

# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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The panel on Japanese Creativity and Sustainable Development proposes to examine whether “Japanese creativity” can serve as a guide for sustainable development from interdisciplinary as well as cross-cultural perspectives. The panel first examines the meaning of “creativity” in its historical, social, psychological and neuro-physiological contexts. The meaning of Japanese creativity is then explored by reviewing the history of Japanese science and engineering as well as the evolution of Japanese business and management. Finally, the question of how Japanese creativity can contribute to sustainable development is discussed by examining if it offers a better promise of maintaining ecological balance between human and natural systems than the Western notion of creativity which has guided the evolution of industrial civilization for the last couple of centuries since the Industrial Revolution.

Examining the implications of Japanese creativity for sustainable development is important because the Western notion of creativity, especially in its applications to industry and commerce, has involved “creative destruction” of not only social institutions but also the natural environment. To the extent that Japanese creativity is absorbing and accommodating, it is expected to play a leading role in guiding industrial civilization into a post-industrial civilization which involves “creative integration” of social institutions and the natural environment.