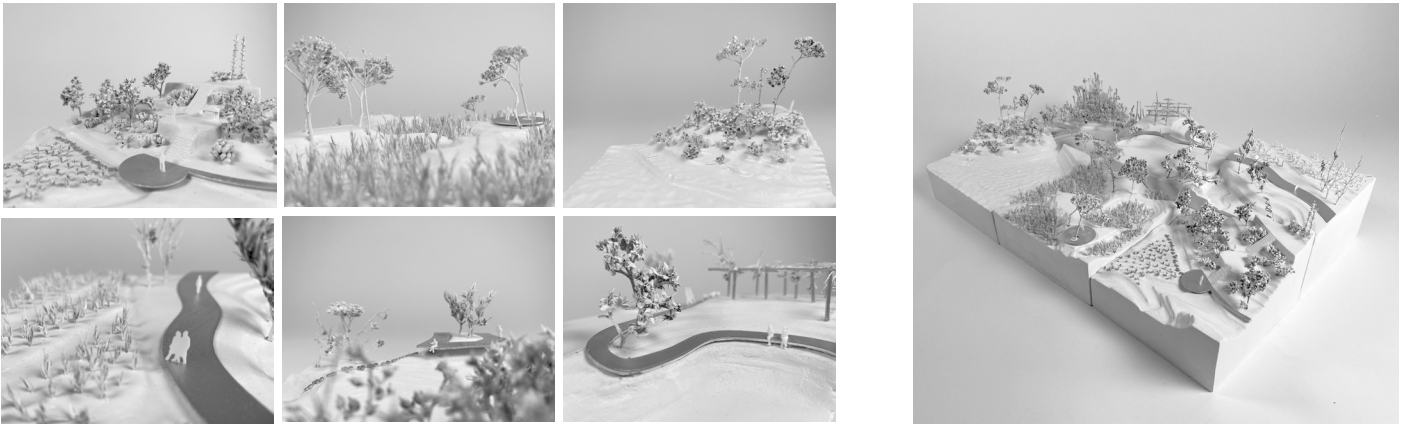


# Abstract

Shizuka Miura

## *The fluid garden of Kitakami*

The project is tested in a small community in the Kitakami ria-valley. The site is a micro-ria that I use as a “miniature testing ground” for larger territorial strategies. Before the Tsunami hit, the local farming community lived in a settlement at the bottom of the valley. After the destruction, the houses were rebuilt on top of the surrounding hills. The status of the land in the valley bottom stays unclear today, as the soil faces salt-water flood risk in the future. My project uses the program of a community garden for the small town to trigger the design. The project is developed through 3 main strategies that aim to complement and evolve the already constructed super-dike.

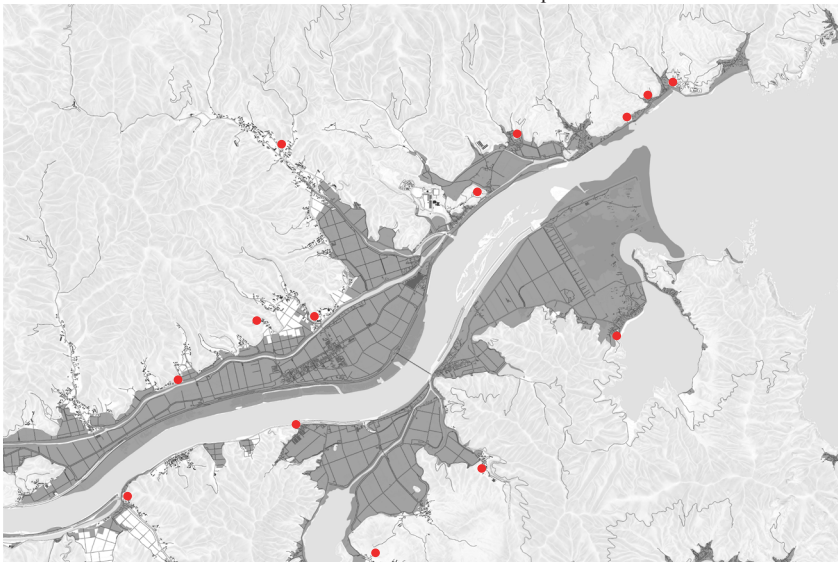


6 series of models

## Ancient knowledge as an emergency route

The first strategy is to create an emergency path based on the mapped shrine locations. Today the main road connecting the ria is at the edge of the land with the water, right behind the seawall; in case of a Tsunami, the road would be blocked for several days. I place a new emergency path connecting the shrines of the valley along the 8 meters contour, the “ancestral safe-zone .” It is a small road but wide enough for emergency vehicles to drive through

Shrine map remained intact after the Tsunami



Shrines entrance in Miyagi prefecture



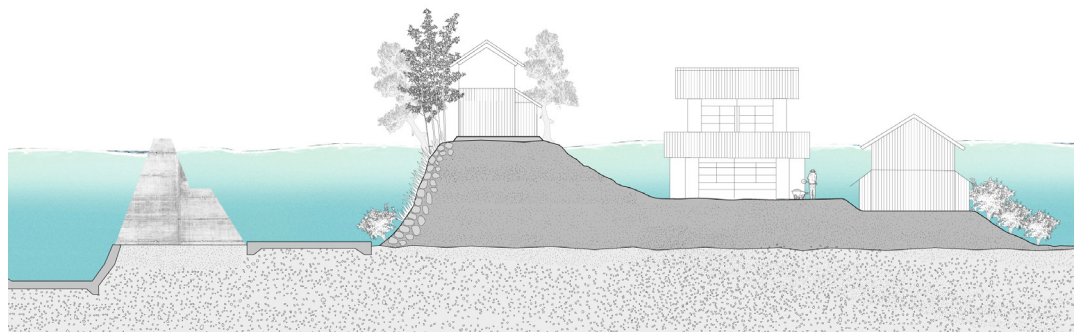
## From fighting nature to absorbing and caring

This strategy is inspired in the Japanese traditional technique of Mizutsuka, developed by people in an area that suffers extreme seasonal floods. They terraced the land, creating different flood levels where constructions and plantations were adapted to the natural fluxes. I propose to adopt the topography of Kitakami into different micro-terraces according to their exposure to Tsunami saline waters. The first or lower level would be the brackish-water reed habitat, historically utilized by locals as a roofing material. The second level will be used as a recreational garden to test the crop's resistance to temporary saline floods; the residents will join in creating the garden. The third terrace, above the 8 meters contour, would be the rice field and orchard. Keeping rice production above the safe height allows continuing current food production practices while cultivating other species that can also be used for economic turn-out. Above the fertile plain, a new forest edge is created by planting deciduous trees like Oak and Maple. Clearing up and planting new species is a strategy to renew the monoculture of cedar and cypress, as it has deteriorated the water quality in the area. Although all the species re-introduced have been traditionally used for production, I aim to inspire a possible circular, diversified and resilient economy to counter the current fragile rice-monoculture in the valley.

Mizutsuka



Section diagram



Animistic celebration of natural cycles.

Japanese animism is all about natural cycles, interacting, and living with them. People worshiped natural elements such as forests, rivers, mountains, rocks, waterfalls, and trees in ancient Japan. The religion called Shinto is practiced in the area and is still today the substrate of mainstream Japanese beliefs. This understanding of the world is embedded in traditional design practices that take inspiration from observations of landscape scenery, such as the traditional dry gardens. As an homage to this creative practice, the new topography of the gardens is carefully shaped through the figure of the Matsushima archipelago, a worshiped landscape in the same prefecture as Kitakami. Different water level scenarios are considered, and the garden will change its appearance through water from time to time. Spaces designed for people to meet natural phenomenology are created, such as two spots to observe the solstice sunlight and sunset, the traditional “hour of the gods.” The observation points will disappear when the first levels of flood happen, manifesting the fluid nature of the landscape.



The garden of Kitakami is an experimental approach to landscape design that claims a new nature-human relationship by reinventing traditional cultural practices. Through terraforming, agriculture, forestry, and gardening, I want to open the discourse of a new design of care on the Tsunami coast of Japan. Where spaces are not only created through top-down production rationales but by designing environments that place greater emphasis on the people who use them. While doing so, I aim to explore a more meaningful and robust relationship between people with the landscapes they live in.