

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES IN ASIA: COMPARATIVE HISTORIES AND GEOGRAPHIES OF DEVELOPMENT

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROJECT

Special Economic Zones (SEZs, defined broadly here to include Free Trade Zones, Export Processing Zones, and Free Economic Zones) now play a significant role in the development of Asian economies. In 1979, as part of China's opening and reform, Deng Xiaoping initiated one of the first formal SEZs in the Shenzhen region of Guangdong Province in southern China. Since then, hundreds of SEZs have been created both within China, as well as in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Philippines, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Pakistan.

Such zones exist within a variety of economic, geographic, historical, and political contexts, and were established to serve a variety of purposes. This project aims to study such zones from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives, seeking to understand the various roles that SEZs have played in the development of cities, regions, and nations. In particular, the project will examine the commonalities and differences between zones in different regions (both within and between nations) and attempt to account for those differences through an examination of historical, geographical, political, and economic factors.

SCOPE OF WORK FOR SELECTED PHD STUDENT

This project does not aim to be comprehensive or exhaustive in its study of SEZs. Rather, it will allow individual PhD students to concentrate their research on one or a few SEZs in a particular nation or region. Students would be expected, through their PhD project, to develop a thorough historical and geographical analysis of one or more zones, thus contributing to the larger comparative project.

To complete such work, students would be expected to conduct relevant archival research, policy and document analysis, ethnographic field work, structured and/or semi-structured interviews, mapping, and/or the collection of quantitative data. Students would be involved in the collection and analysis of data as well as the writing-up of results.