

Fragmentation and Friction as Urban Threats: The Post-1956 City

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Which issues addressed by Harvard's First Urban Design Conference fifty years ago continue to be significant today, and what does their continued significance tell us about our present circumstances?

Mine is the point of view of someone born, raised, and practicing architecture in Tokyo. At the same time, neither I nor any regional society or state today can escape the effects of globalization on politics, economy, and lifestyle. This flow has led to newly reciprocal relationships. This is an age when the presence of over a hundred sushi bars in Manhattan or brisk sales of Spanish Colonial style houses in Tokyo suburbs raise few eyebrows. Therefore, in any discussion of social and infrastructural conditions in Tokyo, an understanding of their significance can only be arrived at by comparing and analyzing similar phenomena in metropolises in the United States, Europe, and Asia. We are entering a time when having at least two points of view—regional and global—is becoming as indispensable to urban studies as it is to cultural anthropology.

I would like to quote, by way of introduction, from the preface of *Incomplete Cities* by Yosuke Hirayama, a Japanese urbanist. Hirayama identifies a condition common to contemporary cities from an analysis of entirely separate processes of reconstruction experienced by three cities after complete or partial destruction: Kobe after the 1995 earth-