On the 7th of April 2010, I attended an event organised by Syinc and co-organised by TEDxSingapore entitled Think and Drink. It was held in Hackerspace in Bussorah street, which was really a small little area in Bugis for aspiring technopreneurs to meet and innovate.

The event consisted of 3 Ashoka fellows coming over to share their experiences in shaping their community. One of them was Preeyanan Loresermvattana from Thailand, the organiser of the country’s first cross-sector network of medical malpractice victims, doctors, lawyers and consumer activists activists into a collective force that is having a measurable impact on public health policy, the judicial system, public opinion, and the standards of the country’s healthcare institutions and medical profession.

Another one of the speakers was Joyce Djaelani Gordon from Indonesia. Joyce is changing the way Indonesia sees and responds to drug abuse and addiction. She learned that in Indonesia drug abuse was more effectively addressed in the context of families and communities, and has created the first integrated and holistic recovery programme that includes aftercare to help young drug users, and involves their families in prevention, public education, and rehabilitation efforts.

Finally, there was Padmanabha Rao from India. Rama Rao and Padmanabha Rao, directors of RIVER, have developed a learner-guided method to teaching that not only increases learning but also re-engages teachers in their responsibility as educators. They have created an innovative, cost-effective, and proven methodology that results in higher levels of student learning, increased teacher ownership and greater school accountability.

Here’s a photo I took during the session when Chris Cusano was introducing the speakers. He’s the director of Ashoka’s Entrepreneur to Entrepreneur programme in Asia, and is currently based in Thailand.

So from left to right, Chris Cusano, Preeyanan Loresermvattana, Joyce Djaelani Gordon and Padmanabha Rao.
The speakers provided a lot of heart-moving stories, and personally, I found Preeyanan’s story of her 19 year battle against legal issues to find justice for her son’s disability due to medical malpractice very moving. The other 2 speakers provided vital lessons as well, and I noticed a very common similarity amongst their movements is that there is often an element of rebellion and struggle involved in the early stages, but eventually, things started to get better because they persevered. Many of their beneficiaries returned as volunteers as well. It was Preeyanan’s story that was the most inspiring, in my opinion, because her heroic struggle eventually captured the attention of the public and the government. However, all 3 of them are world-changing social entrepreneurs, and we can learn a lot from them.

I went for this event for 2 main reasons. I wanted to explore the world of social entrepreneurship and the moving stories of courageous social entrepreneurs. I also love TED talks, and it caught my attention because it was co-organised by TEDxSingapore. While it lacked the grandness of a traditional TED talk, the spirit of the speakers and the applause from the audience were no doubt reminiscent of TED culture.

I also took the opportunity to do networking. I spoke with the founder of TEDxSingapore, the founders of Syinc, and many other positive and energetic people who were in Hackerspace that night. Stories were shared, ideas were propagated, and friendships were forged. I left Hackerspace happy and energized, all set to fight a valiant battle for my exams!