

**KYOTO**

Studio Sergison  
Autumn Semester 2023

Kyoto



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Aerial view of Kyoto



## Introduction

This semester, for the first time, we will be working on housing projects in Kyoto, Japan within the framework of an exchange between the Kyoto Institute of Technology and the Academy of Architecture, Mendrisio. Students from each architecture school will work in pairs with a student from the other. We will spend the first four weeks of the semester in Kyoto and the remainder in Mendrisio.

The focus of our work will be housing, and we will endeavour to find solutions to the needs of contemporary Japanese society. Specifically, we have selected 13 neighbourhoods that we will study in detail, and we hope that realistic proposals will emerge from an extensive process of survey.

While in Japan, we will visit exemplars of Japanese housing, and our work will be supported by experts who will offer their insight into the issues we will be addressing.

Aerial view of Kyoto

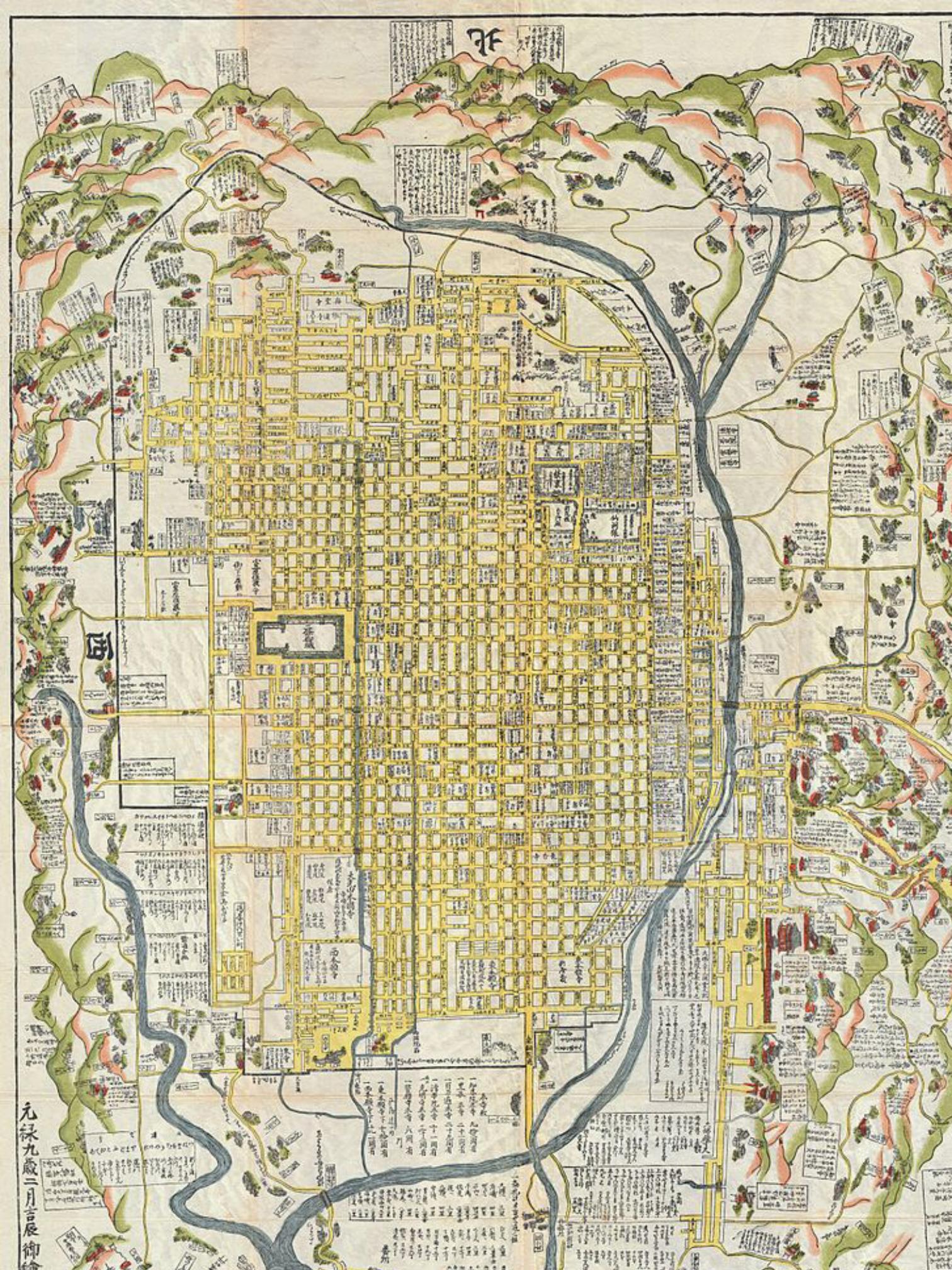
Kyoto's urban development has generally been characterised by an innovative use and management of the city's material heritage; the urban historian Nishikawa Kiji was among the first to recognise this fact. During the 'Symposium for the Preservation of Traditional Culture in Kyoto and Nara' organised by UNESCO and the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs, in September 1970, Nishikawa commented on how much the citizens of Kyoto disliked the word koto (ancient city and former capital), because municipal officers and citizens of Kyoto made their best efforts to develop the city with a progressive view towards the incorporation of new technologies and new concepts of urban living.

Nishikawa explained how this enterprising spirit was fundamental for allowing the city to adapt to the social and economic changes that emerged after the function of 'capital city' was transferred to Tokyo during the second half of the nineteenth century. In fact, the preservation and revival of the material heritage of the city was based on the active and permanent invention of the city's new functions over time.

#### Innovation in Kyoto's modern city making

During the entire modern period, and particularly after the transference of the Emperor to Tokyo in 1869, the most influential residents of Kyoto started to press local officers towards the improvement of the city. Just before the Meiji restoration (1868) the population of Japan had reached about 34 million, with approximately 3 million inhabiting cities, and more than 90 percent of the population living in ordinary farmhouses. Although Kyoto has an urban history of more than 1200 years, during the mid-19th century the general image of the city was marked by rurality: from the wooden built typology of constructions to the size of urban parcels and districts, and the overall landscape still dominated by agricultural fields and forested mountains. However, during the transformation from a former imperial capital into one more local city competing for national resources, instead of reinforcing the agricultural basis of the economy, the local elite chose to orient city improvements towards innovation. It is worth remembering that the national government only issued the first official city planning regulation as late as 1919. This left a regulatory gap that allowed local officers, local merchants and other influential residents of existing cities to autonomously decide and implement city improvements. This autonomy was added to the fact that Kyoto reached the modern period with an accumulated experience in city making from its long history as an imperial capital.

As one of the largest cities of the period – after Tokyo and Osaka – Kyoto competed in attracting rich merchants to revive the local economy. This was achieved through city improvements related to hygiene and the prevention of epidemics, as well as the improvement to urban services such as electricity and transportation. After the completion of the large-scale 'Lake Biwa Channel' infrastructural project (1885-1890), Kyoto built the first hydroelectric power generation plant in Japan – the 'Keage Power Station' – followed by the city's pioneering project of an electric streetcar railroad,



Map of Kyoto.  
1696

whose operation began in 1895. In addition to infrastructural improvements, significantly sized cities in Japan have a history of competing in the attraction of large-scale events, such as industrial exhibitions. This competitiveness continued to be evident during the postwar period, for example, during the process of selecting the host city for the Expo 1970 (eventually going to Osaka), when local governments in the Kansai Region struggled against the powerful local governments of the Kanto Region (where Tokyo is located). Early records boast the occasion when Kyoto hosted the 'Fourth National Industrial Exhibition' in celebration of the 1100-year anniversary of the city's foundation. This exhibition was held to the south of the actual site of Heian Shrine, with a total venue area of 178,000 m<sup>2</sup> and a total site area of 47,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The event served to showcase the first electric streetcar ever installed in Japan and the innovative features of a city supplied by electricity. It also presented the opportunity to widen streets and improve the supply of accommodation in the city. These urban improvements supported the long-term process of transforming Kyoto into an important sightseeing destination.

Upon the establishment of Kyoto municipality in 1889, the city counted around 279 thousand inhabitants. In 1918, the city of Kyoto incorporated 16 towns and villages that resulted in a suburban expansion in which the municipal land area doubled. The development of roads and the electric streetcar, and the creation of new housing sites accompanied this expansion. The most important variations in population growth occurred during the modern period until 1935 and after the war until 1970. The population increased to about 521 thousand in 1920, reaching over 1 million in 1935, and about 1.5 million in 1970, after which numbers stabilized.

The modern period population growth was mainly related to the variations in city limits involving the successive incorporation of surrounding towns and villages. In contrast, the postwar population growth was generally the result of internal migrations from rural areas. Although the population grew vastly until 1970, during the postwar period the rate of growth in Kyoto was modest when compared to other cities, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya or Yokohama.

#### **Redefining postwar urban development**

Kyoto city witnessed the challenge of redefining new objectives for urban development during the postwar period, similar to other local cities involved in dynamic processes of population movement towards metropolitan regions. As described in the Kinki Area Development Law (1963), the municipal government enthusiastically embraced the project of transforming Kyoto into a cultural centre, taking into consideration the fact that the city had escaped the wartime attacks and consequent fires. This project was officially launched in 1950 with the creation of the 'Law for the Construction of Kyoto into a City of International Culture and Tourism' [kokusai bunka kank toshi kensetsu h]. During the war, the city's physical pattern in terms of buildings, roads and other infrastructure managed to be mostly preserved – including ancient features and modern

urban improvements – with one exception: one large area was cleared to create a 'safe' open space in case of air raids. Following a national air defence law, strategic areas for 'building evacuation' [tatemono sokai] were established to prevent the spread of fire in case of air raids. The Kyoto Municipality enforced the total clearance of an area of about 133ha, including the displacement of the area's inhabitants. After the war, 74ha were used for road construction, 63ha for the creation of public squares, and 6ha for urban parks. The eventual result, in 1962, was 24 new road sections, 28 public squares, 28 urban parks, and the extension of the Horikawa, Oike and Goj streets. These interventions added to the subsequent suburban expansion and the continued redesign of the urban fabric.

As a matter of fact, the postwar urban expansion advanced out of a rigid control oriented towards preservation. For the realisation of Kyoto as an international cultural centre, the vision of private developers, most often supported by municipal officers, relied on the creation of new tourism-oriented services and industries, and the construction of new urban infrastructure, hotels and cultural facilities – e.g. museums, universities and conference halls. This vision was criticised by local communities that started to become influential in barring undesired projects, among them, the interdiction of a theme park construction on Mount Hiei in 1960, and the construction in 1964 of a 131m high hotel in front of Kyoto station and a hotel on Narabigaoka Hill. The "Protect Narabigaoka" civil society movement echoed movements taking place in other cities; for example, the Tsurugaoka Hill in Kamakura. These civil society movements triggered the enactment of the Ancient Capitals Preservation Law (1966) at a national level and raised concern for preservation. An awareness emerged of the long-term interactions existing between everyday human activities and natural settings, in processes of physical shaping.

In the case of Kyoto, located in a river basin surrounded by mountains, the technical possibilities of different periods, heavily based on wooden building techniques, greatly shaped the physical features of the townscape. Up until the mid-1960s, most of the housing in central areas was composed of two-storey wooden structures known as machiya: townhouses that together form a specific townscape called machinami [the 'lined' town]. Also known as kyo-machiya, this urban typology began to develop when merchants and manufacturers established themselves in the capital during the Heian period (794-1185) and is still present in Kyoto.

The long history of the traditional wooden buildings in central areas has unfortunately often been overlooked since the end of the war. The large-scale destruction of cities during the war (fast spreading fires during bombing raids) led to the creation of national regulation favouring the use of reinforced concrete structures. The Building Standard Law (1950) introduced severe fire-proof regulations for the construction of new buildings in high-density areas. In 1972, the structures built before the end of the war accounted for 58.4% of buildings in Kyoto, and the Kyoto planning office placed these structures into the category of 'deteriorating housing',

and the replacement of them with new modern structures became an urgent matter. The municipality classified neighbourhoods dense with wooden structures as areas of high fire risk; these included areas such as the Nishijin textile neighbourhood on the western side of Kyoto, a neighbourhood slowly shaped over a long period of time, consisting of family-based small-scale industrial installations, in which the workplace was integrated in the everyday life of the community.

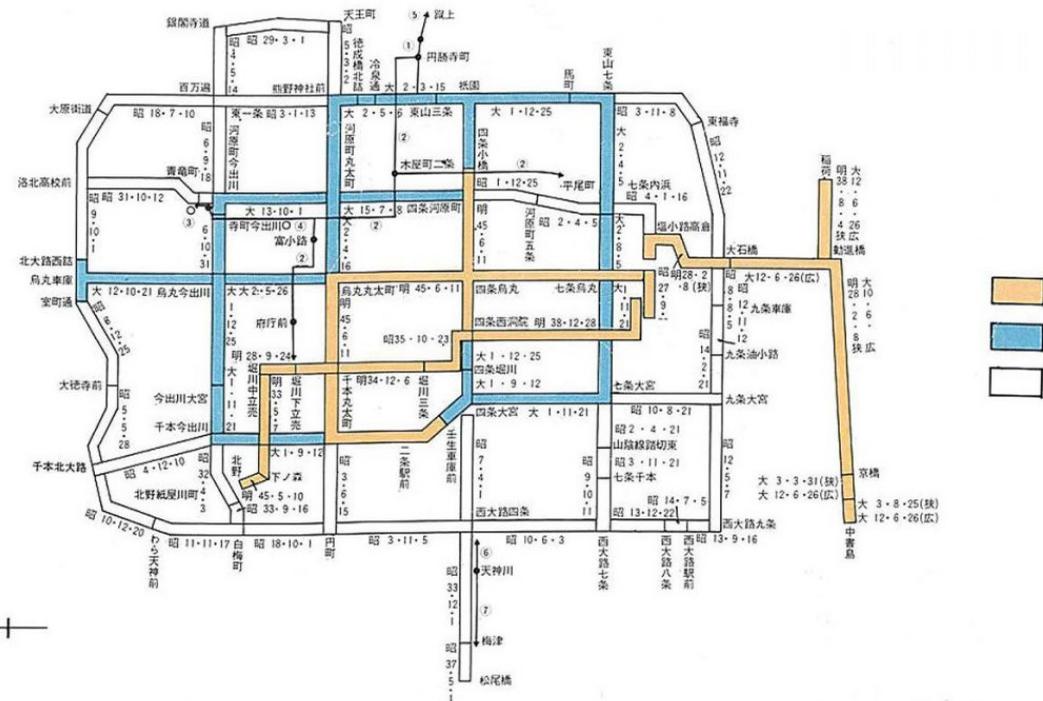
#### **Urban change and the improvement of everyday life**

The large urban changes that took place in the 1960s generated a demand for specialists on urban and regional planning, and led to an increment in the number of locally trained professionals who were aware of the specific needs and characteristics of everyday life in existing cities, towns and villages. New discussion channels were opened with the inauguration of universities and the increase in numbers of students dedicated to city-planning. In the context of disputes among community, specialists and officers about the most suitable patterns of urban interventions, an interest for the material culture of everyday life came to the fore. In this context, independent propositions issued outside governmental offices flourished. Noteworthy is the 1964 Kyoto Plan, headed by Kyoto University professor Nishiyama Uzo. As early as 1960, Nishiyama strongly advised against automobiles in Japanese cities; he considered central urban areas to be public spaces deserving of similar care afforded to the interior of Japanese homes. Nishiyama considered automobiles sources of dirtiness and noise, and thus, in the same way that Japanese people remove their shoes before entering a home, automobiles too should be left outside the residential part, or central areas, of cities.

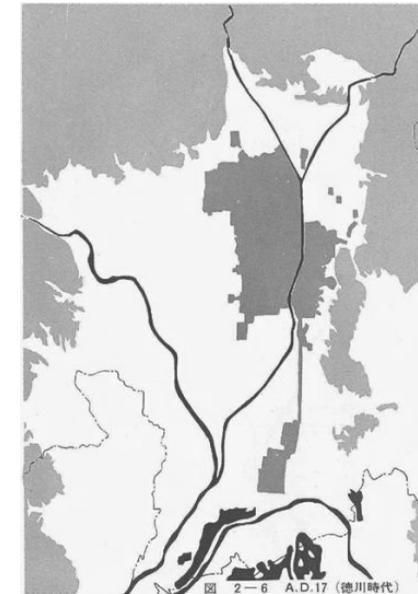
The autonomous plans of the period demonstrated a well-informed, relatively independent opinion, which sometimes diverged from official documents, for example in relation to the preservation of wooden constructions. In contrast, the question of controlling the number of automobiles in central urban areas was a generally accepted idea. Until the 1970s the image of automobiles was often associated with danger, pollution and nuisance in several official documents. According to the municipality of Kyoto, automobiles posed a risk to urban dwellers in Japan. Streets were considered to be urban spaces of vital function to public life, accommodating water, electricity, sewage, and fire prevention systems. Thus, having this vital element of cities blocked with the traffic of individual cars meant large scale risk and disturbance to the entire functioning of the city. Consequently, in the late 1960s, although the number of cars and roads increased, especially in suburban areas, the car continued to be regarded as a nuisance, and its uncontrolled use was believed to eventually undermine the quality of collective life. Thus, investment in collective transportation systems gained priority above the widening of streets in central urban areas.

In terms of measures taken for natural and historical landscape preservation, a succession of regulations at local, regional and national levels started to abound

after the middle of the 20th century. Before that period, at the national level, the 'Law for Preservation of Old Shrines and Temples' was established in 1897. At the local level, in Kyoto, a 'Scenic Landscape District' of 3400ha was established in 1930 in order to protect certain areas, including the areas of the Kamo River, and the Higashiyama and Kitayama mountains. Since 1957, the municipality restricted the installation of outdoor advertisements, which later culminated in the 'Kyoto City Ordinances on Outdoor Advertisements' (1960). At the regional level, the law for conservation areas in the Kinki Region reinforced the preservation of green areas in the suburbs of the city. In 1966, the law for preservation of ancient capitals anticipated the urban landscape municipal ordinance (1972), followed by the 1975 national designation of special areas for preserving traditional buildings. Although the surrounding mountains, temples, shrines and imperial properties of Kyoto were preserved during the prewar period, measures, actions and programs aimed at landscape preservation inside and in the surroundings of the city, started to abound mostly after the 1960s.



Kyoto electric railway route map.  
 Kyotoshi toshikaihatsu kyoku toshikeikakuka 1972,  
 page 7.



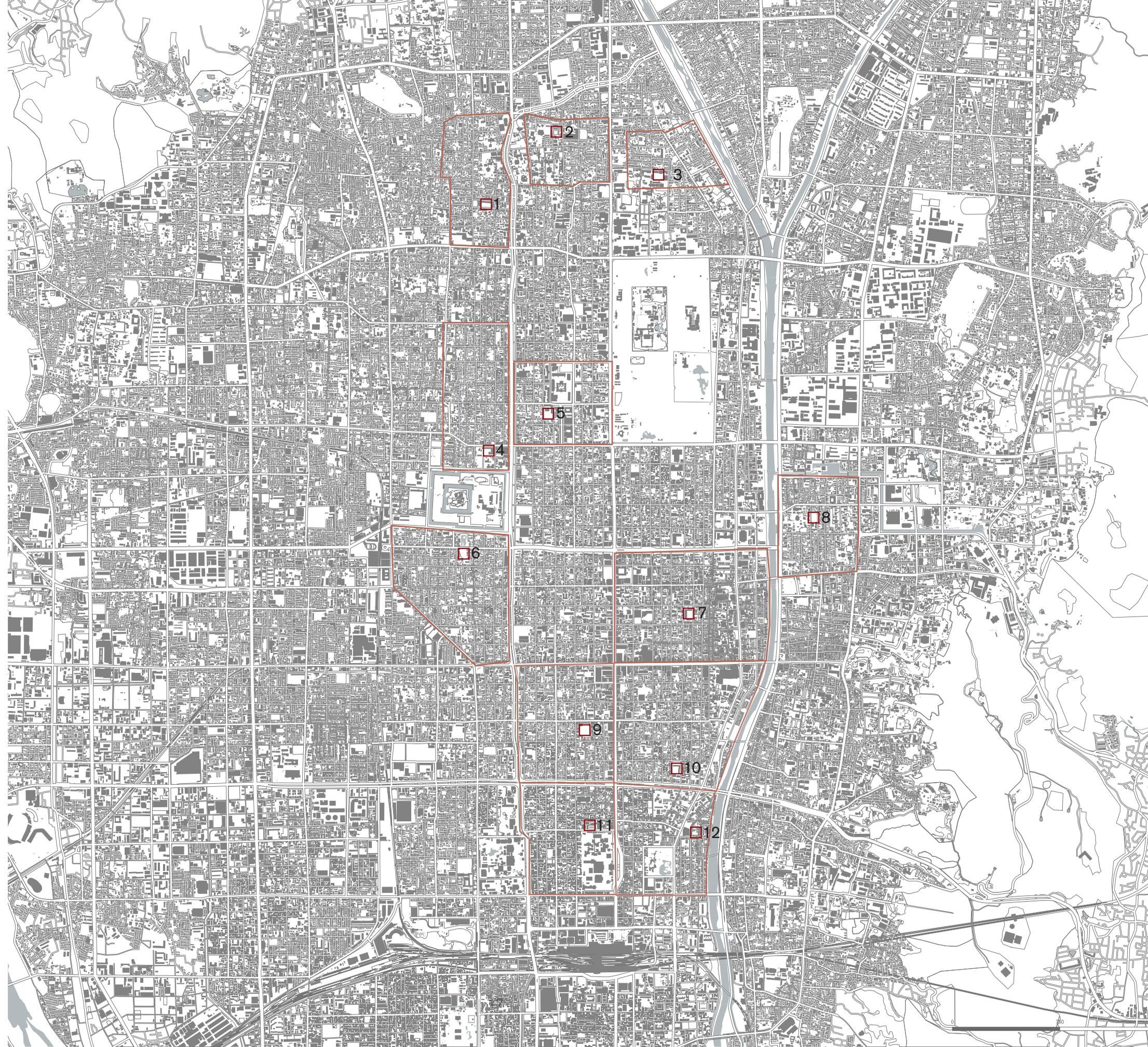
Kyoto urban area expansion map, 17th century, 1909 to  
 1965. Kyotoshi keikakukyoku 1967





Project Sites

- 1  
Kozaicho, Kamigyo Ward
- 2  
Daishincho, Kamigyo Ward
- 3  
Sokokuji Monzencho, Kamigyo Ward
- 4  
Warayacho, Kamigyo Ward
- 5  
Nishiojicho, Kamigyo Ward
- 6  
Anenishicho, Nakagyo Ward
- 7  
Honeyanocho, Nakagyo Ward
- 8  
Shinhigashidoincho, Sakyo Ward
- 9  
Hanjocho, Shimogyo Ward
- 10  
Motoshinmeicho, Shimogyo Ward
- 11  
Yaoyacho, Shimogyo Ward
- 12  
Iwatakicho, Shimogyo Ward





## First exercise: survey

Over the course of past semesters we have given priority to conducting rigorous surveys as a way of understanding the task at hand. At times this takes the form of drawing existing buildings that are typologically similar to the project we are working on, at other times it involves a more detailed record of the existing conditions of a site. In this instance, we will conduct our survey using methods we have not used taken before.

We will invite you to make a film that documents the character and atmosphere of the neighbourhood in which you will be working. This should be carefully structured so as to communicate the character of the place and a specific way of living.

Technical support will be offered to assist you in this task. A screening and a review of the films produced will take place at the end of the period we will spend in Kyoto



Film still. Tokyo Story by Yasujiro Ozu  
1953



Film stills from  
A Hen in the Wind, Yasujiro Ozu. 1948



Film still from Drive my car, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, 2021



Film still from After the Storm  
Hirokazu Kore-eda, 2016

House in Uehara  
Tokyo  
1976  
Kazuo Shinohara



Moriyama house  
Tokyo  
2005  
Ryue Nishizawa



Apartment in Nerima  
Tokyo  
2009  
Go Hasegawa



Each pair of students has been tasked with studying a specific area of Kyoto in order to develop a strategy plan that considers its future urban character.

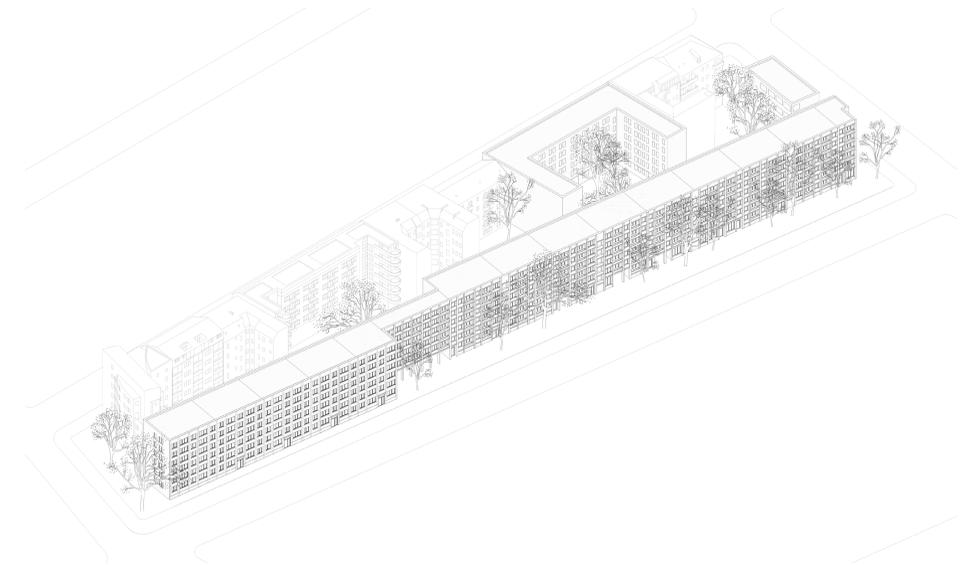
They will be expected to produce a 1:500 site plan that accurately documents the existing organisation of the neighbourhood, drawn as a ground floor plan, and a 1:500 model. Working with the plan and model and the knowledge derived from the survey exercise, they should undertake a thorough investigation to consider what existing buildings might be adjusted or demolished and where new ones may be constructed in future. This should be seen as an iterative process, where numerous scenarios are tested and refined.

While all the neighbourhoods selected contain non-residential programmes, priority should be given to housing proposals. Japan is currently experiencing a marked reduction in the birth-rate, and as a result each of the sites houses a school that is deemed to be surplus to requirements.

Care should be given to the form of housing considered: student accommodation, multigenerational housing, shared and assisted living solutions are all relevant.

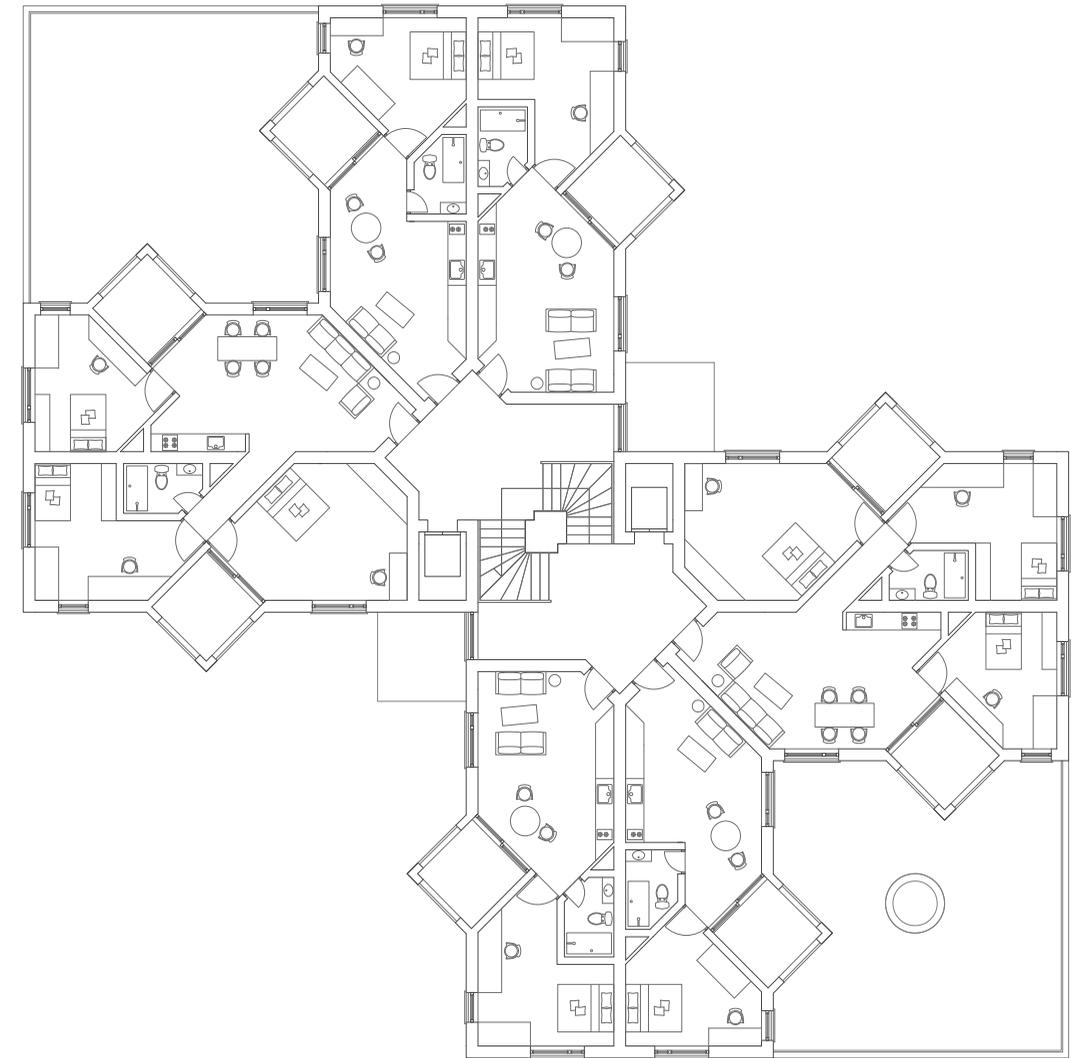
Projects should be tested at scale 1:500 volumetrically and studied in relation to their immediate neighbours, and in their wider setting and context.

A review of the key elements of this exercise, the 1:500 plan and 1:500 model will be arranged.



One of the sites identified for new building(s) in the previous exercise should now be developed in more detail and at a larger scale, i.e. 1:200 or 1:100. A proposal for a housing project should be developed together with a set of plans and sections that explain its organization, including an appropriate mix of apartment sizes and interior layout, and a concept for the common parts.

We encourage students to consider realistic and conceptually ambitious solutions that address the culturally specific requirements of Japanese housing.



The facades of a building might reveal something about its internal organisation, but they always deal with the representational aspects of architecture: the appearance of a building is the result of a set of conscious decisions.

In your work you should consider what image is appropriate for a contemporary residential building in Kyoto. How should it relate to the existing neighbouring buildings? What materials should be employed in the making of the facades? What kind of atmosphere are you trying to create through the form of construction used? These are just a few of the issues you should address in this exercise.

Proposals should be developed by producing and reviewing a number of facade drawings, unwrapped elevations and models.



The last piece of work involves adjusting and revising the drawings and producing two final images of the project: the first illustrating the building in its context, the second an interior perspective showing a domestic space. These can be created by making models and then carefully photographing them, or digitally.

A review of the semester's work will be held with invited guest critics and all the work produced will be assessed and discussed.



Date	Event	Details	Assignments
21 September JP	Studio briefing	9:00 Jonathan Sergison (JS) presents studio introduction 9:30 Lecture by Oana Suteu (OS) 10:30 Domestic space in cinema 11:30 Film screening of Kyoto 17:00 Lecture by Shigenori Uoya TBC	Survey studies
22 September JP	Site visit	Project sites visit in Kyoto	Survey studies and filmmaking
27 - 28 September JP	Tutorials	Tutorials with OS Lecture by Makoto Takei Lecture by JS	Survey studies and filmmaking
3 - 4 October JP	Tutorials	Tutorials with OS Lecture by Alejandro Martinez	Survey studies and filmmaking
7-10 October JP	Study trip	Karuizawa and Kyoto visits Public lecture by Go Hasegawa Public lecture by JS	
12 October JP	Reviews at 10:00 am	Survey review with Daisuke Hattori, Irina Davidovici, Walter Angonese and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto	
13 October JP	Tutorials	Morning tutorials. Survey material discussion before departure to CH	1:500 site model 1:200 drawings, plans, sections and elevations
19-20 October CH	Tutorials	Site model Plans, sections and elevations	1:500 site model 1:200 drawings, plans, sections and elevations
26-27 October CH	Tutorials	Site model Plans, sections and elevations	1:200 drawings, plans, sections and elevations 1:200 model studies
2 November CH	Intermediate review	Project reviews with guest critics	Pdf presentation Survey 1:500 and 1:200 models 1:200 plans, sections, elevations Images

Date	Event	Details	Assignments
9 - 10 November CH	Tutorials	Plans, sections and elevations	1:200 models 1:200/1:100 plans, sections, elevations
16 - 17 November CH	Tutorials	Plans, sections and elevations	1:200/1:100 plans, sections, elevations
23 - 24 November CH	Review	Plans, sections and elevations	1:200/1:100 plans, sections, elevations
30 November - 1 December CH	Tutorials	Plans, sections and elevations	1:200/1:100 plans, sections, elevations
7 - 8 December CH	Tutorials	Submission of final drawings	1:200/1:100 plans, sections, elevations
14 - 15 December CH	Tutorials	Final models and images	Interior perspectives, Exterior perspectives, 1:200 site model Draft pdf presentation
20 December CH	Final review	Project reviews with guest critics	Pdf presentation 1:200 site model Interior and exterior perspectives 1:200 situation plan 1:100 plans, sections and facades Interior and exterior perspectives

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## Film list

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Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon*, 1950  
Akira Kurosawa, *The Bad Sleep Well*, 1960  
Akira Kurosawa, *Red Beard*, 1965  
Akira Kurosawa, *High and Low*, 1963  
Akira Kurosawa, *Dreams*, 1990  
Akira Kurosawa, *Madadayo*, 1993  
Hirokazu Kore-eda, *Maborosi*, 1995  
Hirokazu Kore-eda, *Nobody Knows*, 2004  
Hirokazu Kore-eda, *After the Storm*, 2016  
Hiroshi, Teshigahara, *Woman of the Dunes*, 1964  
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Kaneto Shindo, *The Naked Island*, 1960  
Katsuhiro Otomo, *Akira*, 1988  
Karsuhito Ishii, *The Taste of Tea*, 2004  
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Kenji Mizoguchi, *The Story of the Late Chrysanthemums*, 1939  
Kenji Mizoguchi, *Ugetsu*, 1953  
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Kiyoshi Kurosawa, *Bright Future*, 2003  
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