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Question Set #1

1. What are your initial impressions of the organization and an overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing; how does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

My first week was spent in the park - doing what the weeklong volunteers pay hundreds of US dollars to do. I have to admit - it was amazing and I would have gladly have paid for the experience. I was surprised how smoothly everything operated despite there being hundreds of uneducated visitors and tourists running around. Definitely a lot less structured than a US nonprofit, but it worked (or appeared to work) just as well.

When I arrived at the airport, completely shocked by my surroundings, the climate, the language, and just being completely overloaded - I was a bit worried. Meeting my supervisor, Patty, along with several younger people (who I later learned were on a scholarship through Elephant Nature Park where they exchange work for tuition) didn't curb my fears at all. She whisked me out of the airport to my apartment without much introduction - I had no idea what was about to occur.

Well, after dumping me at my apartment/guest house, they quickly departed - leaving me to fend for myself. Good, now I could explore and get my bearings. I did this by just walking around and exploring (going to markets, attending a labyboy cabaret show, and taking a Thai cooking class - obviously.) Then Monday, it was off to the park without much explanation. The volunteers around me, who had researched the park experience and knew exactly what they were doing, were much more educated than me for what to expect. I would suggest future interns at least review the Week Long Volunteer at Elephant Nature Park if they want to know what to expect. (For the record: no you don't need to bring bedding. They will give you a few t-shirts. You will get very dirty - in the most fun way possible. They will feed you all week.)

I am dominating the work! Some of it is mundane and trivial (translations, interacting with customers in English, helping with bookings, social media posts) but some of it is very impactful (have already produced several short videos, done voiceover work for an education documentary, and helped to plan new marketing strategies for the foundation/park.)

Is it what I expected? No, it's way better! The previous intern told me she didn't do much other than take pictures and that it felt like a vacation for her. Well...I guess you can work as hard as you want because I've been putting in 10 hour days and working nonstop with the media team - and I love it. I don't imagine this pace can keep up, but I have already voiced my preferences to my supervisor and Lek (the founder) and they have already agreed to send me on other projects at other sites and projects

throughout Thailand and even to Cambodia.

2. What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?

What stood out to me regarding my immediate arrival was the disconnect between myself and Patty (my supervisor) as to how out of my element I was.

I had been traveling for 3 days straight with minimal sleep in a completely new environment with zero Thai communication skills (though, I did by a SIM card at the BKK airport, which proved genius and almost necessary). Whereas for Patty it was just another day, with yet another new intern. I don't need to be babied, but I think the fact that it was my first time in Thailand (or abroad anywhere, ever) it would have been nice to have my hand held a little bit and go a little slower out of the gate.

Chiang Mai was also a lot more busy than I expected (well, more vehicles close to hitting me at least) so getting around during rush hour was a bit more complicated than I expected. Red Trucks and Tuk Tuks seem very safe here in Chiang Mai, but I still prefer to walk absolutely anywhere - and you can (at least within the Old City).

As far as my arrival at work - it was much busier than I expected in the office. I later learned that Monday morning is insanely busy because that is when all of the weeklong volunteers at all of the different projects arrive at the office to depart. It is absolute chaos - but thanks to a retired expat who works in the office named Ally - it is becoming organized chaos.

As far as arrival at my actual apartment - funny experience. I think the family that lives in the lobby hates me for some reason. But that's ok. I wasn't able to sleep the first few nights because of the poor air circulation and heat. There is no air conditioning and the fan doesn't work very well. I'm not a high maintenance person, but this apartment is not very nice by any standards - but it gets the job done. I would suggest buying a drying rack to wash clothes in the sink, a 2nd fan, and a closed garbage to put waste in. (I am still trying to find a garbage - I have spent about 12 hours going to different shops and can't figure out how to buy basic home furnishings.)

3. What was your greatest anxiety prior to departing and how do you feel about that now that you have arrived?

I honestly don't know. I guess just making it here alive was my biggest concern - and that's over so it's been pretty easy since then. Communication is always a concern, but my coworkers enjoy practicing English and I always tell them they can stop talking to me if they get tired.

I try to spend minimal time in my apartment (only to sleep) and spend the rest of my time exploring Chiang Mai and getting a sense of the culture and way of life (which is difficult, because Chiang Mai is touristy and has a lot of travelers.) My advice would be to befriend your Thai coworkers early and go out to lunch with them. I am often the only white person when I do this which is very enjoyable for me - plus the food is always better. The park pays for my food at several places, but they are overpriced and Americanized (overpriced by Thai standards, averaging about \$7/meal whereas the places I go with my

Thai coworkers can get me a more delicious, authentic, spicy, filling meal for about 90 cents.)

I am just rambling at this point - but I already feel acclimated and people have been very kind and accepting. I am still learning how to clean my bottom after I go to the bathroom, but practice makes perfect so I won't stress too much over that for now. Hopefully next time I check in, I can say I am a cleaner, fresher, more efficient human.

Question Set #2

1. How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this align with your professional goals that you set for yourself? What would you like to achieve in the next half of your internship?

I feel very comfortable at work. I don't even think about it at this point - it feels like any other job I've had in my life. The first few weeks I would be so hyper-aware at all times, even when doing something simple such as walking to work. At this point, I am able to daze off and daydream during my morning walk to work. It's a sense of being and feeling comfortable, safe, and accepted.

Professional skills are coming along. I am learning more about the organizational structure of SEF and how it differs from the United States. I also have plans to visit more sites in the coming weeks to see how things differ within different parts of Southeast Asia. My video skills have also never been better, as Ter and Ta have taught me invaluable lessons in cinematography - and we apply these skills several times a week on excursions to remote locations.

I don't know if I explicitly mentioned anything in my goals about wanting to feel accepted - but I do. Everyone at work knows me and when I bump into them outside of work we are able to small talk and recognize each other. I have made really good friends with Ter and Ta - whom I work with in the media office. My goal beyond that would be to mix and mingle with other coworkers more and perhaps see them outside of work. This includes those who cannot speak English whatsoever. I think a co-worker today asked me to go grab a beer sometime and I agreed (I think) so I will update you as to how that interaction, consisting mainly of head nods and gestures, works out.

2. How are things going relative to your personal goals? In which areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand? What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?

One thing I never wanted to do was become complacent. This, for me, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and I don't want to squander any of it. I know it's impossible to always be exploring - I would indeed burn out after three straight months of exploration - but I never allow myself more than a few hours a week of relaxation and bingeing. I can watch silly shows once I get home, but my time here is temporary. I've heard varying opinions on this - but my technique is to see as much as I can and be productive in my off time. If I have free time, I will journal, blog, or write letters to friends and family.

Before I leave, I hope to continue immersing myself into the culture, making friends, and seeing beyond

what most tourists get to see. I feel as though I am already there, but I truly want to see how authentic an experience I can have.

3. How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals? What kinds of experiences have stood out to you so far? What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?

Wow...I have exceeded my expectations here. I recently wrote a blog post (more of a tirade) against "digital nomads" and other westerners who come to places like Chiang Mai and take advantage of the infrastructure for personal gain. For me, it's hard to watch it happen even though I know there are many economic benefits to the community. Also, when talking to local Thai about the issue, they don't seem too annoyed by the Westerners that are so prevalent here in Chiang Mai.

I think it just makes me realize that I myself need to become more tolerant of annoying Westerners - that maybe sometimes they aren't so bad. That's one of the biggest things I need to continue to work on.

As far as Thai culture - I love it and I am learning so much. Even though my meals are paid for when working with SEF, the food is mostly Farang food (westerner) and even after weeks of me telling them to crank up the spice because I was acclimated before I even arrived, they continue to offer me watered-down meals. So, sometimes I sneak away with my Thai co-workers. The food is about 1/10th the price, 5 times as delicious, and 20 times as spicy. Usually these locations are in an alleyway or someone's converted garage. My favorite dish so far is Khao Soi, a noodle dish originating in Burma and popular in Northern Laos and Thailand. In one of these alleyways, we can get Khao Soi for about 25 baht (75 cents) but the Farang places charge up to 90 baht (\$2.75).

Food is the greatest way to acclimate to new people and experiences in Thailand. Last week, I went to visit a remote Karen hill tribe in the northern mountains of Thailand. We were doing some work and filming with the local farmers. We were lucky enough to share a meal and some laughs with the village leader. We were invited back, and absolutely accepted, another visit planned for next week - again over lunch. I was also invited by some of the masseuses at the park to join them for their home cooked meal after I received a traditional Thai massage. This was stuff I would never experience anywhere else, but it was quite an experience. I'm not going to lie - I winced several times at the strong flavors in the soy paste and freshly caught snails and other sea life, but I enjoyed my experience all the same. Even as they laughed at me while I choked on bones and shells.

The key to having these experiences is to just continue to interact with the locals. By traveling in hostels with other westerners, and only seeking out westerner food, and only visiting the top places on TripAdvisor - you never have these types of interactions. I'm grateful I am able to travel the way I am thanks to IE3 and Save Elephant Foundation.

As far as the remainder of my trip - I just want to continue to go with the flow and meet new Thai's who can show me new and wonderful things. I asked one of my coworkers if I can come with him next time he attends temple and he said he would like me to go. That was a huge goal of mine before I came here - to not only attend a wat (Buddhist temple - which I've already been to dozens) but to partake in the

ceremony in a traditional and respectful way. I also am getting nervous about my internship coming to a close and being able to explore and travel outside of the SEF world - there is too much I want to explore and too many cultural experiences I can hope to see. I hope the right one chooses me so I don't have to pick!

*Follow-up email on 7/21/15

I've realized 90% of what I send you is gloating.

Well, I've now experienced a slight negative that I think can be attributed to cultural differences.

In the office, I work about 10 hours per day and am productive and self-directed. This week, I have been shipped out to the park for a documentary assignment (I will be training as a mahout - and we will film the experience.)

I was only given one day's notice of this - which in itself seems like a problem. I have a home in Chiang Mai and sometimes make plans or have appointments. I got lucky this week, as I had no plans, but more warning before being uprooted for a week would be helpful.

Additionally, since arriving to the park, I've spent hours sitting around thinking I am about to do something. Whenever I ask, "What time exactly should I meet you?" I am greeted with a "yes, later."

I know previous interns reported similar things, almost on a daily basis, so I can now empathize with that feeling of being frustrated/underutilized.

Fortunately, this is a very temporary assignment and I just need to somehow let my western mentality of go-go-go and be on hiatus for a few days.

Otherwise, training as a mahout has been an amazing experience. Being up to your elbow inside of a 5-ton animal's mouth isn't something you ever think you're going to be doing. Well...I'm doing it.

Question Set #3

1. Describe a day in your life – what is your work schedule like, what do you do after work, how do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?

I usually wake up about 6:45 am and read international news to get me feeling alive, awake, and alert. The news is usually pointless and depressing - so then I brush my teeth and head to breakfast at the corner cafe near work. I usually order fruit, muesli, and yogurt along with a latte (I'm addicted to caffeine/coffee) while listening to a podcast (This American Life, Fresh Air, or Morning Edition) or reading a book. I like to people watch and take in the morning commute in front of me - tuk tuks, scooters, and songthaew producing tons of smog and uninhabitable air quality.

At 8 am I head across the street to the office to be greeted by some smug remark by Patty (and I return

the favor). I sawadee krap several coworkers before removing my shoes and heading upstairs to hang out with my two best co-worker friends Ter and Ta in the air-conditioned upstairs corner office. The office is filled with tons of hard drives, camcorders, and a drone. Up there we edit film, write scripts, do voiceover work, translations, and upload our work to YouTube. This has been the bulk of my work lately. (Ironically, though, I'm writing this from the park - where I have spent this week. My daily routine is quite different and laid back here.)

I either go to free lunch at one of the 3 comped restaurants (The Corner, Juicy4U, or Taste From Heaven Vegetarian Restaurant) or I skip out and get REAL traditional (and cheap) Thai food with my coworkers. Khao Soi or Pad Ka-Prao is the usual meal, and it costs about 30 baht (less than 1 USD). The meals at the westernized restaurants usually end up costing about 200-300 baht - though SEF pays for them so I guess it's not a big deal. I just prefer the authentic (and spicy) food from the alleys than the food on the hostel streets.

After lunch - it's back to the office. I oftentimes stay as late as six or seven even though I think they are okay with me leaving at five. Several factors make me stay: I like hanging out with the guys, I like air-conditioning (I can't sleep or even hang out in my apartment - much too hot) and I can use the reliable internet to update my blog, fill these reports, and communicate with family without having to buy anything.

I feel like I have walked every square inch of old city Chiang Mai at this point - as I oftentimes leave work and just begin walking with no goal in mind. I only end up eating dinner about 50% of the time - sometimes just opting for a mango avocado smoothie as my dinner (I love food and love eating, but walking everywhere and the heat makes dinner sound unappetizing.) If I do opt for dinner consumption, I prefer to do so at the street stall markets. My two favorite are Southgate and Northgate market.

Southgate has an amazing Turkish cart that makes "Turkish pizza and kebops". I don't really know what that means - but they're delicious. Northgate has a cart that was featured on Anthony Bourdain's Parts Unknown: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjxPMa4tu0c> - where a woman in a cowboy hat combines slow-simmered pork, rice, egg, fermented vegetables, and hot/sweet sauce. It's absolutely wonderful.

Lek, the founder, is a vegetarian due to her love of animals. I could say the same from age 12-18 (oftentimes vegan) but no longer. I would recommend any future interns to weigh their morals vs. their love of food before visiting Chiang Mai. The food is amazingly delicious - more so when filled with meat. I am considering returning to a vegetarian lifestyle for the animals, and for our planet, upon return to the United States - but I wouldn't consider it for a second here. I think a common misconception from people about Buddhism is that the monks' respect of animals translates into vegetarian diets. I have not found this to be the case whatsoever - and when visiting local villages I am often served meals consisting almost entirely of animal products. If vegetarianism is hugely important to you - I would consider India as a travel destination. Not saying it can't be accomplished in northern Thailand - but it's definitely not their priority.

Anyway...after visiting the markets or wandering around the wats (temples) I usually head home as

there is nothing for me in the Thai nightlife (I don't really enjoy partying or drinking). Because I am cheap, I walk everywhere. Even though a red truck (songthaew) can be had for less than one USD (tuk tuks are overpriced and less safe - I never take them). Because of this, I usually arrive back home quite late and read for a while before heading to bed. I am a bad boyfriend/friend/family member - so I seldom call my family back home even though the time to do it would be early morning or late at night.

2. Housing: What is your living situation like? Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead? If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.

My housing was chosen for me by Save Elephant Foundation. They have rented the same guesthouse, which is about a 5 minute walk from the office, for several years. To get to the room, you walk through the owner's living room and go up one flight of stairs. The hallways are open to the elements somewhat and I use a key to enter my room (I also put a padlock on the door for extra security - though I'm never concerned about security.) From what I can tell, the owners of the building resent me. I'm not sure why - but perhaps it is because one time I enquired to them whether or not they received a copy of my passport as they requested (the messenger was to deliver it) and they misinterpreted what I was saying. They thought I said "password" and proceeded to copy down the internet password for me. I told them right away of the confusion and thought it was settled. Internet costs 300 baht extra per month, and I have a sim card, so it is not necessary for me. Once I got a bill for the internet, I told them I do not use it - that they misinterpreted my request. They treated me rather rudely, but then said that it was fine.

I regularly have cockroaches, ants, and geckos in my room but it doesn't really bother me. What bothers me is the heat. Being on the second floor caused my room to be about 100 degrees my first few nights and I was unable to sleep at all. Luckily, things have cooled down now that we have entered the monsoon season - so I am able to sleep, sometimes at night (although I am still unable to be in the room during the day without becoming sick.) I would suggest anyone coming during the hotter seasons to splurge for a guest house with air conditioning if they are high-maintenance or have a wealthy individual funding their trip for them. I would never consider it though because I am far too poor/cheap.

Also, everywhere I go has nice bins for putting toilet tissue into (since you can't flush paper in Thai septic). But no matter how hard I've tried - I couldn't find any store that sells these bins. I have resorted to putting all of my waste into Ziploc baggies - which is completely disgusting and also very complicated. Oh well.

3. Finances: How is your budget working out for you? Are you spending more or less than what you expected? How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc? What would you do differently knowing what you know now?

I am spending far, far less than I expected for most things. I didn't realize SEF would be buying so much food for me - so I expected that to be a much bigger expense. I could easily go the entire internship spending about \$5 USD on food - but I didn't come all this way to be that stingy (almost). So, I would say, I end up spending about 60 baht per day on food (\$2 USD).

Travel is cheap - but can add up. If you figure that going to the store requires two rides (there and back), then the restaurant requires two more - you can end up spending about \$15 USD. This again would assume you don't haggle - which I have never not haggled. I always negotiate the red truck price before I get in - and they usually quote me about 100-150 baht per ride. I then politely laugh, say no no no, and then get it down to about 30-50 baht depending on distance. They definitely will charge you more depending on how new you are (seem) and your proximity to touristy destinations (the bus station, a hostel, the mall, etc.) I took a bus to Pai (a distant city), and it was only about \$6. Non air-conditioned and dirty but filled only with Thais - but I loved it. I took a touristy van on the way back (air conditioned, much faster, internet recommended, all tourists) and found it to be a terrible experience - and it cost over three times as much. So more expensive is not always better.

My recreation doesn't cost much whatsoever because I either go hiking, which is free or visit the different temples which are suggested donations. Whatever you feel like paying - you can. I usually throw in a couple bucks USD equivalent (30-60-90 baht.)

I don't think I would do much differently. I guess I got lucky with the haggling early on and caught on very quickly. I don't feel I ever spent more than I should've during my entire trip except when I took the small van back in Pai and recently at the mall I bought a pair of hiking shoes because the shoes I brought fell apart (Merrell Gore-Tex hiking shoes that cost \$160 in the United States - I paid 3900 baht, so about \$110 which is a heck of a lot for shoes but I was heading to the jungle the next day and didn't have much choice at the store.)

4. Travel and Transportation: How do you typically get around town and to work? Are you satisfied with that choice? Would you recommend other options? Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on time off? How do you manage that? What do you recommend for travel options? Where do you recommend exploring?

I walk everywhere. I probably walk about 5-25 miles per day. I do this because I both enjoy exercise and I am stingy. I am extremely satisfied with my choice - but I would prefer it quite a bit if there wasn't so much pollution. Breathing can become quite a problem if I walk near main roads and I get quite dizzy.

The bus system is pretty great and goes to the main surrounding tourist destinations such as Pai and Chiang Rai. I would suggest it and they're under \$10 USD for a 4-5 hour bus ride. I've gotten to go on many side excursions with co-workers and have never turned down a chance to travel with them. This is always free - and a great way to see the country.

I can't give too many recommendations for people who enjoy hanging out with westerners or partying. But, for introverted people, I would recommend doing the hike from Chiang Mai University to Doi Suthep temple - Northwest of Old City. It takes about 6 or 7 hours round trip but it's pretty great and I've done it several times (there is also Doi Suthep National Park a short red-truck ride from the top of the hike if you want to further explore). Also, Pai was a bit touristy and annoying, but I stayed at a place well outside of the city in the beautiful countryside and enjoyed it immensely. It's a great place to go to get away from the business of Chiang Mai. Also, going to the park is always an option to get away from the city, but of course the park is filled with many volunteers, guests, and visitors so you

will seldom have peace. Every Sunday night is the most gigantic market in all of Chiang Mai (and probably all of Thailand) and that is always fun to take in (overwhelming, yet fun.) There's definitely something for everyone in and around Chiang Mai - you just need to find it.

Question Set #4

1. Professional: How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?

It's funny - because I have been a college student for a decade and have used everything from year 1 to year 10 of my college experience. I began my undergraduate program as a Film student. I learned a lot about framing, cinematography, and script writing before leaving the film program to cycle through 36 other majors before finding my niche in Journalism.

I was told in this internship, I had to be proactive. So, I began telling everyone about my enthusiasm and passion for filmmaking and wanting to make a difference with Save Elephant Foundation's (SEF) media team. My wish was soon granted and I was working full-time with filming, editing, learning special effects, and going to locations to create our amazing videos with the media team. I learned a ton in just a few weeks - and it was unlike any experience I've had with film in the U.S.

Also, when I wasn't filming, I was helping with administrative tasks in the office. In my graduate program (Master of Public Administration) so far, classes such as Public Management and Public Sector Theory have helped me analyze the experience on an organizational and administrative level. Without that academic training - I would be clueless to the deep inner workings of public and nonprofit organizations, the minor tasks and regulations that make everyday function possible (and functional).

Also, SEF is a foundation, which means it relies on funding from donors. My previous internship-for-credit during grad school was with University Development at University of Oregon where we were conducting a \$2 billion fundraising campaign. Working on such a large-scale campaign definitely allows you unique insight into how organizations develop and raise funds - and understanding the financial inner-workings of organizations helps you realize how/why organizations do the things they do.

2. Cross Cultural: Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?

I haven't made any major mistakes (that I'm aware of). I attribute this to being thoughtful and well-read in cultural decency. But, obviously language barriers will always come into play. Simple things, such as ordering food or simple dialogue, can sometimes break down. So if I just want rice, vegetables, and an egg - I say those three words in Thai, get a head nod, and will maybe receive rice and pork. Not the end of the world - but if it happened every day for the rest of my life, would probably begin to frustrate me.

I also try my best to mime things out if there is any confusion - but sometimes that doesn't even work for something simple like, "where is the sink?" Maybe my miming of washing my hands doesn't

resemble how they wash their hands whatsoever.

It also doesn't "help" that Thais are very divided on Thai culture. Not only do young values differ from old values - but there are so many different tribes/people I've lived amongst and some couldn't care less about northern values or western values. So, the ethics, values, and practices are different depending on who you're around and it's just best to follow suit and always be culturally aware.

3. Personal: What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience? What has been the greatest personal challenge? What has been the greatest reward?

I didn't expect to learn anything about myself during this experience - or at least not very much. But, I have learned several things so far:

1. A "nomad" life sounds extremely boring to me.

I think extremely short-term country-hopping travel is irresponsible and disrespectful - but I also don't want to be someone who spends a decade traveling the world. That sounds like everyone's dream - but it's not my dream. I love adventure, but I also enjoy certainty and the freedom that comes with being settled (that sounds oxymoronic - but I think of it like writing/art). Nothing induces less creativity in an artist than a blank canvas with zero input. Paint a picture - make a movie - write a book. About what?! People need foundations to progress - and I enjoy having a foundation.

2. I have an increased respect for my life in the United States of America.

People always told me I would have more respect for my boring domestic life once I traveled extensively abroad. I never believed them - but it's true. Being able to drink the water, not using my own arm as toilet paper, and not having to worry about dying every time I get bit by a mosquito are luxuries I enjoy every day in Oregon. I don't NEED those things, but I will never take them for granted ever again.

At the same time, I have lived in a country where respect for government and the figurehead is widespread - quite the opposite of the US, where any cable news network will be criticizing (sometimes even demonizing) the leader of our country.

There is no standing ovation for President Obama at the bus station, or before a movie at the cinema. I am envious at this "forced patriotism" because I know there was a time where Americans valued the nation's highest cabinet and were willing to show public displays of respect. With the divisiveness in the US- I'm not sure if we will ever see that again.

3. I don't have much in common with young farangs (westerners).

I don't understand young people. I don't understand the use of the words, "like" or "literally". I can't relate to the obsession of getting tattoos, talking about getting tattoos, and planning out the perfect tattoos. I don't understand people traveling indefinitely despite never having a job after having

planned/saved for a decade for this trip.

I enjoy the thought of these people and the amount of change and influence they have on the world. One of them will inevitably be my boss in 15 years - and I mean they will, like, literally be my boss at my employer.

All of this makes me realize I'm not a kid anymore. And that I am lucky to have this experience of international travel, living, and learning before I am officially old. I know I was an annoying brat at 18-20 as well - and that's part of the living/learning experience we are all consciously deciding to partake in with every sip of water, every meal, and every night of sleep we have.

So - for me - the biggest challenge has been truly being alone. I am an introvert who has lived alone many times. Turns down party invitations to read books. I go to films and restaurants alone on a regular basis. But - I have always had options to be social. Here - I am oftentimes secluded from English-speaking peers my age and feel truly alone. I don't love it like I thought I would. Even menial conversations about people bragging about their travels (all travel stories bore the heck out of me) can sometimes become amusing when I haven't had an English conversation in a while. Even writing these answers out in English is comforting in a sort-of-way I can't explain. I think it cheapens my "experience" but is definitely comforting. Akin to binge watching Netflix and eating a pint of Ben & Jerry's back in the states.

The greatest reward is the stories and experiences (cultural and elephant-based.) I don't plan to share them often or thoroughly with many people. I want to hold them close and make them personal. What makes me most excited is to share them with the most special people in my life. Those people aren't born yet - but I can't wait to tell my kids about my experience. Show them pictures, videos, and more about a culture of people who live quite differently than themselves - to help them realize that the world does not (literally) revolve around them or the United States of America - and that all the decisions we make in our life are worldwide decisions that influence the human race - not just our fellow Americans.

Question Set #5

1. Future Paths: Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths? Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) while abroad to learn about the field?

Regardless of all of the passions and dreams I have had during my trip - I still need to finish my second and final year of graduate school. But, academics are something I miss and am truly looking forward to getting back to after this experience. Working with an international nonprofit, and working with amazing wildlife such as elephants, works your brain in a different way than academics - but I prefer to have both experiences.

What this internship has given me is time - time to contemplate my future due to lack of friends, family, and oftentimes fellow English speakers. I drew out a hierarchy for myself - a "personal career ladder" if you will - outlining the possible fields I am qualified to go into and where they can possibly lead.

1. Nonprofit work - this has always been a possibility for my long-term career.
2. B-Corps (Benefit Corporation) - this has become a more & more intriguing model of business for me. Basically, it utilizes capitalism to the maximum ability while maintaining the values of morals of a nonprofit organization. If done correctly, can be quite efficient.
3. Local Government - Being a city administrator, and eventually, a city manager seems like an ideal career for myself. I've always considered myself to be a generalist - and this is a generalists dream. You have to be good at everything, talk to everyone, and be everywhere. I love making positive impacts on my local community - and I can't think of a better way of doing it. (All villages in Thailand have a tribe leaders, many of whom I have talked to, so I guess that was my informal informational interview. I would love to bring a similar style of passion and mindfulness the tribe leaders exhibit back to the United States.)
4. Federal Government - Oh boy. I told myself I would never work for the feds, but if you want to perform public service, where can you make more of an impact? It comes along with a well-earned reputation of being a bureaucratic nightmare - but I think it could pay off big dividends. And, if I don't enjoy it, I can always transfer down to lower-levels of government, as federal skills are applicable at every level of government (it would be a much harder task to go from local -> federal.)

Further goals: I am more certain of my life at age 45 - I plan to open a youth nonprofit camp dedicated to living healthy lifestyles where they would engage in drug and alcohol-free happiness and learn about organic farming, exercise, mindfulness, and other hippy idealism.

I would also use the skills gained in my career to branch into consulting work - that will allow me to be more of my own boss and work the hours I see fit in order to start a nonprofit or spend time with my family.

Backup plan: be a multi-million dollar internet video star (only if I get desperate).

2. Now is the time to begin thinking about how to articulate all your experiences you have been gaining for your next endeavors (job search, graduate school applications, etc). Identify 3-4 accomplishments or successes in your internship of which you are most proud. These can be professional, personal or cross-cultural. Explain them briefly below.

Top Accomplishments:

1. Cultural immersion & surviving: just flying all the way across the globe and discovering/exploring a culture that is new to me, by myself, was an accomplishment. Visiting sites in all regions of Thailand and living/working with the local hill tribes - as well as seeing Cambodia and Angkor Wat - allowed me to experience more culture than most in their entire lifetimes and I will be forever grateful and knowledgeable.
2. Creating engaging YouTube videos that received hundreds of thousands of views.
3. Helping to make SEF a little better than I found it in terms of efficiency, operation models, techniques,

and operating procedures.

3. After identifying 3-4, pick two of these and expand on them with the following:

- Outline the context of the situation
- Describe any challenges you faced
- Describe the actions you took to overcome the challenges

Culture:

- Context: I was born, raised, and educated in the United States of America.

I moved to Thailand for the summer. I've never been abroad, much less to Thailand. This created a cultural learning experience.

- Challenges: Language is the most obvious and glaring challenge. Being uneducated in the populous language where you reside inhibits your ability to communicate, move about, order goods and services, be aware of and complete tasks at work, and other very simple tasks you normally take for granted.

There is also a much lower "standard of living" which isn't necessarily bad, but certainly luxuries you may be used to don't exist, such as flushable toilets, fresh running water, in-home laundry, and many other things.

Another big one for me was cultural norms and manners. I think I struggle with tact in the United States and am often too honest for people's comfort. Going into Thailand, I knew I had to tone this down - because Thailand is even more anti-blunt honesty than the US ("saving face" is considered very important).

There were several situations where people pushed my buttons - not sure if intentionally or if I was misinterpreting - but it was hard to hold my tongue and not become confrontational. I just realized that people are people and no matter which culture you interact with, some people are jerks.

- overcoming actions: for language barriers, visual cues and body language go a long way (so do Google photos and Google translate). It was very seldom to not be able to at least communicate partially what I wanted. I'd say it only happened once - at a fancy coffee shop. I tried to order a coffee, a standard black regular coffee as the west calls it, only to receive a fancy mocha frappe latte.

I blame this on capitalism more so than language, as the shop was ignorant to the idea of a cup of coffee due to the popularity of fancy espresso drinks (Starbucks shirts worn by local Thais is not uncommon). I think I was the first person who ever wanted a boring old plain coffee and it blew their minds.

Overcoming "standard of living" issues was the most fun one for me. Back in the US, I consider myself a minimalist - which is just an elitist way of saying I don't buy hardly anything, shop second hand or make my own goods, try to be able to fit most of my possessions in several duffel bags, and just don't spend much money whatsoever. I also grow my own vegetables and shower MAYBE once a week. (This is

frowned upon in Thailand very much so.)

But, my point is, I don't have a very high standard of living in the US so the transition wasn't very hard. I don't own a dryer at home so there was no change there. I don't have AC at home, again no problem. I do flush toilet paper at home though - that was definitely something I had to get used to. I never got well-versed with the bidet gun regardless of how many times I tried - so I sadly am still reliant on hatcheted trees to clean my bottom. I also hardly ever drive back home, so walking, biking, and using public transportation everywhere was a real treat. All in all, I'm somewhat dreading returning to the convenience in the United States - not so much for my sake, but for the Earth's. Where resources are so much easier to utilize, people take advantage with long, hot showers, aimless driving, and AC blasting. I think if everyone lived in an area with bucket showers, several hours of generator-powered electricity a day, and unaffordable cars - they would take energy less for granted.

Videos:

- Challenges: not many! It's been a few years since I've had any "formal" training so the media guys showed me their standards of operation and we were ready to roll shortly.

- overcoming actions: just watched and learned from Ter, who is a master Elephant viral video maker.

4. Describe the workplace culture at your host organization. How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?

I wish I understood how to answer this better, but I'm just going to talk about how Save Elephant Foundation and Craig Wiroll (me) differ.

Despite considering myself to be carefree and creative at times, I definitely have a strong Type A aspect to my personality. I like to hold people (myself included) accountable and make sure there is an established plan and that everyone is on the same page.

At Save Elephant Foundation, there is seldom a stated goal other than the main big overarching mission statement (which hasn't changed in 20 years).

This results in many different independent pods of people working to accomplish different tasks with very little communication or accountability.

For someone like me, it looks like inefficient chaos. But... I'm an outsider. And this organization is almost as old as I am. It definitely works in the culture it operates, so who am I to say it's wrong? It's not. I can give my input for what I think might help - but at the end of the day, things here are very different than in the United States - and that's OK.

But, that being said, there is a lot I would not use if I ever start my own nonprofit back in the states. Mostly because some of SEF's practices would get me in legal trouble (their financial records wouldn't pass muster/regulation in the US). That's not saying SEF is wrong, I definitely think regulations can go

much too far in the United States in certain instances to the point of inhibiting efficiency with little safety gain.

What I would use from SEF's and Thailand's model is the passion for the mission. Possibly because the lack of regulation, all staff are able to devote themselves to protecting and saving the Asian elephant with all of their effort. I've never seen more genuine people in all my life. They are elephant lovers who happen to get paid for living out their passion, not just idle workers.

This all stems from the top, where Lek works endlessly to save the elephants, improve the communities, help the hill tribe people, save the environment, preserve the forests, grow food sustainably, rescue cats, dogs, monkeys, cows, pigs, buffalo, and more. There is no end to her kindness - literally, as she has opened sites all over Thailand, moved over to Cambodia, and has been developing a project in Myanmar for the last decade - and she has absolutely no plan to slow down.

I learned a lot from her as a leader or an organization and I hope that whatever leadership position I end up holding someday that I can give 1/5th as much passion as she does for Save Elephant Foundation. It seems superhuman and I am lucky to have witnessed it first-hand

5. What words of advice do you have for future interns as they prepare for this internship and living in your host country/culture?

For SEF:

Be yourself.

People at SEF are very genuine and loving - don't waste time being timid or feigning a polite personality (unless you're genuinely super nice) you need to jump in head first and make friends and meet cool people. There's plenty within the organization. By being outgoing, you will get invited to do things only a handful of people in the world have been lucky enough to do - so say, "Yes" to opportunities.

I never thought Lek and myself would wander the jungle together, with her teaching me how to be a mahout with my arm engulfed in an elephant's mouth as I feed it, but that happened.

I never thought I'd be seeing hidden areas in Angkor Wat thanks to some weird guy in the bushes who asked me if I wanted to see something cool - but that happened! (Thanks to SEF for shipping me to Cambodia and for the manager there for driving me to Angkor Wat!)

Your kindness and passion will be noticed and you will be rewarded.

I also guarantee that no matter how well things go, frustration will happen. Most likely you will feel under/uninformed. This happened to me when I learned hours beforehand that I was being shipped in a 15 hour bus four hours before it happened to be in the middle of the jungle for a week.

But, being uninformed and at times underutilized are part of this experience. I guess the biggest learning

experience you will gain from all of that is patience. So, two things will happen: you're an impatient person (like me) and you will gain a personality trait.

Or, you're already patient. Good for you, then this will be no problem for you!

Living in Thailand:

I wouldn't bother being vegetarian, for starters. I mean...you can still carry your passion for animal rights, and all of the restaurants SEF buys food for you at everyday have vegetarian food (as does the park) but part of the Thai culture, especially in Chiang Mai, are meat based foods.

The culture isn't going to change anytime soon, so you might as well partake for the short while you are here, and dine with the local Thai people. Vegetarianism is near and dear to my heart (I became vegan at age 12) but the ability to be vegetarian seems so privileged in a place like this - at least give it a try.

Also, don't be shy about negotiating. Do it day one for practice. Call over a songthaew (red truck) and use your best Thai to ask for a ride. If it's about a mile or two, the price is at most 40 baht.

When they pull up, ask "how much baht?" or in Thai if you're fancy. As a silly-looking westerner, they will probably quote you 150 baht or something. Just politely decline and offer a rebuttal of 40 baht (or lower if you wish). The worst than can happen is they drive away, but they will probably accept your offer or offer a counter. It's not rude to negotiate for things like trucks as westerners often get overcharged - but you can't afford to be overcharged daily for 3-6 months. (Don't barter on things with marked prices, such as things at the mall, unless you want to be laughed at.)

Buy Day 1:

- Toilet paper
- Covered garbage can (for poo)

Those are pretty much the only things I ever bought. I'm a simple guy.

Everything else about Thailand living is pretty easy - unless I'm just jaded from living here.

Take advantage of things that would cost 10x back home (massages, full-service haircuts, smoothies, etc.)

Stray dogs are evil and scary, especially in random alleys at night (sorry, I love dogs, but it's true).

And make sure to get out of the city. Chiang Mai is wonderful for food and culture - but is terrible for peace and tranquility. Get dropped off at the university and hike up Doi Suthep or take a weekend and getaway to a rural guest house to meditate and enjoy the rice fields. It's good for your soul - Thailand is a beautiful and green county.

And, of course, eat all the food.

Question Set #6

1. Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how have your impressions of the host culture changed?

Thailand was what I expected to be in very certain locations - but for the most part, I was entirely off-base with my expectations. What was most unexpected to me was the level of development and sophistication of large urban areas. Chiang Mai was much more developed than I had expected, and Bangkok even more so. I was taken aback by the high-price eateries, skyscrapers, and abundance of fancy European-style coffee shops and boutiques throughout the city - as well as the advanced public transit.

Another aspect to consider beforehand was the people. The reputation for Thailand is the, "land of smiles" and this was definitely drilled into me before I departed. Although I agree that people are friendly in Thailand - I wouldn't have thought they were universally nicer than any other ethnic group. I think to assign a level of friendliness to any specific demographic seems a bit...odd. One thing I would say is that people were extremely tolerant of my "foreignness" and lack of awareness of where I was (can you help me find...), my numerous questions about the culture, and my lack of Thai language skills. Another aspect to consider would be the general attitude and style of living within the culture. Again, these are completely different depending on whether you are in Bangkok or visiting a tiny Karen hill tribe in the mountains of northwest Thailand. I guess the variety within the country in itself was surprising to me. Also, the regional differences, thanks in part to refugees who have chosen not to completely assimilate into classical Thai culture also add variety and expanse to the regional differences. The biggest thing is that my impressions were based off of written opinions, Americanized restaurants, and hearsay and are now based in first-person anecdotal experiences - and personally I can trust nothing more than that. Obviously having a longer experience (I was there 3 months) and traveling to more locals (I failed to visit the southwest islands) would give me a better "big picture" idea of the culture - but my discussions ranging from quality of living, to politics, with the local people helped filled some of the gaps of what I was unable to see for myself.

2. What, if anything, do you wish you had known or prepared before your internship?

I spent hundreds of hours meticulously preparing for my internship. I would change nothing.