

Introduction to Special Issue: Quality of Life and Environmentalism in ASEAN

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The Vientiane Action Program, issued in 2013, declared that the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) will enhance integration, focusing on connectivity of member states by 2015. One of the policy tasks included in the Vientiane Action program, under the heading of Society, includes health and the environment. This special issue examines how ASEAN citizens evaluate their quality of life and environmentalism in order to help ASEAN achieve its goal of improving health and the environment by 2015 and beyond.

Higher integration through connectivity can be enhanced by elevating production and transportation within the ASEAN region. Needless to say, citizens' health is one of the key foundations of regional integration as all regional activities depend on citizens' health. Although ASEAN member states have registered increasingly high levels of hygiene and nutrition as economic dynamism has accelerated in ASEAN, much remains to be improved. Similarly, in tandem with acceleration in regional economic production, the environment of the ASEAN member states has been steadily deteriorating. Safety of the the region's environment is one of the key foundations of higher-level regional integration.

Research on the quality of life and environmentalism in ASEAN has only recently been invigorated, but has tended to be based on one country – not a region-wide study. This special issue is based on the ASEAN-wide survey on health and the environment carried out in all ten countries of the ASEAN in 2009–10 funded by the Japan–ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF). It is part of the larger AsiaBarometer survey project which covers the 29 Asian countries.

Under the initiative and leadership of Takashi Inoguchi and his team, the AsiaBarometer survey was carried out to examine the quality of life in 29 societies

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covering East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia in the 2000s (Inoguchi, forthcoming; Inoguchi, 2014; Inoguchi, 2013; Inoguchi, 2012; Shin and Inoguchi, 2010; Inoguchi and Fujii, 2008; Inoguchi, 2004). It is by far the only Asia-wide survey focusing on the quality of life and related subjects in the world. The survey was designed to execute face-to-face interviewing with 800 to 3,000 citizens in each society. Sampling was carried out in principle by a nation-wide random sampling method and their variants to suit each society's practice.¹

The article by **Taku Yamamoto** describes the quality of life in relation to the principle of ASEAN's idea of a social and cultural community (ASEAN, 2009) and the United Nations Development Program's Millennium Developmental Goals (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2010). Analyzing ASEAN citizens' responses to the World Health Organization's WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire, Yamamoto provides national profiles for ASEAN citizens in terms of physical, spiritual, human relations, and the life environmental milieu. He mentions the 'sharing of experience and best practices' in ASEAN, especially in the life environmental milieu, as one of the principles of the effort as a whole, with Malaysia supplying a model. **Shinya Sasaoka's** article examines which factors determine citizens' environmentalism. Highlighting the two major determinants – central governmental policy emphasis and the level of economic development – and thus the level of environmental deterioration, Shinya Sasaoka concludes that those blaming national governments for environmental deterioration tend to entertain high hopes for regional and international organizations, especially ASEAN. The article by **Seiji Fujii** posits the question, 'Which level of government should decide on environmental problems: local governments such as city and prefectural governments, the central (national) government, regional governments such as ASEAN and EU, or the world government (the United Nations)?'. He concludes that the higher environmental aggravation is, such as CO₂ emission per capita, the higher the response that environment policy should be tackled with by lower level governments.

The broad picture coming up from these articles is that concerns for the quality of life have been rising steadily in ASEAN, that national governments are to blame for the mis- or under-handling of social-cultural milieu issues, and that lower level governments or neighborhood community level handling seems to be preferred while regional and international organizations are the hope for the nebulous future.

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political behavior, and international relations. He has published numerous books and articles, amongst which are *American Democracy Promotion* (Oxford University Press, 2000), *Reinventing the Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), *Japanese Politics: An Introduction* (Trans Pacific Press, 2005), *Political Cultures in Asia and Europe* (Routledge, 2006), *The Uses of Institutions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), *Citizens and the State* (Routledge, 2008), *Globalisation, Public Opinion and the State* (Routledge, 2008), *The Quality of Life in Confucian Asia* (Springer, 2010). *American Democracy Promotion* (Oxford University Press, 2000), *Reinventing the Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), *The Uses of Institutions* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), *Japanese Politics Today* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), *The US-Japan Security Alliance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) and *Quality of Life in Asia* (Springer, 2012), *Political Parties and Democracy – Contemporary Western Europe and Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and *The Troubled Triangle: Economic and Security concerns for the United States, Japan and China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). He is Executive Editor of the *Japanese Journal of Political Science* (Cambridge University Press) and Director of the AsiaBarometer project.

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