This lecture puts the Great East Japan Earthquake into perspective by analysing it in the context of other major disasters. Using micro- and neighborhood-level data from four disasters in three nations over the 20th and 21st centuries, this talk will investigate standard theories of recovery and resilience. Bivariate, time series cross sectional, and matching analyses show that more than factors such as individual or personal wealth, aid from the government, or damage from the disaster, the depth of social capital best predicts recovery. Social capital works through three main mechanisms: elevating voice and suppressing exit, overcoming collective action barriers, and providing informal insurance. Should social networks prove the critical engines before, during, and after disaster, this suggests a new approach to disaster mitigation for NGOs, individuals, and governments.

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The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on Thursday, January 17, 2013 at 6.30 p.m. at the DIJ. Admission is free, please register at: forum@dijtokyo.org or Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien
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