

ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY IN JAPAN

The Japanese Association for Environmental Sociology (JAES)

July 2006

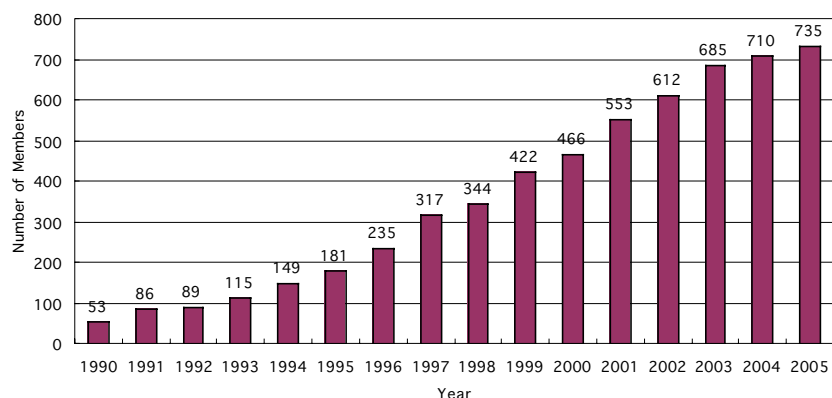
Environmental Sociology in Japan

Japanese environmental sociology has roots that go back to the early 1960s, when it mainly focused its attention on the analysis of social mechanisms that produced “pollution victims.” This can be attributed mainly to the fact that Japan suffered from severe environmental disruptions in the 1960s and 1970s. A few examples of the disruptions (*kogai*) are Minamata and Itai-Itai diseases, but the list continues endlessly. Researchers, therefore, conducted case studies occasionally accompanied by in-depth interviews, intending to understand subjective reactions of “victims” as well as their protest activities and to uncover the mechanisms of societal and environmental disruption in local communities. Sociologists of the time considered analyzing the structure of victimization as more urgent than the “HEP-NEP paradigm change” controversy. In the late 1980s, Japanese sociologists whose interests focused on environmental problems gathered at a symposium. They founded a small informal association in 1990, the predecessor of The Japanese Association for Environmental Sociology. The late Prof. IJIMA Nobuko (1938-2001), a pioneer in Japanese environmental sociology, became the first president.

What is JAES?

The Japanese Association for Environmental Sociology (JAES) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing the development of environmental sociology. JAES was founded in 1992 with 53 researchers taking part in its foundation. Now with over 700 members (as of June 2006, see Figure 1), JAES has become the largest environmental sociology association around the Globe. JAES members come from a wide range of backgrounds: researchers, teachers, students and practitioners in many fields. The Association holds semiannual seminars each spring and autumn and publishes *the Journal of Environmental Sociology*, the world’s first journal devoted especially to environmental sociology.

FIG. 1 JAES Membership: 1990-2005



Semiannual Seminars and Other Activities

Reflecting the diversity of our members, the themes of recent seminars include: eco-tourism and regeneration of community, new wave in environmental movements, "commons" and the environment, citizen-participation in the environmental policy-making process, renewable energy, organic farming, Minamata disease, and forest conservation.

The seminars held each spring are well-known for their excursion programs: each provides its members the opportunity to discuss "on site," namely, at the actual place of environmental disruption. The seminars have been held in places such as Ashio copper mine, Lake Biwa, the World Heritage Shirakami Mountains, Minamata, Niigata, and a waste disposal site in Nagano.

JAES places emphasis on communicating with foreign researchers and associations abroad. JAES held the "International Symposium on Environmental Problems in Asian Societies" in 1993, and the Association supported "Kyoto Environmental Sociology Conference 2001" organized by Research Committee 24 of the International Sociological Association. The International Relations Committee was founded in 2002 to promote networking especially among Asian societies.

JAES is also active in increasing interchanges with other fields of social sciences. Since 2000, JAES has co-hosted interdisciplinary symposium with two academic associations, the Society for Environmental Economics and Policy Studies and the Japan Association for Environmental Law and Policy.

The Journal of Environmental Sociology

The annual academic journal of JAES, *the Journal of Environmental Sociology*, was first published in 1995. The Journal covers a wide range of topics, just like the semiannual seminars, and each issue contains special feature articles (most of which are written in Japanese with English abstracts), as shown below:

- Vol. 1 (1995) Perspectives of Environmental Sociology
- Vol. 2 (1996) Fieldwork and Environmental Sociology
- Vol. 3 (1997) Forests, River and Sea as Commons
- Vol. 4 (1998) Environmental Movements and Non-Profit Organizations
- Vol. 5 (1999) Sociological Study on Environmental Regeneration
- Vol. 6 (2000) (1) Viewpoints on the Environmental Destruction
(2) The Significance of Waste Management Legislation and its Social Impacts
- Vol. 7 (2001) Environmental Policy and Environmental Sociology
- Vol. 8 (2002) Toward a Sociology of Renewable Energy
- Vol. 9 (2003) Discourse toward Organic Farming and Vernacular Life Style
- Vol. 10 (2004) New Developments in Environmental Sociology
- Vol. 11 (2005) A Logic of Justice and Legitimacy about Environment

For More Information on *the Journal of Environmental Sociology*

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