

Editorial Introduction

Following the success of our inaugural issue in December last year, this special issue focuses on the theme concerning inequality and welfare issues in Thailand. Particularly, the disparities, for instance, in income and wealth distribution, healthcare access, development and work opportunities that trouble our society are the problems that we have long made efforts to solve.

In this issue, our journal is very honoured to have Professor Pasuk Pongphachit accepting our invitation to produce a very insightful article, “Commentary Note on Thailand’s Current Inequality Situation and Its Prospects”. The article explores the trends and reasons for the rise in multiple dimensions of inequality in Thailand. It also provides an outline of possible policies and discussion for future prospects, focusing on the key and obvious factors, namely; rights, representation, education, public goods and fair tax system.

In addition to the research articles, this issue also reflects some practitioner’s perspective via the article, “Thailand’s Current Socio-Politico-Economy: Perspectives and Prospects” by Prasittidesh Vichitsorasatra, former Consul-General to the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Kolkata, India. Southeast Asia has seen much change over the past few decades. The article describes how the shocks and aftershocks of the global turbulence have been amplified by a precarious and fragile political situation in Thailand. Ultimately, however, Thailand’s future and developmental outcomes will depend on the engagement and cooperation of the Thai people.

The first research article of this issue, “Property Tax in Thailand: an Assessment and Policy Implications,” by Duangmanee Laovakul portrays how inequality in all its dimensions remains a large issue in Thailand. This article

focuses on tax policies, in particular taxes on property in Thailand, as a means to use fiscal policy to address inequality. Currently, property taxes remain very low, and many exemptions exist resulting in low tax revenues. Furthermore, poor enforcement and monitoring exacerbate collection issues. In the case of the local development tax, the tax base is assessed according to the value of land during the period 1978-1981 resulting in undervaluation. The article suggests that urgent reformation of these bills is required which is currently taking place.

The second article, “Market Expansion, Political Relationship and Geographical Inequality in the Early Rattanakorn Siam: a Theoretical Perspective” by Pornthep Benyaapikul displays the dominance of the social structure and geographical location in the economy during Rattanakosin Siam (1782-1855). Coercive relationship existed between the aristocrats (*munnai*) and the commoners (*phrai*). The elite class had power over commoners through forced employment and restricted movement of labor which consequently resulted in concentration of trading activities, income and wealth among the nobles. This study provides a game-theoretical perspective to explain a mechanism for which market economy proliferates through geographical locations and its implications on locational inequality. This can hint to the policy implications for the present-day situation.

The third article “Income Elasticity of Demand for Outpatient and Inpatient Services: an Empirical Study in Thailand,” by Kaewkwan Tangtipongkul investigates the potential household income effect on public and private healthcare choices for outpatient and inpatient services by combining data from the Health and Welfare Survey 2006 with information on hospitals and doctors in each province. It also seeks to provide information for policymakers to improve policy decisions. For example, the article suggests that the

government can improve the level of service provided at district level hospitals in order to reduce the referral process and transportation costs incurred by Universal Coverage beneficiaries (which mainly consists of low income persons). Moreover, improving the prevention and promotional care program will also increase awareness of how to prevent common diseases in households.

The forth article, “How can Promoting “Desirable” Elderly Employment Opportunities Alleviate the Shortfalls of Thailand’s Ageing Society?” by Euamporn Phijaisanit examines the implications of Thailand’s ageing population on economic growth in the light of existing social structures and policy infrastructures. The article proposes policy options, which seeks to bring about a more desired ageing society through greater elderly labor participation, improved elderly welfare structures, and fiscally sustainable public finance.

Thammasat Review of Economic and Social Policy (TRESP) is our newly constructed biannual double-blind peer reviewed international journal published in June and December. The Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University and the Editorial Team of TRESP seek to provide an effective platform for reflecting policy-oriented perspectives that links the academic and policymaking community. Having devoted to our ‘knowledge-for-all’ philosophy so as to drive our society forward, the Faculty decided that TRESP published under an open access model. For further information and updates on this journal, or to submit an article, please visit our website at www.tresp.econ.tu.ac.th.

Euamporn Phijaisanit
Editor-in-Chief