

**Zeitschrift:** Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

**Band:** 51 (1997)

**Heft:** 1: Diversity, change, fluidity : Japanese perspectives

**Artikel:** Citizens' movements in Japan : differing issues - differing responses

**Autor:** Nennstiel, Ulrike

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147327>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 08.07.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## CITIZENS' MOVEMENTS IN JAPAN DIFFERING ISSUES – DIFFERING RESPONSES

Ulrike Nennstiel, Sapporo

In the 1960s citizens' movements (*jūmin undō*<sup>1</sup>) came to play an important role in the political scene, both in Japan and in many other industrialized countries. The reasons for their appearance, however, only partly resemble each other. Within Japan various grievances gave rise to citizens' movements in a number of places at the same time, but the concrete causes, aims and strategies of the people involved differed in many ways, depending on the specific conditions of the respective locality, on the strategies employed by the authorities, etc.

Nowadays citizens' movements in Japan are sometimes said to have "died away", but in Japanese newspapers, one will find at least one article about the activities of a movement a week. Therefore, we cannot say that citizens' movements have "died away". On the contrary, there are vast numbers of citizens' movements, but their variety in topic, range, activities, and strategies hardly permits any general statements about them.

This paper focuses on movements in Japan related to environmental issues. Citing a number of historical cases, it briefly sketches the most outstanding features of the history of citizens' movements in Japan since World War II. Subsequently, some examples of recent movements will be presented in order to give an idea of the variety and divergence of citizens' movements in Japan today.

### 1. The emergence and "heyday" of citizens' movements

After the end of World War II, people were starving, and because more than 4.5 million Japanese came back from the former colonies and soldiers returned from war, there was a shortage of approx. 6 million houses. Most of the citizens were busy thinking of how to meet the most basic needs of

1 Literally: "Movements by the local inhabitants of an area". In a Japanese *Encyclopedia of Sociology* the expression *jūmin undō* is defined as a "social movement, by which citizens of a certain area try to protect their citizens rights by spontaneously or organizedly opposing to the capitalists and authorities infringing on these rights." (OKOSHI 1993; cf. NENNSTIEL 1994:467f)

everyday life. Fast economic recovery was thought of by many as the key for solving the most urgent problems and for opening up a brighter future. At that time no influential citizens' movements existed. (Miyamoto 1973: 28f; Funaba 1988:213f)

This situation basically changed in the 1950s with industry recovering and expanding faster than ever before. New industrial plants were planned and rapidly built in many places. Young farmers gave up the work of their forefathers for better paid jobs in the new factories. In economic terms, living became much easier for many of them. At the same time, however, the negative effects of the forced industrial development began to terrify those living in the neighborhood of industrial plants. In Minamata fishermen got sick and died because of the mercury the Chisso Company emitted into the bay. Instead of getting support from their fellow citizens, the victims were scorned and pressed to keep silent, because the city of Minamata depended on Chisso for taxes as well as for jobs. The prefectural government even urged the physicians who had proved the causal relationship between the emissions from Chisso and the death of the fishermen not to publish their findings. All attempts of the victims and their families to get social or financial support failed, and Chisso could continue for nine years to emit its mercury-poisoned waste into the bay without running into any problems. (Harada 1989:1-84; Kamioka 1987; McKean 1981:50-59; Miyamoto 1987:133-152)

This changed after 1965, when at the mouth of the Agano River in Niigata prefecture a "new" disease occurred, characterized by symptoms very similar to those of Minamata. In contrast to Minamata, the Niigata prefectural government immediately prohibited the sale of any fish caught in that area, and induced a scientific investigation concerning the origin of the disease. The prefectural government did not try to protect Shōwa Denki, the company responsible for the poisoning of the water, but instead publicly accused the company for its actions. The influential MITI (Ministry of Trade and Industry) first supported Shōwa Denki, but could not help dropping its support after the government officially had acknowledged the causal relationship between the waste water of Shōwa Denki and the fatal disease. Persuaded by lawyers, some of the victims filed a lawsuit against the still powerful company. This eventually became the incentive for the victims in Minamata to take legal action, too.

(Kamioka 1987:108-111; Kumasaka 1976; McKean 1981:54-56; Miyamoto 1973:112-128)

At about the same time, two other serious environmental disasters occurred. One of them became known by the name of the painful disease it brought about: *itai-itai*, a rapid crumbling of the bones caused by cadmium. In the area of the Shintsu River (Toyama prefecture) physicians had already noted the symptoms before the war, supposing a kind of poisoning to be the source. In 1961 they were able to prove that the disease was caused by the metal factory operated by Mitsui, but the physicians' association as well as the government ignored their deduction.

In January 1968 the Ministry of Welfare confirmed the earlier results. Two months later almost 500 people took action against Mitsui Metal, demanding compensation for the suffering the company had caused them (or members of their family).

In a similar way to the case of Minamata, the plaintiffs were scorned by their fellow citizens who considered them arrogant and insolent to file a suit against a corporation as influential as Mitsui. This attitude did not change until the court pronounced its judgment recognizing their claims. (Kamioka 1987:124-129; McKean 1981:45-50; Miyamoto 1992:205f; Yoshioka 1972:242-248)

The other environmental disaster, which was the forth among the disasters leading to the so-called "four big environmental trials", was the spread of asthma in Yokkaichi, the first petro-*konbināto*<sup>2</sup> in Japan which started operations in 1955. Within three years, more than one thousand people living in the neighborhood were recorded to be suffering from asthma. But the victims were intimidated and silenced by the industry and local administration, so that no significant protest movement arose. Therefore, almost ten years passed before the victims took action and demanded compensation for their suffering. (Kamioka 1987:119-124; McKean 1981:59-67; Miyamoto 1973:92f)

The "four big environmental trials" continued for many years, even decades, but ultimately they did not bring success for the plaintiffs. Still, the fact that common people dared to take steps against powerful com-

2 The term "*konbinōto*" is used here in the Japanese sense of the word. It refers to an area where many factories (belonging to different companies) are located adjacent to each other in order to enhance the use of the infrastructure for industry and to take advantage of the industrial concentration.



panies encouraged citizens in many other places also to turn to the courts, and in effect gave rise to a large number of environmental lawsuits in the years after 1968.<sup>3</sup>

The "boom" of lawsuits, however, was but one result of the environmental damage which quickly spread as industrial production increased, particularly after 1955. Another effect of the worsening of environmental conditions was the growing uneasiness among people living near places where an industrial plant was to be built or expanded. People began to distrust any governmental administration which promoted industrial development, seemingly without paying thorough attention to the effects the industry would have upon the environment. (Kamioka 1987:105-108)

The first successful movement aimed at preventing the development of an industrial *konbināto* was carried out by the citizens of Mishima, Shimizu and Numazu in Shizuoka prefecture in 1963/64. When the prefectural government announced its plan to build a large oil *konbināto*, many people in the area were shocked, fearing consequences similar to those known to have occurred in Yokkaichi, where industrial development had "succeeded". They organized assemblies, initiated study groups and went to Yokkaichi in order to get more detail information about the risks associated with industrial development. Distrusting the administration and their investigations, members of the citizens' movement ordered a scientific investigation of their own. Contrasting it with the official one, they could show up the critical points, and, in doing so, convince even more people of the dangers involved in the project. In 1964 the town council of Shimizu decided to reject the plan, as did the city councils of Mishima and Numazu thereafter. In October 1964 the politicians and administrators finally gave up their plans for the *konbināto*. (Kamioka 1987:164-169; McKean 1981:29-32; Miyamoto 1992:213-216; Ui 1989)

In short, the developments of the 1960s were strongly influenced directly and indirectly by the high economic growth. To mention the most general features, administrators and politicians created plans for huge projects, with the costs as well as the output being calculated on an immense scale. The actual increase in industrial production and the development of large industrial plants, however, caused serious damage to

3 This trend reached its peak in 1971 with 75.000 cases concerning environmental issues within one year. (KRAUSS/ SIMCOCK 1980:187)

the environment, and it often was a threat to the health of the people living nearby. On the one hand, many citizens enjoyed a considerably higher living standard than ten years before; on the other, they became wary of the dangerous consequences of this kind of development. A tendency arose to prefer a slow-down of economic progress for the sake of protecting both nature and health. Therefore, citizens' movements sprang up in many places, demanding the reduction of environmental pollution, claiming compensation for injuries suffered on account of industrial production, aimed at the prevention of the construction or enlargement of industrial sites, or planning the improvement of the environment people were living in. At the same time, the political climate had become distinctly different from that of the immediate postwar years, and quite a few city councils were now dominated by progressive parties. (Kamioka 1987:184-189; Ui 1989:109)

## 2. The effects of the oil crisis

The (first) oil crisis in 1973 irrevocably ended the era of high economic growth, inducing a number of other changes as well. First of all there was a rapid rise in prices, primarily of oil and petrochemical products, but it easily extended to other goods as well. Many consumers reacted with panic. Whichever merchandise was rumored to be running out of stock people started to buy in unforeseen quantities, with the effect that the respective product did eventually run short. Companies had to pay higher prices for energy and raw materials than hitherto, and the Japanese economy showed all the symptoms of a recession.

With regard to citizens' movements, two phenomena proved to be decisive. On the one hand, the worsened economic situation forced the industrial expansion to slow down. Many companies postponed the construction of new plants, and politicians and administrators had to reduce the grandiose projects they had planned. Some of the most ambitious schemes had to be given up completely.

For a number of citizens' movements this was felt as a relief, because the polluting industry no longer threatened to expand as fast as it had done before. On the other hand, faced with the rapid increase in prices, many people now became afraid of the consequences of the recession and focused their interest on economic issues. Hence, citizens' movements both

lost members and energy. At the same time, the position of movements demanding stricter standards and legal measures against polluting factories weakened, because the industrial lobby stressed that it would no longer be able to continue production at all if the standard of tolerated emissions were not relaxed.

In most of the municipal and prefectural governments, the LDP returned to power. This reflects a trend towards conservatism, which often tends to appear in reaction to economic recession.

Apart from the above mentioned general aspects, the main effects of the oil crisis on citizens' movements need to be considered separately for each individual case.

In the following paragraphs, attention will be given to three actual movements, all of which tried to prevent the construction of a huge industrial *konbināto* designed in the comprehensive development plans of the '60s. The three movements are those at Shibushi Bay (Kagoshima prefecture), in the area of Mutsu-Ogawara (Aomori prefecture), and in Tomakomai (Hokkaidō). They resembled one another in so far as citizens opposed and tried to stop the construction of an industrial site, but the frame within which the respective movements took place differed in many ways, and so did the outcome.

## 2.1 Shibushi Bay

Shibushi Bay in southern Kyūshū was famous for its natural beauty, and part of its coast line belonged to a national park. Most inhabitants were living well on fishery and agriculture when they first heard of plans to reclaim a tract of land from the sea in order to build an extensive industrial site. Led by the fishermen's cooperative and the regional association for the preservation of nature, citizens announced their opposition against the project. They started various activities aimed at preventing the intended kind of industrial development, such as organizing study groups and meetings for the exchange of information, gathering signatures, etc. They submitted a petition to the Agency for Environment, asking it not to agree to any changes concerning the area designated a national park. In spite of this, however, mayors and town-councillors supported the plans of Kagoshima prefecture to establish the largest petro-*konbināto* in the country in Shibushi Bay. The authorities tried to persuade citizens to agree, but they did not succeed. Gradually, their methods became more

coercive. The citizens' movement, for their part, stressed the damage the project would inflict upon nature, and the risks for local inhabitants. They pointed out that they had nothing to gain from the planned industrial development, but instead faced the loss of their source of livelihood. In June 1972 they tried to enter the prefectural parliament to present a petition, but were stopped by the police. However, the governor in the end however was blamed even by members of his own party for appealing to the police, and for the dubious methods he used to obtain a decision in favor of the project. The central government demanded that he revise the plan so as to achieve a broader support among the citizens concerned. As a result, he instructed administrators and politicians on the municipal level to set up committees which should, as "representative bodies", officially approve of his plans. (Kawana 1992:33-43; McKean 1981:88-91)

The governor was still busy trying to reach an agreement in every municipality and town, be it by persuasion, by ruse or by police force, when the petro-companies began to lose interest on account of the oil shock. In April 1976, the governor published the "second development plan", in which the scale and costs of the project in Shibushi Bay were reduced a good deal, adapting it to the new economic conditions. Nonetheless, the opposition against the construction of an industrial site in the bay continued, arguing that the content of the project remained almost completely unchanged. December 1980, after a further revision of the plan, the project was finally accepted. But, in the end, just one oil tank was actually built. In other words, the citizens' movement did not succeed, but the project was not realized either. (Kawana 1992:108; McKean 1981:93-97; Tōgo/Ikehata/Teruoka 1982)

## 2.2 Mutsu-Ogawara

In Mutsu-Ogawara, where in the same period a similar project was drawn up, the situation differed essentially from that of Shibushi Bay. Livelihood in this northern part of the Japanese main island was extremely difficult, the average income in Aomori prefecture being the lowest in all of Japan. Therefore, the plans for industrial development in this area did not only fit into the concept of the national planners intending to reduce industrial concentration in the metropolitan areas, but they also corresponded to the interests of many local residents, who considered industrial development the only chance to improve their lives.

In 1971, Aomori prefecture published details of the plan for the *konbināto*. Only then did the inhabitants of the region of Mutsu-Ogawara come to know that the prefecture intended to resettle almost ten thousand people in order to open up the new industrial site. At first, people were shocked. Later, when they realized that they were offered mountaineous forest land in exchange for their arable land, they became upset. They had longed for industrial development, but the way the prefecture promoted it, disregarding the people living there was too much!

Citizens of Rokkasho, the central village in the region, began to organize an opposition movement. Their activities resembled those in Shibushi Bay and other places. They started arranging study groups and opportunities to exchange information, organizing visits to industrial sites already in operation to talk to the people who had once opposed the exploitation there, etc. The governor, for his part, visited the mayor and the village council of Rokkasho in order to convince them of the benefits of the project he was promoting – but to no avail. Eventually, due to the strong opposition, the prefecture was forced to revise the plan and to reduce the scale of the project.

In October 1972 a new plan for industrial development in Mutsu-Ogawara was published, in which the number of people to be resettled was considerably smaller. Many of those who under the revised plan would not have to move felt relieved and tended to abandon their opposition. The prefecture pushed ahead with land purchases, paying more than 13 million yen for land in the area within one year. Correspondingly, the number of citizens profiting increased. Finally, those agreeing “with some reservations” to the project under dubious conditions brought about a vote in favour of it.

The oil crisis in 1973, however, resulted in essential changes. The companies which had been interested in building a new factory in Mutsu-Ogawara froze their extension plans, one after the other. The Mutsu-Ogawara-Corporation, responsible for the promotion of the industrial development project, ran into deeper and deeper debts, while both the farmers who had given up their land and the fishermen who had given up their fishing rights “for the interest of the country” became “exploitation refugees” without jobs or means to earn a living. Ten years after the oil crisis, most of the land opened up for industry still lay unused.



Then, in 1984, the electricity association proposed to use the ground for building a center for recycling nuclear waste from power plants. With this plan, the government and the electricity association hoped to get rid of the nuclear waste they were responsible for, while the governor of Aomori and the Mutsu-Ogawara-Corporation considered it a chance to cover up their economic failure. Local citizens, feeling suspicious, again organized an opposition movement. They composed questions for submission to the governor, wrote petitions, and gathered signatures against the nuclear plant.

At that time, however, most of the younger people with chances of getting a better paid job elsewhere had left the region. Hence, the majority of inhabitants were elderly people, people running their own business and therefore dependent on customers, and people working for a construction company (and, therefore hoping to profit from any kind of public project). Nonetheless, after the nuclear accident in Chernobyl in 1986 the number of people who feared and opposed the new project increased immensely.

The prefectural government reacted by organizing *setsumeikai* (explanatory meetings), having information booklets printed, and arranging visits to nuclear power plants in operation, in order to show the citizens of Mutsu-Ogawara how safely and free from worry people could live next to a nuclear power plant. In the end, a majority of mayors and municipal councils accepted the plans, and in 1992 the first part of the plant opened for operation. (Higuchi 1987:149-211; Kamata 1991; Kawana 1992:373-485)

### 2.3 Tomakomai East

Tomakomai East, the third case to be discussed here, was originally thought of as part of the "new industrial city in the middle of Hokkaidō" designed in the first comprehensive development plan (1962). A large *kombinōto* was planned for industries that were to benefit from being located near the sea. These included, in particular, industries producing steel, petrochemicals, metals, cars, mineral oil, as well as electric power plants.

After the first rumors about a possible plan to build an industrial site in Tomokomai East, brokers intending to profit as intermediaries began to buy the land which was to be provided for the industrial *konbināto*. At that time, most of the farmers were ready to sell, since the price they were



offered was higher than what was usually paid for arable land in that area. Those who hesitated or refused to sell their land, in opposition to industrial development, were persuaded by public officials offering them a special arrangement.

As in Aomori prefecture (Mutsu-Ogawara), the politicians and officials in the development agency and the prefectural government of Hokkaidō ignored the interests and concerns of the citizens of Tomakomai, and thereby evoked distrust and criticism. In 1973, the local agricultural cooperative, the local fishermen's cooperative, the regional branches of the progressive parties, the labor union, and other local and regional associations began to articulate opposition against the giant project. They quickly increased in number. In order to confine the movement, the city office organized information meetings aimed at convincing the inhabitants of the idea that the project would bring many advantages for them, for the region and for the nation as a whole. Nonetheless, the promoters of the project could not prevent the opposition movement from getting stronger. What bothered them most was that the fishermen's cooperative vehemently refused to abandon its fishing rights in the area where the harbor was to be built. Requested to define its demand for compensation in terms of money, the fishermen's cooperative refused. Emphasizing the dependence on fishing grounds, it went so far as to organize a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Transportation to protest against being put under pressure to give up a livelihood for the sake of transportation facilities.

Repeatedly, administrators and politicians on the local level tried to talk to those members of the fishermen's cooperative they knew personally, or to whom they were related. The cooperative, confronted with the danger of members giving up the common interest for personal advantages, finally decided to present a monetary demand for the fishing rights which they thought was so high that it would never be accepted. That way, they intended to make it irrational for any individual member to give up the position of the association in favor of a personal arrangement, because this could hardly be more profitable than what the cooperative was demanding. Even more important, it wanted to put an end to the situation of repeatedly being asked to define its demand in terms of money, even though it did not have the intention of accepting a monetary solution, but of keeping the fishing rights. However, it did not achieve its aim, for it was

paid the incredible sum of more than one million yen – an amount until then never paid for fishing rights anywhere in Japan.

In August 1976 construction of the new industrial site began, in spite of the already apparent consequences of the oil crisis. Similarly to what happened at other industrial sites just under construction, the enterprises once interested in buying land in Tomakomai East postponed or cancelled their plan one after the other. At the same time, irrespective of the difficulties of selling the land, the interest for the loans once incurred to buy it continuously increased, reaching a total of ten billion yen in February 1977. By September 1991 not even 8% of the land had been sold, and Tomakomai East became the most extensive unused industrial area in all of Japan. (Kawana 1992:327-372)

In contrast to Mutsu-Ogawara, however, there was no other significant plan for a large-scale project in Tomakomai East thereafter. This indicates some decisive differences between the two cases, though the situation looked similar. In both cases, companies cancelled their plans for extension after the oil shock, yet the costs for the site rose continuously. One fundamental difference, however, concerns the agencies responsible for bearing the costs of the fiasco. In Mutsu-Ogawara, it was a half private – half prefectural corporation which very nearly went bankrupt, while in Tomakomai the Hokkaidō Development Agency, i.e. the national government, was directly involved in opening up the industrial site.

A second difference was the economic situation of the citizens opposing the project. The fishermen in Tomakomai had something to lose, namely, fishing grounds rich enough to live on. They were apparently not as well off as the people in the region of Shibushi Bay, but better off than those in Mutsu-Ogawara.

A third difference between Tomakomai and Mutsu-Ogawara where a different plan could finally be realized is probably the geographical location. Sapporo and the industrial center in Muroran would probably have been too close to Tomakomai to establish any plant there as dangerous as a center for recycling nuclear waste. Additionally, about half of the urban population of central Hokkaidō (that is, many inhabitants of Sapporo, Tomakomai, Muroran, Chitose, etc.) could be expected to initiate a very strong, aggressive and influential citizens' movement against such a plan, with a political climate quite different from that in the north east of Honshū. Besides, in the case of Tomakomai, most of the people who could

not (or did not want to) continue the farming or fishery of their fathers did not move as far away as Tōkyō, but found better paid jobs either in Tomakomai itself or in one of the neighboring urban centers and remained in the region.

Recently, new plans for the development of Tomakomai East were published (*Hokkaidō kaihatsuchō* 1995<sup>4</sup>) and even announced in the news. On the one hand they turn out to be a continuation of the efforts for industrial development. On the other, they contain new elements such as the consideration given to the “change of industrial structure and the technological revolution”, to “industry expected to grow in a medium and long term perspective”, and to “diversity”. New as well is the intention to concentrate research and testing facilities on the site. The other central points – namely, to provide urban services, to include the whole region in the considerations, to care for “harmony with the natural environment”, to pay attention to safety, and to secure the flexibility of the plans – probably can be found in almost any urban development plan nowadays.

As has been shown, plans for giant industrial sites were a central target of citizens’ movements’ criticism in the 1970s, but not the only one by any means. The three movements in Shibushi Bay, Mutsu-Ogawara and Tomakomai East were chosen to show how differently even such movements can develop which deal with similar problems. Consequently, and corresponding to the growth in variety of objects and goals, the diversity of citizens’ movements has increased considerably until today.

### 3. The diversity of citizens’ movements since the 1980s

In the 1970s, with the effects of the oil crisis, economic issues came to be the main concern of many people. In the 1980s, however, it became apparent that the experiences of the danger involved in irresponsible industrial development and in putting absolute preference on economic development had not faded away. Nor had the consciousness of citizens’ rights, and of the importance of the environment, or the knowledge that the living standard is not reducible to economic terms, disappeared.

Today there are members of all political orientations and social classes engaged in citizens’ movements, trying to attain what they consider

4 This is the plan referred to as a “new plan” in the morning news in February 1997.

worthy of their activity. Consequently, citizens' movements take up a wide variety of subjects, for example, the reduction of sunlight in apartments because of the construction of high-rise blocks, the preservation of traditional landmarks, the noise of tennis courts, the pesticides used on golf courses, the negative influences of ski grounds on nature, the diverse problems involved in building dams, the noise and pollution of busy airports, the danger of nuclear plants, and many others. Since it is impossible here to discuss every type of citizens' movement which has occurred during the last fifteen years, three examples will be provided in order to show some elements typical of influential movements of the 1980s and 1990s, and to sketch their heterogeneous character.

The first example, the citizens' movement in Otaru (Hokkaidō), exemplifies movements aimed at preserving traditional landmarks. The second example is one of the best-known national trust movements in Japan. The third example describes the opposition to the construction of a dam at the mouth of the Nagara River, which attracted the attention of people from all over the country.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.1 The canals of Otaru

Before discussing the citizens' movement of Otaru, it seems useful to take a look at the history of the city. Once a small settlement of Japanese colonists in Hokkaidō, Otaru grew and attained importance because of its harbour facing the Japanese sea. It first began to flourish with the construction of a railway from Sapporo to Horonai, one of the first coal mines exploited in Hokkaidō. In 1890, the city reclaimed large areas of land from the sea in order to widen the town centre and the harbour. At that time, the first brick storehouses were built, which were later to become the symbol of the city. At the turn of the century, Otaru played a significant role as a centre of international trade. During the 1930s, the canals and the dock area were further extended to increase the capacity of the harbour.

In 1965, the prefectural government of Hokkaidō and the municipal government of Otaru published plans to fill in the canals, to tear down the

5 All of these three examples are to a certain degree "famous" citizens' movements, cases that have been discussed in the newspapers and that have attained a certain publicity. For numerous other examples not enough reliable information is available.

old brick storehouses, and to build a six-lane street instead. Two years later, construction work began. In 1973, when the filling in of the canals had become imminent, citizens started to realize that without the canals and the red brick storehouses the character of their city would change immensely. They undertook an initiative aimed at the conservation and revival of the canals. Emphasizing their historical importance for the development of the city and its architecture, they argued that the canals and the storehouses symbolized local culture, and that the area around the old harbour was appreciated as an open space.

The movement spread rapidly, showing that many inhabitants of Otaru indeed cared about the canals. They made efforts to render the old ward still more attractive and to give it a new function. To this end, they cleaned the water of the canals, transformed some of the old storehouses into tourist attractions and stressed their cultural and historical importance. (Ogasawara 1986:78)

In addition, activists gathered signatures and submitted petitions to the municipality as well as to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. They got in touch with other citizens' movements, which likewise aimed at maintaining historical edifices. A group of scholars working at a national university nearby employed their knowledge to develop an alternative construction plan that made feasible both the preservation of the canals and storehouses as well as the construction of a wide street.

The mass media took up the issue, and, as a result, the citizens' movement gained supporters from all parts of the country. In 1978 the topic was even mentioned in parliament (Sasaki 1980). However, not all of the local members of the movement were pleased about the growing assistance. The majority of the inhabitants of Otaru had been educated in the tradition of merchants or public servants, that is, they tended towards unquestioning deference to authority, towards a conservative attitude, and, in many cases, towards an aversion to having anything in common with members of the Communist Party. This finally led to the splitting of the movement: on the one hand were those who welcomed whoever might be a supporter, on the other those who set a higher value on not having anything to do with communists and their sympathizers than on the movement's objective.

Of course, the splitting weakened the movement and brought about partial defeats with regard to its aim. These setbacks in turn were apt to



intensify the strain between the two groups, because each side tended to blame the other for being responsible for them. Then, in 1984, the prefectural government of Hokkaidō and the municipal government of Otaru went ahead with the construction work. (Ogasawara 1986; Sasaki 1984)

Yet this is not the end of the story. In view of subsequent developments, two points are left to be mentioned. The first one is that the municipal government had in the meantime understood the importance of tourism and began to promote it, making it into one of the pillars of the city's economy.

The second point concerns the northern segment of the canals, which had been unaffected by the construction of the new street. In the city plans, this area was mapped out as an extended park, the details of which were to be settled later. Recently, it became apparent that, because of another expensive project, the municipality has no money left for furnishing this park. Thus, officially, the authorities generously decided to leave it to the citizens who wanted the canals to be preserved to arrange the park surrounding the northern canal.

### 3.2 The National Trust Movement on Shiretoko

The next case to be discussed is the national trust movement in Shiretoko. It differs from the movement in Otaru in almost every respect, except for the time it occurred at, and for being situated in Hokkaidō. Again, a few words about the history of the location are useful to clarify the circumstances under which the movement began.

When the Japanese started to colonize Hokkaidō, they first lived exclusively in the southern parts of the island. For strategic reasons, the central government tried to make colonists settle in the eastern parts as well. This policy had already been started under the Tokugawa government (1600-1868), was continued after the Meiji Restoration (1868), and became intensified in the Taishō era (1912-1926). In this context, the Shiretoko Peninsula was one of the objects of particular attention, because it is only a few kilometers away from the Kuril Islands. The government had the coast region of Shiretoko made arable, aiming to attract as many settlers as possible. Nonetheless, because of the extremely unfavourable conditions in terms of climate and infrastructure, and because of the very meager soil, the region never attracted a large number of people (Miyamaru 1987:59f). In December 1961 most of the peninsula was designated a national park,



though none of the local people had ever asked for this.<sup>6</sup> (Tawara 1988:81-85)

At the beginning of the 1970s, tourism commenced to boom. When it was just about to touch even the remote east of Hokkaidō, the municipality of Shari, the administrative authority responsible for Shiretoko, was determined to prevent commercial tourism from extending up to the national park and destroying the calmness of its nature. Therefore, the town representatives requested the farmers living on the peninsula not to sell any land to a broker. This was an awkward request, since most of these farmers were highly in debt and ready to give up agriculture for being hired by a company, where they would no longer have to bear economic risks on their own. On the other hand, the town of Shari was not able to buy the land either, and multiple petitions by the town for support sent to the Environmental Agency were ignored.

In this difficult situation, the mayor of Shari discovered an article about National Trust movements in the newspaper, and soon he was convinced that this would be the solution. Together with the town councillors he decided to divide the land for sale into lots of 100 square meters each, and to offer these for 8.000 yen a piece to people all over Japan. The new owners would not have to care for their plot, but they would also be denied the right to use it arbitrarily. They had to leave it to the town of Shari to cultivate the land, themselves being merely allowed to take part in the planting of trees.

The money expected to come in was to be used for establishing a foundation, the object of which would be to purchase the fields of those farmers who wished to abandon agriculture, and to buy trees for recultivating the relinquished land. By renewed afforestation the townspeople and others engaged in the preservation of wild life intended to conserve the flora and fauna of the Shiretoko Peninsula.

The idea found much response all over the country, and proved a success. Within only a few months, the town received enough money to purchase 120 ha of land and to plant it with trees. Encouraged by this success, the municipality of Shari started a second national trust action, intending to repurchase land on the peninsula previously sold to someone

6 Usually this kind of designation never occurs in Japan without local people for many years sending petitions to public authorities and praising the nature of the place again and again.

else. By 1986 they had succeeded in buying and recultivating 76% of the arable land lying unused. (Kawana 1995:88-99)

### 3.3 The sluice at Nagara River

The last citizens' movement to be discussed here, as already mentioned, is the one opposing the construction of a dam near the mouth of the Nagara River. The Nagara River has its source in Gifu prefecture, passes through Aichi prefecture, and flows into the Pacific in Ise Bay (Mie prefecture). It is famous for being one of the longest Japanese rivers having clear water without a dam interfering with its flow. A variety of fish and waterfowl lived in and along it. People enjoyed swimming and paddling in the river, or wandering through the water meadows.

In the 1960s the Ministry of Construction published a plan to build a dam in the Nagara River in order to provide water for the industrial zones near the bay, mainly in Nagoya and in Yokkaichi. The people living in the villages along the river vehemently opposed the project, fearing the dam would increase the danger of flooding after heavy rainfalls. The politicians and administrators promoting the project tried to convince the people of its safety, but this, for a number of reasons, turned out next to be impossible. So they decided to change the plan, and instead of the dam build a sluice at the estuary, with "water supply for the industrial sites" and "flood control" as its alleged aims. "Flood control" had never been mentioned as a goal of the dam, but once added, it gradually came to be placed in the foreground, while the importance of "water supply for industrial sites" came to be stressed less. The promoters of the sluice explained the need for it as follows: In order to prevent inundations it would be necessary, first, to raise the capacity of the river. The best way to accomplish this would be by dredging. As a result of dredging, however, the seawater, at high tide now flowing upstream less than 15 km, would enter the river up to 30 km and swamp the adjacent fields with salt water. In order to prevent damage, therefore, it would be indispensable to build a sluice at the estuary. (Momose 1994:31f)

There was no reason to assume that in contrast to the dam the sluice would not increase the danger of flooding. Nevertheless, the same village councillors who had expressed uneasiness about the dam accepted the sluice. However, most of the residents for their part opposed the new project as much as the previous one. To put pressure on them the pre-

fectural government called upon the municipal employees to visit the opponents personally at home. Yet the authorities could not break the opposition, which turned out to be stronger than assumed.

At the beginning of the 1980s more than 26.000 citizens engaged in submitting petitions and taking the issue to court, intending to stop the plan for the sluice. Their central arguments were as follows:

1. The sluice would not prevent flooding, but would on the contrary rather tend to aggravate it. As even the promoters of the project admitted, with heavy rainfall the sluice would have to be opened, otherwise it would obstruct the water flow and thus increase the damage of flooding. Notwithstanding, even when the sluice would be opened, its thick posts would remain and inhibit the flow of the water. Trees and other large objects carried by the river would easily get stuck on the posts. Consequently, after heavy rainfall, the sluice, even when opened, could have an effect resembling that of a wall.

2. The sluice would destroy the natural conditions of the river and its environment. The mud accumulating in the river bed would, in the course of time tend to kill all organisms in the water.

3. The sluice would hinder the salmon wandering up the river. As a result the fishermen living along the river would suffer a considerable loss of income.

4. If large quantities of water were taken out for industrial supply, this would heighten the negative influences of the sluice on the environment.

5. The villages planned to be destroyed for building the sluice were not ready to accept this decision.

Later on, the citizens' movement mainly focused on the point that the necessity of the sluice appeared extremely doubtful. First of all, they pointed out that at the time the plans for the dam were given up no need for flood control had existed. Secondly, the need for industrial water supply decreased enormously because of the structural changes in industry following the oil shock. Thirdly, there was no need to preclude salt water from damaging the fields, since even in the villages next to the estuary usually no damage from salt had occurred. Besides, the sluice was not likely to reduce any damage brought about by salt water, but would, on the contrary, enlarge the area affected. (Momose 1994; Mizusaki 1991; Tanaka 1991)

Irrespective of these objections, construction work was begun in July 1988. At that time, the opposition movement was supported by many people living in all parts of the country. Scientific associations as well as associations for the preservation of wildlife petitioned to stop the construction. In 1990 the director of the Environmental Agency inspected the estuary and asked the Ministry of Construction to make further investigations before continuing the work. Opinion polls proved that the vast majority of the people living in the villages along the Nagara River wanted the construction work immediately frozen or stopped. (Amano 1994:139)

When the Hosokawa cabinet came to power, the members of the citizens' movement felt relieved, because this was what they had been voting for. The new Minister of Construction, a member of the Socialist Party, inspected the estuary and listened to the representatives of the movement. In response, he ordered additional investigations.

In July 1994, the court finally delivered its verdict on the cases citizens had filed twelve years earlier. The judges rejected all their claims, arguing that 94% of the essential construction work had already been finished. Eventually, while members of the Socialist Party were responsible for the construction work, the sluice was completed, regardless of all opposition.

### Summary

As this historical sketch of citizens' movements (*jūmin undō*) in Japan has tried to show, these movements changed in the course of time, along with the change of economic, social and environmental conditions. In this respect, there are some features that typically reflect the problems of a certain period, but many elements would not fit into such an easy scheme. Even the citizens' movements reacting to similar plans in various places differed from their very beginning. Some of the measures they employed resembled each other, but the outcome of their efforts did not.

In accordance with what is commonly referred to as "pluralization", the citizens' movements since the 1980s have taken up a variety of topics and assumed diverse roles in (local) society. Three of them were selected and discussed in some detail, but many other examples could have been given as well. For reasons of space, all the "simply local" movements were not touched on, nor the most recent movements, like the "citizens'

vote" in Okinawa. The citizens' movements are by far too numerous and too divergent to be covered with *all* of their essential topics and features in just one article. The individuality of most movements makes it sometimes difficult even to group them into categories.

To sum up, the citizens' movements of each period share some characteristics, yet each movement has its specific context and its peculiarity as well. It also always has its own peculiar history, depending not only on changing conditions and changes in membership, but also on the individuals involved changing their aims, strategies, and sometimes even their views.

As a result, only *some* general features and *some* individual movements could be presented. In short, the citizens' movements are too diverse and too polymorphous for truly "representative" ones to be picked out.

#### REFERENCES

- AMANO Reiko: "Hosokawa sōri, igarashi kensetsu daijin e," in: KITAGAWA Ishimatsu / AMANO Reiko (eds.). *Kyōdaina gūkō. Nagara-gawa kakō-zeki. Sei•kan•zai juchaku no kōzō*. Nagoya: Fubaisha 1994; pp. 134-146.
- FUNABA Masatomi: "Kokudo sōgō kaihatsu," in: *Sekai daihyakka jiten*. Tōkyō: Heibonsha 1988; pp. 213-215.
- HARADA Masazumi: *Minamata-byō ni manabitai*. Nihon hyōronsha 1989.
- HIGUCHI Kenji: *Genpatsu hibaku rettō*. Tōkyō: San'ichi shobō 1987.
- HOKKAIDŌ KAIHATSUCHŌ: *Tomakomai higashi-bu kaihatsu shin keikaku*. 1995 [unpubl.].
- KAMATA Satoshi: *Rokkasho mura no kiroku* (jō/ge). Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 1991.
- KAMIOKA Namiko: *Nihon no kōgaishi*. Tōkyō: Sekai shoin 1987.
- KAWANA Hideyuki: *Daikibo kaihatsu. Dokyumento Nihon no kōgai, dai nana-kan*. Tōkyō: Ryokufū shuppan 1992.
- , *Kankyō gyōsei no kiro. Dokyumento Nihon no kōgai, dai jūikkan*. Tōkyō: Ryokufū shuppan 1995.
- KRAUSS, Ellis / SIMCOCK, Badford: "Citizens' Movements," in: KRAUSS, Ellis / FLANNAGAN, Scott. *Political Opposition and Local Politics in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1980; pp. 87-227.
- KUMASAKA Kenji: "Minamata-byō o meguru kansha. Undōtai no tenkai katei," in: *Gendai shakai gakkai-gi* (Gendai shakaigaku; 6). Tōkyō: Kōdansha 1976; pp. 73-97.



McKEAN, Margaret: *Environmental Protest and Citizens' Movements in Japan*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 1981.

MIYAMARU Yoshie: "Shiretoko 100 heihō mōtoru undō to nashonaru torasuto," in: HONDA Katsuichi (ed.). *Shiretoko o kangaeru*. Tōkyō: Banseisha 1987; pp. 59-82.

MIYAMOTO Ken'ichi: *Chiiki kaihatsu wa kore de yoi ka*. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 1973.

—, *Nihon no kankyō mondai*. Tōkyō: Yūhikaku 1975.

—, *Nihon no kankyō seisaku*. Tōkyō: Ōtsuki shoten 1990.

—, *Kankyō to kaihatsu*. Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten 1992.

MIZUSAKI Tokifumi: "Mizu shigen kaihatsu no kōzōteki hizumi," in: NAGARA-GAWA KAKŌ-ZEKI NI HANTAI SURU SHIMIN NO KAI (ed.). *Nagara-gawa kakō-zeki*. Tōkyō: Gijutsu to ningensha 1991; pp. 73-118.

MOMOSE Toshiaki: "Nagara-gawa kakō-zeki no mondai," in: KITAGAWA Ishimatsu/ AMANO Reiko (eds.). *Kyōdaina gūkō. Nagara-gawa kakō-zeki. Seikanzai juchaku no kōzō*. Nagoya: Fubaisha 1994; pp. 25-55.

NENNSTIEL, K. Ulrike: "Bürgerbewegungen in Japan – 'Tsukurarete min'i' oder: Wogegen kommen sie nicht an?" In: KLOPFENSTEIN, Eduard (ed.): *Referate des 9. deutschsprachigen Japanologentages in Zürich*. Bern et al.: Peter Lang; pp. 466-488.

OGASAWARA Masaru: *Otaru unga sensō shimatsu*. Tōkyō: Asahi shinbunsha 1986.

OKOSHI Kazunobu: "Jūmin undō," in: MORIOKA Kiyomi/ SHIOBARA Tsutomu / HONMA Kōhei (eds.). *Shin shakaigaku jiten*. Yūhikaku 1993; p. 701.

SASAKI Kōjirō: *Kenkyū hōkoku. Machizukuri ni okeru kankyō no kyōiku ryoku to kankyō ibento-kei shimin undō no tenkai ni kansuru kenkyū. Otaru unga mondai o tōshite*. [Unpublished research report, Toyota Foundation] 1980.

TANAKA Toyoho: "Kensetsu no riron no mujun to gimon," in: NAGARA-GAWA KAKŌ-ZEKI NI HANTAI SURU SHIMIN NO KAI (ed.). *Nagara-gawa kakō-zeki*. Tōkyō: Gijutsu to ningensha 1991; pp. 181-225.

TAWARA Hiromi: "Kokuritsu kōen toshite no shiretoko no shizen hogo no arikata," in: YASEI SEIBUTSU JŌHŌ SENTŌ. *Shiretoko kara no shuppatsu. Bassai mondai no kyōkun o dō ikasu ka*. Sapporo: Kyōdō bunkasha 1988; pp. 81-99.

TŌGO Sōbei / IKEHATA Tsutomu / TERUOKA Yasumitsu: "Shibushi-wan jūmin undō shoshi," in: SHIBUSHI-WAN KŌGAI RENRAKU KYŌGI KAI (ed.). *Aru kaihatsu hantai undō*. Tōkyō: Gakuyō shobō 1982; pp. 18-56.

Ui Jun: *Kōgai genron*. I. Tōkyō: Aki shobō 1971.

—, "Anti-Pollution Movements and Other Grass-Roots Organizations," in: TSURU Shigeto / WEIDNER, Helmut. *Environmental Policy in Japan*. Berlin: Sigma Bohn 1992, pp. 109-119.

YOSHIOKA Kin'ichi: *Itai-Itai-byō ronsō. Kōgai jishu kōza 15 nen*. Tōkyō: Aki shobō 1972; pp. 242-248.7.



