

**Fellows ID: S-14008**

**Fellow's name: Helen Woolley, The Department of Landscape, The University of Sheffield, England**

**Host: Professor Isami Kinoshita, Chiba University.**

**Title: Children's Outdoor Environments in the Post-Disaster Tohoku area of Japan**

### **Our research about children's outdoor environments in the post disaster area**

As a Chartered Landscape Architect my main research interest is in children's outdoor environments and how we plan, design, manage, finance and underpin these activities with policy. In 2012 I visited the post disaster area of Tohoku (funded by the Daiwa Anglo- Japanese Foundation) and saw the devastation to housing, schools, nurseries and communities. I visited again this year as a JSPS Invited Fellow and again spent much time based not at Chiba University, but out in the post-disaster area with my academic host. We re-visited locations such as areas Sendai, Ishinomaki, Rikuzentakata, Kesenuma, Minami Sanriku, and Fukushima. We spent time with, interviewed and conversed with many different people including Professors, Prefecture staff, play workers, kindergarten staff, others working with and for children and young people, some young people, people from NPOs, people in temporary housing (introduced by individuals from NPOs) and individuals and groups concerned about the environment and re-introducing the concept of Furusato.

The aim of my visit was to understand some of the changes related to children's outdoor environments since 2012 and to particular understand more about the situation with kindergartens and green spaces in Fukushima Prefecture. I was also interested to find out more about the ongoing situation with the temporary housing and the reconstruction phase of the new housing.

One of the striking things was that more adults are getting involved with supporting children's outdoor and indoor play in different ways. In addition in Fukushima one of the kindergartens has made really positive progress with using their outdoor space, now that the aerial radiation levels are safer. But in Fukushima there has also been a dramatic increase in the number of indoor play facilities and there is concern that the rate of obesity in children has increased since the triple disaster.

### **My experience of Japan**

As ever I was so well looked after by my host and everyone whom I met. Many of the people could not speak English and because I cannot speak Japanese my host translated for me and for part of the time we were joined by someone who had acted as an informal translator two years ago. Otherwise we managed to communicate in non-verbal ways. All the people I had previously met welcomed me again with open arms and shared cultural activities as well as research discussions. Others whom I had not met before opened up their homes to provide hospitality, cultural context and their experiences of the disaster. So many of these people really want the world to remember about what happened in the triple disaster and have urged me to tell their story.

Here are the references for the two publications from my visits to Japan:

Kinoshita, I. and Woolley, H. (accepted) Children's Play Environment after a Disaster: The Great East Japan Earthquake *Children* 2014, 1, 1-x manuscripts; doi:10.3390/children10x000x

Woolley, H. and Kinoshita, I. (2014) Children outdoor play and disasters: an example from the Tohoku area in north east Japan following the triple disaster of March 2011, *Children and Society* DOI:10.1111/chso.12072



The ground dropped 2 metres in the earthquake, we are standing above where two of the Earth's plates overlap



Asobiba adventure playground was built in the months after the disaster

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