Coping with Natural Disasters in Japanese Urban Planning

Part I: How to make Cities more Resilient? Disaster Risk Reduction in Japanese Urban Planning (Prof. Dr. Uta Hohn)

Part II: Reconstruction Work and Disaster Control after the Great East Japan Earthquake: Report from Ôtsuchi-machi, Iwate (Prof. Dr. Kenjirô Ômura)

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake of magnitude 9.0 and a tsunami devastated wide areas on the seacoast of the Tohoku region. 15,769 people lost their lives and 4,227 were posted as missing (as of Sept. 6, 2011). About 115,000 dwellings have been destroyed completely. The task of reconstruction is immense. At the same time the strategies, concepts and instruments of disaster prevention need to be reassessed. Coping with natural disasters in Japanese urban planning means both: damage mitigation by preventative measures and adaption as well as building more resilient cities in the course of reconstruction.

In the first part of the common lecture Uta Hohn will start with an overview of natural hazards and natural disasters in Japan. Then, using the example of Tôkyô, the structural and socioeconomic reasons for the spatial distinctions of risk potentials in the case of a big earthquake will be explained. The next step will be to illustrate the development path of strategies, instruments and projects in the struggle of policy, urban planning and local people to mitigate disaster risks. Besides successful examples the manifold difficulties in setting up more resilient cities will be revealed.

In the second part Kenjirô Ômura will at first explicate the specific character of the damage and the influence of the Great East Japan Earthquake comparing with the past great earthquakes in the modern history of Japan. Then using the example of Ôtsuchi-machi, he will point out, how the small town was damaged and how it struggles to reconstruct and to revitalize the community in the process of reconstruction planning. The next step will be to illustrate the new planning instruments enacted by Japanese government to support the damaged local authorities. Finally tasks and proposals for sustainable communities will be presented.
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1980-1986 study of geography and history at Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB)
1986 state examination for high school teachers at RUB
1986-1988 scientific assistant of Prof. Dr. Peter Schöller (Institute of Geography, RUB)
1988-1990 scientific assistant of Prof. Dr. Winfried Flüchter (Department of Geography, University of Duisburg)
1989 PhD at the University of Duisburg, Department of Geography, on the thesis "Deutsche Städte im Luftkrieg. Regionale Unterschiede der Kriegszerstörung deutscher Städte und Folgen des Luftkrieges unter bevölkerungsgeographischem Aspekt" (The destruction of German towns in World War II)
1990 "Duisburg Award" of "The Society of Friends of the University of Duisburg" for the PhD thesis
1990 "Great Japanese Certificate" of the University of Duisburg
1990-1998 assistant lecturer (Department of Geography, University of Duisburg)
1993-1994 "Professional Fellowship" granted by the Japan Foundation: visiting researcher at the Hitotsubashi University, affiliated with Prof. Dr. Keiichi Takeuchi (Institute for Social-Economic Studies)
1997-1998 scholarship of the German Research Foundation (DFG) for writing the postdoctoral thesis (habilitation)
1998 habilitation at the University of Duisburg, Department of Geography, with the postdoctoral thesis "Stadtplanung, Stadterneuerung und Stadtumbau in Japan. Planungsgeschichte, Planungsrecht, Planungspraxis und planungstheoretische Reflexionen" (Urban planning, urban renewal and urban restructuring in Japan. Planning history, planning law, planning practice, planning theory)
1998-2000 assistant professor at the University of Duisburg
2000 "JaDe Award" of the "Society for the promotion of cultural relationships between Japan and Germany"
2000-2003 visiting professorship for human geography at the Institute of Geography, University of Dortmund
2001 "Scientific Award for Human Geography" of the "Frithjof Voss Foundation – Foundation for Geography"
2004-2006 head of department, Institute of Geography, Ruhr-University Bochum
2004-2006 visiting professor at the Institute of Policy and Planning Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Japan
2005 annual summer and autumn schools on comparative research on urban and regional development in metropolitan regions in Germany, Japan and China in cooperation with the Institute of Policy and Planning Sciences, University of Tsukuba, and the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University, Shanghai
2008-2011 dean of the Faculty of Geosciences, Ruhr-University Bochum
2010-2013 research project "Steering metropolitan transformational processes in the context of the Japanese "Urban Renaissance" policy, exemplified by the Kansai metropolitan region", funded by the German Research Foundation
CV Omura

1966 – 1971  Study at University of Tokyo
1971 March   graduated as Bachelor, Department of Urban Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Tokyo
1971 April – 1977 March  Researcher at Institute of Behavioral Sciences in Tokyo
1974 June – 1976  Scholarship from DAAD
September 1974 October – 1976 September, Study at Laboratory of Urban Planning of Prof. Adolf Bayer, University of Karlsruhe, Germany
1977 April – 1984 March  Assistant Professor in Department of Urban Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Tokyo
1984 February  Promotion to Doctor of Engineering at Faculty of Engineering, University of Tokyo
1984 April – 1994 August  Head of Urban Development Division, Building Research Institute, Ministry of Construction
1985 May  Award for Papers of 1984 by the City Planning Institute of Japan
1994 September – 2004 March  Professor at Institute of Policy and Planning Sciences, University of Tsukuba
1999 April – 2001 March  Chair of Institute of Policy and Planning Sciences, University of Tsukuba
2003 April – 2004 April  Professor at Institute for Social Sciences, University of Tokyo
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