Academy of the Future in Practice

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For many years a number of studies have been trying to illustrate how universities will or should be reformed under external pressures. Contrary to what the management literature has stressed, however, the organisational structure of universities has become more hierarchical and centralised in recent decades (Martin 2016). Where the organisational reform from within is at stake, transdisciplinary research (TR), problem-based learning (PBL) and education for sustainable development (ESD) as promising elements for future academic research and higher education have also struggled to comfortably fit into modern universities (e.g. Scholz 2017; Moust, Van Berkel & Schmidt 2005; Mulá et al. 2017). When a disruptive scenario for the future of universities depicts new practices and institutions for higher education, academic ethos to cultivate one's professional personality (or *Bildung*) is regarded as a key asset for present and future employability (Hammershøj 2018). Another innovative scenario expects them as collaborative partners for local sustainability (Blass & Hayward 2014). Under the circumstances we have been newly developing a transdisciplinary, problem-based, and community-oriented approach to future academic research and higher education. The concept of our approach was initially called *Satoyama* University, while *Satoyama* refers to a Japanese traditional sustainable socio-ecological system for rural land-use (Takeuchi 2010) and such state of capitalism is increasingly expected to replace conventional money-driven capitalism in Japan (Motani 2017). It was soon renamed Shimane Academia by reason that we suggest this approach should be more decentralised and loosely networked than universities, positioned as alternative and complementary to existing academic research institutes and higher education systems, and directed to a more specific local context. Shimane is one of local and depopulated prefectures in Japan and has the least universities in prefecture, but civil society organisations and community activities are relatively sustained and provide room for great potentials of grassroots activities.

Shimane Academia consists of a number of different activities ranging from fundraising, project design, player recruiting (researcher as well as local practitioner), proposal writing and administration to face-to-face gathering, informal exchange, site visit, online communication, lecture, seminar, workshop and annual meeting. The annual meeting has three main activities. First, researchers and local stakeholders from different backgrounds participate workshops to co-create transdisciplinary research and practice idea through deliberation on current and future economic, social and cultural issues in local areas. These ideas are examined to be feasible and sustainable by the participants and potential partners during and after the annual meeting. In the 2017 meeting, the participants identified 'hunting and wildlife management' and 'bread-and-butter job training and education' as key social issues and plausible project topics. Through the continuous discussions, a new project 'citizen-oriented digital archives

of mythology and anthropology' (CODAMA) was proposed and launched in the 2018 meeting, involving a wide variety of members from universities, city councils, local research institutes, travel agencies and civil society organisations. The CODAMA project is now being supported by Shimane University, a private foundation and central/local governments. Second, participatory outreach event and networking is innovatively designed to attract local children and researchers' family as well as the workshop participants and other community members. In 2017, we conducted a science communication event with a mobile microscope attachable to smartphone cameras and joined a community-based activity to renovate an old folk house. In 2018, the mobile microscope was further mobilised with the citizen science app 'iNaturalist' at a workshop for the hunting and wildlife management project. This app was founded in 2008 to serve a global community and to aid in the observation and identification of natural phenomena, allowing users to explore, observe, and discover the natural world by taking pictures of naturally occurring organisms and uploading the images to a global community of naturalists who crowdsource to identify the organism (Nugent 2018). After walking around a local farm damaged by wild animals and analysing the surrounding environmental conditions with iNaturalist, the participants then discussed and explored possible socio-technological solutions to wildlife damage and control. Third, we also organise interactive excursions. Whereas conference excursions are mostly oriented to consumerism, our approach is more ethical, social and community-based and contributed to rural development (Okazaki 2008; Cawley & Gillmor 2008; Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic 2011). The 2017 excursion was on dark tourism for Tatara ironmaking and the 2018 was on cultural tourism for a local myth. Researchers' family was also able to join the excursion or take a dedicated day-trip tour organised by local residents and travel agencies.

Our regional academia programme started with anticipating the academy of the future as a new synergetic movement of research, education and community development in which academic scholars and their families, creators and local residents can develop their own *Bildung* and collaboratively and sustainably serve to regional economy, society and culture. This programme then made us realise the relevance of tangible projects by visioning local societies, creating new values and working together with wider participants. Not based in any single institutions (i.e. universities, funds, projects), the participants involved in multi-layered foresight (cf. Dufva, Könnölä & Koivisto 2015) do not feel any power gradients but can join discussions on different kinds of issues, topics and research interests in a more flat, flexible and comfortable manner. With power-free relationships and networks, all the related actors share a sense of crisis in the depopulated and devastated socio-ecological system and each can then anticipate our desirable futures, commit to local issues and tackle social problems by their own – conducting research, reforming education, or promoting community service. They can also go back and forth between programme and project levels. Despite challenges to design, implement and evaluate the programme, expand the loose networks and find more sustainable management, this foresight activity performs not only as regional (Higdem 2014), participatory (Nikolova 2014), networked (van der Duin, Heger & Schlesinger 2014) and transdisciplinary (Gudowsky & Peissl 2016) but also as structural (Georghiou & Harper 2011), systemic (Saritas &

Nugroho 2012) and adaptive (Gibson et al. 2018).

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