

Editorial Introduction

Special Issue on “Environmental Planning”

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The natural environment is where our human societies are based on and draw resources from. We breathe air, drink water, reside on land, harvest the crops and manufacture the goods that we need with biotic and abiotic matters from the environment. It also absorbs the wastes that we discharge, forming ecosystems that have enveloped us for millions of years (Donald, 2009). However, due to the rapid population increase, industrialization and excessive use of fossil fuels in the past two centuries, severe environmental problems have emerged, among which energy and climate change are amongst the most concerned (Harris, 2012). Meanwhile, besides the geologic hazards such as earthquake, volcano eruptions and landslides that have always presented threats to human beings, atmospheric hazards such as floods and draughts are now intensified due to climate changes induced by human activities (IPCC, 2014). This special issue addresses on these three key issues: disaster mitigation, energy and climate change.

The first two papers examine the issue of disaster mitigation focusing on different disasters and different target groups. Nguyen, Imamura, and Iuchi (2016) review much literature and point out that tourists are vulnerable to disasters because they are transient people who usually lack knowledge of local hazards and perceive risks differently. Moreover tourists face communication barriers, and local emergency management systems are often focused on the preparedness and response phases of local communities. The authors use the case of coastal tourism destinations and suggest social learning as a possible means to address this disaster management gap. Targeting governmental policies, Yamashita et al. (2016) carried out a questionnaire survey to evaluate the effectiveness of municipalities in utilizing the registration scheme for their watershed management which is promoted by the Japanese government. The study indicates that municipalities are not so active in promoting runoff reduction by subsidizing private facilities, and that the public involvement should be strengthened in some planning processes.

The following paper by authors Tantiwatthanaphanich and Zou (2016) is a case study of a rural village in Thailand called Na Duang that was chosen for the implementation of a biomass utilization plan under an international cooperation scheme. After introducing the current status of energy demand, national plans, potential for biomass and biogas utilization, as well as relevant policies at the national level, the Na Duang project is described in

detail and an analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) is performed.

For the climate change research field, Yang, Li and Xu (2016) study the city-level greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory of China. A GHG inventory is a framework for measuring a city's GHGs from all sources in the city and it provides scientific evidences for mitigation policies and actions. Yang, Li and Xu (2016) reviews recent published works of urban GHG inventory in China and compares the methodology frameworks, gas types, emission scopes and geographical boundaries. This paper shows that the city-level GHG inventory studies in China are still in the exploratory stage and facing many difficulties.

Some of the papers in this issue were presented at the Biennial International Conference on Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development held on 7-9 August at Taipei University of Technology, Taiwan. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to researchers who joined the conference and submitted their works to our journal. We also give special thanks go to reviewers who granted us their most generous support with their time and valuable comments. We hope all our efforts will enhance the knowledge for a sustainable human-nature relationship.

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