



## Poles Apart, Horizon 2020 deepens EU-Japan Relations



*Prof. Takuo Suganuma*

It is that time of the year again when both EU and Japan rise to commemorate the EU-Japan Friendship Week in 2017 and Tohoku University Main Library is gearing up to put up an exhibition for the same.

Since the last 3 years, the European Commission's flagship Horizon 2020 program has been funding research worldwide. With a funding of about 80 billion euros (approx. ¥9.9 trillion) in the period of 7 years (2014-2020) apart from the private funding which it shall attract, it is the EU's biggest hit at research and innovation. With the primary goals of reducing red tape and time along with creation of new jobs in all the sectors, it also aims to facilitate public-private partnership for accessible innovation. It was only a matter of time when researchers from Tohoku University collaborated with Horizon 2020 for high-impact research that are changing lives here in Japan.

The EU-Japan Friendship week has been an annual event since 2001 where both EU and Japan celebrate the common spirit of unity. The Horizon 2020 program helps further in deepening the relations between the two. With public engagement at an all-time high, such initiatives are bringing researchers worldwide to

work on a common platform with an interdisciplinary approach.

Prof. Takuo Suganuma and his team at Tohoku University are one such beneficiaries of the Horizon 2020 program. He is affiliated with Cyberscience Center, Tohoku University. His team is working on the ambitious iKaaS project which expands to 'intelligent Knowledge as-a-Service'. Using sensors and acquiring data from the town management and people assistance. Prof. Suganuma and his team are working in the model town of Tago-nishi in Miyagi prefecture towards weather prediction. He also considers using iKaaS in education too and has even collaborating with Prof. Nagatomi for its potential application in healthcare. Here are the excerpts from the interview which we conducted few weeks back:

### 1. What do you think are the biggest challenges to 'Big Data' today and how can they be overcome?

The most popular big data today would be Google search engine or LHC (Large Hadron Collider) under big science. The LHC generates 500 exabytes of data on a daily basis which is an extremely large number to manage. The Human Genome Project is another such example. The biggest challenge thus is the management of big data and I think it can be solved case per case.

### 2. How do you think that the collaboration with EU through Horizon 2020 help your project?

Apart from funding, it helps us in many ways. We are a big team to develop a large scale software/product. Many researchers and developers worldwide are participating in the same and this interdisciplinary approach is very beneficial.

### 3. Where do you see iKaaS Project 10 years from now?

The project is in its initial stage of development. We hope that the technology developed here can be used in town management, healthcare and for serving the elderly people.



*Testing the VR around a virtual town*

**4. Your project has repeatedly mentioned about the necessity to protect sensitive data. How do you think iKaaS can deal with the cyber-security challenges in the future?**

From our viewpoint, cyber-security and sensitive data protection are two different things. We want to protect the sensitive data such as personal information.

**5. What are the current challenges to iKaaS and how do you plan to overcome then?**

In the initial stage, it is the development of a prototype. The next step would be to improve the quality of the software for practical use.

The EU - Japan friendship week shall be commemorated from May 24, 2017 to July 21, 2017 at Tohoku University Main Library.

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## Rediscovering India and South Asia

"I took this picture when I attended an Indian wedding..." said Dr. Yamashita who was dressed in a green *kurta* over which he sported a caricature of Rajnikanth printed on a white shirt as he delivered his introductory lecture at the 'Dynamic India' event.

The 6th Global Session was held on April 21, 2016 at the Global Learning Room of Kawauchi Main Library. The theme for the session revolved around India and its neighbours and the changes the region has seen in the last 10

years. Dr. Hiroshi Yamashita, the introductory speaker, is affiliated with the 'Graduate School of International Cultural Studies' at Tohoku University. He has conducted intensive research in the field of Tamilian literature and Dravidian culture of India. Discussing about India and its general overview, he spoke about his book which he wrote in 2016 along with his wife Dr. Okamitsu titled, 'Encyclopaedia of India'. "States in India are bigger than some of the countries in Europe," he mentioned in his lecture. He further added, "In India, the calendar differs from state to state."



*Dr. Yamashita delivering the keynote address*

The members in the audience varied from professors and administrative members, students from Japan, United States, China and India. A group of Japanese students who spent some time at India's 'Banaras Hindu University' spoke basic phrases in Hindi as they looked at the exhibition arranged by the library on India in the Global Learning Room. Following Dr. Yamashita's lecture was a panel discussion and presentation from South Asian students about their 10 years in the region. Moderated by Dr. Okanimitsu, students from India, Bangladesh and Nepal spoke about their last decade which was followed by a Japanese research student talking about her experience in Nepal during the fall of monarchy and years after that.

"What does it mean to be an Indian?," asked Rohan Raj who has travelled extremely in India owing to his father's service in the Indian Navy. "To be an Indian is to realise that our identities aren't shaped by our religion, race, land or gender but by our common set of cross cultural ways of living that unite us despite all superficial differences," he said. He added, "To be an Indian is to realise that India cannot be labelled into a singular identity but a harmonious amalgam of multiple Identities that shape our

understanding of the world.” Ahmed Mustahid of Bangladesh spoke about the culture, history and society of his country. “One of my favourite activities on 21st February is the *Ekushey* book fair,” he said as he spoke about Bangladesh’s 1952 language movement and the subsequent Liberation war in 1971. “The hardworking people of Bangladesh inspire me everyday. I am proud of people like Dr. Zahid Hassan who has discovered Weyl-Fermion and is currently a professor at Princeton University,” he added. Trishit Banerjee from India juxtaposed his personal experiences with national events that had major impact on the Indian society in the last decade. “I spent my childhood at a time when technology and internet were slowly penetrating into the Indian homes,” he said. Addressing challenges in India, he emphasised on educational reforms as a long-term solution for the same.

The last 10 years in Nepal saw political turbulence, fall of monarchy, natural calamities and yet instilled fresh hopes with the newly adopted constitution. “Most people know about the Himalayas and Mount Everest in Nepal but what most people do not know is the fact that Nepal has geographical features such as the Terai region which is less than 300 metres above the sea-level. It is of the most diverse ecosystems in the world,” said Bibek Raut who is a Nepalese student at Tohoku University. Sakura Kudo, a student of Religious Studies at the university focussed on the changing society in Nepal. “Not having electricity for days and lighting a candle after the sunset was the face of the turmoil,” she recollected. “Shortages of gas cylinders due to economic sanctions by India led to humanitarian crisis,” she added. Nepal’s trade dependency on India for about 70% of its foreign trade was seen as a concern by both the speakers.



*Panellists with Dr. Okamitsu*

Questions from the audience raised a few more important topics. While Mustahid spoke about the mutual distrust between Bangladeshis and Pakistanis since the war in response to a question, Raj and Banerjee realised the lack of any cross-cultural understanding programs in Indian schools. “We learn it from our friends and neighbourhood,” Raj said.

The event saw the South Asian region from various perspectives. Some of the audience members won a lottery and claimed Indian souvenirs. “Such events help in understanding a country and the region better,” said Shoei Yoshiue, one of the curators of the event.

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### **Books, services and a bit of Haginosuke : Welcome to the library!**

Haginosuke loves his pink scarf. His family has been guarding the university library for generations together! Who knew back in 1911 that the library shall get a dear family member in Haginosuke? A mischievous young bush clover, he has been a true friend to the readers through thick and thin.

As Tohoku University completes 110 years this year, the university library has been a testimony to the history of the modern world. Founded in 1911, it was located in Katahira which is one of the busiest downtown areas in Sendai. Currently, the original library building is being used as the university archives after the library was moved to Kawauchi in 1973.



*P.C Work Area*

The library plays a host to a variety of services for students. “Since I am a research student, I love the private research rooms. The variety of



services that the library has. It is highly commendable,” says Ding who is currently a third-year graduate student of International Cultural studies at Tohoku University.

Apart from the private research rooms and reading areas which can accommodate about 500 people at the same time, the library has flexible areas where readers can freely move the desks, chairs and white boards as they wish. Group study boxes provide private study areas in a largely public environment.

The Tohoku University library hosts more than 4 million books which makes it one of the largest academic libraries in Japan. Readers can easily search for the desired material through OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) which is a database of all the materials available in the library. They can easily get access to more than 17 million articles published by Japanese institutes out of which 4 million are available online through CiNii articles database. It is also popular amongst researchers to use Science Direct, Web of Science and Scopus for gaining access to international journals and articles since 1800s.

To make it reader-friendly, readers can avail remote access to e-journals, e-books and databases from outside the university. The library has on-campus services such as borrowing a PC and reserving spaces for events that you would like to host at no extra

cost. The Global Learning Room on the third floor of the library is an innovative space for both Japanese and international students to interact with each other. English learners can choose books depending upon their skills in the same. The Oxford University Press books are labelled into categories which describe the difficulty level of English used in the abridged version. For native speakers, Japanese books translated into English are available easily. From Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro* and Risa Wataya's *I want to kick you in the back* to *The tale of Genji* and *Bushido*, the variety is a delight to the readers. Books relating to the United Nations, European Union or the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 can also be accessed easily.

“I have not seen such interactive spaces in Chinese libraries. It is new and refreshing,” says Ding who appreciates the Global Learning

Room in the library which facilitates inter-cultural conversations.

One of the best known services in the library is that of ‘My Library’. You can reserve a book, browse through OPAC, extend the loan period, request a book from another library, reserve a facility and so on. The international concierge assists students in various languages to support them in using the library. Graduate students from Thailand, Indonesia, Italy, Brazil, India, US, Sweden and many more comprise the concierge team.



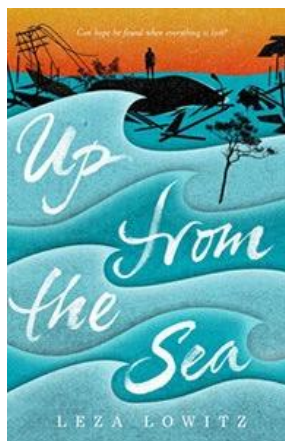
*Main Library Building*

While Haginosuke spends his time guarding the library and reaching out to Hagie asking for her hand in marriage, the 2 bush clovers have been the true mascots to represent the diversity of the library. You never know what you may find in the stack collection or the rare *Kano* collection in the library. With 14 departmental libraries and 5 central libraries (including the Kawauchi Main Library), the Tohoku University library is indeed a true resource for the global

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## Reader's Choice : What to Read Next?

*This section introduces a-book-a-month to feed your grey matter with intellect and emotion from the selection available at Tohoku University Main Library. Sit back and let's read!*



**“Up from the sea and straight into your heart”**

*Leza Lowitz's latest novel-in-verse truly captures the innocence trapped amidst a tragedy that shall send chills down the spine for a long time to come.*

The most powerful sentences are usually short. They are crisp and touch the inner you while you remember them forever.

When I first picked up Lowitz's 'Up from the Sea', I found the novel-in-verse style extremely interesting. The abstractness that I encounter when I read modern poetry was what I expected out of the same but, Lowitz gently tells the story of a young Japanese boy named Kai who loses his family in the tsunami with ease, comfort and yet unsettling. It never gives you the chance to feel at peace with an event so grave in intensity and yet uses simple phrases to give the storyline a beautiful touch.

The main character, Kai, appears to be a common boy who is a victim of nature's rage. His frantic search for his mother and the discovery of his grandmother's body are emotionally over-bearing. Battling his personal emotions of love towards his classmate, guilt of surviving, sense of insecurity and loneliness after the disappearance of his father, jealousy and suicide, he rises to be the unsung hero of the tragedy. Lowitz makes us realise how every victim is a hero in his/her own way.

Kai's longing for his father can be understood as he says: "After he left, too proud to write: *Wish Dad would come back home*"

One of the merits of this book are that the footnotes give you a glimpse of the Japanese language and culture. There are verses which have absolute Japanese context but could be easily understood using the footnotes. The book also depicts the chaos profoundly. Phrases such as 'refrigeratorsblackboardsbicycletaxis', 'bustedpianosshelvesdesksstairs' convey the chaos with ease.

As a reader, I smiled and cried with Kai. The sentences were powerful enough to make me feel as a part of the story. Being an Indian, I have little to connect with the tragedy but I felt the pain of the victim-heroes with every single line. Kai is a story built by many powerful stories of the common people. He is everyone. You shall find a bit of Kai in every character that you come across the novel.

Social issues of trying to fit in the society has subtle hints in the book. In the beginning, you can see Shin and Ryu trying to fit into the society due to their physical appearances. As we approach the end, you can listen as Kai speaks, 'Even if I make mistakes, it doesn't seem to matter.' The change that dawned upon him after his New York visit set in the backdrop of the 9/11's 10th anniversary shows the need to accept differences as the norm in the Japanese society.

In the end, Lowitz's novel-in-verse is a subtle reminder of the unsung heroes who are building the future of Tohoku brick-by-brick. It shall stand the test of time as a memoir of a tragedy that created hopes far and wide. It is an uplifting novel and has immense potential to be adapted into a monologue-drama. As I close the book, I am left with hopes of a new future. It truly arises from the sea and settles into my heart.

**Author :** Leza Lowitz

**Publisher :** Crown Books for Young Readers

**Pages :** 272

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## Know the Team Sentinel (Library Edition)!

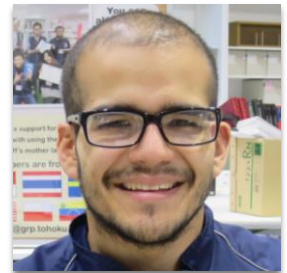


### ***Lee Sunhee ( The director of International Concierge )***

A graduate student of educational informatics from South Korea, she loves listening to music and can speak English, Japanese and Korean! "It will soon be alright," is her motto for leading life.

### ***Manuel Campos***

A graduate student of medicine from Venezuela, he loves to travel, write and cook. "Hard times forge steel smile," he believes. Did we tell you that he can speak English, Japanese and Spanish?



### ***Yang Yan***

From China, She likes to write comic strips! A graduate student of international cultural studies, she believes that none of us should ever forget our first resolution. Interested in her work? Check out the next issue for her manga!



### ***Trishit Banerjee (The editor in chief )***

From the land of Buddha - India, Trishit loves to read, write and travel. A student of chemistry, he can speak 5 languages! "Pick up a good book and open up your world," is what he believes in.



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