PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOPS

The Great East Japan Earthquake poses various questions to us: What infrastructure has formed the condition and Governmentality of the late modern society? What causal mechanisms and powers have emerged in the process of rehabilitation, resilience, and reformation of the infrastructure? Thus, we (Keisuke Mori as the primary organizer, and Yutaka Iwadate and Saki Sunaga [Uchiumi] as the secondary) organized three successive workshops to answer these questions.

To investigate the “over-determinating” restructuring processes after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we organized the study group that investigated the theory of the infrastructure and mainly comprised the graduate students at Hitotsubashi University. In this process, we realized that we had to refine our theoretical concept to understand the urban society and infrastructure. Thus, we organized the three interdisciplinary workshops.

We invited three renowned junior researchers from diverse disciplinary areas investigating the infrastructures in the Japanese areas from the above perspectives. In this paper, first, we will summarize the commonality and difference among the workshops. Second, we will demonstrate the possibilities and limits of the findings drawn in those workshops.

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CONTENTS OF THE WORKSHOPS

First Workshop: Materiality and Governmentality

In the first workshop, we invited Junji Nishikawa, a...
sociologist, who has published remarkable works on social history of glass representing urban materiality and sought to clarify the theoretical possibility that enables us to grasp the big picture of the formation of contemporary society in transition.

First, in the presentation titled “Materiality and Governmentality: Contemporary Research Current on Infrastructure and its Cases,” Nishikawa presented the contemporary research constellation on the infrastructural Governmentality related to the urban studies. He combined these theoretical frameworks and demonstrated how urban planners in Tokyo in 1920s used sunlight as a modern material device for urban planning. Second, Yutaka Iwadate gave a presentation titled, “For Infra-fundamental Analysis on Urban Areas.” His argumentation on water supply shows how the problem of water was viewed in the urban area of Tokyo in the aftermath of the earthquake. Moreover, during high economic growth after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, water supply was focused because of the water shortage. His historical, comparative view on water supply clarifies the invisibility of urban materiality. Third, Saki Sunaga discusses the relation between class and fashion in the 19th-century London, in the presentation, “‘Longing’ for Modern Fashion: Cultural Inclusion Process of Victorian Servant on Punch.” In this period, mass production of clothes and materialization of class mobility streamlined the flow of hand-me-down clothes from an aristocrat via bourgeois to proletarian. She focuses on the cartoons depicting the relationship between mistress and servant in the journal Punch. She concludes that such representation depicts a noteworthy aspect of the social advancement of the working class women.

As a whole, in this workshop, the implication of modernity was questioned from various perspectives: How the humans and non-humans have created and reformed the collectivity of themselves as the social. Materiality and Governmentality play significant role in this process.

Second Workshop: Theoretical Investigation into Social-Causality

In the second workshop, we invited Motonao Mori, a philosopher of Alfred North Whitehead, and focused on the “events” caused by the Earthquake.

First, Motonao Mori (“Origin, Withering, and Village: Gan Tanigawa and Michiko Ishimure’s thought of Kyushu”) demonstrates how Minamata mercury poisoning and coral complex in Kyushu emerged as events in Modernity. He narrows down the target to two prominent storywriters, critiques, as well as activists, Gan Tanigawa and Michiko Ishimure. To clarify his intention, Mori
deployed prehension, a Whitehead’s term, to criticize apprehension that became privileged in the context of cognition in modern science. This way, one can develop the argument on the level of the perceiving subject as Ishimure does by writing, and the reasoning subject as Tanigawa does. This view criticizes the epistemology of writing based on the 19th-century fashioned sciences. Thus, Mori opened the possibility of scientific writing. Second, Takefumi Ueda (“Making the Great East Japan Earthquake Chronicle 2011.3.11-2011.5.11: Infrastructure, Reliability, and Sociology of Knowledge”) clarifies the process of making the chronicle. He mentioned that experiencing disaster as something radical has strongly influenced chronicle making, and that seeking causality among those events is very crucial. Finally, Yutaka Iwadate (“Reading the Great East Japan Earthquake Chronicle”) presented a response to Ueda’s presentation. Citing Ueda’s analysis of “causality of events,” he analyzed the process of breakdown of water supply system after the earthquake in Tokyo. He pointed out that many unintentional actors (or “actant”) have connected through the institutional measures to fix the problems including the breakdown of water lines and mixing of radioactive materials into the supplied water. While the first workshop focused on the invisible paths of materials in modern societies and related politics, the second workshop focused on the critical examination of the condition of modern thinking and its limit.

**Third Workshop: Subjectification of Humans and Non-Humans to/against the State and its Scenery**

For the third workshop, we sought to find a new theoretical perspective to understand the diverse events triggered by the earthquake. The keywords included state and scenery. We invited Takeshi Haraguchi, a human geographer (“Problematizing from the Past of Kamagasaki: Urban, Labor, and Infrastructure”). Based on the fieldworks in Yoseba in Osaka, Haraguchi focused on the history of the day laborers’ camp in Kamagasaki from an infrastructural perspective. Labor power gathered in Kamagasaki used to be absorbed in construction, port operation, shipbuilding, and nuclear industries. However, it has been changing through the massive restructuring of labor market and the technology structure; the scenery of Kamagasaki has changed drastically. Nowadays, the popularization of cell phone communication and transition of flophouses into Internet cafes have eliminated the Yoseba scenery. This might be the contemporary ontology of labor and built environment.

Second, Keisuke Mori (“Earthquake and Emerging of the State: Ideology of Nation-State and Military in Globalization”) argued how the Japanese Self Defense Forces and U.S. Forces identified themselves as the rescue agency after the earthquake. The Great
East Japan Earthquake was characterized by massive military mobilization for the rescue missions. Mori clarified the legislative basis of this mobilization and the impact of those militaries on their own mission. In this regard, Tadahito Yamamoto proposed the meaning and importance of “archiving” the disaster. How can we find, trace, and share the diverse experiences of disaster? This was a critical aspect for those who had experienced the disaster.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND ISSUES

We have found many new questions and issues in the workshops. Nevertheless, mentioning all the points is impossible. Therefore, we will present some important issues in the discussion.

First, let us discuss the extent to which the definition of Governmentality is valid. Michel Foucault’s analysis of Governmentality (Dean 2013; Foucault 2004a, 2004b; Rose and Miller 2008) is unique because it enables us to clarify the sovereign power, discipline, and bio-politics. This opened the possibility to examine the horizontal-micro-power relation by criticizing the top-down understanding of power relations in a Weberian sense. From this perspective, we can critically evaluate the government’s policy of rehabilitation after the earthquake. On the other hand, some criticized that only focusing on the Governmentality would pose us the same danger that lacks the structured and vertical understanding of power. However, Foucault’s perspective already deeply criticized the condition of the (neo) liberal subject formation during the late 1970s. All the above suggest that the state plays a crucial role in the new phase of neoliberalism in Japan. Therefore, class and capital-based analysis (Harvey 2005, 1985) applies to the Foucauldian notion of power relations.

Second, the event and analyses of various cascading effects of disaster have an analytical problem: Where should we cut the scales? “Cutting” events in “appropriate” scales gravely depends on the disciplines and practices (Latour 2005, 1993; Law and Hassard eds. 1999). Immediately after the earthquake, this “cutting” was very difficult for our research team because of the scale of the disaster. However, this seems to stabilize with time. One of our problems is not to limit the disaster as an event within one discipline, but understand the disaster as an event and create the tool for investigating it.

Finally, “archiving” is a pressing issue for those conducting studies on disasters. How can we give shape to, preserve, and share multiple research achievements? The disaster does not end but continues. We hope that the workshops could contribute to the archiving of the Great East Japan Earthquake.
Notes

1 All affiliated in February 2014.
2 Here, the word Kyusyu, represents not only the southwest region of Japan, but also an event wherein Minamata disease, severe mercury contamination, took place. The intellectuals, Ishimure and Tanigawa were based in the Kyusyu region.
4 As mentioned, Yoseba (day laborers’ camp) historically signifies the biggest urban corner where the cheap hostels for the day laborers are concentrated. Similar to Kamagasaki in Osaka, Sanya in Tokyo represents the same in East Japan.
5 For the sophisticated problematization of Where-to-cut issue in the empirical research, see Osugi (2015).

References