

## From the Alps to a Northeast Asian Borderland

From September 6th to 9th this year, the XIth Border Regions in Transition (BRIT) conference was held at the University of Geneva, Switzerland and the University Joseph Fourier in Grenoble, France. It was my first participation at the BRIT conference and (after such an exciting journey) surely will be the first of many. As a political theorist by training, I found myself excitingly informed by phenomena of other borderlands in the world. Working mainly on the Thai-Burmese border zones since 1999, I found myself being “taught” by many presenters I listened to. And I liked what I learnt a great deal. Having once commuted between my university in Bangkok and the Thai-Burmese border zones almost every week to teach in a “refugee camp” for three straight years, I found myself absorbing knowledge of lives in other border zones: be they Vietnamese, Central Asian, European, and American among others.

From this trip, I also learnt that the BRIT conference had become a major venue for border specialists to exchange their views on exciting, and at times, challenging border issues in many parts of the world. Those engagements range from rigorous theoretical multilogue, policy debates, to advocacy concerns. Such enriching ethos had been colorfully strengthened at the BRIT XI. I have a feeling that the BRIT XII will be energized even further when it will take place in Fukuoka, Japan and Pusan, South Korea next year – more issues of Asian borderlands will be on the global map of interests and concerns. As the only so-called “Southeast Asianist” to attend the BRIT XI conference, I could not help but hoped that the future BRIT conferences will involve more researchers from the region. It took my fellow “Northeast Asianists” at the Slavic Research Center (SRC) of Hokkaido University to make sure that at least a researcher from “Southeast Asia” would be present at the BRIT conference in Switzerland and France. I have felt so grateful for the very memorable journey.

Decha Tangseefa (Thammasat University, Thailand)

