

more heavily than the “right” to function and safety. These individual essays deliver on Cupers’s promise in the introduction to provide alternative perspectives from which to view buildings and urban spaces previously ignored by or attributed solely to architects. Still, neither the reasons for the choices of cases nor the relationships among the cases are clear. This leaves the reader adrift, unable to understand each chapter’s role in the book’s overall critical intervention.

In addition, the collection focuses theoretically and geographically on the Euro-American context. This emphasis, Cupers argues, arose because “the notion of the user in architecture is contingent upon the ambiguity between citizenship and consumerism—a condition that became especially paradigmatic in the economies of the postwar decades in Europe and North America” (7). It nonetheless continues a bias exhibited in many current revisionist accounts of architectural history. Though claiming polyvalence, they often keep one toe in established narratives with European modernism as the explicit or implicit origin point. To its credit, the collection does not completely avoid the Global South. When it does explore non-Western contexts, however, it does so in relation to European ideals and models. For example, Sheila Crane beautifully illustrates modernist ethnographic accounts of the *bidonvilles* of colonial Algeria and the subsequent imaginations brought to bear on immigrant spaces in France in the 1980s (chapter 6). Yet, because many scholars interested in the modernist project have revisited the France–North Africa axis in the past two decades, it has become almost a diagram of power and difference that further cements France’s central position in the production of architectural meaning.⁴

The essays in this volume are unquestionably interesting and significant contributions. Still, the collection as a whole misses an opportunity to reflect on the ultimate purpose of historical inquiry. It teeters between reinforcing an idea of historical progress (despite honorable aims) and putting forth a view of history as the mere agglomeration of ever more sites and stories left to individual interpretation. The unresolved nature of this tension keeps the collection entangled with traditional Euro- and architect-centric perspectives. Just as CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture

Moderne) architects slotted ethnographic accounts into a predetermined grid, contemporary historians tend to generate novel theoretical framing and sites and then align them with existing structures of professional knowledge. A true alternative must do more than add sociological studies and consumer advocacy to the list of objects of architectural expertise. Similarly, the simple accretion of novel historical cases and theoretical positions does not produce a relational history. Instead, scholars must challenge themselves to pursue complexity without forfeiting those bigger stories that might provide contemporary designers, untethered from place and history, new grounds for self-reflection and future development.

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Notes

1. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault, eds., *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2000); Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities* (London: Routledge, 2010).
2. Jonathan Hill, ed., *Architecture: The Subject Is Matter* (London: Routledge, 2014).
3. Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).
4. Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989); Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern: The Post-war Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2005); Sheila Crane, *Mediterranean Crossroads: Marseille and Modern Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

Gregory L. Heller

Ed Bacon: Planning, Politics, and the Building of Modern Philadelphia

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 320 pp., 25 b/w illus. \$39.95, ISBN 9780812244908

Elihu Rubin

Insuring the City: The Prudential Center and the Postwar Urban Landscape

New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012, 256 pp., 50 b/w illus. \$30.00, ISBN 9780300170184

On 9–10 April 1956, the Harvard Graduate School of Design convened a landmark conference on urban design, the intention of which was “to be exploratory, not didactic, and to try to find a common basis for the joint work of the Architect, the Landscape Architect and the City Planner in the field of Urban Design. In the minds of its sponsors, Urban Design is wider than the scope of these three professions, though all have vital contributions to make.”¹ Many argue that this convocation initiated urban design as a discipline distinct from both architecture and planning and that the conference solidified the notion that urban design is a radically interdisciplinary field in which foregrounding public needs takes precedence over issues of beauty and scale.

One invitee to that conference was the executive director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Edmund N. Bacon, whose plangent call for a more humanistic and holistic approach to urban design underscored the need for a new specialization: “Planners have traditionally considered the design of physical structures as detail. Administrators almost invariably think in terms of specific projects and procedures rather than the underlying correlative relationships. What we need is the architect-planner-administrator, and if we ever get it we will then really have an urban designer.”² Bacon’s prescient plea for comprehensive interpersonal cooperation in the success of urban renewal was consistent with the views of others at the conference, but Bacon remained isolated in the larger context of American postwar urban policy. He had a history of iconoclasm but also of advocating for community participation as a way of supplementing the work of professional planners with input from members of the public.³ He instinctively understood not only that people make cities but also that cities make people.

As simple as that formulation may be, it is perhaps the most fitting way to describe the uneasy, fractious, yet ultimately symbiotic relationship between human beings and their urban environments. Comprising many competing, conflicting, and contradictory forces, cities are never singular or monolithic; rather, they are constantly evolving networks of actors, actions, and external forces that defy categorization.

Writers on urbanism can be expected, then, to deploy various strategies of reading cities: by examining a single person's efforts, by exploring a teleological evolution during a chosen historical period, or by focusing on an external set of factors that give shape to a thesis about a city's development. We will get a holistic view only if we cast widely and deeply, and even then urbanity's mercurial nature will resist complete and totalizing knowledge.

Recent scholars on the history of architecture and urbanism, picking up on what we might call a more agonistic form of historical inquiry, have made a collective shift away from the monographic toward the systemic—a multilateral attempt at repudiating the master-builder scenario and replacing it with examinations of core systems of production and consumption and of ecologies of urban inhabitation. Several salient examples would be Reinhold Martin's *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*, John Harwood's *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945–1976*, Eyal Weizman's *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, and Neil Brenner's edited volume *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*.⁴ These books represent attempts to uncover different discursive logics at play in architectural and urban affairs, specifically ones motivated by fluctuating economic values, coercive and volatile political situations, and geopolitical shifts in governmentality and territoriality. The critical distance between the two books under review here represents the range of movement between these two modes of research.

Most people who are familiar with Edmund Bacon probably know him through his singular and unforgettable appearance in Nathaniel Kahn's 2003 film about his father, Louis Kahn, titled *My Architect*. In the film, the younger Kahn takes a walk around Philadelphia with an elderly Bacon (who would die two years after the film's release at age ninety-five), whose vitriol and obstinacy about his own opinions (and about the wrongheadedness of Louis Kahn's) remained undiminished more than fifty years after the two feuded over the redevelopment of Penn Center. According to his preface in *Ed Bacon: Planning, Politics, and the Building of Modern*

Philadelphia, Gregory Heller met Bacon when Heller, as a Wesleyan undergraduate, requested an audience with the austere figure in anticipation of writing his senior thesis on city planning. Bacon seized upon the young man's eagerness and conscripted him into assisting with the writing of his memoir, a position that had already been occupied and abandoned by a legion of young, evidently less patient, scholars.

The volume currently under review, which is the result of the many hours Heller spent in Bacon's company, is less a biography, memoir, or critical analysis of Bacon's significant career as an urban planner than it is a sturdy and dutiful chronology of Bacon's professional life. Heller devotes extended sections to Bacon's work in Flint, Michigan; to his efforts at revitalizing Philadelphia's City Center; to his rehabilitation of the neighborhood now known as Society Hill (but known as the "Bloody Fifth Ward" prior to Bacon's ministrations on the conflicted neighborhood's behalf); and to his magnum opus, 1967's *Design of Cities*.⁵

Bacon had exchanges, debates, friendships, affiliations, and feuds with a number of fascinating contemporaries, including (most famously) Louis Kahn, Italian architect and critic Bruno Zevi, the Greek futurist and planner Constantinos Doxiadis, housing advocate Catherine Bauer, and historian Lewis Mumford. Heller resists the temptation to delve too deeply into these associations—clearly wishing to use Bacon's own accomplishments as the support for his text—and as a result a reader might experience some regret. By keeping the focus exclusively on Bacon, Heller weighs in only briefly on the fascinating range of influences and encounters in which his protagonist engaged, from his days as one of the first students at the renowned Cranbrook Academy, where he studied under Eliel Saarinen and attended a lecture by Le Corbusier, to his famously defiant skateboard ride in protest of then-mayor John F. Street's ban on skating in Philadelphia's LOVE Park.

Those previously familiar with Bacon and his reputation as a major figure in the formation of modern-day Philadelphia will be surprised at how often he conceded defeat or exhausted his patience with projects, undoubtedly because he knew that the might of even one charismatic and

dedicated individual was no match for the power, corruption, and lies of economic and political machinery. Bacon had thechutzpah and the outsized personality of legendary figures such as Robert Moses, but as Heller's book makes clear, he lacked the foothold in Philadelphia's political machine required to realize projects of near-impossible scope and depth, despite his playing a role for decades in nearly every major planning decision in Philadelphia.

Departing from Heller's "person of singular vision" framework in order to scrutinize an even more crowded choreography of urban renewal, Elihu Rubin's gambit in *Insuring the City* relies on an inquiry into the fitful and protracted development of Boston's Prudential Center. The private Prudential Insurance Company sought to insert itself into the postwar landscape of Boston through a unique and convoluted public-private partnership, and the details of that struggle reveal a great deal about how, in the United States of the 1950s and 1960s, city, state, and federal funds conjoined uneasily with private capital investment as means of countering the anxieties of many planners in the know who were, as Rubin writes, "fearful ... that American cities were dying" (26).

The insurance industry makes a wonderful analogical framework through which to view the convalescence of American urban landscapes, and Rubin capitalizes on this insight. Just as an insurance company might hedge its bets against payouts through a reliance on the salubrity of a majority of its policyholders, so does a city's urban planning department assume that options chosen on behalf of the greatest number of citizens will find relatively few dissenters, resulting in a situation that presumably works for all. In each case, economics and political maneuvering are at the heart of decision making, and in urban planning, as Rubin writes, "a balance had to be struck between the planner's vision and what the real estate developers would finance" (12). Thus both the municipality and the financier (in this case Boston and Prudential Insurance, respectively) acted as if Prudential's investment in the urban context would benefit both corporate and private interests, an ideal convergence that rarely, if ever, manifests an ideal outcome.

Key figures make appearances, such as the chairman of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, William F. Callahan (who saw the marriage of the newly constructed Mass Pike as part and parcel of the Prudential Center's objectives for the city's economic recovery), and Charles Luckman, head of the firm that designed the Prudential Tower and former Lever Brothers president (not to mention the man responsible for commissioning SOM's Gordon Bunschaft to design the company's iconic Park Avenue headquarters), but their roles remain relegated to supporting status. Rubin never strays from the larger question of the turbulent public-private alliance that brought "the Pru" into existence in the first place. The denouement, as he calls his penultimate section, reveals that in 1998, Prudential sold the property to a real estate investment trust called Boston Properties for a rumored \$700 million. The sale coincided with Prudential's shift from a customer-owned corporation to a joint-stock company—in other words, from a collective and cooperative model to a corporate one.

We learn something of no small significance here: as Prudential began to corporatize its business model, the machinations signaled a move away from what might with some generosity be classed as a participatory or inclusive framework. The company's earlier efforts at embodying a benevolent presence in the heart of Boston began to unravel. Rubin masterfully and captivantly spins the story of Prudential's own internal struggles to act as an agent of urban renewal while at the same time staying true to the company's bottom line. The tale is rife with conflict, as is every urban context consistently coping with its internal tensions, and concludes with the opening of Luckman's project in 1964, with a short final chapter devoted to the Pru's legacy.

Rubin remains skeptical of the project's success throughout his volume, and he uses the legacy chapter to discuss briefly some of the ameliorative efforts in the following decades, including one by Carr, Lynch, Hack, and Sandell in the 1980s that sought to reconcile the rift between the Back Bay and the South End that the Massachusetts Turnpike (so critical to the initial plan) had brought about. That firm was founded in 1977 by Kevin Lynch, then an urban planning professor at MIT, whose ideas about urban form were formulated largely

through deep analysis of downtown Boston. His absence from Rubin's book is surprising given his long engagement not only with the city but also with evaluating the best way to balance democratic decision making among administrative, developmental, and citizen interests.

In his seminal 1958 text "A Theory of Urban Form," written with British town planner Lloyd Rodwin, Lynch asked the following question as a provocation to the formulaic aspirations of his fellow planners: "Where has there been any systematic evaluation of the possible range of urban forms in relation to the objectives men might have?"⁶ The unsettling truth is that we will never have a comprehensive index of such a broad range; thus the future appearance of many more studies like the ones reviewed here is guaranteed.

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Notes

1. Quoted in a "condensed report" on the Harvard conference published as "Urban Design," *Progressive Architecture* 37, no. 8 (Aug. 1956), 97.
2. *Ibid.*, 109.
3. The earliest example that Gregory L. Heller gives in *Ed Bacon* concerns Bacon's work in Flint, Michigan, where, in 1936, he innovated a new form of study for downtown traffic patterns by distributing thousands of index cards to citizens "to survey members of the public on how they moved about the city" (27).
4. Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005); John Harwood, *The Interface: IBM and the Transformation of Corporate Design, 1945–1976* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2012); Neil Brenner, ed., *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2014).
5. Edmund N. Bacon, *Design of Cities* (New York: Viking Press, 1967).
6. Kevin Lynch and Lloyd Rodwin, "A Theory of Urban Form," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 24, no. 4 (1958), 201.

Renata Hejduk and Jim Williamson, eds.

The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Reader

New York: Routledge, 2011, 385 pp., 16 color and 45 b/w illus. \$165 (cloth), ISBN 9780415780803; \$49.95 (paper), ISBN 9780415780810

For at least four decades now, historians have been busy demythologizing modernism. It continues to be a fruitful area of research, as there is no shortage of ways in which any monolithic view of modernism can show itself to be problematic. Among relatively recent aspects of such work are the myriad appearances of religious topics in a period for which increasing secularization, if not widespread hostility to religion, is readily presumed to be coterminous with, if not constitutive of, modernity. There are reasons behind such presumptions, for a central (even if not defining) condition of modernity is surely an increasing critique of religion as traditionally conceived. Whether this critique is construed and experienced as the death of God (as Friedrich Nietzsche had it), the falling apart of Christendom (as Christianity's institutional metanarrative), Christianity's own theological demythologization, or just the waning of religious authority amid splintering denominational claims, there are reasons enough not to be surprised that religion has been insufficiently addressed in the scholarship of modern architecture.

The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture is a welcome addition to this developing reappraisal of twentieth-century architecture. As an anthology comprising fifty separate chapters, including a general introduction and essays from a broad array of sources, it offers a wonderfully diverse set of entry points into the topic. Among the authors are architects, historians, theorists, critics, philosophers, a theologian, and a poet. The subjects presented include "canonical" figures in modern architecture; varieties of unconventional religious practice; theological and liturgical reflections on modern religious architecture; religious themes as present in nonreligious buildings; architecturally relevant concepts from religious studies; interpretive methods shared by scholars of religion and architecture, such as phenomenology; and many permutations of such common motifs as "sacred" and "spirit." For thirty-nine of the fifty chapters, dates of authorship range from 1909 to 2006; the remaining eleven were written expressly for the present publication.

The resulting collection raises many rich possibilities for the reader, especially