

## Introduction

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This special issue of *SSWR* commemorating 2017 ISA RC55 Mid-term Conference is jointly organized by Research Committee 55 on Social Indicators of International Sociological Association (ISA RC55) and International Consortium for Social Well-being Studies (ICSWS). ICSWS is an inter-organizational research partnership consisting of research institutes in seven Asian societies initiated by Center for Social Well-being Studies at Senshu University. Ming-Chang Tsai (President, RC55), Rob Bijl (Vice-President, RC55), Hiroo Harada (Chair, Center for Social Well-being Studies at Senshu University), and Masayuki Kanai (Secretary General, Center for Social Well-being Studies at Senshu University) have served as organizers of the special issue.

The RC55 of ISA held a mid-term conference in Taipei, Taiwan on April 21-22, 2017. The theme of the conference was “The Futures of Social Indicators: Regional Responses to Global Challenges.” Over 30 participants gathered from 12 countries presented a wide diversity of research topics to which social indicators researchers proposed to be future directions of scientific efforts. After the conference, there was a consensus that a number of papers should be published to share their innovative ideas and solid evidence. We thus decided to form a review panel and started to solicit manuscripts to make a special issue materialized.

The organizers called all participants of the conference for submissions to this special issue at the end of the conference. All submitted papers were peer-reviewed, and three papers were finally accepted.

Georg P. Mueller’s “Gender Inequality under Different National Welfare Regimes: An Empirical Evaluation with Entropy

Measures from Information Theory” examines empirical applicability of a set of inequality measures based on information theory, which is proposed by the author. Hypotheses on the relation between degree of gender inequality measured by the above indicators and degree of the three types of Esping-Andersen welfare regime, i.e. conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, are evaluated using data from 13 European countries. The results indicate that the hypotheses fit well especially for liberal and socialist regime, which indicates empirical usefulness of the author’s inequality measures. This ambitious work opens up a new direction in social indicators studies, to achieve substantial results with rigorous mathematical settings.

Eva Lelièvre and her colleagues’ “Happiness, Health and Well-being in a Life Course Perspective: Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis of Sequences of Subjective Indicators” introduces a new survey method to capture life-course trajectories of the respondents’ subjective well-being. Differing from traditional retrospective surveys that ask respondents’ subjective well-being at certain points in time designated by researchers such as “when you graduated the last school” or “when you married first,” the authors tested new survey techniques in France and

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Thailand that allowed respondents to set a sequence of periods, which was defined by being at the same level of subjective well-being in their life course. They present some descriptive statistics and analyses from the new data which demonstrate the usefulness and applicability of their new methods. This paper also points to a new direction in data collection for well-being studies.

Ruut Veenhoven's "Happiness Research: Past and Future" is based on his keynote speech delivered at the conference. He overviews the history of quality-of-life studies from ancient Greece to the present time and describes the changing focuses of interests in each point in time. He also discusses social and scientific drivers for quality-of-life studies in history to foresee the future directions of the studies. This paper provides a well-organized bird eye view of the agendas to inspire future well-being researchers.

The organizers believe that this special issue makes a substantial contribution by introducing cutting-edge methodologies and inspiring the international community of well-being studies.

**Ming-Chang Tsai** is Research Fellow and Executive Director of Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. He was president of Taiwanese Sociological Association, and was dean of College of Social Sciences, National Taipei University, Taiwan. He now serves as President of Research Committee

of Social Indicators (RC 55) of the International Sociological Association, and Vice-President for the International Society for Quality of Life Studies. His current research project focuses on family and quality of life studies in East Asian countries. His recent books include *Global Exposure in East Asia* (Routledge, 2015) and *Family, Work and Wellbeing in Asia* (coeditor, Springer, 2017).

**Rob Bijl**, sociologist and psychiatric epidemiologist, is deputy director of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP. SCP is an institute for social and cultural policy analysis. From 2001 – 2006 dr. Bijl was head of the research department on Migration and Integration of the Ministry of Justice. He has published internationally on migrant integration, policy evaluation and quality of life. His current research is on trends in quality of life in relation to social policy. He is vice-president of the board of ISA Research Committee on Social Indicators. He is member of the European Social Reporting Network. Next to his SCP work, he is member of the Supervisory Boards of a mental health organization and a welfare organization.

**Hiroo Harada** is Professor of Economics at Senshu University. His research interests are in the fields of public finance, taxation, regional economy, public choice and social capital/well-being. He was President of Japan Public Choice Society, and serves as President of the Association for the Study of Political Society. He now serves as Chair of the Center for Social Well-being Studies, Senshu University. His current works have been published in "Public Choice" in *The International Encyclopedia of Political Communication* (Wiley Blackwell Books, 2015), and *The Senshu Social Well-being Review* among others.

**Masayuki Kanai** is Professor of Sociology at Senshu University. His research interests are in the field of social inequality, social capital, and subjective wellbeing. His current works assessing cross national comparisons of the causal mechanisms of subjecting wellbeing using survey data in Asian societies has been published in *Sociological Theory and Methods* and *The Senshu Social Well-being Review* among others.