Editor’s Note: Overview of the JSIJ Inaugural Issue

Maria MAKABENTA IKEDA *

We would like to welcome readers to the newly-launched Japan Social Innovation Journal (JSIJ), an online journal that provides a venue for academics, researchers, professionals and practitioners in the fields related to social innovation, to offer their views and to showcase the diversity of innovative thought and ways that create benefits for society.

The JSIJ is the official journal of the Institute for Policy Analysis and Social Innovation (IPS) at the University of Hyogo in Kobe, Japan. The decision to publish JSIJ as an online journal was made not only to allow free access of articles but also to gain high visibility for JSIJ articles to a wider audience of academics, social entrepreneurs, nonprofit and non-government organizations as well as policymakers.

It is our hope that in due course we can attract a certain measure of international readership for the JSIJ in the coming years to help increase the awareness and provide a venue for discussion of social issues as well as socially innovative ideas and activities in the world with a special focus on Japan, the emerging economies in Asia-Pacific and the European regions. Impact of various structural changes, advancements in information technology and globalization in various economies lead to a rich diversity of unmet needs and problems; and though we believe that the nature of policy dynamics is quite distinct and unique to each country, there are commonalities in the research initiatives focused on the systematic analysis of the new approaches to innovation for countries, regions and cities cutting across public, private and nonprofit boundaries to resolve issues. The potential benefits in sharing knowledge and learning from each other’s experiences are vast.

The coverage of the JSIJ includes the range of topics concerned with the design, implementation, and evaluation of socio-economic development policies and their impact on communities; the impact on regional economies of industrial policy; effects of demographic changes such as aging, labor migration on communities and the formulation of regional revitalization programs; the implementation of best practices of social responsibility, transparency, accountability in local governments, businesses and organizations in general; governance, legislation and other institutional mechanisms that affect entrepreneurship, wealth creation, maintaining the balance between economic efficiency and ecological sustainability of communities; the role of education in resource mobilization for social causes; the development of information networks that enhance creativity and learning, knowledge management, disaster management and, formation of social collaborative networks that break the barriers of language, ethnicity, etc. in culturally diverse societies. The JSIJ looks forward to linking theory and everyday work that build the preconditions conducive to the birth of innovative ideas and mechanisms aimed at boosting economic development and sustainable social systems for the future.

1 EDITORIAL POLICY

The results of scientific research and practical experience as well as commentaries published in the JSIJ will be made available to readers free of charge. The JSIJ team is dedicated to its task of ensuring that the JSIJ attracts high quality contributions from around the world for the purpose of providing readers with a practical and relevant journal. For the present, we accept contributions via email transmission. Submitted manuscripts will be managed efficiently and publication decisions

*Maria Makabenta Ikeda is Associate Professor at the Institute for Policy Analysis and Social Innovation and University of Hyogo School of Economics in Kobe, Japan.
will be processed as quickly as possible. We know that this will be a key factor in attracting a wide readership as well as potential authors. The authors hold non-exclusive copyright of their work, though this mutual agreement with JSIJ permits authors to use, republish parts of the article, and/or post the published (PDF) version of the article on his/her personal web site subject only to giving appropriate credit to JSIJ as the original source of publication. JSIJ articles are archived in the digital collection of electronic publications of the National Diet Library (NDL) of Japan and preparations are under way for JSIJ to be indexed in various repositories.

Manuscripts submitted to the JSIJ are managed by the Editors. The Editors assign an article to two or more members of the Board for refereeing and publication decision. However, submitted manuscripts may be returned to authors after a careful prescreening by either of the editors generally based on a number of considerations such as subject matter suitability, interest to the JSIJ audience, or quality or competitiveness of the manuscript that do not meet JSIJ standards, among others. Papers are assigned on the basis of the expertise of a board member, as well as other factors such as conflict of interest, availability and workload. Papers submitted by a member of the JSIJ Board are generally handled by either of the Editors employing appropriate confidentiality procedures. Submitted manuscripts are reviewed via the double blind referee system, that is, without revealing the name of the author on the manuscript, and in turn, the names of referees are not included in the comment or feedback forms sent to authors. With advice from a team of experts in various fields, the Editors may invite specific individuals who have done or are doing significant work in the fields related to social innovation to write for JSIJ and these invited papers are neither subject to peer review nor page length limitations.

2 THE JSIJ EDITORIAL BOARD

With this vast range of topics, the Editors rely heavily on the Editorial Board composed of Advisors and Peer Reviewers for advice and evaluation of submitted manuscripts. The Board is composed of distinguished and dynamic researchers and professionals representing several countries outside of Japan including Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the UK and the US. They bring not only a wealth of diversity but also expertise as well as research and practical experience to the JSIJ. Members are selected for their professional reliability in refereeing for the JSIJ on the variety of topics represented in prospective submissions. The term of a JSIJ board member is from one (1) year to three (3) years and renewable thereafter.

We are very pleased to welcome onboard stalwarts of social innovation and entrepreneurship such as Geoff Mulgan, Pegram Harrison, Chris Gibbons and Alan Kay with their knowledge and experience in social enterprises, business planning, leadership and community enterprise development. Modeling of endogenous growth in economic development and regional regeneration efforts are the specialized fields of Takashi Yamamoto and Josef T. Yap. The growing importance of the so-called third sector or the voluntary sector consisting of non-profit and non-government organizations in stimulating community development and change in business organizations and civil society are among the fields of specialization of Ivana Kraftova, Tadayuki Miyamoto, and Takashi Notsu.

Many of the recent socially innovative ideas involve finance mechanisms and we have a group of specialists such as Maria Socorro G. Bautista, Yasuhiro Gintani, Masahiro Nakano, and Sadayoshi Takaya on monetary and finance who can evaluate how these mechanisms support the key stages of innovation. Examining the sources and economic consequences of innovation often point to motivations in improving market access, logistics, trade and investments, labor and welfare, and resource mobilization where the collective research interests of Hiroyuki Nishiyama, Yoshinori Takahashi, and Yukiko Yokoyama lie.

In this age of advanced information communication technologies, the JSIJ is proud to be in the counsel of Professor Toru Ishida, a well-known name in the field of social informatics, that is, an emerging field adapting new technologies with social potential -- culture and computing.
collaborative networks, intercultural collaboration, language grid and community computing. Likewise, we are most fortunate to have Professor Jan Capek whose expertise lies in the analysis of information systems, technology management, and knowledge management strategies.

Every day we find ourselves realizing that the world we live in is more open and more interconnected than we can ever imagine; and Maria Reinaruth Carlos, Lilian Terumi Hatano, Khoo Boo Tiek, Pauline Kent and Yoko Matsuda provide the JSIJ expertise in evaluating the potential effects and issues concerning multicultural diversity, migration and ethnicity. For most emerging economies in Southeast Asia, the birth of innovative ideas and the cradle of entrepreneurship lie in the stronghold of politics, legislation and the judiciary and Patricio N. Abinales, Shinichi Kusanagi, Viengrat Nethipo, Wahyu Prasetyawan are JSIJ’s experts here.

3 THE CURRENT ISSUE

As we prepare this Spring issue of JSIJ, Japan is still reeling from the impact of the devastation in the Tohoku and Kanto regions in the northeast. We at the IPS join the rest of the country and the world in grief and mourning for those who lost their families and homes in this unprecedented earthquake-tsunami-nuclear crisis disaster in Japanese history. Damages and losses have been estimated at over 16 trillion yen ($198 billion) or approximately three percent of annual GDP, according to Japanese authorities. Japan’s disaster risk management and recovery strategies are being put to test. Long-term relief and reconstruction efforts are under way as the crisis continues to unfold.

At the IPS in Kobe, our resolve to undertake initiatives in social innovation research is all the more strengthened. Sixteen years ago, the prefecture of Hyogo in Western Japan experienced the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake of January 1995. That was before the Internet boom and the rise of social networks, yet we saw more than a million volunteers involved in relief efforts to distribute food and supplies to the evacuees. Private retail companies responded by using their existing supply networks to provide necessities in affected areas, while telecommunication companies provided free telephone services for survivors. In the first article of this JSIJ inaugural issue, Yuichi Honjo, Executive Director of the Kobe Institute for Urban Research (KIUR) describes in detail the socially innovative mechanisms involved in implementing the 10-year Kobe recovery plan. In 2000 and 2005 respectively, findings of interim five-year monitoring and assessment activities using the PDCA management cycle as a tool validated and underscored the social values of self-help and community solidarity as key enablers of recovery. In turning the wheels of community development, Honjo stresses the necessity of the individual person to realize that in order for him to be an effective player in the community, a certain degree of self-governance is needed. Recognition of individual limitations at the same time makes community solidarity imperative considering that co-existence in a community and cooperation with others strengthen and accelerate recovery efforts.

In similar fashion, these notions of self-help and mutual action with social purpose characterize the Third System of an economy described in the conceptual framework used by Alan Kay, Director of the Community Business Scotland (CBS) Network, which explains how social inclusion/exclusion strategies shape social enterprises in the UK experience. At the core of this Third System are the self-help economy and the community economy while at the periphery is the social economy component made up of social enterprises, community enterprises and some voluntary organizations that are engaged in activities that trade for community or social benefit.

Socially beneficial project activities implemented on an international scale are made possible by recent cutting-edge technology and a whole lot of heart and zest for doing good in the world. Kopernik, is an example of an online giving marketplace, a new breed of social enterprises on the rise. We at the IPS have had the pleasure of having the young and dynamic social entrepreneur and Kopernik Co-founder/CEO Toshi Nakamura at the IPS Seminar in February 2011. His background and a decade-long of work experience in international development at the United Nations provided
him and his former colleague and now co-founder, Ewa Wojkowska the motivation to found Kopernik.

In his article in this issue, Nakamura identifies technology and innovation as the critical factors that enable online technology marketplaces like Kopernik to open up and change the rules of the game of philanthropy. With an expanding connectivity via the internet and mobile systems, more and more people gather in these online marketplaces to participate and donate. Nakamura also points out that contrary to the belief that the Japanese have a weak propensity to donate to charitable causes, estimates for 2008 to 2009 show that the Japanese shelled out US$12 billion for charity—an amount that is 10 percent of total global ODA flows in 2009 reported by the OECD.

Since it started operations in February 2010, Kopernik has implemented nineteen projects providing approximately 2,500 technologies that reduce the effects of poverty and improve the quality of life of rural villagers in various developing countries like Kenya, East Timor, Oecusse, Nigeria, China, Haiti, Indonesia, Vietnam, etc. Recently, Japan was included in the list of countries that benefit from the NPO’s activities. Nakamura, in a letter of appeal wrote that he never thought he would see the day that Kopernik technology originally geared towards developing countries would be sent to help Japan. They are sending solar powered lamps and hearing aid devices to the quake and tsunami-stricken areas in Tohoku where power, gas, water and basic necessities are in extreme short supply, and are actively seeking donations to support these emergency operations. Estimates as of January 2011 show 20,000 people have benefited from these life-changing technologies provided by Kopernik. Nakamura and his team’s pro bono work has garnered recognition, among them the Clean Tech runner-up honors at the 2011 Tech Crunchies last January 2011 and TEDxWarsaw in late March 2011. With successes under their belts, the hardworking Kopernik team is busy collating impact assessment data for their project activities and technologies disseminated.

There are three article contributions on two promising emerging economies: the Czech Republic in the EU and Vietnam in East Asia, both of which are enjoying rapid economic growth. This year, 2011 marks the 20th year after the implementation of economic reforms in the Czech Republic that engineered the shift from a planned to a market economy. Kraftova discusses the transformation of ownership relations or privatization as the main driver that enabled the successful transition to a market economy in the Czech Republic. Deregulation and price liberalization programs were accompanied by corresponding institutional and legislative changes which allowed the liquidation of state assets through public auctions, direct transfers or sale to private entities.

Similarly, crucial changes are under way for the legislative framework to formalize the financial sector of Vietnam. In their respective articles, Iwase and Bui discuss the details and implications of the legal provisions that affect consumer credit and allow foreign investors to do business in Vietnam. These articles show that aside from changes in the Vietnamese legal system, financial sector development is crucial condition for Vietnam’s economic growth take-off. In particular, the capability of the financial sector to efficiently intermediate between consumer savings and business investment is a key enabler of economic growth.

This special issue of the JSIJ includes a section called Voices featuring two essays. Occasionally, the Voices section will feature short commentaries and essays on social issues. These papers will not be subject to referee comments/review.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We at the IPS would like to extend our deepest appreciation to all who helped in making this JSIJ inaugural issue possible. We thank the University of Hyogo system for providing some financial and technical support as well as much-needed server space. Special thanks go to Ms. Asuka Tachibana for her excellent assistance in putting together the journal site.
And finally, we would like to thank all the contributors to this issue and members of the Board who accepted our invitation and who expressed the willingness to share their expertise, time and energy with *JSIJ*. We look forward to a healthy exchange of ideas to advance research on social innovation which will no doubt provide a better understanding of the pressing challenges of contemporary society.