# Local environmental action in Japan: the transfer of the Groundwork approach.

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***Executive Summary***

The research discovered that there are some key structural, social and cultural differences between Japan and the UK. This however has meant that so far the approach has had some difficulty in flourishing in a way that GW UK could compare to UK projects and Trusts.

These differences do not however mean that the transfer of the Groundwork approach is without merit. In fact it can be argued that Groundwork takes on a greater significance in present day circumstances in Japan. GW could act as a vanguard to transform relations and expectations between various groups and political scales. For this to occur numerous factors would have to be addressed in Japan.

It is also the case that with any transfer of approach from one culture to another there will be a need for compromises and care in developing projects. As such the form that GW takes in Japan at present depends on the pre-existing good practice of environmental and community groups. This practice, observed through the projects visited, leans towards environmental improvement rather than any clear emphasis on community building or other capacity building.

*Key findings*;

- There was some difficulty in fully appreciating the issues, due to language and other cultural barriers.
- Different sets of political, social and cultural circumstances will inevitably lead to tensions and then divergence from models designed and tested in other circumstances. Groundwork thus far in Japan has experienced this.
- There appears to be a lack of vision or determination to fully utilize the GW approach in Japan from central government. Partly because the approach has not proven itself.
- The use of GW as a label has been prompted by successful projects and group organizations in the locations visited. This is at odds from the rationale of GW UK in the past.
- Projects have yet to engage fully with some of the difficult social issues that prevail in Japan. Although there are signs that this is being approached.
- More research is needed at individual case study level looking at JGA sponsored projects

and areas.

- Some notable local groups have moved to expand their operations and look towards tackling wider or deeper issues present in their area.
- UK GW might usefully lobby central government in Japan about how the model developed in the UK needs more support in order for it to succeed. For this a political will to tackle some of the more serious, emergent problems in Japan needs to be present.
- If GW can prevail as a fully state-sponsored approach then a twin-track GW might emerge where the first style is more light touch and deals with small scale environmental improvement. The second strand would look a little more like the project work being undertaken by GW UK / Trusts since the 1990s in the UK.

## *1. Introduction*

### *1.1 The project*

This report summarises the findings of a project undertaken by Gavin Parker and Meiko Murayama and funded, in part, by Nihon University, Japan under their special collaborative research fund. The work was carried out between Spring 2001 and Spring 2003 and involved several visits to Japan and numerous interviews with key actors as well as supporting documentary review.

Initially the research was begun to examine community based environmental action in Mishima City, Shizuoka, Japan. It was the intention of the researchers to look into attempts by local people to improve their local environment, a sub-theme was the impact this had on the image of the City. This was on the basis of numerous environmental improvement projects that had been completed there under the GW banner.

Once the initial investigations were complete the project was directed more specifically on the transfer of Groundwork (GW) from the UK to Japan, with a focus on Mishima and in the context of pre-existing community action in Japan. Mishima, it was discovered, had become the first place where the UK Groundwork model or label, was adopted in Japan. In refocusing the project the research was rendered more manageable and potentially useful for GW in Japan.

### *1.2 Scope, audience and research questions*

The intended style and approach of the report is to present the findings in such a way as to be useful to both practitioners in Japan and the UK, and also to an academic audience. In particular we hope that the report will be of some use to Groundwork UK, the Japan Groundwork Association (JGA) and Groundwork Mishima. In taking this line we assess the transfer and operation of GW Mishima, offering advice to that Group as well as to GW UK and the JGA in the recommendations section.

In investigating the transfer of Groundwork to Mishima we have attempted to place the Groundwork story in Japan into a wider context. We placed the work into a research frame that draws on related academic research and elements of theoretical discussion so that the work can be extended in future research efforts. Part of this approach involved linking historical and cultural issues to environmental projects, which may impinge on the take up and operation of the

Groundwork approach in Japan. We feel that this element of understanding is crucial in ongoing and future attempts to promote Groundwork and related project-based efforts, particularly from the British perspective. The result has been to provide an account, albeit incomplete, of the current situation regarding GW in Japan with more speculative discussion, based on qualitative research, about the factors that have shaped GW and environmental action in Japan since 1992.

*1.3 Research questions*

The research questions adopted are wide ranging and challenging, particularly given the cultural and other logistical barriers faced by the researchers. The central research questions of the project were;

- What are the main social, political and economic factors that may impinge on GW in Japan?
- Why use the Groundwork model in Japan?
- How has the UK approach been implemented or altered in the Japanese context?
- Why has Groundwork developed in this way thus far?
- What was happening in Mishima in terms of local environmental action (and elsewhere in Japan) prior to the adoption of Groundwork?
- What difficulties have been experienced by Mishima, the JGA and GW international?
  - What lessons can GW UK learn from this?
  - How might 'GW' Mishima usefully proceed into the future?
  - What wider lessons are there for cross-cultural transference of models and institutional arrangements?

This is a deliberate choice of approach, engineered to set up a more integrated appraisal of the Japanese context. It also lends itself to suggest a more in-depth research agenda for the various actors involved in GW in Japan (i.e. the JGA, Central Government, Local Government in Japan, GW UK, other academics and local community groups in Japan). One outcome could be the design of options for the future development of GW in Japan.

*1.4 Method*

The research has been case study led based on a form of action research model (Stringer, 1996) as the Japanese context was largely unknown prior to the beginning of the work and the team spent a

considerable time focusing on one case study and the key actors involved. The research team observed and interviewed participants in Mishima and elsewhere, as well as conducting interviews with key informants in the UK and Japan. Thus thee main primary source of information has been through key interviews with those active at various levels with GW in the UK and Japan (see appendix 1). This of itself has necessitated reading and discussing wider influences on Japanese civil society (Mullings 1999) and trying to understand the local history of Mishima (Calleawert 2002). Additionally a range of printed material, some of which is only available in Japanese, has been reviewed. This was time consuming and it is difficult to know for sure how comprehensive the review has been. It is worth noting though that the work has been done at a reasonably sedate pace - partly to assist in gathering as wide an appreciation of the Japanese context as possible.

*1.5 Comparative study*

The research is an exercise in comparative study, both of GW in the two countries, but also the political economy of the two societies. Comparative research of this nature inevitably misses some of the details or nuances of culture and organization that may have impacted on the development of policy and the actors involved (Kohn, 1989, Mullins 1999). Despite the research team being Anglo-Japanese it was rather difficult at times to fully uncover some of the pertinent issues and drivers, in particular where there had been conflict or tensions, or where structural change had recently occurred but was beyond the initial purview of the research.

Additionally, the political aspects of policy change and social and political restructuring in Japan is also a problematic topic for some actors involved in environmental planning / community development in Japan. Indeed the difficulties of access and cross-cultural research in similar circumstances is a research obstacle in the UK and elsewhere (see Gilbert, 1993). Actors in conflict situations may wish to downplay, spin or distance themselves from past events, offering a sanitized or partial account of conflict instead. In this sense then the research has been faced with a double-bind; a series of culturally specific issues and obstacles and wider tensions inherent in research that attempts to comparatively describe and analyse policy change and consequential conflict. We have indicated where possible the limits of our study and therefore opportunities for further research in the main body of the report.

Getting at underlying issues or uncovering controversy has been awkward and time consuming. The tendency to avoid sensitive or politicised issues is a commonly accepted problem in research. It is perhaps a particularly acute issue when researching Japanese society, a problem possibly exacerbated when the questions are emanating predominately from a *gaijin*[1] researcher. Reflexivity in qualitative research is necessary and a precursive aspect of such research. Given the above it was difficult to use research skills that are culturally dependent in this project; meaning that diffuse knowledge and general appreciations of societies are foundational to specialist research.

Nuances of language are often lost in translation and that can also be a problem for this type of research. In order to ameliorate this the draft of the report was sent to several of the key informants to ensure that the main issues and findings ring true and so that factual inaccuracies or oversights are minimised. The draft was also read by the Mishima NPO Groundwork group for the same reasons. Despite such precautions the authors accept that there will be oversights and omissions remaining. It is clear that further research led by Japanese researchers should be carried out in the future.

To summarise there have been four key obstacles that future researchers might usefully plan for;

- Language barriers and wider issues of availability of English language texts,
- Difficulties of transcription and translation of qualitative data,
- Wider shifts in Japanese legal and regulatory systems,
- Outsider status exacerbating access barriers and willingness to provide detailed or clear information.

### *2. Community participation and empowerment*

By now much has been written on the subject of public participation, local empowerment and capacity-building. This aspect has been of particular interest to environmental planners (see for example; Barrett & Usui, 2002; Banks & Shenton, 2001; Selman, 2000; Parker, 1999; Kennedy, 1996). There are numerous generic issues that flow from this concern and most of the key issues

[1] Outsider or foreigner – this term has a mildly perjorative implication. There is also a potential double bind here as Japanese have historically operated on a group-based social system so that a foreign researcher who is not

identified have relevance, in varying degrees, for the main users of this report. This makes it worthwhile rehearsing them here and attempting to relate them to the findings and conclusions of the report.

Some of the key points can be summarised as below;

- Capacity-building – one dominant justification for public engagement is the assumed social and human capital building effect of communal or political activity. There are questions here about the durability of such capacity however.
- 'Getting-things-done' versus the capital / capacity building of those involved,
- Exploitation – how appropriate is it for volunteers, citizens or 'lay' persons to undertake tasks rather than other public or private institutions,
- Volunteer fatigue – there are question marks about the longevity and 'stickability' of volunteers / activists,
- Intra-community conflict –interventions can exacerbate or even give rise to tensions within locales,
- Quality - difficulties in measuring value-added and questions about the quality of non-professional work,
- Role and centrality of key individuals – and the influence that these individuals have on process as well as outcome of projects or participatory events.

Therefore it is important that where possible activists in Japan using Groundwork models are aware of these kinds of issues and can effectively steer a path through them in a manner that is probably only appropriate in a Japanese, if not localized Japanese, fashion. In the UK there is now a legacy of experience of developing tools and checks on volunteer activity and community engagement. Notably Wilcox (1994) sets out numerous techniques of participation, demonstrating the range of techniques and the difficulties of achieving inclusive, fair and quality outputs (Walker et al 2000). There has also been considerable attention paid by government agencies and academics to process and difficulties of different participation examples (cf. LGMB 1996, Parker 1999, Rydin &

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part of group or network may be doubly distanced from the research subject (Sorensen, 2002a; McCargo, 2000).

Pennington, 2000). The idea of partnership working exhorted by Groundwork is one such area where lessons have been learned in the UK. While those points have been learned in a UK context it is also likely that new ones will need to be learned in the UK and Japan. It is also probable that old mistakes will also be made in Japan – perhaps with different conclusions. It is important that those cautions are absorbed and advice disseminated about them.

*2.1 Partnerships*

The partnership approach to environmental and wider regeneration and community activity is now endemic in UK policymaking. This extends from GW projects through to broader area-wide regeneration policy. Such partnerships permeate all levels of government in the UK and extend into and across disparate policy concerns – in part this has come from the Blair government's aim of 'joined-up policy' and 'joined-up thinking'. GW retains a key role in developing this aspect of practice and can claim to have had some influence on the thinking of the Blair administration. It is worth noting that in England and Wales GW UK has had a hand in designing the Neighbourhood Renewal and New Deal community regeneration agendas with the UK government (ODPM, 2002).

In Japan, however, partnership between the private, public and voluntary or community sectors is less well established, in fact until recently almost unheard of (Barrett & Usui 2002; Nakano 1997). Despite years of policy structured around partnership working in the UK there are still issues and problems, inertias and tensions which are apparent. The UK experience indicates that transferring a partnership-based model such as GW (as the case of GW to Japan in the early 1990s) was unlikely to be straightforward, particularly given other structural barriers to the development of NPOs in Japan. So the adoption of GW in Japan was unlikely to be swift or without obstacle. It is clear that implementing a model based on public, private and voluntary co-operation and co-funding is not easy - a point that activists and JGA staff need to understand so they are prepared for a long campaign.

The development of civil society and associated political culture / institutions has followed a different course in Japan than the UK. We do not wish to fall into a simplistic, if inviting, line of *Nihonjin-ron* (Sorensen, 2002a,b; Dale, 1986) which boxes off Japan as being in some way unique or indecipherable. However it is the case that the opportunities and acceptability of organisations that

would seek to influence the traditional roles or powers of local government (and the civil service) has met with resistance, if unevenly, in some quarters of the bureaucracy and most probably at the local, regional and central government scales (Barrett & Usui 2002).

## *3. Groundwork UK*

### *3.1 History and dimensions*

During the late 1970s the Countryside Commission developed Groundwork as an urban fringe initiative that sought to improve areas of vacant, derelict or otherwise unsightly land (Jones, 1990). This was prompted by civil unrest at the time and a need for new methods of addressing social problems such as youth unemployment / lack of training was identified. Even at the early stages, however, the focus was on environmental improvement driven partly as a function of the frustration of central government at the failure of the local state or the market to deliver quality environments in certain places.

The early GW initiatives made use of unemployed people as well as other volunteers to carry out environmental improvements. In this early phase GW was primarily a countryside action vehicle and was funded through the Countryside Commission. The first Groundwork Trust was initiated in St. Helens in the North West of England in 1981 and was initially engaging in work with residents around small areas of disused land. It engaged local communities in improving their local environment. Early projects included footpath clearance, tree-planting and notably the creation of pocket parks (Jones 1990).

By 1985 Groundwork achieved charitable status and had begun the Trust system. In 1989, recognising the potential for Groundwork project work to develop further and possibly move into urban areas, the then Department of the Environment took over the core funding of the organisation. The scope of Groundwork was to be developed - it had since shifted attention towards the inner cities and towns and had also widened its remit to incorporate social and economic objectives as well as environmental improvements. The Government shifted responsibility for oversight of GW to the regeneration arm of the DoE soon after 1989. By the early 1990s Groundwork had fully developed the three-way partnership approach involving public, private and the voluntary sector and had gained wide experience in managing different groups and achieving positive outcomes. As

part of this the organisation was looking at job creation and training as integral to the capacity building effort that was fast becoming the central objective of building people as well as places. This led from the 'action for the environment' to the more recent motto of 'changing places, changing lives' in summing up the ethos of GW.

Meanwhile during the late 1980s Groundwork was being recognized as a potentially useful approach to environmental improvement in Japan (Oyama, 2001; Oyama 1989), and partly as a method of bridging the vertical policy and community structures extant in Japan (Phillips, 1992; Nakano, 1997, Barrett & Usui, 2002). This was certainly the agenda that some of the people involved in Groundwork and associated individuals in Japan were pursuing at that time;

> 'there were a number of people, some of them quite senior, who saw Groundwork as a potential mechanism for replacing, or adapting the highly patriarchical, top down system which is beginning to break down in Japan' (Oyama, 2001).

Thus the potential of the approach was recognized, but as can be inferred from the above quote, the difficulties of successfully building the GW approach in Japan were likely to be considerable. This theme is developed later.

*3.2 The Groundwork Trusts*

The organisation of GW was based on local projects that developed across the country. By 1994 the GW organization had been reorganized and a federated structure was set up with each local GW Trust being given more freedom from the national level GW organization. Each trust was then required to produce a report and accounts (Barton 2001, DETR 2001). A regional tier of governance was set up a little afterwards to provide a bridge between the rather distant and strategic national organization and the local GW Trusts (Jones 2003). In this way a highly organised structure with some built in flexibility and freedom for each Trust has been developed. Crucially, core funding from central government enables the organization to secure itself on a foundation of guaranteed income and associated credibility.

Groundwork act as the brokers in a given situation. In this sense they are network builders (Selman

& Parker 1997, Parker & Wragg 1999) who aim to stitch partners together for mutual benefit and synergy. The organisation employs professional staff to ensure that the process and outcomes are high quality – but of course this is not always the case and recent research has shown that Groundwork does, on occasion, struggle to met all of its aims and objectives (Fordham et al, 2002). However the organization has set itself difficult, if laudable, aspirations; ones that were not being addressed by other means (Walker *et al*, 2000).

Our allusion above was that since the mid-1990s GW has expanded with its role at the national level becoming a central part of government regeneration policy. Certainly it is apparent that since 1999 Groundwork has moved into what might be termed its 'third phase', adopting the *Changing places, changing lives* strap-line and adopting a wider view of its role and endorsing a sustainable communities aim;

> Groundwork's purpose is to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action". We do this by getting residents, businesses and other local organisations involved in practical projects that improve the quality of life, bring about regeneration and lay the foundations for sustainable development (Groundwork UK 2002).

The ODPM now sponsors Groundwork to help take forward the UK Government's aim of bringing about environmental regeneration in deprived urban areas. The DETR (now ODPM) grant of £8m in 2001/02, contributed towards running costs and some of the project activity of individual trusts. Additional funds, secured from a number of sources including the EU, local authorities, national lottery, landfill tax and business contributed to Groundwork's total income for the financial year 2000 of around £70m (ODPM, 2003). As indicated in Table 1 below, by 2001 the budget for GW was £76m (approx 1.37¥ Bn) with the funding coming from a variety of public and private sources. This rose again to £88m for 2001-02 – note below the proportionate rise (21% to 34%) in funding from regional and national regeneration funds.

*Table 1 - GW UK federation funding*

| **Funding source** | **Income 2000-01** | **Income 2001-02** |
|---|---|---|
| UK Govt. & National Assemblies | £14.2m (18%) | £13.1m (15%) |
| Private sector | £16.5m (22%) | £15.8m (18%) |
| Local authorities | £13.3m (17%) | £13.9m (16%) |
| European Union | £10.7m (14%) | £11.5m (13%) |
| National Lottery | £6.2m (8%) | £3.8m (4%) |
| Other funding (RDAs, SRB etc) | £16.3m (21%) | £29.9m (34%) |
| *Totals* | *£77.2m (100%)* | *£88.0m (100%)* |

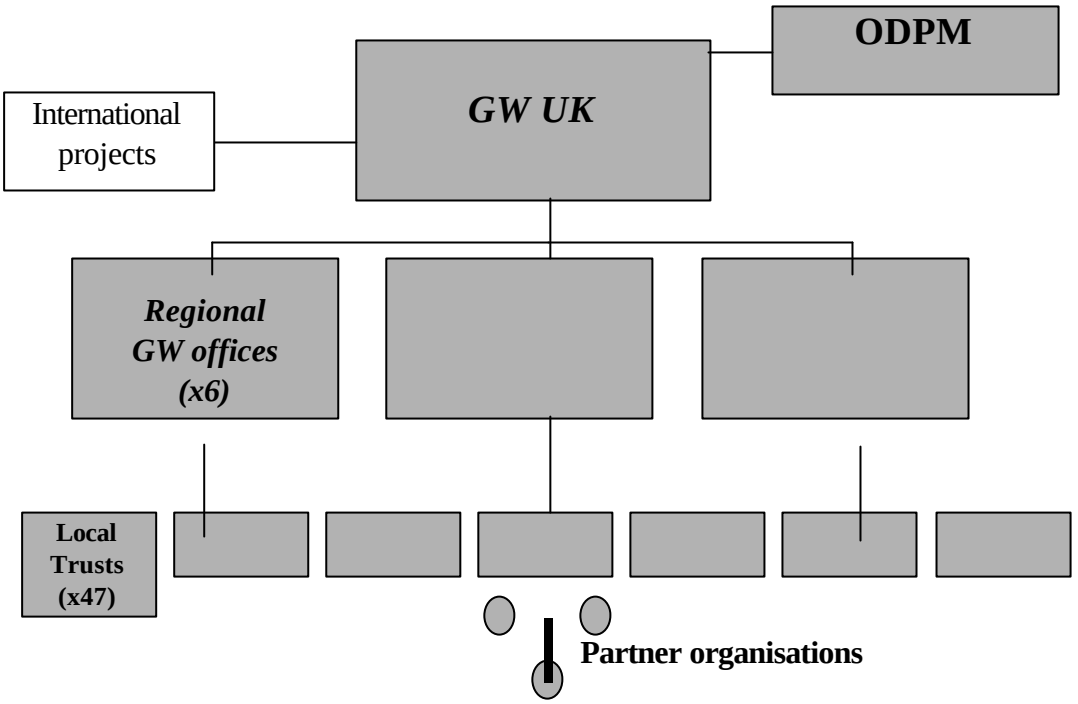
(Source: GW UK 2002, 2003)

By 2002 GW UK's budget was increased to help tackle the challenges of the *urban renaissance* vision (DTLR, 2000). Extra responsibility for other government programmes, such as the 'community enablers' scheme, where £30 million is to be distributed between 2003-2005 to community groups across England, has also been taken on board and GW senior staff have been advising the UK government on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR; see ODPM, 2002; Fordham et al 2002).

*3.3 Present state*

Groundwork UK has a foundational principle of partnership working which has been enthusiastically embraced by the UK government. The notion of networking is closely allied to the partnership-working model, bringing with it a recognition of the need to liaise effectively with as many contributors as possible and necessary for the success of the project. Within this model GW sees itself acting as an intermediary, as well as key actor, in the building of the network / partnership. Importantly the process of 'involvement' foe the different partners should be instrumental in building links and social / human capital for the benefit of wider society.

*Figure 1 - Groundwork in the UK*




In recent years Groundwork has been prominent in regeneration programmes aimed at urban areas and in particular those areas in most need of help to rebuild or improve themselves in terms of physical environment and social capacity. Namely part of a drive towards environmental justice (Buckingham-Hatfield & Percy 1999). The themes that GW has developed in the UK in the late 1990s fall into six categories (GW 2001);

- Land - and improvement to derelict sites,
- Community – engaging a range of people and encouraging community cohesion,
- Education – for example by setting up projects with schools,
- Employment – engendering skills and certification for work,
- Business – getting local and national business to participate in projects, and not only by part funding them, but more directly where possible,
- Youth – as above in engaging young people in GW projects.

Groundwork, through the network of 47 local trusts, claims to have supported around 4,800

projects while working with around 7,000 businesses, encouraged volunteers to give more than 340,000 days of their time and created 2,500 jobs. Thus the set up of GW in the UK by the new millennium was complex and large-scale with significant funding and the ear of central government.

In practice many of the projects undertaken involve many, if not all of these elements and reflect the way that GW attempts to engineer capacity building as well as physical and environmental improvements; hence the *process* is seen as being at least as important as the outcome. This is primarily in order to empower people and enable socio-economic development - a strong current in UK regeneration policy. This aspect is one that is both difficult to achieve and difficult to measure. It seems it has been less easy to transfer this to Japan both as a concept and as a practice with efforts to establish organizational frameworks and funding taking up time and effort, while at the same time 'GW' groups in Japan have been busying themselves with local environmental improvement projects (Oyama 2001, Senga 2002; see s5).

It seems that the JGA has begun from a relative standing start, towards involvement by voluntary or partnership brokers such as GW and into a resistant culture at the local, regional and national level. Below we discuss some of the issues that relate to the Japanese society and economy that are necessary to better understand the trajectory of Groundwork in Japan and Mishima. Indeed some of these issues came to the fore during the research reported here.

The Japanese lacked the historical trajectory that lay behind GW UK and also the political support and administrative structures to assist in promoting it. This has resulted in certain inertias and gaps in how the JGA and local GW groups have operated in Japan. As we will explore below and through the case study (and see appendix 2), the adoption of GW has had mixed results and different 'brands' of GW has been emerging with a different emphases and evolutionary timescale. It is possible however to see the potential need for and understanding of GW, as it has emerged in the UK, growing over time in Japan.

*3.4 Issues / problems*

Despite the generally accepted success of GW UK over the years a number of generic issues have arisen which the Trusts and GW UK have had to address. In the recent review report on

Groundwork carried out by GFA consulting and Sheffield Hallam University a number of those issues were iterated (see Fordham et al, 2002). While some related to monitoring and administration, there were four linked areas of substantive concern and relevance to this report. They are summarised below as;

*i. Joint working*

Primarily this relates to often anecdotal accounts of strained relations between local authorities and Groundwork Trusts in the past. By and large such issues are infrequent as partnership working in regeneration and community development has become a usual and accepted feature. Initially however GW was seen by some local authority officials and elected representatives as an attempt by central government to impose their own vision on an area and at the same time exploit local people; sometimes unemployed or otherwise marginalized, to do what had been public works activities. It has also been difficult on occasion for GW to attract the private sector to engage in projects; see below.

*ii. Private sector involvement / contributions*

There has been an ongoing issue about getting a sufficient and reliable income and consistent partnership for GW projects from private sources. Table one (s3.2 above) tends to mask this issue rather. The above issue can also relate to long-termism, and also the potential stigma of association with an unglamorous area. These can be a problem for some larger private companies. In such cases they would prefer to contribute one-off payments and often this is accompanied by a wish to steer away from projects that might otherwise be funded by the state. There has been more notable success in some areas where the private sector make contributions in kind through staff secondment or use of other facilities or materials.

*iii. Project duration*

One common criticism of policy and of regeneration projects is that they can be guilty of attempting 'quick-fix' solutions – partly as result of funding stipulations or a misplaced understanding of the root causes of social and economic dsyfunction. However it is evident that there is often a need for long-term commitment to areas and communities that are disadvantaged. As a result care should be taken to ensure that a proper assessment of the duration of a GW presence is carried out and an

understanding of the impacts of intervention are anticipated and monitored.

*iv. Purity of the model*

The Groundwork approach is interesting as it has operated with a conceptual framework that invokes ideas of networking and partnership with an emphasis on the processual benefits of community activity, as well as the positive benefits of physical or otherwise tangible outputs. This approach has always been challenging and it has been tempting, indeed sensible in some cases for trusts and projects to compromise on the conceptual model in terms of funding responsibilities and the degree to which process benefits are effected. One aspect of this compromise has been to go ahead without much by way of resourcing from the private sector.

Thus GW attempts to steer a path between these types of issues but critically all the trusts and central / local government understand the underlying operational principles of GW.

## *4. The wider Japanese context and environmental action*

Particularly for the benefit of non-Japanese we have included some background material about Japan that we feel helps to contextualise the adoption of GW.

### *4.1 The environment*

The natural environment has long taken a central place in Japanese culture. Shinto and Buddhism, as the predominant religions in Japan, place a strong duty towards respect for the environment as well as placing ancestral tradition high on the moral agenda. This stance still permeates the national consciousness. Confucianism as a way of thinking has also deeply affected the Japanese way of life, particularly in terms of hierarchical acceptance and the importance of family. It is important to note that these wider norms have affected the way that policy and participation take place in Japan.

One examplar of the type of rationale underpinning this is that people are seen as being there to serve the state, rather than the state serving society (Sorensen, 2002a). This emphasis reverses the emphasis in the UK and much of the Western world. This is not to say that associational life is

weak, quite the reverse – there are many networks of *chonaikai*[2] for example which serve an interesting and perhaps underplayed or under utilized function (EAJS 1997). The point to be made however is that the way in which people respond to organs of the state and vice versa is complex and quite different from attitudes found in the UK.

The appreciation of landscape and of flora are features of Japanese society. However it is observable that the Japanese have a somewhat schizophrenic approach to the environment. Much of the natural environment has been sacrificed or at least compromised in the postwar era, primarily in order to assist in the phenomenal rise of the Japanese economy – Japan has boasted the second largest economy in the world, after the US, since the 1980s (McCargo 2000).

Environmental action in Japan has its beginnings in the citizens movements which sprang up around Japan during the 1960s and 1970s, partly as a response to a growing awareness of environmental problems and a dissatisfaction with the system of government that seemed impervious to the views of the people (Broadbent 1998, McCargo 2000). Commentators on Japan's political culture have observed the top-down nature of the system. Severe cases of environmental Pollution typified by the infamous Minamata mercury poisoning incident in the late 1950s sparked protests and, eventually, reparations, but seemingly little by way of determined regulation and enforcement (Ui, 1992). Indeed part of the history of the citizen / neighbourhood and environmental movement demonstrated in the Mishima GW case study below, has its antecedence in a water use and pollution issue dating from the 1960s (Kawamura 2002; Kawamura 1984).

*4.2 Economic context*

The economic success of Japan in the post war period, or the latter of 20th century was achieved by strong central government and big businesses. However from around the late 1980s they have

[2] There are many examples of neighbourhood associations and groups that set themselves up to tackle particular issues and problems – Mishima *Yusukai* being one such example. More generally there are structures of formal governance through local community groups based on neighbourhood. Over most of Japan all households are a member of one Chonaikai or Jichikai. They are exclusive to each other and every household will become a member automatically. Their role has a comprehensive function, and complementary function, as the tail end of municipal government (*kansonminpi-okami-sisou*) similar to UK Parishes in this respect at least.

become serious cancer to the society. Since the much vaunted collapse of the so called 'bubble economy' in the late 1980s Japan has been suffering from an economic crisis that has seen many thousands of redundancies and, incrementally, limits being placed on local government expenditure. This situation in some ways mirrors the condition of the British economy in the late 1970s early 1980s; at least in the sense that new ways of working and 'shrinking state' spending policies are firmly on the agenda in Japan. There has also been a slow but significant shift in the way people are thinking about social position and roles. People started to realise that the traditional ways of working will no longer be effective, and that change was needed. 'Big Government' had been possible due to tax revenue in the past (Hayashi 2000) but Japanese MNCs are not doing well globally. The resulting reduction in tax revenues plays a part in keeping the traditional government structures, as reorganisation is financially difficult. Allied to this is reported resistance within the civil service towards reform (cf. Nakano 1997).

Centralisation of the government system over time may have resulted in local areas being more similar to one another, although Reed (1986) urges caution on this point. The old system showed its limits, particularly in the redevelopment of the Kansai area after the great earthquake in 1995. In contrast, and at the same time, the volunteer sector and NPOs have shown that they can complement/deliver what local government cannot provide. Furthermore they have become more aware that they are the real leaders in their own local area (Shiraisi, et al. 2002: 5). It has become evident that Japan has faced the need for drastic changes in the delivery of local services. There is a growing awareness of the flaws of elected or otherwise powerful individuals and groups (e.g. bureaucratic corruption and large companies' unethical business behaviours). In Japanese society – political corruption and other scandals implicating bureaucrats and politicians have become commonplace in Japan. This is leading to more open dissent and challenges to accepted ways of doing things, with a growing body of powerful Japanese seeking to radically alter structures and practices of governance – none more so perhaps than the Mayor of Tokyo - Shintaro Ishihara and the Prime Minister Junichi Koizumi.

Although not spoken about readily there are emerging problems that Japan faces that have been features of western societies for the last thirty or so years. It was noticed by the authors that many of the problems experienced by western cities and communities are less easily identifiable or perhaps

identified as problems for communities to engage with in Japan. This is either due to history or to an unwillingness to recognise those problems. Despite the relatively hidden nature of some of the issues that are arising it is clear that unemployment and homelessness is rising (see Plate 1).

*Plate 1 - Homelessness in Japan*

The blue tarpaulin shacks are an increasingly common sight in Japan.

Youth disaffection appears to be growing and the use of drugs also appears to be a growing issue. Unemployment and homelessness has risen dramatically during the 1990s with 3.57m people unemployed in 2003 and with an official tally of over 26,000 homeless announced in that year. With many banks of the main rivers dotted with blue tarpaulins and similar sights in some of the main parks of Tokyo – it may well be that those figures are heavy underestimates in a culture where unemployment is seen as a personal failure and to be homeless a social disgrace.

In reflecting on this situation it is not difficult to see that similar ingredients, however sad, led to the rise and perhaps necessity of Groundwork in the UK. It is perhaps the time to look again at the role of GW in Japan and argue that the need for a more challenging approach to the problems outlined can be supported by the kind of GW models developed in the UK. This requires a clearer understanding and political will to tackle such problems in Japan but it will require a re-emphasis from the JGA, GW UK and local groups in Japan. Engaging with such socially reviled groups and issues does need to be addressed.

We will return to this crucial aspect and its relationship to GW efforts in Japan later in the text.

*4.3 Group culture and community groups in Japan*

There has been a group culture that often manifests itself in team projects and efforts resulting in tangible outcomes such as creating artifacts, staging shows and building communal facilities. Added to this there are sports for children, for women, the youth, elderly, local fire brigade volunteers, PTAs, chambers of commerce for local small business owners (as well as for the *Chonaikai* which deals holistically with local issues). This, as with other modern societies, has been eroded but, in common with British society, vestiges and good examples of communal activity remain - perhaps notably in more stable populations and some rural areas.

Some interviewees during this research have bemoaned the loss of community over time, but examples of community effort and the *Chonaikai* mentioned earlier were readily apparent to the authors; including quotidian, but perhaps indicative, efforts such as longstanding community litter clearing parties that tidy up the neighbourhood regularly.

*Plate 2 - Kamakura litter duty sign*


Plate 2 depicts a sign indicating a local clean-up rota (to the right). This one is at Kamakura and states that twice-monthly the area is cleared by a group of local resident (Chonaikai) volunteers.

*4.4 Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)*

Given the above it is perhaps surprising that until very recently the voluntary sector has not been

exploited by central and local government as it has been in the UK (Sorenson 2002b, Parker 1999; Martin 1995, Mitsuhashi *et al.* 2000), although there are exceptions to this (see Barrett & Usui 2002). This has in part been due to the arms length relationship between civil society and formal structures of governance. There are other obstacles that have slowed the growth of NPOs in Japan and their ability to raise funding, in particular legal constraints on NPOs (Yamaoaka 1998).

The effective roles of the volunteer sector post-earthquake in the Hanshin-Awaji great disaster played a part in facilitating the formulation of the NPO Act in March 1998. One critic notes that the earthquake was the turning point of the power balance between the 'public' and 'citizen' (Hayashi 2000). The 1998 law was passed to enable NPOs to operate more freely and hold their own financial accounts. These events have promoted the emergence of a 'third pillar' in Japanese society - to partner government and the private sector (Hayashi 2000, Iokibe 1999). This shift in thinking and legal alterations implicitly support the central trust of Groundwork in hoping to engineer new working practices and social capital building within and between communities and local government. While this is encouraging for Groundwork locally and nationally, as well as for GW UK, the law has been criticised (see; Pekkanen 2001, Yamaoaka 1998) for not being flexible enough for some potential NPO groups. It is probable that the law will be amended in time as the impact and success of such organizations are recognized. This is a policy area to be monitored in the future.

With the economic crisis that has persisted in Japan since the early 1990s, coupled with constitutional change such as the NPO law, the way that communities of interest and local government interact has been slowly and perhaps unevenly developing. The Japanese have tried to learn from the US and the UK to transform local government. Through various studies in foreign cities it became apparent that communities, in large cities especially, were faced with structural (read industrial) change and decline. They needed support from NPOs and enhanced self-help was seen as important (Mitsuhashi *et al.* 2000). There are various fragmented or disjointed plans being developed in Japan trying to tackle evident problems of organisation and power (Isobe 1999). NPOs are expected to integrate different governmental plans at the local level to solve various issues. Yamaoka (1997, in Mitsuhashi 2001: 3) identifies four dimensions or features of the third sector / NPO which seem familiar to the UK and which challenge local and regional government i.e. pioneering, pluralistic, critical, humanistic.

The local government role in Japan has been to provide for the needs of local communities in a rather top-down fashion. An insight into this came in one of the interviews with Mishima City Council, it became clear that in the past the idea of community development related to developing things *for* the community rather developing *the* community (Miyazaki 2001). Thus at odds with the idea of capacity building or partnership working commonly accepted in the UK – but underlining the point about state-people relations and roles. In Mishima at least this culture is shifting, in part due to the actions and apparently successful outcomes of the GW Mishima constituent groups. According to several of the interviewees this culture was yet to permeate all the local authorities in Japan. Barrett & Usui (2002) do note that such shifts in practice have more recently been spreading in Japan however.

*4.5 Japan and the culture of borrowing*

In the 1990s GW attracted much attention and was heralded as part of the future direction of Japan. Many different groups of organisations had travelled to Europe to learn about a range of institutional arrangements since the 1950s – the operation of social welfare programmes being a particularly notable example. Despite the borrowing of some ideas, other aspects of the old hierarchical, rigid and vertically separate system persist. On an agentive level it is clear that in many organizations the way in which seniority has operated is quite strict with employees and subordinates not being able to leave the office before the boss does – a typical outcome is that numerous workers are left trying to find something constructive to do late at night while the boss works on – a particular form of presenteeism.

At its core though the hierarchical culture is perhaps not so much different to the West. When applied to our focus it may be the case that the JGA see GW UK as 'boss' rather than partner organization. If elements of this have existed then difficulties in developing a unique Japanese approach to GW operation may have persisted in part because of this. At the same time other factors have inhibited the JGA from being creative or forceful about the utility of the GW approach. Importantly an insecurity about evidence of GW success in Japan t0 take to central government has become a veritable chicken and egg problem.

While wishing to avoid making too many generalisations it is worth noting that the Japanese have had a tendency towards what is known as *'Hakurai-shikou'* or a culture of borrowing. This, it appears, comes as a result of regarding western methods as being in some way superior, or at least necessary, to bring about a modernised Japan - particularly an issue during the later part of the C19th and into the C20th. Remnants of this way of thinking still persist although it must be said that many countries now borrow ideas from each other - it has become a standard method of policy development for many governments. However a linked outcome is the Japanese willingness and ability to integrate ideas and modify them. This has led to the maxim *wakon-yousai* -'Japanese spirit, Western technology', whereby the Japanese absorb ideas and reproduce variant products. It is common for Japanese to look for models in western countries to improve domestic practices. It is therefore not unusual for the Japanese public sector to seek policy models to introduce to Japan.

Despite this legacy of *hakurai-shikou* we think a culture shift is necessary in Japan to properly understand the spirit of Groundwork and the wider partnership approach that has emerged in regeneration efforts in the UK since the 1990s. As we have set out above, the Japanese circumstance, history, culture and political structures are significantly different to the UK and as a result the kind of Groundwork likely to develop in Japan will be significantly different to the British approach – which is itself diverse (Jones 2003). Such a policy development and necessary idea diffusion was also likely to take a considerable period to develop even if all parties were willing to incorporate it.

*4.6 Barriers and challenges*

It is taken for granted that the local and national governmental role and history in Japan is different to that of the UK. The structure of formal governance is broken into national government with rather monolithic government departments, with well publicized tensions and rivalries between them, (notably for our area of concern between the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of construction) and to a lesser extent between both of these powerful departments and the smaller environment agency.

Another traditional source of tension has been between the regions or prefectures, of which there are 38, and the local government municipalities or district councils. In general terms the prefectures

have been the decision-makers for capital funds. Therefore the rather distant prefecture has had the last say on local project capital funding – a possible feature of UK regional reorganisation. Many public servants visit ministries in order to try to strengthen their links with the national government (Nakano 1997). Often governors and mayors are parts of national government elites who have strong networks across central government. This can provide numerous advantages to their own localities.

Structurally the role and power of the prefectures, located quite distantly from communities, is also an issue that Japan may seek to further address in the future. Indeed the influence of prefectures is under threat as the central government are pursuing a policy of incentivised agglomeration of the smaller municipalities so that they will have a more strategic capability, garner a larger single tax base and cut duplication of service provision. Incentives for this merger of village and town councils will be unavailable soon after 2003, but the effect of creating stronger municipalities may be to provide more funds for Groundwork style projects from the municipal level.

Urban and rural planning has traditionally been the territory of the public sector, and especially the central government, although gradual delegation to lower levels of the public sector has been the trend. The Japanese planning approach has been dominated by the building of infrastructure. This resulted, for example, in the construction of main roads in the middle of residential areas and often dividing communities. This approach to planning has been actualised by engineer-oriented planners, in contrast to planners from social science backgrounds in the UK. Thus conventional planners in Japan have lacked the perspective of the individual community or appreciated the importance of the amenity of residents – their approach has been extremely top-down. The word *machi-dzukuri* or community building seems to have been born from resistance against the public sector imposing their *keikaku* rational / technical planning[3] (Shiraishi *et al* 2002: 25).

Community development then is seen as development for the community as part of a top-down model. It is also the case that associations of interest have got on with their activities - part of the

[3] The first word *machi-dzukuri* has a warmth in its sound compared to the latter *keikaku*, which conveys the power of the bureaucracy for at least for some people.

group culture that predominated - and local government have worked quite separately, responding to public opinion only when threatened with open dissent or direct action. In this situation a gap between the public and institutions has existed. There is now a strong momentum for residents and the local government to be the main actors for their own local community – a drive for a more mature civil society. The central government itself recognised the limitations of its conventional planning. They have started to use the term *machi-dzukuri* for their approach to planning in their own documents recently (Ministry of Construction 2000). In the light of such shifts in thinking the GW approach might be expected to prove useful and timely.

*4.7 Funding arrangements*

Funding for Groundwork is primarily channelled through the Japan Groundwork Association (JGA). The JGA was formally established in 1996 with over 100¥ million of donations from the original membership of; 7 prefectures, 1 ordinance-designated city, 4 other cities and towns, 16 Companies (including 5 big businesses), 146 individuals and 1 other in October 1995 (JGA 1999). The membership of JGA has been expanding with membership in 2000-01 as below in Table 2.

*Table 2 - JGA membership breakdown*

| **Membership type** | **Numbers 2000-2001** | **Numbers 2001-2002** |
|---|---|---|
| Local active groups | 39 | 39 |
| Local NPOs | 4 | 23 |
| Prefectures | 21 | - |
| Ordinance designated city | 2 | - |
| Cities, Towns, Villages | 66 | - |
| Companies | 27 (inc. 6 large corporates) | 25 |
| Individual members | 262 | 124 |

(Source: JGA 2002, 2003)

Five government departments funded (now four) the JGA with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) being the largest single donor. The rest of the revenue derives from membership fees and donations. Other subsidies are received from the government and the private sector, including project subsidy and loans.

*Table 3a - JGA Income 2001-2002 (1,000¥, £1 =180¥)*

| **Revenue** | **Budget '000¥** | **Closing** | **+ / -** | **Note** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interest rate of fundamental resources | 470 | 289 | 181 | |
| Membership fee | 23,000 | 21,567 | 1,433 | |
| Donation | | 1,050 | -1,050 | |
| Subsidy:<br>i. Agriculture :<br>ii. Private: | 56,500<br>48,000<br>8,500 | 52,800 | 3,700 | |
| Project income | 106,420<br>25,000 (nat. govt)<br>81,420 (local govt) | 83,432<br>49,579 (nat. govt)<br>33,853 (local govt) | 22,988<br>-24,579<br>47,567 | Min. of Agric.,<br>Min. Land & Trans,<br>Chiba Prefecture etc |
| Loans | 50,000 | 100,000 | -50,000 | |
| Other | 600 | 713 | -113 | |
| From the previous account | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| **Total (A)** | **236,990** | **260,930** | **-23,940** | |

*Table 3b - JGA Spending 2001-2002 (1,000¥: £1 =180¥)*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Projects | 139,100 | 121,832 | 17,268 | Human resource: 45,000 |
| Administration fee (pay, rent etc;) | 43,460 | 34,303 | 9,157 | Includes salaries |
| Repayment of loan | 50,000 | 90,000 | -40,000 | |
| others | 4,430 | 1,136 | -2,114 | |
| **Total (B)** | **236,990** | **247,271** | **-10,281** | |
| **(A)-(B)** | **0** | **13,659** | **-13,659** | |

(Source: JGA 2002)

The JGA has faced continuous financial difficulties as it must pay its way from revenues received (including core costs such as staff pay and rents). Also, given the economic downturn in the 1990s such organizations, if they are without strong enough senior support, have tended to suffer budgetary cuts. This was the case with the JGA. As has been outlined the culture and political structure has been rather resistant towards moves that appear to usurp power from the bureaucracy. NPOs being just one example of this type of perceived threat (see Sorensen, 2002b).

The figures in Table 3a & b show us that the JGA is not generously resourced. Central government subsidy for the JGA stood at just over 56¥ M (£312,000). Their other main income source is derived from research projects undertaken for central government and staff are largely funded

through this process. Donations and membership fees do not amount to significant totals. One result is that little resource is left for the development of GW projects and groups and no staff are funded for local groups by the JGA. Instead the JGA act as an advisory service for the pilot groups and others. By 2003 however the JGA boasted 19 FTE staff. It is apparent that this set up is very different from GW UK. Further consideration of how to alter this arrangement to fit the purposes of GW development is necessary (more on the JGA is detailed at s5.2).

## *5. History of Groundwork transfer to Japan*

### *5.1 Advising Japan*

During the 1980s various communications were exchanged between UK and Japan relating to the initial success of GW in the UK. This was partly encouraged by Professor Gordon Cherry and his former student Yoshi Oyama. In the late 1980s seeing the potential of GW Yoshi Oyama wrote a report on GW as an introduction for Japanese decision makers (Oyama 1989). It is worthwhile mentioning that the Oyama report was funded by the Toyota corporation who were alert to the principle of public/private partnerships as early as the mid-1980s.

It is well documented that the first Groundwork exchanges to Japan were made by a team led by Lord Jenkins of Roding in 1991 (GW Mishima 2002; Phillips, 1992). With a follow-on visit in the next year. The second delegation authored a report recommending that GW might in principle be transferred to Japan (Phillips, 1992). As discussed in s6.2 below, the study team looked at Mishima as a potential project pilot area. Mishima was selected as a place to visit partly due to the pre-existing activity that we relate below and the proactivity of the leader of the Mishima 'Groundwork' group.

It is worth noting up front that the Japanese understanding of GW is not what GW UK would necessarily expect. For example the JGA present the core idea of GW in a rather limited way. Many GW participants understand it as 'environmental improvement through loose partnership based on unpaid volunteer work' (JGA 1999: 19). It is clear that the UK model and practice has not been fully understood by some of the Japanese involved in setting up the JGA - elsewhere the UK model has been interpreted variously to fit Japanese circumstances.

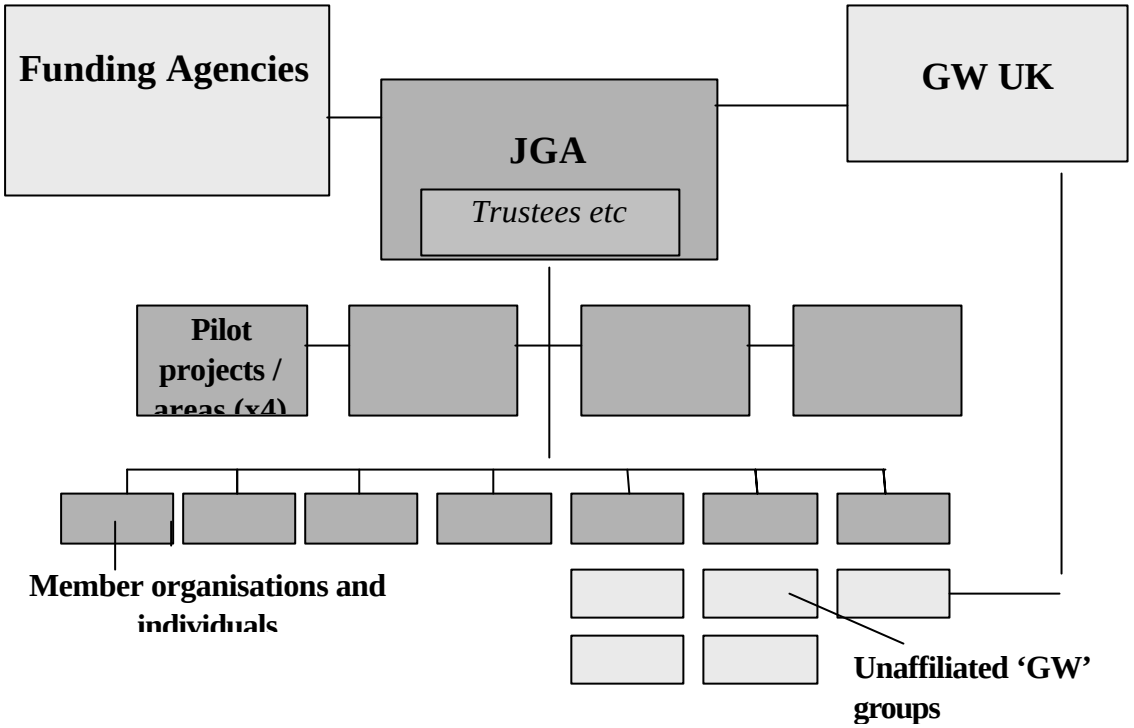
*Table 4 - Key moments in GW development*

| |
|---|
| **1989** - Toyota Report written by Yoshi Oyama about GW UK. |
| **1991** - First visit made by the UK delegation. Recommended transfer of GW in principle. |
| **1991** onwards - Many Japanese visiting GW UK annually. |
| **1992** - second visit to Japan by UK delegation. Aichi and Mishima become pilot areas for Groundwork. |
| **1995** - Japan Groundwork Association (JGA) set up. Funding from five ministries (Agriculture, Transport, Construction, Environment and Telecommunications) |
| **1997** - Review of the JGA initiated by GW UK. Pilots planned. |
| **1998** - The first UK-Japan Groundwork Symposium. |
| **1999** - Setting up of Action Plan for GW development in Japan. |
| **1999** - JGA GW pilots initiated in four locations – Kora (Shiga), Fukuoka (Kyushu), Kochi (Shikoku) and Tokachi (Hokkaido). |
| **1999** - GW UK instigate annual symposia in Japan to enable mutual information and support. |
| **1999** - The Second UK-Japan Groundwork Symposium. |
| **2001-03** - Series of UK GW led capacity-building initiatives. |

The delegation visit and the subsequent 1992 report could not hope to understand the various complex issues and differences between Japan and the UK at that time (Phillips 2001). Even in this report the context presented has been limited and partial. How such issues might affect the adoption of the Groundwork approach and associated structures could not have been fully grasped. While difficult to substantiate, there is a strong possibility that the nuances and theory that underlies GW in the UK is not necessarily pushed down to the local group / individual level by the JGA or other local leaders. In other words, when looking at GW in Japan it is best called 'a GW approach' instead of Groundwork – indeed each project area has adopted its own approach to suit local circumstances.

Thus from the diagram (Fig 2- overpage) it is possible to see that a shadow set of groups and projects exist without the JGA and that the JGA has multiple masters – GW UK and their four central government funders. A detailed organogram of internal JGA organization is located on the JGA website (JGA 2003).

*Figure 2 - The Structure of Groundwork in Japan*




*5.2 The JGA and the approach to GW in Japan*

The JGA, upon inception in the mid-1990s appears to have either misunderstood the operational structure and basis of GW UK, or has been forced to operate as a membership organization in order to raise an income stream for its core funding, despite realising that this is a significant departure from the UK GW structure. It is difficult to ascertain what their thinking was. It appears from interviews that sufficient funding was not forthcoming from central government (JGA 2001). It seems that the JGA has made some sacrifices in not emphasising the importance of some of the key organisational issues and structures present in the UK system e.g. establishment of trusts, core paid, skilled staff. This was despite the memorandum of understanding that both the UK and the JGA agreed to sign.

In their 1999 action plan report the JGA identified seven key problems, some of these points are being addressed but others are less easily soluble. It was recognized that;

- the JGA was not fully functioning as a national centre of GW,
- the GW idea is not well understood by the Japanese polity and public,
- socially positive impacts of GW are not presented effectively,
- the public sector is not able to support the establishment and management of UK-style Trusts,
- many private sector companies do not understand and participate in GW,
- Japanese groups unable to recognise paid skilled 'volunteer sector' staff,
- there are only weak links between the JGA and GW UK (JGA 1999).

Since 1996 the JGA has been focusing on three major tasks: GW promotion, research projects and the support of local area projects. The main income for the JGA is from research projects from central and municipal governments and this has taken much of the energy and time of the staff at JGA. This is another factor in not being able to deliver what the JGA really need to achieve. In either case the approach taken may not have sent out the right kind of signals to local municipalities or volunteer groups about the innovative approach to partnership and local ownership that GW has attempted in the British context. This is one of the issues that the Mishima GW leadership had with the executive JGA in the late 1990s i.e. whether or not to respond to a top-down model or to react and design approaches to suit local circumstances.

The approach taken by the JGA to spread the idea of the GW approach was rather expedient. When supporting local projects, the JGA respected the way that the local groups had operated before and had not necessarily encouraged the UK approach wholeheartedly or in depth. This may have misled many local groups in terms of a deeper understanding of the UK GW approach. The JGA has started 4 pilot cases aiming to establish Trusts and introduce a more UK-style GW into Japan from 1998 (JGA, 1999). It remains to be seen how this effort works out, particularly as the pilot areas already have track records in (non-GW) project work (see Appendix 2(ii)).

The JGA signed an agreement with GW UK in order to use the name of Groundwork and the Logo - the Groundwork symbol is a registered trademark for the JGA. Although the JGA has had advice at key moments from the UK, the feedback to UK GW on the Japanese situation has not been sufficient or regular enough. Both parties realise now that it is necessary to rewrite the agreement but it is unclear how GW and the JGA will now proceed (JGA 1999, Mitsuhashi *et al* 2000: 92).

The JGA appear to have leant towards the traditional and adapted local circumstances in the early attempts to embed the GW organization in Japan. The JGA appeared to look toward established groups and projects to adopt the GW label – a form of retrofitting. It is tempting to highlight this approach as one of the reasons that the JGA has had difficulty in successfully rolling out the UK style GW approach in Japan and now it is difficult to assess the success of GW in Japan as against previous *ad hoc* projects. Their actions are perhaps understandable in the face of cultural, political and economic barriers.

Mitsuhashi *et al* (2000: 88) has classified GW activities in Japan into three groups: public sector led; company led; and residents led. Each type has its strength and weakness in their approach and process. Furthermore it shows that various types of GW activities have spread based on its own characteristics. It is then open to question whether the JGA *can or should* insist that the UK model should persist or let the JGA take its own unique way and respond to the local circumstances and flexibilities that emerge from below. These discussions are taking place to decide the future direction of GW in Japan (JGA 2001).

*5.3 Review*

It may be confusing but there is no single style of GW activity in Japan, instead there are many groups who refer to themselves as GW groups. Strictly speaking they are not what UK GW is, nor do they adhere to the model that the JGA themselves subscribe to. Some others are not directly supported by the JGA nor are they members of the JGA. It is not only that relations between the UK GW and JGA has not been close enough to rectify the early direction of the JGA, but there has been only a partial understanding of the flexibility that the UK GW trusts now operate with and concomitantly of the political issues at a higher level. Mitsuhashi *et al* (2000) however admit the difficulty of choosing the future direction of GW activities in Japan. Despite the national level politicking some local area groups or local government sponsored pilots are aiming to establish GW Trusts at the regional level, although this has yet to transpire (cf. Kora Town Council 1999). Changes made to the JGA management in 2001-02 do seem encouraging as the new leadership appear more energetic and well-networked than previous incumbents (Senga 2002).

There are several problems that the JGA faces and among them the following are the major challenges. Firstly the JGA has failed to persuade central government of its utility when compared to other options or groups. This is partly due to not being able to show successful cases to society. Thus it is all the more important for the JGA to succeed with the 'official' pilot cases – therefore backing groups with track records is expediently sensible. Under current regulation Japanese local government cannot subsidise in sufficient amounts to maintain NPOs or local groups. GW UK gain core funding from central government and also receive strong contributions from local authorities, often acting as guarantors. This requires legislative change for that situation to improve in Japan (Pekkanen 2001). In Japan a volunteer is regarded as non-paid and it is not easy to persuade municipalities to have professionally skilled paid full time staff working for NPOs – for them paid 'volunteers' appears a strange misnomer.

The function of the JGA has been limited to giving a kind of credibility to members in the society rather than fully functioning as leading and supporting GW activities. Many current local GW groups seem to have started activities before becoming a member of GW in order to solve problems and they have subsequently encountered or introduced the GW approach and taken a JGA pathway. The membership organization is a very usual approach to adopt in Japan with over 86, 000 voluntary groups registered in 2001-02. The vast majority of those were private organisations without legal standing (Watanabe 2002). These groups work in a rather uncoordinated and with a narrow issue-based focus. In terms of the Japanese model for environmental action there has been a lack of innovation in policy formulation, although changes to local government law have begun a process of reassessing the way things are done and who is involved in the policy process. Work on LA21 in Japan recently has cautiously advised that new models of working are developing (see Barrett & Usui 2002) that open up the ground for Groundwork style operations. Although there are also examples where old ways of doing things are dressed in new clothes or re-labelled to suit; 'In many instances…local bureaucrats simply renam[ed] an existing environmental plan…or an existing advisory group as an environmental forum' (Barrett & Usui 2002: 58).

More recently working with and utilising (empowering) local residents has been accepted by at least some quarters of the Japanese civil service. This aspect of change is now presented as an inevitable

part of the future direction of Japanese local governance. Compromises made over funding and structure as well as partial understanding of the underpinning logic or rationale of GW has led to the current problems that the JGA face. It is possible that in a rather desperate search for a new approach, and without close examination or thorough consideration, that the JGA was established. Since then pressure for a more UK style of approach has been applied but without funds or political support this is difficult for the JGA to achieve. It is further hampered by the way in which GW has been presented in Japan thus far.

In summary some of the key wider issues that have faced GW development and the JGA in Japan;

- Enrolment difficulties and minimal financial support from the five funding bodies,
- Inertia and stance of local government,
- Lack of a supportive legal framework for NPOs,
- Lack of understanding by the private sector,
- Lack of strong, informed or motivated leadership at the JGA.

We now turn to consider the story and development of a GW group in the wider context of that described above.

### *6. Case study: Mishima City, Shizuoka*

As indicated, Mishima was among the first cities in Japan to embrace the ideas of GW, acting as host to the delegations visiting from the UK in 1991 and 1992. Since those visits numerous activities and projects have been carried out under the GW banner in that city (with some activities having been carried out or planned prior to GW). Despite this history the Mishima GW NPO[4] is not a formal member of the JGA.

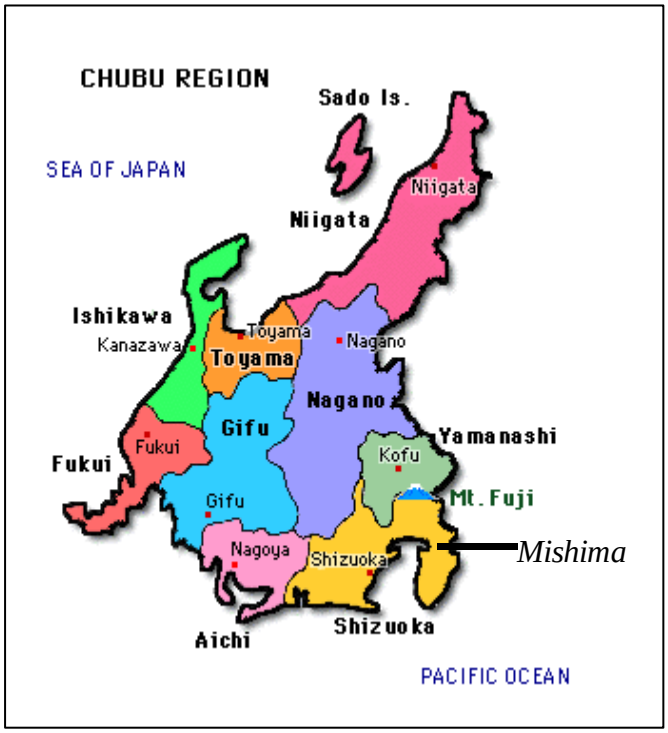
#### *6.1 Mishima*

Mishima is a city of approximately 150,000 pop situated about 120km west of Tokyo, (less than one hours journey time on the *Shinkansen* bullet train). The city is located on the old Shogun-era

[4] After the 1998 law was passed the Mishima GW Action Committee got NPO corporate status in 1999.

*Tokkaido* route between Kyoto and Tokyo[5]. This road was largely responsible for the settlement's growth in the Edo period. In 1941 the Town was awarded City status and in the late 1960s the *Shinkansen* rail station was built.

*Plate 3 - Map of Shizuoka area*




Mishima and the surrounding countryside is renowned for water and the city carries a civic slogan of *Mizu-no-Miyako*, Mishima - City of Water, Mishima. The reason for this being the plentiful and exceptionally pure water that springs up in Mishima, largely from the water flowing from the nearby Mount Fuji – the symbolic and spiritual focal point of Japan. In 1983 the City was designated as model district for 'Water and Green' by the National Land Agency (Katada, 1992 in Phillips 1992). In this sense Mishima had a history of civic pride in its local environment (Kawamura 1984). It is this history that forms an important context to GW in the city and which is discussed below.

[5] The *Tokkaido* was set up to link the old and new capitals of feudal Japan, with 53 staging points being licensed along the road, including Mishima. The road and its associated heritage is now an important tourist attraction for the towns and villages lining its route (see Dunn, 1969).

*6.2 Water as environmental resource, agent and intermediary*

The water is a central element of the case study, it acted as a prompt for environmental action in Mishima and continues to form a central role in the activities of many of the Groundwork and related projects undertaken in Mishima (cf. Kortelainen 1999; Parker & Wragg 1999). A crisis relating to local water usage and supply had prompted community environmental action since the 1960s (Kawamura 2002; Komatsu 2001; Watanabe 2001). Hence one of the initial reasons that Mishima was selected for study was because of the history of environmental action there (Calleawert 2002, Crouch & Parker 2003).

In the immediate post-war years the rivers and streams flowing through the City were important sources of drinking water and used for other domestic uses, such as washing, refrigeration, bathing - as well as the critical agricultural uses (i.e. rice paddy irrigation). During the 1950s and 60s the area and the foot of Mt Fuji underwent rapid and widespread economic development, with numerous factories and housing units being constructed in the vicinity of Mishima. A number of these industrial complexes required a large volume of water as part of their processing – indeed the plentiful supply of good quality water around the base of Mount Fuji was an attraction, combined with the relatively easy access to ports and the Tokyo / Yokohama megalopolis. In short this led to a fall in the water levels in the rivers and spring streams flowing in and around the City of Water (Kawamura 1984).

By the early 1960s the water levels were so low that for parts of the year the riverbeds and ponds were exposed and dry. Water contamination had got worse and clear water streams changed to dirty ditches. This situation persisted for some time. The first major environmental action group was formed to tackle water issue in Mishima in the mid-1960s. The situation worsened further with some ponds and springs drying up completely. This was particularly serious as a Japanese pleasure garden – the *Rakujuen* park - had as its centre-piece an ornamental lake the *Kohamaike.* This had started to dry up in 1962 and to this day it is still without water - except on rare occasions over the last ten years or so (see Plate 4).

This spring fed one of major water streams called the *Genpeigawa*. This was made as an irrigation channel for rice fields in the southern part of Mishima city. The emaciation of the water supply in the city led to mounting voices of concern and protest. This was set in the context of wider concerns

about the environment in Japan at the time and the rise of the Japanese environmental movement (Broadbent 1998). In the 1970s a film was made by a locally based, but nationally regarded, film director to publicise the water issue in Mishima (Watanabe 2002, Tsukada 2002).

*Plate 4 - Rakujuen Park with dry Kohamaike lake*

Memories of water-filled townscapes up until the early 1960s and the dried-out *Kohamaike* in the Rakujuen reminded local residents of the issue and galvanised many to heal the damaged city. The campaign to address the water situation gathered momentum. There was a strong feeling that one factory in particular was responsible for the lack of water in the City. Soon afterwards representatives of the groups of concerned residents confronted one of the major industrial water users, an aluminium company *Tore*, about the impact that their voluminous water usage was alleged to have on the city and surrounding areas. In 1965 they were persuaded to redirect some of their water to the streams in the Summer. The citizens delegation pursued the issue further and were supported by a petition signed by more than 20,000 people. This prompted the Shizuoka prefectural assembly to start action to mitigate the water supply problem in 1966 (Kawamura 1984). As a result water supply in the area was reorganized and some streams were resupplied with water. Despite these efforts the springs still do not rise and so the water problem issue persists in Mishima, with little water flowing through the city compared to the 1950s. This issue and initial protest was the antecedent of the now well-established (and Groundwork Mishima constituent) group, Mishima *Yusukai* or *Friends of the Water Society.*

Thus, different actors have tried to tackle water issues in Mishima and with some successes over the

years. For our purposes one of the crucial moments was the meeting of two of the key actors interested in the water issue in the late 1980s. This led indirectly to the establishment of *Yusuikai* in 1991 and which became a core action group for the establishment of GW. One of these was a widow of one of the traditionally respected families in Mishima who had devoted herself unselfishlessly to water issues in the City and whose house abuts the *Genpeigawa*. The other key player was a prefectural officer who, at around that time, successfully sought funding for improvements along 1.5km of the *Genpeigawa* stream in 1990. This was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture (Mishima Yusuikai 2001: 84). It aimed to enhance the amenity and create a waterfront space along this stream (see Plate 5). This is one of the projects to revitalise the old water city which predates GW adoption. Others were, at the time, trying to reintroduce fireflies, which can only survive in clear water, once again into the streams of Mishima. Water issues in Mishima appeared very complicated to solve - partly due to the range of interests involved. The *Yusuikai* group realised the need to incorporate various actors, including the local government, companies and other narrowly focused local action groups. In essence they had identified the need for partnership – virtually unheard of in Japan at that time. It was this process of enhancing the *Genpeigawa* which led the interest in GW and the birth of GW Mishima.

*Plate 5 - the Genpeigawa stream after environmental improvements*

The *Yusuikai* holds regular study sessions, field trips to well known water front places, clean river days, plus various other types of environmental enhancement such as; planting flowers, making gardens, and publishing news letters (Tsukada 2002). The group is action and achievement oriented. Through various activities a wide human network was made and one of early networkers was a key

person in establishing the JGA (Mishima Yusuikai 2001). *Yusuikai* led the establishment of the GW Mishima Action Committee on 2nd September 1992 to welcome the second Japan-UK GW communication visit. After the visit to Mishima by the UK delegates, plus interested Japanese academics and specialists, Mishima was chosen as one of two cities to start as a model for implementing the GW approach in Japan. This was importantly due to the planned and ongoing improvements for the *Gempeigawa* and the existing *Yusuikai* network. The UK GW delegates gave 10 issues and 10 proposals to Mishima after this visit (Phillips 1992). The recommendations included; creating a clear vision of the organisation, networking with other groups, establishing a GW group, devising a business plan and marketing themselves (NPO GW Mishima 2002). This gave Mishima clear guidance to follow and confidence to further proceed with environmental enhancement through a partnership approach and formed the basis of their actions in the next few years.

*Plate 6 - the Genpeigawa stream GW signage*

Mishima had an environmental enhancement project funded by the government, as noted above, and from this the GW style approach was taken to implement projects on other parts of the river. The *Genpeigawa* was enormously enhanced and the process itself was the first realisation of the GW approach in Mishima (Plate 6). However it is worth noting again here that, the project already existed to enhance the environment along the irrigation and only then was the GW Mishima Action Committee was founded – it fully utilised the *Yusuikai* and expanded as the success of the project became apparent. Each of the 12 or so participant groups in Mishima has retained its own leadership within the committee structure of NPO GW Mishima.

The *Gempeigawa* has become the showcase of Mishima GW – although it is open to debate whether this process of improvement would have occurred anyway. Since 1992 many groups from all over Japan have visited Mishima to learn about its unique environmental improvement style. The reflection we would highlight is that the initial success and pump-priming of the first project definitely encouraged local groups to join the GW action committee. In this sense success has bred success. For us the water issue however was the key to the inception of the GW approach in Mishima - it provided a cause and a need for a novel solution.

This begs the question; why use GW? Two key reasons emerge. Firstly local conditions required a unifying idea and the English brand mark made GW more attractive to people in Mishima - following this idea of *hakurai-shikou* (Watanabe 2001). Replication of the initial stages at Mishima and reflection on the circumstances and human resources present there might usefully be something that the JGA (and others) consider in the future.

Mishima was the first city to implement the GW approach - even before JGA was established - and has good connections with UK GW. Mishima GW organised the first field trip to Oldham and Rochdale GW trust in 1993 and were introduced in the local UK press paper as the first GW 'Trust' in Japan (Evening Chronicle 1993). They also saw other examples of environmental improvement in Japan, including Kora Town (see appendix 2).

A series of environmental improvement projects were carried out between 1993 and 1998 including further park and water-based projects, which included habitat restoration. They have also begun school-based initiatives for environmental education, festivals and published numerous leaflets and texts relating to environmental improvement and local amenity issues (NPO GW Mishima 2002). Since 1991 Mishima have completed more than 16 major projects with numerous others detailed in their promotional literature (NPO GW Mishima 2002). More recently they had enough resource to employ part-time office staff and even a fulltime officer. By 2002 over 109 different group visits had visited Mishima to see the 'GW' projects.

Links to the UK are maintained, John Davidson (formerly of GW UK) visited in 1999 and in 2002

GW Mishima held a symposium to mark its tenth anniversary with a guest speaker Robin Henshaw, from Oldham and Rochdale GW addressing the event. There have also been field trips to UK GW trusts and other relevant projects. One of the tenth anniversary events in 2002 was one such example when more than 20 of the Mishima activists toured England. In 2003 they sent one of their executive members to Oldham and Rochdale in order to gain more professional skills and experience. Despite this proactivity however, the relationship between the JGA and Mishima has not been the strongest. Mishima has definitely has made its way without the help of the JGA and is more active in many ways than the JGA nationally, or when compared against JGA sponsored local project pilots. This is partly due to initial successes, the pre-existing groups in Mishima and the strong leadership of the committee chair with municipal and prefectural support.

*6.3 Capacity-building and practical achievement. The Role of Key Actors in Mishima*

The Mishima example and the existence of the GW organization from the early stage is due in large measure to a few key individuals and decisions taken around the time of the 1991 GW delegation visit. As discussed above much environmental work had been embarked upon in Mishima and unofficial residents groups had existed in Mishima long before the GW action committee. It is unlikely that the history of Mishima environmental action and GW in Mishima would be recognisable without a particular actor that has dominated proceedings over the last decade.

The lead individual responsible for guiding the action committee at Mishima is a dynamic individual ('X') who has been good at getting things done and has resisted the JGA view. The JGA did not understand clearly or agree with what he was trying to do;

> 'X is a dynamic person…he wanted to promote Groundwork his way, it's not seen by the senior people at the JGA as a big thing…' (Oyama, 2001)

Thus the tension was present at the outset between adopting a model that looked more like the UK approach - informed by direct experience through X and others linking with Mishima and the UK, versus a more cautious approach, as mentioned, and as advocated by senior JGA officials. The JGA were dominated by former employees of the powerful and conservative Ministry of Agriculture who have not been willing to let local flexibility flourish – a tension that in fact has been present with

GW UK but is being addressed under the federal structure (Fordham et al 2002). It may be that more 'soft' support and guidance about this could be beneficial for the JGA from the UK – indeed the planned regular visits or symposia may help in this respect (GW UK 2001) and the successful development of the Mishima NPO may also help persuade skeptics.

The key Mishima network builder 'X' has multiple roles and positions. He is also in a good position in terms of the funding network at the prefectural and municipal level and also within the Ministry of Agriculture. He works for Shizuoka Prefecture in the NPO section. His personal network is also useful as he grew up in Mishima and graduated from a local school. This is a critical bond in Japanese society. However his charisma was also critical as some skeptical actors were needed to be part of the committee. For example the ex-owner of the Rakujuen park was persuaded by him and others to be involved in GW as his status in Mishima is highly regarded. Different influential figures in Mishima were gathered in order to enable involvement and funding for GW projects. The leader utilized PR in various media, coupled with a strategic approach, passion and endeavour.

Our key actor had strong views about GW having listened carefully to the approach taken in the UK prior to 1990/1 and since then. X had worked for the JGA for two years acting as the first secretary-general, but soon left after the approach taken by the JGA and the Ministry of Agriculture differed from his view of how GW should develop in Japan. He felt that the national level of GW implementation was unlikely to deliver results quickly. He put his energies in building up the Mishima 'GW' organization to fit the vision that he would rather see develop, rather than the approach that a fledgling JGA appeared to want. The GW 'brand' from the UK seemed to be an emblematic tool to bind other volunteer and local groups into one.

After the tenth anniversary of Mishima GW discussion about a successor to lead the network is now openly on the agenda. This will be an important step as the network has relied on X for direction until now.

The finding that key actors or influential individuals are important to the success of environmental initiatives is hardly new and more widely the role of elite network builders has been noted with a range of literatures. Selman in his work in the UK has noted that the characteristics of such

individuals can be crucial factors in the success of environmental groups, their social capital being a key element of this (see Putnam, 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Lin, 2001; Parker & Doak, 2002). The 'paradox of charisma' as it might be called comes into play here. Where there is a strong network builder there are questions that arise which relate to the impacts that such an individual can have – both positive and negative. They may be strong at the 'getting things done' side and be catalytic, but what wider learning / skills benefits do the other individual participants get? In Japan this is realistically an area of research that a Japanese researcher could usefully assess. It is therefore an aspect that should be explored in Japan, much in the same way that investigating the human and social capital impacts of community initiatives is being looked at in the UK and elsewhere in the West. Unfortunately untangling this dimension has not been possible in this project. If GW in Japan is to develop a deeper understanding of potential participation benefits and pitfalls then this aspect will need to be understood.

*6.4 Mishima as the 'organic Japanese GW model' or, an atypical example?*

The question set in the section heading is easily answered; it is both atypical and an organic model. First it should be stressed that there is unlikely to be typicality in the Japanese context (see appendix 2 for two further examples). As we have explained the Japanese cultural and socio-economic context is so different that this is a reasonable assertion. A wider study, or a study undertaken in future years, may find similarities in some aspects, but this report focuses on Mishima and reflects on difference and micro-activity; as far as has been possible in a small project. It is clear that the Mishima groups and the leadership of X in particular featured a good and relatively deep understanding of the principles underpinning GW. He also realised that a more bottom-up process of network engineering would be required. However next steps and how to move GW on in Japan in the future is another issue - and is discussed below.

Mishima GW has been lauded by many, but its 'success' has been downplayed by the JGA as it has dissented from the approach that they wanted to see. It has also refused to join the JGA after disagreements in the early stages of setting up the JGA. As such Mishima doesn't have the official recognition of either the JGA or GW UK as a partner. Mishima GW has created its original logo mark, although the antecedence from the UK logo is clear (as the front page of the report indicates). Field trips to Mishima have provided living examples of the GW approach and it shows their

material achievements, which can be more powerful than papers or other exhortations from the JGA. Mishima is known as an advanced case, and visitors therefore ignore the fact that Mishima is non-member of the JGA, but do respond to the results of the network – in this sense Mishima is still a 'good advert for GW and by (non!)association the JGA.

The cultural dynamics in Japan are very different, as indicated earlier. This leads to one of the main points for analysis – how should GW or its equivalent be best operationalised in Japan? And how might this perhaps be altered or 'stepped' over time? For example, one important point for the future is how to ensure that flatter hierarchies can be introduced to maximize the processual benefits in terms of capacity-building and that the potential wider benefits of GW are felt. Also how can flexibility be allowed in the process in Japan where top-down and rather inflexible thinking still dominates in the bureaucracy. In this sense GW could potentially play an important role in building civil society in Japan and assist in decompartmentalising old divisions both locally and nationally.

Success might follow a similar pattern to that of GW in the UK with small, less challenging, projects and with a more modest expectation in terms of the 'model' and the range of partners and funding that could be attracted. What scope is there for more than one 'flavour' of GW in Japan to persist? How and when could the funding organisations and perhaps central government deal with this kind of flexible decentralisation, bearing in mind the 'command and control' history of the Japanese bureaucracy. Our work also begs the question - what kind of things should the JGA concentrate on? And further than this, there is likely to be differential development over time in different places. We feel this is inevitable and to be embraced given the nature of community working. Each area (or 'pilot') is likely to develop its own approach and its own network relations. The JGA needs to find a way of encouraging this while monitoring and advising.

The examples that we have seen and heard about are tending to focus on easier to tackle issues and using existing organisations and volunteers, even to the extent of retrospectively labelling prior projects as GW. While each Trust in the UK and local group or NPO in Japan has a unique style, there are two general approaches to Groundwork. They can be characterized as;

*i. Groundwork as environmental improvement*.

This model has a less ambitious focus - similar to that found in the UK in the early years of GW. This appears to prevail in Japan, with notable exceptions. There is not a problem with this variant of GW except that it does not tackle deeper issues, or concern itself overly with some of GW UK's objectives, such as capacity-building or skills training.

*ii. Groundwork as neighbourhood renewal.*

This second approach is a rather more challenging variant of GW. This seeks to take on deeper problems and issues and is also concerned with process concerns. In order for this to take hold in Japan several factors would need to be addressed. Firstly Groundwork / JGA would almost certainly require more buy-in from central government. In some senses the JGA are trying to demonstrate success in order to achieve this. However identifying problems and issues and pointing to success in resolving those issues elsewhere might be more persuasive. Secondly, various actors at a local, regional and national scale need to understand the GW ethos more thoroughly – the authors suspect that there are some basic misapprehensions that persist about GW in Japan. These include misunderstandings about terminology and underlying concepts on which this variant of Groundwork activity and outcome rests.

There is a danger that while the former approach dominates the latter one may not evolve. The former, dominant idea of GW in Japan will be dominant and perhaps somewhat fixed in the minds of local and national decision makers.

*6.5 The Problems*

In summary form the problems faced in Japan by GW are still difficult to put into order of importance or magnitude. We think they are primarily because of;

- a misunderstanding of the purpose of GW,
- a lack of realization or desire to acknowledge certain problems in Japan,
- a conviction that traditional approaches through municipalities is acceptable,
- an unwillingness to fund new approaches in the current economic climate in Japan (despite its potential savings / benefits),

- lack of acceptance that GW needs a patient stance in the beginning of a process that will take time to mature - then seek to tackle more deep-rooted or apparently insoluble issues,
- A lack of understanding of how best to initiated a Groundwork group and how to set up pre-project discussions in different areas.

Even in this research we have seen examples where the potential to tackle deeper issues is present, however experienced staff are important and delicate social dynamics may be exacerbated by the presence of GW-style initiatives unless care is taken about previous history and problems[6].

Soon we feel it will be appropriate to fully appraise the JGA pilots and perhaps to examine the other GW style projects that have continued without pilot status in Japan. This presents a challenge for the JGA and others as this kind of research should have a wide focus and use other environmental actions and groups as comparators. The objectives and issues to be tackled by GW in Japan should also be reappraised in this process. It is our view that two different styles of GW could co-exist in Japan – in a sense this kind of situation exists in the UK with different projects with different foci running simultaneously within Trusts. It is an unfortunate truth that some of the social issues that prompted Groundwork initially in England are becoming more serious in Japan. This leads us to conclude that it is more necessary for Japan to find ways of tackling those problems now than has ever been the case.

## *7. Conclusion*

### *7.1 Findings*

Our project to look at GW development in Japan has been an interesting experience, although it has been made more difficult due to cultural barriers, such as language[7]. Despite this we have been able

[6] The Kora case being a clear example of this. The team visited Kora as JGA pilot project to discover that much work had been done prior to GW adoption in the town and that there was a very delicate socio-cultural issue relating to historically discriminated groups or class in the town - the *Buraku.* This issue had also resulted in a very divided community. Efforts to resolve this would need to be approached very carefully, thoughtfully, and probably over a long timescale (see appendix 2; BLHRRI 2003).

[7] By experiencing this it gives us an insight into the differences that Japanese have likewise in comprehending English-based texts and ideas.

to provide an account of how GW first developed in Japan and the directions it has followed since 1991. We must reiterate however, that the work cannot be read as exhaustive or definitive – we certainly hope that our 'take' on GW provides some food for thought and at least stimulates or provokes a debate about the future of GW in Japan.

The reliance on already established groups and the key role of active individuals demonstrates how GW and the JGA have focused on these social and human capital resources. These may help in building capacity in those areas but without such features and a lack of paid GW staff in other areas the model is unlikely to prosper. The existence of local community groups and environmental groups of different types in Japan indicates that in many areas there is evidence of community cohesion and the impetus to build capacity. This should be encouraged but an emphasis on problem areas is a challenging future step for Japan.

The process of encouraging local activities GW in Japan is the opposite from UK GW. In Japan GW was introduced after some environmental improvement activities had taken place and on fertile ground. Thus, unlike the UK, the trust had not been the *centre* of initiating activities. The pre-existing environmental groups needed to have a logo to gather different actors and GW has been in one sense taken as a 'magic' ingredient which may bring about positive impacts. The GW label is utilised to further promote, enhance and amalgamate activities. In this sense the Japanese have demonstrated that they do not necessarily need to follow the British approach, but simply to adopt the label. However efforts are still being pursued to established GW Trusts at the prefectural or municipal level – this is seen as the way to lever in more funds from government and perhaps the private sector.

Despite the above it is possible to say that the time for a Groundwork that is understandable and similar in focus to that existing in the UK is becoming more applicable in Japan. Economic problems, loosening of previous administrative and legal structures are all seemingly pushing on an open door. However the history of GW in Japan is so far chequered and some kind of separation between local environmental groups and new projects aimed at deeper social issues would be advisable. In our view support for organic and active groups in places like Mishima should also be more forthcoming with a 'broader church' policy being adopted by the JGA.

In this vein lessons may be drawn in more developed areas, such as Mishima and from wider structures and experiences in the UK. For example; Community / Parish plans, Community Strategies and other project vehicles pursued by the Countryside Agency, for example. A wider exchange of knowledge is needed so that the Japanese can see how and where GW has come from, why and how it sits amongst other structures in the UK.

There will need to be an emphasis on *process* established (Oyama 2001) and indeed the secondment of UK practitioners to Japan may help in this respect. However, short-lived interventions by these actors in areas where there are deep-rooted or difficult issues may not really help and care is urged here. More work on grassroots development rather than top-down intervention is necessary but patience and resources to achieve this will be required.

Notwithstanding the above there should be a multi-partite acceptance that Japan GW approaches and aims may be different to those of GW UK, particularly since we can reflect both on how GW UK itself has changed over the past 20 or so years and on the experience of the JGA over the past seven years. Resistance to GW needs to be better understood - a task for a different kind of analysis focused on central government and elite bureaucratic change.

Funding is a common and tangible barrier to future development of GW and culturally there are a range of issues, including the need to make such paid volunteer work honourable, if GW is to expand and tackle more deep-rooted issues in Japan (such as the *buraku* issue, unemployment etc.). Central government need to realize that GW can help with some of the bigger socio-economic issues that are growing in Japan, and perhaps fund the JGA accordingly. The current scope for development that the current funding regime affords the JGA is fairly limiting. More support for private sector involvement from central government would also be a boost.

Linked to this above point the Japanese central government and the JGA need to think hard about 'horses for courses' - what models, and for what purposes, should they be encouraging in Japan. A suite of options and policy vehicles is needed to approach different issues of different types.

There is a tension to be resolved between flexibility and the 'branded' approach defined by GW UK. It is seen as a strength that GW Trusts in the UK develop projects innovatively and flexibly to suit local circumstances (GFA race et al 2002) but by the same token there has been a feeling that if things are done too differently in Japan the identity and reputation of GW UK may suffer. This may be, in part, explained by language and other cultural barriers making the parent – GW UK – feel unsure as to how 'the child is doing at school' and whether the curriculum is appropriate.

On a more conceptual note is has become clear that the language and theory used by the British voluntary sector / academics are not always well understood by Japanese actors. More work on developing and checking understandings may be required. Similarly a better understanding of the barriers and structural issues faced by the Japanese needs to be understood by others.

*7.2. Recommendations*

Our conclusions are multifaceted, they speak to different actors in this wider GW network and our recommendations are set out below with suggestions for the different interests based on our deliberations.

*National / international*

- GW UK need to assess the resource implications of support. Carefully consider whether GW UK support in any form other than vocal and 'good neighbour' support is viable or necessary. In some senses many of the points below are resource dependent.
- GW UK need to better understand the crucial distinctions in terms of culture, administration and law that exist in Japan.
- Mould GW Japan to fit and move to alter legal / administrative parameters where necessary and desirable.
- Encourage GW UK documents to be translated and explained carefully to GW participants in Japan. They are often lacking contextual background to fully understand the motives and aims of GW UK.
- Examine the need the retain control of the 'Brand' - perhaps consider what the 'bare essential' elements are. Can Japanese groups be realistically prevented from using the brand anyway?
- Adopt best practice from other environmental organisations and processes not only GW –

LA21 for example (see Barrett & Usui 2002). In this sense ensure a wider appreciation of capacity building.

- Go for 'shared ownership' link officers to be 'planted' in key areas / prefectures with a developmental role at all levels – partnership funded by prefecture, municipality and JGA. In some ways replicate the Mishima network. In others look at how GW UK has tried to intervene in 'failing' areas and how for example the CA fund officers in other organisations.
- Investigate possibility of secondments of experienced UK staff to Japan for one or two year periods to advise local groups – but without a fixed view of what this form might take at the local level.
- Reflect on the core components that GW needs to retain/adopt to support local Japanese groups. Partnership is something that most would endeavour to achieve.
- Further, wider research of the type explained in this report is to be encouraged, however given the language and other cultural barriers that exist it would be preferable to ensure that an experienced Japanese researcher led the work and then leads on the subsequent report compilation. Given this it is useful to maintain a multinational team approach to ensure that auto-critique of findings and assumptions is enabled.

*For Mishima GW and others*

- There is also a need to ensure a deeper understanding of capacity-building / social capital ideas.
- However, ensure that your model for action fits local circumstances as well as chiming with prefectural or national wishes,
- What new challenges or parallel organizations should (Mishima / Shizuoka) develop or face up to?
- Do you want (to reinstate) linkage with GW UK and the JGA?
- Look to identify a strategy for the next ten years or so. What kind of things do the constituent groups want to achieve?
- Look at how do the initiatives that GW UK chime with local aspirations, the local (Mishima) community need?
- Make use of other ideas and schemes beyond the GW UK umbrella; for example community planning techniques, visioning processes (Wates, 2000) and project based initiatives such as;

Doorstep Greens, Millennium Greens and the Local Heritage Initiative (Countryside Agency, 2000).

- Look more widely at the range of self-help activities that are actively pursued in the West, such as community self-build and parish planning,
- Look to explain how business can benefit from GW engagement so that more funds can be levered in,
- Finally, keep up the good work; *Ganbare, Ganbare (Mishima)!*

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## *9. Appendices*

### *Appendix 1 – Key interviewees (2001-2002)*

Mr Philip Barton – Director GW UK.

Mr Hidehiko Hanashima - Tsurumai Jichikai, Sakado.

Mr Robin Henshaw – Director Oldham and Rochdale GW Trust UK.

Mr. Hirokazu Kawamura – Former Local Mishima Activist, politician and author.

Mrs Yukiko Komatsu – Mishima GW NPO, Mishima Yusuikai.

Mr M. Matsuyama – JGA Tokyo.

Mr. Toshiyuki Matsuyama - Sakado GW.

Prof. Nobuo Mitsuhashi – Utsunomiya University.

Mr Masayuki Miyazaki – Mishima City Council.

Mr Kikuo Nose - Kora Town Council.

Mr Yoshi Oyama – University of Birmingham.

Mr Naoaki Ozawa - Sakado City Council.

Prof. Adrian Phillips – Emeritus Professor of Environmental Planning, Cardiff.

Prof. Yutaro Senga – Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology.

Mrs Reiko Tsukada – Yusuikai society, Mishima.

Mr Masao Tujikaya – Kora GW.

Mr Unosuke Uematsu – Executive director, JGA.

Ms Akiko Urushibata – GW Mishima NPO.

Mr Tsuyoshi Wakisaka – General manager, JGA.

Mr Toyohiro Watanabe – GW Mishima, Shizuoka Prefecture.

Mr Yoshio Yamada - Kora Planning Department.

Mr Hideo Yamamoto - Mayor of Kora.

The research team would also like to highlight that numerous others that have informed the project indirectly, through conversations and in passing incidental information.

***Appendix 2 - Supplementary cases: Sakado & Kora***

Visits and interviews were conducted in two further places apart from Mishima. These were Sakado, in Saitama Prefecture (approx. 1 hour north of Tokyo) and Kora, in Shiga Prefecture (near Lake Biwa, east of Kyoto). Both of these places have become GW groups supported by or members of the JGA. Kora is one of the four pilot areas designated by the JGA in 1999. These examples provided counterpoints to the Mishima study and enabled the team to triangulate the Mishima findings to some extent. In each case a visit and series of interviews were conducted to try and appreciate what had been happening and to understand the circumstances around why those places had adopted Groundwork.

*i. Sakado, Saitama prefecture*

In this case the local authority has taken the initiative to implement the GW approach and chose Sakado city as one of the first two cases to apply it (Sankei Newspaper 1998). The GW approach was introduced by the Saitama prefectural government, with preparations for this beginning in December 1997. The area around Sakado is characterised by a mixture of urban, commuter cities close to Tokyo and rural agricultural land. In this sense the area has been without a strong community spirit because much of the housing is recent and the people living there are immigrants from other areas (Matsuyama 2001). There are parallels to some of the housing estates on the edges of UK cities that have benefited from GW projects.

Sakado city council has had a project to 'fill the city with flowers' since 1992, aiming to make a network of residents (matizukuri) through this process. In 1997 a group, *Tsurumai Jichikai* - Volunteer Group of Flowers in Tsurumai district in Sakado City, was founded to make a better community environment through flora. The activities of the group was recognised by the city council and they received a prize. *Tsurumai Jichikai* asked the city council if it could convert a small area of empty land into a garden / park in January 1998. This area was formerly part of a sewage processing facility. The city council then introduced the GW approach via their membership of the JGA, and which then led to the establishment of the Sakado GW action committee (Sakado GW Action Committee 2000).

Saitama prefecture funded the first GW project with a 300,000¥ contribution and Sakado city with 20,000¥ (ibid.). The GW approach was totally new to the volunteer groups and local residents and they started to learn about the JGA only months before formal designation (1st September 1998) as the model case or approach to implementation of GW in Saitama. Through support from the JGA, visits to GW implementing cities, including Mishima, symposiums and workshops, residents and council officers activists learnt about the GW approach and asked residents and companies to join in with the project. Tsurumai district saw its garden completed by the end of March 1999 and got the permission to use the logo of GW in the same month (Saitama Shinbun 1999; Sakado GW Action Committee 2000). Their next project is to grow a rare but traditional plant called Murasaki, which is one of the 'red listed' plants of distinction by the government (Sakado GW Action Committee 2000). Murasaki used to be abundant in the area but became extinct from the natural habitat in the industrial period.

The case we observed had involved as wide a cross-section of the locality as possible. A small scale park was initiated and completed by local residents with the support of the local authority. The project focus that we saw had been to create a small park themed on the reuse of recycled material. This appeared to be very much like a UK 'Millennium Greens' type approach. The leaders of the Sakado group were very interested and apparently unaware of the wider and possibly deeper aims of Groundwork UK.

The leading actors of Sakado are Mr. Matsuyama, the head of a local business group and Ms. Endo, the leader of local volunteer group. However the support from the city council is strong and Sakado GW action committee office is located within the city council. Recognition of GW is very limited and the council has struggled to gain understanding from residents and businesses about the ethos of GW. The interviews found that one of the major aims / motives of the adoption of GW in Sakado is in building a community network in the Tsurumai district. There are new residents moving in the area and the Chonaikai (Jichikai) wants to build a network among old and new residents. In this sense the GW approach seems appropriate. By 2003 plans to begin another park project were well underway.

*ii. Kora, Shiga prefecture*

The town is now well known in Japan as a water-related community development example. This was the first town that the Mishima *Yusuikai* visited to learn about water city projects in October 1991, just after its foundation (Yusuikai 2001). The Mishima GW Action Committee also paid a visit in September 1993 (NPO GW Mishima 2002). Kora is a small rural town with a population of approximately 8,700 (Kora Town Council 2000). This number has been in decline for some time due to outmigration, partly to avoid postcode stigmatization, as will be explained. The main industry is agriculture, mostly run by the elders with few successors and a growing number of farmers with side-jobs. Geographically it is located the left side of the Inugami River on an alluvial fan that is famous for rice production.

There are 13 discernible *Shuuraku* (communities) and the town has a longer history of community development efforts following a very long history of intra-village rivalry and hostility stemming from water rights conflicts from feudal times. This was especially caused by droughts. After the construction of the Inukami Dam and the Kanaya head works in the 1960s the water supply stabilised in the town. Irrigation from the river now runs all over the town and the streams are still used for washing vegetables, emergency use (fire supply) and garden fountains. Efforts to address the remaining historical divisions between the communities had culminated in a citizen participation programme in the 1980s (Kora Town Council 2000).

A paddy field and irrigation improvement plan was proposed in 1981 but negative impacts on the local environment seemed to be inevitable outcomes of the plan. This proposal led to widespread protest – on a topic that had historically aroused strong feelings. A huge cut in public work in the town and a new mayor with a new administrative approach in the mid 1980s made for a turning point in community and town development thinking. These changes involved the first occasion when town development was partly planned by residents themselves (Nose 2001).

The town council conducted environmental research, led by an academic, to help alleviate the conflicts. This study led to the Kora Town Rural Landscape Creation Initiative in 1985 and then a further landmark scheme of *Seseragi* Clear Stream Garden Town Development in 1990 (Kora Town Council 1999). The new comprehensive plan prioritised the preservation and enhancement of

the rural landscape – with the water being integral to this aim. Lectures and workshops with specialists encouraged the participation of local residents in environmental enhancement and development and its success led to the establishment of the Seseragi Clear Stream Community College (Tsujikawa 2001). A new action group formed in 1989 in each of the 13 communities. This involved a community development committee which enabled the participation of various actors within each community. This residents' groups are innovative and more democratic as existing community groups have a long history of vertical administrative organisation. The rivalry between each community then led to competition to achieve enhanced environmental or water feature development through pocket parks, stream enhancement and playgrounds (Nose 2001; Tsujikawa 2001). Residents have since been involved in various town development projects funded by the public sector, including central government ministries such as MAFF (Agriculture) (Kora Town Council 2000, 2001).

The achievements have been very visual and has further encouraged local people to participate in their own town development. As in Mishima, water has been the critical bond or issue to motivate residents in Kora. It is also worth mentioning that the long and continuous endeavour to tackle the deep-rooted human rights issues in the town has been one of the bases on which to pursue the resident-motivated community development. As noted above historical water disputes and the human rights problem is deeply rooted in the town and it has been not easy to make links and amalgamate all 13 communities into one force (Yamamoto 2001). GW, as the third party, has now been given a role to link 13 communities, and to make a physical network to the various water features in the town of 1,366 ha in area. While the partnership of the town has stronger links now between the residents and the public sector there is little mention of support from private sector companies (Kora Town Council 1999, 2000).

The town has seen the huge environmental enhancement during the 1990s and the council wants to proceed further and keep the momentum of residents' activities. GW was introduced in 1999 by JGA after advice from a senior professor, who has been one of key four specialists instructing Kora town development since 1990 (Kora Town Council 2000, Senga 2002). GW has been introduced to further this direction (GW Kora 2000). Kora has its own unique approach to community development already when it was appointed as a GW pilot case. It is our view that care should be

taken to implement the GW model here as the situation is complex and delicate between the thirteen separate 'communities' living in Kora. There is still a task to be carefully discussed about how to horizontally integrate these different communities – a task made more difficult still by the existence of the *buraku* issue, which is too complex to detail here (see; BLHRRI 2003).

There have been many visitors to Kora City to see the achievements in the past decade, and it has provided confidence to Kora residents. The town council seemed to hope positioning it as one applicable example of community-led development in Japan, even though the town is small would be beneficial. Perhaps the Council regards the GW brand, plus national recognition as a mark of distinction and local pride. It did appear to the researchers as if GW had been portrayed as a panacea for what appeared to be a rather intractable and deeply ingrained set of micro-social tensions that have existed for many years and which were exacerbated by the *buraku* stigma. It is possible, however, that GW can intervene to erode these long standing divisions – but our recommendations and conclusions apply.

*Reflective note*

In general terms the wider understanding of GW amongst the people we met in the above cases seemed limited and certainly the confidence and ability of the groups we met were mixed. It was almost as if they had been told that GW was a good thing and had taken that at face value. This uncritical acceptance of a system, model and process is fraught with difficulties. It is hoped that the case study areas do find ways of taking the most relevant and workable elements suggested by the GW model, while retaining the aspects of good practice and careful development that were developed prior to the adoption of the GW label. For GW to be effective here stronger links and a more detailed explanation and training for local groups activists seems necessary.