

AfterLandscapes: Designing in Uncertainty

A landscape architecture perspective on post-disaster recovery in Japan



This year marks the **5th anniversary** of the earthquake and tsunami that struck **Japan** on **March 11, 2011**. Soon after, landscape architecture researcher **Dr Marieluise Jonas (RMIT University)** began working with locals in the city of **Kesennuma**, which was destroyed by the tsunami. Five years on, and having recently returned from yet another trip to the area, Dr Jonas offers an inside perspective on the complexity of the recovery process.

Along Japan's northeast coast, many towns were wiped out by the tsunami, which travelled several kilometres inland and ran up to a height of **over 30 metres** in some areas. Many of these towns had been home to fishermen and oyster farmers who relied on the sea for their livelihoods.

Nine months after the disaster, Dr Jonas was invited to visit the tsunami-affected city of **Kesennuma** to work with local communities on a rebuilding strategy. This meeting spawned multiple research projects, some continuing to this day, which aimed to resolve the tensions faced by tsunami-affected communities who somehow hope to continue living by, and with, the sea.

At the centre of the tensions in Kesenuma is the reconstruction strategy being tabled at multiple levels of government, which includes building a number of large seawalls and raising land in affected areas. The aims of this are twofold: to protecting the community from similar disasters in the future, and to create jobs. **Yet, this strategy is causing controversy.** Local people are concerned about the environmental and economic impacts of these measures, as well as their impact on lifestyles and local identity. They are also concerned that the sea walls could breed a **false sense of security**, such as that which saw the demise of **Tarō**, a village around 100km north of Kesenuma, back in 2011.

The story of Tarō, and the situation in Kesenuma today, **raise questions of what it means to build resilient futures.** How we can best learn from disasters? What should be prioritized in rebuilding? Who should be consulted? Should we even rebuild at all? Kesenuma's dilemma is just one example of the challenges surrounding reconstruction, and is a microcosm of the **complex deliberations and negotiations** that have been taking place up and down Japan's northeast coast in the wake of the tsunami.

Marieluse Jonas says:

“This story is based in Japan, but ultimately what I would like to share is universal. I want to show complex it is to rebuild after a disaster of this magnitude. People think, there's a disaster, we fix things, it's fine. But we can't just replace what we had before and assume everything will be the same. We have seen this with flood- and fire-affected communities in Australia, and we can see it happening in Japan now too, albeit on a much larger scale. I hope that looking closely at the successes, failures and stalemates of post-disaster rebuilding will make us better equipped to cope with disasters in the future.”

*Dr Jonas will give a free public talk, '**AfterLandscapes: Designing in Uncertainty**', at The Japan Foundation, Sydney on **March 18 (Friday), 6:30pm – 7:30pm**, sharing recent developments and critical reflections on the ongoing recovery process in Japan's northeastern **Tōhoku region**, through the lens of her work in Kesenuma.*

*This talk is part of a broader event program titled, **After 3.11: Have you met the new Japan?**, commemorating the 5th anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami. **After 3.11** runs March 1 – April 15 and includes an exhibition, film screening and further talks.*

PROGRAM DETAILS

After 3.11: Have you met the new Japan?

[EXHIBITION]

March 1 – April 15 *Icons of Time* by Tomohiro Muda

Gallery Hours

Monday – Friday: 10am – 6pm

Selected Saturdays (March 19, April 9): 10am – 3pm

Closed Sundays & public holidays

Admission is free.

Opening Reception & Artist Talk

March 4, 6:30pm – 8:00pm

Admission free. RSVP essential.

[DEMONSTRATION]

March 10 **Obori Soma Ware: Rebuilding Kiln & Kin**
Masanori Sue (Ceramicist) & Takeshi Matsunaga (Speaker)

6:30pm – 7:30pm (doors open 6pm) @ The Japan Foundation, Sydney.

Admission is free. RSVP essential (via website).

[TALKS]

March 18 **AfterLandscapes: Designing in Uncertainty**
Marieluisse Jonas (RMIT University)

April 1 **The New Wave of Activist Culture in Post-3.11 Japan**
Akihiro Ogawa (Melbourne University)

April 15 **3.11 in Literature and Film**
Tamaki Tokita (University of Sydney)

6:30pm – 7:30pm (doors open 6pm) @ The Japan Foundation, Sydney.

Admission is free. RSVP essential (via website).

Free CHOYA tastings available at venue.

[FILM]

April 8 **Tell the Prime Minister** (2015; 109 mins; Japanese with English subtitles)
Feat. Q&A with director Eiji Oguma

6:30pm (doors open 6pm) @ University of Technology Sydney (Bldg 2, Lecture theatre 3.02)

Admission is free. RSVP essential (via website).

Venues: [EXHIBITION, DEMONSTRATION & TALKS]

The Japan Foundation, Sydney
Level 4, Central Park (access via lifts)
28 Broadway, Chippendale NSW 2008

[FILM]

University of Technology, Sydney (UTS)

Building 2, Lecture Theatre 3.02 (via UTS main entrance, Broadway)

Admission: Admission is free. RSVP essential for talks, film and opening reception.
Bookings via website.

Enquiries: reception@jpf.org.au / 02 8239 0055

Website/RSVP: www.jpf.org.au



Free CHOYA tastings available on talk nights

ABOUT MARIELUISE JONAS



Dr Marieluise Jonas is a senior lecturer in landscape architecture in RMIT University's School of Architecture and Design. Prior to entering academia, she practiced as a landscape architect in Germany, Japan and Australia. Marieluise earned her PhD at the University of Tokyo, where she researched informal gardening practices in dense urban conditions. Since 3.11, she has been highly involved with communities in tsunami-affected Tōhoku, and continues her affiliation with the University of Tokyo through urban research and post-disaster reconstruction projects. She has recently returned from Tōhoku, where she convened a conference called "Living with the Sea", funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia-Japan Foundation. Her talk is based on her current book project, *AfterLandscape: Designing in Uncertainty—Post Disaster Futures Japan* [forthcoming, 2016], which seeks to document innovative rebuilding in Tōhoku. In December 2016, she will travel again to Tohoku with RMIT students to conduct field research on the economic and ecologic impact of seawalls.

ABOUT KESENNUMA

Kesennuma (pop. 66,667) is a coastal city in Miyagi prefecture, in the northeastern Tōhoku region of Japan. 1,359 residents are either dead or missing as a result of the tsunami, and 15,815 homes were destroyed. The current population is 66,667 (January 2016). The population prior to the disaster was 73,489 (October 2010).

ABOUT TARŌ VILLAGE

Tarō is a small coastal village in Iwate prefecture, in the northeastern Tōhoku region of Japan. After being hit by tsunamis in 1896 and again in 1933, the town built an enormous seawall to protect it from further disasters. Construction of its seawall began in 1934, and was completed 24 years later, in 1958. Additional works were later done to improve the wall, and were completed in 1978. The resulting sea wall was 10 meters high and approximately 2.5 kilometres long. On March 11, 2011, locals were confident that the wall would protect them as the tsunami rolled in. Some even headed to the wall to watch. But the waters easily crossed the wall, partially destroying it, and swept away the village it had been designed to protect.

ABOUT 3.11

On March 11, 2011 at 2.46pm, a magnitude 9.0 quake struck Japan, causing the nation's biggest tsunami in over a millennium. The wave hit the northeastern Tōhoku region, destroying thousands of homes and sparking the explosion of a nuclear power plant in coastal Fukushima. This triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami and plant explosion is known in Japan as "3.11". Five years on, the effects still echo in the physical, civil and artistic landscape. The *After 3.11* program shines a spotlight on some of these changes.

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 22 offices in 21 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1978.



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For more information please see www.jpf.org.au or contact:

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