

# H-Net Reviews

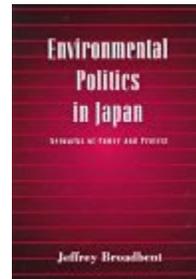
in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Jeffrey Broadbent. *Environmental Politics in Japan: Networks of Power and Protest*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xviii + 418 pp. \$59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-56424-3.

Reviewed by Miranda A. Schreurs (Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland)

Published on H-Japan (April, 1999)



Jeffrey Broadbent's meticulously researched volume follows the long drama of environmental protest in rapidly industrializing rural Japan. The setting is Oita Prefecture in Kyushu. Broadbent spent several years in Oita living among the fisherman, farmers, and urban residents that eventually split into different camps—some strongly supporting and others vehemently opposing industrial development plans for the region. The vivid accounts of the sit-ins, community demonstrations, and even knife attacks that marked the years of protest against development plans for Beppu Bay make for a page turner. It is also a book of high scholarly caliber and theoretical sophistication. Broadbent's book draws upon his time in Oita and the hundreds of interviews he conducted while living there and during follow-up trips to the region and to Tokyo.

Weaving theory throughout his narrative, Broadbent portrays the struggles of environmental networks that spent years fighting almost insurmountable odds in their efforts to try to scale down industrial development plans for Beppu Bay. Challenging the explanatory power of resource mobilization and political opportunity structure theories in the Oita case, Broadbent argues that social networks of trust best explain why protest movements formed in Oita. He found that local residents followed their community leader in protest because of their trust in him. Describing the formation of one environmental protest community, for example, Broadbent writes, "In Saeki, local residents joined Katayama in protest because they trusted him as the traditional ku leader. Similarly, in Kozaki, residents joined the protest in part due to their preexisting trust in Yuki or Inao. In Kozaki and Saeki, in other words, activist leaders ripped their subordinate networks away from the vertical social fabric and used them

to mobilize insurgency. In Saeki, residents had already been complaining to Katayama about the soot from the plywood factory. The ku-head was supposed to receive such complaints. When failure to redress from the authorities frustrated Katayama, he led his ku-members in protest" (p. 181).

Despite years of protest activities, the networks Broadbent follows had but limited success in their fight against what Broadbent dubs the "Triple Control Machine"—the alliance among the pro-development Liberal Democratic Party, government, and big business—that operates all the way from the national level down through the prefectural to the town and hamlet levels. In rural Oita Prefecture where industrial development meant catching up with far more developed Tokyo, support for the Governor's plans to bring an industrial complex to the region was strong. Environmental supporters who feared the effects of large-scale industrialization for human health, the fishing industry, and the quality of the environment faced tremendous hurdles.

In many ways, the story that Broadbent tells reminds one of the haunting tales of Minamata mercury poisoning, Itai-itai disease, and Yokkaichi asthma that Norrie Huddle and Michael Reich, Margaret McKean, Ui Jun, and others have recorded for posterity. Broadbent adds to the already extensive body of literature examining Japan's citizens' movements, a sociological case study of a more ordinary, but therefore perhaps more representative, pollution case.

One of the most arresting discoveries that Broadbent makes is of corruption within one of the environmental movements he traced. Typically, the literature dealing with Japan's early environmental movement

shows sharply divided communities pitting supporters of industrial development against environmental activists. Broadbent shows just how fragile the environmental citizen networks were in the face of constant efforts by the “Triple Control Machine” to break them with offers of compensation and bribes. Often the failure of the protest movements could be tied to the ability of the Triple Control Machine to break their networks.

The reader should be made aware that the title of the book is somewhat misleading. It suggests a much broader coverage of environmental policies and pro-

grams in Japan than is in fact the case. While the volume does link the Oita experience to national environmental policy developments in Japan in the early 1970s, the volume is historical. The reader looking for a discussion of environmental politics in Japan after the late 1970s will have to look elsewhere.

Copyright (c) 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-japan>

**Citation:** Miranda A. Schreurs. Review of Broadbent, Jeffrey, *Environmental Politics in Japan: Networks of Power and Protest*. H-Japan, H-Net Reviews. April, 1999.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=3028>

Copyright © 1999 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).