

Toward a Theoretical Reconsideration of the Interface between the Social and the Material

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Ever since the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, Japanese society has been confronted with continuing structural changes resulting from this disaster. The aftermath of the disaster is still ongoing.

The Study Group of Infrastructure and Society, constituted in April 2011, began publication of the bulletin *Disaster, Infrastructure and Society (DIS)* in order to share and discuss experiences of the disaster with domestic and international readers. The Study Group of Infrastructure and Society compiled more than 11,000 events that occurred in relation with the disaster (see *DIS* No. 1) in the “The Great East Japan Earthquake Chronicle: 2011. 3. 11 - 2011. 5. 11.” However, the summation of these events in this chronicle does not convey the totality of the impact of the disaster. Then, what kinds of theory or perspective enable us to grasp the totality of the impact of the disaster?

Based on our experiences in Tokyo following the Great East Japan Earthquake, the crisis caused by the disaster is not only that of capital accumulation, but also of our modernized and urbanized daily lives. In *DIS* No.3, the special issue titled, “The Logics of Cascading: Infrastructural Perspectives on a Post-Disaster Situation,” and including the article proposed by Stephen Graham, focused on how daily lives are usually supported by complex infrastructures.

Continuing the discussion within *DIS* No. 3, this special issue entitled “Infrastructure Politics” will

attempt to reconsider the theoretical or sociological problems concerning the interface between the social and the material, utilizing Actor Network Theory, the urban theories of David Harvey and Manuel Castells, the governmentality studies of Michel Foucault, and/or the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. This special issue was the product of the three interdisciplinary workshops on “Infrastructural Perspective on the (Re)Formation of Contemporary Society: Events, Scenery, and Governmentality,” at Hitotsubashi University in December of 2013 and January and February of 2014. All contributors to this special issue were also presenters at these workshops. For more information, see the report of workshops added to the end of this special issue.

More than five years have passed since the first volume of *DIS* was published. We will attempt to improve the *DIS* bulletin further and to propose not only results or findings of our investigation, but also theoretical perspectives that developed through our research activities. This *DIS* No.6 is expected to be the first step to this challenge.