

Huyen T. Le -- Graduate Institute of Development and International Studies

EDUCATION

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

May 2014

- BA in Government and Economics
- Wesleyan Freeman Asian Scholarship: Full merit-based scholarship, awarded to one student from each of 11 countries

Middlebury College, Vermont, VT

Summer 2011

- Highly selective 7-week summer intensive French language program

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & ACTIVITIES

Research Assistant, *Professor. Richard Grossman – Economics Department*,

Wesleyan University

Fall 2012-present

- Developed and analyzed the largest database available on London Stock Exchange Market from 1829 to 1929.

Collaborator, *Vietnam's Association for Protection of Children's Rights*, Hanoi,

Vietnam

Fall 2010-present

- Researched on child protection programs that led to the establishment of a self-help and mutual aid network in 6 provinces
- Evaluated the impact of sex education on teenagers that enabled a series of training program at middle schools and community centers in Hanoi and Ben Tre Province

Research Intern, *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)*, Phil., PA Summer 2012

- Worked on *Think Tanks in Southeast Asia (SEA) project*, responsibilities included:
 - Designed surveys sent to 149 think tanks. Interviewed 10 think tanks' executive
 - Identified mismanagement of human resources at these institutions.
 - Recommended training programs and leveraging benefit packages for researchers with PhDs
 - Presented findings to senior fellows at the FPRI. Wrote reports to US ambassadors in SEA
- Wrote a comparative report on infrastructure development agendas among the G-20 countries. Found the gap in budget projections of private sector's share in investment.

Co-Chair, *Vietnamese Student Association*, Wesleyan University Fall 2010 – Present

- Raised funds to support reconstructive facial surgery to children in Vietnam
- Organized 200+-attendee film-screening events, invited directors and scholars to discuss Vietnam's contemporary issues

Member, *Freeman Asian Scholars Association (FASA)*, Wesleyan Univ. *Fall 2010 – Present*

- Raised \$40,000 with a team of 32 members for FASA scholarship to sponsor international students to attend Wesleyan

Event Specialist, *Instructional Media Service*, Wesleyan University *Winter 2010 – Spring 2012*

- Assisted faculty with technical issues, organized and assisted with students' events, specializing in video recording and web-casting

President, *Green Bees Junior Reporter Club*, *Radio the Voice of Vietnam*, Hanoi, Vietnam *Spring 2003 – Fall 2009*

- Designed broadcasting program and managed a 30-person team
- Assisted 45 street children and children whose parents were serving prison sentence with access to education
- Educated them about children's rights and established a supporting network of over 60 volunteers

Assistant, *Journalistic Skills Training Program – VOV and PLAN Vietnam*, Vietnam *Spring 2007 – Fall 2008*

- Redesigned training materials to help over 60 children from rural areas to create radio programs and use recording equipments
- Served as the liaison between the children groups and project managers
- Educated the children about child abuse and human trafficking

Radio show host, *Children Connect Program*, *Radio the Voice of Vietnam (VOV)*, Hanoi, Vietnam *Spring 2003-Winter 2009*

- Presented the news on the national broadcasting channel air twice a week
- Led over 20 live broadcasts on children's right, educational reform, and fund-raising campaigns

News Anchor, *Youth News Daily – Vietnam National Channel 1*, Hanoi, Vietnam *Spring 2007-Fall 2008*

- Anchored *Youth News Daily* twice a week
- Conducted interviews with government officials, United Nations Representatives, and people from diverse backgrounds
- Edited news stories under strict time constraints for live broadcasts

SKILLS & INTERESTS

- **Languages:** Native Vietnamese, fluent English, proficient French, and elementary Chinese
- **Computer Skills:** Proficient in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Final Cut Pro, Eviews, Stata
- **Travel:** Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Japan, U.S

SUMMER PROGRAM

1. Provide a brief overview of the organization for which you will intern or program/project you are developing.

The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) is an institution of research and higher education dedicated to the study of world affairs. IHEID is famous for its interdisciplinary programs on international and development issues that offers independent and rigorous analysis of global issues, especially those of the least developed countries. Thanks to its advantageous location in Geneva, the Institute engages with the local community of diplomatic missions, multinational enterprises, and international organizations to provide researchers and students unique opportunities for global discussion, real-world experience, experience with transnational corporations, and a chance to contribute to development. Out of all the applicants, I was the only undergraduate chosen to participate in the Junior Research Fellow at the IHEID, which is specifically designed for PhD candidates and Fulbright nominees to further advance their research interests. I will be working at the Department of Development Studies on the “Large-scale Land Acquisition in Southeast Asia” project. It is the collaboration between the IHEID, International Land Coalition, the United Nation Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and the Governments of Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China. The project *“centers on the socio-political, economic, and environment challenges characterizing transnational land acquisitions. It was prompted by the recent spike in documented cross-border land acquisition in Southeast Asia and the lack of knowledge about the circumstances in which these land deals take place – in terms of processes and contexts – and their impact on local population (IHEID 2013).”*

2. Briefly provide details of the internship or experience, including responsibilities and tasks.

The “Large-scale Land acquisition in Southeast Asia” project is conducted in three phases: Preliminary Work (I), Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis (II), and Policy Recommendation (III). The senior researchers have finished the first phase, which consists of fieldwork, data collection, and setting up collaboration between the project team and local authorities. Thanks to my quantitative skills obtained through my coursework at Wesleyan (Empirical Methods for Political Science, Quantitative Methods in Economics, and Introduction to Statistical Consulting), I have been assigned to work on phase II, in which my primary responsibility will be to conduct statistical analysis on factors determining the negotiation and implementation of land acquisition, and impacts of land deals on local populations.

Since the lack of empirical analysis has long formed a barrier to progress in this specific field, my work will provide researchers an in-depth understanding of land acquisition at a micro level. Depending on the quality of data collected, there is a possibility that I may go on a fieldtrip with Professor Gironde to Cambodia and Vietnam to interview government officials and people in the local community, as I

am proficient in both Vietnamese and French. My time at the department office will also involve conducting literature review and analyzing Human Rights factors in the decision-making process involves international participants. This task will allow me to make use of my coursework in International Law and of my theoretical foundation acquired through training in both Economics and Government majors. Moreover, I will collaborate with researchers in Geneva and Southeast Asia to prepare materials for policy dialogues between international agencies and local authorities in order to mitigate possible negative impacts on the livelihood and socio-economic conditions. I will also write memoranda for the weekly meetings at the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to ensure effective communication between the research team at the IHEID and its partners. As a junior research fellow, I am required to schedule meetings with my direct supervisor, Professor Gironde, and a professor of my choice at the institute to discuss my career goal and receive academic guidance. This will be a great opportunity to learn about the field of development from the world-class experts and getting insights as well as support for my application for graduate school.

3. How have you communicated with the employer and determined mutual interest?

I have been in regular correspondence with Prof. Gironde since March 2012. I first contacted him after reading his articles for my research paper in International Law class. After quite a number of emails discussing his works, I became impressed by his extensive knowledge and experience working on economic development in developing countries. I expressed my interest in international development and pursuing a career in public policy, and explained how they dovetailed with his area of expertise. I wrote him a letter detailing my coursework at Wesleyan, previous internship experience, language proficiency, and quantitative skills. He then encouraged me to apply for the Junior Research Fellowship at the IHEID. I feel honored to be accepted as the only undergraduate students in such a competitive program for PhD candidates. After considering my research interests and skill set, he asked me to work with the Land Acquisition Project, of which he is the director. I emailed to confirm my participation in the project and to explain what I want to achieve through this research opportunity. Professor Gironde and I also discussed my tasks and responsibilities to help me understand the actual work as a researcher in International Development. The research experience is tailored to benefit the project and to help me get to the forefront of the field as well as to network with the professors at the Institute and other international organizations in Geneva. Since November 2012, he has provided monthly updates on the project and instructions to help me familiarize myself with the literature and quantitative techniques so that I will be well equipped and prepared upon my arrival in Geneva. Ms. Eliane Minassian – Programme Officer – has processed my paper work and assisted me with finding housing, visa application, library access, and other logistics.

4. How will this experience enhance or broaden your career goals?

My decision to pursue a career in public policy is deeply influenced by my childhood in Vietnam. My neighborhood was a place of hustle and bustle, where the struggle of development was not a thing on reports and journals, but an alive metamorphosis that I witnessed day to day. My childhood coincided with the very vulnerable moment of a transitional period – skyscrapers present side by side with slumps, Western goods in place of Soviet Union appliances, motorcycles instead of bicycles, and then cars flooding the streets. Many things looked better, yet many things seemed wrong. Poverty and corruption remain prevalent while the expanding earning gaps is creating inequality and a chasm between social classes. Vietnam was happy and thrilled to welcome these positive changes yet not well equipped to handle the transformation and commotion no one quite comprehends. I was excited to be part of this irresistible change – to do my little part to help mitigate potential negative impacts of development on people around me.

Early on, I have made a long-term commitment to promoting Children’s Rights since I believe investing in children is the best way to eradicate perpetual poverty. I worked with Radio the Voice of Vietnam to support street children whose parents were serving prison sentence to have access to education and equip them with essential skills to cope with potential danger they might have encountered in their working environment. I also acted as a liaison between UNICEF and PLAN Vietnam to build toilets for children in mountainous areas and design training program on sex education. My time working with children and disadvantaged people provided me with invaluable understanding of development and the reality that I would not be able to witness otherwise. Moreover, travelling extensively across the country, I had the opportunity to listen to people’s opinion of what was making real difference in their lives and how resources can be allocated to meet their needs. In retrospect, at that time I had not had the necessary intellectual maturity or the vocabulary to spell out “perpetual poverty” or what exactly it was that made all these necessities and dreams sounded so impossible to them. Yet if there was one thing that I was sure of, it was my desire to do “something” to help people like the little kids working on the streets I’d met to have better and equal access to the benefits of development.

Then I came to Wesleyan. The academic experience here has translated my dream to make a change in my home country into knowledge and actions. Majoring in Economics and Government, I am accumulating a solid understanding of economic development from an interdisciplinary perspective. Intrigued by the insight into political nature of economics, I took the International Political Economy class with Professor Gallarotti last semester to investigate the cause of differences in governance policy and its impact on trade and economic liberalization. My fundamental understanding of political economy was complemented by the Macroeconomics and Multinational Enterprises classes, in which I had the opportunity to conduct research on macroeconomic policy and transnational economic activities on local populations. Especially, the International Law class I

took with Professor Nelson strengthens my belief in the effectiveness of inter-governmental organizations and advocacy groups in shaping public opinion and in producing policy consultation. Thanks to the combination of both theoretical framework and quantitative analysis obtained through my coursework in Quantitative Methods, Empirical Analysis in Political Science, and Statistical Consulting, I am able to converse across disciplines and tailor my research for specific country and region.

My interest in economic development goes beyond coursework and informs my multiple projects. Last summer, as a research intern at the Upenn's Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), I had the first hand experience on original research. By leveraging my analytical skills and performing statistical analysis, I identified the discrepancies in budget projections for infrastructure among the G-20 think tanks. To compensate for the gaps, I then collaborated with my teammates to outline solutions to drive up investment from the private sector. I also took the initiative to design a survey sent to 149 think tank executives in Southeast Asia, which allowed us to identify the mismanagement of human resources and provide detailed policy recommendations to improve the efficiency at these institutions. My team and I presented these findings to the senior fellows at FPRI, following up with a final report delivered to U.S ambassadors in the region. Not only does the internship refine my skill set, it also gives me the chance to better understand myself.

Instead of staying in the ivory tower, I want to be on the ground, making meaningful and powerful impact in our communities. Thus, the research experience on the "Large-scale Land Acquisition in Southeast Asia" at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies will be the very first step for me to go beyond the academic setting and engage into an international and professional working environment. The increasing involvement of multinational enterprises and governmental authorities in the land deals are reshaping the region and transforming the lives of local people in so many ways. Working on this project, I will acquire a fine-grained understanding of an imperative and impactful issues in the region of my research interest. Moreover, exposure to human factors inherent in the work place accompanying with diverse cultural setting plays an important role in the success of any professionals, more so for those working in public policy. Working in Geneva in a project involving both research institution and international organizations, I can enhance my interpersonal skills and communication competency. Moreover, as I plan to go to graduate school, the project will open many possibilities of networking with the world leading experts in international development, people at the World Bank and United Nations Development agencies. I will obtain insights to graduate school admission as well as acquire an edge in employment prospects.

I feel grateful and fortunate to be chosen as a Wesleyan Freeman Scholar to attend Wesleyan. I am committed to pursuing a career in public policy with focus on international economic development so that I can contribute my part to provide people in Vietnam and the developing world with access to education, to better living standard, and to the opportunities such as the one I was given here. It is my

hope that the Wesleyan Summer experience grant will give me the chance to advance my commitment and to pay it forward.