

An Interview with Toshifumi Kawasumi, Director General, Office of the Government for Policy Planning, Tokyo Metropolitan Government

Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Long-term Vision Highlights Challenges of Revitalization

By Japan SPOTLIGHT Editorial Section

The Tokyo Metropolitan government published a new long-term vision for the next decade titled “Creating the Future” at the end of 2014. It showcased a number of challenges the city will face, including how it can meet the demands of increasing globalization. *Japan SPOTLIGHT* had an interview with Toshifumi Kawasumi, a key figure in the formulation of the vision.

Introduction to Long-term Vision for Tokyo

JS: First of all, could you tell us about the background to this vision being formulated by your government?

Kawasumi: The Tokyo Metropolitan government has made such long-term plans many times in the past and also any local government should have such blueprints of the basic policies of their administrations. In particular, we have a new governor now, Yoichi Masuzoe, and we thought we should have new policy commitments on his behalf. In addition, Tokyo was selected last year as the venue for the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020, so we believe that we should have a number of policies to be implemented before those events, and that now is the best time to announce a new plan.

This new policy vision covers the next decade, meaning 2024 is the last year of its target period. So we are looking beyond the Olympic year of 2020 in the vision.

We are assuming that the Olympics and Paralympics will be a turning point in getting Tokyo back on track toward becoming a key city under globalization, as it has been losing some of its presence in the global community through having failed to address the challenges of globalization. If we cannot revitalize Tokyo and enable it to regain its power, we could see Japan as a nation declining further.

We will need to win the increasingly serious competition among the cities of the world to avoid this. What kind of policy measures



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would make this possible? This is our general thinking behind the work of formulating this new long-term policy vision.

JS: So this long-term plan's key aim is to win this global inter-city competition, isn't it?

Kawasumi: Yes. However, our ultimate goal, as our governor is saying, is to enhance the quality of life by consolidating social welfare, healthcare and employment systems. To achieve this goal, we would have to revitalize our economy. A key feature of our vision is that we aim both to improve quality of life and revitalize the economy. Our long-term plans so far have mainly focused on hardware but in the current one we focus not only on the economy but also quality of life. So our vision this time contains a variety of issues and is more voluminous and detailed.

Another feature is that we have set up a two-tier time frame, namely the Olympic year 2020 and the final year of the coverage of this vision, 2024. In accordance with this time frame, we have set about 360 numerical targets for each policy goal to be realized by specific measures. Many of them are rather ambitious and not so easy to achieve. We simultaneously fixed a specific three-year plan for the implementation of each policy. We usually fix such implementation programs in the year after the one in which the long-term plan has been adopted. The long-term plan, its implementation programs and the budget endorsing those programs have been fixed

at the same time and presented to the public so that the citizens of Tokyo can clearly see the path of each policy goal and be more convinced of its feasibility. This is also another key feature of our plan.

Legacy of the Olympics & Paralympics

JS: Your two-tier time track suggests you regard the legacy of the Olympics and Paralympics as very important. Such a legacy must ultimately enhance the global standing of Tokyo through efforts to revitalize the economy and raise the quality of life. Can you tell us what the symbolic legacy of these Olympics might be, such as the highways or super express trains that were symbolic of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics?

Kawasumi: Our governor is always responding to such a question by saying that a symbolic legacy would be the “realization of a hydrogen society”. We are anyway thinking about policies to achieve what may be considered a legacy of the Olympics and Paralympics in line with the thoughts of the International Olympic Committee. In this long-term plan, we would include not only hardware elements such as barrier-free structures for elderly people but also software elements such as hospitality or further development of volunteer activities.

JS: London is also highly focused on the legacy of the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012. It has its own legacy implementation program corresponding to your three-year program. The city of London and the British government are collaborating to check on progress every year. Are you planning to set up such a follow-up mechanism?

Kawasumi: We have not yet planned such a follow-up mechanism. But we are not the only ones with a long-term vision, because the Japan Olympic Committee (JOC) and the Japanese government’s Olympics and Paralympics Preparatory Office are also thinking about what legacies there should be. Whereas the JOC is probably thinking about sports facilities as a key legacy, we are thinking about urban structures and energy sources for urban life. For our part, of course, we are checking the progress of the implementation of the programs, and this will lead to a follow-up of the vision.

JS: In the case of London, a variety of numerical targets were established and checks on the progress of policy implementation were made in the light of those goals. I believe you can do the same.

Kawasumi: Yes. Since we also have numerical targets for each policy, we can easily check the progress of their implementation to achieve an Olympic legacy and even what could be achieved beyond 2020.



Tokyo at the Center of Globalization?

JS: We are very interested in how your long-term policy vision could provide various measures for Tokyo to be more actively engaged in global initiatives, though at this moment it seems to be behind the trend of globalization. Our mission at the Japan Economic Foundation is also to enhance the presence of Japan in a globalized world. In this light, I would like to concentrate my questions now on the policies to promote the internationalization of Tokyo in your vision. First, how are you planning to promote Tokyo’s relations with other major global cities towards 2020 in preparation for the Olympics and Paralympics?

Kawasumi: In addition to our newly released long-term vision that includes our external relations policy, we announced our basic strategy on city diplomacy in a separate format at the same time. We made it clear in this strategy why the Tokyo Metropolitan government is pursuing a city diplomacy policy independently from the central government and also where this policy is heading hereafter.

Our basic idea is that, first of all, we should use our external relations policy for the success of the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020 and then return the benefits of our policy to taxpayers, namely the residents of Tokyo, by improving social infrastructures through exchanges with other big cities; and lastly, we should restore Tokyo’s status as a global city through our external relations policy.

To achieve the success of the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics we will need to learn lessons from Rio de Janeiro, the venue of the 2016 Olympics, as well as from London. We need to think about how to

promote the qualities of Tokyo to visitors from around the world in Rio in 2016.

Apart from the Olympics, we need to be actively engaged in exchanges of information and views on common issues facing all large cities in the world, such as disaster-relief. We should encourage such regional and urban development policy discussions through various channels, such as sister- and friendship-city relations.

It is important to increase the number of people from overseas visiting or working in Tokyo. We have many measures in our long-term policy plan to attract tourists, but we need to promote Tokyo not only for tourists but also for business people. We should promote the attractions of Tokyo, such as the variety of business opportunities it offers or the mixture of Eastern and Western cultures. Such public relations activities would play a crucial role in attracting people, goods, money and information to Tokyo.

Governor Masuzoe is a former professor of international relations and politics, and an extremely talented multilinguist. He will be at the center of our external relations activities and his engagement in promoting Tokyo to the world will be extremely useful.

JS: You are also aiming to create hot spots in Tokyo where people can communicate with each other in English that many non-Japanese visiting Japan would find nice and comfortable. How do you plan to realize this idea?

Kawasumi: They are sort of “English Villages”. Our governor is very keen on realizing this project. He has been saying since his inauguration that Tokyo should prepare to become a multi-language speaking environment. Towards 2020, this will be one of our key goals and we have already started many reforms for it.

For example, signs relating to public transport in Tokyo are not expressed in a common format and are occasionally very difficult to find. We have a multi-language association in which we discuss how we can integrate such divergent signs into common ones among the different transportation systems and make them easy to find and understand. To be more specific, we are now discussing how we can create common signage for ticket machines in several languages among the Tokyo Metropolitan subway, Japan Railways and other transportation companies.

We are also planning to create a common uniform for volunteers for the Olympics and Paralympics to help people from overseas when they visit tourist spots. Considering that we have many complaints from people visiting Japan about the difficulty of finding places where free Wi-Fi is available, we are now thinking about creating a Wi-Fi system that can be used permanently after a visitor's registration for free Wi-Fi at the airport upon arrival. We are also thinking about selecting around 10 areas most frequently visited by foreign tourists where they can get sightseeing information very easily by either a volunteer's help or free Wi-Fi.

We have developed a web-based system for restaurants and tourists. By using the system, restaurants can easily make a menu

that provides a multi-language (12 languages) translation for Japanese words such as the names of food. In addition, tourists can search for restaurants that have menus in foreign languages.

Another example is in the medicare sector. Multi-language services in hospitals run by the Tokyo Metropolitan government will be achieved by 2020. This is essential if Japanese medical consultation services are to meet the needs of non-Japanese patients.

JS: What about the security aspects of the Olympics and Paralympics in 2020? This may be a matter for the national government and not just for the Tokyo Metropolitan government.

Kawasumi: This is a crucial issue for the Olympics and Paralympics, though it should not be limited to them, and should encompass terrorist attacks, natural disasters, pandemics and other contingencies. As you say, this is generally a matter for the national government, but in order to strengthen security, collaboration among different entities such as the central government, the JOC (in charge of security management for sports facilities) and the Tokyo Metropolitan government must be seriously considered.

In terms of our responsibility, we have confirmed a budget plan for security measures against terrorist attacks including cyberattacks and also adopted a budget for next fiscal year of more than \$2.5 billion to enhance our disaster-relief capacity, such as by strengthening building structures against earthquakes, which will be discussed in the city assembly soon. We are truly doing our best to achieve safety and security in Tokyo.

Human Resources Development Program

JS: Your long-term vision contains an education program for raising human resources to respond to the need for globalization. This is, I believe, another



key policy to place Tokyo at the heart of globalization in the future. Could you briefly introduce the framework of this program?

Kawasumi: Governor Masuzoe is always saying that unless you speak English you will not be able to do anything to enhance Tokyo's presence in the global community. In welcoming guests or working with business people coming from overseas, we must speak English, otherwise we will not have any productive outcome.

Based upon our governor's strong belief in the utility of English, we will introduce education in English in our elementary schools, junior high schools and senior high schools. We have set a goal for all senior high school graduates to qualify for the Eiken Test in Practical English Proficiency, Grade Pre2, which is rather an ambitious goal. One of the tools to achieve this goal is the "English Village" where the kids have to speak only English. We will also strengthen our efforts to educate English teachers to enhance their teaching capacity and recommend them to be qualified to at least the Eiken Test, Grade Pre1 level.

We will also select 10 senior high schools run by the Tokyo Metropolitan government to be called the "Global 10" and introduce special programs to encourage the students to study abroad or invite students from overseas to study at these schools. We are also planning to introduce an education program for the International Baccalaureate, a framework that gives students internationally-recognized admission to universities in the world. We have many other new education policies in our long-term vision and place emphasis on education to meet the challenges of a globalized society, as our governor strongly advocates.

JS: We have many readers overseas interested in business in Japan or coming to teach in Japan, or students interested in studying in Japan. For them it would be welcome news that Tokyo is trying to expand the number of places where people can communicate in English.

Kawasumi: We are planning to do our best to promote this good news all over the world. Our staff in the Tokyo Metropolitan government have to learn English as well in order to implement such English-oriented education programs.

JS: The "Global 10" program you mentioned is also a sort of English education program that expands the opportunities for the students to practice English in real life.

Kawasumi: Yes. The students in these high schools must be able to communicate well with native English speakers through daily contact with them. The high school students who study abroad for a year will be one year behind their classmates, since so far learning experience at a school overseas is not considered as an academic achievement and that discourages students from studying abroad. Therefore, we

need to introduce a new system in which the subjects they learn during their stay overseas could be counted towards the necessary qualifications for graduating from high school in Japan. We will implement this system experimentally for those "Global 10" schools and see whether it could be expanded to all high schools or not.

JS: Tokyo Metropolitan University is also planning to have a new education program to raise global leaders, isn't it?

Kawasumi: Yes. This is also a program in which studying abroad is an obligation and in a routine curriculum they also put weight on discussions and communication in English. We would expect them to make a good contribution to our education policy and enhance their international reputation through student exchange with academic institutes overseas.

JS: So there would be good opportunities for native English teachers in Tokyo?

Kawasumi: Yes. There would be a much greater need for native English teachers other than those coming to Japan on the JET program today. We hope such teachers will become good friends and supporters of the Japanese, and that our students will learn from them about not only English but also their thoughts and cultures. We hope that the national government would implement similar policies following our model and that we can collaborate to duplicate these effects. I believe that Tokyo should be the locomotive of Japan, leading initiatives for globalization such as this innovative English education program.

JS: In your education program to promote adaptability to globalization, education in language and culture would have the greatest weight. But in addition, I think learning about the international economy could well be considered crucial to enhancing our capacity to adapt to globalization. For example, free trade is a key concept in thinking about the benefits of globalization, but in reality there are a great many people opposed to trade liberalization pacts, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. When you expand your education program, how about creating a new program to learn about international trade, such as encouraging simulated trade negotiations by the students? I believe this is practiced in California.

Kawasumi: I think there would be two merits of such a program. First, the students would be able to understand free trade as a rule or system of the globalized community.

Second, they could learn negotiation and debating skills in English. This is certainly an interesting idea that could deserve our consideration.

JS