Preliminary Results

The initial survey of source material shows highly heterogeneous temporalities. The most easily traced macrostructures of land-reclamation – outside the existing urban pattern – and traffic infrastructure – within the existing pattern – show a slow but persistent development over a span of more than a century in which significant occurrences are clearly marked by publications and public attention. The same high public attention is on the construction of skyscrapers and landmarks, resulting in text and images which will allow for tracing the temporalities of skyscraper districts and the shift in skyline(s). The same is possible for signature buildings like Nakagin Capsule Tower and Tsukiji Market. Two significant parts of the built urban environments are methodologically more challenging: the residential neighborhoods and the small-to-medium-scale business districts. Despite the limited durability of the wooden houses, the neighborhoods show the highest level of inertia, while the highest level of transformation seems to affect certain business districts.

After relating the evidence on the built environment to narrative sources, I expect to find an intermingled discourse of contradicting perceptions and explanations in regard to the persistence of built environment. This should point towards the argumentation strategies for and against urban innovation and help improving development strategies that integrate citizens’ needs for cultural stability.