

Discovering a region, meeting people, working to build a city

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I work in Shizuoka City as a consultant in urban development that incorporates local characteristics in architectural design and within Shizuoka Prefecture. I married while still a student and after completing my master's degree went to work at the architect's office operated by my father's older brother. I continued working while carrying other duties such as parenting, and later looking after my parents, doing my best to do what was needed both at home and at work. Sometimes I would feel like I couldn't keep up with the pressures of it all, and before I knew it thirty years had passed. The children have grown into independence and now I spend each day working at both architectural design and "urban development." The latter is complex and difficult but interesting. Everyday there is something to enjoy.

When I say "urban development," there may be a number of people that wonder what it is I mean. And well they should, since "urban development" has no clear definition. At one time it was confined to meaning physical projects such as city planning and road construction, the creation of urban areas. It has since come to go beyond these physical aspects to include intangible aspects and is used to cover all the projects and activities related to lifestyle and the region. Since it can be used in so many contexts to match what is being said it has become a very useful term. It isn't often used to discuss negative aspects but to reflect an intention to advance the regional environment and lifestyles towards positive outcomes. Personally, I use "urban development" broadly to refer to all "actions" that have the intent of improving interpersonal relationship and the region at their core. Urban development also involves "the site: location of the problem" and the "actions and implemented items" performed there.

So what does it mean to make "Urban Development" an occupation? At the core of urban development is the citizens. The job is then to support their actions and appropriately provide the different kinds of knowledge, techniques and wisdom needed at their locations (problem solving). In some cases there are times when the work includes getting directly involved on site. Every area is unique and must be carefully studied. We meet with the people and have conversations to consider improvements customized to the community and help local people take action and implement the proposals.

I got involved in urban development in order to help the region become more alive, including regional reinvigoration plans and renovation of shopping districts. Doing this kind of work helped me to realize that merely building things and making the city look nice is not enough to make it more alive. That good opportunities and locations for urban development take place when the process of urban development is decided locally. Using meetings to consider concrete actions such as facilities or cityscape we hold workshops to build awareness of urban development and in the course of this we have learned many things the hard way. We've also met some great people and found good opportunities to make a differ-

ence, gradually building a business in urban development. As I played the part I felt was needed at each time and place, I was lucky to discover how interesting this work could be. One reason I could do this was the relative freedom to act one has in an architect office located in a smaller regional center. I am grateful that I'm able to do this work in this way and play my own small part.



Workshop about making a park at an Elementary School