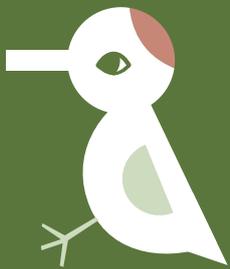


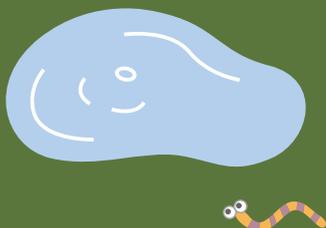
GREEN ACCESS PROJECT

グリーンアクセス
プロジェクト



Our Logo: the Woodpecker

The logo of our project is the woodpecker. It symbolizes “nature,” “awakening,” and “continuation” – the wish that we will be able to continue working little by little to open doors for the Green Access along with a wide range of the public.



Purposes

The Green Access Project aims to build a system of citizens’ participation and cooperation in which collective environmental activities may generate synergies towards the guarantee of environmental right and the creation of a sustainable society.

The official name of this project is “Cooperation Innovation for Sustainable Society---Implementation Measures of the 3 Aarhus Principles in Japan.” It is supported by a grant (2010~2013) from the Funding Program for Next Generation World-Leading Researchers (Council for Science and Technology Policy - Government of Japan).

Japan’s Strengths and Weaknesses

(Achievements and Challenges)

Historically, environmental litigation has played a significant role for the progress of environmental policies and law in Japan. Furthermore, widespread grassroots activities on e.g. recycling, energy saving and nature conservation, such as *Satoyama Initiative*, makes Japan one of the few countries where voluntary approaches of the public and businesses have been relatively effective. In addition, since the early 1990s, various councils and proposal systems have been legally introduced. Such overview may lead to the conclusion that Japan has experienced a remarkable development in citizens’ participation in environmental issues.

However, there have been some criticisms from both the public and public administration. The former complains that their opinions have never been reflected in public policies, no matter how much efforts they make to participate in such discussion process. On the other hand, the latter stresses that no innovative ideas are submitted, no matter how much effort and time are put into participation procedures. Since people have begun to question the effectiveness of cooperative measures to build a sustainable society, a disinterest in participating seems to be emerging. In addition, many unsolved environmental issues (e.g. the U.S. base in Henoko, Okinawa, and the nuclear power plants) demonstrate that our decision making process should be reviewed. In this sense, an institutional reform based on a new cooperative perspective will be indispensable to promote the involvement of the public in environmental matters.

The Aarhus Convention and the Green Access

The importance of public participation and cooperation is now commonly recognized throughout the global society as well as in Japan. However, differently from Japan, in the global society, an effective participation system only can be built on the integral guarantee of the following three rights:

- (1) **Access to information;**
- (2) **Right to participate in decision-making; and**
- (3) **Access to justice.**

In this project, these three rights are jointly called “Green Access.” The notion of Green Access was introduced in the 10th principle of the 1992 Rio Declaration. In 1998, the “Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters” was adopted to guarantee it. It is usually called “Aarhus Convention” as it was adopted in Aarhus, Denmark.

Contents of the Project

Until today, there has been deep-seated skepticism against institutionalizing participative/cooperative processes in Japan. Especially as for the access to justice, it has not been considered suitable for a joint approach. While the effectiveness of the Aarhus Convention is observed in many countries, it is also true that there are many approaches toward its implementation and better models are still being sought.

Thus, the Green Access Project aims to propose appropriate participation/cooperation models for Japanese society, which could simultaneously meet global standards and preserve the historical and original achievements arisen as a result of the environmental leading cases in Japan. To pursue this goal, this project will especially focus on the fields of water management and transportation, as the structure for public participation and cooperation varies according to the field.

The specific research activities are as follows:

- Survey on the current status of the Green Access implementation in the Parties of the Aarhus Convention.
- Questionnaire surveys on the actual situation of the public participation and cooperation in Japan.
- Reviews on the models for the cooperation measures planning based on the Act for promoting environmental education and activities.
- Recommendations on legal systems in the field of transportation and water management.
- Publication of research outcome through the project’s website, papers, etc.

Members

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