

# Introduction

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Chief Editor*

This is our eighth issue, and marks the completion of the fourth year of both the journal and its parent body IAAPS. It is also our first issue which can be considered a themed issue: all general articles in the issue grew out of presentations made at IAAPS conferences, with two from the original conference in 2010, and three from the 2011 conference. It is our intention to continue working with conference presenters in the future to develop their work into papers we would be proud to publish in *Asia Pacific World*.

## Featured Article

The featured article in this issue comes from Professor Emeritus Terry McGee, and is a transcription of the lecture he delivered at the 20th International Geography Festival upon being awarded the highest honor in the field of geography: the Lauréat Prix International de Géographie Vautrin Lud. Throughout his academic career Professor McGee's research has focused on urbanization, with particular attention on urban development in Southeast Asia. He has published more than 30 books, monographs and reports, from *The Southeast Asian City* (1967) to *China's Urban Space: Development under Market Socialism* (2007). In the lecture, Prof. McGee concurs with assessments that East Asia will emerge this century as an important component of a multi-polar global economy. However, he eschews simply detailing the features of the economic rise of the region, and instead evaluates the Asia Pacific region, and in particular the Pacific Ocean itself as the medium of the region, through the lens of *geographic space*. His three-part analysis first looks at how the "pathways" of the Pacific, linking rapidly changing urban nodes, have been inserted into the system of global networks of trade and communication flows. He then evaluates how the "idea of the Pacific" is being reconstructed, and concludes by considering what kind of geographical knowledge and understanding is needed to make sense of this new world.

## Commentary

We are also publishing one commentary in this issue: a detailed look at the "middle-income trap" and suggestions of what countries may do to avoid become mired in it. Prof.



Shalendra Sharma first analyzes why several countries have become caught in the trap, failing to reach high-income status when they were once clearly on track for it, and then, conversely, analyzes the reasons behind the success of South Korea, which has managed to become a high-income economy. He gleans lessons from these experiences to suggest ways that China (and other countries) can avoid becoming stuck in the middle-income trap.

## General Articles

Our first general article in this issue is by Ms. Poornima Jayawardana, who reports on a detailed, qualitative study of the impact of Sri Lanka's government-sponsored *Samurdhi* program in one small rural village. The *Samurdhi* program, in operation since 1995, is aimed at reducing poverty and includes a microfinance lending program as one element. Ms. Jayawardana's interest is in evaluating whether poor rural women are truly empowered by microfinance programs. She evaluates the impact on married women in her study village from several different angles: economic empowerment, household well-being, and social and political empowerment. Based on in-depth interviews with both recipients and case officers, she draws conclusions about the efficacy of the current program, and makes recommendations on how it could effectively be modified.

The second general article is by Prof. Stephen Nagy, whose study involves the use of international relations (IR) theories in the analysis and comparison of immigration policy and the situations of immigrant integration in three international cities in the Asia Pacific: Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Vancouver. Prof. Nagy chose these three cities for comparison as they all play an important role in the movement of migrants, each being a regionally-interconnected center of commerce, trade, and education which both sends out and accepts large numbers of migrants. The paper examines the behavior patterns shown by the governments of the three cities in relation to facilitating migration as well as integrating migrants within their societies and harnessing their potential in order to enhance local prosperity. The paper shows how these objectives can be interpreted through the viewpoints on migration of various theoretical systems commonly utilized in the field of IR.

In the next paper, Dr. Abhik Chakraborty reports on a study of the current conditions of Japan's Kizu river basin, which runs through part of the second-largest urban area in Japan. Japan's postwar period of economic growth saw a spree of dam building throughout the country, including in the Kizu river basin, many built with flood control as the principal aim in response to a number of very damaging floods and the resulting perception that the rivers needed to be "controlled." Nature conservation efforts started taking root during the 1990s, with the establishment of a policy to restore rivers to their natural forms, prioritizing the role of ecosystems and the natural habitats of species. However, the paper finds that despite increased concern for the environment and the protection of certain key species in the region, such as the Japanese giant salamander, the central importance still being placed on flood prevention has resulted in a perpetuation of human control over the natural flow, and continued modification of basin landscapes with dams and other

structures. The paper concludes that there has been no substantial reversal of the decline in natural diversity in the Kizu river basin, and that basin governance in today's Japan is still far from being environmentally-oriented.

The connection between rural tourism and sustainable rural economies has recently been receiving much attention. Initiating and broadening tourism activities in rural areas has become an important strategy for contributing to the wellbeing of local communities, providing social, economic and environmental protection and development. Prof. Kazem Vafadari's paper examines the extent to which tourism can contribute to the revitalization and sustainable development of a local community, focusing on the example of the incorporation of tourism in a traditional Japanese agricultural landscape (*satoyama*) in the author's study area: rural Noto peninsula in Japan's Ishikawa Prefecture. In Noto, the agricultural landscape has been greatly affected by depopulation and the consequent underuse of natural resources by the aging local community. The author's research reveals that when properly organized and managed using a systematic approach, rural tourism activities can contribute to the revitalization and sustainability of local communities.

Finally, in his paper on the modeling of worldwide English language usage, Mr. Christopher Haswell asserts that the modeling needs to adapt and evolve, especially in response to the rapidly changing usage situation in the Asia Pacific. He contends that new speakers of English in the Asia Pacific could be assisted by more accurate and dynamic modeling which recognizes that the real goal is effective international communication rather than adherence to the standards established by the countries in which English is the native language. He begins his paper with a review of the most influential English language models to date—observing how the models have adapted to the changing nature of global English usage—and then proposes his own new model for handling the complexities of modern worldwide English language usage: a “Global Model.”

The issue concludes with an assortment of reviews of books covering the Asia Pacific region.

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