

Hokkaido Sociological Association's Message to the World

Hokkaido Sociological Association



[Japan's Third World Natural Heritage Site, Shiretoko in Northeastern Hokkaido](#)

1. Message to the World

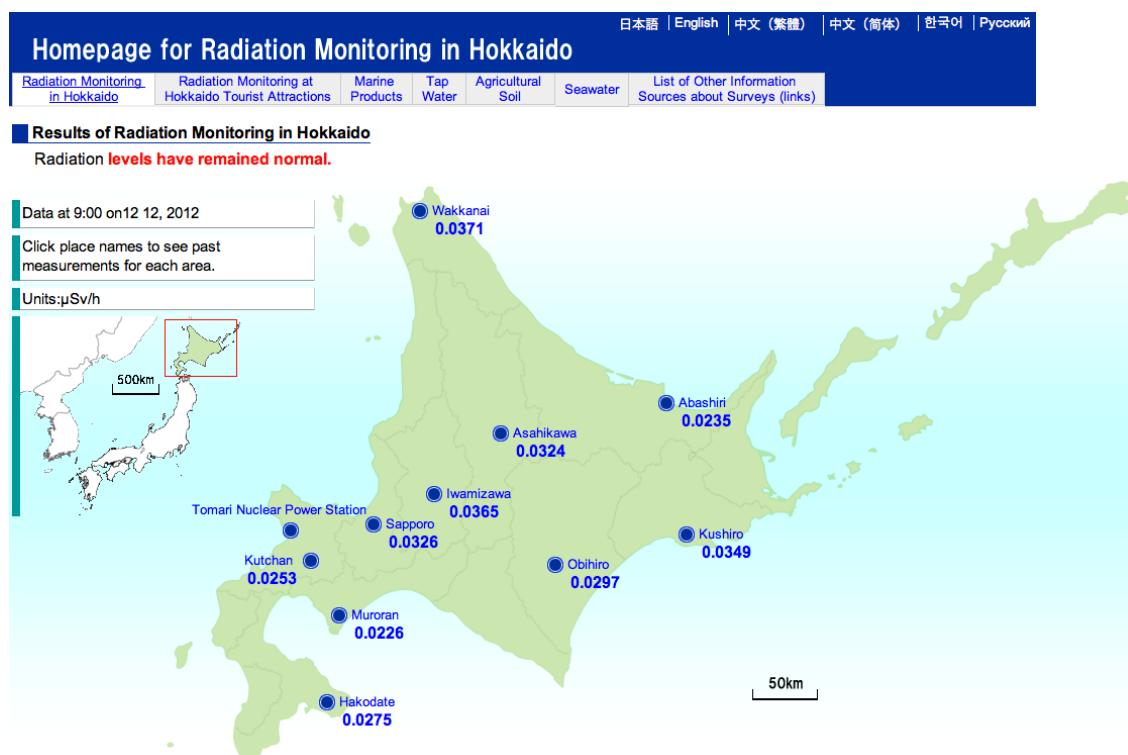
The powerful tsunami caused by the massive earthquake off the Pacific Ocean of the Tohoku Region that occurred on March 11, 2011 surged towards coastal regions, swallowing the lives of nearly 20,000 people from across all the towns that it struck. Following this, the people of Hamadori, Fukushima Prefecture were forced to evacuate for an extended period of time due to the impact from the accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Plant. Many people tried to figure out what they could do for the afflicted region, and activities were soundly carried out both by people who went to the scene of the disaster as well as the residents and NGOs that worked to receive residents from Fukushima Prefecture in Hokkaido and accommodate them there. Those who evacuated to Hokkaido created the Michinoku Kai self-help organization, which initiated activities such as exchanging information, exchanges, providing aid supplies, and employment placement through the intermediation of both the government and evacuees as well as evacuees and local residents.

Even among sociologists there were researchers who formed permanent support

organizations consisting of emergency support volunteers and studied the actual living conditions of the disaster victims through their practices out of a desire to aid with rebuilding the communities in the stricken regions. The Hokkaido Sociological Association also contains sociologists who are engaged in support and investigative activities in a variety of ways. As such, this paper will attempt to consider social challenges that are shared between Hokkaido and the Tohoku Region.

Speech and conduct (civilian assemblies, demonstrations in the streets) to the effect that we are now in an epochal period for forming a denuclearized, sustainable society are taking place in urban areas throughout Japan, as if 3.11 constituted a second postwar period. Yet those who live in rural areas—particularly in Hokkaido where the industrial foundations have been weakening as a result of the economic globalization that has continued since the 1980s, and where expenditures continue to shrink as a result of low birthrates, the aging of the population, and depopulation—cannot help but feel as if debates over changing lifestyles and communities are somewhat extravagant. Frankly speaking, just being born, getting an education, and securing employment in the hinterland in Hokkaido are by no means easy tasks (except for in Sapporo which is the prefectoral capital). What is more, elderly people who are not fortunate enough to have access to medical institutions cannot grow old with peace of mind, and even in Sapporo the number of middle and elderly people in their 40s and 50s who are being downsized is on the rise. As things stand now we can no longer count on the jobs and social security that had been enjoyed by Japan in the 1980s, and so we have no other option but to change our very lifestyle itself.

So then, what sorts of problems should a sociological association in such a society be



interested in and what sorts of research challenges should it tackle? Conducting research on domains such as the family, local communities, and labor is not what is important here. Rather, the feeling is that it is important to have an awareness of public problems so that no matter what the subject is its research results can be utilized in some way in order to continue improving Hokkaido society.

If we were to trace back the history of the Hokkaido Sociological Association and the footprints left behind by the pioneers who were actively involved in it, we would see that since the outset sociological associations in Hokkaido have done research and studies underpinned by an interest in public problems. The association has been closely aligned with the lives of the people of Hokkaido, and it is from out of this that it has obtained its sociological conceptual abilities. When it comes to this specific subject, the history and current status of the Hokkaido Sociological Association will be explained in detail below. At any rate, for our message to the world we would like to take this opportunity to discuss and introduce the social influence and significance of the global impact had by Hokkaido in Japan, despite the fact that it is a rural society, as well as the advice from members of the Hokkaido Sociological Association on forming societies that enable its people to live in this region.

SAKURAI Yoshihide

(President of the Hokkaido Sociological Association during 2011 – 2013)

2. About the Hokkaido Sociological Association

Our association was established in around 1951, and thus it has a history that is already nearly 60 years old. It has 144 members (as of June 9, 2012), and remains active as a cooperative organization for research and education by those involved in sociology who either reside in Hokkaido or who have resided there at some point.

Its board of directors consists of a president and vice president (one each), directors (seven), and auditors (two), all of which are selected through an election by the members (with terms lasting for two years; reelection for two terms in a row not permitted). As far as standing committees go, the association has an Editorial Board Committee (five people) and a Research Activities Committee (five or more people).

Research report sessions are held once a year in June at a university in Hokkaido, where symposia, general reports (member presentations), and other events are carried out.

As for the association's periodic publications:

(1) *Contemporary Sociological Studies, the journal*: This is a journal that is generally issued once a year in June. It consists of special feature papers, contributed papers (which undergo a peer-review), book reviews, and so forth. For the papers submitted by members, offers are received by August 31 of each year, and the deadline to submit the papers is on October 31.

(2) Newsletter: Generally issued four times a year, in March, May, July, and November.

Research subsidies: The association offers research assistance of 50,000 yen per case to

young researchers who are members of the association (graduate students and graduate school graduates who are not in a position where they can apply for Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research on their own) that apply for it.

Annual fees: 6,000 yen in general, or 4,000 yen for students.

3. Current Status (Focus and Major Interests)

The commonality shared by the members of the association is that they take Hokkaido as their field of research, but the areas of expertise and interests of the researchers are quite diverse (Table). In addition, the following sorts of theme sessions and symposia have been held (over the past 15 years).

Members' major fields of speciality	No. of people
The family	18
Rural villages / local communities	14
Social welfare / social security / medical care	11
Education	10
Culture / religion / ethics	10
Social class / social hierarchy / social mobility	8
Management / industry / labor	7
General theory	5
Cities	5
Social change theory	4
Gender / generation	4
Comparative community / area studies	4
Ethnicity issues / nationalism	4
Communication / information / symbols	3
Social movements / aggregate behavior	3
Social philosophy / social thought / sociological history	3
Politics / international relations	3
Life structures	3
Social psychology / social consciousness	2
Social pathology / social problems	2
Population	2
The environment	1
Sociological research methodologies / survey methods / measurement methods	1
Social history / folklore / life history	1
Social group / organization theory	1
Leisure / sports	1
Total	130

[Changes in the Meeting Symposia]

○1997

45th meeting (Tokyo University of Science, Oshamanbe Campus)
Electronic Media and Humanity's Lowbrow Aspects

○1998

46th meeting (Hokkaido Information University)
Hokkaido 50 Years after WWII

○1999

47th meeting (Otaru University of Commerce)

Living as Sociologists

○2000

48th meeting (Hokkaido University of Education – Iwamizawa Campus)

Higher Education and Regional Societies: New Connections between Resident Activities and Educational Institutions

○2001

49th meeting (Sapporo International University)

The Present State of Rural Villages in Hokkaido and Regional Revival

Horizons Opened up by Gender Theory

○2002

50th meeting (Hokkaido University)

Supporting the Self-reliance of the Elderly

○2003

51st meeting (Hokusei Gakuen University)

On Teaching Sociology

○2004

52nd meeting (Hokkaido Asai Gakuen University)

Fluctuations in the Employment Systems and the Educationally Oriented Society

○2005

53rd meeting (Hokkaido University of Education – Sapporo)

Urban Development in the Compact City of Sapporo

○2006

54th meeting (Hokkai Gakuen University)

Considering the Sociology of Food Based on Slow Food

○2007

55th meeting (Hokkaido Musashi Women's Junior College)

Intimate Spheres and Violence: Finding Clues within a Set of Problems concerning Domestic Violence and Men's Sexual Desires

○2008

56th meeting (Asahikawa Medical College)

Is Medical Care Going Too Far?: Health, Medical Care, and Contemporary Society

○2009

57th meeting (Sapporo Gakuin University)

Regional Restoration and Sociology

○2010

58th meeting (Hokkaido University of Education – Hakodate)

Local Media and Its Relationship to the Community

○2011

59th meeting (Tenshi College)

The End Results of Societies that Increasingly Leave Illness to Chance: Towards Networking for New Connections

○2012

60th meeting (Kokugakuin University Hokkaido Junior College)

Risks and Tasks of an Elderly Society and Care Relationships for a Super Aging Society: Mounting Risks and Social Countermeasures

4. Links

- Science Council of Japan
- The Japan Sociological Society
- Sociological Society of West Japan
- Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies
- Contemporary Sociological Studies, the journal J-Stage
- Tourism in Hokkaido (Link to Hokkaido Tourism Organization)

[Contact Address]

Department of Administrative Affairs:

Inside the Hokkaido NPO Support Center

6th floor of the Sapporo 63 Building

3-3-1 Kita 6 Johigashi, Higashi-ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido, 060-0906

TEL: +81-(0)11-299-6940 FAX: +81-(0)11-299-6941 E-mail: socio@npo-hokkaido.org