

S-face

SFC makes the future through researches

Breathing the lives of
a thousand years
into the landscape
Hajime Ishikawa



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Creating a tranquil landscape based on the concept of practical landscaping

I have been involved in the design of landscapes for many years. Based on that experience, I now conduct research on the design of "places that people live in" and "places that people exist in."

When confront a subject in my position as a landscape designer, I always make sure that I give temporal and spatial consideration to factors that have an impact on the subject over a wider area. By doing so, I have always devoted myself to exploring how I can create a landscape that is easy to maintain, and how I can create a high-quality landscape as a form of spatial design.

Let us consider this by taking the example of plants, which is an important constituent of a landscape. If large trees are present in the target area, it is an indication that the area has managed to sustain a good environment to enable the growth of trees over a long period of time. Hence, by giving temporal and spatial consideration to the wide-area factors in this way, I am able to create a sustainable landscape design. Furthermore, through the power of design, if we were able to develop the surrounding environment such that people would want to care for it involuntarily, I believe that we would be able to further enhance sustainability.

When "existing soil, climates, and vegetation" and the "expectations of human beings" gradually find common ground in such ways and become optimized, bringing about a state of "dynamic equilibrium," a tranquil landscape is born. This concept of practical landscaping then works to create high-quality spaces.

The Millennium Village Project triggered by an earthquake disaster

In recent years, I have been involved in a Millennium Village Project undertaken jointly by research laboratories from several universities. A "Millennium village" refers to settlements or regions that have successfully sustained production and life for more than a thousand years, overcoming numerous disasters and social transformation.

By uncovering the "Millennium villages" that are scattered across Japan, studying them, and publishing the results of our studies, this project aims to consider the ways of long-term living environments in the future, and put them into practice.

This project was triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake that struck in 2011. Immediately after the earthquake disaster, various architect groups commenced activities in aid of reconstruction efforts. However, we attempted to take a slightly different approach from such activities. In the course of our studies and reviews, we did not focus on "villages that have been damaged" as the role of our group from the architectural history perspective of looking at objects over the long-term; rather, by studying "villages that have not been damaged," we came up with the idea that it may be more important to explore the secrets behind the strength of such villages. This was the start of studies into settlements and regions that have continued to sustain production and life for more than a thousand years. Since 2014, we have based our research in the Kanto and Kansai regions, and researchers, practitioners, as well as students from various research fields have been running this project based on the themes of environment, settlements, and communities.

The hint to a quality space lies in settlements that have survived for a long time through elaborate means

The modern times call for sustainable development, and methods of landscaping aimed at achieving symbiosis between humans and nature has become an important theme.

Amidst the advancing decline of the rural population, the method of uncovering the potential resources of the area and applying these resources to landscape design^(*) can be regarded as a form of technology that connects the past and the future.

Professor Hajime Ishikawa has studied settlements and regions where production and life have been sustained for more than a thousand years. Through his research, he explores landscape design that is able to strike a balance between human beings and nature, and take the greatest advantage of its value while maintaining its appeal permanently.

* Using the original elements of the land as the foundation for designing and building the landscape, including city spaces, garden spaces, and streets.

Millennium Village Project



Triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake that struck in 2011. The aim of the project is to uncover and study "Millennium villages" scattered across Japan, publish the results of these studies, consider the ways of long-term living environments in the future, and put them into practice. Research activities are based in the Kanto and Kansai regions.

Making a Guide Book



As a part of the "project to pass the town to future generations" that is currently being implemented in Kamiyama Town, Tokushima Prefecture, the research team is producing illustrated reference books featuring the landscape of the town as well as its lifestyle, an appreciation guidebook of the region, and other materials. The team visits the research field, and conducts interviews and other activities to obtain resources for these materials.



Developing human resources who can harness the concept of practical landscaping as a tool

My research laboratory is currently engaged in a project to search for a "landscape for survival" in Kamiyama Town, Tokushima Prefecture, while applying the methods used in the Millennium Village Project. This town is a mountainous one spread across the banks of Akuigawa River, a tributary of Yoshinogawa River. It has a population of approximately 6,300 people, and the population aging rate has already reached 46%. However, in recent years, companies headquartered in major cities have begun to establish offices in this depopulated mountain village, drawing in settlers and other companies. Young people working in IT companies are now utilizing old folk dwellings that are 150 years old as their office spaces.

Rather than placing such a beautiful landscape in "cold storage," this town has retained the rich characteristics of a "Millennium village" while updating its lifestyle to meet the demands of the times.

As part of our "project to pass the town to future generations" in Kamiyama Town, my research laboratory is producing illustrated reference books of the landscape and lifestyle, an appreciation guidebook of the region, and other materials. There are also plans to design and produce several types of media aimed at considering the thousand years to date, and the thousand years going forward. In the future, I hope to pursue the concept of practical landscaping in a broader sense through such activities, while staying in the interdisciplinary environment of SFC (Keio University Shonan Fujisawa Campus). Through dialogues and activities with students, I also aim to develop human resources who are able to harness the concepts of landscape design as a tool, and send them out into society.

Profile Hajime Ishikawa



Professor, Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University. Landscape architect. Born in 1964 in Uji City, Kyoto. After a career at the Architectural Design Division of Kajima Corporation and at Landscape Design Inc. etc., he took up his present position. He is engaged in research and representation activities such as design education, terrain, maps, etc.

Please visit S-face website for details!

There are more articles and video of Hajime Ishikawa

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