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Author(s)	MACHIMURA, Takashi
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Mission of the Bulletin

Takashi MACHIMURA
Hitotsubashi University

On March 11, 2011, several great earthquakes and a devastating tsunami suddenly hit the coastal areas of East Japan. More than 350 thousand houses were destroyed, and almost 20 thousand people died or were reported missing. Accompanying these tragic events were serious accidents at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima, which caused large-scale radioactive contamination and forced almost 100 thousand residents to be evacuated and live as refugees.

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In fact, these disasters are continuing and no one knows how long and to what extent they will have an impact on society and history. However, people have come to gradually understand that the current incidents are not just accidental natural disasters but are rather historically-rooted and structurally-framed social events.

Therefore, first of all, this bulletin seeks to share with its diverse readers as many facts and findings as possible about the experienced and ongoing disasters. For this purpose, we have collected data since March and compiled it into a chronicle. In doing so, we have learned that the so-called “disaster” is made of

a sequential, but contingent, mass of events. As time goes by, however, we are watching the emergence of various forces that channel these pieces into several master narratives of the “disaster.” Thus, we now feel the necessity to keep a record of events as “raw” pieces and to make this record open to analysis.

In addition, this bulletin is expected to provide a forum for intellectual dialogue. We expect the bulletin to raise issues about not only the disaster but also events related to it. These may include technology, risk, the environment, the nation’s development, the city and the region, globalization, civil society, governance, community resilience and recovery, security and military issues, social movement, public memory, medium and culture. Moreover, we anticipate that the questions raised in regard to these issues will lead us to conduct debates on social theory and fair society in general.

At last, this bulletin is written mainly in English. We believe the experiences in Japan should be shared in common by both international and domestic readers. Currently it is becoming easier to get immediate information from the Internet. Yet those are often fragmented and easily lost. And most of the information are given in Japanese. Therefore this bulletin seeks for making a small platform which is open to non-Japanese speaking community. Fortunately we already have excellent precedents such as Social Science Research Council’s “Understanding Katrina: Perspectives from the Social Sciences” (<http://understandingkatrina.ssrc.org/>). So we hope this challenge will be a part of transnational network for exchange of ideas from the perspectives of the social sciences.