

S-face

SFC makes the future through researches

Transverse Practical Affairs and Academia to Transform the Earth System

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Securing the Earth's Future with a “Trans-disciplinarity” Approach

In the 21st Century the problems surrounding the global environment are entering a new phase.

We have entered an era in which it is not possible to pursue development without first taking into consideration as a prerequisite “safeguarding environment and resources.”

It was under these circumstances that Future Earth, a global sustainability research programme, got underway.

How will this project, which Professor Norichika Kanie is also involved in running, evolve?

Sustainable Development Goals and Earth System Governance

My research theme is “Earth System Governance.” Short-, medium- and long-term international institutions and policies for climate change has been a primary focus of my research, but recently more attention has been paid to research and practice on sustainability governance.

Amid that, one important project was the Project On Sustainability Transformation beyond 2015 (POST2015), which was undertaken with the support of the Ministry of the Environment’s Environment Research and Technology Development Fund (ERTDF). I served as POST2015’s project leader.

The project involved around 70 researchers from Japan and abroad with 200 million yen annual budget for the period of 3 years. In the short term, this strategic research project aimed to contribute to the international debate on setting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the long term it aimed to propose policies and mechanisms for transforming human activities in order to build a sustainable society.

This project ended FY2015, but research on the SDGs has been continuing subsequently, including approaches for implementing and evaluating the SDGs. As part of that, I am interested both academically and practically in the theme of what kind of approach to take in effectively interfacing science and policy. I believe that Future Earth, the global research program, will be one driving force for realizing that, and I am part of the leadership team in the Knowledge Action Network on the SDGs.

The Trans-disciplinarity Concept: Crossing the Boundaries of Academia and Society

Future Earth was proposed at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, by International Council for Science (ICSU) and other partners. It is a research initiative aimed at comprehensively promoting research on “a sustainable global environment” through the integration of existing international programs concerning global environmental research as well as through the cooperation of the academic

community, funding agencies(*) and stakeholders such as international organizations.

One of Future Earth’s more notable features is that it not only extols the importance of an interdisciplinarity approach that transcends the boundaries of academic fields such as natural science, social science, engineering and humanities, it simultaneously advocates a “trans-disciplinarity” approach that transcends the boundaries between academia and society. This concept involves having not only academic specialists but also a variety of society’s stakeholders participate in Future Earth’s activities so that both specialists and stakeholders can work together to carry out co-design, co-production and co-delivery for creation of knowledge. It is characterized by taking an interactive approach, and as such differs entirely to the unidirectional process that has existed up to now in which researchers have conducted their research in ivory towers and those outcomes have been delivered to society. Eight stakeholder groups have been identified:

- 1) academic research;
- 2) the interface between science and policy;
- 3) research grant institutions;
- 4) various government organizations;
- 5) development organizations;
- 6) the business and industrial communities;
- 7) civil society; and
- 8) the media.

The reality is that SFC (Keio University Shonan Fujisawa Campus) had been pursuing this approach from 25 years ago, and I look at it with the sense that after 25 years, the world is catching up to SFC. Conversely, having now returned to SFC as a faculty member, I believe we must think seriously about what can be done to imbue the students with the same mindset as existed 25 years ago.

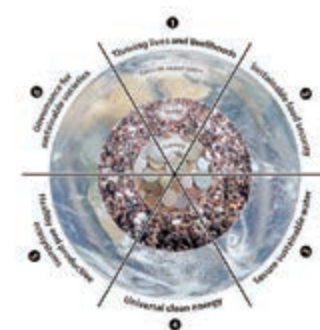
* Institutions that distribute research funding

I Want to Bring the Knowledge I Obtain at the Policy Front Lines back to the University

The title of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 is “Transforming our world.” We are now facing the final

opportunity for making the transformation in order to overcome the crises faced by the Earth system and its governance mechanisms, I believe. There are innumerable problems where unless the way humankind lives and thinks changes, it is going to be too late. People’s mindsets may change after 50 years have passed, but by then it will be too late. My goal is to use a “governance” perspective to try to resolve these problems.

From here on I intend to work on building an effective interface of science and policy for “sustainable development” in the short term, while in the long term I want to work on moving back and forth between practical affairs and academia. I was a member of the inaugural class at SFC, and since my student days I continued to harbor the goal of becoming involved in UN work at some point. Currently I am involved in UN work at the United Nations University and elsewhere, but from here on the work I want to do involves engaging more deeply in policy practice and then taking those experiences back to the university. A precedent has been set for me at SFC by great men such as Professor Emeritus Naoyuki Agawa and Professor Emeritus Heizo Takenaka, who left behind track records in the fields of policy practice and took the knowledge they gained in doing so back to the university. This is a genuine trans-disciplinarity approach, and has formed the core of the SFC ideal since its founding, I believe. In the course of my future work, I want to exemplify the trans-disciplinarity approach myself, and make the trans-disciplinarity approach itself the subject of my research.



Conceptual diagram of sustainable development in the 21st century

Sustainable Development Goals



Engaging in research on the SDGs, including approaches to implementing and evaluating the SDGs, Interested in particular in the theme of “what kind of approach to take with effectively interfacing science and policy.”

Hakone Ekiden



While studying at SFC he belonged to the Keio University Athletic Association. Since his senior year 1994, when the Keio team competed in the Hakone Ekiden, it has drifted away from entering competitions. Having recently set the goal of “competing in the Hakone Ekiden by 2020,” he has been working on bringing the club back in Hakone.



Profile Norichika Kanie

Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University; Senior Research Fellow, United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). Worked as an associate professor, Faculty of Law at University of Kitakyushu and as an associate professor, Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology at Tokyo Institute of Technology before taking up his present position in 2015.

Future Earth



An international research program aimed at resolving various global-scale issues and realizing a sustainable society. Professor Kanie is involved in running the Japan hub of the global secretariat, and is engaged in activities for aligning his own research and the direction aimed for with Future Earth.



Please visit S-face website for details!

There are more articles and video of Norichika Kanie

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