

# **Lessons to Global Urbanization from Modern Japan's Problematic Experiences: Message to the World from the Japan Association for Urban Sociology**

## **Japan Association for Urban Sociology**

The Japan Association for Urban Sociology was launched on May 17, 1982. Since then it has deepened sociological studies on urban areas in a theoretical, empirical, and applicative manner based on trends across sociology as a whole, such as globalization and urbanization. This message will introduce readers to the history of urban sociology in Japan and the major issues with which it is interested, while also discussing post-3.11 challenges.

### **1. The Origins of Urban Sociology in Japan**

Just like with the case in other countries, it is not all that easy to discuss the origins of urban sociology in Japan with precision. If one were to trace back the genealogy of urban sociological studies that have persisted down to the present, then at the very least these would exhibit the following three trends.

First there are the studies on poverty that have been carried out since the end of the 19th century with a focus on cities like Tokyo, which have experienced the social change of turning from feudal cities into modern cities. Groundbreaking work in social investigations—such as MATSUBARA Iwagoro's *The Darkest Side of Tokyo* (1893) or YOKOYAMA Gennosuke's *Lower Class Society in Japan* (1899), for example—offered impressive portraits of the existence of the underclass in massive cities. Such works actually derived inspiration from Charles BOOTH's studies on London and the works of others.

Second is that during the first half of the 20th century, when capitalist economies started to undergo significant development, studies on themes such as housing, sanitation, poverty, social class, and leisure were carried out in the metropolises that had begun to spring up. These were instituted by local governments that had a pressing need to enact social policies. There was an enormous number of such investigative reports, which serve as valuable records on Japan's first metropolis. One of the leaders in this was ISOMURA Eiichi, who was involved in urban policy at Tokyo City Hall. After World War II he moved to a university and became one of Japan's representative urban sociological researchers (Isomura 1989).

The third trend is that pioneers in urban sociological studies began to appear on the scene at the universities that gradually continued to be established. OKUI Fukutaro, who lectured on economics, was influenced by the thinking of John RUSKIN and the notion of the garden city while he was studying abroad in the United Kingdom. He vigorously championed studies in Tokyo's outer-lying cities starting in the 1930s (Okui 1940). SUZUKI Eitaro, who started research based on agricultural sociology, attempted to depict the characteristics of Japan's cities—which were comprised of unique spheres while at the same time being embedded within a hierarchical

structure between the center and periphery—through the use of the concept of nodal institutions (Suzuki 1957).

When World War II came to a close in 1945 Japan's cities, which had been dealt major blows from air-raids and evacuations, made a fresh start from out of what were quite literally ruins. Having started to seek out new political and economic structures under the American occupation, Japanese cities were thrown into a state of confusion as their populations surged upwards once again. As a reflection of the circumstances of the times, in the 1950s research on Japan's cities produced outstanding empirical studies in fields such as poverty and crime (refer to "3. Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion"). However, in the 1950s and 1960s, when the country moved away from postwar reconstruction and towards rapid economic growth, Japanese urban sociology entered a new stage of institutionalization as urbanization proceeded at full tilt.

(MACHIMURA Takashi, Hitotsubashi University)

## **2. Rapid Economic Growth and Metropolitan Society—Urban Sociology Becomes Institutionalized**

According to population statistics by the United Nations, in 1950 the percentage of the population living in "urban areas" came to 53.4% of Japan's total population. Twenty years later in 1970 this figure had shot up to 71.9% (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2012). In this period, which overlapped precisely with the country's period of rapid economic growth, large-scale population migrations from rural regions to major metropolitan areas proceeded apace in Japan. A great many people flowed into the three major metropolitan areas of Tokyo, Osaka, or Nagoya in order to find work or to advance onto universities or other institutes of higher learning.

According to the same statistics, the percentage of the population living in urban areas in the United States showed a moderate increase from 64.2% to 73.2% from the 1950s to the 1970s. Conversely, in the United Kingdom, where urbanization was already more advanced, a slight decrease from 79.0% to 77.1% was recorded for this same proportion. On the other hand, a look at Japan's neighboring countries in East Asia reveals that the percentage of the population in metropolitan areas in 1970 was only 40.7% in South Korea and 17.4% in China. It has been recognized that the West was oftentimes ahead of Japan when it came to urbanization. Therefore, urban studies in Japan have been developed in a manner whereby they refer to concepts and theories proposed in the West while simultaneously verifying whether these are applicable in Japan's case.

Throughout the progression of its rapid urbanization a whole host of new social problems occurred frequently in urban society. However, it was difficult to resolve these with just the traditional institutions and conventional organizations found in the urban and rural areas in which social structures had undergone upheaval. What sorts of new prescriptions should be suggested? Urban sociological studies have always been required to face up to such practical challenges. However, in order to offer prescriptions it is necessary to define what the problems are. Moreover, their causes must also be explained by tracing them back to their underlying structures. From the

1960s to the 1980s urban sociological research in Japan diverged into several different schools of thought regarding their understanding of urban social structures and their changes.

First off, there was the standpoint that saw the greatest problems facing urban societies as being due to the tension and opposition produced by the intermixed status of new and old residents who have differing rationales for integration, as well as the lack of a new rationale for social integration. This approach of emphasizing integration has been understood in Japan as being linked with the Chicago school of urban sociology. The young people who flowed into major metropolitan areas searched for living quarters in the vicinity around the city centers which had excellent transportation facilities for commuting to work and school, after which they formed families and relocated to suburban areas. For this reason, suburban communities in which new and old residents are intermixed have served as a major platform for empirical studies in urban sociology in search of new integration. Through this process the concept of “community” as a new rationale for integration has been taken up in a political sense, and urban sociologists themselves continue to be involved in its establishment (refer to “4. Community Theory and Network Analysis”).

Second, there has been the position that has viewed the major causes of the problems confronting urban societies as being due to (capitalistic) economic structures and the contradictions produced by state policies that are closely connected with these. In Japan, which prior to the war was strongly influenced by Marxism, political economic approaches had a strong influence even in studies of urban and rural areas. The enormous impact that large-scale industrial development had on regional societies represented a major theme in many of the studies on urban and rural areas. Moreover, the social movements in which residents organized in opposition to the environmental destruction and pollution caused by development were also taken up as a major focus of urban studies in the 1970s and 1980s as the new main constituents in oppositional behavior (Matsubara and Nitagai eds. 1976).

The wave of “new urban sociology” that appeared at the end of the 1960s from out of the West arrived in Japan in no time at all. The subjects dealt with by the new urban sociology were the urban transformations that took place during periods of economic growth and the social contradictions that these engendered. As part of this movement, theories from France by the likes of Henri LÉFEBVRE and Manuel CASTELLS had a strong affinity with Japanese society. Postwar France was similar to Japan in that it made progress with urbanization at a rapid pace on account of its proactive urban development policies. Lefebvre’s *Le droit à la ville* (1967) was quickly translated into Japanese by 1969.

Third, numerous studies to empirically confirm how urban and rural political structures should be arranged were taken up as a research field that is related to both of the two schools of thought seen above. The fact of the matter is that, against this backdrop, questions surrounding the extent to which the feudal system and the nationalism under the Emperor system from before the war had an impact on newly-democratic postwar Japanese society were widely shared among the social sciences in postwar Japan. In the case of urban sociology, one of the focal points was on the political functions of the ruling local resident organizations—or neighborhood associations. Progress was made on empirical studies in this area that incorporated techniques from the American

style of research on community power structures. What is more, studies to verify the urban impacts produced by state intervention in society through its policies were carried out on the basis of the capitalist state theory of the 1970s. There were a wide variety of subjects that were verified through these. But on the whole it was reaffirmed that there was some degree of difference between the traditional ruling structures that were based on land ownership and the capitalistic power structures that have existed since the modern age, and that as things currently stood these were intermixed within actual urban and rural areas.

The establishment of the Japan Association for Urban Sociology in 1982 was premised against this wide array of studies. In the 1980s Japan was enjoying its bubble economy. Japanese cities were awash in new waves of global capital, immigrants, and so on (refer to “5. Challenges for Urban Ethnicity Studies”). In the globally urbanizing Tokyo factories, warehouse districts, and old worker’s districts were destroyed on account of redevelopment, and on their old sites offices, condominiums, and other such buildings were erected (Machimura 1992). At the beginning of the 1990s the economic bubble burst, and ever since Japan has been suffering from prolonged economic stagnation. The trends of industrialization and urbanization that started in the rapid growth period had come to an end. In the 1990s, while globalization gathered steam worldwide, Japan on the other hand was compelled to clean up from the message following its bubble economy. Japanese cities headed into the 21st century amidst the stagnation and isolation that was known as the “lost decade” (refer to “6. 21st Century Urban Sociology in Japan in Light of 3.11”).

(MACHIMURA Takashi, Hitotsubashi University)

### **3. Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion**

Now that it has entered the 21st century, Japan finds itself in similar circumstances with many other countries in that the progression of poverty and social exclusion poses a significant social problem. This was prompted by the emergence of homeless people in major cities that has risen to prominence since the 1990s as a result of de-industrialization and globalization.

Of course, that is not to imply that poverty and social exclusion did not exist in cities prior to that. As was mentioned in Section 1, one of the starting points from which urban sociology in Japan emerged was from factual investigations into the impoverished. What is more, the rapid industrialization that began at the outset of the 20th century gave rise to pockets of poverty and exclusion within cities, and state and local governments instituted numerous studies on these out of their need to undertake policy responses to them. Prior to the war, the Chicago school of urban sociology was adopted in Japan by the administrative personnel in cities who were confronted with various different urban problems, such as poverty. This also provided the theoretical and methodological basis for thinking about social problems in cities in the postwar period as well. Conversely, urban studies rooted in Marxism regarded urban problems as sharp indications of the structural contradictions of capitalistic industrialization. Such studies attempted to empirically demonstrate the polarization of social classes and impoverishment found within cities that were produced through the expansion of regional inequalities.

However, ever since its period of rapid economic growth Japan has recognized poverty as

being a problem that is resolved or alleviated together with the achievement of affluence. From 1955 to 1995 its per capita GNP has grown roughly 40-fold on a nominal basis and roughly ten-fold on a real basis. Moreover, the people's "middle-class consciousness" has also expanded.

But in actuality poverty and exclusion have not exactly gone away. Japanese urban sociology has amassed a body of studies focusing on people who work at *yoseba* (skid row districts), as well as in the labor market for the lower classes. These have continued to pose questions about not only the explanations for the economic structures that give rise to poor people, but also the power structures and ideological structures of civil society that try to sweep poverty and exclusion under the rug. AOKI Hideo positions Japan's urban underclass within international structures of exploitation. He also portrays the ideological and power structures that exclude the urban underclass based upon his assiduous studies (Aoki 2000).

NISHIZAWA Akihiko refers to the "limited positions and spaces where people who have been marginalized from groups, cut off from regional society, and alienated from their family can live in isolation" as "domains of the poor" (Nishizawa 2010). Since the 1990s there has been a profusion of poor people in urban spaces. While various types of social support have begun to be provided to such people, according to Nishizawa authoritative interventions in these domains of the poor and the ideologies justifying these have essentially remained unchanged from the time when modern society came into being until the present. He typifies these into three patterns: treatment, concealment, and erasure. Treatment refers to reincorporating people into organizations and fixed domains through training, while concealment refers to socially isolating people of an unpatriotic status who are not worthy of treatment and rendering them invisible. Erasure is employed by society through death by abandonment or "attacks."

However, social support is necessary. The problem will most likely be one of identifying the ideologies underpinning this and designing institutions that do not exclude. In recent years support from the aid sector, such as NPOs, has been growing more prolific. How can support that does not exclude people and social inclusion be made possible? While cities are venues of exclusion, at the same time they are also venues where the social rise up in opposition to exclusion through a mixture of a diverse array of constituents, including interested parties, supporters, citizens, and the government. The thinking is that contemporary urban sociology must indicate the process by which this takes shape.

(INAZUKI Tadashi, The University of Kitakyushu)

#### **4. Community Theory and Network Analysis**

##### **4.1 Community Theory**

Community theories in urban sociology in Japan have undergone their own unique development in the postwar period by emphasizing locality (the finiteness of regional spaces) and communality (the interactions between local residents). Japan's major cities went through a period of rapid growth in the 1960s, causing a rapid loss in communality within regional societies and instigating said societies in major cities to undergo major transformations. NAKAMURA Hachiro studied the neighborhood associations and community circles on the suburb of Tokyo in this period.

He discovered that their conventional organizational configuration in which prestigious local citizens were appointed as officials was crumbling and that new types of neighborhood associations were being established one after another. With this new type of neighborhood association many people undertook roles in said associations in order to protect residents' rights (Nakamura 1973). MATSUBARA Haruo and KURASAWA Susumu conducted attitude surveys on residents in housing complexes on the suburb of Tokyo during this same period. They discovered that the consciousness of city dwellers, which lay at the opposite extreme from traditional community consciousness, was in fact higher among people residing in housing complexes who were new residents (Matsubara and Kurasawa 1969; Matsubara 1978).

Based on such discoveries by urban sociologists, Japanese community theory aimed to establish new regional communities that were an integral part of the formation of civic communities. As such, it promoted studies related to resident awareness that could contribute to the formation of communities, or in other words to community consciousness. Two of the outcomes from this will be introduced here.

The first is OKUDA Michihiro's community model, while the second is SUZUKI Hiroshi's community morals. Okuda created four patterns of consciousness by combining the two axes of subjectification and universalization based on the trends of the traditional community consciousness theory that was developed to simultaneously encapsulate regional attachment and an awareness of universal values. These four patterns are the regional community model, the traditional anomie model, the individualist model, and the community model. These models hypothesized development processes, with the regional community model corresponding to traditional regional societies, the traditional anomie and individualist models appearing over the course of its breakdown and disintegration, and the community model serving as a new consciousness that appears when these integrate (Okuda 1983).

Conversely, Suzuki Hiroshi perceived the transformations to social structures that accompanied urbanization as being tied in with changes in the lives of individuals. For this reason, he proposed placing emphasis on changes in residents' consciousness at the local community level and analytically differentiating community consciousness into moral dimensions and normative dimensions. Norms are people's inclinations or objectives to uphold values, and morals are their ambition or morale towards upholding norms. Whereas norms are set as qualitative variables—so to speak—that indicate a number of directions, morals are set as quantitative variables that express standards. Suzuki selected four districts with different residential structures according to an axis running from "indigenous" to "fluid" and performed a comparative study concerning community morals and norms (Suzuki ed. 1978).

In response to these two studies, Kurasawa Susumu advocated for an ideal concept for community; namely, stipulating "desirable local community systems" (Kurasawa 1998). On the basis of his own urban lifestyle theory, Kurasawa criticized residents' strong dependence on systems that manage problems of shared and collective living based upon special expertise (expertise-based management systems). He also called for the reform of these expertise-based management systems in local communities, and urges communities to undertake the work of

erecting management systems that are optimal for each local community.

Community theory is currently grappling with new research challenges, such as resident participation in governmental decision-making processes, reforming the different management systems of each spatial region, cooperation between regional organizations, and social capital.

#### **4.2 Network Analyses**

Elizabeth BOTT's research related to the roles of couples and networks has had a direct major impact on the sociology of the family. But over the long run many of Japan's urban sociologists have continued to display a closer affinity for discussions concerning Louis WIRTH's theory on the degeneration of primary relationships over and above that for Bott's work. Yet even though the term network was not used over the course of such movements, pioneering studies were carried out on social networks in a substantial sense, which had some measure of influence on them (Sasamori 1955; Suzuki ed. 1978; Morioka 1979). In the 1980s the personal network research of Claude S. FISCHER, Barry WELLMAN and others in North America began to be introduced to Japan, and the number of researchers who were interested in the changes in personal networks that accompanied urbanization suddenly shot up. The research by Fischer and Wellman were based on the results of the research on networks from Wirth onwards, which they organized in order to develop their own research so as to demonstrate new theoretical implications. It is believed that it was for this reason that such work was easily accepted by Japan's urban sociologists.

Fischer's research evoked empirical studies on the themes of urbanism and friendship networks in Japan. Wellman's research played a significant role in the sense that it no doubt liberated researchers from the challenge of uncovering accumulations of intimate networks within communities, which is hard to do in reality, via liberated community theory. What is more, comparative studies between cities related to urbanism and friendship networks in Japanese cities have provided knowledge not only on urbanism. They have also offered knowledge on the impact this has on the formation of friendship networks and the binding force of networks, such as research subjects' native regions and previous places of residence, accessibility within cities, and the number of years research subjects have been residing where they live (refer to Matsumoto 1995, 2005; Otani 1995; Nozawa 2009; Morioka ed. 2000, etc.). Moving forward, there will be a need to deepen discussions concerning the collection of data related to the special characteristics of network structures and the methods for measuring urbanism.

(MORIOKA Kiyoshi, The Open University of Japan)

#### **5. Challenges for Urban Ethnicity Studies**

Ethnicity studies in Japan have a history that only stretches back a mere 25 years. Back when the Japan Association for Urban Sociology was established in 1982, ethnicity studies were almost completely nonexistent within Japan. The following four studies can be mentioned as examples of trailblazing studies. KAJITA Takamichi studied immigration issues in the West, and was quick to point out that this perspective enabled him to start to see signs of issues with foreigners in Japan as

well (Kajita 1988). In the same year, WATADO Ichiro statistically showcased the extent to which foreigners had increased in Tokyo in more specific terms (Watado 1988). Thereafter, FURUKI Toshiaki could be said to have been prescient when it came to studies on attitudes towards foreigners (Furuki ed. 1990). The reason why is because studies on ethnic consciousness in Japan did not finally get up to speed until after the start of the 2000s. Moreover, in connection with his research on issues with foreign workers in Europe, MORI Hiromasa realized that in fact a similar issue had existed in Japan from before. This was the issue with the Korean people residing in Japan (Mori 1986). Mori's research could be described as a groundbreaking study that situated this issue within a whole new context.

With these pioneering figures, over this past quarter century we have truly seen a large number of sociological studies performed, over which themes have gradually crystallized. These themes include "urban communities and foreign residents", "issues with foreign workers", "the attitudes of Japanese people towards foreigners", "policies for resident foreigners", "ethnic businesses", "ethnic culture", and more. The first three of these are themes that urban sociologists have addressed relatively enthusiastically.

With respect to urban communities and foreign residents, Okuda Michihiro's group set to work on a survey in Ikebukuro, Tokyo in April 1988 (Okuda and Tajima ed. 1991). After this they vigorously continued to carry out surveys with a Shinjuku survey in 1991 and a second Ikebukuro survey in 1994, with which they achieved results. Their research was interested in the extent to which foreigners from Asia contributed to reviving the resident population and to countermeasures to the aging of society, which are administrative challenges in the inner area of Tokyo. At roughly the same time period, TANI Tomio's group set to work studying ethnic relations between Koreans residing in Japan and Japanese people within the Ikuno Ward of Osaka, with this research continuing still to this day (Tani ed. 2002). Furthermore, HIROTA Yasuo empirically revealed how the ethnic networks created by South Americans of Japanese ancestry and Japanese people in Tsurumi Ward, Yokohama City serve as "circuits" for overcoming a variety of different problems by circumventing the institutional barriers faced by non-Japanese people of Japanese ancestry (Hirota 2003). The unique regional characteristic whereby numerous people originally hailing from Okinawa were to be found both among the Japanese people and among the non-Japanese of Japanese descent enabled the formation of these circuits.

These sorts of urban sociological studies have attracted pointed criticism from a sociology of labor standpoint. For example, OKUBO Takeshi has pointed out that Hirota's study was lacking in an analytical perspective of looking at foreign labor problems (Okubo 2005). While the question was presented from the perspective of "Are foreigners residents or workers?" to the author's way of thinking this opposition must be sublated through the construction of a theory of urban typology that is concerned with ethnic groups. As research on this accumulates, it will become clearer and clearer that there are urban areas where it is appropriate to treat foreigners as residents and urban areas where it is appropriate to treat them as workers. As such, a theory of urban typology constitutes a future challenge for ethnicity studies in Japan.

A considerable body of research has been amassed on the attitudes of Japanese people towards

foreigners, from which the following hypotheses were deduced when this was put in order by MATSUMOTO Yasushi. These include hypotheses related to social organization, networks, the effects from one's place of residence, the effects of urbanism, frequency of contact, particular types of concentrated dwellings of Japanese people, particular types of concentrated dwellings of foreigners, and more (Matsumoto 2006). Whereas the primary factors behind most of these have been sought in individual attributes and behavior, in recent years the appearance of a hypothesis that divides the labor market into separate parts has garnered attention. This hypothesis analyzes attitudes towards foreigners from a macro perspective that looks at the labor market and the positioning of foreign workers within it (Nagayoshi 2012). Future challenges related to ethnic attitudes include dealing with the process by which images of foreigners are formed, forming hypotheses incorporating a time axis of carryover effects and attitude-based interpretations, as well as moving from attitude surveys to fieldwork and even studies on foreigner attitudes of Japanese people beyond this.

It is estimated that Japan's population will decrease by 41 million people over the next 50 years. In the future, the issue of immigration for the sake of securing its workforce will likely pose an unavoidable challenge to Japan. In this sense, there is no shortage of themes that urban ethnic studies must grapple with in order to seek out modalities for living in harmony with foreigners. Moreover, challenges at the national level in the form of immigration policies will only increase in importance more and more in the future.

(TANI Tomio, Konan University)

## **6. 21st Century Urban Sociology in Japan in Light of 3.11**

### **6.1 Problems for Urban Sociology**

At a session commemorating the 30-year anniversary of the Japan Association for Urban Sociology at the association's 30th meeting (in 2012), MACHIMURA Takashi perceived of the association's 30 years as "searching in the midst of an 'identity crisis.'" He arranged the challenges that Japanese urban sociology has proposed and worked to address thus far, based upon which he submitted the following three challenges as current and future challenges.

The first challenge will be multilayered considerations of opportunities for "bundling" people who have been exposed to a process of "merciless individualization" into cities as structures. The network theory by MORIOKA Kiyoshi that was reported on at the session commemorating the association's 30-year anniversary and TANI Tomio's ethnicity theory are sets of issues that extend into this. The second challenge will be to grasp urban systems and their connection with the structures of the social worlds of the people that live in them. Urban systems "not only exist as the material bases for peoples' lives, but also function as the physical foundations constituting communality when people make approaches to said urban systems" (Tamano 1996: 85). The question of how the relationship with these two structures is to be perceived is being raised through the second challenge. The third challenge will be to ask what sorts of roles cities play both as the originators of influence and conversely as entities that are themselves influenced in the midst of declining populations and within global or regional urban arrangements and urban networks. This

question is one that deserves consideration.

## **6.2 Exposing the Disparities between the Central and Local Governments**

This third challenge was pointed out by towns and villages—and while this question is being posed in connection with the second challenge—it now constitutes an urgent subject for urban sociology in Japan. The Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Plant that occurred on March 11, 2011 clearly exposed the rupture and disparities between the central and local governments for everyone to see, and made a great many people cognizant of the facts of the matter.

The national land development that began in the latter half of the Showa Era (1926-89) was actually carried out to enable the concentrated allocation of production functions in the Pacific belt region. However, this actual state of affairs was concealed, and from the latter half of the Showa Era a masquerade was perpetuated that this represented a “spatial Keynesianism,” which is to say that it held fast to a policy of investing in and developing all domestic spaces equally. Yet since the start of the 2000s the government undertook a plain and unambiguous shift towards cities, and thus the sense of fairness that had provided the foundation for cooperative relations within the country was lost as peripheral regions were neglected. As a result of this, disparities arose between the central and regional governments in terms of their economic might and self-governing capabilities (Nakazawa 2012).

In this manner, 3.11 has been the catalyst for stripping away the mask of this “spatial Keynesianism” from these “regional urban arrangements and urban networks” that had been built up from the latter half of the Showa Era through the Heisei Era (1989-). As such, many people began to realize that this was something that had been constructed because of the economic prosperity of the central government. Questions have started to be raised over how to change this relationship between the central and local governments, and over what sorts of roles cities should play. The anti-nuclear demonstrations that were held every Friday in front of the prime minister’s office could be called an expression of this realization. Yet this has yet to lead to a reformation of the relationship between the central and local governments, as has been pointed out in the following quotation: “In fact their relationship has remained unchanged for one and a half years; and on the contrary it appears as if this inclination continues to grow stronger (Yamashita 2012: 68).”

## **6.3 Questions Posed to Japanese Urban Sociologists**

While this relationship has not reached the point of undergoing a reformation, grass-roots movements to rewire the connection between the central and local governments have steadily persisted and are showing signs of expanding. Kirikiri in Otsuchi Town, Kamihei District, Iwate Prefecture suffered catastrophic damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake. When the transporting of a portable shrine, the deer dance, the tiger dance, and a grand *kagura* performance were carried out in this region in the summer of 2012 for the first time since the earthquake, student volunteers took part from the preparatory and practice stages, and when it came time for the actual performances the people of Kirikiri joined them in taking part. To the student volunteers Kirikiri

offers a more appealing and radiant local community over Tokyo, which is where they live. This is demonstrated by the fact that once the students visited Kirikiri the majority of them became repeat visitors.

Support must be provided for the “Increase of agents who are capable of freely surmounting and rewiring the existing fixed scale of municipality-prefecture-country-international community” (Nakazawa 2012: 211). Therefore, consideration must be given to the question of what sorts of roles cities should play within regional urban arrangements and urban networks. We must also grasp the changes in urban systems and the changes in the structures of the social worlds of the people that live in them, while also giving thought to how such systems can survive today when they are being confronted with declining populations. These are the demands being placed on 21st century urban sociology in Japan.

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