

Role of the Citizen's College at the Core of the Regional Community in Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark

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The Tokyo University Gardening Club, a private organization, is composed of graduates and students of the former School of Forestry at Tokyo University. Through the landscape garden theme of "Man's relationship with nature," the club has conducted research since 2008 in the Itoigawa Region. Through this research a number of high quality resources were discovered, leading to the creation of a regional college campus in the study of "Geopark Studies" and the forming of the "Geo Campus Geo College Plan" in 2010 with the goal of regional revitalization.

The reason landscape architects are drawn to Itoigawa is that the potential in the people of Itoigawa for mutual coexistence with natural forces and the natural and cultural resources are similar to the landscape architecture fundamental concept of Man's relationship with nature. This connects the creation of new territory in both geopark studies and landscape architecture and through their fusion a method of regional conservation and actualization is created in practice. As it has been considered to be a place where landscape architecture can be idealized while areas that have not been deepened can be progressed, we established ourselves in Itoigawa City.

The opening of the Itoigawa Geopark College in 2012 was envisioned to have its campus cover the entirety of the Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark. We have conducted activities to create a regional community, experience, learn, research and plan with the opening of our school.

We are hoping that by cooperating with the Geopark we will be able to act as a prototype model for other regional cities. This program can bring visitors from outside the region by bringing together regional lecturers for scientific and cultural exchange through Sustainable Development Studies and through the inclusion of specialists. Partnerships with the Itoigawa Geopark Council, Chamber of Commerce, and Board of Education are proactively being advanced helping to advance the creation of a new field of "Geopark Studies" and a result is being seen through the promotion of this to universities and government ministries.

From the above, the Itoigawa Geopark College's outline, goal and plan are as follows:

Outline: "A school in a city of greenery rich in culture, wildlife and topography."

Goal: "An Itoigawa where people have a connection with nature. An Itoigawa here people can coexist with natural forces."

Plan: "Conservation and use of the Geopark. Planning of a sustainable environment. Planning and implementation of environmental education."

Local people take a primary role in the Geopark College and through the joint planning between outside specialists and local people, a trimester-based curriculum has been developed.

The first trimester covers the fundamentals of landscape architecture, the second applies those fundamentals to discussions about examples found in Itoigawa and the third involves individual research of the Itoigawa UNESCO Global Geopark, the writing of reports and the preparation of theses with the support of specialists. Since 2012, 35 papers have been produced through this program. Students express joy in improving the results of their research and activities, so the college has gone on to create a step-up program for graduates.

Since 2013, college graduates have used their theses as a basis to attempt a new community called the "Geo Cafe" and in the following year they developed the "Itoigawa Geopark College Research Lab," they have begun to teach environmental education through recreational activities aimed at primary school aged children at the local "GeoPal" tourism center and they have produced Geopark-branded goods.

Through these activities, we plan to increase the interest in the Geopark and community among school children and in the future plan a graduate student-centered university plan.

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