

Group Interview for Community Design

A social & life-style investigation during
the pre-design process for a sustainable community design



Case study in Kohoku New Town,
Tsuzuki Ward, Yokohama, JAPAN



Prof. Kazuo Iwamura

Architect / UIA, ARCASIA, JIA

Professor Emeritus, Tokyo City University

Visiting Professor, Chu Hai College of Higher Education

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Contents

0

1. Abstract	01
2. Cyclical Design Process	04
3. Case Study of Group Interview Investigation	05
4. Results of Group Interview	09
5. Analytical Results	19
6. Conclusion	23

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Abstract-1

- The author, as a practicing architect in favor of implementing sustainable built environment, has developed the cyclical design process constituted of three phases: *1)Pre-design, 2)Design and 3)Post-design.*
- During the Pre-design phase, designers are requested to make efforts to investigate the project's circumstances including **the natural and socio-cultural environment**, in order to elaborate **the concept** to be shared by all the stakeholders.
- This presentation refers to a part of investigation about *the subconscious awareness of the residents* in the Kohoku New Town, where drastic changes have been experienced during the last three decades of development of 1,300 ha. Major issue was *the gaps of awareness among the residents with different background.*
- The author applies *the group interview methods* to reveal such residents' subconscious awareness, which helps designers understand *social backgrounds of the project.*
- In this case, the resulting keywords have been categorized into three groups, such as *1) Human Environment, 2)Time Environment and 3)Space Environment.*
- The above keywords and categories have also revealed their *value and way of living*, often unknown to the planners and designers.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Abstract-2

Such an analytical fact-finding
regarding the relationship between
the residents' awareness and their physical environment
is
a basic approach of "Information Ecology*"
for the sake of
community planning and design,
allowing residents' participation into
the following cyclical design process.

*The term "information ecology" marks a connection between ecological ideas with the dynamics and properties of the increasingly dense, complex and important digital informational environment and has been gaining progressively wider acceptance in a growing number of disciplines. "Information ecology" often is used as metaphor, viewing the informational space as an ecosystem

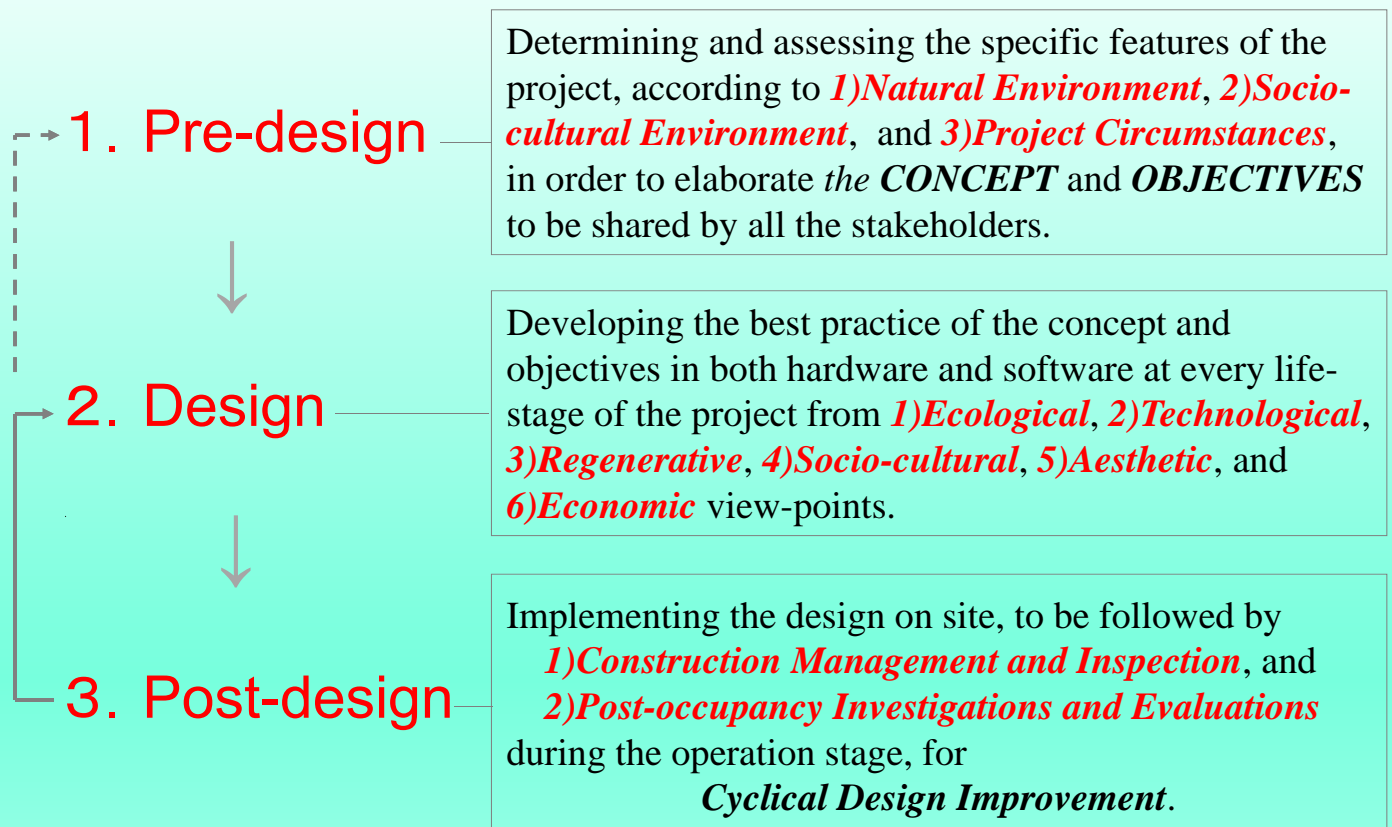
© Kazuo IWAMURA

Keywords

1. Subconscious awareness of residents
2. Sustainable community development & design
3. Cyclical environmental design process
4. Group interview method
5. Residents' participation

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Cyclical Design Process of a Sustainable Built Environment



© Kazuo IWAMURA

A case study of Group Interview investigation

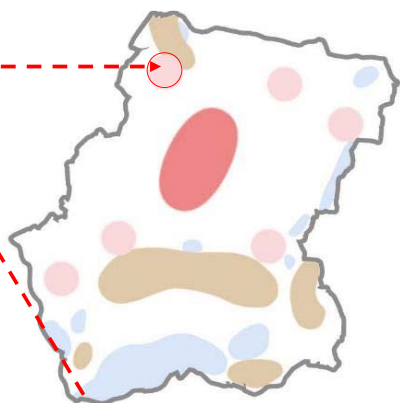


in Kohoku New Town,
Tsuzuki Ward,
Yokohama, JAPAN

© Kazuo IWAMURA

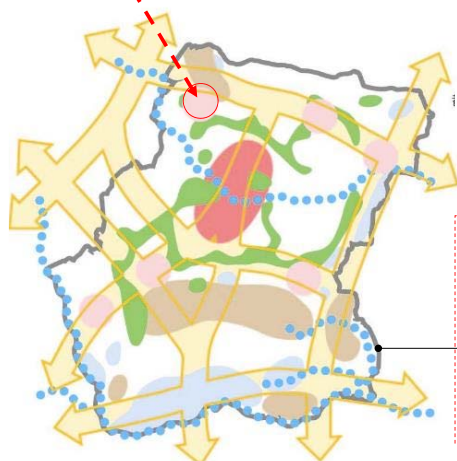
Kohoku New Town in Tsuzuki Ward, Yokohama

We are here!



Town Cores and Industrial Zones

- Town Center District
- Station Center Districts
- Agricultural Zones
- Industrial Zones



Future Structural Image of Tsuzuki Ward

The population as of September 1st, 2003:
Yokohama City = 3,526,000 (43,500ha)

Tsuzuki Ward = 170,000 (2,800ha)

Kohoku NT = 122,000 (2,500ha)

Average Age of NT residents: ca. 35 years old

© Kazuo IWAMURA

- 1) Analysis on the residents' properties characteristics in and around the New Town.
- 2) Selection of a key or typical person representing a property, through local authority or other relevant organizations.
- 3) Forming five to ten groups to be interviewed, with the help of the key person in selecting her (or his) closed friends belonging to the same property. The size of a group should be max. 5 to 6 persons.
- 4) The group member is preferably all women, who are well aware of everyday life issues, including shopping, children's education, administration services, social welfares, local information etc. Men's groups are added complementally according to necessity.

- 5) The best venue of the interview is at home of a group member, or in members' favorite café or restaurant, in order to avoid formal atmosphere and to experience her own life-style.
- 6) The interview is not focused on some specific topics but on usual daily life of each member from morning till night, and recorded only by noting in stead of using any electronic devices. Creating a casual and friendly atmosphere is top priority.
- 7) The results of the group interview should be compiled and analyzed as soon as possible first group by group, and then according to issues discovered through crossing the each result. Keywords shall be mapped and grouped on the theme map, which illustrates the structure of issues regarding the residents' lifestyle.

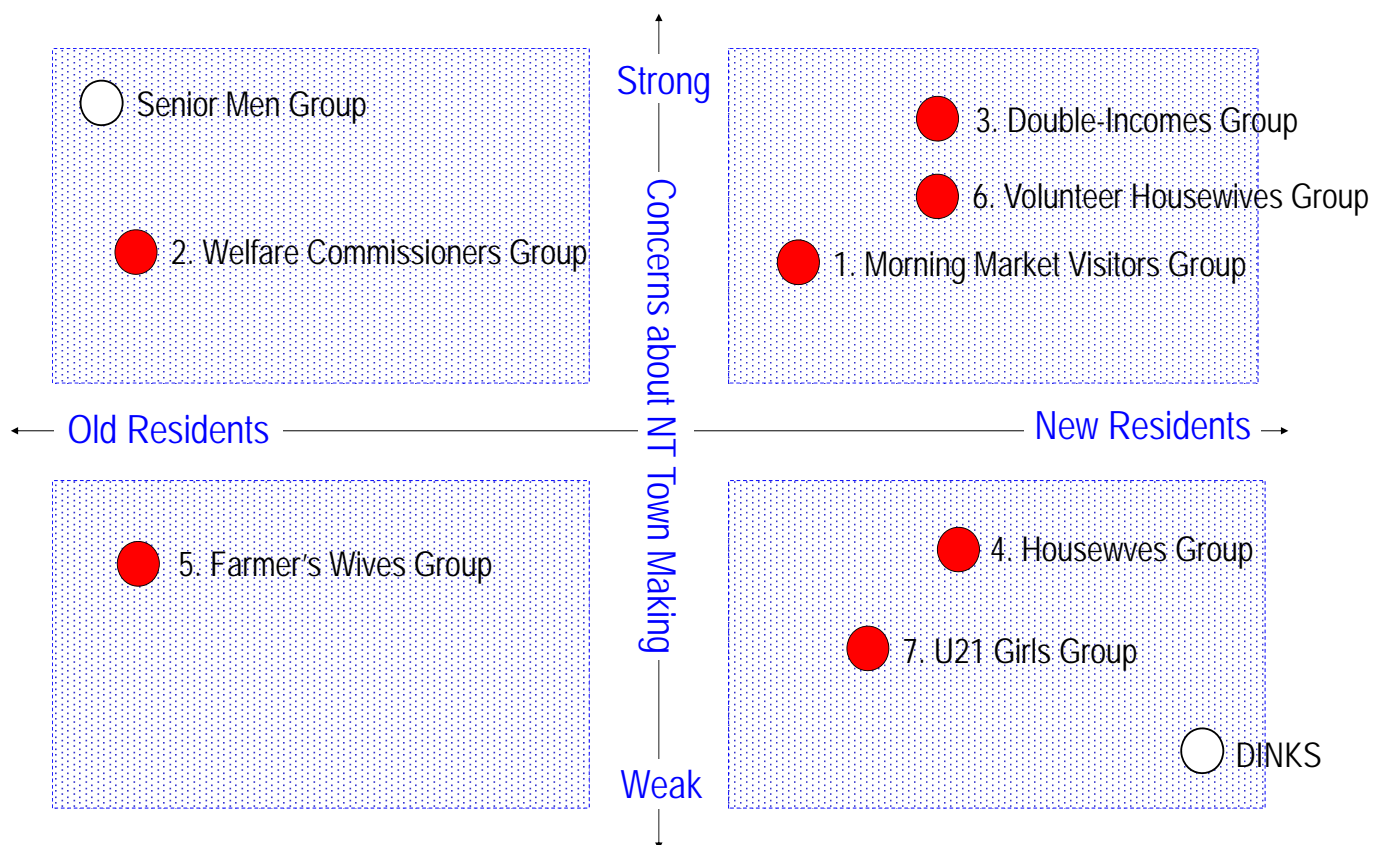
Results of Group Interview investigation according to each selected group

in Kohoku New Town,
Tsuzuki Ward, Yokohama, JAPAN



© Kazuo IWAMURA

Case Study: Map of Selected Groups for Interview



© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-1: Morning Market Visitors Group

House wives community created through the acquaintance at a Morning Market on Sunday, sharing the problems of taking care of handicapped children. Mixture of old and new residents is characteristic.



- One of the motivations to move here was the planned wide road network, however, the present traffic jam is a cause of dissatisfaction.
- Priority for their residence is the traffic and shopping convenience. Little concern and awareness about the town-scaping.
- The preserved green in NT is highly evaluated, and enjoyed. They like the NT and their own life. A little knowledge about the drastic change of the old residents' life.
- They observe the society and community through their handicapped children, and created mutual network to help themselves.
- They seek the relationship with the existing community, which, however, is often provided by the local administration.
- Personnel contact with the old residents is requested, but in vain. They feel to be rejected by them.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-2: Welfare Commissioners Group

Typical aged house wives of old residents, living originally on farming, and now on the basis of new real estate business. They lead an active life, contributing to the local community as the welfare commissioner.



- They quite enjoy their own life.
- Their life with big family is appreciated. They had been taking care of their parents-in-law as a wife, and are now living with the wife of their own sons.
- They have their own indigenous community since long time, therefore, little requirement to NT.
- While they received financial advantages from the NT development, their traditional life-style was lost. As they feel somehow to be disturbed by the newcomers, their relationship became more tight.
- They have their own extensive land and commodious house surrounded by rich green. Public parks are, therefore, no priority for them, and although they feel sad when green disappears, it is no serious problem for them.
- Their old inconvenient life-style is now their sweet memory, and they even proud of it.
- They prefer rather to live with their family and to sustain it within the existing community around them, than to challenge to begin with something new.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-3: Double Income Group

Very active working mothers of new double income residents living in privately-owned flats of the Governmental Housing Corporation since 7-8 years. With higher academic background, they are very conscious of the rights of residents, sharing a house for kids by themselves. They short absolutely of time.



- They happened to move in NT, just because they won the lottery for a condominium provided by the Housing Corporation. No special interest in NT at the beginning.
- They have all higher academic background, and share the common sense that double-income is just normal.
- Strong desire for further learning.
- They have scarce gender gap, and share their household and kids' education with their husband.
- Typical active life-style of "the busier, the more active".
- Very little concern about the town-scaping, but very responsive to the information for children.
- Their behavior is oriented by clear policies like strong concern about the environmental problem including healthy foods.
- Although sharing a house for kids by themselves costs a lot, they keep their job as profession.
- It is not the Town as a whole, but their life in condominium that attracts them.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-4: House Wives Group

House wives of new residents living in privately-owned flats of the Governmental Housing Corporation. They have quite different consciousness from the Group-3, despite their similar residential circumstances.



- House wives, almost fully engaged in their kids rearing.
- They find their human networks through their kids' relations.
- Although they have some dissatisfactions, no active opinion is addressed to the local administration and community.
- Sharing longest time with their kids is their priority for the time being.
- They long to move in a detached house, however, it is not affordable for them in NT.
- They find condominium life very convenient and safe, where spending most of their time.
- They have no contact with the old residents, and formed a closed human network of similar age.
- Nuclear family is the center for them.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-5 : Farmer's Wives Group

House wives of old farmer residents with the age of 50's to 70's. They are the core members of the women division of Farmers' Cooperative Organization, actively and comfortably living on their husbands' income from farming and non-farming business such as real estates operation

- They try to get accustomed to their present life, keeping good memories of old days.
- They think that their men's life has been more drastically changed than their own. They tend to keep their most favorite agriculture-centered life with earth, although the surrounding situation has been totally changed.
- Due to the NT development, their family structure has been distorted, causing fundamental changes.
- During the early stage of the development, there were harsh struggles between the pros for and the cons against the NT development within their men's society.
- They still live within their old community, and glance at NT from time to time as a foreign world.
- There are some who really enjoy the new life, recognizing themselves as bad wives.



- Although they were obliged to change their life-style during quite long time in their temporarily house due to NT construction, their agriculture-centered life has been quickly recovered after they came back home.
- Their children, grown up in the temporarily houses, have no experience of the old farmer's houses, which is a pity for the them.
- Living as farmer's wife, they understand their husband through cooperative works in the field.
- They experienced the early days as wife, expressing no opinion in their family and community. Even now, they tend to speak after men's words.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-6 : Volunteer Housewives Group

House wives of new residents with the age of 50's, who have already finished raising their kids and therefore much time for community activities. These people are the core member of residents' initiatives of the Kohoku New Town.

- They have an ample situation both spiritually and financially.
- Provided with the benefits of Bubble Economy, they could have moved to better residence for several times.
- Their human network is based upon the acquaintances at events for children.
- They are active core members of PTA, expressing vitally their own opinions.
- Their children are grown up and their husbands are at business. Therefore they seek their own world outside of family, keeping the relationship with friends as a most precious resource for them.
- As the place of children's education is not NT any more, they have no serious need for the contact with the local community. However, they worry about the local information gap between old residents and new residents.
- They came from the other regions and created nuclear family here. Scarce contact with their relatives, except at yearly ritual events.
- They belong to the generation, preparing for the forthcoming life with their own parents who live alone in their home town.



© Kazuo IWAMURA

Selected Group-7 : U21 Girls Group

Girls under 21 years old, mostly teenagers, who constitute a considerable proportion of the New Town, the average residents' age of which is ca. 35 years old.

- For them NT is only the base camp of their life, and their activity fields are elsewhere in Tokyo and Yokohama.
- Therefore, they have no clear need and favorable image for NT.
- Enjoying diverse urban acquaintances and stimulations, they give efforts to make up themselves.
- They are fond of NT. It's convenient location to both Tokyo and Yokohama is very much appreciated.
- However, they find the district's public bus transportation very inconvenient.
- They stay at home only at night and during the weekend. Their daily activities are based at their school or jobbing place.
- They are all grown up in NT. Therefore, they have many friends of primary school and junior high school, to spend time together at the weekend.
- Their information source of fashion is magazine, and they do not watch at TV so often.
- They are more or less interested in volunteer activities to take care of children or the handicapped. Some of them are practicing such activities.

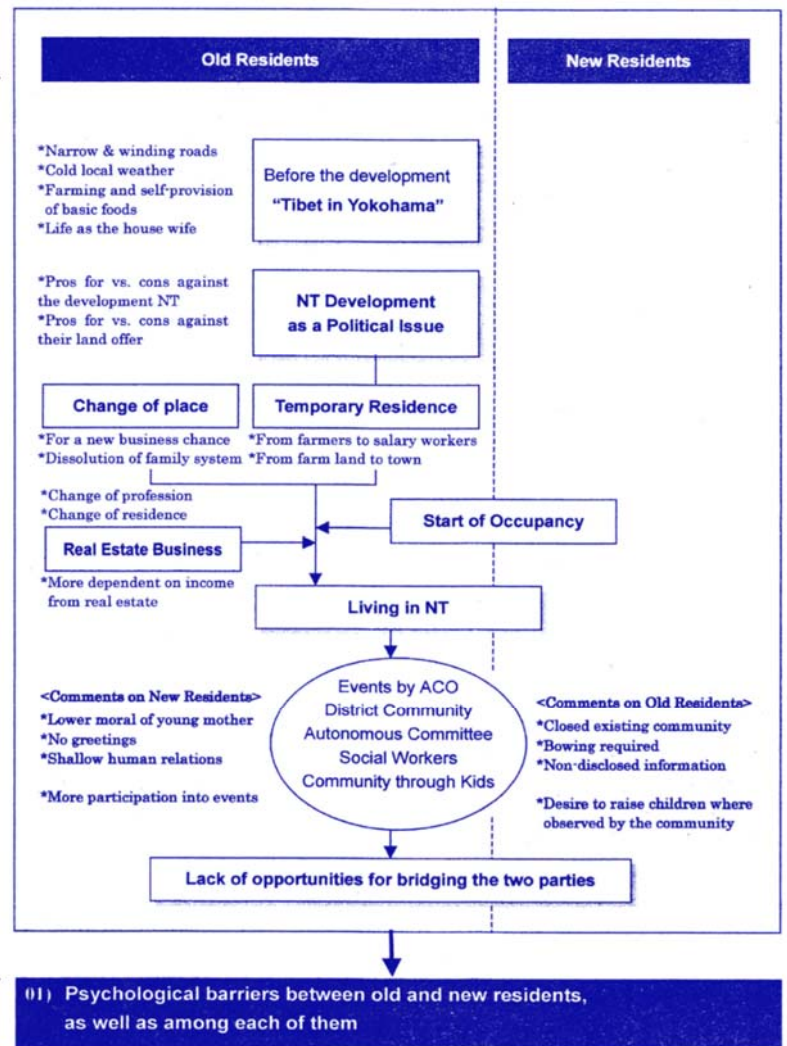


© Kazuo IWAMURA

A chart example

showing the psychological relationship between old and new residents in the Kohoku New Town

This chart reveals the subconscious barriers between old and new residents in the new town developed since 30 years.



Analytic Results-1: Human Environmental Issues-1

1) Psychological barriers between old and new residents, as well as among each of them

- Desire for the mutual touch and exchange → *Creation of spaces and opportunities for daily communication*
- Time lag in coping with their <life> and <change>, and the difference of financial background

2) Old inhabitants as bearers of the indigenous culture and the former farm-village's life styles

- Witness of the indigenous and living culture of the place → *Town making with historical elements to be inherited*

3) Strong needs for daily town information as well as intellectual one, in terms of contents, way of circulation and its speed

- Gap between demand and supply of community information, during the maturing process of a new town → *Needs for sustainable communication sites*

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Analytic Results-2: Human Environmental Issues-2

4) Itemized communities and citizen's activities, crystallized from and around one's own personal problems

- Diversified problems to be addressed by the residents, including working conditions, child rearing, education, nursing etc., which created individual activities
- Little choice of services provided by both public and private sectors, during the maturing process of NT

5) Desire for self-accomplishment and socialization, beyond the difference of generation and property

- Little information and access for participation, to be shared by the residents → *Improvement of the community information services is required*
- Gap between demand and supply of volunteer activities → *Networking the potential residents' activities is needed*

© Kazuo IWAMURA

06) Diversification and acceleration of their time environment

- Available time is recognized as the most precious resource by the residents
- Awareness of time shortage dominates our contemporary urban life → *To be reflected in the provision of space, information and services*
- The quality and quantity of <Time Environment>, definitely different according to generation and property of the resident → *To be considered as the basic factor of the contemporary lifestyle*

Results-4: Space Environmental Issues

07) Planning concept, scarcely known by the inhabitants

- Bird's eye, human's eye and insect's eye level → *Eye level gap in observing the town*
- Stereotype image of a good town, and fabricated image of consumers

08) Spatial gap between residents' area and the administrative area

09) Little interest in townscape in residents' mind

10) Satisfaction grade of the present home and town is evaluated on the basis of prior experiences of their residential environment

11) The present home for life?

12) New residents tend to live away from their parent(s).

Conclusion-1

Although this research through the qualitative group interview method was quantitatively limited due to time and finance, we could overview very vividly the existing private and social life shared by the residents in the Kohoku New Town, on both general and specific levels.

The most unexpected result was the residents' little concern to the tangible urban design aspects, including public space organization and town-scaping of aesthetic quality, which are always major concerns of urban designers and architects.

After the growing stage of 30 years, however, the Kohoku New Town will experience its forthcoming maturing process, where the existing diverse cultural and social activities of the residents seem to contribute to the collaborations towards a sustainable Old Town.

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Conclusion-2

Such an analytical fact-finding
regarding the relationship between
the residents' awareness and their physical environment
is
a basic approach of "Information Ecology*"
for the sake of
community planning and design,
allowing residents' participation into
the cyclical design process (c.f. slide 4).

*The term "information ecology" marks a connection between ecological ideas with the dynamics and properties of the increasingly dense, complex and important digital informational environment and has been gaining progressively wider acceptance in a growing number of disciplines. "Information ecology" often is used as metaphor, viewing the informational space as an ecosystem

© Kazuo IWAMURA

Reference

- 1) Iwamura, “Residents and Town-scaping” 1999, Housing Industry Foundation
- 2) “Tsuduki Master Plan of Town Planning” 2002, Yokohama City
- 3) Iwamura et al., “Towards the Architecture for a Global Environment” 2005, Shokokusha



© Kazuo IWAMURA

Community design for our next generations...



Thank you very much for your attention.

© Kazuo IWAMURA