

Inheriting the Principle of Expo '90 and Town Development

Shoichi Mitani

Director of the Planning Division and
Deputy Director-General of General Affairs
Expo '90 Foundation

1. Introduction

The International Garden and Greenery Exposition, Osaka, Japan, 1990 (Expo '90) was the fourth international exposition held in Japan, and the first World Horticultural Exhibition (at the A1 level) ever held in Asia. Expo '90, whose theme was the “Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind,” concluded successfully. At that time, public attention was shifting from regional pollution problems to global environmental challenges. With the emergence of such issues as ozone depletion, acid rain, and deforestation, people began to worry about global warming. The phrase “recognize anew the importance of greenery lost by the progress of urbanization” was frequently used. It was an indication that, in the age when the traditional Japanese view of nature was being forgotten, we, city residents in many cases, came to focus on “nature” and “life.” It is 33 years since Expo '90 was held. Now, I would like to express my opinions about inheriting its principle and town development.



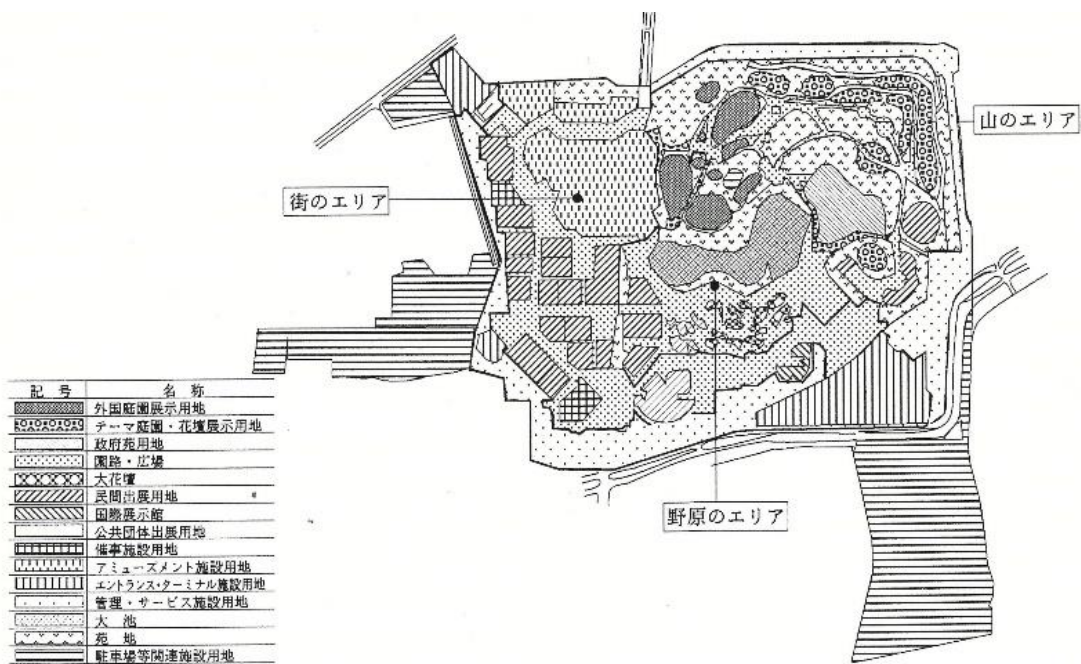
Venue of the Expo '90

2. Establishment of the principle

The theme of Expo '90, “Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind,” provided the basis for the event’s basic concept and the venue plan to embody it. Japanese people have been awed by and respected many gods living in abundant nature. The theme was intended to integrate this Japanese view of nature into a horticultural exposition traditionally held in Europe. It also differentiated Expo '90 from conventional international exhibitions, which had been held since the mid-19th century to enhance the national prestige of a country by displaying the most prominent inventions and achievements of the times. The theme was based on the Expo '90 principle that remains important even today. As an aside, the Japanese term “共生” (*Kyosei*), which literally means

symbiosis (or harmonious coexistence), was originally a biological term that encompasses mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism. According to the proposal by Sakyo Komatsu, a writer and one of the general producers of Expo '90, “共生” (*Kyosei*) was adopted as the keyword of the theme, so that the exposition was held as a “festival of life” to symbolize life on earth. The term subsequently became a social term that was used to describe measures taken by Japanese ministries, agencies, and local governments as well as political manifestos, and that was found in the names of new departments at universities/colleges, real estate advertising, and the like. Now we can see “共生” being used not only to promote town development, but also to connect different countries, ethnic groups, and cultures. In addition, the number of hits on the internet for “共生” was 25.9million in 2009 (searched by the author). The number has increased to 51.5million as at February 2023, at the time this article was completed.

3. Venue plan



Zoning of EXPO '90 venue

<画像翻訳>

街のエリア	City Area
山のエリア	Mountain Area
野原のエリア	Field Area
名称	Term

記号	Legend
外国庭園展示用地	International Gardens
テーマ庭園・花壇展示用地	Theme Gardens/Flower Beds
政府苑用地	Japanese Government Garden
園路・広場	Squares and Streets
大花壇	Big Flower Beds
民間出展用地	Private-Sector Pavilions
国際展示館	International Exhibit Halls
公共団体出展用地	Public-Sector Pavilions
催事施設用地	Event Zone
アミューズメント施設用地	Amusement Zone
エントランス・ターミナル施設用地	Entrances and Terminals
管理・サービス施設用地	Administration and Service
大池	Large Pond
苑地	Greenery Zone
駐車場等関連施設用地	Parking Areas

It is said that an international exposition is a testing ground for a future society. When the Japan World Exposition, Osaka, 1970 (Osaka's Expo '70) was held, moving walkways, videophones, and other “dream” equipment and devices, which have now become commonplace, attracted much attention as items symbolizing the steadily growing economy of Japan at that time, as suggested by the theme of Osaka's Expo '70, “Progress and Harmony for Mankind.” On the other hand, Expo '90 placed primary focus on “flowers and greenery,” which had conventionally played supporting roles, rather than state-of-the-art science and technology. By doing so, the exhibition provided many people with an opportunity to reconsider the roles and importance of plants, which they had begun to forget before the end of the century when the aforementioned environmental challenges emerged, helping them to envision a near-future city that harmoniously coexists with nature.

The venue concept of Expo '90 sought to realize an ideal state of flowers and greenery that would support richer and healthier lifestyles toward the 21st century. The venue plan was created with the following three areas as the basic elements: the Mountain Area, the City Area and the Field Area. The Mountain Area, which represented the fundamental space structure of Japan's geographical features, was designed to express its contractive relationship with the City Area. The Field Area was placed to connect the Mountain and City Areas. This venue zoning was exactly based on the image of Japan's *satoyama satochi* landscapes. Each area was linked in a unified manner for optimal use of space. In the Mountain Area, visitors enjoyed viewing 2-meter-wide flower beds along walkways, while strolling under lush trees. The Field Area offered a nice view of container flowers and boxed trees. In the City Area, building coverage was reduced from 60% to 50% for the first time in the history of expositions, achieving a 30% green coverage rate (including wall greening). The area also included well-considered vegetation in front of pavilions, lattices, and three-dimensional flower beds, which aroused the interest of visitors.



Flower bed along a walkway in the Mountain Area

In the Government Garden exhibited by the Japanese government, a future city model was displayed at the City and Environment Pavilion. The pavilion demonstrated the roles and importance of flowers and greenery in a city, and made a new suggestion for an urban environment where flowers and greenery and people could coexist in harmony. Among the exhibits there were “floral decorations near windows and on balconies,” “symbolic trees of the city,” “coexistence space visited by birds” and “lifeforms in a city garden,” all of which can be found here and there today. The exhibition was intended to allow visitors to see the greenery of the entire city from the viewpoint of Landsat, so that they could realize the importance of greenery as a mass of various parks, zoos, botanical gardens, green buffer zones, etc. Such greenery formed a network of plains



City and Environment Pavilion in the Japanese Government Garden

and lines, serving as the city's framework and social infrastructure. Below is the explanatory comment on the exhibits.

“The greenery of the Japanese Archipelago has been cultivated by our predecessors over a long period of time. They have devised various methods to protect and utilize this vast natural greenery. It is essential that greenery in the national land be preserved properly, in order to create a favorable city environment. A city can be comfortable not through conflict but through harmonization with nature (greenery).”

4. Results of Expo '90 (Whole of Japan)

In light of the success and results of Expo '90, a meeting was held by the Council to Inherit the Basic Principle of the International Garden and Greenery Exposition, Osaka, Japan, 1990, an advisory body to the Minister of Construction and to the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, on September 6, 1990 during the event. At the meeting, several measures were proposed regarding town development toward the creation of a prosperous society. These measures are summarized below:

- ① Strive to create and preserve a rich space containing flowers and greenery.
- ② Introduce the same type of competition-style campaigns for developing towns of flowers and greenery that are conducted in European countries, in order to more actively promote nationwide campaigns to create in Japan communities that are full of flowers and greenery with the participation of the general public.
- ③ Improve the National Urban Greening Fair, Greenery Day, Greenery Week, and other related greening promotion events, and periodically hold flower festivals on a nationwide scale while strengthening the international character of these events.
- ④ Actively incorporate the competitions of flowers and greenery held at Expo '90 into the above events.
- ⑤ Broaden the range of the promotion campaigns through the effective use of TV, radio, and other media. Osaka, which hosted Expo '90, will actively promote the development of a pleasant and comfortable city, as an advanced municipality that takes the lead in the nationwide movement to create towns full of flowers and greenery.

The respective measures produced positive outcomes. As for measure ①, the Organization for Landscape and Urban Green Technologies (now Organization for Landscape and Urban Green Infrastructure) was established, which has studied and promoted tree planting in urban spaces as well as inside and outside of buildings. Regarding measure ②, the National Flower Town Planning Competition was held on a nationwide scale. Even now, the competition is organized as a major

project for inheriting the principle of Expo '90 (the details will be described later). As a result of measure ③, similar events were held, such as Flower Festa '95 Gifu, Japan Flora 2000 (A2, B1),^{*Note 1} Lake Hamana Pacific Flora 2004 (A2, B1),^{*Note 1} as well as the National Urban Greening Fair, which is being held for the 40th time this year. Measure ④ led to the holding of the Japan Flower Festival Competition (closed in 2004). With regard to measure ⑤, other various measures and projects have been implemented in Osaka, where the Expo '90 Foundation is located (the details will be described later).

For reference, I would like to discuss the results of a survey conducted after Expo '90. In March 1994, the Expo '90 Foundation sent a questionnaire survey to 2,210 entities in Japan, including the central and local governments and garden and greenery organizations, and received responses from 621 respondents. These answers indicated the greatness of the effects and significance of Expo '90. To the question about "Expo '90's impact on the promotion of activities regarding flowers and greenery: Changes after Expo '90," 62% respondents answered "There were positive changes." As for the content of these changes (multiple answers allowed), 47.5% cited "Establishment of organizations for promoting the development of towns full of flowers and greenery, and the holding of lectures and seminars on promoting flowers and greenery." Other answers included "New town development campaigns and flower and greenery promotion campaigns," "The holding of expositions and exhibitions," "Development of new products and methods and improvement in production and logistics systems" and "Regular publishing of information magazines and journals." Also, 80% respondents cited "Higher interest in flowers and greenery," 55% "Review of environmental activities and increased awareness of environmental beatification," and 26% "Higher interest in the global environment." These survey results suggested that the principle "Harmonious Coexistence of Nature and Mankind" gained public empathy and spread across Japan, and that Expo '90 raised public environmental awareness, thereby contributing to initiatives for new town development.

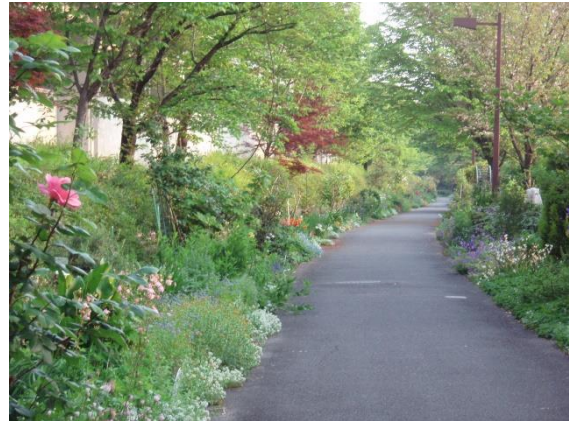
The National Flower Town Planning Competition mentioned above comprises a nationwide campaign and competitions held in Japan with the participation of the general public. The Competition was proposed by the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Minister of Construction (at that time), and is organized by the National Flower Town Planning Competition Promotion Association (consisting of the Expo '90 Foundation, the Flower Association of Japan, the Urban Green Fund [now Organization for Landscape and Urban Green Infrastructure] and the Japan Flower Promotion Center Foundation). In



Groundwork Mishima, an NPO, which was selected to receive the EXPO '90 Foundation grant in 2009 and between 2015 and 2018. The NPO was also awarded the 2015 Prize of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport at the National Flower Town Planning Competition

In 1991, the year following the Expo '90, the National Flower Town Planning Competition commenced. In its first year, although it took time for preparations, the Competition received more than 300 applications, encouraging many people who love flowers and greenery nationwide to be involved in town development activities. Its objective is not simply to evaluate the beauty of flowers and design of flower beds. Instead, the judgment focus is placed on the ripple effect of a single flower bed. The Competition expects that the effects will spread to neighborhood areas, just like a point that grows into a line, then to a plane. The Competition aims to utilize the power of flowers to bring together people to form a local community, which will eventually lead to better town development. Fortunately, from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, there was a tendency for Japanese men not to be shy about having flowers, amid the great popularity enjoyed by “trendy dramas” (TV dramas), since these dramas invariably had a scene, for instance, where a male character jauntily walked through the street holding a bouquet in his hand. In the late 1990s, a gardening boom occurred (“gardening” was selected as one of the major ten buzzwords in 1997). Against such a backdrop, the total number of applications for the Competition increased year by year. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number hovered around 1,500. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1,000 applications were submitted in 2021.^{Note 2} For the past 32 years, the Competition has received applications from almost all prefectures in Japan, with the total number of entries amounting to about 45,000. This enormous number indicates that town development through flowers and greenery has become widespread throughout Japan and established as a national movement.

Since the Expo '90 Foundation started to invite applications for its grant from the public in fiscal 2004, it has supported over 450 civic groups and other organizations. Of these grant recipients, 110 organizations are engaged in town development and flower bed making, providing an underpinning for the Competition.



Gardencity Coop Kongo East SUMIREKAI, a recipient of the EXPO '90 Foundation Natural Environment Grant in 2007 and 2018

Moreover, the Expo '90 Foundation inaugurated the reconstruction support grant program in the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake. So far, the grant has been provided to a total of 132 organizations to help disaster-hit areas, including those affected by the Kumamoto Earthquake and the tremendous catastrophes that have taken place in the Kansai region. If you see a town destroyed by an earthquake or land from where everything has been swept away by tsunami, you will feel as if it is a black-and-white world. Some people commented that flowers and greenery can add color to such a monochrome scene and symbolize "life" and "hope," encouraging disaster victims to live to see tomorrow. I have also heard that flower beds created near temporary housing or disaster restoration housing serve as a place for communication among people who have gotten together from different areas. It is said that town building through flowers and greenery will help build personal relationships. This may be the best example of such cases.

5. Results of Expo '90 (Osaka)

Now I would like to discuss the measures taken by Osaka, which hosted Expo '90. First, the Osaka municipal government formulated the Osaka City Comprehensive Development Plan 21 in October 1990, immediately after the closing of the exposition. On the 29th of the same month, then Mayor Masaya Nishio made the Declaration of Osaka Greenery Development, which was followed by the establishment of the Osaka City Greenery Development Promotion Fund endowed with 10 billion yen in November.

The gist of the above declaration was as follows: Expo '90 was an event that offered important suggestions not only as to urban environmental improvement but also creation of a new city environment in the future, in order to address issues regarding cultural and regional revitalization. These suggestions have proved useful in dealing with global environmental problems in local communities and in people's everyday life settings, and enabled Expo '90 to function as an experimental field for future city and regional development. To ensure that the exposition's effects

will not be temporary, Osaka City strives to inherit its principle and results and reflect them in future city planning, by making “town development through flowers and greenery” part of the city’s culture. Meanwhile, the Osaka City Greenery Development Promotion Fund aims to comprehensively promote greening initiatives, including tree-planting at homes, business facilities, and other private spaces, by awarding a grant for projects to conserve and grow preserved trees and forests as well as greening promotion and awareness-raising activities. As mentioned above, Osaka City made this declaration and established the 10 billion yen fund immediately after the closure of the exposition. This shows the city’s strong commitment to carry on the principle of Expo ’90. In November 1991, the year after the event, the Greenery Osaka 2005 Plan was formulated as a medium-term plan for greening policy. This plan was drawn up by further evolving the concept of the Osaka City Greenery Development Promotion Fund to facilitate its active use. Subsequently, in 2000, Osaka City formulated its Basic Greenery Plan, a long-term and comprehensive plan for preserving and creating green and open spaces. It was revised in 2013 to the Osaka City New Basic Greenery Plan, with the aim of developing Osaka into a “City of Green” which everyone wishes to live and work in, or visit. In this manner, the Osaka municipal government has evolved its measures to promote greenery city development to the present day.

In the meantime, the Osaka prefectural government established a park in commemoration of Expo ’90 and opened a flower culture zone. In 2009, the government established the Midori Osaka Promotion Plan, which clarified the direction of measures to promote greenery activities in Osaka Prefecture, setting “major city of Osaka full of green” as its future vision. In line with the basic strategies to preserve and regenerate wide green areas, form networks and create diverse greenery throughout towns, Osaka Prefecture has advanced a number of greenery initiatives. In addition, the “Green Town Planning Award (nickname: Osaka Landscape Award)” was inaugurated in 2011 (organizers: Expo ’90 Foundation, Osaka Prefectural Government, and Kansai Branch, Consultants of Landscape Architecture) in order to intensify efforts to implement the plan. In 2021, Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City established the Osaka Park Vision, which defined the direction of initiatives to enhance the attractive features of park green zones over a wide area of Osaka. The prefecture and city also formulated the Osaka Urban Development Grand Design in 2022, which summarized the direction of urban development and relevant strategies, including these greening policies.

Furthermore, on the occasion of Expo ’90, the K. Matsushita Foundation of Expo ’90 (now K. Matsushita Foundation), Dairinkai, and other private organizations were established or formed. Even after Expo ’90, these organizations have been continuing with their activities to inherit the principle. This, I think, is very rare and valuable.

6. Conclusion

His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince (now His Imperial Majesty), who was the Governor Emeritus of Expo '90, delivered the following opening address: "Nature, symbolized by flowers and greenery, has nurtured many lifeforms. We, humanity, have built our present prosperity with the blessings of nature. Nature is the source of life. At the same time, nature provides us inspiration and comfort. However, in the present day, when urbanization is advancing in many countries and greenery is decreasing on a global scale, as serious tasks for humanity, we should reaffirm the greatness and importance of nature and seek ways to harmoniously coexist with nature. Under these circumstances, I believe that it is truly opportune that the International Garden and Greenery Exposition is being held. I expect that people who visit this exposition will realize anew the depth of nature and restore their respect and veneration for nature by communing with flowers and greenery collected from countries around the world. I also hope that visitors will deepen their consideration to pass on a better global environment to the next century." Even now, I feel that it was a deeply insightful and thoughtful address.

Expo '90 was an attempt to explore a desirable city in the 21st century. As one of the parties concerned, I am very happy to see that its principle has been maintained in various ways and kept alive in various parts of Japan. This is also a great source of pride for all those involved in preparing and organizing Expo '90.

In 2027, Yokohama will host the International Horticultural Expo, the A1 world horticultural exhibition to be held for the first time in 37 years in Japan. It is said that whether an exposition will be a success or failure is determined not only by the numbers of visitors and participating countries, but also by what legacy the exposition can leave behind. I sincerely hope that Expo 2027 Yokohama will serve as a venue for reflecting the times and prove to be an epoch-making event, whose significance and objectives will be widespread nationwide. I also expect that, Expo 2027 Yokohama will contribute, in synergy with the trend set by Expo '90, to the development of pleasant and prosperous communities(Shoichi Mitani)

Note 1: A1 category events are international horticultural exhibitions held for three weeks to six months, A2 category events are these exhibitions whose duration is three weeks or less, and B1 category events are national horticultural exhibitions held for three weeks to six months.

Note 2: In 2022, the number was below 1,000, since no applications were submitted from Ibaraki Prefecture, a former collaborator.

References

Official Report of the International Garden and Greenery Exposition, Osaka, Japan, 1990, published by the Expo '90 Foundation (1991)

Report on Exhibits by the Japanese Government in Expo '90, published by the Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (1991)

Osaka City's History of Administration with Flowers and Greenery, published by Osaka City Park Association (2001)

Greenery Osaka 2005 Plan—Greening Policy as a Grand Design, published by the Greening Section, Greening Promotion Department, Greening Promotion Division, Osaka City Construction Bureau (1995)

Newspaper "*Hana no Tomo*" vols. 149-152, published by The Flower Association of Japan (2020)