Museums of Cities as Cultural Hubs: Past, Present and Future

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City Museums as Cultural Hubs: Past, Present and Future

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現代社会における京都文化博物館の役割を探す

ABSTRACT

Expectations for city museums are ever-increasing, so we must ask ourselves some questions: how can we discover and understand what the expectations of a diverse range of people are? Furthermore, to what extent can we meet those expectations? As such, the Museum of Kyoto, as a city museum, also needs to play new, additional roles.

One of these roles is to contribute to the *Machizukuri* (Community Planning or Area Management) of the museum's neighbourhood. In other words, we speak of a contribution of the museum to the people of the area and how it can acquire a sense of place, given that it is located at the centre of the city of Kyoto. Here, in addition to the residents, there are also many tourists, people working in commerce and, in recent years, new immigrants. Therefore, with so many different inputs, conflicts of interest are unavoidable. Additionally, following the recent wave of consumer-oriented commercialism, the cultural resources of the area may be lost. From such a sense of crisis, efforts are being made by the *Machizukuri* associations, organised by the residents and stakeholders of the area, to discuss what it means to be here and to consider the identity of this place.

How can the museum be involved in these activities? To find an answer to this question, the museum holds regular meetings with the local community planning associations. By establishing a place for ongoing dialogue, we are gradually creating new ways to be involved, especially through collaborative projects. For example, we have held interviews with local residents, researched document surveys, assessed similar projects elsewhere, conducted workshops and symposia, modern architecture tours and special exhibitions. All of them are participatory, from planning through to implementation and evaluation. In particular, for the past two years, we have tried to value modern architecture in Kyoto.

In this article, the participatory projects of the Museum of Kyoto, which involve the community, will be presented in order to discuss the contemporary roles and responsibilities of a city museum in Kyoto.

Key words: *Machizukuri*, community planning, dialogue, internal voices, roles of museums

要旨

近年、都市博物館への期待は高まっているようだ。博物館関係者は、そうした 様々な期待にどれだけ気づくことができ、また期待にどれだけ応えられるだ ろうか。京都府京都文化博物館もまた、都市博物館として新たな役割を求め られている。

その役割の一つが「まちづくり」への貢献だ。まちづくりという言葉が指す内 容は時代によって変化しており、定義は難しい。英語で言えば、エリア・マネジ メントやコミュニティ・プランニングが相当しよう。あえて言い換えれば、博物 館による地域の人々に対する貢献であり、また地域の人々がその土地への愛 着や帰属意識、あるいは品格を感じられるように活動をおこなうことだ。もち ろん地域には住民だけではなく、旅行者やお店を構える人々もいるし、また新 たに居住を始める方もいる。それゆえに、興味や関心の相違によって地域の 人々の間で問題が生じることも避けがたい。加えて近年の消費志向の商業主 義は、それまで継承されてきた地域の文化資源を消費し尽くす危険がある。こ のような危機感から、当館の界隈ではまちづくり組織がこの地域のアイデンテ ィティや品格を検討する活動をはじめている。

博物館は、このような活動にどう関わることができるだろうか。この問いに回 答を見つけるため、当館ではまちづくり組織と月に一度定例会を開催してい る。ここでの対話を繰り返すことで、私たちは新たに連携事業を形成すること ができ、すでに様々な活動を始めている。それは例えば、地域住民へのインタ ビュー、資料調査、同様の事業の比較研究、ワークショップ、シンポジウム、ま ちあるきツアー、企画展などである。いずれも、地域組織と博物館が深く連携 した事業であることが特徴である。例えば、企画展では、展示品選びや展示 などの諸作業のはじめから最後まで地域組織メンバーが参画した。とりわけ ここ数年間は、都市景観なかでも近代建築にねらいを定め、その価値づけに かかる取り組みを多数実施している。最新の企画展では、来場者に対して、こ の地域の近代建築や景観にかかる投票をうながすような展示をつくり、近代 建築の価値評価などといったまちづくりに活かすためのデータを得た。また、 建物の環境にかかる自然科学的手法や建物全体の三次元測量およびVRと いった最新技術について、企画展を通じて地域組織・住民に紹介した。こうし たデータや技術は、近代建築や景観を今後も継承し、活用するために、参考 になるだろうし、実際に地域組織もこれらの技術の導入を始めている。

このようにして博物館は、様々な人々の対話や意見交換をおこなえる場となったり、最新技術などのショーケースとなったりすることで、まちづくりに貢献できるのではなかろうか。本稿では、具体的な活動について詳しく紹介していきたい。

Introduction

What kind of role is the Museum of Kyoto now playing in our contemporary society? Before answering this question, it is important to introduce the word *Hakubutukan-iki*. This word has been used in Japan for at least fifty years and illustrates the roles and responsibilities of museums in a rather negative way.

Hakubutukan means "museum" in Japanese and *Ik* means "to become a part of a collection". Together, they stand for "becoming part of a collection in the museum". This can be understood as a term referring to the collection of materials, one of the basic functions of the museum. However, its true meaning is negative. *Hakubutukan-iki* in Japanese actually means "out of date" or "useless". Therefore, when we try to define the roles of *Hakubutukan*, or a museum in contemporary society, we have to consider the broader associations that Japanese people make to museums.

On the other hand, the roles of the museum have drastically changed over time and continue to evolve; it no longer is just a place to store and display obsolete things. In particular, expectations for the museum are increasing. How can we discover and understand the expectations of a diverse range of people? To what extent can we meet those expectations? What kind of roles should the museum play in modern society? Before addressing the main topic of this paper, the Museum of Kyoto should be presented.

Brief guide for the Museum of Kyoto and its new role

The Museum of Kyoto opened in 1988 as a comprehensive cultural facility that collects, preserves, researches and exhibits a broad range of cultural properties including archaeology, history, art, film and folklore. It is an institution that also encourages the creation of new artworks and international cultural exchange projects.

The Museum of Kyoto consists of two buildings: the Main building and the Annex. The Annex was established in 1906 as the Kyoto branch of the Bank of Japan, and it was designated as an Important Cultural Property of Japan in 1969. This is a famous example of brick architecture from the Meiji period known as the *Tatsuno* style, which is named after one of Japan's first modern architects, Tatsuno Kingo. The Annex is now used as a unique venue for the Museum of Kyoto and is available for multiple uses such as conferences, ceremonies, concerts, art exhibitions and even weddings. This building has become a familiar landmark with close ties to the local community.

The main building has exhibition spaces for arts, history and community where we work as curators. Besides exhibitions, the curators have been doing various activities (Murano, 2018a; 2018b). As defined in the museum functions, we are engaged in collection, preservation, education, entertainment and investigation. In addition to these functions, the Museum of Kyoto is a city museum, so it is now sought after to perform new functions, namely, the *Machizukuri*. This is another Japanese term which should be explained in order to demonstrate our roles.

Expectations for contributing to Machizukuri

Machizukuri is a key concept for understanding modern Japanese community planning. *Machi* means "neighbourhood" or "small town" and *zukuri* stands for "making" or "planning". It is a very particular concept in Japan. There are several definitions of *Machizukuri*, and the translations into English are also varied. According to one of the definitions, *Machizukuri* can be understood as an attempt to improve or sustain the city with the involvement of local residents in the planning (Watanabe, 2006). So, this means that local residents should be engaged

from the start in creating the plan, having their own roles and responsibilities in city planning. Therefore, the activities of *Machizukuri* include encouraging the involvement of residents in meetings and policy-making, among others.

In this sense, the Museum of Kyoto is expected to participate in *Machizukuri* as one of the important stakeholders for the local community. This being established, what kind of contribution can one make? How can the museum meet those expectations? These are not easy questions to answer. To find an appropriate answer to this question, we would like to share the current issues that we are now facing in Kyoto.

Diagnostics of the current situation of Kyoto

Kyoto is located at the centre of Japan and is a city famed for its cultural heritage. According to the results of the comparison study on perceived identity and branding of cities in Japan (Hayashi, 2006), Tokyo, as the current political capital of Japan, excels in technology, economy and also the policy-making for Japan as a whole. When it comes to Kyoto, the atmosphere of well-preserved culture and history is the main feature of the city. We may be able to say that Kyoto is a city where the Japanese people are proud of its culture and history.

The Museum of Kyoto is located at the heart of Kyoto, and in the vicinity there are various famous tourist spots such as the Imperial Palace, Nijō Castle, Heian Jingu Shrine and Gion, among others. The museum lies in the very centre of the city. Such famous tourist destinations are undoubtedly important components of Kyoto's culture and, as such, many people will connect to them personally and consider them as the typical image of the city. However, this is also the image of Kyoto as seen from outside, through the eyes of tourists and the tourism industry. There are more cultural components of Kyoto which differ from these external images. Nevertheless, these seem to be neglected in favour of the famous Kyoto images, and they do not receive as much attention as the former.

The external image of Kyoto attracts many people to the city. In fact, about 53.6 million people visited the city in 2017.¹ While so many people visit or come to live, those who have been supporting the foundations of this history and culture of Kyoto, its local residents, seem to have been forgotten. If the daily culture and identity that local residents cherish are not admired, then the culture and history of Kyoto will only be consumed, and there is a danger that they will not be preserved and passed down to future generations. Likewise, there are lots of voices from within the city, which might be different from the voices from the outside. In Kyoto, picking up the multiple voices of the community has been of crucial importance.

Another problem is that the very human relationships within the communities and neighbourhoods are gradually weakening in Japan, and we are now at the brink of the destruction of these communities.² Therefore, the voices from the inside are sporadic, making it impossible to produce a strong message. This also has been raised as an issue in community planning.

From such a sense of community crisis, efforts for *Machizukuri* are being made by the residents and stakeholders of the neighbourhoods in the area of the Museum of Kyoto, such as shop owners, architects, academics, among others, in order to manage the area better. It is necessary for the Museum of Kyoto to consider how it can be involved in these activities.

¹ Source: Kyoto Tourism Comprehensive Survey 2017.

² See: White Paper on the National Lifestyle (2007)

Efforts of the Museum of Kyoto

Taking the above issues into account, the Museum of Kyoto strives to participate in several actions. As far as our concrete activities go, we established three basic principles. The first is to share the concept of the *Machizukuri* in this area, talking with the local community in Kyoto. Second, based on the concept outlined, we take actions. Finally, the third is to propose ideas and plans for the next projects.

Sharing the concept of Machizukuri and the primary concerns of the local community

In order to understand each other personally and officially, the Museum of Kyoto and the local Machizukuri associations have regular monthly meetings, which, so far, have been held more than sixty times. Through these meetings, we share our visions of the Machizukuri and discover activities and theoretical concepts. The museum especially focuses on the neighbouring community associations. To the north and south of the museum, there are two different communities: on the northern side there is the Aneyakoji Street community, and on the southern part there is the Sanjo Street community. It is characteristic of Kyoto that the street has the designation of community and both of them have their own Machizukuri associations.

Through these community involvement meetings, there are lots of exchange opportunities between community members, we can share various information such as that on community festivals, and we can also understand why these attractive events are necessary. Regarding festivals, it is important to hold them to offer opportunities for communication among residents.

We are now focusing much more on their primary concerns. First, to identify the cultural resources of the area, then, to promote the values of the landscape and its components for preserving them and attracting people to the area. Lastly, to improve a sense of place among people of the area by encouraging them to participate in the planning. All these activities are expected to contribute to reconstructing and reaffirming ties within the community.



Machikado museum (left: position of the signboard; right: a closer view of a signboard). © Museum of Kyoto

Taking actions with the local associations

With these concepts in mind, the Museum of Kyoto has committed to develop activities with the local associations. The activities can be summarised in five key words: Discovery, Share, Open, Express and Compare.

Discovery means to discover and collect the cultural resources of the area. Cultural resources include every tangible and intangible asset that the local people want to cherish. We visited each house in the community and conducted interview-based surveys with the residents. Through this activity, Machizukuri association members could also talk directly with local residents with whom they had

never previously exchanged views. As a result, Machizukuri members were able to deepen their understanding of the local cultural resources. The museum has played a role in connecting Machizukuri members and local residents. This is one of the achievements of our community involvement activities.

The next step, to *Share*, was to communicate the information and ideas obtained through the Discovery activities to a broader selection of people. We implemented Machizukuri café (like a science café) and held symposia on various occasions to open the event for discussion. Each Machizukuri café had about thirty attendees, and the symposia had about a hundred people. Through these events, we have been able to generate ideas for future activities to better preserve, inherit and

utilise local resources. One such idea is an open architecture event (inspired by the Open House London) in order to introduce the charm and value of modern architecture on Sanjo Street. For the past two years, we have tried to value modern architecture in Kyoto. The reason is that the local community planning associations feel frustrated by the loss of the modern architecture and they hope to preserve it as an important element of the local landscape and also to use it as a resource for the Machizukuri in this area. This event will be implemented in the near future. What is the next step after Share? It will be to further expand the range of people who can share information. In other words, to Open information. Simply holding symposia does not mean that information is widely available because the number of participants is limited. Therefore, we published information on the web so that anyone can access it. The information is not tourist information but messages for the Machizukuri community. For example, the Aneyakoji Street guidebook is available online.³ Here one can find local cultural resources which have been gathered through collaborative work between the Museum of Kyoto and the Machizukuri associations as well as the vision of the Machizukuri including the manners and precautions to be followed to enjoy walking in this area.

Relating to *Open* activities, we propose to highlight the importance of the area for the community and visitors and to *Express* messages, so that each resident feels able to have a voice and suggest what they would like to introduce. The messages of the community can be found on the websites of the community associations. However, that is an official message and does not reflect a personal and private opinion. Then, in order to get messages across, we have established a *Machikado* museum for presenting stories and messages of shops and houses in Sanjo Street.⁴

One can find a signboard in front of each house and shop, serving as a prop so that the community members can express their opinions and messages. If the possibility to upgrade these boards to electronic boards arises in the near future, comments and opinions on the messages may be collected. Since this is a private message, it is necessary to consider carefully how to respond to it, as there may be benefits for community planning in two-way communication.

However, there is one thing to be aware of while conducting these activities. If one targets only a limited area and is unaware of other examples, there will be a risk of creating an insulated and self-righteous worldview. Therefore, to *Compare* ideas with organisations in other areas and to visit them to obtain real and practical information seems wise. For example, in 2015, we visited Hagi City, in the Yamaguchi Prefecture, where there is a famous project, a kind of *Open Air Museum*, which is a city-wide community development project. Although Hagi is far away from Kyoto, their city museum was worth visiting because comparing the projects of both cities helped evaluate our activities. It was not an objective evaluation by a third party, but our subjective evaluation. In other words, it created self-awareness and led to a review of activities and the development of new ones.

Proposing ideas and plans for the next actions

Museum exhibitions are a suitable medium to introduce new ideas and information, not only for visitors but also for community members. In 2019, we held the exhibition *Modern Architecture and Community Projects in Bunpaku (The Museum of Kyoto) neighbourhood*, where we collaborated with the *Machizukuri* associations. This exhibition had been planned for over a year, alongside other activities. Its theme focused on the landscape, and especially on modern architecture, which is the primary concern of the ongoing activities of the *Machizukuri* associations. Currently, Kyoto has a problem in the preservation of modern architecture for future generations. The *Machizukuri* associations would



The members of the **Machizukuri** association, creating the exhibition. © Museum of Kyoto

³ The website: http://aneyakouji.jp/guidemap/

⁴ It translates into English as "street corner".

Photo of the buildings on the Sanjo street and voting results. © Museum of Kyoto



like to encourage appreciation of its value, so we decided to conduct the exhibition. Exhibits were selected by curators and members of the *Machizukuri* associations, and the community members engaged in the exhibition work itself.

Then, from that point, we devised new actions for the future. One of the ideas is to obtain feedback about the landscape of the Sanjo area from the exhibition visitors, by using an elevation photo of all of the buildings in this area. Using that photo, we asked the visitors which architecture they prefer as one of the elements of the Sanjo street's landscape, and also asked them to put on a sticker. We also prepared a freewriting note and asked the visitors to write their opinion there. The exhibition ended in October 2019, and the voting results have not been compiled yet, but roughly three thousand stickers have been affixed. So, if, on average, each of the visitors put three stickers, it means that nearly one thousand people voted. The *Machizukuri* associations can utilise such feedback from the visitors for their community planning activities.

In addition, we would like to incorporate lots of new ideas and technologies, through which we might be able to utilise the cultural heritage in a new way. As one of the community's concerns is to promote the landscape of the area and to get more people interested, it will be important to strike a balance between the preservation and practicality of the architecture. The Annex of the Museum of Kyoto (the former Kyoto branch of the Bank of Japan, as mentioned above) is being used as a "Unique Venue" a place given over to special use, differing from the original functions of the building. Places that offer a unique environment, such as historic buildings, galleries, museums, among others, can be expected to elicit feelings of something special and highlight regional features when used as venues for events. In that sense, the venue offers the possibility of adding new value to its inherent worth. Therefore, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan is promoting this kind of use.

In contrast, we can point out the lack of scientific data on what type of activity will not damage or harm the venue facilities, or what problems might occur with the expansion of activities. Considering this point, with the cooperation of Tsukuba University and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, we are endeavouring to gather data on changes in humidity, CO_2 concentrations, PM 2.5, vibrations and other matters relating to the use of the Annex facilities. Almost all of the data is available on the website of Purpleair,⁵ and we present this technology and the results in the exhibition. There are expectations that, in the near future, we will be able to hold discussions based on specific data, in an attempt to find a balance between preservation and use. This methodology will be applicable not only to the other buildings in Sanjo Street, which the association focuses on, but also the buildings anywhere.

Moreover, we introduced a VR (virtual reality) rendering of the Annex in this exhibition. VR is a technology of great interest in the world of museums. We created this VR in cooperation with Leica Geosystems and Elysium. Leica Geosystems is a company supporting measurement professionals worldwide. Elysium is a software company that has been at the forefront of 3D geometry handling and data translation for over three decades. In collaboration with both companies, we have been carrying out 3D scanning in order to apply it to virtual reality. Although VR has a lot of computer graphics in general, our VR uses data based on accurate measurement by spatial scanning. In other words, this VR data not only help to present the Annex more clearly but can also be used for restoration if an accident occurs in the Annex and part of it is lost, since the original shape can be accurately identified. It becomes valuable source of information. This methodology will also be applicable to other works of architecture.

⁵ See: www2.purpleair.com

Thus, the museum can be a showcase for advanced technology and theory. Community members will see this and it will hopefully become a reference model for thinking about what to do in other cases.

Conclusion

In summary, the museum can offer opportunities to exchange and represent multiple voices. The museum can be a showcase of new technologies and ideas and be a source of inspiration. If such activities can be implemented, the museum will be able to contribute to community development. However, it is important to take stock that these activities should be based on community participation. When that is fulfilled, the museum will truly become a dialogue space for *Machizukuri*. This will be a museum's role, and if it is contributing to *Machizukuri*, the museum will evolve from "useless", becoming a much-needed entity in the contemporary society.

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