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OBITUARY

## The obituary of Professor Yorifusa Ishida (1932–2015): a pioneer of planning history in Japan



On 4 November 2015, Dr Yorifusa Ishida, Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Metropolitan University, died from pneumonia in Tokyo at the age of 83. As a pioneer in Japanese planning history, he was a long-time IPHS member and served as a council member of the Planning History Group (present IPHS) from 1989 to 1991.

He was a leading scholar in post-war Japan, in the fields of land-use controls and planning, city and rural planning, and planning history. He was active in international circles and in domestic government services. He has left many high-quality writings, which may become the subject of further research by future researchers. The purpose of this paper is to present a comprehensive picture of the life and works of Professor Ishida, and to identify his evolving range of research interests and attainments. Such a picture will guide readers to rich, challenging, and little-known treasures of Japan's planning history research.

Yorifusa Ishida was born on 7 February 1932, as the first son – with both an elder and a younger sister – of Shinpachiro Ishida and his wife, Kunie. Their home was a wooden rented house located in Tokyo's western periphery of Kokubunji Village (present Kokubunji City), located about 30 kilometres west of Tokyo Central Station. The next year, the family moved to their own wooden detached house in Musashino Town (present Musashino City), located about 10 kilometres nearer to Tokyo Station. The new house was designed by his father, who was an architectural engineer. Ishida's interest in architecture seems to have come from his father's profession. Their house was in a newly developing

suburb, which retained much of the natural environment. Ishida grew up there as a boy, interested in insects and watching the environment changing as a result of urbanization. All these experiences seem to be the roots of his later professional interests in urban and rural planning, and in his personal hobby of bird-watching. Ishida lived in that house all through his student days, until he moved out when he got married in 1960.

In 1950, Ishida graduated from the Architecture Department of the University of Tokyo. His graduation thesis was entitled: 'Land Acquisition Problem in Public Housing' and his graduation design: 'Residential Unit Planning'. He then pursued graduate studies under Professor Eika Takayama, a leading figure in city planning in the academic community, such as the City Planning Institute of Japan, and in various committees of the Ministry of Construction, which was responsible for city planning administration. Professor Takayama's Lab was one of the top groups of scholars in the emerging field of city planning at that time. Like other Japanese universities, the graduate education of the Takayama Lab was a training system similar to an apprenticeship, with fewer classroom lectures and more free personal activities. Ishida joined a group of young scholars who were studying the problem of rural villages and agriculture. It is interesting to note that they were inclined towards Marxism and had advanced research methods in social science. The later academic Ishida owed them both Marxist and methodological influences.

In 1957, Ishida finished his master's course with a thesis entitled: 'Study on the Provincial Cities and Their Peripheries', in which he empirically analysed the urban-rural relationship in provincial towns and villages in Nagano Prefecture and developed some theoretical arguments about the urban-rural relationship in the process of urbanization. In 1960, Ishida started work as a Research Fellow in the Architecture Department of Tokyo Metropolitan University and, the next year, obtained a doctorate degree from the University of Tokyo. His dissertation was entitled: 'Study on the Land Use Control System for Urban Sprawl Areas in the Metropolitan Peripheries'. He investigated the actual reality of the disorderly development, or 'urban sprawl', in the metropolitan peripheries, which was a very serious problem in Japan at that time, from both urban and rural viewpoints. After examining the existing land-use control techniques against sprawl, Ishida proposed a new land-use system, as explained later. The same year, Ishida married Miss Yūko Kogikuya and moved into a small wooden rented apartment room in Kamakura City, about 42 kilometres south of Tokyo Station. The severe housing shortage caused difficulty for the newlywed couple, who had to commute to their working places for 50–70 minutes in overcrowded trains. This urban, rather metropolitan, problem gave Ishida new energy to study city planning for a practical solution.

There was an urgent need to amend the half-century old City Planning Act of 1919 and strengthen the land-use control system against urban sprawl. Ishida's doctorate dissertation provided empirical data about the actual sprawl problem and presented a proposal for a stronger land-use control system. It seems to have some influence in the law-making process through Professor Takayama. In 1968, a drastic amendment was made to create the new City Planning Act, which is still the current planning law, through many minor later amendments. The Act institutionalized a new system of controlling 'development', which is defined as altering the lot shape or quality of land to make it available mainly for the purpose of the construction of buildings or special structures. This development control is implemented differently according to Areas, where development is basically allowed in Urbanization Promotion Areas, and not allowed in Urbanization Controlled Areas. Ishida's proposal, however, had been more sophisticated in that not only development, but also various land-related activities were to be controlled, and the Area classifications were not two but four, namely: Existing Urban Area, Urbanization Area, Urbanization Restraint Area, and Conservation Area. Though he was not entirely happy with the new system, the legislative impact of his research result marked an auspicious start to his career, and his debt to Professor Takayama was gratefully acknowledged.

***In 1967, Ishida was promoted to tenured Associate Professor at the age of 35. In 1984, he moved from the Architecture Department to the University's Centre for Urban Studies, as Professor, and served as Director from 1991 till his retirement in 1995.***

Ishida did not start his academic career as a planning historian. As seen above, his starting point was land-use controls in the urban peripheries. His basic interest lay in the planning tools for land-use controls such as building lines, zoning, and land readjustment. As he searched for the more fundamental nature of these tools, he realized the importance of their historical development in Japan and their relationship with the western countries, from where many of them had come. According to his own statement, Ishida started to study planning history in the latter 1970s, although he had written such historical papers on: the post-war reconstruction planning in 1960, Capital Region Planning and Tokyo metropolitan area. He admits that his paper on the historical analysis of Tokyo's central area planning in 1880 was the first genuine paper on the history of Japan's modern city planning.

Ishida's historical works covered a wide range of topics. They centre on land-use controls and planning such as: zoning, building lines, land readjustment, development benefit, or English 'betterment', and intensive land utilization. Tokyo was his main research field and he wrote the histories of: Capital Region Planning, Tokyo's urban structure, and Tokyo's unbuilt projects.<sup>1</sup> His early historical works include individual case studies of the Meiji Era such as a slum clearance project or a Japanese industrial village.<sup>2</sup> In his later days, he wrote histories on more general topics such as: historical periodization, urban design,<sup>3</sup> urban land policy, contemporary planning issues, and decentralization of planning powers.

Ishida was, probably, the first professor in Japan who taught 'planning history' as an independent classroom subject. Based upon his lectures, he published a book on the first general history of Japan's modern planning in 1987. The book in Japanese was entitled: *The Hundred Years of Japanese Modern City Planning*. Its revised version, (entitled *The Historical Development of Japanese Modern and Contemporary City Planning, 1868–2003*) is still the only book by a Japanese author on this topic, and is widely referred to in the Japanese planning community.<sup>4</sup>

In the following years, his historical interest expanded to the more general topic of the Japanese planning system as a whole, with a strong sense that historical research should have practical implications for future planning practice. One of the highlights in this line is a paper: 'A Planning History towards 2019',<sup>5</sup> which he presented as his retirement lecture in 1995. Ishida was not satisfied with a historical study that presents past history only, but believed that it should provide something useful for our future actions.

In short, his historical study is characterized by width and depth. His interest is wide enough to cover the entire period of Japan's modern city planning, from even before the first legislation of the Tokyo Urban Improvement Ordinance of 1888 to the current planning practice in the early 2000s. His analysis is deep in terms of digging and examining the historical data and in terms of elaborate arguments. Also it should be noted that he believed historical study should be able to produce practical guides for current and future planning systems and practice. In this sense, Ishida was a pragmatist.

Ishida made his international debut rather late in his professional career. In 1979, at the age of 47, he made his first overseas trip to Europe, visiting Stockholm, Hamburg, Lübeck, Amsterdam, The Hague, Delft, and Paris. Subsequently, he made about 23 overseas trips until around 2003, often for international conferences. He visited Western Europe 15 times, but the USA only twice, which may show that his concern was directed more towards European than American modern planning. He made six trips to China, South Korea, India, and Australia–New Zealand, but showed rather little research interest in planning in those countries and regions, as his 'modern' city planning seemingly meant 'Western' or 'European' city planning.

In 1982, Ishida attended for the first time an international conference held at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development in Nagoya, where he presented his first paper in a foreign language.<sup>6</sup> With the 3rd International Conference of the Planning History Group (PHG, present IPHS) in Tokyo in 1988 as a turning point, he began his international activities, energetically writing and attending conferences. He participated in the PHG–IPHS conference six times, always with interesting papers. They are

Tokyo, Birmingham, Hong Kong, Thessaloniki, Sydney, Helsinki, and New Delhi (absent).<sup>7</sup> Ishida also attended the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJ), presenting papers five times from 1991 to 2003.

Ishida was a very generous mentor to many young researchers, including several foreigners whom he personally coached during their research times in Japan, and with whom he co-published and became a personal friend.<sup>8</sup> Ishida was proud of collaborating with them when he named them as Gordon Cherry, Françoise Durand, Marc Bourdier, Vincent Rounard, Natacha Aveline, Augustin Berque, Winfried Flüchter, Carola Hein, Uta Hohn, Jeffry Diefendorf, André Sorensen, Jeffery Hanes, and Son Jeong-Mok.<sup>9</sup>

When Ishida wrote papers in a foreign language, he tried to make them easy for western readers to understand by analysing and explaining the current situation and historical development of land-use problems and their control system in Tokyo and Japan at large. Therefore, these writings are good guides for foreign scholars to the history and current system of Japanese city planning.

***Looking at Ishida's total research activities that stretches over 40 years, we can divide them into two periods with around 1980s as a turning point.***

As mentioned before, Ishida started his professional career in a happy way because his research direction headed towards needs of the time, and his research results played a comfortable role in the law-making process of the new City Planning Act of 1968. He believed a good planning system to be a detailed and strict land-use control system. Society was headed certainly in that direction. The Area system of the 1968 Act and the District Planning system of 1980 followed this line, though not fully satisfactorily, according to his theoretical framework. From the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, many local governments where actual city planning was being carried out were administered by progressive heads, often based upon the collaboration of Socialist and Communist parties. Ishida, sympathetic towards the Marxist camp, considered this situation a favourable development towards democratic city planning administration.

In the early 1980s, however, the political atmosphere changed to a more conservative mood. In 1982, the Nakasone administration started a deregulation policy and applied it also to land-use controls that were the core tools of city planning. It was a favourable situation for urban land owners and developers, who wanted to use urban space more intensively for more profits. Ishida saw the policy as 'breaking the cage of "the detailed and strict land-use control system" which the 1968 Act had started and the 1980 District Planning system had reinforced, and letting loose a tiger of land price in the field'.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the deregulation policies paved the way towards land price inflation and then the 'bubble economy' that started in 1986 and ended in 1991.

Now, the gap between Ishida's research paradigm and society's paradigm became decisive. To him, the Nakasone deregulations meant 'displanning'. Although it was not a well-established term in the planning community, he instituted 'displanning' as the crucial keyword for the decade from the early 1980s in his planning history.<sup>11</sup> The Nakasone deregulations were, in a sense, a fundamental challenge to the total research attainments that Ishida had built up over the years. In order to meet the challenge theoretically, he took the following approach. He raised such abstract questions as: 'What is the plan?' and 'How should planning be?' Then he tried to answer these questions concretely by analysing the concept and function of 'plan' and 'planning' in the context of land-use controls in particular, and Japanese planning history in general.

As a result, Ishida argued that planning should 'have the collective will and goal of urban people and to provide the method and means rationally to materialize these most effectively'. The deregulation policy, which lacked in the concept of such a collective goal, was against his image of planning, as described above, and so, Ishida concluded, was 'displanning'.<sup>12</sup> However, judging from now, another approach could be possible. That is to focus upon the 'main actor' in city planning. The theoretical question that Nakasone deregulations presented was: 'How can we deal with urban developers properly who are strong actors in urban economy of building the city?' Ishida's former approach was to focus upon

the ‘agricultural people’ as crucial actors in city planning and he developed his land-use control theories upon it. Could he approach the problem similarly by focusing upon urban developers as crucial actors and, as a result, develop his theories about their role in city planning? Well, probably it was not possible because of his own ideology towards the market economy.

Thus, Ishida’s research stance changed dramatically in the late 1980s. Previously, he had empirically examined individual aspects of land-use controls and planning in order to discover ways to improve them. Now, he tried to understand theoretically the basic nature of the Japanese planning system as a whole by means of historical analysis and international comparison. This theoretical and holistic approach was in fact another way to search for practical solutions for the future of city planning on a wider scale, looking towards the twenty-first century. In this sense, Ishida was a pragmatist who sought for practical implications from the historical and international research of planning systems.

Ishida’s academic activities in Japan were concentrated in three academic organizations. First, the City Planning Institute of Japan, where he served as Academic Committee Chair from 1985 to 1989 and Vice President from 1989 to 1991, awarded him the Academic Prize in 1982 and the Distinguished Service Prize in 2001. Second, the Architectural Institute of Japan, which he joined in 1957, awarded him the Academic Prize in 1991 and the Grand Prix in 2004. Third, the Association for Rural Planning was the institute where Ishida served as Vice President from 1992 to 1993 and as President from 1994 to 1996.

Like other leading university professors, Ishida served as a member of various planning-related committees of both central and local governments. He served as a professional member of the Central City Planning Council of the Ministry of Construction from 1978 to 1980 and from 1982 to 1989. He was invited to the national Diet as an expert witness four times in 1990, 1999, 2000, and 2002. At the local government level, he served on various committees, often as chairperson at prefectures and municipalities mostly within the Tokyo metropolitan area.

In 1995, Ishida retired from Tokyo Metropolitan University and became Professor Emeritus. The same year, he became Special Professor of the private Kogakuin University in Tokyo and served until 1999, when he became 67 years of age. Then came a complete retirement, which gave him more time for enjoying research and his hobbies of community activities and bird-watching.

In 2004, when Ishida was awarded the AIJ Grand Prix, he published a little booklet written in Japanese and entitled: *Research of City and Rural Planning History for Future Perspectives and Planning*, which became more or less the last message that Ishida presented to the Japanese planning community. On the last page, he wrote, ‘I do not know how much time is left to me, I will still continue my research activity’.<sup>13</sup> That time, as revealed later, was only five years.

On May 10, 2009, we were preparing a party with Professors Fukuo Akimoto and Naoto Nakajima at my home, honouring Ishida for his 77th birthday. However, he did not appear. After several telephone calls, we sadly learned he had had stroke and had been hospitalized. Since then, he was mostly confined to bed and never regained complete consciousness for nearly six years until his death in 2015.

Ishida was survived by two sons, a daughter, and two grandchildren. His beloved wife Yûko had passed away 14 years before. Now, Professor Yorifusa Ishida is laid to rest together with Yûko under the family grave-stone of his own design in Kodaira Cemetery, located five kilometres north of the place where he was born.

## Notes

1. Ishida, “Tôkyô Chûô Shiku Kakutei”, 15–34.
2. Ishida, “Toshi Nôson Keikaku niokeru,” 20.
3. Ishida and Dunin-Woyseth, “Nihon niokeru Toshi Kûkan”, 154–5.
4. Ishida, *Nihon Kindai Toshi Keikaku*; Ishida, *Nihon Kin-Gendai Toshi Keikaku*.
5. Ishida, “2019 Nen eno Toshi Keikaku-shi”, 141–4.
6. Ishida, “The District Planning System”, 232–4.

7. Ishida, “Failures in the Transference”, 543–67; Ishida, “Japanese Industrial Villages”, 295–305; Ishida, “Agricultural Land Use”, 103–23; Ishida, “War, Military Affairs”, 393–8; Ishida, “Eika Takayama”; Ishida, “Urban Farmland and Forests”; Ishida and S. Shôji, “Water Front Development”, 550–64.
8. Ishida, “Japanese Cities and Planning”; Ishida, “Planning Power in Japan”, 25–54.
9. Ishida, *Tenbô to Keikaku*.
10. Ishida, “Tochi Riyô no Shisô”, 78–97.
11. See Note 4.
12. Ishida, “Keikaku toyû Gainen”, 802–4.
13. See Note 9.

## Notes on contributor

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