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Kyoto's Landscape

A close look at the Meirin District

Marie-Thérèse van Thoor

Sanjo Street, the old road to Tokyo, is a lively street in the middle of Meirin District in the heart of Kyoto. People live, work, shop and stroll there. The street, like all others in the district, is made up of houses and shops, restaurants, workshops and kinds of activity. The neighbourhood is well known for the many kimono fabrics, but there is even a bike shop – a familiar phenomenon for the Dutch [FIG. 1]. Building types vary. Where Sanjo Street connects up with the large avenues surrounding the urban block, there are large, tall buildings, with the occasional higher block of flats at the centre. However, low-build prevails. Meirin District is part of what is called the historical urban area, and contains buildings from various periods, from the 17th through to the 20th century, including many machiya.

In his contribution to *Urban Coding and Planning* Yoshihiko Baba describes the history and the ordinances of districts in Kyoto, including Meirin District (Baba 2012). We can conclude that the current system and character of city planning are based on a long tradition. Interestingly, urban government supports local community initiatives on a neighbourhood level. In this text the spatial characteristics of Meirin District are seen through the lens of the Landscape Plan (2007), with input and know-how from city officials and architects, as well as from the point of view of the Meirin Neighbourhood Association (Kyoto City, 2007; interviews 2017).



FIG. 1 Bike shop in Sanjo Street

The Landscape of Kyoto

The landscape of Kyoto can be perceived not only by vision, but also by such sensations as light, wind, sound and smell which harmonized with each other since olden days. It is also perceived together with its history and the sensitivity and mentality of its people. For a long time, the landscape of Kyoto has been regarded as the asset that should be protected' (Kyoto City 2007, p. 2).

The landscape of Kyoto, in which geography, topography, climate, history, traditions, culture and inhabitants blend together, is an umbrella term which also covers architecture (historical and modern) and urban planning. In Kyoto's landscape the underlying components, elements and attributes mingle and coalesce; together they form the city's values and characteristics. The Urban Planning or Cityscape Department is responsible for that urban landscape, and in 2005 drew up the Landscape Plan, which was revised and adapted in 2007, based on the national Landscape Act (Kyoto City 2007).

Some of Kyoto's urban buildings have been designated as protected national monuments in accordance with the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Japan has several types and qualifications of cultural properties. The most important monuments, such as shrines, castles and temples, count as national treasures. They have the highest protection, as well as the most restrictions. Other monuments are divided into national important cultural properties and national registered tangible cultural properties, generally referred to as national designated monuments and national registered monuments, respectively (Ishikawa 2017). Since 1897 the designation of monuments has been based on six criteria: historic sites, special historic sites, places of scenic beauty, special places of scenic beauty, natural monuments and special natural monuments. They are examined and recorded in various ways, and there are several forms of subsidization and advice. The government designates these monuments, the prefecture is responsible for their management and maintenance (Ishikawa

2017). Designated monuments are significant and may not be demolished indiscriminately. However, for the demolition of registered monuments one only needs to announce the intention. Registered monuments are the 'youngest' category. That classification was created following the devastating earthquake in Kobe in 1995. Many historical buildings were also vanishing at that time for other reasons, such as large-scale new-build. As a result, a move was made to inventory and register endangered and valuable heritage buildings that did not yet have protected status. Clearly, the restrictions for registered monuments are far less limiting, but at least such buildings are documented.

Yuichi Ishikawa is an architecture historian and works at the Heritage Department in Kyoto. His activities relate to the national designated and registered monuments and entail visual inspections, inventories, compilation of charts relating the values and distribution, and research and advice on restorations and subsidies. Ishikawa believes it is important when restoring designated monuments to respect the original concept of the building. When the occasion arises, it can mean that all elements must be restored or else replaced 'in the original way' (Ishikawa 2017). That applies for the façade, the roof, the building volume, the floor plan, as well as for the materials, colours or other details. In the next chapter, Kazuto Kasahara calls this original approach to restoration or renovation the 'traditional concept and method of renovation design', describing exactly what that amounts to (Kasahara pp. 45–47). Ishikawa however does see conversion of monuments, giving them a different use, or their modification (for instance, insulation), to be good options, provided such changes and modification are reversible (Ishikawa 2017).

The Heritage Department is also involved in making inventories of the national registered monuments. That process is well underway. In addition, a start has been made to list potential post-war monuments by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. At the Heritage Department, apart from this policy-related research,

they also have scope for fundamental research into the historical city of Kyoto. It is a major exercise, initiated by the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, entailing the study of smaller districts of Kyoto with a view to recording in depth the cultural landscape of all these neighbourhoods. The results are ultimately intended to be tied in with the Landscape Plan of Kyoto City (Ishikawa 2017).

Local heritage and the Landscape Plan

The Landscape Plan comprises all the urban ordinances relating to new-build, existing buildings and monuments. Kyoto not only has national designated and registered monuments, but also local designated and local registered monuments. Since 2005 those buildings have been designated by the city of Kyoto and do not fall under the Heritage Department's remit.

Initiatives for a Landscape Policy for developing, regulating and protecting Kyoto's landscape were already taken at the beginning of the 20th century. They speeded up in the 1960s, when the first plans for high-rise came about – such as for the Kyoto Tower in 1964. The Kyoto Hotel (1994) and Kyoto Station Building (1997) were to become the next controversial projects, once more on account of their height, which for Kyoto was exceptional (Kyoto City 2007). In 1991 the Council for Kyoto City Development on Measures for Land Use and Landscape was set up. It proposed dividing Kyoto into three areas, labelled as 'Conservation' (the north and the mountain areas), 'Revitalization' (downtown) and 'Creation' (the south). All manner of ordinances, guidelines and policies followed for the districts, including the Guideline for the Business-Residential Districts (1998), for the districts where traditional machiya, workshops and culture were under threat from tall apartment blocks. These guidelines contained measures to stimulate the revitalization of the districts, such as the conservation and renovation of machiya, opening up dead-end alleyways, and making them habitable, creating walking areas, and promoting small-scale industry. All this was based on cooperation and executed in conjunction

with the city, businesses and residents (Kyoto City 2007). The local population's participation was an important and indispensable aspect, based on long tradition, as described earlier by Carola Hein (Baba 2012; Hein 2008).

However, the measures were not an immediate success, nor were they immediately understood and embraced by the residents. The situation only changed when the measures received legal and national support in the national Landscape Act, and the local population became more actively involved as well. Neighbourhood committees like the Neighbourhood Association of Meirin (School) District played a crucial role. Meanwhile, burgeoning urbanization and the fear that the city's heritage was being lost led to the founding of a body with the splendid name of Council on Landscape Formation of Kyoto Shining Forever (2005), which greatly influenced the content of the Landscape Plan. The Plan laid down uniform parameters, restrictions and design codes for the entire Kyoto landscape for which prior to 2005 there had been an incomprehensible and highly diverse set of rules.

Maps accompany the Landscape Plan indicating regions and districts in different colours designating the character, features and values of the areas. Different criteria and codes apply for each sector which are relevant to their character and values (Uehara 2017). For example, the pink blocks indicate the valuable parts of the historical urban area and have stricter rules than the surrounding yellow blocks. The green blocks mark the surroundings of the foremost monuments, or landmarks, like the Imperial Palace and Nijo Castle [FIG. 2]. Local designated and registered monuments are, like the national designated and registered monuments, integrated in the (cultural) landscape of each district. Furthermore, remaining machiya count as important landscape structures.

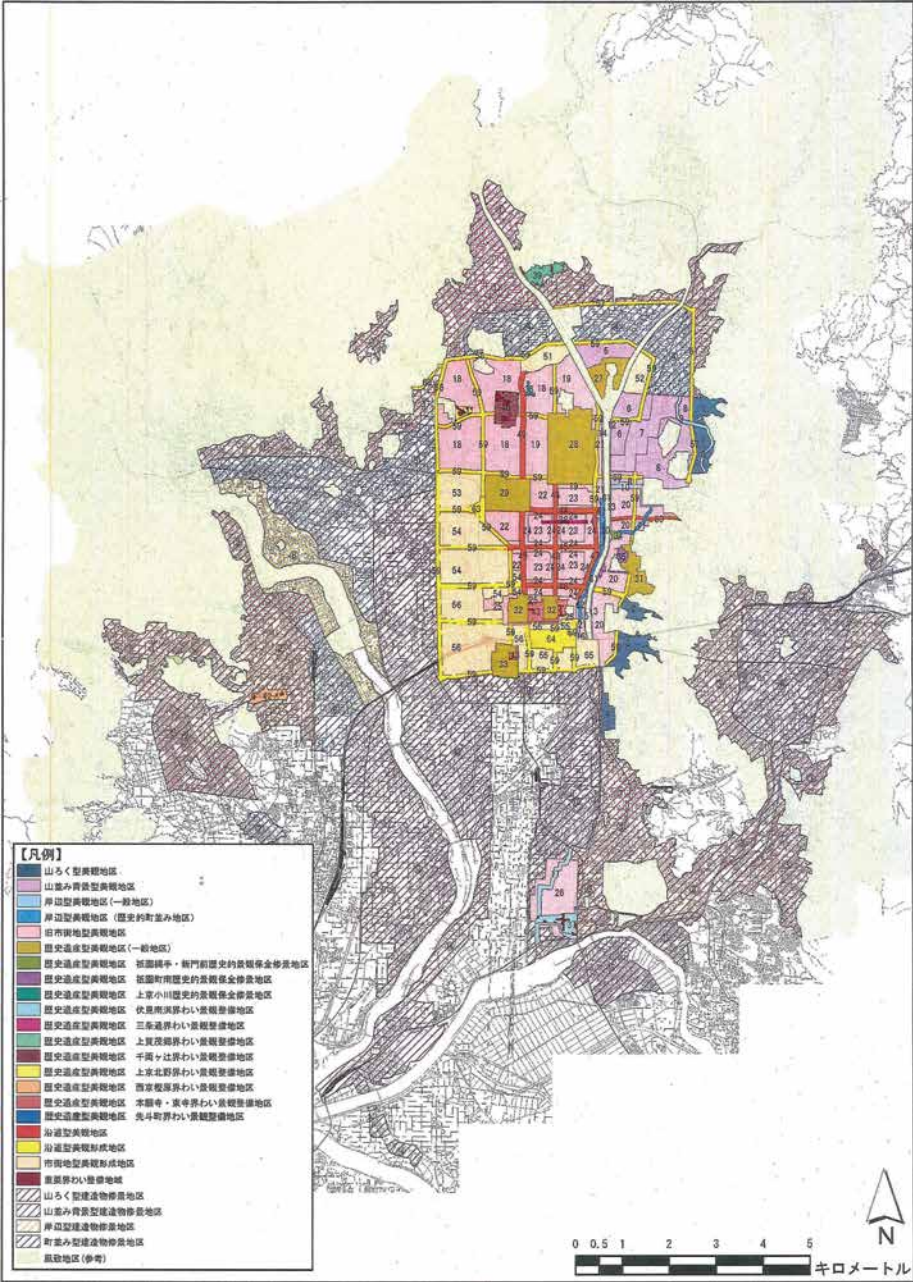


FIG. 2 Map in the Landscape Plan (2007). Different colours indicate character, features and values of the areas

The Heritage Department is responsible for the (national) monuments, as we have seen. It focuses on the buildings themselves and does not deal with urban development. The local designated and registered monuments should rather be considered as examples for the conservation, regulation and development of the overall picture of Kyoto's landscape. In their case, the qualification 'designated' or 'registered' only relates to the exterior, more specifically only to the façade and the outline. With the major monuments – local designated monuments – only the façade and height may not be altered. The less valuable monuments – local registered monuments – do fall under a design code, but it is easier to modify them, in height for instance.

For the implementation of the landscape development of the historical city of Kyoto five 'projects' are formulated in the Landscape Plan: 1. Regulation of building heights; 2. Formulation of design standards or design codes; 3. Protection of vistas and perspectives; 4. Advertising policy; 5. Conservation and revitalization of historical buildings, including machiya. The underlying idea of the Landscape Plan is to 'create' a landscape that not only harmonizes with the natural surroundings, but in which the new – future – appearance of Kyoto also harmonizes with the traditional urban landscape. Conservation, revitalization and creation are inseparably bound together here (Kyoto City 2007).

The Landscape Plan has three important features. Firstly, the plan is geared to development, and looks to the future of Kyoto in 50 to 100 years time. In the city, most property is privately owned, but the landscape of Kyoto is seen as public property. Lastly, it is the responsibility of everyone in the city to protect landscape structures for the future (Kyoto City 2017). This plan unites cultural history and spatial development. In that respect the Landscape Plan resembles the Dutch Belvédère Memorandum (1999), and one wonders if the Belvédère strategy 'conservation through development' might not also apply for the policy of Kyoto City.

Building height

Kyoto lies in a basin surrounded by hills. Regulations have been made regarding building heights, to prevent high-rise from detracting too greatly from that picture of a city between mountains. In the business districts (round the station) building heights may exceed those elsewhere in the city. In addition, there is already high-rise along a number of large avenues [FIG. 3]. The intention is for building height gradually to decrease between the commercial centres and the hills. Six height levels are applied, ranging from a maximum of 31 metres in the centre to maximum 10 metres on the urban periphery at the foot of the hills.



FIG. 3 Karasuma Street, which borders the Meirin District on the west side, shows higher building heights than the centre of the urban block

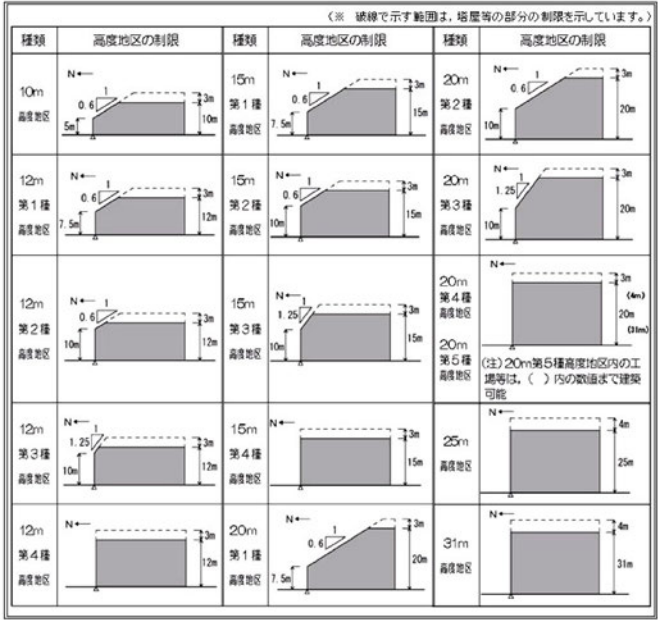


FIG. 4 Building regulations for height control

These heights are relative to the characteristic elements of the districts in Kyoto's landscape. For instance, in the historical urban area the maximum height of 15 metres is in line with machiya [FIG. 4].

In exceptional cases it is possible to exceed the maximum height, in order to promote an attractive urban landscape that harmonizes with the city's dynamic (Kyoto City 2007, p. 45). That exception may be applicable if a building's design is such that it will improve the quality of the setting (or even of the city) [FIG. 5]; if the building has a public function in keeping with the surrounding landscape; if greater building height is necessary in terms of safety or construction; and if the building is part of an attractive 'street landscape'. Street landscapes of that type are found in Meirin District, for example in Oike Street or Karasuma Street, and where building height is substantially more than in the smaller streets and alleys within the urban block [FIG. 6].



FIG. 5 The design quality of this building permits its greater height as compared to the surrounding setting

An exception can also be made for pitched roofs. They are considered to characterize Kyoto's appearance and so such roofs may exceed the maximum height actually prescribed in the area in question [FIG. 7].



FIG. 6 Karasuma Street, a roadscape landscape with heigher buildings



FIG. 7 Characteristic pitched roofs





(1) 壁は京壁又はこれに準じるものとする。 (2) 無り窓、下地窓、下地欄間、ガラス格子引違戸又は腰高ガラス引違い戸並びに張り出し手摺によって構成する。	(1) 壁は京壁、しっくい壁又はこれに準じるものとする。 (2) 1階は格子戸、腰高ガラス引違い戸、はきだし引違戸又は腰板張りによって構成する。 (3) 2階開口部は、腰高ガラス格子引違戸、面格子又は出格子窓によって構成する。	(1) 壁は京壁又はこれに準じるものとする。 (2) 1階は格子戸、はきだし引違戸又は腰下見板張りによって構成する。 (3) 2階開口部は、数寄風装飾窓、下地窓、腰高ガラス格子引違戸又は出格子窓によって構成する。	(1) 壁は京壁又はこれに準じるものとする。 (2) 2階開口部は、腰高ガラス引違戸又ははきだし引違戸及び長押によって構成する。
(1) 仕上げとなる柱、長押、建具等の見掛け部は木とする。 (2) 大走りはモルタル塗装、洗い出し砂利仕上げその他これに類する仕上げとする。 (3) 胸寄や犬矢来を設ける。	(1) 仕上げとなる柱、長押、建具等の見掛け部は木とする。 (2) 大走りはモルタル塗装、洗い出し砂利仕上げその他これに類する仕上げとする。	同左	同左
木部はべんがら塗り、古色塗装又は生地仕上げその他これに類する仕上げの色彩とする。	木部はべんがら塗り、古色塗装又は生地仕上げその他これに類する仕上げの色彩とする。	木部は古色塗装又は生地仕上げその他これに類する仕上げの色彩とする。	同左
			

FIG. 8 Examples of guidelines for building standards or design codes



FIG. 9 How to park a car in a machiya



FIG. 10 A car parked in a modern building



FIG. 11 Setback above the second floor



FIG. 12 Another solution for a setback

Design codes

Building standards or design codes are the measures which architects and residents encounter most in practice. Tomoko Uehara of the Cityscape Department emphasizes that they not only apply to new-build, but also to monuments, though additional values and rules also apply to the latter (Uehara 2017). Design codes also vary greatly, depending on the district to which they relate. At present the city works with twelve different standards. As a neighbourhood may belong to several such districts, several codes can apply. Meirin District combines a machiya landscape with roadscape landscapes at the peripheries. Moreover, it is situated to the south-east of Nijo Castle and accordingly the view corridors towards that monument must be unencumbered in a circle around it.

There are common standards applying to the basic designs of most of the city as a whole. In addition, each district has more specific local standards. The design codes are set down in detail, in writing and in pictures. According to Ms. Uehara, all architects should in fact know all the guidelines by heart, or at least always have them to hand [FIG. 8].

There are common standards for roof colours, for the material of the indoor walls, for balconies, for the colours of exterior walls and for property boundaries (fence, gateway, wall, hedge and the like). For example, design codes prescribe possible solutions for the parking of a car in or in front of a house [FIG. 9/10].

The design codes, combined with the regulations for maximum building heights, also identify the desired course of the rooflines (see fig. 4). A setback is required above a certain height, which is usually applied very literally [FIG. 11/12].

Vistas and advertising

As we have seen, important buildings, monuments and sceneries may be regarded as landmarks for future development. It can require an unimpeded view of such landmarks from various directions. In the Landscape Plan these

Perspective Landscape Conservation Zones are identified, alongside the concomitant regulations for building height, form, design, colours of structures and elements, or colours of outside walls and roofs. Depending on the value and significance of the landmarks, the zones are referred to as perspective zone, short distance view zone or distant view zone. The setbacks of the buildings in these zones are also planned to correspond to the view of the landmarks.

It is impossible to envisage a dynamic, modern city of the future without advertising. Consequently, the Landscape Plan also has a project that regulates policy regarding outdoor advertising. There are rules relating to the place, height, colours and size of displays and billboards in the landscape (and on buildings). The advertising, photos or paintings must be appropriate to the buildings and the environment. The rules are not only intended to discourage certain advertisements, but also to stimulate good quality. In exceptional cases it is again possible to depart from the rules, as is the case with historical advertising, or advertising of 'extremely good design'. In such cases subsidies are even available. The qualification 'good' or even 'excellent' applies to advertising that is discreet and blends into the surroundings [FIG. 13].



FIG. 13 Example of excellent advertising: it perfectly blends with the machiya

Revitalization of machiya

The Landscape Plan defines machiya as important structural elements and vehicles of the image of the future. That is why they are specially spotlighted in the plan. A few decades ago, the inhabitants, architects or committees were the ones who campaigned to save and preserve machiya. For instance, researchers from Kyoto University and a few architects embarked on the research and restoration of machiya some 25 years ago. A group of architects, including Ryoichi Kinoshita, set up Kyomachiya Architects. In recent years they have dealt with around 250 machiya. On the one hand, their work relates to restoring the houses. On the other hand, Kyomachiya Architects trains craftspeople, like carpenters, supervises them, and in this way ensures that know-how is passed on to the younger generation. In the *Kyoto Machiya Revitalization Project* it is possible to see the results of the Kyomachiya Architects' endeavours (Kyomachiya Council 2011 and 2016).

Kyomachiya Architects works with the Kyoto Centre for Community Collaboration (KCCC), which was founded some twenty years ago. According to its website, the KCCC helps to achieve the goal 'How to keep Kyoto Kyoto'. In the 1990s the Centre conducted surveys which charted the number of machiya remaining in the city and any still existing relevant information. The surveys formed the foundation for the lists of local designated and registered monuments. The restoration and conversion of machiya, and the uniqueness of materials and details will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

As we have seen, one of the aims of the Landscape Plan is to involve residents actively in protecting collective property of the Kyoto landscape. The KCCC is important for information, communication and mediation, between the city, organizations, architects, craftspeople and inhabitants. In the neighbourhoods themselves, the neighbourhood committees may have great influence on the specific character and appearance of their neighbourhoods. Kyoto City has recognized such committees in what are meanwhile nine neighbourhoods as serious partners

of the city in implementing the Landscape Plan (Uehara 2017). Principals and architects in those nine neighbourhoods cannot just ignore the committees or associations. In neighbourhoods other than the nine it is not compulsory (as yet) for people planning new-build, alteration or conversion to first pay a visit to the local association, but the city does urge them to do so.

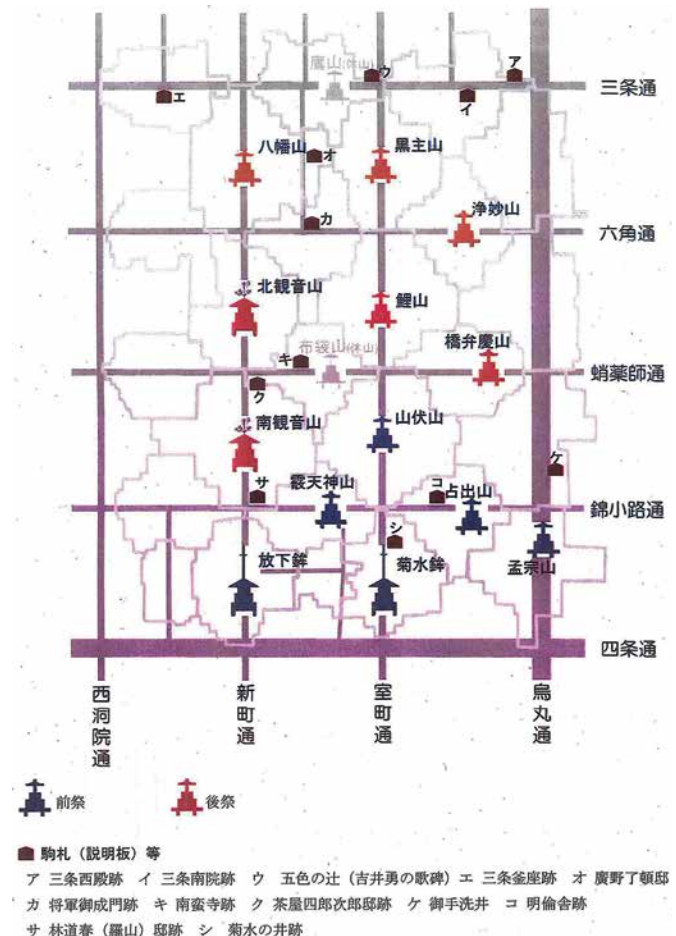


FIG. 14 Plan of Meirin (School) District, comprising 27 smaller neighbourhoods



FIG. 15 Mr. Akira Hasegawa, president of the Meirin District neighbourhood association, March 15th 2017

Meirin District Neighbourhood Association

Akira Hasegawa is the president of the neighbourhood association of Meirin (School) District, one comprising 27 communities [FIG. 14/15]. The association was set up in 2000 and has meanwhile attracted growing interest and influence, as Mr. Hasegawa proudly told me (Hasegawa 2017). The construction of a large apartment building in the middle of the block occasioned the founding of this neighbourhood committee. At that time many small artisanal businesses, which are so characteristic of the neighbourhood, were closing down. Hasegawa lives in Sanjo Street which is the leading street in Kyoto – and perhaps in the whole of Japan – for traditional kimono fabrics [FIG. 16].

The building of the twelve-storey block of flats amounted to an enormous jump in scale for the neighbourhood. Flats of that type block a great deal of sunlight for the surrounding, lower buildings. But the neighbourhood does attract many new residents, particularly from outside, the majority of whom want to settle in new-build apartments. On the perimeter of the block, at Horikawa Street, there is a secondary school that prepares intelligent students for university – the prestigious Horikawa High School. Parents wishing to enrol their children in that school must be able to prove they live in the neighbourhood.



FIG. 16 Window shop in Sanjo Street, the leading street for traditional kimono industry

So many families are looking for homes there. According to Hasegawa 80% of the local residents now live in apartments.

As high-rise buildings went up, a noticeable rift came about between the 'indigenous' residents (living mostly in the older, low-rise homes) and the new inhabitants. The association, which was originally founded as a pressure group against big construction firms which were buying up small business premises and having them demolished to make way for high-rise, also saw an opening for other activities. They were concerned about a decline and loss of the district's traditional culture, and sought means to protect it and bring it to people's attention. Also, they could seek to make contact with the new neighbours and inform them on the history, temples, tea ceremonies, music and other traditions of the communities. The chief medium in that respect is the *Meirin News*, a free publication of the neighbourhood association and delivered door-to-door three times a year (*Meirin News* 2005-). In the course of the first nine years, the *Meirin News* introduced the 27 neighbourhoods, one at a time. Today it is an important medium of communication for and about people, businesses, festivities, meetings and topical developments in the district [FIG. 17].



FIG. 17 The Meirin News (2015)



FIG. 18 A machiya pulled down and deported (2015)



FIG. 19 Apartment blocks replace traditional buildings

The big construction firms or financiers, often from Tokyo or Osaka, had little time for the activities originating from the neighbourhood, nor were they interested in information relating to cultural history reported in Meirin News (Hasegawa 2017). In order to meet the ever-increasing demand for new housing, the builders kept on buying up existing properties and proceeded to pull them down and replace them with large apartment blocks [FIG. 18/19].

Apartments change hands quite often, meaning that their occupants do not form ties with the neighbourhood. Accordingly, low-rise buildings rapidly disappeared and the numbers of machiya dropped drastically. Figure 20 presents a map of Meirin District showing the machiya still encountered by the KCCC during a survey between 2008 and 2010. Some have been pulled down in the meantime [FIG. 20] (Nishii 2017). Since this district is important on account of the fabrics (as used for kimono) stocked in machiya, it has meant that not only the district's traditional architecture, but also its cultural identity is under threat.

However, there is another side to the demolition followed by new-build: after 2010 many food shops and eating and drinking establishments came to the district, followed by hotels. In 2009 *yamahoko*, the floats deployed in the Gion festival (*Gion Matsuri*) were registered on the Unesco world heritage list as expressions of intangible global heritage. The *yamahoko* are drawn in a procession through the district's streets during the annual Gion festival in July. They are also known as moving museums, because they are hung with tapestries and other objects depicting the district's cultural crafts and traditions. For Kyoto, and certainly for these neighbourhoods, the Gion festival is the most important festivity of the year and of the city. And it appeals to tourists. Today Kyoto counts as one of the most attractive tourist cities in the world.

In that context, we saw that the neighbourhoods are important and serious partners for the city of Kyoto. The Meirin District association is one of the city's nine partners, though it is still relatively new. Before Kyoto City changed the policy for the landscape in 2005, each district had its own regulations and

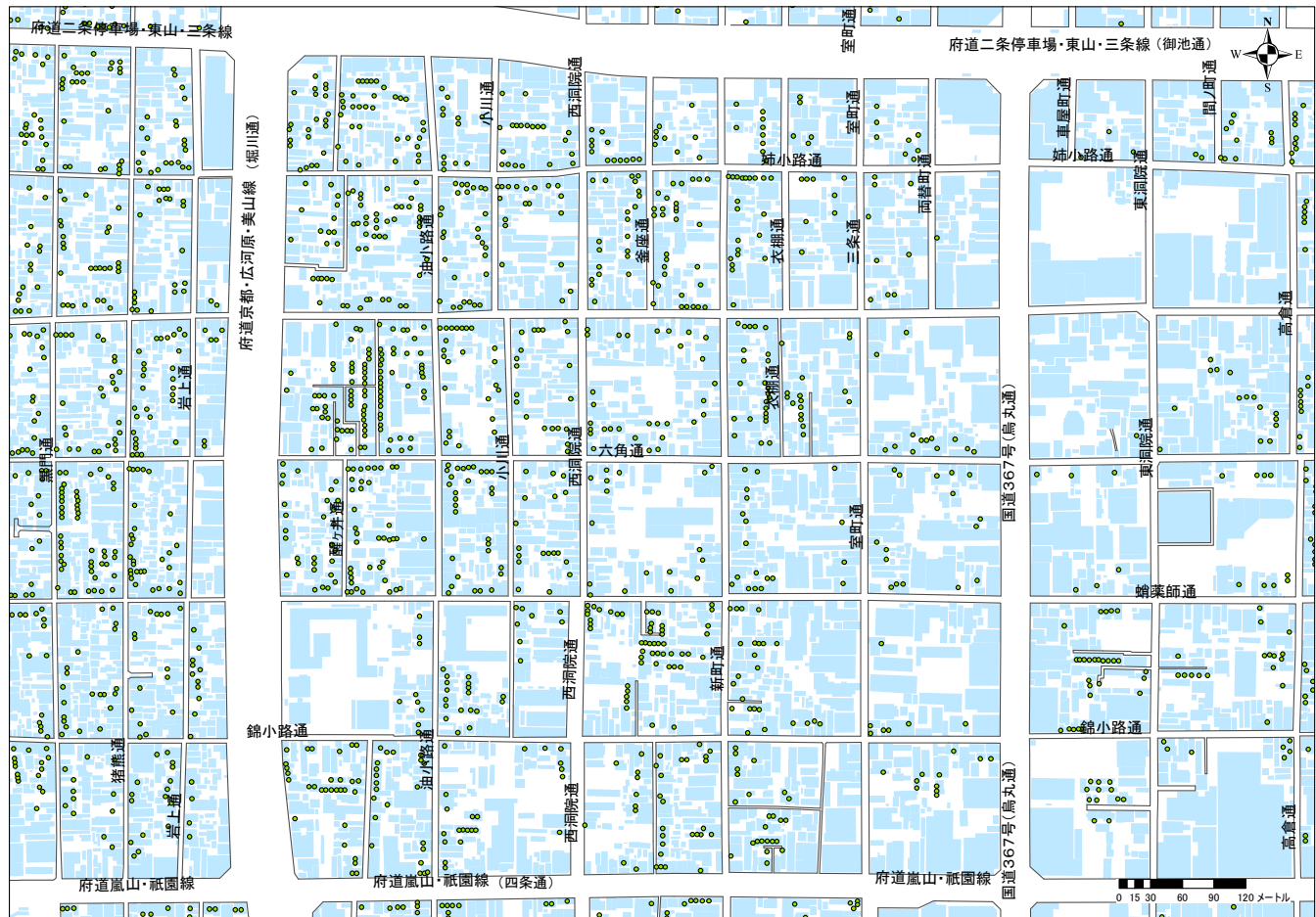


FIG. 20 Map of Meirin District indicating still existing machiya, encountered by a KCCC survey between 2008 and 2010

restrictions. However they did not work, according to Akira Hasegawa, because it made no difference whether they were observed or not (Hasegawa 2017). And initially the new city policy did not make much of an impression on builders and architects either. That is why the city decided to involve the association as an intermediary between the city on the one hand, and the owner, the construction firm or architect on the other. The neighbourhood acquired an official role in the building process,

as a convincing mediator, though admittedly without real power. If an owner wishes to apply for building permission, the architect or contractor must first call on the neighbourhood association. There he receives extensive information on the history and traditions of the district, and the association explains its own wishes regarding the application or the neighbourhood. Since it is a mixed-use district, with residential and commercial functions, and everything in between, the regulations are not



FIG. 21 Air-conditioning unit attached to the street façade of a machiya



FIG. 22 Air-conditioning units covered behind specially designed wooden screens

as strict as in Gion District, for example – the famous *geiko* (the local term for geisha) district. There, it is possible for the city to apply stricter regulations for building, even including specific colours and materials. In Meirin District the key factor is the persuasiveness of the association. And it is sometimes hard to persuade owners and architects, because officially the association is only there to be heard.

A report of the discussion with the association must be added, as proof that the visit has taken place. Ultimately, it will only be clear once the building is finished whether the association has had any influence.

Meirin District Design Codes

Consequently, the neighbourhood association decided to draw up its own design codes, alongside the city building standards, partly on account of its positive experience with designs which it had been able to influence. The Design Codes of the Meirin Neighbourhood Association were in preparation in March 2017, publication was expected in the April (Hasegawa 2017, *Meirin News* 6/2017). Interestingly, the association gives authenticity as the first rule regarding design. The Landscape Plan does not mention that term, but for the neighbourhood association,

authenticity is vital. What it amounts to is that the essence of the machiya (in particular) be maintained and the context not adversely affected. In our conversation with the architect Ryoichi Kinoshita of Kyomachiya Architects, authenticity was also discussed. For him, the essence of the machiya relates perhaps more to what is 'natural' rather than to the specific materials, techniques or layout. He believes that the 'machiya idea' is sensed mainly inside the machiya. You 'feel' the cold and the warmth, and the machiya can be either wet or dry. According to Kinoshita, the way light enters the rooms and the way you hear and feel the wind through the walls, are important. Although such sensory authenticity is not formulated as such, it corresponds quite well with the 'sensations that harmonized with each other since the olden days' in the Landscape Plan (Kyoto City 2017, p. 2).

The Meirin codes also prescribe a 'sophisticated' façade, amounting to the requirement that its colours and materials be in harmony with the context and the neighbourhood. In practice, it also means that the occupant may not attach anything extraneous on or to his house. Today many houses in Kyoto have air-conditioning and the ugly units can be found throughout the streetscape. The neighbourhood association is trying to get rid of them, encouraging the use of specially designed wooden



FIG. 23 Remaining dead-end alleyway, or *rogi*



FIG. 24 Potted plants in front of the façade look attractive, but deviate from the essence and traditional plan of machiya

screens behind which the units can be concealed [FIG. 21/22]. That rule also relates to advertising, in order to guarantee continuity and consistency of the landscape. In keeping with the aforementioned attention to original or traditional building practices, the Design Code also calls special attention to maintaining the essence of the machiya, with its specific façade, the *omoté*, and the dead-end alleyways, the *rogi* [FIG. 23].

Apart from design codes, the association also publishes more general rules for the district in the *Meirin News*. They relate to the observance of silence at evening- and night-time, to safety in the street and disaster protection (for example for earthquakes). The association is also responsible for organizing activities for the Gion festival. It decides on the route for the procession, which houses will display their own 'treasures' and who will play which role in this important festivity. Lastly, the association seeks to discourage one of the activities which the city of Kyoto actually stimulates.

It relates to the small trees, shrubs or potted plants that increasingly are being crammed onto the small plots in front of the houses. Kyoto City wants to encourage greenery in the city, to make the streetscape more attractive; also, tourists react positively to the green still-lives [FIG. 24]. But the associations prefer greenery in the patio gardens, in keeping with the machiya's essence.

Development through conservation

The Landscape Plan is based on the idea that the city, or landscape of Kyoto, will once more be largely characteristic and original several decades hence. It is a picture of a city in which high-rise is concentrated in specific business districts, and in which, elsewhere, a maximum height of 15 metres applies, in line with the design codes. Earlier in this text, the Belvédère Memorandum was quoted in which cultural history combines with development. Conversely, Kyoto's strategy might be described as 'development through conservation'. It is an understandable strategy, because it builds upon essences and traditions they are seeking to foster. But one wonders if the desired picture of the future will still be one of ambience. Building codes, height regulations, vistas etcetera relate to street scapes, in which remaining machiya count as important landscape structures. But only their facades and general outline are regarded, without consideration of traditional concepts and methods of construction or restoration. Nowadays many machiya are unoccupied, and there are often complicated legal ownership structures regarding the property. And accordingly, machiya restoration, conversion and adaption take longer than their demolition.