

**EE551:***Selected Topics in International Economics I*

**EE561:***Selected Topics in Development Economics I*

**Trip Essay**

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**July 8**

On this day, I arrived Don Muang airport at 6.30. Despite the first date of the trip, I need to regulation for my next semester in BE portal website. We were flying a domestic flight to Nakorn Phanom airport. Then, we were using the vans to Mukdahan province which is the border between Thailand and Laos. We were also using Second Friendship bridge crossing the Mekong river which is the natural border between Thailand and Laos. The border town of Laos is Savannakhet or Savan town. This is my second time in Laos but the first time in Savannakhet. In my opinion, the town is so similar to Thailand in the past 20 years. The commodities mostly direct from Thailand and China. However, the obvious different thing is the driving lane which opposite to Thailand. The first destination after we arrived in Laos was Savan-SENO Special economic zone which is the first SEZ of Laos since 2003. It's more interesting to know that ,nowadays, Laos have 10 SEZs. Moreover, the Savan-SENO is located along East-West corridor which is a new opportunity for investor. The obvious change is the Japanese firm moved from Laem Chabang, Thailand to this SEZ. I like the idea of one stop service center in SEZ which making the operation licencing, business-tax registration, import-export permit, and the other government regulation or permit could occurred in the SEZ. The second destination was Royal Thai Consulate General in Savannakhet which support Thai investor and other international relation between Thailand and Laos. We went to the market before the dinner. The market was so similar to Thai market, and Lao people could speak Thai fluently. In the night, we stayed in Savan resort which was also the casino. The interesting point is Lao people are not allowed to gambling. The government allowed only foreigner which making the influx of the money from gambling.

## **July 9**

After we were going out from Savannakhet, we were heading to east. Along the way, I saw a lot of new houses and local people. The road seem new and some part of the road had the extension plan. We were stopped at the gas station which was similar to the old gas station in Thailand. We were using only 3 hours from Savan which is border town between Thailand and Laos to Lao Bao, the border between Laos and Vietnam. Thanks for the new road. The interesting point is the Laos departure immigration gate and Vietnam arrival immigration gate were on the same building which could make the less time. If we are Thai, it was every easy to crossing the border within ASEAN. However, if we weren't such as American people, they need to using visa or visa on arrival. We changed from Thai van into Lao bus. The interesting point is the car for each county could only crossing within the second country along the border but couldn't crossing to the third country. We met with Khun Phuba who is our Vietnamese guide. He mentioned a lot in Vietnamese War. After that, we heading to Vinh Thach tunnel which was the tunnel during Vietnam War. In the night, we stayed in Dong ha city where we had a chance to play sea water and the beach.

## **July 10**

After we left the hotel, we were heading to CP Vietnam Hue branch which is shrimp farm. There were a lot of data that the speaker provided. There were also some amount of interesting points such as CP invested in Vietnam for 25 years, shrimp indoor farming is larger than Thailand etc. Moreover, the shrimp product from CP Vietnam were mostly export to Japan which were 30 percents of total export, and also, European countries. After the meeting, the speaker led us to see the production line which mostly made by human. The shrimp production using more in human labor where Vietnamese labor cost 300 USD per month. I like the way that CP engage local people, training them and using CSR and ESR strategy such as take care the labours' family to making the sustainability in the local area. It's more interesting that in the CP introduction footage, there were

the footage of Vietnamese labor sing their national anthem. After we visited CP Vietnam, we ever heading to Hue where is the ancient capital city of Vietnam. There are also the imperial palace of Vietnamese emperor which is very huge and beautiful. In my opinion, the art of Vietnamese was very similar to China. Moreover, Hue is not only the ancient town, but there're also business area in the town such as banks and malls. Moreover, there are some skyscraper and a lot of bars which could support the tourism business.

### **July 11**

In this day, we were leaving Hue, and heading to Da Nang. Previously, the plan was heading to the Vietnamese economic university which was no contact from them. In this town, I saw a lot of Bubble tea cafe. I went to House of Cha which is Vietnamese brand selling Taiwanese tea. It was seem obvious that Vietnamese people like to drink a sweet tea because I ordered 50 percent sugar but it tasted like 2 times sugar in Thailand. Moreover, most of new cafe have a huge space and a lot of table which I saw that there were some teenagers using this space as co-working space. Later, we visited Vincome Plaza in Da Nang. In the entrance, there was the exhibition booth of Vinfast which is the Vietnamese automotive brand under Vingroup which also the owner of VIncom and Vinmart. It's interesting that the Vinfast car was cost only 500,000 baht, but it hard to say that it's cheap because of the unknown quality. There were also Bata shop which is Thai shoes brand in the mall. After that, we checked in the hotel and went to local market. There were a lot of dry seafood and clothes there. The interesting point of the local market is there was no any price label in the market. It seem that you need to bargain for every trading. Moreover, it likely possible to be charged high cost because of the foreigner customer who couldn't speaker Vietnamese.

## **July 12**

After we were sightseeing at the temple in the morning, we were going to Big C shopping center and also local products such as Betagen, Dutchmill, Tipco etc. and also local products such as Vinamilk. There were also KFC near by. It's very interesting that the one of the most famous menu in KFC Vietnam is Zaab Thai chicken which taste like Wing Zaab in Thailand. Later, we visited SCG Vietnam Da Nang branch. It felt funny that the speaker was our faculty alumni and he asked us to sing the faculty song or Oob. After that, he was providing the Vietnamese market data and also their local brand of cement. It's very interesting that SCG Vietnam who is the one of oligopoly in Thai market using local marketing strategy in Vietnam. According to the infographic, SCG do a lot of local research such as position of the brand, local competitor, quality, culture. Moreover, they also using Thai brand advantage to boost their brand because of the positive perception of Thai brand due to Vietnamese customer. I liked the way of speaker provided us the applied economic data such as the different in demand and supply of cement market for each region in Vietnam; High supply and low demand in the north due to the abundant resource, and low supply and high demand due to the economy city such as Ho Chi Minh city and Da Nang city. In the evening, we arrived at Hoi An city which is the world heritage town. It's very beautiful old city. However, everything seem suitable for tourism such as the high cost of commodities comparing which the other city.

## **July 13**

For this day, we spend all times in Sunworld, Ba Na hill which is the largest theme park in Vietnam. However, the strong sunlight and overcrowding of tourists both Vietnamese and foreigner causing the bad environment in the theme park. The cutting-line culture could see everywhere in this theme park. I couldn't say that it was causing from Chinese tourist or Korean tourist or the other nationality, because of the similar of asian face and language. I was not play so much. Mostly

I spent times with my camera and my friend. However, it's very impressive that the overcrowding tourists could also causing the high influx of capital and money in Vietnam. I could agree that Vietnam tourism sector is growing rapidly and there were many interesting place, especially Ba Na hill. The cable car could making the good attraction for tourists which I think this is one of the good investment that Thai investor could invest either domestically or internationally.

### **July 14**

The last day of the trip. I visited Highland coffee beside the hotel. It's very interesting that despite the good decoration, the price was still low. Of course, the coffee was too sweet even though I ordered sweetness black coffee. The airport is very clean and modern but it's very small. It's very interesting that there're both Korean duty-free and Japanese duty-free in the same building. Moreover, the costs of duty-free product were not too expensive. However, there were small amounts of goods in shelve. I also noticed that there are the another flights from Da Nang to Bangkok such as Bangkok Airways and Thai Vietjet Air which I could say that there're some amount of demand for this route. In the last minute of trip in Vietnam I thought that the rapid growth of Vietnam could causing the totally change in the few decade. So, I could say that I want to go back to Vietnam as either traveling or investment destination.

### **What surprises/impresses you most during the trip?**

The SCG local strategy which it seem successful

### **How do you see East-West economic route (R9-from Mukdaharn to Laos to Danang) as connectivity in the region? (more potential? problems? or any issues? border crossing?)**

It's very useful as transportation and logistic within the region. But in CP Vietnam case. This route is not using because of Thailand and Laos are not the destination of export. So, I could say that the advantage is useful only in this region. But it could possible if we built the good road from

Ayeyawady in Myanmar which is also the pier to Indian Ocean and connect to Da Nang in South China sea. So it could increasing the advantage of East-West economic route.

**How do you see Laos and Vietnam in the next 5-10 years?**

I expect that both country could developing their country and upgrade the ASEAN. Moreover, the globalisation also causing the ability to access to technology. I could say that in the next 5-10 years, both countries could raise their standard of living for their people.

**Can you imagine yourself working/living in Laos and/or Vietnam? Why/Why not?**

Yes, especially in Vietnam, because of the opportunity in Vietnam seem as the attraction for me. Moreover, the lifestyle and food is not different much from Thailand.

**Feedback for the trip**

Thank for this trip, I love it