” The author found, particularly in the three cases of the rural provinces of Thailand, that agro-tourism and eco-tourism have become similar types of tourism attractions that represent an integration of “**development**” and “**conservation**” of rural cultural landscapes in interesting ways.

Recently, the transitions between rural and urban landscapes in the tourism context have tended to merge together positively and depend on one another. The development of agro-tourism enterprises in peri-urban areas also offers a means to promote integrated urban and rural development, improve the quality of agricultural products and services, and widen economic, environmental and social benefits.<sup>7</sup> However, Yang, Cai, and Sliuzas also concluded that the local demand for agro-tourism in less developed countries is generally lower than in developed countries. The author argued them<sup>8</sup> that this is not always true but that in developing country such as Thailand, agro-tourism is well developed and has become a major contribution to alternative tourism in the country. There have been the significant shifts from an agricultural base country to a more industrialized country, which is apparent in how the rural landscape has transformed into an urban landscape and, at the same time, how urban development conserves the ecological values of rural landscapes through the application of urban agriculture concepts to the urban landscape. Meanwhile, with urbanization and the decline of the agricultural sector, many farms have had to find new ways to survive, and one solution is to host tourists on family properties. In addition, countries with cultural diversity and a lively rural society can attract tourists who are interested in culture and natural heritage.<sup>9, 10, 11</sup>

This study focuses on the cases of agricultural and ecological based tourism destinations in rural provinces of Thailand. Included are three home-stay destinations in Surin under the theme (“Elephant Village”), Samut Songkram (“living with water”), and Prachinburi (“sustainable agriculture”). The status of tourism development and the pros and cons of recent agro-eco tourism will be discussed in this paper. Examples of the success and/or failure of tourism development will be reviewed and elaborated from the perspectives of both conservation and development.

### **Tourism Development Policies: Situation, Trends, and Key Actors.**

Tourism is Thailand’s largest export industry, having contributed approximately 15% of total exports with more than ten million visitors annually. On the national level, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports established in 2002. The ministry’s mission is to promote, support and develop tourism, sports, education and recreation-related industries and other activities prescribed by law. The agency is authorized to establish relevant sections under Article 15 of the Act on Organization of Ministries, Sub-Ministries and Departments B.E. 2545<sup>12</sup>, including the Office of the Minister, the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the Office of Sport and Recreation Development, and the Department of Tourism.<sup>13</sup> The main purpose of the Department of Tourism is to be responsible for tourism in Thailand, especially the development of tourism sites, the tourism industry, and overseeing the standards for domestic guides, by aiming to sustainably benefit the Thai economy, society, and culture. Prior to the Act, these duties had been the responsibility of the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Furthermore, the promotion of the film industry under the Office of Public Relations Plan and Policy Development, Public Relations Department, had been transferred to the Department of Tourism<sup>14</sup>. The aforementioned national independent agency, TAT, was established on March 18, 1960, and still remains today. TAT was the first organization in Thailand to be specifically responsible for the promotion of tourism and has established 15 additional offices in different parts of the world<sup>15</sup>. As an agency closely tied to the Thai bureaucracy, TAT is also a statutory authority that mediates between government policies and the tourism industry<sup>16</sup>. Meanwhile, since the establishment of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, many agencies have been listed as tourism networks in the following three sub-categories :

- 1) Government agencies
  - Tourist Police Division
- 2) Agency-independent public organizations
  - Organization Management Areas for Sustainable Tourism
  - Tourism Council of Thailand
  - Thai Tourism Research
- 3) International agencies
  - World Tourism Organization (WTO)

Not only TAT and the national public agencies are involved in tourism, but as Simpson<sup>17</sup> described their roles, tourism stakeholders include industry, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in managing tourism in its many forms. Elliott<sup>18</sup> saw the political environment and external and internal environmental powers of tourism in Thailand as a result of the stability and continuity in the political, social, and economic system, which have been responsible for substantial development in the tourism industry. The external environment, especially regional security, has benefited the industry, and the internal environment, such as geographic location and climate, is favorable for tourism development.

Among the most influential actors in agro-eco tourism development are not only local and foreign NGOs, but also home-stay host community members in the form of “voluntourism” (Volunteer+Tourism). The fastest growing alternative tourism markets in the world, offering intimate experiences to tourists that arouse a sense of closeness and a story about shared experiences, are a major motivating factor<sup>19</sup>.

Because of the higher income generation, it seems that many governments commonly favor a mass tourism model. However, the Department of Tourism also promotes smaller scale tourism development with more local opportunities, as suggested by Dearden and Harron<sup>20</sup>. The Thai government supports the tourism industry with approximately 3% of the total government budget. Promotional campaigns have been introduced with slogans such as “Visit Thailand Year”, “Amazing Thailand”, “Unseen Thailand”, and “Thailand: the Gateway to Indochina”. However, a more appropriate form of tourism development in the developing world is so-called alternative tourism, in which tourists are often interested in a specific attraction, a particular animal, a mountain, a cultural site, or a people. Thailand has policies that are common in both developing and developed countries, especially in Europe and in particular the development of “**rural tourism**”. Thus, rural tourism is expected to play an important role in the revitalization of rural areas through family enterprises and to add new value of a commercial channel to rural life, local products, and people living in rural areas<sup>21</sup>.

Su<sup>22</sup> categorized six models of “**rural tourism development**”: 1) household-run small business, 2) individual farmstead, 3) farmer family plus farmer family, 4) corporation plus farmers, 5) corporation plus community plus farmers, and 6) government plus corporation plus farmers. These types of tourism development make it easy to understand the diversity of the stakeholders involved in rural tourism, ranging from the individual person/farmer to a few farmers, a farmer community, a farmer corporation, and the government. Rural tourism development in Thailand is mainly organized as type 4) through type 6). In recent studies, tourism is often listed as among the creative industries, and “**creative tourism**” has been developed in many destinations. Therefore, the author identified agro-eco tourism as a type of “creative tourism” according its purpose to be an escape from the serial reproduction of mass cultural tourism, offering more flexible and authentic experiences that can be co-created between host and tourists<sup>23</sup>.

### Targets of Agro-Eco Tourism

Agro- and eco-tourism are considered to be more adventurous than other more comfortable traveling activities. Because of its nature, this type of tourism does not attract many mass tourists but attracts

youth tourists in the age range of 20 to 30, those Cohen<sup>24</sup> defined as “**drifters**”, “**wanderers**”, or “**travelers**”, Cohen also mentioned a process of socio-cultural mediation between natives and tourists that this type of tourism offers to foreigner tourists. These young tourists prefer a place that is “**not too touristic**”. For this reason, the author gathered experiences from landscape architecture field trips with undergraduate students to three home-stay resorts, each of which had few other tourists. Each location could only occupy a maximum of approximately 50 to 80 people a day. The services and facilities were sometimes sub-standard, but they served to be sufficient for daily life at reasonable prices (6-10 USD/person/night including meals). Elderly and disabled persons are still not encouraged to be agro-eco tourists in these destinations.

### **Home-stay: Communities and Their Tangible and Intangible Cultural Landscapes**

Home-stay facilities were described by Liu<sup>25</sup> as depending greatly on the surrounding attractions. If the locations are typically not near a major tourist attraction, they can only target special interest groups or “**niche segments**”. Home-stay visitors are urged to follow the hosts’ way of living and tend to be more culturally aware and sensitive.

The author compared the three Thai cases with a similar Chinese case of “Nong jia le” (Happy Farmer Home). Similar to a B&B<sup>26</sup> this type of home-stay was described as the integration of cultural tourism and rural tourism. Rural tourism, with forms such as folk-customs tourism, rural eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and leisure farm tourism, are locations where people can enjoy an idyllic rural life in a natural setting, with family intimacy, green lifestyles, simplicity, unsophisticated surroundings, a green environment, fresh air, open space, and virgin forest and soil, as opposed to stigmatized areas associated with poverty, ignorance, lack of sanitation, underdevelopment, backwardness, barbarism, and lack of education<sup>27</sup>.

### **Agro-Eco Tourism Destination Cases in Rural Provinces in Thailand**

The cases of agricultural and ecological based types of tourism destinations in rural provinces in Thailand included three home-stay destinations in Surin (“Elephant Village”), Samut Songkram (“living with water”), and Prachinburi (“sustainable agriculture”). All of the destinations were originally proposed for a landscape architecture field trips class and the 2011 IFLA APR Student Charette site. The three cases represented small-scale tourism and the value of local communities and natural environments and showed the problematic issues resulting from the rapid growth of tourism development.

#### **1) Elephant Village Home-stay, Ban Ta Klang, Surin**

Elephant Village is located at Ban Ta Klang, Tambon Kra Pho, Amphoe Tha Tum, approximately 58 km. from Surin. Local villagers raise and train elephants. However, unlike in the northern part of Thailand, where elephants are trained to work, the elephants here are trained to perform in the annual Surin Elephant Round-up and stay with the villagers as a type of household pet. Ban Ta Klang is situated in a beautiful rural landscape with a white, sandy beach where the two main rivers of northeastern Thailand, the Moon and Chee rivers, meet. Elephant Village offers tourists a home-stay program in which they can enjoy a daily elephant training show during October through November, ride elephants to their daily baths in the rivers, and experience the villagers’ life and culture. Activities include the traditional welcome ceremony, elephants’ master spirit worship, and local home-style I-san (northeastern Thai) meals. The orientation and arrangement of each house in the village is based on the original locations of the villagers. Each house stands on columns with a large multipurpose space on the ground floor and bedrooms on the second floor; a detached toilet and the elephant house are located near the owner’s house.



**Fig. 1 – Traditional welcome ceremony performed by the village leader**



**Fig. 2 – An evening talk with the host family in the multipurpose space under the house.**



**Fig. 3 – The detached elephants' area and the house**





**Fig. 4 – Elephant riding and bathing**

## **2) Living with Water, Plai Poong Pang, Ampawa, Samutsongkram**

The winner of the Tourist's Choice Award 1999, community-based eco-tourism at Plai Pong Pang is located in the Plai Pong Pang Sub-District in Samut Songkhram, the smallest province in Thailand, one and a half hours southwest of Bangkok. Samut Songkhram is located at the mouth of Mae Klong River, which flows to the Gulf of Thailand. The province has the smallest area in the country but has a long history and a diversity of cultural and natural habitats. The site has a strong image of the vernacular landscape of central Thailand, with fruit orchards, a mangrove forest, and fishing villages. There are several Thai-style gabled-roof house clusters in the vicinity. Some of these houses are located next to a small canal or in the middle of a coconut orchard in fishing villages near the mangrove area. The houses provide home-stay services for tourists. Traveling along the canals to observe the local lifestyle of the Thai people and to the nearby floating markets and fishing villages can usually be arranged. The most popular activity at night is the firefly watching boat cruises along the river and canals. Local people are aware that fireflies are the ecological indicator of a clean river.



**Fig. 5 – Floating market and boat trips**



**Fig. 6 – Traditional Thai houses along the river**



**Fig. 7 – Thai-style house in the orchards**



**Fig. 8 – Giving food to Buddhist monks: the morning activity**





**Fig. 9 – Mangrove reforestation activity**

### **3) Tab Lan Sustainable Agriculture Home-stay Village, Prachinburi**

The Tab Lan Sustainable Agriculture Home-stay Village is located in the World Heritage Sites of Khao Yai and Tab Lan National Park, Tambon Bu Pram, Na Dee District, Prachin Buri Province. Tab Lan National Park is the second largest national park in Thailand, and there are many attractions in the area, including several beautiful waterfalls, Pa Lan (Fan Palm Grove), spectacular view points, local OTOP<sup>28</sup> souvenir shops, restaurants, coffee houses, fruit orchards and mushroom farms. The meals cooked by the host families are local recipes using agricultural products and plants from the farms, and many products, including drinks, soaps, and other bathroom accessories, are made from herbs in traditional ways.



**Fig. 10 – Welcome drink and snack made of flowers and domestic plants**



**Fig. 11 – Local guide explaining about the fan palm reforestation nursery**





**Fig. 12 – Houses on the farm**



**Fig. 13 – OTOP products made of fan palm leaves**

### **The PROs of Agro-Eco Tourism in the Context of a Rural Cultural Landscape.**

**Humble economic benefit:** Tourism is usually considered to be a rather “clean” industry. At the same time, tourism services are labor-intensive, and expansion will improve income distribution, especially regarding “pro-poor” policies, which contribute a large share of economic growth to the total GDP of a country. It is important to note that the Thai economy depends heavily on the performance of its tourism industry<sup>29</sup>, and in fact, tourism does not contaminate the environment as much as other industries with the same contribution. This is especially the case with agro-eco tourism because this type of development begins with community volunteers, and therefore the incomes gained from the services are directed to the first-hand service providers from facilities shared by the host families and the communities. Simpson<sup>30</sup> emphasized that benefits from community-based tourism can be transferred to the community on which it depends for management and operation. Simpson classified tourism benefits into four broad categories: 1) economic, 2) environmental, 3) socio-cultural, and 4) building skills and influence. He cited Kontogeogopoulos<sup>31</sup> and provided an example of Thailand’s oldest ecotourism company, Sea Canoe, that not only pays a high salary to its staff, but the business also contributes to the communities in Phuket and neighboring provinces through spending by owners of escort boats and transport vans, food purchases, and payments to local outlets.

**Ecological economy social life:** Social life is not a single benefit, although it blends the ecological value of eco-tourism with economic value and offers an improved social life to the stakeholders of an agricultural related business. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a massive popular movement of “consumption of rural areas”<sup>32</sup>. Since then, the rural landscape has developed rapidly, associated with rising living standards and vehicle ownership. Furthermore, Middleton<sup>33</sup> cited Newby<sup>34</sup> regarding “agribusiness”, a term that is similar to agro-tourism, in which business owners regard the landscape as a factor of production and a source of profit.

This benefit came from the balancing of the environment and economic development for a better quality of life. As Torres<sup>35</sup> also mentioned regarding the benefit of tourism development, especially in the agricultural sector in the case of Mexico, how converting farmers and rural inhabitants into economic stakeholders and beneficiaries of tourism represents an important opportunity to improve the social status with a better quality of life. Iorio and Corsale<sup>36</sup> again concluded that family enterprises gain the benefit of agro-tourism from farm gross income, generation of cash flow and the creation of employment opportunities for family members.

**Creative economy:** The new movement of a creative economy also includes tourism development; the concept focuses on the value-added of the products and services using creativity instead of high investment. In the positive aspects of “creative tourism”<sup>37</sup>, there are clear common elements. These elements include participative, authentic experiences that allow tourists to develop their creative potential and skills through contact with local people and their culture, the so-called “active form of consumption”, with an emphasis on “living” or “intangible” culture rather than static, tangible cultural heritage. A living culture would rather depend on its uniqueness, represented by the old communities with more intangible values such as those in Thailand (e.g., elephant master spiritual worship, traditional food and herbal drinks). The other local wisdom, such as “how to” live with water in the Thai way of life, the ecosystem of human life and other elements are parts of the unlimited resources available to agro-eco tourism development.

### **The CONs of Agro-Eco Tourism in the Context of a Rural Cultural Landscape.**

**Fragmented support:** The tourism industry in Thailand is split into many factions, especially between luxurious offerings and other, less expensive and informal groups, as described by Elliott<sup>38</sup>. This condition indicates a crucial weakness of agro-eco tourism resulting from too many authorities. TAT, which has a strong financial status, pays more attention to mass tourism with its high standards and expectations, which agro-eco tourism is unable to achieve. Meanwhile, the Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports actually supports agro-eco tourism but only through policies that are not overcome by budget constraints. Local agro-eco tourism service providers have to stand on their own or initiate their own non-governmental networks.

There are still a number of weaknesses of agro-tourism and other rural tourism related to the organizational framework of involved agencies and actors, especially in its lack of professionalism and innovation. The low entry barriers to agro-tourism also might attract people with no relevant training or education who cannot speak a foreign language. Furthermore, misunderstanding of marketing and demand have led to the demolition of traditional houses and farms and their replacement with modern structures intended to serve the expectation of large numbers of foreigners. Moreover, local enterprises may have weaknesses in coordinating with other stakeholders and the government<sup>39</sup>. Iorio and Corsale also mentioned the lack of adequate capacity and understanding of the tourism culture by the villagers involved in rural tourism. These problems can be resolved by metropolitan enterprises, with their marketing powers, management expertise, and client base and the incubation of a professional culture among villagers to manage a tourism venture.

**Economic impacts:** The economic impact from agro-eco tourism seems to be lower than from mass tourism. However, in the community’s micro economy, the same pattern that occurred on a larger

scale, as Wattanakuljarus and Coxhead<sup>40</sup> noted, problems occur when overall tourism is too large in relation to GDP and overall employment. These conditions cause economy-wide impacts because of the complexity of interdependent sectors and markets, which is difficult to predict and to plan for. However, these impacts can be prevented by a well-conducted assessment and long-term planning with monitoring programs from all involved participants.

**Social impacts:** The side effects of the economic impact on the community level are social impacts in different patterns. The process of socio-cultural mediation between natives and tourists usually results in a communication gap, which can easily lead to misunderstanding, hostility and conflict<sup>41</sup>. In addition to socio-cultural impacts, Zhong et al.<sup>42</sup> cited many research papers in Chinese cases and stated that tourism development may negatively affect the social life and local culture in a destination. These authors provided some examples, such as Guangdong Province and the Jiuzhaigou Scenic Area, in which the socio-cultural environment of a town was significantly altered as a result of tourism development.

Din<sup>43</sup> categorized the social consequences of tourism into two aspects: moral and cultural. Moral aspects refer to values, ethics and religion, and cultural aspects encompass arts and crafts, which is called “manifest material culture”. Din concluded that in Malaysian cases, the moral and religious aspects appear to be more problematic, including drugs and prostitution, especially in encounters between Caucasians and conservative locals.

**Overstressed multifunctional landscapes:** As Vos and Meekes<sup>44</sup> discussed in their research on European cultural landscapes, agro-tourism is a dish on an ‘à la carte’ menu or in a ‘supermarket’ of a multifunctional landscape that recently, because of market demands, has provided a new economic base for society. Under these conditions, urbanized areas with a scarcity of land and extensive multiple interests may become overstressed.

**Lower quality tourism infrastructure and environment:** Because of the natural setting, one major problem of rural tourism is accessibility. However, increasing the number of tourists can stress the carrying capacity of the destinations and cause impacts to the environment. Zhong et al.<sup>45</sup> also explained about tourism impacts on the environment that not only damage or disturb the natural/cultural resources on which development depends but also affect tourists’ experience, as observed in many destinations that have experienced environmental degradation to some extent because of surpassing their carrying capacity.

Forsyth<sup>46</sup> identified how the adoption of tourism impacts the environment, especially tourism in upland forested mountains and cultural landscapes, where hill tribe people have been blamed for deforestation, soil erosion, and damage to watershed properties. In these areas, tourism has been encouraged among hill communities as a way to reduce environmental degradation by resolving the need for exhaustive or overly frequent agricultural cultivation. However, at the same time, the increasing numbers of non-agricultural occupations in tourism development mainly have the costs of direct impacts, visual impacts, pollution, or footpath erosion.

## Conclusions

In this paper, the attempt has been made to understand the nature of agro- and eco-tourism industry in Thailand and to introduce the fundamental tools of cultural landscape management and sustainable practices to compare the three cases in rural provinces in Thailand with others. The plan is to reach a long-term solution and determine the best utilization of tourism resources. In Thailand, landscape architectural design and planning play an important role in tourism development. However, to highlight the need for landscape architecture in tourism development, we need to stress the enhancement of the destinations by studying the carrying capacity and assigning land uses to preserve ecosystems and cultural landscapes and to reduce the impacts to both tangible and intangible

landscapes throughout the development. In summary, the benefits and weaknesses of recent agro-eco tourism development in rural provinces of Thailand are similar to those arguments made by many scholars regarding the three issues of sustainable development: social, environmental, and especially cultural impacts. The PROs of this type of tourism focused on the aspects of 1) humble economic benefit, 2) the ecological economy social life, and 3) the new movement toward a creative economy. The CONs addressed in this paper are 1) fragmented support, 2) economic impacts, 3) social impacts, 4) overstressed multifunctional landscapes, and 5) lower quality tourism infrastructure and environment. The experiences gained from the three cases in Thailand can be examples of the success and/or failure of tourism development in relation with approaches of both conservation and development. These to confirm with the earlier conclusions by the same author; the lessons learned from Pom Mahakan Fort community, Bangkok, Thailand<sup>47, 48</sup>, that the unique landscape of the old communities is the combination of life and culture, which pertains the contexts of tangible and intangible heritage, which need to minimize an alien generic man-made structure and the sign of modern city if parts of our history still remain and the conservation works should include the ‘tangible’ heritage structures of the sites and also the ‘intangible’ living heritage<sup>49</sup> before it becomes too late to be recovered.

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<sup>1</sup> Meetings, Incentive, Conference/Congress, & Exhibition/Event

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THE PROS AND CONS OF  
AGRO-ECO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT  
IN RURAL PROVINCES OF THAILAND

Ariya ARUNINTA

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A. Aruninta 2011

*Contents*

- Introduction : Rural Cultural Landscape as an Important Resource of Agro-Eco Tourism in Thailand
- Tourism Development Policies: Situation, Trends, and Key Actors
- Target of Agro-Eco Tourism
- Home-stay : Communities and Their **Tangible and Intangible** Cultural Landscapes
- Agro-Eco Tourism Destination Cases in Rural Provinces in Thailand
- The PROs and CONs of Agro-Eco Tourism in the Context of a Rural Cultural Landscape
- Conclusions

## Introduction

### Rural Cultural Landscape as an Important Resource of Agro-Eco Tourism in Thailand

- The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) targets five markets:
  1. Beaches and islands;
  2. national parks and forests;
  3. culture and history;
  4. thirteen niche market products, including MICE , cruises, honeymoons, and shopping; and
  5. man-made attractions.



## Tourism Development Policies: Situation, Trends, and Key Actors

- Situations : Tourism is Thailand's largest export industry, having contributed approximately 15% of total exports with more than ten million visitors annually
- Key actors :
  - the Ministry of Tourism and Sports
  - the Tourism Authority of Thailand
  - tourism networks
    - Government agencies, Agency-independent public organizations , International agencies
  - non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
  - Host families/communities



## Target of Agro-Eco Tourism

- “drifters”
- “wanderers”
- “travelers”
- “voyagers”
- “not too touristic”
- “niche segments”
- landscape architecture field trips with undergraduate students
- Each location could only occupy a maximum of approximately 50 to 80 people a day.
- The services and facilities were sometimes sub-standard, but they served to be sufficient for daily life at reasonable prices (6-10 USD/person/night including meals).
- Elderly and disabled persons are still not encouraged to be agro-eco tourists in these destinations.

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## Issues

- The local demand for agro-tourism in less developed countries is generally lower than in developed countries
- The significant shifts from an agricultural base country to a more industrialized country, which is apparent in how the rural landscape has transformed into an urban landscape
- With urbanization and the decline of the agricultural sector, many farms have had to find new ways to survive, and one solution is to host tourists on family properties.
- Countries with cultural diversity and a lively rural society can attract tourists who are interested in culture and natural heritage.

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6

## Home-stay

### Communities and Their Tangible and Intangible Cultural Landscapes

- are locations where people can enjoy an idyllic rural life in a natural setting, with family intimacy, green lifestyles, simplicity, unsophisticated surroundings, a green environment, fresh air, open space, and virgin forest and soil, as opposed to stigmatized areas associated with poverty, ignorance, lack of sanitation, underdevelopment, backwardness, barbarism, and lack of education (Su, 2011)



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## Agro-Eco Tourism Destination Cases in Rural Provinces in Thailand

- Elephant Village Home-stay, Ban Ta Klang, Surin
- Living with Water, Plai Poong Pang, Ampawa, Samutsongkram
- Tab Lan Sustainable Agriculture Home-stay Village, Prachinburi





## 1) Elephant Village Home-stay, Ban Ta Klang, Surin

- Approximately 58 km. from Surin.
- Home-Stay with the villagers and elephants as a type of household pet.
- Situated in a beautiful rural landscape with a white, sandy beach where the two main rivers of northeastern Thailand, the Moon and Chee rivers, meet.
- Offers tourists a home-stay program
  - enjoy a daily elephant training show during October through November,
  - ride elephants to their daily baths in the rivers,
  - experience the villagers' life and culture : the traditional welcome ceremony, elephants' master spirit worship,
  - local home-style I-san (northeastern Thai) meals.

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10



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11



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12





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13



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14

## 2) Living with Water, Plai Poong Pang, Ampawa, Samut Songkhram

- The winner of the Tourist's Choice Award 1999, community-based eco-tourism
- located in the Plai Poong Pang, Samut Songkhram, the smallest province in Thailand, 1.5 hours southwest of Bangkok.
- has a long history and a diversity of cultural and natural habitats.
- Has a strong image of the vernacular landscape of central Thailand, with fruit orchards, a mangrove forest, and fishing villages.
- Thai-style gabled-roof house clusters by small canal or in the middle of a coconut orchard in fishing villages near the mangrove area.
- home-stay services for tourists.
  - canals cruises , floating markets and fishing villages
  - the firefly watching (fireflies are the ecological indicator of a clean river)



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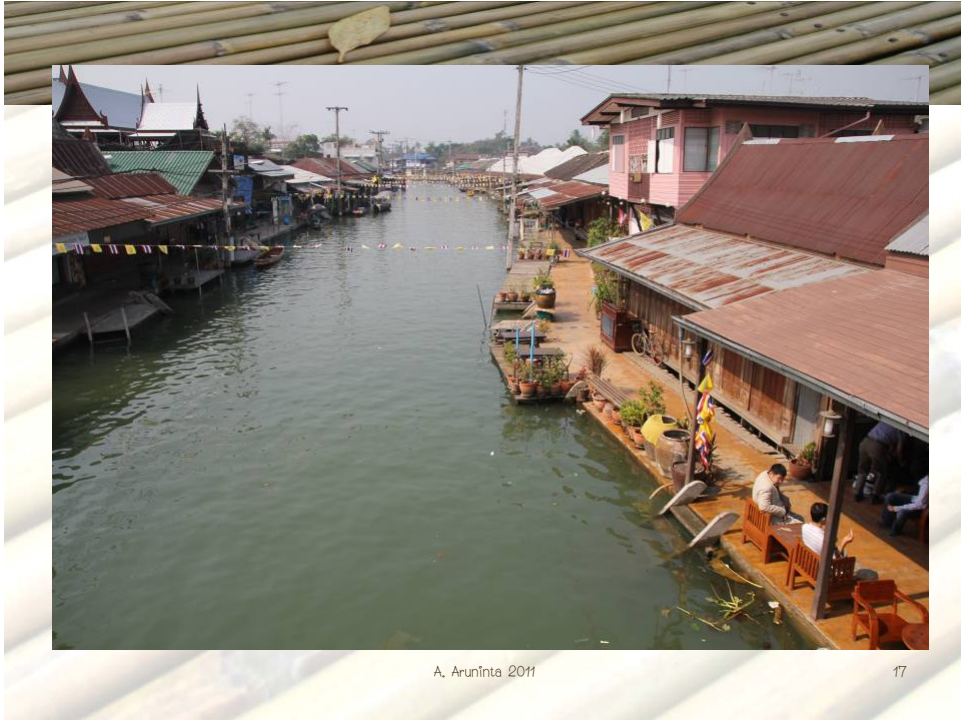
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16





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17



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18







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21



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22

### 3) Tab Lan Sustainable Agriculture Village, Prachinburi

- located in the World Heritage Sites of Khao Yai and Tab Lan National Park, Prachin Buri Province.
- Tab Lan National Park is the second largest national park in Thailand : including several beautiful waterfalls, Pa Lan (Fan Palm Grove), spectacular view points
- local OTOP[1] souvenir shops, restaurants, coffee houses, fruit orchards and mushroom farms.
- The meals cooked by the host families are local recipes using agricultural products and plants from the farms, and many products, including drinks, soaps, and other bathroom accessories, are made from herbs in traditional ways.



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23



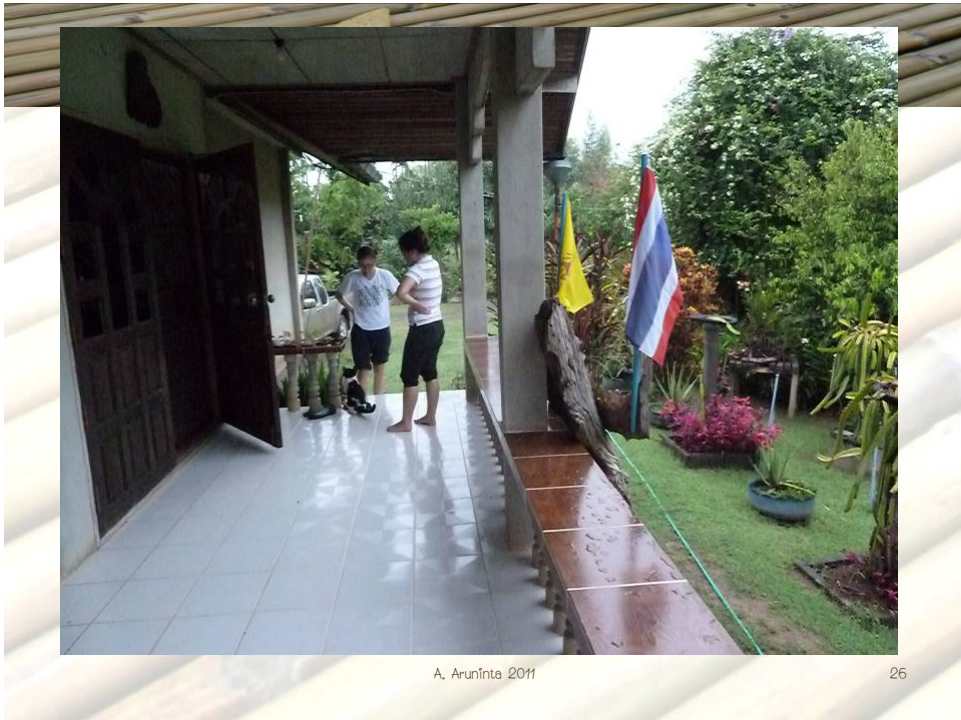
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24





25



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26



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27



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28



### *The PROs of Agro-Eco Tourism in the Context of a Rural Cultural Landscape*

- Humble economic benefit
- Ecological economy social life  
→ “consumption of rural areas”
- Creative economy



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29

### *The CONS of Agro-Eco Tourism in the Context of a Rural Cultural Landscape*

- Fragmented support
- Economic impacts
- Social impacts
- Overstressed multifunctional landscapes
- Lower quality tourism infrastructure and environment



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30



## Conclusions



MPW (Ming Pao Weekly) Magazine –  
Travel issue : Bangkok  
Old Town

- The experiences gained from the three cases in Thailand can be examples of the success and/or failure of tourism development in relation with approaches of both conservation and development. These to confirm with the earlier conclusions by the author;
  - 因此 the unique landscape of the old communities is the combination of life and culture, which pertains the contexts of **tangible and intangible heritage**.
  - Needs to minimize an alien generic man-made structure and the sign of modern city if parts of our history still remain and the conservation works should include the "tangible" heritage structures of the sites and also the "intangible" living heritage<sup>[3]</sup> before it becomes too late to be recovered.

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