

# Future Design – Thinking About Our Legacy to the Next Generation

By Naoyuki Haraoka

Against the background of long-term challenges beyond generations, such as the aging of society and depopulation, expanding government debt, and global climate change, how can we leave a sustainable human society and economy to our succeeding generations?

A group of Japanese social and natural scientists, and local as well as central government officials, have been working on Future Design (FD) for social systems to respond to that question since a few years ago. They have applied experimental economics methodology to the issue and discovered that a group of people assigned to represent the interests of a future generation in the experiments, a so-called “imaginary future generation”, tend to protect the interests of the future generation with a different thought process from that of the people in the current generation.

Short-termism is prominent today. Rising populism around the world could perhaps be characterized as short-termism, and not just as anti-globalization or anti-elitism. I think this academic project could show us that short-termism may not always dominate human thinking but be overwhelmed by FD.

A distinguished Japanese think-tank, the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research, hosted the Future Design Workshop 2019 on Jan. 26-27, 2019, prompting earnest discussions of FD among the public at this seminar. It is also noteworthy that FD has recently been applied to some Japanese local government policy assessments in discussions with the local residents.

FD will need a wide range of expertise, and we have a variety of experts contributing articles to this issue of *Japan SPOTLIGHT*.

Our Cover Story starts with an introduction to the beginnings of FD by Prof. Tatsuyoshi Saijo, the founder of the project in Japan and a distinguished practitioner

of experimental economics. Dr. Keiichiro Kobayashi, a member of our editorial committee, introduces also the basic concepts of FD, its goals and how it works. Then we have an article by Ritsuji Yoshioka, a young official working for the town of Yahaba in Iwate Prefecture, which reveals the town’s pioneering work on the application of FD to its waterworks project.

After a general understanding of FD has been outlined in these three articles, we then offer a variety of pieces on specific issues where FD can be applied as follows. Toshiaki Hiromitsu, a Japanese Ministry of Finance official, introduces its application to fiscal policy, and Prof. Tetsusei Kurashiki talks about its application to risk communication, an important aspect of disaster management, especially bearing in mind the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011. Prof. Yoichi Hizen shows how FD can be adopted by political systems, while Prof. Chiaki Matsunaga and Prof. Shunsuke Managi, in their article, discuss Inclusive Wealth as an important concept for policy evaluation in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and suggest how FD could work well with this. Dr. Ryuta Aoki, a neuroscientist, introduces the intersecting of FD and neuroscience, showing how human brain functions can work to support FD.

Finally, we interviewed Dr. Ashok Khosla, a distinguished Indian opinion leader on poverty and the environment, about how FD could contribute to human welfare. He emphasized it should also address extreme poverty as well as other long-term issues.

## (Brief Introductions)

### COVER STORY 1

#### Beginning of Future Design

By Tatsuyoshi Saijo

Kochi University of Technology started its FD-related



study in 2014 under Prof. Saijo's leadership as founding director of the university's Research Institute for Future Design.

#### COVER STORY 2

##### **Future Design Research: the Issues**

By Keiichiro Kobayashi

FD's goal is to bring players into the current political decision-making process who are assigned to represent the interests of future generations. Political philosophy justifies that those representing future generations' interests would work for them not through sympathy but by employing simple logic.

#### COVER STORY 3

##### **Future Design Applied in the Town of Yahaba in Iwate Prefecture**

By Ritsuji Yoshioka

A workshop on "Comprehensive Strategy on Community, People, and Job Creation" for the implementation of FD in the town of Yahaba has worked well and shown it would be possible for the FD approach to create groups of people who will stand up for the benefit of future generations.

#### COVER STORY 4

##### **Reflection of Long-term Fiscal Policy Through Moral Philosophy & Experimental Social Science**

By Toshiaki Hiromitsu

Research intensively applying ethics and experimental social science shows it can help solve long-term fiscal issues, something which has not been considered in thinking about fiscal policy up to now.

#### COVER STORY 5

##### **Future Design-Based Risk Communication**

By Tetsusei Kurashiki

Risk communication by dissemination of scientific knowledge about disasters was insufficient at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake. FD could be useful in tackling disaster prevention and response education.

#### COVER STORY 6

##### **Future Design for Political Systems**

By Yoichi Hizen

Establishing a new electoral system creating a representative seat for future generations and a ballot for the sake of future generations must be considered for their benefit.

#### COVER STORY 7

##### **Inclusive Wealth & Policy Making**

By Chiaki Matsunaga & Shunsuke Managi

An "Inclusive Wealth Index" should be used as a yardstick for evaluating sustainability and a standard economic indicator in the light of SDGs. This would lead to social progress incorporating FD.

#### COVER STORY 8

##### **Neuro Future Design: Prospecting a New Transdisciplinary Science for a Sustainable Society**

By Ryuta Aoki

Human beings have the capacity to imagine a future event as if they are experiencing it now, thus differentiating them from chimpanzees and other animals. "Futurability" is thus a part of human nature. The human brain also demonstrates incredible malleability in response to social and environmental factors, and changes in social systems could change human nature.

#### COVER STORY 9

Interview with Dr. Ashok Khosla, Chairman of the Development Alternatives Group

##### **Future Design Is a Good Idea, If It Also Addresses Extreme Poverty**

By Japan SPOTLIGHT

Without solving extreme poverty, we cannot solve environmental problems, since much of the damage to the environment, such as deforestation, is often directly related to or caused by poverty. FD would have to take this into account.

Naoyuki Haraoka is editor-in-chief of *Japan SPOTLIGHT* & executive managing director of the Japan Economic Foundation (JEF).