



Misaki Buraku

CASE STUDIES OF COLLECTIVE HOUSING IN ASIAN CITIES SERIES • JULY 2021

Misaki is one of Japan's 6,000 Buraku communities that have faced centuries of institutionalized discrimination, isolation and impoverishment. Government programs were finally introduced to right some of those wrongs, and this Buraku community in Fukuoka Prefecture took advantage of them, to completely redesign and rebuild their dilapidated riverside community, improve their incomes and bolster their social support systems in the process. Misaki is one of several pioneering Buraku communities which spearheaded a larger movement of community-led redevelopment of run-down, neglected neighborhoods.

- Project Misaki Buraku
- Location Chikushino Town, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan
- Size 150 households
- Finished 1990
- Type On-site redevelopment of a centuries-old Buraku settlement, with support from various government Buraku redevelopment and participatory town planning programs

CONTEXT AND PROCESS

Background: Participatory community planning in Japan

For a long time, urban planning in Japan has been highly centralized - first in the laying out of imperial courts, feudal castles and the towns which served them, and later in the developing of big infrastructure to serve the country's growing industrial development. But in the 1970s, growing concern about urban environmental problems like air pollution, fires, earthquake safety and loss of historic neighborhoods began opening space for greater local involvement.

Machi-zukuri ("participatory town planning" in Japanese) is a concept which emerged from a few seminal redevelopment projects undertaken in the 1970s by poor and marginalized communities who wanted more say in how these problems were dealt with in their neighborhoods. These projects became very well-known and inspired other communities to do participatory plans of their own. Machi-zukuri was gradually incorporated into national town-planning policies through a series of new laws and regulations. First, neighborhood consent-based building control was instituted in 1976, then district-wide planning was introduced in the revised City Planning Law in 1980. This prompted many municipalities to adopt local machi-zukuri bylaws, since rules about how district-wide plans are implemented are made locally. Finally, three machi-zukuri laws were established in 1998.

Real and fake machi-zukuri: Institutional mechanisms to support community-driven redevelopment now exist, and communities in all Japanese cities can take advantage of them. But relatively few do. In fact, a lot of municipal machi-zukuri projects being done these days follow the same old top-down planning style, with only a token "participation" of the people who live there. Real machi-zukuri takes a lot of time and requires strong communities and good professional support. The Misaki collective housing redevelopment project described in this case study is a shining example of the *real* machi-zukuri.

How machi-zukuri works:

Machi-zukuri is a central government policy which provides financial and technical support to communities wanting to redevelop their areas through a collective, participatory planning process. The policy is centralized, but the implementation is decentralized and highly flexible. Local governments can develop their own procedures for how to support communities wishing to do machi-zukuri style planning and how to distribute budgets. The national government often supports two-thirds of the cost and local governments support one-third, but cost-sharing between central and local government is also negotiable, depending on the nature and scale of each project. Machi-zukuri projects are all different, but the policy usually provides:

- funds to support the community design process, including salaries of the planners and architects the people select themselves to provide technical assistance.
- funds to buy land from land-owners in areas being redeveloped, to construct public infrastructure and amenities.
- funds for the construction of public infrastructure and facilities, usually built by private contractors hired by the municipality, following local standards and bylaws, but according to the community's plans.
- subsidies to encourage people to reconstruct their houses using fire-proof materials in which the city "buys" the old structures that are demolished as part of the people's redevelopment plans.

Machi-zukuri and Japan's Buraku communities:

Five hundred years ago, Japan's feudal society was organized into a strict caste system of warriors, artisans, farmers and merchants. Those who slaughtered animals, dug graves and worked leather (thereby becoming tainted with the impurities of death) were the system's "untouchables." Called first *eta* (filth) or *hinin* (non-human) and much later *burakumin* (villagers) or *dowa*, these outcasts were forced to live in squalor, poverty and social exclusion in designated settlements called *buraku*, on the outskirts of towns and cities, where they were easy targets for abuse.

Discrimination against the Burakumin was outlawed in 1871, but mistrust and hostility continued right up to the 1960s, when pressure from the long-standing Buraku liberation movement induced the government to launch a series of special programs to help improve the lives and settlements of the Burakumin.

Besides improvements to education, employment and welfare, these programs provided support for the physical upgrading of Japan's 6,000 Buraku districts (representing some 3 million people), in which government budget was passed directly to the Buraku Liberation League (BLL) branch in each community. Two-thirds of this money came from the national government, and one-third from the local government, but it

was up to each community to negotiate with its local government and decide how to plan and implement the projects.

Many less active communities were content to let local governments take charge of upgrading their settlements, and most municipalities were only too happy to take on these lucrative construction projects. But some Buraku communities, like those in Asaka, Kitagata and Misaki (described in this case study) took advantage of provisions which allowed them to develop a variety of improvement projects themselves, in a more participatory style.

Through these early community-driven upgrading projects, Japan's Buraku communities played a pioneering role in establishing the institutional and financial arrangements for the *machi-zukuri* facility, and became test-cases for the model in which communities collectively design and implement their own redevelopment and local and national governments support them. Even today, community-driven planning continues to be most visible in Buraku settlements around Japan.

The community:

Misaki is a very old Buraku community of 150 low-income households, at the edge of Chikushino Town, on Japan's Kyushu Island. Three hundred years ago, during the Edo period, the ancestors of people who live in the community today were forcibly located there, from other parts of Chikushino, when the place was officially designated as a Buraku outcaste settlement. For centuries, the people butchered animals and tanned leather there to make their living. It was an isolated place on the swampy banks of the Homan River, with a canal on the other side, which physically separated the settlement from the town. There was only one old, broken-down wooden bridge to get to the community, which was like an island formed by the river and the canal. "*Don't go there!*" the townsfolk used to say.

Inside, the community was a crowded maze of dilapidated wooden houses. Besides problems of flooding every year, there was the constant danger of fire. In 1943, one particularly bad fire got out of control and all the houses were burned down. The residents had to rebuild from the ground up. But the lanes were still narrow, and the wooden houses were still so close together that the fire danger persisted, since no fire trucks or ambulances could get into the community. So packed were the conditions that many houses could only be reached by going through other people's houses or yards. There was no privacy at all. People were kind and neighborly, and for most, this wasn't much of a problem. But in Japan, the law says that every house must have access from the street. For a long time, the community used to cultivate rice for their own consumption on a big piece of vacant land across the river. In the 1970s, the government developed housing on that land and the people lost that benefit. This was a big problem, especially for poorer families, and this increased the urgency for the redevelopment project.

Initiating the project:

In the early 1990s, the Chikushino Municipality came up with a redevelopment plan for Misaki, which remained an untouched pocket of poverty surrounded by upscale residential neighborhoods. This top-down style plan, however, met with fierce resistance from the community people. Inspired by earlier *machi-zukuri* projects in other Buraku communities, the people lobbied hard to get the city's permission to make their own plan. After a long fight, they were finally able to persuade the city to allow them to do a participatory planning, using the *machi-zukuri* facility and special public subsidies for redeveloping Buraku communities.

Once the city agreed, this energetic community recruited the services of Yoko Hatakenaka, an architect and planner who had assisted in a well-known Buraku community's participatory redevelopment at Kitagata, in the nearby city of Kitakyushu. From the outset, most of the residents were keen on completely reconstructing their community, from the ground up. And that's what they did. Their project in Misaki was so successful that it became a pilot project that was replicated in other non-Buraku neighborhoods of Chikushino.

DESIGN AND PLANNING

Design process:

With Yoko's guidance, the residents organized a series of planning workshops, in which the community was divided into ten sub-groups. People in each subgroup area used maps to mark the bad points they wanted to improve and the good qualities they wanted to preserve in the redevelopment of their part of the community. These maps became the basis for the new community plan. It took about six months to develop Misaki's final plan, which was then submitted to the city with these features:

- **Land reclamation:** By channeling the river, reclaiming river-bed land and constructing a new embankment, the people solved the flooding problem and also expanded their developable space.
- **Public rental housing:** As part of the plan, 60% of Misaki's 150 families would build their own new houses. The other 40% who were elderly, handicapped or could not afford to build their own houses would live in public rental housing which the government would construct, according to the two-story cluster plans the people developed with Yoko in a special workshop.
- **Community center and parks:** At the center of Misaki, in what used to be a working rice field, the people planned a large community center and a public park, complete with an enormous jungle gym that was specially designed by Misaki's children. Several smaller parks were also included in the plans.

The process of reorganizing a densely-crowded settlement to make room for wider lanes and much-needed public facilities called for lots of adjustments and delicate negotiations between community members, the municipality and the planner, who helped calculate how much land they would need for the roads, parks, open spaces and public rental housing in the new plan, based on the local bylaws. Individual land-owners then "sold" the land required for these public facilities to the municipality, which then constructed them - all according to the people's plan.

A good example of this delicate micro-planning involved a provisions shop. One family in the old community had for many years run a small provisions shop where everyone used to gather and where residents could buy goods on credit and pay once a month, if they needed. When people gathered at this shop, there was a lot of communication. The people agreed that this was clearly a good thing in the village, since good relations make for more safety, better security and a kindly sense in the community. So the shop went down on the planning maps as something that should be carefully preserved - and the shop is still there today.

Public rental housing: Yoko organized a special workshop to design the public rental housing that would be at the center of Misaki, where many of the elderly and poorer families in the community would stay. As part of the government's Buraku redevelopment subsidies, the people could design the public rental housing, but the government would build and manage it. In the workshops, the people looked at how to design the rooms, the stairways, the shared open spaces and the balconies. Some apartments have their own workshops inside for income generation. The architect helped the people to make many models to study different design ideas. Some of the apartments are two-story units, and some are smaller one-bedroom units, and they are all beautifully arranged in two-story buildings clustered around a network of small squares, gardens and private spaces. A few of the apartments were carefully designed to be accessible to disabled people. The rent for the apartments is subsidized by the local government and (in 2003) was about 7,000 yen (US\$ 70) for small units, up to 13,000 Yen (US\$ 130) per month (for the big two-story units). Which is very cheap for Japan. Most apartments have 30-year leases.

The park and play-gym: The design of the main park came later in the planning process, and by then, it was much easier for the people to discuss and design the park which would be a centerpiece of the community, built on land which used to be a rice field. They recruited the children from the community to help design the big jungle-gym in the middle of the park. The kids call their big, tent-like play-gym *tentoku*. It was expensive to build, but the city government paid for it. The jungle-gym is so much fun that kids from all over the district still come to play on it. In another part of the park, they designed a croquet yard, with a beautifully constructed wooden shed where the croquet mallets and balls are stored. This gentle sport continues to be popular with Misaki's elderly residents. The people also decided to build a public toilet on the edge of the park for visitors to use, to show them that outsiders are welcome here. As the community leader Fujimoto-san put it, "This is an open community, not a '*no trespassing*' place."

In Japan, there are many rules and bylaws about reconstruction which make it very difficult and expensive to implement any redevelopment project. There is no way around these laws, which everyone has to follow - not only Buraku communities. Roads, for example, must be built to certain widths. Lanes which were two meters wide in the old community had to be widened to four meters in the redevelopment. But how to get the land for those wider roads? Or land for other public spaces? The community had to negotiate to allow the city to "buy" the land for these things from people in the community, whose plots were then made smaller. The community's planner Yoko calculated how much land the people would need for the roads, park, open spaces and public rental housing, based on a standard percentage, which in turn came from certain residential development bylaws. Then, once they knew how much land they would need for these public uses, they could start negotiating with community members, the planners and city government to get the land to accommodate all those uses. It was very delicate and took a long time to work this all out.

But as Fujimoto-san put it, "All this negotiating and all this working together built stronger relationships in our neighborhood. Activities bring people together more than all the talk in the world." It took the people about six months to develop a final plan which everyone could agree to, with housing for 150 families and a range

of community spaces and facilities. The total land area in the Misaki community is seven hectares, which was divided in the redevelopment plan according to this breakdown of uses:

- Private houses (90 units) and rice fields 64% of area
- Public rental housing (60 units) 5.7% of area
- Public spaces 36% of area
- Park and open recreation spaces 9.3% of area
- Pedestrian walkways 4.6% of area
- Roads 16.4% of area

People's lives are whole: Besides the layout and housing, the planning process in Misaki also addressed many other needs and other aspects of people's lives. Special committees of residents were set up to plant trees, to organize boat races on the river and to plan concerts, games, festivals and sports meets. There is an active women's group and a children's group in Misaki, and they print yearly calendars of events, with memorials for people who died during the year. All this was part of the town planning, which was consciously intended to address not only people's physical needs, but to rebuild relations within the community. In the past, the discrimination people had faced had caused a lot of troubles and heart-ache, and this had strained relations between community members - and between the community and other groups in the city. The Misaki residents wanted to rebuild all those relationships as part of their town planning process. A crucial part of that was ensuring that everyone has a role, and everyone could participate in the improvement of the community, so all 150 families could be like one big family.

A new community name: Along with upgrading the community, the people decided it was time to upgrade the name of their settlement. For centuries, the area was called simply *Shitami*, which means "low place." There was a lively discussion about names, and the children in the community were included in it. It was the suggestion of one high-school student to call the new community *Misaki*, which means "beautiful blossom." That was the most popular idea, so the people decided to use it.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

In Misaki, the whole process of planning and building took just three years, which was the limit set by the government. As community leader Fujimoto-san said, "The limited time was very important. If the project dragged on, we'd have to pay for it ourselves. But the fast pace kept up the excitement, so we had no time to get bored." Yoko the architect added, "For professionals like us, our minds may feel restricted by a short time frame, but for the people it's no problem at all. They are ready to go. They have the enthusiasm, and they want the change."

After replanning, the community members "sold" bits and pieces of their land needed for various public uses in the new community (for roads, public park, public rental housing) to the local government, which would then maintain those public spaces. This is a typical arrangement in Japan, and is a key part of the *machi-zukuri* facility. This gives communities money for their non-infrastructure development. The city constructed the roads, drains, park and riverbed redevelopment, using private contractors, and according to the city's norms and standards. But they agreed to follow the layout plans the people of Misaki had designed, and allowed the community people to earn a little income by providing all the unskilled labor. They also persuaded the city to allow the community do do all the landscaping and tree-planting themselves. This kind of community involvement was a first for Fukuoka Prefecture. The bed of the Homan River used to be 15 meters wide, and part of the new embankment plans called for channeling the river into only 6 meters, so the community could get an extra six-meter strip of land for their housing development.

Timeline:

- 1700s: Buraku people first forcibly relocated to area, which was then called *Shitami*, or "low place".
- 1991: City develops plan for redeveloping Misaki, with no input from community. People reject it.
- 1993: People make their own redevelopment plan. Plan is approved by city. Construction starts. People rename their community *Misaki*, which means "beautiful blossom."
- 1996: Construction of housing and infrastructure is finished, people occupy their new community.
- 2003: Team of community leaders from Thailand visits Misaki on a learning exchange trip.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

Land tenure:

In most Buraku areas in Japan, there was no formal land tenure system at all. But after the second world war, the land system in the whole country changed, and people living in Buraku communities like Misaki got individual legal land title to their land, whether it was big or small, and whether it had a house on it or it was a small garden or rice field. There was never any eviction problem - the land was secure. In the newly redeveloped Misaki community, the 90 families who opted to upgrade or rebuild their own houses have individual land title to their plots. The 60 families who opted to move into the public rental housing do not have title to their apartments, but their rent is subsidized and their tenancy is secure.

Government support:

The redevelopment of Misaki involved substantial government involvement and investment, even though the way the project was planned and implemented was very unusual. This is how one official from the Chikushino Municipal Planning Office described the project to some visitors in 2003:

“Before, we practiced only the conventional top-down style of town planning in Chikushino. The first time we met with the Misaki people, we were hesitant, but we kept meeting, and gradually the relationship got more comfortable. For us, this was a new thing, to be working with people who wanted to make their own development plan themselves. But after Misaki, we realized the value of these participatory planning methods, which have now been used in other non-Buraku neighborhoods of Chikushino. In places where planning was done in this way, complaints to the government have almost completely stopped; people feel it is 'their town,' so maintenance is easy and cooperation is very strong. Town planning is not only a set of ideas - it involves money. Our role, after talking to the people in Misaki was to negotiate with the national and prefectural governments to get funding for the project. Also, town-planning specialists like Hatakenaka are needed. So the planner, the Municipality and the people were all important partners in the process in Misaki. You need all three - it is like the three sides of a triangle.”

PROJECT FINANCING

Project costs and who paid for what?

It cost a total of US\$ 7.2 million to redevelop Misaki. That included the cost of constructing roads, infrastructure, the park, the community center, the public rental housing, the design process support and the planner's professional fees. That also included compensation paid to people for their demolished houses and the cost of buying back land for public spaces. There is a system in Japan by which the government "buys" the old houses from the people (structure only - the land is purchased separately), destroys them and pays some money to the people, which helps offset the cost of building their new houses: it's a form of compensation for house reconstruction. Two-thirds of this budget came from the national government and one-third from the local government, most from special Buraku subsidy programs. This figure did not include cost of private houses that were built or upgraded afterwards.

IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

Keeping the human sense at the center: “The environment in Misaki is good now. We have lots of trees and birds and good natural scenery. Other parts of the city are very congested, but here in Misaki it is very comfortable. We are a big pioneer in Japan - every year, 20 to 30 groups come to visit us and see what we have done. But we don't think of our development as finished. Conquering poverty is not just about improving living conditions, but improving education and jobs, finding ways to manage our lives with less money and to take care of our own. This atmosphere of mutual support is very important. We also have elderly and children's groups, tuition classes, organic farming, committees to plan boat races, festivals and sports meets. Activities bring people together more than all the talk in the world! The most important thing in town planning is keeping the human sense at the center.” (*Yasunaga Mitsunori, community leader in Misaki*)

Young people coming back: “There are many old people living in the community now. Of the total 450 people living in Misaki, there are about 100 who are elderly. Why has the number of young people decreased? Misaki used to be a place young people were ashamed to live. They wanted to move away, get out of the area and escape from the stigma that came with living here. But now that we have built our new community, young people are coming back. After our redevelopment, Misaki has become a good place

for young people to bring their friends and family. Everything is proper now." (*Fujimoto-san, community leader in Misaki*)

Development is never finished: "Before, the lanes in this village were very narrow. Only those of us who lived here knew where to go. The houses were crowded together and very dangerous, because fires spread quickly from wooden houses like ours. Now, the situation here is very good. But building our Misaki town is not finished yet. We don't think of our development as finished at all. We will keep on developing things until we all think we are happy to be here. Especially the elderly and the handicapped - all the village people support them. That atmosphere is very important, and we want to develop that sense of mutual help and support. Finally, everyone here feels respected." (*Kunagasan, community member in Misaki*)

Hospitality Misaki style: When the group from Thailand visited Misaki in 2003, they were treated to a gala dinner and cultural night at the end of the visit. During the dinner, they were served several delicacies of the region and of this community, including *motsunabe* (a clear soup made of vegetables grown right here in the gardens of Misaki) and *basashi* (raw horse meat). The elderly women's group performed the traditional *Miyo* fan dance, in beautiful kimonos, on the tatami mats at the end of the room. They also performed a dance called *Takara-fune*, which means "treasure boat." Then one woman in the group sang a haiku poem, "Butterfly in the garden." Another man sang the *Sumo* song. Then the visitors were served saki (rice wine) in big bamboo cups, with hot water. When the time came for everyone to go home, everyone sitting at the round tables was flushed with good food, liquor and goodwill.

Reflections from the community architect:

A great part of the machi-zukuri facility is that it provides funds for communities to chose and hire their own consultant designers to assist in their community planning. Yoko Hatakenaka is an architect-planner who lives and works in the city of Kochi, on the island of Shikoku, and has focused much of his work on participatory community design and planning. In the 1980s, he worked with another Buraku community at Kitagata to do a community redevelopment project which became very well known among Buraku communities, and that's why the people in Misaki asked him to come help them plan their redevelopment project. Here are some words from Yoko about his work with the people of Misaki:

Before Misaki, I worked on three other participatory town planning projects, involving some rebuilding. And there were always lots of complaints. So I hesitated in Misaki, and proposed to the people to do a more limited plan, without totally rebuilding. But the leaders were more ambitious and wanted to do it all. So I asked the leaders to check everyone's opinions - *everyone's!* And they all agreed to change the whole plan.

I worked very hard to help in the design process, but the key point of this success story in Misaki was the very good leadership in the community. The future of this area may be good because there is not just one good leader here but at least ten good leaders. For other planners, the short time frame for planning that was imposed by the government would have been very difficult, but here it was no problem. For we professionals, our minds feel restricted by a short time frame, but for the people, a short time is no problem - they are ready to go, they have the enthusiasm, and they want change. People want to do everything in that short time. One interesting aspect of Misaki was the unusually generous area in the community given to parks and open spaces, which makes the community so open and comfortable and green.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

In November 2003, a group of Thai community leaders and a small team from ACHR visited Misaki and spent a couple of days with the people, to learn about their redevelopment project and to compare notes on the subject of collective, community-driven housing. This case study was written by Thomas Kerr at ACHR, using materials from presentations given and notes taken during that visit to Misaki, with help translating some of the Japanese documents from Shoko Sakuma. For more information about the redevelopment of the Misaki Buraku, or other collective housing projects in Asia, please contact ACHR.

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PHOTOS



The Misaki Buraku has occupied the same seven hectares of land along the Homan River for more than three centuries.



This aerial photo shows the crowded Misaki community, between the river and a canal, before it was redeveloped, in the orange outline.



Before the redevelopment project, the townspeople in Chikushino called the area "Shitami", which means "Low land", since it was on low-lying flood-prone land along the Homan River, well outside the city.



The community experienced serious flooding almost every year, during the rainy season, and the flooding undermined the houses.



Before redevelopment, the houses in Misaki were in poor condition and made of flammable materials which fires a constant danger.



Most of the lanes were too narrow for vehicles, and so fire trucks and ambulances could not get in when there were fires or emergencies.



The photos on this page all come from the 1993 community design workshops in Misaki. Here the community members are voting for option 4, which was "full redevelopment of the area."



With help from the planner, Yoko Hatakenaka, the people divided themselves into ten sub-groups, by area, and then marked on the map the good and bad points of their area.



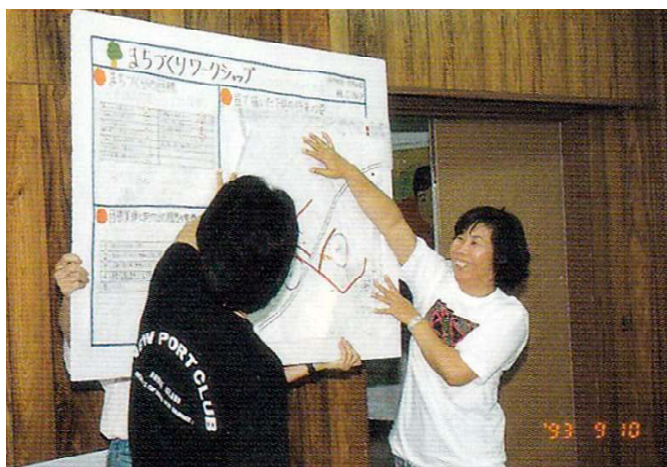
In the process of examining their existing neighborhood and discussing together what they liked about it and what they wanted to change, the people started getting excited.



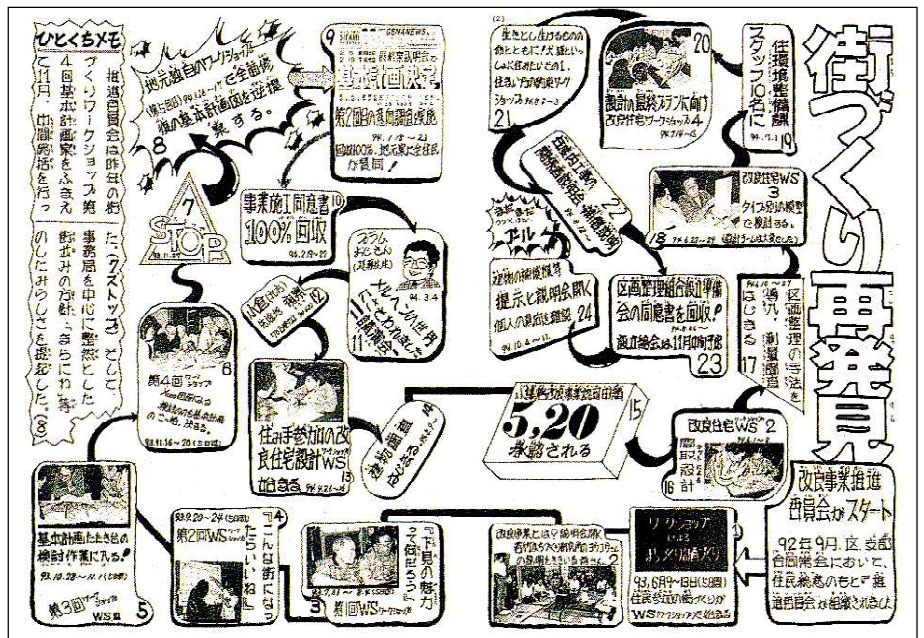
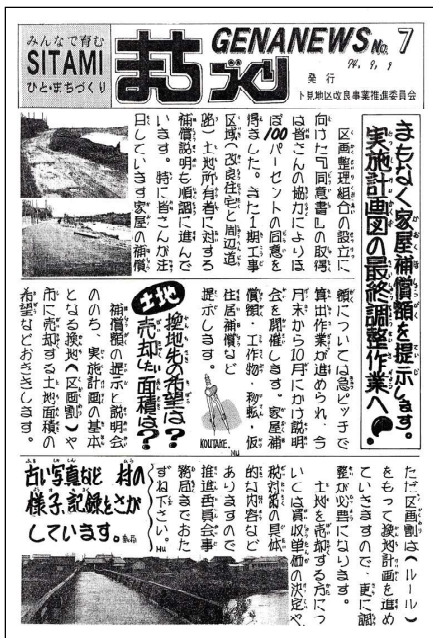
Here the people in one subgroup are discussing how to widen the access roads, but at the same time allow people who wanted to stay in the same place to renovate or rebuild their houses.



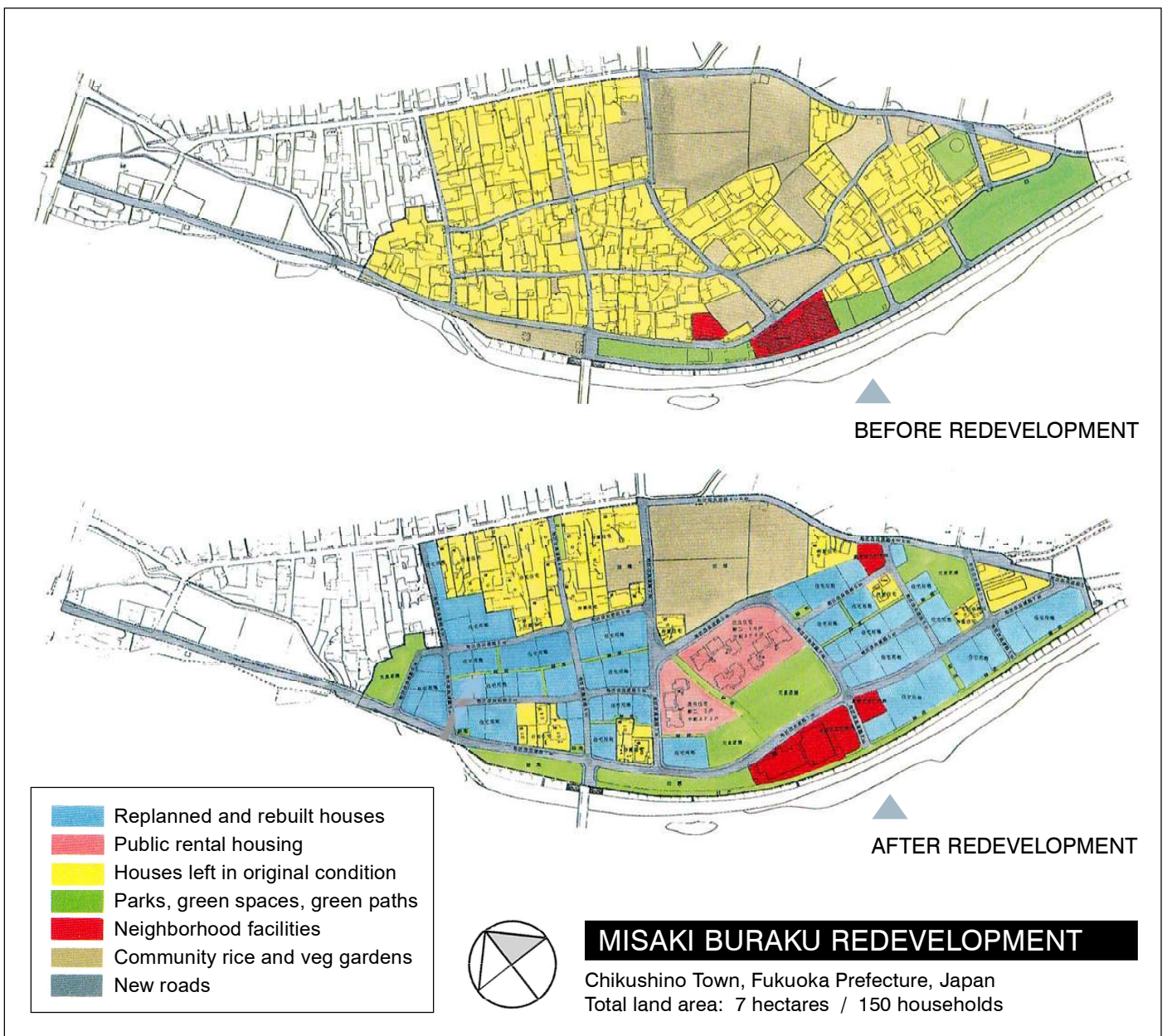
The children of Misaki were also included in the design process. Several workshops were organized especially for them, where they helped to design the parks and playground equipment.



Here the final redevelopment plan - which put together all the ten subgroup plans - is being presented and discussed with the whole community, in one of the later workshops.



Yoko and the planning team prepared regular newsletters to pass on important information about the project and to keep everyone informed of the progress. The two-page spread on the right used the concept of a board game to describe all the steps in the redevelopment process.





These photos were copied from a municipal brochure and are a little grainy, but they show the construction process in Misaki, with old houses being demolished (above left) and new houses being built (above right).



Here the public rental housing is being built in the center of the newly-redeveloped Misaki. The local government hired contractors to build the housing, but following the people's designs.

新しい風のふくまち

Misaki is a town where a new wind blows. The development of this district took three years to plan and build, in collaboration with the government.

美咲マップ

1 えびす公園
Ebisu Park for events & daily relaxation

2 記念公園
Memorial Park with mandarin orange blossoms

3 河畔公園
Riverside Park invites breezes from the Homan River

4 美味公園
Misaki Park has a big jungle-gym that was designed by the children, which they call "Tentoku"

5 美味公園
Misaki Park also has a big open grass-covered area for festivals and ball games

6 みさき団地
Misaki Public rental housing complex with 9 types of units which the residents designed

11 宝満川・土倉橋
Shisima Bridge crosses the Homan River, which used to flood Misaki every year

10 解放センター・体育館・老人憩の家
Buraku Liberation Center and Gymnasium and Elderly Rest House

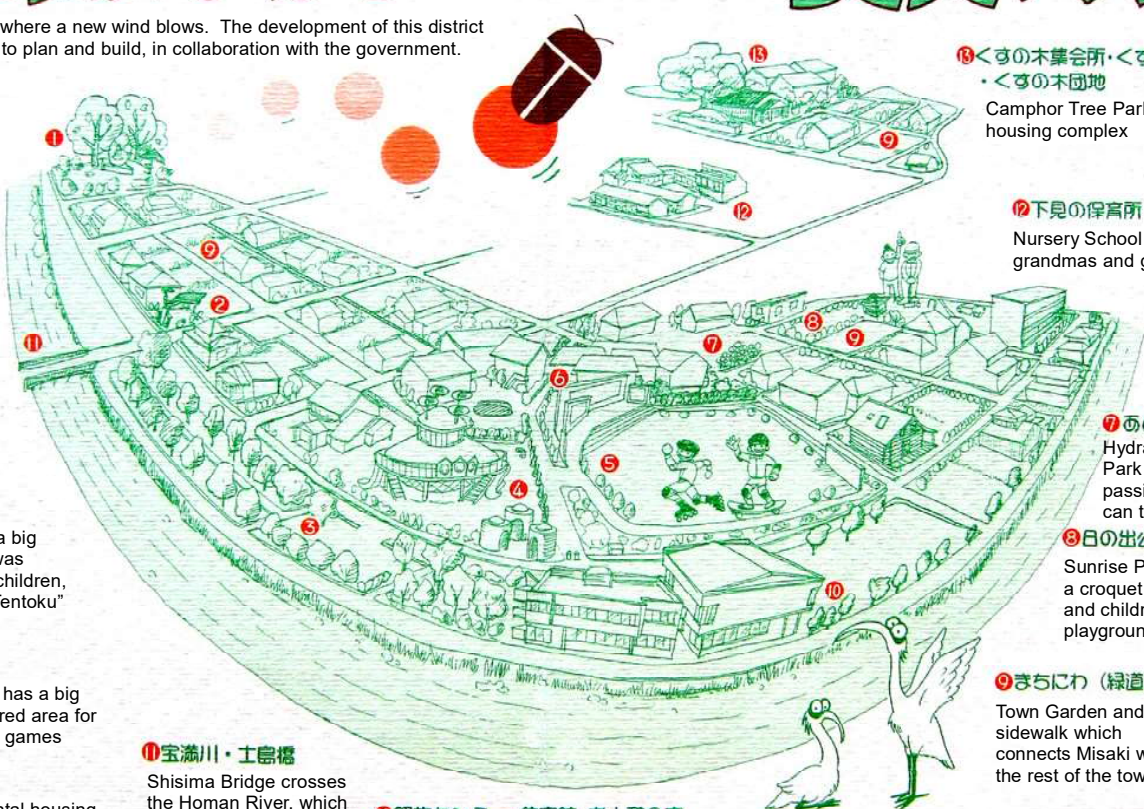
13 くすの木集会所・くすの木公園
・くすの木団地
Camphor Tree Park and housing complex

12 下見の保育所
Nursery School built by grandmas and grandpas

7 あひさい公園
Hydrangea Park where passing people can take rest

8 日の出公園
Sunrise Park with a croquet field and children's playground

9 まちにわ (緑道)
Town Garden and sidewalk which connects Misaki with the rest of the town



美咲まちづくり運営委員会



▲ This is what public rental housing in Japan usually looks like, with rental units stacked up in colorless, utilitarian blocks of various sizes.



▲ Compare that with this public rental housing in Misaki, which was designed to be joyful to live in, with trees and gardens and courtyards.



The public rental housing includes many different unit types, including ground floor units to accommodate disabled people, and has lots of places to sit. They even designed the camelia-themed manhole covers.



▲ Some of the larger rental units, for families, were designed with two floors, and are more like a house than a public rental housing unit.



▲ A shady walkway encircles the whole public rental housing area, and the community people did all the landscaping and tree-planting.



Here is a photo of one of the areas of Misaki where the streets were re-planned, and the house plots were slightly adjusted, to allow families who wanted to build themselves, to reconstruct their own single-family houses.



The single-family houses in Misaki all have entrances on streets, but many landscaped walkways like this one thread through them.



Radishes, leeks and leafy greens are growing in one of the several collectively-managed community vegetable gardens throughout the Misaki community.



The embankment built along the Homan River stopped the flooding and allowed the community to reclaim more land for their housing and other community amenities.



A rainy day walk on the newly-built walkway which winds along the Homan River, on the southern side of the Misaki community.



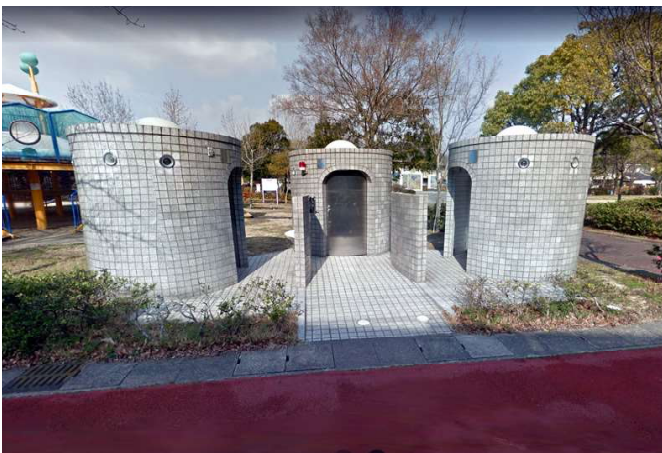
This is the team of community members who go out every day, rain or shine, to prune and sweep and keep everything in Misaki clean and tidy.



The big park in the center of Misaki, in front of the community center, is just one of eight parks that are sprinkled throughout the community, each with its own character and planting theme.



The enormous tent-like play-gym in the park was designed by the children of Misaki, and remains a favorite place for kids from all over the district.



The people also decided to build a public toilet on the edge of the park for visitors, to show them that outsiders are welcome in Misaki. As Fujimoto-san put it, "This is an open community, not a 'no-tresspassing' place."



That's the Buraku Liberation Center (which functions as a community center), with the gymnasium and elderly center just behind.



The Misaki community members are consciously keeping the human sense at the center of their redevelopment. Here the elderly women's group performs the traditional "Miyō" fan dance for some visitors from Thailand.



Here some of the children of Misaki are posing with visiting friends from Thailand in their community's very popular gymnasium.