This thesis aims to reveal the theoretical strengths and limitations of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ and seek the ways for living together better in the highly globalized society. Although the idea of cosmopolitanism has a rich history and a genealogy from the Cynics to Immanuel Kant, this thesis mainly focuses on ‘new cosmopolitanism’, which can be distinguished from classical cosmopolitanism. Since the 1990s, cosmopolitanism has gained a renewed interest as a concept to articulate the challenges that have arisen as the result of globalization and the arrival of the highly interconnected world.

A major part of this thesis is devoted to the critical assessment of the late Ulrich Beck’s cosmopolitan theory. There are two reasons why I choose Beck as a subject amongst many thinkers of cosmopolitanism: (1) the work of Beck represents one of the comprehensive attempts to advance cosmopolitan sociology; (2) Beck’s cosmopolitan theory embodies the strengths and limitations of ‘new cosmopolitanism’. The critical analysis of Beck’s theory can lead to a better understanding of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ as a whole and a critical inheritance of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ as the intellectual movement.

This thesis consists of three parts. In Part 1, I give an introduction to the main argument (Chapter 1). In Part 2, I provide the critical analysis of Ulrich Beck’s cosmopolitan theory (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). In Part 3, I attempt to seek ways to overcome issues inherent in Beck’s cosmopolitan theory and critically develop cosmopolitanism (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5).

In Chapter 1, ‘New cosmopolitanism and its theoretical potential’, I describe theoretical genealogy of the idea of cosmopolitanism. Then I make comparison between classical cosmopolitanism and ‘new cosmopolitanism’ whereby I show what is new about ‘new cosmopolitanism’ and clarify its theoretical characteristics. Moreover, I note that ‘new cosmopolitanism’ has faced a theoretical impasse that I try to overcome, which is one aim of the thesis. Another aim of the thesis is a critical assessment and inheritance of Beck’s cosmopolitan theory, so I briefly describe his cosmopolitan theory and its relevance. Finally, I refer to the importance of a Japanese perspective in cosmopolitanism studies.
In Chapter 2, ‘Cosmopolitanism as realpolitik: economic globalization and a limitation of methodological nationalism’, I scrutinize Beck’s idea of ‘cosmopolitan realpolitik’, while referring to other relevant theories by scholars other than Beck. Beck discusses ‘cosmopolitan realpolitik’ as a political vision in a global age. Moreover, I show how inequality and stratification have been intricately constructed in global contexts, rather than within a national context. Then I argue that inequality cannot be adequately grasped by methodological nationalism and addressed effectively only by national politics, whereby I clarify the significance of Beck’s theory. I also refer to the limitation of Beck’s rhetoric to focus on ‘realism’.

In Chapter 3, I argue that although Beck’s theoretical contribution is large, there are some issues Beck has left. I first articulate ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ as research agenda and ‘cosmopolitanization’ that is what Beck coined as the basis for ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’. I then point out two major problems inherent in Beck’s theory: first, his ignorance of history of colonialism and historical differences; second, his overestimation of cosmopolitan reality. First, although Beck tried to overcome Eurocentrism that many scholars had referred to as the problematic nature of Beck’s theory, Beck’s solution for overcoming still remains unclear. I argue that in order to overcome Eurocentrism, not only having multiple perspectives in addition to the European perspective, but also a postcolonial perspective to undermine the imperialist and universalistic aspiration are important. Thus, in Chapter 4, I explore the Eurocentric nature that cosmopolitanism unwittingly has inherited and discuss the importance of postcolonial perspective.

Second, I argue that Beck tends to overestimate ‘cosmopolitan reality’ and avoid addressing the gap between cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanization. Certainly, cosmopolitanization can be the first step in acknowledging the interconnectivity and interdependence of our society as one of necessary conditions of cosmopolitanism. However, the transcultural encounters engendered by ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ may be superficial and inadequate for the realization of living together better. Thus, it is important to think what kind of factors can constitute and sustain more robust cosmopolitan solidarity, which I argue in Chapter 5.
In Part 3—Chapter 4 and 5—, I grapple with these two issues left by Beck and seek the ways for critical theoretical progression beyond Beck. In Chapter 4, ‘on rooted/routed cosmopolitanism: from the postcolonial perspective’, in articulating the relationship between the local and the cosmopolitan in cosmopolitanism, I first stress that it is important to conceive of cosmopolitanism from below and as rooted in a particular space. There are two reasons why cosmopolitanism needs to be conceived from below or a particular place: (1) the critique of the dichotomy between local and cosmopolitan; (2) a strong Western genealogy. I argue that debates over cosmopolitanism tend to have an implicit or explicit Western bias because cosmopolitanism has arguably been more highly relevant to Western elites. Yet I also mention that dogmatic universalism such as Eurocentric cosmopolitanism is not unique to Europe and can be seen in the war-time Japanese slogan, Hakkō ichiu. Since it is essential to maintain a critical attitude toward the unilateral use of ‘common’ value and dogmatic universalism under a mask of cosmopolitanism, postcolonial perspective is necessary. It is important to decentre the knowledge and accomplish the self-transformation by postcolonial thinking such as iki thinking.

In Chapter 5, ‘On cosmopolitan solidarity: ‘how can ‘we’ relate with ‘the others’?’’, I articulate what kind of factors are important for a ‘strong-as-possible’ solidarity. I discuss two cosmopolitanisms in a case of natural disaster: humanitarian cosmopolitanism and culpability cosmopolitanism. In doing so, I examine possible factors—causal relationship and compassion—to constitute and strengthen cosmopolitan solidarity. Moreover, I critically examine sentiment’s potential and limitation in a creation of broader community and transnational solidarity. Although one can appraise sentiment for two reasons—the motivational issue of cosmopolitanism and inseparability between morality and sentiment—, relating sentiment with cosmopolitan solidarity requires careful qualification. Finally, I argue that in order to constitute ‘strong-as-possible’ solidarity, it is important to question the tacit assumption of ‘we’ and acknowledge the hidden internal hybridity, rather than expanding ‘we’ by an emotional identification with ‘distant others’. In questioning of the obviousness of ‘we’, one can accomplish a critical self-transformation. A critical self-transformation is a kind of cosmopolitan norm and one of the most important factors for realizing living together better. From one small step from the individual self-transformation, it may create a ‘strong-as-possible’ solidarity and lead to greater social transformation.