

# Opening Remarks

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for attending our international conference. On behalf of the organizers, I would like to welcome you and explain the intent and goals of this conference.

## **Outline of the Research Project**

First, let me describe the outline of this research project. The theme for the project is “Exploring Social Capital towards Sustainable Development in East Asia: From Community, Security and Civil Society,” and 33 persons have been involved in the research over a period of five years since fiscal 2009. In that year, Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology also selected the project for its Supported Program for the Strategic Research Foundation at Private Universities.

## **Perspectives and Mission of the Research Project**

In Japan, today, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the birthrate is decreasing and the population is aging at the same time as globalization is making great strides. We are on the verge of a major crossroads where we must consider how to develop, evolve (deepen), and maintain the social, economic, and political structures that have formed and cumulated in the course of the modernization that followed the Meiji Restoration and the economic development after the end of World War II. I believe that so far the experience and accomplishments of Japan have been attained while embracing economic prosperity, political maturity, cultural accumulation and traditional values. With this project, we aim to carry out primary research to embed this enriched civil society even more deeply in the future.

As our inquiries progressed, we realized that the concepts, theories and hypotheses of social capital provide us with important clues. Social capital is manifested in family and community ties, networks of social organizations (such as corporate and voluntary organizations), and the safety-net of the public sector. It is based on the idea that when these

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structures are stable and reliable in terms of their interconnectedness and relationships, they tie in with social safety-net and security and, as a result, they enhance the sustainability and capacity to adapt of society as a whole.

However, there are indications that even in Japan these relationships involving social capital have wavered in recent years. What about the situation in other countries and regions in Asia? By carrying out factual investigations and a number of surveys (questionnaires, interviews), we would like to develop as objective an understanding as possible of the actual state of affairs.

### **The Impact of the Great East Japan Earthquake**

At 2:46 pm on Friday, March 11, 2011, a huge earthquake of magnitude 9.0 struck the Pacific coast of the Tohoku region of Japan. Then, the area was assailed by the unimaginable tsunami and the enormous damage to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. We call it the Great East Japan Earthquake. The damage was so great that even now, more than two years later, there is a tentative restoration of sorts, but the reconstruction is still incomplete, and many regions have not even begun the process of revitalization. To begin with, many areas in the Hamadori region (the Pacific coastal areas) of Fukushima Prefecture, which sit in the shadow of the Fukushima nuclear accident, are still out of bounds.

Incidentally, the media reported on how most of the victims, who after such a shock had to be evacuated to emergency shelters, conducted themselves in an extremely unassuming and quiet manner. In Japan as well as abroad, the voices even approached a kind of surprise and admiration for the conduct of the victims. Conduct like this may perhaps be an expression of the Japanese perception of the impermanence of life, or it may be understood through the worldview that Kamo no Chomei described in *Hojoki* (An Account of My Hut) in 1212. Or, possibly, it indicates the degree of the strength of social capital rooted in the communities of the Tohoku region.

However, it is very irritating that the then government of Japan, which was in the hands of the Democratic Party of Japan, took advantage of the tendency of many Japanese people to display self-restraint in the face of this type of emergency, and were wholly preoccupied with excuses and incapable of devising any policy. On the other hand, as no more than a group of researchers, we have modest progress with plans for symposiums and other public lectures that at least consider the present situation in the disaster-stricken area based on this research project.

### **The relationship between Individual Values, Social Capital and Social Values**

The following illustrates our fundamental awareness of social capital. Starting from individual values, we move through social capital consisting of trust, norms, and networks, to arrive at the social value structure determined by family, community, organizations, economy, politics, culture, and so on. In short, social capital is a process that starts with the values of individuals, which are then converted into the value structures of society as a whole; i.e., it has a hand in determining what values are important in a particular society. The figures are rough illustrations

of that relationship.

Figure 1 Relationships between Individual Values, Social Capital, and Social Values

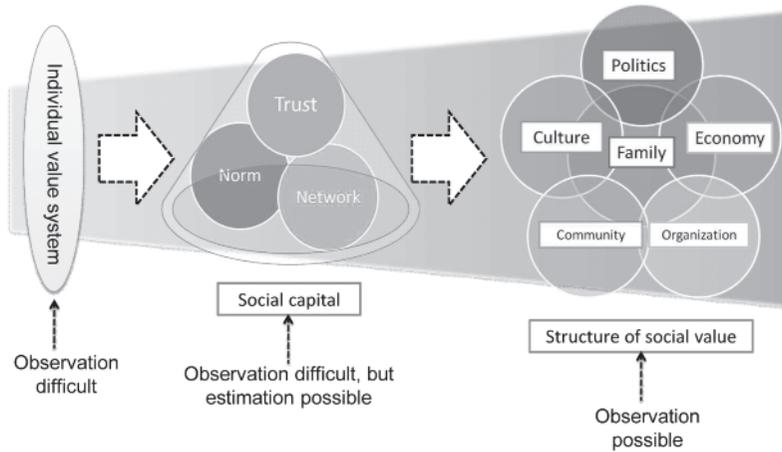
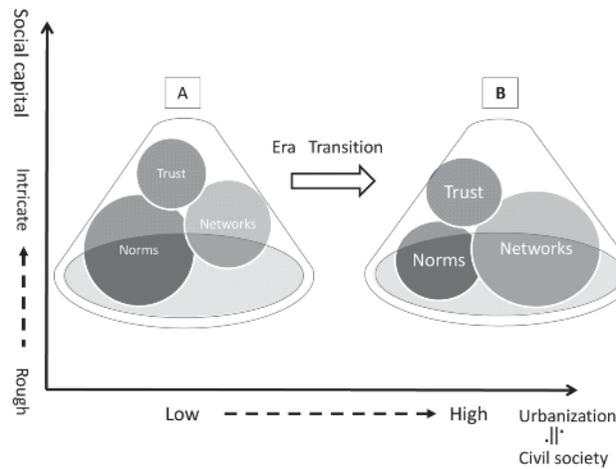


Figure 2 Categories and Transformation of Social Capital



### Research Project Activities (1)

For this research project, we have worked since fiscal 2009 to deepen awareness by inviting researchers with previous experience of researching social capital and, at the same time, we have broadened our own expertise by organizing symposiums and public lectures about striking and representative cases.

However, after the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011,

we decided that we should turn our attention to research and analysis based on this unprecedented experience. Based on this perspective, we made our way to several areas struck by the disaster, and we also organized symposiums focusing on these areas. Specifically, in July 2011, we organized a symposium that covered Ishinomaki City in Miyagi Prefecture, and in July 2012, another symposium on Kamaishi City in Iwate Prefecture.

### **Research Project Activities (2)**

At the same time, we have also carried out surveys (questionnaires and interviews) on the reality of social capital in Japan and overseas for this project.

In Japan, we surveyed disaster preparedness and voluntary activities in Shinjuku ward in Tokyo in October 2010 and in August 2011. We also surveyed disaster preparedness and voluntary activities in Kawasaki City in Kanagawa Prefecture in December 2012 and in April 2013.

Overseas, we carried out surveys of social capital including social life, social risk, social etiquette, customs, and norms in seven countries and regions. We conducted surveys in Vietnam and Laos in 2010 and 2011; in Korea and Cambodia in 2011 and 2012; and in China's Fujian province, Taiwan and Thailand in 2012 and 2013. Our colleagues from affiliated organizations, who carried out the surveys on our behalf, are joining us at this venue today. This is a profoundly emotional occasion for us, and we would once again like to express our gratitude to everyone involved in this project.

### **Changes in Awareness of Disaster Prevention: The Context of the Great East Japan Earthquake**

Today, we will hear reports from researchers in every country and region about the results of the overseas surveys, but before we do, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce the results of the surveys in Japan. Specifically, in October 2010, we surveyed awareness of disaster prevention in the eastern parts of Shinjuku ward in Tokyo. In August 2011, we carried out a survey in the western parts of Shinjuku ward in Tokyo to find out how awareness of disaster prevention had changed after the Great East Japan Earthquake. So, what can we read from this comparison?

In terms of confidence in people or institutions in the event of a natural disaster, the values before the great earthquake were 4.333 for family, 3.880 for the Self Defense Forces, 3.731 for police and firefighters, 3.648 for hospitals, and 3.529 for disaster management organizations run by volunteers. After the great earthquake, the values were 4.358 for family, 4.165 for the Self Defense Forces, 3.787 for police and firefighters, 3.673 for hospitals, and 3.627 for voluntary disaster management organizations. Consequently, there were no changes to the order of rankings. Moreover, there was an increase in the degree of confidence in both the people and the institutions that were listed among the choices at the time of the survey. We found no cases where the degree of confidence decreased. In short, the disaster raised overall confidence in cooperation and public assistance. In descending order, confidence increased by 0.285 for the

Self Defense Forces, 0.198 for volunteers and NPOs, 0.132 for people in the community, 0.098 for voluntary disaster prevention organizations, and 0.093 for relatives. In short, if we exclude the striking increase in trust in the Self Defense Forces, this suggests increased trust in cooperation and self-help.

Figure 3 Reliability on people or institutions in the event of natural disasters  
(paired-sample *t* test)

“Have the cognition for disaster preparedness changed after the Great East Japan Earthquake?”

	paired-sample	Great East Japan Earthquake		B-A	p value	judgment
		before the Earthquake (A)	after the Earthquake (B)			
family	727	4.333	4.358	0.025	0.203	
people in neighborhood	721	3.429	3.560	0.132	0.000	***
relatives	708	3.006	3.099	0.093	0.000	***
acquaintances or friends	704	3.196	3.259	0.063	0.000	***
colleagues or coworkers	369	2.821	2.902	0.081	0.001	**
voluntary organizations for disaster management	714	3.529	3.627	0.098	0.000	***
self-fire brigade	692	3.516	3.584	0.068	0.000	***
volunteers or NPOs	665	2.988	3.186	0.198	0.000	***
police or firefighting organizations	695	3.731	3.787	0.056	0.011	*
hospitals	685	3.648	3.673	0.025	0.247	
Shinjuku Ward Office	691	3.317	3.355	0.038	0.100	
Tokyo Metropolitan Government	687	3.180	3.252	0.071	0.003	**
Self Defense Force	691	3.880	4.165	0.285	0.000	***

(note) All questions are made up of the five-point Likert scale.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Based on these survey results, we have been able to provisionally discover the fundamental and important elements that make up social capital in present-day Japan (in particular, in central Tokyo), and at the same time, we have been able to estimate the changes brought on by the experience of a serious natural disaster like the Great East Japan Earthquake. However, much prudent investigation is still required on how this knowledge is reflected in actual policy structures and priorities.

### Outcome of the Research Project

The outcomes for every year of the research project, which started in fiscal 2009, have been collected in three publications. One of them is the *Annual Report*. The second one is *The Journal of Social Capital Studies*, a collection of essays in Japanese. The third one is *The Senshu Social Capital Review*, a collection of essays in English. The *Annual Report* is a record of the activities in each year of the project. Researchers at the university research center wrote the essays for the Japanese collection. The essays in English were also written by researchers at this center, but with the intention of sharing the information with overseas researchers. As of now, we have

already published four issues for all three publications.

We also plan to publish the proceedings of this international conference in a fifth issue. I expect that we have a long day ahead of us, but I hope you will enjoy participating until the end of the day.