

# Action for a sustainable society

## About the activities of NPO in Japan and Kitakyushu

Yurika Mori<sup>1</sup>, Yu-ling Tsai<sup>2</sup>, Bart Dewancker<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doctoral Student, Graduate School of Environmental Engineering, The University of Kitakyushu  
Japan

E-mail: yurikamori@icloud.com

<sup>2</sup> Doctoral Student, Graduate School of Environmental Engineering, The University of Kitakyushu,  
Japan E-mail: yulingt@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Department of Architecture, The University of Kitakyushu, Japan  
E-mail: bart@kitakyu-u.ac.jp

---

**Abstract:** In recent years, many people have gathered and lived in cities. There are various reasons for this, such as being close to the place of work and going to school, But living in an urban atmosphere has various choices from commercial to cultural, and we will have many benefits. As the economy develops, so do the cities. In Japanese society, where the population is concentrated in big cities, it can be said that the pandemic has promoted the establishment of a remote style freed from time and place. The breakthrough that allows us to freely choose our favorite lifestyle is very meaningful. Speaking of lifestyle changes, people and society have become more enthusiastic about environmental conservation than before. In Japan, the word Satoumi Satoyama has been used for a long time. These means that bioproductivity and biodiversity which have increased due to the addition of human resources".

**Keywords:** biodiversity; NPO; Environmental conservation activities; Environmental education activities

---

## 1. Introduction

The concentration of population in urban areas is increasing, while the depopulation of regional cities is becoming more serious. This problem has a major background in the declining birthrate and aging population. In the first place, cities, which are complex and developed with various elements, have various functions, and although the reasons depend on the individual, there are many advantages to living in a city. As the economy has developed, cities have expanded and grown. However, in recent years, more and more attention has been paid to living not only in cities but also in rural areas. This is because the development of the IoT society has shortened the distance between cities and rural areas in various aspects through IoT. Furthermore, COVID-19, with its tremendous infectious power, has changed our society into one where people keep their distance from each other, and has changed our lives into a new normal. It is very significant that it has established a remote style in our lifestyles, free from time and place, and that we can now choose the lifestyle of our choice without being bound by place and time. There are probably many people who have gone to the countryside to balance their work and private

lives. Against this background, the countryside is attracting more and more attention. I have been reminded of the advantages of both the city and the countryside, and the key phrase "living in harmony with nature" is indispensable in both lives.

## 2. SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are international goals to achieve a sustainable and better world by 2030, which are described in the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" unanimously adopted by member countries at the United Nations Summit in September 2015 as the successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) formulated in 2001. The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 targets, and pledge to "leave no one behind" on the Earth. The SDGs are universal, not only for developing countries but also for developed countries themselves, and Japan is actively working on them. In conclusion, we have a common goal, which is to "aim for a life of coexistence with the beautiful nature that exists on this planet."

## 3. Keywords in environmental conservation

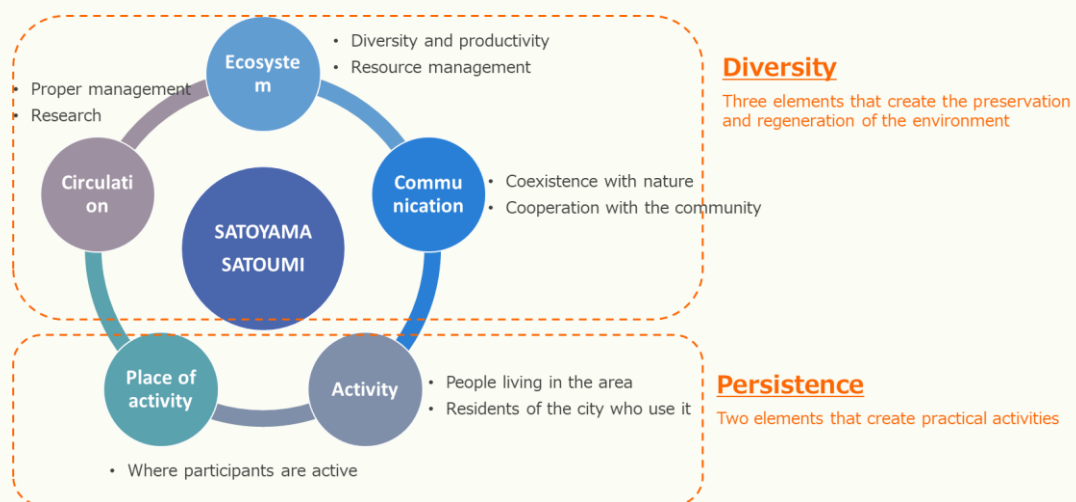


Figure 1 Five elements that make up the environmental concept

As for the concept of coexisting with nature, Japan has actually had the term Satoumi and Satoyama since ancient times. Satoumi is local sea and the Satoyama is local mountain. Satoumi and Satoyama refer to "oceans and mountains where biological productivity and biodiversity have been enhanced by human intervention. There are many ways in which humans interact with nature, and depending on how we interact with nature, we can either protect it or destroy it. Therefore, the way in which human hands are applied becomes important. Figure 1 shows Five elements that make up the environmental concept. Satoumi and Satoyama development consists of five elements. The three elements are "material cycle," "ecosystem," and "interaction," which support conservation and regeneration, and the two elements of "place of activity" and "subject of activity" which support practice. These five elements make up and nurture the

Satoumi and Satoyama. Furthermore, the balance of these elements creates a variety of activities that are unique to each region. The increase in the amount of garbage caused by pollutants discharged from the lives of local residents and industrial activities, the impact on ecosystems, and changes in the environment can be prevented by human intervention, such as maintenance and cleaning, which can help stop the deterioration of the environment and restore it to a good state, leading to the creation of rich biodiversity. On the other hand, consciously avoiding the use of human hands in certain areas in order to conserve the environment and protect ecosystems close to their pristine state can also be said to be a form of management with the appropriate use of human hands. It is important to seek out appropriate ways for people to interact with nature in each region, and to continue to do so.

#### 4. Case study



Figure 2 Bamboo forest conservation activities

In terms of citizens' activities, there are many organizations in Japan that protect Satoyama and Satoumi. Today I would like to introduce you to an activity that is taking place in Kitakyushu: the Kitakyushu Biotope Network Laboratory, which was established in 2001, is working to protect the local natural environment. Our activities are located in Kitakyushu City in the Kyushu region of Japan. Kitakyushu belongs to the Kyushu region, which is located in the southwestern part of Japan, and is the northernmost part of the Kyushu region. Our activities are mainly bamboo forest conservation activities in Wakamatsu, Kitakyushu City, and we are also conducting PJ in Surabaya as an environmental education activity. In Kitakyushu, abandoned bamboo forests have become a problem, and when they expand, they affect other trees and biodiversity. Bamboo grows vigorously and its roots can expand and invade the forest. In addition, the bamboo blocks light, causing the trees to weaken and die. As a result, the number of species of birds and insects also decreases, leading to a decline in biodiversity. Figure 2 shows Bamboo forest conservation activities. In addition, since the underground stems of bamboos are concentrated about 30 centimeters underground, rainwater cannot penetrate deep into the ground, and the underground stems of neglected bamboo forests corrode or die, posing the risk of soil and soil collapse. In order to solve these problems, we have been conducting monthly bamboo forest maintenance activities, but there is a

problem of land ownership in conducting these activities. Some of the land owners do not like the idea of a citizens' group maintaining a bamboo forest. As a result, there are cases where bamboo forests are left unattended. Next, as for environmental education activities, we hold fieldwork and craft classes for parents and children to learn about the purpose and methods of preserving nature by making things and experiencing them. Figure 3 shows Environmental education activities. In addition to Kitakyushu, we are also conducting environmental education workshops to conserve mangrove forests in Surabaya, Indonesia.



Figure 3 Environmental education activities

## 5. Citizen Action

Kitakyushu, where we are based, has a history of pollution. This is a picture of the sky and sea of Kitakyushu in the 1960s. Kitakyushu supported Japan's long period of high economic growth in the 1960's. The price of economic development during this period of high economic growth was pollution. The sea was polluted, the sky was obscured by smog, the laundry was soiled by smog when hung outside, and children could not play outside due to the photochemical smog. Dokai Bay is a typical example of such pollution. It was called the Sea of Death, and it was said that no living thing could live in this sea. The first to speak out against the pollution was a citizens' movement of mothers concerned about the health of their children. Under the slogan "We want blue skies," they voluntarily surveyed the air pollution situation and, based on the results, launched a proactive movement to demand improvements from corporations and the government. The citizens' voices and activities moved the companies and changed the government's way of thinking. Kitakyushu was one of the first cities in Japan where citizens, businesses and the government worked together to improve the situation, and the city's skies and seas were revived.

## 6. Summary

While the SDGs can appeal to a wide range of people with regard to environmental issues and social problems, the focus should be on how they are translated into action in the future. In the same way that the terrible pollution in Kitakyushu changed the way the government and corporations acted because

of the activities of citizen mothers, actions taken at the individual level can lead to major changes. Figure 4 shows Relationships between civic organizations and other organizations. This is why the activities of NPOs, which support activities at the citizen level, will play an increasingly important role in the future. We are keenly aware of two key elements in NPO activities. First, it is very important to raise awareness of the environment among children and local residents through practical activities, and to actually take action to protect the beauty of nature. The second is to bring about changes in people's lifestyles through environmental education. It is important for us to take action ourselves and teach the younger generation so that we can develop into a sustainable society.

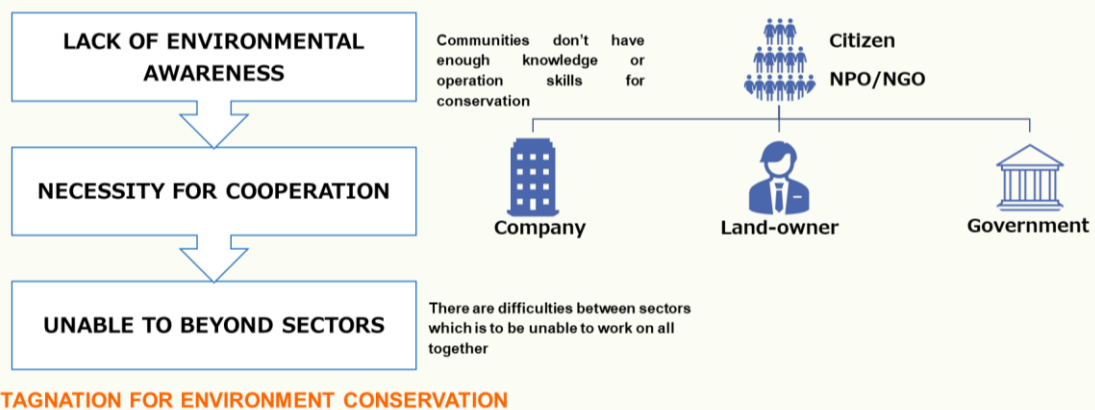


Figure 4 Relationships between civic organizations and other organizations

## References

1. City of Kitakyushu.  
[https://www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/kankyoku/file\\_0269.html](https://www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/kankyoku/file_0269.html)  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].
2. Kyushu tourism promotion organization  
<https://www.welcomekyushu.jp/article/?mode=detail&id=390>  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].
3. Satoumi Net  
<https://www.env.go.jp/water/heisa/satoumi/01.html>  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].
4. globally Important agricultural heritage systems  
<http://www.pref.ishikawa.jp/satoyama/noto-giahs/>  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].
5. Imacocollabo.  
<https://imacocollabo.or.jp/about-sdgs/>  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/sdgs/about/index.html>  
[Accessed September 13, 2021].