

The Dementia Project: Innovation Driven by Social Challenges

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Dementia is a social phenomenon that has an enormous impact on Japanese society. As of June 2013, the number of elderly with dementia in Japan exceeded 4.6 million, a number that is projected to reach 5.5 million by the year 2025. The challenges surrounding dementia are particularly evident in two key areas: the aging society and healthcare. The initiatives that we describe here for dealing with dementia could serve as a pilot project for instigating social innovations for dealing with the aging society and healthcare. Here, we describe an innovation design process including the "Future Session" methodology that deepens our understanding of the social issues related to dementia. We also describe the value of creating a "shared issue" among multiple stakeholders through this approach.

1. Introduction

In June 2013, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare announced that the estimated ratio of elderly people with dementia in Japan was 15%.¹⁾ The number exceeded 4.6 million, a figure that is projected to grow to 5.5 million by the year 2025. Looking out over any town in Japan, many of the homes you see will have a family member who is affected by dementia. We believe that dementia is a social phenomenon that has an enormous impact on Japanese society.

On a worldwide scale, the number of people with dementia grew to around 35.6 million in 2010 and is expected to increase three-fold to approximately 115.4 million by the year 2050.²⁾ Annual global expenses and losses and other costs associated with dementia were roughly US\$604 billion in 2010.

National and local governments (the public sector) and the medical establishment (the healthcare sector) have implemented valuable dementia-related initiatives, but there are some limitations on what can be achieved by individual sectors. What is clearly needed is broad-based social innovation involving participation of both public and private sectors, something that goes beyond the conventional framework.

The challenges surrounding dementia that we face today can be seen as an extreme use case,

especially in two key areas: the aging society and healthcare. This suggests that any knowledge or insights we might acquire for dealing with dementia could very likely also be applied to the issues faced in dealing with the aging society and healthcare.

This paper touches on the significance of cooperation among future stakeholders while outlining a process that broadens corporate awareness and understanding of social phenomena affecting dementia. We describe an innovation design process including the "Future Session" methodology that deepens our understanding of the social issues related to dementia. We also describe the value of creating a "shared issue" among multiple stakeholders through this approach.

2. Cooperation of future stakeholders

Contemporary social issues are intertwined in a most convoluted way. Coming up with workable solutions under these complex circumstances thus requires that all sectors of society envision the future and cooperate as stakeholders in that future.

For private sector corporations, it is not easy to introduce innovations that address social issues including making system changes. However, local governments and other public sector entities are often quite eager to work with corporations that have lots of resources,

non-profit organizations (NPOs), and other social sector players in promoting next-generation initiatives. At the same time, NPOs and other social sector players are keen to work with entities in the private and public sectors such as local governments so that they can offer larger scale services than they could otherwise.

The situation and overall picture with respect to social issues is ambiguous. It is not at all clear just who these stakeholders who might inject new energy into these issues actually are. Essentially, we need to round up people from various sectors who could participate as good future stakeholders and then start looking for sound solutions while carefully defining the issues that need to be solved. Then, through collaboration, these stakeholders could work together to clearly identify the questions and the issues that should be addressed.

By looking at social issues as grand challenges, stakeholders representing different sectors—corporations, local governments, NPOs, universities, and so on—could create a place in which to apply their various resources. These potential collaboration opportunities would create a cross-sector dialog that would lead to new forms of competitiveness and innovation. With this approach, social issues function to combine organizations in different sectors as linking boundary objects³⁾ that function to compose new ecosystems or platforms for generating future innovations.

This notion of stakeholders working together to create a new ecosystem or innovation platform even though they may have very different intentions exists already. For example, Project Shakti,⁴⁾ which is a classic base-of-the-pyramid (BoP) project, brings together multiple stakeholders—Unilever, the Indian government, and a bank in India—with wholly different objectives to address social issues facing woman who live in countless villages spread across India. Some of these villages are just small dots on the map that are not even connected by roads, yet the project has achieved tremendous success.

We can consider the social issues surrounding dementia as a kind of BoP issue in Japan. We believe that bringing together stakeholders including ones in the private sector to work with long-term vision on new dementia-related initiatives will create an important source of innovation.

3. Dementia Project process

In this section, we describe our approaches to addressing the social issues related to dementia.

In October 2011, Fujitsu Laboratories Ltd. (Fujitsu Labs), the Center for Global Communications (GLOCOM) at the International University of Japan, and the Dementia Friendship Club (an NPO)⁵⁾ launched the Dementia Project to chart a new way of dealing with dementia-related issues. The objective of this project is to probe the question of “how corporations in the private sector can get more directly involved in the social issues surrounding dementia.” We used several innovation design methodologies including participant observations, stakeholder mapping, “Future Sessions,” and interviews. Here we will detail the process activities for the first six months of the project, highlighting the significance of results achieved so far.

1) Participant observation

In this first process, we participated as trip support volunteers for events sponsored by the Dementia Friendship Club. This involved accompanying a dementia family support group on daytrips to pick tangerines and visit a hot spring spa. The objectives of this participant observation process were not only to help the participants but also to obtain a detailed perspective on their role in society and to give us a better understanding of the thinking of people with dementia and of their families.

The purpose was not to obtain an abstract or conceptual view of the relevant social issues with all their complex relations but rather to simply understand “what is happening right there at the event.” The insights and hypothesis obtained then become the starting point for subsequent processes. They also provide a reliable compass for keeping the processes on track.

After participating in each daytrip, we analyzed the participants’ behaviors and conversations. From these analyses, we gained four key insights about people with dementia.

- They like to express themselves.
- They like to help other people.
- They need support that is not overprotective.
- They and their partners support each other.

On the basis of these insights, we cataloged the relations among the daytrip participants under the provisional term “extended virtual family including

unrelated community members.”

2) Stakeholder mapping

Next we mapped the stakeholder relationships. Such stakeholder maps are often used in a traditional organizational development process. This process is positioned as a phase in which we objectively come to understand the complicated situation surrounding dementia.

Although this process is generally used to analyze a clearly defined existing relationship, we also included the perspective of future stakeholders, focusing on the possibility of changing their future involvement. Essentially, this process is an interactive and useful one in which new relationships and possibilities are explored.

3) Future Session 1

To promote creative dialog among future stakeholders, we used the Future Session scheme.⁶⁾ The sessions bring together people in different positions from different sectors to meet in a physical space. These sessions mainly involve dialog and innovative design processes for conceiving creative initiatives for the future.

The first Future Session we conducted, “Future Session 1,” was designed to support the process of amplifying and broadening the insights and hypotheses obtained so far through previous observations and dialogs. We invited several stakeholders, who had been described in the stakeholder mapping process, as guests. They included the president of a travel agency who could help with daytrips, a provider of advanced

daycare services, a lawyer who provides legal assistance to foreigners, the manager of a hotel affiliated with a major railway company, a city official working at the welfare department, a medical doctor working in a corporation, and a sports club manager. We also recruited other participants from a diverse array of people (very different from the homogenous groups typically brought together for business workshops).

All the participants, including the guests, discussed the “significance of dementia from the perspective of my current job.” The various visions and directions they produced were highly suggestive and rich in diversity, as shown in **Figure 1**.

4) Interview

To substantiate and deepen the vision and direction obtained in Future Session 1, we interviewed Mr. Masahiko Sato, a person with early-onset dementia who has written about his condition.^{7), 8)} We asked him to share his thoughts of what everyday life is like for someone living with dementia. Here are some of the highlights of his comments:

- “Even though I have dementia, there are many things I can do. Yet there are lots of people who think that if you have dementia, you can’t do anything for yourself. That’s an attitude I really want to change. It’s important to think for oneself, and if people think you can’t, it’s really tough to bear.”
- “I love to take trips. Life has its ups and downs. I try to make opportunities for myself as best I can. It’s important to get out in the community and not stay cooped up in the house or the same

The 5% Margin:

Travel probably makes up less than 5% of our lives, yet that 5% uplifts and enlivens the remaining 95% of our lives! It is important that 5% of our everyday lives is uplifting and bright.

New forms of business:

Hotels are also in the banquet and party business, which is leading to the emergence of a new business: establishing ties and relationships among people.

New forms of work:

Rather than treating people with dementia as simply service recipients, treat them as potential service providers as well.

Vigilant and attentive towns:

Accessible attentive services are possible through collaboration between local governments and corporations.

Volunteering and business:

A new direction is emerging, one that does not distinguish by monetary value between volunteering to help people and performing work to earn a living.

Pleasant places where people congregate for care:

Places that accommodate different personalities and support both “those who want to help others” and “those who want to assume roles.”

“Good death” innovation:

Living well also involves dying well.

Figure 1
Examples of visions and directions produced in Future Session 1.

environment just because you have dementia. It's also important for people with dedication and passion to seize opportunities to try and change society. One place I would really like to visit is the Ogasawara Islands. It is my dream to walk around that world heritage site and take lots of pictures."

- "As long as you have a companion or somebody to go with, you can take trips, go to musicals, all kinds of things. Of course, it is always better if the other person likes travel and musicals too! When I'm chatting with someone and get stuck for something to say, I just pull out my cell phone and show some of my pictures. I always have my mobile phone with me, so I can show photos anytime, anywhere. This also provides a chance to swap addresses. The photos and e-mail messages in my cell phone are like a memorandum book."

The insights we gained from the interview are similar to ones gained from the daytrip experience. They included 1) the importance of "not depriving people with dementia of those things that they can do themselves" and 2) the need to "give people with dementia the assurance of the minor help they might need as a result of their condition." From a service perspective, a key insight was the need for "services to allow you to continue being the hero of your life even if you have dementia."

5) Future Session 2

Building on the processes described above, Future Session 2 focused on "designing services that

enable people with dementia and their families to live their lives and continue being the heroes of their own lives." The emphasis was on prototyping anticipated yet still unknown services through dialogs among diverse future stakeholders.

Close to 80 people participated in this session including many from the business world who may not have previously given much thought to dementia-related issues—e.g., we had participants from automotive-related companies, beverage companies, material manufacturers, printing companies, insurance companies, supermarkets, and publishers. Other participants were members of NPOs, intermediate support groups, and welfare organizations, journalists, and designers.

The emphasis in this session was on service ideas, and as one can see from the sketches in **Figure 2**, many excellent ideas were proposed: 1) creating a service that supports building new relationships that brighten people's lives, 2) creating a community service that supports local residents by driving them around for entertainment and by providing rides to various destinations, 3) providing an educational service in supermarkets for naturally educating customers about creating an inclusive community, one that includes people with dementia, and 4) using a bar that is empty during the daytime as a place where people with dementia and their families can meet and exchange information and as a site for marketing to the elderly.

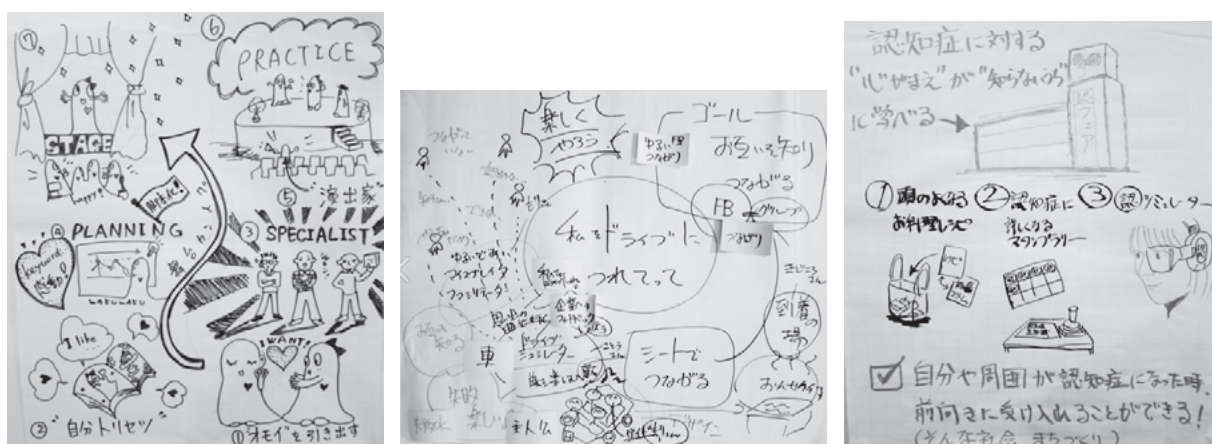


Figure 2
Service ideas sketched during Future Session 2.

4. Further development of the Dementia Project

The Dementia Project is still ongoing. Using participant observations, stakeholder mapping, Future Sessions, and interviews, we developed a much better understanding of the social issues associated with dementia, and we supported an in-depth dialog exploring how private sector companies could create value and get involved in the project. While the proposed scheme may not immediately provide the services needed to address the social issues, some of the ideas presented in Future Session 2 contain the seeds of innovation that could lead to lots of possibilities. Indeed, the approach advocated here is essential for dealing with the complex issues of modern society.

During this series of processes, some of the caregivers unexpectedly said things like, "I was really startled by the simplicity of questions raised by people of different backgrounds; they made it sound like it would be fairly easy to change things that I have always considered very difficult for long time," and "I was really astounded at the genuine interest and concern regarding dementia shown by the business people." These may even be the first embryonic signs of a new ecosystem emerging among the welfare and caregiver sectors and the private business sector that will address the social issues associated with dementia, an ecosystem that brings together a keen awareness of social problems and ideas obtained from various business sectors.

Future Session 3 was held in June 2012 on the theme "Future tools: continue being the hero of your life." Once again, Mr. Masahiko Sato (the person with dementia mentioned earlier) participated as did Mr. Shigenobu Nakamura,⁹⁾ another person with dementia. We began to explore the meaning of a new concept across different sectors that emerged from this session—the concept of a "memory clock" (*kioku tokei*). We plan to continue working on this concept in addition to expanding our ideathon and hackathon prototyping-related activities in the years ahead.

In July 2012, a new initiative called "Futures"¹⁰⁾ was launched with the support of the British Council, Fujitsu Labs, GLOCOM, and Future Sessions Inc. Futures aims at driving the development of a platform enabling social entrepreneurs, government agencies, and other players to explore the possibility of social

innovations while interacting and collaborating across transnational sectors. We unveiled a prototype through a number of bilateral sessions between Japan and the U.K. on the aging society held in 2012. On the Japan side, Fujitsu Labs hosted a session on "The Aging Society and Commuter Towns" in October 2012, which was followed by another session in November hosted by Kao Corporation focusing on "Active Seniors." On the U.K. side, NESTA and Accenture hosted workshops in November 2012 on the themes "Silver Economy" and "An Age Revolution." Finally, in December 2012, members of both sides got together in London for two final workshops.

The approach that we have described of creating innovation as the starting point for dealing with social issues essentially involves creating social boundary objects or creating shared issues (CSIs). The Dementia Project is a concrete example of this approach.

In addition, we are seeing much greater potential for collaborative activities across sectors thanks to the proliferation of social network services. This is because, as one can see in **Figure 3**, the great chasm¹¹⁾ that used to present such a problem for business incubation is now being bridged for stakeholders and early adopters by the penetration of networks.

The next step for the Dementia Project will be to delve through dialog even deeper into possible business opportunities and areas of cooperation that cut across different industries and sectors. For this to happen, it is critically important to align the keywords with respect to the effects. **Table 1** shows the keywords for deeper dialog regarding areas of opportunity.¹²⁾

Looking at the processes and insights described above, we can see another dimension of the social issues related to dementia. The challenges faced by people with dementia can be readily perceived by anyone in society by simple extension of what is directly before us. Anyone can empathize with someone who "is unable to go places where one should be able to go," "is unable to keep up with changes," "is unable to control information," "has a sense of alienation," "faces a reduction in the range of options as one goes from being a consumer to being a user," and "gets support for separate individual situations but not for one's total life."

In a sense, we are directly confronted with the challenge of a cognitive social phenomenon. As

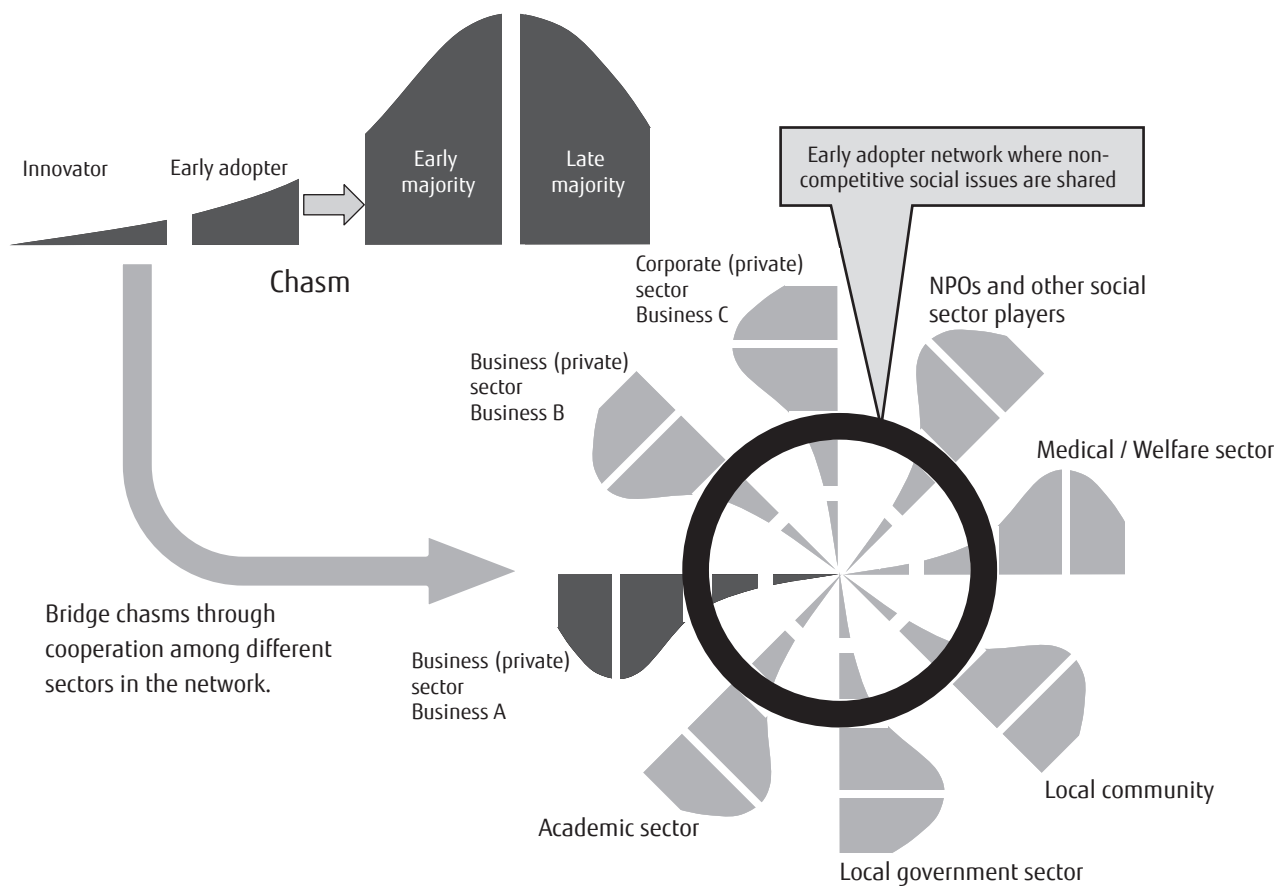


Figure 3
Collaborative activities across sectors using social networks.

Table 1
Keywords for deeper dialog regarding areas of opportunity.

Keywords	Content to be considered
End user	Meaning, value, effect on consumers concerned with social issues
Customer relations	Meaning, value, effect, agent for channels involving sales
Innovation	Meaning and effect from standpoint of R&D and sustainability
Market development	Meaning and value for developing new markets
Cost	Effect in terms of cost
Stakeholders including in-house ones	Meaning and value for stakeholders including employees and future employees

information becomes so voluminous that it exceeds our cognitive limits, we find ourselves in many situations in which we are unable to make a decision. This should make it easy for anyone to empathize with the challenges faced by people with dementia. The social issues faced by people with dementia are shared by each and every one of us making up society, and these issues must be dealt with through collaboration among

companies, organizations, and sectors.

5. Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of the Dementia Project, a collaborative initiative of Fujitsu Labs, GLOCOM, and the Dementia Friendship Club. Given that different sectors have various visions of the future, it is important that local governments, corporations,

and NPOs pull together as future stakeholders. Making use of the "Future Session" framework, the Dementia Project has given us a much better understanding of the social issues associated with dementia and has produced ideas for how companies can support people with dementia and their families.

This project has been made possible thanks to the support and cooperation of many people. Profound appreciation is expressed to all of the stakeholders and to the many individuals who provided support and guidance for this project.

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