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to build a rapid transit link to Marin County. In 1971 the district added bus and ferry services subsidized by bridge tolls. By 1979, however, bus and ferry service increased both capital and operating costs and pushed the district into the red. Dyble argues that the district was defensive and ‘stubbornly resistant’ to reform. It also has a ‘legacy of disregard to safety and maintenance’. She speaks of a bridge district ‘culture’ devoted to defending the interests of the district rather than representing the interests of the public. She concludes that special districts ‘undermine democracy’ because they avoid public scrutiny and accountability. However, the extent that the GGBHD, as a special district, was more corrupt or self-interested than any other form of government is not clear. The GGBHD was not alone in defending its autonomy. Dyble shows that local political entities, who desired to defend home rule, helped the GGBHD defeat the regional transit district. The GGBHD also found allies in local officials and other special districts that favoured local control and decentralized authority over regional government. Because Dyble covers the history of the bridge district and analyses the nature of special districts more generally, political scientists and urban historians will find the book of interest. This is a fine history of the bridge district and as such it represents one example of how a special district operates. However, it is not clear how unique the GGBHD was and what its history says about special districts more generally.

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**Eric Mumford**, *Defining Urban Design. CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline, 1937–69*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009. 272pp. 86 b/w illustrations, 14 colour images. Bibliography. £35.00. doi:10.1017/S0963926810000258

Eric Mumford’s book examines the way in which a number of members of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), such as Walter Gropius, Siegfried Giedion, Josep Lluís Sert, Louis Kahn, George Holmes Perkins, William Wurster and others, have been involved in the articulation of urban design issues and subsequent formulation of the discipline of urban design. Mumford stakes his claim further by stating that this Harvard-centred Urban Design group was the originator of the discipline during the crucial period after World War II from the 1940s to the 1960s.

Architectural history and theory have included the field of discourse and practice in university departments and on building projects in the United States and around the world. However, according to Eric Mumford, the fact that this knowledge has its roots within the urbanism of CIAM is less well understood – a fact that the author aims to rectify. This is a worthy project as the exact origins of urban design have been blurred and simplified. Eric Mumford challenges another reductionist claim – the assumption that modern urbanism could be relegated to the removal of historical urban quarters in favour of dysfunctional housing blocks. Through the presentation of series of documented events of the time, the author demonstrates that CIAM goals were in reality deeply concerned with the quality of life in cities. Eric Mumford explains that members’ activities were instrumental in forming the discourse of urban design that includes care for the neighbourhoods and the

city. He demonstrates this point by scrupulously referring to a range of historical documents. Moreover, Mumford makes a case that it was the erasure and rejection of these ambitions by politicians, developers and bureaucrats that had led to the regrettable results of failed architecture, unsuccessful urban schemes and pitiful urban sprawls. He aims to put the record straight by presenting the full scope of Modernist urban design as debated, designed and argued.

How does the author attend to this task? *Defining Urban Design* is a well-researched book, particularly within the American architectural context, that will be of great assistance to many graduate students. However, the flavour of this volume brings the realization that urban design has been a somewhat grey discipline dominated by solemn-looking men. Despite the exhaustiveness of references and the careful divisions into periods, the missing ingredients are the overall 'colours' of thinking processes and the radical depth of urban design debates. They are present, but flattened, when we expect them to be three-dimensional. For example, the depth of the affiliation between the ideas of urban design on one hand, and the philosophy of life and its attitudes towards modern existence on the other, does not entirely come through. Eric Mumford addresses the point about social consciousness in the case of Josep Lluís Sert by stating that the Catalan émigré's realized projects do not convey the extent of the social ideals that were central to his vision. The author argues that Sert's main urban design elements, such as compact housing, pedestrian units of neighbourhood organization, greenway systems and enclosed civic plazas, never appear all together in any of his schemes, owing to external factors. This point is rightly argued, but Mumford could have gone further in arguing about this aspect of social consciousness.

During the period after World War II and culminating in the early 1960s, existentialist ideas and positions became implicitly dominant in many countries as ways of reasserting the importance of human individuality and freedom. Philosophers such as Sartre, de Beauvoir, Unamuno and Camus were the exponents of a sentiment that existed in a diffused form amongst the many who had experienced the perils of war and authoritarian regimes. Architects were no exceptions – urban design ideas were suspended between the growing assertion of the individual and the wider concerns for the society. This might have been more strongly expressed in Europe, but it was felt in the USA, too. In this context, I recall the seminar series on late CIAM held at the AA Graduate School in the 1980s–1990s chaired by Roy Landau, the founder of the AA postgraduate education, who was not a stranger to the US context as he taught regularly at MIT, at the Rhode Island School of Design and at the University of Pennsylvania (from the 1960s to the 1990s). Landau's CIAM seminar guests included personalities such as Peter and Alison Smithson and Cadbury Brown. The most astounding memory from these sessions was the insight into how deeply held were the beliefs of the protagonists of urban debates in the 1950s and 1960s. The individual positions were vigorously defended as the veterans of Modernism instantly joined in deliberations about Modernism. Architects Christopher Dean, Cedric Price and the structural engineer Frank Newby were present, adding their voices and the missing details with precision and zest. A similar culture existed in the urban debates in Brazil when the new capital had been built. Typically, politics was debated in relation to philosophy, architecture and the aesthetics. These discussions involving Lucio Costa were not unlike the ones held around Mart Stam's radical plans for the

rebuilding of post-war Dresden. Stam advocated a modern planning and structure for the heavily destroyed city that was ultimately rejected by most of the citizens.

The character of the late CIAM and 1940s–1960s urban design debates unravels unresolved issues that often resulted from the lack of a clearly shared language. Indeed it is on the basis of this miscommunication that the subsequent architectural discourse evolved. This we are able to claim from today's point of view that includes 40 years of articulation of the language now referred to as architectural theory. However, the shared promulgations between 1937 and 1969 were less about sophisticated arguments and theorized speeches, and more about fervent lines of reasoning and deeply held beliefs about the society. The implicit philosophy was that there should be a transparency of existence, which was to be projected in urban design and was to transpire into future urban life. In the aftermath of the World War II this would have been perceived as central. The people involved saw themselves as individuals with the responsibility of giving their own lives a meaning that was to be lived passionately and sincerely, in spite of many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity or alienation. Perhaps even historians of this period should allow themselves some air.

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**Amy Helen Bell**, *London Was Ours: Diaries and Memoirs of the London Blitz*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008. x + 278pp. Bibliography. £52.50 hbk.

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*London Was Ours* is an original, insightful and engagingly written study of first-hand accounts of the London Blitz. Amy Helen Bell fuses social and cultural history, attending both to experiences of the Blitz – uncovered from a very wide range of diaries and letters – and to the ways in which Londoners narrated these experiences, both at the time and in subsequent, autobiographical writings. In so doing, she makes an important addition to the historiography of the 'The People's War' and a compelling contribution to the history of twentieth-century London.

War-time diarists – acutely conscious of their roles as historical witnesses – deployed highly visual metaphors to capture the danger, contingency and 'terrible beauty' of the Blitz. More prosaically, in their accounts of the raids themselves, rationing, war work and civil defence, Londoners described the social inequalities that persisted beneath idealized notions of civilian unity. As Bell forcefully demonstrates, first-hand accounts tended to depict solidarity 'within social classes, not between them'. War work in London centred on 'the organization and maintenance of the city', itself a powerful symbol of British fortitude. Yet Bell's sources reveal the complexity of individual motivations. Patriotic sentiment was always entwined with personal needs and desires: for money, distraction, company and excitement. Evacuation and public shelters made family life increasingly visible during war-time. Here, too, pre-war antagonisms persisted, not least in the moralistic scrutiny of the mothers of the urban poor by their better-heeled counterparts. Within families, existing tensions were exacerbated by the strains of war and, children's voyeuristic excitement notwithstanding, we see glimpses in Bell's work of the heightened vulnerability of both children and the elderly.