

# **PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT THROUGH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND SEA - LESSONS FROM DUTCH TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR JAPAN -**

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## **1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Among scientists and policymakers, strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is widely considered as a promising means to attain environmental sustainability by incorporating environmental interests at the strategic decision-making level. Among several requirements, public participation is often described as one of the most essential elements. In part, this is due to the increasing practice of public participation in a wide range of planning. However, there is still little empirical evidence of the effects of public participation on incorporating environmental interest into strategic policy decision-making.

## **2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODS**

The purpose of this study is to identify the conditions that allow for viable public participation in the promotion of environmentally sustainable transport by assessing the effects of public participation at the strategic level on transport planning in the Netherlands. First, the Dutch planning system was explored. Subsequently, two cases, the Strategic Mobility Plan Utrecht (a regional plan) and the Memorandum Mobility (a national plan), were examined.

## **3. RESULTS**

Results indicate that particular NGOs in the Netherlands have a crucial role on decision-making with respect to environmental interests. Environmentally sustainable transport, however, is not able to be promoted by public participation alone. In addition, SEA does not seem to be a powerful tool for Dutch planning system unless four obstacles are overcome, related to budget, bureaucracy, competition among social organizations, and gaps between views of the public and those of politicians. The followings are lessons explored for Japan. Not only would it be necessary for Japan to remove the above obstacles to effective public participation in strategic level, public policy to raise institutional capacity of environmental organizations to make them influential for interactive planning and accomplish environmentally sustainable society would seem to be necessary as well.