



The Effect of Thailand's Subcultures on Other Southeast Asia States' Countercultures

Dr. Eswaranathan Ehambaranathan

IPU, New Zealand

Abstract

Southeast Asia (SEA) is geographically divided into two sub-regions, mainland and insular. This region consists of 11 states that consistently oppose social liberal changes and hold traditional values. Conservatism in politics, economy and social, including laws, is always favoured in this region. However, the recent development in Thailand could test the conservatism believes and practices in this region. In 2022, Thailand decriminalised the cultivation and consummation of cannabis. These new laws allow people in Thailand to consume marijuana edibles, marijuana-infused drinks and use marijuana for medical purposes. This is not the first time Thailand has been liberalising its laws. For example, unlike other SEA countries, Thailand does not regulate clothing in private; therefore, there has been a significant increase in the number of clothing-optional resorts in Thailand over recent years. Such activities have now been part of Thailand's subculture but remain taboo in other SEA states. Hence, this research has investigated the impact on the SEA sub-regions. Therefore, this research addresses the primary research question: Could Thailand's recent cultural and legal changes influence other SEA states? Due to the infancy of this research, qualitative and digital ethnography research method was chosen. The content analysis was adopted from the secondary government published data through eliciting themes. The findings revealed that digital connectivity and people mobility would encourage the people in this region to understand, respect or even practice Thailand's subculture. The mainland states may tend to accept and observe Thailand's subculture in their states. However, the insular states will not accept such subcultures and will always consider such activities as countercultures.

Keywords: ASEAN, conservatism, insular, liberalism, mainland