

THE FAILURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY?:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF NPOS AND THE STATE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

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This dissertation is an ethnographic study of the emergence of nonprofit organizations (NPOs), which have been proliferating in Japan since the passage of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (so-called NPO Law) in 1998. My research analyzes the dynamic micro-politics of everyday interactions between the state and ordinary people in the creation and ongoing activities of an NPO. It especially focuses on how different levels in the Japanese government shape these civil-society organizations into a structure that supports the state's goals, and how people at the grassroots level respond to the state's actions. Furthermore, this dissertation examines the meaning of civil society in an anthropological context. My approach explores the mutually constitutive roles of state and society, avoiding any easy essentialism or stereotyping of Japan's social and political development, but it does aim at destabilizing some of the key assumptions regarding civil society.

Based on twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork, from September 2001 through April 2003, in Tokyo, I document the transition that Japanese society at a grassroots level has undergone since this epoch-making law allowed thousands of civic groups to be acknowledged as proactive participants in Japanese social and political life. My fieldwork involved intensive participant observation as an unpaid staff-researcher at an NPO promoting continuing education in the local community; this field research was supplemented by extensive interviews with NPO participants, Japanese NPO experts in academia, and government officials, attendance at

workshops for NPO practitioners across the country, as well as discourse analysis of mass media coverage about NPOs.

What I did not see was evidence of a transition, however. The state continues to be strong, and NPOs – a product of the state’s deliberate institutionalization of civil society – are now even synonymous with the state. The state is an unusually strong actor, retarding development of a healthy, dynamic civil society. The state is using underhanded tactics for institutionalizing civil society to meet its goals. The case calls into question the relationship between state and society in contemporary Japanese life, and raises the issue of whether civil society can be created through the actions of the state.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Akihiro Ogawa was born in Nagoya, Japan. He grew up and went to school in Gifu. After graduating from Temple University with BA in History *magna cum laude* in 1993, he worked at Kyodo News, a Japanese wire service, as a staff reporter, for five years. In fall 1998, he went back to graduate school. First, he started his graduate training in Political Science at Columbia University. After completing his MA in Political Science in 1999, he transferred to Cornell University. He joined the Department of Anthropology in 2000 and got an MA in Anthropology in 2002. He did his dissertation fieldwork in Tokyo from September 2001 through April 2003. From Jun 2002 through May 2004, he had an affiliation with the Institute of Social Science at the University of Tokyo where he completed this dissertation.

For Deborah

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Because of the confidential nature of materials the dissertation draws upon, no identifying information for sources of data is provided. Except for where otherwise indicated all quotations are taken from my fieldnotes and all translations are mine. Furthermore, Japanese individuals' name are written surname first. Conversions from Japanese yen to US dollars are made at a constant rate of 110 yen to the dollar.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY	1
CHAPTER 2: NPO-IZATION OF SOCIETY: THE MACRO LANDSCAPE OF THE JAPANESE NPO PHENOMENON	26
CHAPTER 3: MAKING AN NPO IN JAPANESE SOCIETY: NEW TOOLS FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION?	58
CHAPTER 4: INVITED BY THE STATE: INSTITUTIONALIZING VOLUNTEER SUBJECTIVITY	91
CHAPTER 5: POWER AND CONTESTED RATIONALITIES: ATTEMPTS FOR POLICY COLLABORATION AMONG NPOS AN THE STATE	118
CHAPTER 6: INTEGRATION INTO A “SYSTEM SOCIETY”: JAPANESE NPOS AND THE DISCOURSE OF “CIVIL SOCIETY”	161
CHAPTER 7: REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE: INITIATING CHANGE – ACTION RESEARCH IN A JAPANESE THIRD-SECTOR ORGANIZATION	210

APPENDIX	
APPENDIX 1: Government Proposal Toward NPO-ization	229
APPENDIX 2: Meeting Records	232
APPENDIX 3: Content of Entrustment	239
APPENDIX 4: Translation of the NPO Law	241
REFERENCES	262
Japanese Glossary	287

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Organizational Structure of SLG	16
Figure 2.1: Number of NPOs as of December 31, 2003	33
Figure 2.2: Areas of NPO Activity as of December 31, 2003	36
Figure 2.3: Where Volunteers Come From	44
Figure 7.1: First Conceptual Diagram (Linear)	219
Figure 7.2: Second Conceptual Diagram (Cyclical)	220

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Locations of NPOs in Japan as of December 31, 2003	35
Table 2.2: Reasons to Incorporate as an NPO	39
Table 5.1: Government's Cost of Calculations	149

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

***Key Questions***

Since December 1998, Japanese society has seen the rapid proliferation of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) incorporated under the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (the NPO Law).<sup>1</sup> As of December 31, 2003, the number of NPOs in Japan had reached 14,657. Only over the past five years has Japan seen the establishment of such a huge number of new organizations. What is happening in Japanese society? What does the NPO phenomenon imply? What are Japanese people actually experiencing in NPOs? This project focuses on NPOs as components of a new third sector in contemporary Japanese society.<sup>2</sup>

There are those who argue that such associational life represents the society's steps to mold a civil society in Japan (e.g., Honma and Deguchi 1996; Yamamoto 1996, 1998, 1999; Sakamoto 1997; Wanner 1998; Mori 1998; Yamaoka 1999; Yamauchi 1999a, 1999b, 2000; Economic Planning Agency 2000; Pekkanen 2000, 2002; Yamauchi and Deguchi 2000; Anheier and Kendall 2001; Hirata 2002; Nakamaki 2002; Schwartz 2002; Bestor V. 2002; Pharr 2002; Osborne 2003; Matsubara and Todoroki 2003; Schwartz and Pharr 2003; Cabinet Office 2004b; Kingston in press). In *The State of Civil Society in Japan*, the newest comprehensive study on Japanese civil society primarily

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<sup>1</sup> In this project, I exclusively focus on NPOs that are incorporated under the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (the so-called NPO Law) of 1998. Under the law, these NPOs are called specified nonprofit corporations or *tokutei hieri katsudō hōjin*. Meanwhile, a similar term – NGOs (non-governmental organizations or *hiseifu soshiki*) – is a subtype of this category. In essence, NGOs in Japan are categorized as NPOs that are active on international development issues. I will develop an extensive argument on the definition of Japanese nonprofit entities later in chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term “third sector,” which usually implies “citizens’ sector.” The third sector stands beside the first sector (the government) and the second sector (for-profit businesses). In Japanese, there is a direct translation for “third sector”: *daisan sekutā*. However, this term refers to corporations established through joint investments of the government and for-profit businesses. In the present context, I am referring to the common usage, not to the Japanese term.

done by political scientists in both the United States and Japan, Susan J. Pharr (2003: xiii) defines civil society in the most popular discourse as follows:

[c]ivil society consists of sustained, organized social activity that occurs in groups that are formed outside the state, the market, and the family. Cumulatively, such activity creates a public sphere outside the state, a space in which groups and individuals engage in public discourse.

Civil society, then, is represented both as the nexus of societal associations expected to generate civility, social cohesion, and morality. It is a sphere of voluntary associations and informal networks in which individuals and groups engage in activities of public consequence. Civil society specifically encompasses neighborhood organizations, cooperatives, charities, unions, political parties, churches, social movements, and interest groups. The Japanese NPO Law was designed to provide a platform for Japanese people to become engaged in setting the public agenda, which has been all too frequently regarded as the exclusive province of bureaucrats under a strong state. Thus, NPOs, the focus of this project, are located as a distinctive type of association in the civil life of contemporary Japan.

A decade ago, the Japanese term *NPO* (written “NPO” and pronounced *enu-pī-ō*) was not in popular use; in fact, it was virtually unknown. The term *NPO* first appeared in 1995, the year of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (January 17, 1995), in a popular vocabulary encyclopedia of contemporary Japanese *Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki*. Civil-society organizations such as NPOs first caught national attention and gained momentum in Japan after the great earthquake, when approximately 1.3 million volunteers acted to aid victims of the disaster. The government bureaucracy’s ineffective efforts to deal with the tragic situation paled in comparison with the impressive work of volunteers at the scene of the earthquake. The contributions of volunteers dramatized, on a national scale, the need for a social structure that would bolster a voluntary sector that would be

associated neither with government nor with for-profit business organizations. In the aftermath of the 1995 earthquake, efforts to ease rigid government control over the incorporation of NPOs began to receive strong support from political and business leaders and members of the media. Furthermore, the move was accelerated by reports of bribery scandals by high-ranking bureaucrats, such as at the Ministry of Finance, and other improper uses of power. The result of this social movement was the passage of the NPO Law in March 1998. (See Pekkanen 2000 on the law-making process). The NPO Law was based on the vision that people could become organized in newly conceptualized entities called NPOs. Many hoped that NPOs would present effective alternatives to government (and also business entities), and would break the social, political and economic gridlock, which the Japanese society faced from the burst of asset-inflated, so-called “bubble” economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Historically, scholars, primarily political scientists, have held a privileged place in the production of knowledge about the development of civil society. The concept of civil society has experienced an enormous theoretical rebirth in recent years (e.g., Habermas 1989, 1996; Seligman 1992; Tester 1992; Kumar 1993; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000; Cohen and Arato 1994; Gellner 1994; Salamon 1994, 1997; Hall 1995; Hann and Dunn 1996; Salamon and Anheier 1996, 1997; Hirst 1997; Walzer 1997; Alexander 1998; Kean 1998, 2003; Ehrenberg 1999; Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001; Rosenblum and Post 2002; Kaldor et al. 2003; Edwards 2004). After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, the term – civil society – assumed a much wider sense and was invoked more frequently than it had been in the past. Reformers in Eastern Europe, who have been key players in reviving the use of the term, have employed it expansively to describe the challenges of a democratic transition from a statist regime. In fact, civil society’s pivotal role in modern democratic theory testifies to the crisis that contemporary societies face as they seek new foundations in social and political life. For many people, civil society has

even become a slogan that connotes an alternative center for political initiatives. The argument has been enthusiastically endorsed as a universal ideal of social institution.

But, it seems to me that the argument has often promoted static, patterned, normative notions and models of the state and of civil society, which have usually been based on the American communitarian experience. In fact, the concept of civil society clearly grows out of a specific, European historical context (Chatterjee 1990). As an anthropologist, I am most interested in the historical and cultural particularity of the Japanese concept of civil society. I assume that even among European countries the socio-political relationships are various. The concept of civil society is of course not unified. Chris M. Hann (1996: 3), a social anthropologist, argues that civil society debates have been too narrowly circumscribed by modern western modes of liberal individualism. In addition, he argues that the exploration of civil society requires careful attention to be paid to a range of informal interpersonal practices that are overlooked by other disciplines. In Hann's view, anthropologists have much to contribute to the investigation of the moral aspects of power, cohesion, and social order in contemporary societies. In an effort to construct a more dynamic understanding of Japanese civil society, I will develop my argument in line with Hann's. From this perspective, civil society is not a model; it is an active, dynamic process. My approach explores the mutually constitutive roles of state and society and seeks to avoid simplistic essentialism or stereotyping of Japan's social and political development. At the same time, it aims to destabilize some of the key assumptions regarding civil society. This will enable a critical assessment of some recent approaches to understanding and to advocate the merits of civil society.

This dissertation primarily focuses on the transition that Japanese society, at a grassroots level, has undergone since the epoch-making NPO Law allowed thousands of civic groups to be acknowledged as proactive participants in Japanese social and political life. I analyze the dynamic micro-politics of everyday interactions between the state and

ordinary people in the creation and ongoing activities of an NPO. In so doing, I devote particular attention to the way in which different levels of the Japanese government shape NPOs into a structure that supports the state's goals, as well as how people at the grassroots level respond to the state's actions. Furthermore, my aim for this project is to examine how discourses on Japanese NPOs create knowledge, define sets of appropriate practices, and facilitate and encourage the behaviors that are defined as "appropriate." The larger agenda of this project is to cultivate a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of citizens' participation in contemporary Japanese social and political life. By highlighting Japanese concepts and practices of civil society, this dissertation will question whether NPOs represent a sustainable movement toward broader democratic participation in Japan, or whether, in fact, they stifle such participation.

### ***Civil Society Arguments***

Before going into my argument, I would like to give a literature review on civil society arguments. In contemporary Japan, too, the concept of civil society has captured the imagination of political leaders, intellectuals, activists, and others. It has become a key factor in the democratization of socio-political life in the nation.

The current popular usage of the term – civil society – is attributed to Montesquieu (1689-1755), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), and Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59). These writers proposed key conceptions of civil society that focused on the delineation of associational spaces, environments for social negotiation, civility, and public-mindedness. Observing the despotism of the eighteenth century French ancient regime, for example, Montesquieu realized in civil society a context for the societal negotiation of the absolute power of the monarch that was not a domain separate from the monarchy. As political power became concentrated in administrative monarchies, there was a decline in the importance of the deliberative social and political institutions that had earlier served to mediate power. Groups that were excluded from the political process

sought inclusion through societal associations and political institutions that could afford them a voice against absolutism (Shackleton 1961).

Meanwhile, Ferguson treated civil society as a state of civility. Ferguson pointed to the corrosion of civic spirit in political society, in which the successful commercial classes had become servile to the administrative state. Although the state provided members of these classes with the rule of law, it deprived them of their traditional rights (Kean 1988, Ferguson 1995). Ferguson placed self-governing organizations – such as the self-help groups, which played a significant role in poverty relief in eighteenth century Britain – at the core of the civil society concept. He pointed out the positive potential of voluntary associations for engendering civility beyond the special interests of the state and business sectors.

Tocqueville's writings have been central to the current revival of debate on civil society. Tocqueville noted the propensity of Americans, who lived in relative equality compared to their European counterparts, to form associations of all kinds for all purposes. In this tendency, Tocqueville claimed, lay the strength of the American democracy. Tocqueville argued,

The Americans ... are fond of explaining almost all the actions of their lives by the principle of self-interest rightly understood; they show with complacency how an enlightened regard for themselves constantly prompts them to assist one another and inclines them willingly to sacrifice a portion of their time and property to the welfare of the state.

(Tocqueville 1948: 122)

Tocqueville maintained that civic associations reinforced the spirit of collaboration that was vital for public affairs; political associations, in turn, taught habits that could be transferred to nonpolitical forms of cooperation. Through associational life, he claimed, American citizens are imbued with an ethic of self-interest.

Recently, however, social critics have noted the decline of civil society in the United States. This decline is often attributed to the expansion of the government and corporate sectors, which has coincided with the narrowing of the voluntary service and advocacy sector. Robert D. Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), for example, portrays a significant decline in associational habits among Americans. Citing surveys that have tracked levels of political participation and group membership over the past quarter century, Putnam (1995) argues that Americans who came of age during the Depression and World War II have been far more deeply engaged in the lives of their communities than the generations that have followed them. According to Putnam, Americans must be concerned about depleting their stock of "social capital," which is defined as norms, networks, and social trust. Robert D. Putnam et al. (1993) argue that a democratic government is more responsive and effective when it faces a vigorous civil society; a civic culture of "generalized trust" and social solidarity is an important prerequisite of a vital democracy. Such a culture is nourished by voluntary associations that are egalitarian rather than hierarchical, and that treat citizens as participants rather than as clients. The civil society is most likely to foster solid social cooperation, to reinforce norms of reciprocity, and, thus, to make democracy work.

Jürgen Habermas' concept of the public sphere is in line with this understanding of civil society in the context of ideas and communication. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas (1989) presents that the open sphere of private persons came together as a public voice. For Habermas, the public sphere is a space where communication about collective values takes place. It includes organizations of civic opinion, such as associations and the media. These abstractions lead Habermas (1996: 367) to conceptualize civil society as follows:

Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distill and transmit such reactions in amplified

form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalizes problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest, inside the framework of organized public spheres.

This popular definition rationalized the democratic capacity of citizens to create amongst themselves the associations necessary to bring new issues to the public agenda, to defend civil rights, and to provide for an effective collective voice in contemporary social and political life.

### ***Why Anthropology?***

It has been said that anthropologists have made relatively limited contributions to the discussion on civil society, as William F. Fisher (1997) points out in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Indeed, there have been few detailed anthropological studies that have attempted to articulate what is happening within specific civil-society organizations such as NPOs and NGOs in Japanese contexts. Likewise, there are few anthropological analyses of the impact of Japanese NPO/NGO practices on the relations of power among individuals, communities, and the state. Little attention has been paid to the discourse within which concepts of civil society are presented as solutions to the problems of democracy. When we re-read ethnographies, however, we find that many anthropologists vividly describe such key features of civil society as grassroots interactions between the public and private spheres, power dynamics, and forms of exchange. Such social behaviors were inscribed in earnest by Japan anthropologists in their ethnographies of territorial societies (e.g., Embree 1939; Dore 1958; Smith 1974; Bestor 1989) and of social structure and group affiliations (e.g., Nakane 1967, 1970; Doi 1971). While anthropologists may not consciously address the concept of civil society, I contend that they have been documenting crucial elements of this construct.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Among a few exceptions are ethnographies produced in and after the late 1990s (Stevens 1997; Leblanc 1999; Nakano L. 2000; Tang 2001; Moon 2002; Witteveen 2003). These projects directly focused on the

I came to the anthropology of civil society with an academic background in political science and history and career experience as a reporter. Even though my academic discipline and the direction of my professional career have changed, my interest in research has remained intact. During the mid-1990s, before returning to graduate school, I worked as a reporter at Kyodo News, where I covered the Japanese financial scene. At the press clubs of the Bank of Japan and the Tokyo Stock Exchange, I saw Japan taking steps to transform itself into a more deregulatory state in order to galvanize the economy and society. I had the opportunity to witness Japan's distinctive procedures for policymaking, and I became familiar with the political process and its attendant constraints. During this time, journalists and scholars emphasized that Japan's bureaucratic state needed to become more transparent and accountable to its people so that it could respond more effectively to their needs (e.g., Ogawa 1997). However, a question remained: How could ordinary people speak up in public about the public good? Around the same time, Japanese society saw the emergence of NPOs, and I wondered whether this new sector would offer an effective alternative to the existing bureaucratic structure. Would NPOs break through the inflexible political process in Japan?

I believe this question to be politically consequential. I initially entered Columbia University's graduate program in political science in order to gain some theoretical perspective on the issue. My decision to switch to anthropology resulted from my growing dissatisfaction with the dominant approaches in political science, which attempt to reduce all socio-political phenomena to simple models. Positivistic political science, which mobilizes the tools of microeconomics and decision analysis, is indeed adept at fixing and formalizing interests by generating objective, value-free theoretical models – showing linear relationships between means and ends. My frustration arose from the tendencies of theory-driven social science, which seemed far removed from reality, from

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civic sphere in Japan and consciously saw volunteerism – a key phenomenon of civil society – as such a term, for example.

what I covered in politics and economy during my time in journalism. How could I break down a phenomenon that had just begun or that was in transition, such as the Japanese NPO movement, or civil-society making into a hypothetico-deductive causal relationship? Reality is more complicated. I wished to demonstrate in detail how an influential western idea like civil society could be altered, interpreted and innovatively modified within the specific contexts of practical and intellectual life in Japanese society. To achieve this goal, I looked to the tools of anthropology.

When I began to analyze the emerging NPO phenomenon in Japan, I was struck by the power of ethnography as a form of knowledge production. Socio-cultural anthropologists are armed with ethnography. We are skilled fieldworkers, using open-ended, naturalistic inquiry methods and inductive reasoning to understand local perspectives. Doing ethnography is a serious interpretive endeavor through observing, documenting, analyzing customs and behaviors. Ethnography provides “not only substantive information but perspectives on that information” (Peacock 2001: 121). Furthermore, ethnography is “a flexible and opportunistic strategy for diversifying and making more complex our understanding of various places, people, and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 37).

Ethnography is a way of generalizing humanity. It describes real people in a systematic and accurate manner. However, it also does more than that. Going beyond means-ends allows examination of reflexive loops, making our own self-existence more apparent. By revealing the general through the particular and the abstract through the concrete, an ethnographic work weaves facts into a form that highlights patterns, principles, meanings, and values. In so doing, an ethnography can reveal “how things are really done” at a local level, and what effects they are having on ordinary people in particular macro processes. In particular, I found that the ethnographic approach is

uniquely suited to the study of societies in transformation, as it allows the researcher to pay attention to uncertainty.<sup>4</sup>

What made ethnography most attractive to me for my project was that it facilitated the inclusion of diverse voices. For me, ethnography is “an active form of democratic participation” (Greenhouse and Greenwood 1998: 3). Ethnographic inquiries seek to discover the perspectives that are embedded in the voices of others. George E. Marcus characterizes “voices” as follows:

Voices are not seen as products of local structures, based on community and tradition, alone or as privileged sources of perspective. Rather they are seen as products of the complex sets of associations and experiences which compose them.

(Marcus 1994: 49)

Collecting such voices as ethnographic evidence, anthropology can function as a public witness and can provide a record of our times. Anthropologists often communicate an understanding of what life is like in the marginal corners of society. The anthropological approach, fortified with local, multiple viewpoints, helps us to interpret deeper structural and cultural patterns and rationalities. In fact, I believe, the approach can reveal concepts which underpin the moral, ethical, and social order, and furthermore, disguised ideology and power by deconstructing dominant policy rationality.

Particularly on this point, my project is also situated as anthropology of the state, which is usually located opposite the concept of civil society. In this ethnography, I reveal intentionality of the state to institutionalize NPOs or civil society through the incorporation of NPOs under the 1998 NPO Law. When I conducted this research on civil society, I noticed that the government at different levels played a significant role in institutionalizing civil society in Japan. I have been actually looking at the strong

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<sup>4</sup> Julie Dawn Hemment (2000), which studied post-socialist civil society in Russia, and Robin M. LeBlanc (1999), which analyzed women’s roles in the Japanese political arena, pointed out the same advantage of analysis in ethnography.

intentionality of the state in mobilizing people into the framework of civil society or NPOs.

Anthropologists traditionally have not focused on the state itself. Anthropologists instead focused on the production of the cultural or the social, or with forms of exchange among people without the state. A preference for fieldwork in small-scale communities made it difficult for anthropologists to connect their subjects with the state.

Anthropologists often assumed an essential socio-cultural opposition of the people to the state. However, in contemporary society, the interaction of ordinary people with the state is becoming an unavoidable condition, and anthropologists in fact consciously look at the state itself as a research subject (e.g., Geertz 1980; Moore 1986; Nader 1990; Borneman 1992, 1997; Herzfeld 1992; Taussig 1997; Ferguson and Gupta 2002). As John Borneman (2001) points out, the scope of the state now goes beyond traditional activities such as war and the production of laws regulating the exercise of power over territoriality and commerce; but also it generates forms of subjectivity in people. One of the major anthropological aspects of the state has been the deployment of anthropologies: ways of defining and categorizing populations and of systematizing knowledge about them. In fact, the state takes direct initiatives in institutionalizing particular cultural and social forms and subjectivity through projects of reform, education, development, incarceration, war, welfare, and family planning, along with the use of scientific techniques such as surveys, census, questionnaires, actuarial tables, economic forecasting, spatial mapping, case studies, and bureaucratic interviews.

Following this, my research interest specifically goes to how the Japanese state institutionalizes civil society. Citing US cases, Theda Skocpol (1996) actually discusses the role of the state in molding civil society. According to her argument, organized civil society has never flourished apart from active government and inclusive democratic politics. Civic vitality has also depended on vibrant ties across classes and localities. She even argues that if we want to repair civil society, we must first and foremost revitalize

political democracy itself. If so, how about Japan? What political techniques does the Japanese government use in order to effectively institutionalize civil society?

### ***Social Context of My Field Site***

For my field site, I chose SLG (pseudonym), an NPO promoting continuing education. SLG is located in a downtown (shitamachi) Tokyo neighborhood. Situated in the eastern part of Tokyo between two big rivers, Sumidagawa and Arakawa, the neighborhood is an old district that people started inhabiting a couple hundred of years ago. Since the Edo era (1603-1867), primarily ordinary people, such as artisans and merchants, have populated the district. Currently one-story Japanese houses and various kinds of mom-and-pop shops dot the landscape, expanding out from clusters around the metro stations. It is a busy, crowded area with narrow streets and not much space between homes and buildings. The district is a major industrial area in Tokyo, in particular, for medium and small-sized manufacturers, including precision materials, toys, soap and shoes. In the last century these industries were almost entirely destroyed by two disasters with many people losing their lives – the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and heavy bombardment by the United States during World War II. However, as Japan experienced its high economic growth period in the early postwar era, the district revived, led by the medium and small-sized manufacturers, and the population reached its peak in 1963. With factories moving away from the city, however, the total population has been decreasing. On the other hand, the aging population is steadily increasing. Among more than 200,000 people in the municipality, nearly 20 percent are aged 65 years or older nowadays. Under the circumstances, one of the major purposes of SLG activities, which promote continuing education in the local community, is to provide some learning opportunities to the aged local residents. One of the key participants in SLG activities as volunteers is the retired people, as I argue in chapter 2.

In 1994, a municipal government in downtown Tokyo opened a public facility for promoting continuing education in the local community. The Japanese Social Education Law mandates that governments at both national and municipal levels provide all residents with learning opportunities over their lifetimes.<sup>5</sup> It was the first attempt to build such a facility in a Tokyo metropolitan municipality. For the operational content of the center, the government mobilized local residents as volunteers. The government played a visible and significant role in recruiting volunteers, mobilizing people through the existing voluntary associations. There are a wide variety of social groups and social networks active at the local level, including neighborhood associations, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), cultural and physical education associations, community development groups, women's groups, and local NGOs. SLG was a newcomer to this landscape of associational life. There has never been any tension in the relationship between SLG and other conventional associations, however. In fact, members from these conventional associations solidly supported SLG. As I argue in chapter 4, the municipal government *invited* people as volunteers and asked them to operate the NPO. In other words, the core members overlap between SLG and pre-existing local institutions. The existing social capital was mobilized for generating SLG activities. Moreover, SLG attracts different segments of population, in particular, people who move into the local community. While they feel it difficult to join territorial-based conventional organizations, the NPO is a new way of entry to the community life. SLG can be located as another way to mobilize people. Initially, 47 volunteers were involved with the operation. When I did fieldwork, more than 100 people were registered as volunteers.

This volunteer mobilization project was justified in that continuing education is a self-learning activity and it would provide a way for the residents themselves to improve

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<sup>5</sup> According to Article 3 of the Japanese Social Education Law, both national and municipal governments must make every effort to set up and operate facilities for lifelong learning in order for the entire population to be able to take advantage of opportunities to enhance their lives by cultivating themselves.

the quality of their lives through lifelong learning activities. For these reasons, it would be best if learning activities were organized by the residents' spontaneous will. The government's role was to facilitate them; the continuing education opportunity was strategically arranged and intentionally organized by the government. What the volunteers were expected to do was plan and operate continuing education courses. More specifically, they were expected to decide what they wanted to learn and look for teachers through their networks. It was desirable to have teachers from the local community since this was a community-oriented continuing education project. The volunteers were also expected to help the courses. For example, responsibilities included locking and unlocking classrooms, preparing handouts, and taking attendance. For the fiscal 2003 year (from April 2003 through March 2004), SLG offered 154 courses. The courses included, for example, Japanese literature, English, Chinese, and Korean conversation, Japanese drum, haiku (Japanese-style poem), sculpture, photography, computers, accounting pottery, aerobics, and social dance. One of the most popular courses was area studies, focusing on history and culture in the local community. Most courses lasted for three to six months. However, some courses, such as foreign language and accounting, continued for a year. During the most recent fiscal year, a total of 16,056 local residents attended the courses.

In terms of organizational structure, SLG was originally incorporated in 1994 as a citizens' group, which was categorized as a *nin'i dantai*, or informal private groups. The government initially organized the volunteers as a citizens' group aiming to promote continuing education in the local community. Even though it was a citizens' group, however, it actually functioned as a part of the government. The government dispatched its staff to handle administrative work and funded all of the volunteers' activities. The volunteers were actually paid 1,000 yen (approximately \$9) per day, considered an activity fee by the government. In September 2000, the citizens' group was reorganized as an NPO (named SLG) under the NPO Law. The municipal government (again) led the

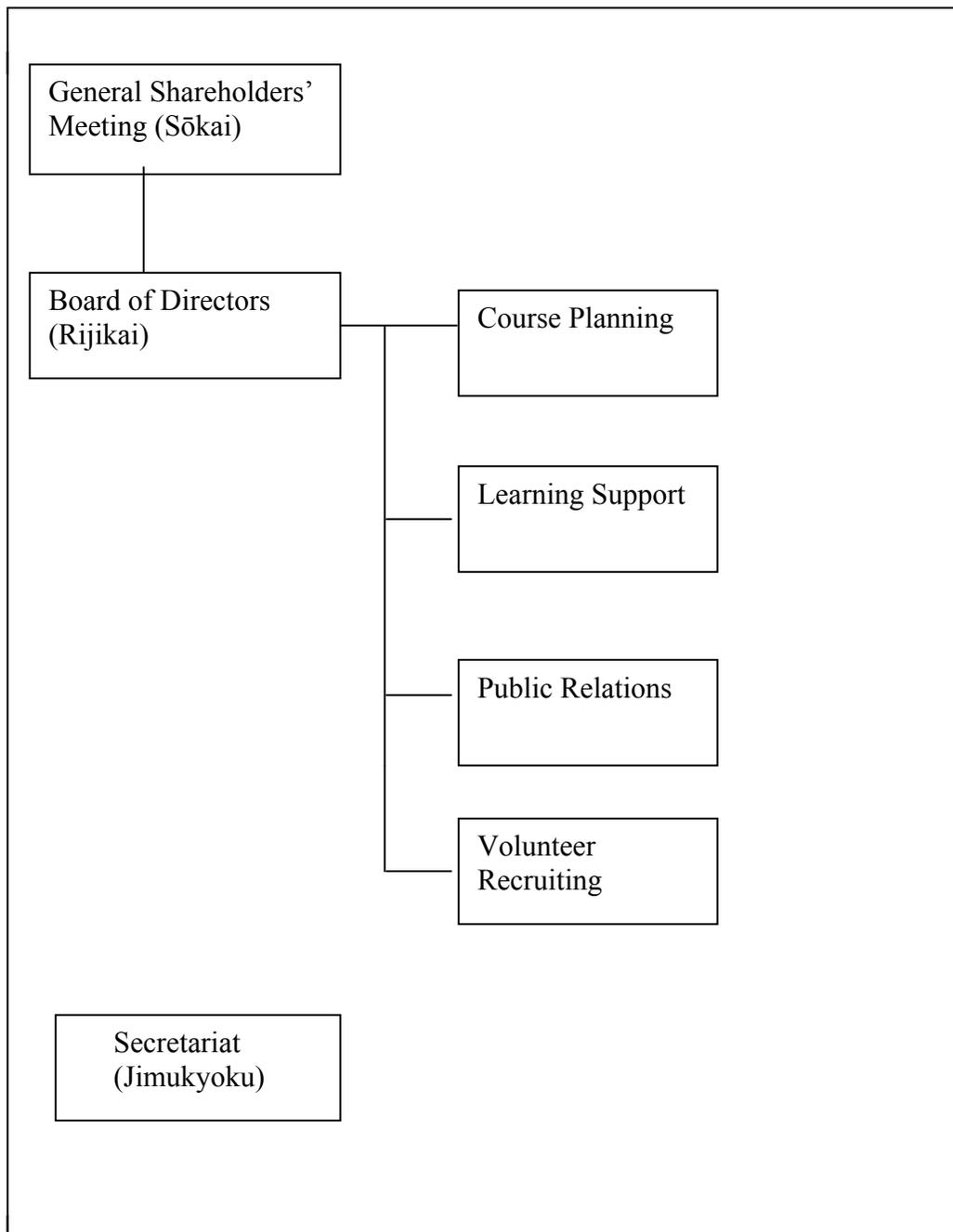


Figure 1.1 Organizational Structure of SLG

process of getting the NPO status; it assigned a local lawyer to be the head of the NPO for facilitating the legal procedure. As I show in Figure 1.1, the general shareholders'

meeting was the top location for decision-making. Under the previous organization, all of the decision-making was done under the auspices of the municipal government. The board of directors was newly created as an executive function, although the government selected the initial members. In terms of the role of the volunteers, they were systematically divided into four divisions based on their interests – course planning, learning support, public relations, and volunteer recruiting. Furthermore, they were no longer paid their activity fees. Instead, they were required to pay 3,000 yen (approximately \$27) as a membership fee. Here, I introduce their activities by using a narrative of one volunteer. It came from observing an introductory seminar for newly joined SLG volunteers.

I want to tell you what we are doing here at SLG. Maybe I should say something about what volunteerism is, or what NPOs are. But I would rather use this opportunity to say more specific things. We call ourselves learning volunteers. The word “volunteers” probably conjures up images of welfare assistants or disaster-relief workers. However, we are volunteers promoting lifelong learning for local residents. First, we offer places for learning. Second, we offer information on learning. Third, we offer places for presentations of learning. I believe that those are our missions. In order to do them, we have created four divisions – course planning, learning support, public relations and volunteer recruiting. We volunteers belong to some of the divisions. At the same time, we organize events such as “Trend Seminars,” which are biannual seminars focusing on a popular topic, and a “*Yūtoriya sai*,” a biannual festival where SLG volunteers join with SLG course-takers to make presentations about what was learned in the courses. Please think about becoming an SLG volunteer. To start, I really want to ask you to come to our meetings. Please look at the white board. You can find a schedule of meetings. We always welcome you by preparing coffee and some snacks. I believe, from my experience, doing volunteer activities here at SLG will lead to your own continuing education. Furthermore, I feel some satisfaction when course takers enjoy courses with which I am involved. I believe you will, too.

Meanwhile, the municipal government actually reduced its staff in its continuing education division. It abolished the director of continuing education policy position under

the name of administrative structural reform in the year that SLG got NPO status. In fact, the government was trying to transfer all businesses related to continuing education to SLG as part of a devolution process prompted by neoliberal administrative reform.

I chose this NPO as my research field site because it offered the opportunity to observe a type of direct interaction between the state and society – specifically, between a municipal government and an NPO. I expected to witness dynamic interactions between the newly created social sector (NPOs) and the existing first sector (government).

### ***Fieldwork***

I joined SLG in September 2001, one year after its official incorporation as an NPO. At that time, SLG was facing certain difficulties and people were confused (both of which interested me as a researcher) in its relationship with the municipal government. The government had begun to entrust aspects of the operation of the continuing education center – specifically, the planetarium and the computer facility – to SLG beginning in April 2002. This was the first step in the government's effort to transfer the operation of the center to the NPO.

I conducted ethnographic field research from September 2001 through April 2003. During this period, I worked as an unpaid staff-researcher at SLG. In exchange for my work in the areas of course planning and volunteer recruitment, I was given free rein to conduct research at the NPO. I used techniques of participant observations during public activities, conducted ethnographic interviews, and complemented my observations with archival research as needed.

For data collection, I believed that a micro-level approach would allow for a detailed analysis of everyday behavior. The study of occasions and routines, I maintained, should reveal much of the machinery of the social structure. Meanwhile, I anticipated that

macro-level forces and constraints would be observable at the micro-level, as these forces have meanings for individuals in their everyday lives. The call for a turn to the everyday is generated by research that brings with it a practice orientation (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). As Anthony Giddens (1984: 36) argues, “all social systems, no matter how grand or far-flung, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life.” As an organizational researcher, I believe that there is great value in examining the everyday practices of organizational life that are usually taken for granted or dismissed as unimportant.

Specifically, I expected that the meetings I observed and the stories I heard in the organization would afford important information about the social structure and culture of the organization. At my field site, I regularly attended weekly staff meetings, course planning and volunteer recruitment meetings, and monthly directors’ meetings. At these meetings, I collected evidence of basic organizational values such as rationality, pragmatism, and efficiency. Anthropologists conceptualize meetings as communication events that must be examined because they are embedded within a socio-cultural setting – such as an organization, a community, and a society – as a constitutive social form (Schwartzman 1989, 1993). My approach in the field site was motivated by an appreciation of the idea that the world does not appear to us as formalized concepts, such as “structure” or “culture,” “hierarchy” or “value,” but through particular routines and gatherings composed of specific actors (or agents) attempting to press their claims and trying to make sense of what is happening to them. The meetings I attended contributed to the production and reproduction of the structure of the everyday life of the NPO – that is, they were an *organizing* process of everyday life (Weick 1995).

I collected stories through the ethnographic interview method. I spoke with people at SLG in informal settings and during formal interview sessions. To the anthropologist, stories are highly significant, as they represent how people interpret meaning. They shape and sustain individuals’ *images* of the organization in which they work (Morgan 1986).

The anthropologist subjects these *images* to analysis in terms of their deployment of values, power, rules, discretion, organization, and paradox. In this way, stories play a key role in constituting meaning for organizational members. The stories one hears and tells, and the morals that are drawn from them, tend to constitute organizational realities to an extent that is often unrecognized. In a single organization, there may be several organizational realities. Various metaphors, skillfully knitted together, can accurately reflect the complex and multidimensional social realities that comprise organizations.

Furthermore, I used extensive analysis of government documents to supplement the data I collected at SLG from intensive participant observation and ethnographic interviews. My observations at SLG were also supplemented by extensive interviews with NPO participants, Japanese NPO experts in academia, and government officials. In addition, I attended workshops for NPO practitioners across the country and performed discourse analysis of NPO coverage in the mass media.

### ***Action Research Project***

Before going into the chapter overviews, I need to mention that this project takes Action Research as a key research stance. Action Research is a social research strategy that combines collaborative research and an impulse toward social change with a strong democratic emphasis (Whyte 1991; Greenwood and Levin 1998). Action Research differs from conventional social science research, as it engages ordinary people in the research process and ultimately supports “a more just or satisfying situation for stakeholders” (Greenwood and Levin 1998: 4). This strategy is also a social practice, through which the researcher seeks to help marginalized people attain a degree of emancipation, by making them autonomous and responsible members of society. It is also allied to the ideals of democracy; in this sense, it is proper to call Action Research a research strategy of the people, by the people, and for the people (Park 1997).

I understand Action Research to be a framework in which ordinary people can practice democracy by dealing with concrete problems that are of immediate concern to them. Action Research provides a forum for people to discuss what should be done to effect meaningful social change. In my project at SLG, I employed Action Research strategy to address the practical problems that arose in participants' daily struggles for social well-being. The "problems" discussed in this dissertation are those that the participants recognized as important. SLG members were the individuals charged with solving these problems. They formulated, conducted, and learned from the research process. As a trained researcher, my role was to facilitate this process. Through participant observation, open-ended interviews, and document analysis, I helped to uncover problems and possibilities for change; however, the SLG members were empowered to choose options freely. Although it seemed that most of the people I worked with at SLG had never encountered an anthropologist, they found the concrete knowledge I collected on the organization and its needs extremely helpful, as it aided them in the design of evaluation programs for SLG's main business, the planning of continuing education courses. I organized a team for evaluating activities that would help to define the problems they wanted to solve. Under my facilitation, SLG members began to accumulate knowledge and to explore solutions using their own initiatives. I felt that the realities of organizational life were so complex that members could profit from the aid of a professional researcher trained in organizational behavior and culture, and I hoped to help organize members and facilitate the problem-solving process.

I chose this research strategy for a variety of reasons. Actually the main reason directly relates to the meaning I found in doing this research. One of the products I sought from this effort was a dissertation that would offer an ethnography of the Japanese NPO movement. At the same time, I hoped that my ethnography might transcend strictly descriptive goals. My project would be fulfilling not only academically as an anthropologist and Japan specialist, but also personally; I seek ways to democratize my

own society through social and political reform. In fact, my ultimate objectives as an anthropologist are to help empower ordinary people and to forward the democratization of society by practicing action-oriented social research. Therefore, I locate my ethnographic fieldwork as an attempt to design a blueprint for democratizing society. I believe that the availability of this research stance makes the discipline of anthropology one of the most viable fields for facilitating social and political change. The Action Research strategy came naturally to me, as it reflected my dual role of friendly outsider and involved participant, a reflection of my condition as a native anthropologist interested in democratizing society through social and political reform. From an ethnographic perspective, my interest in NPOs and in civil society was motivated not only by academic curiosity but by a desire to examine the grassroots of, and possibilities for social reform in, contemporary Japanese society. As a native anthropologist, I did this ethnography for people in my own society. This ethnography is a question I want to ask the people.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Overview of Chapters***

In chapter 2, I describe the macro landscape of the ongoing NPO phenomenon in Japan, primarily using government documents and statistics from the national and municipal governments and my ethnographic findings. The goal of this chapter is to answer three inter-related questions: What are these new organizations? What does this new social sector look like? What has happened in Japanese society since the advent of the NPO phenomenon? I found that NPO advocates often argue for the merits of NPOs in the context of the economy; in particular, they contend that NPOs provide novel opportunities in a new labor market. They provide an inexpensive labor force, termed *paid volunteers*.

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<sup>6</sup> On this standpoint, I was greatly influenced by Kuwayama Takami (1997, 2004) on native anthropology.

The first question I will address in chapter 3 is why people create NPOs. Japanese media outlets have promoted the establishment of NPOs as an essential step in creating “civil society” in Japan, presenting numerous stories that feature people who have found meaning in their lives through civic participation in an NPO. Moreover, I will show that the state is the strongest promoter of the establishment of NPOs, particularly at the level of the municipal government. My field site, for instance, SLG, was formed under the government’s direct leadership to offer continuing education, a service originally provided by the government itself. In light of the government’s sponsorship of SLG, I ask the following questions: How and why did the government create SLG? In what way did the government introduce the term and concept of an NPO to the local residents? Meanwhile, in what way did the residents respond to the municipal government? How did the residents feel about being mobilized to form SLG? While examining these questions, I describe several people who played important roles in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Japan – such as the citizens’ movements (*shimin undō*) and residents’ movements (*jūmin undō*) – but who were hesitant to join NPOs. Initially, I had hypothesized that these individuals would be the leaders of the current NPO phenomenon. However, this turned out not to be the case. In what way, I ask, do they understand the NPO-ization of society?

In chapter 4, I discuss the state of volunteerism in Japanese society, exploring the following question: Who participates in NPOs? Volunteers are the primary supporters of the ongoing NPO phenomenon and it is therefore important to discover who defines the current discourse on volunteerism. Activities that, traditionally, were not particularly noteworthy are now labeled as volunteerism. Why? I argue that the government plays the central role in promoting volunteerism and mobilizing volunteer subjects. At my field site, for instance, the local residents were explicitly mobilized as volunteers in a government-created NPO. Indeed, the government propagandized a kind of “volunteer subjectivity” – a subjectivity among the populace both ready and willing to support NPO

activities. This volunteerization of Japanese citizens is handled largely by one major advocate of volunteerism in Japan: the Ministry of Education, which is in the process of revising the basic education law to institutionalize volunteer activities in the core curriculum. Through both school and media, the volunteerism has been introduced as a new way of life for everybody.

In chapter 5, I examine the collaborative process, *kyōdō*, currently being undertaken by NPOs and the government in Japan in terms of the play of power and influence. In this chapter, I propose changes that could create better partnerships and more participatory democracy within individual NPOs. *Kyōdō* between NPOs and the municipal government in policymaking, a new and fashionable political strategy in Japan, promises to facilitate successful, effective policy implementation while achieving cost cutting. The partnership is usually realized through the entrusting of projects to NPOs by the government. An NPO, for instance, might provide specific social services to the public in place of (but promoted by) the state. Taking as an example an entrustment case that failed, I argue that power sharing is often problematic, as power tends to be tipped toward the government sector by virtue of its hold over policy development. I identify the following problems that arise in NPO-government cooperation: a preoccupation with persistent formalism in Japanese administrative politics, the framing of issues and procedures in the dominant discourses and practices of the government sector, and the resistance to alternative ways of doing things in the government.

In chapter 6, the concluding chapter for this dissertation, I examine the Japanese sense of “civil society.” As an anthropologist, I am most interested in the historical and cultural particularity of the Japanese concept of civil society. As mentioned previously, one optimistic expectation of the NPO Law was that it would provide a platform for ordinary people to become engaged in setting the public agenda, something that has been all too frequently regarded as the exclusive territory of bureaucrats under the strong state. There has more recently been a consensus that the state has finally stepped in to mold

civil society for the benefit of its citizens. My ethnographic findings, in fact, showed that a predominant user and beneficiary of the NPO Law is, actually, the state itself, which maintains a strong regulatory role over this kind of community “self help.” People cannot establish NPOs in an entirely free manner. Indeed, NPOs must be established within the 17 limited areas of the NPO Law. These areas – which include social welfare, continuing education, and international development – happen to be those in which the government has failed to deliver required services. I argue that in contrast to the view that government has taken a leading role in addressing social problems, it is the NPOs, supporting the governments’ functions, which are actually organizing “civil society” in contemporary Japan. They are doing so in spite of, not because of, the government bureaucracy.

In chapter 7, I present a reflexive narrative of my 20-month fieldwork experience at SLG, discussing the role Action Research as a key stance in conducting my fieldwork. As an action-oriented researcher, I was heavily involved with SLG as an unpaid secretariat staff member. After hearing a great deal of frustration about the organization from SLG volunteers during the initial stage of my fieldwork, I stepped in to facilitate several problem-solving processes. In so doing, I explored the following questions: Why were SLG volunteers frustrated? What changes could they generate? What did they want to change? As an action-oriented anthropologist in the field site, meanwhile, I kept in view several self-reflexive questions about my role: Who am I in this organization? What kind of role do the people expect me to play? How do I define myself? Why am I doing this research? What can I contribute to this field site as a native anthropologist?

## CHAPTER 2

### NPO-IZATION OF SOCIETY:

#### THE MACRO LANDSCAPE OF THE JAPANESE NPO PHENOMENON

##### *What are Japanese NPOs?*

This chapter introduces the basic characteristics of the Japanese nonprofit sector. The Japanese term *NPO* was not in popular use a decade ago; in fact, it was virtually unknown. Today, however, the term is widely used in Japanese society. The NPO Law was legislated in 1998. Through the provisions of this law, the number of specified nonprofit corporations, usually called *NPO*, has grown to nearly 15,000 in early 2004, and the rate of growth in this sector has not yet slowed. Japanese society faces the phenomenon of so-called NPO-ization.

In this chapter, I attempt to render an image of Japanese NPOs. What are these new organizations? What does this new social sector look like? What has happened in Japanese society since the advent of the NPO movement? In the first section of this chapter, I present the macro landscape of Japanese NPOs. In so doing, I primarily use government documents and statistics from the national and municipal governments, employing my ethnographic findings to enrich the argument.<sup>7</sup> In the second section, I focus on an interesting macro phenomenon of the Japanese NPO. During my fieldwork, I found that NPO advocates often argue the merits of NPOs in the context of the economy;

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<sup>7</sup> I primarily employ the five newest statistical data on Japanese NPOs that were available in January 2004. The first one is from the website of the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government, which oversees NPO issues. The website is available at <http://www5.cao.go.jp/seikatsu/np0>. The second report, *Sangyo renkanhyō niyoru NPO no keizai kōka no bunseki ni tsuite*, released on February 19, 2002, was presented by the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The third, *NPO hōjin ankēto chōsa hōkoku*, released on September 9, 2003, was also produced by this institute. The fourth, *Kokumin seikatsu hakusho*, was published in November 2000 by the former Economic Planning Agency (reorganized under the Cabinet Office as part of national administrative reforms in January 2001). This report focused in particular on volunteer activities and NPOs in Japan. In addition, I use some data from *NPO hakusho 2002*, a report presented by Osaka University School of International Public Policy, a key research center on the nonprofit sector in Japan.

in particular, they contend that NPOs provide novel opportunities in a new labor market.<sup>8</sup> However, what is the meaning of working in the new NPO sector? What do people actually experience while working at NPOs? I found that, in reality, many people working at NPOs were grossly underpaid; most NPO employees receive less than half of the average wage in Japanese society. Such low wages are frequently justified by invoking the term *paid volunteers*. I will attempt to articulate the reality I observed through ethnography.

### ***Basic Data***

#### *Definition of NPOs*

Even though the term NPO is relatively new, the nonprofit third sector has become solidly rooted in Japanese society. The Japanese nonprofit world can currently be divided into four categories: (1) NPOs created under the NPO Law, (2) public interest corporations, (3) neighborhood associations, and (4) citizens' groups.<sup>9</sup> Among these, the first two entities – NPOs created under the NPO Law and public interest corporations – are officially registered as nonprofit entities with the government. By contrast, neighborhood associations and citizens' groups are not regarded as legal entities. However, they are the major forces in the sector, in terms of their numbers and influence.

#### The Four Entities in the Japanese Nonprofit Sector

##### (1) NPOs created under the NPO Law – *NPO*

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<sup>8</sup> On this point, I found that statistics relating to NPOs were primarily collected by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. NPOs were located in part of domestic economic and industry policies. The ministry set up a special committee called *sangyō kōzō shingikai*, a committee analyzing industrial structure from the perspective of economic revitalization. NPOs issues are mainly discussed in that committee. One of the key phrases was *aratana keizai shutai toshite no NPO* (NPOs as a new economic subject).

<sup>9</sup> In my argument, I have not included cooperatives and unions, which are included in a relatively wide definition for the term “nonprofit entities,” since those entities are not categorized as ones pursuing public-interests or *kōeki*, according to *Kōeki hōjin hakusho 2002*. See details in the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Post and Communications 2002: 3.

This category includes NPOs that are incorporated under the NPO Law of 1998. These organizations are classified as specified nonprofit corporations or *tokutei hieri katudō hōjin*. The law explains what the organizations must be in the first two articles:

#### Article 1 (Purpose)

The purpose of this law is to promote the sound development of specified nonprofit activities in the form of volunteer and other activities freely performed by citizens to benefit society, through such measures as the provision of corporate status to organizations that undertake specified nonprofit activities, and thereby to contribute to advancement of the public welfare.

#### Article 2 (Definition)

"Specified nonprofit activities" under this law shall mean those activities specified in the attached schedule, which are for the purpose of contributing to advancement of the interests of many and unspecified persons.

"Specified nonprofit corporation" under this law shall mean an organization that has as its main purpose the implementation of specified nonprofit activities, that conforms with each of the following items, and that is a corporation established under the provisions of this law:

- a. an organization that is covered by both of the following items and is not for the purpose of generating profits:
  1. provisions regarding acquisition and loss of qualifications for membership are not unreasonable;
  2. the number of officers receiving remuneration total no more than one-third of the total number of officers;
  
- b. an organization whose activities conform with each of the following items:
  3. the activities are not for the purpose of propagating religious teachings, performing ceremonies, or educating or fostering believers;
  4. the activities are not for the purpose of promoting, supporting, or opposing a political principle;
  5. the activities are not for the purpose of recommending, supporting, or opposing a candidate (including a prospective candidate) for a public office (meaning a public office as specified in Article 3 of the Public Offices Election Law [Law No. 100 of 1950]; the same shall apply hereafter), a person holding a public office, or a political party.

NPOs, which are the focus of this project, occupy the most narrowly defined category of nonprofit entity. Meanwhile, as I mentioned in the beginning of chapter 1, a familiar-sounds term NGOs (non-governmental organizations) represent a subtype of this category of NPOs in a Japanese context. In essence, NGOs are NPOs that are active on international development issues. Thus, internationally active Japanese NGOs, such as the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation and Peace Winds Japan, have NPO status under the NPO Law.

(2) Public Interest Corporations – *kōeki hōjin*<sup>10</sup>

These are nonprofit entities incorporated under Article 34 of the 1898 Civil Code. In legal terms, there are two kinds of public interest entities: incorporated associations (*shadan hōjin*) and incorporated foundations (*zaidan hōjin*). In Japan, there are 26,183 public interest corporations on October 1, 2002. Among them, there are 12,889 incorporated associations and 13,294 incorporated foundations (Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Post and Telecommunications 2002: 25).

Entities in the first category, *shadan hōjin*, are authorized as “associations with the objective of worship, religion, charity, education, arts and crafts, and other activities for public interest, and not for profit,” according to the Civil Code. Before I returned to graduate school, I was working for Kyodo News, an incorporated association. The news service had chosen this legal status in order to pursue free expression as a journalistic institution without being burdened by economic motives. Kyodo News is made up of various member organizations, which include national and local newspapers, television stations, and radio stations across Japan. It is operated under a charter of association and

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<sup>10</sup> The information used in this section is based on *Kōeki hōjin hakusho 2002*, published by the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Post and Communications. Pekkanen and Simon (2003) provides an extensive English-language overview of legal framework on public interest corporations in Japan.

governed by a general assembly of all members who elect a board of directors to oversee the day-to-day activities of the organization.

The second type of public interest corporation is *zaidan hōjin*. These organizations serve the public interest, but they are authorized by special laws attached to Article 34 of the Civil Law. This group includes social welfare corporations or *shakai fukushi hōjin*, educational corporations or *gakkō hōjin*, religious corporations or *shūkyō hōjin*, and medical corporations or *iryō hōjin*. Services for the elderly, children, and the handicapped are operated under social welfare corporations. Japanese private schools are categorized as educational corporations. In order to establish a private school, one must apply for this status.<sup>11</sup> Buddhist temples, Shintō shrines, and Christian churches have legal status in Japan as religious corporations. Private hospitals, meanwhile, are usually established as medical corporations.

Robert Pekkanen and Karla Simon (2003: 80) describes well the organizational entities. “A foundation does not have members, but it is governed by a board of directors, in accordance with basic rules laid down by its founders in the charter of the foundation. Permitting procedures for foundations are similar to those for associations, but with an emphasis on meeting specified capital requirements.” However, the crucial difference between the two types of entity in this category – Incorporated Associations (*shadan hōjin*) and Incorporated Foundations (*zaidan hōjin*) – has been summarized as follows: The former are “formed around a group of members,” while the latter are “formed around an amount of money” (ibid.). According to the Japanese Civil Code, a certified group was required to provide proof of an endowment of at least 300 million yen (approximately

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<sup>11</sup> When I was finishing up this chapter (February 2004), the Council for University Chartering and School Juridical Person, an advisory panel, urged the Ministry of Education to allow two public stock companies entry into education from April 2004. This is a part of nationwide structural reform program and the first case that entities other than educational corporations establish private schools. According to the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper (February 12, 2004), the two companies are Tokyo Legal Mind K.K., which runs prep schools for the bar examination, will set up a college exclusively aiming to tackle national exams, including civil service exams, and Digital Hollywood, which will set up a graduate school for training producers and directors for television programs, movies and game-software.

\$2.7 million) as a “sound financial base” and an annual budget of 30 million yen (approximately \$2700).

### (3) Neighborhood Associations – *chōkai*<sup>12</sup>

The neighborhood association is a traditional, community-based organization. It also functions as an effective, grassroots administrative arm of the municipal government. For example, neighborhood associations act as basic units for organizing local festivals, the national census and deliver disaster relief in emergencies.

*Chōkai* are voluntarily organized community-based groups that aimed to achieve self-governance and mutual assistance in pre-modern Japan. The groups were called *machiuchi*. Most of them were officially started when the Meiji government institutionalized the municipal system in 1889. However, during World War II, *chōkai* were officially instituted by the order by the Ministry of the Interior and controlled under a pro-World War II organization – *Taisei yokusankai* (Imperial Rule Assistance Association) as “organ of the state” (Amemiya 1998: 225). In fact, *chōkai* played a significant role in mobilizing people to participate in total war, while providing surveillance at the grassroots level. After the war, the allied forces dissolved *chōkai* because they prevented the democratization of Japanese society. Since then, *chōkai* have existed without any legal validity. However, it is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of the Japanese population is organized under *chōkai*. *Chōkai* function as grassroots administrative arms; for example, these organizations take the national census and collect garbage. Actually the government at the municipal level asks its population to report when it establishes a new *chōkai*.

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<sup>12</sup> *Chōkai* are also known as *chōnaikai* and *jichikai*. *Jichikai* is currently used more often in some official settings. In this project, however, I use the name of *chōkai* because people in my field site prefer to use it, instead of *jichikai*, and I believe it is more popular among ordinary people.

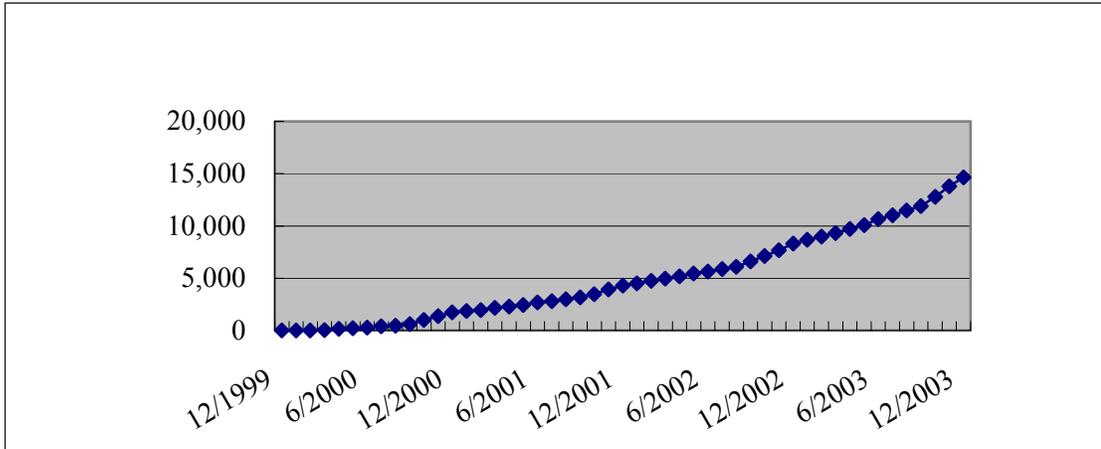
Urban sociologists such as Okui Fukutaro (1940) who was influenced by the Chicago school of sociology, conducted research on *chōkai* and concluded that these networks are typical of feudalistic Japan. Theodore C. Bestor (1989) analyzed *chōkai* as a key social institutions that produce and reproduce traditionalism as an important process sustaining contemporary Japanese patterns of social organization. The role of *chōkai* was reexamined after Japan achieved high economic growth during the late 1970s. Iwasaki Nobuhiko et al. (1989) focused on the positive role that *chōkai* networks played as the center of residents' movements against environmental pollution.

#### (4) Citizens' Groups – *shimin dantai*

Citizens' groups, or *shimin dantai*, are usually categorized as informal private groups, or *nin'i dantai*. They are neither controlled nor protected by Japanese law. Most of the nonprofit entities in Japan are included in this category. According to a survey done by the Cabinet Office (2001), it is estimated that the total number of nonprofit entities in Japanese society, including both registered and non-registered groups but excluding neighborhood associations (*chōkai*), is 87,928. Among them, there are 204 NPOs incorporated under the NPO Law when the survey was announced in September 2000, and about 26,000 public interest corporations. Of the remaining entities, it has been estimated that more than 60,000 groups fall into this category. As these entities are outside the government's supervision, any individual can create a citizens' group at any time.

#### *The Number of NPOs*

In January 2004, when I wrote this chapter, there were 14,657 NPOs incorporated under the NPO Law in 1998. As Figure 2.1 shows, the number of NPOs has steadily increased over the past five years. The number is still increasing at a relatively constant and consistent pace.



Cabinet Office 2004a

Figure 2.1: Number of NPOs as of December 31, 2003

Most incorporated NPOs are relatively new. Of the 1,910 NPOs that responded to a 2003 survey by the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, 82.5 percent were formed after the Great Hanshi-Awaji Earthquake in January 1995, and 67.5 percent were formed after the enactment of the NPO Law in December 1998, meanwhile, only 17.5 percent of respondents reported that their organizations had been operating prior to official incorporation and before the earthquake (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2003: 4-6). It seems reasonable to assume that the groups that operated before the enactment of the NPO Law were functioning as informal private groups, or *nin'i dantai*. Sixty-four percent of the NPOs surveyed had no record of activities prior to incorporation under the NPO Law. This statistic strongly indicates that the NPO Law itself accelerated the incorporation of NPOs in Japanese society.

#### *Location of NPOs*

NPOs are scattered across Japan, as Table 2.1 illustrates (Cabinet Office 2004a). They are heavily concentrated in three areas with great population density: the Tokyo

metropolitan area (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, and Saitama), the Kansai area (Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo) and the Chukyo area (Aichi, Gifu, and Mie). NPOs are also concentrated in Hokkaido, Miyagi, Hiroshima, and Fukuoka, in their major cities designated by government ordinance as *seirei shitei toshi*— Sapporo, Sendai, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Kitakyushu. Among the 14,657 NPOs in existence at the time of this writing, 8,821, or 60.2 percent of the total, are located in Japanese metropolises.<sup>13</sup>

### *Areas of Activity*

Under the NPO Law, there are 17 areas of permissible NPO activities: (1) promotion of health, medical treatment, or welfare, (2) promotion of social education, (3) promotion of community development, (4) promotion of science, culture, the arts, or sports, (5) conservation of the environment, (6) disaster relief, (7) promotion of community safety, (8) protection of human rights or promotion of peace, (9) international cooperation, (10) promotion of a society with equal gender participation, (11) sound nurturing of youth, (12) development of information technology, (13) promotion of science and technology, (14) promotion of economic activities, (15) development of vocational expertise or expansion of employment opportunities, (16) protection of consumers, and (17) administration of organizations that engage in the above activities or provide liaison, advice, or assistance in connection with the above activities.<sup>14</sup> The last area is usually characterized as “NPO support activities.”

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<sup>13</sup> The data on *seirei shitei toshi* were obtained on January 31, 2004. Data on designated cities are reviewed and updated on April 1 of every year. At this point, there are 13 cities in Japan. Others include Saitama, Chiba, Kawasaki, Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe. The minimum requirement to get the status is to have a population of at least 500,000 people.

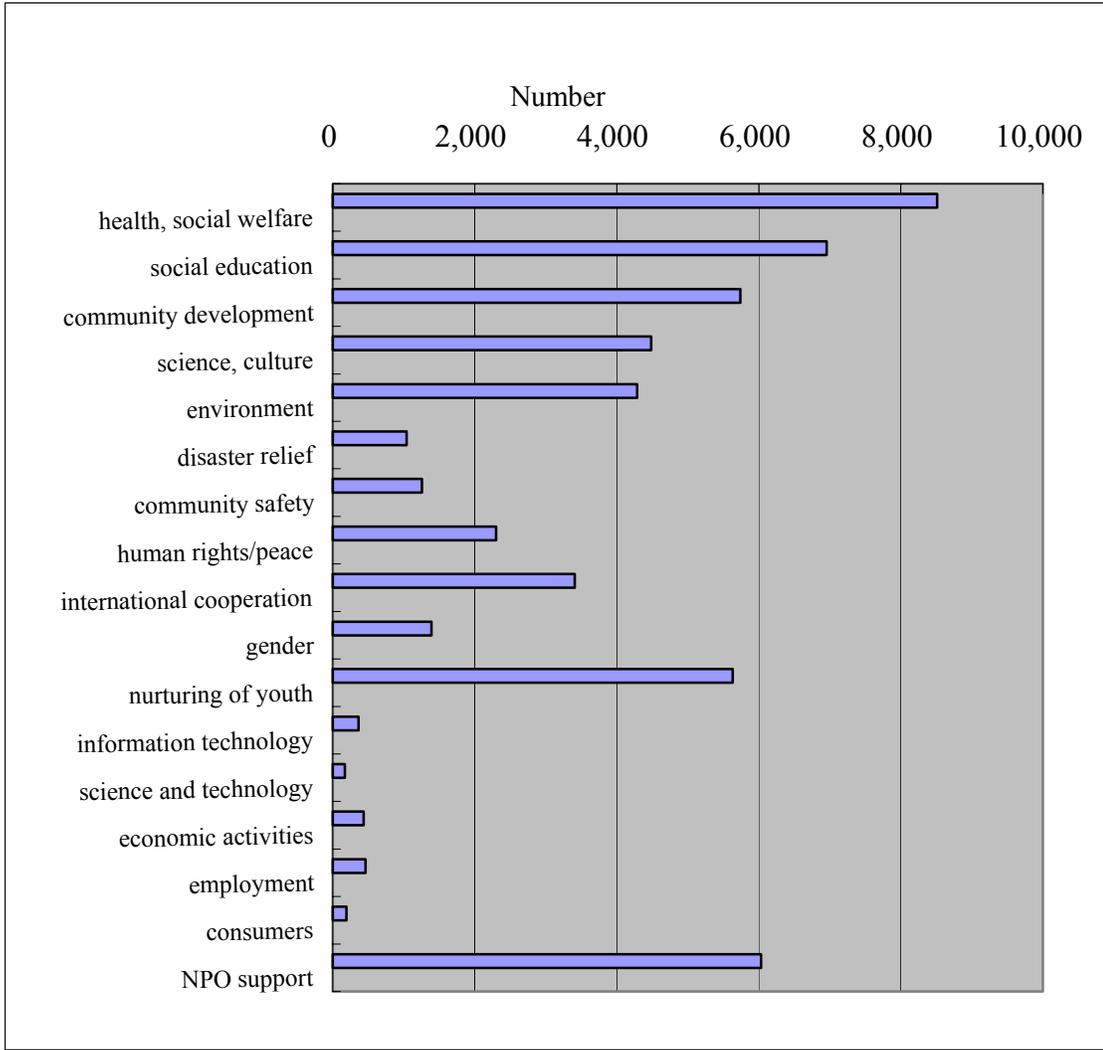
<sup>14</sup> When it was first put into effect on December 1, 1998, the law defined only 12 areas. On May 1, 2003, five newly defined areas were added: development of information technology, promotion of science and technology, promotion of economic activities, development of vocational expertise or expansion of employment opportunities, and protection of consumers.

Table 2.1: Locations of NPOs in Japan as of December 31, 2003

	Certification		Certification
Hokkaido	516	Shiga	155
Aomori	88	Kyoto	382
Iwate	123	Osaka	1,182
Miyagi	217	Hyogo	477
Akita	77	Nara	96
Yamagata	113	Wakayama	85
Fukushima	158	Tottori	49
Ibaraki	181	Shimane	52
Tochigi	169	Okayama	180
Gunma	291	Hiroshima	218
Saitama	385	Yamaguchi	134
Chiba	544	Tokushima	59
Tokyo	2,974	Kagawa	87
Kanagawa	858	Ehime	111
Niigata	177	Kochi	97
Toyama	68	Fukuoka	470
Ishikawa	113	Saga	77
Fukui	99	Nagasaki	125
Yamanashi	88	Kumamoto	165
Nagano	282	Oita	123
Gifu	174	Miyazaki	87
Shizuoka	345	Kagoshima	104
Aichi	435	Okinawa	127
Mie	206	national <sup>15</sup>	1,334
		total	14,657

Cabinet Office 2004a

<sup>15</sup> According to the Article 9 of the NPO Law, the government agency that has jurisdiction over a specified nonprofit corporation shall be the governor of the *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent) in which the main office of the specified nonprofit corporation is located. The Prime Minister shall be the government agency with jurisdiction over any specified nonprofit corporation that has offices in two or more *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent). Among 14,199 NPOs, 12,908 NPOs registered at one government office.



Cabinet Office 2004a

Figure 2.2: Areas of NPO Activity as of December 31, 2003

A single NPO can cross-register in several activity domains. Of 14,657 NPOs, 11,653, or 79.5 percent of the total, registered in more than two areas of activity (Cabinet Office 2004a). In this subgroup, 2,786 NPOs registered in two areas, 2,666 NPOs registered in three areas, and 2,110 NPOs registered in four areas. Forty-three NPOs even registered in all of the 17 designated areas.

So, what are NPOs doing exactly? Nowadays, NPOs of various types have been incorporated across the country. These organizations pursue unique activities, many of which were never performed in Japanese society outside the conventional sectors before the NPO Law. During my fieldwork, almost everyday, newspapers reported on the establishment of new NPOs. I will give a couple of “typical” examples.

The most popular activity area in which NPOs are created is the promotion of health, medical treatment, or welfare. Fifty-eight percent of NPOs are currently registered in this category (Cabinet Office 2004a). Most of these organizations are called *kaigo* NPOs, which specialize in providing care to the elderly. Such NPOs play a significant role in elder care, a task that was traditionally performed by female family members. To some extent, the growth in *kaigo* NPOs reflects women’s advancement in society, as *kaigo* is becoming a function that is not necessarily assumed by female family members.

The second most popular type of NPO activity is the promotion of social education. My field site is included in this category. This NPO promotes lifelong learning activities in a local downtown Tokyo community. Across the country, continuing education – once the province of the government – is increasingly administered by NPOs. Meanwhile, “*Furī sukūru*,” or Free Schools – popular charter schools that primarily serve children with school phobia – are also being established under this category. Through institutions such as these, NPOs provide an alternative to school education, although the students of NPO-operated schools cannot earn formal state-recognized degrees.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing, the Japanese government announced that such alternative schools would get formal school status in the Japanese education system as part of a nationwide move of deregulation or *kisei*

A representative organization in the category of culture, arts, and science (which is ranked fourth) is an NPO in Tokyo's Toshima ward (Asahi Shimbun February 5, 2004). This NPO is in charge of developing arts programs for local residents. It is based at an abandoned junior high school, which was closed due to the population decrease in an inner city of Tokyo. Other NPOs in this group provide assistance to museums. Members of these NPOs play significant roles in actual museum operations and contribute their knowledge, skills, and experiences as docents (Nihon Keizai Shimbun February 28, 2004).

Community safety NPOs account for the seventh-largest area of NPO activity. A typical NPO in this category is one that developed a unique type of alarm system following recent crime waves (Asahi Shimbun February 5, 2004). This NPO is entrusted by the municipal government. The NPO, *Monozukuri Shinagawa-juku* (Shinagawa Creative), created an effective alarm buzzer for children that emit electric waves and sound. According to the newspaper article, when the buzzer is activated, an alarm sounds and the device sends electric waves to a "mother device" that can be more than 50 meters away. These wireless mother devices with display panels will be set up in public facilities and in shopping areas, where they will transmit information to a central host computer.

### *Why Are NPOs Incorporated?*

The former Economic Planning Agency (2000: 134) investigated the reasons that NPOs have been incorporated.<sup>17</sup> According to the agency's survey, the most common reason to obtain corporate status for an NPO is to enhance the organization's social credibility, as the Table 2.2 below indicates.

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*kanwa*, as the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported on March 17, 2004. Thirty-two alternative schools were approved by the government ahead of April, when the new school year begins in Japan. The 32 schools were among 95 entities' projects approved by the government in the nation's special economic zones eligible for preferential deregulatory treatment.

<sup>17</sup> The agency was in charge of NPO issues at that time. As I mentioned earlier, it is currently placed under the Cabinet Office as part of national administrative reforms in January 2001.

Table 2.2: Reasons to Incorporate as an NPO

to enhance social credibility	81.4%
to create understanding as a non-profit	61.7%
to easily get contracts with the government	52.0%
to increase membership	50.1%
to make contracts under the organization name	49.0%
to get donations	48.7%
to prove duty and responsibility	44.8%
to get possible tax incentives	42.4%
to hold real estate, bank accounts	31.7%
to do profit-oriented business	21.4%
to more easily get corporate status	17.6%
to guarantee stability of staff	14.6%
to facilitate overseas activities	10.6%
Other	11.0%
nothing particular	0.2%
no response	0.3%

Economic Planning Agency 2000

In a brochure on creating NPOs, meanwhile, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2000a: 8) states that there are three benefits to gaining NPO status. The underlying message of the brochure is that NPO status guarantees the perception of credibility in society. First, the brochure stated that real estate can be held under the name of an NPO. Second, a bank account can be opened under the name of an NPO. Third, contracts with other entities can be formed under the name of an NPO. For example, an NPO can rent an office, subscribe to a telephone company, and even make an entrustment contract with the government.

On the surface, the ability of an NPO to open a bank account seems very trivial. However, when I asked people why they chose to form NPOs, this was most often cited as a major reason. I had an interesting experience related to this issue. I had planned to attend a seminar on NPO management, but was forced to cancel my reservation. The sponsor asked me via email to pay a cancellation fee. I had thought that the sponsor was

an NPO, but I learned that the seminar was actually sponsored by an individual. Therefore, I had to pay the cancellation fee to the individual, since a non-authorized group cannot open a bank account under a group name. I was somewhat repulsed by this; to be honest, I myself was embarrassed to pay a fee to an individual's bank account. This experience actually made me understand this reasons of why people want to gain NPO status. In the perception of many people, groups are trustworthy, particularly if they have a bank account under the name of the organization.

### *Process of Incorporation*

Under the NPO Law, the incorporation process is becoming quite simple. The prefecture government now prepares templates for the necessary documents in a prospective NPO's application packet, including the cover page, the articles of association, and budget forms. I received a guidebook on NPOs, which was distributed in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government office. The guidebook includes everything I would need to incorporate an NPO. People who are interested in incorporating NPOs need only to take advantage of these templates. I also found that these kinds of documents can easily be downloaded from the Internet of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The government's decision on any NPO application is based on a set of objective criteria. Thus, an application undergoes a relatively straightforward certification process, rather than a permission or approval process that would involve the discretion of government agencies, which had been common practice in Japan. Meanwhile, as I mentioned previously, the governor of the prefecture in which the NPO is located – or the Cabinet Office, in the case of an NPO with offices in at least two prefectures – is required to authenticate the establishment of the organization, as long as it conforms to the provisions set forth in the application.

Before the NPO Law, the government intervened more aggressively in the incorporation of nonprofit organizations. The Japanese Civil Code, which was written in

1898, more than 100 years ago under the Meiji Government, regulated the incorporation of various types of nonprofit organizations, usually as public interest corporations. Permitted fields of activity for these organizations included social welfare, education, religion and medicine – social welfare corporations, educational corporations, religious corporations, and medical corporations respectively. An organization seeking to be incorporated was forced to undergo a lengthy and complicated process. Permission (*kyoka*), approval (*ninka*), or certification (*ninshō*) was granted at the discretion of the national or prefectural government agency that had jurisdiction over an organization's field of activities.<sup>18</sup> According to Article 34 of the Civil Code, furthermore, the “competent government authorities also require that the group submit a detailed plan of activities and select a governing board of ‘public esteemed individuals.’” Once registered, an organization was obliged to submit a budget and a plan of activities before the beginning of each fiscal year, which started on April 1 and ended on March 31 of the following year. At the end of the year, the organization presented a progress report and financial reports to appropriate ministries. Incorporated groups needed to adhere rigidly to reporting requirements or they risked having their status revoked.

As of December 31, 2003, meanwhile, more than 99 percent of applications for NPO status under the 1998 NPO Law pass smoothly through the recognition process (Cabinet Office 2004a).<sup>19</sup> Even though the application must be submitted to the government, there is not a rigorous screening process. When an application fails, it does so simply because it lacks certain documents. Government officials, in fact, are surprisingly indifferent to the administrative procedures surrounding incorporation, and

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<sup>18</sup> Permission (*kyoka*) entails significant bureaucratic discretion. Although Approval (*ninka*), in practice, can approximate *kyoka*, there is, technically, less bureaucratic discretion involved in the former. Certification (*ninshō*) is a term for which the level of discretion is contested.

<sup>19</sup> As of December 31, 2003, 16,353 groups applied for NPO status. Among them, only 55 applications were rejected. At this point, 14,657 NPOs have been incorporated, and 135 NPOs have dissolved. Others are in the process of certification.

furthermore, the real operation.<sup>20</sup> When I went to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government office with people from my field site to obtain contact for information other NPOs in our ward, I encountered evidence of this attitude. Upon our arrival at the office, Ms. Horie, a volunteer who accompanied me, asked for the contact information. She said to an official, “We tried to call the NPOs using the phone numbers from the local volunteer center. But we weren’t able to reach them. Do you have any updated information?” The official checked the phone numbers, but found the same outdated information that we already had. The official explained, “We don’t have any more information than this. We are supposed to have information. However, what we have is the information from when the groups registered. After that, we don’t control or supervise them. Thus, we don’t know what they are now actually doing. It is beyond our responsibility.”

*Memberships: Who participates in NPOs?*

There are two types of membership in NPOs: regular membership (*sei-kaiin*) and supporting membership (*sanjo-kaiin*). Of the 1,910 NPOs surveyed by the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, each NPO has 124 regular members and 123 supporting members (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2003: 16). Regular members participate in activities as volunteers and pay a full membership fee. Meanwhile, supporting members donate a membership fee (which is usually greater than the regular members’ fee) and do not participate in activities. Most of the members in both categories are individuals rather than organizations.

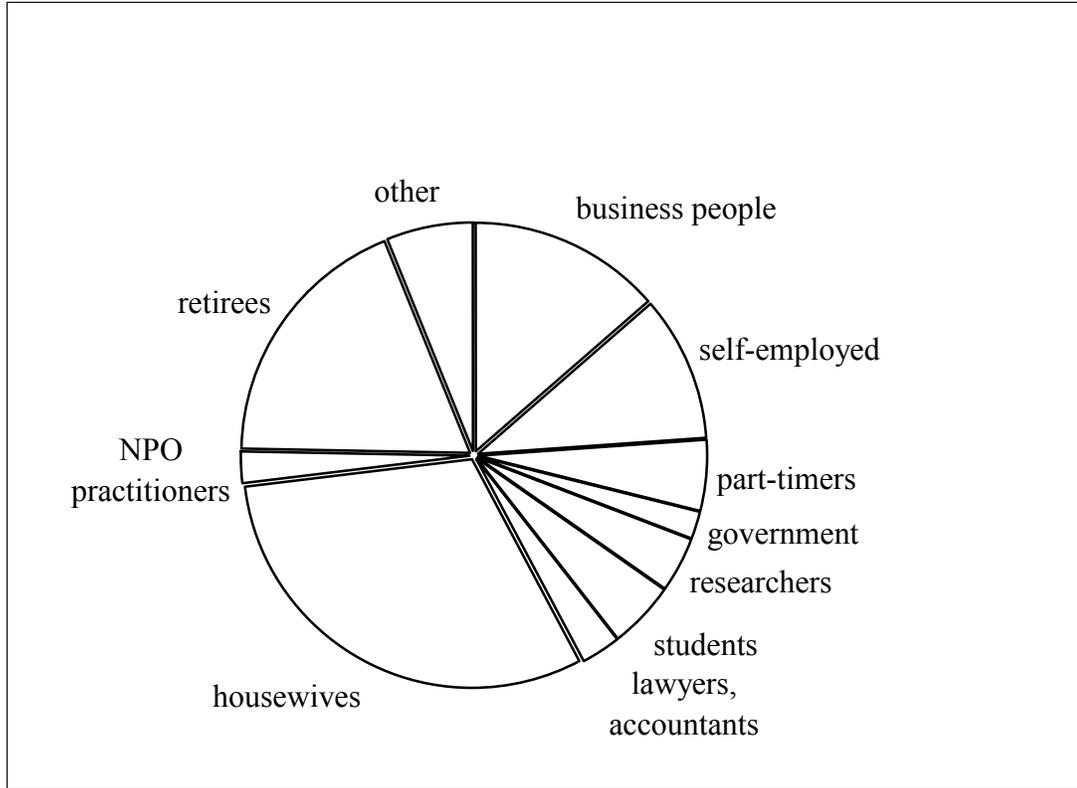
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<sup>20</sup> However, NPOs are supposed to submit some documents to the government every year after their incorporation. According to the Article 29 of the NPO Law, a specified nonprofit corporation must submit its activity report, etc., list of officers, etc., and articles of incorporation, etc. (limited to articles of incorporation that have been amended, as well as copies of the documents relating to approval and registration of said amendment), once every fiscal year to the government agency with jurisdiction as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.

In the survey by the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (2003: 12) shows that each NPO has 64 volunteers a month in operating activities. People of various backgrounds participate in NPOs as regular members. The survey data show that the majority of participants are housewives (30.7%), retirees (18.4%), businesspeople (13.6%), and self-employed individuals (10.3%) (ibid.: 13). The survey also shows that they usually spend 37 hours a month as volunteers for their NPO activities, while the time for volunteering is increasing year by year. (ibid.: 12). In particular, housewives are powerful forces in NPO volunteer activities. The results of this survey suggest that housewives' high awareness of such issues as elderly care and children motivates their participation in NPO activities. Businesspeople and self-employed persons become involved in NPO activities particularly from the perspectives of community development and the environment. Retirees (mostly men) and specialists (i.e. lawyers and accountants) are expected to contribute their professional knowledge and skills to NPO activities.

Based on these figures, some would argue that gender dynamics in the traditionally male-dominated Japanese society are now changing through NPOs. This conclusion is, however, difficult for me to support. At my field site, SLG, I did observe that women were active as grassroots volunteers. Of 131 registered volunteers at April 2003, 46 were men and 85 were women. However, the management of the organization was dominated by men. SLG's board of directors, a top decision-making body in the organization, was heavily dominated by men: There were 25 men and only 4 women. Most female participants at SLG were relatively distant from the NPO's management and key decision-making processes. A similar phenomenon is reported by Joan E. Pynes (2000), who examined the representation of women as chief executive officers and board members in nonprofit organizations in the United States. Her findings suggest that more women than men serve as chief executive officers and fiscal officers of nonprofits, but that these organizations have more men than women as board presidents and treasurers.

At my field site, too, men dominated the board. However, women did serve as financial officers at the secretariat.



Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2003

Figure 2.3: Where Volunteers Come From

### *The Scale of Economy*

The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (2002: 3) projected that the domestic production generated by the Japanese nonprofit third sector is 694.1 billion yen (approximately \$6.3 billion), which was equivalent to 0.08 percent of Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) in the year 2000.<sup>21</sup> This figure is almost equivalent to that

<sup>21</sup> In addition to NPOs I focus in this project, the data include other nonprofit entities such as citizens' group. Since this is the only one official statistical data for arguing the economic impact on the emerging nonprofit sector from the macro perspective, I cite this in my project.

associated with the pulp industry (620.8 billion yen or approximately \$5.6 billion) and the motorcycle industry (686.8 billion yen or approximately \$6.2 billion). Furthermore, the NPOs' 694.1 billion yen (approximately \$6.3 billion) induced the production of 492 billion yen (approximately \$4.5 billion) in other industries. The induced industries include real estate (644 million yen or approximately \$5.8 billion), telecommunications (607 million yen or approximately \$5.5 billion), research and information services (391 million yen or approximately \$3.5 million), publishing (382 million yen or approximately \$3.5 million), and pulp (223 million yen or approximately \$2 million). In total, the production associated with the nonprofit sector is worth 1.18 trillion yen (approximately \$10.7 billion).

The ministry also projected that by the year 2010, if Japan annually attains 1.5 percent rise in domestic demand, the expected production generated by NPOs will jump to 1.784 trillion yen (approximately \$16 billion yen) – almost triple the projection in 2000 – and will account for 0.16 percent of Japan's GDP (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2002: 5). NPO production will continue to expand as continuing structural reform generates new growth in the areas of the environment, social welfare, and information. Furthermore, the survey projected that the sector's contribution to the GDP would reach 0.61 percent, if public services provided by the current government sector shift by 10 percent toward NPOs. If these services shift to NPOs by 20 percent, the sector will account for 1.03 percent of the GDP. However, when compared to conventional Japanese nonprofit entities, NPOs generate a rather small amount of production (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2002:4). For example, medical corporations contribute 6.374 trillion yen (approximately \$58 billion), educational corporations contribute 5.22 trillion yen (approximately \$47 billion), and religious corporations contribute 1.74 trillion yen (approximately \$16 billion).

*How are NPOs financed?*

On average, the annual business scale of an NPO was 15.3 million yen (approximately \$140,000) in 2003 (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry 2003: 19). Of the 1,910 NPOs surveyed in 2003, 65.6 percent operated with less than 10 million yen (approximately \$90,000), and 33.3 percent were operated with more than 10 million yen. The latter group included NPOs focused on social welfare, social education, human rights, international exchange, and information technology. NPOs devoted to community development, disaster relief, and community safety tend to be relatively small.

Regarding sources of income, survey results presented by the Osaka University School of International Public Policy (2002: 17) revealed that income NPO sources are diverse, and that they depend on the areas that an NPO pursues. For example, culture NPOs are primarily financed by membership fees (89.1%), government assistance (10.2%), and contributions (0.7%). International corporation NPOs and community development NPOs are among those in this category. On the other hand, social welfare or so-called *kaigo* NPOs are financed 82.3 percent by government assistance, 15.6 percent by membership fees, and 1.7 percent by donations. This is the same situation my field site faces. Culture and arts NPOs are among other categories that are heavily dependent upon government assistance. Meanwhile, intermediary NPOs that specialize in NPO support are financed largely by contributions (61%).

The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (2003: 21) indicated that 33.8 percent of an average NPO's total income goes to personnel fees, while 36.7 percent goes to activity fees, 7.4 percent to utilities, and the remaining amount to miscellaneous expenses.

### *Taxation*

As the last piece of basic information, I need to mention tax issues. Getting status as an incorporated entity in society has always meant that there are corporation tax (*hōjin zei*) responsibilities. This is true for the NPOs I discussed in this project as well. NPOs are currently following the taxation for public interest corporations, which are directed by the Civil Code. Under Japan's Corporation Tax Law, public interest corporations are exempt from corporate income tax except to the extent they receive income from profit-making activities. The law articulates that there are 33 areas of profit-making activities that public interest corporations are allowed to be involved, and for these areas the tax rate is 27 percent, meanwhile, this compares to the 37.5 percent rate on for-profit businesses. Furthermore, public interest corporations are allowed to exempt from taxation up to 20 percent of their income stemming from profit-making activities if that income is exclusively used to develop areas that are primarily for public good. They are also subject to taxes, including local tax and consumption tax. Meanwhile, they are exempt from several types of taxes, for example, tax on the interest stemming from endowment money.

This last item is available only for public interest corporations under the Civil Code and not applicable to NPOs incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law, however. In the Fiscal-Year 2001 Tax Reform, this point was argued. Provisions were made to allow certain NPOs to gain the status of tax-exempt, which came into effect on October 1, 2001. The Commissioner of the National Tax Administration makes the determination of tax-exempt status.<sup>22</sup> There are quite a number of too-complicated qualifications that an NPO must satisfy to qualify for and maintain tax-exempt status.<sup>23</sup> As of March 24, 2004,

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<sup>22</sup> This tax-exempt status is called *nintei* – implying some “privileged” status.

<sup>23</sup> The requirements include restriction on activities. First, provisions prohibit special relationships with specific persons, contributions to corporations, religions groups, or political groups. Provisions also limit self-dealing by prohibiting the distribution of profits to directors, employees, contributors, or their relatives. No more than employee or director may be members of the same family, nor may one-third of directors or employees be employees or directors of another legal person or group. Second, at least 80 percent of expenditures and at least 70 percent of contributions must be spent on 17 areas of specified non-profit activities. Third, there are three public benefit tests. The first one is geographic test. The tax-exempt NPOs must either (1) receive contributions from individuals or legal persons from multiple geographic areas; (2)

only 22 NPOs among nearly 150,000 NPOs got this tax-exempt status, according to the National Tax Administration.

### *NPOs as Workplaces*

One of the key observations I made during my fieldwork was NPOs were argued in the context of the economy. In particular, NPOs have emerged as new workplaces in Japanese society. NPOs offer a new style of occupation in contemporary Japan, as careers in these organizations differ from conventional “salaried man” and “office lady” jobs. The *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported on June 7, 2003 a survey on NPOs, conducted by Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, a think tank affiliated with a major advertising company. The survey asked 1,000 men and women about what they think of NPOs. According to the survey, 31 percent of respondents intended to create NPOs or work for NPOs. The creators of the survey interpreted NPOs as something to discover when one is searching for personal meaning in life.

Furthermore, NPOs attract many young people, in spite of the fact that salaries offered at these organizations are often low. Universities have established both undergraduate and graduate training programs in nonprofit sector management, in which summer internships at NPOs are required. For example, in 1994, Osaka University, one of the core national universities in Japan, started a graduate program that offers theoretical and practical training to professionals in the area of the third sector. Waseda University, a prestigious private university in Tokyo, established a similar graduate program in 2003. Rikkyo University in Tokyo created a graduate program in nonprofit

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engage in the activities in multiple geographic areas; or (3) spread its funding or service across multiple areas. The second test includes four provisions designed to prohibit mutual benefit organizations from qualifying. For example, more than half of the activities must not be services or funds for the benefit of members. The third test is the public support test. An accounting formula is provided to determine that at least one third of the group’s total revenue comes from public support via contributions. Both revenue and public support are defined in detail. Finally, there are reporting duties for getting and maintaining the tax-exempt status. Organizations must file reports every year with the National Tax Administration. For more details, see Pekkanen and Simon (2003: 91-95), which provides an extensive explanation of the taxation system in Japan in English.

management in 2002. Meiji University in Tokyo created an undergraduate program in nonprofit management in its business department in 2003. These programs were established in response to the growing need of NPOs to secure staff with both practical and academic knowledge as well as proficiency in law and management theory.

At my field site, SLG, several young people on the secretariat staff joined the NPO after working in a different sector. I asked one of these new staff members, Mr. Honda, about why he had chosen an NPO as his new workplace. A native of the local community, Mr. Honda was 31 years old. He had worked as a salesman for a housing materials company listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange for nine years after graduating from college. While eating *tonkatsu* (fried pork cutlet) for lunch, we talked about the current situation of SLG. Mr. Honda told me that on his first day at SLG, he attended a volunteers' meeting. He said that his impression of SLG was that it was very active, and, furthermore, that it was a highly unique organization. "SLG's business is completely operated by volunteers," he said. "It is very rare, isn't it? I had an experience of working at an NPO before coming here. I was with an environmental NPO. However, the organization is basically operated by a few regular paid staff members. Volunteers are called when they are needed." Mr. Honda continued, expressing his concern on NPO activities in this society. "However, what I see here at SLG is very much the same as what I saw at the previous NPO. That is, the business is not organized well. I can even say that it is messy, and may even say it is in crisis. Nobody knows well what we should do as an NPO. We don't know how NPOs function. We are only becoming familiar with the word *NPO*. However, we don't know well what an NPO is." Following his comments, I asked, "If so, why did you choose to work at an NPO?" He replied, "I wanted to work for my community. When I was working at my previous company I was in Kansai (western Japan) for seven years. I never had a chance to come back to Tokyo, to my hometown. I was a little bit tired of that way of life."

Indeed, working at an NPO represents a new way of life, which I argue more in the next chapter. However, at the same time, as his comments suggested, it seems to me that working at NPOs means having some difficult experiences. What does working at an NPO exactly entail? What exactly does working at an NPO mean? What are the working conditions? How much are employees paid? How many hours do they work in a day? What kind of labor environment is prepared for them? The personal meaning that we find in work is important. However, the reality of the workplace is often harsher than our idealism would suggest. This was also in line with what Mr. Honda felt. I perceived the fragile reality of the NPO sector that had just been established in Japanese society.

On November 9, 2002, NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, aired a 45-minute feature program on Japanese NPOs. The program described NPOs as new workplaces; it focused primarily on pointing out the differences between conventional workplaces and NPOs. The first difference between conventional workplaces and NPOs that the program highlighted concerned workplace culture. In NPOs, the program claimed, working customs are different. In the words of the program coordinator, "Don't forget that at NPOs everybody is equal. That is the NPO culture. You can't order people around." The program explained that the conventional decision-making paradigm in Japanese society, which is based on vertical social relationships, does not work at NPOs. When the management of an NPO needs to make a decision, taking a majority vote is often not meaningful. Rather, NPO staff prefer to discuss an issue until everybody fully understands it. The program coordinator advised, "Don't be bossy like a boss. You should always be modest when you want to work at NPOs. Try to make communication beyond generations (targeting retired persons). Think about what words you are using. Also, think about how your professional skills gained in your regular job can be used for NPO activities."

The second difference is more serious. It concerned income, insurance, and pension funding. The program offered the following example of the often-meager

compensation of NPO employees: a man who is currently working at an NPO providing elderly care in Nerima, Tokyo receives only 11,000 yen (approximately \$100) per month! He performs all administrative work – including accounting – for the NPO. Currently, his NPO earns 6 million yen (approximately \$55,000) and receives 2 million yen (approximately \$18,000) in financial aid from the municipal government. Most NPOs do not offer health insurance to employees, whereas most Japanese companies do. Thus, many NPO workers are forced to seek health insurance by themselves. According to the program, all people who want to work for NPOs should embrace the principle of self-responsibility or *jiko-sekinin*, one of the key words I heard often during my fieldwork on Japanese NPOs. When asked for her opinion of the economic outlook of NPOs, the woman who was considering establishing an NPO said, “It seems to be really difficult to make a living.” The program coordinator attempted to reassure her: “No. You can make money if you want. If you have some good idea, you can make money.”<sup>24</sup> The program presented examples of fair trade NPO activities, such as those of an NPO focusing on international development in Southeast Asian countries. In the words of the coordinator, “You can even combine your mission with economic motives if you have a strong mission you want to achieve.”

In spite of this fragile reality, the NPO sector is gathering attention as a new labor market. According to a survey sponsored by the Japan NPO Research Association (2001: 4), there are 36,364 people currently working at the NPOs incorporated under the NPO Law. Among secretariat staff members of NPOs, 15,939 are paid and 20,425 are unpaid. Amid conditions of persistent social deadlock and postwar high unemployment, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on September 2, 2001 reported that the Japanese government is actually using NPOs as a stimulus measure to create new jobs. The Ministry of Economy,

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<sup>24</sup> According to the Article 5-1 of the NPO Law, a specified nonprofit corporation *may engage in operations other than those relating to specified nonprofit activities* (referred to hereafter as "other operations"), to the extent that said other operations do not interfere with operations relating to specified nonprofit activities. Revenue generated from said other operations, if any, must be used in the specified nonprofit activities (Italic added by Ogawa for emphasis).

Trade, and Industry offered NPOs 540 million yen (approximately \$4.9 million) in subsidies in the hope that they would provide employment opportunities during fiscal year 2002, which began in April 2002 and ended in March 2003. Under the plan, NPOs would receive subsidies to cover the cost of taking over administrative tasks from local government bodies and for developing measures to deal with the illegal dumping of household appliances.<sup>25</sup> Local bodies would contract with NPOs to manage a range of activities, such as handling parking violations and distributing meals to the elderly. Moreover, activities considered valuable to the community, such as the establishment of information technology study groups in vacant school classrooms, would also be eligible for subsidies. Following the implementation of this plan, SLG received money from the municipal government to hire new staff. SLG hired four new staff members at the secretariat. However, since the money was a part of a package designed to stimulate employment, the municipal government stated that the funds could only be used to hire residents of the local community. Mr. Honda, whom I cited above, was hired through this government package. The newspaper article which reported the government's new plan, ended with the comment, "The ministry plans to draw upon the wisdom of the private sector." NPOs further gather attention as a workplace option. The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* reported on January 6, 2004 that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government would officially introduce job opportunities at NPOs and volunteer-based organizations at its job consulting facilities beginning in the summer of 2004.

The realities NPOs are facing at the grassroots level are not so rosy, however. According to the survey of the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (2003: 14-15), of the 5.1 people that are hired by the average NPO, only 1.8 people are full-time paid staff. In other words, most NPO staff members are part-time or unpaid. Nearly 40

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<sup>25</sup> In April 2001, the household appliances recycling law was introduced in Japan. Under the law, consumers must pay recycling fees to dispose of these items. There have since been concerns about an increase in the illegal dumping of appliances.

percent of NPO staff members are totally unpaid. The average annual salary for a full-time paid staff member of an NPO is 1,184,000 yen (approximately \$11,000) and the average annual salary for a part-timer is 4,814,000 yen (approximately \$4,400). This is far from the national average. According to the annual statistics from the National Taxation Administration, the average salary in the calendar year of 2002 is 4,478,000 yen (approximately \$41,000) a year for both men and women (with average age of 43.3 years), 5,483,000 yen (approximately \$50,000) for men (43.4 years) and 2,777,000 yen (approximately \$25,000) for women (43.1 years).<sup>26</sup>

The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (2003: 14) also presented that part-timers at NPOs are paid only 440 yen (approximately \$4) per hour. This is far below the minimum labor wages that prefecture-level governments mandate. In Tokyo, for example, on October 1, 2003 that the minimum labor wage would be 708 yen (approximately \$6.5), according to the Tokyo Labor Bureau. At a pay rate that is typically quite low, paid staff members work 7.18 hours per day or 32.24 hours a week, meanwhile, unpaid staff members work 4.47 hours per day or 12.30 hours a week (Japan NPO Research Association 2001: 4). At my field site, I observed that the full-time staff members were working more than 40 hours per week. It was typical for them to remain in the office from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day. To make matters worse, labor contracts and benefits – including working rules, health and labor insurance, and pension money – are not well provisioned.

In light of these data, is working at NPOs illegal? Should people working at NPOs not expect to earn a living? Is it not justifiable that NPO officers receive annual salaries at the national average? In the NHK television program I introduced before, the minimum wage rate does not apply to all NPO workers' salaries, as not all NPO workers are regarded as operating under a "regular" or "formal" employment contract. In my field

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<sup>26</sup> *Minkan kyūyo jittai toukei chōsa kekka* 2002.

site, the huge difference in wages has been justified by the term *paid volunteers*. There seemed to be a consensus among SLG management and volunteers that secretariat staff should not expect to earn a significant amount of money. Frankly speaking, NPOs are not places to pursue money-making. Unpaid work, which is beautifully labeled “volunteerism,” is a key concept at SLG and other NPOs. At SLG, volunteers work for the local community. They work to promote lifelong learning through *voluntary* activities. These NPO activities are primarily operated by unpaid volunteers, who pay a membership fee to participate in activities on behalf of the community. As these volunteers need staff to coordinate their activities, secretariat staff members are hired to arrange and organize pleasant environments for volunteering while jointly working with the volunteers. In essence, these staff members are part of the volunteer force. According to organizational philosophy, their spirit should be identical to that of the volunteers. They are *paid* for the privilege of organizing the volunteers’ activities. Thus, a little money is enough. I once heard an SLG volunteer say, “We are working unpaid. But we are doing more than the secretariat staff. Why are they paid?”

However, *paid volunteers* came to have another meaning when SLG was expected to become a more professional organization. Management proposed applying the term conveniently and strategically to ordinary volunteers in order to regulate their behaviors. At that time, a hot topic at SLG concerned the proper way to manage the organization. In particular, many wondered how SLG would direct volunteers toward forging a collaborative relationship with the municipal government. The underlying message of the discourse surrounding this issue was “We are not an amateur group. We are an NPO, a professional entity incorporated under the NPO Law.” Mr. Nakamoto, SLG head, invoked the concept of paid volunteers as follows:

What I image in the near future is an organization without volunteers. Without volunteers, we can operate continuing education courses. In order to create a solid collaborative relationship with the municipal government, we need to fortify our

organizational system. People who are in charge of the continuing education business should be paid, instead of unpaid, volunteers. Otherwise, we can't get them to take responsibility for our business. All of the staff should be under the secretariat. The staff will make continuing education courses, instead of volunteers. As a continuing education organization, SLG must perform its course offering business more smoothly and systematically.

*Paid volunteers* – the term suggests a cheap labor force. As these workers are conceptualized as volunteers, they do not even need to be paid the minimum labor wage. They participate in activities primarily to find meaning in their lives, so money should not be an issue. A little money is used as an effective tool to institutionalize responsibility among NPO volunteers, who are to interpret nominal pay as an indication that their tasks are “work” rather than less significant “volunteer activities.”

The following proposal was presented by Mr. Harada, a director in charge of course planning, at a biweekly volunteers' meeting.

Because of a decrease of volunteers, SLG can't support the current system in which volunteers do all kinds of housekeeping tasks. What I want to propose is that such housekeeping tasks be recognized as assigned, necessary jobs. We set a quota. As a continuing education organization, SLG must perform its course offering business more smoothly and systematically. Designated volunteers need to feel more responsibility for his/her assigned job. We are not allowed to make any mistakes in front of our customers. We can't make any mistakes regarding classes as an organization. In this context I propose that SLG “buy” volunteers' free time as an organization, which means SLG pays those designated volunteers. Thus, I propose the secretariat recruit people as paid volunteers for the operation. As an organization, we recognized such volunteers as part-time staff of the secretariat. SLG will pay 500 yen (approximately \$4) per hour.

Mr. Kaneko, a retired volunteer, was the first to react to this proposal.

But the proposal does not satisfy the minimum wage system of this country. We have to pay at least 700 yen (approximately \$6.5) per hour, right? How do we clear the requirement?

Ms. Murase, a housewife volunteer, further asked,

We have currently 50 courses, which run for half a year. If we pay 500 yen (approximately \$4.5) per hour, we need to prepare about 1 million yen (approximately \$9,000). Can we do it? We are now facing an issue that our municipal government is going to cut money to us due to a tight fiscal policy. Our budget is very, very limited.

The director responded,

I don't think we need so much money... I was thinking that the secretariat staff would oversee all of the courses that are being held at the same time, instead of supervising just one course. In this case we need, probably, two people per time slot.

Many grassroots volunteers were puzzled by the image that the proposal conveyed, as SLG had created a distinctive style of continuing education in Japanese society. At SLG, volunteers who are local residents plan, organize, and operate continuing education courses. They decide what they learn by themselves. For the volunteers, being involved with the course making process was a key part of their lifelong learning. They were concerned that the basic philosophy of learning might be altered if volunteers were paid. In the new organizational image, volunteers were just expected to perform housekeeping tasks, such as locking and unlocking classrooms, preparing handouts, and assisting teachers. Ms. Tajima, a housewife volunteer, said,

I am very disappointed with the proposal, and totally against it. If the system is introduced, how can I find meaning in what I have been doing here as a volunteer for the past seven years? I have enjoyed the whole process of course making – planning, organizing, and housekeeping. During the housekeeping process before and after class I met many people. I learned the importance of communication. That is the real attraction of volunteering here at SLG. I am coming here for that purpose, not to earn money.

Another housewife volunteer, Ms. Imai, followed her comments:

What is important is not locking/unlocking classrooms but taking care of students. That part makes SLG different from other continuing education centers. This has becoming like a “culture center” in a town.<sup>27</sup> Why don’t they entrust this continuing education to such centers as ours? I guess it would be more efficient and systematic, as the management people want.

The *paid volunteer* argument did not last long, because the volunteers did not support the top-down proposal. After this meeting, however, the issue was often brought to the discussion table. The problem with the *paid volunteer* proposal was that money, in the eyes of many volunteers, tainted the meaning they found in their activities. Although the volunteers could not attach a cost to their priceless work, they thought that the proposed price – 500 yen per hour (approximately \$4.5) – was unbelievably low.

As I discussed previously, many grassroots volunteers are housewives and retirees, whom the management thought would work for this price. This is a contemporary form of exploitation that primarily targets women and retirees. When human goodwill is organized under volunteerism in this manner, it actually destroys an important social practice – minimum labor wage – which have been won by workers through long battles. This chapter has provided an outline of the characteristics, history, and current dilemmas of NPOs, but many questions remain to be answered. Why do people create NPOs? Are they doing so just for social credibility? What kinds of people are attracted to the idea of establishing and/or joining NPOs? In the next chapter, I will focus on the meaning of incorporating an NPO in contemporary Japanese society.

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<sup>27</sup> In Japan, there are many continuing education opportunities provided by so-called culture centers or *karuchâ sentâ* in Japanese. These centers are commercially operated by department stores, newspapers and television companies, and so on.

CHAPTER 3  
MAKING AN NPO IN JAPANESE SOCIETY:  
NEW TOOLS FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION?

***Hanko Demand***

The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, a Japanese business daily, reported on January 26, 2003, that one of the most profitable industries in the currently sluggish Japanese economy is the *hanko* business. *Hanko* is a seal that is symbolic of formal approval among both individuals and corporations in Japanese society. Its function is equivalent to that of the signature in western countries. The number of franchise shops manufacturing *hanko* has nearly doubled in the past three years. Traditionally, making *hanko* required high-level engraving skills. Today, however, the introduction of the computer in the *hanko* industry has streamlined production. In traditional Japanese society, *hanko* was often required in the administrative procedures of the government. Generally speaking, these administrative procedures have now been simplified. According to the newspaper article, individuals usually have only five *hanko* over a lifetime. The current demand should therefore be limited. If this is the case, why is the business thriving? The business daily attributed the surge to the dramatically increasing number of NPOs created under the 1998 NPO Law. In the process of gaining recognition as an NPO, organizations are required to submit documents to the government with a *hanko*. *Hanko* makes the documents more formal and is used to enhance the trustworthy image of NPOs in society. Trust is a key word in the Japanese NPO world. In fact, the biggest reason to get NPO status is to enhance social credibility as an organization, as I argued in the previous chapter. *Hanko* symbolizes formal participation in society. The logic is that receiving NPO status increases opportunities for active social participation.

In this chapter, I shift my focus to a micro-level analysis on why people incorporate NPOs. Why did some people at the grassroots level choose to become NPOs?

What is the meaning of making NPOs? Who leads the incorporation of NPOs? I will attempt to answer those key questions, combining my ethnographic fieldwork at SLG and media discourse analysis. By referring to my detailed ethnographic findings, furthermore, I will describe the way in which people in my field site chose to become an NPO, particularly focusing on the role of the government. In fact, I will present the government as a dominant user and beneficiary of the NPO Law, and the local residents as mobilized under the NPO for achieving the government's goal – cost cutting. Meanwhile, I noticed some people hesitated to join NPOs. Who were they? Why did they hesitate to participate? Why did others choose not to become NPOs? I will seek answers to these questions.

### ***Why NPOs?***

In the previous chapter, I introduced some basic landscape on why NPOs are incorporated. The most common reason to establish an NPO is to enhance social credibility. However, what does “social credibility” mean? I would like to start my argument on why grassroots people incorporate NPOs, employing my detailed ethnographic findings. I gained insight into outsiders' perceptions of NPOs on my very first day at SLG, the NPO I had chosen for my field site. In the afternoon, I visited small shops in the local community with two SLG staff members, Mr. Kawade and Mr. Kose. We brought 1,000 posters and 1,000 tickets for a seminar organized by the NPO; we asked people at the shops to sell these tickets on behalf of SLG. We went to two liquor shops, a bookstore, a Japanese-style bar (*izakaya*), Japanese noodle (*soba*) shops, a Japanese public bath (*sentō*), and other establishments. I heard from Mr. Kawade that SLG was taking advantage of the network of one of its directors. As we visited these businesses, I felt that I was given a good opportunity to become acquainted with the landscape in which SLG was situated. I had never been to this part of downtown Tokyo before. Before beginning fieldwork at SLG, I had only been aware of the area as a

neighborhood that had been heavily destroyed by US bombardments during World War II. We had a particularly interesting conversation about NPOs with the owner of a rice-cracker shop. In a conversation with me, he said,

Honestly speaking, I don't know very much about NPOs. I don't know what they are doing. However, currently I often think about what I should do after retirement. I am now over 50. Sooner or later, I may also be involved with these kinds of activities. Some day maybe I will come to understand what NPO activities are.

We had another intriguing exchange with the wife of a local manufacturer:

*the wife:* What's SLG? ... I believe that I was asked by my friend to cooperate to sell tickets, but... .  
*Mr. Kawade:* SLG is an NPO.  
*the wife:* Ah, *NPO*? Recently, I have heard that term many times....  
 But I don't know exactly what it is... .

[Silence.]

*Mr. Kawade:* SLG is certified by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.  
*the wife:* Huh, I am relieved to hear that. I think this kind of thing should always be confirmed... .

This was one of the most common statements I heard from people about the ongoing NPO phenomenon. Enhancing social credibility has been a key motivation for gaining NPO status. According to the NPO Law, NPOs should not be religious or political; they should be neutral both religiously and politically, as many Japanese people are extremely sensitive about affiliations when it comes to organizational and social activities. When an organization achieves NPO status, it has been certified by an authority – in this case, the government – as a group that is not dangerous and that is trustworthy.

Furthermore, during my fieldwork, I discovered that there are many opportunities across Japan to learn why and how to create NPOs. Meetings and seminars addressing this topic are sponsored by NPOs, the government, foundations, and other groups. At

such meetings, the guiding question is usually the following: What are the merits of obtaining NPO status? One NPO practitioner in a presentation emphasized that a desire to establish social credibility was again the primary motivation to seek NPO status. What I found more interesting was that enhancing social credibility was argued in making relationships with the existing sector such as the government and for-profit-businesses. The NPO practitioner said to floor,

NPOs can be a business contractor as an entity. NPOs can own real estate. NPOs can open bank accounts. NPOs can easily expand their activities abroad because foreign governments usually require citizens' groups to have legal status.

Before the NPO law was established, a citizens' group could not become a party to a contract as an organization; if the organization wished to pursue contract work, a person within the organization was compelled to become a contractor as an individual. This situation generated a number of problems, such as those associated with inheritance taxes.

Such contracts pose "a risk for a business partner." When a citizen's group receives legal status as an entity, it is able to avoid such problems. As an NPO, an organization can be more "socially recognized and we can clearly know legal responsibility.

I conducted several interviews in which people directly cited this issue as a primary reason for applying for NPO status. At an NPO I visited for my research, I heard an interesting story. The director in her 50s offered the following motivation for receiving NPO status:

We are promoting "listening volunteering." This is well known in the United States as "peer counseling." I learned it there. The term "peer counseling" is currently often heard. However, ten years ago, it was not. A couple of years ago, we started to be directly asked frequently by the municipal government to have seminars teaching peer counseling. The funding seemed to come from the social welfare budget. One day, we were asked by a government official to get NPO status. The official said, "It is easier to make a contract with an NPO, instead of a non-authorized citizens' group." At that time, we were expecting to establish a solid relationship with the government. We wanted to get entrustment contracts from the government. That's why we got NPO status.

I heard the same kind of narrative in the NHK television program, which I cited in chapter 2.

I volunteer to read for kids. I started this activity because I wanted to do something for society. I wanted to contribute something to my community. Currently, our activities are done after school. However, if we get the status as an NPO, we can go into schools in our local community and we can volunteer at schools between classes or at lunchtime. Moreover, what is attractive for us is that we can easily get funding from the government if we are doing our activities as an NPO.

In this context of making relationship with the existing sector, continuity or *keizokusei* is particularly emphasized as a key component in NPO activities.<sup>28</sup> At my field site, when the organization intended to become an NPO, the word “continuity” was often mentioned as a difference between NPOs and other citizen-based organizations. My field site actually invited a former bureaucrat when the NPO Law passed the Diet to give a speech. He was a top bureaucrat of the Economic Planning Agency, which was responsible for NPO issues at that time. The former bureaucrat told us,

We are looking at a more diversified sense of values among NPOs. That’s a crucial reason we are trying to create the NPO sector. Many NPOs are primarily supported by volunteers who are motivated by individual, spontaneous will. However, activities done by volunteers and activities done by NPOs have different characteristics. Since you have NPO status under the NPO Law, NPOs should move beyond volunteerism. Your NPO activities should be “continuous.”

His speech implied that an NPO is not allowed to stop its activities due to individual reasons. What I got from him was the message that once an organization is recognized

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<sup>28</sup> Interestingly enough, the citizens’ group promoting the NPO Law was not an NPO. It was a *nin’i dantai* or informal private organization. The head of the group said in a seminar for NPO practitioners that he did not feel it was a necessity for his group to gain NPO status, as his group focused specifically on the legislative process of the NPO Law as a limited-time project. He wanted to complete this project within five years. “It is not an endless project group,” he said. “That’s why we won’t apply for NPO status.” However, the group, which was established in 1994, still continues its activities as of March 8, 2004.

under the NPO Law, it has a responsibility to continue its activities. Otherwise, the activities of the organization should not be recognized as those of an NPO.

On the other hand, I found that NPOs are explicitly associated with self-actualization. Although this point is not represented in the Table 2.2. of chapter 2, which shows the reasons to incorporate an NPO, I found that people use NPOs – which represent a new social sector – as vehicles for the expression of their values and beliefs. Establishing and being involved in NPOs are ways of expressing identity and personality. On this point, the Japanese media are conducting extensive campaigns to encourage people to establish and join NPOs. During my 20-month fieldwork, I read articles on newly established NPOs in the national newspapers almost every day. I clipped all of the articles I encountered. I subscribed to two newspapers: the *Asahi Shimbun*, a liberal daily, and the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, a business daily. After I completed my fieldwork, I had collected more than 1,000 clippings from these sources alone.

In an *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper article on December 19, 2002 entitled “Let’s Make an NPO. Solving Ordinary Problems with Friends,” a bureaucrat in his 30s who had joined several kinds of NPOs expressed his view that “NPOs play a significant role because they can act in a very flexible manner. In my work in public administration, I am involved in the macro process of law making. However, it is difficult to be involved with something on a case-by-case basis.” The article also described a female advertising professional in her 30s who had established an NPO focusing on public relations. Prior to founding the NPO, she had been assisting international development NGOs by creating introductory pamphlets and posters as a volunteer. As she had found it difficult to balance her job and her volunteer work, she decided to create an NPO that would embrace both dimensions of her life, and that would ensure that her work continued. In her words, “If I can’t do this volunteering activity and if this volunteering is organized as an NPO, somebody will take it over. The organizational mission will never fade away.”

A weekly business magazine, *Tōyō Keizai* (March 29, 2003 issue), targeting salaried men between the ages of 40 and 60, encourages its readers to think about NPO involvement as a new lifestyle. The magazine presents comments from people in its target demographic who participate in NPO activities. For instance, *Tōyō Keizai* printed the following remarks from the former director of a Tokyo financial institution:

In the morning I go to work at 7:30. I try to finish at 6 as often as possible. After 6, it is time for my NPO activity. On Saturday and Sunday, I do it, too. ... I can make a contribution at my workplace. But I also want to contribute something to this society. I can do this by participating in an NPO.

NPOs enable individuals to find a new sense of values. People are expected to express their values under the NPO Law. In fact, a famous NPO practitioner in Japan told an audience at a nationwide NPO symposium:

Expressing your own personality also means recognizing other personalities. NPOs are the only sector in Japanese society in which you can freely express your own personality. In the 21st century, I even imagine that the citizens' sector formed by NPOs will become the first sector, with business the second, and government the third sector. We are the leading sector.

As I noted earlier in chapter 2, the social activities outlined by the NPO Law covers 17 areas, including social welfare, social education, community development, and international development. People are expected to spontaneously choose an area in which to establish NPOs or freely join NPOs.

In many ways, the emergence of NPOs has instigated changes in the human relationship in Japan. The emergence of NPOs is indeed presented as a good opportunity to create a new way of life and to forge an unprecedented direction in Japanese society. NPOs have created networks across sectors in a manner that has never been seen in conventional Japanese society. Sociologist Ueno Chizuko (1994: 281-301) argues that

conventional Japanese society is based on three types of networks: kinship or *ketsu-en*, territorial bond or *chi-en*, and the corporate network or *sha-en*. Japanese people are now beginning to bond through particular symbols, instead of through conventional kinship, territorial bond, and the corporate network, Japanese people can now choose to network with others on the basis of common values. Ueno termed this type of network *sentaku-en*, or the relation that people can choose. Networks involving NPOs seem to conform to Ueno's concept of *sentaku-en*. What I often heard in my field site was that people who would never have met in the traditional system are now interacting in the framework of NPOs. NPOs are perceived to be catalyst for social change in contemporary Japanese society.

### ***Another Discourse of NPOs***

The claims made in the above quote seem partially true. People do make NPOs because NPOs do provide a new way of life and generate new modes of social interaction. However, I will not develop my argument along this line. Rather, I will reveal another side of NPOs in the context of Japanese society.

In my ethnographic investigation, I discovered a distinctive characteristic of the Japanese NPO phenomenon. That is, a predominant user (and beneficiary) of the law is actually the state, in particular, at the municipal level, which aims to cut costs amid a dire, ailing budget situation. The result is that the state has remained as dominant as ever. The government tactically and conveniently introduced NPOs as a new social sector. I participated in an NPO called SLG that the municipal government played a significant role in incorporating. It instructed residents on how to create and operate NPOs, providing generous financial support. The government organized the residents as volunteers under the name of NPOs, and then transferred government work to these NPOs. In my field site, the residents were assigned to carry out continuing education policy implementation by the government. The organization's volunteers planned

continuing education courses and offered them to local residents in the community, replacing the government in this role.

During the initial phase of my fieldwork, I thought that this characteristic – the government’s direct involvement in generating an NPO – was unique to my field site. I wondered if I was looking at an exceptional case, and questioned whether I should look for another field site in order to understand Japanese NPOs correctly. Actually I had been told by a woman who was working for an intermediary group promoting the generation of NPOs that my field site was indeed extraordinary and rare. (On this argument, I will introduce it later in this chapter under *Proper NPOs and Strange NPOs*.) However, I gradually noticed that the characteristics of my field site were not so rare. Rather, government involvement in NPO creation is becoming the dominant trend in Japanese society. I observed some municipal governments coping SLG in implementing continuing education policy, while the governments abolished or shrank their continuing education policy divisions. Some of the directors and secretariat staff were actually invited to give lectures on how to make and operate a continuing education NPO. Furthermore, the move was expanding beyond the municipal level. The *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on March 15, 2003, reports that there was a controversy that the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade tried to create an NPO aiming to protect consumers. But existing consumer groups totally opposed the move.

### ***Government’s Rationale for Creating an NPO***

As I mentioned in chapter 1, the municipal government organized my field site in 1994 as a citizens’ group promoting continuing education after it built a public facility for promoting continuing education in local community. The group was categorized as a citizens’ group. Despite this classification, the group was strictly controlled by the municipal government. That is, the government recruited residents as volunteers and

assigned them the task of creating continuing education courses, replacing a role of the government. I will argue this volunteer mobilization project in chapter 4.

Why did the group become an NPO? That was one of the key research agenda items in my project. I asked many people why they chose to become an NPO if I had a chance. Here is an answer story I often heard in my field site.

The municipal government paid the volunteers an activity fee of 1,000 yen (approximately \$9) per day, which it nominally called a transportation fee. This term was somewhat misleading, as many people came to the organization by bicycle or on foot from their homes in the neighborhood, thus incurring little or no cost. If the volunteers worked throughout an entire day, 500 yen (approximately \$4.5) were provided as a lunch allowance. In a month, some volunteers earned more than 30,000 yen (approximately \$270). Under this situation, the entity began to lose sight of its organizational mission – promoting continuing education in the local community. Some volunteers came to make pocket money, while others saw their participation as a chance to continue their own education for free, as they were permitted to listen to courses as assistants. There were many conflicts among volunteers. One government official who was in charge of supervising this group told me,

Amid the conflict, many people left. They didn't know what they should do. They didn't clearly realize what their activities were contributing to. They didn't even know why they were volunteering there. It was a crisis for the organization. We had a board of directors. However, they didn't point out a way, either.

Around the same time, the Japanese society saw the legislation of the NPO Law. The municipal government tried to take advantage of this law by reorganizing the entity. The government attempted to let the organizational entity become an NPO in order to avoid meaningless conflicts among the volunteers by creating a shared vision under the name of an NPO. In fact, both the volunteers and the government would be unified by the NPO's

mission. The director of continuing education policy of the government at that time said to me,

I was involved with SLG before the former group got NPO status. The former organization was operated under the direct initiatives of the municipal government. Under the circumstances, it seemed that members had lost direction. They never found any shared meaning and purpose among them. Due to the lack of unified consensus, there were many trivial conflicts among the members. Many people, including me, were frustrated with the situation. Around the same time, Japanese society saw the emergence of the NPO sector as the NPO Law passed the Diet. Thus, I proposed the organizational form of NPO to the former organization. I believed that people could get together around a mission that an NPO would define. If we created and defined a mission, we could avoid such conflicts because people could share the meaning of their activities.

What the government did was organize a special committee to discuss the NPO-ization of the local residents' group. The committee was organized by 22 people, including 8 government officials, 6 specialists on continuing education, and 8 volunteers. The specialists specialized in continuing education and were directly appointed by the government. Meetings were held eight times from January through August 1999, although the committee spent only its last two meetings on NPO-ization. At the first 6 meetings, they merely discussed the continuing education policy of the municipality in the near future. My goal is to present how the government introduced the new organizational and social form of the NPO and in what ways the resident volunteers responded to the government's proposal. After the government led the reorganization of the entity, what did the volunteers feel and experience? In the following section, I will analyze the minutes of the meeting proceedings.

### ***Government's Proposal***

At the seventh meeting, the government suddenly submitted a 7-page proposal to the committee, which was titled "Toward Incorporating the Resident-based Continuing

Education Promoting Organization as an NPO.” The proposal covered three topics: (1) From Volunteers’ Groups to NPOs; (2) The Meaning of Incorporation as an NPO; and (3) The Agenda for Incorporation. The full document is available as Appendix 1. Here is an outline of the proposal. It begins by mentioning why we need NPOs:

*Government Proposal toward NPO-ization*

1) *From Volunteers’ Groups to NPOs:*

*The Government and NPOs:*

So far in this country, we have believed that solving social problems is a mission of the government. We have believed that public services should be provided by the government. The public services were based on the key political principles of equality and fairness. However, it is doubtful nowadays that the public services are responding to complicated new social problems and the diversified values of the citizens. We are expected to respond to such problems and values more promptly and individually. If we do this in the government, it results in increased cost.

On the other hand, NPOs make it possible to respond to such problems and values promptly and individually, taking advantage of volunteers and contributions, meanwhile achieving cost-cutting by providing the services. Social activities generated by NPOs, whatever they are, will make us realize the importance of independent, spontaneous activities for human beings and society. The expected role of NPOs will further increase in the 21st century when the government steps in to tighten its budget.

2) *The Meaning of Incorporation as an NPO:*

Citizens’ groups without incorporation status, usually referred to as *nin’i dantai*, have often faced some difficulties in their activities due to a lack of legal status. In order to improve this situation, the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (the so-called NPO Law) was established in March 1998. (The actual enforcement date was December 1, 1998.) The law aims to facilitate activities’ positive contribution to public welfare in society and to give the incorporation status as an NPO to private, not-for-profit citizens’ groups.

*Continuing education activities by our residents are in line with the NPO Law.*

In the NPO Law, 12 areas such as social welfare, social education, community development, and so on are included. Promoting continuing education can surely be categorized as social education.

- 3) *The Agenda for Incorporation*  
*need to strengthen organizational power as a business entity*  
*need to secure human resources for NPO operation*  
*need to secure stable financial resources*

### ***Meeting***

In response to the proposal, the committee members engaged in discussion. I have documented the details of the discussion and included it as Appendix 2 in order to present the way in which the government introduced the organization and the way in which the residents responded to it. Here in this section, I will write a summary of the discussion. The discussion started with the government justifying the incorporation of NPOs, while arguing the differences between the new social sector and conventional nonprofit organizations, including incorporated associations and incorporated foundations. The government led the discussion, introducing the new type of organization to the volunteers. Reading the proposal prepared by the government, they actually “taught” what NPOs were.

The head of the continuing education policy in the municipal government started the discussion.

*Director:* The proposal is only an ideal model. We understand that the reality is not so easy. My concern is how to integrate the current system into the new one. How about a decision-making system? Who holds the power of decision making within the NPO? Who operates the organization in a real sense? We need to discuss details more thoroughly. In particular, what it will be the organizational form.

On the other hand, volunteers’ interests were on the pros and cons in getting the NPO status. Why did we have to be NPO-ized? What were the merits for us? Was there any meaning in becoming an NPO? Was it just troublesome for us? On the issue, specialists hired by the municipal government prepared the answers to their questions. Of course, all of them were pro-NPO scholars.

*Volunteer 1:* Wait... . I understand the direction. However, why become an NPOs? At this stage, we need to talk more about merits and demerits of getting NPO status. Speaking of demerits, for example, the accounting report that the NPO Law requires sounds like burden. Again, who will lead this move? If we get the status, the relationship with the government might change.

*Specialist 1:* The status itself is easy to get. Thinking about what you guys are doing, because there are no religious and political activities, getting the NPO status should be an automatic process if you apply for the status with the government. You are required to submit certain kinds of documents in the process of information disclosure. The law defines the submission as a duty for all NPOs recognized under the law. The duty leads to the credibility of NPOs in society. However, making documents available will take a lot of time. It might be a burden and have demerits. As to merits, you can situate your activities in society. For example, you would like to create ties with the Board of Education in the municipal government. In the current situation, it is difficult for the government to create such a relationship with a private, informal group. However, there shouldn't be any problems in the case of either public interest corporations, such as incorporated associations or incorporated foundations. Incorporated status guarantees social acceptance. Furthermore, you may ease people's minds. If you can get the status, that means that the things you are doing so far will be understood as socially beneficial activities.

Other volunteers asked further.

*Volunteer 2:* In order to get the status, it seems to me that it will be a lot of trouble to prepare such documents as accounting reports. What is really going on at NPOs that already received the status?

*Specialist 1:* Only one year has passed since the law was created. Thus, we don't have any reports on it. We need to wait for a couple of years. According to some handbooks on how to establish NPOs, making NPOs requires the same kinds of arduous tasks as creating for-profit companies. In fact, we need to have solid determination that we want to make a not-for-profit company. Otherwise, it is just going to be a failure.

Following these responses, the volunteers came to understand that getting NPO status would increase the social credibility of the group. It seemed that it was OK for them. However, their concern was: Who incorporates it? Who controls the application process? Who is going to take leadership in the process? To get incorporation, they need a founder. Who is it going to be? The government responded them.

*Vice director:* Relating to the time issue, we plan to reorganize the current group and start it as a new organization form next April. We are going to specifically argue the process of incorporation following the advice of this series of meetings. We are also considering asking the local residents to join in the discussion.

At this stage, the volunteers noticed that everything was actually prepared and already organized by the government. It seemed obvious that the current group was supposed to become an NPO. The government would establish an NPO and strongly support it. They also knew that the government would fund 50 million yen (approximately \$450,000) to the new organization each year for the time being. Money was indeed a key issue; it would decide whether the activities continued or were stopped. However, the government implied that the amount of the funding might be decreased because it expected that the new organization would become independent of the government as a new institution.

*Volunteer 2:* If the money is suddenly cut, I believe that our activities will be seriously damaged. Our activities might have to cease. Thus, we had better more seriously consider the funding prospects for the future from the government.

*Specialist 2:* Why don't we stop talking in this manner? What we are talking about is the incorporation of an NPO. We are now stepping toward becoming independent of the government. What are we expected to do? What we are going to do is what the government did, but did not do well. Under the name of an NPO, I would like to emphasize that we, the residents, are going to take strong leadership in promoting lifelong learning in our community.

- Volunteer 2:* I know what you mean. However, look at the reality. Look at us. We are so dependent on the government. I remember when the current group was started. At that time, the government entrusted some work to us, in a sense. However, remember what happened over the next 5 years. We didn't do anything without the government's help.
- Specialist 2:* If you understand it, why don't you become more independent? You know well the situation surrounding us. If so, why don't you become independent when you go to the next step of becoming an NPO?
- Volunteer 2:* I do know well. We need to be separated from the government and become more independent.
- Volunteer 4:* Fifty million yen is really a lot of money. We need money to do our activities. More importantly, what we need to think about, I believe, is what kind of relationship we should pursue with the government.

Toward the NPO-ization, everything was actually prepared by the government.

Meanwhile, the volunteers were puzzled over what was going on – a hasty move in which they were involved. Volunteers expressed their honest concerns to the move.

- Volunteers 3:* Over the past five years, the current organization has played a significant role in the community. I think it is more realistic if we discuss reorganizing the current organization as an NPO over the upcoming five years. I heard that next April is the due date to generate an NPO. There is no need to be hasty, however. This is because the management of NPOs is not so easy. Under the current stagnant economy, the other day I heard that some famous NPOs couldn't even pay their personnel fees. Donations from businesses and individuals are not so easily collected, either. What I want to say is that it is impossible to incorporate an NPO if organizations are really not needed by the local community. Why do we incorporate an NPO? We can operate the NPO only when we have a solid shared vision among people. We are going to be able to overcome difficulties we may face only when we have a solid shared vision of what continuing education is. We need to create a solid vision about why we reorganized this group and incorporated as an NPO.

The other added his opinion.

*Volunteer 1:* I just want to say one thing: Who will take the leadership role in incorporating the NPO? In fact, if we don't have a certain number of people who think that this should be done, we can't establish the NPO. We don't want to take responsibility for doing it. We are only members of an advisory group organized by the government. We could say, "You should do it." We can't say, "We will do," however. If this is not achieved, who will take responsibility?

*Chair:* Since we are just an advisory group, we can't say that "we will." Probably the best expression is "It is desirable to reorganize the current organization as an NPO."

When I read this meeting record, it gave me the feeling that the government played a considerable role in the NPO-ization, while conveniently and tactically mobilizing local residents as volunteers to be aligned with their government logic – cost cutting. The mobilized volunteers expressed honest concerns on the NPO-ization. However, it was clear that everything was already decided. Also, it even gave me an impression that this meeting itself was perfunctory. Volunteers were there just because they need to be present, as a perfunctory participation. The NPO-ization was a project prepared by the government.

### ***Following the Meeting***

At the end of August 1999, the "advisory committee" submitted the result of the discussion to the municipal government's Board of Education as a proposal. During the last phase of the discussion, the chair had made the final decision on NPO-ization. At this stage, the government customarily would accept the proposal and automatically put it into practice. The proposal was titled "On Creating an Organization Which Promotes Continuing Education by the Local Residents." The proposal's first main point was that the municipal government would extend generous support for creating the residents'

organization. The government would provide free space for the organization's activities in public facilities, and would offer as much financial and human resources support as possible. Instead of suggesting that the organization would be an administrative arm of the municipal government, the proposal confirmed that the main actors of the activities would be the residents.

The proposal stated that the new organization should have a decision-making system led by the residents, including an annual meeting as a top decision-making institution, a monthly directors' meeting, and a volunteers' meeting. The government would not intervene in any of these decision-making processes. In addition, the proposal stated that the new organization would have a board of directors headed by a president and two vice presidents. It would have a secretariat. The volunteers would be divided into four groups based on their interests: course planning, learning support, public relations and volunteer recruiting. Finally, the proposal recommended that the residents' organization apply for NPO status in order to build some positive collaborative relationships with the municipal government and local businesses.

Following the proposal, the municipal government proactively led the group's transition to an NPO, targeting April 2000, the starting month of the Japanese fiscal year, as the new organization's incorporation date. In order to meet this deadline, the government organized a preparation committee to facilitate the transition to the new organization. The municipal government nominated the committee members. The committee consisted of 15 members, who included volunteers, local businessmen from medium-sized enterprises, neighborhood association leaders, local NGO leaders, PTA leaders, a college professor, and a lawyer.

The first task of the committee was to determine the organization's name. The organization had been called the Committee for Learning Promotion. However, volunteers felt that the name sounded excessively bureaucratic. After accepting ideas from volunteers, the name SLG (pseudonym) was selected. (The real name in Japanese

connotes the activation of lifelong learning activities in the local community through an analogy to several kinds of flowers blooming in a garden.)

Second, the government assigned a local lawyer as president to guide the new organization. He was expected to facilitate all of the legal procedures required to obtain NPO status. Preparing documents for the process was not hard; however, laypeople found the legal terms for incorporation difficult to understand. In the end, the lawyer wrote the entire articles of association, or *teikan*, by himself, which led later to problems related to power concentration at the head of the organization as it pursued efficient organizational management. At the same time, the organization stopped providing all volunteers the 1,000 yen (approximately \$9) per day remuneration that had been recognized as an activity fee among the volunteers. Instead, the organization introduced a membership fee system. Volunteers were compelled to pay 3,000 yen (approximately \$27) to become registered; this registration served as verification that they agreed with the mission of the reorganized entity.

In what way were volunteers told about the transition to an NPO? I obtained a memo on a series of lecture and discussion sessions held in February 2000. This series, which was organized by the preparation committee, was entitled “What Are NPOs?” The series lecturer, an NPO practitioner, was appointed by the government. According to a memo taken by a lecture participant, the first item on the agenda was the difference between volunteering and NPO activities. Volunteering was presented as the activities of individuals. In contrast, NPO programs were described as institutionalized citizens’ activities. According to the lecture, participation in NPOs is voluntary and is based on individual free will. However, NPOs are organizations promoting projects and aiming to achieve certain results. Thus, the ability of management is tested in achieving the results.

The second agenda item concerned “what has changed and what has not changed” in the transition to NPO status. What had not changed was that volunteers would support lifelong learning among local residents. This would be the most crucial aspect of the new

organization. At the same time, the new organization was aware that training and enhancing the skills of volunteers would be another important element of the new structure. Such training would be necessary to enhance the NPO's capacity as an organization. The new organization intended to expand its business. The former group had been limited to offering continuing education courses to the local residents. Under the name of an NPO, the new organization would construct a collaborative relationship with the municipal government and local businesses to provide new services of lifelong learning to the local residents. The lecture emphasized that "NPOs can do anything they want. NPOs are in the private sector." The former organization had been under the direct control of the government, whereas the new organization would not be a part of the government. One of the strongest advantages of the change in organizational form would be flexibility. In the framework of the government, there were many constraints that had limited the group's activities. NPOs can make money, as long as the earnings are not distributed among the members but specifically used for generating the next business, as the NPO Law defines.

The third item on the agenda was a statement that the new organization would consciously target two kinds of customers. One group of customers would be local people who took courses. The organization would be expected to understand their expectations for learning. In addition, customers would include volunteers who paid membership fees. They would be an important financial resource for operating activities as an NPO. Thus, recruiting new volunteers would be another key to expanding the capacity of the new NPO. After these lecture sessions, discussions between the preparation committee members and volunteers were opened.

- volunteer:* Is this decision of NPO-ization finally decided? Or are we still in a trial and error process? I feel very down about the government-led process.
- committee:* We are still discussing this, although it has basically been

- decided. If you want to say something, please bring your opinion to the secretariat. Indeed, we have to admit that the government intervened a lot in the process of NPO-ization. However, the important thing is that we will become independent of the government as soon as possible by getting NPO status.
- volunteer:* Today, I heard about the membership fee for the first time. I was never informed of it. If we set the membership fee, only people who can afford to participate in the new organization will be involved. I don't mean that the actual amount of the membership fee is big or small. It's just the principle of it.
- committee:* In its current form, this organization is financed 100% by the municipal government. If this continues, we can't get out from the feeling that we are helping the government. We are doing the government's work, instead of government officials doing it. However, if we pay something for our own activities, our consciousness will be different. We can develop the consciousness that we can be independent of the government. Under the name of an NPO, we will be reorganized. We are going to become an equal partner with the government.
- volunteer:* Why do we need to be incorporated as an NPO? I am not sure why people who are voluntarily participating in this activity have to pay money to volunteer.
- committee:* Paying a membership fee is just a verification of our motivation to conduct our own activities independently of the government. Realistically speaking, it would be impossible to operate the new organization with only the membership fee. The membership fee is a matter of our consciousness that we wish to be independent of the government. Actually, the membership fee will be used for members themselves. For example, the money will be used for lecture series specifically targeting members. Members will benefit from the money they pay.
- volunteer:* To operate an NPO, we need human beings, money, and assets. I understand that becoming an NPO means pushing self-actualization among our volunteers. I was wondering, however, whether the intention of this move is cost cutting, due to the severe financial situation of the municipal government.

Three months after this discussion was held in May 2000, the preparation committee sponsored a general meeting to reorganize the citizens' group. The newly established organization formally changed its name to SLG. Shortly after the general meeting, SLG applied for NPO status with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

At that time, 85 people were registered as volunteers. When the organization was reorganized as an NPO, 25 volunteers left the organization. I had the opportunity to conduct interviews with a couple of people who left the organization at that time. Their stories were very impressive, and informed my way of thinking about my field site. One of the volunteers, Mr. Mizouchi, in his 70s, told me,

I was getting frustrated because the organization was becoming more focused on how to manage people when it pursued NPO status. I was born in Manchuria before World War II. It was on the border of the former Soviet Union. I spent my elementary school days there. In my class, there were Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Mongols, and Russians. I was an engineer of construction equipment. Affiliated with a trading company as a consultant, I worked all over the world. I was in Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, China, Guam, and the United States. In my life, diversity was usual. I learned that differences were common. However, I felt that SLG did not accept any diversity. I even felt that we were all expected to feel and behave the same way. Thus, I would say that tadpoles are getting together there, seeing no development... .

Mr. Nomura, a man in his 50s who ran a drug store in the community, offered an insightful perspective on NPOs. He spent five years as a volunteer for course planning.

When we were making courses, what was important was how each planner saw and felt experiences in daily life. I can even say that whether a course was successful or not depended on the “personality” of the planner. Do the current people at SLG realize the importance of the “personality” issue? How many people try to think about the meaning of continuing education? Probably, the outward appearance as an organization looks good because of its NPO status. I was not against the organization getting NPO status. However, I would say the current organization lost something important. I would even say that the organization is like a “cast-off.” Continuing education is a very deep concept. It is hard to fully understand it. But SLG is an organization promoting continuing education in this community. Thus, people in the organization should show their vision of continuing education to the residents. Their role is to lead residents’ learning activities.

In spite of these concerns, SLG was granted NPO status by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government on September 30, 2000, without incident.

### *Proper NPOs and Strange NPOs*

I entered my field site in September 2001. At that time, it had been almost a year since the citizens' group had received NPO status. While attending every meeting of volunteers as a secretariat staff-researcher at SLG, I gradually noticed that many people, regardless of whether they were directors, volunteers, or secretariat staff, were very frustrated with the current situation. Furthermore, the same kinds of frustrations were repeated again and again among them. The frustrations were directly related to the new organizational style, *NPO*. It seemed to me that the volunteers and staff did not fully digest the concept of NPOs. They struggled with the following questions: What are NPOs? What should we do as members of NPOs? Indeed, it might be reasonable that they had such questions, as the municipal government had introduced the concept of NPOs rather suddenly. In fact, the word *NPO* was largely unfamiliar to many Japanese people, including me. As a new organizational form for mobilizing volunteers, NPOs were becoming popular in Japanese society. Even though it had been more than one year since NPO status had been conferred to SLG, people in my field site were still very annoyed by the organizational form in which they had become involved. Throughout my fieldwork, I was looking for how SLG people understood *NPO*. At every level within the organization, I saw extensive discussion on the topic.

I had a chance to observe a directors' meeting that involved intensive conversation about the meaning of NPOs. The SLG head proposed a discussion on the topic:

*head:* We have never formerly discussed what NPOs are. What are "proper" NPOs? We know some say that SLG is not a proper NPO. Indeed, the government was intentionally involved with creating this NPO.

*vice head 1:* I think an organization like SLG emerged in order to fill a gap between the conventional institutions.

- head:* I really want to ask you guys to study more about NPOs. What I want is for you all not to make arguments based on your own experiences, but to know what a normative NPO is. What I imagine is that Doctors Without Borders is a proper NPO.
- vice head 1:* I am still not sure why volunteer-based organizations need to get NPO status... .
- head:* It's for collecting money. That is my understanding.
- vice head 2:* What we need are real, specific measures about what we should do here at SLG. We are told that SLG is not a proper NPO. If so, I want SLG to become a proper NPO. We should make serious efforts to become a proper NPO. I want to ask why it is not a proper NPO and which parts are not proper. ... What is proper? What is not proper? Are there any models of proper NPOs?
- director 1:* I understand that not-proper NPOs lack passion generated from a shared vision.
- vice head 2:* I want to get rid of the "not-proper" parts of SLG as an NPO.
- vice head 1:* As a board member in charge of course planning, I have always thought about what we can do here. Usually, I understand that we should have a goal as an educational institution. As a continuing education NPO, what can we pursue as a goal? What is our shared goal? In fact, what can we change within this NPO even when we discuss the proper model of NPOs?

Meanwhile, on a grassroots level, annoyance about what NPOs should be was persistently seen among the volunteers. On the way home from a course planning meeting one night, Ms. Kunimatsu, a local business owner and volunteer, expressed her disappointment about the conversation that had taken place. The discussion had indeed been messy. Nobody had controlled the discussion, and the discussion materials were not even well prepared by the secretariat. Many people had been confused, and had complained about this. Sometimes these complaints served to destroy constructive arguments others were trying to make. Ms. Kunimatsu said to me,

I think again tonight that this group is so difficult. We repeated the same things over and over again. We haven't learned anything from past experiences.... I am very tired. I was wondering if we have reached our limit. As you know, this

organization was not created by citizens' voluntary power. The municipal government played a key role in establishing this organization. I have fully known its limits and weaknesses since its establishment. I have believed that it is not in its proper state as an NPO. Today I felt this again. When we moved to an NPO one year ago, I hoped we could have the same ideal under the framework of an NPO. We could see the same ideal and vision. However, today I again confirmed that everybody looks toward different things and has different ideals.

As the annoyance at the grassroots level grew, I heard another impressive comment from Ms. Asaoka, a veteran volunteer at the Red Cross in the local community. At a biweekly meeting, the recruiting and training division discussed the necessity of creating a shared vision among the volunteers. Constructing a shared vision as an NPO was a crucial item on the long-term agenda of volunteers in the division. They believed that having a shared vision would be inevitable under the NPO structure. This persistent goal was never achieved, however. The inability to set a shared vision exhausted the volunteers. This resulted in some of the volunteers leaving the organization. Ms. Asaoka, a veteran volunteer, said,

The reason we can't set a shared vision is, I believe, that this NPO was established in a very unnatural fashion. We are not an NPO in the proper sense. I understand NPOs should be spontaneously developed from the bottom up. That's how we understood it when we studied to apply for NPO status... . Actually, everybody was upset about the way it was done by the government, remember? Thus, we volunteers are still struggling to understand this new type of organization. We are still in the middle of a transition. We need to overcome the difficulties by ourselves.

Ms. Kato, a volunteer who retired from her job, responded,

For the past year, I have been repeating that we need a mission and vision. I think that originally we had one. Before becoming an NPO, we always talked about what continuing education is. The discussion itself was our learning process. I believe we were creating our shared vision. However, since becoming an NPO, the main theme of the discussion has been driven by the theory of NPOs. But that was not what we wanted, right? We lost sight of our most important mission as a continuing education promoter. I remember that our

mission was offering opportunities for continuing education to the residents, for the residents, and by the residents. How many people now share this goal? But I don't say the mission and vision should be kept forever. We have only to re-set our mission and shared vision whenever we feel the necessity.

Responding to this comment, Ms. Asaoka said,

This organization is very contradictory. We didn't even need to get NPO status.

Under the circumstances, I was interested in what the government thought about the reality of SLG's situation – the volunteers were lost due to an inability to establish a shared vision. I was even beginning to think that the government had done something they should not have done. My key informant, Ms. Takamiya, set a meeting with a former director of continuing education policy in the municipal government. The director had played a significant role during the incorporation of the NPO. Other volunteers – Mr. Iwata, a businessman in his 30s, and Ms. Tanaka, a housewife in her 30s – also attended this meeting.

- Ms. Tanaka:* Now the SLG head says we don't have any mission as an organization. It is impossible to have a unified mission. What has changed?
- Mr. Iwata:* Volunteers at the grassroots level like us can talk about our mission. But, people at the top level never talk about it. I am always frustrated about that. What should I do? I have no idea. I just have frustrations about SLG. Organizations without missions cannot exist. Regardless of whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit, every organization has its own mission. I don't know how SLG can even exist.
- director:* We had a mission as a shared vision. We made it. Where is it? When we compiled our basic ideas about SLG in the proposal, we clearly wrote our mission. At that time, we intentionally introduced the word "supporter" instead of using the term "volunteer." If we had used the word "volunteer," the meaning would be variable. If there were 100 people, there would be 100 meanings of volunteering. But if we call people "supporters," then they are unified because they agree with the mission SLG defines.

*Ms. Tanaka:* Without any confirmed mission, we are lost again, honestly speaking. I feel that my frustration has almost reached over my limit. I am now pregnant. So I think that maybe this is a good time to leave SLG.

The destructive atmosphere was expanding not only among the grassroots volunteers and directors, but also among secretariat staff. I wrote in my fieldnotes the following comments of the general secretary of a secretariat at the monthly staff meeting:

The government directly helped organize SLG. The government plays a significant role in generating NPOs. The government even plays a key role in creating the moves as it is creating a residents' movement. I don't know if that is good or bad. However, this is the reality. The government is generating NPOs for entrusting such social services as elderly care and social welfare as well as continuing education. Many municipal governments and citizens' groups have been visiting us in order to learn our way of community-oriented continuing education. However, in a real sense, I would say that I don't think we are a "correct" NPO. What we are is like an extension of what the government does. Even though we are under the name NPO, we are doing the same things as the government... .

I am going to honestly tell you that some municipal government officials, such as the vice head of the Board of Education, seem to see SLG's activities as declining sooner or later. However, if SLG is really going to be dissolved, the municipal government is going to be in trouble because the government has now stopped offering continuing education courses. As the Japanese Social Education Law states, offering and supporting continuing education is a responsibility of the government. The government can't do the same thing at the same cost we manage at SLG... .

What is the normative image of an NPO? Is there, in fact, any normative image of a Japanese NPO? Is it necessary for members of an NPO to have a shared organizational vision? What form should NPOs take? Furthermore, who actually defines proper or strange NPOs? As I continued my fieldwork, I began to realize that I had no idea about what NPOs should be. In a formal interview, Mr. Takahashi, the oldest volunteer, offered his opinion of the type of shared vision NPOs are supposed to have:

Organizations in which people do not get together based on trust come to need a

“vision” and “mission.” However, creating and sharing a vision/mission is a very difficult task. Think about a word. The meaning of a word depends on a person’s interpretation. It is very difficult to share the same meaning among people. It is impossible to fully share the meaning. I say it is good if we can share the “most basic” part of the meaning. I know that, recently, SLG volunteers have wanted “a shared vision.” However, they need to know the process they are now attempting is very, very difficult. The NPO Law forced us to do very difficult things. It asked us to create a shared vision, instead of following a leader based on popularity. Otherwise, NPOs will dissolve.

I also got some clues to the answers to my questions during a lunch meeting with a junior colleague at college (who was working for a well-known intermediary group promoting NPO generation in Japanese society) and her boss.

- junior:* Recently, I have been confused. We see strange NPOs being established every day.
- boss:* I am aware of strange NPOs currently being established. I think there are a lot of “sudden” specialists on NPOs. People who don’t understand what NPOs are have begun talking a lot about NPOs. For example, this evening there is a meeting organized by the medium-sized business association in Tokyo about NPOs. I doubt the association understands NPOs well. This is a kind of tragedy for Japanese society.
- me:* What do you guys mean by “strange”?
- junior:* There are many types of NPO in Japan. I can’t show you what a “typical” Japanese NPO is. However, what I can say is that NPOs that were established shortly after the NPO Law was enacted were NPO like NPOs. (I don’t understand NPO like NPOs, though.) However, the current NPOs are something strange. ... By the way, what kinds of NPOs do you see now as a researcher?
- me:* I am now based at a continuing education NPO in downtown Tokyo for my dissertation research. The NPO is very interesting because the municipal government collaboratively established this NPO with the residents in order to improve their lifelong learning opportunities. The establishment of the NPO represented a new way to learn, instead of only using a conventional channel of learning. Furthermore, volunteers operate all facets of the NPO. I can see an interesting example of Japanese volunteerism. Also, I can see direct and active interactions between residents and the municipal government. I ask how the public administration is involved with the NPO.
- junior:* Any other NPOs?

- me:* I am also seeing NPOs coming out from labor unions, and environmental NPOs in Yokohama. But I don't see these two types so much.
- junior:* I think that you should expand your research more... . You should have looked more carefully at this emerging social sector, NPOs. The NPOs we want to create can make a more meaningful social sector in the 21st century. As you may know, everything was started from the NPO Law-making process. That was a meaningful collaboration between citizens and politicians. The current NPO boom is in line with the "meaningful" collaboration. Strange NPOs that we are now seeing will definitely not survive.

During the conversation, I was very confused. The NPOs I was seeing were the strange ones, according to the definition offered by my junior. To me, they seemed to be the norm rather than the exception. After saying that there were many types of NPO in Japan, my junior optimistically implied that strange NPOs would not last in the survival of the fittest. This suggested that she did not recognize the diversity of the NPO sector in Japan. I understood that the organization for which my junior and her boss worked had been established to pursue diversity in citizens' activities and to support the various types of NPOs in society. Despite this mission, my junior and her boss only perceived a normative image of NPOs. In fact, they entered a normative discussion as an authority in the area of the Japanese NPO world. I felt a big gap between what I saw in the field site and what my junior and her boss saw. What I saw in my field site was Japanese NPOs in crisis. I saw that volunteers at SLG could not move forward within the new NPO framework. At the grassroots level, people were at a loss on one hand, while there was a rosy macro-discourse about the Japanese NPO sector on the other hand.

What is the reason for this bifurcation? What is the real image of Japanese NPOs? Who has a "correct" grasp of NPOs? I have just reiterated my questions. NPOs (such as SLG) that were created under the strong guidance of the state actually exist in Japanese society. According to the definition of NPOs given by my junior and her boss, though, SLG was not a proper NPO, but a strange NPO. In reality, however, people at the

grassroots level were mobilizing under the NPO Law and volunteering for advancement of public welfare. Observing the grassroots people's serious efforts for betterment of the local community, I thought there was no reason that their activities should be denied. Objectively speaking, this is a reality of the Japanese NPO sector. It is one form surely seen in the Japanese NPO phenomenon.

***Who Participates? Who Does Not Participate?***

Who is participating in NPOs? This was one of the primary questions explored in this project. Regarding this point, I will develop a detailed argument in the next chapter, particularly focusing on a reality of volunteerism in Japan. Here, I would like to consider the other key question: Who is not participating in NPOs?

Japan has a rich tradition of citizens' movement in the post-World War II era. Students, laborers, and ordinary and marginal people have played a significant role in creating social and political trends (e.g., Koschmann 1978, 1996; Gordon 1993; Kurihara 1999; Sasaki-Uemura 2001). Before starting my research, I had imagined that the people who had led the students' movements of the 1960s and residents' movements of the 1970s would proactively participate in the ongoing NPO phenomenon in Japan. I had the impression that many of these activists would populate this sector. However, I came to understand that they were hesitant to become involved in NPOs. It seemed that NPOs were mobilizing a different group of people from those in the students' and residents' movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the people I encountered in NPOs did not have strong ties to the activist movements of the post-World War II era. They were not anti-government and anti-business. Instead, they wished to be collaborative partners and to propose something new for society.

Mr. Takahashi, the oldest volunteer, departed from the mainstream point of view. He offered his honest impression of the ongoing NPO phenomenon. He had been an

activist in a residents' movement against environmental pollution in his local community in the 1970s. He said,

I think we have a right to not follow the NPO Law. I am participating in a community development committee set up by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. The committee was supposed to develop into an NPO. However, it did not apply for this status. In our discussion, we concluded that getting NPO status does not offer any merits. In fact, we may even feel that our activities are limited by the status. Thus, we chose not to adopt an NPO style. I don't want to create NPOs actually. Establishing NPOs is a burden.

He continued,

The NPO Law is tactically arranged to mobilize people. By joining SLG, I know I am being "used" by the government. In the framework of SLG as an NPO, I know that the government expects me to play some role in society and to function for the entire society based on my experience in the residents' movement. I think many people are not conscious that the government is mobilizing them. Even in such situations, what I clearly can say is, however, that people at a grassroots level are making serious efforts to do what they want to do and what they can do here at SLG, by finding their "own" meaning, values, and sense, regardless of the government's intention. I strongly believe and hope that the potential power of the people at a grassroots level will get together and "explode" someday. It will not happen suddenly, but slowly and surely it will happen...like a technological innovation in my toy factory. We can do it even if we don't have the tool called the NPO.

Before concluding discussion on this issue, I would like to add the perspective of my old friend Momo. I met her when I started working as a reporter for a news service in Gunma Prefecture in the early 1990s. I used to speak with her because she was (and still is) an activist in a city northeast of Tokyo, where many migrant laborers from Bangladesh, Iran, Pakistan, and Peru worked at small- and medium-sized factories during the so-called bubble economy of the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Many foreign workers, most of whom were illegally staying in Japan, came to this city to perform jobs

that Japanese people hate to do. These jobs are called 3K in Japanese; they are *kitanai*, *kitsui*, and *kurai*, or dirty, difficult, and depressing.

When there was an on-the-job accident, the factory owners often refused compensation to these workers, as they were living in the country illegally. Momo eagerly supported the migrant workers. She created her own network to help them by organizing a group to support migrant workers' rights in Japan. As a reporter, I covered many labor accident cases in which these workers were involved. Momo would stand up for anyone she believed was a victim; she would also stand up against anyone, whether a government official or a business owner. Momo experienced the students' movements of the late 1960s when she was a freshman at college in Tokyo. While covering many cases as a reporter, I saw that Momo's actions originated from her experiences as a student activist.

It was in early January 2003 that I met Momo for the first time in more than five years. After I left to attend a graduate school in the United States, I had no opportunity to see her; we had only exchanged letters during that time. She was as active as she had been almost 10 years ago, although her appearance was a little different. She had cut her hair short and had lost a little weight. We talked about many things during our meeting at a tiny *izakaya*, a Japanese-style bar, in Shimbashi, Tokyo.

I really expected her to mention the ongoing NPO phenomenon in Japanese society because she continued to be so active in social movements. I was expecting her to say something about it. But, during our three-hour conversation, she never uttered the word NPO once. In the last few minutes of our meeting, I asked her directly what she thought about the current social trend toward NPOs. All she said was: "Some people might find that easier..."

That was the only comment she offered. Despite its brevity, her remark was one of the most insightful comments I gathered for my project. She had continued to do what she wanted to do and what she needed to do in Japanese society as an independent,

autonomous human being, while remaining deeply rooted in her community. She did not need an NPO.

CHAPTER 4  
INVITED BY THE STATE:  
INSTITUTIONALIZING VOLUNTEER SUBJECTIVITY

***Chobora - You can volunteer with a single finger!***

A man finds trash on the road, and goes to pick it up.

A: Oh, trash.

Narration: Nice *chobora*!

A: What's that? *Cho...*

Narration: *Chobora...* . You did a little volunteering. We now call it *chobora*.

A person in a wheelchair is at a loss in an elevator hall since the button is at an awkward position. Another person briskly moves towards the elevator and pushes the button.

The woman in the wheelchair: Thank you.

Narration: Why don't you start *chobora*? You can volunteer with a single finger.

This was a vignette from a nation-wide televised commercial that aired in 2001 when I was doing fieldwork in an urban Tokyo neighborhood. The sponsor was the Japan Advertising Council, known as AC, a public-interest cooperation that promotes serving the common good through public service campaigns. The novel term, *chobora*, which is a combination of the Japanese word for “a little” (*cho*) and “volunteering” (*bora*: the front part of the English-loan word *borantia*), has permeated the thoughts and behaviors of Japanese people.

In this chapter, I argue that such Foucauldian, coercive subjectivity – what I call volunteer subjectivity – is being intentionally produced and reproduced under the name of volunteerism in contemporary Japanese society. The process of promoting this volunteer subjectivity, which has pierced the very basis of human consciousness, is resulting in an institutionalization of a new relationship between the state and the

individual. During the course of ethnographic fieldwork from September 2001 through April 2003 intensively focusing on volunteerism stemming from the 1998 Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (NPO Law), I looked at the mobilization of volunteer subjects in Japanese society, and I gradually came to realize the agent is surely the state. The Japanese government at various levels plays a significant role in mobilizing these volunteer subjects. At the practical level, the municipal government *invites* residents to become volunteers to provide specific social services in the local community such as in continuing education program planning where I did fieldwork, museum operation, and elderly-care services. The government then organizes the residents into volunteer organizations called nonprofit organizations (NPOs) under the 1998 NPO Law. The motivation for this is not to augment social services offered by the state. I found that the volunteer activities organized under NPOs actually replace the government providing these services. The primary purpose of this NPO policy is cutting cost in public administration, a key agenda in globally dominant neoliberal politics. Meanwhile, such volunteer subjectivity supporting NPO activities has been systematically produced and reproduced. The education ministry has been trying to revise the Fundamental Law of Education, a basic charter defining the direction of the state-supervised education, in order to situate *borantia* or volunteering as one of the core courses in the Japanese school system. It aims to generate a subjectivity with civic engagement, in which people can spontaneously participate in the problem solving processes in public affairs.

I started the fieldwork with key questions: Why are we Japanese recently hearing the term *borantia* so often? Who actually sets up this emerging discourse of *borantia*? What exactly happens in volunteerism under the NPO Law? Although we do not say “*borantia*,” it seems to me that such actions as portrayed in the vignette could practically be termed as kindness – *shinsetsu* or *omoiyari* – in daily life. In fact, even though no Western, Judeo-Christian tradition is deeply rooted among its people, Japanese society is not a complete stranger to the concept of volunteerism. Japan has a tradition of neighbors

helping each other, symbolized by a term *otagaisama* (for each other), which represents a sensitivity of mutual aid. Japanese society has such a set of rules for daily life, rooted in the local community. Its members have traditionally forged close ties based on mutual aid. One typical example was the form of cooperative labor known as *yui* (literally, tying) through which community members would help each other plant and harvest fields, rebuild homes, thatch roofs, and engage in other activities that could best be done by a group (Hoshino 2000). In today's society as well, if one of the neighbors is having a funeral, Japanese people go along to help; in areas with heavy snowfall, neighbors of households without able-bodied adults willingly help with snow shoveling. In every case, helpers accept no payment because members of the local community help and support each other, as part of the spirit of *otagaisama*. Thus, why is the contemporary Japanese society now intentionally choosing to define activities that are not particularly noteworthy, such as picking up trash and pushing an elevator button, as volunteering? Who is participating in this new social trend? What are ordinary people experiencing and what do they think of this phenomenon? In this chapter, I explore the implication of this emerging form of volunteerism.

### ***Discourse of Borantia***

In what way was the term *borantia* introduced to Japanese society? In the popular vocabulary encyclopedia *Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki*, which has been published since 1948, the word *borantia* first appeared in the 1960 volume. However, at that point, it was only explained in the foreign-loan words' section as a volunteer soldier in the military. In 1968, the meaning then expanded into a conventional social welfare term. Both of the definitions were in use until the newest issue of 2003. In 1979, the word *borantia* was introduced as a way to participate in society, particularly for women. *Borantia* is a sort of spirit. Residents have a consciousness as members of society to spontaneously participate in social and political life, and make voluntary efforts for the

common good. The embodiment of this spirit is called volunteer activities. Beyond social welfare, it is now recognized to be a wide range of spontaneous activities in social and political life. Interestingly enough, Ichikawa Fusae, one of the first Dietwomen in Japan's postwar politics to advocate for improvements of women's status, wrote the explanation. She was a leader in the women's suffrage league, and played a significant role in obtaining women's suffrage in Japan. Currently the vocabulary encyclopedia has expanded the itemization of the word *borantia* to more than 20 definitions.

The above is a popular discourse of volunteerism. From Japanese academia, meanwhile, Kaneko Ikuyo (1992) sets a new meaning of volunteering in contemporary Japan. He looks at volunteerism from a perspective of relationality among people, introducing a key word *tsunagari* or networking. Volunteering represents a relationality in society – when he/she sees that some other people face problems, he/she tries to solve the problems jointly with the people. He argues such *tsunagari* generated from volunteer activities makes society diversified and enriched. Volunteering is a principle of behavior for people who want to find new ways of perspectives and new senses of values. It could even be a “window” for a breaking deadlocked situation of society (Kaneko 1992: 69).

Why is volunteerism in vogue now? At this stage, I believe that there are two possible answers. The general perception of this emerging *borantia* began to take a root in the wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake that devastated the Hanshin area of Hyogo and Osaka Prefectures, western Japan, on January 17, 1995, which claimed 6,401 lives. As soon as news of the earthquake broke, 1,377,300 people joined volunteer activities from January 1995 through January 1996 from all over Japan and dedicated themselves to rescue work (Economic Planning Agency 2000: 7). Faced with the sudden emergence of an extreme number of volunteers in 1995, some members of the mass media coined the term “The First Year of Volunteerism.” Many Japan-based scholars, primarily sociologists, did extensive research on the impact of the post-Hanshin volunteering on conventional political, economic, and social institutions. Their work

point out that the inability of the traditional government bureaucracy to deal with the tragic situation, in contrast to the impressive work of the volunteers, dramatized the need for a social and political structure that recognized the valuable contributions of volunteer-based civic groups like NPOs to society. Furthermore, they argue that the earthquake changed the way grassroots people constructed the meaning and reality of society.

The second observation was that the new dynamism of Japanese volunteerism could be better seen as stemming from a convergence of domestic and global developments. Lester M. Salamon (1994) argues that the development of volunteerism is indicative of a global associational revolution. The movement was characterized by a massive array of self-governing, voluntary, private organizations pursuing public purposes outside the formal apparatus of the state. The expansion of the associational groups would permanently alter the relationship between states and citizens. Think-tank specialists see the ongoing proliferation of volunteerism as evidence of Japan's evolving "civil society," a term that refers to more direct participation by the citizenry in addressing social needs (Yamamoto 1996). This was a result of Japanese postwar economic prosperity, which generated a sizable urban middle-class (ibid.: 10-11). Furthermore, the prolonged malaise of the Japanese economy since the 1990s challenged the validity of the ideals of material achievement that shaped it after World War II. The system of lifetime employment, once the pride of Japan's companies, was showing cracks. In this increasingly uncertain environment, getting a job with a company no longer meant the guarantee of a stable future. Rather, people were shifting their priorities to pursue something they could truly support. In this context, volunteerism gave ordinary people a chance to strategically choose to develop meaning in their lives, described by Lynne Y. Nakano as a lifestyle choice for establishing self-identities (Nakano L. 2000). Volunteering was advocated as a conscious self-motivated action for enriching one's life amid socio-economic uncertainty.

But, these explanations do not completely satisfy me. They do not answer some of my original questions: Who defined the macro discourse of volunteering in Japanese society? Who defined one activity as appropriate and desirable and called it “volunteering”? Were the criteria appropriate or not? Who actually benefits from this emerging phenomenon of volunteering? In order to answer these questions, I would like to introduce a volunteer mobilization project by the state – a municipal government, which I observed and experienced.

### ***Invited Volunteers by the Government***

Ms. Tajima, a housewife in her 50s, was an active woman in the local community, playing a couple of key roles in the women’s section of the neighborhood association and her daughters’ school PTA and was organizing a summer camp for kids. She served her family as a traditional Japanese housewife while living with her husband’s mother. After finishing child rearing almost ten years ago, Ms. Tajima had started looking for “something new in life.” One day an advertisement in local paper caught her eye. The advertisement was recruiting members on behalf of a woman’s group for an international exchange program. The group, which was affiliated with the municipal government, planned to visit Hungary and Czechoslovakia during the year. Her strong interest in music of Eastern Europe motivated her to apply, although she told me that she did not exactly understand the purpose of the mission. Ms. Tajima thought she deserved to apply for the mission in light of her contribution to the community as a neighborhood association and PTA member. She wrote up an essay entitled “Challenge to the Unknown World,” mentioning her rich experiences in the local community and her own interest to explore something new in her life. She was then chosen as a member of the delegation to Eastern Europe. This was her first involvement with the government.

In May 1994, Ms. Tajima got a call from a municipal-government official asking for her help after she returned from the 3-week international exchange mission for

women. The call was from a director of a newly created public facility for promoting continuing education in the municipality. The director asked for her to help as a volunteer in curriculum planning and operation of the facility. Here she described her impression of the call at that time:

For a long time, I was a traditional Japanese housewife – *ryōsai-kenbo* (good wife and wise mother). I graduated from a private girl's school – from its junior high through college – one famous for *ryōsai-kenbo* education. I served and still serve my husband. I fully took care of my two daughters. As my hobby I enjoyed cake baking. I was fully satisfied when my family enjoyed my homemade cakes. However, on the other hand, I wanted to start something while my mother-in-law was still healthy. Someday I will have to take care of her. When I was thinking about the rest of my life, I thought I want to be more involved with society. Actually at that time I have to admit that I was looking for a place I could go. When I got the call from the municipal-government officer, I thought this was maybe a last chance to explore another road in my life. I thought I would participate in my community more and more. The director expected me to play such an important role in the community, right? The call really confirmed my reason for being in this community. Thus, I decided to accept the offer from the government and join the continuing education project for my community as a volunteer. I really enjoyed volunteering here. However, I never imagined in my life that I would be involved in promoting continuing education in such an active manner. That was new territory for me.

Around the same time, Mr. Koba was also asked for his help by the director of the continuing education policy in the municipal government. He was a leader of a neighborhood association in his community and was appointed as a member of a task force to promote administrative reform in the municipal government. He talked to me about why he was involved in this volunteering activity:

When I was a leader of my neighborhood association nearly 10 years ago, I came to know Ms. Saeki, director of continuing education policy at the municipal government. At that time, she was in the community development division, though. I was directly asked by her to help this community-oriented continuing education project. I was never reluctant to do it. As a disposition shared by us in downtown Tokyo, if somebody we know well wants to do something but needs help, we gladly help him or her. That follows our feeling of *otagaisama*.

When he talked to me about this, it seemed that he was very proud of the story. This was partly because this episode revealed that he had a relationship with a high-ranking official in the municipal government. Furthermore, the direct call for help verified that the government trusted him. The government, frankly, tickled his pride.

Meanwhile, the municipal government publicly recruited people who spontaneously responded to their project for volunteers. Everywhere in the community, including at public libraries, hospitals, banks, subway stations, and the municipal government head office along with its branches, there appeared B-5-size, blue, plain paper notices. The notice, which was not decorated at all and only written in black ink on blue paper, had a simple message, saying:

*“Why don’t you join us?”* The municipal government is now recruiting volunteers to do planning and operations for continuing education activities at a newly created continuing education center in the community. The center opens this coming December. The only requirement for eligibility is to be a resident or worker in the municipality.

The notice impressively ended with a couple of poem-like sentences:

*You Can Do Something!*  
*You Might Want to Do Something!*  
*Why Don’t You Step into A New Life?*  
*You Can Start through This Volunteer Activity.*

As a further analysis, I examined the government’s internal documents on this volunteer-mobilization project in which it demonstrated the justification for organizing local residents as volunteers to implement continuing education policy. Under the Japanese Social Education Law, local governments at the prefecture and municipal levels are required to take full responsibility for offering continuing education to the residents. A

paper titled “On Learning Activities and Volunteering” is one of the few documents available mentioning the vision of the municipal government for this project.

Speaking of the continuing education policy, the basic principle should be self-learning by residents themselves. The learning activities should be operated by the residents’ spontaneous will. However, such opportunity for learning should be strategically arranged and intentionally organized by the municipal government. In this project, the residents could be both students and teachers. They could learn from each other. The residents are expected to not only acquire some new knowledge and skills but also to enhance themselves and improve the quality of their lives through involvement in this project. Thus, the proposed project of continuing education would be ‘hand-made’ by the volunteer-residents.

They further argue:

Continuing education is a positive learning activity in a community, one where independent residents build their own learning promoting system and provide learning opportunities to the residents. That is, continuing education is independent, self-directed volunteering activities by the residents themselves.

While building this policy, meanwhile, the main concern for the government was who could mobilize for this community-oriented continuing education project. The government actually pointed to the residents’ mobilization for the project as the highest priority. The government indeed needed to open the volunteering opportunity to the public. However, in order to maintain a level of control, they decided to create spaces by means of invitations to volunteer. In fact, there were a number of seats to be filled by some chosen people. They were all highly educated; most of them had college degrees and high profiles in their local communities. By sharing the vision of the project, such *invited* volunteers were strongly expected to play significant roles in operating the project instead of the municipal government.

By the opening of the continuing education center, 47 residents, including 34 *invited* volunteers like Ms. Tajima and Mr. Koba, had responded to the government’s

recruitment. Meanwhile, there were 13 purely voluntary participants. In total, there were 32 women and 15 men. Among the 34 *invited* people - all of whom were directly appointed by the government - were former teachers from a university, a high school, and an elementary school, women who participated in the government-sponsored international exchange program, leaders of the neighborhood association, community development activists, PTA leaders, Red Cross volunteers, local NGO practitioners, consumers' cooperative members, local cultural association leaders, local physical education association leaders, and local women's center leaders. The municipal government then organized all of the 47 volunteers into a citizens' group, which would be finally reorganized as an NPO, for promoting continuing education in the local community. The 34 *invited* volunteers were, as planned, assigned to central positions in the project, such as planning continuing education courses in the areas of literature, foreign languages, pottery, calligraphy, for example, and publishing a newsletter on continuing education activities in the community. The other voluntary participants were expected to help the *invited* people. This deliberate distinction of volunteers' roles created by the municipal government resulted in lasting frustration among the purely *voluntary* volunteers. Meanwhile, the number of people who voluntarily joined this continuing education project increased year by year. When I was doing my fieldwork, the number of volunteers amounted to more than 100. However, the *invited* volunteers continuously tried to influence all things regarding the operation, feeling some sense of duty to do so since they were directly asked by the government. They sustained a solid belief that what they were doing was all supported by the government. "I don't want to fail," Ms. Tajima often said to me when I asked her why she was working so eagerly. It was like a duty and a regular job. The only difference was that she was not being paid, and what she was doing was actually called *borantia*.

***Volunteering as Potential for Individualization?*<sup>29</sup>**

Throughout my fieldwork, I was very surprised by one point shared by almost all of the volunteers. It was their answers to my very simple questions – Why are you volunteering here? Why did you choose volunteering for promoting continuing education? Answers were never on the tips of their tongues, or responses from the volunteers were uninspiring. It seems reasonable that the 34 *invited* volunteers clearly answered my questions. However, this did not seem to be the case for the more than 100 people registered as *pure* volunteers. Most of them seemed not to have any particular reasons for volunteering in activities specifically related to promoting continuing education. Actually, I was frustrated because I was given no clear idea about why people volunteered here. Why did they choose this particular type of volunteering activity for supporting continuing education? Why did they not choose another kind of volunteering?

Each of them was freely looking for their own reasons for volunteering. Mr. Iwata, businessman of my generation in his early 30s, told me that meeting people was his reason for volunteering.

I am not from this area. I wanted to meet local people. I often have to move due to my job. For the past seven years, I have moved 11 times. However, I never had a chance to meet local people in these places. Now I have met many, many people. That is one of the main reasons I am volunteering here.

Mr. Matsuda, a college professor in his 40s, talked to me in the same way about why he joined this activity.

I wanted to be involved in my community more. I moved here three years ago. I bought a house. However, I didn't know anybody in this community. Therefore, volunteering here is a precious chance to get to know people.

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<sup>29</sup> I use this term “individualization” in line with Ulrich Beck’s definition (1994: 13). He says, “‘Individuation’ means, first, the disembedding and, second, the re-embedding of industrial society ways of life by new ones, in which the individuals must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves. Thus, the name ‘individualization’.”

Along the same lines, Mr. Takahashi, the oldest volunteer in his 70s and formerly a toy factory owner, said:

I am volunteering here for networking in case of an emergency. Think about the possibility of a huge earthquake happening here in downtown Tokyo. In that case, we need to know each other to survive the disaster by helping each other. Volunteering here offers me a chance to know who is who in the community.

Ms. Hayashi, in her late 40s, told me why she was volunteering.

I fully took advantage of this volunteering opportunity for my career development. Many years ago, I wanted to be a writer. Instead, I got married, and had two kids. I did not have enough time. About five years ago I saw an advertisement for recruiting some volunteer writers for a newsletter informing of continuing education opportunities in the local community. I wanted to learn how to write articles professionally. Fortunately, there were some professional editors the municipal government hired. I learned a lot from them. Actually, the editors even helped me make a network for publishing. Through the network, now I earn money by writing some short articles. It is a great achievement for me even if the articles are short.

While searching for their reasons for volunteering, I gradually came to notice that what the volunteers wanted to do was not something particular, in this case, for promoting continuing education. Most of the volunteers did not specifically seek volunteering opportunities with continuing education. Rather, they were just looking for “something” to satisfy their own individual needs. The volunteers have their own reasons for wanting to engage in volunteer service, which was, only by chance, promoting continuing education in the local community; an opportunity prepared by the municipal government.

Nakano Toshio (1999) argues this phenomenon of volunteering I saw in my field site SLG by introducing the concept of a potential for individualization or self-

actualization. Who am I? What do I want to do? What can I do? In what way do I construct my identity? Alberto Melucci (1989) points out that in contemporary society individualization is realized in the context of a reflexively ordered environment. In fact, the process of individualization requires the self-reflexive form of action. Our life-political environment is not a one-dimensional hierarchical power structure. It is expressed by multiple values generated by affluent information resources and reinforced by social conflicts. Such an environment makes it possible for us to negotiate and intentionally choose another identity, a reflexive production of self in the life-political arenas from which social identities are constructed. No fixed identities are confirmed. Conventional social divisions, by means of which membership in class, family, gender, or nation-state are defined, are now becoming increasingly flexible and their boundary lines are becoming more diffused. New kinds of social identities are formed by such figurations as “nomads of the present.” The volunteers in my field site abstractly expressed what they might want to do, or said that they simply wanted to do something in general. The vehicle for volunteering did not matter much. When people were looking for something, the municipal government offered a place for volunteering in a very timely manner. People happened to encounter chances for volunteer work in the area of continuing education. They justified the situation saying that they encountered what they were looking for, and then they realized that they finally found new meaning in their lives.

Actually, I myself experienced this. I did not have a strong interest in volunteering. I had never had volunteer experience in my life prior to starting this project. However, I had thought that if I had a chance, I wanted to try volunteering for something. I wanted to be involved in society in the form of a volunteer. I believed that my involvement would contribute positively to society. I had no idea, though, about what kind of volunteering activities in which I wanted to engage. It was just something. It was not something in particular. One day I happened to help a children’s class as a volunteer because the assigned volunteer was suddenly sick. That day I wrote in my fieldnotes what I felt at the

time.

Today I helped in a course for kids as a volunteer. As part of the coursework, kids made their own illustrated books - writing stories, drawing pictures, and binding the pages. There were about 20 kids in the course. Today was the final session. Thus, we volunteers helped in the bookbinding process. I had several conversations with the kids. One young girl told me while I helped her, "I wanted this book to be a present to myself. Actually, September 1 is my birthday. I really enjoyed this course. I want to take a course like this again." Another child also told me, "I have come to this (continuing education) center since I was in my first year of the elementary school. I took many fine arts courses here. I like these courses." I felt a feeling of satisfaction and happiness when I heard such comments from the kids. Probably the feeling I felt was a kind of joy in being a volunteer. The volunteers who find meaning in doing volunteer work here must have this type of feeling I felt today.

I was never interested in children's courses, or in promoting continuing education activities. However, from the bottom of my heart, I was very much moved by my own first "volunteer" experience. I felt joy run through my body and mind. I even thought that I found a new aspect of myself. At the same time, however, I thought this feeling could be dangerous. Somebody, including an authority like the government, could take advantage of this kind of feeling for achieving its own purpose, while mobilizing people under the beautiful name of volunteerism. In fact, Melucci warns of the possibility that the process of individualization faces a sort of blockade when we abandon the serious self-reflexive form of action and if we blindly believe in existing power. In these cases, one falls into dependence on authority. He says, "the process of individualization involves on the one hand, the potential for individual control over the conditions and levels of action; yet, on the other, it entails the expropriation of these self-reflexive and self-productive resources by society itself" (1989: 48; also cited by Nakano, T. 1999: 85). Given volunteer opportunities by the government, people simply felt joy as a part of self-actualization while they were volunteering. They wanted to repeat the same experience again, as I did. We only considered the pure feeling that we were helping, bettering

society. However, people were, on one level, only reacting to the government's appeal. It subconsciously meant that volunteers became enablers of the system, unaware that they were recruited and manipulated by the government into becoming a part of the existing social structure in order to compensate for the government's insufficiencies. While mobilizing the local residents as volunteers, as I argued earlier, the fiscally-ailing municipal government actually shrank its staff in its continuing education division. It abolished the director of continuing education policy position under the name of administrative structural reform in 2000, the year that my field site SLG got NPO status. It occurred to me that the government could conveniently mobilize people as volunteers without any serious effort for their own purpose, particularly if and when the ideas of the volunteer recruits were just pure and, even more importantly, naïve.

### ***Reproduction of Volunteer Subjectivity through Education***

Even though volunteering is part of self-individualization, examples of continuing education volunteers in my fieldwork verify that it is actually controllable by somebody. In the process of education reform, the Japanese government has been making serious efforts to institutionalize the expression of voluntary will into the existing society in an effective, strategic manner (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2002). At the practical level, the institutionalization of volunteer subjectivity is encouraged through the national education program. In Japan, the education ministry strictly supervises the content of education. Through education as a national project, such subjectivity is recognized as important and ideal for society, and justified as a desirable social identity for supporting the current existing society. In particular, students are expected to absorb volunteer subjectivity as something necessary to good citizenship. In a contemporary discourse, the volunteer subjectivity organized under NPOs is even expected to break the deadlocked economy and society as Japan lost direction after the burst of the asset-inflated "bubble" economy of the late 1980s through the early 1990s.

In March 20, 2003, the Japanese government received an epoch-making proposal, one that aimed to revise the Fundamental Law of Education, from the Central Council for Education, an authoritative advisory body to the education minister.<sup>30</sup> The education law has defined the basic concept of the Japanese educational system since 1947, controlled textbook content and defined the daily school regimen and beyond, as its guiding principles. Based on reflections of Japan's nationalist education before and during World War II and with the aim of building a democratic and peaceful society, the concept of individualism has been prominent in Japanese educational philosophy. Actually, the law, which is often dubbed an "education constitution," is the only law among several fundamental laws enacted during the Allied Forces' occupation after World War II that has not been revised, although some politicians have tried.<sup>31</sup> The latest attempt to revise the law was initiated in November 2001 by the education minister at the time, Toyama Atsuko. Minister Toyama told the council that a study of revisions to the law was necessary to deal with "changes we are facing" by nurturing creativity and fostering respect for tradition and culture – "qualities," she said, that are required for the nation's citizens (Asahi Shimbun November 27, 2001).

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<sup>30</sup> Based on the recommendations from the council, the education ministry formulated a bill to revise the Fundamental Law of Education and submitted it to the Diet. In the Regular Diet Session of 2003, however, the proposal was pending due to opinion conflicts among coalition ruling party members. The proposal would be discussed continuously, although Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichiro never mentioned a deadline, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported on July 31, 2003.

<sup>31</sup> The Fundamental Law of Education was created in 1947. There were four attempts to revise the law prior to this time in November 2001. The first one was in February 1956 by Education Minister Kiyose Ichiro. The second one was in August 1960 by Education Minister Araki Masuo. In August 1987, the Ad Hoc Council on Education was organized under Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. It was this council that actually formed the foundation of the current education reform policy. Under the administration of Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo and Mori Yoshiro in the late 1990s, furthermore, the National Commission on Educational Reform, a private advisory body for the prime minister, urged the government to review the basic education law and adapt Japan's educational agenda to better meet international needs. The council recommended that Japanese schools reiterate traditional values, reaffirming Japanese culture and community. One of the key points in the recommendation was that all school children perform community service, which was deemed coercive and compulsory. Education Minister Toyama then ordered the Central Council for Education to take into account the recommendations made by the National Commission on Education Reform. In fact, a current review of the law gained momentum after being recommended by the final report of the National Commission on Educational Reform in 2000.

In the noteworthy proposal by the Central Council for Education, the key slogan of education called for an agenda toward education in the new millennium – “the nurturing of spiritually rich and strong Japanese people who will generate new ground for the 21st century.” The origin of this policy advocating education with latitude can be traced back to the Ad Hoc Council on Education, which former Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) formed in the 1980s. Nakasone defended the council’s work in an interview with the *Asahi Shimbun*.

The measures set forth by the council to be carried out at the school level are rather meaningful. They are being implemented and expanded upon one by one. I think the council ought to take credit for them. Yet the most crucial and basic point is absent, that is to say the policy lacks a spiritual backbone. It is extremely compliant with the Fundamental Law of Education, which underscores individuality and freedom, yet omits the notion of the state and the public as well as the sense of respect toward Japan’s unique culture and tradition. ... I am not saying this to accentuate nationalism. One needs a spiritual pillar in order to live as a human being. The current education system does not provide the students the time to give serious thought to ideas and philosophies.

(Asahi Shimbun August 19, 2002)

Keeping with these comments by Nakasone, the Central Council for Education defined an ideal image for the Japanese education. More specific to the revisions, the proposal recommended that seven principles be added to the current Fundamental Law of Education:

1. Schools must be trusted by the public;
2. University reform is necessary to carry the nation into the knowledge-oriented era;
3. The role of families and coordination among schools, families, and local authorities is important in educational matters;
4. A sense of civic responsibility for proactively participating in public must be cultivated;
5. There should be respect for Japanese culture, and the development of a love for community and patriotism;

6. Lifelong learning must be promoted;
7. The basic program to promote education must be modified.

(Central Council for Education 2003)

The proposal promotes the cultivation of a sense of civic responsibility, while maintaining an underlying tone of patriotic emphasis on nationalistic identity formation, seen as the influence of former Prime Minister Nakasone. This idea stresses the importance of nurturing awareness and a positive attitude toward becoming actively involved in public forums supportive of the state and the individual.

Furthermore, in the proposal, a new term *New Public* or *atarashii kōkyō* is introduced, while the meaning of “public” has been tactically re-conceptualized. In Japanese society, “public” has meant the state or something related with the state. However, it is redefining the public sphere by institutionalizing volunteer subjectivity. The concept of public has been expanded. It includes an area of civic engagement for supporting a *New Public*. It is a sphere in which people in general or people who are interested in a cause can voluntarily participate. The proposal aims to establish a foundation of solidarity of good citizens to promote a better society defined as increased civic engagement, which in itself would help society, the argument goes, to become less subject to the whims of government.

*Creating a New Public, which aims to encourage the proactive participation of volunteering subjects for the state and society in the 21st century*

It is the responsibility of people living in a democratic country to be proactively involved in matters of the state and society. The situation of the state and society heavily depends on the people’s will to seek something better. However, so far we Japanese are liable to depend on somebody else’s action regarding these issues. We believe it is someone else’s responsibility. That is not good, however. Instead, what we need is to cultivate a sense of public awareness. Through the volunteers’ work seen just after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, we confirmed that we have a tradition of mutual aid. Now we are stepping into a new era in which we are supporting a sense of values, which we now call a *New*

*Public*. That is, we try to solve our social problems we face by ourselves, including life improvement issues in the daily lives of the local community as well as beyond-national-boarders matters of the global environment and human rights. It is expected that one tries to use one's abilities and time for others, local communities, and society, based on one's own will. For supporting a *New Public*, what one needs is self-awareness as an active participant in the making of the state and society, bravery for practicing social justice, and an attitude of respect for Japanese traditional social norms.

(Central Council for Education 2003)

Here, in other words, in the *New Public* sphere, Japanese people are expected to spontaneously do what they feel they need to do by themselves, instead of waiting for something to be provided by the government. That, in theory, is the civic engagement that the education ministry expects to institutionalize as volunteer subjectivity.

A reality in Japan is that volunteering often sounds like it is mandatory. In the educational philosophy promulgated by the Central Council for Education, volunteering to support the *New Public* is expected to officially be set up in school education as something compulsory. In fact, the council recommended introducing volunteerism as a part of the core curriculum, such as in moral education (*dōtoku*) and social studies courses. In another proposal on volunteer promotion by the Central Council for Education, its basic stance on promoting volunteerism is that

[V]olunteering should be considered a key for solving and answering social problems we are now facing. Volunteering provides an opportunity for social participation as independent, autonomous individuals. Such individuals are expected to contribute to generating and supporting the new “public.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, learning volunteering plays a dominant role in supporting the concept of the “public.” It will become crucial to support a rich civil society.

(Central Council for Education 2002)

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<sup>32</sup> Although at this point, July 2002 when this proposal was presented, the term *New Public* was not officially introduced, the concept can be seen in the content of the report. The term *New Public* first officially appeared in the 2003 report by the Central Council for Education.

In a further example, the proposal mentioned how to introduce volunteering to children in elementary, secondary and college levels:

For the youth in the growth phase, both schools and local communities should intentionally and strategically introduce volunteer activities. Considering their educational value, we urge them to have various kinds of “direct” volunteer experiences. ... Learning to volunteer provides an opportunity for spontaneous learning and activity, and generates quite considerate persons. Volunteering will give students a chance to enhance the meaning of their lives throughout their lifetimes. Furthermore, doing so will create a solid foundation to become a spontaneous, independent person who can always contribute to society through everyday activities.

(ibid.)

In fact, the council urged students from elementary schools to universities to participate in volunteering as such activities could be an important factor in high school and college admissions and counted as credit. To generate real-life volunteer experiences, it was reported that Waseda University, one of the prestigious private universities in Tokyo, planned to dispatch its 250 students into elementary and junior high schools in the Shinjuku-ward of central Tokyo as teaching assistants for computer science and club activities (Nihon Keizai Shimbun June 14, 2002). This is definitely becoming a trend in Japanese university education. Moreover, the council proposed establishing a “young volunteer passport” system, under which students who volunteer may be given discounts on entrance fees to public facilities (Central Council for Education 2002). This document would be a record of individual volunteer activities, and would apply toward school credit, entrance examinations and employment recruitment evaluations.

Under the circumstances, some critics point out that forcing students to participate in some volunteer activities and offering rewards as incentive distorts the original spirit of volunteerism. The *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on April 9, 2002 said in an editorial:

The important thing in volunteer activities is not simply the number of hours put in. What counts is how one uses his physical and mental resources to learn, care and

understand what it is like to help other people. Nor is “helping out” at nursing homes and similar institutions the only form of volunteer work. Active volunteerism involves identifying problems and working out solutions, as was the case for the young people who helped address the issue of HIV-tainted blood products, for example. Moreover, it ought to be more amply rewarded. One can gain joy when his action makes a difference, no matter how modest.

It is indeed possible that “overnight volunteers” might suddenly become popular in schools because they would receive merit points for their volunteer activities, which would be recorded in their teachers’ reports to schools to which they plan to apply. The meaning of “volunteer” will change if and when it becomes virtually compulsory in schools. Volunteering has an active sense originally but the proposal makes it less of a self-motivated activity.

Interestingly enough, the proposal on volunteer promotion never used the English-loan word *borantia* for its definition of “volunteering.” It was translated as *hōshi* in Japanese, which literally means “service ” in English. The Japanese term – *hōshi* – actually has a nuance that implies supporting society or even sacrificing oneself for the public welfare. The proposal justified the usage of the term *hōshi* because it correctly expressed the broad meaning of volunteering. It said:

Both *hōshi* and *borantia* commonly mean activities for someone else and society as a whole, providing time and not expecting any material rewards. ... What we pursue here is that we contribute to the *New Public*, which is supported by each individual and society, providing time and ability. That is, more specifically, we pursue activities for someone else, including oneself, and society as a whole, not expecting any rewards. In this sense, we broadly define the activities as *hōshi*. ... From this point, our traditional community services such as neighborhood associations, youth groups, firefighting, and festivals are all based on *hōshi*.

(Central Council for Education 2002)

But, I have never perceived that the volunteers in my field site see their activities as *hōshi*. In my impression, their reasons for volunteering are far from *hōshi*. They were

actually very sensitive to the word *hōshi* and never used it for describing their activities. I inscribed a comment on this issue in my fieldnotes. One volunteer said in a meeting,

I don't think that volunteerism is *hōshi*. We volunteers are not building a relationship between people who give services and people who receive services. We are not pursuing such a relationship. We primarily try to enhance ourselves through volunteering. I believe that we are now in a transition from a money-based society to a heart-based society. Volunteering offers us a clue to the meaning in life. We are not doing for others but doing for ourselves and for our own life.

Another said,

I believe that there is no ideal type of volunteering. Each organization or group has its own style. I think it would be possible to have various styles of volunteering.

While listening to these opinions, I felt that the argument made by the education ministry in the macro discourse is somewhat far from the reality of volunteering in this society.

It seemed contradictory that the government can ignore such reality at the grassroots, while education is situated as the first step for effectively making routine the creation of this coercive social consciousness (e.g., Illich 1972; Foucault 1977; Miller 2001). This occurs through forms of educational practice, which shape volunteering as supporting the *New Public*. Education controlled under the strong state defines an ideal style of civic engagement. It is a social engineering tool for determining identities, to be deployed for an ulterior purpose. Furthermore, in producing and reproducing a certain form of human nature – one directed by the urge of volunteer subjectivity – the national education system has impinged upon the population as a whole. The proposal points out how the government and businesses can introduce and support volunteering activities (Central Council for Education 2002). At the practical level, volunteering promotion

centers, such as Tokyo Voluntary Action Center (TVAC), an administrative arm of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government specializing in promoting volunteerism, encourage people in Tokyo to participate in volunteer work. Social Welfare councils, quasi-government institutions designed to promote both the growth of volunteerism and the matching of existing community needs with volunteering resources, are nowadays being reorganized as volunteering promotion centers at prefecture and municipal levels. In the Tokyo metropolitan area, for example, there were 51 volunteer centers and welfare councils in April 2004. Volunteer centers like TVAC give information about volunteer opportunities while educating people who are interested in volunteering. What they are teaching, however, is not simply the virtues of volunteerism, but the social necessity of surrendering subjectivity to the volunteering impulse. According to a TVAC pamphlet, there are four pillars of volunteerism. They say volunteerism exhibit the following qualities: (1) spontaneity, (2) mutually aiding, (3) unpaid service, and (4) contained problem solving.

Japanese society, as a result of such movements, has been experiencing a reformulation of the relations between the state and the individual. In fact, it is being introduced to a new form of rationality of the state aimed at the level of human consciousness. The volunteer subjectivity is becoming “the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society” (Foucault 1977: 194). In fact, I noticed that the Japanese term *borantia* is never used for “negative” activism under the current system. Participating in, for example, anti-government activities, anti-globalization appeals, and anti-Iraq War (to cite a recent case), has never been categorized as part of volunteer activities. The volunteer subjectivity is only praised for maintaining and even strengthening the existing society. In this sense, if we replace the term *New Public* with “the state” in the council proposal, the meaning of volunteerism in Japan becomes clearer. That is, volunteerism is done for the state. Volunteer work is not to be used against the state, even if the volunteer believes this activity would be for the good of the people.

During my fieldwork, I had an impression that volunteers supervised under the NPO system would never become social activists. They are apolitical. In general, those people advocating thoughts different from the dominant political voice are labeled as people in citizens' groups. I found that this is very conspicuous in media reports such as in newspapers.

### ***The Colonization of the Volunteering World***

As I argued earlier in this chapter, volunteering is realized as informal, unregulated, and spontaneous, as the word *voluntary* originally brings to mind. Volunteering is an expression of individuals' values and their search for meaning in their lives. It is situated as part of the activities of the lifeworld, a term introduced by Edmund Husserl (Husserl 1970). He describes the lifeworld as the world of immediate experience, the world as already there, predetermined, the world as experienced in the natural, primordial attitude, that of original natural life. The lifeworld can take a variety of forms. It is the immediate milieu of the individual social actor. It can be very tightly woven together or it can be more loosely structured. The things that make life worthwhile are love, friendship, companionship, good conversations with friends and peer groups in informal discussions, and spending quality time with family. We are known and recognized as a person, an individual, and a human being.

On the other hand, throughout my fieldwork, I felt like I observed something different from the argument outlined above. I was witnessing the encroachment of forms of administrative rationality or formal rationality, to use Max Weber's terms into life spaces (Weber 1978). I would call it the colonization of the volunteering world, as Jürgen Habermas labels it a colonization of the lifeworld (Habermas 1987). As my ethnographic research shows, volunteers were originally seeking their own meaning in their lives. Satisfying their own meaning through volunteering for something was one of the crucial motivations for stepping into volunteering. However, such people who were interested in

satisfying their own interests through volunteering for something were strategically mobilized under the NPO Law in Japanese society. They were organized as volunteers under the name of NPOs, in which each had its own special area of social service within the limited 17 designated areas, which include social welfare, community development, and international cooperation, as I argued in chapter 2. The volunteers are expected to play a significant role in contributing to the existing society through activities in NPOs. Furthermore, participating in voluntary activities at NPOs, for example, are highly recommended as an ideal civic engagement style for supporting the *New Public* or the state. Volunteering supervised under the NPO Law should be situated in the domain of formal rationality.

The colonization of the volunteering world involves a restatement of the Weberian thesis that the modern world based on formal rationality (determined by expectations of rational action pursuing efficiency and predictability) is triumphing over substantive rationality (determined by conscious value-oriented action) and coming to dominate areas that were formally defined by substantive rationality. It is a process by which rational actions in social and political life become predominant in the social activity of individuals, and formal rationality becomes predominant in the patterns of action, which are institutionalized in groups, organizations, and other collective behaviors. Weber characterizes as a warning this phenomenon that increasing rationality is an “iron cage” that limits individual freedom and activities.

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: “Specialist without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has obtained a level of civilization never before achieved.”

(Weber 1992: 182)

In my research context, under the iron cage, people are expected to institutionalize volunteer subjectivity in their body and mind as civic engagement for supporting the *New Public* or the state. In the mobilization of volunteerism in contemporary Japan, all burdens went to the grassroots volunteers, who are at a loss, suddenly given such a large assignment. They are at their wit's end trying to determine what they are expected to do. One volunteer, Ms. Takamiya, one of the 13 *pure* volunteers who spontaneously joined this community-oriented continuing education project, told me:

I think what I am doing here is work. I know a lot is expected of us from the government. The pressure actually sometimes made me feel lost – I don't know what I am doing here. I am only a volunteer, looking for my own meaning through volunteering.

Another day Ms. Tajima, whom I mentioned earlier in this chapter as an *invited* volunteer, told me,

For the past two weeks, I have been sick. I was at home. During that time, I felt I was very settled. I even felt like that was the real me. Volunteering made me very tired. I was always thinking about planning new courses. I don't know why I was so driven. Nevertheless, it was my daily life.

While hearing stories from the volunteers, I will never forget the day that I saw a government official playing a computer game next to one of the volunteers who was negotiating with an instructor candidate. More able, active, flexible volunteers actually covered his job. Meanwhile, some of the volunteers left the organization as they became annoyed with this reality – the colonization of their volunteer consciousness by administrative rationality. They felt that this was not the volunteer activity they had imagined. These people chose not to be volunteers under the NPO structure.

Volunteerism institutionalized under the NPO Law serves not voluntary grassroots people but the state, in particular, the neoliberal state, which pursues the small government with an emphasis on market rationality. Such a conservative government is taking advantage of the enthusiasm for volunteering to streamline the social system generated in the current framework of public administration. This is one reality of “volunteerism” in contemporary Japan. I would say, moreover, this reality of “volunteerism” is not limited to Japanese society. I believe that it is also true to in other countries promoting volunteerism under a conservative neoliberal policy.

## CHAPTER 5

### POWER AND CONTESTED RATIONALITIES:

#### ATTEMPTS FOR POLICY COLLABORATION AMONG NPOS AND THE STATE

##### *Kyōdō – Policy Collaboration*

In this chapter, I will argue a new political technique called *Kyōdō* – policy collaboration between NPOs and the government, in particular, at the municipal level, which has become popular since the enactment of the 1998 NPO Law.

I have here a 255-page report with an orange cover published by the Mie Prefectural government NPO team (Mie Prefectural Government 2001). The report specifically deals with 123 successful cases of *kyōdō*, policy collaboration between municipal governments in Mie Prefecture and local NPOs during the fiscal year 2000, which ran from April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2001. Since this the late 1990s, Mie Prefecture, located in central Japan, has become established as a role model for the Japanese NPO world for the way in which the prefecture government strongly pushed policy collaboration with local NPOs under reform-minded Governor Kitagawa Masayasu. Mr. Kitagawa, elected in 1995, aggressively implemented a decentralization policy at the local level of his administration.<sup>33</sup> His key elements were promoting information disclosure and building unique methods for evaluating administrative measures.<sup>34</sup> These were moves away from the old-fashioned back-room maneuvering politics of the central government. Mr. Kitagawa’s way of administrative reform inspired a birth of reform-minded or politically non-aligned governors across the

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<sup>33</sup> Mr. Kitagawa served two terms as governor between 1995 and 2003, before resigning in April 2003.

<sup>34</sup> The new evaluation system put into effect in 1996, for example, looked at nearly 3,000 prefectural projects to ensure that they had clearly defined purposes and quantifiable targets. For road development, for example, one objective was to reduce travel time between points. This, rather than previously used and bureaucratically defined “percentage of road improvement,” was made the standard. Such information, which is also important for road users, has been made public. The new approach also intended to sensitize officials away from their traditional approach of “disclosing information when asked,” toward actively volunteering information.

nation, particularly in Iwate, Miyagi, Chiba, Nagano, Wakayama, Tottori, Kochi and Fukuoka prefectures. People may talk of an “age of local governments,” while others lament that local governments have almost no officials who are really up to the challenge of creating changes under the strong control of the central government. However, the local governments have indeed moved ahead of the central government as far as reform is concerned. Acknowledging the significance of this shift, the national daily *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper wrote in an editorial on July 18, 2002, that the central government and bureaucrats could be left behind the times. The editorial urged the central government to recognize the important lessons local governments could offer regarding information disclosure, thorough evaluation of administration and changing the official mind-set.

*Kyōdō* was also a hot topic for both NPO members and municipal government officials at my field site SLG promoting continuing education in a local community. The NPO, organized by local residents, would take full responsibility for managing a public facility for promoting continuing education as an entrustment project, a policy collaboration between the government and the NPO. In fact, the government moved to transfer all businesses related to continuing education to the NPO. First, the government started to entrust parts of the operation of the center – specifically the planetarium and computer facility – to the NPO from April 2002. Then the final step was to separate itself completely from the continuing education center, which would result in the entrustment of the entire operation to the NPO. I was able to observe this attempt, which was scheduled to start in April 2003. The official talks toward the entrustment continued for six months until December 2002. I attended the entire series of meetings as an observer, although sometimes I was asked to give my opinions. Despite the attempts, however, the two sides failed to reach an agreement on the entrustment project.

In this chapter, I will first give an overview of *kyōdō* discourse in Japan, and then focus on the specific entrustment case that failed, identifying key points of this evolving

collaborative process between an NPO and the government. Why did the entrustment case fail? What were the constraints? What makes the playing field uneven? Who holds the decision-making power? What was the expected role of the government? What was the expected role of the NPO? During my observations, I was looking for what the people at both the NPO and the government experienced within the broader process of collaboration. I was particularly interested in how participants interpreted the process and how they wove it into their daily lives to create a social consciousness and identity. I want to acknowledge the potential for NPOs to put policy into practice. *Kyōdō* is an active effort of civic engagement in public affairs, which aims to build on the resources, skills, and knowledge of community members so that they can, together, improve the quality of life in the community. However, I will argue that there have been difficulties in terms of power sharing as power tends to be tipped to the government by virtue of its hold over policy development. My ethnographic investigation identified a preoccupation with persistent formalism in Japanese administrative politics, the framing of issues, procedures and practices of the government sector in the dominant discourses of bureaucratic instrumental rationality – in this case, a cost-cutting priority. Also important, I observed something that the government had not expected: resistance from the volunteer-based NPO to introduce alternative ways of doing things. The government's rationality, which was pushing for the most effective public administration in terms of cost, was never echoed among the volunteers, and vice versa. Local knowledge and practices generated by the NPO were fettered by the bureaucratic rationality. Another aspect I observed was how the dynamics of power contributed to determining the dominant rationality over the decision-making process. Rationality is very much power driven in Japanese society, in ways similar to those Bent Flyvbjerg (1998) confirmed in his study of a community development project in Aalborg, an old Danish town. The powerlessness experienced by the NPO participants during the decision-making process led them to be suspicious of the government. They even felt that they were becoming

peripheral under the strong state. There was a strong contrast between practices generated by local knowledge and state administrative skills, which destroyed trust, a key factor to a democratic process. Pursuing an ideal form of deliberative democracy, NPOs revealed fragility and immaturity; meanwhile, the state ironically became more and more dominant.

### ***Kyōdō – A New Political Technique***

Before moving on to analysis of the case, I want to review the discourse of *Kyōdō* in contemporary Japanese politics. *Kyōdō* is introduced as a new political technique between local NPOs and local governments in policy-making initiatives, one that was very much in fashion as it would make possible more successful policies. This was directly in line with a trend seen in the Anglo-American countries, the foundation for the so-called New Public Management (NPM) movement that strongly influenced the renewal of public sector activities in all advanced industrial countries. Japan is a latecomer to the NPM-inspired reform. Only since 1995 have comprehensive reforms - including traditional reform elements, such as cabinet reform, decentralization and strengthening of local self-government - as well as NPM-specific components, including a spree of agencification, been tackled (e.g., Pollitt 1990; Osborne and Gaebler 1993; Naschold 1996; Muramatsu and Naschold 1997).<sup>35</sup>

As Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari (1996) argue, creating collaboration

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<sup>35</sup> The new public management gradually came into the mainstream during the 1970s and 1980s when the earlier Neo-Keynesian economic policies faced deepening difficulties. A more neo-liberal orientation gained the overhand in the United States and in the United Kingdom together with the rise to power of Ronald Reagan (1981-88) and Margaret Thatcher (1979-90). In many advanced industrial countries middle-class people started to criticize increasing taxes, badly functioning public services and endless labor market disputes. Under the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, the expansion of public sector activities was stopped and the government's share of GDP started to decline during the 1980s. Different strategies were developed in order to reduce bureaucracy, to raise the efficiency of public service organizations and to improve the quantity of services. One widely used method was to look at ways in which the best performing large private service companies were managed and to utilize those experiences in the development of public sector organizations. This method was applied to the public sector, called New Public management.

beyond the conventional sector generates new flows of energy in society. Introducing the term “public work” to mean collaborative work that builds basic public goods and resources, they note that

[p]ublic generates new sources of energy. It brings together people, resources, and groups who may never have imagined working together. By creating new working relationships, it also changes the dynamic of power, often in significant ways.

(Boyte and Kari 1996: 29)

The political atmosphere in Japan certainly resembles what Boyte and Kari described. For example, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, one of the strong public entities promoting collaboration under conservative Governor Ishihara Shintaro, defines the term in a policy proposal for promoting *kyōdō*. It provides an ideal scheme of *kyōdō*

*Kyōdō* denotes activities jointly created by the government and NPOs, respecting each other as equal partners and exchanging their respective resources, aimed at achieving some social purpose and offering social services.

(Tokyo Metropolitan Government 2000b: 18)

Furthermore, *Kyōdō* is meaningful in the Japanese context of deregulation politics and financial economy, which started in the late 1990s under Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Koizumi Jun'ichiro, who was prime minister during my fieldwork, was strongly pushing for government services, including postal services, to be privatized. One of his favorite phrases, frequently quoted was, “*Min de yareru koto wa min de [yaru]*” (If things can be done by the private sector, the private sector should do them. The government does not need to do them if it does not need to be involved).

This trend has become dominant across the nation as public-private partnership (PPP). In Japan the PPP policy has actually been explained as a panacea for breaking

through the current deadlocked situation of the economy, referring to the British economy, which was galvanized under Margaret Thatcher's strong initiative to implement PPP policies. The idea is associated with using limited taxes more efficiently. It is not limited to government procurement but also can be applied to all aspects of the administration as a whole. According to research done by a private think-tank in Tokyo, more than 60 percent of local governments are interested in introducing the PPP policy for enhancing the efficiency of the public administration.<sup>36</sup>

Aiming to expand the PPP idea, many symposia were held in Japan during the time that I was doing my fieldwork. These symposia focused on explaining ways in which the policy should be introduced, advocating its effectiveness as a cost-cutting measure, while, at the same time, justifying it as a highly recommended platform for increasing citizen's participation in public affairs. Each symposium included invited experts from countries already successful in implementing the PPP policy. One symposium I attended on PPP in Tokyo in May 2002 was sponsored by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). The discussants included bureaucrats from METI, the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, a professor of economics from the University of Tokyo, and a few economists and strategists of private think-tanks in Japan. The PPP expert this time was an Australian businessman. The underlying theme of the symposium was the redefinition of the government's job of providing basic social services. It provided a good forum to consider the true mission of the government and what the government should be providing to its "customers." They argued that if the role is to provide the best social services to the public, the government

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<sup>36</sup> *Nikkei sangyō shōhi kenkyūjo*, a think-tank affiliated with the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* newspaper, conducted a survey on the Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) in local governments including 47 prefectures and 700 municipal governments, during March to May 2003. According to the survey, 9.5 percent of the governments, including 18 prefectural and 53 municipal governments, had already introduced the policy. Nearly 52 percent, including 26 prefectural and 361 municipal governments were considering implementing the policy. Their primary interests included the areas of garbage recycling, continuing education, and social works. Some 44 prefectures say the policy was effective in cutting the budget and enhancing the efficiency of public administration. For further detail, see the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* newspaper on June 16, 2003.

should consider buying them, or outsourcing, not generating them on its own. The role of the government should be to offer the best quality service at the cheapest price to its constituents. One METI official said at the symposium:

We are now introducing a concept of new public interest in Japanese society. What we are thinking is not public services in a top-down manner, but public services jointly produced by both the government and the private sector like NPOs. I believe the PPP policy aims to utilize the vitality of the private sector to galvanize the current deadlocked society. It is an effective approach to rebuild the Japanese economy.

An economist at a bank-affiliated think-tank continued:

The private sector is not a mere subcontractor to the government. The PPP policy develops an equal partnership between the government and the private sector. It is a type of outsourcing, in order to enhance efficiency. We know from our experience that the government's way, based on bureaucracy, limits their ways of thinking and acting. They will be able to think more freely and flexibly.

The Australian expert said:

Japan is lucky because it can learn from the UK and Australia, both of which were successful in using a PPP policy for the past couple of decades. Japan can learn from them in a most effective manner about the cases of successes and failures. We can provide that knowledge.

The symposium specifically discussed what the private sector organizations such as NPOs could do under a PPP policy framework. Examples of collaboration they mentioned were childcare, water supply, parking violation ticketing, prison operation, and data input. As a MOF official observed:

Indeed those are the main areas the government is considering entrusting to the private sector, mainly for cost cutting. However, I understand that an important issue is to what degree can the government rely on the private sector. I think the government should take responsibility at the decision-making stage. The

government needs to control the decision-making activities, including making budgets and recruiting personnel.

Another discussant added:

What I imagined is, for example, a housewives patrol. They find parking violators, and call the police. The police then go and give the tickets.

In January 2003, I had another opportunity to participate in a similar gathering, an annual conference on policy analysis, hosted by a nationwide consortium of policy analysts, politicians, researchers, and students. While the overall purpose of the conference was to discuss the Japanese policy-making system, the main topic was deregulation. Several participants reported obstacles caused by the Japanese political structure, for example how existing bureaucrats resist opening up active policy debates, and how the conventional iron triangle formed by bureaucracy, businesses, and tribe-politicians dominate the decision-making system in politics and the economy. Some participants even argued that Japanese politics is not politics in any real sense; it is just an interest coordination process. Many people stick to this social structure as it promotes their own interests. Against this backdrop, NPOs are being introduced as a way to stimulate the current deadlocked policy discussions by introducing new players such as NPOs to these debates. In other words, supporting a wider role for NPOs is in line with deregulation politics.

One of the discussants at this January gathering, a mayor in Gunma Prefecture, northern Tokyo, outlined how he uses NPOs in his municipal administration.

What I want to do is increase the quality of our municipal services for the residents. For example, I want to open our office 24 hours. However, I can't use my staff for that purpose due to labor law regulations. Thus, I use an NPO. If I use NPOs, I can keep the office open 24 hours. This is a result of a small-government policy. The municipal government and NPOs have a good collaborative relationship and were able to make such entrustment contract.

At the grassroots level, the collaboration is usually realized by entrusting projects to NPOs, for example, having an NPO provide specific social services to the public in place of, but promoted by, the government. I will discuss a specific case below.

### ***Talks toward Kyōdō : A Japanese Case***

From this section I will present the development of the entrustment talks between SLG and the municipal government from July 2002 until the end of the year. Formal meetings were held seven times and resulted in failure, with six NPO members, including a head, three vice heads, general secretary and vice general secretary, and four municipal government officials, including the chief of continuing education policy, head and vice head of the continuing education center, and a continuing education specialist of the government.<sup>37</sup> The series of meeting was primarily driven by one word – benefit. What are the benefits? The participants from both SLG and the municipal government each explored their own benefits in achieving the entrustment.

The talks started in early July 2002. Throughout, the tone was oppressive, and even unfriendly, due to the dominant presence of the government at SLG. The government held the dominant power as trustor and the NPO as trustee was weak. The policy chief of the continuing education of the government primarily led the discussions. In fact, it was the government, not the NPO, which presented the proposal for the entrustment project. At the beginning of the meeting, the policy chief defined the purpose of the meeting and how this meeting would be conducted.

*policy chief:* This meeting aims to create mutual understanding about the entrustment of operations of the continuing education center to SLG. We need to discuss what this is exactly; what SLG would

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<sup>37</sup> I should explain that the general secretary of the NPO was actually an *amakudari* official from the municipal government, which literally means “descent from heaven” or the practice of retired bureaucrats landing cushy jobs in the private sector.

be expected to do; and what impact this could potentially have on the residents, both positively and negatively. We have not decided when the entrustment would start, although we are targeting April 2003 tentatively. We have not decided whether we will entrust the operations to SLG or not, either. Once again, I hope through a series of meetings we can develop some shared vision of the entrustment project.

The head of the continuing education center followed the policy chief.

*center head:* Frankly speaking, under the entrustment contract, we would want SLG to only do basic facility management; this primarily entails daily maintenance of the continuing education center, including both the main hall and the annex.

He was referring to a 10-page handout, of which eight-pages were filled with details on how to do daily maintenance. The list of things-to-do was quite overwhelming. It included 62 items. (See Appendix 3.)

### ***Benefits – the Government Defines***

After explaining the agenda, they started discussions by focusing on the benefits of entrustment for both sides. Why would SLG want to get involved in the entrustment? Why would the government want to entrust management of a public facility to an NPO? The government, while responding to a question from a SLG member, defined the benefit from its point of view. Surprisingly, the government also provided rationales to the NPO about why NPOs should accept entrustment contracts from the government, which originally should be presented by NPOs under their own initiatives.

*SLG head:* First, may we ask what your thoughts are regarding entrusting business to an NPO instead of to a conventional, public corporation? According to a local ordinance, the government only makes entrustment

- policy chief:* contracts with government-created public corporations.<sup>38</sup> One of the benefits NPOs get from entrustment is stable revenue from earning entrustment fees from the government. This is part of our support policy for NPOs. This means, we plan to change the current stance on the entrustment contract. We consider that if you can save some part of the entrustment money due to your efficiency efforts, you don't have to give it back to us. You can keep it. Furthermore, from the residents' perspective – and actually this is the strongest reason for entrustment itself – the residents may feel that it is more convenient when NPOs operate public facilities, rather than when the government operates them. The crucial aim is to more effectively achieve the purpose that such facilities originally have. In other words, we want public feasibility to the residents, by the residents, and for the residents. Thus, we are considering entrusting all the current work we do on this to you. The work includes such responsibilities as collecting rental fees, maintaining the building, nighttime patrolling, and so on. However, you may not always do all of the things by yourself. For example, you can entrust nighttime patrolling to others.
- SLG head:* How many staff members do you have for the center?
- center head:* Six. However, you may not necessarily need six people. It's totally up to you. If you can do it with three people, you may use the extra money to use on other things. The more efficiently you do things the better you can manage your financial situation.
- SLG head:* I was thinking that it might be difficult to solidify our financial situation with the entrustment money from the government... by saving money on our own efforts. ... The efforts mean that we will do what you were doing with six people, with fewer people, right? If you think it is possible, why don't you do it that way? That's not the issue, though. That is not what we are actually looking for. What we want is when SLG uses the facilities of this center, it doesn't have to pay a fee, or maybe pays a discounted fee. That would benefit us.
- policy chief:* If we specifically do something only for SLG, it would not be fair to all of the residents in this ward. We can't do that. We couldn't intentionally do something like that, not with a public facility.
- SLG vice head:* For instance, could we extend the hours of operation to 9:30 p.m. for our courses offering?

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<sup>38</sup> Under the local ordinance in the municipality, the government can only make an entrustment contract with public corporations, called *kōsha*, which are created by the government for that purpose.

- policy chief:* Institutionally, no.
- SLG head:* Why is this a fairness issue? What is fairness? I think that fairness is not an issue in this case. I believe that the municipal government should seriously think about what it means to entrust something to a citizens-based NPO, instead of entrusting to a public corporation or for-profit company. Otherwise, the entrustment to NPOs will just become another form of subcontracting by the government. We want to use this public facility as much as we can. If we can combine entrusted facility management with our continuing education business, we can find the meaning of the entrustment. That would be a benefit that we could consider when we evaluate the entrustment contract with the municipal the government. We believe that what we want would also benefit the residents.
- policy chief:* It is impossible. Institutionally, it is impossible.
- SLG head:* If so, why don't you take a look at a couple of productive cases where other local governments nationwide and NPOs are collaborating? I believe that the government's role is to support various types of citizens' activities. We want to propose changing the management style of this facility to meet the actual needs that the users have.
- policy chief:* It is impossible... .
- SLG head :* We are putting too much emphasis on management of the facility. It is capping the development of the argument on users' activities. At this stage, we're not even looking at the facility operations. We are just looking at what has been put in front of us. At this point I would just say that nothing attractive has been presented to us.
- policy chief:* Providing services equally to all of the residents is our mission for doing the entrustment. The stance is based on the municipal government's ordinance. That's the only thing we expect you to do.
- SLG head:* Why aren't you more flexible? Why don't you try to change the ordinance? We have only to follow laws and rules. We need to revise laws if they limit our spontaneous activities. Now we know that the stance of the government is totally different from ours. The government thinks only about what it can do it under the current system. However, we don't. We want to change the system if the law limits our activities.
- policy chief:* I still believe that it is not possible. If the facility expands its service hours, other public facilities in the community may follow. Our job will just endlessly increase.

The discussion clearly revealed a large discrepancy between the two sides. I felt that the government was trying to manipulate the NPO to achieve its policy agenda. It was taking leadership in the discussion and justifying the entrustment as an administrative technique in the new public management framework. It was as though the government fully knew what the role of the NPOs should be in this kind of project with the government. It taught the right way to be an NPO. Interestingly enough, however, at the first meeting, the government only justified the entrustment project from the perspective of NPO and the residents. It never termed its logic, i.e. cost cutting.

The entrustment project was a package deal that the government wanted to make. Thus, there was no chance for SLG to say anything about any details of the business contract. SLG was only a trustee, while the government was the trustor. The government would reject any complaints from the trustee about the content of the project. Further negotiation would be impossible. As the head of the continuing education policy put it.

*policy chief:* We are going to entrust you with only a part of the daily administration of the facility. We don't expect you to have any say on anything on this issue. We are going to decide all of the details on the entrustment. You have only to follow our directions.

Amid the oppressive atmosphere, there was also a nuance that the government could make the entrustment contract with another trustee if and when SLG showed it was not worthy or capable of doing the daily administration as requested. I even felt that the government looked down on SLG.

*policy chief:* Actually, I do have concerns about whether SLG can do exactly what we ask with its current business abilities. I think that people dispatched from the government have done a great job supporting the business over the past six years before they left SLG last spring. I feel the SLG's secretariat is quite fragile now.

At this initial meeting, the government (again suddenly) produced a detailed list of the entrustment project to the NPO. As far as I know, there was no *nemawashi* (discussion in advance), part of the traditional decision-making system in Japanese society, between the government and SLG. The members of SLG appeared extremely annoyed not only at the list itself but that there was no *nemawashi* to introduce such important matters. It might even have been a shocking experience for the SLG people because they had believed that the government was an intimate partner. However, there was no such camaraderie. I just observed an oppressiveness that the government held over SLG. Meanwhile, SLG just revealed its fragility. This might be described as volunteers' amateurism, while the government indeed overwhelmed the SLG side with its professionalism as a business contractor. Clearly the NPO and the government entered the discussion with different images, different meanings and purposes, for the project. In other words, they were seeing the same things differently.

At the second talk in this process held at the end of July, the government further explained the details of the facility management plan. However, SLG's assertions again sounded powerless; it had no major influence toward changing the discussion's trend at this stage.

### ***Inside Discussion: Challenging the Defined Benefits***

By the beginning of August, following the first and second meetings on the entrustment, SLG still could not decide about whether to accept the entrustment due to the wide gap in understanding what the project entailed. SLG organized an internal strategy meeting specifically focusing on the entrustment project with the municipal government. The meeting was organized by SLG head, three vice heads, general secretary and vice general secretary, and one government official (vice head of the continuing education center). The meeting also included two directors, one of whom had experience as a business consultant (called *consul-director* in the conversation analysis

below) and another who was a member of the task force on administrative reform for the municipal government (called *reform-member*) respectively.

For the first internal discussion, I saw that the strategy meeting was interestingly divided along two sides – pro-entrustment and anti-entrustment. It was political in a sense. The pro-entrustment side included SLG head, a local lawyer who was directly appointed by the government to be the NPO president, and an SLG director from an administrative reform task force of the municipal government. On the anti-entrustment side was two vice heads – a woman who was invited by SLG to be a vice head from a local environmental NGO (*environmentalist*), and a person with a long history as a volunteer fire fighter in the community (*fireman*). One of the vice heads (*landlord*) missed the first internal meeting, although he played a key role in designating the direction later on.

- head*: I understand that the government originally planned to transfer all kinds of work related to continuing education to SLG. I believe that that's why they supported this NPO. This is my understanding.
- environmentalist*: Even if it is true, I think it is impossible to accept the entrustment from next year. We are not well prepared for it. If we accept it now, our burden would definitely increase. How about our secretariat? Are they well prepared? How about the directors' board? How about our grassroots volunteers? What we need to discuss is ... what we need to do. What are we trying to achieve?
- reform-member*: For me, such an argument is nonsense. What we need to discuss here is in what way we can prepare to accept the contract. We need to discuss the system we need to develop step by step. Otherwise, nothing can progress. If we talk about this issue for a year, can we make any conclusions? I doubt it. I believe it is better for us to start now.
- environmentalist*: But, we really don't have time to prepare for it. We need to discuss many issues. The crucial purpose of the entrustment is whether the residents can benefit. Cost cutting is the government's aim.
- reform-member*: It is difficult to prepare perfectly. I think we need to do this by trial and error. We will correct gradually while we operate. I believe that's how it should be done.
- fireman*: If we accept the entrustment now, I was wondering what the burden would be on our very limited number of

- volunteers... . It does not look good.
- head:* The entrustment has nothing to do with the volunteers. To move forward on accepting the entrustment project we will need to hire somebody with business experience, someone who will particularly handle the entrustment project.
- fireman:* If that's the case then there is no reason that this NPO should accept the entrustment, if both the volunteers of our organizations and the residents in the local community don't actively participate in the entrustment project itself. Otherwise, why doesn't the government entrust the work to a government-created public corporation or for-profit company? Our volunteers and the residents should be heavily involved with the project throughout. I want to create a place to discuss this project more openly.
- head:* It is an illusion (with laughing). Do you think that the policy chief of continuing education can understand such an opinion? Think about his rigid attitude, ... He is a typical bureaucrat.
- general secretary:* I just want to remind you what the government would reject every complaint from the trustee. Trustees should accept contracts without saying anything about the details. Based on my experience, there are no negotiations.

*At this point in the discussion, I sensed an undercurrent of feelings that working with the government was something prestigious, and that it was therefore inappropriate to say anything about the actual details of the contract.*

- reform-member:* It is natural that we have a very different perspective from the government's. We are not a take-over target for the government. We have our own way as an NPO, an organization in the private sector.
- environmentalist:* However, we don't have any vision on the entrustment as an NPO. What makes us an NPO? We were indeed created by the government... . Maybe I think we are expected to just follow their instructions without saying anything. But, it would be ideal if we could operate this continuing education center in its entirety, combining effectively the public facilities with our continuing education course offerings. How wonderful it would be for the local community! Thinking that way stimulates my imagination. What would we be able to do? What do we want to do? We should and could propose specific plans to the government as an NPO. That's the proper attitude as an NPO. That definitely could lead us to benefit from the situation.
- fireman:* Maybe we lack a shared meaning of what an NPO is. Even if we accept the entrustment project, we need to think more

- of creating a shared meaning as an NPO.
- consul-director:* I very much agree with this opinion. We need to present a direction as an NPO. Otherwise, we can't move forward. We need something we all can share. I was thinking that one of the things we need to do first is have the directors' board present mid and long-term goals as an NPO.
- head:* We should have discussed these kinds of issues when we became an NPO... .

As the discussion continued, the participants reflected further on the government's attitude and vision on educational policy in the local community.

- environmentalist:* I was wondering what the role of the government is in community education. It seems like it gave up on its continuing education policy. Furthermore, the number of kids in this community is decreasing year by year. Public schools in our community are being closed. Under the circumstances, what action is the government taking? Both school education and continuing education are out of their hands. I was wondering why they want to disengage themselves from education issues any more? ... Nowadays anything made "hands-off by the government" is justified under the name of structural reform. However, I don't agree with it. I believe that the government needs to take responsibility for it, especially by offering high quality of education, as a basic service for its residents.

*vice center head (a government official):*

What I can say clearly is that the government sees continuing education as part of its community development policy. Thus, I believe that SLG, which is organized by the residents in the local community, can freely develop its ideas of continuing education and implement them. Why not? The government is going to fund this activity. That's the government's stance. It will definitely lead to cost cutting and it is part of structural reform. However, if we are only driven by the cost-cutting, structural reform logic, we would lose something important on the meaning of continuing education in this community.

Frustration was evident on the discussion floor. Nobody controlled it. It was frustration

stemming from a sense of their own inability as an NPO. They wanted to do something as an NPO. Considering the current situation, however, it would be impossible to work with the government while proposing something as an NPO. On the other hand, it would be a great chance for the NPO if it could use the public facility according to its will. Who could guide them? The members of the NPO fully, albeit silently, acknowledged that they were not empowered at a level necessary to work as equals with the government.

One week later, the internal discussions resumed. How would they move forward? It seemed to me that they were deadlocked. The conversation went around and around. The pro-entrustment people tried to control the meeting, meanwhile the anti-entrustment vice heads resisted. At the beginning of the second internal meeting, the SLG head encouraged the participants to make some decisions in a hasty manner.

*head:* I need to say yes or no by the next meeting with the government on August 26. This leaves us only 3 weeks. Otherwise, we can't start full negotiations, including on the budget for the next fiscal year. Should we move forward on it? Should we reject it?

The head tried to assert his power at the meeting. At this stage, I saw different power dynamics starting to dominate the discussion which provided an opportunity to observe an interesting contrast of micro-political power. Discussion-leader power, for example, shifted to one vice head (*landlord*) who had missed the first internal meeting. This person was an influential leader in the local community. He was from a good, established family, one which had been part of the community for more than 300 years. He also had rich experiences in such activities as PTAs and community development. When the head asked him for his opinion about the entrustment project, he responded.

*landlord:* I think we should accept the entrustment business if we can. It would be a good opportunity because we would deal with all of the facets of continuing education in this local community. From the government's position, this entrustment project leads

to cost cutting. The government thinks that introducing private sector power will bring stimulus to the government administration. However, I believe that the real meaning is more than that. What we need to consider is what can we specifically do for the residents when we accept the entrustment. If we don't make this point clear we will be a target for criticism from the residents, not the government.

This comment suddenly changed the atmosphere. Nobody, including the anti-entrustment people rushed to disagree with his comment. There was only a silence – positive silence for the pro-entrustment people. I knew that he was a very reliable man among the volunteers. However, I never imagined he held such influential power. In terms of his territorial power, even though my field site is located in a very urbanized part of Tokyo, it still exists. The head was nothing. He was just a newcomer in the community, having moved to this area a couple of decades ago.

Empowered by this comment, the pro-entrustment side seemed to gain momentum. From this stage I was actually surprised when I later looked at my fieldnotes because there were few opinions inscribed from anti-entrustment members. The discussion gradually moved toward a shared consensus, based on the keyword “residents.” In this process, the pro-entrustment people seemed to take tactical advantage of the positive mood generated by this shift of emphasis to the term residents.

*environmentalist:* We need to think about what we can do specifically for *the residents* when we accept the entrustment project. For example, the center facilities should be more convenient for *the residents* themselves.

*reform member:* Why don't we look at *the residents* more, not at the government? Why don't we move forward, not backward? We are an entity of social movement. We are a residents' movement for improving our social lives by promoting continuing education in this local community. We need to go forward to improve services of continuing education for *the residents*. Our counterpart is not the government but *the residents*. We should think about all of *the residents* in this community, regardless of sex and age, since we now take full

- responsibility for the continuing education operation. Maybe we are focusing too much at the relationship between SLG and the government. Instead, we need to look more at *the residents*.
- head:* I think under the current situation nobody thinks it to be possible to do the entrustment. Why don't we propose to have a transition time for fully preparing for it? We don't intend to fully operate this facility next year by ourselves. Instead, we will operate this facility by getting help, I mean, getting a couple of staff members from the government. It should be a step-by-step process.
- reform member:* Now we are amateurs in terms of administrative management skills such as public facility management. But think about what we can achieve in a couple of years. In the transition time we would reach above an amateur level.
- landlord:* Having a transition period is important. I believe that probably we had better make the entrustment contract with the government. Think about the future. By learning administrative management skills, we should be able to more assuredly secure opportunities for continuing education for the residents, in terms of securing classrooms, which directly lead to expanding our services. Local schools are becoming very closed to outsiders. Although we wanted to expand our classrooms at local schools, it might be easier to secure classrooms, for example, for offering our continuing education courses under the entrustment.
- head:* I understand the crucial purpose of the entrustment is that *the residents* can benefit. Both NPOs and the government try to achieve the same thing, but in extremely different manners.

As a result, SLG decided to discuss the entrustment project in a positive manner. At the stage, however, its concern was whether the government would understand the concept of a transitional period. The SLG side had been informed that if and when the government entrusted all of the facility operation to the SLG, all of the government staff would leave the center. SLG was going to request that they be given a few people well acquainted with the center management operation. Otherwise, they would have difficulty fully learning the details of the administration. The government officer attending this strategy meeting said the government would respond to such a request as flexibly as possible.

Ten days later, this meeting result was reported at the monthly directors' meeting.

It was only a 10-minute discussion, though, which made me wonder if the directors were actually interested in this issue. The only discussion was:

- director 1:* The entrustment project would be a chance to improve our organizational power. It is a chance to change our management style to be more professional. For this purpose, probably we need one director to handle everything about the entrustment project.
- director 2:* The secretariat should be more solidified in its foundation for accepting the entrustment project with the government. The entrustment is mainly an administrative matter. Instead of volunteers, the secretariat should take more responsibility for this. If this is the case, there should not be any gap in consciousness about the entrustment between the directors and the secretariat staff.
- director 3:* If we don't accept the entrustment now, the municipal government may look for another partner. It is going to be troublesome because we would have to discuss adjustments for the operation of this center with others. In this sense, I agree with accepting the entrustment project.

Nothing said was particularly new. Under the apparently positive atmosphere, a couple of directors spoke up.

- director 4:* This kind of discussion should have been done in a more open and participatory manner at an earlier stage.
- director 5:* I think so, too. Cooperation from our volunteers is inevitable. We need to explain this to all of the volunteers and ask for their cooperation. I think one of the concerns among the volunteers is how they will be involved with this project specifically. Why don't we get together for talking about this? This is not an issue that we decide by a simple majority. We need to have a dialogue.

Their voices were never fully echoed during the 10-minute discussion, however. I could not tell whether other directors pretended not to listen or actually did not listen. The head decided to move forward on the entrustment project discussions with the government, without taking even a simple majority vote of the directors present at the meeting. Here at

SLG, everything was moving forward with serious discussions being smoothed over, as to not cause waves. That seemed to be the highest priority in the process of decision making here. This is how things usually got done in this community.

### ***Dialogue with Grassroots Volunteers***

The grassroots volunteers were totally excluded from the entrustment project discussions. During both the strategy meetings and the monthly directors' meeting, there was no serious consideration about the expected burden the volunteers might have. Meanwhile, the volunteers had major concerns about the entrustment project. They were hearing about the entrustment contract as rumors. Many had heard that their NPO would operate the continuing education facility from next April as a part of an entrustment project with the municipal government. They were never well informed of the details. Many volunteers even asked me about what was going on between the two entities, SLG and the government, because I was attending the series of meetings related to the project as a secretariat staff-researcher.

On a Saturday afternoon at the end of September, a session was finally held to explain the entrustment project to the volunteers. This happened only because the volunteers began to bombard the secretariat with questions about the rumored entrustment project. The secretariat organized the session. What was surprising was the low turnout. There were only 9 volunteers – 6 men and 3 women – who came to the session, meanwhile there were more than 100 volunteers registered and invited. Only five directors from the board attended, out of SLG's more than 20 directors. Before the beginning of the session I had to admit that the atmosphere was heavy. This may have been due to the disappointment among the organizers of the attendance, which they took as a lack of interest by the volunteers in the entrustment project. At the beginning, the head talked to the participants briefly.

*head:* This move for the entrustment is part of administrative rationalization of the municipal government. However, we are thinking that this move means more to us. This is a process of creating a meaningful collaborative relationship between an NPO and the government. This partnership would be the first case in the field of continuing education in this country. We are creating our own continuing education agenda with the government, together. Please ask me whatever you want on this project.

After the head's explanation, mentioning the 62-items list that the government gave to SLG, a question-and-answer time was started. The first question was made by Mr. Takahashi, the oldest volunteer. It was a very simple question but hit the nail on the head.

*Mr. Takahashi:* Can you tell us clearly about the pros and cons of this project for us?

*head:* I think the benefit is that we can operate both our continuing education course offerings and facility management together. This means we can use the continuing education center according to our needs. The only negative thing I imagine is that we have to hear complaints about the facility from the center users directly.

*Mr. Takahashi:* What do you think about the personnel issue? Who will handle the project?

*head:* Currently the municipal government handles the facility management. However, when the entrustment project starts, they are going to leave.

*Mr. Takahashi:* Do you plan to hire new people for this project?

*head:* Yes. Only secretariat staff members will handle the entrustment issue. This is basically the government's job.

Another man, Mr. Saitō, just retired as a postman in his early 60s, asked:

*Mr. Saitō:* But, the municipal government will continue to own this public facility, right?

*head:* Yes. This is a government asset.

*Mr. Saitō:* If so, I was wondering how much we could use this facility effectively and freely. What I wanted to say is how much will the municipal government intervene in our activities. How much are they going to be involved in making decisions on the facility management?

*head:* I believe that we are not expected to do anything beyond the content of the contract.

Mr. Miyabe, local business owner in his 40s, continued:

*Mr. Miyabe:* For example, we are thinking we want to expand the operation time of this facility beyond 9 pm. Who is going to change and decide such a matter?

*head:* I think the facility operation is regulated and ruled by a municipal ordinance. Actually we are now in discussions on the revision of the ordinance in order to allow us to operate the center more freely.

Mr. Shimizu, a businessman in his 50s, followed:

*Mr. Shimizu:* If we accept the entrustment project, we want to use this facility freely. That's would be the only benefit of the entrustment. Also, what is our role? How are we situated in this project? What is our expected of us with regard to the entrustment?

Ms. Imai, a housewife in her early 60s, added to this question:

*Ms. Imai:* I was wondering about any new burden on us. It would be too much if something new is added to my duties. Can you tell us more specifically about that? I am really annoyed because we don't have any information about the project.

*head:* The burden only goes to the secretariat. You aren't expected to have any new burden.

Mr. Iwata, a businessman in his early 30s, said:

*Mr. Iwata:* I was still wondering what we could contribute to the project. I recognize that this is a nationwide trend – that some government functions are being moved to the private sector like to NPOs. If so, what can grassroots volunteers do? What can we do as members of the NPO? I think we know details of this facility. As for daily activities, we realize many points that

we need to change. What we need to do is exchange opinions from such points of view. Otherwise, the move to entrustment means nothing for us. Why don't we discuss this issue more openly?

The head responded to this.

*head:* As SLG head, I act very politically regarding this project. The entrustment is a matter directly related to the government. Thus, I am becoming very sensitive to the information disclosure on this project.

*As I listened, the exchange raised some questions in my mind: So what? Does this response mean that he doesn't want to talk about the entrustment issue with volunteers? He looks like he doesn't want to say any more on this issue. If so, what's the purpose of this gathering? Why did we have everyone assemble here? Is this gathering merely for the purpose of gathering?*

Throughout the gathering, I perceived some contrast between the volunteers and the head. It was again a contrast in terms of who held power. The head, armed with detailed information and supported by both the directors' board and the municipal government, looked very confident. It might be more appropriate to say that he held himself in a businesslike manner. On the other hand, the volunteers looked like they were in search of something amid uncertainty. Some could not even raise questions due to the limited disclosure. Some of the active volunteers who raised questions were indeed very enthusiastic about this eventful project at first, but, after the session the mood shifted toward apathy. In the context of the explanation session, the dominant power was held by the head. The power made the directors blind to the reality – what the volunteers actually think and want. They did not see through the expanding disappointment among the volunteers. One vice head even complained to the floor at the very end of this session.

*vice head (environmentalist):*

Today I am very disappointed because we only have 9

volunteers attending. This issue is directly related with the key stance of our business in the future, right? I expected many volunteers would come. I think SLG volunteers only pursue courses to satisfy their individual needs. You seem to lack a consciousness as a member of an organization.

The participant volunteers were apparently embarrassed by the claim. Some were even angry about it. What the volunteers were actually frustrated with was that they could not even say anything because they did not have enough information. They had the impression that the entrustment project was moving forward to somewhere, having nothing to do with them. Why did we come today? Why were we called? Was this just to show that collaboration was proceeding jointly with the local residents? That was the end of the dialogue.

### ***Distrust Accelerating between Each Side***

At the third round of meetings with the government, SLG reported that they wanted to proceed with the discussions on the entrustment project in a positive way. However, they still felt that the municipal government did not fully realize the ramifications of the project itself. At the discussion table, the SLG head, citing the guideline on collaboration with NPOs made by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (which I introduced earlier in this chapter), mentioned the significance of the entrustment project. This was one of the most impressive moments in the series of talks.

*SLG head:* I believe that the entrustment method should not be used in the framework of the government's logic. NPOs are not subcontractors to the government. If the government misses this point, the meaning of NPOs will become unclear. This is a collaborative project for both of us – an NPO and the government. We are pursuing the same thing, but for different objectives.

The response from the government was rigid. It stepped up to clearly mention the

purpose of the project from its perspective. This had not been termed in the first and second series of talks. The policy chief of continuing education promptly responded to the head's comment:

*policy chief:* We are promoting the entrustment under a program of rationalization of our public administration. The attitude leads to a careful use of taxpayers' money. We are not promoting the entrustment project just because it is economical. What we are interested in is what we can get as a result of the entrustment project. What kinds of services to the residents are newly created? What value-added can you offer?

*landlord:* If you say so, I believe that the government needs to revise the local ordinance as soon as possible. Otherwise, we can't do anything. For example, we can plan new continuing education courses by using the planetarium at the center. However, the planetarium is not supposed to be used for such a purpose under the local ordinance. According to the ordinance, the planetarium is a place to see stars, not a place to have continuing education courses. Thus, we can't make any courses due to the law constraint. The law limits our possibilities and imagination.

*policy chief:* The law guarantees the public facility – the planetarium in this case – will be equally open to all people in the local community. That is the top priority. We can't treat SLG specially, even though SLG is a partner in the entrustment project.

*fireman:* Why don't we discuss the issue more flexibly? Otherwise, we can't achieve the key purpose – enhancing the use of this facility. The planetarium is a facility to see stars. However, for us, the planetarium is a dome-shaped facility. We plan to have a music concert while watching stars. If so, we can use the facility more creatively. Why don't you think in such a way? It is fun, isn't it?

*policy chief:* Institutionally speaking, it is a problem. The law says that the planetarium is not supposed to be used in such a way.

As the discussion continued, based on the decision at the strategy meeting, SLG requested the government create a transition time for the project. What they asked for was some help from the government with the facility management in the initial stage. What SLG members were afraid of was that the government would leave without fully handing

over any detailed information and skills about the work to SLG. This concern stemmed from what SLG members saw in other cases when government officials left for new jobs without fully transferring their jobs to their successors. The successors were expected to learn the newly assigned jobs on their own. SLG people thought that this – even though it was the government’s way – would be impossible. Policy chief of continuing education responded to the SLG request:

*policy chief:* On the requested issue, I am not sure. Traditionally, if we talk about entrustment, we usually consider the full set, not partial, including human resources. This will be a discussion point for the near future. I am not sure we can break the tradition, though. Anyway, I wanted to tell you guys that it is an issue we decide, not you.

The government did not turn a deaf ear to the SLG proposal, however.

Inside SLG, one issue left unclear was the government’s rationale that the entrustment project would create financial stability as an NPO. The municipal government provided two categories of money to SLG. One was called *hojo-kin* (aid money) and the other was *itaku-kin* (entrustment money). The government funded SLG’s continuing education business from the aid-money category. They decided how much money should go to SLG. SLG had no right to say anything about the decision. According to the SLG vice general secretary, SLG had 660 million yen (approximately \$6 million) for the fiscal year 2002. About 350 million yen (approximately \$3.2 million) went to personnel costs and 310 million yen (approximately \$2.8 million) went to supporting programs. This year amid the discussion of the entrustment project the government required SLG for the first time to show how much aid money went to which business specifically, and furthermore, how much in profits SLG could make.

*vice general secretary:* Why do I feel such difficulty in doing this? So far the government has funded SLG. Funding was like an

automatic process. The aid money was just given to us without any discussion.

*I thought: This is surprising. The government has funded an NPO since its establishment without asking for the submission of any funding rationale. It is quite a large amount of taxpayers' money.*

*vice general secretary continued:*

We have not discussed anything about our vision for the budget for this year. For the next year we definitely need to discuss this point. Otherwise, we are again just going to follow the government's decision without saying anything. SLG should request the total amount of aid money from the government based on its performance for the year and its plans for the next year.

The government had been decreasing the amount of the aid money due to its severe financial situation. Every year the budget was supposed to decrease by 10 percent. At the entrustment talk, the government introduced logic that the decreased part of the aid money can be recovered by money for the entrustment. SLG people were extremely annoyed with this opinion.

After the explanation session of the entrustment project to the volunteers, I had a chance to exchange opinions about this government's logic with the vice general secretary and volunteer Mr. Iwata. Both of them thought that the logic was wrong. The two kinds of money should not be blurred. They should clearly discern the difference of the money. If they use the entrustment money for covering the decreased aid money, what is going to happen? That is a key concern. The situation will be that there is not enough money for the entrustment project itself. In that case, just image the situation.

*Mr. Iwata:*

I was actually thinking about what is expected of us by the government. That is, as one of the possibilities, we are required to do the entrustment business by decreasing our staff. There are 6 full-time staff members working on the project for the government. However, we cannot afford to hire 6 people. Say we

try to do it with 5 people. That move is justified as a successful case of structural reform. Using private power, the government sector is supposed to be reinvigorated. What is going to happen at the grassroots level, though?

*vice general secretary:* I think that we can't even hire 5 staff members. Actually I was told the other day by an accountant that SLG is out of date since its staff is made up of all regular, full-time workers. It is very rare in this sluggish economy. Listening to his opinion, I was thinking we are going to hire part-time staff people and then, finally, our volunteers will fill the position on an unpaid basis. In the near future, our volunteers will sit at the reception desk of the continuing education center, instead of government's official. That is not over-exaggeration.

We were wondering if we saw any serious efforts by the government in its severe financial situation. Their salaries are double those of SLG staff members. The general secretary of SLG told me one day that personal expenses would be halved when the municipal government entrusts all business related to continuing education to SLG. Currently SLG hires 23 people as full-time staff. SLG pays 200,000 yen (approximately \$1,800) or so a month and gives health insurance to its staff. But, they do not pay any bonus. Usually Japanese companies pay an annual bonus of four to six months' salary as additional payment. The secretary said, "I think the SLG secretariat is very fragile. The staff is working without any complaining even though their salaries and benefits are not so good. They fully understand the current situation of the bad economy and difficulties of getting jobs. I am afraid that they will leave SLG when the economy improves." For the government it would be a successful case of structural reform because the residents called volunteers are taking over jobs originally done by paid government officials. Thus, SLG would be praised as a model case of residents participating in community-oriented continuing education. However, the reality was that the discrepancy of perception and

understanding of what citizen participation in local politics should look like was only becoming wider and wider.

***Pushing Cost -Cutting Policy***

Around October, discussions about the entrustment project accelerated, paced by the government. This was because the government had to make budget decisions for the next fiscal year. Around the same time, there was a rumor among SLG secretariat staff that the entrustment project might not happen. According to the rumor, the government was calculating the next year's budget. If it entrusted all of the continuing education center business to SLG, it would cost more than this year's budget because 150 million yen (approximately \$1.3 million) in consumption tax had to be added to the contract. This would undermine the original aim of cost cutting. The government was reconsidering whether the entrustment to an NPO was the most effective measure under the structural reform movement. However, the decision remained in the government's hands; SLG was never included in the discussions on the budget. This further increased SLG's negative feeling for both the government and its own inability as an NPO. The feeling of being marginalized increased.

A fifth meeting took place in mid-November. As the meeting began, the policy chief of continuing education announced what they had been doing over the past one month.

*policy chief:* Actually we estimated the cost of running this continuing education center for the next year. We did it in three cases. The first one is Plan A. That is, the government would continue to operate this center; Plan B is that the government would entrust all businesses related with the center to SLG; Plan C entails that the government operates the center while some of the staff of regular government officials is replaced by part-time staff. According to the calculations, we have realized that Plan C is most effective in a cost-cutting sense, which means that Plan C is in line with the administrative and structural reform we are

now pushing. Plan C is going to save more than 10 million yen (approximately \$900), compared with Plan B. The difference amounts to two people's annual salaries. This is just a test calculation and we don't have any formal decision about this issue. However, I just want to let you guys know that the Plan C is most realistic.

Table 5.1: Government's Cost of Calculations

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Plan A</i>	<i>Plan B</i>	<i>Plan C</i>
<b>facility management</b>	<b>155,831</b>	<b>203,225</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>203,225</b>
<b>total operation cost</b>	<b>164,756</b>	<b>171,981</b>	<b>396,393</b>	<b>171,981</b>
audiovisual library	22,082	16,511	16,511	16,511
science course for kids	971	922	922	922
SGG entrustment fee	141,703	154,548	378,960	154,548
<b>total human resources cost</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>37,200</b>
regular staff	54,000	54,000	27,000	27,000
part-time staff				10,200
<b>total cost</b>	<b>374,587</b>	<b>429,206</b>	<b>423,393</b>	<b>412,406</b>
			▲5,813	▲16,800

Numbers in Millions of Japanese Yen

I was interested in the reaction from SLG. I saw that they were more or less relieved.

SLG vice general secretary looked at me and even smiled. I know that she was always discussing SLG's inability to start the entrustment project with the government.

According to her, the entrustment would only burden the secretariat. Actually there were no verbal responses to the policy chief's comment. There was just silence on the discussion floor. Further talks on the specific issues did not develop that day.

Ten days later, the talks resumed. At this stage SLG again challenged the government. The SLG head proposed that they would like to do the project, with the government at the cheapest cost as per Plan C. The head said:

*SLG head:* We believe that we can do it at the cheapest cost. Actually we plan to cut actual business costs, instead of salaries for our staff, by introducing competition. Instead of cutting personnel fees, why doesn't the government cut the actual spending cost? The government never makes efforts to look for contractors who can do business cheaper, right? The government has always chosen contractors within its system, which seems to be very unusual and sometimes even ridiculous to us. You guys never notice that there might be something wrong with the system because the way of thinking is limited in the rigid and inflexible bureaucracy. Under the current severe economic condition of this country, the private sector is making serious efforts to cut costs while keeping quality. It is based on the principle of competition and survival of the fittest. Thus, we are going to help decrease the actual spending cost. That is what the private sector is doing and it is a way the private sector is taking.

The policy chief responded:

*policy chief:* We are not choosing our contractors without any logic. We are choosing them because they are very familiar with the business we want to do. It happens that the same companies repeatedly get the contracts. The contractors are limited to those with a lot of experience with the government. What we need is to provide the same quality of services to the residents. That's all. If it is done at a cheaper cost, it is ideal. However, based on our calculation, we are expected to choose the cheapest way. Otherwise, we will be criticized by all of the residents.

No shared understanding occurred.

At the sixth meeting at the end of December, the government simply announced that there would be no entrustment next year. They had decided to go with Plan C, replacing some of the current regular staff with part-timers. The rationale was that this was the cheapest and would have no hidden costs, such as the consumption tax. The government finally found that entrustment was not the best measure to cut costs. It found another way to cut costs more effectively. Thus, it did not need to discuss the entrustment

further. At this stage, SLG did not even have a chance to respond at all.

I observed the entire series of discussions on the entrustment. The government initiated the series of talks, and, throughout the process, was primary leader for all discussion. SLG was under represented throughout the meetings. There were no active or specific discussions about the entrustment work. Furthermore, the meetings were always conducted in a very closed manner. The members were fixed. Actually when one of the secretariat staff members asked to observe the meeting, his request was denied by his boss, the *amakudari* general secretary. SLG volunteers never participated in the discussions with the government. They were never even fully informed. Their frustration drove them to be less interested in the discussion. In fact, the less-dynamic, closed atmosphere accelerated the failure of the entrustment talks. During the meetings, the major topic was dominated by particular administrative procedures and techniques. People outside the government, myself included, sometimes did not understand their particular use of words, or administrative language (*gyōsei yōgo*). The closed nature could even be justified in a way because the volunteers would not be able to understand the procedures and language of public administration very well.

My interpretation of what was happening in this case was that the government wanted to totally replace its regular staff at the continuing education center with unpaid volunteers. The vice head of the continuing education center often said during the entrustment talks, “Work such as repairs can be done by volunteers... .” However, SLG rejected the government’s intention. They protected their meaning and value with respect to volunteering for the local community. In this sense, SLG might be said to have won... .

### ***Contested Rationalities: A Reality***

Since both SLG and the government arguments were based on different rationales, the points of discussion never meshed together. The government was pushing its argument on rationalizing public administration, demonstrating just the characteristics

that Herbert A. Simon observed in the “administrative man” who recognizes the world as a drastically simplified model of the buzzing, blooming confusion that constitutes the real world (Simon 1997). For the government, cost cutting was the highest priority and preference in its rationality. The government is a trustor. It has money. It has laws which legitimizes its actions. It has an administrative logic supported by the PPP policy.

On the other hand, SLG was looking for something different. Since it had its own sense of what the entrustment project should mean, it tried to insert its meaning to the project. Its actions went beyond the rational, purposive function of the work. It was looking for “Mētis”, exactly as James C. Scott (1998: 311) defines. Scott generates the notion of Mētis while examining how authoritarian, high-modernist schemes are potentially so destructive. He argues:

...the necessarily thin, schematic model of social organization and production animating the planning was inadequate as a set of instructions for creating a successful order. By themselves, the simplified rules can never generate a functioning community, city, or economy. Formal order is, to be more explicit, is always and to some considerable degree parasitic on informal processes, which the formal scheme does not recognize, without which it could not exist, and which it alone cannot create or maintain.

(Scott 1998: 310)

Mētis, which is practical knowledge and skills or know-how, is generated from actual experiences the NPO has. However, it was totally denied by the government’s rationality, although SLG tried to believe that the government should have some understanding of citizens’ activities. SLG people even felt that the government was very cold. They thought that the government should have supported the SLG proposal because the volunteer-based SLG had been playing a significant part of the government’s role in education. They were supposed to be good partners to each other. As for the government, as Scott points out, its rationality was “not just strategies of production, but also strategies of control and appropriation” (Scott 1998:311).

I observed this in rationality for actions throughout my extensive research. One night in December 2002, for example, I went to an interesting symposium in Ginza, Tokyo's upscale shopping district, which was entitled "Moving from Public to Private – We will take leadership for social change." The symposium was sponsored and organized by one of the first independent think-tanks in Japan. The leader of the think-tank advocated:

We are now facing an era in which we are going to offer by ourselves such services as social welfare and education, which have been provided by the government thus far. However, now it is time that we take responsibility for our own social lives. The role of the government is becoming smaller. On the other hand, citizens are becoming a major actor in society. We need to recognize that this is a key trend.

Several NPO practitioners were invited to the meeting. What I saw was a big difference between NPO practitioners and some NPO "theorists" like the think-tank head. Mr. Kim is Korean-Japanese man organizing an NPO in Shinjuku, one of the busiest districts of metropolitan Tokyo, for helping victims of domestic violence. He said:

I am doing what I feel I need to do. I don't care whether I am doing it as an NPO or not. That doesn't matter. I can't trust the government or police. Thus, I do what I feel I need to do. I am now in my mid-40s. I don't have a wife or kids, either. However, I want to leave some verification that I lived.

On the other hand, a bureaucrat, who actually played a significant role under Governor Kitagawa administration in Mie prefecture which I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, voiced an interesting comment in opposition. He said:

I think I know why several kinds of NPO unite. If they unite for achieving something, they believe they can do something more powerfully. If only one NPO does something, its power is limited. However, if they get together and propose something in the policy-making arena, it would be influential. Why don't they do that more? The move would directly generate social change.

Mr. Kim responded:

I would never do that. I am not interested in it. Why should I get together with other organizations just because we are all labeled as NPOs? Each NPO has a different stance, right? It seems difficult to get together.... Before getting together, I want to do something by myself. It is easier. That's why I organized an NPO."

Mr. Machida, another NPO practitioner, concurred.

I also don't imagine getting together with other NPOs. Each NPO has its own mission and vision. If we strongly feel that we need to get together we would. However, we can't get together if somebody (implying the government) prepares and organizes such an NPO network for policy making. That move would be possible but it is difficult to get involved in NPO networking.

Following this discussion, I become even more interested in exploring what both volunteers and government officials themselves thought about building collaborative relationships with NPOs in my particular field of continuing education. What happens behind the scenes of the formal discussions? I had a chance to speak informally with a vice head of this continuing education center, he shared his perspectives on the SLG entrustment talk:

I am really worried about SLG. Actually SLG is still dependent on us. They never try to be independent of the municipal government. The government and NPOs are different entities. However, both of us continue to cling to each other, although two years have passed since SLG got NPO status. The entrustment talks were a good time to encourage SLG to be independent of the government.

For the entrustment project, the municipal government would have paid the minimum cost. They wouldn't have included money for paying taxes. Paying tax is SLG's responsibility. We would cut the amount of money even if SLG requested it. I am in charge of this job. Also, I would not approve money requests for such things as the planetarium and computer facility, which are entrusted from the municipal government. If SLG wants to do something more,

they should do it with its own money. That is what entrustment is.

Another reason that the entrustment talks failed was that the government was very doubtful about accountability issues, specifically SLG's business management capabilities. It even wondered whether the SLG secretariat could do the office work generated by the entrustment project. My key informant, Ms. Takamiya, observed:

*my informant:*

According to one of the government staff members at the center, the concern was indeed amplified when the staff dispatched from the government to SLG suddenly left SLG at the end of March this year. The government dispatched him as part of its NPO-supporting policy for the past six years. He said to me, SLG's ability to do administrative work has surely decreased. I am pretty sure the government staff contributed a lot to SLG.

This interpretation left me with a sense that the government may actually have chosen to distance itself tactically from the entrustment talks with SLG. The government, well informed about the delicate organizational aspects of SLG, may have felt that SLG was too fragile to make the entrustment contract with the government.

On the other side of this story was how NPO people saw the government. An SLG secretariat staff member provided one interesting story. Apparently for the past year a dispatched staff member from the municipal government had been giving him a hard time.

*staff:* The man wouldn't tell me about the course making procedures unless I asked. Actually I was never trained on my duties by my predecessor. I think he wouldn't be happy if I became successful since continuing education was originally offered by the municipal government and is now being handled by an NPO. For the man, his job had been snatched by other people.

This story reminded me of how the Japanese foreign ministry rejected a particular NGO's participation in the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in January 2002. Peace Winds Japan, a humanitarian aid NGO in Afghanistan, was excluded from the conference because a senior lawmaker, known as *gaikō-zoku*, a tribe politician who has strong influence on foreign affairs, was angered by comments made by one of the NGO members in the Japanese daily the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on January 18, 2002. What the Peace Winds Japan member said in the interview article with *Asahi* reporter was, "I don't have total faith in the ability of the government (*okami*) . I don't trust any of them that much." Following this article, the foreign ministry, which was under pressure from one of the *gaikō-zoku*, a group of politicians specializing in foreign policy, said that it was not appropriate for the NGO which made such comments about the government to participate in a conference organized by the Japanese government. The tone of the media here in Tokyo was that the lawmakers were unhappy with NGOs because they were so successful, in contrast to the foreign ministry, which then turned around and put pressure on the NGO. NGOs were infringing upon several kinds of vested interests of the foreign ministry. The Japanese democracy is still immature. The story of the foreign ministry and NGOs sounded familiar to me.

During my time at SLG I was able to observe a number of incidents of (meaningless) government intervention. Once such incident clearly illustrates power harassment by government officials. It happened during an afternoon team meeting discussion on course planning. There were nearly 10 volunteer housewives there. They were discussing how to operate a couple of courses, which would start in January. They needed to decide who would be doing housekeeping for the courses. A vice general secretary in charge of the course planning, a dispatched official, and I attended the meeting from the secretariat. Actually I was very impressed with the dispatched official's way of talking during the meeting. He often used phrases to the volunteers such as, "Do

this as soon as possible,” or “Discuss it and decide promptly.” I had never heard anybody use such authoritative language during any meetings held at SLG. The following exchange illustrates this even more clearly:

- vice secretary:* In the near future, we probably need to discuss the cooling-off period for courses we provide to the residents.
- dispatched man:* Don't say such a dream-like thing. We can't do such a thing. Such a thing is never going to be realized. You should be more conscious of your responsibilities as a paid staff member and vice general secretary of the SLG secretariat.

This exchange took place in front of volunteers. His aggressive attitude left an impression on me. After the meeting, two of the housewife volunteers told me that they felt very uncomfortable when they saw the dispatched official yelling an NPO staff member. This kind of thing happened often, however. This incident aptly speaks to the frailty of the relationship between NPOs and the government.

### ***Kyōdō: A Failed Attempt***

In many countries, the role of third sector organizations has gained increasing attention in the context of opening up the meaning of democracy. Among the western intellectual groups, communitarian and social capital theorists, rooted in Alexis de Tocqueville's work, have highlighted the function of the third sector in the development of social capital and the formation of civic trust and norms as the basis of effective governance. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville (1948) argues that voluntary associations were necessary for providing successful alternatives for problems having to do with the common-good and for curbing unbridled governmental power. The growth and development of voluntary associations provides safeguards for checking political despotism, reinforcing the habits of the heart that are essential to stable and effective

democratic institutions. Such associations become informal webs of solidarity that binds societies together and provides communities with the most basic of social safety nets.

Scholars have further promoted the idea of associative democracy to supplement or even supplant representative democracy (e.g., Cohen and Rogers 1992; Hirst 1989, 1994, 1997; Dryzek 2000). This idea of associative democracy has been developed around the idea of renovating democracy by extending the scope of associations and remodeling the relation between the state and civil society. The concept is putting emphasis on self-governing voluntary association as the building blocks of participatory democracy. Advocates of associative democracy assume that this type of democracy will reduce the complexity of the modern state while drawing citizens close to public life and foster their civil engagement. Paul Q. Hirst (1994: 19) defines associative democracy as follows;

Associative democracy is deceptively simple in its most basic political claims. ...Associationalism makes a central normative claim, that individual liberty and human welfare are both best served when as many of the affairs of society as possible are managed by voluntary and democratically self-governing associations. Associationalism seeks to square the aims of freedom for the individual in pursuing his or her chosen with the effective governance of social affairs.

Hirst's conception of associative democracy is in line with an ideological ground of Anthony Giddens' *Third Way* (Giddens 1998), which I discuss again in chapter 7. The doctrine argues for balancing the undoubted energy of capitalism with the need to foster social solidarity and civic values. The *Third Way* suggests that it is possible to combine social solidarity with a dynamic economy, and this is a goal contemporary social democrats should strive for. Conventional institutions of representative democracy now find it harder to regulate social life and to scrutinize public services. Our activities have become complex, practices differentiated and flexible, and change both rapid and multi-

directional. The result is a complex society that is impossible to control democratically without decentralization of accountability. Thus, associative democracy advocates collective decision making with the all stakeholders who will be affected by the decision thorough arguing, bargaining, and voting. To achieve collective decisions, voluntary associations, private corporations, and governments should all come together. Among them, voluntary associations can best provide key sites and processes for effective governance and welfare provision, which will foster active citizenship, extend democracy and even strengthen civil society. It involves shifting control of and responsibility for social development from the social administrative institutions of the centralized state to self-governing voluntary association. In fact, the role of voluntary organizations in promoting democracy has gained increasing attention worldwide, as many countries are experiencing an apparent loss of faith in the formal democratic process, accompanied by decreasing political party membership and voting levels. Under the circumstances, voluntary associations have the potential to become principal organizing forces in society, the key institutions providing public good.

My ethnographic investigation of the above Japanese case, meanwhile, revealed a number of tensions between the government and a volunteer-based NPO. One of my friends working for a municipal government told me:

I am skeptical of making a collaborative partnership between the government and NPOs. As a reality, our jobs at the municipal level are only two things: doing the same things as in previous years and choosing a couple of projects from which the national or prefectural government assigned. The administration is divided vertically into divisions (*tatewari*). Under the rigid structure, it is difficult for the municipal government to seriously consider NPOs as policy alternative resources. The government can't respond to NPOs' demands. I believe that NPOs should play a significant role in breaking the traditional style of administration. ... However, I think NPOs are not fully prepared, either. In my city, only 19 NPOs currently exist. More than that, NPOs should let the government know their diversity, and the government should respond to the diversity. In my working place, *okami* (the government) still controls everything.

Because the power of the government is too strong, and because the accountability of the NPO is (still) too weak, the meaning of introducing the third sector organization into real politics has left many people confused. In my field site, I saw that the role of the third sector as social capital in a community was even destroyed. The government totally ignored the need for a trust-based dialogue on what kind of society the NPO was jointly pursuing with it. The government even tried to give the *kyōdō* collaborative relations with NPOs a beautiful, but empty name. I observed this tragedy.

The government is now rushing to cut costs under the name of administrative reform. The budget cuts target, for example, nursing and caring for the elderly, areas in which women are traditionally expected to take primary responsibility in Japanese society. Those services are now commonly covered by NPOs under the name of entrustment. Originally expected to provide these basic services as well as education, community development, and welfare, the government is more and more outsourcing them. The reality is that NPOs are becoming subcontractors to the government. In fact, among the collaborative cases in Mie Prefecture I mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, nearly 80 percent were proposed by the government. NPOs were just receivers of government plans. Throughout my fieldwork on Japanese NPOs, I have wondered what the government is and what local autonomy is. Thinking about the role of the Japanese NPOs and third sector means rethinking what the government should be. The government needs to be reorganized and rationalized. Otherwise, Japanese NPOs will never strongly develop and only continue to show fragility. NPOs are not new “partnership” organizations – or, ironically, NPOs – primarily intended to make collaborative relations with the government. Ideally, it is hoped that NPOs will change the rigid characteristics of Japanese politics and even beat the dominant bureaucracy. Only in this context can policy collaboration create a new wave of social resources, beyond the conventional sector, human beings, information and money.

CHAPTER 6  
INTEGRATION INTO A “SYSTEM SOCIETY”:  
JAPANESE NPOs AND THE DISCOURSE OF “CIVIL SOCIETY”

In this concluding chapter, I explore the meaning of civil society in contemporary Japan. What is the meaning of “civil society” or *shimin-shakai*? Who are citizens or *shimin*? What are NPOs? These were key questions I repeatedly asked in this project. Here again, I would like to sum up my arguments on Japanese NPOs and provide a conclusion based on my ethnographic fieldwork.

First, I affirm my ethnographic observation of the Japanese NPO phenomenon, which includes participant observation fieldwork and discourse analysis of mass media coverage of NPOs. I attempt to answer the following questions: How do people feel about their participation in NPO activities? What do they want to achieve? How do they locate their NPO activities within the discourse of “social contributions”? What I observed was that there were two kinds of people: One type feels frustrated and finally leaves the NPO sector, while the other is comfortable with the structures of participation in NPOs. My ethnography showed that the difference between these two types stemmed from their perception of NPOs. The former type sees NPOs as new social movement entities, while the latter type understands the NPOs as components of conventional social institutions. I felt that people have been confused about the intended role of NPOs, but are beginning to realize what NPOs are expected to be in Japanese society.

Second, I examine why the Japanese have been busy with the construction of “civil society” and the generation of *shimin* by introducing a new third sector – NPOs. By exploring the history of the civil society concept in this society, I attempt to locate my ethnographic findings in the context of Japanese intellectual history, which has a rich past on the civil society argument (*shimin shakai ron*), while intensively examining writings by scholars of the so-called “civil-society school” (*shimin shakai ha*) such as Maruyama

Masao and Otsuka Hisao. I will initially present the concise genealogy of the term *shimin* and discuss how the term has evolved into its present-day usage. The term *shimin* actually carried negative connotations among Marxist-oriented scholars, who were once a dominant power in Japanese academia. However, I portray *shimin* as having a positive nuance since the 1960s, with the development of new social movements. In the citizens' movements (*shimin undō*) of the 1960s and the residents' movements (*jūmin undō*) of the 1970s, various kinds of politically active people were called *shimin*. Meanwhile, I see that a new group of people are called *shimin* today; these new *shimin* are participating in volunteer activities with NPOs. The “new” *shimin* are quite distinct from the *shimin* of the new social movements. The “new” *shimin* conjures an image of a normative subject with civic engagement; with this term, the NPOs are presented as vehicles for spontaneous participation in the problem-solving processes of public affairs for the betterment of society as a whole. Indeed, NPOs are only incorporated if they are deemed to “contribute to advancement of the public welfare” as the NPO articulates. The contemporary meaning of *shimin* lacks a dynamic connotation. The current *shimin* are uniform, even apolitical subjects.

Such discourse on *shimin* is, however, not unfamiliar to the Japanese. Likewise, the formation of normative subjects working for society as a whole is not a new phenomenon in Japan. This has become more evident as “revisionist” historians have reassessed modern Japanese society in light of wartime and postwar continuity.<sup>39</sup> These

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<sup>39</sup> I used this term “revisionist” in the best sense (Koschmann 1998a: xi), as defined in the book *Total War and 'Modernization'*. This book seeks to criticize postwar democracy by illuminating from various angles the threads of continuity that link post-World War II ideology and institutions to their wartime predecessors. The contributors to this book critically dispose progressive historiography, another revisionist historiography – *jiyūshugi shikan*, which I argue later in this chapter – that itself reacted critically against the academic histories of wartime. It is undeniable that revisionism has become associated, in some instances, with deliberate distortions of the past: lack of “hard evidence” has been used by some writers to cast doubt on the credibility of entire events, such as the Nanjing Massacre. Indeed, revisionism has become a code word for “lying about the past.” However, as Takahashi Tetsuya (2001: iii) in the other branch argues, revisionism is integral to the writing of good history. If we take revisionism to mean revising interpretations of the past, without implying a “distortion” of that past, then we can understand revisionism as a device that shapes and reflects changing historical consciousness. Revisionism can reflect changing concerns in contemporary society, or it can reflect the emergence of new information that requires

historians argue that the transition from the pre-World War II era to wartime and through the postwar era represents a shift from a class society to a system society. In a system society, all members share the burden of the social functions that are required in a time of total war. In this fashion, the mobilization for total war helped to establish a system society organized on the basis of functionalist principles. Individuals with total war subjectivity are expected to fulfill particular functions to facilitate the smooth operation of the whole society. In Japan, “normative subjects for the whole” were produced during the total war mobilization process. I see that the production of the same subjectivity supporting total war continued during the miraculous economic development of the 1960s and 1970s, and is still evident in contemporary Japan’s deadlocked economy and society. Today, NPOs are used by the state to rationalize the convenient and strategic integration and reorganization of ordinary people into the existing system as *shimin*. In the persistent economic uncertainty that has existed since the 1990s, NPOs are used by the state to mobilize people under the name of “civil society.” In so doing, the state primarily aims at maintaining and supporting the existing social and political system. People with what I call “total war subjectivity” are expected to help abate social collapse by participating in NPO activities. While referring to my ethnographic findings, I argue that the total war subjectivity is now standardized in *shimin*. People are becoming *shimin*, intentionally produced and reproduced by the state at many different levels.

Third, I see the Japanese NPO sector as a representation of neoliberal rationality, which is becoming a dominant force in the international political economy. The NPO Law was originally intended to reconstruct Japanese political life. It promised to provide a platform for ordinary people to become engaged in setting the public agenda – something that has all too frequently been regarded as the exclusive province of bureaucrats under the strong state. Furthermore, the law aimed to create a balance

between the state and society. However, I did not see any evidence of a transition in this direction: A predominant user and beneficiary of the NPO Law *is* actually the state, particularly at the municipal level. The result is that the state has remained as dominant as ever, and NPOs – products of the state’s deliberate institutionalization of “civil society” – are now nearly synonymous with it. NPOs were tactically and strategically introduced to Japanese society by the state at many different levels. The political strategy of devolution (i.e. decentralization and power shifting) was justified under the conservative neoliberal policy, which has been pushed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) since the Nakasone Yasuhiro administration of the 1980s. The emergence of NPOs is an inevitable extension of neoliberal policy implementations, rather than a suddenly ignited phenomenon of volunteerism following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, as is commonly supposed in myths about NPO origins. In fact, NPOs are, or “civil society” is, now regarded as a key form of agency in neoliberal structural reforms and in the ongoing political agenda of the Japanese state.

Furthermore, the theory of social capital, as presented by Robert D. Putnam, supports civil-society making in Japan. By invoking the concept of social capital, the government is justifying a strategic reorganization of the existing social and political system that will suit its own needs. Social capital is available to the government to reduce its cost by removing some activities from the state domain to NPOs. It seems to me, however, the introduction of social capital, a social evolutionary idea, ironically discourages people from democratizing their own argument on civil society. Instead, the state plays a significant role in generating “civil society,” taking the American society as a model. The case calls into question the relationship between state and society in contemporary Japanese social and political life and raises the issue of whether civil society can be created through the actions of the state.

## ***I. Ethnographic Observation***

### *Into an existing system*<sup>40</sup>

In late May 2002, Mr. Kawade and I met for lunch for the first time since his departure from my field site, SLG, at the end of March. At SLG, he had been a vice general secretary of the secretariat, and I had assisted him as an unpaid staff researcher during my fieldwork. In early February of that year, the SLG head had laid Mr. Kawade off in a very top-down manner, which the SLG volunteers found entirely unacceptable. It was a process in which the head intended to create a power-concentrated organization. Mr. Kawade gained popularity among the volunteer, and it seemed that for the head Mr. Kawade had become unpleasant company. Mr. Kawade now makes a living as a professional practitioner of acupuncture and moxibustion. When I met with him in May 2002, what impressed me was his persistent commitment to promoting continuing education in the local community. It was apparent that his resignation had not reflected his will. During our meeting, he continued to talk about his dreams for SLG. On that day, he spoke of the creation of a digital archive library in the local community. We had often discussed this idea when we worked together.

*Mr. Kawade:* This area is a very old downtown community in Tokyo. We still have traditional Japanese households, temples, shrines, and festivals. However, this area is now facing community-wide redevelopment. We see new buildings every day. Amid the deadlocked economy, both the national and local governments are pushing a revitalization policy in central Tokyo. As you can see, one of the policy aspects is to build tower-like condominiums, and the old traditional community will be destroyed. I wanted to capture those vanishing landscapes as visual data, create a library, and locate SLG as the center of community archives.

*I responded:* If you tell your idea to some SLG volunteers such as Ms. Tajima and Ms. Imai – both of them are actively involved with planning community

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<sup>40</sup> My use of the term *system* is based on the definition given by the “revisionist” historians I cite in the beginning of this chapter.

studies programs – they would help you. Of course I would really like to help you, too.

*Mr. Kawade:* Recently, I was thinking that it would be ideal if we could do something creative at NPOs while having regular jobs. I feel that it is difficult to do something creative and something new in a *system* called NPOs as a full-time regular worker. Working at NPOs is still a kind of experiment in this society. I have to work to make a living, anyway. It is even very risky to work at NPOs. Thus, it is understandable that people there are becoming hesitant to do something creative and new, and becoming conservative. Such NPOs are becoming less dynamic. There is no meaning for a new social sector like NPOs if they don't make serious efforts to try creative and new things. Why do people stay at NPOs?

Another discourse on NPOs serves to demonstrate the stark difference of opinion with regard to how NPOs are perceived in Japanese society. On April 18, 2003, the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported one NPO practitioner's experience in local community development in an article titled, "With new values, NPOs can fix a broken system." The article begins with the following passages:

Japanese society today is paralyzed by a systemic malaise that politicians and bureaucrats are helpless to fix. . . . It is the job of us NPOs to create a new value *system*. And for that, we need to break down traditional values. I want local government heads to break down the traditional *system* of government, and local legislators to break the traditional legislative structure.

*Reporter:* What do you think of the fact that the total number of NPOs now exceeds 10,000?

I think the number translates into people's strong desire to break down old, dysfunctional *systems* that don't do anyone any good. The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995 underscored the efficiency of administrative authorities in serving the public. Today it is as if the entire nation is reeling from a devastating economic catastrophe. People are squirreling away their meager savings, but they won't solve anything. So those who believe in initiating action have formed NPOs to serve their own local communities. These include men who were formerly "married" to their companies – so-called corporate warriors.

*Reporter:* Do you think NPOs can rebuild local communities?

The traditional bureaucrat and corporate structures ... no longer make the nation tick. In contrast, NPOs shun the traditional pyramid hierarchy of top-down management, and expect each individual member to act responsibly within the given network. Such a *system*, I believe, can energize the local community.

Interestingly enough, both Mr. Kawade and the NPO practitioner, while presenting opposite arguments, used the same key word – *system*. For Mr. Kawade, being involved in the system had a negative meaning. He seemed to hesitate to participate in the system. Meanwhile, the NPO practitioner felt quite comfortable with a role in the existing, although reorganized, *system*.

Contrary to the rosy discourse presented in *Asahi*, what I primarily observed at a grassroots NPO were people like Mr. Kawade who were annoyed with the roles they were expected to fulfill in society. They were in despair, and they were tired. For many individuals at my field site, the experience of NPO participation was a source of disappointment. They couldn't chase their dreams at NPOs. In fact, they were annoyed with themselves for what they perceived as a gap in their imagination, which prevented them from reconciling their actual experience in NPOs with their ideals for these organizations. Such individuals often decided to leave the NPO sector, as I argued in chapter 3.

It seems to me that many people, including myself initially, imagined NPOs as movement entities (*undō-tai*) and identified them within the framework of new social movements, the citizens' movements (*shimin undō*) of the 1960s, and the residents' movements (*jūmin undō*) of the 1970s. New social movements, in line with Alberto Melucci's definition of social movements, appeared in the 1970s in Japanese society when it became clear that neither representative politics nor the administration, pressure groups, or existing social movements could begin to resolve social contradictions and distortions. Melucci (1989: 248-9) associates new movements with alternative cultures or lifestyles. The activities of these movements function primarily as symbolic challenges to existing power relations. Their arenas are "public spaces" that are independent of the

institutions of government, the party system, and state structures (Melucci 1989: 258). In a Japanese context, Kurihara Akira (1999) points out that the new social movements were spontaneously organized by independent individuals, and were measured according to such standards as ways of life, identity, self-renewal, self-determination, and symbiosis (*kyōsei*).

Those who left SLG came to believe that NPOs did not represent new social movement entities. In fact, NPOs are newly created social institutions, which are solidly located within the existing social, political, and economic system. This becomes obvious when we carefully read the first article of the NPO Law, which defines their expected roles in Japanese society.

#### Article 1 (Purpose)

The purpose of this law is to promote the sound development of specified nonprofit activities in the form of volunteer and other activities freely performed by citizens to benefit society, through such measures as the provision of corporate status to organizations that undertake specified nonprofit activities, and thereby to *contribute to advancement of the public welfare*.

(Italic added by Ogawa)

NPOs are only expected to benefit society. In other words, their activities should contribute to maintaining and strengthening the current system. Otherwise, organizations do not “deserve” to receive NPO status from the government.

On this point, one of the symbolic incidents I experienced at SLG was a discussion about how to increase volunteer participation by achieving linkage with *chōkai* (neighborhood associations), which are among the most conservative organizations and which represent the most effective administrative arm in grassroots Japanese society. During my fieldwork, I attended biweekly meetings of SLG’s recruiting division. The agenda of one day was how to increase the number of volunteers. Setting a quantitative target for the year, the attendees decided to recruit 20 new volunteers. Mr.

Koba, the director in charge of this division, spoke to the attendees:

*Mr. Koba:* In order to achieve the target, I think it is important that we take some actions. Until now, we were just waiting for new people to come to SLG. I think SLG could enter into the local community through the *chōkai* network. Why don't we link SLG with the neighborhood more? Many of people in our neighborhood still don't know SLG or even our activities well. Why don't we directly visit homes and distribute our advertisements? However, I believe that one of the key points in the advertisement is that we are not just volunteers. We are volunteers for an "NPO." NPOs are front-runners in society. Try to let neighborhood people think about the meaning of volunteering for an NPO.

The meeting did not include a discussion of specific measures that could be taken to implement Mr. Koba's proposal. However, I found this meeting highly significant, as it was the first time that I had heard an SLG board member officially mention the linkage of SLG with *chōkai* in the local community. Indeed, *chōkai* are widely considered the most reliable and trustworthy institutions in the local community. It is also tightly connected to the municipal government and local businesses. By establishing a relationship with the *chōkai*, SLG could easily win the trust of local people by upholding the existing social system.

## ***II. The Discourse of Contemporary Shimin***

### *1. Meaning of Shimin*

In March 2001, shortly before I started my dissertation fieldwork on Japanese NPOs, there was a nationwide election in Japan. Dōmoto Akiko, an independent candidate, beat her party-backed rivals and was elected governor of Chiba Prefecture, which is next to Tokyo. By stressing her position as an independent, Dōmoto received much support from urban voters who were skeptical of mainstream political parties. Approximately 70 groups called *katteren* spontaneously assembled volunteers for her election campaign. A newspaper reported that the volunteer network supporting Dōmoto

eventually swelled to include 230 organizations. In an interview with reporters, Dōmoto spoke of this volunteer effort:

This victory has great meaning to us all because an election campaign, waged only by volunteers, without the support of any political parties, has beaten the party-backed rivals. ... I believe the purely *shimin*-led election in Chiba will inject momentum into Japan toward the upper house race. I am extremely glad because I was able to play a significant role in accelerating changes in Japanese politics. Let's change politics from Chiba.

(Asahi Shimbun March 26, 2001)

In the passage above, Dōmoto refers to *shimin* in a romantic way. Her comments reflect a belief that every ill can be cured by people called *shimin*, who are “capable of disturbing the *status quo* and encouraging critical governance” (Hirowatari 2002:4). *Shimin* are indeed often placed at the opposite end of the spectrum from the government, bureaucracy, and big business. Within this perspective, *shimin* are everything that the state and business are not. *Shimin* are always standing on the socially correct side of an issue (Saeki 1997: 12). They represent a positive force that can overcome the deficiencies of the government and business sectors. The term *shimin* also has a politically correct nuance; thus, it can be invoked to garner the support of those who feel deeply that something has gone wrong in Japanese society. This interpretation is based on the usage of *shimin* that emerged in the 1960s, when Japan saw the development of new social movements.

Half a century ago, this positive connotation of *shimin* was not widely held in Japan. In the early post-war era, *shimin* were generally regarded in a negative light. Among many Japanese intellectuals who were heavily influenced by the Marxist doctrine, civil society meant capitalistic society, and *shimin* meant bourgeois. The origin of the term – civil society – can be traced to the German term “Bürgerlich Gesellschaft,” which Georg Friedrich Hegel used to describe bourgeois or civil society. In *The*

*Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (1967) showed that the growth of civil society was the most characteristic feature of modern society. In contrast, medieval society featured an inseparable relationship between the state and the kinship structures that determined the station of every person in life. Hegel saw civil society as operating “behind the backs” of the people, who were governed by forces of which they were unconscious by the state, which Hegel considered the self-conscious actualization of reason. Thus, he promoted the separation of the state from civil society and maintained that the state had no business interfering in the economy. In Karl Marx’s view, meanwhile, civil society is an illusion that needs to be unmasked. The apparent freedom of action it grants to the individual serves to disguise underlying realities of class exploitation. The capitalist state, instead of resolving the tensions of civil society, merely cements the power of the ruling class. Citizens are hopelessly fragmented, alienated from each other and from their “species-being,” as well as from the means of production and the product of their labor (Tucker 1978).

For Marxist-oriented scholars, who represented the dominant power in Japanese intellectual circles of the early postwar era, *shimin* were symbols of individualism and liberalism. Thus, *shimin* represented key ideological elements of bourgeois or civil society. Even today, as Shinohara Hajime (2004: 93), professor emeritus of political science at the University of Tokyo, points out, even though the term *shimin* is gaining currency among politicians and journalists, some scholars still hesitate to use the term. From the Marxist viewpoint, *shimin* were capitalists, members of an exploiting class who pursued their own self-interests without thinking of the public welfare. Takabatake Michitoshi (2004: 33), professor emeritus of political science at Rikkyo University, too, expresses that for Marxism-influenced scholars it was difficult to accept the term *shimin shakai* (civil society) since it overlaps with bourgeois society. Post-war intellectuals such as Maruyama Masao did not often invest the term *shimin* with positive connotations in their arguments. In fact, it seems that Maruyama did not use the term *shimin* intentionally

because he thought that there was no space in Japanese society for European-specific civil society to exist due to its particularities (Ishida 1997: 11-16). When translating the word *citoyen* from French, which emerged during the French Revolution, Maruyama used the term *kōmin*, directly translated as public person, rather than *shimin*, describing the “modern *kōmin* as key leaders of political responsibility” (Maruyama 1951:301). Oda Makoto (1995: 7-8), a writer and social activist who led *Beheiren* (“Peace for Vietnam” Committee) in the anti-Vietnam War movement in the 1960s in Japan, has described the feelings he had about the term in 1965: “The term *shimin* was not usually used, even when the term was argued by a university professor giving a lecture on the French Revolution. It sounded like something peculiar and affected. ... For the left-wing, revolutionary intellectuals, the term *shimin* was always related with some ‘discriminatory’ words such as ‘petite bourgeois.’”

*Shimin* first came to have a positive sense in the late 1950s, which largely wiped out the negative image the term had assumed in dominant Marxist thought. During this decade, Japan experienced new social movements, such citizens’ movements and residents’ movements. The term *shimin* appeared when Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke tried to revise the Police Duties Bill in 1958, a sign to renew the US-Japan Security Treaty (AMPO) in 1960.<sup>41</sup> People, including intellectuals and journalists, organized demonstrations against the move. At that time *shimin* was first used. Kuno Osamu, philosopher and political activist, is one of the first persons to use the term *shimin* in that positive usage. Kuno heralded the rise of *shimin*-based movements capable of mobilizing people whose consciousness was based on their occupational ethics because they cut across organizational loyalties and demand universal adherence to procedural rules. Kuno asked masses to generate their subjectivity through their own occupations:

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<sup>41</sup> The 1958 bill was called *Keisatsukan shokumu shikkō hō*, which “intended to broaden police powers; intensively opposed, and ultimately blocked, by progressive political forces.” (Yamanouchi et al. 1998: 323)

In order to be an active *shimin*, his/her occupation should be basically separate from national and political authority. Citizens' movements are based on a strong awareness of occupation. Each individual can freely express his/her opinion for/against the government, based on his/her occupation. Their values based on their occupations can expand beyond national borders in that the same people in the same occupation would share the same values.

(Kuno 1960: 12-3)

Through the AMPO demonstration of the 1960s, a series of massive protests against the Japanese government's renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, the term *shimin* was becoming popularized. The following passage offers an example of how the term *shimin* was actually used during this period. This is an excerpt from a pamphlet of a citizens' group, the Voiceless Voice (Koe naki koe no kai).

Hello. All of you *Shimin*, let's all walk together.  
 Even if it is only five minutes or just a hundred meters,  
 let's walk together.  
 We don't stick to any particular political thoughts  
 nor do we loudly stake claims.  
 But even the "voiceless voices" can distinguish what is right and what's not,  
 and we really want to protest politics.  
 So, let's walk together and quietly show our opposition to politics.

(Koe naki koe no kai 1962: 30-31)

*Shimin* seemed to attract people, and was therefore used to mobilize people for new social movements. Oda Makoto, as a social activist, realized diversity in the term *shimin* (Oda 1974: 11). He described various kinds of people who were uniting for an anti-Vietnam War demonstration, including salaried workers, housewives, teachers, boys, and the unemployed. In Oda's sense, *shimin* existed outside social class and occupations, rejecting any kind of exclusion and respecting diversity. *Shimin* were the key subjects of

the movements of the 1960s; they networked horizontally and freely manifested a wide range of lifestyles.

Does the connotation of dynamism in Oda's definition of *shimin* still hold in the emerging NPO sector in Japanese society? At my field site, during a bimonthly meeting of SLG's volunteer recruiting division that I attended, we discussed a new volunteer recruiting system. SLG often received calls from people who were responding to the organization's Internet advertisement seeking volunteers. The agenda of the meeting focused on the following question: How should SLG respond to such requests for volunteer opportunities? They were discussing specific details about how to welcome newcomers in a series of introductory sessions at SLG. As a key principle, they emphasized that cooperation with other volunteers was the highest priority in volunteering at SLG. In this context in welcoming newcomers, what does cooperation entail? I sensed that cooperation, in essence, meant, "not giving other volunteers trouble." What SLG needed, Ms. Kato, a housewife volunteer and a leader of the division, seemed to be saying, were people who could follow the rules of the organization without registering complaints. Volunteers were only expected to come at their appointed times and to devote their time and energy to productive work at SLG.

This discussion actually made me recall a newspaper article I had read that morning.<sup>42</sup> The article dealt with the recent boom of company mergers in Japanese society. According to the newspaper article, disparate types of people were forced to work together after a company merger. Due to the mixture of different corporate cultures, miscommunication frequently occurred. According to the article, when people face such situations, they have a good excuse that helps to reduce their frustration: They can rationalize, "Now there are 'various kinds of people' (*tasaina hito tachi*) in our company, it is difficult to communicate with each other very well. It can't be helped. It's the

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<sup>42</sup> The article appeared in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on November 12, 2002, which was titled "Tasai na hito ga irukara" (Because there are various kinds of people...).

reality.” I believe that the phrase “various kinds of people” originally had a positive nuance in Japanese. Having “various kinds of people” in a company should represent an asset, as the term suggests rich, valuable human resources. In this newspaper article’s context, however, the phrase “various kinds of people” sounded quite negative. Various kinds of people colored by different corporate cultures were presented as an obstacle to effective management. Instead of pursuing diversity among volunteers, my impression was that SLG sought to standardize volunteers’ behaviors. I began to wonder if diversity among SLG volunteers was valued.

People called *shimin* are key players in both NPOs and the new social movements. However, the subjectivity represented by the word *shimin* is unique to each context. In the NPOs, *shimin* never appeal or protest against government policies, as *shimin* in the 1960s and 1970s did. The NPO activities are, as I described in the previous chapters, realized in a very moderate tone, including problem-solving, policy proposal or collaborative relationship (*kyōdō*). On the other hand, Wesley Sasaki-Uemura’s (2001) vivid description of the AMPO demonstration of 1960 illustrates the political activism of the new social movements. During this demonstration, millions of *shimin* took to the streets for months in protest against the AMPO treaty and its forcible ratification by the Kishi Nobusuke administration. Sasaki-Uemura showed that the AMPO movement was comprised of diverse groups of politically conscious actors attempting to reshape the political body. Furthermore, he pointed out that the AMPO-era citizens’ movements exerted a major influence on the organizational structures and political philosophies of the anti-Vietnam War effort, local residents’ environmental movements, and the consumer movements in the following decades.

In contrast, today’s *shimin*, mobilized by the state within the NPO structure, are actually avoiding politics. *Shimin* are compelled to avoid politics in the NPO setting, as the NPO Law prohibits political involvement by these organizations. The law explicitly

defines NPOs as organizational entities that are not involved in any political and religious activities:

Article 2 (Definition)

"Specified nonprofit activities" under this law shall mean those activities specified in the attached schedule, which are for the purpose of contributing to advancement of the interests of many and unspecified persons.

"Specified nonprofit corporation" under this law shall mean an organization that has as its main purpose the implementation of specified nonprofit activities, that conforms with each of the following items, and that is a corporation established under the provisions of this law:

a. an organization that is covered by both of the following items and is not for the purpose of generating profits:

1. provisions regarding acquisition and loss of qualifications for membership are not unreasonable;
2. the number of officers receiving remuneration total no more than one-third of the total number of officers;

b. an organization whose activities conform with each of the following items:

3. the activities are not for the purpose of propagating religious teachings, performing ceremonies, or educating or fostering believers;
4. the activities are not for the purpose of promoting, supporting, or opposing a political principle;
5. the activities are not for the purpose of recommending, supporting, or opposing a candidate (including a prospective candidate) for a public office (meaning a public office as specified in Article 3 of the Public Offices Election Law [Law No. 100 of 1950]; the same shall apply hereafter), a person holding a public office, or a political party.

The November 1, 2003 edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported an interesting story regarding NPOs' involvement in politics. In December 2002, the Kanagawa Prefectural Government Community Relations Department (which is in charge of NPO-related issues) sent a letter to all of the NPOs in the prefecture. Anticipating the national

election scheduled for the upcoming year, the letter reminded them that NPOs were not to be involved in any political activities related to election campaigns. The letter emphasized the NPO Law's clear prohibition of political involvement and stressed that NPOs were expected to understand this point. The newspaper story introduced voices of annoyance from NPO members responding to the letter. As one NPO person said, "I thought that NPOs were supposed to play significant roles in the process of legislating and objectifying the government. However, this letter put a kind of pressure on us. I am afraid that some NPOs will step back, thinking that it is better to have nothing to do with politics." More surprisingly, a newsletter published by an intermediary NPO in the prefecture presented concerns that most of the NPOs in the prefecture kept silent on this issue (Kanagawa Information Center for Citizen's Activities 2003: 21). As this incident suggests, the contemporary meaning of *shimin* lacks a dynamic connotation; *shimin* are apolitical subjects who are simply expected to "contribute to advancement of the public welfare" through NPO activities.

## 2. *Shimin as Total War Subjectivity*

We need to know more positively that the currently emerging new economic ethics (ethos) is ... based on individual responsibility for production which demands from the whole (state). The whole requires us to expand productivity. By discarding profit-making consciousness, we need to discern the fact directly and clearly.

(Ōtsuka 1969a[1944]: 341)

In order that the new ethics leads to something "productive", we need to establish two distinctive characteristics – inner originality and institutional rationality as the crucial structure of our inner commitment for the whole. ... The supreme inner originality should be generated through aesthetic training by normative, self-disciplined subjects.

(ibid.:343)

These lines were written in 1944 by Ōtsuka Hisao, an economic historian at Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo), while he was witnessing the Japanese army fighting in a crisis against the United States in Saipan. Ōtsuka advocated a type of subjectivity that he believed was necessary if the Japanese were to fight World War II as a “total war.” What he sought was a normative, self-disciplined subjectivity that would support the whole, which was clearly the state. He understood that the wartime crisis required the Japanese people to establish a new economic ethic. On the other hand, the subjectivity advocated by Ōtsuka for supporting total war actually sounds familiar to those of us who are examining Japan in the 21st century. It seems to me that Ōtsuka’s underlying tone in 1944 is echoed in the discourse of contemporary Japan, which is facing a chronically deadlocked economy and society. In fact, the subjectivity expected today, which I have been arguing in this dissertation project on Japanese NPOs, is precisely the total war subjectivity.<sup>43</sup>

In his 1944 article entitled “*Saikōdo ‘jihatsusei’ no hatsuyō*,” (Generating a Supreme “Inner Originality”), Ōtsuka argued that people’s priorities needed to shift. The Japanese people, according to Ōtsuka, needed to stop working to increase their own wealth; instead, they should direct their efforts toward benefiting the state. In this way, they would accept full responsibility for expanding the productive forces of society. Self-disciplined subjects were expected to support a new economic order. In his formulation of ideal subjectivity, furthermore, Ōtsuka introduced a secularized form of the Calvinist ethos of individual autonomy, which was based on freedom of conscience and suppression of selfish desire. What Ōtsuka sought were economic subjects who could supervise and motivate themselves through self-discipline. For the Protestant Ōtsuka, membership in Uchimura Kanzo’s Non-Church faction had been highly formative, as was his immersion in the work of Max Weber (Koschmann 1998b). Ōtsuka’s essentially

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<sup>43</sup> In developing this thought, I was greatly influenced by Yamanouchi Yasushi et al. (1998), Nakano Toshio (1999, 2001), and Oguma Eiji (2002).

religious zeal to foster a new human type (*ningen ruikei*) – the modern personality – came to form a leitmotiv in his professional work. Citing Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe as a proto-type of modern human being, Ōtsuka encouraged the Japanese people to adopt a rational, autonomous way of life in his postwar writing. Of Robinson Crusoe, Ōtsuka wrote,

... [h]e generated his life in a extremely rational and planned way. What impressed us was he was organizing the reality he was facing by creating rational system of production (albeit it is reproduction, more preciously speaking) on such an isolated island.

(Ōtsuka 1969c[1947]: 215)

Ōtsuka continued,

If we borrow Max Weber’s words, Robinson Crusoe’s way of life was just under “the spirit of capitalism” that normative subjects were generating through the modern production system.

(ibid.: 220)

For Ōtsuka, Identification of “normative subjects” was a prerequisite of democracy and economic reconstruction. Ōtsuka indeed argued,

Japanese people must learn to appreciate their individuality and their worth as human beings. They must become free individuals capable of creating a new social order and promoting public welfare on their own initiative. An internally-fired, living democracy can emerge only out of a society of free individuals. They are also the root force behind the power of production – the material foundation of economic development. A free citizenry is not only the decisive source of productive power, it is that power itself.

(Ōtsuka 1969b[1946]: 172)

He further argued,

The Japanese people must form a new frame of reference, a modern and democratic social ethos. Only then can free and independent working people, and the domestic market built on them, actualize the power of modern production. External pressure to build along certain lines has made it all the more important that our motivation be internalized; our entire ethos must have a new core around which to evolve and change, and we must recognize that the means to accomplish this goal lie almost exclusively in education.

(ibid.: 173)

That is, Ōtsuka's theory of self-disciplined, self-motivated, rational subjects working for the benefit of the whole remained consistent during total war and throughout the post-war democratic revolution. On this point, Nakano Toshio (2001: 78-9) argues that Ōtsuka created a macro discourse on postwar enlightenment, mobilizing people under a slogan of reconstruction by instilling his sense of modernity arising from economic subjects. Using the same rationale that he employed in his wartime writing, Ōtsuka helped to create postwar subjects for the whole (i.e. the state) who could contribute to the achievement of postwar reconstruction, democratic revolution, and economic growth.

Another key person in this argument was Maruyama Masao, a political scientist and intellectual historian at Tokyo Imperial University. The most common image of Maruyama, as projected by his pronouncements and writings on post World War II Japanese politics, is of a man who vehemently opposed the 1960s version of the Japan-US Security Treaty and the attempts by conservatives to revise Article 9's renouncement of war in the postwar constitution, which was regarded as a symbol of pacifism (Sasaki 1997: 59). In a broader perspective, Maruyama was a spokesman for democracy and public enlightenment in the postwar period. Meanwhile, like Ōtsuka, Maruyama maintained the underlying tone of his argument from the interwar period through the postwar era.

During the war, Maruyama saw the emergence of a political subjectivity that supported and strengthened the nationalistic atmosphere of total war. The following is a well-known quote from Maruyama's "Becoming a Nation":

It is said that a nation means subjects who try to form a nation. In a modern sense, a nation does not always mean subjects that belong to a national community or share in a common political institution. It means only people, not a nation. In order for people to become a nation it is inevitable that people positively evaluate their commonalities, and have a strong consciousness about them. Usually this transformation from people to nation is encouraged by pressure from foreign countries.

(Maruyama 1944: 93)

As a political scientist, Maruyama focused on the relationship between individuals and the state. His approach was to focus on thought patterns that revealed the dynamics of society, and his analysis was targeted at the inner dimension of humanity, or interiority (*naimensei*).

Maruyama saw postwar democracy as entailing the awakening among the masses of modern political subjectivity. Imagining the intentional construction of a political subjectivity, he referred to John Locke, who advocated positive, rational, self-legislating subjects.

Locke was the one of the first thinkers to establish systematically the principles of political liberalism by generating the notion of liberty from a passive definition of the lack of self-discipline to a positive, constructive notion of self-determination – the subjective liberty that human beings can define their norms by themselves.

(Maruyama 1976b[1949]: 404)

Maruyama continued this argument by citing phrases from Locke's *Second Treaties of Government*:

...for all the states of created beings capable of laws, *where there is no law, there is no freedom*: for *liberty* is, to be free from restraint and violence from others; which cannot be, where there is no law..." (§57). Thus, "[t]he *liberty of*

*man*, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established by consent, in the common-wealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it” (§22). This means that political liberty is people’s political autonomy, which is only established by the parliamentary government.

(*ibid.*: 404, emphasis originally added by Locke)

On the relationship between individuals and the state, Maruyama presented an additional model, in which he cited the work of the Meiji-period enlightenment thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi. Maruyama’s strong affirmation of the universality within European culture as relevant to Japan came at a time when a defensive exceptionalism had developed into one of the most brutal forms of nationalism in Japanese history. In fact, one cannot read Maruyama in context without sensing a powerful intellect marked by a national concern. Maruyama’s work, like that of the modernists as a whole, was actually nationalistic in its intent. For Maruyama, nationalism was “an instrument of universalization” (Maruyama, quoted by Barshay 1992: 385). Referring to Fukuzawa, Maruyama wrote, nationalism and his individualism were not, as had often been assumed, contradictory but were rather complementary aspects of a coherent political approach (Maruyama 1976a[1943]: 144). Maruyama certainly observed the emergence of political subjectivity as strengthening nationalistic atmospheres in preparation for total war. Like Ōtsuka arguing for economic subjectivity, Maruyama tried to mobilize political subjectivity for supporting total war and postwar democratic revolutions. By focusing on interiority, Maruyama played a significant role in developing the definition of subjectivity in terms of the values of his era. By the postwar era, the total war subjectivity, as advocated by Ōtsuka and Maruyama, permeated Japanese society.

In the early postwar period of the mid-1950s, Japanese society experienced dynamic social and political transformation. In 1955, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the leading political party in Japan for the past half-century, was formed after two

conservative parties merged. This marked the start of the 1955 system, which is a conservative, one-dominant-party political system that prevailed in Japan from 1955 to 1993. The defining key characteristic of this system was the tension between conservative and progressive political forces (Kingston 2001: 23-24). In other words, progressive in this context meant the Marxist and radical left political culture that prevailed in trade unions and among the members of the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), the largest opposition party in Japan until its demise in the mid-1990s. The LDP actually developed in response to the growing unity and strength of the left and efforts to pursue a 'class struggle' support by Sōhyō (the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan), Japan's largest union organization at that time. The era witnessed a bitter ideological battle over the political agenda between the progressive and the conservative sides.

Against this backdrop, Japanese people could be seen starting to freely speak up in public, originally triggered by the emergence of ban-the-atomic bomb activities in the wake of the Lucky Dragon incident (Daigo fukuryūmaru jiken) of 1954. In 1958, there was nationwide opposition to the revision of the Police Duties Law, which aimed to expand police prerogatives in the anticipation of a crime. The subsequent event was the 1960 struggle against renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (Ampo), a milestone in postwar Japanese politics. Although these movements at the initial stage were still overwhelmingly supported by the members of existing social institutions, instead of individuals, such as unions and student government associations, the political demonstration against the dominant discourse marked the beginning of ordinary people's participation in politics and society, and the beginning of new social movements in Melucci's terms. The movements of this era would be a crucial foundation for generating issue-oriented activists' movements such as the citizens' movements of the 1960s, like *Beheiren*, and the residents' movements of the 1970s as seen in the Minamata environment pollution case.

I have been making an argument that total war subjectivity, which was built up during World War II, penetrated postwar Japanese society through the new social movements, and then included volunteer subjectivity supporting NPO activities in the 1990s, which maintain and strengthen the existing social system. Furthermore, people who are instilled with such normative total war subjectivity have been labeled as *shimin* or citizens over the Japanese postwar history. When we think about the infiltration of total war subjectivity to Japanese people's basic consciousness in the postwar era, intellectuals such as political scientists and philosophers played a significant role (Koschmann 1993). What the intellectuals did was guide the people in the new social movements to formulate meaningful, alternative proposals in society and politics. It seemed that they advocated a new subjectivity like "new social movement subjectivity" which was expected to proactively participate in society and politics instead of merely opposing the existing order.

However, I believe this is just a conversion of the name from total war subjectivity to new social movement subjectivity. Intellectuals have merely given a theoretical foundation for the rational re-organization of the total war system in contemporary system society. The specific reorganization covered, for instance, the miraculous economic development in the 1960s and 1970s, and the emergence of volunteer-based nonprofit activities in the 1980s and 1990s, as I will argue in the next section in this chapter, by introducing a key word *Gleichschaltung* or forced uniformity. In fact, Yamanouchi Yasushi, a historian of social theory, argues that the theoretical constructions of "civil-society school" scholars such as Ōtsuka and Maruyama were consciously or unconsciously trying to integrate nations toward a modern nation-state. Under intellectuals influenced by these two theorists, the new social movements had been tactically absorbed by people into and located within a system society that was organized on the functional principles of total war mobilization (Yamanouchi 1996: 41). In addition to Otsuka and Maruyama, postwar intellectuals such as Matsushita Keiichi, Uchida

Yoshihiko, Hirata Kiyooki, and Takabatake Michitoshi played significant roles in finding justifications for the widespread new social movements, rationalizing them as legitimate heirs to the ideals of postwar democracy (e.g., Matsushita 1966, 1971a, 1971b, 1994; Uchida 1967; Hirata 1969) and even proposing how to make their “random” activities more effective (e.g., Takabatake 1971).

In particular, I focus on Matsushita Keiichi, a political scientist at Hosei University. He was a key theorist who gave rationales to the new social movements in Japan. His rationales featured a central concept: “civil minimums.” In fact, Matsushita provided a prototype of *shimin*. *Shimin* were expected to bear the responsibility for defining the public interest. As such, *shimin* were to take part in the planning and construction of the state, and guard its operations vigilantly. According to this viewpoint, it was essential that citizens’ movements offered a unique contribution in their ability to influence political developments from outside the immediate, formal political process. It seems to me that there are thus no differences in the expected role of *shimin* between total war subjectivity and Matsushita’s sense of the term.

Matsushita promoted ideal normative subjects who supported *shimin*-based movements. In his description of the model *shimin*, he cites the ideas of Fukuzawa Yukichi (as Maruyama Masao did in his early postwar writings):

“Citizens” describes as the autonomous human being who, ideally, embodies the republican spirit of freedom and equality. ... The citizen is a free, self-respecting human being, capable of effectively organizing and initiating political policy. He is active in politics because he is concerned with the problems of daily life rather than with an abstract sense of duty to the nation; as a result, he does not regard his own opinion as infallible, but remains open-minded and flexible.

(Matsushita 1971a: 198-9)

Matsushita further advocated political participation by ordinary people in ordinary places, a form of integration that will make self-government that nation's highest priority. He continued,

Citizens' movements must become involved in the entire scope of progressive self-government in order to establish "civil minimums." They must take part in the planning and construction of government, and then guard its operations vigilantly and critically. It is essential that the citizens' movements remain aloof from internecine party politics, regardless of local conditions, for their unique function and contribution lies in their ability to influence political developments from outside the immediate, formal political process. For this reason, citizens' movements will differ structurally from professional political groups, such as the parties and the clubs that support parties. The preservation of an amateur quality will assure the citizens' movements of greater freshness and vitality than would otherwise be possible; it will allow them to continue focusing on problems more basic than structure and traditional politics.

(Matsushita 1971a: 224-5)

Since the 1970s, Matsushita's theory of "civil minimums" has represented a key attitude on how to lead the local residents' movements in Japanese society. Matsushita saw a new political subject emerging in these social movements. The movements were repudiating the irresponsibility of the traditional political system, in which policy decisions were initiated at the national level and then trickled down to the prefectural and local levels. In Matsushita's words, "The citizens' movements seek a one-hundred eighty degree reversal in the flow of authority to create a 'citizen participation model,' where decisions originate with the citizen and flow out to the national level" (Matsushita 1971a: 197). The movement, according to Matsushita, had to seek genuine popular sovereignty and democracy. Its positive participation in the state would offer an antidote to the weaknesses of established political parties, labor unions, and various radical groups.

Such normative, self-motivated subjectivity, a distinctive characteristic acquired in total war subjectivity, has appeared in Japanese society in various guises. In the 1980s, the subjectivity was confirmed by some voluntary-based nonprofit activities. For example,

the era of the “bubble economy,” this subjectivity emerged in the form of corporate philanthropy. One of the most common terms in the business sector during this period was “contribution to making society better” (*shakai kōken*) (Deguchi 1993). Japanese businesses preached the importance of corporate citizenship or *kigyō shimin*, and they began to learn the way of corporate philanthropy from American enterprises. The philanthropic activities were actually energized largely from the “supply side” by corporate philanthropy. After the Plaza accord triggered a dramatic appreciation of the yen, the Japanese economy, viewed in US dollar terms, loomed as a huge international presence. The combination of a weak US dollar and a strong yen encouraged direct Japanese investment in countries around the world, particularly in the United States, and opened the way for American-style nonprofit activity. However, philanthropic activities gradually faded away in Japanese society when the “bubble economy” burst in the early 1990s.

In the 1990s, total war subjectivity re-appeared in Japanese society as volunteer subjectivity, a subjectivity recommending spontaneous volunteer activities, which I argued in chapter 4. The subjectivity is now organized under NPOs, which are incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. NPOs supported by volunteer subjectivity are expected to play significant roles by providing alternatives to state institutions. NPO generation has been justified in rosy discourse, as illustrated in the passage below:

NPOs have been particularly effective in areas where government bureaucracy does not have sufficient flexibility or resources to respond effectively. As social needs and values became more diverse and the government budget became more constrained, the space for NPOs widened.

(Yamamoto 1999: 101)

The emergence of NPOs is expected to change Japanese society, in which the bureaucracy has traditionally monopolized decision-making and determined public interests. Normative subject production seems to be further intensified through the

activities of NPOs, as the government promotes collaborative relationships with these groups. Many sources, including the government, foundations, and businesses, are currently funding collaborative government-NPO activities. People with the normative subjectivity are called as *shimin* and are expected to support the current social system through NPO activities. Today, NPOs are – or “civil society” is – even at the core of the current debate about how to reinvigorate Japan politically, economically, and socially, and people who support NPOs are called *shimin*.

### 3. *Becoming Shimin: Standardization of Subjectivity*

In contemporary Japan, *shimin* are a highly recommended subjectivity. What Japanese people are now experiencing is the state-led standardization of ideal *shimin* subjectivity, which involves an intentional process of homogenization. Japanese society has experienced the homogenization of subjectivity several times, and I argue that the Japanese are now experiencing this process again through the generation of NPOs. Amemiya Shoichi (1998) argues that modern Japanese society has, to date, experienced two homogenization processes, which have been led by the state in order to achieve national reorganization for achieving particular purposes. He called this intentional process *Gleichschaltung*, which is usually translated into Japanese as “forced uniformity” (*kyōseiteki kakuitsuka*) or “forced homogenization” (*kyōseiteki kinshitsuka*).<sup>44</sup> According to his argument, Japan experienced the first *Gleichschaltung* in the 1930s and 1940s.

After the Great Depression in 1929, according to Amemiya, Japan’s recovery could occur

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<sup>44</sup> The German term – *Gleichschaltung* – was used by Maruyama Masao and scholars in former East and West Germany to refer to the state’s suppression and dissolution of political parties, labor unions, and other modern organizations. Ralf Dahrendorf has used this term to describe the dismantling of premodern, authoritarian groups. Amemiya expanded the meaning of the German term – *Gleichschaltung* – as follows: First, he included as its object all autonomous groups and organizations, whether modern or premodern, old or new. Second, he argued that there existed a powerful current of intentional social change that included the content of social revolution. Third, the leading force in this movement included not merely the state, but also business enterprises and other social groups. In the present project, I am most interested in the second definition. See Amemiya (1998: 237) for more details on the definition.

only through further rationalization and expansion of capitalism; specifically, recovery would rely upon the development of heavy and chemical industries. Meanwhile, Japan's international relationships brought it into intense competition with the western powers for markets. The result was heavy industrialization, which centered on the rapid, short-term expansion of military production in preparation for war. It was inevitable, says Amemiya, that the existing industrial structure – production, distribution, and consumption – would be radically transformed. Amemiya (1998: 225) argues that labor power needed to be forced out of the nonindustrial sector (i.e. agriculture, distribution and service industries) and into the heavy industrial sector. Anything that impeded this process, including organizations independent of state power – whether “old” or “new,” “authoritarian” or “democratic” – had to be dismantled. Under these circumstances, Japanese society was reorganized under strong state leadership. In politics, the parties were dissolved and reformed as the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, which also directly controlled the neighborhood associations (*chōkai*) in local communities. The Japanese industries, meanwhile, were under the control of the Greater Japan Industrial Patriotic Association, the Agricultural Patriotic League, the Commercial Patriotic Association, the Navel Patriotic League, the Greater Japan Women's Association, and the Greater Japan Young Men and Youth Association.

The second *Gleichschaltung* came shortly after World War II, carried out by large corporations and other social organizations. The postwar “productivity first” policy generated people with standardized values who were oriented solely toward commodity production and distribution. More specifically, a newly emerged middle class – salaried workers – embodied these policy values. As Amemiya (1998: 233) argues, “Overall, this amounted to the mass-production of one-dimensional company-men who inherited the total-war propensity to submerge themselves entirely in an organization.” Meanwhile, economic policies strengthened links designed to promote industrialization through a revived wartime pattern. These policies marked a shift in emphasis toward the size of the

economic pie and how it was distributed. Furthermore, the total war system destroyed both the autonomous old middle class that had formerly taken responsibility for the local community and the new middle class that was capable of inheriting such norms. After 1945, the homogenization of regional and class differences sacrificed the independence of the upper level of the old middle class while encouraging the belief that everyone was a member of the middle class or *chūryū kaikyū*. Amemiya (1998: 234) concludes, “This might very well be called an ‘historical rapprochement’ between the old and new middle classes, premised on the first and second processes of *Gleichschaltung* and the ‘achievements’ of industrialization, the welfare state, and social equalization brought about by erasing distinctions among ‘upper class,’ ‘middle class,’ and the ‘poor.’”

Following Amemiya, I would argue that what I observed – the NPO phenomenon in contemporary Japan – is the third *Gleichschaltung*. Amid a national crisis in which the economy has been languishing for more than a decade following the collapse of the “bubble economy” in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the *shimin* subjectivity, which was developed through the historical experience of total war mobilization, has been reexamined and recommended as an ideal subjectivity. This subjectivity has now been standardized through the implementation of the NPO Law, which aims to “contribute to advancement of the public welfare” as I have repeated several times as a direct quote from the NPO Law. Furthermore, the state is now trying to institutionalize this subjectivity through state-supervised education, as I argued in chapter 4. This process is a national project. As a result of these efforts, people are expected to play a significant role in supporting the existing system, which was responsible for Japan’s miraculous economic reconstruction over the postwar decades. The standardized subjectivity embodied *shimin* is enforced among ordinary people through NPO participation. Ordinary citizens are expected to become *shimin*.

However, one question still remains. Exactly who are exactly *shimin*? Who are becoming *shimin*? At my field site, SLG, there were more than 100 registered volunteers.

As I explained in chapter 4, the core group of volunteers consisted of people invited by the government. These people were leaders who contributed to local community activities such as neighborhood associations, PTAs, and local physical education associations. In addition, most members of this group were highly educated, holding college degrees. The rest of the volunteers could be described (using conventional terms of social classification based on occupation) as retirees, housewives, businesspersons/salaried workers, and students performing internships for college course credits. These were, in short, very ordinary members of the Japanese middle class.

In the movement to standardize *shimin* subjectivity, these “ordinary people” have been targeted. The *shimin* subjectivity has been intentionally institutionalized around them. They have no particular characteristics, roughly speaking. In informal Japanese terminology, their ordinariness is probably described as *futsū*. In fact, at my field site, I often heard the term *futsū* used as a key word. SLG staff often said that the organization needed “ordinary people” – *futsū no hitotachi* – as volunteers.

Oda Makoto also used the word *futsū* when he described the people who participated in the anti-Vietnam War movement. Participants in the movement included salaried workers, housewives, teachers, youth, and the unemployed. Oda (1974: 11) called these people *futsū no shimin* or “ordinary citizens.” However, in this usage, Oda implied “various kinds of people,” as I argued previously, calling them “ordinary citizens.” Furthermore, “When he was being told, ‘I am an ordinary company worker.’ Oda responded to it, saying ‘I am an ordinary writer.’” Oda’s usage suggested that ordinariness is something that transcends existing social class and occupations, rejects any kind of exclusion, and respects diversity.

However, the implications of the term *futsū* seemed different at the NPO I observed. SLG actually appeared to reject diversity among the volunteers. In fact, when members of this NPO used the term *futsū*, I found that exclusivity was implied. When they recruited new volunteers, they were looking for persons much like the current

volunteers – people who were willing to follow the rules of the organization without complaint. Meanwhile, from time to time, I observed serious complaints among the volunteers about how to eliminate several annoying members of the group. These complaints always ended in vain; the volunteers did not find any solutions to their concerns. There was a common belief among the SLG volunteers that spontaneous will in volunteering should be greatly respected. Therefore, none of them could honestly and directly confront the “annoying people” with comments like “Don’t come anymore.” Although the volunteers were frustrated with certain individuals, they never tried to bring the topic to the discussion table on an official level. This was partly because they hated conflict. In fact, they were quite silent every time they had an opportunity to voice such concerns.

As I contemplated the “ordinariness” represented by the term *futsū*, I had a chance to read a book entitled *Iyashi no nashonarizumu* (roughly translated as Nationalism as Healing) (Ueno Y. 2003), an ethnography of a group of grassroots conservatives in the late 1990s who supported a neo-nationalistic history textbook. The textbook was penned by nationalistic academics from the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, who were attempting to revise the history textbooks used in junior high schools. As members of an academic circle called the Association for the Advancement of Liberalist View of History, they advocated the liberal view of history – *jiyūshugi shikan*.<sup>45</sup> They argued that the root cause of Japan’s deadlocked economy and society in the 1990s lay in a

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<sup>45</sup> The major figures of the scholars’ groups are Fujioka Nobukatsu, a professor at Takushoku University, and Nishio Kanji, a professor at the University of Electro-Communication. Among articles available in English language, for extensive analysis of the neo-nationalism, see Curtis Anderson Gayle, “Progressive Representations of the Nation: Early Postwar Japan and Beyond” in *Social Science Japan Journal*. 4:1 2001, 1-19; Rikki Kersten, “Neo-nationalism and the ‘Liberal School of History’” in *Japan Forum*. 1999, 191-203; and Oshiba Ryo, “National Symbols, History Textbooks and Neo-Nationalism in Japan” in *We the People in the Global Age: Re-examination of Nationalism and Citizenship*. A critical argument is found in “A Comic Book View of History” by Tessa Morris-Suzuki in *Quarterly Bulletin* June 2001. She argues, “Some texts had begun to acknowledge uncomfortable subjects—like the existence of ‘comfort women.’ Now, a backlash is in progress, tied inextricably to Japan’s economic woes, rising unemployment and concern about the future. Such conditions have fostered a climate where simplistic neo-nationalism can flourish.”

masochistic overemphasis on the negative aspects of Japanese history. They called for a new type of history education that would help to build the identity of the Japanese people. In order to awaken a sense of national pride among Japanese students, the scholars promoted a view of early 20th-century Japan that refused to acknowledge Japan's invasion and colonization of other Asian countries and that exonerated Japan for its responsibility in World War II. Furthermore, they believed that the acceptance of individualism and the development of democracy – the guiding principles of reform after World War II – are highly regarded because prewar Japan neglected such social values. However, in postwar Japan, the concept of public responsibility, which must counterbalance the recognition of private rights, has been neglected. Thus, the deadlock in contemporary Japan can be viewed as the culmination of 50 years of postwar Japanese history.

Ueno Yoko, the author of this ethnography, conducted ethnographic fieldwork in a grassroots group in Kanagawa Prefecture that supported the neo-nationalist textbook, which had appeared amid the trend toward a more open way of teaching history in the 1990s. In Japan, all textbooks used in public and private schools must be submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval. Ueno's ethnography describes how this group of grassroots conservatives supported the history textbook in an attempt to reverse the masochistic view of Japanese history (in particular, Japanese World War II history), and how they justified the textbook's nationalistic discourse. While reading this ethnography, I was especially interested in the following questions: Exactly who supports the textbook? Who are grassroots conservatives? Ueno actually calls themselves "silent conservative citizens" (Ueno Y. 2003: 143). In the ethnography, the supporters of the textbook are people who might be labeled as "white-collar" workers. They seem to be far removed from the social activists in political movements. They emphasize respect for individualism, and they value their professions and families more than they value the activities of advocacy groups. Furthermore, they hesitate to take extreme positions. They

never even call themselves “right-wingers” or “nationalists.” Ueno identifies shared characteristics she observed among the group members. When the people in her field site described themselves, they called themselves ordinary citizens – *futsū no shimin* – although they sometimes had difficulties finding the correct words to accurately express themselves. Throughout the fieldwork, the members of the group often asked Ueno, “Do you think this is a gathering organized by people who are not typical? We are ordinary, aren’t we?”

In contexts such as this, the term *futsū* is used to guarantee membership in the majority in Japanese society. In Ueno’s ethnography, the movement supporters are extremely afraid of being excluded from the majority, and sense that society may cast a suspicious eye on their activities. Furthermore, Ueno points out that one of the favorite expressions among the group members is “silent majority” or *sairento majoritī* in Japanese (Ueno Y. 2003: 145). In fact, they *are* silent. They avoid conflict. They are passive. They attempt never to complain in public. Within the inner circle they created, they have become good spectators in their support of the nationalistic textbook. Why do they choose to function as passive observers? Ueno reasons that they choose this role because their group’s activities have no direct impact on their daily lives. They are busy with their professions; supporting the textbook is not their first priority.

In my view, the people supporting the nationalistic textbook movement and the people supporting activities at my field site look very much alike. In fact, both prefer to have people label them as ordinary – *futsū*. At SLG, as my ethnographic findings show, the volunteers were primarily middle-class members of the local community. Although the NPO was located in a blue-collar district of Tokyo, most participants in the NPO were white-collar workers. Members of the former outcast *burakumin* and members of other nationalities, such as Japanese-Koreans, migrant workers from China and the Philippines, were not represented, even though these groups were present in the local community.

The SLG volunteers were also far removed from the progressive activism that characterized the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As I discussed in chapter 3, the left-wing social activists, in fact, hesitated to join the nationwide NPO movement. Nevertheless, it did not appear that people at my NPO supported the extreme right wing. I believe that they were neither on the left nor on the right. Instead, they held the center. They probably represented the ordinary, middle-class people that had been called the “silent majority” throughout postwar Japanese history. If anything, they might have been conservatives who supported the policies implemented by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the ruling party during most of the postwar era. They never complained about the existing government in public, and they never tried to instigate conflict with it. They were silent. Such people are now conveniently but tactically mobilized under NPOs, a new social institution that aims to “contribute to advancement of the public welfare.” They are simply expected to do something for the betterment of society. Furthermore, when they use the term *futsū*, the word suggests a subconscious attempt to exclude otherness. In order to protect their comfort in small, insular communities, they try to reject otherness. They reject something heterogeneous to them. They do not even notice otherness, due to a lack of imagination. Their exclusive subjectivity rejects diversity. Today, the apolitical, exclusive subjectivity has been standardized in *shimin*. This subjectivity is in line with total war subjectivity, as advocated by Maruyama Masao’s “To be a nation” article and Otsuka Hisao’s Robinson Crusoe article. This subjectivity was developed through the new social movements in Japan, which positively functioned in providing alternative proposals. *Shimin* is now standardized through the NPO Law as a necessary subjectivity. Labeled as *shimin*, heterogeneousness among people is becoming obscure. Such people are populating “civil society” in contemporary Japanese society.

### ***III. NPOs as Neoliberal Representation***

#### *1. Why NPOs “Now”?*

Why does Japanese society have NPOs? Why are they in vogue? In order to develop the present argument, I would like to briefly introduce the manner in which NPOs are discussed in Japanese academia. NPOs are primarily studied by sociologists and economists. For example, Hasegawa Koichi, a sociologist at Tohoku University, pointed out that the characteristics of social movements in Japan have changed over the past three decades.<sup>46</sup> In the early 1970s, Japan saw the development of residents’ movements. In the mid-1980s, the country saw the emergence of network-based social movements. These movements, which were categorized as new social movements in line with the work of Alberto Melucci (1989), drew upon participants who viewed their involvement as an end in itself. They sought action because they needed to fill their lives with activity – any activity – as activity is stimulating and exciting. The movements of this era were also characterized by the achievement of people in society voluntarily coming together for a common, beneficial purpose. Hasegawa further argues that in the late 1990s Japanese society institutionalized these movements. Why did the institutionalization of social movements occur? Following the impressive (and spontaneously organized) disaster relief activities of 1.3 million volunteers after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, there was a shared consensus among Japanese people that our society needed to support volunteer-based social movements. A new formal and institutional framework to support these social movements – one that would be controlled neither by the conventional government nor by private, for-profit businesses – was necessary. After the 1995 earthquake, there had not been much of a system in place to provide long-term, efficient support to the disaster-stricken area. That experience led Diet members to bring forward new legislation to encourage the establishment of more

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<sup>46</sup> This argument is from a key note speech made by Hasegawa at a special seminar on Japanese NPOs titled “NPO no saizensen.” It was held at Tokyo Institute of Technology on November 19, 2001.

voluntary nonprofit organizations by granting them corporate status, which would enable their members to share their assets or make a contract in the name of organization. Without this status, members had to open bank accounts as individuals. To form an NPO, one does not have to prepare capital; thus, it is much easier for an NPO to achieve corporate status than it is for other types of corporate bodies. This has led some to argue that the institutionalization of NPOs was an inevitable result of the great earthquake.

Instead, I contend that Japanese society would have NPOs even if the great earthquake had never occurred. Arguably, the current NPO phenomenon derived from the context of the social movements. In the early 1990s the development of the Japanese nonprofit third sector was already discussed in an American think-tank journal as a new dynamism stemming from a convergence of domestic and global developments, which are “awakening Japanese citizens to the possibility of new ways of relating to their environment” (Frost 1993: 28). In fact, official activities supporting the institutionalization of a nonprofit sector began in November 1994, about two months before the earthquake. A citizens’ group known as the C’s (formerly the Coalition for Legislation to Support Citizens’ Organizations) was organized by 24 citizens’ groups to facilitate citizen-based activities. The C’s were well known, as the group which played a significant role in lobbying the legislative process of the NPO Law in 1998. When the C’s established their group, they sought three objectives: a system for citizens’ groups that would allow them easy access to corporate status, a tax exemption system for citizens’ activities, and information disclosure relating to citizens’ activities.

I do not totally deny, however, that the earthquake triggered the trend toward the institutionalization of some types of citizen-based social movements in a very positive manner. I have developed my argument in a different way. I see NPOs as key agencies in neoliberalism.<sup>47</sup> I directly attribute the NPO phenomenon seen in Japanese society to

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<sup>47</sup> Neoliberalism is a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last quarter-century. The prefix “neo” suggests a “new” kind of liberalism. The “old” kind was the liberal school of economics,

globally expanding neoliberalism. The NPO phenomenon is not something unique to Japanese society. Rather, it is a representation of the way in which a global trend – neoliberalism – is placed, shaped, understood, and operated in a society. Neoliberalism, as a global trend in politics and economics, is theoretically backed by Anthony Giddens's *Third Way* (1998). The book title suggests a political philosophy that is distinctive yet also defined by its relationship to other models. A general characteristic of neoliberalism is the desire to intensify and expand markets by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formation of transactions. I understand from Giddens (1998) the main points of neoliberalism include (1) the rule of the market: liberating private enterprise from any bonds imposed by the government, no matter how much social damage this causes; (2) cutting public expenditure for social services; (3) deregulation: reducing government regulation of everything that could diminish profits, including protecting the environment and safety on the job; (4) privatization: selling state-owned enterprises, goods, and services to private investors; and (5) eliminating the concept of the public good or community and replacing it with self-responsibility or *jiko-sekinin*, which I discussed in chapter 2. Following the conservative administrations of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States, Nakasone Yasuhiro, a political leader of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Japanese prime minister from 1982 through 1987, promoted deregulation policies under his administration. He privatized three state-owned businesses: national railways, telephone and telegraph, and

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as argued in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776. The old school advocated the abolition of government intervention in economic matters. According to Smith, there should be no restrictions on manufacturing, no barriers to commerce, and no tariffs; free trade was the best way to ensure that the nation's economy would develop. Such ideas were "liberal," in the sense that they rejected the notion of controls. This application of individualism encouraged free enterprise and free competition. On the other hand, the Great Depression of 1929 led John Maynard Keynes to develop a theory that challenged such liberalism as the best policy for capitalists. Keynes argued that full employment is necessary for capitalism to grow, and that it can be achieved only if governments and central banks intervene to increase employment. These ideas had much influence on US President Roosevelt's New Deal policy. The belief that government should and could advance the common good became widely accepted. However, the capitalist crisis of the past two decades, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That's what makes this liberalism "neo" or "new." Now, with the rapid globalization of capitalist economy, we are seeing neo-liberalism on a global scale.

tobacco and salt. Those businesses are currently known as Japan Railroad (JR), Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT), and Japan Tobacco (JT), respectively. The government thus downsized, transferring its businesses to the corporate sector.

The 1990s, popularly called in Japan the “Lost Decade” or *ushinawareta jūnen*, saw paradigm shift in Japanese social and political life. Jeffrey Kingston, a Tokyo-based American historian, describes that era as follows in a book overviewing postwar Japanese history:

Mired in recession during the 1990s, Japan is facing the consequences of prolonged economic malaise. It enters the twenty-first century as the world’s leading debtor nation, with total public debt amounting to 123 percent of GDP, a result of massive counter-cyclical government-spending packages aimed at stimulating recovery and rescuing the financial sector from insolvency. From a nation that enjoyed double-digit growth and minimal unemployment throughout the miracle years..., growth has become anaemic and unemployment has skyrocketed. The twin pressures of recession and economic deregulation have generated a powerful riptide with considerable consequences for the employment system. This system seems to be unraveling as companies discover that measures which saw them through past slumps are exhausted. Corporate Japan can no longer afford the rigidities and high costs of lifetime employment and seniority-based wage scales (*nenko*). The social contract between employers and employees based on security and loyalty is a likely casualty as firms gradually pursue more aggressive restructuring. What went wrong?

(Kingston 2001: 90)

Under these circumstances, the neoliberal *Third Way* trend has been solidly supported since Japanese people were becoming distrustful to the government. In particular, the bureaucrats, people who had been labeled as the cleverest in the society and had led the postwar miraculous reconstruction. However, many attributed the sluggish economic situation to mismanagement of domestic economy policies by the finance ministry bureaucrats. Furthermore, the bureaucrats have lost much of their prestige and trustworthiness due to a flurry of bribery scandals nationwide, such as *kankan settai* or entertaining higher bureaucrats by lower bureaucrats with tax payers’ money. Some

finance ministry officials even accepted entertainment from business at a *no pan shabushabu* (a kind of Japanese food) restaurant, where waitress wore short skirts and no underwear. Gerald L. Curtis, a Japanese politics specialist, pointed out these incidents “symbolized how far bureaucratic behavior had strayed from the lofty ideal of the self-less professional who dedicated his life to serve the interests of nations” (Curtis 1999: 56). The fall from grace of the bureaucrats was finally and decisively highlighted by the woeful performance in the disaster-relief activities following the great earthquake. “The governments can’t respond to our needs promptly and flexibly,” – I think this was a shared impression among us Japanese, which I reported as a reporter in the mid-1990s. They no longer seem to have the answers and no longer seem able to cope with new challenges. As we came to learn of their incompetence and malfeasance, we felt a solid need for highlighted scrutiny and monitoring of their activities. At that exact time, the concept of NPOs was strategically introduced to the society, in a very timely, and in a sense, tactical manner. The third sector, which is not the government nor for-profit businesses, was officially instituted in Japanese society.

Why NPOs “Now”? That was a question I raised in in the beginning of this section. The answer should not be mono-causal. However, I primarily believe that Japanese NPOs should be situated in line with the neoliberal policy implementations of the 1980s and early 1990s. They are an inevitable extension of the neoliberal politics we experienced in the past two decades. The emergence of NPOs is a reverse discourse of neoliberalism, which pursues the small government. NPOs, or “civil society,” actually gained attention in the context of structural reform, or *kōzō kaikaku*, which primarily intends devolution from the government to the private sector. Among the private sector, NPOs are a target. Structural reform is a key term in neoliberal politics since the late 1990s of the Hashimoto Ryutaro administration of the LDP.<sup>48</sup> In the argument of

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<sup>48</sup> Probably I need to mention here that Hashimoto is a key political figure, since he strongly pushed deregulation politics. Hashimoto sponsored the financial Big Bang program in the Tokyo market under the

structural reform, NPOs are definitely expected to play a powerful role in setting the terms of structural reform debates by mobilizing key constituencies, and in coordinating grassroots companies to effect change. They are expected to be a device that will drastically change the conventional social, political, and economic customs in Japanese society, by tapping volunteers to better society and to revitalize the economy. In fact, the Economic Strategy Council (*keizai senryaku kaigi*), an advisory body to prime minister, officially proposed in 1999 to introduce NPOs into the existing system to enhance dynamism in society. In the proposal, the role of NPOs is certainly mentioned, for example, as partners in Private Finance Initiative (Economic Strategy Council 1999). In this context, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, the Japanese business daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* and the Japan Business Federation (*Nippon Keidanren*) have been ardent supporters of NPO activities.

NPOs, representations of neoliberalism are justified and described as “civil-society organizations,” a term that connotes something correct, ideal, and desirable. NPOs were tactically and strategically introduced to Japanese society by the state at many different levels. As I argued in previous chapters, I observed a field site that the primary user of the NPO Law was the municipal government. The government mobilized the local residents as volunteers and organized an NPO. Under the name of structural reform, the NPOs were officially included into the arena of public administration under the name of *kyōdō*. Citing my ethnographic findings, I have documented the Japanese NPO phenomenon is part of the neoliberal, calculated reorganization of the existing social and political system, which has been dominated by bureaucratic instrumental rationality. Now people are mobilized through NPOs to support this reorganization.

NPOs, which originally intended to break the instrumental rationality, are tactically and

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name of structural reform. Above all, he was the prime minister when the NPO Law was legislated. Gerald L. Curtis (1999: 39) described the Hashimoto administration, as he “came into office promising to reform everything from the bureaucracy to the educational system. His government, however, proceeded cautiously with implementing his reform program. It had to deal with a bureaucracy that resisted change. It needed to balance competing interests and avoid alienating any key constituency in its broad social base.”

strategically co-opted into the existing social and political system. For me, this move looks ironically as if it is intensifying the conventional bureaucratic rationality. The result is that the state has remained as dominant as it ever was. The state continues to be strong, and NPOs – products of the state’s deliberate institutionalization of “civil society” – have become nearly synonymous with the state. The state, an unusually strong actor, actually retards the development of a healthy, dynamic civil society. I might say that the state is using underhanded tactics to institutionalize a “civil society” that will meet its goals.

## 2. *Social Capital and the Discourse of “Civil Society”*

Toward concluding this dissertation, I need to discuss one more topic. That is with regard to social capital. Is it desirable to have more NPOs in society? Is the rising number of NPOs likely to increase opportunities for social and political participation? The theory of social capital may shed light on this issue. Many scholars have discussed the concept of social capital (e.g., Jacobs 1961; Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988, 1990; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000).<sup>49</sup> I believe that the work of Robert D. Putnam, who stresses the trust and reciprocity between people that facilitates collective action in terms of economic and political development at regional and national levels, is particularly relevant to the NPO phenomenon in Japan. Defining the core idea of social

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<sup>49</sup> Pierre Bourdieu first introduced the term “social capital” in the contemporary sense. Using the phrase *le capital social*, he defined the meaning as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1986: 248). This means that social capital is something that is essential to building economic capital and social status and that is essential for maintaining the possibility of future social participation. James S. Coleman also sees social capital in functional terms: not as a characteristic of individual agents, but as something that “inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors” (Coleman 1990: 16). Social capital is the connective tissue of society, which makes it easier for people to trust each other and build reutilized relationships, especially in the area of commerce. Coleman defined the term thus: “Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure... Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (Coleman 1990: 16). Furthermore, Coleman argues that social capital is a public good that is created as a by-product of other activities. Social capital is indispensable to the production of other forms of capital (Coleman 1990: 35).

capital in the phrase “social networks have value” and arguing that increased “social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups” (Putnam 2000: 19), Putnam sees social capital as a distinct form of public good, which is embodied in civic engagement and affects economic prosperity. In particular, he highlights voluntary associations as agents that create and sustain the bridging of social capital that enables people to get ahead.

Is Japanese social capital rich or poor? It is said that Japan is a “high social trust” nation characterized by communitarian capitalism (Vogel 1987; Thurow 1996). It is also said that Japan has a vibrant association life with roots that go back to the rich capital stores of prewar Japan, and that the dense social networks of the prewar era are still used to mobilize the conservative vote (Hastings 1995). Meanwhile, a few Japanese political scientists influenced by Putnam have conducted quantitative research on social capital in Japan (e.g., Inoguchi 2000, 2002). The newest and most extensive research available on this topic during my dissertation writing stage was a study conducted by the Japanese Cabinet Office, which was announced in June 2003. According to this study (Cabinet Office 2003), regions where volunteering is active show relatively low crime rates, low unemployment rates, and high birth rates. If we locate these findings within the concept of social capital, as the researchers did, we would conclude that active volunteering activities enrich social linkage through human networks in local communities, which, in turn, results in the accumulation of social capital. From this perspective, volunteer activities definitely lead to a desirable result: peaceful, safe, and stable communities. Returning to the question I raised at the beginning of the previous paragraph, the research suggests that urban areas such as Tokyo and Osaka are social-capital poor, while regional areas are social-capital rich, due to the urbanization process.

However, I am not exclusively interested in whether Japan is social-capital rich or poor. Rather, I am interested in how this seemingly new concept – social capital – has been introduced, argued, and even justified (by the state) in contemporary Japanese

society. How are NPOs located in the social capital argument? In fact, the research project described above encourages the government to pursue cooperative policies to build solid social capital in Japan. The researchers' key stance is that the government can build social capital through policies that build volunteering activities. According to the research report (Cabinet Office 2003: 101-102), such policies should cover a wide range, as the significance of social capital is not limited to any particular area. The government has been implementing various kinds of policies and programs related to community development, including community support and revitalization programs. The government is also given the following recommendations: to create more policies to encourage participation in volunteer activities, and to activate existing volunteering programs. These policies will lead to greater social capital, as they play a significant role in creating human relationships among volunteers based on the norm of reciprocity. In this sense, volunteer-based NPO activities act as a seedbed for the cultivation of social capital. As highly recommended in the study, the government can take advantage of existing social capital for new policy implementation. By thus invoking social capital, the government is justifying a strategic reorganization of the existing social and political systems that will suit it. Social capital is available to the government to reduce its costs by removing activities from the domain of the state. In fact, social capital can save taxpayers money through the devolution process as work moves from the state to the voluntary NPO sector. It is about the community successfully achieving progress toward solving social ills.

For me, social capital appears to be a convenient excuse for the neoliberal government of Japan. Social capital is a social institution and a practice in neoliberal hegemony. Furthermore, social capital is a social evolution ideology. What makes the concept of social capital attractive for some people is that a lack of social capital is not permanent. Enhanced policies can create social capital. The social capital theory is a theory of the "haves." Davydd J. Greenwood (2002: 11) argues that this theory [social

capital] is an exciting ideology for those in power, as it justifies their social interventions and values (after all, the “haves” possess social capital, which is why they also have most of the goodies). In this sense, Japan is a “have-not” (which Greenwood calls “nth” or “not the haves”), while the United States is a “have.”

During my fieldwork, I had a couple of opportunities to attend symposia on civil society, NPOs, and NGOs, which were sponsored by several foundations from Japan and the United States. In such symposia, the United States and other western countries are always the “teachers,” and Japan, as a latecomer to civil-society making, is always the “student.” The following is an excerpt from an interesting conversation I inscribed in my fieldnotes:

In the opening remark at a symposium, an executive vice president of a US foundation said, “We are a US-based nonprofit organization. For the past 50 years, our foundation has been interested in supporting civil-society making and nonprofits’ development here in Japan and Asia. Through supporting grassroots NGOs, we recognize that we can build our understanding and deepen our relationship.”

Responding to the remark, a Japanese man from a major Japanese foundation said,

“Thank you very much for coming to this symposium. In terms of creating civil society, I would say that the US is our mentor. We have a lot of things we can learn from US experiences. Fortunately, the US foundation fully understands and supports our intentions. In this 21st century, we Japanese should more positively participate in global civil society by becoming a crucial member and by sharing knowledge. However, in order to do so, Japanese NGOs need to achieve solid capacity building.”

The panel discussion started. The title of the discussion was “State-NGO relations and international development assistance.” In this context, civil-society organizations – NGOs and NPOs – are key players. A director of a Japanese NGO focused on family planning in international development first offered a summary of Japan’s history of

involvement in NGOs with international cooperation. She mentioned that NGOs' involvement in international cooperation started more than 10 years ago in Japan. The NGO movement, she said, was ignited by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995. Currently, NGOs are expected to play a significant role in contributing to international development. NGOs are not only practitioners entrusted by the government, but are also participants in the decision-making process, although their position is still limited. These organizations are starting to assume advocacy functions. This speaker was followed by the executive director of a similar organization in the US, who introduced the US Foreign Assistant Act and discussed how NGOs are treated in this legislation.

During the symposium, I was struck by the power imbalance between the American and Japanese participants. The American foundation led the discussion, defining and “teaching” the meaning of civil society. The prevailing attitude was that American people know everything about the citizens' sector. Thus, Americans would teach the Japanese, who were expected to politely listen. When a person from the floor raised a question about the current conflict between NGOs and governments in a recent G-8 Summit, the US sponsor interrupted the question, deeming it inappropriate to the symposium. I was extremely surprised to see the free expression of opinion squelched. Moreover, the symposium was held in the Ark Mori Building – one of the most expensive spaces in Roppongi, Tokyo – in which US investment banks such as Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers have offices. As the day went on, I had the impression that a macro discourse of NGOs/NPOs in Japan was being created far away from grassroots people like those at my field site in downtown Tokyo. The day's discussion seemed to have nothing to do with them. At grassroots NPOs, people are confused and frustrated by organizational deadlock. As the concept of NPOs is entirely new to Japanese society, people were perplexed about what to do in NPOs and how to do it. When they sought role models, government officials instructed NPO participants (volunteers) on how to conduct NPO activities. Furthermore, I often heard the following comment at various NPOs: “We

should do this way because American people do it this way.” Civil society is not given by somebody. During my fieldwork, I strongly felt that we Japanese needed to start democratizing our own argument on civil society, not just follow the United States as a role model in institutionalizing civil society. This insight actually drove me to become an active action-minded researcher.

In this project, I was looking for the distinctive meaning of civil society in contemporary Japan, exclusively focusing on NPOs incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. Japanese NPOs are believed to provide greater accommodation and space for diversity in contemporary Japan. However, if I may borrow the phrase of Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985: 173), NPOs “redefine the notion of democracy itself in such a way as to restrict its field of application and limit political participation to an ever narrower area.” As I repeated many times in this dissertation, the NPO Law limits the activities to the only 17 areas that can “contribute to advancement of the public welfare.” The normative subjectivity supporting the 17-areas is now standardized as *shimin*, and the *shimin* subjectivity is extensively produced and reproduced nationwide. Normalized, exclusive subjects are supposed to play significant roles in providing public services to communities. Under the circumstances, people are actually becoming alienated from increasingly remote and commercialized neoliberal policy-making processes. In fact, a handicapped person even contributed a sad comment to the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper on September 29, 2002, questioning this ongoing trend. She says, “I, a handicapped person, am always supposed to be “given” (*hodokoshi wo ukeru*). I am always supposed to be helped. If those activities are standardized, becoming something normative under the name of volunteerism, I would be really uncomfortable living in this society. For me, it is really difficult to survive. I feel I must be small and weak. ... I wonder what this society is trying to achieve. Even I can push the button on the elevator.” On this point, I must argue again the meaning of democracy defined by NPO activities “serve to legitimize a regime

in which political participation might be virtually non-existent” (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 173). Actually these quotations are from a strong critique toward neoliberalism.

Toward the end of this dissertation, I conclude that civil society in contemporary Japan is a strategic articulation of total war subjectivity – a distinctive characteristic, which has been imbedded in Japanese people – and neoliberalism – a globally dominant political technique. NPOs absorb total war subjects very well. We Japanese are nowadays experiencing such institutionalization of “civil society.” We are being mobilized and organized under the name of civil society for achieving public good. I myself experienced the active, dynamic process.

“Civil society” is such an integrated system. I created a picture of the state attempting to depoliticize the local residents, but my case also suggested how this was not being meekly accepted. I hope, optimistically, most Japanese people vaguely realize this ongoing reality. It is a fact that more than 60,000 citizens’ groups have existed in Japanese society, as I introduced in chapter 2. However, only a small percent of the citizens’ groups have sought recognition under the NPO Law. In fact, most of the NPOs currently incorporated exist because there is the NPO Law. There may be a self-selection bias to those that are less inclined to challenge the government. In fact, some were very cautious to participate in this NPO phenomenon. I confirmed that some social activists from the past hesitate to join it. Some surely left NPOs because they felt they were not what they were looking for.

Lastly, I should mention that the huge number of NPO incorporation has proceeded simultaneously with conservative nationalistic legislation. In August 1999, the government passed the Communication Monitoring Law and an amendment to the Citizens’ Residence Registration Law, which allowed the government to monitor all citizens by assigning each citizen a number. Furthermore, the government enacted the National Flag and Anthem Law on August 13, 1999, in order to strengthen the symbols of national identity. More recently, the Japanese government dispatched its self-defense

forces to Iraq. It was historic moment because the Japanese military was dispatched to a warring territory for the first time since World War II. As it is located in this context, NPOs should be viewed with some amount of skepticism. Indeed there have been no NPOs to publicly oppose these nationalistic moves. I even confirmed that some people organized under NPOs explicitly express discomfort when others say something against the political discourse.

As I argued, this ongoing NPO phenomenon serves the state at various levels for maintaining and strengthening the existing social and political system. The NPO policy does not serve grassroots people. It limits the meaning of democracy, and social and political participation. It even makes some people feel they are being alienated.

Admittedly, my ethnography may not be all inclusive of the Japanese NPO phenomenon, which has only a short history. But, I believe I have identified an important reality in examining of the relationship between the state and society. My concern is what will happen when the concept of society is extended to include the state. This is along the same lines as the phenomena seen in the 1930s and in the 1940s, when nationalistic Japan advanced into World War II as total war.

CHAPTER 7  
REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE: INITIATING CHANGE –  
ACTION RESEARCH IN A JAPANESE THIRD-SECTOR ORGANIZATION

***Motivating Research***

*A gardener said one day, “We are going to plant a flower garden.”*

*However, the flowers of the garden never fully bloomed.*

*The trimming is only an appearance.*

*The arrogant gardener prunes according to his taste.*

*He never considers each individual flower.*

*The gardener gives water and fertilizer haphazardly.*

*The flowers can't get their necessary nutrition.*

*The roots have begun to rot.*

*The garden has beautiful stone walls.*

*However, the stone walls hurt the flowers' roots.*

*To make matter worse, the walls disturb the draining.*

*The gardener wondered why the flowers were withering.*

*Without serious consideration, he pulled out the flowers,  
although some of the flowers had buds.*

*He bought new flowers and planted them.*

*But the newly planted flowers again started withering.*

*The day after a heavy rain fell, the garden lost all of the flowers,  
leaving only the beautiful, but cold empty stone walls.*

This was a poem I received from a female volunteer during the initial stage of my fieldwork at SLG. This poem inspired me as an action-minded anthropologist. I would not be satisfied just observing the phenomenon in front of me. I wanted to become as deeply involved in SLG's deadlocked processes as possible. I wanted to facilitate changes to help make the organization operate better for its members. Suspending my objectivity as a researcher, I set off on a mission of action. So, in this chapter, I would like to share my narrative account as an insider anthropologist.

The action to which I am referring is a research strategy called Action Research, which I introduced in chapter 1. As an action-oriented anthropologist, I utilized my conventional ethnographic training to record when people in my field site presented their voices in society. Ethnography was very attractive to me because it facilitated the inclusion of diverse voices. Ethnographic inquiries seek to discover the perspectives that are embedded in the voices and actions of others. The words of my research collaborators echoed much of what I experienced and observed, as I became *nakama*, or close friends. I shared a lot of frustration with the people in my field site as I gradually became a full member in the discussions. Above all, I became a part of a network of *nakama*, who shared the same frustrations and tried to make changes in unison, collaborating with and helping each other. I offered anything I could to help, including knowledge and time, and was treated with reciprocal respect. We created changes through trial and error, and learned something in the process of reactivating an evaluation team in the course of revitalizing the grassroots level of the course planning division at SLG. Also, as I argued in chapter 1, this research strategy was very natural to me because it reflected my dual role of friendly outsider and involved participant, a reflection of my condition as a native anthropologist interested in democratizing society through social and political reform. Furthermore, while doing my research in the discipline of anthropology, I realized that the Action Research strategy is an extremely effective complement to the ethnographic approach, as both are cyclical. The major tasks of ethnography – asking questions, recording observations, and analyzing data – are repeated over and over again. Meanwhile, the Action Research problem-solving cycle consists of four steps: diagnosing problems, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (Coghlan and Brannick 2001: 17). In theory, this research process never ends.

### *Setting the Field Site*

On July 11, 2001, I returned from the United States to Japan to conduct my dissertation fieldwork. At that point, I had no specific organizations in my mind. I only knew that I wanted to study the emergent voluntary third sector in Japan, which would be associated neither with government nor with business. Also, I wanted to undertake a detailed organizational ethnography of the Japanese NPOs, in particular, which were established under the NPO Law of 1998. As a further restriction, I wanted to set my field site in Tokyo or the greater Tokyo metropolitan area, where my wife had begun her job.

What I initially did was attend gatherings for people who were interested in NPOs. The 1998 Law had encouraged a number of salon-style gatherings across the country for people who wanted to know and learn more about what NPOs were. The gatherings were advertised on the Internet and open to the public. At the initial stage of my fieldwork, I attended as many of these events as possible, exchanging my business card with as many NPO practitioners as I could. Whenever I had a chance, I talked about my project with them. If the NPOs they were operating sounded interesting to me, I visited their offices. I exchanged 48 business cards with NPO volunteer leaders during the first month of my fieldwork.

At the first salon-style gathering I attended in late July, I happened to sit next to Mr. Hasegawa, general secretary of SLG, an NPO located in downtown Tokyo that promotes continuing education in the local community. He was actually the first person with whom I exchanged business cards. In early August, I e-mailed him, requesting a meeting. We exchanged a couple of email messages because he wanted information on my research. I told him that I wanted to conduct an organizational ethnography at an NPO in order to witness this emerging social sector in Japanese society. I explained that I wanted to be involved in an NPO as much as possible by becoming a regular staff member while at the same time creating something collaboratively with NPO participants. I did not want to be treated like a visitor or an outsider.

At first, Mr. Hasegawa rejected my request on the grounds that his NPO was not in line with my research purpose. Actually, he said that his NPO was a “quasi-governmental organization” and was not part of the dynamic movement of the third sector in Japan. Although I did not exactly understand his use of the term “quasi-governmental” at that time, the term itself intrigued me. I sent an email to him saying, “I want to see various kinds of NPOs in the initial stage of my research. Even quasi-governmental organizations are a reality of the Japanese NPO sector. If they are less dynamic, I would like to think about why these types of NPOs are less dynamic. Anyway, I would like to visit you and know your NPO, if you have time.”

In mid August, I took a train to a tiny station on a minor metro line, two stops from Asakusa, a downtown area on the north-east side of Tokyo. The neighborhood was old. There were typical one-story Japanese houses and various kinds of mom-and-pop shops. While walking, however, I suddenly saw a modern building amid the landscape. All of its walls were fitted with glass and every door was automatic. At the entrance, there was an artificial river. The contrast of seeing this contemporary compound against the traditional flavor of the neighborhood was striking. The building was SLG. Mr. Hasegawa’s office was on the second floor. He sat at the head-desk position in the office. There were about five other people working there, but I could not tell what they were doing because I was seated in a partitioned area. Mr. Hasegawa appeared, and we talked a little bit about the previous day’s typhoon which had hit the Tokyo metropolitan area. Then he started talking about his background and about why he was working there.

I estimated him to be in his early 60s. He had worked for an oil company after graduating from a prestigious private university in Tokyo. Two years ago, he was laid off when his company restructured. He told me about how depressed he had been at that time, as he had been successful in the company before he was let go. Since then, however, he had come to enjoy his free time. One day one of his high school classmates, a man named Mr. Nakamoto, called him. He was a lawyer and president of this NPO.

“Mr. Nakamoto asked me to help with this NPO if I didn’t have any other work,” Mr. Hasegawa told me. “I was free at that time. So I joined this NPO as general secretary.”

One of the most important revelations in this conversation was that the municipal government created this NPO. “What was the government doing creating a third-sector organization?” I thought to myself. According to him, this NPO originally started in 1994 as a citizens’ group for promoting continuing education under the guidance of the municipal government. It was formed as a *nin’i dantai*, or private entity, which is neither controlled nor protected by Japanese law. The municipal government recruited the local residents as volunteers. The volunteers, under the supervision of the government, planned continuing education courses and offered these courses to local residents. The Japanese Social Education Law requires both the national and municipal governments to provide all residents with learning opportunities over their lifetimes. The municipal government, however, was faced with an ailing budget situation. By delegating the responsibility for public education to existing volunteer groups, they could reduce the budget. Mr. Hasegawa explained to me that the operation of this NPO was heavily dependent on the municipal government. He even said that it operated as a government-created but privately-operated entity. In fact, this NPO operated out of a building owned by the municipal government, which it leased for free. Mr. Hasegawa said, “Now, our way of providing continuing education is actually a role model across the country. Many local government officers visit us to study this NPO as a model for promoting continuing education in a local community. In a sense, our NPO is a pioneer in the area of continuing education.”

Throughout the conversation, Mr. Hasegawa revealed his frustration with his NPO. “I am originally from the private sector,” he pointed out. “Now I am a supervisor here. However, I often feel that this is a very risky situation for an organization.” Mr. Hasegawa continued, “There are no concepts of risk management, public relations, or double-entry bookkeeping,” all typical corporate efficiency strategies. He complained,

“Here, I see a lot of waste, waste that I never imagined in my former company. For example, we have six part-timers. They rotate two people at a time. Thus, we have only two assistants at one time. However, since we have six people, we have six desks. It’s ridiculous, isn’t it? It is a typical way of thinking for bureaucrats.” He continued, “Such a way of thinking is dominant in this NPO. I am not sure whether this is the real style of a citizens-led NPO. I want to introduce an element of the private sector and try to change this NPO.” He was assigned the role of general secretary for two years. “Until my contract is over, I want to do the best that I can do,” he said, “I hope somebody will help me make changes.”

I thought the conversation with Mr. Hasegawa went quite well. He spoke candidly. I would never have heard the six-desk story if I had interviewed him as a reporter. I thought I should keep watching SLG’s situation because it definitely represented one important type of Japanese NPO. I felt Mr. Hasegawa’s strong frustration over the current management style of SLG. He recognized the immaturity of this portion of the NPO sector, and I was fascinated with the possibility of seeing how he would challenge the current system. Furthermore, I wanted to see conflict inside an NPO, and this one seemed ripe for conflict. Later in the day, I sent an email to Mr. Hasegawa saying that I could understand his frustration. I told him that I wanted to be involved with his NPO and help initiate change with him, if at all possible. One week later, I received an offer to act as an unpaid staff-researcher at the SLG secretariat. Mr. Hasegawa created the position especially for me, and I delightedly accepted it. To receive institutional consent, he required me to submit my vitae and a Cornell certificate of enrollment. I visited SLG to submit the documents the next day. He again said to me, “This organization is still in an experimental stage. When I came here, I imagined that SLG was already a perfect entity, running as an organization. But, everyday I feel that SLG is still in an experiment.”

SLG became the focus of my research. It had taken almost two months to decide my field site.

### ***Knowing the Field Site***

The organizational structure of SLG included a president appointed by the government (Mr. Nakamoto), a head of the secretariat appointed by the president (Mr. Hasegawa), and five secretariat staff which included two dispatched-government officials. The government officials within the secretariat were in charge of the organization's budget, which wholly came from the municipal government. I became the sixth member of the secretariat staff. Meanwhile, volunteers are in charge of operating the NPO activities. They were divided into four divisions – course planning, learning support, public relations, and volunteer recruiting.

I started my research by attending every meeting held at SLG and arranging as many formal interviews as possible. My ethnographic investigation first revealed that people were frustrated and even annoyed with the term and concept *NPO*. Many people even asked me, “What is an NPO?” Since I was introduced to the group as a researcher in the area of NPOs, I was supposed to know a great deal about NPOs and how they work. What SLG members complained about most was the inflexible, bureaucratic decision making inside the organization, all of which became present after SLG changed its organizational style to *NPO*. In a meeting for course planning, Ms. Imai, one of the oldest volunteers in the organization, said,

This organization has become more bureaucratic since it got NPO status. I imagined we would act more actively and freely. However, we cannot. In particular, I even feel that the relation between volunteers and the secretariat is currently becoming rigid. We were more flexible before.

When I asked Ms. Tajima, a housewife volunteer, about the difference between the former entity and the current NPO style, she told me in an interview,

After becoming an NPO... everything is driven by a theory of organization. SLG as an organization is the top priority. Before becoming an NPO, we really

enjoyed discussions. All kinds of decisions were made through free, open discussion. Anybody could join the discussion. Now we are fragmented because of the four-division system in the organization. All we often hear now are orders from the SLG president. He said you should do this, and you should do that... . We are not his subordinates.

I noticed that, like Ms. Tajima, people I interviewed and observed were all extremely weary. Why were they feeling such deadlock? Before entering the field site, I had heard only a rosy macro discourse on Japanese NPOs. Why was everybody here so discouraged?

Even though the SLG volunteers were organized under the NPO rubric, I realized that they did not understand why they were organized this way. They felt that the operations of the NPO should be in their hands. What I saw was an organization becoming more and more inflexible and isolating its members. There was too much of a focus on management and efficiency under the name of *NPO*, and many members thought that the organization was even losing sight of *manabi*, or learning, which was SLG's primary agenda.

### ***Developing Action Research***

#### *Initiating Collaborative Inquiry*

“How could SLG break the deadlock it faced organizationally,” I asked myself? It seemed that the current situation at SLG stemmed from a lack of self-reflexive evaluation of the organization's activities. It occurred to me that an Action Research approach, which I studied in my coursework, could be useful to this central issue. The idea being that a self-evaluation system would be a good starting point for making changes in this organization. However, I was not sure specifically how I should start acting on my idea. My knowledge of Action Research strategy thus far was only obtained through reading books, and I only understood conceptually what would and should happen when this

research approach was applied. Knowledge from books was not so helpful in this practical setting.

Around this time, Mr. Hasegawa, the general secretary, left SLG as a result of organizational politics. He had a major conflict with one of the two officials dispatched from the municipal government to support SLG activities. “Support” was a nominal reason, however. The officials essentially tried to control the operation of SLG, which meant supervising a supposedly citizen-based, community-oriented continuing education program. Mr. Hasegawa objected to this control. Under the circumstances, the officials threatened him with losing his position at the organization. They criticized him for his management style; a style geared to managing private sector enterprises. Mr. Hasegawa realized SLG was more of a government office than a third-sector, nimble organization. He left SLG four months after I joined.

Mr. Hasegawa greatly supported my research. But now he was gone, and I felt a great loss. I realized that I would need to re-establish a context for my research to enable people at the organization to understand it. I decided to try to speak frankly to some of the NPO volunteers.

My goal in getting restarted was to establish a collaborative inquiry group made up of members who shared a desire to change this inflexible situation while working to pursue new possibilities for the organization. The first person I had in my mind was Mr. Harada, one of the directors in charge of course planning. Mr. Harada, in his 50s, was a professional architect. He was one of the most influential directors at SLG and had a rich background in community development. He also seemed to have a strong sense of SLG’s purpose. He had said many times that SLG should offer high-quality, interesting courses to its customers, and pursue customer satisfaction. Otherwise, SLG as a business would not meet the need for which it was established. Therefore, he concluded, it needed a course evaluation system. Establishing such a system would require creating a reflexive

space for the organization to think about itself and its activities. At the end of November, I went to his office and honestly and directly told him what I felt my concern.

*Me:* Over the last two months I have spent here, I have observed that many people are frustrated. I was wondering if we could make a more open, diversified discussion space in the course planning division through the course evaluation process. I remember that you mentioned the necessity of creating an evaluation system. I would like to participate in evaluation activities while doing my research here. Why don't we now create a path to make a breakthrough?

Here, I presented a simple conceptual diagram – a linear diagram:

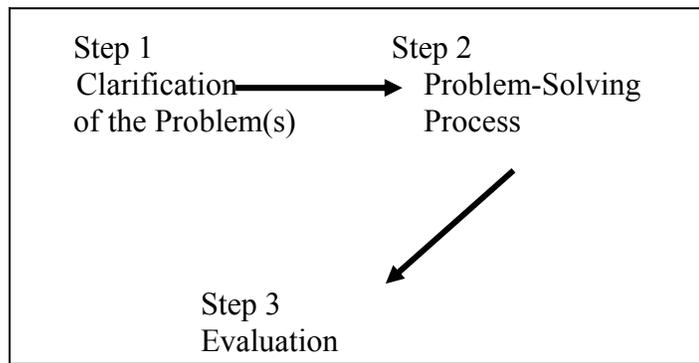


Figure 7.1: First Conceptual Diagram (Linear)

Explaining the diagram, I proposed that the evaluation project would (1) hold meetings twice a month, (2) use email as a mode for activating discussion, and (3) be a time-limited project. Initially, I would facilitate the process, but would gradually distribute power to the team members.

After listening to my proposal, Mr. Harada commented:

*Mr. Harada:* That would be interesting. What we need is to create a bottom-up style of discussion at SLG.

Then, Mr. Harada drew a more developed cyclic and dynamic diagram to represent his way of thinking. I thought that his diagram was more valuable than mine. It showed a learning process that was circular and spiraling, moving through recursive procedures of action and reflection.

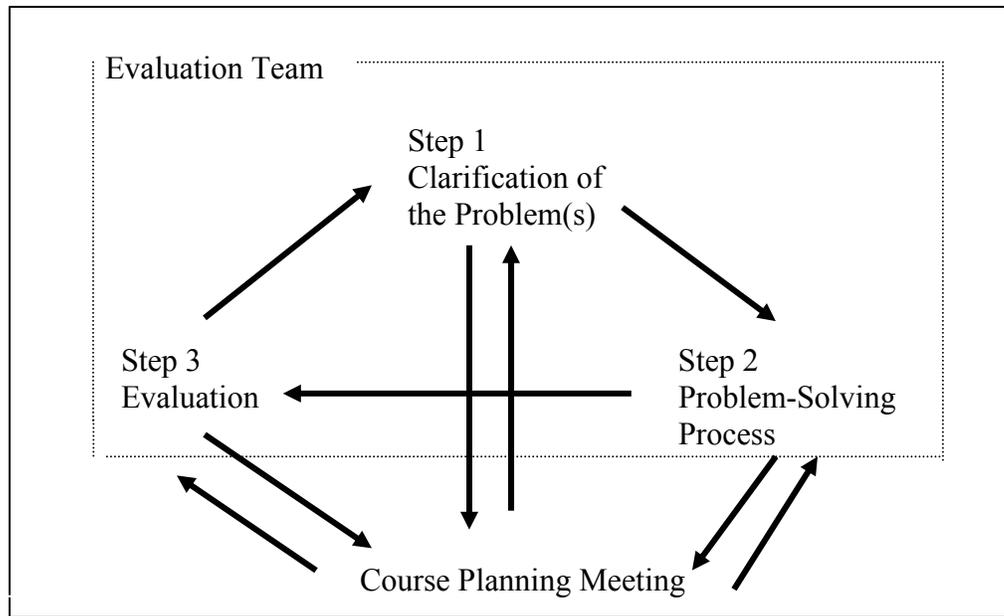


Figure 7.2: Second Conceptual Diagram (Cyclical)

Based on this proposal, Mr. Harada and I started to recruit members for an evaluation team. We agreed that the new evaluation team should be open to all volunteers at SLG, but would have some core members and some revolving seats. Anybody who wanted to join the discussion could do so. Just monitoring should also be okay. The most crucial point was to enhance diversity. Among the SLG volunteers, we thought of including Ms. Tanaka (in her early 30s, nutritionist/housewife, 2 years at SLG), Mr. Iwata (late 20s, businessman, 3 years), Ms. Andō (40s, housewife, 5 years), and Mr. Takahashi (late 70s, retired, 7 years), who were all in the course planning division. Up to this point, I had many chances to talk to them directly about what I had felt over the past

months, and confirmed that we shared the same concerns. In particular, I built a solid relationship, one based on trust, with Mr. Iwata through my fieldwork. He and I came to spend a good deal of time exchanging ideas about what we could do to make changes at SLG. Furthermore, the team should include some of the directors. Among directors, Ms. Kunimatsu, director of course planning (60s, entrepreneur, 7 years), and Mr. Kobayashi, director of course planning (40s, college professor, 3 years), could join. We started to call for participation from the nominated candidates. Initially, Mr. Takahashi turned down our request, due to his age. He also said he did not use email, which would result in some difficulties in communication. Despite these issues, we appreciated his knowledge and experience in community development. Thus, we promised to provide special care to him. Instead of using email, we would fax all opinion exchanges to him. Following this move, Mr. Harada asked for approval at the monthly directors' meeting in December to set up an evaluation team under his direct supervision, and obtained institutional consent.

### *Stepping into the Action Research Cycle*

SLG volunteers felt that the current situation was not what they expected, and they also felt strongly that SLG needed to be changed, and could only be changed with their efforts. I hoped the volunteers would hold onto this positive underlying mood. What could I do to help achieve this? I thought I could be a catalyst in pushing forward the volunteers' demands. I started to build relationships with the core members of the evaluation team through discussions. Due to time constraints among the members, we supplemented our discussions with emails. Based on Mr. Harada's proposal, the group started as an evaluation team for the continuing education courses SLG was offering. However, through email discussion, we gradually reconfigured the purpose of the team, and formulated the beginning of a self-evaluation system on the basis that evaluating our own activities by ourselves would lead to generating better courses. By strengthening the foundation, the organization would improve. It was time to move ahead.

A regular meeting of the course planning division in February was scheduled for that night. As a facilitator for a search conference, I distributed a bunch of “post-it” notes to all of the 12 people who were present, including the core members of the evaluation team and some other volunteers. Search conference is a methodology of participatory planning and design that integrates planning, problem-solving, and concrete action. As I distributed the post-its and 12 colored markers, I said, “Write down anything you want to bring to the table. Otherwise, we can’t solve anything.” At the beginning, it seemed that the volunteers hesitated a little bit, as usual. However, after Ms. Kunitmatsu said, “This is interesting. Hmmm, I can write whatever I want to change,” other volunteers gradually participated in this process. The volunteers appeared to enjoy the process, changing the color of the markers they used every so often. Surprisingly, in 15 minutes, we had collected more than 50 post-it notes from the attendants. We divided them into various topics, such as items related to volunteers, directors, course planning, the secretariat, and so on.

In the next meeting, 10 days later, they classified all of the problems that they wanted to solve into each of their areas of expertise, while I facilitated. For example, volunteers who had accounting backgrounds received topics related to the budget for the next year. They also made decisions about when they would discuss their topics over the upcoming five months. The participants first picked up what they wanted to improve, then assigned priorities. The process consisted of a series of eight meetings. From March through July, I facilitated monthly meetings to address the problem-solving process of the course planning division. We were talking about our vision, course planning, course operation, and promotion of communication among the volunteers. In July, I asked the participants whether they wanted to continue this problem-solving process.

*Ms. Andō:* I wanted to repeat this problem-solving process. If we stop at this level, we will have frustration again. I am sure that we are moving ahead through this process.

*Ms. Murase:* I don't want to postpone dealing with problems. We need to do it again.

Based on their opinions, we started the second problem-solving process. I practiced Action Research, careful to avoid using academic jargon. They understood, however, what I was trying to do. It seemed to me that they came to learn how to resolve their frustration. It was the first step for them to empower themselves; they broke the deadlock they faced under the strong concentration of power. They defined what they wanted to change, and what they needed to do to effect that change. I facilitated the first few problem-solving processes. After that, the role of facilitator moved – first to the secretariat staff, and then to the volunteers. I gradually decreased my presence in the series of meetings. During my time there they repeated their problem-solving cycle two times.

Meanwhile, the government-dispatched officials at SLG were aware of this activity. Although they did not express any interest in participating in this process, they did watch from a distance. Mr. Nakamoto, president of SLG, did seem bothered by it. As the process went on, he would not even make eye contact with Mr. Iwata, a key member of the evaluation team, or me.

### ***My Positionality in the Field Site***

#### *Surviving Organizational Politics*

During my fieldwork, I was always thinking about my position. Who am I in this organization? What kind of role am I expected to play? How do I define myself? I am a doctoral researcher from an American university, I told myself; but I am also a secretariat staff member at my field site. Even though I am from an American university, I am not a “visiting” researcher. I am a Japanese anthropologist doing research on his own society. I wanted my research to be an ethnography for my dissertation with a larger agenda of

generating solid moves toward the democratization of the institutional environment. As an action-minded researcher, I also wanted to build collaborative relationships with people in my field site that generate change if given a chance. I believed that my research results would contribute to that end. In one sense, achieving these results, or at least discovering whether I could, was my research. I tried to facilitate moves that the grassroots volunteers in my field site could use by themselves and for their activities. I wanted people in my field site to have a chance to speak up and empower themselves.

Being an action-oriented researcher, however, is overtly political, and surviving organizational politics is a key issue in this approach. Apparently, some people had difficulty understanding my active stance as a researcher. They expected me to be a conventional researcher who said and did nothing. I was just expected to be a silent observer. One experience I had in my field site drove this point home:

Field notes 90

Name: Am I being blackballed?

File: 06-03-02

This afternoon I was told by Mr. Kuroda, general secretary of SLG, that Mr. Nakamoto, president of SLG, said that I am no longer allowed to attend a monthly strategic meeting, which I had been attending since October, from this June. Some board members, including the president, vice presidents, director in charge of course planning, and director of recruiting and training, had been attending the meetings. I had been allowed to attend as a staff-researcher of the secretariat. I located the meetings as a crucial part of my fieldwork because I could observe active interaction among the members who take initiatives in SLG management. As the board of directors' meetings were not functioning well at SLG due partly to its big size, the strategic meetings become a significant place for making decisions.

As a reason for my "exclusion" (I was surprised that some people used this term to describe my situation) from the meetings, Mr. Kuroda said that the meeting from the next time was going to deal with an entrustment contract with the municipal government. According to Mr. Nakamoto, "It should be a secret meeting because it deals with how SLG talks to the government. The content of the meeting must not be leaked. Thus, Mr. Yanase from the government would not be allowed to attend the meeting, either."

I was very upset by this decision. I had never disrupted the meetings. I was only an active listener. Sometimes, some members asked me to make comments. Only in those cases did I say something. I had no idea what I should do as a researcher. Later that afternoon, I had a chance to talk to Mr. Aota, vice president of SLG. He already knew that I would be excluded from the meeting. He was also upset. I asked him, “Was there any discussion about my position in the meeting among the meeting members?” He said, “No. We didn’t have any discussion about this decision. Mr. Nakamoto made the decision by himself. I don’t understand why you are not allowed to attend the meeting. A possible reason I can guess is that you presented some questions at the annual shareholders’ meeting in mid-May. The question was exactly a point that Mr. Nakamoto did not want to touch upon. He is scared of you.” Showing me the agenda for the next strategic meeting, which Mr. Nakamoto had faxed to him, Mr. Aota continued, “Now nobody controls him, even the municipal government that assigned him as president of SLG. See this agenda. It portrays a one-man style of management just as medium/small-sized companies have. All decision-making is concentrated around Mr. Nakamoto. The agenda even mentions expanding the SLG president’s term of office. He seems to have misunderstood his position. He is parading like the emperor with new clothes.”

At that time, the most important thing for me was to keep my position at SLG, both for my commitment to the members’ cause and for completing my dissertation research. I had only spent nine months there. I needed to continue my collaborative research with people in the course planning division. My involvement in the evaluation team had only just started and was still ongoing. I could not finish at this stage. I was very interested in how the emerging sector called NPOs maintains relationships with the conventional political actor – the government. What do NPOs want? What is expected of them? Many of my questions were still unanswered.

On the upcoming Monday night, the strategic meeting was held. I asked Mr. Kuroda, SLG general secretary, if I could attend the meeting, while reiterating my research purpose. He gave me permission to attend, because he said that I was under his direct control as a secretariat staff member. Mr. Tanase, an official from the municipal government, did not appear at the meeting. The discussion was primarily about how to deal with negotiation of an entrustment contract between the municipal government and SLG. During the meeting, Mr. Nakamoto, the SLG president, proposed creating another

committee to prepare the negotiations. The committee was to be organized by the SLG president, three vice presidents, the general secretary, the vice general secretary and two more directors. At that time, I told Mr. Nakamoto, “I would like to attend the meeting as an observer. May I?” He promptly said, “Of course not.” There was no explanation.

I was doubly shocked: first, at the fact that I had just been excluded from the list of attendees of future sessions of the newly strategic meetings; second, by the fact that my request was turned down so quickly, with a sharp “No” in a public discussion. I had never experienced this kind of reproach. Furthermore, I was not given a chance to reply to him. Others in attendance also said nothing. I had understood that all kinds of meetings should be open here at SLG, as this was an organization operated by volunteers and because funding comes mostly from taxpayers’ money through the municipal government. After the meeting, the president approached me, saying, “If you want to attend, you can. But I am afraid of what the municipal government will say.” (Actually I did not understand what he meant by these words.) Mr. Kuroda, general secretary, said, “I don’t think there will be any problem for Mr. Ogawa to attend the meeting.” Mr. Kuroda is actually an *amakudari*, given a comfortable job here after having worked as an official in the municipal government. He was still powerful in the government.

This conflict was one of the most impressive moments in my fieldwork experience. After this, I tried to speak up clearly about my research purpose whenever I had the chance, saying, “I want to do some collaborative research. I do not intend to just observe as a researcher. I want to jointly learn something with you. Since I am here, I want to be involved with activities as much as possible.”

The president of SLG never spoke to me again. I knew that he was committed to creating an organization in his own style, with a bureaucratic, top-down style of decision-making. I also knew that this would create a less dynamic organization. Meanwhile, the grassroots volunteers never had a chance to object. I saw SLG at a micro-level, representing the overall NPO landscape. In this strong state, voluntary third-sector

organizations are still very young with few funding sources and a strong management resources. Thus, it is easy to understand how these organizations end up becoming the extensions of the government, which has financial and managerial resources. I do not think I disturbed Mr. Nakamoto's ambition. Who could say "No" to such a top-down, bureaucratic style? I believe that the grassroots volunteers can. Just being there, I initiated a spark of change.

### *What I Didn't Do in the Field Site*

Why write an ethnography? This question also always presented a dilemma with regard to my position as a so-called native anthropologist. I believe in and am struck by the power of ethnography as a style of behavior and knowledge production. For me, ethnography is an approach that opens a space for dialogue as a method for exploring and constructing meaning among stakeholders (Clifford 1988). Revealing not only substantive information, but also perspectives on that information, ethnography can provide protocols for making decisions and working together. For me, ethnography is a collaborative effort to generate a joint account with people at the point of research. During the fieldwork for this study, I always wanted to open a space to people at my field site. Ideally, I wanted people at my field site like Mr. Iwata, my key research collaborator, to join in the processes of writing their own ethnography, thus representing their own voices in their own words.

However, I faced several institutional constraints on achieving this. One was language, and the other was time. I am a Japanese national attending an American university, where the institutional language is English. I was doing this research as a partial requirement to satisfy my doctoral degree. In writing, I am targeting American readers in general, and the advisors on my doctoral committee in particular. I have to write my fieldnotes and dissertation in English. Due to the time constraints, it may have been more productive had I written in Japanese. How much was my writing in English, I

have to ask myself, meaningful to people at my field site? Probably not very. Knowledge generated by my ethnography was monopolized by people who understand English in academia.

After getting my doctoral degree, I decided at some point in this writing that I must write my ethnography in Japanese if I am to label myself as a native anthropologist doing research on his own society. Without assigning myself this project, I cannot share the knowledge represented in my ethnography with my research collaborators. Writing in English almost means nothing for most of the Japanese, including ordinary grassroots people at my field site. They gain nothing. They can't even access this ethnography. Such an ethnography would be only self-gratifying for me as a researcher trained in English-language academia.

In addition, I have struggled with the fact of a time constraint when writing a dissertation. Action Research is a time-consuming process, and it is very exhausting. However, during my 20-month fieldwork, I tried to produce some results, and I felt I was expected to do so. Without trying to produce results in the field site, I felt that I could not move forward in the writing process. As I wrap up my fieldwork, I am aware that I would like to return to SLG. My research at SLG has just started. During the past 20 months, I have only planted the seeds for future changes. People at SLG are continuing the cyclical process of problem solving. My hope is that when I am able to return, the process we started collaboratively will have started to take root, giving the people at SLG more colorful flowers within their beautiful stone walls.

## APPENDIX 1

### *Government Proposal toward NPO-ization*

#### *(1) From Volunteers' Groups to NPOs:*

##### *The Government and NPOs:*

So far in this country, we have believed that solving social problems is a mission of the government. We have believed that public services should be provided by the government. The public services were based on the key political principles of equality and fairness. However, it is doubtful nowadays that the public services are responding to complicated new social problems and the diversified values of the citizens. We are expected to respond to such problems and values more promptly and individually. If we do this in the government, it results in increased cost.

On the other hand, NPOs make it possible to respond to such problems and values promptly and individually, taking advantage of volunteers and contributions, meanwhile achieving cost-cutting by providing the services. Social activities generated by NPOs, whatever they are, will make us realize the importance of independent, spontaneous activities for human beings and society. The expected role of NPOs will further increase in the 21st century when the government steps in to tighten its budget.

NPO stands for nonprofit organization, as you may already know. The actual meaning of the term might be unclear, however. The practical social function of the organization is to provide public services by citizens. However, NPOs do not mean subcontractors of the government, nor cheap service providers. We realize that NPOs organized by citizens are in charge of producing highly valuable social services by themselves. NPOs are expected to play a key role in changing the persistent social structure of Japanese society from being government-centered to citizen-centered.

The relationship between the government and NPOs is complementary. Both the government and NPOs are expected to respond to various social needs while making use of their characteristics. NPOs have a strong image of providing nonprofit volunteer-based social activities. However, NPOs have an economic function, too. They are expected to generate employment in local communities.

#### *(2) The Meaning of Incorporation as an NPO:*

Citizens' groups without incorporation status, usually referred to as *nin'i dantai*, have often faced some difficulties in their activities due to a lack of legal status. In order to improve this situation, the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (the so-called NPO Law) was established in March 1998. (The actual enforcement date was December 1, 1998.) The law aims to facilitate activities'

positive contribution to public welfare in society and to give the incorporation status as an NPO to private, not-for-profit citizens' groups.

The First Article of the NPO Law clearly says:

The purpose of this law is to promote the sound development of specified nonprofit activities in the form of volunteer and other activities freely performed by citizens to benefit society, through such measures as the provision of corporate status to organizations that undertake specified nonprofit activities, and thereby to contribute to advancement of the public welfare.

When a *nin'i dantai* gets NPO status, the group becomes realized as legal entity. It can enter into contracts with others, open bank accounts, and register real estate under the name of the NPO. Moreover, the group can enhance credibility in society because it is required to disclose information based on the NPO Law.

*Continuing education activities by our residents are in line with the NPO Law.* In the NPO Law, 12 areas such as social welfare, social education, community development, and so on are included. Promoting continuing education can surely be categorized as social education. Continuing education activities promoted by residents provide learning opportunities as one of the basic social services and contribute to the development of lifelong learning in the local community. What they are providing are definitely independent, spontaneous learning activities contributing to the betterment of society. This deserves to get NPO status. By getting NPO status, the group can expand its activities. This also makes it possible to form collaborative relationships with the government and other private sector companies as an equal partner.

### (3) *The Agenda for Incorporation*

#### *need to strengthen organizational power as a business entity*

The current citizens' group heavily depends on the government. It lacks management skills. In order for this group to become a continuous and professional lifelong learning service provider in the local community, it is necessary to make solid articles of association (*teikan*) as an independent organization. It is also necessary to have management ability. Becoming an NPO means that the organization is going to operate lifelong learning services as a business. The ultimate purpose as a continuing education NPO is to plan and offer continuing education courses, marketing to the residents' needs. For achieving this purpose, the group needs to secure human and financial resources, supported with public relations activities. As an incorporated entity, management ability pursuing efficiency is strongly enhanced.

#### *need to secure human resources for NPO operation*

The group needs to secure persons who have strong abilities in strategic management and financial affairs. We believe that qualifications are the same kind that for-profit businesses would ask of their employees. They are expected to work effectively based on their business plan. Team-working ability is also highly expected. They should be self-starters.

In the main business of continuing education course offerings, the current group is too dependent on resident-volunteers. To operate the business as an NPO, the group is expected to deepen its understanding as an organization and create a shared vision among the volunteers. At the same time, volunteers are expected to be trained in how to design organizations and how to operate organizations effectively. The group needs to think about hiring paid staff to operate the group as an NPO from a business professional perspective, while keeping the resident-volunteers as strong promoters of continuing education activities in the community.

*need to secure stable financial resources*

Even though NPOs are not-for-profit organizations, you can make money unless the profits are distributed among the NPO members. Even though it is not-for-profit, operating costs such as personnel expenses are necessary. Currently, the government provides money to the group as aid. When the group gets NPO status, it needs to solidify its financial backing in multiple ways. One way would be to enter into a contract with the government. Another way would be to collect donations from for-profit businesses. It is also reasonable to step into new businesses to secure stable financial resources.

We strongly expect that the current group will get NPO status in the near future and will further contribute to developing lifelong learning activities in the local community as a professional service provider.

## APPENDIX 2

### *Meeting Records*

This was the only detailed, official record of the discussions on the incorporation of the NPO that I could find in SLG archives.

22 Participants:

6 specialists on continuing education

*Chair* (The government asked a specialist to chair the meeting.)

*Specialist 1:*

*Specialist 2:*

*Specialist 3:*

There are two other specialists attending the meeting, although they did not speak.

8 volunteers

*Volunteer 1: housewife*

*Volunteer 2: former junior high principal*

*Volunteer 3: housewife*

*Volunteer 4: college professor*

*Volunteer 5: housewife*

There are three other volunteers attending the meeting, although they did not speak.

Following the explanation of the government's proposal on NPO-ization, an intensive discussion started.

*Chair:* I think this is the right way to go, anyway. (From this proposal) I feel the government's strong will to reorganize the group as an NPO. Probably we will face many difficulties but I don't think we have anything against this proposal.

*Director :* The proposal is, however, only an ideal model. We understand that the reality is not so easy. Our concern is how to integrate the current system into the new one. How about a decision-making system? Who holds the power of decision making within the NPO? Who operates the organization in a real sense? We need to discuss details more thoroughly. In particular, what it will be the organizational form?

*Volunteer 1:* Wait... I understand the direction. However, why become NPOs? At this stage, we need to talk more about merits and demerits of getting NPO status. Speaking of demerits, for example, the accounting report that the NPO Law requires sounds like burden. Again, who will lead this move? If we get the status, the relationship with the government might change.

- Chair:* I believe if we make a group based on law, we can't do irresponsible things. This stance is key for a citizens-based group. Otherwise, the group might die out. If our activities are legally supported, we will take more responsibility for what we are doing. I think that is a merit.
- Specialist 1:* The status itself is easy to get. Thinking about what you guys are doing, because there are no religious and political activities, getting the NPO status should be an automatic process if you apply for the status with the government. You are required to submit certain kinds of documents in the process of information disclosure. The law defines the submission as a duty for all NPOs recognized under the law. The duty leads to the credibility of NPOs in society. However, making documents available will take a lot of time. It might be a burden and have demerits. As to merits, you can situate your activities in society. For example, you would like to create ties with the Board of Education in the municipal government. In the current situation, it is difficult for the government to create such a relationship with a private, informal group. However, there shouldn't be any problem in the case of either public interest corporations, such as incorporated associations or incorporated foundations. Incorporated status guarantees social acceptance. Furthermore, you may ease people's minds. If you can get the status, that means that the things you are doing so far will be understood as socially beneficial activities.
- Volunteer 2:* In order to get the status, it seems to me that it will be a lot of trouble to prepare such documents as accounting reports. What is really going on at NPOs that already received the status?
- Specialist 1:* Only one year has passed since the law was created. Thus, we don't have any reports on it. We need to wait for a couple of years. According to some handbooks on how to establish NPOs, making NPOs requires the same kinds of arduous tasks as creating for-profit companies. In fact, we need to have solid determination that we want to make a not-for-profit company. Otherwise, it is just going to be a failure.
- Volunteer 2:* I understood that incorporated status would enhance social credibility for our activities. My concern is, however, who leads this incorporated organization? The task will be more than the volunteers' capacity. Actually, the other day I ordered a brochure on how to establish NPOs from an NPO promotion center in Osaka. Although I am not familiar with NPOs, the brochure was a manual for making NPOs. We need only follow the flowchart. It even includes the actual application form we need to use to apply for NPO status with the government. However, I was wondering who controls this application

process. The task in front of us cannot be done by volunteers. Who is going to take leadership?

*Chair:* Are there any examples of citizens' groups that have their own staff?

*Specialist 1:* Yes. I know of two cases in Kyushu.

*Chair:* If so, such concerns will be solved.

*Specialist 1:* I think so, too.

*Volunteer 3:* If we incorporate, we need a founder. Who is it going to be?

*Vice director :* Relating to the time issue, we plan to reorganize the current group and start it as a new organization from next April. We are going to specifically argue the process of incorporation following the advice of this series of meetings. We are also considering asking the local residents to join in the discussion.

*Chair:* I would like to confirm that the government will strongly support us until the new organization is on the right track.

*Director :* Yes.

*Volunteer 2:* Did you say that the new organization is going to start next April? I was wondering whether this is really possible.

*Vice director :* Yes. We will make every effort to do it.

*Volunteer 2:* I think it is an important commitment the government would make. We only have six months.... Will you continue to support the organization financially?

*Vice director :* On that point, we will also ask for opinions about this plan from the municipal assembly.

*Volunteer 2:* How much will you support the new organization? How much do you plan to fund this organization?

*Vice director :* The municipal government will provide 50 million yen (approximately \$450,000) to the current group each year. In addition, we will fund personnel wages for the secretariat staff. At this stage, I have no idea about the budget for the future. I don't know if we will continue to fund at the current level. I don't know either if we will decrease the amount of money. Furthermore, I don't know if this organization is going to make our division of continuing education reorganize itself.

*Specialist 1:* I think it is right that we can't expect 50 million yen forever... , right?

*Vice director :* .... (silence)

*Specialist 1:* To establish an NPO, you need to think of how it can generate money, instead of depending on financial support from the government. you need to create our own mechanism to get money for our activities.

*Volunteer 2:* If the money is suddenly cut, I believe that our activities will be seriously damaged. Our activities might have to cease. Thus, we had better more seriously consider the funding prospects for the future from the government.

- Specialist 2:* Why don't we stop talking in this manner? What we are talking about is the incorporation of an NPO. We are now stepping toward becoming independent of the government. What are we expected to do? What we are going to do is what the government did, but did not do well. Under the name of an NPO, I would like to emphasize that we, the residents, are going to take strong leadership in promoting lifelong learning in our community.
- Volunteer 2:* I know what you mean. However, look at the reality. Look at us. We are so dependent on the government. I remember when the current group was started. At that time, the government entrusted some work to us, in a sense. However, remember what happened over the next 5 years. We didn't do anything without the government's help.
- Specialist 2:* If you understand it, why don't you become more independent? You know well the situation surrounding us. If so, why don't you become independent when you go to the next step of becoming an NPO?
- Volunteer 2:* I do know well. We need to be separated from the government and become more independent.
- Volunteer 4:* Fifty million yen is really a lot of money. We need money to do our activities. More importantly, what we need to think about, I believe, is what kind of relationship we should pursue with the government.
- Specialist 2:* In the present situation, the government completely covers the necessary funding. Why didn't we make efforts to secure money another way? We could have collected donations from the residents in the local community. We could have asked for money from private foundations. Unfortunately, we haven't had such ideas or even consciousness then.
- Volunteer 4:* Money mostly goes for lecturers' teaching fees. We set tuition as low as possible. Here at this point, we need to think about how to finance our activities.
- Specialist 1:* Yes, I think so, too. Our activities should be not-for-profit. However, if we do not make money, we can't keep our activities going. Before going on the right track, the government can support the new organization financially for a limited term. It is an inevitable cost the government should pay because the new organization is taking on part of government's job.
- Chair:* I believe that our discussion has led to an agreement. Creating an NPO means becoming independent of the government. However, this is not an automatic process. We need solid support from the government, in particular, at the initial stage and we believe that the government has to support us. Otherwise, we will not be able to be independent.

- Volunteer 5:* We were talking about how dependent we are on the government. However, in reality, we are not doing our activities without the government's support, although some people might think that they are independent of the government. Nothing goes forward. That is the reality. I also know how difficult it will be to change our "dependent" consciousness. Such consciousness is entirely instilled into our bodies. Without discussing this reality, we are talking about making an NPO in order to become an independent entity from the government. I was wondering how many volunteers agree with this decision.... Over the past five years, I think our achievement has been significant. We got 50 million in funding from the government. We had more than 100 volunteers. We were providing nearly 100 continuing education courses to the community. We published a monthly learning information newsletter. However, many volunteers are frustrated. Why? They feel some reluctance to continue volunteering here. One of their anxieties stems from this series of discussions. I mean, they are actually excluded from the meetings. They are wondering if they are going to be a part of reorganizing as an NPO next April. What does that mean for them? Is it possible to continue their volunteering activities after the current organization is reorganized as an NPO? The majority of volunteers do not say anything about the development. They are not even allowed to observe the discussions. I heard somewhere that we don't need the current volunteers for the new organization. However, I believe the current volunteers will support the new organization. If so, in addition to stable financial sources, we need to think more about the human resources issue. As volunteers, we need to be trained more. We need to improve our skills as volunteers. I believe that this point is what we would like to get support for from the government. What can we do as volunteers? Currently, we volunteers are looking at different things. As volunteers, we need to look at the same thing. This is what we would like to achieve through the process of making an NPO.
- Specialist 1:* I would say that we are learning about consciousness-making as volunteers in a participatory manner. Those things are not achieved in a top-down way. We are now making an organization based on citizens' participation. Thus, we need to develop a new organization in a participatory manner through discussions and workshops with the volunteers. Otherwise, consciousness will not be changed easily.
- Specialist 3:* I am working for a center promoting gender equality as a regular staff member. I want to emphasize here the importance of financial resources. The reality we are facing is the budget

cuts by the government. In the government, if and when the budget is tight, officials target cutting the aid budget for the citizens' sector. As a basic principle, we need to be independent of the government. That's a key principle because we don't know when the government will cut the budget on us. For that moment, we need to be fully prepared.

*Chair:* I think in the proposal we need to clearly recommend that the government support us both financially and in terms of human resources until the new organization is fully independent.

*Specialist 2:* The financial issue is already included in the proposal.

*Chair:* Does anybody want to add anything else in the proposal?

*Volunteer 3:* Over the past five years, the current organization has played a significant role in the community. I think it is more realistic if we discuss reorganizing the current organization as an NPO over the upcoming five years. I heard that next April is the due date to generate an NPO. There is no need to be hasty, however. This is because the management of NPOs is not so easy. Under the current stagnant economy, the other day I heard that some famous NPOs couldn't even pay their personnel fees. Donations from businesses and individuals are not so easily collected, either. What I want to say is that it is impossible to incorporate an NPO if organizations are really not needed by the local community. Why do we incorporate an NPO? We can operate the NPO only when we have a solid shared vision among people. We are going to be able to overcome difficulties we may face only when we have a solid shared vision of what continuing education is. We need to create a solid vision about why we reorganized this group and incorporated as an NPO. In this sense, I think it will take five years to generate such a vision among people. The vision should also include management issues as an NPO. Since this discussion didn't include the majority of the volunteers, we need to carefully proceed with the incorporation of an NPO. We can create a study group for incorporating as an NPO in the current organization, for example. Otherwise, the result of our discussion may only lead to misunderstanding among the volunteers. Most of them think that the government doesn't spend money on continuing education. They just want to cut their budget. People in the local community think that making an NPO is the easiest way for the government... . Who wants to operate the NPO?

*Vice director :* I don't mean next April is the deadline. Beginning next April, we will be preparing the incorporation of an NPO. However, we are thinking of establishing it as soon as possible.

*Volunteer 2:* Now there is an NPO boom in society. I don't think we want to wait for five or ten years. Our community is facing rapid aging.

We can't wait such a long time. I believe it is good timing to do it now.

*Volunteer 4:*

It might be better to move on to the next step now.

*Chair:*

Based on our discussion, I would like to confirm that the due date for incorporation is not next April. However, I understand we have an agreement that the current organization will be reorganized as an NPO. Does everyone agree?

*Voices:*

Yes.

*Volunteer 1:*

I just want to say one thing: Who will take the leadership role in incorporating the NPO? In fact, if we don't have a certain number of people who think that this should be done, we can't establish the NPO. We don't want to take responsibility for doing it. We are only members of an advisory group organized by the government. We could say, "You should do it." We can't say, "We will do," however. If this is not achieved, who will take responsibility?

*Chair:*

Since we are just an advisory group, we can't say that "we will do." Probably the best expression is "It is desirable to reorganize the current organization as an NPO."

## APPENDIX 3

### *Content of Entrustment*

1. offering continuing education opportunities for the residents based on the local ordinance
2. collecting the rental fee for the center facilities
3. maintaining the center facilities
4. maintaining around the center
5. collecting the rental fee for the public facilities below
  - (a) municipal sanatorium
  - (b) municipal parks
  - (c) municipal gymnasiums
  - (d) municipal athletic field
  - (e) municipal theater hall
  - (f) municipal social welfare hall
  - (g) municipal women's participation promotion center
  - (h) municipal industrial center
  - (i) municipal medium-sized company support center
  - (j) municipal indoor pool
  - (k) municipal sports center
  - (l) municipal home economics center
  - (m) municipal community center
6. simple administrative works of the facilities mentioned above, which the mayor designates
7. SLG must supply the collected fee to the government by the day fifth every month

### Specific Items of Facility Management of the Continuing Education Center

#### Main Hall

1. Entrance Hall (everyday 9:00 – 21:00)
  - reception to visitors
  - give information on the center
  - telephone handling
  - making daily reports to the government
2. Renting-Out the Facilities (everyday 9:00 – 21:00)
  - accepting reservation for the facilities
  - manipulating the facility terminal
  - collecting the rental fee
  - delivering the facility keys
3. Music Studio, Audiovisual Studio, Recording Room  
(Monday through Friday 17:00 – 21:00; Saturday, Sunday and holidays 9:00 – 21:00)
  - helping to find audiovisual materials
  - renting out the audiovisual equipment
  - instructing how to use the facilities
  - maintaining the facilities
4. Security

5. leading to evacuate in case of emergency  
 guiding to a parking lot at night  
 restraining prohibited activities  
 security check for the room, plaza, and terrace  
 notify the government if find broken or damaged parts of the center  
 controlling Lost and Found  
 finding and doing appropriate response to suspicious persons and goods  
 preventing dangerous activities which damage to the center facilities  
 locking and unlocking all of the room doors and emergency doors  
 locking and unlocking the main entrance  
 safekeeping and delivering the keys  
 setting the automatic security system  
 securing security for the visitors and all of the facility users  
 presenting when renting out and returning the center equipment  
 preventing some demonstration and appeal activities in/around the center  
 maintaining an area for parking bicycles
6. Fire Prevention  
 checking fire prevention equipment – monthly and annually – ask specialists  
 checking the smoke extraction apparatuses and the fire doors  
 fire prevention for the smoking corner
7. Utilities (Electricity, Gas and Water)  
 responsible for daily maintenance, including turning off the lights  
 testing the electricity breakers regularly  
 checking the electricity equipment – monthly and annually – ask specialists  
 maintaining the electricity equipment through the remote watching system  
 appropriately responding to emergency  
 maintaining the elevators  
 maintaining the parking meter equipment at a parking lot  
 maintaining the air conditioning system – three times a year  
 checking the water system – ask specialists
8. Cleaning  
 daily cleaning  
 monthly professional cleaning

#### Annex

required the same things as the Main Hall

## APPENDIX 4

### *Translation of the NPO Law*

This is an unofficial translation of the NPO Law, provided by the Japan Center for International Exchange.

### Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities [UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION]

(Promulgated on March 25, 1998)  
(Including all revisions with the latest made on April 9, 2003)

#### Chapter I. General Provisions

##### (Purpose) Article 1.

The purpose of this law is to promote the sound development of specified nonprofit activities in the form of volunteer and other activities freely performed by citizens to benefit society, through such measures as the provision of corporate status to organizations that undertake specified nonprofit activities, and thereby to contribute to advancement of the public welfare.

##### (Definitions) Article 2.

1. "Specified nonprofit activities" under this law shall mean those activities specified in the attached schedule, which are for the purpose of contributing to advancement of the interests of many and unspecified persons.
2. "Specified nonprofit corporation" under this law shall mean an organization that has as its main purpose the implementation of specified nonprofit activities, that conforms with each of the following items, and that is a corporation established under the provisions of this law:
  - i. an organization that is covered by both of the following items and is not for the purpose of generating profits:
    - a. provisions regarding acquisition and loss of qualifications for membership are not unreasonable;
    - b. the number of officers receiving remuneration total no more than one-third of the total number of officers;
  - ii. an organization whose activities conform with each of the following items:
    - a. the activities are not for the purpose of propagating religious teachings, performing ceremonies, or educating or fostering believers;

- b. the activities are not for the purpose of promoting, supporting, or opposing a political principle;
- c. the activities are not for the purpose of recommending, supporting, or opposing a candidate (including a prospective candidate) for a public office (meaning a public office as specified in Article 3 of the Public Offices Election Law [Law No. 100 of 1950]; the same shall apply hereafter), a person holding a public office, or a political party.

## Chapter II. Specified Nonprofit Corporations

### Section 1. Common Provisions

#### (Principles)

##### Article 3.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation must not engage in operations for the interests of a specific individual or corporation or other organization.
2. A specified nonprofit corporation must not be used for a specific political party.

#### (Restriction on use of name)

##### Article 4.

No entity other than a specified nonprofit corporation may use the words "specified nonprofit corporation" within its name or any wording that can be confused with same.

#### (Other operations)

##### Article 5.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation may engage in operations other than those relating to specified nonprofit activities (referred to hereafter as "other operations"), to the extent that said other operations do not interfere with operations relating to specified nonprofit activities. Revenue generated from said other operations, if any, must be used in the specified nonprofit activities.
2. The account for other operations must be separated from the account for operations relating to specified nonprofit activities implemented by said specified nonprofit corporation and administered as a special account.

#### (Address)

##### Article 6.

The address of a specified nonprofit corporation shall be the location of its main office.

(Registration)

Article 7.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation must be registered as prescribed by cabinet order.
2. In regard to matters requiring registration as specified in the preceding paragraph, a specified nonprofit corporation cannot contest claims by third parties until after registration.

(Mutatis mutandis application of the Civil Code)

Article 8.

The provisions of Articles 43 and 44 of the Civil Code (Law No. 89 of 1896) shall apply mutatis mutandis to specified nonprofit corporations.

(Competent authority)

Article 9.

1. The government agency with jurisdiction for a specified nonprofit corporation shall be the governor of the *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent) in which the main office of the specified nonprofit corporation is located.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of the preceding paragraph, the Prime Minister shall be the government agency with jurisdiction for any specified nonprofit corporation that has offices in two (2) or more *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefectures or equivalent).

## Section 2. Establishment

(Authentication of establishment)

Article 10.

1. A person who intends to establish a specified nonprofit corporation must submit an application together with the following documents as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office (or ordinance of a *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* [prefecture or equivalent]), in the case of a specified nonprofit corporation other than a specified nonprofit corporation specified in Article 9.2; the same shall apply hereafter, with the exception of Articles 26.3, 44.2 and 44-2) and must obtain authentication of establishment:
  - i. articles of incorporation;
  - ii. the following documents concerning officers:
    - a. a list of officers (meaning a listing of the name, address or residence and indication of paid or unpaid status for each officer);
    - b. a certified copy of an affidavit from each officer stating that he/she is not covered by Article 20 and that he/she will not violate the

- provisions of Article 21, and a letter of acceptance from each officer;
- c. a document as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office attesting to the address or residence of each officer;
  - iii. a document listing the names of at least ten (10) members (which for corporate members shall mean the name of the corporation and the name of the representative), as well as their addresses or residences;
  - iv. a document indicating that conformance with Article 2.2.ii and Article 12.1.iii has been verified;
  - v. a prospectus;
  - vi. a certified copy of minutes attesting to a decision of intent to establish a specified nonprofit organization;
  - vii. an operating plan for the initial fiscal year and the following fiscal year after establishment;
  - viii. a budget statement of revenue and expenditure for the initial fiscal year and the following fiscal year after establishment.
2. If an application for authentication has been submitted as specified in the preceding paragraph, the government agency with jurisdiction must promptly publish that fact, as well as the matters specified below, and must provide the documents specified in items i, ii.a, v, vii, and viii for public view at a designated location for two (2) months from the date of acceptance of the application:
- i. the date on which the application was submitted;
  - ii. the name of the specified nonprofit corporation related to the application, as well as the name of the representative, the location of the main office, and the purposes specified in the articles of incorporation.

(Articles of incorporation)  
Article 11.

1. The articles of incorporation of a specified nonprofit corporation must specify the following:
- i. purposes;
  - ii. name;
  - iii. types of specified nonprofit activities to be undertaken and types of operations related to said specified nonprofit activities;
  - iv. location of the main office and any other offices;
  - v. matters relating to acquisition and loss of qualifications for membership;
  - vi. matters concerning officers;
  - vii. matters concerning meetings;
  - viii. matters concerning assets;
  - ix. matters concerning accounts;
  - x. fiscal year;
  - xi. matters concerning the types of, and other particulars of, any other operations that are to be undertaken;
  - xii. matters concerning dissolution;
  - xiii. matters concerning amendment of the articles of incorporation;

- xiv. method of public notice.
- 2. The initial officers after establishment must be listed in the articles of incorporation.
- 3. If provision is made in the matters specified in 1.xii above for an entity to succeed to remaining assets, said entity must be a specified nonprofit corporation or another entity selected from those specified below:
  - i. the national government or a local public organization;
  - ii. a corporation established under the provisions of Article 34 of the Civil Code;
  - iii. a school corporation as specified in Article 3 of the Private Schools Law (Law No. 270 of 1949);
  - iv. a social welfare corporation as specified in Article 22 of the Social Welfare Services Law (Law No. 45 of 1951);
  - v. a relief and rehabilitation corporation as specified in Article 2.6 of the Relief and Rehabilitation Enterprise Law (Law No. 86 of 1995).

(Criteria for authentication, etc.)

Article 12.

- 1. The government agency with jurisdiction must authenticate establishment if it is recognized that the application for authentication specified in Article 10.1 conforms with the following:
  - i. the procedures for establishment, the application, and the content of the articles of incorporation comply with laws and regulations;
  - ii. the specified nonprofit corporation of said application is an organization as specified in Article 2.2;
  - iii. specified nonprofit corporation making said application is not to be any of the following:
    - a. a violent criminal organization (meaning a violent criminal organization as stipulated by Article 2.ii of the Law Concerning the Prevention of Irregularities by Gangsters [Law No. 77 of 1991]; the same shall apply hereafter);
    - b. under the control of a violent criminal organization or its members (including members of a constituent organization of a violent criminal organization; the same shall apply hereafter) or a person who has been a member of a violent criminal organization and for whom five (5) years have yet to pass from the date on which said person was no longer a member of a violent criminal organization (referred to hereafter as "members of a violent criminal organization, etc.");
  - iv. the specified nonprofit corporation of said application has at least ten (10) members.
- 2. Authentication or denial pursuant to the provisions of the preceding paragraph shall be made within two (2) months from the date of expiration of the period specified in Article 10.2 unless there is just and proper reason to the contrary.

3. If the government agency with jurisdiction denies authentication pursuant to the provisions of paragraph 1, the government agency with jurisdiction must provide prompt notification in writing to the person who submitted the application, stating the reason for denial.

(Seeking for opinion, etc.)  
Article 12-2

The provisions of Articles 43-2 and 43-3 shall apply mutatis mutandis to authentication if application is filed pursuant to provisions of Article 10.1.

(Date of establishment, etc.)  
Article 13.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation shall be established through registration of establishment at the location of its main office.
2. A specified nonprofit corporation that has made the registration specified in the preceding paragraph shall promptly submit to the government agency with jurisdiction written notification, together with a certified copy of registration attesting that said registration has been made.

(Mutatis mutandis application of the Civil Code)  
Article 14.

The provisions of Article 51.1 of the Civil Code (limited to those sections that concern the time of incorporation) shall apply mutatis mutandis to establishment of a specified nonprofit corporation.

### Section 3. Administration

(Officers)  
Article 15.

A specified nonprofit corporation shall have three (3) or more directors and one (1) or more auditors as its officers.

(Representation by directors)  
Article 16.

The directors shall represent a specified nonprofit corporation in all the business thereof, with the proviso that their power of representation may be restricted by the articles of incorporation.

## (Determination of business)

## Article 17.

The business of a specified nonprofit corporation shall be determined by majority vote of the directors, unless otherwise specified in the articles of incorporation.

## (Duties of auditors)

## Article 18.

Supervisors shall perform the duties specified in each of the following items:

- i. inspect the status of business conducted by the directors;
- ii. inspect the status of assets of the specified nonprofit corporation;
- iii. if, as a result of the inspection specified in the preceding two items, improper conduct or important facts indicating violation of laws, regulations, or the articles of incorporation with regard to the business or assets of the specified nonprofit corporation are discovered, report same to a general meeting or the government agency with jurisdiction;
- iv. if necessary in order to submit a report as specified in the preceding item, convene a general meeting;
- v. present opinions to the directors on the status of business conducted by the directors or the status of assets of the specified nonprofit corporation.

## (Prohibition of dual functions by auditors)

## Article 19.

An auditor may not concurrently be a director or staff member of the specified nonprofit corporation.

## (Reasons for disqualification as an officer)

## Article 20.

No person who is covered by any of the following may become an officer of a specified nonprofit corporation:

- i. an adult ward or a person under curatorial care
- ii. a bankrupt who has not been reinstated with his/her rights;
- iii. a person who has been sentenced to imprisonment or a more severe penalty, and for whom two (2) years have yet to pass from the date of expiration of execution of the sentence or the date on which said person became no longer subject to execution of sentence;
- iv. a person who has been sentenced to a penal fine as a result of violation of the provisions of this law or the provisions of the Law Concerning the Prevention of Irregularities by Gangsters, excluding the provisions of Article 31.7 of said law or Article 204, Article 206, Article 208, Article 208-3, Article 222, or Article 247 of the Criminal Code (Law No. 45 of 1907) or the provisions of the Law Concerning Punishment of Violent

Acts, Etc. (Law No. 60 of 1926), and for whom two (2) years have yet to pass from the date of expiration of execution of the sentence or the date on which said person became no longer subject to execution of sentence;

- v. a member of a violent criminal organization, etc.
- vi. a person who was an officer of a specified nonprofit corporation at the time of dissolution thereof, authentication of establishment having been revoked pursuant to the provisions of Article 43, and for whom two (2) years have yet to pass from the date on which said authentication of establishment was revoked.

(Limitations on relatives, etc., of officers)

Article 21.

Officers may not include more than one (1) person who is a spouse or relative within the third degree of consanguinity of any one (1) officer, and said officer and his/her spouse and relatives within the third degree of consanguinity may not constitute more than one-third of the total number of officers.

(Filling vacant offices)

Article 22.

If the offices of more than one-third of the fixed number of directors or auditors fall vacant, they shall be filled promptly.

(Notification of changes concerning officers)

Article 23.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation must promptly notify the government agency with jurisdiction in the event of any change in the name or the address or residence of an officer.
2. When making the notification specified in the preceding paragraph when a new officer has been installed (excluding instances of reappointment simultaneously with expiration of the term of office), a specified nonprofit corporation shall submit to the government agency with jurisdiction the documents listed in Article 10.1.ii.b and c in regard to said officer.

(Term of office of officers)

Article 24.

The articles of incorporation shall specify a term of office of not more than two (2) years for officers. However, reappointment shall not be prohibited. Notwithstanding the preceding item, for specified nonprofit corporations which are to elect their officers at the general meeting as specified in the articles of incorporation, if a successor is not elected to office, the term of office may be extended until termination of the first general meeting from the last day of the

previous officer's term of office as specified by the articles of incorporation pursuant to the provisions of the preceding paragraph.

(Amendment of articles of incorporation)

Article 25.

1. Any amendment of the articles of incorporation shall take place by resolution of a general meeting as specified in the articles of incorporation.
2. Any resolution specified in the preceding paragraph must be approved by at least three-fourths of the members present at a general meeting attended by at least one-half of the members, unless otherwise specified in the articles of incorporation.
3. No amendment of the articles of incorporation shall be effective unless approval is obtained from the government agency with jurisdiction, excluding amendments involving the matters specified in Article 11.1.iv (limited to those not involving a change of competent authority), as well as the matters specified in viii and xiv of the same paragraph (referred to in paragraph 6 as "amendment of the articles of incorporation regarding minor matters").
4. If a specified nonprofit corporation wishes to obtain the approval specified in the preceding paragraph, said specified nonprofit corporation must submit an application to the government agency with jurisdiction together with a certified copy of the minutes of the general meeting at which amendment of the articles of incorporation was approved, as well as the amended articles of incorporation. If amendment of the articles of incorporation is related to matters specified in Article 11.1.iii or xi, an operating plan and a budget statement of revenue and expenditure for the fiscal year in which the date of amendment is included and the following fiscal year must be attached to the application
5. The provisions of Article 10.2 and Article 12 shall apply mutatis mutandis to the approval specified in paragraph 3.
6. A specified nonprofit corporation must notify the government agency with jurisdiction promptly in the event that it makes any amendment of the articles of incorporation regarding minor matters.

Article 26.

1. The application specified in paragraph 4 of the preceding article for approval of amendment of the articles of incorporation involving a change of government agency with jurisdiction must be submitted to the government agency with jurisdiction after the change via the government agency with jurisdiction prior to the change.
2. In the event of the preceding paragraph, in addition to the documents specified in Article 25.4, the documents specified in Article 10.1.ii.a and iv, as well as the most recent activity report, etc., as specified in Article 28.1 (which for the period from establishment through compilation of said documents shall mean the inventory of assets at the time of establishment specified in Article 14 applying Civil Code Article 51.1, and for the period from a merger through compilation of

said documents shall mean the inventory of assets specified in Article 35.1) must be attached to the application.

3. In the event of paragraph 1, if the government agency with jurisdiction approves amendment of the articles of incorporation, the government agency with jurisdiction shall promptly take over administrative work from the prior competent authority as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.

(Accounting principles)

Article 27.

Accounts for a specified nonprofit corporation must be kept as prescribed in this law as well as in accordance with the following principles:

- i. repealed\*
- ii. account books must be kept accurately, in keeping with the principles of formal bookkeeping;
- iii. the inventory of assets, balance sheet, and statement of revenue and expenditure must clearly state the truthful extent of revenue and expenditure and of finances on the basis of the account books;
- iv. the standards and procedures adopted for processing accounts must be followed consistently each fiscal year and must not be changed indiscriminately.

(Keeping of activity report, etc., and viewing thereof)

Article 28.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation must compile within the first three (3) months of each fiscal year, as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office, an activity report, inventory of assets, balance sheet, and statement of revenue and expenditure (referred to in the following paragraph, Article 29, and Article 43.1 as "activity report, etc.") for the previous fiscal year, and a list of officers (meaning a listing of the names and addresses or residences of all persons who were officers the previous fiscal year and indication of paid or unpaid status for each officer for the previous fiscal year), as well as a document listing the names of at least ten (10) members (which for corporate members shall mean the name of the corporation and the name of the representative), as well as their addresses or residences (referred to in the following paragraph, Article 29, and Article 43.1 as "list of officers, etc."); and said specified nonprofit corporation must keep these documents at its main office until the last day of the second successive fiscal year after the fiscal year in question.
2. If a member or other interested party asks to view the activity report, etc. (which for the period from establishment through compilation of said documents shall mean the inventory of assets at the time of establishment specified in Article 14 applying Civil Code Article 51.1 and for the period from a merger through compilation of said documents shall mean the inventory of assets specified in

Article 35.1; the same shall apply in Article 29.2), the list of officers, etc., or the articles of incorporation or copies of documents relating to the authentication or registration of same (referred to in Article 29 and Article 43.1 as "articles of incorporation, etc."), said specified nonprofit corporation must allow viewing thereof unless there is just and proper reason to the contrary.

(Submission and public disclosure of activity report, etc.)

Article 29.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation must submit its activity report, etc., list of officers, etc., and articles of incorporation, etc. (limited to articles of incorporation that have been amended, as well as copies of the documents relating to approval and registration of said amendment), once every fiscal year to the government agency with jurisdiction as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.
2. If a request is made to view the activity report, etc., or registry of officers, etc. (limited to those submitted within the last three [3] years), or the articles of incorporation, etc., submitted to the government agency with jurisdiction by a specified nonprofit corporation, the government agency with jurisdiction must permit viewing thereof as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.

(Mutatis mutandis application of the Civil Code)

Article 30.

The provisions of Article 54 to Article 57 and Article 60 to Article 66 of the Civil Code shall apply mutatis mutandis to a specified nonprofit corporation. In this case, "the court . . . on the application of any person interested or of a public prosecutor" in Article 56 of the Civil Code shall be read as "the government agency with jurisdiction . . . on the application of any interested party or by the authority of his/her post."

#### Section 4. Dissolution and Merger

(Reasons for dissolution)

Article 31.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation shall be dissolved for any of the following reasons:
  - i. resolution of a general meeting to that effect;
  - ii. the occurrence of any reason for dissolution specified in the articles of incorporation;
  - iii. the impossibility of successful performance of operations relating to the nonprofit activities that are its objective;
  - iv. absence of members;
  - v. merger;
  - vi. bankruptcy;

- vii. revocation of authentication of establishment in accordance with the provisions of Article 43.
- 2. Dissolution for the reason specified in item iii of the preceding paragraph shall not take effect without the approval of the government agency with jurisdiction.
- 3. A specified nonprofit corporation wishing to obtain approval as specified in the preceding paragraph shall submit to the government agency with jurisdiction a document attesting to the reason specified in paragraph 1.iii.
- 4. The liquidator shall, when dissolution is effected for the reasons specified in paragraph 1.i, ii, iv, or vi, promptly notify the government agency with jurisdiction to that effect.

(Assignment of remaining assets)  
Article 32.

- 1. The remaining assets of a dissolved specified nonprofit corporation shall, except in the cases of merger and bankruptcy, be assigned to the entity stipulated by the articles of incorporation at the time of notifying the government agency with jurisdiction of the completion of liquidation.
- 2. If there is no provision in the articles of incorporation regarding assignment of remaining assets, the liquidator may, upon receipt of approval by the government agency with jurisdiction, transfer them to the national government or a local public organization.
- 3. Any assets that are not disposed of under the provisions of the preceding two paragraphs shall be assigned to the national treasury.

(Merger)  
Article 33.

A specified nonprofit corporation may merge with another specified nonprofit corporation.

(Procedures for merger)  
Article 34.

- 1. Any merger by a specified nonprofit corporation must be approved by resolution of a general meeting.
- 2. The resolution specified in the preceding paragraph must be approved by at least three-fourths of the members, unless otherwise specified in the articles of incorporation.
- 3. No merger shall be effective unless approval is obtained from the government agency with jurisdiction.
- 4. If a specified nonprofit corporation wishes to obtain the approval specified in the preceding paragraph, said specified nonprofit corporation must submit an application to the government agency with jurisdiction together with a certified copy of the minutes of the general meeting at which the resolution specified in paragraph 1 was approved.

5. The provisions of Article 10 and Article 12 shall apply mutatis mutandis to the approval specified in paragraph 3.

Article 35.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation shall, upon approval by the government agency with jurisdiction as specified in Article 34.3, prepare an inventory of assets and a balance sheet within two (2) weeks from the date of notification of said approval.
2. A specified nonprofit corporation shall, upon approval by the government agency with jurisdiction as specified in Article 34.3, give public notice to creditors within two (2) weeks from the date of notification of said approval that they shall present objections, if any, during a fixed period and further shall give separate notice to the same effect to each known creditor, provided that said fixed period is not less than two (2) months.

Article 36.

1. If no creditor presents an objection to the merger during the period specified in Article 35.2, it shall be deemed that the merger has been consented to.
2. If any creditor presents an objection, the specified nonprofit corporation must satisfy his/her claims or furnish him/her with equivalent collateral or entrust equivalent assets to a trust company or a bank engaged in trust business for the purpose of satisfying said creditor. However, this is not necessary when there is no possibility that the merger will harm said creditor.

Article 37.

When a specified nonprofit corporation is to be established by merger, preparation of the articles of incorporation and other matters relating to establishment of said specified nonprofit corporation shall be attended to by joint action of persons selected by each specified nonprofit corporation.

(Effect of merger)

Article 38.

A specified nonprofit corporation that continues to exist after merger or a specified nonprofit corporation established by merger shall succeed to all the rights and obligations of the specified nonprofit corporation or corporations ceasing to exist by reason of merger (including the rights and obligations possessed by said specified nonprofit corporation or corporations by virtue of permission and other dispositions granted by the administrative authorities in connection with the business thereof).

(Time of merger)  
Article 39.

1. Merger of specified nonprofit corporations shall take effect upon completion of registration at the locality of the main office of the specified nonprofit corporation that continues to exist after merger or of the specified nonprofit corporation that is established by merger.
2. The provisions of Article 13.2 shall apply mutatis mutandis to the registration specified in the preceding paragraph.

(Mutatis mutandis application of the Civil Code)  
Article 40.

The provisions of Article 69, Article 70, Article 73 to Article 76, Article 77.2 (limited to the portion relating to reporting), and Article 78 to Article 83 of the Civil Code, as well as the provisions of Article 35.2, Article 36, Article 37-2, Article 136 to Article 137, and Article 138 of the Law of Procedure for Noncontentious Matters, shall apply mutatis mutandis to dissolution and liquidation of a specified nonprofit corporation. In this case, "the competent authorities" in Article 77.2 and Article 83 of the Civil Code shall be read as "the government agency with jurisdiction."

## Section 5. Supervision

(Reports and Inspection)  
Article 41.

1. If there is sufficient reason to suspect that a specified nonprofit corporation has violated laws, regulations, administrative dispositions based on laws or regulations, or the articles of incorporation, the government agency with jurisdiction may have said specified nonprofit corporation make a report concerning the status of its business or assets or have officials of the government agency with jurisdiction enter the office or offices and other facilities of said specified nonprofit corporation and inspect the status of its business or assets or its account books, documents, and other materials.
2. If the government agency with jurisdiction has the inspection specified in the preceding paragraph performed, the government agency with jurisdiction shall have its officials present a document stating the sufficient reason of said paragraph to the officers of the specified nonprofit corporation or other persons with authority to supervise the office or offices and other facilities that are subject to inspection (referred to hereafter in this paragraph as "officers, etc., of the specified nonprofit corporation") and must deliver said document if the officers, etc., of the specified nonprofit corporation demand delivery thereof.
3. Any official performing the inspection specified in paragraph 1 must carry a certificate attesting to his/her official status and must show it to those concerned.

4. The authority to inspect specified in paragraph 1 shall not be construed as the authority to conduct a criminal investigation.

(Orders to improve)

Article 42.

The government agency with jurisdiction may order a specified nonprofit corporation to take such measures as are necessary for improvement within a fixed period if the government agency with jurisdiction deems that said specified nonprofit corporation does not meet the requirements of Article 12.1.ii, iii, or iv or otherwise violates laws, regulations, administrative dispositions based on laws or regulations, or the articles of incorporation or that its operations are materially lacking in propriety.

(Revocation of authentication of establishment)

Article 43.

1. The government agency with jurisdiction may revoke its authentication of establishment of a specified nonprofit corporation if said specified nonprofit corporation violates an order specified in Article 42 and the government agency with jurisdiction cannot fulfill the objectives of supervision through other means or if a specified nonprofit corporation has not submitted an activity report, etc., registry of officers, etc., or articles of incorporation, etc., as specified in Article 29.1 for at least three (3) years.
2. The government agency with jurisdiction may revoke its authentication of establishment of a specified nonprofit corporation even without issuing the order specified in Article 42 if said specified nonprofit corporation violates laws or regulations and if it is clear that improvement cannot be expected as a result of such an order and that the objectives of supervision cannot be fulfilled through other means.
3. If a specified nonprofit corporation so requests, efforts must be made to hold public hearings on the dates of hearings concerning the revocation of authentication of establishment as specified in the preceding two paragraphs.
4. If the government agency with jurisdiction does not hold public hearings on the dates of hearings when a request as specified in the preceding paragraph has been made, the government agency with jurisdiction must deliver to the specified nonprofit corporation a written statement of the reason for not holding public hearings.

(Seeking for opinion)

Article 43-2

If there is sufficient reason to suspect that a specified nonprofit corporation has not complied with the requirements specified in Article 12.1.iii or if its officer(s) disqualifies by corresponding to Article 20.v, the government agency with jurisdiction may ask, stating the reason, for the opinion of the Director General

for the National Police Agency in the case where the government agency with jurisdiction is the Prime Minister and of the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police or the Chief Commissioner of the Prefectural Police in the case where the government agency with jurisdiction is the governor of a *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent), (referred to as "Director General for the National Police Agency or Chief Commissioner of the Prefectural Police" in the following section).

(Advice to government agency with jurisdiction)  
Article 43-3

If there is sufficient reason to suspect that a specified nonprofit corporation has not complied with the requirements specified in Article 12.1iii or if its officer(s) disqualifies by corresponding to Article 20.v and there is a need for the government agency with jurisdiction to take appropriate measures as are necessary on the said specified nonprofit corporation, the Director General for the National Police Agency or Chief Commissioner of the Prefectural Police may advise the government agency with jurisdiction to do so.

#### Section 6. Miscellaneous Provisions

(Provision of Information)  
Article 44.

1. The Prime Minister must deliver copies of documents for viewing as specified in Article 29.2 (excluding copies of documents already delivered pursuant to this paragraph) to the governor of the *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent) in which an office of a specified nonprofit corporation specified in Article 9.2 is located.
2. A specified nonprofit corporation specified in Article 9.2 must submit copies of the documents specified in the preceding paragraph to the Prime Minister as prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.
3. The governor of a *to*, *do*, *fu*, or *ken* (prefecture or equivalent) may permit viewing of the copies of the documents that he/she receives pursuant to paragraph 1 as prescribed by ordinance of his/her prefecture or equivalent.

Article 44-2  
(Translation left out)

(Regulations for implementation)  
Article 45.

In addition to the provisions of this chapter, the procedures for implementation thereof, as well as other particulars necessary for implementation, shall be prescribed by ordinance of the Prime Minister's Office.

## Chapter III. Special Treatment Under Tax Law

## Article 46.

1. A specified nonprofit corporation shall be deemed to be a public interest corporation, etc., as specified in Article 2.vi of the Corporation Tax Law (Law No. 34 of 1965) for the purposes of application of said law and other laws and regulations relating to corporation taxes. In this event, for the purposes of applying Article 37 of said law, the wording "public interest corporations, etc." in paragraph 3 of said article shall be read as "public interest corporations, etc. (excluding corporations; hereafter referred to as 'specified nonprofit corporations'), specified in Article 2.2 of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (Law No. 7 of 1998)," and the wording "public interest corporations, etc." in paragraph 4 of said article shall be read as "public interest corporations, etc. (excluding specified nonprofit corporations)"; for the purposes of applying Article 66 of said law, the wording "ordinary corporations" in paragraphs 1 and 2 of said article shall be read as "ordinary corporations (including specified nonprofit corporations)," and the wording "public interest corporations, etc." in paragraph 3 of said article shall be read as "public interest corporations, etc. (excluding specified nonprofit corporations)"; and for the purposes of applying Article 68-6 of the Special Taxation Measures Law (Law No. 26 of 1957), the wording "those corporations deemed" in said article shall be read as "those corporations deemed (which for corporations specified in Article 2.2 of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities [Law No. 7 of 1998] shall be limited to corporations designated by cabinet order as small-scale corporations)."
2. For the purposes of applying the Consumption Tax Law (Law No. 108 of 1988) and other laws and regulations concerning the consumption tax, a specified nonprofit corporation shall be deemed to be a corporation as specified in Schedule 3 of the Consumption Tax Law.
3. For the purposes of applying the Land Value Tax Law (Law No. 69 of 1991) and other laws and regulations concerning the land value tax (excluding the provisions of Article 33 of said law), a specified nonprofit corporation shall be deemed to be a public interest corporation, etc., as specified in Article 2.vi of the Land Value Tax Law, with the proviso that for the purposes of applying the provisions of laws or regulations concerning exemption from land value tax pursuant to Article 6 of said law, a specified nonprofit corporation shall be deemed to be an organization, etc., without juridical personality as specified in Article 2.vii of said law.

## Article 46-2

If a specified nonprofit corporation meets the requirements of organization and operation as specified in the Special Tax Measures Law and receives approval of the Director General for the National Tax Administration Agency as contributing to the promotion of public benefit, an individual or a corporation contributing or donating a gift to the said specified nonprofit corporation for its specified nonprofit activities shall be considered a special case and exempt from income tax, corporate tax or inheritance tax as specified by the said law.

## Chapter IV. Penal Provisions

## Article 47.

A person who violates an order specified in Article 42 shall be liable to a fine not exceeding 500,000 yen.

## Article 48.

If a representative or proxy or an employee or other worker of a specified nonprofit corporation commits any violation specified in the preceding article in connection with the business of said specified nonprofit corporation, the specified nonprofit corporation as well as the offender shall be liable to the penalty prescribed in said article.

## Article 49.

Directors, auditors, or the liquidator of a specified nonprofit corporation shall be liable to a nonpenal fine not exceeding 200,000 yen in any of the following cases:

- i. registration as specified in the provisions of the cabinet order specified in Article 7.1 has been neglected;
- ii. preparation of an inventory of assets as specified in the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 51 of the Civil Code, applicable mutatis mutandis to Article 14, has been neglected or matters required to be included in said inventory have not been included or untrue entries have been made;
- iii. notification has not been given, in violation of the provisions of Article 23.1 or Article 25.6, or false notification has been given;
- iv. the keeping of the documents specified in the provisions of Article 28.1 has been neglected or matters required to be included in said documents have not been included or untrue entries have been made;
- v. submission of the documents specified in Article 29.1 has been neglected;

- vi. preparation of the documents specified in Article 35.1 has been neglected or matters required to be included in said documents have not been included or untrue entries have been made;
- vii. the provisions of Article 35.2 or Article 36.2 have been violated;
- viii. application for adjudication of bankruptcy as specified in Article 70.2 or Article 81.1 of the Civil Code, applicable mutatis mutandis to Article 40, has been neglected;
- ix. public notice as specified in Article 79.1 or Article 81.1 of the Civil Code, applicable mutatis mutandis to Article 40, has been neglected or untrue public notice has been given.
- x. reporting specified in provisions of Article 41.1 has been neglected or untrue, or inspection specified in the same Article refused, disturbed or evaded.

#### Article 50.

A person who violates the provisions of Article 4 shall be liable to a nonpenal fine not exceeding 100,000 yen.

#### Attached Schedule (Article 2)

1. Promotion of health, medical treatment, or welfare
2. Promotion of social education
3. Promotion of community development
4. Promotion of science, culture, the arts, or sports
5. Conservation of the environment
6. Disaster relief
7. Promotion of community safety
8. Protection of human rights or promotion of peace
9. International cooperation
10. Promotion of a society with equal gender participation
11. Sound nurturing of youth
12. Development of information technology
13. Promotion of science and technology
14. Promotion of economic activities
15. Development of vocational expertise or expansion of employment opportunities
16. Protection of consumers
17. Administration of organizations that engage in the above activities or provision of liaison, advice, or assistance in connection with the above activities

## Supplementary Provisions

(Law No. 173 of 2002) (Excerpts)

(Enforcement Date)

Article 1.

This law shall be in force and effect from May 1, 2003.

(Transitional Measures)

Article 2.

The provisions in Article 5.2 of the revised Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (referred to hereafter as the "new Law") are to be applied to operations starting in the fiscal year following that of the date of enforcement of this law (referred to hereafter as the "enforcement date"). For operations in the fiscal year started before the enforcement date, the provisions are to follow precedent cases. In enforcing this law, the provisions in Article 11.1 (limited to those sections that concern xi) relating to other operations specified in Article 5.1 of the new Law (excluding the revenue-generating operations specified in Article 5.1 of the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities before the revision [referred to hereafter as the "old Law"]) of a specified nonprofit corporation shall not be applied until passing of one year from the enforcement date of this law.

Article 3.

The provisions relating to the documents to be submitted together with the application for approval specified in Articles 10.1, 25.4 and 34.4 of the old Law before the enforcement date are to follow precedent cases. The criteria relating to the application for approval specified in Article 10.1 of the old Law, application for approval specified in Article 25.4 of the old Law, and application for approval specified in Article 34.4 of the old Law before the enforcement date are to follow precedent cases.

Article 4.

In enforcing this law, the provisions in Article 11.1 (limited to those sections that concern item x) shall not be applied to specified nonprofit corporations (including organizations relating to application for authentication of establishment of a specified nonprofit corporation; the same shall apply to the following paragraph) which have not fixed a fiscal year in their articles of incorporation until passing of one year from the enforcement date of this law.

In enforcing this law, the wording shall be amended for the purpose of applying Articles 27.4, 28.1 and 29.1 of the new Law and Article 2.1 of the Supplementary

Provisions until the day before the start of the initial fiscal year to specified nonprofit corporations which have not fixed a fiscal year:

The wording "every fiscal year," "previous fiscal year" and "two fiscal years hence" in Article 28.1 shall be amended to read "every year," "previous year" and "two years hence." The wording "every fiscal year" in Article 29.1 shall be amended to read "every year." The wording "the fiscal year following that of the date of enforcement of this law (referred to hereafter as the "enforcement date")" shall be amended to read "January 1, 2004 (the date of the initial fiscal year if the initial fiscal year starts before the said date)." The wording "the fiscal year started before the enforcement date" shall be amended to read "December 31, 2003 (the day before the start of the initial fiscal year if the initial fiscal year starts before the said date)."

\* Editorial note: Article 27.i, an accounting-related clause, stated that all revenues and expenditures must be based on an initial budget.

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## Japanese Glossary

Key Japanese words appearing in this dissertation

*amakudari* (天下り)

literally means “descent from heaven” or the practice of retired bureaucrats landing cushy jobs in the private sector

*atarashii kōkyō* (新しい公共) New Public

*borantia* (ボランティア) volunteer /volunteering

*chōkai, chōnaikai, or jichikai* (町会、町内会、自治会) neighborhood associations

*chuō kyōiku shingikai* (中央教育審議会) Central Council for Education

*chūryū kaikyū* (中流階級) middle class

*dōtoku* (道徳) moral education

*gakkō hōjin* (学校法人) educational corporations

*gyōsei yōgo* (行政用語) administrative language

*futsū* (普通) ordinary

*hanko* (はんこ) seal

*hieiri soshiki* (非営利組織) nonprofit organizations (NPOs)

*hiseifu soshiki* (非政府組織) non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

*hōjin-zei* (法人税) corporation tax

*hojo kin* (補助金) aid money

*hōshi* (奉仕) service

*iryō hōjin* (医療法人) medical corporations

*itaku kin* (委託金) entrustment money

*jiko-sekinin* (自己責任) self-responsibility

*jimukyoku* (事務局) secretariat

*jūmin undō* (住民運動) residents’ movements

*kaigo* (介護) elderly care

*keizai senryaku kaigi* (経済戦略会議) Economic Strategy Council

*keizokusei* (継続性) continuity

*kigyō shimin* (企業市民) corporate citizenship

*kisei kanwa* (規制緩和) deregulation

*kōeki* (公益) public interest

*kōeki hōjin* (公益法人) public interest corporations

*kōen-kaiin* (後援会員) supporting membership

*kōmin* (公民) public person

*kōzō kaikaku* (構造改革) structural reform

*kyōdō* (協働) collaboration

*kyōiku kaikaku kokumin kaigi* (教育改革国民会議)

National Commission on Educational Reform

*kyōiku kihon hō* (教育基本法) Fundamental Law of Education

*kyōka* (許可) permission

*kyōsei* (共生) symbiosis  
*kyōseiteki kakuitsuka* (強制的画一化) forced uniformity  
*kyōseiteki kinshitsuka* (強制的均質化) forced homogenization  
*manabi* (学び) learning  
*nemawashi* (根回し) discussion in advance  
*nichibei anzen hoshō jōyaku* (日米安全保障条約, 安保)  
 US-Japan Security Treaty, AMPO  
*nin'i dantai* (任意団体) informal private groups  
*ninka* (認可) approval  
*ninshō* (認証) certification  
*Nippon Keidanren* (日本経団連 / 日本経済団体連合会) Japan Business Federation  
*okami* (お上) the government  
*omoiyari* (思いやり) kindness  
*otagaisama* (お互い様) for each other  
*rijikai* (理事会) Board of Directors  
*rinji kyōiku shingikai* (臨時教育審議会) Ad Hoc Council on Education  
*ryōsai-kenbo* (良妻賢母) good wife and wise mother  
*sanjo-kaiin* (賛助会員) supporting membership  
*sei-kaiin* (正会員) regular membership  
*seirei shitei toshi* (政令指定都市) ordinance-designated cities  
*shadan hōjin* (社団法人) incorporated associations  
*shakai fukushi hōjin* (社会福祉法人) social welfare corporations  
*shakai fukushi kyōgikai* (社会福祉協議会) social welfare councils  
*shakai kōken* (社会貢献) contribution to making society better  
*shimin* (市民) citizen(s)  
*shimin dantai* (市民団体) citizens' group  
*shimin shakai* (市民社会) civil society  
*shimin undō* (市民運動) citizens' movements  
*shinsetsu* (親切) kindness  
*shitamachi* (下町) downtown  
*shōgai gakushū* (生涯学習) continuing education / lifelong learning  
*shūkyō hōjin* (宗教法人) religious corporations  
*sōkai* (総会) general shareholders' meeting  
*tatewari* (縦割り) divided vertically into divisions  
*teikan* (定款) articles of association  
*tokutei hieiri katsudō sokushin hō* (特定非営利活動促進法 / NPO 法)  
 Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities  
*tokutei hieri katsudō hōjin* (特定非営利活動法人、NPO)  
 specified nonprofit corporations  
*tsunagari* (つながり) networking  
*ushinawareta jūnen* (失われた10年) Lost Decade

*yui* (結い) tying

*yushō borantia* (有償ボランティア) paid volunteers

*zaidan hōjin* (財団法人) incorporated foundations