

## Panel on Revitalization of Local Community and Ubiquitous Network Society

### Summary of Minutes (7th Meeting)

#### 1. Date and Time

Tuesday, May 29, 2007; 10:00 to 11:40

#### 2. Location

Special Room No.3, Mita Conference Hall

#### 3. Attendees (honorifics omitted)

##### (1) Panel Members

Shimizu (Chair), Ohyama (Deputy-Chair), Aida, Iizumi (Proxy: Kioka), Uemura (Proxy: Okiyama), Kiyohara (Proxy: Uyama), Kotani, Kondo, Taki, Tsubota, Tsuyuki, Nagayoshi, Muraki, Wasai (Proxy: Tanaka)

##### (2) Observers

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology; Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport

##### (3) MIC Representatives

Taniguchi (Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications), Katsuno (Deputy Director-General of Minister's Secretariat), Imabayashi (Director of the Regional Communications Development Division), Uematsu (Director of the Local Governments ICT Promotion Office), Nakata (Deputy-Director of the Regional Communications Development Division)

#### 4. Minutes of the Meeting

##### (1) Opening

##### (2) Introduction of the panel members and checking of distributed documents (Secretariat)

###### - Attendance of the members

- Absent members: Shimada, Sudo, Hatano

- Proxies: Kioka for Iizumi, Okiyama for Uemura, Uyama for Kiyohara, and Tanaka for

Wasai

Distributed documents were checked

(3) Summary of minutes of the last meeting (Secretariat)

- Reference 7-1 was reviewed as the summary of the minutes of the last meeting.

(4) Agenda

<Report outline (draft proposal)>

The secretariat gave a presentation based on Reference 7-3, which was followed by an exchange of opinions.

[Opinion Exchange]

- Today there is a drive to replace the model by which local governments simply follow the decisions made by the central government. In line with this, our plans should not be based on the central government presenting its ideal of the advanced initiative and local governments simply following its lead. There should be ample consideration given to allowing local governments to take this as an opportunity to start their own deliberations.
- I believe this Panel will actually be ready at the starting line when all the meetings are over. However, I hope this Panel will be the trigger for a new beginning, so I would like to ask the members to continue to watch over the progress even after the Panel is closed down.
- A ubiquitous community cannot be realized unless we have people who will be committed even without government subsidies, as opposed to those who say they will be involved only if they can get the subsidy. We should go forward with the intention of providing support to such people.
- In regard to the significance of the ubiquitous community, the potential lies within local communities and not within ICT. We have held our discussions from the viewpoint of how to utilize ICT as an effective tool to draw out the potential of local communities. What the successful cases have in common is that they were all able to use ICT to draw out the potential that already existed but was not fully realized in their local community.

<Main points of the issues discussed in previous meetings>

Members shared their opinions.

- We are currently conducting studies on how to establish the ICT network infrastructure from the standpoint of a telecommunications carrier who will provide the ubiquitous services. APPLIC, which we are a member of, is also conducting studies on local information platforms. We would like to take what we have learned from this Panel back

to APPLIC and incorporate it into our studies on policies and measures to promote ICT in local communities.

- Regarding the framework for establishing an information communications infrastructure, we have just proposed a flexible management style that can adapt to different local characteristics. There may be a need to have a joint public-private effort to develop a system to certify people who can promote ICT in local communities.
- In a way, regional differences are inevitable, since consumers tend to flock to whatever is attractive. I believe ICT has great potential to prevent such gaps from widening and to revitalize depopulated communities. All communities have some “selling point” and ICT would be an effective way of spotlighting these. We must think about how we can tell the rest of the world about these local communities, as well as how to turn virtual communities into real world communities. There are great expectations for what ICT may be able to achieve in these arenas.
- Although it is necessary to have local communities move ahead with their ICT promotion policies, communities with smaller populations have smaller budgets. In the event that subsidies from the central government are not enough, we may need support from the private sector as well. We recently did some research on the London Olympics and found that documents submitted for the selection of Olympics sites were quite persuasive. This is an example of how appropriate disclosure of persuasive information is vital in promoting citizen participation.
- Market development is a challenge. The online advertising market has grown at the national level, but there is currently no online advertising for local communities. Even if this were attempted, the only responses would come from Tokyo. The problem of overconcentration in Tokyo has not been solved. There have been various efforts, with industry, universities, and government all struggling for solutions, but we have not seen much success. This is not an issue that should be attempted to be solved locally. There should be non-financial support to tackle this issue.
- Japan has a tradition of people in local communities working together. While ICT can strengthen this kind of cooperative relationship, at the same time it can also cause division and isolation of the individuals in the community. Each community will have a different dynamic and unless we take this into consideration in utilizing ICT, we will not be able to reap its full benefits. It would probably be both effective and efficient if we can use a local community that is functioning successfully as a model when deploying our initiatives.

- Recently, we held a symposium on the theme of utilizing ICT to revitalize local communities. At the symposium, a case study was presented on Toho village, which has a population of 2,000 and which successfully implemented three projects that won the Nikkei Informatization Grand Prix. This was partially due to the fact that there were some talented people in the community, but I believe what is important is that a community was born through collaboration to achieve a common vision and that each individual in the community was able to renew their sense of purpose through the projects.
- One of the keys to ensure the continuation of a project may be to continually supply high-quality information. It would be also effective to have opportunities to publicize success stories, such as by presenting national awards. From the local communities' side, they can generate CGM on themes like tourism and local food. The important thing is to have a continuous flow of information about the local communities' selling point both in terms of historical and present-day appeal. If local communities and consumers can both continue to supply high-quality information, it's sure to be used.
- The impact of the increasing aging population on our society is quite significant, but it is difficult to actually observe. Elderly people in local communities face isolation and physical disability. The number of these people who are living with fewer family members will grow, and they will tend to rely more on services provided by the government. However, even if the framework to provide the services is made available, only a limited number of elderly people can actually make full use of them. We need to establish a system where the elderly are supported by the 'last person,' a solution similar to the 'last mile' in networks. On the other hand, people reaching old age from now on will have strong ICT skills, which means that they may be able to overcome isolation and physical disability by making use of ICT together with the people in their local community, so support should definitely be provided for these people.
- Improving productivity in the service sector, where ICT use is lagging compared with the manufacturing sector, is considered to be a challenge that will soon be upon us. Most of the work local governments do is providing services, so it faces the same challenge of improving productivity through the use of ICT. However, the fact is that today there is no know-how, no human resources and no funding to promote the utilization of ICT. In particular, in terms of human resources, we do not have people who can promote efforts or people who can support them. Yokosuka Research Park (YRP) was able to bring together a great number of talented individuals and thus succeeded in promoting ICT. Local

communities are made up of people. A single municipality is too small in terms of its capacity to attract a pool of skilled workers, so we may need to think about grouping multiple municipalities together when considering this issue.

- The city of Mitaka began inviting SOHO workers to come there in 1996. In the 10 years since then, eight facilities and 140 companies have accepted the invitation. I believe it is important not to give up, but to continue until we see a certain level of success.
- I believe broadcasting can trigger a process by which a range of technologies are used to uncover various treasures hidden in local communities. As a broadcaster, the important thing is to provide something that is attractive to viewers, while at the same time ensuring the level of profitability needed to continue operating. We are keen to continue to be the cheer squad for the movement towards realizing a ubiquitous community.
- Establishing an information infrastructure in a disadvantaged area is what will lead to reducing the gap. In unprofitable regions that the private sector avoids, it is necessary for the government to take the lead in establishing the infrastructure for the revitalization of the community, with the most desirable scenario being the government and the private sector each fulfilling their role successfully. Human resources development as well as technological innovation to bring about ICT that is user-friendly even to the elderly and children would also contribute to realizing a ubiquitous network society.
- If all were to use the same resources, then the scenario whereby revitalizing one will cause a downfall in another becomes a possibility. The Priority Policy Program 2007 undertaken by the IT Strategic Headquarters suggests that personal information should as a general rule be disclosed to the individual it belongs to. By freeing up how the individual can use his or her information, there is a possibility that we may see new businesses emerging. It could be said that the recent pension records issue arose because personal information was not appropriately disclosed to each individual. In order to ensure secure disclosure, we can use something like an 'electronic private mail box.' This will allow people to control the flow of information or the nature of the information entered therein, or to see what information is contained in the box at any time.
- The utilization of ICT can strengthen the relationship between people in the local community or enable people living in isolated areas to create their own network-based community. The Report should identify and present the best practices so that each local community can use this as a reference to promote their own efforts according to the characteristics of their region. We also need to consider how to collect the best practices.

The development of ICT-related human resources is another key point for the Report to address. One way would be to define a standard for skill sets, but since the standard will not become widespread if it is difficult to understand, we need to take care to ensure that the definitions are easy to comprehend so that they will be accepted by the public.

- The various issues faced by local communities have not changed over the past 10 years, but the situation has definitely become more serious. Local communities are trying to transform themselves, and are making various efforts including the development of a new wave of workers under academia-industry-government collaboration schemes and trying to link up manufacturing with IT. We are now seeing a change in awareness where people are thinking of changing the way they work and live to adapt to the new framework of community business. People should take advantage of the opportunities provided by the central government to achieve the results they need.

<Free discussion>

[Parliamentary Secretary for Internal Affairs and Communications Taniguchi]

I am grateful for all the opinions you have shared. The results of this discussion will be reflected in our policies. Also, I believe it will be worthwhile to communicate the issues discussed here to local governments, businesses, and NPOs, who are the ones who are directly involved. I hope our society as a whole can work on this challenging issue of the ubiquitous community and that it is a social movement that gathers momentum. I continue to welcome any comments and suggestions from panel members.

- I believe that the privacy protection industry will grow to become a major industry in the future. It would involve something like the 'electronic private mail box' that was mentioned earlier. In Japan, there is a strong tendency to rely on the public services as the Japanese government has been so reliable, but in the future we must be more independent. Rather than relaxing our guard with the coming of a ubiquitous community, we must take it as an opportunity to play an active role and to think about what each of us can do within it.
- As we age, our cognitive abilities decrease. We need to think about how we can ensure support for the elderly who are not able to use ICT in spite of their efforts to learn. In Korea, where ICT is heavily promoted, support is provided through such measures as recommending volunteers.

- Being able to access your own personal information, if you flip it over, means that you cannot access other people's information. If we include elderly people in our consideration, then the television set would be what people are most familiar with, so we should use the television set to retrieve or access personal information. We may also need to think about a way to allow a caregiver to access information on behalf of the person under care.