

Japan: Insight into World's Future

Ms. Lejla Hodžić

(Bosnia and Herzegovina, age 19)

(full text)

Ancient civilizations had much less possibilities, information and knowledge about resources of the planet that was their home. Despite this fact, the knowledge they had is indisputably tremendous and parts of it are still a mystery even for 21st century experts and scientists. Modern-age people could learn a lot from the ancient civilizations, but there is one especially important thing that they could learn from them and that could assure and brighten their future. Ancient civilizations had numerous manners how to find and exploit resources and to improve the world they lived in. Modern people have a poor habit of constantly turning to the same resources, without being conscious those resources will run out once. Of course, there is a lot of investment made in developing new resources, but when we talk about people in general, the truth is much different. As if we are addicted to those same resources only because they give us a false sense of security. People get easily addicted to the safety they have in the present, without thinking about their own future, and the future of their descendants. It is estimated that probably in 50 years oil production will drop below half what is currently¹. This shows that it is of crucial importance for world economy, for governments to turn to exploitation of resources which are modern, human developed, intelligence-led, and most important of all, safe for the world that is highly polluted. Natural resources are a treasure that Earth has, but people are greedy and have no limits in using them. In the recession-struck world it is hard to find funds for researching and developing long-term solutions for not only the economy of our world, but also, the world itself. The question that appears intriguing to many is what are the resources that people will be relying on in the future? In my opinion, a country with small natural resources appears to be giving us the answer to this question and the insight to our future. Japan is a country with practically no energy resources and the fact that it is the world's largest importer of coal and liquefied natural gas, as well as the second largest importer of oil proves my statement². Japan is a country turning to one of the most important and yet neglected resources, human intelligence. Recognizing the leading position of this resource will result in numerous other resources that will improve the economy, quality of our life, prevent global climate problems and make our world a better place for living. Making intelligent choices will change the world that is more often perceived as a place drowning in problems of natural, economical, social and health character. In order to make such improvements a particular foundation is needed, and that is a change in the way we think, in the way we understand our existence in the world and our function in it. People yearn to live longer but they continually make moves that will surely only shorten their life expectancy. Scientists are warning us about short-term character

1. McDonald, Bill. *How Many Years Of Oil Do We Have Left To Run Our Industrial Civilization, Keeping In Mind That Oil Is A Resource And Has An Economical End?* www.forbes.com

2. World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. www.cia.gov

of natural resources which people continually exploit and create imbalance in our environment causing other problems. This is why the future brings a complete new definition of a resource. more often perceived as a place drowning in problems of natural, economical, social and health character. In order to make such improvements a particular foundation is needed, and that is a change in the way we think, in the way we understand our existence in the world and our function in it. People yearn to live longer but they continually make moves that will surely only shorten their life expectancy. Scientists are warning us about short-term character of natural resources which people continually exploit and create imbalance in our environment causing other problems. This is why the future brings a complete new definition of a resource. Oxford dictionary defines resources as, among other things, personal attributes and capabilities regarded as able to help or sustain one in adverse circumstances³. There are so many resources which are not yet explored enough and one single leading source may lead to the discovery of resources that will become the future of our sustenance. The reason why I have mentioned so many seemingly unrelated things is a country, which in my opinion, has or is already using resources previously mentioned. Japan, a country of the far East that serves as an example of what investing into human developed resources means. This is a country with a mentality that can serve as an example to the humanity. A country that cherishes treasures of the nature, already developed resources and continually tries to develop new ones. It is a country proud of what their people have achieved and a country with the longest life expectancy at birth according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs⁴. Japan might not have mineral, oil and gas resources, but its other resources can certainly not only become their most important exports, but also benefits to this world. In the core of these resources, what I find especially important is Japan's culture and lifestyle because it shows the mentality of the people of Japan, and brings in reasons why Japan has resources that can benefit the world. Japan has incredibly developed green technology which has been given a tag of our future so many times. In terms of Tokyo 2020, labor force that Japan possesses is definitely an important resource. And the last which I will be mentioning in further text, is transportation. It is important in the world of globalization to accept developments that Japan has made in transportation because of the characteristics it has and which I will be mentioning. Conclusively, Japan's lifestyle and life philosophy, green technology, transportation, labor force and human intelligence are the resources that Japan should offer the world through a unique event such as Olympic Games 2020.

Each nation's culture is unique in its own particular way, so is Japan's culture. The country of the rising sun is a source of a clever blend of modern and traditional. I would say this is one of the most important resources that Japan could offer to the world, when it comes to unconventional resources. Nations across the globe are struggling in maintaining the traces of their tradition, while Japan's youth is aware of their tradition and they continue cherishing it. In the same time they improve, modernize, create, and work, all in order to make their world a better place. Genki, a word common in Japan, its meaning is a complete mystery to the rest of the world when it comes to the popular lifestyle. Genki in Japanese means enthusiastic, energetic, **and full** of life and healthy⁵. In

3.Oxford Dictionary. Resource. www.oxforddictionaries.com

4. Life expectancy at birth (years), UN World Population Prospects 2010 www.un.org

5.Genki. www.urbandictionary.com

my opinion, understanding the philosophy of Japanese could be important for people in the world, especially in Western countries to turn from being pessimistic to optimistic. I believe that understanding this Japanese life philosophy is important for understanding their achievements and successes in other fields, especially in green technology. I perceive people of Japan as guards of the planet they live in, guards of the life that has been given to them. They appreciate what they have and cherish that. We could take for example their tradition as something they rely very much on. Nevertheless, nothing prevents them from enjoying up-to-date things. Kindness is also something that is not part of the polite manners, but of their lifestyle. I can recall a situation from a recently finished World Cup, where the Japanese football representation fans cleaned the trash they and the other fans left on the stadium. Instead of waking up a sense of humanity in people, this situation caused surprise in people. I wonder how come that preserving the cleanliness and healthiness of our environment can cause surprise. What kind of strangers to our planet have we become if this surprises us? However, the fact it does surprise the rest of the world, should be a proof to Japan's people that their awareness of the endangered planet could be a resource they could offer to the world and by that improve it. Beside this, the behavior of the entire nation should serve as an example, a nation that is proud and whose people cooperate and unite in their labor and by that raise the self-esteem of the entire nation. Japan is a country that conveys the impression of humbleness, politeness and gratitude. The reason why I consider this entire philosophy of the nation and its behavior important is for understanding the key of Japan's success in those fields which are not so familiar to the rest of the world. Beside, such lifestyle and philosophy is what the humanity thrives for and still cannot reach. Japanese have proved us how strong mental state can help in overcoming the most shocking and unexpected life problems, such as Fukushima accident. Why shouldn't Japan be the country developing such an undeveloped resource as this one, lifestyle that can be the foundation of crucial changes in the world.

Japan's manufacturing is one of its strongest characteristics. They do import raw materials, but they create wonders out of them. A resource that is going to be essential in the future if we want to keep our economy in balance with our environment is green technology which encompasses among other things development of renewable energy resources and hydrogen fuel cells. In 2002 the government passed the Basic Law on Energy Policy in order to promote comprehensive and integrated energy policies. This law sets forth the basic energy policy principles of “ensuring a stable energy supply,” “harmonization with the environment,” and “utilization of market mechanisms,” and it also mandates the preparation of a “Basic Energy Plan” that promotes a systematic, long-term, comprehensive approach to policies concerning energy supply and demand⁶. Japan takes a leading position in developing solutions for supplying energy resources, by turning to renewable energy resources, such as the power of the wind or sun. Nuclear energy has proved to be dangerous and not the best choice. Solar power energy turns out to be the best possibility for replacing our basic oil and gas energy resources. As we can see from the law Japanese government passed in 2002, they are turning to developing a long-term strategy for finding new energy resources. Moreover, these resources have to be environment-friendly. If we think better, global climate problems cannot be solved if we do not find new energy supplies. Also, if we continue using gas and oil as our

6. Energy and Resources. www.web-japan.org

only energy resources, their supplies are likely to run out even faster which can cause serious problems in economy. The prices of gas and oil will rise extremely and without proper energy, nothing can be initiated and created. This is why countries that decide to follow the steps Japan is making towards creating new resources, will surely avoid such problems that the rest of the world will be facing with. Japan has started a lot of different projects with a goal to improve Japan's overall energy efficiency by 30% in 2030. Japan has been an enthusiastic supporter of zero-emission hydrogen, which drew \$240 million in research funding in 2012, according to the Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Promotion Office at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry⁷. After the Fukushima accident, Japan is certainly at a crossroad when it comes to nuclear energy, because on one side it can surely benefit the energy efficiency in Japan. On the other side, nuclear energy has to be developed with safer strategy. Japan has been a great supporter of renewable energy resources, and it continues to invest in them. Japan could live great growth in its economy if it places the green technology products to the market in the right way. In my opinion Olympic Games are not only great sports and multicultural event, but also a possibility for the host country to promote itself. I believe that in this aspect, Japan should use this opportunity for creating a better market for selling green technology products and strategies, because it is for sure, that once in our close future, the economy will depend upon the results of the researches and developments Japan is making in this field. This way, Japan will benefit the world in a way that is crucial for the sustenance of our economy in the future, and will take a position among future leading economies of the world. Japan should use its great possibility; the investments it has made over years in developing green technology should finally prove to be profitable. The unique chance for this would be Tokyo 2020. Creating an environment-friendly atmosphere for athletes, using green technology products in different areas of organization of the Olympic Games would be a mayor success, a one that has not yet been seen. If green technology is what scientists claim it to be, using such products in organizing games should cut many expenses for Japanese government. By promoting this in the right way, Japan could use Olympic Games for assuring its leading position in selling green technology products in the future. Who says now that resources have to be defined within sharp limits that have been set for us over years? It turns out to be that human ability to use its cognitive functions and intelligence is a resource that is truly priceless, if it can create such technology.

Japan is a proof of what strong labor force can make and create, and how powerful human intelligence actually is. Labor force in Japan is the reflection of the nation itself. Hardworking, persistent and trained workers prove there is no challenge compelling enough to stop them in benefiting and improving the nation. It seems that in Japan, like in no other place, people understand that welfare is a result of a hard work. The statistics show how Japan has, not only one of the best labor forces in the world, but also one of the most stable ones. According to Ministry of Internal Affairs & Communications, in June 2014, Japan's employment rate was 59.9 percent, which meant 63.6 million people were employed, and unemployment rate was 3.7 percent⁸. Japan's labor force is known for its persistence and diligence, finishing their works professionally and responsibly. Again, such a labor force is a key element in organizing an event such as Olympic Games. And the Games are a unique opportunity for showing

7. **But in Renewable Energy for Japan: A Post-Fukushima Quest** <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/>

8. Japan Labor Force Participation Rate. www.tradingeconomics.com/japan/labor-force-participation-rate

how powerful army a labor force can be, and how hard work and trained individuals can lead to perfect results. But in order to achieve perfection, one needs to learn and train a lot. I believe that Japan's investment in education and training of young people, could lead to a number of professionals who can direct Japanese economy into a blossom. Already, we are aware how investment in education can lead to development in economy. Everybody points out this fact, but it is in my opinion crucial for governments of countries like Japan to take initiative in conducting these improvements in education and investing in it. Why? Well, the answer is pretty simple if we know how much developments in technology, robotics and renewable energy are important for the world. And Japan is the country leading in these fields. Our future depends on these fields. Robotics in Japan has reached a level unimaginable to us, ordinary people. Nevertheless, we are not that far from the point in our future where robots are going to be a necessity. Modern world has put number of requests which ordinary person can not fulfill in one day. Robots are there to help us dilute these obligations and tasks we need to perform on a daily basis. This is a resource which Japan has to turn into its economy's remedy. Investments in people who want to become professionals in this area can help Japan in developing a more human-friendly robots. I think that Japan should work on improving robots to make them more appealing and alluring to humans. **This way human** can understand the benefits of robotics, because nowadays, ordinary people yet perceive robots as something too complicated and something that belongs to science. The economy of Japan could benefit a lot if robots would be perceived as human friends or assistants. **This way robot** would become what modern technology has become nowadays, unseparable part of our life. Robotics is a human-developed resource. **A Resource** that is a result of human intelligence. I think that Japan has a major advantage in the world because it has understood the importance of human intelligence for our future. Since people have exploited natural resources, they have put our environment into danger. Now, it is up to our intelligence to resolve these issues, to create a safe future for us and our planet. Putting focus on this leads to success. A major advantage that Japan has **acquired** is in realizing the necessity of human intelligence for our sustainance. However, human intelligence is negligible if it is not nurtured with proper education. If we look closely into different sectors of Japanese economy, we can see how many developments have been made in areas of agriculture, transportation, robotics, technology, education etc, which is a result of human intelligence's involvement in these areas. One of the major resources, a key element for our sustainance is actually in human intelligence, and Japan has it.

Great innovations in the areas of agriculture, transportation and education prove how providing a good ground for developing technology can result in achievements in different fields which are of high importance for our everyday life. These areas have different characteristics which are unique for Japan. These characteristics are mainly developments which are yet unseen in other parts of the world, but will be important for the green economy. Japan is one of the most important countries when it comes to urban agriculture, and it could take a leading role in it, offering the world great inspiration for creating new environment and atmosphere in cities. Since Japan does not have great natural resources, it is understandable that great urban farmholders play significant role in the agriculture of Japan. Urban farmers account for 25% of farming households in Japan⁹. But the benefit that urban agriculture

9. Moreno-Peñaranda, Raquel. Japan's Urban Agriculture: Cultivating Sustainability and Well-being www.unu.edu

could bring to big cities and developing a healthier atmosphere in them is priceless. Urban agriculture introduces local ecosystems that would satisfy needs for food in the urban areas.

Transportation of food would not be necessary and the healthiness of the products would be kept at maximum. From rooftop gardens for urban residents to engage in agriculture, to green curtains using edible species for insulation of public buildings, to computer-based indoor plant growing, new forms of urban farming are emerging¹⁰. This proves how much developments in technology can assist people on a daily basis. Considering the situation in the world now, and what we so far can imagine as our future, Japan is the country that can use these developments as its main export product. Recognizing the need that globalization has brought, for people to be easily connected, Japan has invested a lot in its transportation system, which will be an amazing convenience during the Olympic Games. Japan uses mostly railway transportation, and has some of the fastest trains known for its punctuality, connecting its biggest cities¹¹. Again we are facing an area which has changed so much, thanks to great technology. It seems like wherever we turn, we are likely to see the miracles of technology. I think this could be one of the strongest benefits that Japan can offer the world, because traditional railway's systems have become plain and unattractive for world's travellers. And there is a need for these systems to be renewed and improved. Even though this will require a lot of investments, it is not a trend to follow, it is a need that globalization has set for us. Changing traditional views on education can make loose results. But introducing modern methods including technological facilities does not mean changing traditional views on education. It means that we are using the fruits of education, technology, to improve that same education system that has brought amazing products for us. These changes are inevitable if we want our students to create something new, yet unseen, something that will help us in the future. Information has to be available to young people, in order for them to create. I think that Japan has made great steps in these areas, and that it should promote more its culture of improving lifestyle through the use of technology during Tokyo 2020.

It might seem a bit idealistic to imagine that lifestyle and life philosophy of Japan could be its actual resource from this point, but the fact is that this world has to face some changes in order to achieve prosperity. Our life has become highly unhealthy, people are brutal to each other. In the world which we share, instead of being close and working on improving our planet, we are strangers to each other. And this is where our individualism and wrong philosophy has led us. To the point where we have developed a fear from our future, because we are uncertain what it brings to us. Since we have reached this point, we should consider it as a turning point for our future, and do the best we can to secure a safer future, a healthier environment, and facilitate our everyday obligations. Japan has offered the world a small insight into what our future could look like by developing renewable energy resources, green technology, and robotics. But in order to understand how Japan achieved this, we should consider how good their culture and lifestyle are. It could be that their blend of traditional life principles such as humbleness, gratitude and hard work, and modern **technology is** their resource and could benefit the world.

Together with changing our perception of the world we live in, comes human intelligence that should be widely

10. [Moreno-Peñaranda, Raquel. Japan's Urban Agriculture: Cultivating Sustainability and Well-being. www.unu.edu](http://www.unu.edu)

11. [Transport in Japan. www.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu)

used for developing planet-saving ideas. Human intelligence is underestimated and a resource that is not being invested in unfortunately. Japan should promote its robotics and technology innovation and underline the importance of human intelligence for such amazing creations of the modern age. Modern age is the one that can bring unimaginable facilities for our world, ones that can release the pressure that the needs of the modern life require. These facilities are all technology, created by human intelligence, manufactured by trained and educated labor force, another resource that Japan possesses. Conclusively, Japan should use its chance in this turning point, take the initiative in promoting these new developments which are going to be our future for certain. Taking the initiative will not only mean that Japan will benefit our world, but will secure its place among world's leading economies.