# Chapter 1

Introduction

Key Questions

The *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, a Japanese business daily, reported on January 26, 2003, an interesting episode regarding the ongoing phenomenon of nonprofit organization (NPO) incorporation following the 1998 NPO Law (formally the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities, enacted in 1998) in Japan. The paper said 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 Japanese society, *hanko* is often required in the administrative procedures of the government. 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, then why is the business thriving? The business daily attributed the surge to the dramatically increasing number of NPOs created under the 1998 NPO Law. Since the law's enactment, more than 30,000 NPOs have been incorporated (as of March 31, 2007), as Figure 1.1 shows, and the number is still increasing at a relatively constant and consistent pace across the country.[1] In the process of gaining recognition as an NPO, an organization is 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 Japanese society. It symbolizes formal participation in society. The logic is that receiving NPO status increases opportunities for active social participation.

Seeing this emerging phenomenon, I started this project with a simple question: What is going on under the institutionalization of the
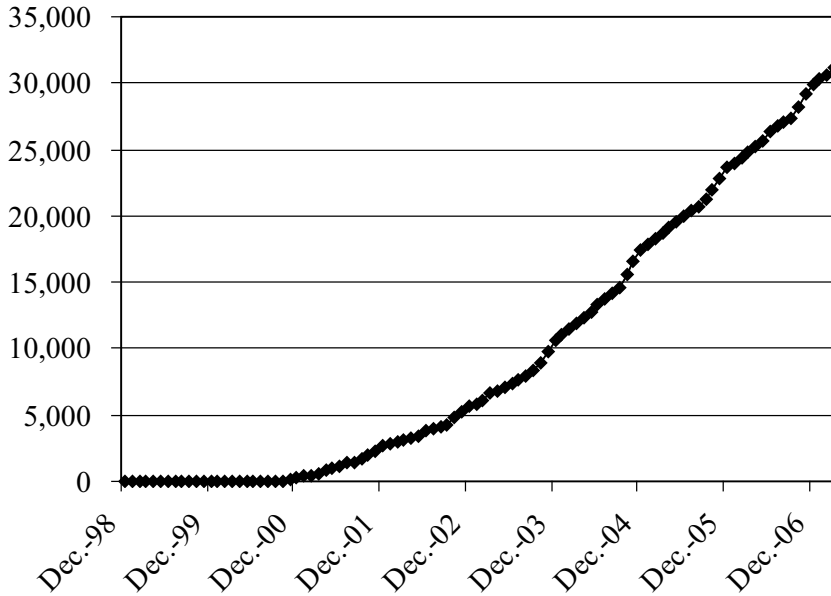
(Cabinet Office 2007b)

Figure 1.1 Number of NPOs as of March 31, 2007

NPO sector? Since the late 1990s, the NPO has excited great attention and debate among both ordinary Japanese and political elites, as well as considerable discussion in the popular press and in academic writings, as a key actor in civil society—a public sphere that broadly refers to nonstate institutions and associations that are critical to sustaining modern democratic participation. Until then, the Japanese term *NPO* (written "NPO" and pronounced *enu-pī-ō*)—specified nonprofit corporations, or *tokutei hieri katsudō hōjin* in Japanese legal terms—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 on January 17, 1995, in a popular encyclopedia of contemporary Japanese vocabulary (*Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki* various years). The NPO, a voluntary third-sector organization,[2] caught national attention and gained momentum in Japanese society, particularly after the great earthquake, when approximately 1.3 million volunteers acted to aid victims of the disaster (Economic Planning Agency 2000). The government bureaucracy's

ineffective efforts to deal with the tragic situation paled in comparison to 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 third sector. 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. It is believed that the result of this social movement was the passage of the NPO Law in March 1998 (see Pekkanen 2000 on the legislation process).

Before the 1998 NPO Law, the government intervened more aggressively in the incorporation of nonprofit, third-sector organizations. The Japanese Civil Code, which was written in 1898, more than 100 years ago under the Meiji government, regulated the major third-sector organizations, including *kōeki hōjin*, usually translated as public interest corporations or public interest legal persons under Article 34. There are two forms of public interest corporations—incorporated foundations (*zaidan hōjin*) and incorporated associations (*shadan hōjin*). In addition, various public interest organizations are authorized by special laws arising under, or attached to, Article 34. These special bodies include social welfare services corporations (*shakai fukushi hōjin*), medical services corporations or hospitals (*iryō hōjin*), private school corporations (*gakkō hōjin*), religious corporations (*shūkyō hōjin*), and offender rehabilitation corporations (*kōsei hogo hōjin*). Specified nonprofit corporations (commonly called NPOs) incorporated by the NPO Law—a main focus of this book—are categorized in the special group (Japan Association of Charitable Organizations 2001). An organization seeking to be incorporated is forced to undergo an administrative process. Permission (*kyoka)*, approval (*ninka*), or recognition (*ninshō*) is granted at the discretion of the national or prefectural government agencies that had jurisdiction over the organization's field of activities, a common regulation technique.[3] According to Article 34 of the Civil Code, the government authorities require that the group submit a detailed plan of activities and select a governing board of publicly esteemed individuals. Once registered, an organization is obliged to submit a budget and a plan of activities before the beginning of each fiscal year, which starts on April 1 and ends on March 31 of the following year. At the end of the year, the organization presents a progress report and financial reports to the appropriate ministries. Incorporated groups need to adhere rigidly to reporting requirements or risk having their status revoked.[4]

Under the 1998 NPO Law, meanwhile, the incorporation process for third-sector organizations became quite (and amazingly) simple. The prefectural government now prepares templates for the necessary

documents in a prospective NPO's application packet, including the cover page, articles of association (*teikan*), and budget forms. People who want to create an NPO have only to fill out the templates and choose activity areas from seventeen disciplines defined by the NPO Law, including social welfare, social education, community development, environment, disaster relief, community safety, and human rights.[5] I received a guidebook on NPOs that was distributed in the Tokyo Metropolitan Government office (see Tokyo Metropolitan Government 2000b). The guidebook indeed includes everything I would need to incorporate an NPO. People who are interested in incorporating NPOs need only take advantage of these templates. I also found that these kinds of documents could easily be downloaded from the Internet on each prefecture's Web site. Regarding incorporation, 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. The government's decision on any NPO application is based on a set of objective criteria. Thus an application undergoes a relatively straightforward recognition process rather than a permission or approval process that would involve the discretion of government agencies, which was formerly common practice. As of March 31, 2007, 99 percent of applications for NPO status under the NPO Law passed smoothly through the registration process (Cabinet Office 2007d).[6] When an application failed, it did so simply because it lacked certain documents. One leading NPO practitioner in Japan points out that "[t]he direct significance of the NPO Law is that by making it easier for many organizations engaged in civic activities to obtain corporate status, the law enables these organizations to enter into different contracts and arrangements" (Yamaoka 2000, 3). Real estate can now be held under the name of an NPO. A bank account can be opened under the name of an NPO. 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 and businesses. Before the enactment of the NPO Law, these kinds of contracts were made under individuals' names.

So what are NPOs doing exactly? NPOs of various types have been incorporated across the country. During my fieldwork from 2001 through 2003 in Japan, almost every day newspapers reported on the establishment of new NPOs. I offer some images of Japanese NPOs from my newspaper clippings. As Figure 1.2 shows, the most popular activity area in which NPOs are created is the promotion of social welfare, health, or medical treatment. As of March 31, 2007, 58 percent of NPOs (or 18,140 NPOs) were registered in this category (Cabinet Office 2007c). Most of these
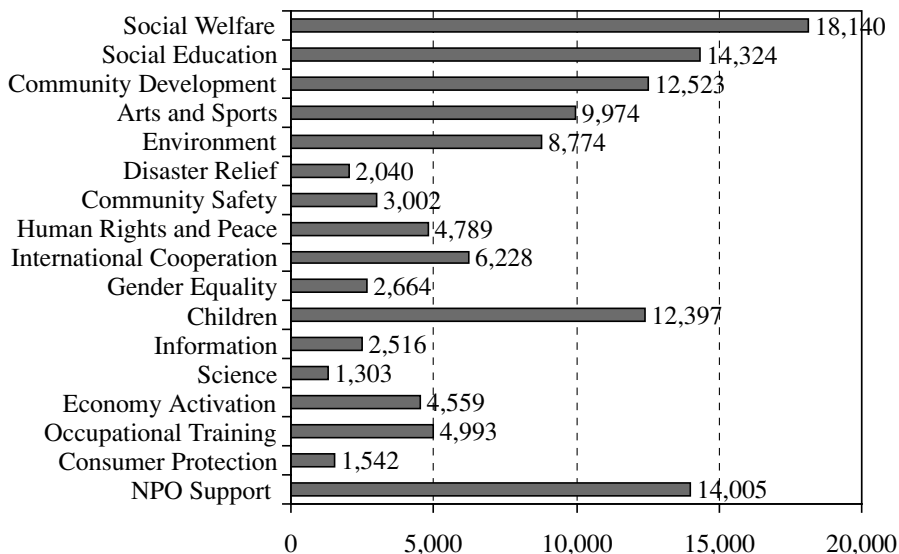
(Cabinet Office 2007c)

Note: Of 26,114 NPOs, or 83.9 percent of the total, registered in more than two areas of activity (Cabinet Office 2007a). In this subgroup, 5,504 NPOs registered in two areas, 5,724 NPOs registered in three areas, and 4,769 NPOs registered in four areas, and 206 NPOs even registered in all of the seventeen designated areas.

Figure 1.2 Areas of NPO Activities as of March 31, 2007. An NPO can cross-register in several activity domains.

organizations are called *kaigo* NPOs and specialize in providing care to the elderly. Such NPOs play a significant role in elder care, a task that was performed by female family members as well as the local government dispatching care workers to individual homes following the enactment of the Welfare Law for the Elderly in 1962. The second most popular type of NPO activity is the promotion of social education. My field site is included in this category. It is an NPO that promotes lifelong learning (*shōgai gakushū*) activities in a local downtown Tokyo community. Across the country, lifelong learning—once the province of the government—is increasingly administered by NPOs. Third, a representative organization in the category of culture, arts, and sports (which is ranked sixth) is an NPO in Tokyo's Toshima ward (*Asahi Shimbun*, February 5a, 2004). This NPO is in charge of developing arts programs for local residents. It is based at an abandoned junior high school that was closed due to the

population decrease in the 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). Lastly, community safety is also a popular area. A typical NPO in this category is one that developed a unique type of alarm system following a recent crime wave (*Asahi Shimbun*, February 5b, 2004). An NPO in Shinagawa ward in Tokyo created an effective alarm buzzer for children that emits 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 fifty meters away. These wireless mother devices with display panels will be set up in public facilities and shopping areas, where they will transmit information to a central host computer.

Observing the phenomenon, the key research objective of this book is to explore what ordinary grassroots Japanese people are feeling and experiencing under the NPO, the seed of the institutionalization of Japanese "civil society," or *shimin shakai*, under the 1998 NPO Law, as well as to determine how the new concept of the NPO was introduced and interpreted among them. I document in detail the transition that Japanese society has undergone since the epoch-making NPO Law was implemented, allowing thousands of civic groups to be acknowledged as proactive participants in Japanese social and political life. In particular, as a case, I analyze the dynamic micro-politics of everyday interactions between the state and ordinary individuals in the creation and ongoing activities of an NPO. In so doing, I devote special attention to the way in which different levels of the Japanese government try to shape the NPO, or "civil society," into an existing social and political structure that actually supports the state's specific goals. I also illuminate how grassroots people respond to the state's deliberate actions to institutionalize civil society in Japan. My research questions include the following: Can civil society successfully be constructed by a state? What are the ways in which states seek to shape their relations with their populations, and how effective are those policies likely to be? Ultimately, I believe that this book calls into question the relationship between the state and individuals in contemporary Japanese society while raising the broad issue of whether civil society can be intentionally created through the actions of the state. On this point, this book extends the value of the current study of policy in anthropology, argued in *Family and Social Policy in Japan: Anthropological Approaches* (Goodman 2002), by adding a very timely policy narrative. More practically, I believe that the narratives documented in this book should provide Japanese policy makers with

a significant strategy for affecting third-sector or NPO policy. Further, there are important policy implications of the book for any state seeking to mold its society in specific ways.

Anthropology of Civil Society

The concept of civil society experienced an enormous theoretical rebirth following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the 1980s. This book directly addresses a substantive lacuna that exists throughout the civil-society scholarship. Most of the work in the field contains normative theoretical formulations with ethnocentric Western intellectual origins (e.g., Arato 1981, 2000; Naruse 1984; Keane 1988, 1998; Habermas 1989, 1996; Shils 1991; Calhoun 1992; Cohen and Arato 1992; Curtis et al. 1992; Evans and Boyte 1992; Seligman 1992; Tester 1992; Walzer 1992; Kumar 1993; Pérez-Diaz 1993; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000; Salamon 1994, 2001; Diamond 1994; Eberly 1994; Gellner 1994; Fukuyama 1995; Hall 1995; Verba et al. 1995; Levi 1996; Berman 1997; Diamond et al. 1997; Mathews 1997; Sakamoto 1997; Alexander 1998, 2003; Lehning 1998; Rueschemeyer et al. 1998; Wuthnow 1998; Salamon et al. 1999; Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Ehrenberg 1999; Levy 1999; Florini 2000; Edwards et al. 2001; Warren 2001; Rosenblum and Post 2002; P. Smith 2002; Kaldor et al. 2003; Edwards 2004; Miyajima 2004; Salamon et al. 2004; Baker and Chandler 2005; Batliwala and Brown 2006; Redclift 2006). It seems that these studies, analytical and descriptive in quality, often have promoted static, patterned, highly abstract notions and models of the state and the individual. "Civil society" has even been used as a strategic term by those campaigning for goals such as democracy and justice.

   The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences defines the idea of civil society in two distinct ways.[7] In the first definition, the civil society concept can be traced back to the notion of *societas civilis* in Cicero's writing (Cicero 1998), and its earlier foundation in Aristotle's concept of *koinonia politike* (Aristotle 1981). Civil society was synonymous with political structures and organizations. Here, civil society is conterminous with the state—that is, power relations ordered through law and institutions with the objective of ensuring social harmony (e.g., Locke [1690] 1980; Hobbes [1660] 1996). In the second formulation, civil society is understood as a self-regulating, self-governing body outside and often in opposition to the state, represented both as the nexus of societal associations expected to generate civility, social cohesion, and morality and as the site of reciprocal economic relations among individuals engaged in market-exchange activity. For Adam Ferguson ([1767] 1995), Adam

Smith ([1776] 1974), and Immanuel Kant ([1784] 1963), civil society is a normative category describing a social realm strictly distinguished from the state. Civil society, in these readings, describes a unity of individual lives—a sphere of solidarity and moral sentiment. Further, it is an arena of active citizenry and concern about public issues. In Hegelian-Marxist terms, meanwhile, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy (Hegel [1821] 1967; Marx [1843] 1978b, [1845] 1978a). For Hegel, civil society was the market. He focused on the right to the private ownership of property, the division of labor, and exchange as the central features of civil society, using the term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, which has been translated as bourgeois society (see Engels [1852]1975, 188). Marx narrowed the Hegelian sense of civil society. He equated civil society with bourgeois *capitalist* society, seeing it as another vehicle for furthering the interests of the dominant class under capitalism.

In the contemporary discourse on civil society, the scholarship surrounding the second definition outlined earlier is more relevant. Civil society signifies, as Craig Calhoun (2001) argues, the organization of social life on the basis of interpersonal relationships, group formation, and a system of exchange linking people beyond the range of intimate family relations and without reliance on direction by the government. Civil society is important to advocates of democracy, Calhoun continues, because it signifies the capacity of citizens to create amongst themselves the associations necessary to bring new issues to the public agenda, to defend both civil and human rights, and to provide for an effective collective voice in the political process. Indeed, civil society theorists focus on the capacity for self-organization of social relations outside the control of the state. For example, Francis Fukuyama (1995, 8) defines civil society as "the realm of spontaneously created social structures separate from the state that underlie democratic political institutions." Larry Diamond (1994, 4) regards civil society as "self-generating." Michael Walzer (1992, 89) presents civil society as "the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest, and ideology—that fill this space." These networks include "unions, churches, political parties, social movements, cooperatives, neighbourhoods, schools of thought, societies for promoting or preventing this and that" (90). Jürgen Habermas (1996, 367) nicely summarizes the usage of 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 definition clearly rationalizes 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.

In the context of the United States, the idea of civil society is linked not only to democracy but also to reliance on voluntary organizations. In this sense, Alexis de Tocqueville and Robert Putnam have been central to the debate on civil society. The discourse was based on an idealization of American communitarian ideas and practices. Tocqueville noted the propensity of Americans, who lived in relative equality compared to European class-based society, to form voluntary associations of all kinds for all purposes. In this tendency, Tocqueville perceived 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 [1840] 1980, 122)

Tocqueville maintained that civic associations reinforced the spirit of collaboration that was vital to 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. 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 Great 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." Defining the core idea of social 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 that 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. Putnam et al. (1993) further 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. The work of Putnam, who stresses the trust and reciprocity between people that facilitate collective action in terms of economic and political development at the regional and national levels, is particularly relevant to the contemporary civil-society scholarship.

Today, these discourses on civil society converge within a more practical but ideal discourse coined by the global associational revolution. Consider the following quote from Lester Salamon's milestone article on contemporary civil-society scholarship:

> A striking upsurge is underway around the globe in organized voluntary activity and the creation of private, nonprofit or nongovernmental organizations. From the developed countries of North America, Europe and Asia to the developing societies of Africa, Latin America and the former Soviet bloc, people are forming associations, foundations and similar institutions to deliver human services, promote grass-roots economic development, prevent environmental degradation, protect civil rights and pursue a thousand other objectives formerly unattended or left to the state. . . . Indeed, we are in the midst of a global "associational revolution" that may prove to be as significant to the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state was to the latter nineteenth century. (Salamon 1994, 109)

Salamon argues that this associational revolution may be permanently altering the relationship between the state and individuals. He later continues his argument elsewhere:

> [T]he appropriate paradigm for the 21st century is one of partnership and a politics of collaboration—i.e., a "new governance" that emphasizes collaboration, not separate action, by the different sectors as the best hope for achieving meaningful progress. This is the true meaning of the "civil society" about which we hear so much today—not a sector, but a relationship among sectors, and between them and citizens, in which all are actively engaged in addressing public problems. (Salamon 2001, 37)

This rationale is further justified by Jessica Mathews in terms of a "power shift" in the post-cold war era. Mathews articulates a new dynamic of associational life, arguing, "They [states, markets, and civil society] are sharing powers—including political, social, and security roles at the core of sovereignty—with businesses, with international organizations, and with a multitude of citizens groups, known as nongovernmental organizations" (Mathews 1997, 50).

My own research is motivated primarily by a concern for the way civil society is discussed by these authors in particular and in the contemporary literature in general. In my view, the way of discussing civil society in the existing scholarship is a very privileged one. It largely ignores the experiences of ordinary grassroots people as seen within their local institutional frameworks, such as the Japanese NPO.

In the Japanese context that this book studies as a case, civil society, or *shimin shakai*, became a familiar term among social scientists who were mostly influenced by Marxism in the postwar period 1945–1970 (e.g., Ōtsuka 1946; Kawashima 1949; Shimizu 1951; Takashima 1953; Uchida 1953; Maruyama 1954; Mizuta 1954; Ōkouchi 1954; Matsushita 1966, 1971a, 1971b; Sakuta 1966; Hirata 1969; Fukuda 1971; Takabatake 1971; see Barshay 1992, 2003, 2004; Koschmann 1978, 1993, 1996; Takashima 1991; Matsushita 1994; Kokuminbunka Kaigi 1997; Garon 2002; Iokibe 1999; Carver et al. 2000; Takabatake 2001, 2004; Avenell 2006 for reviewing comprehensive historical developments on the civil society argument in this period). This categorizing preceded the recent international proliferation of civil-society literature in the West from the 1970s onward (see Carver et al. 2000 for further detailed argument). Since the 1990s in the revival of civil society in the West, as well as the surge of volunteerism following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, civil society has once again been the focus of an enormous amount of attention in mainstream Japanese society, among political elites, in the popular press, and in academic writings (e.g., Amenomori 1993; Honma and Deguchi 1996; Yamamoto 1996, 1998, 1999; Curtis 1997; Saeki 1997; Broadbent 1998;

Ishitsuka 1998; Imai 1998, 2001; Lesbirel 1998; Mori 1998; Saito 1998; Yagi et al. 1998; Yamauchi et al. 1999; Vosse 1999; Pekkanen 2000, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Imada 2001; Takao 2001; Hirata 2002; Hirowatari 2002; Sato 2002; Shigetomi 2002; Tsujinaka 2002; Osborne 2003; Schwartz and Pharr 2003; Alagappa 2004; Chan-Tiberghien 2004; Hasegawa 2004; Iriyama 2004; Kingston 2004; Yamaguchi 2004; Waley 2005; Yoshida 2005; Kawahara 2006; Ducke 2007; Haddad 2007).

These works primarily suggest that Japan does not have civil society in the Western sense, which I reviewed earlier. Uchida Yoshihiko, a historian of economic theory and one of the most enthusiastic Japanese scholars using the term *civil society*, said that civil society in Japan was immature (Uchida 1953), for example. The dominant view is that civil society is monolithic, with little delineation between the state and society. Japanese civil society or third-sector groups in fact will have this quasi-government characteristic. From this perspective, the political advocacy that exists is weak (primarily compared to the United States); the relationship between the state and society is very close, and little attention is paid to what is going on outside the state. Some argue that in a historical institutionalism framework—a dominant theoretical orientation in social sciences—Japan has been an "activist state" (Pharr 2003), successfully institutionalizing (through funding and favorable tax treatment) specific kinds of third-sector groups that significantly support such national ideology as developmentalism in the modernization process. Legal and institutional frameworks indeed contour the Japanese civic terrain (see Pekkanen 2003).

I agree with these arguments. But as an anthropologist I am most interested in exploring the historical and cultural dynamics—local practices, values, and beliefs—developed in the context of civil society. I believe that each society and culture molds its own version of civil society, reflecting its most important values, such as individual liberty, public solidarity, pluralism, and nonviolence, all of which sustain a dynamic civic culture. I assume that even in Western countries sociopolitical relationships are various and that the concept of civil society is, of course, not unified. On this point, Chris Hann (1996, 3; see also Hann and Dunn 1996), 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 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. We anthropologists are facing "civil society's need for de-construction" (Benthall 2000).

Anthropologists have made relatively limited contributions to the discussion on civil society, as William Fisher (1997) points out in the *Annual Review of Anthropology*. In the area of Japanese anthropology, for example, there have been few detailed anthropological studies that have attempted to articulate what is happening within specific civil-society organizations such as NPOs and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). 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 directly 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 reciprocity and exchange, the elaboration of communal advantage, modes of affiliation, and patterns of public participation. Such social behaviors were traditionally documented in earnest in ethnographies of territorial societies (e.g., Embree 1939; Dore 1958, 1978; R. Smith 1974, 1978; Hendry 1981; Smith and Wiswell 1982; Kelly 1985; Bestor 1989, 1990, 2004; Ben-Ari 1991; Robertson 1991; Traphagan 2004; Kawano 2005) and of social structure and group affiliations (e.g., Vogel 1963, 1975; Plath 1964; Befu 1963; Nakane 1967, 1970; Doi 1971; Dore 1973; Rohlen 1974, 1983; White 1987, 1991, 2002; Imamura 1987; Okimoto and Rohlen 1988; Hamabata 1990; Kondo 1990; Hamada 1991; Sato 1991; Goodman 1993, 2000; Allison 1994; Roberts 1994; Turner 1995; Ogasawara 1998; Robertson 1998; Traphagan 2000; Gill 2001; Nakamura 2002, 2006; Roth 2002; Miyazaki 2003; McVeigh 2004; Graham 2005). While anthropologists may not have consciously addressed the concept of civil society, I contend that they have been documenting crucial elements of this construct. Among a few exceptions are ethnographies produced during and after the late 1990s (Stevens 1997; LeBlanc 1999; Nakano 2000, 2005; Thang 2001; Moon 2002; Nakamaki 2002; Han 2004; Witteveen 2004). These projects directly focus on the civic sphere in Japan and consciously see volunteerism—a key phenomenon of civil society—as such a term, for example. Victoria Bestor (2002) gives a comprehensive review of the anthropological literature on the topic of civil society in Japan.

I myself was struck by the power of ethnography when I began to analyze the emerging NPO phenomenon in Japan. Sociocultural anthropologists are armed with ethnography. We are skilled field-workers, using open-ended, naturalistic inquiry methods and inductive reasoning to understand local perspectives. Doing ethnography is a serious interpretive endeavor that involves observing, documenting, and analyzing customs and behaviors. Ethnography provides "not only substantive information but perspectives on that information" (Peacock 2001, 121).

In fact, ethnographic research made it possible to trace three levels of analysis—ideological process, institutional patterning, and the everyday routines of individuals (Kelly 1993, 192). On this point, I was not confined to "studying up," in Laura Nader's (1972) sense. I took a more flexible research position in keeping with what Susan Reinhold (1994, 477–79) calls "studying through": tracing ways in which power, for example, creates webs and relations between actors, institutions, and discourses across time and space.

Ethnography describes real people in a systematic and an accurate manner. However, it does more than that. 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, ethnography can reveal "how things are really done" at a local level, as well as what effects they are having on ordinary, grassroots people in particular macro-processes. Meanwhile, going beyond means-ends analysis allows the examination of reflexive loops, making my own self-existence more apparent. Further, I particularly 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.[8] Furthermore, what made ethnography most attractive to me 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 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. The ethnographic approach, fortified with multiple local viewpoints, helps us interpret deeper structural and cultural patterns and rationalities. In fact, this approach, by deconstructing the dominant political rationality, can reveal concepts that underpin the moral, ethical, and social order, which often are disguised by ideology and power (Wedel and Feldman 2005).

Civil society is not a model; it is an active, dynamic process that I myself experience. My research objective is not to argue about what civil society is but to discover what civil society does. This book thus

provides a grounded analysis of grassroots practices and values expressed by local actors trying to frame common definitions of the Japanese NPOs incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. Employing detailed ethnography, I argue that when one examines the Japanese NPO from the grassroots up, instead of from the top down (i.e., from the view of political elites and high-level institutions), a very different picture of social and political life in Japan emerges. Otherwise, the civil society argument itself will never be democratized.

What I sought in this book was an ethnography of civil society in contemporary Japan. I document people, places, and meanings as well as the concrete manifestations of civil society. At the same time, I seek to avoid simplistic essentialism or stereotyping of Japan's historical development, aiming to link Japanese civil society studies and experiences to the global discourse on civil society. I argue the state-led institutionalization of volunteer-based NPOs under the name of civil society, and I locate such Japanese NPOs, or "civil society," as a form of agency in neoliberalism, a dominant ideology in contemporary global politics and economies. Further, this book explicitly illuminates strong disagreements from below combined with grassroots resistance and frustration regarding the state's deliberate effort to construct such "civil society." The conflicts within the ongoing NPO phenomenon present powerful narratives—real voices and real experiences that have yet to be vibrantly documented as a form of ethnography. Recording these conflicts should enable a critical assessment of some recent normative approaches and destabilize some key understanding as well as advocating the merits of civil society under the existing scholarship.

Fieldwork

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in total of twenty-four months for this project—from September 2001 through April 2003, with follow-up research in July and August 2005, in addition to September and December 2006. I worked as an unpaid staff researcher at an NPO that I call SLG (pseudonym), which was incorporated under the 1998 NPO Law. It was located in Kawazoe (pseudonym) in downtown Tokyo and promoted lifelong learning in the local community. In exchange for my administrative and planning work at SLG, I was given free rein to conduct research at the NPO.

There are some specific reasons I chose SLG as my research base. During the initial stage of my fieldwork, I was indeed looking for some "typical" NPOs under the NPO Law in Japanese society. However, I

realized that it would be almost impossible to define what is typical at that point since Japanese NPOs had only a short history. Only two years had passed since the NPO Law was enacted when I started fieldwork. My field site SLG was originally established by the municipal government as a citizens' group in the mid 1990s. It provided lifelong learning opportunities to the local residents in place of the government. Following the enactment of the NPO Law in 1998, the group was reincorporated as an NPO under the strong leadership of the government. Actually, the case of SLG strongly reminded me of an "activist state" argument (Pharr 2003), as I introduced earlier, which describes Japan as successfully institutionalizing civil society groups that conveniently support current policy through funding and favorable tax treatment. An NPO like SLG itself might be nothing new. Yet I believed that SLG would provide me with a great case study on the state-led institutionalization of civil society. My key research interest is to know what grassroots Japanese people experience and feel within such a state-led institutionalization of civil society, in particular, during the molding process of civil society; my scholarly interest as an anthropologist is to document them as a form of original ethnography. SLG is extremely relevant to analyze when I go beyond such formal discourse on Japanese civil society, describe values and beliefs expressed and practiced by people, and present how the concept of civil society is interpreted and implemented at a Japanese grassroots level. My case study of SLG makes a unique contribution to the civil society scholarship in and outside of Japan.

In my fieldwork, I used conventional techniques of participant observation, conducted an extensive series of interviews, and complemented my observations and interview records with archival research as needed. For data collection, I believed that a micro-level approach would allow for a detailed analysis of everyday practices. 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 microlevel, as these forces have meanings for individuals in their everyday lives. The call for a turn to everydayness 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 located at an NPO, I believed that there was great value in examining the everyday practices of organizational life that are usually taken for granted or dismissed as unimportant.

More 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 sociocultural setting—such as an organization, a community, or a society—as a constitutive social form (Schwartzman 1989, 1993; see also Flyvbjerg 1991; Kunda 1992 for ethnographic case studies). My approach at the field site was motivated by an appreciation of the idea that the world does appear to us 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 everyday life of the NPO—that is, they were an *organizing* process of everyday life (Weick 1995).

I collected stories through the open-ended interview method. I mostly spoke with people at SLG in informal settings over coffee or drinks. 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; see also Orr 1990; Van Maanen 1991). 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. Even 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, my fieldwork at SLG was supplemented by conversations with NPO practitioners, Japanese NPO specialists in academia, and government officials in charge of NPO matters at different levels.

Further, I used extensive analysis of government documents from the National Diet Library in Tokyo, municipal libraries, and government facilities in order to supplement the data I collected at SLG. In addition, I attended workshops for NPO practitioners across the country and performed discourse analysis of NPO coverage in the mass media. Meanwhile, I introduce several pieces of literature from Japanese primary sources to this ethnography, since there are numerous rich interdisciplinary discussions on civil society or *shimin shakai* in the Japanese studies scholarship in the post–World War II era. By referring to the literature,

I believe that the full relevance of my argument on a new civil society organization—*NPO*—to the scholarship is solidified.

Action Research

Before going into the chapter overviews, I need to mention that this project takes Action Research (AR) as a key research stance. AR is a social research strategy that combines collaborative research and an impulse toward social change with a strong democratic emphasis (Greenwood and Levin 1998). It 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 the 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 with the ideals of democracy; in this sense, it is proper to call AR a research strategy of the people, by the people, and for the people (Park 1997).

I understand AR to be a framework in which ordinary people can practice democracy by dealing with concrete problems that are of immediate concern to them. AR provides a forum for people to discuss what should be done to effect meaningful social change. In my project at SLG, I employed AR strategy to address the practical problems that arose in participants' daily struggles for social well-being. The "problems" discussed in this project 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 uncover problems and possibilities for change; meanwhile, the SLG members and I were empowered to choose options freely. I facilitated the organization of a team to evaluate activities and to define the problems SLG members wanted to solve. SLG members began to accumulate knowledge and explore solutions using their own initiatives.

I chose this research strategy for a variety of reasons. The main reason directly relates to the meaning I found in doing this research. I came to the anthropology of civil society with an academic background in political science, public policy and administration, and history, as well as 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 a wire service in Japan, where I covered the Tokyo 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 policy making, 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? I myself added other questions: How can I be involved in the action? What can I do to support the public good? Around the same time, Japanese society saw the emergence of NPOs, and I wondered whether this new third sector would offer an effective alternative to the existing bureaucratic structure. Would NPOs break through the inflexible political process in Japan?

By underlying my research with public interest anthropology, I become committed to the democratization of knowledge in research and practice (Sanday 1976, 1998, see also Yamashita 2004 for a Japanese context). My ultimate objectives as an anthropologist in doing this type of research are to help empower ordinary people and to forward the democratization of society by practicing action-oriented social research (Ogawa 2005, 2006a, 2006b). In fact, I eagerly engage ways to empower ordinary people at my field site by capturing grassroots voices in my collaborative ethnography. 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 change (Greenwood 1999).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 is an ethnography of Kawazoe, the district in which I conducted fieldwork. Kawazoe is located in a *shitamachi* area (downtown neighborhood) in the eastern part of Tokyo. People began inhabiting the district hundreds of years ago. Providing ethnographic data on Kawazoe, such as information on local life, history, industries, and population, this chapter looks in particular at active, rich, local associational life in Kawazoe and introduces the kinds of social capital—social groups and networks—that are active in this urban Tokyo neighborhood. I locate

my field site, an NPO called SLG, in this local associational landscape, focusing on how SLG was generated from and integrated into the local community. Meanwhile, chapter 3 describes the landscape of the ongoing NPO phenomenon as a form of organizational ethnography. As a case, I present the detailed, inside story of how SLG, an NPO promoting lifelong learning in a local community, was operated and developed in collaboration with existing entities, primarily the municipal government. In so doing, first, this chapter presents an actual grassroots experience organized under the name NPO. Further, I document the way in which the government has molded civil society by introducing the organizational form of the NPO to residents. This chapter also illustrates grassroots responses to the state's discourse on civil society making. These two chapters, combined with information on Japanese NPOs presented in this introductory chapter, provide basic knowledge of my field site for the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4 examines the state of volunteerism in Japanese society after the enactment of the 1998 NPO Law, exploring a key question: Who are volunteers? In my fieldwork, what I primarily observed and experienced was the mobilization of a type of subjectivity under the name of volunteerism. This subjectivity could be characterized as a Foucauldian coercive subjectivity—what I call "volunteer subjectivity." I have identified this phenomenon from a viewpoint heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality, which refers not only to political processes or state agencies but also, in a more general sense, to the art of guiding people (Foucault 1991). I argue that this normative, self-disciplined subjectivity is important and ideal for society and is reproduced as a desirable social identity through education as a national project and a nationwide campaign promoting volunteerism. Citing the case of SLG at the micro-political level, I describe the way in which the state invites—or, more accurately, mobilizes—local residents to become volunteers and organizes them under an NPO. Furthermore, this chapter, as well as chapter 6, contributes to the current upsurge of Foucauldian anthropologies of modernity (e.g., Inda 2005) by adding an account from Japan.

Chapter 5 explores a case of associative democracy, focusing on policy collaboration in the area of lifelong learning between SLG and the municipal government in downtown Tokyo. The collaboration, currently called *kyōdō*, between NPOs and the government in policy making has been a fashionable administrative technique in Japan since the enactment of the 1998 NPO Law, as it promises to facilitate successful, effective policy implementation while achieving cost cutting. It is realized through the entrustment of projects to NPOs by the government. An NPO, for