

## SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF ANTI-POVERTY ACTIVITIES IN JAPAN: ON DISCIPLINARY MOVEMENTS BY PROFESSIONALS

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**Abstract.** After the Great East Japan Earthquake, anti-poverty activities in Japan have been making the greatest use of preexisting networks and shifting objectives. The aim of this paper is to create the basis to explore the social resilience that disciplinary movements and interactions between them introduce. Reorganizing the social ecology derived from the Chicago School of Sociology, and analyzing the ecological system of various activities combating poverty, this paper provides two findings. First, not only the consultants, but also the supporters, try to activate social lives and activities and can secure self-positioning as a result just like the process of social ecology of the Chicago School of Sociology. Second, by exchanging the dynamic interaction between various specialists, and between specialists and their clients in the social types of “role flexibility” with social zest and hope, there emerges the ecological and social resilience that is never created in closed-regional social worlds.

### INTRODUCTION

Social activities have been emerging in Japan as the pre-existed community has fallen into social confusion. The recession in recent years, as well as the Great East Japan Earthquake on 3/11/2011, has seriously affected people’s lives in Japan. In Japan, “poverty” has become an enormous problem rather than inequality (Yuasa 2007). In particular, the socially vulnerable have taken the brunt of the shock. After the experience of the Great East Japan Earthquake, many people have been talking about human “lives”. As will be discussed later, humanistic protest on the move has the possibility to organize people’s lives. Against this background, human ecology according to the early Chicago School of Sociology can supply several perspectives to depict the process of networks and social bonds around anti-poverty activities. As well as the perspective of the Chicago School, this paper uses the term “social resilience” that is the power to reorganize society flexibly, revised from the personal resilience concept which is often used in the fields of psychology, education and character design (Fraser, M 2004).

As presented before (Nishikawa 2012a, 2012b), after the Great East Japan Earthquake, anti-poverty activities in Japan have been making the greatest use of preexisting networks and shifting objectives. Table 1 is the chronological chart of anti-poverty activities.

|                                                            | <b>First Stage:<br/>(2006 to March<br/>2009)</b>                                                     | <b>Second Stage<br/>(March 2009 to<br/>Jan 2010)</b>                                                      | <b>Third Stage<br/>(Jan 2010 to<br/>March 2011)</b>                           | <b>Fourth Stage<br/>(From March<br/>2011)</b>                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Changes<br/>in the<br/>public<br/>sphere</b>            | Decay of the public sphere (Criticizing inclusive society, public administration and market society) | The emergence of counter-public sphere (motivation to activate the system of counter-directed activities) | Corporations and networks of counter-public spheres and their diversification | Diversification and change of objectives of counter-public spheres |
| <b>Situation<br/>of<br/>support<br/>organiza<br/>tions</b> | Issues from the “unequal society” to “poverty problems”                                              | Broadening of “Hakenmura” activities                                                                      | Development of anti-poverty networks (post-“Hakenmura”)                       | Activating the ready-made networks                                 |

**【 (table1) Natural History or Developmental Process of Anti-Poverty Activities】**  
(Nishikawa 2012 )

Previously my paper reported on the process of development of anti-poverty activities in relation to government, markets, social consciousness, and other organizational activities from 2006 to 2011. For that purpose, it adopted the perspective of the synthesizing approach of human ecology of the early Chicago School of Sociology. In addition, it applies the theory of counter-public spheres in order to trace the changes in networking. Through these methodologies, it becomes possible to grasp the relationships between spheres in terms of people’s zest and consciousness of human nature for the sustainability of activities in time and space. As this previous study shows, chronological changes were found in the anti-poverty activities. There are four stages: 1) disclosure of poverty issues in “the decay of the public sphere”, 2) promotion of “Hakenmura Activities” and of “Counter-public Sphere”, 3) acting out the network-centered movements and cooperation with other spheres, and 4) making the greatest use of ready-made networks and shifting objectives as a result.

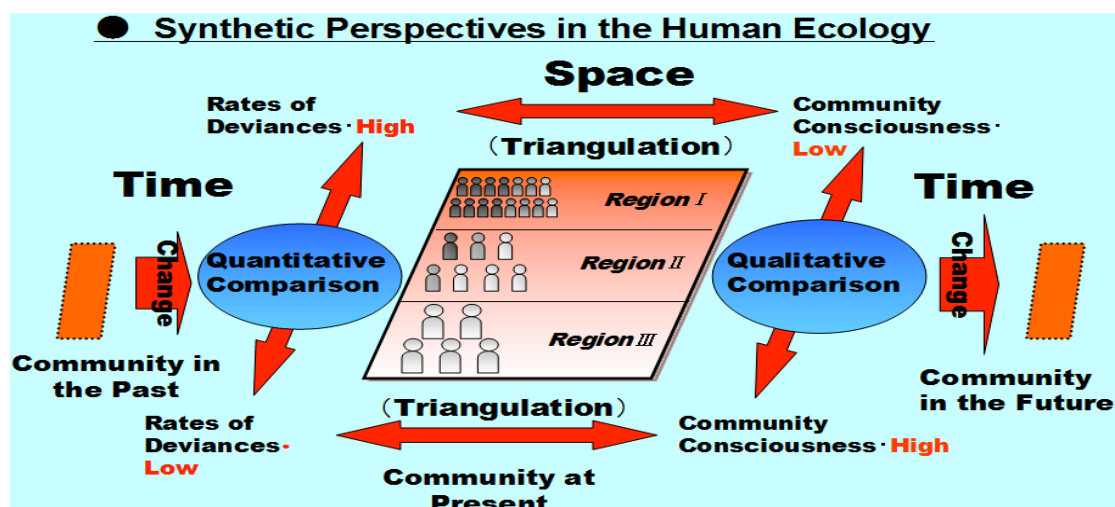
Since then specialists have tried to activate their own “disciplinary movements”. Professionals continually ask “What can we do for the poverty problem as professionals?” and have tried to insist on their significance regarding their professional area. The term, “disciplinary movement” might indicate the image of the egoistic sense. However, the disciplinary movement led to producing mutually beneficial relationships among the concerned persons including professionals and consultants and led to the possibility of emerging social resilience. The problems of this paper are established as follows. Do disciplinary movements lead to establish the cooperative relationships between different regional professionals? And do disciplinary movements with cooperative relationships produce favorable outcomes for the social organization?

The aim of this paper is to create the basis to explore the social resilience that disciplinary movements and interactions between them bring in. Reorganizing the social ecology derived from the Chicago School of Sociology, and analyzing the ecological system of various activities combating poverty, this paper will provide two findings. First, not only the consultants, but also the supporters try to activate social lives and activities and can secure self-positioning as a result just like the process of social ecology of the Chicago School of Sociology. Second, by

exchanging the dynamic interaction between various specialists, and between specialists and their clients in the social types of “role flexibility” with social zest and hope, there emerges the ecological and social resilience that is never created in closed-regional social worlds. The method and perspective is the elaborated social ecology of the early Chicago School of Sociology to capture the conditions in which action and activities with zest and hope by the professionals as well as consultants have connected to the social organization. In addition this paper analyzes the data on professionalism in anti-poverty activities all over Japan acquired through field studies.

## FOR ECOLOGY OF ANTI-POVERTY: SITUATION NEEDS FOR ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

My basic perspective is the human and social ecology derived from the Chicago School of Sociology in the long-term research. The simple image of the Chicago School for other-region researchers might be the qualitative research. The origin of “participant observation” or ethnography is often regarded as anthropology. However, the legacy of participant observation originated in the early Chicago School of Sociology. Under the “giant” mentors R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess, Chicago sociologists had analyzed various social pathological phenomena in the urban city Chicago. The famous “Chicago Monograph” had been produced in that situation by Chicago sociologists. Now there has modestly been the movement of reevaluation of the Chicago School of Sociology in each country, not only in Europe and America but also in Asia especially Japan since the end of the 20th century. Previously the Chicago School was considered as a group whose characteristics included sociological recognition based on qualitative (R. E. Park or H. G. Blumer’s Symbolic interactionism) research or spatial (Concentric zone model) research. On the other hand, the intensive research of the recent 30 years revealed that early Chicago School sociologists regarded quantitative research as the crucial sociological method as well as qualitative research. However sociologists nowadays tend to ignore the methodological problems and focus on how to utilize the poles of methodological dichotomy, for instance, qualitative and quantitative, time and space, natural process and social policy, etc. Full activation of the synthesizing approach derived from the elaborated Chicago sociology is beyond this paper, but for the project of social ecology of anti-poverty, taking it in mind is worthwhile for the long project’s purpose. But why do we have to activate old fashioned social ecology? Here we have to sort out methodological discussion.



【(Figure 1)The synthesizing approach of human ecology】 (Nishikawa 2008)

### **Ecological Perspective for the Change of Social System, Sociologists and Actors**

The first reason to use the socio-ecological perspective is about change in social systems of Japan labor markets. As is already known but worth noting, after the bubble economy burst during the 1980s and the collapse of the Japanese management system in which promotion was by seniority, and lifetime employment and in-company unions existed, the Japan Business Federation in 1995 specified all laborers as 1. Permanent employees, 2. Just-in-time technical employees, or 3. Part-time unskilled employees. Some people say this is one of the realizations of “Modern caste institutions”. Or we can say this is a crisis of Japanese mores to borrow William Graham Sumner and Ernest Watson Burgess’ social planning concepts. Also we have to understand the complicated social structure and social interaction that cannot be captured by a single factor or variable.

Next are the situations that entail the ecological view for the actors. As custom-made employment and life system changes, the situation is in crisis regarding self-esteem, self-positioning, social bonds and control as the Chicago School of Social Psychology problematized. In this condition, actors in general have tendencies to socio-ecologically position themselves. Not only sociologists or researchers but also many people take on having some types of socio-ecological views. This is one example of such discourse.

“ After the Great East Japan Earthquake, people have noticed the importance of social contribution. People have had new issues on how to utilize their abilities or skills for the societies”  
(Nikkei MJ Newspaper, 2 November 2011)

The third point of the situation in need of socio-ecological perspective is the meaning for sociological researchers. Contemporary Japan is individually and socially in a fluid condition. In this situation, we want to do studies on the overview of social and individual resilience as well as fixed-point observation. As Frederic M. Thrasher in the early Chicago School of Sociology, who has been famous for his “Gang” studies, focused on the “interstitial” in time and space, we would like to look out for generation gaps in time, resource gaps between regions in space and so on. Interstitial study can understand the social structure from the social problems.

In addition, though this paper cannot fully discuss this point, for the sociologists or researchers, the implications of human ecology is mainly the “synthesizing approach” transcending the sociological dichotomy of, for example, “time and space” and “qualitative and quantitative”, “science and social policy”, and the “individual and society”. The project of which this paper is one part needs this perspective and methodology in long term research and study.

So what can we call this neo-Chicago School project? For example, this project can be called as a “Symbolic (interactional) ecological system, ecological and symbolic functionalism” and so on, mixing the legacy of ecology and interaction in the Chicago school. Whatever the phrases are, the situation needs to construct social design and theory that can be possible in “synthesizing approach” (methodology, policy, time and space, and social individual) based on an ecological perspective. In summary, the project implies the term “ecology of self-positioning” as social perspective by actors. An Ecological and Synthesizing perspective means sociological perspective by sociologists or researchers. This means activating the perspective of “social reaction” in the tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology or social pathology. This is one of the “*reflexive* disciplinary movements” for elaborating social theory and social organization.

### **Critics for Previous Discourse of Chicago Profession Study and Pro Bono in Japan**

Here are the backgrounds of this paper regarding social elements as well as theoretical. Two points criticizing previous studies are worth keeping in mind. The first point is about the critics who study about professions in the Chicago School of Sociology. The legacy of the Chicago School is that it has been famous for its study on “professions” (medical doctor, school teacher, etc.) as well as the underclass (Frazier 1931, 1932; Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss 1961; Freidson 1970). But they ignore the power of cross-industrial interaction for organizing society. However, if you look at the empirical data on anti-poverty activities in Japan, “cross-industrial interaction” between professions as social reaction is very crucial regarding combating poverty in Japan.

Regarding the interaction and division of labor and emergent property, we would like to pay attention to genealogy from Durkheim and Mead to the Chicago School of Sociology. As Emile Durkheim implied Interaction (or increasing dynamic density) spurs the division of professional work. Not only Durkheim but also Mead and the Chicago School of Sociology gave us many hints, that interactions have emergent properties. Durkheim’s social morphology is resonant with the human ecology of Chicago sociology regarding, for example, interaction between environment and actors (Schnore 1958). Interaction possibly creates cooperation as well as division.

Another point is about critics of pro bono discourse in contemporary Japan. Many media sources in Japan report that the number of people starting new social contribution activities is gradually increasing. Pro bono (or “pro bono publico”) activities have become known as new activities of professional volunteers. Many pro bono discourses ignore the roles of concerned consulters by focusing strongly on professionalism. However, this paper would like to insist that role flexibility (Nishikawa 2011) has the possibility to organize lives of concerned persons. Looking to the Interaction process capturing consulters as well as professionals is necessary for analyzing anti-poverty activities because of the social type of role flexibility.

### **VARIOUS ACTIVITIES COMBATING POVERTY IN JAPAN**

It is certain that many activities combating poverty are being broadened all over Japan. However not only the theme and purposes but also the atmosphere or mood is very different for each activity. Ideally sorting out activities or “Ideal Types” (Max Weber) of activities combating poverty in Japan are as follows.

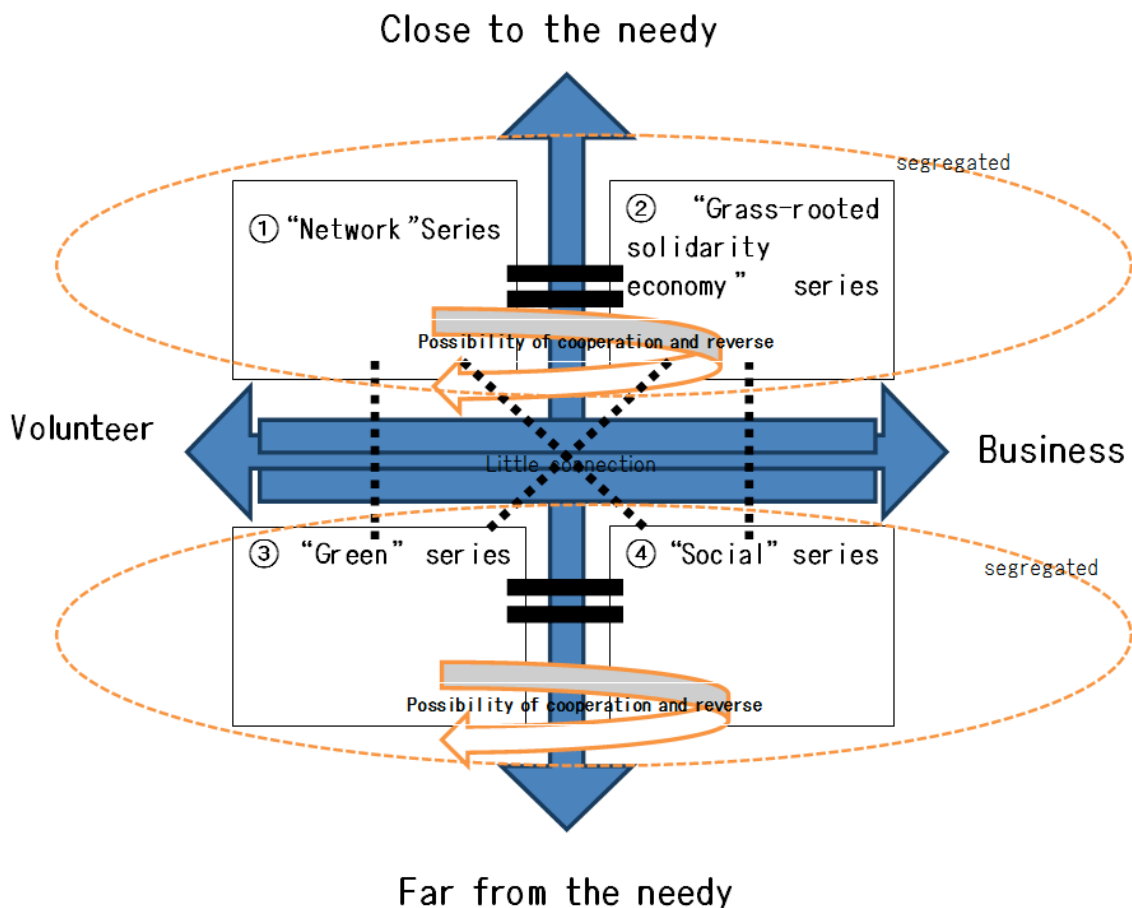
① 「**Network**」 series The examples are “anti-poverty networks” or “Hakenmura” (which means village for temporary workers to see the old year out) activities. “Toshikoshi-Hakenmura” was established in December 2008 in Tokyo. It is well known for its social activities to fight poverty issues. “Toshikoshi-Hakenmura” ended its activity soon and handed its objectives over to the new social activity named “Hakenmura”, which then spread all over Japan. The contents of the anti-poverty activities include counseling events, protest meetings, memorial gatherings, lobbying campaigns, and study meetings, which differ according to the situation, the conditions, the power of opinion leaders, and the atmosphere of each regional anti-poverty group.

② 「**Grass-rooted solidarity economy**」 series Some regions in Japan perform a “solidarity economy” that is one type of the community-based “social safety nets.” The examples of a grass-rooted solidarity economy series include “Big issue Japan.” Big issue was born in 1991 in

London (Sano 2010). Big issue was first published during 2003 in Japan. This is not a “charity” but a business to support independence and give work to homeless people.

③ 「Green」 series The purpose of these activities is the solution of poverty not in Japan but in foreign countries, especially developing countries. Many groups have been gathering at the “Global Festa” held every year in Tokyo. More than two hundred groups have participated in recent years. The mood seems to be just like a festival at an exposition. The theme of “Global Festa 2012” was “Think Global, Think Green: Change World, Produce Future”.

④ 「Social」 series There are people who try to be “cool” social entrepreneurs. The “Social” series includes venture social entrepreneurs. Poverty is one of the objects of social entrepreneurs but it seems to be far from being concerned about needy people. Recently they often use “social” in the special meaning, for example, “social design”, “social value”, “social contribution” with a high mood. Some private, special schools trying to foster “social entrepreneurs” have been established. Concerned players seem to pretend to be high class generally.



【 (Figure 2) Ecological and Systematic View on Activities combating Poverty Problems  
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Figure 2 is regarding the ecological and systematic view on activities combating poverty problems. The vertical line is regarding distance from concerned consulters of the needy. Above is a small distance from concerned consulters. Below is a huge distance from concerned consulters of the needy. As the so called “social activity” players often say “Social contribution is very cool!”, the activities are laying weight on the cool or the sophisticated. Looking at the horizontal line, left is the volunteer series, and right is the business series. When you look at the left direction, activities are taking on non-profit volunteers, and at the right direction, activities are thinking about the sustainability of their own business by considering the market. In this scheme, the horizontal direction takes on switching each other, that is the possibility of cooperation and the reverse, but the vertical direction has few access points with each other. In this system view, there are spheres or network segregations.

### **INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PROFESSIONAL-PROFESSIONALS AND THE PROFESSIONALS-CONCERNED CONSULTERS**

Paying overview attention to this ecological series, this paper would like to pay close attention to the “upper left” or first (①) activities. The “Anti-Poverty Network” is a group of those who regard “being connected” as one of the most important conditions because relational poverty (Ikuta 2007; Nishikawa 2011) as well as economic poverty are crucial problems for them. In order to create social relationships and to accumulate social capital, the staffs, including specialists, reflect hard on the best way to proceed, and carry out the activities into practice.

There are specialists in various fields who take part in anti-poverty activities in Japan. Lawyers and judicial scriveners seem to be at the heart of these. In consultative events of anti-poverty activities, they are in fact the most conspicuous participants. Notably, Kenji Utsunomiya, the former Chairman of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, was the “honorary village mayor” of “Toshikoshi-Hakenmura”, and he has since become a symbol of current anti-poverty activity.

Social welfare counselors and mental health care professionals are called “medical social workers”. They are also interested in the poverty problem. They may give advice on health (including mental health) problems at consultation events. A medium-scale academic study conference has been held to consider some areas of the poverty problem.

Social insurance labor consultants have carried out consultations on labor problems at consultation events. They insist on the importance of teaching “labor law” in high schools and universities, to convey to the younger generation the wisdom to survive in an unstable society. Some of them, if asked, will deliver special lectures in high schools and universities.

Some government workers are also participating. Anti-poverty activity is assumed to be the “counter-public sphere” (Fraser, N. 1992; Nishikawa 2010, 2012) that criticizes the inclusive public sphere and the acts of government, and stimulates activities, but that is not its primary aim. In October 2010, a certain area introduced the employment of Anti-Poverty Network members as Personal Support Service administrative officers.

There are many academic researchers who have an interest in poverty in contemporary Japan. However, fewer researchers are participating in the activities directly. Some sociologists have qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed the consultation sheets obtained at consultation events. The data obtained from the analysis is used to make practical requests to each relevant organization, such as government institutions. For example, Aichi Hakenmura Planning

Committee (2009) highlights many problems regarding poverty in local cities, such as irregular employment, securing accommodations, and foreign nationals of Japanese ancestry, and has requested various organizations including local governments to carry out a favorable policy regarding them.

### **Disciplinary Movements and Agenda-Setting: Ecological Process**

Activities gradually have taken on disciplinary movements and agenda-setting. The motivation to participate in the activities is not only “good will”, as is often said in the “conscientious supporter theory” (McCarthy and Zald 1977), but also contains aspects of the ecological movement by specialists: “What can I do as a specialist?” “What is our position in the activity as specialists?” This is also the ecological problem of the professional staff who want to contribute to society, trying to discover self-positioning from the specialist’s point of view.

Each anti-poverty group in each region determines its own set of problems regarding poverty in Japan. Their agenda includes problems such as “the disabled”, “children”, “women”, “mental health”, “withdrawal”, “Japanese-Korean”, “Japanese-Brazilian”, “multiple consumer loans”, “poverty business”(Yuasa 2007), and so on. The problems set in each group depend on the specific problems in each region, but at the same time we have to recognize that the topics raised by the dominant person or group tend to be regarded as crucial. So this is the issue on agenda-setting, as various media studies indicate.

### **Positions of “Consulters” or Clients in Activities**

It needs to be mentioned about the existence of the concerned consulter. Some people have no special skills in anti-poverty activities. Many of them are ex-consulters. Although most of them have no specific “socially-respectable” specialty, they are assumed to have various resources for the implementation of anti-poverty activities. It is well recognized that the existence of consulters with unstable jobs and their insistence on participating in public anti-poverty activities are a powerful force. There is an increasing focus on the role-flexibility that the consulters also bring to the activities, gaining room for self-positioning and self-worth.

Here we introduce the example of a man who has worked both as a consulter and as a staff member in the “Hakenmura” planning committee in the Chubu region (Nishikawa 2009). After the experience of being homeless, he encountered a consultation event at a “Hakenmura” in a local city, and was able to receive public assistance, and live in a one-room apartment. Now he is participating in the Hakenmura activities as a staff member, going on to reorganize his social life. He is contributing to the consultation events of Hakenmura activities. He has no legal knowledge, but can support the consulters as an ex-consulter. For example, he acts as the icebreaker for a new consulter who has strain showing on his face, and offers support in writing personal history documents, or in filling out some questionnaires. The relationship with his older friend, who has been his friend since he was homeless, has been strengthening. They are living in the same apartment house, and both are participating in anti-poverty activities. Their lives have been organized with self-esteem and self-positioning.

In anti-poverty activities, there is little strict division between consulters and staff. A consulter can become a staff member the next day, and staff as well as ex-consulters often participate in the same party. There is a shared consciousness that anyone can fall into distress. It could happen to you! For the staff, they have the possibility of becoming needy themselves, and for the consulters, to participate in social activities can supply the “place for self-positioning” and fertilize their social life. The degree of flexibility allowed varies according to the region. But the characteristic of flexibility is generally common to many anti-poverty activities. However some activities can’t get participation of consulters. They are trying to find out the effective direction of the activities. Staffs of the activities have begun to realize that concerned consulters with few



skills hesitate to participate in activities where many “great” professional people actively talk out.

### **Interactional Fields of Various Specialists**

There are interactional fields between various professionals. For instance, telephone counseling by various activities may be one of them. Especially in “Yorisoi Hotline” (Multilingual Special Consultation Helpline) backed up by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, if necessary, the various professionals cooperate with each other. In the Personal Support Service also backed by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the system of support seems to be a similar scheme.

And consultation meetings in anti-poverty activities cooperating with various specialists might be another example. The typical variation of booths at consultation service meetings held by anti-poverty networks included a “labor” tent, a “residence” tent, a “public assistance” tent, a “multiple debts” tent, and a “health” tent. This implies the sustainability of activities on disciplinary movements as well as cooperation between professions.

### **Aggregated Cases for Emergence of Individual / Social Resilience**

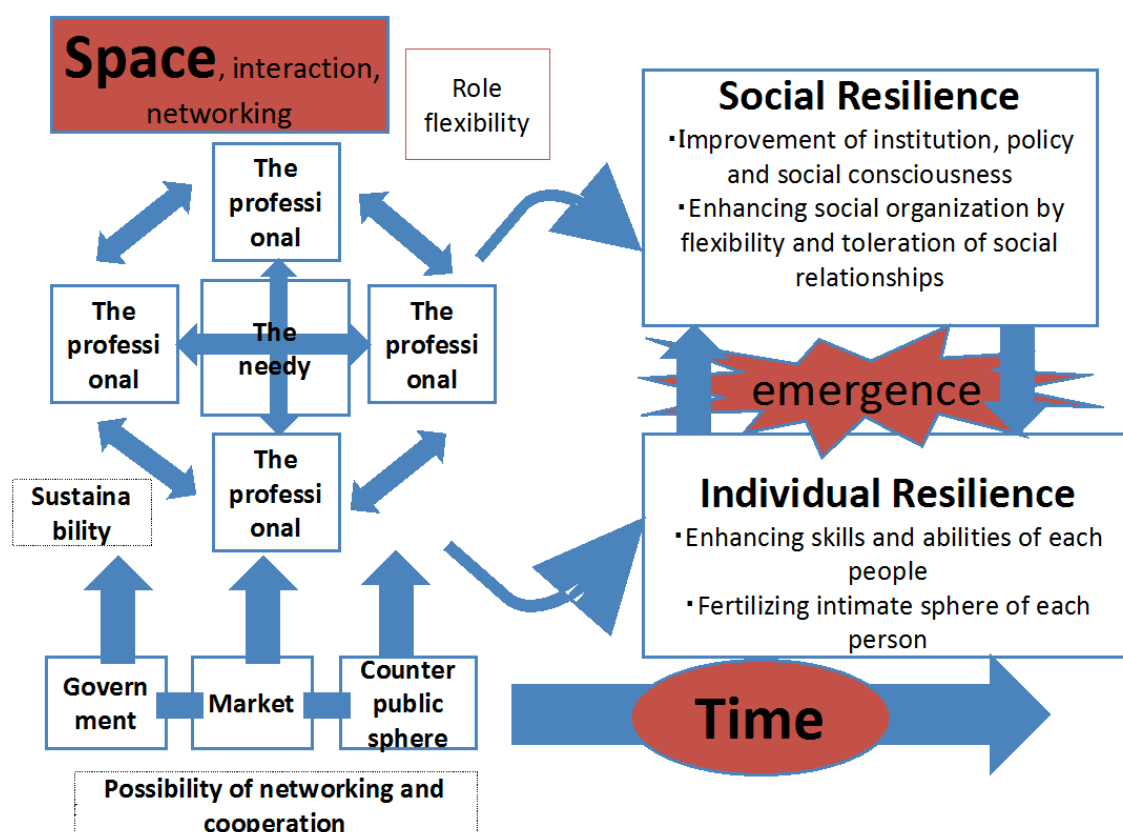
What kind of individual or social resilience can these interactions between them provide? The main providers of activities (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare) are trying to aggregate successful cases (of “Yorisoi Hotline”). Various activity groups report success cases on general understanding and practices of poverty. With the social type (G. Gimmel) of “role flexibility between professions and concerned consultants”, activities are activated in the interactional process of professions – consultants-professions. Some activities succeed in this type of interaction, the others don’t succeed in them and try to call in the acting consultants.

Taking a very random example, I conducted in-depth life history interviews with a man who worked as both a consultant and a staff member in the “Hakenmura” planning committee in Aichi Prefecture (Nishikawa 2009). The narrative of the informant consisted of four stages specific to verbalizing his personality and social capital. In the first stage, he worked as a “respectable” laborer and lived with his family in the Kansai area. In the second stage, he lost his family and started a new life in Aichi Prefecture as a worker in a giant automobile company. In the third stage, he lost his job and house, and experienced “the bottom of his life” as a homeless person. In the fourth stage, he met “Hakenmura” and attempted to rebuild his life by participating in its activities.

In addition, there are some cases in which the anti-poverty group and some NPO/NGOs cooperate as a “counter-public sphere” with the local government administration. For example, the welfare office of Kushiro City (Hokkaido Prefecture) has attempted a program called “support for independence”(Kushiro City Social Affairs Division Life Welfare Office ed. 2009). Welfare recipients are invited by the local government to participate together with NPO/NGOs in some community enterprises, such as nursing homes for the elderly and disabled, or administration of a park or zoo, etc. This way, the participants change their self-position from being passively-assisted to being agents in the organization of the community.

The ecological conception of the emergence of social and individual resilience regarding interaction between professions of different fields can be depicted as figure 3. In the space, interaction, networking level, various field professionals and concerned consultants are interacting, possibly supported by the government, market and counter-public sphere. The relationships between various professionals and concerned consultants are flexible. In the time

level, social and individual resilience, if successful, emerged. Possibly emerged social resilience includes improvement of institution, policy and social consciousness. They also include enhancing social organizations by flexibility and toleration of social relationships. Possibly emerged individual resilience includes enhancing skills and abilities of each person. They also include fertilizing the intimate sphere of each person.



【 (Figure 3) Ecological Conception of Emergence of Social and Individual Resilience regarding Interaction between Professions of Different Fields 】

### Outcome of Interaction between Professions of Various Fields

Though the situations and conditions of each profession are various, professions develop “disciplinary movements”. Some professional activities are cooperating with other activities; other activities are hesitating to cooperate in other certain activities. At the same time they develop or don’t develop cooperation in other professional regions. As we saw at the ecological series of activities, it has something to do with the stance toward problems and atmosphere of the activity as micro sociologist, Erving Goffman formulates in the conception of “role distance” (Goffman 1961) regarding social problems, positionality, self-stance, and self-realization.

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this paper is as follows. First, not only the consultants, but also the supporters try to activate social lives and activities and can secure self-positioning as a result just like the process of social ecology of the Chicago School of Sociology. Second, by exchanging the dynamic interaction between various specialists, and between specialists and their clients in the social types of “role flexibility” with social zest and hope, there emerges the ecological and social resilience that is never created in closed-regional social worlds.

This series of problems is just like the latent function of the social problems as Emile Durkheim and Robert King Merton dissertated. Social problems warm up the disciplinary movements. And these movements can effect the solution of social problems to a lesser or greater degree. Not only the activities but also the disciplinary movements might be warmed up. Professions as well as consultants engaging in activities try to position themselves in society and can connect to broad society as the process of the Chicago School of Social Ecology. Based on these perspectives, continuous research is necessary to observe and investigate the activities combating poverty, seeking for the “theoretical saturation” as the grounded theory of Glazer and Strauss formulates (Glazer and Strauss 1967). This paper might be methodological basis as a research stance for future studies.

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