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**Inventing the new concept of ‘learning’ for the era
of the 100-year life in Japan: Creating society
comprising countless ‘small societies’
organized through ‘learning’**

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Inventing the new concept of “learning” for the era of the 100-year life in Japan: Creating society comprising countless “small societies” organized through “learning”

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Abstract The pessimism on the super aged society that has developed across the country in Japan for around 30 years has finally begun to dissipate and has found symbolic expression as “the era of the 100 year-life”

We are already moving from the past industrial society to the next new society. In this new society, people live in a diversified and shrinking society based on uniqueness and relationships. Its concrete practice is an attempt to confirm the creation of countless “small societies” where people exercising their own agency become the leading actors.

What we see in various practices in local communities is the “movement” where people create and renew the self through interactions with others. There, the “small society” is reconstituted continuously, creating overlapping multiple layers. People move freely between these layers, creating a more diverse “society”.

There, the process of creating “society” is through “learning”, and the process of “learning” is also recreating “society” itself. Only through this dialectic will social trust emerge. People will trust each other through the “movement” of “learning”; “society” will continue to evolve, and people will continue to dynamically construct their own existence. Thus, people’s existence itself is embodied in “learning” and “society”.

Keywords: Small society, Society 5.0, lifelong learning, 100-year life, sustainable communities, self, population trends, movements, local, place based.



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Table of Contents

Super aged society as the issue	1
Sustainability of society as a goal	2
Towards the 100-year life society	3
Society old and new	4
An intolerant society	5
The AI era and poverty as a social challenge	6
Dependence and the loss of responsibility	7
A society of downward levelling or progressing to imagination and empathy?	8
Leading a life of imagination with others through creativity	9
The idea of a “small society”	9
A bottleneck in the consumer society	10
Grandparent-grandchild relationships and mutual recognition	11
“Learning” as “movement”	12
“Learning” as re-inventing oneself for a life of meaning and purpose	15
References	18



Super aged society as the issue

Pessimism on the super aged society has spread over the country in Japan for around 30 years. A movement trying to dispel this pessimism has now been born.

In Japan’s society, a declining birth-rate and the extension of the lifespan have resulted in a rapidly aging population and an accompanying abrupt population reduction. Moreover, the generation of baby boomers¹ has already reached retirement age, and some of them are becoming elderly people over 75 years old. Facing such a situation, it is no exaggeration to say that pessimism has become endemic in this society, enhancing the theory of an aging society crisis.

In Japan, there are also political issues called the 2025 problems. That is:

- The baby boomer generation will become late elderly (over 75 years old)
- One in three people will be over 65 years old
- One in five people will be over 75 years old
- 12 million people in the population (i.e. 10% of the population) will suffer from dementia
- Social security expenses will increase from 120 trillion yen to 150 trillion yen as the Special Account in the government budget (The General Account of Japan was about 100 trillion yen in 2018)

The social security system in Japan which now supports the elderly was based on an expanding economy supported by manufacturing industry and increasing labour force participation. We have experienced now a major shift from the demographic structure of the 19th century model to a 21st century model; and, the social security system that we have been using was established in the early period of this structural change of population in the 1960s-80s is no longer fit for purpose and is now causing dysfunctional effects in today’s ageing society.

This pessimism about the super aged society is a result of social unrest caused by the malfunctioning of society. It may be said that it is a result of a sense of crisis brought about by the shrinking labour market.

¹ Commonly defined as those born between 1946 and 1964.



In order to address this crisis, where the elderly have become a policy problem and its solution has become a major policy issue. Moreover, the ever-growing number of elderly people has been attracting attention in economic terms as the only expanding market in the society where the market shrinks as a whole. In this society, people see the ageing population as the society of the elderly; and, solving the problem of the elderly will lead to a reduction in the social burden, and have economic merit as well. However, various initiatives, including policies targeting the issue, have had little success up to now.

Sustainability of society as a goal

Something is missing from this point of view. What we see when we ask questions from the viewpoint of the aged society is as follows. An aged society is a society in which the lifespan of people is prolonged, the proportion of elderly people increases which along with the declining birth-rate, results in rapid population reduction; but, in that society, infants, adolescents and even middle-aged people, live with the elderly. In this way, we have to change our perspective on society. What we have to ask is not only the way we deal with the elderly problem, but rather the way we can deliver social stability for the next generation, and the way we can create a more sustainable society by achieving greater participation of elderly people in this society.

From this point of view, we can reflect on the following. We are already moving forward from the industrial society of the past to the next new society. In the past industrial society, economic activities have been carried out on a premise that allowed for expanding scale, and people have been treated as anonymous pegs. In other words, people were viewed as labour and purchasing power only, and they were instrumentalized to that view.

However, in the new society, it will be recognized that people exist as individuals in relation to others, and they are each engaged in their own life. People will live in a diversified and shrinking society based on uniqueness and relationships. In that society, people are respected as having unique social and personal existence. In other words, in that society, people are treated as a goal, not as instruments (Jinno, 2015). Their needs, especially commercial and daily needs of people, are not those owned by individuals, but are created from person to person relationships.



Towards the 100-year life society²

The stalemate resulting from the pessimism of an ageing society will lead in the direction of a new society in which everyone creates their own values, and envisions and realizes a society where people live fully with others and live the 100-year life³. From the above viewpoint, this social movement will seem to be a natural progression.

One of the early attempts to envision a 100-year life society was undertaken by the Japanese Government in September 2017 when they established the Council for Designing the 100-year Life Society. By June 2018 the Council had finalized a basic design for the political strategy of the Human Resources Development Revolution. This revolution addressed the challenge of enhancing the quality of individual lives accompanied by the policy called the Productivity Revolution⁴ which is at the core of the Japanese Growth Strategy.

In this paper, the partners in the Council discussed the way people would celebrate the era of 100-year life. The paper reached conclusions in five areas: free early childhood education, free higher education, university reform, promoting recurrent (Lifelong Learning) education and promotion of employment for the elderly.⁵ The paper discussed how people would learn and play their own part in various life stages, while discussing the idea of educational and employment reform. In other words, the idea was to give people agency to take the leading role in making and shaping this society and the role of learning in it. These ideas were discussed in the context of the shift from the conventional life stage theory to the multi-stage life theory.

This proposal was accompanied by a shift in the gaze of the social perspective to an unprecedented super aged society. In other words, rather than seeking to solve the problem of the elderly, in order to pass this society to the next generation, it explored instead how adults, including the elderly, will respond to the next generation of children and pass on this kind of model to them by demonstrating how to raise young people to a leading role in this society. From this perspective, the elderly will change their position from their current social situation with care objectives to a leading role

² For an overview see Gratton and Scott (2016)

³ For example, you can see a part of it in the [National Council for Designing the 100-year Life Society](#) established in the Cabinet Secretariat of the National Government of Japan, and in the 100-year Life Society Network established in Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan.

⁴ <https://www.rieti.go.jp/en/papers/contribution/morikawa/10.html>

⁵ For an in-depth look at labour market reforms for an ageing society see OECD (2019)



responsible for this society and nurturing the next generation.⁶

This is a change of values and perspectives that converts the aged society into a society where all people become active actors in society, with these relationships symbolized in “the era of 100-year life”. Such a society is not one that we can call an aged society. Rather, it should be seen as a “healthy longevity society”: a society that gives meaning and purpose to the lives of its inhabitants regardless of age.

Society old and new

One way of building such a new healthy longevity society is through “place”. There, people are inhabitants as individuals inseparable from others, while being unique. They create and manage their society by themselves, stabilize the foundations of their own lives, realize their wants and continue to learn and grow. They are driven as active citizens of a place or community enjoying life to the full, including fun and pleasure.

This “place” will be called a “small society” in this paper. Philosophers recognize the importance of play in our lives, and in this emerging society we have to recognize the importance of fun and pleasure generated from creating and managing the small society. People’s existence is based on mutual recognition in face-to-face relationships in spatial contexts that give meaning and purpose to people’s lives.

Right now, we are confronted with a situation where the old society of the expanding and reproduction economy promoted by manufacturing industry collapses. In that society, many people lived a similar life based on the premise of increasing population to drive production and demand. In that society, expansionary economic growth, progress, the development of people’s lives, and those of other people, were the social values of that society, as well as the values that drove the economy.

In that society, individuals, families, companies and the government were directly connected through the national school system. Young people were told: if you want to make a happy life in the future, you should study hard, go to a good school, enter a good university, get a job at a big

⁶ In the Report of the Kanagawa 100-year Life Society Network "Towards a Sustainable 100-year Life Society - A Report of 2017 ", March 2018, various ideas of the elderly to play as a social actor are described.



company, work hard, and that way, your salary will increase and the tax revenue will increase too, and the government will guarantee the rest of your life.

Companies and families were the key to social stability and security. Companies, especially large companies, provided enhanced welfare programs through lifetime employment and seniority, and at home, housewives were responsible for housework, childcare and care of the elderly.

The school, as the national education system, had the key role of connecting the family and the company. In that environment, the belief in academic achievement dominated people’s perceptions, and a fierce competition to advance to higher level or more prestigious schools spread across the country.

An intolerant society

In the consumer society following the industrial society, the group, like the family, changed its character. It no longer had meaning as a cohesive unit, but became the place where its isolated members ate meals alone, and lived lonely and disjointed lives. The lives of people had lost a sense of purpose in a society with less cohesion and stability.

Yet, behind this situation, a society that calls for self-responsibility was developing. In this society, failure and success are all regarded as personal responsibilities. Relations that mutually helped people were lost in the past. In Japan, this past society centred on manufacturing industry. Children who were immature for a period, were supposed to become the carriers of this society as a result of their growth and development. So, the need existed to cultivate and train them. Children were taken as having future undeveloped values and ‘selves’. Child development was a matter of concern for society as whole, and various fluctuations seen in their growth processes were seen by people as something that society should take responsibility for. This was a grey zone in the process of development of children in the industrial society. The growth and development of children was reflected in this framework with the analogy of economic development, with child development a kind of factory system.

However, in this consumer society, it became required that children themselves have instant and immediate social value, and that they are the finished products of each part of the process of education and development. In this society, people will be required to be finished products and ask



others to treat themselves as complete products. Learning to be is an individual and rather lonely process. An intolerant relationship is fostered that requires one to be immersed in this personal identity at all times. Within this relationship, people, including children, are becoming isolated as a result of being required to act with self-reliance, while also strengthening the sense of being defensive and isolated from others, who are also required to take personal responsibility. Society becomes insular and atomised, driven by self-interest and becomes an intolerant place. This is not a society to build an empathic sustainable civilization.

The AI era and poverty as a social challenge

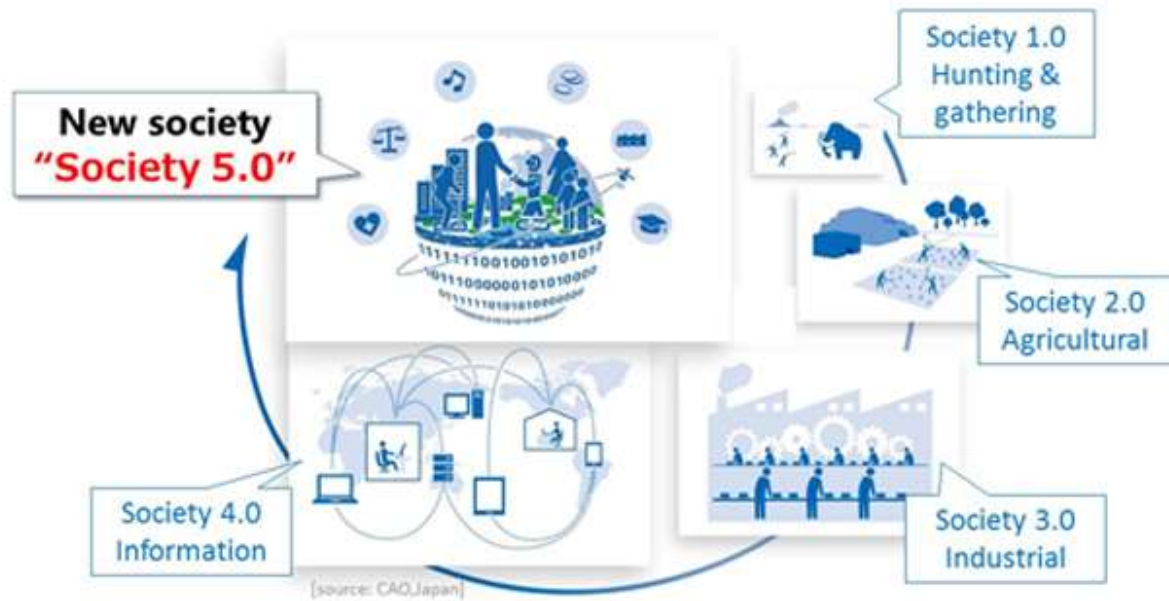
While such social issues have surfaced, technological innovation, called Society 5.0 in Japan,⁷ is progressing. Amid progress in technological innovation, such as AI and IT in particular, the manner of employment continues to change. Nearly 65 percent of new university graduates will enter work in jobs that do not exist now by the year 2030.⁸ It is also estimated that by 2030, we will face an era when about 50% of the work currently being done is automated (Frey and Osborne, 2013).⁹ It has also been pointed out that already AI has cleared the deviation value 60 level in Japanese college entrance examination and accounts for 80% of the white-collar workers layer in Japan. This means that 80% of white-collar workers may lose their jobs in the future (Arai, 2018).

Furthermore, in Japan, a disparate society has evolved, and poverty, particularly child poverty, has become a severe social problem. Currently, it is estimated that one out of every six persons identified statistically as children (0 to 14 years old) are in poor families, and the proportion will exceed 50%, if you include single parent families, especially those with a female single parent, and the highest proportion of comparator OECD countries (Naikakufu [Cabinet Office of National Government, Japan], 2015).

⁷ https://www8.cao.go.jp/cstp/english/society5_0/index.html

⁸ Cathy Davidson pointed out in the interview article of the New York Times in August 2011. A related article is: https://daveporter.typepad.com/global_strategies/2011/08/65-percent-of-todays-grade-school-kids-may-end-up-doing-work-that-hasnt-been-invented-yet.html .
<https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/07/education-needs-a-digital-age-upgrade/>

⁹ According to their forecasts, among the 702 jobs currently in the US, around 2030, 47% of that job will be replaced by artificial intelligence etc.



Further, it is known that poverty is handed down from generations through differences in educational opportunities. In this case, the disparity in educational opportunities appears as a difference in access to information and social resources created by learning become marketised and reconstructed into personal attributes, which leads to disparities in academic ability, and reproduces the hierarchal disparity found in society. A society divided into two poles with a growth in inequality globally.

Dependence and the loss of responsibility

What was lost in the consumer society was the sense that people created local communities in mutually trusting relationships, with empowerment and autonomy. In such a society, consumers were king, but they also relied on administrators and service providers. This led to a sense that they were isolated and helpless.

People who are dependent and powerless consumers become defensive and punitive, further deepening the degree of isolation as society is demolished. As a result, the municipality becomes exhausted and it becomes impossible to guarantee the welfare of residents, especially the socially vulnerable. People become poorer, and society is further divided and fragmented.

But previously, our life was not so fragile. Losing sight of ourselves as living beings interacting



with others in this society, losing a sense of living a life together, and losing the sense that we are building society together, we rely on the administration providing services for each of us. This made us become a complainant, who became punitive as we excluded ourselves from social connections. Is not this dependence and loss of personal responsibility the main reason we do not enjoy and benefit from this healthy longevity society? Longevity for a longer life without meaning and purpose would seem little reward?

A society of downward levelling or progressing to imagination and empathy?

Independence is not the alias of isolation. It is not possible to say that a strong individual tries to profit by fighting with another person to assert his independence. The result is the individual deepens the degree of isolation and retreats from the pleasure of living in this society.¹⁰ On the contrary, if you are always enriching your pleasure by constantly being interested in others, working with imagination as if you desire that person’s desire, and responding to that person’s identity and life, this means that you do not live by yourself, but that you are living in society. You are independent, not isolated, but empowered, living a life with meaning and purpose.

An empathic life is a fulfilling life as you desire and realize other people’s desires and lives. You make your imagination work, make people’s pleasures your own pleasures, and use your imagination to enlarge your own life, this become central to your life. An imaginative empathic life is a creative life. There will be tolerance and acceptance and an enlarged consciousness that expands local and global dimensions. In this imaginative empathic society, it is quite natural that everything is different, and people are different from each other, so that you feel that you are accepted among others and welcome the existence of others. Such a society brings charm, beauty, an enhanced sense of mental health and well-being; and, above all, a society that is sustainable. Inclusion is an everyday fact of life.

However, in our present world, those who have lost their imagination and sense of responsibility are locked into an outdated perspective. They tend to be aggressive towards others and to stick to

¹⁰ In relation to this point the concept of hikikomori may be relevant
<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/04/d5183b807f64-feature-what-japans-hikikomori-can-teach-us-about-self-isolation.html>



isolation, so called independence. Such people speak with aggression while asking others to take care of themselves. Such a fragmented society leads people to distrust each other and abuse themselves. This is not a sustainable society.

In such a society, a downward levelling will occur. The reason why Japanese society has lost vitality is because a mutual collapse has occurred, and a better society has not emerged. In this present society, people are afraid of criticism from others, and try to avoid failure. As a result, innovation seldom occurs.

Leading a life of imagination with others through creativity

To recognize each other rather than to be isolated, to improve each other rather than to crush each other, to control conflict and reform others upwards into a higher-order creation, we have to think, practice and realize the foundations of our society. We have to reimagine the contours of a sustainable society for the future. A path to such a society involves a small community in which we can bond and interact with each other. We become independent by relying on each other.

In this society, we are empowered not to compete with others, rather to create new value in collaboration with others. We seek to construct this society not for powerful individuals to beat other people and take leadership, but for powerless individuals to help each other and create a place where everyone can be positioned, and create new social value together. In this society, the ideas of a defender who will leave no one behind will become important (Washida, 2015). This site is the “place” of people living well, that is, a “small society”. It is a place where inclusion is the norm.

The idea of a “small society”

Today, we are impelled by ageing populations to seize social changes, like those mentioned above, and explore ways to reconstruct these into a world with empathy and hope. We are impelled to overcome the super aged society pessimism that had spread throughout society, by positioning all people as the protagonists of their own lives, and encouraging them to participate in society to the full. In doing this, people will enhance their own personal fulfilment, and contribute to the social possibility of creating a vibrant 100-year life society. The concrete expression of this path to a good sustainable future is the drive to integrate the creation of countless “small societies” where



people take the leading role.

In reimagining society in this way, it will be necessary to change our social perspective on the elderly. It will be necessary to set concrete practical tasks, examine the ways of interaction between the elderly and the next generations, especially the grandchild generation. However, implementing these changes, while fostering the next generation that is responsible for society, will require careful planning, promotion, and research. The elderly generation will have a key role in the transmission of norms and values while also nurturing children, who are the grandchild generation, into the leading role in society. These are important roles for the existing generations, including the elderly.

As background to all this, is the fact that society was originally inherited by grandparent-grandchild generations. From that, a modern society was created that has values focused on development and expansion through scale, in the case of Japan, centred on manufacturing industry. People migrated to the big cities where manufacturing industry was concentrated and they formed the parent and child generation of nuclear families there. Moreover, in that modern society, “home” was created as a closed space that was not located in the local community so that it functioned as an “education” space where mother-child relations dominated. In the long history of human society, this has been a way of social development unique to the so-called industrial society, centred on manufacturing industry in the past half century. We are clearly in transition to a different society.

A bottleneck in the consumer society

Furthermore, industrial society was based on a social division of labour where children’s education and care for the elderly are delegated to professionals. The children were enclosed in “schools”, the elderly was enclosed in “nursing care facilities”, and the space where the elderly and children interacted together was lost.

Moreover, in this society, the middle-aged man (the so-called worker) was the leading actor in society. They were the tools and means of economic development, as the labour force with purchasing power. In this society, people could not fulfil diverse roles in varied human relationships in families and communities. They were not multi-faceted social beings that acquired



a range of skills and “functional abilities”. Rather they were seen as labour and purchasing power that was caught up in a general, anonymous individual existence. Therefore, in this society, when people lost their labour force position through unemployment, they would also lose their social value, and would be marginalised to an unseen existence.

However, society has already passed the era of conventional industrial society and is developing for the next consumer society. Schools are no longer a place to foster anonymous existence as a single-skilled worker who has gained labour force status. Schools have been required to guarantee a variety of experiences for children, and in relationships and cooperation with others, to foster social actors who can live their own lives in a more diverse and complex society.

In other words, society has begun to move from a society in which nuclear families with similar characteristics, enclosed in space and separated from each other; towards a society in which grandparent-grandchild relationships constitute an open intimate area. In this emerging society, where people are beginning to be reorganized towards a people-focused society, where people fulfil various social roles while accumulating a range of experiences, and enhancing their well-being and quality of life.

Grandparent-grandchild relationships and mutual recognition

Moreover, this path to a better society, with such interdependence between generations, is linked with reorganizing the isolation of people, caused by the consumer society, into a relationship of mutual confidence that such intergenerational relationships have brought. In this new society, the way of life of everyone will change.

A crucial change will be that from an isolated existence, to that of the self-sustaining existence created in “mutual relationships” with others. Such an existence will respond to social needs through interdependence with others and in relationships of mutual recognition with others. In this society, “learning”, that is totally different to “education” which is in a separated space socially, will continue to create the existence of people in “mutual relationships” with others, and build a society which will be open to all people. (Makino, 2017)

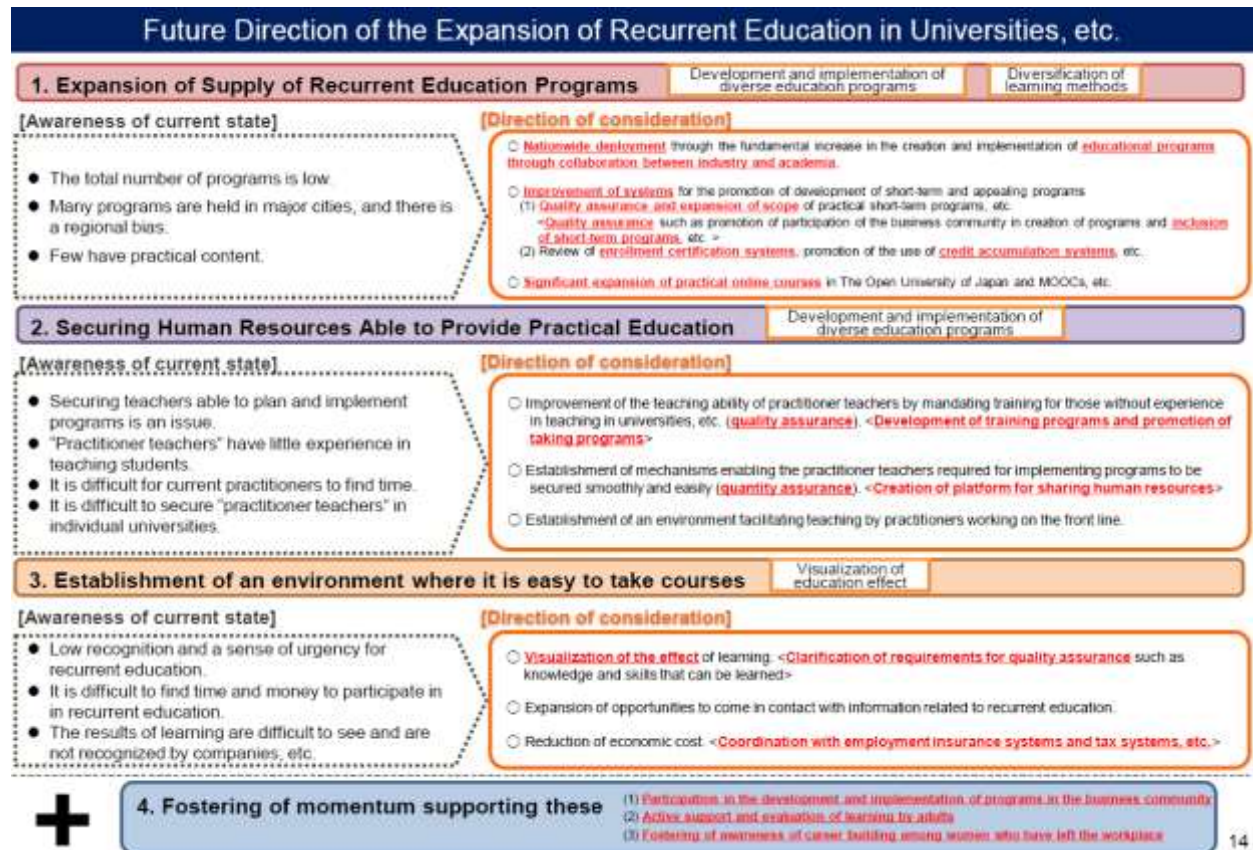
These movements are linked not only to policy at the basic municipal level, but also to national policy trends in recent years that emphasize the creation of a “small society” as a measure of



reforming society as a whole and adapting it to the era of the 100-year life.

“Learning” as “movement”

The *National Council for Designing the 100-year Life Society* in its final report of 2018 emphasised recurrent education and lifelong learning, with a view to a life that is changing to the multi-stage life (The National Council for the Designing 100-year Life Society, 2018).



Source: Suzuki, 2018

The main focus of the life of people which is changing to the multi-stage life is the “place” where everyday life happens, that is, a community in which people interact with each other in face-to-face relationships. That is a “small society”. In such a “small society”, there is a focus on independence and autonomy created through people’s “learning”.

It is crucial for society in the future to form diverse and multiple “small societies”. These efforts for the construction of “small societies” have the following characteristics.

Firstly, these are all experienced in the fields of residents’ autonomous organizations (or equivalent



level communities) of the underlying strata of civil society that should be the foundation of the municipality. This reflects that the focus of policy has shifted recently from the national level, beyond prefectural level, to communities where people exist as residents who live their lives in this space. On the other hand, it is also a manifestation of the fact that attention is being paid to places where people live their daily lives by themselves as residents, resulting from decentralization reforms, changes in economic structure, and fluctuations in the existence of people. In other words, emphasis is placed on confirming the existence of people in specific human relationships, particularly, mutual recognition relationships.

The more the market becomes globalized, the more people are left out of national decision making and involvement, the more people question how a new, concrete way of life that restores the feeling of their existence and identity can be developed. Up to now, the national culture and national morality of the state forms people as citizens, but cannot guarantee the identity of people. Physicality, in the places of daily life (that should be the basis for linking people to the country), and that build the relationships of people to the country, no longer serve this role, and have largely been dismantled.

This leads to the paradox that people easily sink into the fiction of national culture and national morality. But in that context, people cannot see their existence in mutually approval relations. So, they cannot help feeling that their existence is empty, and while they try to depend on this fiction, the outcome is emptiness. A vicious cycle has been formed.

Confronting the reality of such a society is a community where people live and work in concrete daily life with other people. This network is a place of residence of variously connected residents. Their efforts are the practices that residents in such a place, and in relationship with others, try to create a new community, that is, a “small society”.

Moreover, this mutual recognition relationship of people as residents, is a self-affirmation based on these relationships; and is a society made through activities and interactions with friends. It is not consumer satisfaction which serves as a so-called administrative response.

Secondly, people are standing up personally as actors who create local communities with concrete actions and activities in mutual recognition relationships with others. People are trying to rebuild



their existence in a more specific local community.

In this socio-economic structural transformation, “work” is excluded from people's labour processes. The “work”, through which people were encouraged to participate in with others, and which would develop an awareness of "us" by aiming for the future together, has been transformed.

So in this crisis people lose their physicality; that is, temporally and spatially in their daily life, and have difficulty in perceiving their own existence. (Makino, 2010)

Furthermore, the acquisition of a new physicality and the creation of their own existence based on the specific relationships with other people in the local community show the possibility of generating an economy based at the local community level, that is, the “small society”. It means that people constitute their existence as a “movement” of self-organization, identity and self-transformation, and this movement continues to generate new value for the local community.

People in such a small society engage with others and recognize each other mutually, through their own unique but universal existence, as the mediators in the concrete community built together. They realize that their own existence is both unique and universal at the same time. Moreover, in relation to others, people create their own identity, while continuing to construct an existence that is diverse and multiple in relationships. Learning to be is an ongoing process as the individual transforms into a “new self”, as they are also changed, or transformed, through others.

In this society, the need to generate and deploy this “movement” will be developed. This forms a new market. There is a unified relationship between the process of generation and circulation of such value; and, the fact that the residents themselves constantly create and change themselves to a new “self” in these “mutual relationships” with others. That will be a way to create a “small society” as a new market. In this “small society”, the residents, who will constantly re-new themselves as actors of the local community and change themselves continuously, will create these “mutual relationships” with others and configure social values through these “relationships”. This is a dynamic society always on the move, creating new values, but it is a sustainable society.

In these ideas, the way that the self continues to consistently recreate itself as a leading actor or agent in this local community will continue to evolve in these “mutual relationships” with others.



This becomes the “movement” of “learning”. It is also a process in which people create relationships of mutual recognition and interaction with others through “learning” and continue to constitute themselves as being re-born in these relationships, changing, and keeping oneself forever new. This is truly “learning to be” as the UNESCO Faure report proclaimed.

As noted “movement” is “learning”. Therefore, “learning” becomes the way people exist. In other words, “learning” is an interactive and dynamic process that continually replicates its existence in interactions through relationships with others, and is a way of being able to always maintain equilibrium. This is true not only in so-called local or existing communities, but also in new communities such as people’s networks, working environments and workshops. This would build a new kind of learning organization in the workplace.

This “learning” is a social existence of an individual, but it is not a consistent unique “one”. It becomes “many” which manifest a state of equilibrium through ongoing change and the continuance of flow. The way that people constantly continue to create new relationships of self with others is through constantly changing or transforming. In other words, it is a subjective and free activity of self-formation. Here, “learning” and “movement” as people’s existence are synonymous.

In this sense, people’s existence is “learning”, that is, a mutual relationship with other people. This is the process in which people’s existence is constantly linked to the “many” because of flux, and is unique because of the “many”. This is the “place” in which people’s existence is constantly rebuilding.

In other words, “learning” is not only the existence of oneself, but also the way of “society” where “I” always emerges as “we” through interaction with others. It is the way of a society that is not created by expansion of networks, but is created by the formation of countless dots called “small societies”. (Makino, 2018)

“Learning” as re-inventing oneself for a life of meaning and purpose

We are at present facing the transition of our society in this way. This is the turning point in the structural transformation of society. A “small society” as described above will develop in diverse



ways. “Small societies”, as dots in this landscape, gently overlap and interact with each other, and constitute multiple layers. People continue to create their own “life”, their worthwhile existence while coming and going through these layers. This will create a new economy and the possibility of recombining people’s lives in ways that are rich and valued. That “society” is the way of connecting people with others, and is the very existence of “life”. It is “learning” itself which generates the connection between people and which keeps recombining itself.

“Learning” is the way people exist, that is “life”. So that, “learning” is also an ideal way of “society”, and the dynamic process for the formation and transformation of “society”. I have called it a “small society”. Such a “life” is also something that people must continue to create. Learning to be is an on-going process in the longevity society of the “hundred-year life”. It is a “life” of surprises whenever someone meets their new self, which is a lot of fun every time. By having such a fun life of on-going development, someone can feel that he/she is an indispensable part of society. These motives drive the people to give meaning and purpose to their lives.

Moreover, these driving forces are owned by everyone. They are also triggered in the “mutual relationships” with others. It is the ability to live fully by trying to make use of one’s self in contributing to this society. It is a force where the posteriori affirmation of oneself, a life of creativity, at times surprising to oneself, is created through the interaction of recognition of others in the “small society” based on face-to-face relationship. In such a way, an empathic civilization could be created.

This society will be constructed into many “small societies” in which people are the driving force to make and create the future themselves. “Small societies” will be created in every part of society, and will constitute a bigger “society”. By doing so, people will acknowledge the human dignity of each other and keep making “society” constantly renewed, while continuing to reinvent oneself, and so richly creating a real feeling of living there fully in a place. In other words, people will create this society into a value-rich, enjoyable society in which to live.

This is the “society” in which everyone is a full member of the “small society” in which they continue to create themselves, feeling the wonder of life and understanding that they live in this place with others. This will give new meanings to the notions of inclusion and social justice. The



practice of creating such a “small society” and managing it, which is “learning”, is starting to be initiated widely in the daily layers of people’s lives. (Makino, 2015). The era of the 100-year life in Japan has commenced.

What we see in various practices in local places is the “movement” through which people keep re-creating themselves bringing excitement into a rich life. That creates the existence of people in “society”. These “small societies” overlap each other, interact and influence each other, and create multiple layers of existence. People move freely between the layers, creating a more diverse “society”. This is a society of “learning to be” where people engage in self-formation activities in which people recognize dignity in each other, invent new rights, and make these mutual relationships that configure “society” in relation to others.

This should be called “learning”. Therefore, the process of creating “society” is “learning”, and the process of “learning” is also “society” itself. In this dialectical relationship, society is constantly being recombined and people continue to produce new value. In such a new consumer society’s view, people enjoy the process, share their enjoyment and capture the spirit.

Only in this place, will social confidence emerge. On this basis, people will create themselves in mutual relationships with others, and will live together in harmony and respect. People will have confidence in each other through the “movement” of “learning”, and “society” will continue to be created new ways. People will continue to dynamically construct their own existence.

In this society, everyone is a partner in “learning” and a partner who co-creates “society”. The new society is established on the basis of these aspirations for a life well lived that has begun in many places.

The “small society” is one of the exciting new forms of the super aged society that we are welcoming and making together. The 100-year life will be and should be a better life for all.



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