

International Conference Organized by Japan Landscape Architects Union

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Introduction

The Japan Landscape Architects Union (JLAU), together with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region (IFLA-APR) belonging to the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA), will hold an international conference in Japan on November 16, 2023 to discuss the prospects and strategies for the era of climate change. I would like to share with you my thoughts on the conference and introduce the role that Japanese landscape architects should play in the global community, as the Chair of the IFLA-APR 2023 Tokyo, Japan Conference Organizing Committee under Yoshiki Toda, President of JLAU. After that, if you check the program to be offered at the Japan Congress, you should be able to grasp the overall picture of the international conference that we, JLAU, are trying to achieve.

History and Purpose of the International Conference

IFLA is a professional association of landscape architects from all over the world, and is the only organization in the world accredited by UNESCO, a specialized agency of the United Nations. It is customary for IFLA to tour various countries each year to hold a world congress, followed a few months later by an international conference in each of the five regions.

The first IFLA Congress was held in Cambridge, England, in 1948, when the 15-member IFLA was formed. Japan was approved as a member at the 4th Congress held in Vienna in 1954, and Akira Sato, then Director of the Facilities Division of the Ministry of Construction, became the first Japanese representative of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA-Japan). The 9th World Congress was held in Japan in 1964 to coincide with the Tokyo Olympics, the 23rd World Congress was held in 1985, and the Asian Congress was held in Japan in 2000 to coincide with the Awaji Horticultural Exposition. The IFLA-APR Congress, which will be held after the 59th World Congress, will be the first time in about a quarter of a century that the IFLA-APR Congress will be held in Japan. The JLAU, which is responsible for organizing this event, was established in 2013 under the leadership of Toshitaro Mino, the first president, by qualified registered landscape architects and

stakeholders who support the activities of the JLAU. The ability to hold the international conference in 2023, when JLAU will celebrate its 10th anniversary, is largely due to the efforts of Fumiaki Takano, who passed away in August 2021 after serving for a long time as President of IFLA-JAPAN and President of IFLA-APR.

He gave me a book as a gift when I just became the chairperson of the executive committee. The title of the book is “Messages from Our Predecessors to the New Era: IFLA Japan's Progress” and the subtitle is “Commemorating the Integration of IFLA Japan and JLAU.” The last chapter is titled “Toward the Revitalization and Rebirth of IFLA Japan,” in which Mr. Takano himself introduces the background of his participation in IFLA. The following is the original text.

This was my first time attending a delegates' meeting. Amidst the active exchange of opinions among the representatives from various countries, the opinions from Asia were generally reserved and reserved. When it came to education-related themes, the Education Committee submitted the opinion that IFLA should actively promote education in developing countries in order to promote “landscape education” in Asian countries such as Vietnam and Myanmar that have not yet joined IFLA. I listened to the discussion with interest because it was a very good idea, but behind the discussion, I felt a strong intention to bring the Western education system, which is considered to be the best, to the non-signatory Asian countries. (omission) I listened to him for a while, but I could not help but feel that I was not satisfied with what he was saying, so I decided to speak up. “I acknowledged that there are many excellent points in the advanced cases, but we should not unconditionally impose everything on developing countries by assuming that the systems of advanced countries are the most excellent. I disagree with that idea.” The audience, which rarely expresses its opinions clearly, became quiet when the newcomer spoke up. “The field of landscape architecture is closely related to each country's culture, history, view of nature, traditional beauty, religion, etc., and we should start from learning humbly about the activities of the people of each country and build our programs accordingly,” I spoke. This statement was greeted with applause and sympathy from the representatives of Asian countries. This was the beginning of my involvement with IFLA.

While deeply respecting the history of IFLA over the past 75 years and the predecessors of IFLA-JAPAN who have continued to engage in dialogue with landscape architects and stakeholders overseas, I would like to take the significance of holding this international conference as an opportunity for all JLAU members to think about the principles of activities that JLAU, which was established in an era of transition from a growth phase to a maturing phase, should carry forward into the future. I also wanted to think together with IFLA-APR

members about what kind of objectives and awareness of issues we should have in response to the unique challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region, while considering global climate change as a problem common to all humankind. In 2019, when it was decided to hold the Japan Congress, I participated in the IFLA-APR Congress held in Cebu, Philippines, with many JLAU volunteers including Mr. Takano and Mr. Toda, and heard what Asian countries expected from the Japan Congress. Through dialogue with Asian people, we were able to sense their view of life and death that sees disasters as a part of nature and the damage caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the Kumamoto Earthquake as familiar disasters, and their sense of values that overlap with the same culture in the form of local communities that support each other. Convinced that the Asian Monsoon way of life, in which coexistence with nature is at the root of culture, holds hints for rebuilding a sustainable society as symbolized by the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which have been set as common rules for the world, we have set three goals to realize the theme and themes of the conference. The theme of the conference was "Living with Disasters," and the three goals were "Green Infrastructure," "Well-being," and "Landscape Culture," and preparations for the conference began. The conference started with these themes and goals in mind.

Unexpectedly, a pandemic will hit the entire world in 2020, just after we finalized the theme and goals of the conference. The effects of global warming have become apparent not only in terms of natural disasters but also in terms of health hazards. In addition, as the energy problem originating in Russia becomes more serious, we need to consider the danger that topographical changes caused by sea level rise and river flooding will exacerbate conflicts among nations over natural resources. Taking into account these dizzying social trends, the three vice presidents of JLAU have accepted the three goals and have been working to deepen the themes and goals in preparation for the conference, while holding JLAU-sponsored seminars every two months.

Global and Local Perspectives

While the JLAU-led convention in Japan is an international conference in the Asia-Pacific region, it is worth mentioning what will be discussed at the World Congress, which will be held a few months prior to the Japan Congress.

The 2023 World Congress will be co-hosted by Sweden and Kenya, the first time in IFLA's long history that two countries have co-hosted a congress. I wanted to know why, so I interviewed Pia Jonsson, a landscape architect who is preparing for the World Congress in her capacity as chair of the Executive Committee, as I am. The European Union (EU), of which

Sweden is a member, has a legal system that facilitates labor migration and protects the rights of incoming workers from within and outside the EU, and many countries accept a certain amount of workers from EU countries. On the other hand, Sweden has accepted many Kenyan refugees from outside the EU as workers from the standpoint of humanitarian assistance. As a result, even in Sweden, which always ranks high in the world happiness ranking, there are conflicts between communities of different cultures, and now a far-right political party has emerged. In addition, Sweden announced its official participation in NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Swedish landscape architects, led by Ms. Pia, have chosen to join hands with countries of different cultures rather than pick up a gun to defend their own country. In the EU, especially in a society such as Sweden, where international cooperation and protection of human rights are important, local landscape architects play a coordinating role when accepting immigrants and refugees. In the EU, especially in Sweden, where international cooperation and protection of human rights are important, local landscape architects play a coordinating role in accepting immigrants and refugees, and try to create a sustainable community infrastructure that is both diverse and inclusive by finding cultural commonalities between the two countries while recognizing the cultural specificities of the other country. The dialogue with Ms. Pia was a valuable opportunity for us to realize that the true meaning of "landscape culture" is "to humbly learn the activities of the people of each country based on the culture, history, and view of nature of each country," which Mr. Takano considered important.

On the other hand, as Japan's population continues to decline and the country will soon have to rely on labor from overseas, it is an urgent issue to develop social capital with diversity and inclusiveness that will lead to a "wellbeing" society. In my practice of landscape architecture, I have always believed that it is important to create local values that are globally sympathetic. If IFLA's international conference provides an opportunity to learn about the uniqueness and commonality of the cultures of various countries, it will be a great opportunity to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures, and peoples as the foundation of our activities. The significance of an organization accredited by UNESCO, whose activities are based on dialogue among civilizations, cultures, and peoples, will become clearer. On the other hand, what kind of perspective is needed to link cultural diversity to local economies and communities through the SDGs, the goals set by the United Nations, the parent organization of UNESCO? I would like to explore this approach through international events held in Japan.

Perspectives from the Osaka-Kansai Expo

The theme of the Osaka-Kansai Expo to be held in Japan in 2025 is "Designing a Future Society that Shines with Life" and has two goals: the first is to achieve the SDGs and the second is to realize Japan's national strategy, Society 5.0. According to the Cabinet Office, Society 5.0 is a new society following the hunting society 1.0, agrarian society 2.0, industrial society 3.0, and information society 4.0, and is defined as a new human-centered social vision that balances economic development and solutions to social issues through a system that highly integrates cyber and physical space. It is defined as a new human-centered society that balances economic development and the resolution of social issues through systems that highly integrate cyber and physical space.

As an expert in environmental design, I have been participating in the study of the purpose of holding the Osaka-Kansai Expo as a member of the committee for formulating the concept of the Expo since 2020. In the committee, I advised that the fusion of cyberspace and environmental design should aim at "a shared mechanism that generates global empathy" that leads to cultural commonality, and we discussed how the field that could become the social infrastructure of Society 5.0 should be in physical space. The target area of consideration was set as "a region-based climate with local values" that highlights cultural specificity. In my presentation to the committee, I used the Kanto Plain as an example to decipher the cultural specificity of this area from the viewpoints of biology and geography. In biology, an ecotone is defined as a place where different environments, such as land and water areas, mountain and plains, are in continuous contact with each other. The three categories are: the margin between mountains and plains created by sea level rise 120,000 years ago, the area between plateaus and lowlands created by sea level rise 6,000 years ago, and the area between land and sea today. In other words, hunting society 1.0 began at the edge of the mountains and plains, farming society 2.0 developed between the plateau and lowlands, and industrial society 3.0 developed between the land and the sea. The ecotone is an environment where a large number of creatures can inhabit, resulting in a large diversity of species and populations. It is always from this place that humans evolve their culture, and the end of civilization is when the ecotone is lost. The Information Society 4.0 will be remembered in the history of the earth as the turning point of civilization when we discovered that the entire earth was covered with the garbage produced by human beings, as symbolized by the Anthropocene. Society 5.0, then, is not a human-centered society, but a society in which the culture of wisely using technology to realize a society that lives in harmony with nature is at the core. In the midst of global warming, the fields that can serve as the social foundation of Society 5.0 should be places where "new mechanisms for sharing" can be born from "a climate rooted in the local community. This is because, while society has been revolutionized by human-dominated science and technology, such as the Industrial Revolution and the Information Revolution,

when the global environment was stable, humans have evolved through nature-dominated thought and skills during periods of great environmental change, such as the Agricultural Society 2.0 and the Hunting Society 1.0. The results of this study have given me great insight into the process of generating views of nature and religion in the Asia-Pacific region, which is prone to tectonic movements and natural disasters. I expect that this thought process will elevate the discussion of "green infrastructure," which should be thought of in terms of nature superiority, to a higher level.

SDGs and Perspectives from the Host Country

In this section, I would like to consider the sustainable urban development approach of Japanese landscape architects in light of the goals and principles of the SDGs. Japan is a country that is facing a variety of challenges, such as a declining working population due to an aging population and falling rural areas due to the concentration of cities, and it would be a great hope if Japan could point the way to solutions for countries in the Asia-Pacific region that are likely to face similar challenges in the future.

The Wedding Cake Model of the SDGs, which is a global rule, explains the importance of balancing the three elements of "economy, society, and environment. When we combine this indicator with the motto of Japanese landscape architects, "10 years for landscape, 100 years for landscape, and 1,000 years for climate," a time axis of 10 years for economic and landscape formation, 100 years for social and landscape creation, and 1,000 years for fostering the environment and climate emerges. The "environment," which has been carefully protected and sustained by local people over a long period of time, is the foundation upon which a diverse "society" can be maintained and a sustainable "economy" made possible. The realization of a sustainable economy based on a recycling-oriented society with the environment as its foundation is the future image that the theme of the IFLA-APR Japan Congress, "Living with Nature," should aim for.

Since the Industrial Revolution, industrialized countries have constructed "social" systems to grow their "economies" and exploited the "environment" to maintain their social systems. I believe that the reason for the loss of the foundation of Japanese culture lies in the period of rapid economic growth, when people became proud of the science and technology that they had created. At the dawn of the postwar era, local community development groups such as local neighborhood associations and shopping associations acted as consensus-builders for government-led land readjustment projects. In the high-growth period, the government organized various systems for urban development to promote the high-level use of land, and

private-sector-led community development groups promoted development aimed at economic growth. Now that Japan is facing a declining population and a mountain of issues to be resolved, there is a need for city planning practices that are appropriate for a mature period. At the core of these efforts are area management groups organized by a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, the private sector, universities, and city planning experts. In order to support these groups, the national government has established a system called the "Urban Revitalization Corporation" to facilitate their incorporation and provide them with a framework that enables them to perform complementary functions to those of the government. At present, this system can only be applied to municipalities. This is because tax revenues from individual inhabitant tax and fixed asset tax account for 70% of the total financial resources of cities, wards, towns, and villages, and giving area management organizations a public role is a measure to cover the decline in financial resources due to the decline in the population. I believe that this system is the catalyst for the creation of local values that are globally sympathetic.

The beauty of the SDGs is that the global rules set forth by large, ambitious organizations such as the United Nations will enable the growing number of like-minded community development organizations in Japan, such as area management organizations, to devise their own local rules, and to devise locally unique systems and mechanisms that combine global and local issues. The key lies in the ability to devise unique regional systems and mechanisms that combine global and local issues. As long as there are people who are working with conviction to improve their communities, there are many places and opportunities for landscape architects, who are responsible for design activities based on the nature and climate of the region, to contribute. Spaces that are rooted in the local climate are places that have the power to encourage consensus building for new community development. People's pride will be born not from the scale of the local economy and society, but from the nature and culture of the region, and new mechanisms for sharing values will be born not from the global scale of the world and countries, but from the local scale of the region and hometown.

Conclusion

As the world faces global warming, we are being asked how we can convey to the international community Japan's vision of a future in which we "Living with disasters." We selected Futakotamagawa Rise in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, as an appropriate venue for our discussions on the three goals of green infrastructure, wellbeing, and landscape culture, as it overlooks the Tama River and the Kokubunji cliff line at the same time. The area has a climate rooted

in the community with local values. There is also a local university as well as area management organization that will be responsible for the next generation of urban development. Above all, it attracts landscape architects who are experts in urban development. We would like to take this wonderful opportunity to share with the world a new system of sharing that can be shared globally.

It is the mission of politics and government to maintain a safe and secure society for the pursuit of the people's happiness, and we, practitioners and researchers in landscape architecture, must respond to this mission with our knowledge and skills in response to the changing times. Of course, this applies not only to preparedness for natural disasters at home and abroad, but also to preparedness for the preservation of peace in the world. And now, as capital is invested in green infrastructure development as a sustainable social infrastructure, we should draw a master plan for the coming society by integrating the structure of local communities based on a wellbeing society and landscape culture. This is a message to the next generation that reflects on the fact that engineers and academics were only able to get involved in the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake through a coping strategy. Now is the time to link our efforts to control natural disasters to the creation of a city where everyone can live in good physical and mental health through a network of walkable greenery and water. I hope that the IFLA-APR Japan Conference will go down in history as the international conference where the master plan drawn up by landscape architects was able to steer the course from a reactive approach to a more fundamental one. I hope that everyone in Japan and abroad will participate in the conference, and that it will be an opportunity to engage in discussion with a wide range of people.

In a mature society, new institutions and mechanisms will probably emerge from a place where everyone feels they have a place. It may be a cyber space connected by the Internet, or it may be a physical space without boundaries. If our generation fails to realize this, we can connect it to the next generation. With such a message, I would like to send out to the world from the Japan Congress to be held on November 16, 2023, the creation of valuable spaces and a new consensus-building mechanism. We hope you will look forward to the international conference to be held by the Japan Federation of Landscape Architects.