

Then, too, there is that maxim among seasoned urban designers, “To envision takes talent, to implement takes genius.”

The book’s first part explores the circumstances that led to the conceptualization of an urban design discipline at mid-twentieth century. It begins with excerpts from the transcripts of the 1956 Harvard conference that were published in *Progressive Architecture*. That conference included a remarkable group of participants, and partially because of their stature, the conference is generally acknowledged as providing the impetus for a broader pursuit of urban design and ultimately for establishing Harvard’s urban design program, the first of its kind.

Positioning the conference at its complicated historic moment, Eric Mumford traces the discussions about the modern city when the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne) movement began to be splintered by reformist groups such as Team 10, and when José Luis Sert struggled to reunite the Modern Movement under the umbrella of urbanism and by shifting the center of discourse from Europe to America.<sup>6</sup> Richard Marshall, in reviewing the nine Harvard urban design conferences that followed the first in 1956, seems bemused by the relatively simplistic understanding of cities at these conferences and the vagueness of many of the discussions, yet he is energized by the dedication exhibited during these conferences to the subject of urbanism and the value of continuing to have such conversations. From his vantage point in Shanghai, he senses a need to shift the discourse on urbanism again, this time to a rapidly and radically urbanizing Asia.

The second group of essays presents the views of three distinguished architects/planners, Denise Scott Brown, Fumihiko Maki, and Jonathan Barnett, whose careers span much of the half century since the 1956 conference, and who through their work have wisely observed and helped guide the evolution of urban design thinking internationally. Perhaps due to their age and experience, social issues (the responsibility of design to foster human comfort and well-being, which was so important to the early Modern Movement) imbue their thoughts still in a way that a younger generation seems less comfortable articulating so directly. Scott Brown revives the call for greater interaction among planners and architects, and she insists that both must interact far more with social scientists and others who have insight into human nature and needs. Maki, alone among the essayists