

Takayuki Shimaoka · Takahiro Kuba
Hirofumi Nakayama · Toshiyuki Fujita
Nobuhiro Horii *Editors*

Basic Studies in Environmental Knowledge, Technology, Evaluation, and Strategy

Introduction to East Asia Environmental
Studies

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 Springer

Editors

Takayuki Shimaoka
Kyushu University
Fukuoka, Japan

Takahiro Kuba
Kyushu University
Fukuoka, Japan

Hirofumi Nakayama
Kyushu University
Fukuoka, Japan

Toshiyuki Fujita
Kyushu University
Fukuoka, Japan

Nobuhiro Horii
Kyushu University
Fukuoka, Japan

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Basic Studies in Environmental Knowledge, Technology, Evaluation, and Strategy

Preface

Human activities today are increasing at a pace rarely seen in human history. The economies in the West and in developed countries in other parts of the world have continued to grow over the long term because of mass consumption and at the expense of resources and energy. Population growth, urbanization, and economic development likewise have progressed in developing countries, including those in East Asia, at a speed greater than that in the developed countries; consequently, developing countries have had to deal with environmental problems more seriously than developed countries have, including water and air pollution, soil erosion, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and desertification.

A major characteristic of East Asia is a great discrepancy in income between the developed and the poorest countries, even as the region as a whole is growing, with the developing countries chasing after the developed countries as they step up the rate of their stages of development. East Asia is thriving in certain areas because of international relationships in production, trade, investment, finance, and aid.

Mutual dependency between Japan and East Asia deepened when the East Asian countries opened up their respective economies under various liberalization policies that promoted trade with Japan and acceptance of direct Japanese investment as keys to their economic development strategy. These deepened relationships have engendered high economic growth in this area.

Besides the existing economically mutually dependent relationships, a proposal for new coordination in environmental conservation as an international mission would be significant in terms of the current international situation. Therefore, as a developed country, Japan is expected to play a large role in East Asia regarding environmental problems. Japan possesses an environmental awareness born of its struggles to overcome pollution and its accumulation of rich technical knowledge, funding, human resources, and research for solving problems; and the significance of reinvesting such resources in foreign countries is enormous. International cooperation and coordination in environmental conservation in all of East Asia must be recognized as essential to the stability and development of the region, and the development of a system for fostering such relationships is absolutely necessary.

To solve the environmental problems in East Asia, the regional diversity in geography, climate, history, religion, culture, political state, and economy must be recognized. The environmental sense that is common to the region and that emphasizes harmony with the natural environment must be understood, and strategic solutions as per local characteristics and conditions must be assessed while taking the diversity and commonalities in the region into account. For example, accounting for factors such as local economic, technical, and human resource standards in policy designs and technical selections is important for developing countries. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to train people who are capable of finding strategic solutions through wide, highly professional knowledge in not only environmental problems but also related fields (i.e., “environmental strategists,” which we will discuss later), and to take an academic approach by systematizing East Asia Environmental Studies. Here, we define East Asia Environmental Studies as courses of studies for comprehensively understanding the essence of environmental phenomena in East Asia with the characteristics discussed earlier, and for designing optimal policies and technologies for creating a sustainable, safe, and secure environment.

Kyushu University has a long history in and extensive knowledge of international coordination with East Asian countries because of its geographical advantage, and it has engaged in many environmental studies with a strong awareness of the transboundary damage inflicted by environmental problems from China, the Korean Peninsula, and Southeast Asia. The East Asia Environmental Problem Project that began in September 2007 was a part of Kyushu University’s 100th anniversary project, which addressed complex global environmental problems such as air pollution, river and ocean pollution, urban problems, wastes, and food pollution in East Asia, particularly in China, which is undergoing rapid development.

The project was reformed and expanded in April 2009 to the Research Institute for East Asia Environments (RIEAE) with the president of Kyushu University as the head, and it has developed a system for contributing to responses concerning environmental issues in East Asia with education and research.

RIEAE and its researchers aim for social contribution at a national level by solving increasingly complex environmental problems in a practical manner through coordination with relevant institutions. With support from private companies, RIEAE has established 10 research groups, as follows. The “social infrastructure consortium” (urban environment group, low-carbon urban system group, food risk group) works to solve environmental problems caused by urbanization and industrialization; the “environmental symbiosis consortium” (aquatic environment group, anti-desertification group, bioproduction environment group) conducts research for the sustainable and effective use of natural resources without loss of biodiversity; and the “environmental conservation consortium” (air quality group, marine environment group, and environmental chemistry group) and “environmental planning and policy group” research the prevention of environmental pollution

at the local, regional, and trans-boundary levels. In all, 58 researchers are linked to one another and are working on diverse themes in research and education.

Kyushu University has positioned the RIEAE as one of its major projects, and it is funded by the Special Research Budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The institute was founded initially for research purposes, but as stated earlier, human development is absolutely essential for solving environmental problems. Therefore, the institute began to work on developing human resources and providing the research results to education, which truly took off when the East Asia Environmental Strategist Training Program proposed by the institute was selected for the next 5 years in October 2010 by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) as the International Environment Leaders Training Program.

The East Asia Environmental Strategist Training Program is for the purpose of training international leaders by playing to the strengths of Kyushu University as a leader in East Asian environmental studies. It employs the university's rich human resources and its educational and research facilities, as well as the geographical advantage of being near advanced research institutions such as RIEAE.

International leaders trained through the program are called "environmental strategists." The qualifications for an environmental strategist have been defined as comprising the four following skills:

- Environmental knowledge: has acquired a wide range of knowledge from the social to the natural sciences and can comprehensively and systematically understand the relationship between human activities and environmental problems from various points of view.
- Environmental technology: is able to choose feasible technologies from a menu of environmental measures based on local conditions in a developing country.
- Environmental evaluation: is able to accurately understand the structure of environmental problems, and is thoroughly knowledgeable about tools for assessing environmental load and impacts.
- Environmental strategy: is able to apply solutions with leadership using strategic thinking skills, as well as decision making for solving environmental problems in a consensus formation process.

The major goal of this book is to train environmental strategists, using the essence of the East Asia Environmental Strategist Training Program. Its ultimate objective is to impart a broad knowledge of the environmental problems in East Asia in simple terms so that beginners can comprehensively and systematically understand environmental problems, and to help readers acquire four practical skills for strategic development of solutions: (1) environmental knowledge, (2) environmental technology, (3) environmental evaluation, and (4) environmental strategy.

As mentioned earlier, East Asia Environmental Studies is designed to foster a comprehensive understanding of the essence of social and environmental phenomena in East Asia and to develop optimal policies and technologies for creating a sustainable safe and secure environment. Developing environmental strategists who

can find strategic solutions by using their wide and highly professional knowledge on environmental problems and related fields is inseparable from East Asia Environmental Studies as a whole. Therefore, this book is titled *Basic Studies in Environmental Knowledge, Technology, Evaluation, and Strategy: Introduction to Asia Environmental Studies*, and the contents are divided into four essential parts that correspond to the above-named four practical skills required for environmental strategists.

In this book, the authors have attempted to keep the text simple and to limit the explanations to basic concepts in each related field so that the content is understandable both to beginners, such as college undergraduates, and to professionals from different fields. In addition, the book is aimed at providing up-to-date and useful information and research so that it will be useful to front-line researchers and engineers. Part of the book was written by experts on the latest results of their research. We, the editors, would like to thank them for their contributions.

We will be greatly pleased if the book is of any help in solving the environmental problems in East Asia and beyond.

Fukuoka, Japan

Takayuki Shimaoka

Editors and Contributors

Takayuki Shimaoka Takayuki Shimaoka, is a Professor of Faculty of Engineering, Kyushu University. He has B. Eng., M. Eng. and Dr. Eng. from Kyushu University. His research fields are environmental engineering and solid waste management. His specific research topics are qualitative change of solid waste and transportation of materials in landfill. In recent years, he has focused on geochemical change of incineration residues for the beneficial reuse of it. He acted an executive director of Research Institute for East Asia Environments, Kyushu University since 2009, and serviced to development of human resources who can contribute to solve Asian environment issues.

Nobuhiro Horii is an Associate Professor at Faculty of Economics, Kyushu University. He has B.Law and M.law (major in politics) from Keio University. His research work has been about energy and environment issues, especially focusing on China. He has been worked as a researcher of Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO), as a consultant of the World Bank and International Energy Agency, and as a visiting professor of Institute of Social Science, The University of Tokyo.

Takahiro Kuba is the professor of Department of Urban and Environmental Engineering, Graduate School of Engineering, Kyushu University. He has B.Eng. from the Saga University, and M.Eng. and Ph.D. in Eng. from the Kyushu University. His researches have mainly related to the integrated preservation of the water environment using various technologies, such as water environment purification, integrated water management, and sewage treatment, from a wide range of viewpoints that cover the large scale of urban ecology and the small scale of microorganism ecology. His current and previous research interests are the application possibility of bamboo charcoal as cesium ion adsorbent, development of "Eco-engineering Dam Barrier Structure (EDBS)", anaerobic wastewater treatment in a fluidized bed reactor, sewage treatment with denitrifying phosphate removing organisms and nitrifiers, and allelopathic effects of macrophyte on growth of cyanobacteria *Microcystis aeruginosa* etc. He has worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands, and as an associate professor at the Kyushu University.

Hirofumi Nakayama is an associate professor of Department of Urban and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Kyushu University, Japan. Dr. Nakayama's major research interests are in the areas of environmental accounting on waste management, application of remote sensing technology for waste management.

Toshiyuki Fujita is a Professor at Faculty of Economics, Kyushu University. He has B.Eng., M. Eng., and Ph.D. in Eng. from University of Tokyo. His major is environmental economics and his research work has been about game theoretic analyses of global environmental policies and international environmental agreements. He has worked at Tokyo University of Science as a research associate and Kyushu University as an associate professor.

Tetsuya Kusuda is Senior Advisor at the Research Institute of East Asia on Environment. He has earned B.Eng., M.Eng., and Dr. Eng. from Kyushu University. His research work has expanded to environment, environmental systems, ecological systems, water and wastewater treatment, trenchless technology on underground pipelines and environmental ethics. He has worked for Kyushu University as professor and director of Institute of Environmental Systems, the University of Kitakyushu as professor, and University of Florida, USA as visiting professor. He was a member of Science Council of Japan and is a member of the Engineering Academy of Japan.

Reiitsu Kojima is Emeritus professor of Daitobunka Univ.. He worked as a senior researcher, at Institute of Developing Economics, a professor, dean and trustee of Daitobunka Univ., and a visiting professor of Peking Univ. and Peking Univ. of Foreign Language.

Michikazu Kojima is a senior research fellow in the Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization. He got M.Sc. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from University of California, Berkeley. His recent works are International Trade in Recyclable and Hazardous Waste in Asia (ed. with Etsuyo Michida) Edward Elgar 2013, and Kojima, Michikazu Policy for Fostering “Sound” Recycling Industries, Institute of Developing Economies and Institute for Global Environmental Studies, 2014.

Akihisa Mori is an associate professor of Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, serves as a director and Secretary General of the East Asian Association of Environmental and Resource Economics. He has conducted research on environmental aid, climate finance, as well as energy, climate and environmental integration in the context of economic development in East Asia. He edited several books, including Environmental Governance for Sustainable Development: An East Asian Perspective, United Nations University Press, 2013, The Green Fiscal Mechanism and Reform for Low Carbon Development: East Asia and Europe, Routledge, 2013 (with P. Ekins et al.) and Green Growth and Low Carbon Development in East Asia, Routledge, 2013 (with F. Yoshida).

Yuko Ishibashi is a senior researcher at Fukuoka Institute of Health and Environmental Sciences belonging to Fukuoka prefecture. Her research work has been about water environmental science.

Yuka Watanabe is an Associate Professor at East Asia Environmental Strategist Training Program, Research Institute for East Asia Environments, Kyushu University. She has earned her bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from International Christian University, Master's degree in Environmental Sciences from Tsukuba University, and Doctoral degree in Science from Kyushu University. Her research focuses on environmental chemistry and education. She has worked at the National Institute for Environmental Studies as a researcher, Kurume University, School of Medicine as an Assistant Professor, and Kyushu University Graduate school of Engineering as an Assistant Professor.

Hiroshi Kumagai is an administrative officer at Environmental Preservation Division, Department of Environmental Affairs, Fukuoka Prefectural Government. He has B.Eng., M.Eng., and Ph. D. in Eng. from Kyushu university. His research work has been about water environmental engineering. He had worked at Water Quality Division, Fukuoka Institute of Health and Environmental Sciences.

Hiroki Tanikawa is a Professor at the Graduate School of Environmental Studies at Nagoya University, Japan, and a Leader of Nagoya University Global Environmental Leaders Program (NUGELP). Since 1998, the Tanikawa Laboratory, which focused on the field of Environmental System Analysis, is estimating and evaluating the weight of human activity, and particularly attempting to elucidate how much material has been used in industrial processes.

Hideo Koide is Professor at Seinan Gakuin University. He has Bachelor of Economics from Yokohama National University, Master of Economics and Ph.D. in Economics from Hitotsubashi University. His research work has been about environmental economics, environmental policy management and design of interdisciplinary research and education. His doctoral thesis has been published as the title of "Resource Circulation Economy and Internalization of Externalities" from Keiso Shobo in November 2008.

Mitsuyasu Yabe is a Professor at the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Kyushu University in Japan. His areas of expertise are agricultural economics and environmental economics. He has been involved in a variety of research activities in the economic evaluation on biodiversity conservation, rural amenity food safety, and biomass.

Shinji Kaneko is professor at Graduate School for International Development and Cooperation (IDEC), Hiroshima University since 2009. He received Dr. of Engineering from Kyushu University in 1999. He has worked for Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) based in Hayama, Japan from 1999 to 2002 as a researcher and has joined Hiroshima University in 2002 as an associate professor in charge of researches and education in development economics and environmental economics. His research achievements include approximately 40 publications in SCI journals and a book entitled *Environmental Policy and Governance* by Edward Elgar co-authored with Shunsuke Managi in 2009.

Shiro Hori he is a professor at Fukuoka University. He has worked as Japanese government member for 30 years. His research field includes international energy and environmental regime, climate change and energy security. Since 2011, he has acted as an expert for Japanese government on climate negotiation and energy-environment issues. His publication includes, "The Evolution of International Environmental Regimes", *The Waseda Journal of Social Science*, (2015), "The role of CSR in promoting companies energy saving actions in two Asian cities", *Energy Policy*, (2014).

Ryoji Hasegawa is an Assistant Professor at Osaka International University. He has Ph.D. in Economics from Kobe University. He majors in environmental economics and regional economics. His work has been about energy and climate policy, waste management, and input-output analysis. He has work at Institute for Global Change Adaptation Science, Ibaraki University as a researcher and Research Institute for East Asia Environments, Kyushu University as an associate professor.

Hidemichi Fujii is an Associate professor at Nagasaki University. He has Ph.D. in Arts from Hiroshima University. His research work has been about corporate environmental management, environmental innovation and productivity analysis. He has worked at the Graduate School of Environmental Studies in Tohoku University as Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion, and FUJITSU LABORATORIES LTD. as a researcher.

Mami Shinozaki is an Associate Professor of Kyushu University. She specializes in energy saving policy management and environment education issues. Shinozaki is fluent in Chinese and has lived and worked in China for 10 years. She has experienced at the Japan Airlines, Hitachi Construction Machinery, the Consulting Firm, Industry-University-Government collaboration

Management Center of Kyushu University as an international project manager and a researcher, and Research and Education Center of Carbon Resources of Kyushu University as a researcher. She is in charge of the curriculum of East Asia Environmental Strategist Training Program and the subject "Environmental Project Management", "Principles and Exercise of environmental pollution management" and "Internship for Environment in East Asia" at present.

Kenichi Tsukahara is a professor at Faculty of Engineering of Kyushu University. He has B.Eng. from Kyushu University and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He experienced senior positions in the government of Japan, Asian Development Bank, and Japan International Agency. He is now serving as a member of the Science Council of Japan and the chair of Water Related Disaster Risk Management Committee in the World Federation of Engineering Organization.

Takeru Sakai is a professor at Kyushu University. He has B.Eng., M.Eng., and Dr.Eng. from Kyushu University. His research work has been about Urban Design and Landscape Design, City Planning and Architecture. He has worked at the Sogo Kenchiku Architects, ACROS Fukuoka Project at Fukuoka Prefectural Government, Faculty of Engineering, Kyushu University as a research associate, and New Campus Planning Office as a professor. He has also worked at Department of Architecture and Graduate School of Engineering.

Masaki Yokota is an assistant professor at Kyushu University. He has B.Eng., M.Eng., and Doctor of Eng. from Kyushu University. He has worked for IDEA Consultants, Inc. His research work has been about coastal engineering issues.

Hiroki Nakamura is a Research Fellow at Department of Urban and Environmental Engineering, Kyushu University. He has B.Eng., M.Eng., and Ph.D. in Eng. from the Tokyo Institute of Technology. His research work has been about energy, environment, and transport policy and management issues. He has worked at the Energy and Environment Department, Japan Productivity Center, the 'Multidisciplinary Education and Research Center for Energy Science, Tokyo Institute of Technology Global Center of Excellence (GCOE) Program' as a research assistant, Research Institute for East Asia Environments, Kyushu University as an assistant professor, and a lecturer at the University of Kitakyushu.

Koichiro Aitani is a design expert with international practical experience in USA, Europe, Middle East and Asia, on complex residential, commercial, mixed-use and large-scale architecture and urban projects, such as NATO headquarter, Cathedral of Christ the Light with Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, LLP of San Francisco and London. He is a certified professional (1st Class Architect, Japan), also an Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture of Texas A&M University, and a Visiting Professor of Kyushu University. Having over 20 years of practical experience in Architecture and Urban Design with 7 years of teaching, He brings an incredible collaborative spirit and breath of scientific knowledge to every project he touches, with sustainable aspect. Research Interest: Architecture and Urban Design, High-rise Building, Urban Regeneration, Architecture Education.

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