

NG, Wing Fung

To begin with, I would like to thank all the parties and personnel that contributed to this tremendous internship experience. Prior to this trip, I only had a shallow perception of what a civil engineer's routine on site. For me, concrete is a laboratory object, drawings are just files on a computer, and construction safety is merely some anecdotal tales shared by professors. This trip enhanced my thoughts of what a civil engineer will and can do.

The biggest highlight of the whole trip is to gain hands-on experience of building a structure from scratch. As an appointed assistant resident engineer, our post supposed to be recording the site progress. However, in the beginning days, the observers became the observed. We eagerly took up the workers' role, letting them guide us on how to lay bricks and posing our work for them to inspect. This weird experience of reversed identity quite helps us to understand a construction project from their perspective. A bunch of lecture terms popped out from my mind. Remember when the lecturer talked about reinforcement in concrete, I now have a vivid image of the size, structure, the lattice and how to fix the steel bars. Whenever the next time I came across with the workability of mortar, I now have the ability to tell whether the mortar is too stiff or too watery. I was attaining new techniques from my training as well as recapping and consolidating the construction practices that was demonstrated in school.

Concerning the communication within the construction project, we had a weekly reflective with all the parties. Even though we tried our best effort to understand the situation, without any professional guidance, we probably had skipped some minor details. In the leisure, we did have a private chat with the site engineers and received a lot of engineer advice. A major takeaway of these chats is the use of AutoCAD, which we now have access to a load of command, function and templates which was omitted in school.

Apart from the purview of engineering, as a multidiscipline project, we were also introduced to the realm of social science. Throughout the whole trip, they had intrigued me with their surveying skill. Surveying is not unique to their discipline, we have been taught about a traffic habit survey that aim on model buildings. What they accomplished was a qualitative survey, they focused on details that numbers could not reveal. Their skills of facilitating the survey and the use of participatory approach tools are impressive and will be a great addition to the toolbox if another needs assessment is carried in the future days.

Ending up with a side thought I had during the trip, I would like to cite Jeremy Clarkson, an English broadcaster, about his impression of Vietnam, "the mountain, the coastline, the big new engineering project and the traditional fishing ship down here, it is a fabulous country". I have to admit through these two months, I have been obsessed with the country's sophisticated yet problematic traffic, and I sincere thought that they may opt for engineering intervention. What I have seen on this trip is that Vietnam stills lack some basic transportation infrastructure, like metro or highway system. This journey really inspired me that maybe somewhere in the future, I may contribute to more civil engineering projects to, echoing to the theme of Glocal and Mingde project, empowering people.