REINVENTING JAPAN

From Merchant Nation to Civic Nation

YASUO TAKAO

Reinventing Japan

Other works by Yasuo Takao

Is Japan Really Remilitarising? The Politics of Norm Formation and Change (2007)

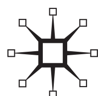
National Integration and Local Power in Japan (1999)

Reinventing Japan

From Merchant Nation to Civic Nation

Yasuo Takao

palgrave
macmillan



REINVENTING JAPAN
Copyright © Yasuo Takao, 2007.
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2007 978-1-4039-8414-2
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

First published in 2007 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN™
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010 and
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England RG21 6XS.
Companies and representatives throughout the world.

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-53966-6 ISBN 978-0-230-60931-0 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230609310

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Takao, Yasuo.
Reinventing Japan: from merchant nation to civic nation/Yasuo Takao.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Japan—Politics and government—1989– 2. Civil society—Japan. 3. Political participation—Japan. 4. Social capital (Sociology)—Japan. I. Title.

JQ1631.T289 2008
320.952—dc22

2007014203

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design by Macmillan India Ltd.

First edition: November 2007

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To the memory of my parents, Misao Takao and Haruo Takao

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Figures viii

List of Tables ix

Acknowledgments xi

A Note on Conventions xiii

Introduction: Civil Society and Local Government 1

1. National Identity and Democracy: Reactive Pacifism to Proactive Pacifism 19
2. A Local Focus of the Nation-State: Production to Consumption Priorities 33
3. The Rise of Voluntary Associations: Exclusive Chien-Ketsuen to Inclusive Voluntarism 55
4. Democratic Decentralization: Participation in Local Community Decision Making 71
5. Co-Governance by Local Government and Civil Society Groups: Balancing Equity and Efficiency for Trust in Public Institutions 89
6. "Digital" Local Communities: Disengagement to Participation 111
7. Women in Grassroots Politics: From Voters to Politicians 135
8. Foreigners in Local Communities: Beneficiaries to Participants 155

Conclusion: In Search of New Directions for Japan 179

Notes 189

Bibliography 223

Index 243

List of Figures

Figure 0.1	Civil society and the local living sphere	9
Figure 1.1	Japanese perception of armed conflict involvement, 1969–2003	24
Figure 1.2	Japanese perception of national security, 1969–2003	25
Figure 1.3	Japanese perception of defense spending levels, 1969–2003	26
Figure 5.1	NPOs and public document disclosure requests in major prefectures, 2000–2004	105
Figure 5.2	NPOs and direct demands for local referenda in Japan, 2000–2004	107
Figure 7.1	Women's share of seats in local assemblies, 1981–2003	146

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Retrenchment impact on public welfare by local government, 1980–2003 45
Table 3.1 NPOs incorporated under the NPO Law, 1999–2004 69
Table 4.1 Growth of information disclosure ordinances, 1996–2005 76
Table 4.2 Information disclosure requests to the Tokyo Metropolitan government, 1985–2004 77
Table 4.3 Growth of personal information protection ordinances, 1996–2005 78
Table 4.4 Growth of local referendum ordinances, 1996–2005 86
Table 5.1 Status of services outsourced by municipal governments in Japan, 2003 96
Table 5.2 Patterns of local administrative reforms in Japan 99
Table 5.3 Prefectural support for voluntary nonprofit activities in Japan, 2004 101
Table 6.1 UN e-government readiness index of major OECD countries, 2004 116
Table 6.2 Changes in the ratio of Internet users to total population, 1997–2002 116
Table 6.3 ICT development by Japanese local governments in 2002 (%) 126
Table 8.1 Registered foreigners as percentage of total population, 1980–2004 160

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

Japan is experiencing a fundamental transition as part of its modern history. The decade of the 1990s saw the end of the post–World War II era when the Liberal Democratic Party (1955–1993) had brought political stability and economic success to the country and, as a result of which Japan is now in the midst of its greatest social and economic transformation. In the late 1980s, Japanese stock and real estate values skyrocketed and it appeared that the country's state-directed capitalism was eclipsing Western-style capitalism. This time of record-setting prosperity was later identified as the "bubble economy" as Japan's economy suddenly collapsed in 1991. The nation was left economically crippled. The scale of the fall was so startling that there was a "lost decade" of economic stagnation—an image that remains with many Westerners as they recall this developmental state's fall from grace. The October 6, 2005, edition of the *Economist* noted that "Japan [had] mutated from being a giver of lessons to a recipient of lectures." Many observers and scholars have been trying to make sense of the changes within Japan and much has been written recently about the sources of the country's economic stagnation and possible underlying factors including the mistaken macroeconomic policies and the structural decline of the Japanese economy. Also well debated is the structure of the country's economic model. In all this research, it is remarkable that the very positive, sociopolitical consequences of this struggling nation in the lost decade have been largely ignored—until this study. The research embodied in this book commenced in 1997 as part of an attempt to understand the turbulence of Japan in the 1990s, the manner in which it led to a realignment of central-local and state-society power relations, and the very welcome democratization of Japan. As this book will clearly explain, it is this realignment within the relations of power—at national, local government, and grassroots levels—that will determine the face of twenty-first-century Japan.

In writing this book, I have accumulated debts of gratitude to many thoughtful friends and organizations. Many colleagues have given me useful critiques and suggestions in the course of conversations. I would like to mention, in particular, David Edgington, Morris Low, Vera Mackie, Anthony McGrew, John McGuire, and Sandra Wilson. My primary debt is to Hori Masaharu, who has kindly kept

me up to date over the past years with the most accurate, reliable information available in Japan. I also especially express my debt to Thomas Schrock, who has wholeheartedly provided me with moral backing.

I would like to thank the Faculty of International Relations at Ritsumeikan University for institutional support, and especially Nakatsuji Keiji for making my research in Japan productive while I was a visiting professor in 2003–2004. I would also like to thank the Department of Social Sciences at Curtin University of Technology in Perth, Western Australia, for a leave of absence that enabled me to continue my research. My special thanks also go to the Australian Research Council (ARC) and Curtin University of Technology for research funding in 2000, 2002, and 2004 that enabled me to conduct research abroad.

The production side of this book would not have proceeded far without the editorial assistance of Sue Summers. Her professional skills at putting complex pieces of my manuscript together contributed to the completion of this book. I am also particularly grateful for the generous support of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Australia, Asia and the Pacific (CASAAP) at Curtin University of Technology.

The first portion of this book draws upon many of my earlier publications including "Participatory Democracy in Japan's Decentralization Drive," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 10 (1998), © The Regents of the University California; "Welfare State Retrenchment–The Case of Japan," *Journal of Public Policy* 19, no. 3 (1999), © Cambridge University Press; "The Rise of the Third Sector in Japan," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 2 (2001), © The Regents of the University California; "Foreigners' Rights in Japan: Beneficiaries to Participants," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 3 (2003), © The Regents of the University California; "Democratic Renewal by 'Digital' Local Government in Japan," *Pacific Affairs* 77, no. 2 (2004), © University of British Columbia; "Co-Governance by Local Government and Civil Society Groups in Japan: Balancing Equity and Efficiency for Trust in Public Institutions," *The Asian Pacific Journal of Public Administration* 28, no. 2 (2006), © University of Hong Kong; and "Japanese Women in Grassroots Politics: Building a Gender Equal Society from the Bottom-Up," *The Pacific Review* 20, no. 2 (2007), © Taylor & Francis.

Finally, my wife, Susan Takao, has played an important part in providing research assistance, critical commentary, and professional editing. For their patience and moral support, I also thank my daughter, Maia, and my son, Makoto.

A Note on Conventions

Japanese personal names throughout the text are presented in Japanese form, that is, with the surname followed by the given name, in reversal of standard Western practice. In making references, I have also referred to Japanese authors in the same manner: surnames first. Newspaper citations refer to morning editions, or else are specifically cited.

Introduction: Civil Society and Local Government

Kenji was born April 7, 1961, in Kurashiki city, Okayama prefecture, a local town about an hour and a half by train from Osaka. His father belonged to the generation that had selflessly supported the state-led economic advances in postwar Japan. Although mentally scarred by the war, Kenji's father continued to work in the same factory, a car parts supplier for Mazda, for some 40 years until his retirement. Given the conventions of the time, he felt compelled to do so and never expressed his thoughts on the matter. However, he provided the encouragement and financial support for his son Kenji to be part of the first generation to gain a university education. When Kenji graduated from a prestigious university in Kyoto, he had the freedom to move away from the monotonous and oppressive convention of "the loyal company worker" that had shaped his father's life.

Today, Kenji works fractional hours as a copywriter, and spends much time with his children. His flexible work hours enable household work sharing with his wife, Sachiko, who is also employed outside the home. Kenji has a personal commitment to buying environment-friendly products. In the area in which he lives, the municipal government has pledged to build and to hand over a playground to the local community group, which, in turn, has promised to maintain it as a safe place for the children. Kenji is an enthusiastic participant in weekly community meetings and has helped to create a self-management plan of the proposed playground. Clearly, Kenji has a love of children and a passion for education. He is not only involved with ongoing Parent Teacher Association (PTA) programs that encourage the success of every child, but also coordinates a project for providing picture books (translated in native languages by volunteers) to children in developing countries. He expressed his broad support of collective needs and issues, when he told me, "Japan has been a peace-loving country in isolation. It is too self-centered to be understood and accepted by others."[1]

In the early twenty-first century, the "local living sphere"—which embraces both the home and its immediate environment—is in transition from a state-centric to a societal space. This book is about the merging forces of civil society in Japan as experienced by ordinary people in their day-to-day lives. Analysis of this important new phenomenon helps shed light on the changing nature of state–civil society relations and the role of local governments in promoting an autonomous civil society. It also reveals the relationship between civil society groups and local government as a key element in Japan's changing structures of governance. To this end, I examine such key issue areas as decentralization, e-democracy, and the manner in which foreign intervention, voluntarism, and the role played by women have converged to form a new national identity and to open the way for the reinvention of Japan in the passage of time from the beginning of World War II (WWII) to the early twenty-first century. The findings strongly indicate that the expansion of associational life in Japan is heading toward a more autonomous civil society.

The shining image of Japan as an "economic miracle" is embedded in the collective narratives of its past successes. Yet Japanese prosperity experienced a long-lasting slump in the 1990s, a decade that was called the "lost decade" by the country's mass media. The findings in this study suggest that to describe this pivotal point in time as "lost" is to miss the crucial accounts of a new nexus of forces in Japan, all poised at the crossroads of fundamental change. Previously, there had been two major turning points in the history of modern Japan: the arrival of Western technology in the late nineteenth century and the Allied Occupation of 1945–1952. It is my view that Japan is now facing a third turning point with the rise of "global" linkages. While these linkages emerge from problems commonly experienced at a global level, it is important to this study to articulate how the consequences of such shared problems are experienced and dealt with at a local level. It is also important to note, in this particular context, that the rapid changes experienced in many Japanese communities are outpacing changes within national policy. To offset the uncertain impact of change, various local communities in Japan have been building up local resources as a means of enhancing their local ability or governance to solve problems and to plan for their future. It is interesting how this merchant nation's fall from grace in recent years has facilitated a major realignment of state-society power relations primarily derived from local initiatives and innovation to bring about democratizing effects. The degree to which this realignment is realized will determine the direction of twenty-first-century Japan.

Historical Survey

It is central to my argument that direct demands for individual control over life choices emerge within the local living sphere. This sphere is more than people's immediate environment; it is also formed by their relationship to the activities they are engaged in, their relationship to production and consumption, their contribution to the continuity and protection of public services, and their

degree of self-management and control over the choices that shape their lives. As local living spheres have undergone considerable change within the history of Japan, it is critically important to identify the historical specificity of state-society relations and to empirically examine the applicability of concepts of civil society—primarily founded on the historical experience of the West—to the individuals represented within this study.

In feudal Japan the local lords controlled fiefs and demanded loyalty and feudal dues from the peasants; in exchange, the peasants sought the protection of their agricultural produce. Villagers were more concerned about the immediate environment in which they lived, than about more anonymous and universalistic interests, and formed their own associations, solved their problems locally, and collectively negotiated with local lords over feudal taxes. So while the local living sphere was to a large degree an imposed institution where class mobility was impossible, the villagers were able to develop their own associational way of life as a community group. Most village groups remained beyond the reach of the Tokugawa shogunate, a feudal military dictatorship that ruled from Edo (the *de facto* capital of Japan), and enjoyed a sphere of autonomy.

The urban living sphere of Japan began to emerge in the sixteenth century with the forced resettlement of samurai and the subsequent relocation of their markets around the castles of their lords. In the same time frame these *joka machi* (castle towns) were converted from military outposts into administrative and commercial centers for mobilizing local resources.[2] By the seventeenth century, the castle towns began to secure control over surrounding territories and serve as the hub of market networks that bound surrounding villages together. The feudal dues paid by peasants were part of a network of control that politically bound villages to local lords. However, the peasants retained a measure of autonomy by bartering and trading with each other in their own marketplace. Village officials were mostly peasants rather than members of the governing class and would identify with the interests of their villages when dealing with magistrates and implementing their orders. Village officials would strategically serve the interests of the village by protecting cooperative living among villagers as they protected the interests of the local lords in the feudal domain. This helped the villages to retain ownership of common lands and to provide facilities for mutual aid that enabled the continuity of peasant life within its own immediate circle.[3] In contrast, local lords—along with any help they could provide—remained remote and unaware of the problems of villagers. Although not equivalent to the contemporary notion of voluntarism as such, the villagers had no choice but to rely on self-help and to resort to associations based upon mutual aid.[4]

Feudal Japan did not constitute a spatially unitary hierarchy but comprised parallel hierarchies of various sizes ranging from the family through the village and the feudatory to the shogunate.[5] The Meiji Restoration of 1868 was the point of departure for shaping and molding a different kind of local living sphere while building a modern state and hastening the development of capitalism. Japan was obviously a latecomer in comparison with other nations, yet it showed its own particular pattern of development when Meiji state and business interests

joined closely together to catch up with the technologically advanced nations of the West. State interventions in Japan helped to shape the thoughts and attitudes of the general public to ensure the development of a cohesive polity capable of hastening the modernization of the country with minimal opposition. The state and market expanded in an inextricable way and the autonomous space of a civil society that lay outside of state and market forces became very narrow as experienced by people in the local living sphere of their day-to-day lives.

The centrality of each local sphere came to a sudden end in 1871 with the Meiji Restoration, which abolished the feudal domains previously existing as multifarious centers and drew boundaries around their frontier areas. The central Meiji government, being the sole national center, tried to build a single-layered sphere of central-local relations. The first step in its state-building effort was to create a set of institutions to facilitate the central government's intervention into the affairs of local communities. The power to tax was placed completely under central control. For purposes of compulsory conscription, the *koseki* (household register) was established to keep official records of the population. The *buraku* (indigenous natural groups at the grassroots level), who lived in their own strongly cohesive circles in accordance with traditional rules and customs, virtually remained intact in Meiji Japan, but the Meiji government tactically used group cohesiveness to place localities under state control.[6] These efforts to build the Meiji local government system began with the intention to deny local communities independent status and to treat them as purely administrative units.[7] This state activism resulted in the "state-ification" of local communities and undermined the cohesion of voluntary activities that had been flourishing in various communities in feudal Japan. Yet the single-layered sphere imposed in the Meiji Reformation was far from complete as liberal intellectuals resisted this national undertaking[8] and there was strong resistance from village people, who believed the forced amalgamations would impair a historically established zone of "natural" functions.[9] Nonetheless, the local living sphere became a state-centric space that revolved around the implementation of national programs as the state purposefully combined its functions with the private functions of individuals in their communities.[10] For example, a spiritual mobilization, which was sought by national leaders to inspire the local populace for the promotion of imperial nationalism, was instituted to encourage people to increase their savings, to use their goods efficiently, and to work diligently, and it proved to be an effective mode of state-ification for keeping the masses under control. Overall, the Meiji political system was crafted to ensure an effective government for the purposes of building the state with minimal opposition in order to catch up with Western powers. Meiji leaders accordingly took state-building initiatives to assure the survival, security, and prosperity of Japan. In this respect, they were largely successful.

Japan's military defeat in 1945 led to the decline of the political legitimacy of state interventions into the local living sphere. The Allied Occupation of Japan was an unprecedented event in the history of Japan during the course of which Occupation officials attempted to transplant Western ideas and values into this

non-Western culture. Basically, the Occupation was an all-American affair in which General Douglas MacArthur was driven by a strong sense of duty, augmented by his sense of idealism, to decentralize Japan's political system and to promote the participation of local communities. As a result, freedom of association was fully guaranteed, tenant farmers became owners of three-quarters of the country, and newly elected local authorities began to act as representatives of localities rather than as agents of the state. Nonetheless, in the midst of this Occupation-led environment, Japanese national bureaucrats were still able to perpetuate state activism and developmentalism under the national goal of industrialization. Local associational life continued primarily with exclusive neighborhood associations as opposed to inclusive, nonresidential voluntary associations with the capacity to bring like-minded individuals together.[11] Neighborhood associations helped to create networks of communal solidarity but tended to confer benefits only to members. This exclusivity would involve risks of undermining the social cohesion of local communities.

Following the Occupation and during the high-growth period of the 1960s, there was broad national consensus in relation to industrialization. Civil society consisted predominantly of producer-led associations such as business, labor, and agricultural associational establishments that had been institutionalized during the late 1950s and 1960s at a national level.[12] This proved to be of considerable help to the fierce determination of Japanese leaders to catch up with Western powers—a determination that had neither died with the end of WWII nor with the introduction of Occupation authority–initiated democratization. Such determination was evident in the goals and strategies pursued by postwar leaders after 1945 when collective briefs in industrialization were widely shared among national elites and local populations. It was visible, for example, within specific patterns of local decision making where democratically elected local administrations strove to meet local priorities at the same time as reflecting the agendas of nationally led regional developments.[13] In the process, local decision making was depoliticized in a cohesive manner and made consistent with the national setting of developmental priorities. Tactically, the national government placated those in the local living sphere by extending to local populations the same material benefits accorded to those on an income tax base within the country's high-growth environment.[14] In tandem, elected local authorities were afforded a measure of local flexibility—a strategic arrangement that was accommodated by national agencies.

By the late 1960s, the results of the country's pro-development priority proved to be unsatisfactory and failed to live up to the expectations of the Japanese people. This was accompanied by growing environmental concerns and issues, and discontented residents pressured their local leaders to place life-oriented needs above the country's developmental needs. Thus, local decision making was politicized—albeit erratically, unsystematically, and often incompletely—as citizens increasingly exhorted elected local authorities to reassess national government policies, particularly its pro-development priority. By the late 1960s, there were sudden increases in local interest group activities with progressive candidates winning

more mayoral and gubernatorial elections. In general, local decision making was driven by localized initiatives and policy innovations, yet this decision making was still largely reactive to, and therefore conjoined with, national government inaction and/or the policies and projects arising from national government initiatives.[15] A key dimension of local decision making was that local authorities collaborated with local interest groups to make the national government accountable for national undertakings, or to ensure local needs in the form of vertical central-local relations rather than horizontal arrangements in which local authorities forged partnerships with other local bodies for local governance. Thus, the local living sphere remained state-centric in this regard.

Japan's high economic growth ended in the early 1970s with the 1973 decision to dramatically increase social security benefits having critical implications for the future management of public finances.[16] One of the priorities of government spending was the automatic and incremental expansion of entitlements. A new phase emerged in the 1975 fiscal year when the national government was forced by falling tax revenues for the first time in the years following WWII to issue deficit-covering bonds to finance the government deficit.[17] Once in place, such an expansionary welfare state system was destined to face an additional wave of financial difficulties that would ultimately lead to financial cutbacks. By the 1980s, the governments of nearly all advanced democratic nations were stretched beyond their capacity and were struggling to perform their expanded tasks despite their resort to deficit financing.[18] It was in this decade that the Japanese government shifted its policy objectives from expansion to cutbacks, which was to create a new movement within state-society dynamics. Prior to this point, both civic and voluntary associations in Japan were largely understood to be in opposition to the state. For example, ideology-oriented citizens' movements in the 1960s were often explicitly described as "anti-state" and as "anti-big business." However, the Japanese government of the 1980s began to recognize that the state could benefit from cooperation with voluntary associations that had been pursuing public purposes beyond the reach of the state. This signaled the start of a state-led process to tap societal initiatives and creativity, while pointing to the national government's recognition of its own failure to prevent the worsening of taxpayers' position and its inability to prevent any further erosion.[19] This was also part of a worldwide pattern of governance that was witnessing a continued decline in public trust in government among almost all the advanced industrial democracies.[20] Throughout the 1990s, conservatives in the advanced industrial democracies favored business-enterprise approaches to the provision of public services. In Japan, this economic rationalism, which was intended to bring the national government back into favor, was far from meeting the immediate needs of local communities. This discouraging reality of market-driven reform stimulated further rethinking about the requirements for the role played by civil society between state and market forces. In July 1993, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was thrown out of power after 38 years in office. This event led to continued political realignments and sparked a heated debate over how to reinvent Japan in a politically and socially innovative way. The 1995 Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, which

killed over 6,000 people, proved to be a turning point when the rescue operations exposed the inflexibility and incompetence of the state vis-à-vis the versatility and contribution of civil society. The overwhelming response to the catastrophe by community groups was reported widely by the mass media and helped raise public awareness about their importance. As will be discussed in chapter 3, this sociopolitical climate led to a three-year process of negotiations among citizens' groups, government officials, and political parties to introduce new legislation that would enable citizens' groups to obtain corporate status with simple procedures. The Law for the Promotion of Specific Nonprofit Activities (commonly known as the NPO Law) was passed unanimously in March 1998. When this law came into effect in December, the number of volunteers more than quadrupled—from 1.6 million in 1980 to 6.9 million in 1998.[21] The 1990s was a benchmark decade in the rise of civic associations.

One result that holds an especial appeal for the Japanese people has been a newfound interest in the engagement of individual citizens at the grassroots level, a form of governance that has been significantly assisted by local governments.[22] In recent years, Japanese local governments have been seen as separate from the national government, indeed increasingly regarded as an alternative to central authority by those who pursue public purposes unaided by the national government.[23] Independently elected local governments have sought to decentralize and disperse state power, to encourage inclusive participation by local communities, and to ensure the safety and health of individuals in local communities.

The rise of local government in Japan has not been independent of further involvement in the local living sphere. Local residents have increasingly enjoyed social over economic priorities as part of a shift in priorities from production to consumption. Yet this has raised a political problem for local residents, particularly in regard to being able to meet their immediate needs such as education, food safety, garbage disposal, a healthy and clean living environment, and safety. This is a critical point for decision making about what to consume that goes beyond the choices of private, self-interested, and cost-minimizing and wealth-maximizing individuals and entails the increased penetration of private space by public space, such as environmentally responsible consumers and domestic violence awareness. To this extent, political functions are socialized, with the loci of political dynamics residing at the local level with society rather than at the national level of the state.

In Japan, global issues such as cross-border environmental degradation and international migration have also brought a new dimension to local communities. In the field of these global issues, policies are primarily national, but the consequences are dealt with by local communities. Without argument, the impact of globalization is both widespread and particular: its manifestations are multiple, rapid, and concretized in local communities in Japan and elsewhere. It is particularly problematic that the consequences of external forces, such as environmental degradation and labor migration, for example, can outpace the reach of national policies. In Japan, this has propelled a shift in the focus of problem solving from the state to individual citizens unable to escape the consequences of globalization

and who have tended to suffer the most. In this context it is believed that independently elected local governments hold the most promise of protecting the rights and welfare of the individual and can act in partnership with civil society groups in the local living sphere. As detailed in chapter 5, there are signs of increasing co-governing by local government and civil society groups in Japan as a means of enhancing the efficacy of local decision making, investments, and collective actions as part of future planning. In this dynamic, the local living sphere is again instrumental in shaping the experience of ever-widening civic participation.

One further development in the 1990s that helps explain the recent surge of civil influence in Japan is the dramatic revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs). On the one hand, the information-based economy in Japan is driven by economic rationalism that prioritizes private property, private profits, and the market.[24] The use of ICT technologies is clearly directed to commercial benefits and consumer convenience, yet it also compels civil society to adapt to the logic of the globalizing knowledge-based economy. The exclusive nature and scope of national economic policies is such that the national government has remained more accessible to a much wider range of ICT-induced commercial interests. On the other hand, the information society in Japan is inherently more capable than the national government alone of promoting civility, inclusive participation, and social cohesion. Overall, ICTs have many potential roles in the development of social relations as a whole[25] with civil society groups believing that ICTs and knowledge production should enhance knowledge and understandings within the wider society, broaden and deepen individuals' participation in the development of social relations, and lead to a reduction in inequalities and social exclusion. The downside is that ICT access tends to be too personalized for individual interests to be effectively integrated into wider social relations. However, as discussed in chapter 6, in permeating the "local living sphere," ICTs do help to transcend individual differences and integrate them into the wider social domain through their appeal to a common social base.

The Approach

The two key concepts in this book—civil society and the local living sphere—have the capacity to draw a number of observations into the same political dynamics. The conceptualization of civil society offers a distinct and effective lens to examine the manner in which Japanese citizens/people involve themselves in broader political, social, and economic relations. As the concept of civil society is both contested and ambiguous, it is necessary to understand the historical evolution of civil societies in order to define its strict boundaries, and to embrace its wide range of actors, for it to be a consistent and useful tool in a cross-national perspective. It is equally important to distinguish between civil society as an analytical concept and civil society as part of the real life–world phenomena that is inextricably intertwined within and around the experiences of individual citizens. As figure 0.1 illustrates, individual citizens fulfill a multitude of

Figure 0.1 Civil society and the local living sphere.

functions, with civil society as just one of those functional spaces. Any individual is likely to be a taxpayer, voter, civil servant, volunteer, consumer, employee, and producer—either simultaneously or at different stages of the life cycle. These multilayered roles are part and parcel of each individual and lend themselves to the development of civic engagement and participation while helping to strengthen civil society and link the state with the market. For this reason, the local living sphere is both a concept and an inclusive and empirical social practice with the capacity to identify and understand immediate issues and problems as they emerge at the grassroots level. It is also a source of local and face-to-face engagement that is the primary driving force for building a trust-based civil society.

Over the past decades, the promise of socialism has been discredited and the efficacy of the modern welfare state has become increasingly unviable. These discouraging realities have continually generated pressures for correcting state failures with antistatist market rationalism widespread among advanced democracies. Yet understandings driven by economic rationalism alone are far from clear in how best to address the failures of the state. Furthermore, state and market failures

have opened the way for an upsurge in organized voluntary action in Japan and around the globe.[26] Activists have called for strengthening of civil society and ordinary citizens have helped to take matters into their own hands by pursuing needs and objectives outside the state and market reach.

Such issues and dynamics lend themselves to a working definition of civil society. It is common today for most theorists to use the term "civil society" as a collectively active sphere closely connected to the legal, associational, and public institutions of society independent of the market as well as of the state.[27] As civil society is seen to be autonomous of both state authority and the private actors of corporate firms and families, it can be envisaged as a sphere in which "social actors pursue neither profit within the market nor power within the state."[28] Nonetheless, neoliberals and some neo-Marxists provide a number of arguments and approaches for the market economy to be included within civil society. The first approach tends to see the self-regulating market as a source of social cohesion and to reaffirm the importance of depoliticized society organized apart from the state. In this view, civil society is the sphere of private associations identifying the freedom of civil society with that of the market. It is part of a pervasive historical perspective that a free market is crucial for building civil society apart from the state, yet this intellectual tradition tends to neglect, or even reject, the role of social movements that could lead the state to redistribute economic resources for ensuring social equity.[29] There is the strong possibility that a self-regulating market left to itself in the private sphere is likely to have destructive effects on civil society, such as increased inequalities and weaker solidarity.

The second approach, recognizing these destructive effects, argues that economic activities in civil society are politicized by class relations and modes of production, and proposes some forms of socially steered economy.[30] One of the most influential class theorists, Antonio Gramsci, tended to utilize categories of analysis that viewed the market economy separately from civil society by adopting a tripartite division of state, society, and market. In a similar vein, the Gramscians, utilizing a structuralist analysis of the dominance of the ruling class, argue the tripartite division to be based upon coercive state power that reinforces a class-based civil society and structures the market economy. The Gramscians claim there is no such thing as civil society independent of the state and corporate power. They see civil society to be largely co-opted by the state and believe that corporate power ultimately dominates state policymaking.

The studies presented in this book do not support these sweeping arguments. Rather, this book focuses precisely on the pluralist discourse of civil society, that is, the non-class-based forms of collective action related to associational and public institutions of society that are formed outside the state and the market. To examine the flowering of civil society activism, it is not useful, and even misleading, to conceive civil society as the entirety of sociocultural life outside the state and the market economy. It is necessary to this argument that civil society can be identified either with "sustained, organized social activity that occurs in groups"[31] or with "the extent that these (the structures of socialization, association, and organized forms of communication of the lifeworld) are institutionalized or

in the process of being institutionalized."[32] In line with the argument of Alexis de Tocqueville that the essence of democracy is founded on active participation,[33] this book argues that modern civil society is based on the structure of egalitarian and politically relevant associations rather than the civic culture of apathetic and apolitical individualism. Civic engagement and participation are politically relevant to the extent that ordinary citizens are capable of influencing the central state system through the articulation of their personal interests within the public arena. In this respect, political parties and parliamentarians are required to aggregate and represent a wide range of interests in political processes and, in doing so, become mediators between civil society and the central state. It is a dynamic concept in which internal change emerges as a key issue for reinvigorating and defending the autonomy of civil society. Particularly important are the social movements that continually enliven and rejuvenate civic culture.[34] Nonetheless, our conception of civil society does not embrace the view that social movements will replace representative democracy but instead sees civic engagement as a means of changing existing civil society structures and complementing the institutional arrangements of representative democracy. Today, most theorists agree that in pursuing both private and public goals and objectives, civil society organizations are politically relevant to the interests of the state. To help explain the interface between civil society and state, Tocqueville proposed "political society" as an overarching political sphere that mediates between the sphere of civil society and the sphere of the state. However, his conception of civil society was too narrow to recognize the possibility of a public sphere within civil society.[35] When broader, yet clearly defined boundaries between the sphere of civil society and the sphere of the state are drawn, the notion of "political society" appears more as an unnecessary category of public sphere. In an advanced democracy, publicly elected representatives, political parties, and elections all help to aggregate and foreground certain social interests and, in the process, mediate politically between civil society and state authority. To this end, they typically reside and compete to assume power within the realm of the state. In contrast, other politically influential actors such as public interest groups, the mass media, and public opinion do not generally seek to seize state power or to replace existing state agents with their own agents. Although such actors may create a shift of emphasis toward institutionalization and a movement-oriented civil society, they still remain within the sphere of civil society rather than the realm of the state. There are exceptions, but it is important to see civil society as a functional sphere in which some actors may cross the boundary into another sphere in order to pursue multiple and shifting organizational goals.[36] There are also actors who will be active within a number of functional spaces as local governments remain a part of the state apparatus, operate within a structure of political constraints and opportunities, and are a potential partner of civil society groups. This is evident with advocacy-oriented civil society groups that often depend vertically upon the resource mobilization and political opportunities that local governments can provide through their connection to the national government. Here is an example of how local governments mediate the relations

of civil society groups with the central state. Yet, at the same time, independently elected local governments have the capacity to work horizontally and to share responsibilities for local governance with civil society groups when they are not co-opted by the state. In this respect, they exist apart from the central state and can be considered an actor within the realm of civil society. This understanding, which will be empirically assessed in the following chapters, suggests that the inclusion of local governments in civil society serves to enhance opportunities for civic engagement and participation.

The merit of including local governments in civil society can also be presumed on the basis of a number of theoretical understandings:

1. There is no a priori reasoning why local governments established by the state might not be included as actors in civil society if offered the opportunity to work with civil society groups. It is true that local government is normally seen as part of the state apparatus and that the majority of scholars consider it to lie outside of civil society. Yet, as the state takes responsibility for an increasing range of provisions, its organization becomes more complex and the fragmentation of its apparatus becomes more visible. There is no single and cohesive state interest that can monitor all aspects of policy including its implementation by state agents. Even in the most hierarchical areas of the state system, the delegation of decision-making power to lower levels of government is inevitable.[37] Thus, there is some separation between local governments and the central state. Jonah Levy also argues for the inclusion of independently elected local authorities within the realm of civil society. He points to the decentralization reforms in France in the early 1980s where local governments—widely seen as an alternative to the state—were designed explicitly to bolster civil society by bringing power within the reach of ordinary citizens.[38]
2. There are local governments that do not have a predominance of coercive power over residents, yet they retain the potential to horizontally organize all social networks, associations, and community solidarity, and thereby reduce nationally imposed administrative relations, by societal steering at a local level. This capacity for societalization by local governments merits their inclusion in civil society. Furthermore, the concept of a state that can monopolize the use of coercive power[39] is unrealistic, for state power is dispersed throughout increasingly complex subsystems including local governments. Assertive local governments collaborating with community groups have less incentive to wield power over individual residents or to maintain general obedience to national commands. Given the historical specificity of Japan's centralized state power that disorganized voluntary social networks and associations in the past, I would argue that the societalization of local governments is one of the most potentially fertile ways of promoting the proliferation of civic engagement.
3. Local government is not an exclusive service provider, but can deliver better services by engaging voluntary organizations and community groups

> in trust-based partnership arrangements. The attributes of service providers of local administration and the recipients as citizens appear to be mutually exclusive. In the historical past, there is no doubt that public administration was an exclusive organization that attempted to monopolize the provision of certain services such as education and public health. Citizens, in turn, demanded not only improved services but also that their voices be heard. In totality, government and citizens can, and do, share responsibilities for pursuing public purposes particularly given the fact that it is citizens who provide local administration with information, who oversee the provision of services, and who participate in the delivery of services. In this clear dimension of the societalization of local government, it can be seen that local government does not exclusively monopolize the resources of a specific authority or its finances and does not compete to assume power within the state.

A stronger civil society does not necessarily ensure democracy. Democracy building in civil society is not automatic. Even in mature democracies, some observers argue that the multiplication of special interests has undermined the workings of representative democracy and has continually influenced and distorted decision making in favor of better-organized interests. In the Japanese context, the possible source of cohesion amid this undue distortion lies in the peculiar role of local government in the local living sphere where the three functional spaces of the state, civil society, and the market are intricately interconnected. First, because independently elected local governments, through their connections to the national government, are empowered to disperse some degree of political power among ordinary citizens as opposed to special interest groups. This is another indication of the manner in which local governments mediate between civil society groups and the central state. Second, local governments are able to raise public awareness of the civic duty of individuals to participate in community decision making in a responsible manner. Thus, local residents are not mere recipients of public services, but are expected to pursue public purposes and to share a number of responsibilities with local authorities in community affairs. In this respect, local governments facilitate civic participation and can also be seen as actors in civil society. Third, in order to meet the immediate need of consumption requirements as opposed to production priorities in the local population,[40] local governments tend to attribute social responsibility for creating higher standards of living in the community to the marketplace. To this end, they encourage investors, consumers, and employees to demand corporate transparency and accountability as part of its social responsibility.

State, civil society, and market each consists of a body of private persons who will function in each of these spheres. Most will be consumers who, given information about price and quality, will make purchasing decisions and consume goods and services in the marketplace. Some may also belong to a self-help service provider in civil society, such as Oxfam, that will boycott sweatshop goods, and may buy “no sweat” goods. Others may belong to a civil society advocacy