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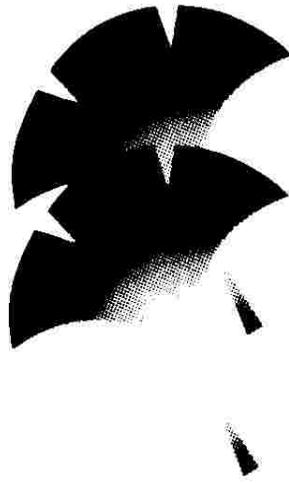
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## Japan's Green Networks: Going Transnational?

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# Japan's Green Networks: Going Transnational?

## Gabriele Vogt

## Content

Abstract:

**Japan's Green Networks: Going Transnational?**

Recently much has been written about a new era of social movement activism brought about by the transnationalization of social movement organizations, i.e., the organizations' development from SMO (social movement organizations) to TSMO (transnational social movement organizations). This working paper asks whether the transnationalizing of social movement activism indeed broadens the movements' range of action and thus also strengthens their position within a domestic political opportunity structure.

Environmental non-governmental organizations in Japan will serve as a case study. I juxtapose the objectives of environmental TSMO activism in Japan with the actual outcomes of their activism, i.e. the extent of the impact they have on the political decision making process in Japan. For this study, I highlight a set of three criteria that, to a large degree, determine the conditions for social movement activism, namely technological progress, public support, and legal framework. I argue that (T)SMO activism in Japan has indeed grown dramatically during the last decade, in terms of both quality and quantity, but has so far failed to tap into its full potential. This brief study argues that the unusually strong NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) character of environmental activism in Japan might be one reason for the still relatively weak position of environmental (T)SMOs in that country.

Key words: *social movement organizations; transnationalization; political opportunity structure; environment; NIMBY.*

## 1. "A word of caution"

This working paper is a raw and unpolished 'first-cut' of some ideas on the transnationalization of social movement activism around environmental issues in Japan. It might seem surprising that I am attempting to classify this piece of work as part of a larger research project on labor migration to Japan. While, at a first glance, the two case studies – environmental issues and labor migration – do not seem to have too many connecting points, a common approach towards the two issues may be applied in terms of theoretical background.

One central aspect of my research project on labor migration is to characterize the relationship, i.e. the structure of interdependence, between civil society and governments (local and national) in Japan. I argue that this relationship is subject to a change that is triggered by, for example, a broadening range of action for civil society actors as transnationalization of their activities proceeds. At this point, my research has two goals: to define the factors that shaped social movements' range of action in the past decade and to analyze how these groups deal with the newly arisen circumstances. In particular I ask whether Japan's social movements are indeed "going transnational." A final evaluation of what my results mean for the further development of Japan's political structure would be desirable.

I aimed at getting these first ideas about the project down on paper simply to generate discussion and solicit suggestions. At this point, many loose ends with regard to empirical data, as well as the structure of arguments, remain to be tied. I thank you for taking time to read this 'first-cut' of my research and I look forward to your comments.

## 2. Introduction

The term "Bewegungsgesellschaft" (movement society) has become a popular slogan in German social movement research since the late 1990s. Dieter Rucht, coordinator of the working group "Civil Society, Citizenship, and Political Mobilisation in Europe" at the Social Science Research Center Berlin, uses it to describe a new form of society, one that is shaped by the growing demand of citizens for participatory democracy. According to Rucht, in Germany as well as in many other democratic states, the volume of protests has been rising constantly since the 1950s and thus reflects these countries' development toward a movement society (Loy 2003/03/17: 3). This argument is supported by Ronald Inglehart, initiator of the World Value Survey, a research project, which lists data collected during the past decades, on the dominant values among different peoples. Inglehart finds not only a shift from material to postmaterial values in all industrial nations during the 1970s and 1980s, but also a connection between this phenomenon and people's growing willingness to participate in social movements in general, and in the so-called new social movements in particular. The more emphasis a society puts on postmaterial values, the higher the percentage of people engaged in new social movements, i.e. in movements that concentrate on idealistic issues that do not necessarily result in the improvement of one's own living conditions, but which put much more emphasis on the improvement of general living conditions around the globe (Inglehart 1990: 66–103; 2000: 80–97).

The central issues of these new social movements are human rights, peace, and the environment. Among those groups, the most steadily growing one in the past decades has been the environmental movement. According to data drawn from the "Yearbook of International Organizations", the most complete census of international organizations published annually, over 1,000 environmental non-governmental organizations are listed in the 2002/03 yearbook. This is about 14 times that of those listed in the 1988/89 yearbook.[1]

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[1] The data in the "Yearbook of International Organizations" is collected by the Union of International Associations. UN records on non-governmental organizations, self-reports, referrals, periodicals and the media are constantly screened to identify these organizations. The data for this working paper has been

During the same time period the number of environmental non-governmental organizations in Asia grew from six to thirty-nine. The first environmental movement in Japan that was listed in the Yearbook is the Asian Environmental Society (AES), organized by Ui Jun at Okinawa University. It was listed for the first time in the 1994/95 yearbook and has appeared there every year since. In an e-mail-interview with the author, Ui Jun (2004/10/28) stressed that he had already started working towards creating a transnational environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s, having been aware of the border-crossing character of environmental issues. So far there has been only one other Japan-based organization to be named in the Yearbook. The Asian Local Environmental Activists (ALEA), led by Chris Semonsen in Tokyo, was shown in the Yearbook only once – in the 1996/97 issue (Union of International Associations: data series).

The empirical observations above must lead to two assumptions: First, the number of social movements engaged in environmental issues has been rising constantly over the past decades and it experienced an especially tremendous rise during the 1990s. Second, this development was not limited to Western European and North American countries, but could also be observed in other world regions such as in Asia, albeit not to the same magnitude. The same holds true for a special version of social movements, the so-called transnational social-movement organizations (TSMO), i.e. social movement organizations that operate in two or more states at the same time. Again, according to data drawn from the "Yearbook of International Organizations", the general number of TSMO as well as their portion of social movement organizations (SMO) has been rising constantly since the 1970s. With TSMO as well, the largest growth occurred among those organizations engaged in the environmental sector (Smith 1997: 42–49).

The question arises as to whether Rucht and Inglehart are right: Are we on our way towards a movement society? Do the roles of protest culture and participatory democracy continue to expand globally? Is the social movements' ability to exert political influence steadily growing in modern democratic states? If yes, then what does this mean for the

assembled by using the "Yearbook of International Organizations" books of 1988/89, 1989/90, 1994/95, 1996/97, 1998/99, 1998/99, 2000/01 and 2002/03.

structure of modern democracies? How are democratic states going to be influenced and shaped by a growing number of active non-state actors?

## 3. Research Approach

Social movements are often subject to rising and falling popularity and effectiveness, a phenomenon that social movement researcher Sidney Tarrow calls "cycles of protest" or "cycles of contention". Such cycles consist of two main phases – mobilization and demobilization of a movement – which again can be divided into three stages each: The mobilization phase consists of conflict and diffusion, repertoires and frames, and increased information and interaction. The demobilization phase consists of exhaustion and polarization, violence and institutionalization, and facilitation and repression (Tarrow 1998: 141–150). Tarrow as well as fellow social movement researchers Keck and Sikkink, among others, classify the transnationalization of SMO as one modern-day opportunity for breaking out of the cycles that sooner or later lead to the degradation of any given social movement. Transnational alliances of SMO are able to, for example, shape the ideological orientation of social movements, or simply contribute to their development through financial aid. In doing so they not only influence the social movement itself, but also the reactions of various national governments towards these new circumstances, and finally the so-called political opportunity structures, i.e. mainly the political, but also the economic and legal framework settings that determine a social movement's capacity to act (Tarrow 1998: 176–195). Keck and Sikkink (1998: 12–13) call this model of determination of social movements by their transnational alliances a "Boomerang Pattern". SMO in centralized states are likely to profit immensely from transnational alliances: they provide the opportunity to put pressure on the national government via social movements abroad, foreign national governments, and/or intergovernmental organizations, thus increasing the national government's responsiveness towards movements' demands and also its

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willingness to compromise on these demands.[2] In this sense TSMO not only seem of vital importance to the social movement sector itself, but also to the evolution of a new political culture and reformed domestic political structures. According to the "Boomerang Pattern" the degree of change triggered by TSMO will be measured in four categories: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics.

This paper focuses on a level below these four categories, one that aims to trace changes in Japan's national political opportunity structure, and their impacts on (T)SMO activism. By doing this, the role transnational social movement organizations play in Japan today shall be highlighted. A study of TSMO in Japan will eventually contribute to research conducted on the relevance of civil society in modern industrialized states, the so-called social movement literature, as well as to research on current political reforms in Japan. The project aims to link together two areas of research: studies on social movements and studies on Japan. Combining them on the one hand allows Japan to be included in the current international discourse on social movements, and on the other hand makes it possible to thoroughly analyze a special sector of Japan's political system, that is, the nation's civil society sector. It thus allows a striving for results on how transnational developments in the civil society sector during the past decade contributed to the reform of Japan's political landscape in general. In short, the project will examine to what degree Keck and Sikkink's "Boomerang Pattern" – so far applied on case studies in the nations of Europe and the Americas – has worked in Japan in recent years.

Using the example of TSMO active in the environmental sector, the most internationally developed and vital TSMO sector will be chosen to illustrate the achievements of TSMO in Japan. Environmental activism, a classic part of activism in new social movements and strongly connected to the growing relevance of postmaterial values, is expanding in Asia as well as in other world regions. Environmental movements therefore are a central part of non-state activism and seem predestined to serve as an indicator for the

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[2] It seems necessary to expand the pool of actors Keck and Sikkink's "Boomerang Pattern" introduces as relevant for the transnationalization of social movement activism: actors such as local governments, private companies, and/or international organizations, just to name a few, may also serve as important allies of TSMO. They will not, however, be subject to research in this brief study.

evolution of a nation's civil society in general. The condition of a nation's environmental TSMO sector allows additional conclusions to be drawn about the degree to which the sector intends to or is able to collaborate transnationally.

Without a doubt, Japan's civil society has undergone remarkable development in the past decade. In order to draw a picture of these changes, three factors will be highlighted: First, the technological progress that has been made which makes networking among non-state networks today much easier than it was just ten years ago. Secondly, public opinion in Japan that today is much more favorable towards a civil society will be examined. Thirdly, new legal frameworks of civil society's actions in Japan will be addressed. The following chapter on events that occurred globally or specifically in Japan in the past decade will define what can be expected of environmental TSMO in Japan today. The chapter on the reality of environmental TSMO in Japan aims to clarify which of these expectations the sector has fulfilled and which it has not. It will be argued that although Japan's environmental TSMO have experienced fairly complex improvements in the above mentioned three categories that immediately determine their range of action, they still have not tapped into their full potential.

## 4. Environmental TSMO in Japan: expectations

As in other industrialized nations, in Japan the support for citizen participation in the environmental sector is associated with support for a new global environmental paradigm, one central part of postmaterial values (Pierce et al. 1990: 52). However, there is also one substantial cross-national difference in popular as well as elite support for citizen involvement in the environmental policy process which needs to be mentioned, and which Pierce, Lovrich and Matsuoka have defined after complex fieldwork with Japanese and US environmental movements. Postmaterial values as a factor that motivates citizen activism in

the environmental sector, the strongest source of motivation for environmental activists in almost all industrialized countries, only constitutes the slightly weaker of two main factors in the Japanese case: "*[...] Japanese environmental activists appear to be more often motivated by their victim status with regard to real or potential pollution than by a sense of reverence for nature in its most natural status.*" (Pierce et al. 1990: 56) This motivation drawn by activists from their awareness of a victim status in a certain case triggers a generally strong focus of environmental activists on local specifics. It must be seen as a main reason for the so-called NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) character of Japanese environmental activism. For Japanese activists, stronger than an overall motivation to protect the environment in general, is the motivation to react by political involvement whenever they see their immediate (living) environment affected negatively (Pierce et al. 1990: 56–57).[3] Thus, they are generally very willing to support environmental activism in their hometown, but react with reluctance when it comes to supporting movements that are located further away or do not necessarily share the same topical concerns. However, a new potential for environmental activism in general and for environmental TSMO especially has evolved in Japan during the past decade. Some general global trends as well as specific events in Japan account for this phenomenon of a growing range of action. Three factors in particular must be named when defining events to which civil society in Japan was exposed in the last decade: technological progress, stronger public support and a reformed legal framework. They shall be highlighted one by one in the following paragraph.

First of all, the evolution of new electronic means of communication enables activists to inform themselves about ongoing events in different parts of the nation or even abroad and also eventually to build up and keep up national as well as transnational networks (Smith: 1997: 52–54). Secondly, from the mid-1990s on, the awareness of what social movements are and how they can be a valuable part of a modern-day society has spread rapidly among the Japanese people. It has mainly been the aftermath of the Hanshin Earthquake and preparation for the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change that triggered a

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[3] For a general picture of the value of nature and environment among Japanese citizens see Thomas 2001. For a comparative study on environmental politics in industrial states, including Japan, refer to Schreurs 2003.

greater awareness on the role of SMO in general, and environmental SMO in particular, in the general public.[4] Also, the legal framework of SMO in the Japanese nation state underwent major reforms during the 1990s. Two of the new laws that enable non-state actors to play a more vital role in Japan's political decision making process are the "Law of Information Disclosure" (*Jōhō Kōkai-hō*) of 1999 and the "Law to Promote Decentralization" (*Chihō Bunken Suishin-hō*) of 1995. The law with the most substantial meaning for Japan's civil society, however, is the "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities" (*Tokutei Hirei Katsudō Sokushin-hō*) of 1998.

The three above named aspects – technological progress, public support and legal framework – have together contributed to a strengthening of Japan's social movement sector. Indeed, today activists have a fair number of opportunities to engage not only in individual local projects, but to also build up national and transnational alliances with groups that share their concerns on certain topics. This allows the activists to rethink the slogan of new social movements, "think globally, and act locally". They can now think globally, act locally and nationally as well as transnationally while profiting from their alliances in various ways. The alliances can help strengthen the movements' inner structures as well as their position in a structure of interdependence with the national government, which is sometimes characterized by mutual cooperation, and sometimes, by fierce opposition. These alliances thus allow the activist groups to have a more intensive impact on certain issues of concern. The question that needs to be addressed when gathering data on the current situation of TSMO in Japan is: To what degree are these organizations making use of their opportunities to strengthen themselves and their positions in the political decision making process? Is the new potential available to TSMO in Japan also reflected in the organizations' realities?

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[4] For in-depth information on the relevance of the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change to non-state actors in Japan see Reiman (2002: 173-187; 2003: 298-315).

**5. Environmental TSMO in Japan: reality**

The data in Table 1 shows a comparison of various, randomly selected environmental TSMO in Japan since the 1980s. The information was drawn from the organizations' websites, bulletins and other publications as well as newspaper articles on various events related to the named organizations. It briefly introduces seven environmental TSMO, both large and small ones, professional ones, those that are based on neighborhood initiatives, those that are part of bigger networks, and independent ones. They are being compared with each other against a list of criteria that includes the movements' settings in terms of time and localities, their actors, goals, methods, financial backgrounds, various results and their transnational dimension. This brief overlook, although by no means at this stage a comprehensive study, allows some tentative conclusions to be drawn about the situation of environmental TSMO in Japan. In the following paragraphs these will be explained according to the three categories of technological progress, public support and legal framework.

**Technological progress**

The rapid technological progress we have witnessed during the past decades, especially in the sector of communication, created new opportunities of interaction between people without the borders of distance and time. Today SMO activists are able to make use of new communication technologies such as the Internet, e-mail and newsgroups, in order to gain supporters, to inform them and the wider public about on-going events, initiate petitions, raise funds, etc. As the newly revived world-wide peace movement of 2003 showed, this instrument can be used very effectively and draws tens or even hundreds of thousands of people to demonstrations with only a relatively short preparation time of only a couple of weeks. However, there is also a downside to the new world of e-communications, which

seems to hold true for TSMO in Japan, too, where access to the Internet is – compared to other industrial nations – still relatively expensive and therefore less widely spread among citizens, i.e. potential supporters of TSMO (Reiman app. 2003: 479–507): If the main communication with supporters, targets and/or allies is being conducted via the new media, gaining credibility in a large market of environmental TSMO is getting more difficult (Keohane and Nye 1998, Internet). This problem is, of course, much more severe for local, independent TSMO, such as SDCC, than for national branches of well-known global organizations, such as A SEED or FoE. Additionally, the more recent an environmental TSMO's funding, the harder the competition to survive. With the number of TSMO steadily growing, it seems difficult to gain credibility in the first place, let alone bind a sufficient number of committed supporters to ensure the ongoing existence of the TSMO (Smith 1997: 58). Other forms of communication among TSMO, other than electronic means, seem to be necessary for placing an organization in a strong and acknowledged position within the global framework. These other forms of communication among TSMO in the environmental sector include participation at international conferences, such as the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change in 1997, and the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. TSMO may use such conferences, in order to secure border-crossing support for their goals and thus, according to the "Boomerang Pattern", put more pressure for responsiveness on their respective national governments: At the Third IUCN (World Conservation Union) World Congress in Bangkok in November 2004, SDCC managed to lobby the participating organizations for a common resolution that urges the Japanese government to protect the fauna of Okinawa Prefecture (SDCC 2006, Internet).

An exclusive focus on electronic communication causes TSMO's internal networks to weaken, and in some cases, to eventually fade away. The above mentioned studies among the supporters of the 2003 world wide peace movement also show that an intensive Internet presence cannot compensate for the bonds and identity-building that arise between social movements' supporters in face-to-face communication (Rucht 2003: 28–32). The same holds true for Japan's environmental TSMO: numerous young "e-movements", e.g. The

Red Card Movement in Okinawa, have vanished after two to three years each of intensive e-campaigning, leaving websites that have not been updated for years as a reminder of their former existence. Yet another method of e-networking, a method that seems particularly profitable in Japan, is communication via cell phones. Websites that are created to be also accessible via cell phone will find a much broader audience in Japan than websites which are exclusively accessible via personal computers. Quantitative research has shown that TSMO which make vital use of the new media are not necessarily successful ones, but that activism via the new media can be a significant step in spreading the word about the goals of TSMO and in securing a pool of supporters (Ducke 2004: 61–72). It may be concluded that the use of new media among TSMO in Japan is a very valuable method of networking, a method which might prove even more valuable when being expanded to other media, such as cell phones, which are spread widely in Japan. E-networking, nevertheless, cannot fully replace "old-fashioned" personal contacts between activists.

**Public Support**

The public support of TSMO among the citizens of Japan is in part strongly connected with the technological progress mapped out in the above paragraph. The effectiveness of new media in TSMO activism as well as public support for any TSMO strongly depends on the phenomenon of trust. TSMO that are trusted may freely use the new media without worrying about credibility; they can also generally count on a vital public support for their lobbying and other activities. The more important question to address in connection with the phenomenon of recently strengthened public support for TSMO in Japan is whether this general development can also trigger a new character of non-state actors' activism in Japan. Is a stronger public support for non-state activism leading both activists and supporters away from a NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) and towards a NIABY (Not in Anybody's Backyard) philosophy? Strong public support for TSMO activities has the power to initiate such a paradigm shift, as it ensures social movement activists the resources necessary to

broaden their range of activism to the transnational level. Issues of environmental protection and sustainability are *en vogue* in Japan these days: Who would not have heard the slogan LOHAS (Life of Health and Sustainability) or noticed the increase in so-called slow-food restaurants all over the country? In contrast to this fashionable environmentalism stands a relatively weak public support for politically contentious environmentalism. The relevance this public support embodies for (T)SMO with relatively poor resources, has just recently been mapped out in a comparative study on environmental (T)SMO activism in Japan and Germany, conducted by political scientist Gesine Foljanty-Jost (2005: 103–117).

Despite efforts undertaken by activists, citizens still struggle with embracing a NIABY philosophy – even on a domestic level, let alone with a transnational perspective. A brief look at topics of referenda held in Japan may illustrate the still strong NIMBY character present among representatives of participatory action and participatory democracy in Japan. Roughly a dozen referenda have been held in Japan since the first one took place in Maki / Niigata prefecture in the summer of 1996. More than two thirds of these referenda dealt with attempts to stop certain construction plans initiated by the national government. For example, activists tried to stop the construction of nuclear power plants, military bases and dams, all projects affecting the immediate environment of people living in the cities where the referenda were held.[5] The large percentage of these anti-demands among referenda held in Japan is remarkable. People likely to get involved in participatory actions seem to be concerned mainly with protesting the realization of certain construction projects that would effect their immediate (living) environment. Initiating projects in the field of so-called distant issue movements that could promise a substantial change to the over-all perception of environmental issues in Japan, however, may be realized only with great difficulty.

Especially puzzling is the fact that this relative disinterest in distant issue movements holds true even when the structural framework for national as well as transnational alliance building is being provided, i.e. when the resources are no point of struggle. As part of its activities in the fields of environmental protection and development aid, in 1996 Japan's

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[5] Referenda in Japan are of a non-binding character; therefore more than their results it is the public discourse they trigger which is of political importance.

Ministry of the Environment, in cooperation with the United Nations University (UNU), created the so-called Global Environmental Information Center (GEIC). GEIC's goal is to function as mediator for (T)SMO, companies and government agencies, in order to enable them to create joint projects in the environmental sector. The office is located in the UNU building in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward. It not only provides a remarkable library, numerous desks with computers and Internet access, a meeting area and ample space for pamphlets – though it is hardly made use of – yet it is even hardly known of among activists. What are the roots of the disinterest by environmental neighborhood activists towards distance issue movements? Environmentalists and political scientists are split in their answers to this question. German environmentalist Jürgen Forkel-Schubert (2006/02/07, presentation), coordinator of projects in the field of environmental education in the city of Hamburg, argues that only thorough environmental education can raise the awareness about the need for activism in distant issue projects as well; political scientist Wilhelm Vosse (2006: 119) argues that it is not only this awareness but also the motivation for contentious political action which is needed in order to create a NIABY atmosphere among the general public and activists in social movements alike.

**Legal Framework**

The relevance of Japan's recently reformed legal framework for (T)SMO activities follows the trend set by the other two aspects – technological progress and public support – highlighted above: it helps to provide activists with a much better political opportunity structure than just a decade ago. However, it is also far from being a nostrum for dealing with the many obstacles in TSMO activism. The most significant change in the legal framework of non-state activism in Japan was marked by the "Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities" (NPO Law). It was enacted in the spring of 1998 and implemented on December 1 the same year. The Law is designed to provide the status of 'nonprofit corporation' to voluntary organizations. Obtaining this legal status is important to such

organizations, as it provides a standing that allows them to act fully as legal persons, e.g., to act as a contractual partner. It furthermore confers legitimacy on the specific groups as well as on the civil-society sector as a whole (Pekkanen 2000: 111–113; Yamaoka 1998, Internet). The regulations of the law are generally perceived – also by the activists – to be ground-breaking. Yamaoka Yoshinori, managing director and secretary of the Japan NPO Center, calls it an eventual "*turning point for a new Japanese civil society in terms of both framework and actual activities*" (Yamaoka 1998, Internet). Equally unique up this point was the law-making process itself: For the first time during this process, substantial participation from citizens' movements in an advisory capacity was solicited, bureaucratic influence was minimized as much as possible and constructive coalition building among the political parties took place (Pekkanen 2000: 111–148).

Contrary to general expectation, at first citizen groups hesitated to make use of the law and to obtain their legal status as nonprofit organizations. There was a strong "wait-and-see approach" among many groups, especially among the established ones. As Pekkanen points out, in the early phase most NPO applicants were relatively new groups. The group in Hokkaido that became the first established NPO legal person, however, nearly tripled its membership in the following six months. After recognizing the obviously strong legitimizing function of the law, more and more established groups also decided to apply for the NPO status (Pekkanen 2000: 137–139). According to the Japan NPO Center (2006, Internet), at this point more than 6,000 organizations have been incorporated as Specified Nonprofit Cooperations; this falls behind the 10,000 groups which were expected to obtain NPO status in the early phase (Pekkanen 2000: 113).

The legitimizing effects of a NPO status has became obvious in the past years. The pragmatic and practical profits that organizations can draw from a standing as a legal person, however, have yet to show themselves clearly. Therefore, many organizations prefer to retain in their old status and spare themselves the paperwork of application as long as there are no significant and immediate (dis)advantages either way. In interviews with the author, this opinion has been stated numerous times, by, for instance, Kogachi Hiroshi

(2004/11/11), founding member and chairperson of The People Association of the Okinawa Recycling Movement [*Okinawa risaikuru undō shimin no kai*], as well as by Yano Manami (2006/04/10), founding member and chairperson of The Network of Cooperation with Immigrants [*Ijuren netto*]. For SMO potential disadvantages may not be as severe as they could be for TSMO, especially when entering into legally binding international contracts. Nevertheless, among the randomly selected independent environmental TSMO illustrated in Table 1 there is only one Japanese grassroots group with NPO status: the relatively strongly transnationally involved Sarawak Campaign Committee. A SEED and FoE also have NPO status, but since they are not originally Japanese TSMO they will not be considered here. The Zushi Movement and the Kitazawa-gawa movement both vanished before the implementation of the NPO Law and therefore cannot be taken into account. The remaining two movements, the Seto Olive Foundation and the Save the Dugong Campaign Center, chose completely different paths towards NPO status. While the Seto Olive Foundation has strong financial backing from a for-profit company and therefore is not ideologically suitable for obtaining NPO status, the SDCC is collaborating closely with NPOs and might sooner or later apply for NPO status itself. Obtaining NPO status for Japanese TSMO seems attractive in terms of legitimizing their activities and gaining a position from which to engage more easily in legal businesses. However, the difference that it makes does not seem to be large enough that every group would rush for it. Also, in recent years the freely available support for citizens' groups engaged nationally or transnationally has been significantly improved. Various helping hands, such as magazines, offices run by NPOs which provide classes on how to empower the groups through computer access and/or how to obtain donations, as well as numerous websites on how to work as a movement, are now available. These resources pool the knowledge of many groups and individuals, thus educating potential activists as well as the public at large about civil society. These educational efforts contribute to less fear of this phenomenon among citizens, and makes everyday business life easier.

## 6. Conclusion

In the last decade Japan's civil society sector was exposed to a variety of influences, global ones and specifically Japanese ones. Due to those influences it has experienced tremendous changes with regard to the technological tools it makes use of, the public support it can count on, and the legal framework in which it finds itself settled. These changes have to be evaluated as generally positive ones, although in practice all of them have their negative sides. Nevertheless, they constitute an improvement on the national environment of which social movement activism in Japan is a part. In order to be able to act at their current highest possible efficiency, Japan's TSMO will need to strive for more credibility and constancy in their actions, a challenging task in an era of major communication through new media. They will also need to gain a larger and more committed pool of supporters and show more willingness and mobility to embrace new chances presented to them, such the NPO Law of 1998.

The changes in the setting of non-state actors in Japan's political system during the last decade can be classified as relatively remarkable. However, at this point it must be concluded that they have so far failed to trigger an overall significant improvement of the civil society sector's involvement in the field of either transnational activism or domestic political reforms. On the one hand, it might be argued that the changes in the nation's domestic setting of its civil society activists are not comprehensive enough. On the other hand, it must not be disregarded that Japan's TSMO, and other civil society groups as well, have not managed to tap the full potential that has been given to them. As one hindrance, an unusually strong NIMBY character among environmental activists in Japan may be named.

TSMO activism in Japan is just about to get off the ground. Thus its effects are not yet clear either in Japan, or abroad. A tentative interpretation of the first results provided by

this study may be that TSMO could have a significant impact on Japan's political culture and political system, once they start playing their part without hesitations. They might even be able to open Japan's political structures to a more participatory democracy, as was seen in the creation of the NPO Law itself. They might be able to boost Japan's role in the international community of states by providing a platform for possible prestigious engagement in the political realization of common postmaterial values. According to Keck and Sikkink's "Boomerang Pattern", creating not only material pressure but also moral pressure enables TSMO to strengthen their position in confrontation with the national government: Once the eye of the international community is on whether postmaterial values in a state prevail or not, the state's responsiveness towards the TSMO's demands will increase. Japanese TSMO, once they blossom, may have the power to transform Japan's national structures as well as its international role. At this point, however, such a statement is pure speculation.

**Table 1: Selected environmental TSMO in Japan in comparison**

| Movement | Actors | Goals | Methods |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Zushi Movement** 1980s Zushi-shi / Kanagawa | Tomino Ki'ichiro (mayor) Local residents | Stop construction of 1,000 housing units for U.S. Navy personnel in Ikego forest | Information Access Section in Zushi city hall; Environmental impact assessment |
| **Friends of the Earth Japan** 1980–present Tokyo www.foejapan.org | Anybody Membership fee: 5,000 Yen per year | Reduce global warming and deforestation; Increase development aid to Third World | Research; Local groups; Information & education |
| **Sarawak Campaign Committee (SCC)** 1987–present Tokyo www.kiwi-us.com/~scc/ | Anybody Membership fee: 5,000 Yen per year | Tropical forest preservation; Protection of indigenous peoples' human rights | Exhibitions, publishing; Lobbying activities in government/industries; Activities through "Eco-Nippon" |
| **A SEED Japan** 1992–present Tokyo www.jca.apc.org/~aseed/ | Mainly youth | Prevent social injustice in environmental problems | Meetings once a month; Occasional action projects in cooperation with e.g. UNU |
| **Kitazawa-gawa** 1994–96 Setagaya-ku / Tokyo | Setagaya neighborhood | *Machizukuri:* Redesigning Kitazawa-gawa Green Mall | 12 community workshops in roughly two years; "On-Site Plan Checking Tours" |
| **Seto Olive Foundation** 2000–present Teshima / Kagawa | Kohei Nakabo (Teshima lawsuit defense council); Tadao Ando (architect); Local residents | Restoration of Teshima's natural beauty after a decade of illegal dumping of industrial waste | Tree-planting ceremonies; Lecture meetings |
| **Save the Dugong Campaign Center (SDCC)** 2001–present Henoko / Okinawa and Tokyo www.sdcc.jp | Local residents; Environmental NGOs; Scholars; Anti-military activists | Stopping the relocation project of MCAS Futenma to Henoko Bay | Lobbying governmental institutions; Online petition; International conferences, symposiums, seminars |

| Financing | Results | Transnational |
|---|---|---|
| Private donations | Received letters of support: > 1,000 from Japan plus 700 from abroad, however construction began in 1993 | Trips to Washington D.C. by opposition groups |
| Membership fees; Selling FoE goods; Mott-Foundation | Various e.g. "Stop Global Warming Parade / Symposium" | Projects in Japan and overseas e.g. Siberia Hot Spot, South Pacific Islands, China Green Deserts |
| Membership fee; Private donations; Sponsorship through umbrella organization "Eco-Nippon" | Various, including helping to preserve Sarawak rainforest in Malaysia; Support for Green Party in the U.S. | Cooperation with citizens and NGOs in Japan and abroad, especially in Malaysia; Participation in international conferences |
| Private donations Grants | Various e.g. "Eco Convenience Store" | Cooperations with A SEED International; Solidarity with international NGOs (Jubilee 2000 etc.) |
| Department of Parks finances Setagaya Community Design Center to initiate citizen participation | Newly designed and constructed Kitazawa-gawa Green Mall | Participation in HELPPR (Human Exchange for Local Participatory Planning in the Pacific Rim) |
| Private and governmental donations; Support by UNIQLO (fashion industry) | 29,434 trees planted as of 2003/10/10 | Donations of olive trees from Greece (olive being an ancient gift from Athena, goddess of wisdom) |
| Private donations; Participation fees | Pending | Cooperation with World Wide Fund for Nature Japan and Nature Conservation Society of Japan; Cooperation with scientists in Australia and the U.S. |

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