

i-Rec international conference and workshop in Japan (2023/6/1- 4)

Theme: Disaster Reconstruction, Recovery, The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, International Symposium, Community Resilience

Place: IRIDeS, Sendai City, Futaba Town, Namie Town, Ishinomaki City, Onagawa Town

From June 1 - 4, 2023, i-Rec 2023 “Tensions Between Tradition and Innovation in Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Action, and Reconstruction: Reflecting on Tohoku’s Recovery Twelve Years Later” was held at IRIDeS, including field visits to disaster affected areas. The event was co-organized by i-Rec, the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) of Tohoku University, Kobe University Research Center for Urban Safety and Security (RCUSS), and the Center for Resilient Design (CResD), Kobe University. i-Rec (international network for information and research for reconstruction) is a web-based international network focused on the study of vulnerability, resilience and reconstruction after disasters: <http://www.grif.umontreal.ca/i-Rec.htm>.

i-Rec deals with information exchange between its members in order to contribute knowledge related to building activities in situations of crisis, particularly disasters in developing countries, and holds an international conference every two years. This was the first time that an i-Rec conference was held in Japan, and twelve years after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, this event coincides with beginning of the 2nd decade of recovery and reconstruction. Co-chairs of i-Rec 2023 were: Assoc. Prof. Liz Maly (International Research Collaboration Office), Prof. Tamiyo Kondo of Kobe University, and Assist. Prof. Julia Gerster (Disaster Culture and Archive Studies). Over 70 people participated in i-Rec 2023.

Before the academic sessions on June 3 and 4th, participations first joined study visits to disaster-affected areas on June 1 and June 2, to gain a deeper understanding of what happened in the GEJE the process of recovery in the affected areas. Coordinated by Assistant Professor Julia Gerster (Disaster Culture and Archive Studies), during the tour of areas affected by the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant on June 1, the group visited the Fukushima Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Museum in Futaba Town, Michi no Eki Namie, and the Remains of Ukedo Elementary School in Namie Town. In addition to learning about the impacts of the nuclear disaster, and the recovery process, from the exhibits and guides, participants also joined a walking tour of Futaba Town and lecture from the representative of F-Atras, a local organization promoting revitalization in the area.

On June 2, the group visited Ishinomaki and Onagawa, tsunami-affected towns in Miyagi Prefecture. In Ishinomaki, participants visited the Kadonowaki Elementary School Ruins, and received a lecture from the Facility Director Richard Halberstadt, as well as seeing the exhibits. In addition, they also visited Ishinomaki Minamihama Tsunami Memorial Park and Miyagi Tsunami Memorial Museum, and received guidance from IRIDeS Visiting Researcher Naomi Chiba (Disaster Humanities and Social Science Division). After stopping in Onagawa to visit the reconstructed shopping arcade, the Onagawa train station, and preserved police box, participants visited the Ogatsu area, and received an explanation about the recovery process from Mr. Akinari Abe. In addition to seeing the levees and housing relocation areas, participants also had the chance to make their own coaster using the traditional Ogatsu slate stone. While many participants were visiting the Tohoku area for the first time, they actively engaged in wide-ranging discussions of the course of the two-day field visits. The fieldwork activities in Fukushima and Miyagi allowed participants to observe and learn from the resilience and innovative rebuilding approaches adopted by local communities, which functioned as a background orientation to the following days academic programs.

The academic conference was held at IRIDeS, on June 3 and June 4. The conference program on the first day focused on the Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster, and reflections on the ongoing recovery from different points of view. After welcoming remarks, in the morning, Prof. Aya Kubota (Graduate School of Engineering, Architecture and Urban Design Course, Tohoku University) delivered a keynote speech entitled: Searching for Our Autonomy-Looking back on Post Great East Japan Earthquake for Social Transformation on Community

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Recovery after 3.11. Afternoon sessions included several panel discussions on different aspects of recovery after the GEJE. The First Panel Discussion: “Housing and Life Recovery after 3.11” included presentations from Architect Mr. Hiroyuki Teshima, and Lawyer and Sendai Bar Association member Mr. Akihiro Uto, and Assoc. Prof. Haruka Tsukuda (Graduate School of Engineering, Architecture and Building Science, Tohoku University). The 2nd Panel Discussion: “Disaster and Memory,” included presentations from Prof. Osamu Tsukihashi (Department of Architecture, Kobe University, Architects Teehouse, and Lost Homes Project), Assoc. Prof. Masashige Motoe (Spatial Design Strategies Lab / Architecture and Urban Design Course, Graduate School of Engineering, Tohoku University), and Assist. Prof. Julia Gerster. Drawing from observations from the previous days’ field work, each presentation and panel was followed by extensive discussion, making connections between the situation in Japan, and other disaster-affected countries.

On the last day, June 4, participants presented their academic research papers, in four parallel sessions. In addition to 54 academic papers presented, there was also a special session on gender and disasters “Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policy and Practice (GRRIPP) Roundtable,” which included Researcher (Specially Appointed) Miwako Kitamura (International Research Collaboration Office), and Special Visiting Researcher Naomi Chiba (Disaster Humanities and Social Science Division). Among the academic papers, the following were presented or co-authored by IRIDeS/Tohoku University faculty:

- *Inclusive Disaster Management Planning: Addressing the Needs of LGBTQ+ Communities in Japan*, Miwako Kitamura, Tohoku University; Anna Matsukawa, University of Hyogo; Anawat Suppasri, Tohoku University; Punam Yadav, University College London
- *Putting Down Roots: Gardening, Farming, and Forestry as Post-Disaster Placemaking* Elizabeth Maly, Tohoku University; Tomoko Matsushita, Urban Research Center; Tamiyo Kondo, Kobe University; Yegane Ghezelloo, National Institute of Technology, Akashi College
- *Oral History as a Tool for Understanding Women’s Resiliency in Ishinomaki after the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Naomi Chiba, Tohoku University
- *School memorials as “Lieux de Mémoire” in the cultural and collective memory of the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Julia Gerster, Tohoku University
- *Public awareness of ALPS treated water released from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and social issues*, Tetsuya Nakamura, Kyoei University; Steven Lloyd, Kyoei University; Atsushi Maruyama, Chiba University; Satoru Masuda, Tohoku University
- *Design Process of Ruins of the Great East Japan Earthquake: Nakahama Elementary School*, Masashige Motoe, Tohoku University
- *Exploratory Comparative Study on Land Acquisition for Recovery in Italy, the United States, and Japan* Kensuke Otsuyama, The University of Tokyo; Tomoyuki Mashiko, Tokyo Metropolitan University; Haruka Tsukuda, Tohoku University

Following the conference, papers will be published on the i-rec website, and selected papers will be part of a special journal issue.

As the first to meet in Japan, i-Rec 2023 provided an unique opportunity for international experts in disaster reconstruction and recovery to learn about the ongoing recovery after the GEJE, and also exchange knowledge and information with an international community of younger researchers. Covering diverse topics, including public policy, urban and community planning, and the social impacts of disasters, i-Rec 2023 served as a platform to build stronger international connections between IRIDeS and disaster researchers, community advocates, and other stakeholders to share knowledge and valuable lessons derived from their experiences. As well as encouraging future collaboration, i-Rec 2023 made significant contributions to the global understanding of effective recovery practices.

Text and Photos by: Liz Maly, Miwako Kitamura (International Research Collaboration Office)
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Fukushima Memorial Museum



Ukedo E.S.



Walking tour in Futaba



Group photo at local shrine in Futaba



Miyagi Memorial Museum



Guide of Ogatsu

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Keynote speech by Prof. Kubota



discussion with participants



Panel 1 discussion



Panel 2 discussion



Special session on gender and disaster



Group Photo (in front of IRIDeS)