

# **Past, Present, and Future of Studies in Japanese Sociological Theory: Challenges of the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan**

**Society for Sociological Theory in Japan  
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The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan was created in 2006. However, its predecessor, the Society for Contemporary Social Theory, was launched in 1990, and so counting since then it has been around for more than 20 years. Its successive activities have been implemented out of a desire to stimulate theoretical research on Japanese sociology. This paper will reflect back on Japanese sociological theory through the people who have been involved in its activities in the aim of discussing the possibilities for activities with a view towards the future. In this sense, the reader should keep in mind that this paper contains the individual viewpoints of those people who were involved in its founding, rather than a consensus of opinion from its members.

## **1. Perspectives on Theoretical Research**

What constitutes theory in sociology? Furthermore, what sort of connection does theory have with reality? In short, what is the significance of theoretical research for sociology? To date, the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan has held symposia that have set forth the topic of “theory,” under titles like “Actuality of Sociological Theory” (2009, third convention), “Constructing Sociological Theory” (2010, fourth convention), and “Challenges to Social Theory” (2011, fifth convention). When it comes to theory, the following three points can be extracted out from the discussions at the preceding Society for Contemporary Social Theory and the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan.

The first is that theory can be summarized as: a) a framework for observing and describing “social reality,” and b) a linguistic proposition for further analyzing and integrating the content observed and described by this. In the case of b), the latter of these, in particular, this can be regarded as the process of “theorizing,” while its relationship with a), the former, is that the results of the theorizing from this serve as new frameworks that are applied to social reality. As this demonstrates, a) and b) share a helical, cyclical relationship. In such cases, in a strict sense this procedure should be scientific in that it constructs provisional propositions that can withstand falsification and other verifications by researchers. Therefore, it has been alleged that what we are after are “middle range theories” that are demonstrable theories, rather than grand theories that cannot be proved. In reality, there is no denying that demonstrability and facticity are the lifelines for the scientific nature of research. However, the viewpoint of theoretical research is not limited to this point alone. Theorizing (theorizing praxis) is an activity that is carried out, albeit unconsciously and simplistically, by the actors operating within the social reality that is the research subject of sociologists, which is to say, those living day to day in the everyday life. As will be described later on, this perspective is one that has been shared by many of the members of the Society for Contemporary Social Theory.

Therefore, the second point is that it should be pointed out that theory is indispensable for people in everyday life. This can be referred to as the “fundamental theories” that people in everyday life have. An important point for sociological theory is that to the extent that researchers strive to perceive social reality, they are coming to grips with the world in which the everyday agents who make up this reality live through the level of everyday knowledge and everyday practice, including the dimension of physical knowledge. In other words, they are coming to grips with this at the level of fundamental theories. But how is it possible to do this? This issue was debated through the Schutz-Parsons dispute. The fact that numerous methodological and epistemological debates have been carried out in the prior debates leading up to the society is a result of such a chronology. There is one other important point that should be mentioned in connection with this search for fundamental theories. This is that throughout their limited lifetimes people in everyday life are constantly capable of having aspirations, dreaming about tomorrow, and having their own unique ideals. Naturally there are diverse levels for the ideals of people in everyday life, ranging from vague ideals such as mere desires to those that have been explicitly specified in the form of life plans. In this there also exist thoughts and criteria related to the future in the form of ideals or ideas. Getting a grasp of the theories of everyday actors, including these, is indispensable for sociological research. If that is taken to be the case, then the following problem arises in this, which is that the ideals/ideas of a single actor do not exist independently of one another from the research motives through to the hidden hypotheses for these by sociology researchers.

The third point is that there are also important research domains that could be called “ideal theories” in theoretical research in sociology. Theoretical researchers select certain theoretical frameworks from among the various theories that have already accumulated within a particular historical backdrop in struggling to come to grips with social reality. The questions of why this is worthy of inquiry and what answers are conceivable beyond such inquiries at the level of the research motives of said researchers in this involves these ideas and ideals—as was stated by Max WEBER when he said, “From where to whence (*woher, wozu*).” In other words, most researchers hold the ideal of “creating a better society” as one of their research goals in their own research, or what could be described as their objectives and values. One could certainly take the view that sociology is solely about grasping reality in an objective and scientific manner. However, inquiries into the question of what is the purpose of these objective and scientific determinations can be superimposed on one another. Presumably the reason for this comes not from the researchers themselves, but rather out of a desire to be helpful in pursuing the ideals of other persons. It is surely in this that research activities and the subjective connections between ideas and ideals that these entail come into view.

Theoretical researchers are sensitive to terminology such as objective, subjective, and scientific that surface in the above description. The act of holding up general concepts like original ideas and thoughts, or ideals and norms themselves for consideration is a task that is indispensable when it comes to theoretical research. Consequently, theoretical research that includes ideal theory must not be detached from scientific tasks or allowed to become invisible within the inner workings of sociology in regards to matters like subjective motives, philosophical debates, or hidden

hypotheses. This third domain of theoretical research, especially its examination of ideal theory, could even be said to be a litmus test for questioning whether or not sociological research is actually beneficial for society.

The three theoretical dimensions of fundamental theory, middle range theory, and ideal theory were discussed above. Above all else, such inquiries have been closely connected with the past and present of the Society of Sociological Theory in Japan, which has striven to debate social reality. Hereafter, this paper will pursue the question of in what form such inquiries have been developed thus far by dividing this into the society's prehistory and its present state. However, in order to clearly situate the activities to date, the history of Japanese sociological theories will first be briefly alluded to.

## **2. A Brief History of Sociological Theory in Japan**

Theoretical research on sociology in Japan began during Japan's first modernization in the Meiji Period. It started with the importation of Herbert SPENCER's sociology, followed shortly by people becoming cognizant of Auguste COMTE's sociology as well. Their social organism theory was novel for Japanese social thought, but eventually this was tied in with contemporary Japan's emperor system and interpreted as the emperor occupying the pinnacle of national organism theory. Later on, in the 20th century the sociological methodologies of Weber and Georg SIMMEL were taken up, and discussions related to the nature of sociology were rejuvenated. In 1924 the Japanese Sociological Society, which served as a predecessor to contemporary Japanese sociological societies, was established in practice, and the society's activities began to be actively carried out. But Simmel's formal sociology has been criticized for only dealing with forms, and cultural sociology that should inquire into its content also gained influence. However, as part of the militaristic trends under the emperor system that lasted up until World War II, Japan experienced nationalistic tendencies in which the 'Japanese' sociology of culture was converted into a sociology of 'Japanese culture.' Of course, we should not lose sight of the fact that the antithesis to these trends in the 1930s was to be observed in the importation of the positivistic approach from the United States into Japan, which was based on social investigations from this same time period. But in the 15 years leading up to the end of World War II (in 1945), theories underpinning Japan's imperialistic ambitions predominated as the underlying keynote. The claim could be made that the basic view of society in these theories was backed by the Hegelian theory of the nation state (a view of the nation state in which the contradictions between the family and civil society are sublated by the state, and which sees world historical developments as being a battle for supremacy between such states).

Therefore, in the postwar rebuilding phase for Japanese sociological societies, a controversy raged over whether they should head in the direction of adopting a Western European social philosophical/theoretical sociology or an American positivistic/empirical sociology. This controversy was carried out in the academic journal entitled the *Japanese Sociological Review* (Vol. 4 of a total of four volumes) published in 1950 during Japan's second modernization in the postwar period. Since then, positivistic sociology has been revitalized within Japanese sociological societies,

and has been developed by this society as well. More than 250 volumes of this academic journal, which is published four times annually, have been published. By the time of the holding of the World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama it becomes the case that the prewar Japanese sociological societies have a history lasting 90 years, while roughly 65 years have passed since the reconstruction of postwar Japanese sociological societies.

What sorts of movements have been displayed by research on sociological theories/doctrines in this postwar sociology? The number of times the names of sociologists appeared in the titles of papers published in the *Japanese Sociological Review* were counted and compiled into the table below (However, for this the number of papers in which the names of the sociologists appeared in the titles were counted, rather than making judgments on this from the contents of the papers, by setting certain criteria. These criteria include standardizing the notation of their names and excluding the names of sociologists that appeared in the introductions to research trends in the 2000s. (Readers are encouraged to refer to NISHIHARA Kazuhisa and SUGIMOTO Manabu (2000) for details. The data was taken from Nishihara (2010: 70f)).

**Table. Number of Times Sociologists Have Appeared in the Titles of Papers Published in the *Japanese Sociological Review***

Name of sociologist	Total	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
1: Weber	32	3	8	9	7	5	0
2: Durkheim	23	3	5	3	4	8	0
3: Parsons	19	5	4	3	4	2	1
4: Schutz	13	0	0	0	8	3	2
5: Marx	9	0	2	5	2	0	0
6: Habermas	8	0	0	0	5	2	1
6: Luhmann	8	0	0	0	5	3	0
6: Mead	8	1	0	2	2	3	0
9: Simmel	6	1	1	0	1	2	1
10: Foucault	4	0	0	0	2	1	1
Total	139	18	20	26	43	29	5

Three trends can be deduced from the table. The first is that sociologists like Weber, Emile DURKHEIM, and Talcott PARSONS are quoted across every decade. The second is that Alfred SCHUTZ, Jürgen HABERMAS, and Niklas LUHMANN began to be quoted starting in the 1980s (at the same time, the name Karl MARX disappeared from the titles of papers over the next 20 years). Third is that the number of sociologists' names dropped off precipitously in the 2000s. This third trend will be considered here. There are several interpretations that could be taken regarding this decline in the names of sociologists specified in the titles.

One is the interpretation that there has been waning interest in theory/doctrine among sociology researchers. In relation to this point one can take a positive assessment of this that

Japanese sociology is getting past the stage of introducing the doctrines of Western sociologists and is aiming for empirical research. Conversely, one could also assess this negatively as a problematic trend in that appraising positivistic knowledge alone will not advance theoretical research. The other interpretation is that the interests of sociologists are turning towards challenges that correspond to the age, such as globalization and ethnicity, more so than theory, and so there has been an increase in theses and special features along these lines. Evidence for this can be found in the fact that the special feature topic of “globalization,” which had not previously been seen, was taken up three times by the *Japanese Sociological Review* in the latter half of the 2000s. Of course, there is no denying that even when the names of sociologists do not appear in the titles of papers, the names of sociologists such as Weber appear within their texts and their knowledge is utilized. But there is no doubt that people’s names have been decreasing in the titles of papers.

Additionally, there is another viewpoint that can be taken. This is the interpretation that with the appearance of other academic journals besides the *Japanese Sociological Review* papers with the names of sociologists in their titles are being subject to technical discussions in these. In addition to academic journals by the Kantoh Sociological Society and the Japan Association for the Study on the History of Sociology, whose activities got up to speed starting around 1990, journals and other publications also newly appeared from the Kansai Sociological Association and the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan. This interpretation rests on the fact that studies with the names of sociologists in their titles are frequently published in these journals. This paper is not the place to perform a comparative examination of these journals, but it will consider this issue in the context of pursuing the theoretical research trends of the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan (and its predecessor) in relation to this interpretation.

### **3. The Society for Contemporary Social Theory and *The Journal of Studies in Contemporary Social Theory***

The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan existed in its previous incarnation as the Society for Contemporary Social Theory. This was created at a rural national university at the start of the 1990s, and was represented by Nishihara as the head of the preparatory committee for the society’s establishment thereafter. The *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Social Theory* (commonly known as the GSR) is an annual research journal that had been published since 1991. Ultimately the GSR ended its print run in 2005 after 15 volumes. In a genealogical sense, this was passed down to the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan’s *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory* on the one hand, and the Institute for Sociology in Tokyo’s *Colloquium: The New Horizon of Contemporary Sociological Theory* (discussed later) on the other hand.

The GSR served as a venue for discussing contemporary social theories from sociology, and “It featured an open operating principle with a style that facilitated participation and was open to all around the basic idea of creating a venue for people to pursue their own issues and interests and announce the results of these based on voluntary and lenient networks” (Nishihara 2007: 146). It was economically viable owing to the membership fees of proponents and the fees for submitting papers. Seven papers and two research notes were published in the first issue. Thereafter the

number of papers published expanded, until in the final 15th volume (2005) 35 papers, seven special feature papers, and two research notes were published. A simple calculation reveals that the number of papers grew seven-fold, while the number of pages of each volume grew five-fold. This raised the GSR's name recognition among young researchers, and also signified that there were constantly large numbers of people with the latent desire to contribute papers among new graduate students and the like. In the 2000s of the 21st century the number of members rose to approximately 400 people, while the number of contributions came in at the not inconsiderable number of about 50 papers. From the revitalization of the GSR one can catch sight of the fact that theoretical research in sociology has in no way been winding down since the 2000s.

Characteristics of the subject matters in the papers in the GSR will now be indicated. The first is that papers related to the sociology of meaning: phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, and critical theory formed the underlying keynote of the GSR. This is indicated by the fact that of the seven papers in its first issue, there were three related to Schutz, two related to critical theory, and one related to labeling theory. This point can also be understood from the fact that special features, including mini-special features (the same hereafter) were put together with titles like "Rereading Peter Berger" from Volume 5, "Phenomenological Sociology as Social Theory" from Volume 7, "100 Years since the Birth of Schutz" from Volume 9, and "Sociology of Memory" from Volume 12. The second characteristic is that a particularly large number of papers about ethnomethodology (hereafter abbreviated as EM) were published. Papers relating to EM were compiled together in the special feature to Volume 3 entitled "Ethnomethodology and Sociology of Practical Reasoning," and since then there has been a rapid proliferation in members and contributions in this field. Thereafter this trend continued with the special features in Volumes 4, 5, and 6, which were "Possibilities of Ethnomethodological Analysis," "New Trends in Ethnomethodology," and "Conversation Analysis on 119 Emergency Calls," respectively, with related papers continuing to be sent in thereafter. But the third characteristic is that since the 2000s studies related to classical (or quasi-classical) sociologists such as Weber, Theodor ADORNO, Michel FOUCAULT, Norbert ELIAS, and Luhmann came to stand out, such as the compilation of the special feature entitled "Rereading Classics of 20th Century Sociological Theory." This trend tied in with the trend of attention being focused on Asian social theory in the form of nation-state theories and globalization theories. The fourth characteristic is that special feature titles like "Body, the Others, and the 'Nation-State,'" from Volume 13, "Social Theory in Northeast Asia" from Volume 14 (the subtitle of which is worded "The Era of Globalization"), and "Social Theory in East Asia" from Volume 15 were noteworthy. These characteristics were not only seen with the Japanese authors, but also in the studies published by researchers from China, South Korea, Taiwan, and other countries.

At the close of this section the number of published papers by theoretical pedigree will be enumerated for all 15 volumes. Categorizing the authors based on content reveals that there were: (1) 32 papers related to EM, (2) 23 papers related to Schutz, (3) 18 papers related to constructionism, including the theory of self-narrative and the sociology of emotion, (4) 16 papers related to critical theory, including Habermas' publicness, and (5) 13 papers related to Weber. Even

in the 2000s (though there were only six volumes here), a count of the papers with sociologists' names that can be counted from their titles shows that Weber appeared in seven; George H. MEAD in five; and Schutz, Hannah ARENDT, and Luhmann in four each. In other words, this suggests that the names of sociologists were not disappearing from the GSR, but that research in theory and doctrine was going strong with the inclusion of new names such as Elias, Zygmunt BAUMAN, Judith BUTLER, and Ulrich BECK.

After having gone through such developments, the GSR was brought to a close after 15 volumes, as was mentioned above. In principal, its activities were taken over by the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan's *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory*.

#### **4. Birth of The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan and *The Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory***

The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan set up the Preparatory Committee for the Society's Establishment in March 2006, and then was formally established in July of that same year. With the objective of kick-starting theoretical research throughout all fields of sociology, the society's name used the phrase "sociological theory" rather than "theoretical sociology." Its academic journal is the *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory*, the ideas for which from the time of its establishment are as follows (Nishihara 2006: 146). "First Idea: Create a forum for theoretical social research centered primarily around sociological theory. Second Idea: Strive to be a society that is open not only to people within Japan, but throughout the world. Ancillary Idea: Make efforts for exchanges and coordination with theoretical researchers on sociology from throughout Asia as an objective for the immediate future." This policy was granted official approval at the first annual general meeting in September 2006, and was incorporated into Article 3 of the Bylaws, which states, "The society will create a venue for theoretical social research centered primarily around sociological theory in a manner that is open to the world." Article 20 also clearly specifies that, "In relation to Article 3 of the Bylaws, for the immediate future the society will proactively work towards exchanges and coordination with theoretical researchers on sociology from throughout Asia." The society's first Chairperson was KATAGIRI Masataka (Chiba University), while its Vice Chairperson was Nishihara (then at Nagoya University). In 2009 the society became a member of the cooperative science and research bodies of the Science Council of Japan, and the following year it also joined the Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies. Starting in 2008 Nishihara served as Chairperson and YUI Kiyomitsu (Kobe University) served as Vice Chairperson, and starting from 2012 OKUMURA Takashi (Rikkyo University) has been its Chairperson with FUJIMURA Masayuki (Sophia University) as Vice Chairperson.

As such, under this policy and structure, Professor Bryan S. TURNER who was then at the National University of Singapore and Professor FENG Gang from Zhejiang University in China were invited to give speeches at the first meeting in 2006 (at Nagoya University). Their studies were compiled into Volume 1 of the *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory*, the society's academic journal, the following year. At the second meeting (at Saitama University),

Professor John HERITAGE and Professor Steve CLAYMAN were invited from UCLA in the United States, with their speeches being turned into the special feature from Volume 2 entitled “Conversation Analysis and Sociology.” Professor WONG Heung Wah from the University of Hong Kong was invited to the third meeting (at Kobe University), while Professor S. Aminul ISLAM from the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh and Professor Anthony ELLIOTT (then) from Flinders University in Australia were invited to the fourth meeting (at Chiba University), and their speeches were also published in the society’s journal the following years. Professor KIM Seung Kuk from Pusan National University in South Korea was invited to the fifth meeting (at Nagasaki University), and Professor Axel HONNETH of Goethe University Frankfurt was invited to the regular research meeting from that same year. Professor Honneth’s studies were published in Volume 5 of the journal. The sixth meeting in 2011 was held at Tokyo Woman’s Christian University, the seventh was held at Ritsumeikan University, and the eighth was held at Seijo University.

In regards to the “exchanges with theoretical researchers on sociology from throughout Asia” from the “Ancillary Idea” mentioned above, we will touch on an agreement on academic exchanges between Japan and South Korea. This agreement on academic exchanges between the society and the Korean Society for Social Theory was concluded by Vice Chairperson Yui during a visit to South Korea in the fall of 2010. The first academic exchange pursuant to this agreement was held in 2012 at Tongguk University in South Korea. The people dispatched from Japan included then Chairperson Nishihara and Vice Chairperson Yui, which was based on a decision by the Board of Directors. The reports from both countries were related to the history and present state of sociological theory in their respective countries. The names of the reports from the Japanese side were “A Brief History of Japanese Sociological Theory: How is Transnational Sociology Possible?” by Nishihara and “The Modernization Process of Japan and the History of Japanese Sociology: Perspectives from History in the Age of Global Settings” by Yui. And the last round of exchanges was held in Japan in 2013.

Next we will allude to the subject matter of the *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Since Volume 2 special features have been put together for every volume of the journal. The titles of the special features have been “Conversation Analysis and Sociology” in Volume 2, “Looking for the Actuality of Sociological Theory” in Volume 3, “The Possibility of Recognition Theory in Constructing Social Theory” in Volume 4, “Where Can Care and Recognition Be Problematized?” in Volume 5, and “Challenges in Social Theory: Theoretical Challenges in the Sociology of Social Crisis” in Volume 6. Pieces related to sociological theoretical examinations of issues like the Great East Japan Earthquake are being prepared for the special features in subsequent volumes. We would also like to touch on the trends in the papers submitted to the journal. As for the trends in the general papers contributed, studies with sociologists’ names in the titles came in at 21 of 47 papers for a ratio of about 45%, which is a higher ratio than that for the *Japanese Sociological Review*, for which this comes in at less than 20% (Nishihara and Sugimoto 2001). But no tendency of concentrating on any one sociologist has been observed. Thematically speaking, a wide range of topics have been debated. These include everything from



basic theories such as methodologies, interactionism, language theory, and body theory, to social theories such as social systems theory, ideology theory, critical theory, individualism theory, and solidarity theory, as well as risk theory, gender theory, disparity theory, social movement theory, Chinese social theory, multiculturalism theory, and globalization theory. The papers are judged through a peer review by a panel of experts. The ratio of submitted papers that are published hovers around 30 – 50%, with only papers that have been stringently selected being published.

Finally, we will touch on the latest topic. This is that an English-language book discussing Japanese sociological theory was published by Professor Elliott, who was invited in 2009. This was done with the full-scale cooperation of Katagiri, the society's first Chairperson, and current Director SAWAI Atsushi, with those who have been directors of the society serving as the chief authors. The *Routledge Companion to Contemporary Japanese Social Theory* has a two-part structure, with the first part discussing topics like phenomenological sociology, critical theory, psychoanalysis, structuralism, and risk society theory while the second part tackles feminism, intimacy, post-modernism, and globalization. Moreover, one interesting point is that each of these discussions has received comments from renowned researchers from all over the world, in which a global dialogue can be discerned. These sorts of experiments should be pursued to a greater extent in the future.

While the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan is a new society, it has been steadily achieving results. In the 2012 directors election a large number of directors from comparatively younger generations were chosen, and a generational shift continues to unfold away from the era of the directors around at the time the society was established. You could say that there are great expectations for the society's future development under the younger generation's feel for the new era.

## **5. Closing Remarks: Future of The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan**

The Society for Sociological Theory in Japan is currently in a transitional phase as it faces a generational shift. Therefore, we would like to close by penning a written message to the future of the society in our capacity as people who were involved in it since its prehistory. Consequently, the authors would like to ask for forgiveness if their personal views creep into this in some small way.

The generation to which the authors belong spent its student days amidst the lingering reverberations of the student movements of the 1960s. This generation exhibited a remarkable inclination towards social theory, as evidenced by the authors' entry into sociology due to their interests in social theories that included political sociology and Marxism. The reason that subjects like phenomenological sociology and critical theory sociology were studied as research subjects is because it was thought that theories with such pedigrees were crucial as fundamental points of departure for social studies. At the time it was the ways that the fundamentals of society were structured that were common across societies, rather than the level of discussions on Japanese society, that were in people's minds. In this sense, what people had in mind was not societies within single nation-states, but rather perspectives on global societies. Of course, back then the EU had not yet been established and—while multinational corporations were being talked about—the

expansion of globalization after the end of the Cold War had not been observed to a sufficient degree. At best it was the end of an international worldview that was predicated on nation-states. The cosmopolitanism alluded to by Beck was nothing more than a philosophical idea from history. But globalization is currently making advances in areas such as military affairs, economics, politics, culture, and education, and societies themselves are evincing profound transformations. As a consequence, the Hegelian notion of “society” itself as a “society within a nation-state” must be reconsidered. In the era where TAKATA Yasuma developed “world social theory” soon after the end of World War II this idea was largely ignored, but at present it presents a pressing challenge. “Societies” are no longer confined to within nation-states, and so exchanges of people, including exchanges of researchers, are carried out in a transnational and global manner. The ISA 2014 World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama will likely serve to accelerate the state of internationalization in Japan.

Therefore, what is currently being sought after is to move beyond introducing Western sociological theories towards pursuing and creating more universal social theories. This will most likely constitute theoretical research based on the implementation of academic exchanges that are “future-oriented,” open to dialogue, and transnational/global. It will not be limited to social analyses and theorizing about one’s own country by applying Western sociological theories, or mere international comparisons based on such theorizing. Dealing with universally shared challenges that are not limited to studying specific, discrete societies within nation-states, or in other words a direction of moving beyond “methodological nationalism,” is what is required. Be that as it may, the problem of language-barriers will hinder Japanese transnational/global academic exchanges. In regards to this matter, one important point that will be called into question in the future is the challenge of making the society itself more multilingual, aside from the academic publication put out in English that was mentioned above. This does not necessarily refer simply to “English-ization,” but rather to “multilingualization” that allows for everything from other Western European languages to Chinese, Korean, and other languages according to the situation. Naturally, the issue of peer-reviews will pose a barrier that stands in the way of this. Therefore, it would most likely be pragmatic to first begin with English-ization and then strive for multilingualization.

Currently, there is another academic journal that was created based on the *Journal of Studies in Contemporary Social Theory*, which is called *Colloquium: The New Horizon of Contemporary Sociological Theory* (launched in 2006; seven volumes have been issued as of the end of 2012) by the Institute for Sociology in Tokyo. Since Volume 3 onwards it has been published in a format where half of its papers are in English. While it continues to face problems with how to go about checking the English texts and peer-reviewing them, as well as ensuring their quality, the journal is carrying out a trial run of interweaving papers contributed from other countries into its special features. Small to medium-scale academic societies that lack the financial leeway to publish English-language journals, such as the Japanese Sociological Society, should give due consideration to such attempts in the future. However, if such attempts were limited to methodological nationalism that merely conveyed studies on a “society within a nation state” to the world then their meaning would be reduced by half. One important point will likely be to equip

them with the aim of constructing new sociological theories in a manner that is open to transnational/global dialogue. The criticism that under the current status quo it will not be possible to do this in the near future is understandable. However, this can serve as the first step for the World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama to proceed down this path one step at a time. In this sense, to the extent that the young Society for Sociological Theory in Japan is largely unfettered by the bonds of tradition, it will be able to construct new potential circuits that are suited to the era based on its pioneering research activities to date.

Of course, there may not be any need to rush. The point that a certain period of time is needed for things to ferment is an understandable one. But for the society, which is looking towards the future, it will surely be permissible to discuss certain ideas based upon its history thus far and its present status. This is thought to be a direction that is consistent with the society's bylaws of creating a venue for theoretical sociological research that is open to Asia and the world. We would like to conclude by stating that this direction is retained by the society as one of its unique characteristics.

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\*This paper was written in corporation with Kiyomitsu Yui (Kobe University, the former vice-president of the Society for Sociological Theory in Japan), but Nishihara is responsible for the content and wording of this article.

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