

# Introduction

*Malcolm J. M. Cooper, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University  
Chief Editor*

Welcome to the seventh issue of *Asia Pacific World*. In this issue, we are publishing the transcripts of two keynote speeches from recent conferences of our parent organization: the International Association for Asia Pacific Studies (IAAPS). This will give readers who missed the conferences a chance to see what is being discussed at them through our invited keynote speakers. Then, in a first for *Asia Pacific World*, we are publishing an opinion essay. The essay is not without controversy, but hopefully will make our readers think and reconsider the way they view the world. If you would like to communicate on this or any other topic through a letter to the editor, please feel free to do so, and we will consider publishing reader responses in future issues.

We present five original articles in the issue, including one which originated as a presentation at the inaugural IAAPS Conference in 2010. Currently, we are planning for the next issue to be a special conference issue, with all of the original articles ones that originated from conference presentations.

## The Conference Keynote Papers

The first conference keynote paper is a transcript of one of the keynote speeches from the 2011 IAAPS Conference. The speaker was Prof. Michael Hsiao, the Director of the Institute of Sociology at Academia Sinica in Taiwan. In the paper, he outlines the complex mix of ethnic groups in Taiwan, and discusses how they interacted with each other during the various periods of Taiwan's history. After the end of martial law and introduction of democracy in 1987, the various minority groups were able to appeal for more rights to improve their situation. He also explains how this process was different for foreign immigrants who, unlike the other ethnic minorities who were successfully able to lobby for their own rights, were in a position where they needed to rely on the support of NGOs to improve their status in Taiwan.

Our second keynote paper comes from the most recent IAAPS Conference, held in Hong Kong in 2012. Prof. Tereso Tullao spoke on human capital as the key to transformation in the Asia Pacific region. He notes that there is both empirical evidence and a theoretical basis for the role of education, together with investment in human capital, in promoting growth and economic progress. He provides an assessment both



of the region as whole and among the individual economies in it to determine if they are developing the necessary human resources not only to maintain growth and lead to renewed economic progress after the recent financial crises, but whether Asia will fulfill the expectations of its long-term economic growth, with economies that are able to avoid becoming mired in the “middle income trap.”

## The Opinion Essay

Our journal’s first ever opinion essay is a speculative one, written by Dr. Thorsten Pattberg of Peking University. Pattberg feels that the West clearly dominates the rest of the world in terms of establishing patterns of thought for all to follow. He looks carefully at the triumvirate of philosophy, religion, and science and shows the heavy influence of Western thinking on the rest of the world, in particular on Asia. He defines *lingualism* as a competition for terminologies (and therefore of legitimized thought and indeed patterns of behavior), and shows through numerous examples how the West has thus far been the clear victor in this competition. Going forward, Pattberg recommends the conscious adoption of more foreign words into our writing, to encourage the consideration of different points of view.

## The General Articles

Our first general article in this issue is by Prof. Richard Herr of the University of Tasmania, Australia. He looks at the concept of regional identity within the Pacific Islands region (comprising the islands of the South Pacific), examining how it has changed over the years since the end of World War II, and what factors have influenced those changes. With boundaries first drawn by colonial powers, the island polities have gradually gained control via independence and gaining a larger voice in the regional political organizations. Herr describes the anomalous role played by Australia and New Zealand, as both “owners” and “stakeholders”: nations both holding membership in regional island organizations as well as being outside stakeholders by virtue of their dependencies (and other interests) in the region. His analysis continues right up to the present day with a discussion of how a newly developing regional organization being promoted by Fiji may challenge the authority of other regional organizations in defining the region. Herr’s paper establishes a solid historical background for the region, helping us to understand the changing identities within it as the contemporary dynamics of Pacific Island regionalism are explored.

The next paper is by Prof. Leakhena Nou, the founder of the Cambodian Diaspora Victims’ Participation Project in the United States. The mission of the organization is to conduct outreach with Cambodian expatriates living in America who were victims of the

Khmer Rouge regime, and to encourage and facilitate their participation in the currently ongoing war crimes tribunal in Cambodia (the ECCC). Her paper reports on research conducted alongside the project, in which she demonstrates that many of these expatriates were indeed victims of brutality by the regime, and that these people are clearly achieving personal benefit by way of participation in this process, even if their participation involves something as simple as drafting and officially submitting a statement on the treatment they experienced. At the time of this writing, Nou is in Cambodia observing the ongoing trial, accompanying some of the survivors now living in America who may be called on to testify before the courts.

The next paper, by Dr. Lawrence Hammar, Jone Gucake, and Ferdinand Strobel, was inspired by their experiences in developing a social research training program on HIV for the UN Development Program. In the program, workers were trained to conduct personal interviews for field research for a comprehensive study of sexually transmitted diseases and sex education in Fiji. The focus of this paper is on the efficacy of qualitative research methods. The authors believe they are very effective at “teasing out” useful information that otherwise might not have been uncovered. They strongly believe that qualitative research methods should be part of the approach used, for example, in determining the motivations behind sexual behaviors of people, and how to use that information to construct effective messages to communicate with and educate these people about, for example, the risks of contracting STDs.

Prof. Rikio Kimura’s research specialty is the activities of NGOs operating in developing nations, in particular in Cambodia. His paper is an analysis of how “rights-based approach” methods (that is, advocating human rights) are being incorporated into the agendas of development NGOs. The rights-based approach is designed to empower members of the community to claim their rights, while at the same time encouraging governments and other duty-bearers to be more responsive to these rights-holders. Using examples of the experiences of several different NGOs in various developing countries, taken from existing research, the paper analyzes the challenges that NGOs may face with blanket incorporation of western-style concepts of human rights. Kimura demonstrates through these examples how a more cautious and thoughtful implementation of human rights may be more effective, as it could produce less friction with governments. Among other things, he outlines an effective way of dealing with controversial cultural practices. Rather than banning them outright, allowing them to continue but with the most objectionable parts eliminated may be a better solution for all involved.

Finally, the paper from Dr. Nila Firdausi Nuzula of the University of Brawijaya, Indonesia, which originated as a presentation at the 2010 IAAPS conference, reports on a study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Japan. Using English-language CSR reports issued over a four-year period from major Japanese firms across various industries, together with a “CSR Matrix” of issues and stakeholders identified by the Japan Business Federation, the author uses word-based content analysis to attempt to determine where the priorities of these companies actually lie. She determines rankings for

both issues (including the environment, business ethics, and corporate philanthropy) and stakeholders (including shareholders, employees, and the general public), and reflects on what this might tell us about the true attitudes toward CSR in these companies.

## **Biography**

**Malcolm J. M. Cooper** is the Chief Editor of *Asia Pacific World*. He is also Professor Emeritus of Tourism Management and Environmental Law at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University.