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Recovering river landscape
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**BETWEEN NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL, DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCES OF THE KAMO RIVER
AND ITS BANKS IN KYOTO**

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The Kamo river is the main river crossing the city of Kyoto. As a river flowing directly from the mountains, it has a wide variation in debit. Together with the mountains that surround the city on three sides, it is a defining element in the city and in its dialogical relation to Nature. Canalized early on to adapt to the geometrical structure of the city, it was used as a source of fresh water for the ancient capital and as a means of transportation for commerce between the mountainous backcountry to the North and the ocean outlet to the South. The river Kamo and its banks made over the centuries the object of numerous developments. The technological progress beginning at the end of the 19th century completely changed its role and allowed to protect the city against its floods. Confined within high dikes that protect the surrounding areas, the banks of the river were redesigned as a simple and low-maintenance promenade, with paths, plantings, benches, sports areas. In the river, a succession of engineered waterfalls creates a specific sound environment that supersedes the sounds of the city; stepping stones allow for direct crossing of the river. During periods of low water level and warm weather, with simple and technologically-driven design, the river can thus be reinvested by the population as a piece of nature within the city. Widely artificial, the arrangement of the river Kamo and its banks can however appear as looking for a natural aspect. In this presentation, we shall try to explain the implemented mechanisms allowing to reach this ideal. This subject profoundly questions the influence of the “milieu”, relation of society to their environment, during the refitting of rivers.

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