

## SEEF Report

This past reading week I had the privilege of being selected along with 30 other students and a few alumni to take part in the Hot Cities of the World Tour that is run out of the Desautels Faculty of Management. The purpose of the tour was to expose us to some of the emerging markets that exist today. In the past, the tour has visited countries such as India, South Africa, Columbia, Chile and for this edition of the tour we visited Hong Kong, Philippines and the island of Palawan in the Philippines.

Our trip was a hectic, eventful 10-day blitz in which we travelled for over 90 hours when you count the travelling we did by air, ground and boat, attended 19 meetings, and probably got 4 hours of sleep a night on average. Despite being a tiring experience, it was one that taught me a lot. While my background is in Nutrition, I find myself drawn more towards the policy and management side of the field where I would be able to use my knowledge in a more innovative and applicable way to bring about social change. As a result, being surrounded by students and professionals who were already exposed to these positions was a great way to immerse myself in the business culture.

We spent two days in Hong Kong where we met with various corporations and learned about how relationships between China and Hong Kong have evolved over time as well as why the Asian business market is the place to be for many different industries. We landed at 6 a.m. and had to be ready to head out for meetings before we left the airport. On the bright side, it led to some amusement as we got to see the bewildered faces of people walking into the bathroom to find 15 men changing into their suits.



Preppy bathroom selfies



Before we got to the serious meetings, we were fortunate enough to get a tour of the business district with a history professor who taught at the University of Hong Kong. The tour was an enriching experience as we got to see the history of Hong Kong which was evident in the merging of their local culture with western influences such as the prominent colonial architecture. It was also interesting to learn that Hong Kong was in fact 40% country parks and nature reserves with less than 25% of the land being developed. This makes for some excellent parks and a huge hiking culture. During our stay in Hong Kong we got to attend an Alumni event which was a great networking opportunity. It also allowed us the chance to experience one of the most densely populated nightlife district that I've seen with an extraordinary amount of people out and about regardless of the time of day. Before we left we also met with the main editor of the Wall Street Journal China which was an exciting

opportunity to  
the war on media

A fellow Canadian in the  
middle of HK

discuss the current state of affairs and  
that is taking place globally. After our

short stay in Hong Kong we were off to Manila where we ended up spending the bulk of our trip. We met a number of CEOs of companies including Microsoft, Ogilvy and Mather as well as the board of directors of Philippines Airlines.



Meeting the former president

It was in Manila that we had two extremely impressive meetings, one with the chairman of the Ayala Group, Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala, as well as the former president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, or as the locals referred to her, G.M.A. The most striking aspect of both these encounters was how normal both these highly respected and successful individuals were which definitely made me reconsider my outlook on how I perceive highly successful individuals. It showed me that I do not necessarily have to sacrifice who I am as a person to achieve success in whatever my chosen field may be.

The most interesting and enjoyable meeting we had however was with the Jollibee Foods Corporation where we were treated to an enormous lunch buffet and had the opportunity to eat the various foods that the company was famous for among its Filipino fan base. This was in addition to a wonderful dance performance by their mascot and while I was unfortunately unable to record any of it, it will forever be etched into my memories. Apart from the fun and games it was exciting to get an insight into the marketing aspect of the food industry in addition to how important building a brand can be. After all the hectic days, full of meetings and networking events, we ended our trip with a one-and-a-half-day stay on the island of Palawan which was one of the most beautiful places I have ever been to. It was a nice respite from our crazy days during this trip.



The power of conservation

Throughout the trip, we were exposed to a very luxurious and inaccurate representation of what life in these countries probably is, which only strengthened my resolve to try and disrupt the way business and enterprise is currently carried out in the various industries. With so much focus placed on making as much money as possible, it is easy to envision that there are many people that fall through the cracks. This was especially evident in the Philippines here the mean salary in Manila is 3 times that of the next biggest city and over 10 times that of the poorest. This income disparity is a common theme that is emerging in various countries, and demonstrated the importance of good policy making that attempts to allow everyone in a nation to live a life with at least their most basic human needs provided for them. It was additionally interesting to witness the dynamic in a country like the Philippines where they have a nationalist at the head of their country in the form of Rodrigo Duterte. While his practices seem barbaric to us in the Western world, it was incredible to witness the amount of support he garnered from his country's populace. This was a scary parallel to what we are currently seeing in the United States where despite all his faults, we still see the tremendous support that exists for Donald Trump. These social factors also increased my belief in the important role that scientists and other academics must play in national policy for social good. I believe that it is up to us as the next generation of professionals, especially when coming from such recognized institutes such as McGill, to lead the change we want to see.

Overall this trip was one filled with great education, networking opportunities as well as a chance to get a glimpse into cultures on the other side of the world. It was definitely an experience that I will remember for years to come. However, such a trip has significant costs associated with it and if it were not for the generous contributions of the donors

who make the Student Experience Enhancement Fund possible, I would not have been able to take part in this incredible trip.