

Three Decades of the Thai-Lao Mekong Friendship Bridges

Lessons Learned and Challenges for Regional Cooperation

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ERIA

Myanmar

Vietnam

Mekong River

Laos

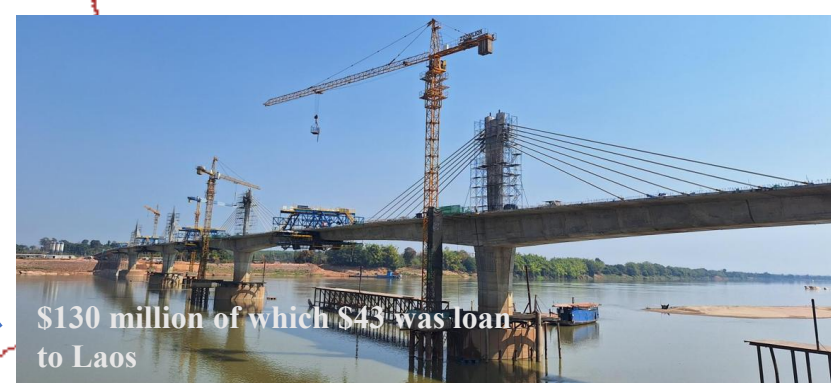
Thailand

Cambodia



\$49 million grant (Thailand)
Chiang Rai – Boko

Source: Mohigan.



\$130 million of which \$43 was loan
to Laos

Source: Presenter (Mar 2025).



\$55 million grant (Thailand)
Nakhon Phanom – Khammouane

Source: Premica Pata.



\$31 million grant (Australia)
Nhong Khai – Vientiane Capital

Source: Jim Holmes.



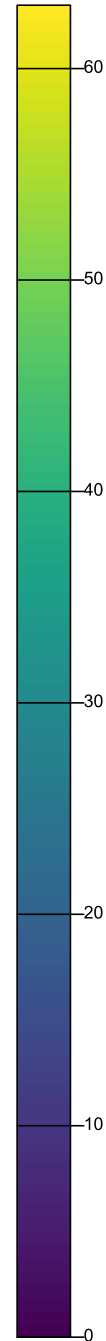
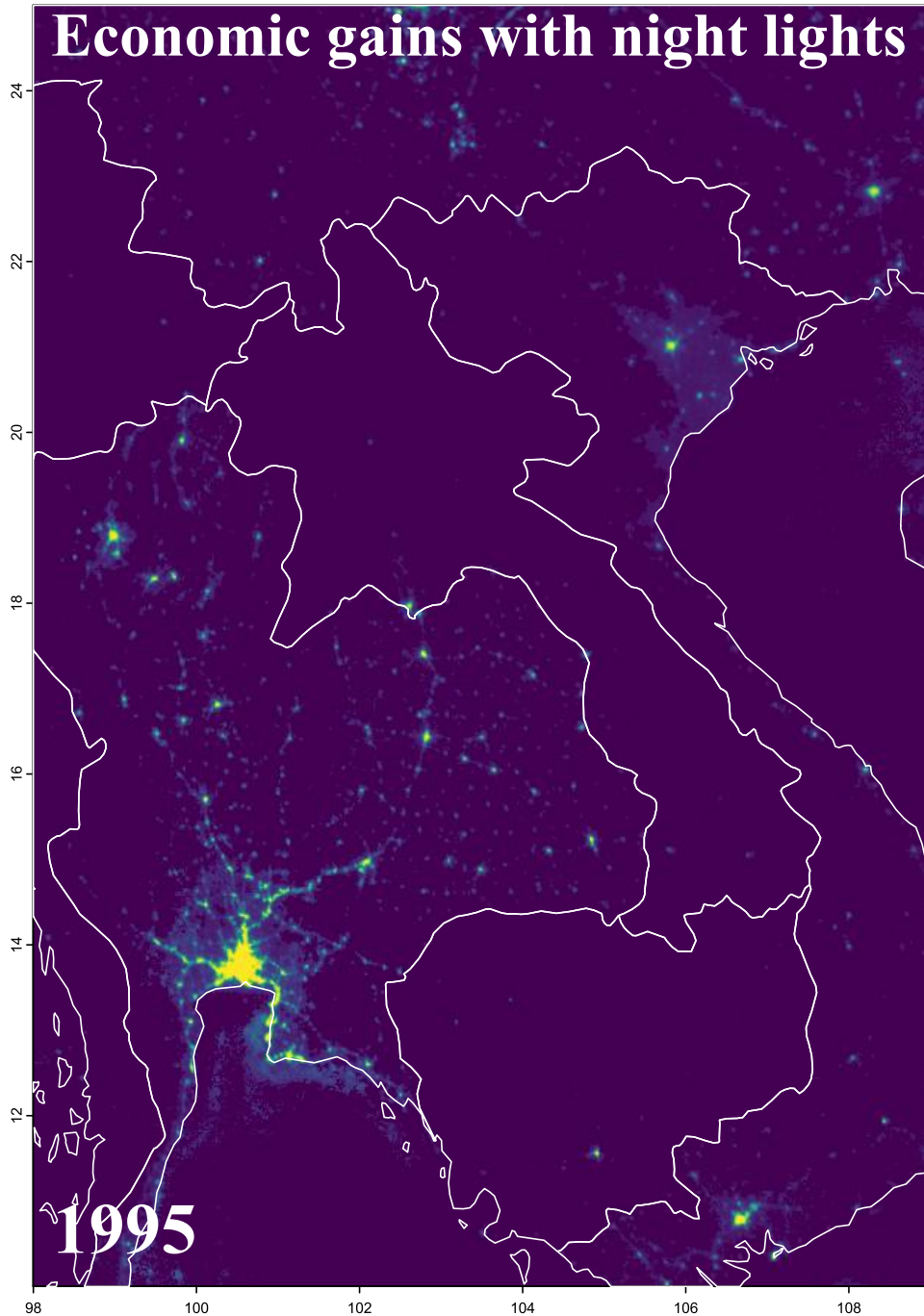
\$70 million soft-loan (Japan)
Mukdahan – Savannakhet

Source: Yothin M.

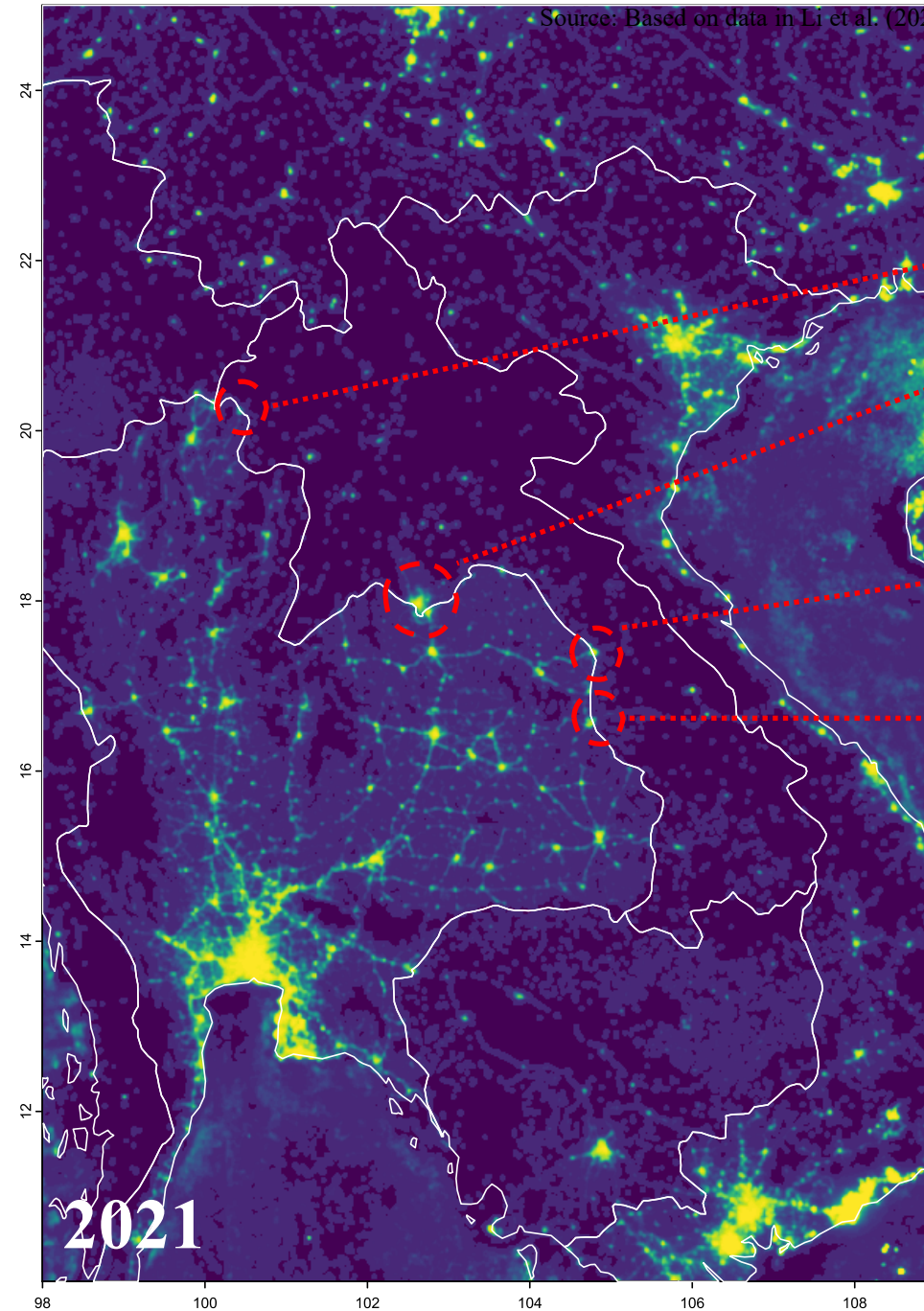
Events led to constructions

- Battlefield to Market (1988)
- End of Cold War (1991)
- ADB's GMS (1992)

Economic gains with night lights



Source: Based on data in Li et al. (2020).



**Chiang Rai –
Bokeo (2013)**

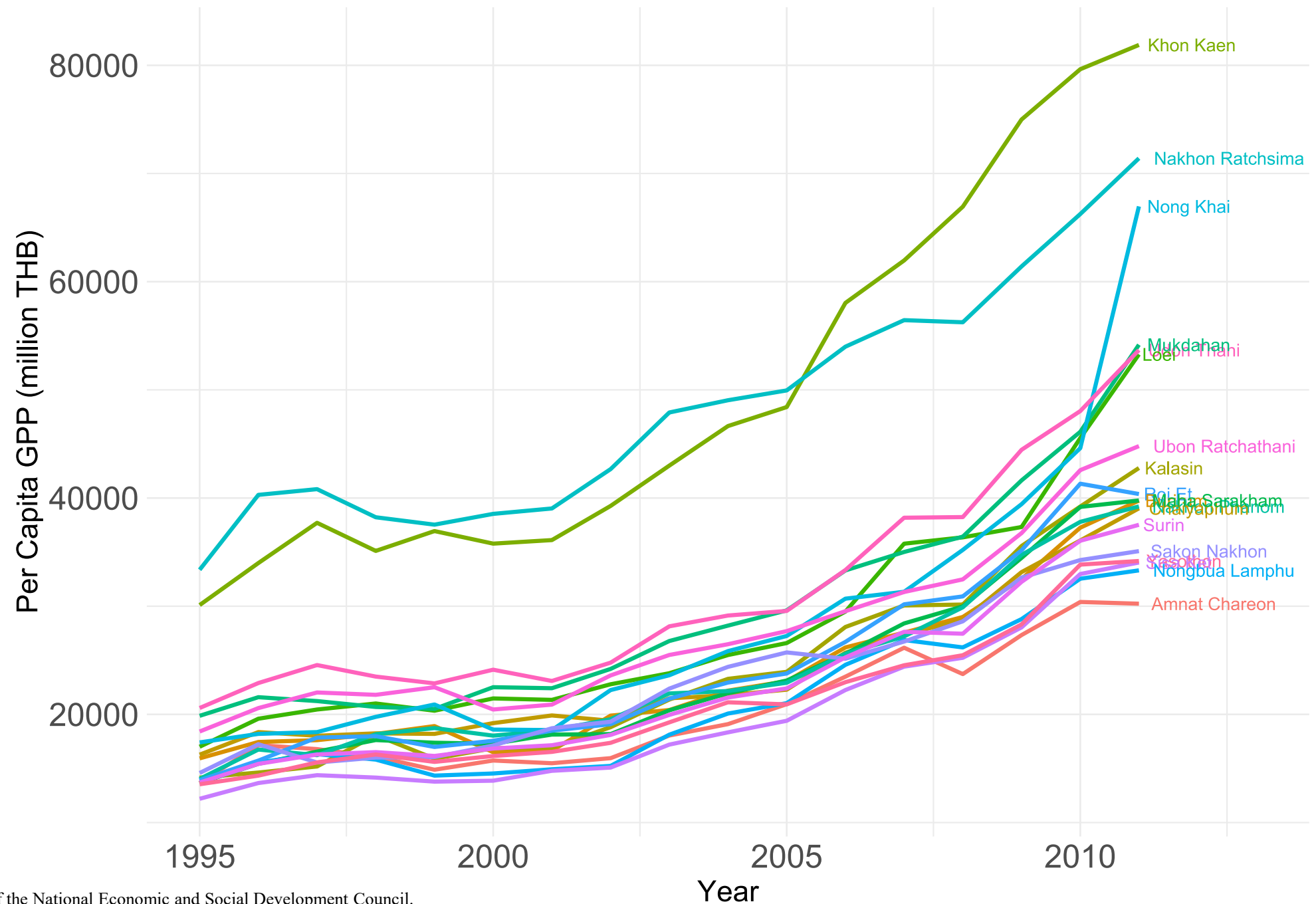
**Nong Khai –
Vientiane Capital
(1994)**

**Nakhon Phanom –
Khammouan
(2011)**

**Mukdahan –
Savannakhet
(2006)**

See Keola et al. (2015)
for relationship
between night light
and GDP.

Per Capita GPP (1995–2011)



Impacts of an international bridge on households: Evidence from Thailand

- Bridge increased the income of agricultural households with agricultural land, especially those near the bridge
- Agricultural households without agricultural land or non-agricultural households with agricultural land did not enjoy such an income increase

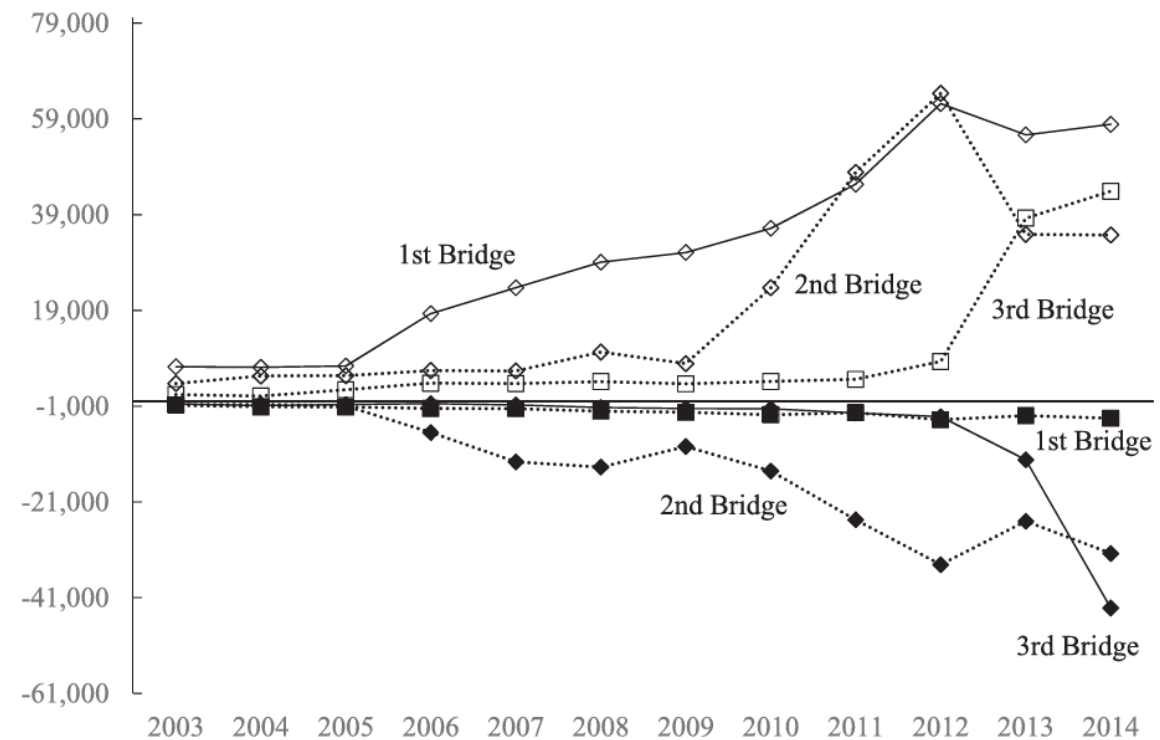
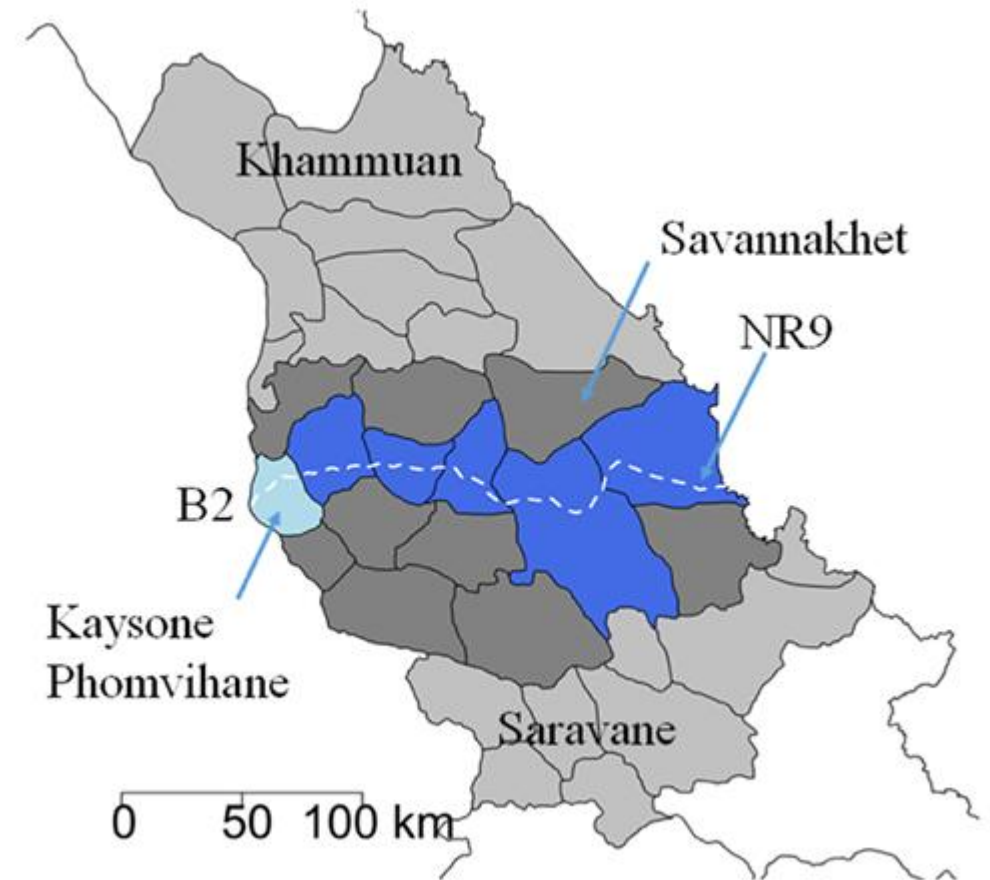


Fig. 2. Trade Values by Thailand across Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges (Million THB).

Source: Bank of Thailand. Notes: The figures include the transit trade values. Positive and negative values indicate exports and imports, respectively.

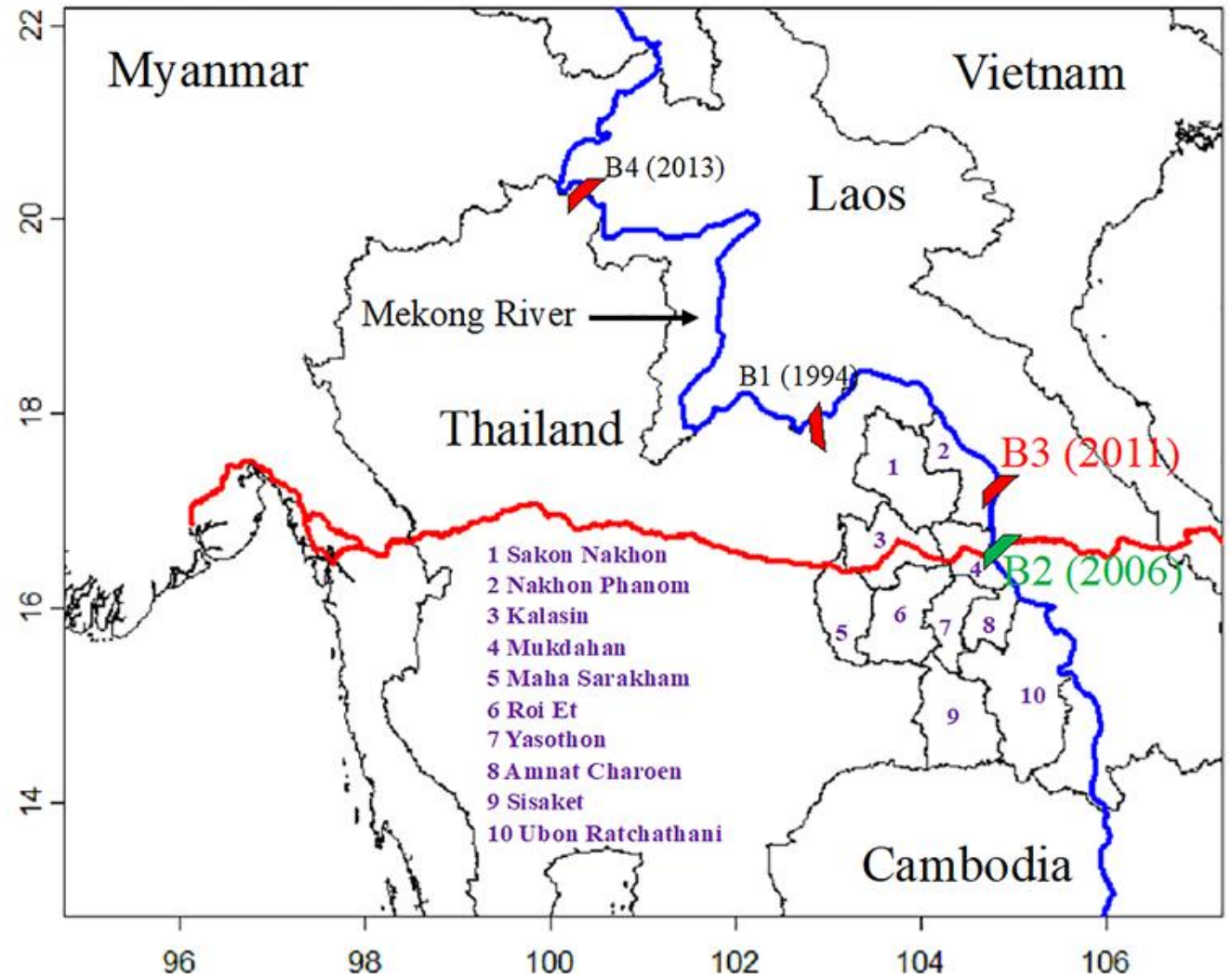
Impacts of international transport infrastructure: Evidence from Laotian households

- Share of food expenditure decreased for Laotian households
- Households with younger heads are likely to benefit more
- All households in Kaysone Phomvihane district benefit from the bridge

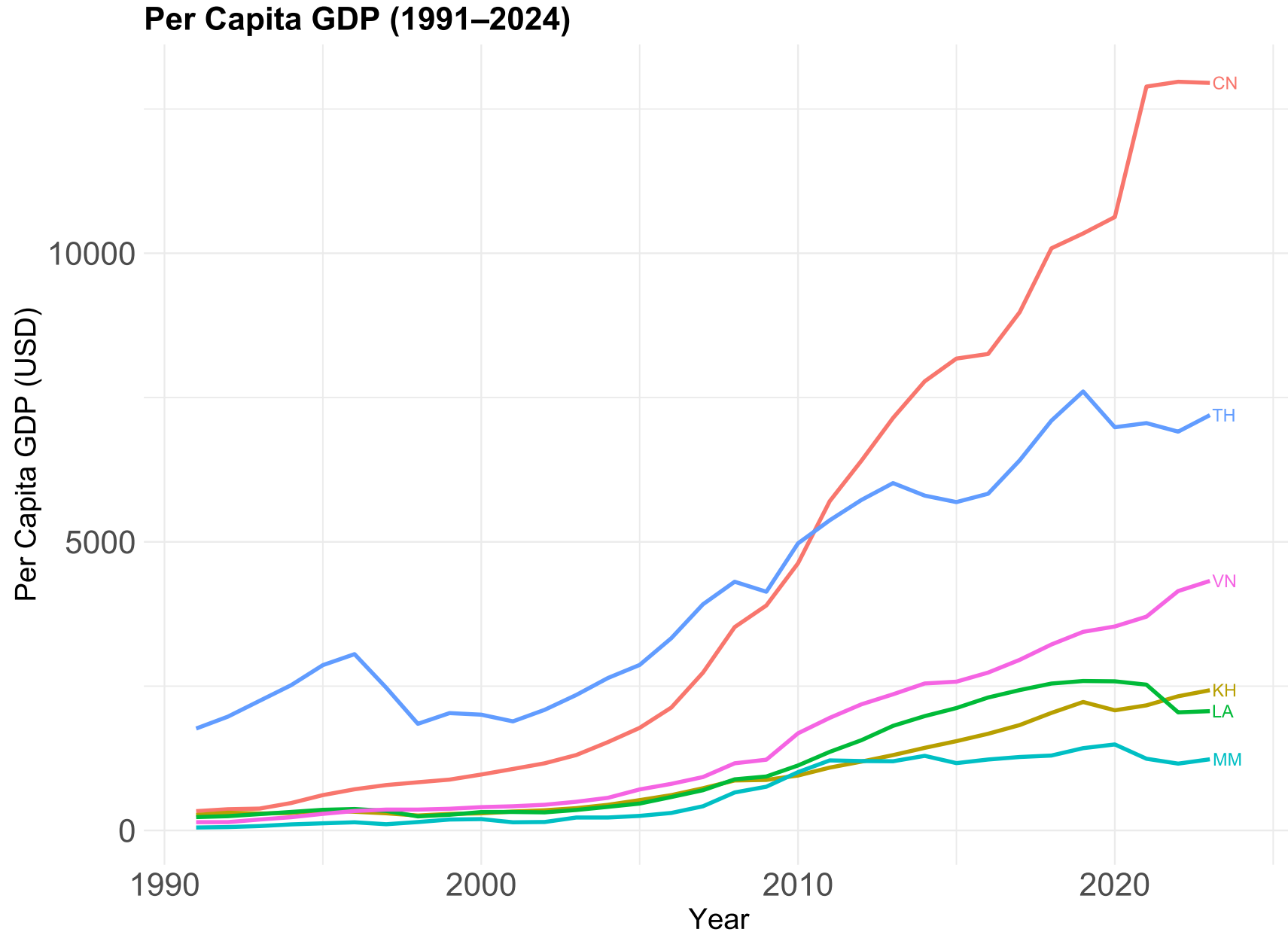


International bridges and informal employment

- Wages of formal workers increased more than informal workers in Thailand
- The effect is localized within 100 km from the bridge



Changing Economic Landscape in the Mekong Region



Underutilization

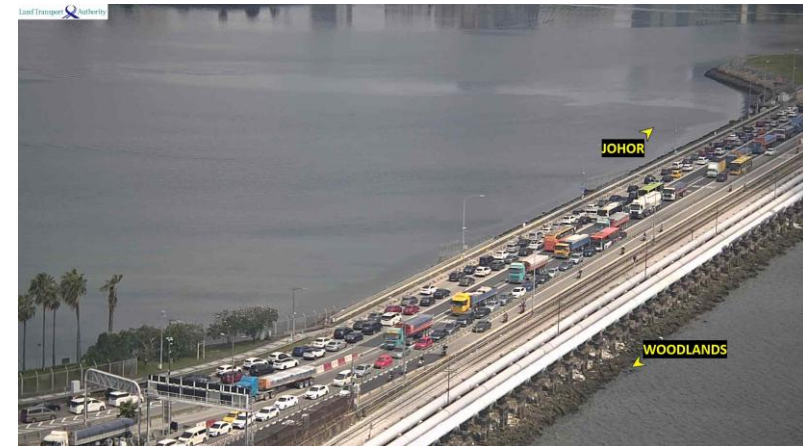
- Nearly 2,000 cars crossed the First Thai-Lao Friendship daily in 2019. More than 20,000 vehicles crossed Oresund Bridge in the same year.
- Less than 7,000 people crossed the First Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge daily. More than 100,000 do so with Oresund Bridge.
- It is nearly 400,000 people over two bridges between Singapore and Malaysia.
- By design thousands of cars can cross a bridge in an hour.

Oresund Bridge Copenhagen (Denmark) – Malmo (Sweden)



Source: News Oresund.

Second Link Singapore – Johor Baru (Malaysia)



Source: The Government of Singapore.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

- Friendship bridges are beneficial to cross-border cooperation and regional development in general.
- The impacts are localized in nature.
- Absorptive capacities matter at all levels.
 - **countries, provinces, households, etc.**
- From construction to utilization.
- How to broaden beneficiaries-pay principle.

References

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