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## Becoming Jane Jacobs First Draft 2009

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# **Jane Jacobs, American Architectural Criticism and Urban Design Theory, 1935-1965**

**Peter L. Laurence**

A DISSERTATION

in

Architectural History and Theory

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

2009

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Jane Jacobs, American Architectural Criticism and Urban Design Theory, 1935-1965

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Peter L. Laurence

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## ABSTRACT

### JANE JACOBS, AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM AND URBAN DESIGN THEORY, 1935-1965

Peter L. Laurence

David E. Leatherbarrow

Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), did not like the term “urban design” and did not describe herself as an architectural critic, but contributed significantly to the development of American architectural criticism and the new field of urban design. Although relatively little is known about Jacobs’ intellectual development, her influences, and her early writing career, before *Death and Life* was published, Jacobs was already among the most influential critics of urban renewal in the country. The book was a culmination of many years of studying and writing about the city; of working as a journalist and critic for *Architectural Forum*, for which she wrote many un-bylined articles about the progress of urban redevelopment; and of involvement in the emerging academic field of urban design. Although she is generally known as an independent and leading critic of urban renewal, Jacobs initially idealized the possibilities of city planning and redevelopment. Meanwhile, both her criticism of city planning theory and practice and her ideas for alternative approaches were significantly influenced by others, including *Forum’s* editor Douglas Haskell, a longtime advocate of rigorous American architectural criticism, as well as Ed Bacon, Catherine Bauer, Louis Kahn, and Lewis Mumford. Jacobs’ ideas about the city and its planning were also shaped by particular interests in urban

geography, the life sciences, and social institutions from early in her career, and it was in bringing these influences together that she developed an understanding of what made a good city and the possibilities and limits of its planning and design. A better understanding of her early work suggests that although Jacobs did not like the term “urban design,” and later wrote that a city cannot be a work of art, she believed in a shared practice of making cities that could serve the diverse plans and desires of their many inhabitants.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Jane Jacobs and American Architectural Criticism and Urban Design Theory, 1935-1965

*This book is neither a retelling in new form of things already said, nor an expansion and enlargement of previously worked out basic ground, but it is an attempt to make what amounts to a different system of thought about the great city.* Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Rockefeller Foundation, 1959

Jane Jacobs was born Jane Isabel Butzner on May 4, 1916 in Dunmore, a streetcar suburb of Scranton, Pennsylvania, to a doctor and a nurse who had met in Philadelphia. She died a Canadian citizen, the wife of an architect and the mother of three children, on April 25, 2006, in Toronto, where her family emigrated in 1968 and where they lived in an urban neighborhood called The Annex, similar to the one in which she had grown up. From 1934, when she was eighteen, until moving to Toronto, Jacobs lived and worked in various neighborhoods of New York City, where she moved to pursue a career as a writer and “find her fortune.”<sup>1</sup> Uninterested in pursuing a formal education, Jacobs had worked at a Scranton newspaper as a reporter following graduation from high school, but, unable to find similar work in New York during the Great Depression, she took work as a stenographer and secretary for a financial writer and manufacturing businesses in Manhattan, and, on the side, she wrote freelance articles for magazines and newspapers, while living with her sister in Brooklyn and Greenwich Village. In the late 1930s, Jacobs completed two years of coursework at Columbia University, and in 1941, Columbia University Press published her edited work *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions*

*of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, with Explanatory Argument*, a book that she dedicated “To 1712 Monroe Avenue,” her Scranton family home. In the ‘40s and early 1950s, Jacobs worked as writer and associate editor for *The Iron Age*, an industry trade magazine, and as a writer, editor, and bureau chief for *Amerika Illustrated*, an Office of War Information and State Department publication. When *Amerika*’s offices were moved to Washington, D.C., in the wake of McCarthy era inquiries, of which Jacobs herself was a target, she decided against seeking work with the journal *Natural History* (a publication of the American Museum of Natural History), and took a position as associate editor *Architectural Forum* in 1952. After working on some one hundred issues, in 1958, Jacobs took a leave of absence from *Architectural Forum* to write her “first” book, or first authored work, published in 1961 as *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (hereafter *Death and Life*), which she dedicated “To New York City.”

In later years, Jacobs would publish other books on cities, economies, and civilization. Her next three books—*The Economy of Cities* (1969); *The Question of Separatism: Quebec and the Struggle over Sovereignty* (1980); and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (1984)—focused on cities and their larger cultural and financial economies. The two books that followed, Socratic dialogues that focused on economics, broadly conceived, and civilization, were *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (1992), which she dedicated “To 1712 Monroe Avenue, 555 Hudson Street, and 69 Albany Avenue,” her homes in Scranton, Greenwich Village, and Toronto, and *The Nature of Economies* (2000). Her last book, *Dark Age Ahead* (2004), part memoir, considered the future of North American civilization in light of her concerns for community and the built environment, education, science, and other cultural conditions.

The recurrent topics and themes found in Jacobs' later books included ecologies and complex systems; scientific thought and method; discrepancies between intellectual representations of the world (i.e., theory) and how systems could be understood to work in the "real" world through rigorous observation; the emergence of intellectual and cultural innovations; and the significance of cities to economies and cultures. Jacobs was already exploring these interests in the first half of her career, during her early years as a writer living in New York, and they continued to develop in her writing and thinking as she moved from journalism to authorship with the writing of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* when she was forty-five. Thus while, in the overarching narrative arc of her work Jacobs began by examining the workings of parts of cities and concluded her lifework in reflecting on the course of whole civilizations, the origins of these key themes of her later thinking can be found in the largely unknown work of her first three decades of writing.

Jacobs' first book was also her greatest. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* is widely considered one of the most notable books ever written on cities. While never a "best-seller," it has been translated into numerous languages and has remained in print since its first edition. Soon after publication reviewers predicted that the book would become canonical and a "history-changing" classic, and it has since been cited in innumerable articles and books concerned with cities and city life in the academic and popular press, in the U.S. and abroad, and is required reading for studies in architecture, city planning, urban studies, and related fields. In 1992, the book was republished in a Modern Library edition, indicating its status as a work as literature as well as expertise.

Despite the book's impact, little has been known about its origins, influences, development, and pre-history. By attacking well-known public figures like Robert Moses, established schools of thought in the fields of architecture and city planning, and the enormous federal and local Urban Renewal regimes that had emerged out of the U.S. Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, the book threw gasoline on the furious controversies surrounding slum clearance and urban renewal. Fanning the flames, and creating smoke that obscured a long period of reading, observation, contemplation, and writing, was Jacobs' activism, which began in earnest immediately following the completion of her manuscript in early 1961. By November 1961, when *Death and Life* was released, she was a celebrity author and public figure engaged in a battle to save her own home and West Village neighborhood from urban renewal and the same city planning ideology that she described at length in the book. Soon thereafter, Jacobs' leadership of the Committee to Save the West Village and a nearly decade-long campaign to stop the Cerberus that was Robert Moses' Lower Manhattan Expressway kept her in the limelight. Although she was at work on her second book by 1963, Jacobs' activism overshadowed her contemplative life, and her earlier decades as an employed writer and office worker. In the meantime, the prevailing sexism of the times enhanced Jacobs' celebrity but disregarded her intellectual contributions.

Another key factor in obscuring her earlier work was Jacobs' own reticence. Despite her experiences observing and writing about the city since the 1930s, and her credentials as an associate editor for *Architectural Forum*, Jacobs revealed little of herself in her writing. Prior to *Death and Life*, there was, of course, no special interest in her biography, and she had relatively few credentials to put forward. Moreover, in the late 1950s, her views on urban renewal were controversial, and, in order to return to her job at *Architectural Forum*, she did not want to imply

that her views reflected the larger editorial position of *Forum* or its parent company, Life (later Time-Life) Incorporated.

In fact, Jacobs had learned to separate her views on urban renewal from *Forum* early on in her writing process. In 1959, when on leave from the magazine to write her book, she was quoted attacking Robert Moses, the New York City Slum Clearance Committee, real estate developers, and the entire urban renewal “gravy train” on the occasion of the ten year anniversary of the Housing Act of 1949.<sup>2</sup> Identified in *The New York Times* as an associate editor of *Architectural Forum*, her comments upset Time executive editors, resulting in a reprimand from her boss, *Forum* editor Douglas Haskell. Haskell, one of America’s foremost architectural critics, typically encouraged Jacobs’ work and advocated aggressive criticism in general, but writing for a professional and industry publication such as *Forum* had its limitations. Haskell wrote Jacobs that “We don’t see the urban renewal situation as black and white as you do,” and added that she “really should not have sounded off in the *New York Times* without making a check because you are identified there as an editor of *Forum* and not as an individual.”<sup>3</sup> Jacobs accordingly wrote *Death and Life* “as an individual,” detaching herself from the national reputation she had garnered as writer for the premier English-language magazine on architecture and the building industry.

Separating herself from *Architectural Forum* was probably not difficult for Jacobs. She was fiercely independent, and, although she did not know it at the time, it was the necessary step for her to begin the second-half of her career, making the transition from a paid writer to an independent author. Moreover, she was ambivalent about her work for *Forum*. Although much of her writing for the magazine was published without a byline, her views had changed dramatically

over the years. In the early 1950s, Jacobs had actually idealized the field of city planning, the possibilities of modern planning techniques, and the “city planning approach.” In her years of writing for *Forum*, Jacobs advocated the gamut of techniques that she would later condemn: application of the lessons of suburbia to downtown and promoting monopolistic shopping centers; urban renewal in the form of eliminating blighted and non-conforming structures; and superblock development to help save the city’s core. As she wrote her friend Grady Clay in 1959, not long into her writing process, “in all sincerity I had been writing for *Forum* about how great various redevelopment plans were going to be. How delightful. How fine they would work. I believed this.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, her views changed, but her epiphany came with “great shocks” and “guilt” for her “personal involvement.”<sup>5</sup>

Since discussing the changes in her thinking through her work and writing for *Forum* would only reflect poorly on the magazine, Jacobs let her new ideas stand on their own merits. And without any other special qualifications or professional experiences, she had little choice. She had no other credentials: no training as a city planner, architect, or sociologist, and no college degree. She had won national recognition in some circles for her “blockbuster” article “Downtown Is For People,” published in *Fortune* in 1958, but insofar as her targets were the unsound theories propped up by credentials and claims of expertise that had once taken her in, she may also have believed it unconvincing to attempt to inflate her professional reputation.

Jacobs’ work, therefore, had to aspire to the standards of objectivity and evidence of more scientific fields than city planning, and this demand in fact appealed to her life-long interests in science and scientific method, as well as her admiration for the achievements in the life sciences. Considering urbanism with a humane perspective and through a scientific lens



reconnected her with her earliest studies of the city, in the 1930s and '40, when she observed and wrote about the urban environment as a “city naturalist.” After her years as a professional architectural critic, she was convinced enough in the lack of understanding about the city as an interconnected ecosystem that she could imagine rebuilding knowledge of the city from first principles. Like Francis Bacon, who revolutionized natural history, modern science, and scientific method in the seventeenth century, she sought to dispense with the idols of jargon, slogans, superstition, familiar habits of thought, and the received wisdom of scholastic book-learning. As Bacon did, she advocated looking deep into the nature of the real world, avoiding indulging in conjectures, and privileging observational induction over theoretical deductions. Applying this “system of thought,” she would create a new treatise on the modern city.

Ironically, the very ambition of Jacobs’ project, to recreate a field of knowledge, combined with her failure to describe her own credentials to leave many readers of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* with the impression that it was the work of an amateur, a housewife with no experience as a writer or any knowledge of her subject. Even those who knew her well professionally helped to perpetuate the legend that Jacobs had hardly written anything before *Death and Life*. For many critics, the book was the work of a keen observer, but merely those of an empiricist whose observations and “home remedies” were limited to a woman’s view of the domestic routine of a particular city neighborhood. Jacobs became stereotyped as a housewife watching the “sidewalk ballet” outside her storefront home on Hudson Street in Greenwich Village, and her ideas inextricably linked to the quaint scale and idiosyncrasy of the city as village, and most often quoted for those parts of her book that reinforced the stereotype. But Jane Jacobs was elsewhere most of the time. As she wrote in *Death and Life*, “The heart-of-

the-day ballet I seldom see because part of the nature of it is that working people who live there, like me, are mostly gone, filling the roles of strangers on other sidewalks.”<sup>6</sup>

A stranger to those who got to know her after *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, that Jane Jacobs was a professional woman who, in the years leading up to the book, spent most of her time not in Greenwich Village, but in three midtown Manhattan office buildings—the Chilton Publishing Company’s office on Park Avenue at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, the offices of the State Department’s Magazine Branch just below Columbus Circle, and Rockefeller Center, where Time Inc. and *Architectural Forum* had their offices. My focus, however, is not biographical details per se. Other books—Alice Alexiou Sparberg’s *Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary* (Rutgers University Press, 2006) and Glenna Lang and Marjory Wunsch’s *Genius of Common Sense: Jane Jacobs and the Story of The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (David R. Godine Publisher, 2009), a juvenile readers’ book, emphasize her life story and provide more details about Jane’s family life.<sup>7</sup> What is needed is an intellectual biography that, while shedding light on Jacobs’ influential experiences and early writing, seeks to explain Jacobs’ thinking and motivations, and thus to expand interpretations of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and her later writing.

Being primarily concerned with Jacobs’ writing up to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, I do not focus on Jacobs’ activism, which began in earnest after she finished writing her first book. Anthony Flint’s *Wrestling with Moses: How Jane Jacobs Took On New York’s Master Builder and Transformed the American City* (Random House, 2009) and Christopher Klemek’s essays on Jacobs are better sources for discussion of this part of her life and its impact on public policy.<sup>8</sup>

By the same token, I try to avoid the familiar David vs. Goliath stories of Jacobs vs. Robert Moses the Technocrat, best told in Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Simon & Schuster, 1982), and Jacobs vs. Le Corbusier the High Modernist, best told in James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1999). I appreciate their arguments because one cannot avoid discussing and interpreting Jacobs' abhorrence and criticism of the top-down social controls implicit in Moses' and Le Corbusier's work and thinking. What is more interesting to me, however, are Jacobs' and these author's alternatives for achieving a good city. Thus I find Scott's interest in the Greek concept of *metis*, "knowledge that can only come from practical experience," in interpreting the "theoretical" significance of Jacobs' work especially compelling.

Finally, insofar as I seek to understand Jacobs' work and thought from the point of view of her early writing career, which was largely unknown to critics of *Death and Life*, I do not dwell on the historiography of criticism after the book was published. Many interesting and enlightening reviews and interpretations are collected in *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs* (Ginger Press, 1997) and in *Block by Block: Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2007).

It is often the case, however, that many of these review essays are colored by stereotypes and mythologies, some of which are positive and some negative, some imposed on Jacobs and some created by her, as well as the legacy of historical circumstance. Early reviews and interpretations, for example, tended to overemphasize Jacobs' "attack on current city planning and rebuilding." Although this attack was Jacobs' opening volley in the first line of her book, her

introductory chapter was in fact uncharacteristically provocative within the context of the book as a whole. The rest of the book was far more dispassionate and measured, and Jacobs' conclusion, in which she sought to understand the systems of thought of those she criticized, actually took the heat out of her own initial critiques. At the time, however, it was Jacobs' criticism that loomed large. Urban Renewal was a massive and heavy-handed federal program that needed this criticism and to change. Therefore, consciously or unconsciously, many early reviews, as well as pre-release excerpts from Jacobs' first chapter, sought to generate controversy and buzz with sensational headlines such as "Speaking Out, The Voice of Dissent: How City Planners Hurt Cities" (*The Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 14, 1961) and "Violence in the City Streets: How Our 'Housing Experts' Unwittingly Encourage Crime" (*Harper's Magazine*, Nov. 4, 1961). In the broader cultural context, meanwhile, Jacobs' urban design criticism may have satisfied a widely-felt hunger for cultural criticism at the dawn of the anti-establishment 1960s.

Criticism, however, was not Jacobs' primary objective. Although she felt strongly about what was wrong with city planning, she was more interested in what was right, "what worked," and in developing a new foundation of knowledge about the city. She favorably cited city planners, architects, academics, and even traffic engineers from whom she had learned. Her ambition, as she wrote in 1959, was "to get the theory and practice of city planning and design started on a new and different track" by organizing new "observations and ideas into workable systems of thought about the city, and in indicating the new aims and tactics which planning must adopt to catalyze constructive and genuinely urban city behavior."<sup>9</sup> As she stated in an interview soon after *Death and Life* was published, "I am for planning... but we'd be better off without planning than the kind we are getting today."<sup>10</sup> Jacobs' project to reform city planning and urban

design, in other words, was in many ways a more conservative, progressive, and difficult project than Jacobs was or is given credit for.

Thus, it is important to understand Jacobs not just as a critic, but a creator of knowledge; not as an independent genius and visionary, but someone who was influenced by and learned from others; not just as an outsider, but an insider; not merely an amateur, but an expert in many things; and not simply as an empiricist, but a theorist.

This set of interpretations is often in contrast to Jacobs' own rhetoric in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which has steered many interpreters off the track. Jacobs wrote the book "as an individual" who self-consciously pursued an ambitious intellectual agenda largely outside of existing literature and took pride in her independence of thought, but this was not the whole story. Although she attacked many theorists and their methodologies, and often expressed antagonism to formal education, the academy, credentials, expertise, the status of experts, and the very idea of theory, Jacobs herself was a theorist. Although she may have pursued an inductive approach, in seeking to rebuild understanding of the city, Jacobs implicitly and explicitly defined a methodological approach, developed conclusions and principles that extrapolated from her collected data, and found both inspiration and confirmation in other theories. Thus, despite being anti-academic and rhetorically anti-theoretical, Jacobs developed new theories meant to offer better interpretations of reality, as Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), said that "paradigm shifts" must do. Her goal was not to remove the work of theory (i.e., observation and reflection) from city planning and design, but to put it on "a new and different track."

Rhetoric aside, although Jacobs always had a rebellious streak, she was also always loyally committed to her work and her editors, whether at the State Department or at *Architectural Forum*. Although she was often prescient, she developed wisdom through decades of observation and experiences that sometimes proved her wrong. Although she was independent-minded and harbored negative feelings for academia (she would later turn down numerous honorary degrees on principle), her lack of scholarly apparatus and disassociation from professional circles belied the fact that she was encouraged, influenced, and supported by certain academics, practitioners, and theorists, including other writers, scientists, visionary architects, and professional city planners. She could not have written *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* without their influence, both positive and negative, and their support, particularly their support for the Rockefeller Foundation grant that allowed her the time and financial support to write the book. And although *Death and Life* was Jacobs' "first" book, she had published her first essay on the city when she was nineteen; her first book, *Constitutional Chaff*, was published by an academic press when she was twenty-five; and she had worked as a professional architectural and urban redevelopment critic for nearly a decade before writing her more celebrated work. She came to architectural and urban criticism with some experience, and honed her craft at *Architectural Forum*, which served as her alternative to academic education in the field.

Jacobs, in other words, was not an amateur or an outsider, but a largely self-educated professional who was immersed in contexts and participated in histories with which she is not typically associated. Each chapter in this study is intended to reveal part of this story.

Following this introduction, Chapter Two, "Slumming and Unslumming," takes its title from Jacobs' description of the dynamics of urban decline and regeneration in *The Death and Life*

of *Great American Cities*. Recognizing the great significance of this subject in *Death and Life*, the chapter focuses on Jacobs' earliest essays on the city, which she wrote soon after her move to New York in 1935, in which she first explored the subject of city dynamics. "Changing New York," as Berenice Abbott described her photographs of the city in 1938, is thus the backdrop of this chapter. The city of these years, as it faded from the Jazz Age into the Depression-era city, was in the process of change, but, at the same time, it was the city of Jacobs' first and most lasting impression. And unlike Le Corbusier, who visited the city within weeks of the time Jacobs' first essay on the city was published in 1935, what impressed Jacobs most about the city was not its new skyscrapers, but the working districts between the skyscrapers of Wall Street and Midtown. These parts of the city, which were the subject of her early essays, exemplified the endurance of the city's life force, and, even in the Great Depression, the dynamic relationships between the city and its inhabitants.

Jacobs' early essays show that even as a young writer on the city, she already understood city dynamics from the point of view of human geography and city change in a historical and geographical context. Thus, in the course of interpreting her early essays on the city, I also look back into New York's history. I offer a brief history of Jacobs' Greenwich Village, which she described in *Death and Life*, was an "unslummed former slum," and I similarly consider the history of the city's Lower East Side, which, as Le Corbusier and other informed city planners knew, was a testing ground for large-scale gentrification and urban renewal efforts of international significance. The history of these places is important not only because Jacobs later argued, in *Death and Life*, that the Lower East Side and other city "slums" would likely have revived and have "unslummed" themselves without Urban Renewal intervention, as Greenwich

Village had done, but because her early essays show that she already understood city dynamics and that, as the title of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* suggested, a renewed urban life could follow decline.<sup>11</sup>

Chapter Three, “Systems of Survival,” takes its title from Jacobs’ fifth major book, *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (1992). This book, Jacobs’ first of two dialogue books, was inspired by Plato’s *Republic* (c. 380 BC) in both narrative form and content. In her book, Jacobs focused understanding what she described as two “moral syndromes,” the “Commercial Moral Syndrome” and the “Guardian Moral Syndrome.” Influenced by Henri Pirenne’s writing on the revival and development of European cities following the decline of the Roman Empire, Jacobs associated the city, as a culturally and economically productive center, particularly with the Commercial moral system. This moral system included such characteristics as collaborating easily with strangers and aliens; being open to inventiveness and novelty; dissenting for the sake of the task; shunning force; and coming to voluntary agreements. By contrast, reminiscent of Socrates’ fatal encounter with the ruling establishment of Athens, the Guardian moral system advocated being nationalistic; adhering to tradition; respecting hierarchy; shunning trading; and exerting prowess.<sup>12</sup> Initially, Jacobs shorthanded these moral systems as being those of “traders” and “raiders” respectively, but, as she noted in the endnotes to the book, she eventually acknowledged that Guardian morality was “grounded in legitimate territorial concerns.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus although *Systems of Survival* is not generally recognized as one of Jacobs’ “city books”—*The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), *The Economy of Cities* (1969), and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984)—I regard it as significant because, like Plato in *The*



*Republic* (in Greek, *Politeia*, “The Governance of the City-State”), from an early age, Jacobs was concerned and interested in not only the city per se, but the governance of the city, and of societies in general. Thus, this chapter—which spans chronologically from Jacobs’ college education in the late-1930s until the start of her work as an architectural and urban design critic and editor at *Architectural Forum* in the early-1950s—focuses on the influences of Jacobs’ early educational and work experiences on her thinking and the development of her own systems of thought. I discuss her early education in Geography and Economic Geography at Columbia University, which anticipated her later books on those subjects, and her studies of the government of the United States, which led to her first book, *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787* (Columbia University Press, 1941). Building on the important theme of self-regeneration in cities explored in the previous chapter, this chapter further considers Jacobs’ early political philosophy, explaining why she was not a New Deal liberal, as commonly presumed, and shows that she regarded dialogue and popular participation in government as enduringly essential to American democracy. Similar again to Socrates’ method, Jacobs is shown to have been self-conscious in approaching others in person and in her writing with a corresponding intersubjective sensibility, in which she actively sought to understand their point of view, interests, and concerns.

In concluding this chapter, I discuss how Jacobs’ intersubjectivity and “Trader”-oriented moral philosophy brought her into serious conflict with the “Guardian” moral system for the first time, anticipating her later abhorrence of the federal Urban Renewal Program. In discussing Jacobs’ work as a propagandist for the Office of War Information during World War II, and her work for the State Department’s Russian-language magazine *Amerika Illustrated* during the Cold

War, I show that her approach to her propaganda work contributed to suspicions that she was a Communist-sympathizer, resulting in an FBI investigation of her led by J. Edgar Hoover, which in turn contributed to the closing of the State Department's New York Magazine Branch by seeming to validate Senator Joseph McCarthy's allegations of Communist infiltration of the State Department. In contrast to stereotypes that Jacobs was an amateur journalist when she started at *Architectural Forum* in 1952, this chapter also shows that Jacobs had a substantial amount of experience as a senior writer and editor by the time that she left the State Department, and that her work as a writer and editor also included articles on architecture, cities, and urban renewal.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six examine various aspects and influences of the years of Jacobs' professional architectural writing and the development of her thinking about the city and urban redevelopment leading up to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. These chapters show that although Jacobs always had an interest in the city, she did not begin her career as an architectural journalist as a critic or with a critical agenda—in fact, she initially supported urban redevelopment and renewal.

Chapter Four, “We Inaugurate Architectural Criticism,” focuses on Jacobs' early experiences at *Forum* and the influences of Douglas Haskell, the “Dean of architectural editors,” who provoked her to more critical writing and contributed significantly to Jacobs' professional development. More broadly, the chapter offers a history of American architectural criticism in order to explain both Haskell's and Jacobs' contributions to the field, his dating back to the 1930s, and hers preceding *Death and Life*. As suggested by the title, this study intends to show that Jacobs already participated in the development of American architectural criticism before she wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Chapter Five, “Advocating the *City Planner’s Approach*,” and Chapter Six, “*Oases in the Desert or Seeds of Self-Regeneration*,” focus on Jacobs’ early writing at *Forum*, most of it previously un-attributed and unknown, and her transition from architectural critic to the magazine’s urban redevelopment specialist. The chapters span the years between the passage of the federal “urban redevelopment” Housing Act of 1949 and initial results of the “urban renewal” Housing Act of 1954, examine Jacobs’ and others’ writing on redevelopment and city planning, and show that, like most people, Jacobs supported the modernization of U.S. cities, advocated many of the redevelopment techniques that she later became famous for criticizing, and even idealized the “city planner approach” to studying and solving the city’s problems. Further challenging the popular mythology surrounding Jacobs’ mid-1950s epiphany about the flaws of Urban Renewal and “Orthodox Modern City Planning,” the history of Jacobs’ negative experiences with redevelopment in Greenwich Village and in the East Harlem community is told, and the positive experiences and influences of Louis Kahn, Ed Bacon, and the nascent Philadelphia School are described.

Building on the examinations of architectural criticism in Chapter Four and writing on urban redevelopment in Chapters Five and Six, Chapter Seven discusses the other parts of this study’s title, the emergence of the field of urban design; the development of “urban design criticism,” a term invented as a shorthand description of architectural criticism of the urban environment; and Jacobs’ participation in and contributions to that history. This chapter discusses urban design research sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, starting in 1952; Jacobs’ participation at the First Harvard Urban Design Conference in 1956; and her contributions to the University of Pennsylvania – Rockefeller Foundation Conference on Urban Design Criticism in

1958, as well as her contributions to the Foundation's larger urban design research initiative, including her own Foundation-supported research and book project.

Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, discusses Jane Jacobs' writing of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. *Death and Life*, which Jacobs began working on in 1958 immediately following the Penn-Rockefeller "Urban Design Criticism" conference, was the epitome of what was discussed as necessary at that conference, namely a highly critical examination of current redevelopment practices and the presentation of a new urban design philosophy for both professional and public audiences. Similarly grounded in contemporary debates, critical aspects of her design theory, in particular her emphasis on "how the city works," were related to contemporaneous and long-standing debates about the "functionalism" of modern architecture, of which Jacobs was aware and in which she had participated as an architectural critic. Seen in this light, Jacobs' urban theory was a reinvention and extension of architectural functionalism, albeit one that in being applied to the city reversed the professionally-accepted hierarchy between the architectural object and the urban form.

The conclusion summarizes and extends the overarching arguments about Jane Jacobs as a professional writer, who observed the nature and development of the city from an early age; who was influenced by and deeply engaged in the professional contexts of her time as an architectural journalist and critic; and who, by virtue of these ties, participated in the continuity and evolution of city planning and urban design theories, including their wrong turns, as much as she revolutionized them.

With a better sense of what she borrowed, it is possible to better understand what Jacobs gave back, and to see what was innovative and most important in her thinking. For example,

among Jacobs' most remarkable observations was that the emerging field of complexity science corroborated her ideas about the complexity of the city. Although the notion that the city was "complex," and that it was like a living body or biological system, was not new, her understanding that complexity science provided a better scientific interpretation of the city than previous attempts was itself unprecedented and far ahead of its time. Having made observations relevant to the new science of complexity (sometimes described as complexity theory, chaos theory, or nonlinear dynamics), Jacobs was a pioneer in this field at least a decade before it emerged as such in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>14</sup> Despite developments in the field since then, however, it seems unlikely that the city will ever be adequately or successfully interpreted, planned, or designed mathematically, or by running a computer program—no matter how carefully the many interconnected variables accounted for—any more than "the butterfly effect" can be controlled, or unpredictability eliminated from the weather. It was precisely complexity theory's proof of the significance of the anomalous and the "unaverage" in cities and natural systems that was of interest to her.

The timelessness of Jacobs' ideas stemmed from a focus on the daily lives of people and cities, and a genuine interdisciplinary approach—both of which remain essential to solving critical environmental problems, whether local or global, but which are also likely impossible to achieve from within any academic discipline whose primary concern is its own concerns. Jacobs herself was skeptical of what her book had achieved instrumentally, and not particularly interested with its history or her own biography. In this light, it is perhaps the inter-subjective component of her approach—her empathy for people, and especially for the city as a site of shared and inter-connected constituency—that remains her greatest legacy. As she wrote of the

city on an urban renewal reporting trip to Philadelphia in 1955, “As a sheer manifestation of energy, it [the city] is awesome. It says as much about the power and doggedness of life as the leaves of the forest say in spring. Hundreds of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild the city.”<sup>15</sup>

Some further comments on the methodology and sources for this study may be helpful in explaining its objectives, ideas, and interpretations.

This study, it should be reiterated, focuses on particular aspects of Jane Jacobs’ lifework. Although the emphasis here is on Jacobs’ writing on architecture, urban design, and the city, even within the first-half of her writing career one can find the anticipations of her research and writing on economies, her activism, and the overarching themes that tied all of her interests together, sometimes in the same piece of writing. Jacobs’ first book, *Constitutional Chaff* (1941), for example, contained little of her voice, but it manifested a life-long interest in what Jacobs termed “systems of thought,” a parallel to her life-long curiosity in how certain important but often misunderstood things, like cities, “worked.” Buildings, urban design, and cities, in other words, were ultimately parts of larger systems of human practice and their own laws, and of interest to her on that meta-level as much as for their own sake. This theoretical or philosophical level of investigation, which often focused on the concept of ecologies, complimented her empiricism and activism, and was a thread through her lifework that explains the progression of her research from parts of cities; to cities; to city, regional, and national economies; to civilizations. At her most philosophical, Jacobs’ dialogue books, *Systems of Survival* (1992) and *The Nature of Economies* (2000), explored her interests in human and natural systems and their blurred boundaries, in turn.

Jacobs revealed the significance of the reciprocity between humans and the environment to her in such subtle details as the dedications of some her books to places and her homes, noted at the outset. Thus, insofar as she came to understand this reciprocity and the blurring of boundaries between the natural and the man-made through her studies of the city, an investigation of the first-half of Jacobs' career, which was bracketed by a desire to understand the city in her first essays and "first" book, helps to explain and unify her lifework while advancing an understanding of her contributions to architectural and urban design theory.

To undertake this study I have naturally relied on Jacobs' published writings and books themselves. Equally invaluable, however, were archival materials from Jacobs' collected papers, those of her associates, and the Rockefeller Foundation. These papers, particularly correspondence, revealed the course of events and intentions better than any later remembrances by Jacobs or others. Archival research also uncovered a wealth of Jacobs' previously unknown and unattributed writing. Although I interviewed Jacobs in 1999, this study does not rely on interviews, biographies, or autobiographies older than the period of study. Memory fades and becomes selective, and my research has shown that Jacobs was equally selective with her biography.

This work is thus not intended to be a complete biography, unauthorized or otherwise, nor exclusively about Jane Jacobs. Although Jacobs' work is the primary focus, the study also intends to contribute to the larger context of architectural theory and urban history, contributing to the general histories of American architectural criticism and of urban design, for example, as well as the pre- and post-war histories of urban renewal in American cities. In these areas this work is complimented by and often indebted to David Gosling's *The Evolution of American*

*Urban Design* (John Wiley, 2003) and Eric Mumford's *The CIAM Discourse in Urbanism* (MIT Press, 2000); Josep Lluís Sert: *The Architect of Urban Design* (Yale University Press, 2008); and *Defining Urban Design: CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline* (Yale University Press, 2009), in addition to the many works cited in footnotes, and the support and advice of those recognized in the preceding Acknowledgements.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, Nov. 22, 1961 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, box 13, folder 12, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Boston, MA), 1. Jacobs became increasingly resistant to biographic interest following the initial controversy surrounding *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and late in her life instructed Random House, her long-time publisher, not to assist in biographic projects. The letter from which I quote here is therefore an early and rare autobiographical moment, and a draft. A slightly different version is republished in Max Allen's *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs* (Ontario: The Ginger Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> For a series of articles examining New York City's urban renewal program on the ten-year anniversary of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949, Jane Jacobs was quoted in Wayne Phillips, "Title I Slum Clearance Proves Spur to Cooperative Housing in City," *New York Times*, Jul. 2, 1959. The article was the fourth and last in a series.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to Jane Jacobs, Jul. 2 1959 (Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, box 79, folder 6, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>4</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Grady Clay, Mar. 3, 1959 (Personal Papers of Grady Clay).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 51. Citations of *Death and Life* are from the familiar paperback edition, rather than the first hardcover or Modern Library editions.

<sup>7</sup> Some details about Jacobs' early writing career in Lang and Wunsch's well-researched and written book come from my previously published essays on Jacobs, which they generously acknowledge.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Flint also draws on my previously published work on Jacobs' early career, and is also generous in his acknowledgements.

<sup>9</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 23, 1959 (RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folders 3381, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Gurney Breckenfeld, "Is Planning Killing Cities? Yes, Contends Author-Critic Jane Jacobs," *House and Home* (Nov. 1961), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobs' thesis of "unslumming" can be considered a precedent for Stewart Brand's and Richard Neuwirth's thinking on mega-slums in the developing world.

<sup>12</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992), 215.

<sup>13</sup> Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*, 218.

<sup>14</sup> James Gleick's *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987) and Mark C. Taylor's *The Moment of Complexity: Emerging Network Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) wrote excellent histories of complexity science and theory, although they did not acknowledge Jacobs' contribution. A few writers who did include Jacobs' friend Sally J. Goerner, author of *Chaos and the Evolving Ecological Universe* (London: Routledge, 1994) and



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*After the Clockwork Universe: The Emerging Science and Culture of Integral Society* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2001); and Michael Batty, author of *Cities and Complexity: Understanding Cities with Cellular Automata, Agent-Based Models, and Fractals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007). I wrote about Jacobs' complexity theory in "Contradictions and Complexities: Jane Jacobs' and Robert Venturi's Complexity Theories," *Journal of Architectural Education* 59 (Feb. 2006), 49-60.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment: A Progress Report," *Architectural Forum* 103 (July 1955), 118.

## Chapter 2

### “Slumming and Unslumming”:

### Jacobs’ Early Writing and Experiences in the City

Under the melodramatic roar of the “El,” encircled by hash-houses and Turkish baths, are the shops of hard-boiled, stalwart men, who shyly admit that they are dottles for love, sentiment, and romance. Apprentices, dodging among the hand-carts that are forever rushing to and from the fur and garment districts, dream of the time when they will have their own commission houses. Greeks and Koreans, confessing that they have the hearts of children, build little Japanese gardens. Greenhouse owners declare that they would not sell—at any price—the flowers which grow in their own backyards. A dealer plans how to improve the business that his grandfather started. And orchids in milk-bottles nod at field-flowers in buckets. *Jane Butzner [Jacobs], “Flowers Come to Town” (Vogue, 1937)*

Understanding the processes and forces of city decline and regeneration was of critical importance to Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. “Unslumming and Slumming,” *Death and Life’s* fifteenth chapter, described this process from the point of view of human geography and the self-regeneration of neighborhoods, and meant to turn the popular conception of the “slum” during the Urban Renewal era on its head. This chapter does not focus on urban redevelopment and change during the 1950s, which is considered later, but shows that the forces of 1950s Urban Renewal were already in place by the time Jacobs moved to New York City in 1934. Moreover, a close reading of Jacobs’ first series of essays on the city, written soon after her move, shows that she already understood that the city’s neighborhoods changed, becoming slums and regenerating, over the course of their history. In fact, based on her related description of the “unslummed former slum” of Greenwich Village in *Death and Life*, she was already aware that her choice of city life and her own move to the

neighborhood exemplified the process of “unslumming” and city regeneration. Thus, while looking back on the changes in the city that preceded Jacobs’ move to the city, particularly in Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side, two sites of significant urban renewal activity in the 1950s, this chapter shows that Jacobs had been developing her thesis of city “death and life” for two decades before she battled Robert Moses and the Urban Renewal Administration.

## To New York City

At eighteen, Jane Jacobs was drawn from her hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania to New York City, to which she later dedicated *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In subsequent books such as *The Economy of Cities* (1969) and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984), she explored the cultural and economic influences of cities on regions, nations, and civilizations. From an early age, however, Jacobs was well aware of great cities’ attractive powers, and their special significance in the larger landscape. Cities were lights in the darkness, and even in 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression, New York City was a great bright fire on the horizon, still retaining some of the sparkle and glow of its ebullient Jazz Age. Jacobs offered an image of this in *Death and Life*, where she otherwise sought to avoid minimize her inclination for poetic language, in the belief that “a city can best be understood straightforwardly in its own terms, rather than in terms of some other kinds of organisms or objects.” The “best analogy,” she nevertheless offered, “is to imagine a large field in darkness.”

In the field, many fires are burning. They are of many sizes, some great, other small; some far apart, others dotted close together; some are brightening, some are slowly going out. Each fire, large or small, extends its radiance into the surrounding murk, and thus it carves out a space.<sup>1</sup>

Cities, in other words, were life, and, as she stated succinctly elsewhere in *Death and Life*, “Life attracts life.”<sup>2</sup>

In moving to New York to experience city life when she was eighteen, Jacobs exemplified this phenomenon. In fact, it was something of a family tradition. Her mother, a nurse who grew up in a small Pennsylvania town, and her father, a doctor who grew up on a Virginia farm, had met in Philadelphia, where they studied and worked before moving to Scranton. In their experience, city life was far superior to rural life, and they not only spoke of this to Jacobs and her three siblings, but they likely understood the need for their children to move from Scranton.<sup>3</sup> They clearly understood the magnetism of the city, and may also have prepared Jacobs to understand that cities lived and brightened, but, like Scranton, cities could also burn out.

In her analogy, Jacobs’ Scranton was one of the smaller and slowly dimming fires, having started to flicker out as the demand for anthracite coal began cooling in the decade before the Great Depression. Meanwhile, Higgins, North Carolina, a Western North Carolina hamlet where Jacobs’ aunt directed a Presbyterian mission and where Jacobs spent six months before her move to New York, was a pinprick of light barely illuminating the darkness of the Appalachian Mountains. As she explained in *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, the place had been dying for over a century as people migrated away and left it in isolation, “all but cut off from the economies of cities for about a century and a half.”<sup>4</sup> In this time, the hamlet had become a subsistence economy that “proceeded to shed and lose traditional practices and skills after it had lost almost all contact and interchange with the economies of cities.” Despite being surrounded by stone of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the parishioners wanted to talk her aunt out of building a masonry church. “These people came of a parent culture that had not only reared stone parish churches

from time immemorial, but great cathedrals,” Jacobs mused, “But having lost the practice of construction with stone, people had lost the memory of it, too, over the generations, and having lost the memory, lost the belief in the possibility—until a mason arrived from the nearest city, Asheville, and got them started on a church of small stones.”<sup>5</sup>

The contrast with New York City, of course, could not have been greater. In 1934, the recently completed Chrysler and Empire State buildings were shiny and new, even if the latter was mostly vacant, and Rockefeller Center, one of the largest private building projects in modern times, was pushing rapidly skyward despite the Depression. With similar resolve, Jacobs later wrote, “I came to New York to seek my fortune, Depression or no.”<sup>6</sup>

The fortune Jacobs sought was a career as a writer. Following graduation from high school in early 1933 and a subsequent training course in stenography, she was “thoroughly sick of attending school and eager to get a job, writing or reporting.”<sup>7</sup> For almost a year, until *The Scranton Republican* was sold to *The Scranton Tribune*, she had worked as assistant society editor and general reporter, initially covering society items, civic meetings, and arts reviews, and laying-out the Society page, but later developing her own feature stories for the City Desk.<sup>8</sup> However, with so many people out of work, there were no jobs to be found working for a magazine or newspaper in New York.

Although Jacobs later recalled being reduced to eating baby cereal when money was short, by the end of 1934, New York had seen the worst of the Depression and there was a sense of cautious optimism in the air. The Central Park “Hooverville” was gone, and former New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised the American people a “New Deal.” With the expectation of public works funding, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia his newly appointed Parks

Commissioner Robert Moses (who was also Emergency Public Works Commissioner, former New York Secretary of State, former Chairman of the Committee on Public Improvements in New York, and a Mayoral nominee for the race won by La Guardia) set about implementing their pre-Depression lists of proposed building projects, including parks and parkways, bridges and swimming pools, hydroelectric dams and airports, and public housing. One of the La Guardia's first initiatives, also assisted by the Works Progress Administration, was a Committee on City Planning, which led to the establishment of the New York City Planning Commission in 1936.

Meanwhile, the new City Housing Authority had assumed partial control of housing construction work initiated by the Works Progress Administration. "First Houses," the first municipally built, owned, and managed housing project in the U.S., was dedicated by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on December 3, 1935, with Governor Lehman, Mayor La Guardia, Parks Commissioner Moses, NYC Housing Authority Chairman Langdon Post, special guest Le Corbusier, who was then touring the city, and 10,000 other people—perhaps including Jacobs—looking on.<sup>9</sup>

According to Chairman Post, First Houses was an experimental demonstration project inaugurating an ambitious plan to rehouse 500,000 families throughout the city over the next ten years.<sup>10</sup> The construction sites for follow-up housing projects—including Williamsburg Houses, which would match the largest and most ambitious slum clearance project yet undertaken in the U.S. with the modern architecture of William Lescaze—had already been cleared.<sup>11</sup> For the new City Planning Commission, these projects were steps toward the town planning of modern times. Although such housing developments were not what Le Corbusier, who toured the sites, had in mind, modern architects embraced the idea which he expressed in a *New York Times* article in

January 1932, that “the home and the town, architecture and town planning, all are one.”<sup>12</sup> A few years later, in 1938, Lawrence Orton, former member of the city’s Slum Clearance Committee and founding member of the New York City Planning Commission wrote that housing project design and city planning were “one and the same thing”—an idea that Jacobs came to reject. But at the time, the New Deal building boom would only have suggested to her that compared to Scranton and other parts of the country the great city of New York was well poised to weather the financial downturn.

In the mid 1930s, however, it was finding work, not urban redevelopment, that was eighteen-year-old Jacobs’ primary concern. Unable to find a position with a magazine or newspaper, she looked for part-time work and free-lance writing opportunities, and made the most of job-hunting, which turned out to be a good way to get to know the city’s neighborhoods and business districts. From her home-base in Brooklyn, where she lived with her older sister Betty, Jacobs explored Manhattan as she answered want-ads, sometimes getting off the subway at random stops for the surprise of discovering the marvels of the city, which inspired her to write bits of poetry. In this way she discovered Greenwich Village, where she and Betty moved in 1935, and the working districts of the city whose vitality, largely undiminished by the economic situation, afforded her some employment, and whose complexity and intricacy captured her imagination.

Settled in Greenwich Village, between 1935 and 1938 Jacobs found employment as a research assistant for two writers, and as a secretary at various New York manufacturing businesses. Working as an assistant to a writer, her first New York employment, was the next best thing to finding such a writing job of her own. Robert H. Hemphill, an advocate for national

monetary reform and a straight-talking financial writer for William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal-American*, was an early influence on Jacobs' writing career, directing her toward a lifelong interest in economics, public policy, and "systems of thought." Advocating the establishment of a central bank and removal of the dollar from the gold standard (a move that the Roosevelt Administration rejected), Hemphill was chairman of a committee drafting legislation to be brought before Congress.<sup>13</sup> Jacobs did library research work for him, cut clippings of useful material, and "kept track of bills bearing on economics as they were introduced in Congress and obtained copies of them."<sup>14</sup> Involvement in Hemphill's work of writing national legislation and his encouragement would influence Jacobs to compile the "Rejected Suggestions" of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in her first book, *Constitutional Chaff* (1941).<sup>15</sup>

With only her part-time work for Hemphill, however, Jacobs continued writing, hunting for more work, and exploring the city. She found a few weeks of employment working for a stockbroker writing a book on the financial markets and other temporary work at a drapery manufacturer, a clock-maker, and an office supplies manufacturer, before finding work as assistant to the vice-president of a candy manufacturer in Hell's Kitchen, and as a secretary in the historic Peter A. Frasse & Co. steelworks, a maker of bicycle, automobile, and aircraft components, in the industrial Lower West Side, the area later named Tribeca. In both jobs Jacobs managed to improve efficiency, whether in record-keeping or as a trouble-shooter who would "step into any department which seemed to be bogging down and help devise ways for getting the work out faster."<sup>16</sup>

The neighborhoods where Jacobs worked were described by Le Corbusier on his 1935 visit to the city as the "urban no-man's land made up of miserable low buildings" between the



skyscrapers of Wall Street and those of Midtown.<sup>17</sup> In the modernist's eyes, these congested, "ground-killing" neighborhoods were insalubrious and inefficient. However, following her recent experiences of life in rural North Carolina and in the waning city of Scranton, and conditioned by the struggle to find and keep a job in Manhattan, the working districts of the great city held a special fascination for Jacobs. While the new Rockefeller Center expressed the city's possibilities, it was impossible to imagine a great city without the unpretentious day-to-day life of its working districts.<sup>18</sup> For Jacobs, even garbage collection, no small task in the great city, made her think about how the city functioned at its most basic levels. Looking down from the roof of her apartment in Greenwich Village, she watched the trucks on their rounds and thought "what a complicated, great place this is, and all these pieces of it that make it work."<sup>19</sup> As much a functionalist as Le Corbusier, who fell in love with the newest and most "modern" parts of the city,<sup>20</sup> Jacobs later described the Manhattan's working districts, the subject of her first essays on the city, as exemplary elements of the "metaphoric space-defining fires... where diverse city uses and users give each other close-grained and lively support."<sup>21</sup>

## **The Radiant City**

A few weeks after Le Corbusier toured New York, his first actual experience with the modern metropolis, Jacobs published her first freelance publication and her first essay on the city.<sup>22</sup> On November 3, 1935, two weeks before her essay appeared in *Vogue*, the *New York Times* reported Le Corbusier's impressions of the city. Whereas New York had been cast as the antithesis, "the exact opposite," of his model Voisin city plan (1925), the city changed him. Upon visiting in

person, he admitted that the city was “violently alive, a wilderness of experiment toward a new order.”<sup>23</sup> Its energy spontaneously produced moments of sublime greatness, such as the composition of buildings on Wall Street, where “the face of Washington seen against the Doric columns of the Sub-Treasury, at the foot of the cliff formed by the skyscrapers” created “one of the most remarkable architectural sights in the world.”<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Rockefeller Center (where Jacobs later worked) was one of the largest building projects on the globe, and was evidence of the new order and the power of modern architecture and rational planning. For Le Corbusier, who broadcast a talk on the promise of the Radiant City at Radio City Music Hall on October 23, the complex revealed that a large and unified group of buildings could be judiciously inserted into a great city, effectively replacing the existing urban fabric and proving what could be achieved at the scale of the city.<sup>25</sup> (Jacobs later drew a similar conclusion.<sup>26</sup>) At present, however, he believed that Manhattan’s skyscrapers remained “tied to the dead body of the old city, fettered to the old order... instead of being set above ground on stilts in such fashion that the ground they stand on is saved for the prime essential of circulation.”<sup>27</sup>

Many of Jacobs’ impressions of the city were similar to Le Corbusier’s. Unlike those who recoiled from city life, she was attracted to the vitality and power of the great city. She understood New York’s significance as the capital of world commerce, exchange, culture, and invention, while nevertheless acknowledging brutality and squalor amid the magnificence. Reminiscent of Le Corbusier’s fascination with gangland New York and his disgust with the inhumanity of its slums, in the first of her four-part series on Manhattan’s working districts, “Where the Fur Flies,” published on November 15, 1935, Jacobs described the Fur District, for example, as a place of particularly aggressive “competition and rivalry,” where there was always

“an undercurrent of danger and an expectation of hold-ups.”<sup>28</sup> In other essays, she described some of the city’s districts as “bleak” and “squalid.”<sup>29</sup>

However, whereas Le Corbusier disliked the functional and esthetic chaos of the city (before visiting Manhattan he considered the visual cacophony of the city’s hodge-podge of buildings to be a social and aesthetic affront), Jacobs saw moments of poetic beauty in the city, all the more gorgeous for the surprise of their juxtapositions.<sup>30</sup> She wrote:

Under the melodramatic roar of the “El,” encircled by hash-houses and Turkish baths, are the shops of hard-boiled, stalwart men, who shyly admit that they are dottles for love, sentiment, and romance. Apprentices, dodging among the hand-carts that are forever rushing to and from the fur and garment districts, dream of the time when they will have their own commission houses. Greeks and Koreans, confessing that they have the hearts of children, build little Japanese gardens. Greenhouse owners declare that they would not sell—at any price—the flowers which grow in their own backyards. A dealer plans how to improve the business that his grandfather started. And orchids in milk-bottles nod at field-flowers in buckets.<sup>31</sup>

For functional as much as aesthetic reasons, Jacobs had no interest in separating one from another. Unlike functionalist city planners of the interwar period, both European and American, who sought to segregate city uses and users and thus to “modernize” the city through “creative destruction,” as historian Max Page has described the dynamic, Jacobs instinctively positioned herself outside of the dualistic choice between revolutionary change and nostalgic stability.<sup>32</sup> In focusing on the un-modernized city between the skyscrapers and business centers of Wall Street and Rockefeller Center, a territory that she observed to be as lively and perhaps more interesting than these business districts, Jacobs sought to understand the preexisting order, to see how the everyday, pedestrian city worked and evolved. As she later wrote in *Death and Life*, the young Jacobs had likely already intuited that “To see complex systems of functional order as order, and not as chaos, takes understanding.”<sup>33</sup>

Although the premise went unstated, Jacobs' essays on Manhattan's working neighborhoods—the Fur, Leather, Diamond, and Flower Districts—were written to offer *Vogue's* uptown readers some insight into the material histories of their prized possessions. At a deeper level, however, all of these vignettes of the city, published between late 1935 and early 1937, when Jacobs was nineteen and twenty, described the complex interactions between people, places, and practices that defined the diverse and lively human ecology of New York, and all great cities.

As material histories, Jacobs' essays described the hidden life of products, the invisible processes and networks that preceded their consumption. In “Where the Fur Flies,” she described how furs followed a rough and tumble “journey from trapper to fur-farmer, to auctioneer to dresser, to dealer to manufacturer to retailer.”<sup>34</sup> “Leather Shocking Tales” explained that cowhide used for shoes went through a process that left nothing to waste: it “first has the soles stamped and cut from it. From the remaining network of scraps, heels are cut. Then shoe tips, and finally washers for plumbing and buttons. What is left goes off to fertilizer factories.”<sup>35</sup> “Diamond in the Tough” revealed that most of the jewelry sold in the squalid Diamond District was not new, but sold “by pawnbrokers after the twelve months stipulated by law—and one month of grace—have elapsed from the time it was pawned.”<sup>36</sup> Lastly, in “Flowers Come to Town,” Jacobs told the story of flowers' travel by truck, boat, and plane to get to New York: “Most of them, from Long Island, Connecticut, and New Jersey, arrive in the city via truck, but those from Florida, California, and Canada come by fast express, and those from South America and Holland by ship. Occasionally, a shipment of gardenias is flown from California by airplane.” And some flowers remarkably left New York again by passenger and airship: “All the large passenger liners are

supplied from the New York market, and, on her eastward trips, the *Hindenburg*, too, carries flowers from Twenty-Eighth Street.”<sup>37</sup>

The bouquet on the *Vogue* reader’s windowsill was revealed as more than a pretty arrangement—it was emblematic of the city’s station in international commerce. By implication, all of these goods—furs, leathers, diamonds, and flowers—were *city* products, products of the city’s networks of process and exchange. Having recently experienced living in a subsistence economy with her aunt in rural North Carolina, Jacobs must have already perceived the significance of the city economies, and the tremendous physical and social infrastructure that brought ephemera like flowers, let alone diamonds, to market. She had likely already intuited that city economies developed first, and rural ones afterwards. As she wrote years later in *The Economy of Cities* (1969), “When we see a factory out in the country, we do not automatically assume that the kind of work being done in the factory originated and developed in the country.”<sup>38</sup> It seems that there would have been little hope of convincing even the young Jacobs in the promise of the Ebenezer Howard’s self-sufficient, suburban Garden City.

The significance of history and context, temporal and spatial juxtaposition, and cultural and economic diversity was already clear to the young writer. In her essays, Jacobs showed places that most New Yorkers did not understand, due to imperceptible changes in space and time, and did not visit because they were located downtown, in the working class districts of the Lower East and West Sides, where the uptown Fifth Avenue shoppers did not tread.

Although the Leather District, for example, was under the escarpment of the Brooklyn Bridge, in the no-man’s land between Wall Street and the Lower East Side, it had once been located outside of the city, a perfect case study of a rural satellite of city commerce. “When Wall

Street really had a wall and was the northern boundary of the city,” Jacobs explained, “the Dutch citizens of New York asked the tanners and leather merchants to carry on their business beyond smelling distance. They obligingly moved out to a swamp in the wilderness just south of where the Brooklyn Bridge is now, and there they have remained for more than two hundred years, letting the city grow up about them.”<sup>39</sup>

By contrast, it was unclear to her why the Jewelry District, “a glittering island in the most squalid section of New York City” located between Hester and Canal Streets in the heart of the Lower East Side ghetto, grew up where it did. “No one seems to know why this location was chosen or why the district continues here,” she wrote. “Twenty-five years ago, the first of the merchants settled in this incongruous setting for no reason now remembered. It is adjacent to no allied centers; it exists by itself, across the street from the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge, surrounded by the almost legendary Bowery life.”<sup>40</sup> What was already clear to her, however, was that these districts did not develop in isolation, apart from their history and context.

As for the city’s economic geography and demographics, Jacobs seems to have taken it for granted that the great city was a global metropolis, populated by people from all over the world. Unlike other observers of the time, there was no hint of condescension in her discussion of the ethnic, working class districts that were viewed by many more affluent New Yorkers as the home of the unwashed masses. By contrast, in “Flowers Come to Town,” the most robust of the four essays, there is a subtle parallel between her description of the many varieties of flowers on display and the cultural diversity of immigrant shopkeepers. The implication was that the great city’s diversity paralleled that of the natural world.

Although Jacobs did not attempt to synthesize an overarching thesis of city development until years later, the Flower District's evolution may again have provided some clues. Now located around 28<sup>th</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Middle West Side, the district's origins were on the other side of the island, in a "wholesale market started about fifty-five years ago, well within the memory of the older dealers." At that time, Jacobs continued, "most of the growers lived on Long Island and brought their flowers over in market baskets every morning. They were met by the retail florists at the ferry landing at Thirty-Fourth Street and the East River."<sup>41</sup> Eventually, a competing group of growers established a market at the present location, which displaced a restaurant near the docks that had served as the informal market. The center of the trade then shifted, and small flower businesses, many owned by Greek, Italian, and Oriental immigrants, set up shop behind the neighborhood's nondescript brownstone fronts. Anticipating a chapter in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* on "The Need for Aged Buildings," the young Jacobs also seems to have already understood the importance of old, un-modernized buildings to city economies as business and culture incubators. Modern skyscrapers alone, no matter how tall and no matter how efficient, could not replace them.

Jacobs' nascent sense of context, interconnectivity and self-organization, history and city dynamics was thus from the outset in significant contrast to the revolutionary, anti-historical, and utopian spirit of modernism. A child of the Machine Age and the Suffrage Movement, Jacobs was perhaps too young to experience modernity as a rupture with tradition and the dawn of a new epoch, "one of the great metamorphoses of history," as Le Corbusier's generation saw it.<sup>42</sup> Her impressionable moment was the experience of New York City of the Great Depression, which she celebrated for its ability to continue to work. If others saw the need to re-plan and re-create the

city in the image of the machine, it was, for her, already more than a machine. Despite the Depression, and the city's congestion—or rather because of it—the city continued to tick like clockwork, as seen in the Fur District, where,

From eleven o'clock in the morning until four or five o'clock in the afternoon, a steady flow of fur-heaped handcarts and racks runs north, and a stream of both empty and full ones runs south. Those going north are to fill the orders of manufacturers and retailers farther up-town, and the loaded ones running south are furs being returned as unsatisfactory.<sup>43</sup>

However, as Jacobs later explained with her bonfires metaphor, the city defied being reduced to a single “design device that will express, in clear and easy fashion” its structures and functions.<sup>44</sup> Her early essays already suggest that she did not believe, as Le Corbusier argued in his Radio City speech on the promise of the Radiant City, that new architecture and a new city plan could eliminate disharmonies between the individual and the collective.<sup>45</sup> Just the opposite. In the life of four working districts in the more bleak and squalid parts of the Lower East and Middle West Sides, the disordered and unkempt urban no-man's land of miserable low buildings and dirty brick streets between the skyscrapers of the Financial District and Rockefeller Center, Jacobs found the spirit of New York and its hope for the future. It was in these working districts, “where diverse city uses and users give each other close-grained and lively support,” that the multicultural collective of the city and its people harmonized, not like an autonomous machine, but as part of a globally-connected living system.<sup>46</sup> Whereas Le Corbusier hated the congested inefficiencies of New York's streets: “the streets of the new city have nothing in common with those appalling nightmares, the downtown street of New York,” he wrote in 1929, Jacobs found the essence of the city in its vibrant street life. As compared to the Modernist perspective, Jacobs'



“modernity,” as Marshall Berman argued in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982), was characterized by her affinity for “the man on the street.”<sup>47</sup>

Thus whereas Le Corbusier saw his imagined Radiant City as the promise and expression of a productive and ennobled society, Jacobs looked for this in the existing city, in how people and the city worked together, and created one another. The young Jacobs, an aspiring poet and writer who was said to have experimented with the bohemian eccentricities of dress and behavior “typical of ‘the village’,” understood the potential for people to change the city just as well as its potential to change people.<sup>48</sup> This is how she might have defined a “radiant” city.

## **Slumming and Unslumming**

Although it was considered a slum district only a few decades earlier, in the 1930s Greenwich Village was the home of some of the nation’s most celebrated poets, writers, playwrights, and painters. As a working district in its own right, the primary products of the neighborhood to which Jacobs naturally gravitated were the arts and other forms of avant-garde cultural experimentation. With contributions from Lincoln Steffens, Willa Cather, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Theodore Dreiser, E. E. Cummings, the Ashcan School of artists, and the University in Exile figures at The New School for Social Research, the Village had not only “unslummed,” as Jacobs later described the phenomenon, it had become the nation’s testing ground for progressive expressions of literature, sexuality, politics, the visual arts, and cultural criticism. “The ‘Village’,” wrote Caroline Ware in 1935, “was the center of the American Renaissance or of artiness, of

political progress or of long-haired radical men and short-haired radical women, of sex freedom or of sex license—dependent upon the point of view.”<sup>49</sup>

As she uncovered the history of other Manhattan neighborhoods for her early essays, Jacobs was likely aware that the renaissance of her own new neighborhood—an “unslummed former slum,” as she described it later—was a recent and ongoing phenomenon.<sup>50</sup>

A microcosm of New York’s diversity and dynamics, Greenwich Village was exemplary of the city’s life, death, and rebirth. In colonial and revolutionary New-York, the area was inhabited by both freed African slaves and those seeking to escape the congestion of the city walls in a pastoral suburb. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Village’s salubrious setting meant not just rural beauty, but life and death. After a series of outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera overtook the walled city, many of those seeking to escape the epidemics and who could afford to do so settled permanently in the suburb, prompting a wave of development and real estate speculation in the 1820s and 30s. Helping to stimulate this first wave of gentrification, the city government undertook an early urban redevelopment project that turned a paupers’ cemetery into the Washington Square parade ground. New York University erected buildings on the east side of the square in 1836, and the neighborhood soon became the home of libraries, literary saloons, and art clubs.<sup>51</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, however, the city spread northward, pushed by waves of immigration, into the suburbs. Much of the “American Ward,” as the fashionable part of Greenwich Village was known, became a crowded and ethnically diverse industrial slum as its surrounding warehouses were converted to factories and its deteriorated housing stock was subdivided into hotels and tenements.<sup>52</sup> “Colored people and immigrants from Europe were

surrounding it,” Jacobs later wrote in *Death and Life*, and “neither physically nor socially was the neighborhood equipped to handle their presence—no more, apparently, than a semisuburb is so equipped today.” Much of the white middle-class community fled to settle a new suburb, “a new quiet residential area of unbelievable dullness,” leaving Greenwich Village to deteriorate.<sup>53</sup>

Yet by the time Jacobs moved there a few decades later, Greenwich Village’s bohemian renaissance was evidence of the “unslumming” process that Jacobs later described as among “the greatest regenerative forces inherent in energetic metropolitan economies.”<sup>54</sup> Clearly alluding to her personal experience, she believed that Greenwich Village had become an “unslummed former slum” because it had attracted an energetic, ambitious, and affluent population. As she later wrote, “dull neighborhoods are inevitably deserted by their more energetic, ambitious, or affluent citizens, and also by their young people who can get away,” and believed that the reverse was true for the high-vitality neighborhoods.<sup>55</sup> Greenwich Village had retained something of its historic vitality and it had attracted “vigorous new blood.” Unslumming, Jacobs explained, hinged “on whether a considerable number of the residents and businessmen [writers and artists] of a slum find it both desirable and practical to make and carry out their own plans right there.”<sup>56</sup>

In fact, by the time Jacobs moved to Greenwich Village and Le Corbusier visited Manhattan to promote his Radiant City, many of New York’s worst and most overcrowded slums had improved significantly, and had “uncrowded” despite exponential city-wide population growth. While this was not true for Harlem, where people, as Jacobs later stated, were “cruelly overcrowded in their shelter and cruelly overcharged for it” because they had little economic or geographic choice, the Lower East Side, once counted among the oldest, densest, and most desperate slums in the world, had improved significantly. This was due, on the one hand, to the

city's status as a center of social reform efforts, progressive legislation, infrastructural investment, architectural experimentation, slum redevelopment projects, and the other "firsts" and "greatest" that drew both Jacobs and Le Corbusier to the city. But on the other hand, although New York's population doubled between 1900 and 1935, from 3.4 to 7 million people, even the Lower East Side had improved more than reformers and city planners could have imagined possible.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, without any totalizing master-plan, one of the worst slums in the world lost half of its population and "unslummed" through a more complex and irreplicable set of circumstances that was more than any social critic, legislator, developer, or urban theorist could single-handedly achieve or easily understand.

With a national, if not international, reputation for being the worst slum district in the world by the early 1800s, Manhattan's Lower East Side had been the focus for the best intentions of housing and social reformers for at least a century.<sup>58</sup> Already disadvantaged by geography when Greenwich Village was a bucolic location for colonial agricultural estates, the lower east part of Manhattan was a swampy, second-class, crossroads geography. Surrounding the increasingly polluted Collect Pond were the homes of freed slaves and Jews as well as the tanneries, breweries, and slaughterhouses that, as Jacobs observed in her early essays, the downtown establishment had been expelled from the walled city. Around the time wealthy Manhattanites began to settle suburban Greenwich Village in the early 1800s, the eastside neighborhood known as Five Points spiraled down even further, becoming the city's center of vice, gangs, and impoverished tenement life. Compelled to act, in the first in a long series of New-York slum clearance "firsts," the city government made use of the powers of eminent domain granted by the state legislature in 1800, and, in the 1830s, razed part of the Five Points

core, creating the angular and paradoxically named Paradise Park, which soon became a site for gang battles (as Jacobs wrote in *Death and Life* happened again in the 1950s). Nearby, as Washington Square was being cleared, the city landfilled the polluted Collect Pond, and built a massive prison, a “dismal-fronted pile of bastard Egyptian,” appropriately dubbed The Tombs, on the damp site.<sup>59</sup>

While progressive, these mid-nineteenth century developments, which were contemporary with development renaissances in London and Edinburgh, were overwhelmed by the city’s exponential population growth, much of it from the Irish Famine, which was turning New-York into a great city. In the 1840s and ‘50s, benevolent societies and real estate speculators—including the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, founded in 1845, and real estate developer Silas Wood, who built the soon infamous Gotham Court tenant-house in 1850—addressed the housing situation in individual ways.<sup>60</sup> Charles Dickens, who visited New-York around this time, described the Five Points district as a place where

ruined houses, open to the street, whence, through wide gaps in the walls, other ruins loom upon the eye, as though the world of vice and misery had nothing else to show: hideous tenements which take their name from robbery and murder: all that is loathsome, drooping, and decayed is here.<sup>61</sup>

The city had grown ten times—from 100,000 in 1810 to 1,200,000 people in 1880—but not until the 1860s and ‘70s was significant legislative reform brought to bear. Public health was the primary motivation, followed by more morally-motivated public interests. In 1864, contemporary with London’s sanitary sewer building program (which followed that city’s Broad Street cholera outbreak of 1854 and The Great Stink of 1858), New-York organized its first systematic sanitary survey and established of a Metropolitan Board of Health. This was soon

followed by the Tenement House Act of 1867, which mandated fire escapes. This nascent public interest in urban slums, in other words, was prompted by epidemics and safety concerns that were understood to have impacts not just on the slums, but the entire city.

The slums provided the city with bordellos, gambling houses, opium dens, and political corruption, and by the 1880s, “*Slumming*, the latest fashionable idiosyncrasy in London, i.e., the visiting of the slums of the great city by parties of ladies and gentlemen for sightseeing,” had reached New-York.<sup>62</sup> With some regret that the old Five Points was now gone, the writer of a September 1884 *New York Times* article discussed the “best” districts for sight-seeing: “The old Five Points would have proved a perfect paradise to the *slummers*, but because it exists no more let it not be supposed that the squalor and poverty that characterized that pest spot does not exist elsewhere in this city.”<sup>63</sup> New-York’s slums rivaled London’s not only in squalor, but diversity. There were numerous places for the sight-seer “to see people of whom they had heard, but of whom they were as ignorant as if they were inhabitants of a strange country.”

At the same time, however, the author suggested that slumming had the possibility of stimulating betterment. In London, “*slumming* has brought to the notice of the rich much suffering, and led to many sanitary reforms,” the author observed, although this was not yet the case in New-York: “So far the mania here has assumed the single form of sight-seeing—the more noble ambition of alleviating the condition of the desperately poor visited has not animated the adventurous parties.”<sup>64</sup>

This soon changed. Between 1890 and 1900, the city doubled again in number, from 1.5 to 3 million people, and soon half of the city’s population lived in the exploitive and highly profitable tenement houses that crept north between Manhattan’s waterfronts and the highroad of

Fifth Avenue.<sup>65</sup> Paralleling the British experience, where slumming stimulated reform, a public fad for salacious publications about slum life, such as *Darkness and Daylight, or Lights and Shadows of New York Life* (1892), was followed by police-reporter-turned-photojournalist Jacob Riis' muckraking exposé *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (1890). Prompted by Riis and growing public interest, the city government razed the "foul core" of the Lower East Side for a second time in 1888, and, with the assistance of the Small Parks Act of 1887, turned the razed site, once again, into a park, both repeating the past and anticipating the future.

Located a few blocks from the Five Points slum clearance of 1833—and one block south of the focus area of Jacobs' essay "Diamonds in the Tough"—Mulberry Bend was "one of the first slum clearance projects on a modern scale."<sup>66</sup> It was not without the difficulties of an inaugural effort, however. Almost ten years passed before Mulberry Bend Park (later Columbus Park) opened in 1897. Anticipating future debates about public-private development that would continue indefinitely, the park's construction was delayed by the soon familiar dilemmas of determining compensation for the owners of the condemned properties, evicting tenants, and wrangling over whether adjacent property owners—who would ostensibly profit from proximity to a new pleasure ground—should bear part of the cost of the public investment.<sup>67</sup>

In the end, Jacob Riis and other reformers, including the Union for Concerted Moral Effort, a group of uptown religious leaders whose mission was "to make war on the slums and cut them to pieces with parks and playgrounds," felt that the exemplary Mulberry Bend Park was a success.<sup>68</sup> While the park was still under construction, a reporter wrote that the proper and picturesque people's pleasure ground would be "a welcome bit of green nature that will be more

than grateful to a wretched and hopelessly poverty-stricken part of the community, comprising people of various nationalities, with scarcely an American among them.”<sup>69</sup>

As historian Max Page has written, Riis and others believed that as much as the tenement buildings themselves were inherently evil, “nature,” in the form of pastoral parks and elegant pleasure grounds, was an unmitigated good.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, so powerful was this belief that, in the 1880s, “flower charities” distributed “floral gifts” among the poor in the tenements to raise their spirits, as if flowers alone possessed the power to transform homes and neighborhoods. “What a pleasure it must be to a sufferer imprisoned in one of these tenements to receive a flower, with its color and its green leaves and stems! For every one some time must have seen green fields and breathed their pure air,” wrote one sincere observer.<sup>71</sup> If one flower had such properties, so much more a park. Parks, it was believed with equal sincerity, were not only good for real estate values, they improved public health by providing sunlight and fresh air, socialized immigrants, reduced crime, inspired civilized behavior, mitigated social unrest, and otherwise firmed up the body politic.

Jacobs, who later compared modern city planning practices to nineteenth-century medical pseudoscience, condemned the Urban Renewal era’s anti-urban belief that grass indicated improved in living conditions decades later. However, the “sentimentalization” of nature (which she also recognized as having its roots in the French Enlightenment) was well established in New York well before then.<sup>72</sup> The suburban ideal had been enjoyed by New York’s upper classes since at least the Gilded Age. Around the time that Llewellyn Park, the first suburban housing enclave for wealthy commuters, was built in 1853, Henry James wrote that “New York was both squalid and gilded, to be fled rather than enjoyed.”<sup>73</sup>



In response to a similar dilemma in London, around the turn of the century, Ebenezer Howard's bold "social cities" concept sought to mediate economic disparities and the competing attractions of town and country by creating the "Garden City." The lynchpin of his plan, as outlined in *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (1898), was an inter-municipal railway that would allow the population of metropolitan London to decentralize to satellite suburbs, and permit the emptied city to be rebuilt.

In New York, visionaries had similar ideas, and, in the decades preceding Jacobs' move to the city, similar results came to pass, although without same degree of top-down planning that Howard's plan seemed to need. In 1891, leaders of the Union for Concerted Moral Effort, who, as noted, advocated for municipal parks for the poor, also lobbied for a municipally-owned transit system that would solve the problem of city crowding by making less congested districts, such as Harlem, accessible to the working class.<sup>74</sup> At this time, Manhattan's elevated railroad system was the longest in the world by 1890, but it was slow, overcrowded, expensive, privately-owned, and had limited connections to neighboring cities off the island. Although far less radical than Howard's proposal to reform land ownership, the idea of a municipally-owned transit system was still considered by some to be "socialist," but it eventually came to pass.<sup>75</sup>

In 1904, ten years after the demolition of Mulberry Bend, Greater New York's first subway opened, and the privately-owned Interborough Rapid Transit line soon carried 600,000 people daily. In the 1920s, with the support of Gov. Alfred E. Smith (a native of the Lower East Side), the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit system, also privately-owned, added seven new crossings of the East River. Finally, in 1932, a few years before Jacobs' move to the city, the municipally-owned Independent Rapid Transit Railroad added 190 miles of subway. Soon the melodramatic

roar of the Els, which were torn down as the subways were built, was replaced by the construction noise of the Roaring '20s.

With improved mass transit, New York's demographics changed physically and perceptually. Although New York had grown to over 7 million people, by 1930 the population of the Lower East Side had been halved, from its high of 530,000 to 250,000, as residents moved to the now consolidated boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx.<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, many patrician Greenwich Village "Locals" moved to the Upper East Side, and bohemian "Villagers" like Jacobs moved in, re-gentrifying the neighborhood. "Foreigners," immigrants, and African-Americans, "retreated before the advance of the Villager," and rents rose exponentially, even forcing out many artists by 1927. A national newspaper headline of the time read "Greenwich Village Too Costly Now For Artists To Live There: Values Increase So That Only Those Who Can Write Fluently In Check Books Can Afford It."<sup>77</sup> With a new generation, however, sentiments about the city's diversity and its slums also changed.<sup>78</sup> The bohemian and progressive Villagers held in high regard the authentic life experience and political organization of the ethnic Lower East Side, which had become the center of the labor movement and socialist politics.<sup>79</sup> In Harlem, meanwhile, the African American community had contributed significantly to the legendary sound and spirit of the Jazz Age. For Le Corbusier, whose visit to Harlem was among the highlights of his visit to the U.S., Harlem's sound was "the music of an era of construction" and its spirit was that of the Machine Age.<sup>80</sup>

The sound of the Roaring Twenties was not just that of the subway and the construction of new apartment buildings, however—this was the start of the automobile age and of the car's transformation of the American landscape. By the 1920s, architects, planners, and reformers

including Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Lewis Mumford, and Catherine Bauer, who were inspired by Ebenezer Howard's "social cities" ideals, sought to bring the benefits of suburban life to the middle and working-class commuter. Mass transit and the automobile made the city's less congested boroughs and its suburbs increasingly accessible. Stein and Wright's Sunnyside Gardens (1924), located adjacent to an elevated station in Long Island City, was billed as the first step toward their "ultimate purpose of building an American Garden City."<sup>81</sup> This was followed in 1928 by their model commuter suburb Radburn, New Jersey, a "Suburban Garden City for the Motor Age," designed with a "super-block" plan that eliminated "the annoyances of old-time towns," including urban congestion, both human and vehicular.<sup>82</sup>

Thus, although Jacobs later blamed Howard and Le Corbusier for wanting to radically transform the city, in the years before her move to New York, mass transit and the automobile had already begun to do so, at once decentralizing and "unslumming" the city. In fact, by the time that Jacobs moved to the city, the urban exodus was so significant that suburban sprawl and traffic congestion, the unanticipated consequences of "unslumming," were already problems.

Years later, Jacobs recognized that "unslumming" and suburbanization were corollaries. In the chapter of *Death and Life* titled "Unslumming and Slumming," she observed that the underlying "processes by which it [unslumming] happens have changed surprisingly little over the decades." But, she admitted that,

What is new is that unfit neighborhoods can be deserted more swiftly, and slums can and do spread thinner and farther, than was the case in the days before automobiles and government-guaranteed mortgages for suburban developments, when it was less practical for families with choice to flee neighborhoods that were displaying some of the normal and inevitable conditions that accompany city life (such as the presence of strangers)...<sup>83</sup>

Despite other flaws in his city planning ideas, Le Corbusier already understood this. When he visited New York in 1935 and spoke of the Radiant City, he recognized that “the suburb is the great problem of the U.S.A.”<sup>84</sup> Although he was mesmerized by the automobile, he wanted to keep the countryside free of the “vast, sprawling built-up area encircling the city”; to eliminate long commuting “spent daily in the metros, buses, and Pullmans that causes the destruction of that communal life which is the very marrow of a nation”; and to keep people and their homes “in the middle of the city instead of in Connecticut.”<sup>85</sup> The Radiant City was, literally, Le Corbusier’s proposal for “smart growth,” long before that term was invented.

Thus, by the time Jacobs moved to Greenwich Village, the option to live in the heart of the city, or not, was a choice for much of the population. Those seeking more space and greenery moved to the suburbs, if they could afford it, just as some had left the walled city of Manhattan for the suburbs of Greenwich Village a century earlier.

Town and country, which each had its various, age-old attractions—their “magnets,” as Ebenezer Howard put it—each also had its advocates. Whereas urban reformers like Lewis Mumford, who left New York for the country, generally regarded the congested conditions of the city as a sign of blight, Jacobs saw just the opposite. For her the suburbs, suburban parts of cities, and so-called Garden Cities, were “Great Blights of Dullness,” that, devoid of social and economic diversity, had the great potential of becoming slums.<sup>86</sup> They reminded her of places that she had left.

## **Suburbanized Urbanism and the “Functional City”**

When Federal Art Project photographer Berenice Abbott captured images of the Lower East Side during the same months as Le Corbusier’s visit and Jacobs’ essays, she recognized that she was witnessing “the end of something”—and she was right.<sup>87</sup>

As predicted by Ebenezer Howard and others, decentralization caused people and industries to move, real estate values to fall, and rebuilding opportunities to increase. Real estate developers were attracted to the Lower East Side as a source of cheap real estate, and for reformers and city government, the time was similarly ripe to redevelop the city’s oldest slum with public parks, highways like FDR Drive, and low-rental housing projects that could be built according to efficient, industrialized, and modern standards of construction and planning. As Jacobs later wrote, “The very fact that a slum has uncrowded itself makes it an extremely tempting site for whole or partial urban ‘renewal’ clearance.”<sup>88</sup> Soon some of the sights and neighborhoods that she got to know in her first years in New York would be gone.

As compared to the “creative destruction” of Manhattan before the Great Depression, city redevelopment in the 1930s was even more complicated. Housing shortages, a new sensitivity to social movements on the part of both intellectuals and the masses, the simultaneous appearance of modern architecture and a new federal housing legislation and subsidies, and increased problems of traffic and congestion in an ever-growing city, all combined with new opportunities to commute, to decentralize the city, and the lure of nature in the suburban way of life.

Indeed, while Jacobs was still in high school, a series of events took place that would shape urban redevelopment in New York City and elsewhere in America for decades to come.

One of these events was the seminal “Modern Architecture” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932, curated by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, which introduced Americans to European modernism and which featured an exhibition on housing organized by Stein, Wright, Mumford, and Catherine Bauer, who was then at work on *Modern Housing* (1936). An equally critical and related event was the passage of President Hoover’s Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932, which established a loan fund under the auspices of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and launched the federal government’s first major involvement in housing.<sup>89</sup> The RFC funded only one slum clearance housing project—Knickerbocker Village, located in the Lower East Side—before it was superseded by President Roosevelt’s Public Works Administration, the National Housing Act of 1934, and the establishment of the New York City Housing Authority.<sup>90</sup> The program, however, was the start of federally subsidized “urban renewal,” although it was not called that until the Housing Act of 1954. Under Robert Moses’ influence, Knickerbocker Village became the first large-scale housing project built with the assistance of public funds. Moreover, the promise of federal subsidies stimulated other proposals for the large-scale and wholesale reconstruction of the Lower East Side in its entirety, eventually creating a modified Radiant City-like community of “Towers in a Park.”<sup>91</sup> Through the idealism and good-intentions of reformers, the availability of federal funds, and the overarching suburban impulse, “Manhattanism” was transformed into “suburbanized urbanism.”

“Manhattanism,” as Rem Koolhaas defined it, was a developer-driven (i.e., capitalist) and pre-Modernist “urbanistic ideology” of hyper-density that was, in New York, a unique product of “the splendors and miseries of the metropolitan condition.”<sup>92</sup> In the early 1930s, the initial

redevelopment proposals for the Chrystie-Forsyth and Knickerbocker Village sites in the Lower East Side were among its last and most poignant expressions.

The Chrystie-Forsyth slum was cleared first, in 1930, and the initial proposals to redevelop the site remained stuck in the vision of a Jazz Age City whose time had passed. Early redevelopment concepts by Maxwell Fry and Arthur J. Frappier, which were conceived at about the time that the Empire State Building was completed in 1931, were nevertheless too late for their time.<sup>93</sup> Arthur Frappier's renderings, drawn for the Regional Plan Association, replaced the Lower East Side slums with a fragment of a new skyscraper city flanked by a new multilane automobile parkway and viaduct expressway designed to improve circulation to the Manhattan Bridge. The spirit of the image, with spot lights illuminating the sky and a multilevel transportation system, was a combination of Beaux-Arts civic design, nineteenth century technophilia like in "King's Dreams of New York" (1911-12), and Jazz Age futurism. Such Manhattan fantasies contributed to European modernists' obsession with the city. Maxwell Fry's proposal was more subdued, inspired less by the Empire State Building than by Rockefeller Center. However, entitled the "City of the Future," it was no less of a fantasy.

Although limited to a single block, the initial 1933 proposal for the Knickerbocker Village site was equally ambitious. In this case, speculative real estate developer Fred French had a plan to transform a notorious, tuberculosis-ridden "lung block," which had been identified as a subsequent slum clearance site as early as 1903, into a high-rise, high-density, and "high-class" residential development located five blocks from Mulberry Bend, but from which Wall Street executives could walk to work.<sup>94</sup>

Such plans had worked in the Roaring Twenties. In 1925, French had built Tudor City, which transformed riverfront slums in Midtown Manhattan into the city's first upscale, high-rise enclave, with 3,000 apartments and 600 hotel rooms in twelve elevator buildings surrounding a private interior park.

Except for a federal subsidy, however, the Depression would have been the end of the scheme. Although French had acquired the land by the summer of 1929 through a host of shell corporations, and had commissioned a design by John S. Van Wart and Frederick Ackerman, the stock market crash that fall shelved the project. A few years later, however, the project seemed like a good candidate for a federal subsidy under President Hoover's Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932, at least to Robert Moses. Then chairman of the city's Emergency Public Works Commission, Moses helped French obtain the loan needed to build the project, which was completed in 1934, not long before Jacobs' visit to the Lower East Side. Built more or less as planned, it was nevertheless an anomalous moment of Manhattanism, a high-rise, high-density development for 1,600 apartments on three acres.

Ultimately Knickerbocker Village was rented to middle-class families, not wealthy, but it was clear to all that the project did little for the slum dwellers of the Lower East Side. In an April 1933 exposé in *The Nation*, New York Socialist Party organizer Henry J. Rosner wrote that despite all the publicity surrounding the demolition of the notorious "lung block" for Knickerbocker Village, the neighborhood's original residents would only be worse off for being displaced. Anticipating Jacobs' complaint of "slum shifting" decades later, he wrote that "the displaced tenants will merely move into old-law tenements on the next block which will be a little



less dreary, dilapidated, and unhealthy... Two blocks of slums will be destroyed, but several others will be perpetuated.”<sup>95</sup>

Progressive critics, including architect Frederick Ackerman and Robert Moses himself, agreed. Commenting on Rosner’s article, Moses replied that the solution to larger-scale slum clearance and low-cost housing would be targeted federal subsidies—exactly what would soon come to pass in New Deal and later in Urban Renewal housing legislation. Keenly anticipating the future, Moses wrote,

I know the limitations of the Knickerbocker Village and I think I have some idea of what ought to be done on a large scale. It was immensely difficult to get this one project under way in the face of the reluctance of city officials to grant tax exemption and the bitter opposition of real estate and other interests... the solution of the problem lies at Washington, and if proper provision can be made by law for slum clearance and low-cost housing as part of a reorganized Federal Public Works program, we can get somewhere. This probably involves a Federal subsidy.<sup>96</sup>

In this way, Knickerbocker Village was not only a final moment of Manhattanism, it was the beginning of the transition to more progressive, modern, and suburban models. Although all seemed to agree that slums needed to be torn down, using public funds to displace low-income tenants, gentrify neighborhoods, and profit real estate developers gave some pause, although it was a harbinger of things to come. Suburban-minded reformers, meanwhile, felt that the Knickerbocker Village housing model was too dense, too driven by real estate development profits, and too much like the slums they replaced in terms of the basic amenities of light, air, and open space.

As seen in the housing projects on display in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition on “Modern Architecture,” European architects and planners were already providing these basic necessities. Douglas Haskell, architecture critic for *The Nation* and Jacobs’ future boss, wrote in

March 1932, that the German *Siedlungen*, especially Ernst May's 15,000-family housing project in Frankfurt, represented "the best that the twentieth century can do for the average man."<sup>97</sup> And the person "who knows what sort of house is most practical for living in is not the speculator or the financier," he continued, "but the architect."

The architect knows because he has subordinated his study of land, money, and materials—the only science most contemporary architecture knows—to the real problem, which concerns space, comfort, sanitation, sunlight, and gardens—in short, human habitation.<sup>98</sup>

Although Haskell was not dogmatic about architectural approaches or styles and ultimately a "city person," his arguments for suburban living were broadly shared. "Frankfurt," he wrote, "believes that a citizen is happier when he can step right out of his living-room into a garden and get his fingers in the dirt." Many Americans, architects and not, believed this too. Therefore even before the impact of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City and Le Corbusier's Radiant City, New York architects had developed an indigenous "garden apartment" type, first built in the suburbs of Queens in 1918, but soon in Manhattan as well.<sup>99</sup> By the 1920s, New York architects like Arthur C. Holden, a future acquaintance of Jacobs, invented a new model of "suburbanized urbanism."<sup>100</sup> Developed in consultation with the Regional Plan Association in the late 1920s, Holden's prototypical redevelopment model was a cross between high-density Manhattanism and the low-density New York garden apartment, combining the advantages of urban density and suburban open space, while potentially maintaining the urban context and block structure.

Thus, by the early 1930s, suburban-minded town planning concepts developed by European architects found a receptive audience in the United States, and by 1931, such proposals were put forward for the still vacant Chrystie-Forsyth slum clearance site. These included plans by the Philadelphia and New York based architectural firm of George Howe and William

Lescaze, which had become the most celebrated American modern architectural practice with the completion of the first modernist skyscraper, the PSFS Building in Philadelphia, in 1932. On the heels of this great accomplishment, between 1931 and 1933, the firm submitted proposals not only for Chrystie-Forsyth, but a massive plan for the redevelopment of *all* of the Lower East Side, from the Chrystie-Forsyth site on the west to the East River, Houston Street on the north to the Manhattan Bridge.<sup>101</sup>

After sitting for almost four years, the Chrystie-Forsyth site became new Parks Commissioner Robert Moses' Sara Delano Roosevelt Park (1934), a relatively inexpensive and tested solution for slum clearance. Both of Lescaze's projects, however, were ground-breaking attempts to adapt European modernism to Manhattan—and were visions of things to come. Designed by Lescaze with the assistance of Albert Fry, who had worked in Le Corbusier's office from 1928 to 1929, their Chrystie-Forsythe housing proposal for 24 ten-story apartment slabs was influenced by Le Corbusier's Immeubles-Villas (1925-29) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's apartment block at the Weissenhof Siedlung at Stuttgart (1927). Although these projects' architectural refinements would eventually disappear, the height, massing, and some of the architectural features of Lescaze and Fry's design would be carried forward into the housing built in the 1950s.<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile, their massive River Gardens project, which was comprised of some one hundred cruciform buildings, eight-, seventeen-, and thirty-one-stories in height, was similarly inspired by Le Corbusier's Radiant City, and it anticipated projects like the New York City Housing Authority's Fort Greene Houses (1941) and the first large-scale public-private slum clearance project, Stuyvesant Town (1943). By the mid 1950s, however, the difference between

original ideas and vulgarized ones was recognized by thoughtful observers, including Jane Jacobs.

In 1932, Johnson and Hitchcock wrote in the book accompanying the “Modern Architecture” exhibition that Howe & Lescaze’s work was “an increasingly successful attempt to apply in America, with full regard for all our conditions, the technical and aesthetic ideas of modern architecture.”<sup>103</sup> Indeed, their Chrystie-Forsythe and River Gardens projects sought to preserve the existing city grid and block structure. Nevertheless, by the time that Jacobs moved to New York, the hybridization of American garden apartment models and “super-block” concepts with European modernist architectural tenets and “Functional City” ideas was nearly complete.

In 1934, President Roosevelt signed the National Housing Act, delivering much of what Robert Moses, Mayor La Guardia, and other progressives hoped for. The legislation engaged a new Public Works Administration in urban slum clearance and the construction of public housing, and it provided the impetus for the establishment of state and local housing authorities.

Under the new legislation, the New York City Housing Authority was established that same year and was empowered to use federal funds and issue bonds for slum clearance, public housing construction, and the management of housing projects.<sup>104</sup> Among housing authorities, it was an especially progressive institution. Mayor La Guardia, who was a native of Greenwich Village and the personification of the multicultural city, was particularly proud of his appointments to the Housing Authority: Tenement House Commissioner Langdon Post, Greenwich Settlement House director Mary K. Simkhovitch, Catholic Charities administrator Rev. Roberts Moore, attorney Louis Pink, and American Labor Party leader Charney Vladek. “Where can you find a housing board to equal it—an idealist on housing, a social worker, a

Catholic priest, and a Socialist!” he exclaimed.<sup>105</sup> It was an overwhelmingly liberal-minded group, not unlike Jacobs herself (who soon affiliated with the Labor Party), which sought to provide as much affordable housing to as many New Yorkers as possible. In 1935, when First Houses was completed, the Authority announced an ambitious plan for housing 500,000 people within the coming decade.<sup>106</sup> And, it should be added, at a time when segregation was de rigueur, the New York City Housing Authority adopted a policy of integration decades before civil rights legislation mandated fair housing policies.

Despite the initial fanfare, however, First Houses was generally considered a failed experiment. Although it was designed by Frederick Ackerman, who was one of the most respected housing architects of the time (and the designer of the housing blocks for Stein & Wright’s Sunnyside Gardens and Radburn, as well as Knickerbocker Village), the First Houses model provided too few apartments and, according to both liberal and progressive critics, at too great a cost.

In what was meant to be a modest undertaking, the initial plan for First Houses was to demolish every third tenement building on the site, in order to provide daylight and fresh air, and to renovate the remainder, creating a courtyard apartment block not unlike Knickerbocker Village. In the process, however, it was discovered that the 1846 tenements were in too poor a state to be rehabilitated. After three of the eight were renovated, all but a few walls and the foundations of the rest were torn down, and new apartments were built from the salvaged bricks.<sup>107</sup>

In the end, First Houses was criticized as “a million dollar extravagance” because of its cost overruns. The project’s defenders, including Eleanor Roosevelt, whom Jacobs admired,

argued that public housing's costs might not be recovered in cash, but they would be paid over again in social benefits.<sup>108</sup> Mayor LaGuardia similarly countered that “if private capital cannot build cheerful houses with windows and enough space for sunshine and air at low rentals they should not complain when the government does it.”<sup>109</sup>

Housing Authority Chairman Langdon Post ultimately agreed with the critics. He defended the project as an experiment, with successes and some failures. He stated that First Houses had served “as an excellent laboratory for gaining experience in the handling of low-rent tenants and in running low-rented projects,” but he conceded that the project had cost too much.<sup>110</sup> Even more significant for the future of public housing and urban renewal, however, Post recognized that First Houses had provided an opportunity “to test the Authority's power to condemn land for slum clearance—a test which we won.” By upholding the Authority's power to condemn two parcels that an intractable owner refused to sell, a State Appeals Court established a significant legal precedent for the use of eminent domain upon which future urban redevelopment was predicated.<sup>111</sup>

Housing advocates, meanwhile, did not think that renovation models, whether undertaken by real estate developers or the city, were adequate. Housing Authority chief counsel Charles Abrams, a future friend of Jacobs, did not believe that real estate developers could provide affordable housing in renovated buildings. He offered that “any attempt to provide minimum present-day housing requirements in old-law tenements must result in compromise because of prohibitive costs. It will be far cheaper to demolish the old buildings and reconstruct the areas anew.”<sup>112</sup> Lewis Mumford, who believed that even the city's wealthiest citizens lived in antiquated and architecturally inadequate quarters, agreed. Reviewing First Houses in the *New*

*Yorker*, he bluntly stated that “the cost of renovation is so great that one might as well tear down these lousy quarters and make a fresh start.”<sup>113</sup>

Renovating the existing city, in other words, was almost immediately taken off the table. For anyone concerned with modern housing, renovation projects looked too much like the old city and functioned too much like the old housing models. First Houses, for example, failed to take advantage of maximum solar gain, offered little cross-ventilation, occupied more than 40% of the site when more open space would have been better, and, in the end, it was still surrounded on all sides by other tenements. Rebuilding the storefront buildings, with shops at street level, emphasized the old-fashioned nature of the typology, and emphasized street life, when a suburban way of life was accepted as the ideal. The approach, moreover, was *piecemeal* when *large-scale* slum clearance was believed necessary to abate the spreading “cancer” of slums and meet the enormous need for decent housing. Having received fifteen thousand applications for First Houses’ 122 apartments, the Housing Authority judged that a different approach was clearly necessary to meet demand, satisfy critics, and to reach the goal of providing 5,000 apartments a year.<sup>114</sup>

Williamsburg Houses (1934-37), the Housing Authority’s first independently initiated housing project, was intended to answer all of these demands. It was designed and planned by a team of the most respected architects. These included lead designer William Lescaze, a new member of the Housing Authority’s architectural board; manager and chief architect Irwin Clavan and Richmond Shreve, architects of the Empire State Building (Clavan would later design the “Radiant City” Stuyvesant Town); Arthur C. Holden, another proponent of “suburbanized urbanism”; Frederick Ackerman, the Housing Authority’s new Technical Director; and Harold

Ickes, Administrator of the PWA and Secretary of the Interior. The project would be the most ambitious slum clearance housing project ever undertaken in the U.S. Moreover, as reported by the *New York Times* in 1935, Williamsburg Houses was the forerunner of “a long-range Federal program aimed at the eventual elimination of much of the slum territory in New York and other large cities.”<sup>115</sup> This was an accurate prediction.

While the project’s design committee did not unanimously accept the hybrid of American and European housing concepts (Ackerman objected to many of Lescaze’s design decisions), Williamsburg Houses was generally considered to be a success.<sup>116</sup> Receiving over 25,000 applications for 1,600 apartments and the praise of critics, the support of both experts and the public helped to reinforce the ideals of suburbanized urbanism.<sup>117</sup>

Creating what Lewis Mumford called “the streetless house and the houseless street,” Williamsburg Houses seemed to prove the benefits of the “new order,” where living and working, automobile traffic and pedestrians were all functionally separated. As he wrote in a review of the project in February 1938, a year after Jacobs’ “Flowers Come to Town,” the “first principle of modern neighborhood planning is to reduce the number of streets, convert more open space into gardens and playgrounds, and route traffic around, not through, the neighborhood.”<sup>118</sup>

Following Public Works Administration guidelines influenced by Mumford’s friend and PWA consultant Henry Wright, co-designer of the Garden City-inspired Radburn suburb, Williamsburg replaced twelve city blocks with four super-blocks and turned nine acres of noisy city streets into gardens and park space, which accounted for almost 70% of the site. This was even less than the maximum ground coverage of 35% of the building site permitted by the Public Works Administration, which funded the project. Adding further to the project’s suburban



tranquility, the city's typical storefront building type was eliminated; shops were limited to the highest traffic intersections, reducing interior noise and traffic. Meanwhile, light-colored materials, the lack of distinction between the fronts and the backs of the buildings, and the rotation of the unusually echinate buildings fifteen degrees off the city grid reinforced the project's separation from the neighboring age-darkened and cramped tenement buildings and the rest of the old city.

Thus, by the mid 1930s, through a host of influences—the good intentions of housing reformers, the vernacular precedents of developer-built garden apartments, the influence of European conceptions of “The Functional City,” government policy, and an overarching suburban mindset that was shared by public sentiment—the emergence of what Jacobs later termed “Radiant Garden City” planning was nearly complete.<sup>119</sup> And this even before New York had a City Planning Commission.

## **The Choice of City Life**

At the time Jacobs wrote her early odes to the city's contextually complex and intricately interrelated workings, Lewis Mumford could already opine in a January 1936 column for the *New Yorker* that “What Manhattan needs to overcome its present blight (caused mainly by an exodus to the outskirts and the suburbs) is a series of ‘internal’ suburbs.”<sup>120</sup> In other words, when Jacobs moved to Greenwich Village, those who could afford the commute and the real estate were choosing to leave the city for suburban homes built by speculative real estate developers and to follow the industries that were relocating to the outer boroughs. Contributing further to this

unplanned “unslumming” process, which was facilitated by expanded mass transit and growing ownership of private automobiles, President Roosevelt’s National Housing Act of 1934 created the suburban-oriented Federal Housing Administration, an institution that sought to stimulate private single-family home construction through the guarantee of private home loans or mortgages.

Within cities, meanwhile, the suburban impulse—manifested in the British Garden City movement, German Siedlungen, Le Corbusier’s Radiant City, and in the New York developers’ vernacular—dominated subsidized and planned “unslumming” efforts. Despite the brief episode of Roaring Twenties Manhattanism, most reformers did not consider high-rise housing an appropriate approach. Some housing reformers believed that developer-driven high-rise urban housing like Knickerbocker Village was not only too expensive but too dense. Others believed that when applied to lower income housing, such projects would create “vertical sanitary slums.”<sup>121</sup> Having later criticized the elimination of neighborhood diversity and the concentration of the poor into economically segregated housing projects, Jacobs would have agreed. Housing reformers of the 1930s, meanwhile, seem to have been unanimous in the belief that high-rise housing would leave residents too disconnected from the ground and gardens. Despite his Radiant City proposal, until he visited New York’s skyscrapers, even Le Corbusier rejected the idea of high-rise housing. Thus, faced with the question of how to house hundreds of thousands of people in low-rise dwellings, suburbanized urbanism was a widely shared approach.

Building on this suburban foundation, subsequent slum clearance housing projects eliminated all relationships to the existing city. Under the Public Housing Act of 1937, the last of the New Deal’s housing and development initiatives, the new United States Housing Authority

subsumed the PWA and empowered local authorities like the NYCHA to control federal funding, subject to new housing policies. Although funding increased substantially, the maximum cost per dwelling was dramatically reduced, requiring new cost saving measures and increasing the need for standardization, repetition, and high-rise construction. Projects with the architectural detailing of Williamsburg Houses, which was the most expensive project built by the NYCHA (in adjusted dollars), were no longer possible.<sup>122</sup> Under financial pressure, high-rise housing projects that early housing reformers never would have supported, eliminated the landscape designs that were originally seen as integral to suburban planning models. Also severely reduced, or altogether eliminated, were storefronts or any commercial space within the new urban quarters, thereby eliminating any functional diversity. Standing on new super-blocks that had destroyed the city's preexisting block structure, high-rise housing projects thus soon dispensed with all of the familiar and contextual urban qualities of scale, orientation, public space, and multiple function.

In other words, by the time that Jacobs finished the last of her 1930s essays on the city, the “pathology” of public housing design, as historian Richard Plunz has comprehensively described it, was already latent in urban redevelopment practices.<sup>123</sup> Subsidized “urban renewal”—although it was not called that until the Housing Act of 1954—had begun even before Jacobs moved to New York, with Roosevelt's National Housing Act of 1934.

Moreover, not only did suburbanized urbanism have a long history, it was widely supported, was dictated by government housing policy, and was supported by much of the general public, a vast proportion of the population that did not choose city life. Moreover, when Jacobs moved to Greenwich Village in 1935, the “unslumming” process that had accompanied this

suburban exodus was significant in improving in the quality of life in the city and Jacobs' own urban experience.

In writing about "slumming and unslumming," Jacobs understood and accepted these aspects of city dynamics. Thus, apart from suburbia's "Great Blight of Dullness," what she later found most objectionable about suburbanized urbanism was its denial of choice, and the manner of this denial. Her biography was defined by her own choice of city life, and she spoke for those who stayed in the city or came to it by choice. As she wrote in *Death and Life*,

Unslumming hinges, paradoxically, on the retention of a very considerable part of a slum population within a slum. It hinges on whether a considerable number of the residents and businessmen of a slum find it both desirable and practical to make and carry out their own plans right there...<sup>124</sup>

Thus, she understood that city neighborhoods improved when people chose to stay and invest themselves in them, Jacobs was outraged when she discovered, while conducting research for *Death and Life* in the late 1950s, that Boston's city planners and city government were discussing proposals to rebuild much of the successfully "unslumming slum" of Boston's West End, a city neighborhood that reminded her of Greenwich Village. She was even more incensed in early 1961, when, just as she had finished writing the book, New York's planning commission sought "authority and federal funds to 'renew' us [in Greenwich Village] into an inane pseudosuburb. Of course, the neighborhood," she wrote, "is fighting this bitterly."<sup>125</sup>

Jacobs tried to understand the underlying motivations for urban renewal. She knew that the sentimentalization of nature could be traced back to the eighteenth century. From her earliest essays on the city, she understood something of New York's history, and the fact that some of its neighborhoods, like Greenwich Village, had once been suburbs. She understood, moreover, that early city planning theories were, by definition, new and experimental. "It is understandable that

men who were young in the 1920s were captivated by the vision of the freeway Radiant City, with the specious promise that it would be appropriate to an automobile age. At least it was then a new idea,” she wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.<sup>126</sup>

What she could not tolerate, however, was the authoritarianism and paternalism that was the strong undercurrent of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century reform and city planning movements.<sup>127</sup> “Conventional planning approaches to slums and slum dwellers are thoroughly paternalistic,” she wrote, adding:

The trouble with paternalists is that they want to make impossibly profound changes, and they choose impossibly superficial means for doing so. To overcome slums, we must regard slum dwellers as people capable for understanding and acting upon their own self-interests, which they certainly are. We need to discern, respect, and build upon the forces for regeneration that exist in slums themselves, and that demonstrably work in real cities.<sup>128</sup>

For Jacobs, the city was a collection of many shared purposes and individual ambitions, and this is something she seemed to understand from the time she was nineteen, when she wrote her first essay on the city. Even then, she opposed the federal programs that subsidized urban renewal. Although she became active in union organizing and the American Labor Party in the 1940s, her early voting record suggests that she consistently voted against FDR, La Guardia, and expansion of the federal government under the “New Deal.”<sup>129</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be decades before Jacobs criticized urban renewal per se in writing. In the meantime, while working as a propagandist for the State Department during the Cold War, she would write favorably about the achievements of American urban redevelopment. And soon thereafter, as a new architectural journalist, she would even idealize “the city planner’s method,” a remarkable contradiction of her attack on city planning only a few years later.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 376. For all citations to *Death and Life*, the paperback version is used unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 348.

<sup>3</sup> James Howard Kunstler, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Sept. 6, 2000, *Metropolis* (Mar. 2001), accessed Oct. 24, 2007, [http://www.kunstler.com/mags\\_jacobs2.htm](http://www.kunstler.com/mags_jacobs2.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (New York: Random House, 1984), 124-25.

<sup>5</sup> Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, 125-26.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, Nov. 22, 1961 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, box 13, folder 12, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Boston, MA), 1. A slightly different version of Jacobs' autobiographical account in this letter is republished in Max Allen's *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs* (Ontario: The Ginger Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Talmey, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Butzner [Jacobs], Applications for Federal Employment, Nov. 27, 1943; Oct. 26, 1946; and Sept. 8, 1949 (Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO).

<sup>9</sup> Mackenzie, Catherine. "120 'First Families' Get New Homes; Chosen From Among the City's Worst Housed Groups, They Will Move Into Unaccustomed Surroundings," *New York Times* (December 1, 1935), E10. Le Corbusier's attendance at the First Houses inauguration is documented by Madges Bacon in *Le Corbusier in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 161. It is unknown if Jacobs attended the inauguration of First Houses, but given the celebrity of the event, that she had a fondness for Eleanor Roosevelt, and that she lived nearby, it is certainly possible.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, Roland. "Vast Housing Plan Envisaged For City; Post Sees First Houses as Proving Ground for Program to Provide Homes for 500,000 Families," *New York Times* (December 8, 1935), E10.

<sup>11</sup> At the time, Williamsburg Houses was reportedly the "largest venture in slum clearance ever undertaken in this country," cf. "Brooklyn Slum Clearance," *New York Times* (Oct. 15, 1936), 26.

<sup>12</sup> Le Corbusier, "A Noted Architect Dissects Our Cities; Le Corbusier Indicts Them as Cataclysms and Describes His Ideal Metropolis," *New York Times* (Jan. 3, 1932), SM10. Le Corbusier's visit to Harlem River and Williamsburg Houses was established by Bacon in *Le Corbusier in America*, 161. Le Corbusier's belief that housing and city planning were one and the same thing was later repeated, nearly verbatim, by Lawrence Orton, former member of the city's Slum Clearance Committee and founding member of the New York City Planning Commission in 1938. Cf. "Super-Block Plan Favored by City, Old-Fashioned Divisions are Giving Way to New Scheme, Rheinstein Asserts" *New York Times* (January 15, 1939), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Hemphill is cited in "Ask Central Bank, No Interest Bonds; Sixteen Groups in National Monetary Conference Adopt Inflation Program," *New York Times* (Jan. 17, 1935), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Jane Butzner Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949 (Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO), Attachment H.

<sup>15</sup> Prior to his writing career, Robert H. Hemphill was an inventor, the creator of equipment used in commercial ice plants, and a former utilities company executive in South Carolina. Cf. "Robert Herman Hemphill" obituary (*New York Times*, Apr. 24, 1941), 21. Unknown (and in some cases clearly unreliable) informants in the 1948 FBI investigation of Jacobs indicated that she and her sister lived with Hemphill in his three-bedroom Greenwich Village apartment at 55 Morton Street, and that Jacobs collaborated with him on *Constitutional Chaff*. Cf. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File no. 123-252, Sept. 8, 1948, and File no. 123-145, Sept. 13, 1948.

<sup>16</sup> Jacobs, *ibid*, Attachments F and G.

<sup>17</sup> Le Corbusier, *When Cathedrals Were White* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 55. *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches: Voyage aux pays des timides* was originally published in 1937, and translated into English in 1947.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobs was an admirer of Rockefeller Center, where she later worked, and mentioned it on some six occasions, cf. 89, 104, 110, 181, 386, 439, in *Death and Life*.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Karp, "Jane Jacobs Doesn't Live Here Anymore," *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs*, Max Allen, ed. (Ontario: The Ginger Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>20</sup> In *When Cathedrals Were White*, Le Corbusier described a love-hate relationship with New York, and America (40). He loved the democracy, the internationalism, and the "event" of New York, the George Washington Bridge, Rockefeller Center, Grand Central Terminal, Howe & Lescaze's PSFS Building in Philadelphia, Louis Armstrong and the "hot jazz" of both the city and the music; he hated the inequality, the racism, and the slums. As Mardges Bacon has observed, Le Corbusier sought to leverage American potential and show how Radiant City ideas could ameliorate the society's unfortunate aspects (*Le Corbusier in America*, 206-7).

<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 377.

<sup>22</sup> For Mardges Bacon, Le Corbusier's visit to New York reveals ways in which his preconceptions and treasured mythologies were unaltered by experiences with reality. She points out that his 1935 visit to the city, some years after he described it as the anti-thesis of modern urbanism in *Urbanisme*, was "his first encounter with the realities of a great modern city" (*Le Corbusier in America*, 158).

<sup>23</sup> Henry I. Brock, "Le Corbusier Scans Gotham's Towers; The French Architect, on a Tour, Finds the City Violently Alive, a Wilderness of Experiment Toward a New Order," *New York Times* (Nov. 3, 1935), SM10.

<sup>24</sup> Le Corbusier, *When Cathedrals*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America*, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Jacobs wrote in *Death and Life* that "none of today's pallid imitations of Rockefeller Center is as good as the original" (439). She admired the way that Rockefeller Center fit into the city by working with the city's block structure, but she did not believe that the entire city should be a Rockefeller Center or any other single architectural construction. The architectural project worked as an episode or event in the city, not as a substitution for it.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, SM23.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Butzner, "Where the Fur Flies," *Vogue* 86 (Nov. 15, 1935), 103.

<sup>29</sup> Jane Butzner, "Leather Shocking Tales," *Vogue* 86 (Mar. 1, 1936), 139; "Diamonds in the Tough," *Vogue* 88 (Oct. 15, 1936), 154.

<sup>30</sup> Le Corbusier (1929), "The Street," *Le Corbusier, Oeuvre complete, Vol. 1, 1910-29* (Boston: Birkhauser Publishers, 1995), 112, 118.

<sup>31</sup> Butzner, "Flowers," 113.

<sup>32</sup> Max Page, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 376.

<sup>34</sup> Butzner, "Fur," 103.

<sup>35</sup> Butzner, "Leather," 139.

<sup>36</sup> Jane Butzner, "Diamonds," 154.

<sup>37</sup> Jane Butzner, "Flowers Come to Town," *Vogue* (Feb. 15, 1937), 113-14.

<sup>38</sup> Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Random House, 1969), 11.

<sup>39</sup> Butzner, "Leather," 139.

<sup>40</sup> Butzner, "Diamonds," 154.

<sup>41</sup> Butzner, "Flowers," 113.

<sup>42</sup> Le Corbusier, *Cathedrals*, 34.

<sup>43</sup> Butzner, "Fur," 103.

<sup>44</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 376.

<sup>45</sup> Le Corbusier, *Cathedrals*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 377.

<sup>47</sup> Le Corbusier, "The Street," 119. Marshall Berman (1982), *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 316.

<sup>48</sup> Some hints of character of Jacobs' early life in Greenwich Village come from the McCarthy Era investigation of her alleged Communist Party sympathies. Cf. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File No. 123-252, Special Inquiry – State Department, Sept. 8, 1948.

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- <sup>49</sup> Caroline F. Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930: A Comment on American Civilization in the Post-War Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 124.
- <sup>50</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, Chapter 15, 271, 290.
- <sup>51</sup> Jan Seidler Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, K. Jackson, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 508.
- <sup>52</sup> Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in New York City (1939), *The WPA Guide to New York City* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 126. Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 134. Ramirez, "Greenwich Village," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 508.
- <sup>53</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 275.
- <sup>54</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 290.
- <sup>55</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 273. This is the basis of Richard Florida's "Creative Class" thesis.
- <sup>56</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 273.
- <sup>57</sup> The description of the Lower East Side as "The Most Densely Populated Spot in the World" was the caption of the frontispiece of Robert W. DeForest and Lawrence Veiller's *The Tenement House Problem* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1903).
- <sup>58</sup> Homberger, 84.
- <sup>59</sup> Charles Dickens (1842), *American Notes for General Circulation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), *Oxford Illustrated Dickens*, 90.
- <sup>60</sup> Plunz, *History of Housing*, 6.
- <sup>61</sup> Dickens, *American Notes*
- <sup>62</sup> New York Times, "Slumming In This Town; A Fashionable London Mania Reaches New-York; Slumming Parties to be the Rage This Winter; Good Districts to Visit," *New York Times* (Sep. 14, 1884), 4.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> New York City Department of City Planning Population Division, "New York City Total and Foreign-Born Population, 1790-2000." Homberger, 110. Records indicate that half the population, 1,585,000 people, lived in 42,700 tenements in 1900.
- <sup>66</sup> Plunz, *History of Housing*, 52. Page, *Creative Destruction*, 73-87.
- <sup>67</sup> New York Times, "Mulberry Bend as a Park; Property Owners Want the City to Pay the Whole Cost," *New York Times* (Jan. 21, 1893), 9.
- <sup>68</sup> New York Times, "A Plea for More Parks; Reasons Why We Should Have Them and Cheap Fares on the Elevated," *New York Times* (Nov. 27, 1891), 5.
- <sup>69</sup> New York Times, "Queer Foreign Quarter; Mulberry Bend Park and Its Curious Inhabitants; Glimpse of Italy in the Midst of New-York; Language, Manners, Dress and Customs All Strange; Transformation of a Wretched Quarter; Chinamen Near By in Pell and Mott Streets; What Trees and Grass Mean to These People," *New York Times* (Jul. 12, 1896), 32.
- <sup>70</sup> Max Page, 80-82.
- <sup>71</sup> New York Times, "Slumming In This Town," 4.
- <sup>72</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 444.
- <sup>73</sup> Richard Plunz observes that the desire and possibility of commuting to less congested suburbs was well established in New York by 1850. Llewellyn Park in Orange, NJ, designed by Andrew Jackson Davis and developed by Llewellyn Haskell from 1853, was followed by Irving Park at Tarrytown in 1859 and Tuxedo Park in 1885 (Plunz, *History of Housing*, 9-10). Henry James quoted in Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 36.
- <sup>74</sup> Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, P. Hall, D. Hardy and C. Ward, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 157-58, 163.
- <sup>75</sup> New York Times, "A Plea for More Parks," 5.
- <sup>76</sup> Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 26.
- <sup>77</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, Aug. 29, 1927, quoted in Ware, *Greenwich Village, 1920-1930*, 21.
- <sup>78</sup> *WPA Guide to New York City*, 131.



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<sup>79</sup> Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side*, 74-75.

<sup>80</sup> Le Corbusier, *When Cathedrals*, 158.

<sup>81</sup> Clarence Stein (1951), *Toward New Towns for America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 21.

<sup>82</sup> Stewart Chase, "A Suburban Garden City for the Motor Age," *New York Times* (Jun. 24, 1928), XX4. New York Times, "City Planning Aid Asked of Realtors; John Nolen of Mass. Commission Urges National Association to Research; 'Super Block' City Viewed; A. M. Bing Tells of Park-Dotted New Jersey Development; Officers are Nominated," *New York Times* (Jun. 28, 1929), 15.

<sup>83</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 275-76.

<sup>84</sup> Le Corbusier, "What is the Problem of America?" *Ouvre Complet, 1934-1938*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., A. Dakin, trans. (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture, 1947), 66.

<sup>85</sup> Le Corbusier, "What is the Problem of America?" 66-67.

<sup>86</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 452.

<sup>87</sup> Bonnie Yochelson, *Berenice Abbott: Changing New York, The Complete WPA Project* (New York: The New Press, Museum of the City of New York, 1997), 85.

<sup>88</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 287.

<sup>89</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "HUD Historical Background," HUD website ([www.hud.gov/offices/adm/about/admguides/history.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/about/admguides/history.cfm)), accessed Mar. 26, 2007.

<sup>90</sup> Richard Pommer, "The Architecture of Urban Housing in the United States during the Early 1930s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 37 (Dec. 1978), 235.

<sup>91</sup> Other sources for this history include: Henry J. Rosner, "The RFC Subsidizes Fred F. French," *The Nation* 136 (Apr. 19, 1933), 438; "Public Housing," *Architectural Forum* (May 1938), 346; and see also Plunz, *History of Housing*, 207, and Robert A. M. Stern, G. Gilmartin, T. Mellins, eds., *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 438.

<sup>92</sup> Rem Koolhaas (1978), *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), 10.

<sup>93</sup> Stern, et al., *New York 1930*, 439-40.

<sup>94</sup> New York Times, "Great White Plague in City's Tenements; Report of the Charity Organization Society's Committee," *New York Times* (Feb. 7, 1904), 11. Henry J. Rosner, "The RFC Subsidizes Fred F. French," *The Nation* 136 (Apr. 19, 1933), 438. Stern, et al., *New York 1930*, 418.

<sup>95</sup> Rosner, "RFC Subsidizes Fred F. French," 348.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Moses, Letter to Dorothy Pratt, Apr. 17, 1933 (Douglas Haskell Papers, Box 34, Folder 9) Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. Douglas Haskell, Jacobs' future supervisor at *Architectural Forum*, was then arts critic for *The Nation* and had a particular interest in modern, low-cost housing.

<sup>97</sup> Douglas Haskell, "New Mayland," *The Nation* 134 (Mar. 9, 1932), 292.

<sup>98</sup> Haskell, "New Mayland," 292.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Plunz, *A History of Housing in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 139.

<sup>100</sup> Stern, et al., *New York 1930*, 419.

<sup>101</sup> Stern, et al., *New York 1930*, 443.

<sup>102</sup> Pommer, "Urban Housing in the United States," 251-52. Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America*, 162-64.

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<sup>104</sup> Slum Clearance Committee of New York. *Maps and Charts Prepared by the Slum Clearance Committee of New York, 1933-34, Presented to the New York City Housing Authority, April 3, 1934* (New York: Aug. 1934), 2.

<sup>105</sup> New York Times, "First Houses Open, Roosevelt Hails New Slum Policy; East Side Block Thronged for Dedication of the City's Low-Rent Project; First Step, Officials Say," *New York Times* (Dec. 4, 1935), 16.

<sup>106</sup> Roland Wood, "Vast Housing Plan Envisaged For City; Post Sees First Houses as Proving Ground for Program to Provide Homes for 500,000 Families," *New York Times* (Dec. 8, 1935), E10.

<sup>107</sup> Lee E. Cooper, "City Speeds Work on Three Public Housing Projects; First City Houses Ready for Opening; Families From the East Side Slums Soon to Occupy Modern Suites," *New York Times* (November 24, 1935), RE1. New York Times, "First Houses Cost Held \$10,000 A Room; Total Expenditure \$1,155,649, Against \$328,621 Estimated, Survey Discloses," *New York Times* (September 25, 1936), 25.

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- <sup>108</sup> New York Times, "First Houses Assailed; Kings Associated Builders See Extravagance in Project," *New York Times* (Dec. 19, 1935), 8. New York Times, "Housing Aid Urged By Mrs. Roosevelt; At Model Dwellings on Site of Former Slum, She Asks Women to Back Plea; Praises Social Benefits," *New York Times* (May 13, 1936), 42. New York Times, "First Houses Cost Held \$10,000 A Room; Total Expenditure \$1,155,649, Against \$328,621 Estimated, Survey Discloses," *New York Times* (Sept. 25, 1936), 25.
- <sup>109</sup> New York Times, "City Takes Over Housing Project; Hopkins and Mayor Criticize Private Enterprise as WPA Transfers First Houses; Ridder Gives Key to Post," *New York Times* (Jul. 3, 1936), 21.
- <sup>110</sup> Wood, "Vast Housing Plan," E10.
- <sup>111</sup> Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side*, 110.
- <sup>112</sup> Charles Abrams, "Letter to the Editor: Mr. Moses on Housing; Commissioner's Views on Federal Program Meet with Criticism," *New York Times* (Jul. 1, 1936), 24.
- <sup>113</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: The New Housing," *New Yorker* (Dec. 7, 1935), *Sidewalk Critic: Lewis Mumford's Writing on New York*, Robert Wojtowicz, ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 145. In an earlier essay, Mumford praised William Lescaze's modern renovation of a midtown brownstone, but he wrote with some reservation that he "should not be surprised if his ingenious treatment of plot and site started a wave of renovation." Despite the successful possibilities of such remodeling, Mumford would not be easily dissuaded from his feeling of the inadequacy of traditional urban housing, where even Manhattan's most elite homes could be "called palatial only by those who have neither analyzed their plans nor tried to live in them." Mumford, "The Sky Line: On an Incinerator [and a] Renovated Brownstone," *New Yorker* (September 15, 1934), *Sidewalk Critic*, 116-17.
- <sup>114</sup> Catherine Mackenzie, "120 'First Families' Get New Homes; Chosen From Among the City's Worst Housed Groups, They Will Move Into Unaccustomed Surroundings," *New York Times* (Dec. 1, 1935), E10. Schwartz, *The New York Approach*, 46. Plunz, *History of Housing*, 209-10.
- <sup>115</sup> Williamsburg Houses was reportedly the "largest venture in slum clearance ever undertaken in this country," cf. "Brooklyn Slum Clearance," *New York Times* (Oct. 15, 1936), 26.
- <sup>116</sup> Plunz notes that Ackerman, who was not convinced by Modernism's revolutionary aesthetic agenda, opposed Lescaze's design (*History of Housing*, 220-21).
- <sup>117</sup> "25,789 Apply for Suites In Williamsburg Housing," *New York Times* (July 9, 1937), 35.
- <sup>118</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: The New Order," *New Yorker* (February 26, 1938), *Sidewalk Critic*, 209.
- <sup>119</sup> Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 59.
- <sup>120</sup> Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: Old and New," *New Yorker* (Jan. 11, 1936), *Sidewalk Critic*, 151.
- <sup>121</sup> Pommer, "Urban Housing in the United States," 236. Plunz, *History of Housing*, 224-25.
- <sup>122</sup> Noval White and Elliot Willensky, *AIA Guide to New York City*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000), 758.
- <sup>123</sup> Plunz, *History of Housing*, Ch. 8, pp. 247-79.
- <sup>124</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 272.
- <sup>125</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 272.
- <sup>126</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 371.
- <sup>127</sup> Since *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, critical histories of the Settlement House Movement and other reform movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, like Daphne Spain's *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), have observed that although charitable organizations helped immigrants and the poor, they often paternalistic, and often determinedly or unconsciously sought to indoctrinate their wards with middle-class moral values.
- <sup>128</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 271.
- <sup>129</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Jane Butzner Jacobs, Special Inquiry – State Department," Form 1, NY File no. 123-252, p. 10. During the McCarthy era investigation of the State Department, Jacobs was one of those investigated for possible affiliation with and even spying for the Communist Party. As part of the investigation, Jacobs' registration with the Manhattan Board of Elections was reviewed. Records from 1936 to 1940 indicate that Jacobs was registered as a Republican in 1936; a Democrat in 1937; and a Republican in 1938, '39, and '40. This suggests that she voted against Roosevelt (a Democrat) in 1936; against La Guardia (Republican) in 1937; against Gov. Lehman (a Democrat) in 1938; and against Roosevelt, for his unprecedented third term, in 1940.

## Chapter 3

### “Systems of Thought”:

### The Education of a City Naturalist

Systems of thought, no matter how objective they may purport to be, have underlying emotional bases and values. The development of modern city planning and housing reform has been emotionally based on a glum reluctance to accept city concentrations of people as desirable, and this negative emotion about city concentrations of people has helped deaden planning intellectually. *Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961)*

Jane Jacobs wanted to understand how things worked and to understand how people thought. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was her attempt to explain how cities worked, but in writing it she sought to understand the intellectual obstacles to understanding the city. When describing the book in 1959, she wrote that, “This book is neither a retelling in new form of things already said, nor an expansion and enlargement of previously worked out basic ground, but it is an attempt to make what amounts to a different system of thought about the great city.”<sup>1</sup> Hers was not a positivist approach, however. She recognized that “systems of thought” were affected by emotions, values, and other desires to find the world different than it really was, and that such biases had influenced city planning and urban design theories and practices in particular. Like Francis Bacon, who helped to define “the scientific method” in the early seventeenth century by instructing natural philosophers to beware of superstitions, fantasy, wishful thinking, hasty conclusions, and other flawed habits of thought, Jacobs judged that “the pseudoscience of city planning and its companion, the art of city design,”

was founded on conjecture and misunderstanding. She believed that the teachers and practitioners of these disciplines had been guided by principles derived from towns, suburbs, buildings, world's fairs, and imaginary dream cities, and from most "anything but cities themselves."<sup>2</sup> While attempting to lay the foundation for "a different system of thought about the great city," she also thought about the underlying epistemologies and the methodological implications.

Jacobs' interest in "systems of thought" was not limited to cities and their physical planning and design, however. She was also interested in the governance of cities and of societies in general. Her first book, *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787* (Columbia University Press, 1941), was an examination not only of the U.S. Constitution, but of its implicit intellectual foundation and the dialogic basis of its creation. Similarly, her sixth book, *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (1992), was a study of what she identified as two overarching moral systems. Her work was inspired in form and content by Plato's *Republic* (c. 380 BC). Jacobs' education and work experiences in the years between the late 1930s, when she was enrolled in Columbia University, and the early 1950s, when she started work as an architectural and urban critic for *Architectural Forum*, shaped the early development of her thinking about cities and societies.

## **The Education of a Geographer and City Naturalist**

In September 1938, Jane Jacobs (Jane Butzner until her marriage to Robert Hyde Jacobs, Jr. in 1944<sup>3</sup>) left her position as a secretary at Peter A. Frasse & Company steelworks headquarters, and

enrolled in the University Extension program at Columbia University. Following two happy years of stimulating coursework, Columbia University Press published her first book, an imaginative history of the U.S. Constitution that was well received by scholars, but she would be through with formal education. Following her unsatisfying early educational experiences, circumstances conspired to effectively expel her from college, contributing to a life-long bitterness toward academia. As she had done after high school, she left the academy for the city for a second time, to pursue her own education and experiences in the “real world.” However, Jacobs’ untimely departure from college did not mean that she never intended to complete her college studies and earn her degree. Moreover, the fact that her autodidactic nature was at odds with academic protocols did not mean that her two years of coursework were not a significant and influential part of her education.

In 1961, for a short biography statement intended to accompany a review of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs wrote that, “When I was twenty-two, and had been five years out of high school, I decided I did want to go to school again and learn a lot of things I had become curious about.”<sup>4</sup> Columbia’s University Extension program, later renamed the School of General Studies, was ideal for this purpose, since it offered working and returning students, as well as women, access to regular university courses and faculty in a flexible curriculum. This allowed Jacobs to pursue her own interests, and she completed two full-time years of day classes, which included geography, geology, chemistry, zoology, biology, philosophy, patent law, constitutional law, and the development of legal institutions—nearly all of them subjects to which she returned in her later work.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, one of the courses that Jacobs liked least was in sociology, although she was later described by some as a sociologist, and the back of *Death and*

*Life* indicates that the book should be shelved in the sociology section of the library or bookstore. Jacobs later recalled being very unimpressed by the one she course took at Columbia in the subject.<sup>6</sup>

If Jacobs had matriculated, it would likely have been as a Geography major. She took the most courses in Economic Geography, a study which anticipated her books on cities and economics—*The Economy of Cities* (1969) and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984) in particular. Despite leaving the academy, this field remained the natural intellectual location for much of her work.

In the late 1930s, Economic Geography was a relatively young field that was an important part of Columbia University's large Department of Geography, whose multidisciplinary approach appealed to Jacobs. At Columbia, geography was understood to involve "at least two fields of learning—physiography and one other such as economics, history, botany, zoology." At higher levels of study, the program was administered by a multidisciplinary committee, including a professor of physiography, a professor of economic geography, and other appropriate disciplinary representatives, instead of being "in the hands of any one school or department of the university."<sup>7</sup> This reflected the idea that while geography was considered the "Mother of the Sciences," it was distinct from the physiography or physical geography studied in departments of geology. As defined by the president of the Association of American Geographers in 1922, geography was "the science of *human ecology*," a study that emphasized the reciprocities between human activity and the environment.<sup>8</sup> This was a theme that Jacobs had already explored in her first essays on the city, and it would be a central principle in her lifework.

Among the faculty with whom Jacobs studied was economic geography professor Herman Otte. He specialized in the economics of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the multi-state regional planning agency created by President Roosevelt in 1933, which Jacobs later discussed at length in *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*.<sup>9</sup> There she critiqued the idea that a region could become significantly productive without the economic and cultural development stimulated by a great city.

It was in one of Otte's economic geography courses that Jacobs may have first read Henri Pirenne's *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* (1925)—one of the single most influential books on her thinking about cities. In her last book, *Dark Age Ahead* (2004), she wrote that Pirenne “laid the foundations for modern understanding of cities,” and that *Medieval Cities* was “a basic text for understanding how the world's economic networks operate and how they fail.”<sup>10</sup> While confirming her esteem for Pirenne's ideas, the acknowledgement nevertheless underemphasized the inestimable influence of his book on her own study of cities, economies, and civilization. Jacobs not only cited Pirenne in most of her books, but drew major themes from *Medieval Cities* and expanded on them in *The Economy of Cities* (1969), *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984), and *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (1992).<sup>11</sup> In the first book, Jacobs drew heavily on Pirenne's research on the origins of European cities to explain how cities grew and how they failed. In the second, she was influenced by his history of the development of cities into great cities and into city-states that were nations unto themselves. In the third, Jacobs was particularly influenced by Pirenne's discussion of the tensions between economic and political organization, and the way that economic transformations in eleventh century simultaneously gave rise to cities and social change

that freed serfs from agricultural servitude, created a powerful and productive middle class (the term is Pirenne's), and prompted unprecedented structures of liberty and democracy, viz. civilization. In *Systems of Survival*, Jacobs expanded on the theme of “traders vs. guardians,” her shorthand for the often competing syndromes of commerce (freedom of economic and cultural exchange) and authority (control of economic and cultural exchange) to which Pirenne alluded.

It is clear that Pirenne's book was already on Jacobs' mind when she set out to write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Pirenne not only outlined the qualities of a great city, but *Medieval Cities* was, above all, an explanation of the “death and life” of cities after the collapse of the Roman Empire (a theme also discussed in *Dark Age Ahead*) and the reemergence of cities following the revival of exchange and urban economies. At a time when cities were threatened from within and without by suburban and anti-urban forces—and the influence of the middle class, which, as Pirenne had explained, was historically important to the city's prosperity—the book was especially timely in the 1950s. Thus, when, in 1958, she first outlined her book proposal for *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs offered that Pirenne's work had “much to say on how life is organized in contemporary cities.”<sup>12</sup>

Among her other studies, Jacobs was particularly interested in the sciences. Rather than being random or unrelated interests, as is often supposed, Jacobs' studies in biology, zoology, and geology all fell within the larger field of geography. For her, the study of natural ecology in these courses complemented and informed the study of human ecology in her geography courses. Indeed, the interest in the sciences that Jacobs cultivated at Columbia, especially the natural and life sciences, synthesized with her studies in geography to produce seminal theories of city functions and dynamics. The life sciences were her key to developing Pirenne's historically-



oriented theories of the “death and life” into new and timeless principles about city dynamics. From the time of her science courses at Columbia, Jacobs followed scientific developments in such emerging fields as genetics, cybernetics, and complexity science, which enabled her to argue that concepts and research methodologies familiar to the life sciences could be applied to cities. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* she compared the “immense and brilliant progress” made in the life sciences between the 1930s and the 1950s to the stultification of the “pseudoscience” of city planning during the same period.<sup>13</sup> Discoveries in the life sciences, which revealed the complex mechanics of biological systems, helped to corroborate her belief that fully-functioning cities cannot be spontaneously generated from utopian and artistic desires, but that cities are a part of nature and that they functioned like other natural and living systems. Together, Jacobs’ studies in geography and the sciences would soon lead her to think of herself as a “city naturalist.”

Toward the end of her life, Jacobs recalled that she had “a wonderful time with various science courses and other things that I took there [at Columbia]. And I have always been grateful for what I learned in those couple of years.”<sup>14</sup> Her appreciation for her studies, and their significance in the development of her lifework, however, was in significant contrast with her feelings about the academy as an institution. After two years, Jacobs was effectively expelled, or at least that is how she saw it, because she had enjoyed college and had taken too many classes for an Extension School student, earning sixty-five credits in two years. As she later related, “after I had garnered, statistically, a certain number of credits, I became the property of Barnard College [Columbia’s women’s college].” Barnard, however, rejected her application on the basis of her high school grades, replacing the good feelings that she had developed for higher education

after high school with a lifelong bitterness toward academia. On the upside, she was no longer obliged to follow Barnard's required curriculum and, in her words, was "therefore allowed to continue getting an education."<sup>15</sup>

The irony of this situation was overwhelming. She later rejected numerous honorary degrees (in protest of higher education's greater concern, in her estimation, with selling degrees than educating), but at about the time that Columbia's Barnard College rejected her application for enrollment, Columbia University Press accepted her first book proposal. Indeed, while Jacobs had been taking too many classes, she had also been writing a book. Inspired by her courses in constitutional law and the development of legal institutions—and with some influence from her friend Robert Hemphill, the financial and legal writer for whom she worked during her first years in the city—she wrote the book during her free time.<sup>16</sup> "The idea of such a study, and the method for working it out was my own conception," she wrote in 1949. "It was done during the time I was attending Columbia, but was not a part of my school work. When it was completed, I submitted it to the Columbia University Press, which accepted it for publication and advertised it with the statement,

No better, no more instructive way of showing the extent of the compromise (worked out by the Constitutional Convention delegates) has ever been prepared. Here, article by article, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, and even clause by clause, are the components of our present Constitution and the ideas which they displaced.<sup>17</sup>

Constitutional scholars agreed. It received a brief but favorable review by the eminent constitutional scholar Max Farrand in *The American Historical Review*, and it is still cited in scholarly papers today.<sup>18</sup>

## City-Building and Law-Making

When Jacobs understood that she would not be returning to Columbia to start her third year of college, her thoughts turned immediately to writing about city. She was still working on the manuscript for *Constitutional Chaff*, but just as she had done when she first came to New York looking for a job, she turned to freelance writing, and wrote about the city and how it worked. In an investigation comparable to her essays on the historical geography of the city's working districts, she described the city's infrastructural systems in an article titled "Caution, Men Working," published in May 1940. What appeared new in her thinking in this short article was the suggestion of field and a method of study: Jacobs described herself as a "city naturalist." As she stated in a distinctly geographic metaphor, Jacobs explained that the "city naturalist" could understand the city by following and studying the "rivers," "trails," and "tributaries" of the city's infrastructure:

Despite the almost hopeless variety, the city naturalist, keeping an eye on the letters of the covers, can tell whether he is following the course of one of the great underground rivers, whether he is on the trail of a main stream of electricity, or gas, or one of the tributaries, whether brine to chill the produce markets or steam to heat the skyscrapers, is running under his feet.<sup>19</sup>

Although this explanation was metaphorical, it suggests the impact of her education, and her exposure to the ideas and methods of human and natural ecology in her geography courses. Years later, in the introduction to the 1993 Modern Library edition of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs noted that, in the course of writing the book, "I realized I was engaged in studying the ecology of cities."<sup>20</sup> Her 1940 article, however, suggests that her study had in fact started much earlier.

What is more, in the spring of 1940, as she charted the paths of the city's underground infrastructure networks, the essential life force hidden below the city's surface, she was writing a radical intellectual archaeology of a fundamental social institution, the U.S. Constitution. Here Jacobs' studies of urban ecology and systems of thought first came together, anticipating other themes and interests explored in *Death and Life*, *Systems of Survival*, and *The Nature of Economies*, among her other works.

Unfortunately, there is relatively little of Jacobs' voice in either "Men Working" or *Constitutional Chaff*. The edited book was a serious academic exercise but with only a short introduction by her, and the magazine article was light reading for a subway ride. "Read the monograms on manholes and you will know what runs underneath," went the article's hook. For Jacobs, however, both were close readings of things that people usually took for granted, but which were essential to their lives.

At a superficial level, "Men Working" explained the emblems a city dweller might observe on manhole covers and other street plaques. Some public utilities were actually provided by private companies, and the emblems CT&ES Co, W-U-TEL Co, ECSCOLTD, NYS Co, MR Co, MRC, and NYM&NT, for example, revealed the location of Consolidated Telegraph and Electrical Subway Company's electric wires, Western Union's pneumatic tubes, Empire City Subway Company's telephone wires, New York Steam Company's pipes, Manhattan Refrigeration Company and Merchants Refrigerating Company's brine lines, and New York Mail and Newspaper Tube Company's lines serviced US Postal Service, linking the main post office to branch stations. Others, of course, were public, including the USTD (the pneumatic tube system of the US Treasury Department), the HPFS (High Pressure Fire Service), DPW (Department of

Public Works), and the small covers marked BPM (Borough President of Manhattan) found on sidewalk corners, which covered the locations of sunken surveying monuments.

More significant than its field guide aspect, however, the article was an exercise in not taking the city for granted. The diversity of manhole and service box covers was evidence of the city's history and complexity, and a reminder of the easily overlooked infrastructure of underground utilities, which kept its "working districts" working. The Croton Water System emblems observed by Jacobs, for example, recalled the first supply of fresh water from outside the city in 1842. The water was once collected in a massive reservoir in the form of an monumental Egyptianate building, on the site where the New York Public Library was later built, replacing the storage of water with books. Jacobs observed that the city's infrastructure was, in so many words, like a palimpsest, where the maze of pipes and cables became more intricate with the passing years, as "new covers with new and varying designs are added to the accumulation of nearly a century." Her suggestion was that rather than contribute to the city's artificiality, even the historical accretions of technology enhanced the city's naturalness, and its durability.

Despite the essay's unlikely subject matter, it demonstrated that the young Jacobs already regarded the city as a historical topography, a critical bridge in the gap between past and future, a living artifact of civilization created from and inscribed on the old city and handed forward from one generation to the next.<sup>21</sup>

As unlikely as it also seems at first, Jacobs' *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787* was a similar investigation. Jacobs was very keenly aware that the Constitution was living artifact of similar significance, part of the infrastructure of society and civilization, while being an open framework within which the adjustments necessary to

accommodate new needs could be fashioned. As she wrote in her introduction to *Constitutional Chaff*, “The authors of the Constitution were compelled to set up *some* organization and endow it with *some* power.” But, on September 17, 1787, “the Constitution was signed, and the rest was up to the people.”<sup>22</sup>

It does not seem likely that the similarities between the city as a framework and the Constitution as a framework were lost on Jacobs. Both the Constitution and the city created the public realm. As Pirenne observed, the rebirth of cities in the Middle Ages created the middle class and new legislated liberties: “Freedom, of old, used to be the monopoly of a privileged class. By means of the cities it again took its place in society as a natural attribute of the citizen.”<sup>23</sup> In order to secure “the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity,” the Constitution, of course, did something similar.

Moreover, direct connections between city-building and law-making, with which Jacobs may have been by then familiar, are not unprecedented. As Hannah Arendt observed, in antiquity, law-making and city-building belonged in the same category, and were elevated to the highest rank in political life. “Before men began to act,” she wrote, “a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis* and its structure [being] the law.”<sup>24</sup>

While Jacobs could not have had this particular text of 1958 in mind, the Greek idea that the city, the *polis*, was embodied in its citizens certainly resonated with her. Her understanding of the simultaneity of the city and its citizens was already evident in her earliest essays on the city, and it was an idea that she repeated twenty years later. In 1955, when she first came to understand that extensive urban redevelopment was breaking the link between past and future, she wrote that,

“Hundreds of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild the city.”<sup>25</sup> This idea was closely related to her feeling that once the Constitution was signed, “the rest was up to the people.”<sup>26</sup> For both city-building and governance, in other words, Jacobs looked to—or idealized—an engaged and self-determined citizenry.

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and in subsequent works including *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984) and *Toronto: Considering Self-Government* (2000), Jacobs took up the topic of self-government directly, and in all cases this was closely related to the city.<sup>27</sup> In the second to last chapter of *Death and Life*, titled “Governing and Planning Districts,” she described the city council chamber of New York’s City Hall as a microcosm of the city. “Whole segments of city life, problems of neighborhood upon neighborhood, district upon district, parades of remarkable personalities, all come alive in this room,” she wrote. She may have been thinking of Pirenne, and was certainly anticipating *Systems of Survival*, when she added, “The members of the Board listen, interject and sometimes hand down decrees on the spot, like rulers holding court in the manor during medieval days.”<sup>28</sup>

While writing *Death and Life*, she was also likely thinking back to her study of self-government in *Constitutional Chaff*. Despite the reputation that she developed for fighting bitterly with City Hall, she believed that debate was central to the system of government established with the Constitution. Not only was debate central to the Constitutional Convention, it was implied in the idea that “the rest was up to the people.” They would negotiate the balance of powers between control from above and democratic self-government from below. Thus, the corollary of her belief in self-government was a recognition of the importance of nurturing mechanisms and processes that facilitated collective and democratic outcomes. As she wrote in *Death and Life*,

When human affairs reach, in truth and in fact, new levels of complication, the only thing that can be done is to devise new means of maintaining things well at the new level. The alternative is what Lewis Mumford has aptly called “unbuilding,” the fate of a society which cannot maintain the complexity on which it is built and on which it depends.<sup>29</sup>

The city itself, of course, was one of the critical mechanisms for building and maintaining social complexity. The city fostered civilized debate, and thus despite being “a fierce and rooted partisan,” as Jacobs described herself in *Death and Life*, she could still remark of New York’s city council that “Their energy, wits, patience, and human responsiveness are, on the whole, creditable. I see no reason to expect great improvement from finding better.”<sup>30</sup> Although written at a time of great tension with city government, her words were nevertheless reminiscent of those that she set down in the introduction to *Constitutional Chaff*, when she recorded Convention delegate Franklin’s comments on the process of ratifying the Constitution:

When you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, the passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me, Sir, to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does... Thus I consent, Sir, to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors, I sacrifice to the public good.<sup>31</sup>

Franklin’s empathy and generosity was something that Jacobs sought to emulate. *Constitutional Chaff* was a study of only the rejected proposals for the Constitution. At one level, this revealed the institution’s historical aspect. She explained that when arguments for the inclusion of certain Constitutional provisions were won, what the advocates “thought time would prove has given way to what we think time has proved.” Her study was thus one in which “The Constitution we have is contrasted with the constitutions we might have had.”<sup>32</sup>

At times the alternatives were distinct, such as George Mason of Virginia’s rejected suggestion that Congress should have power to enact sumptuary laws, which he argued was



“made necessary by the extravagance of our manners, the excessive consumption of foreign superfluities and the necessity of restricting it, as well with economical as republican views.”<sup>33</sup>

Oftentimes, however, debate centered around the fundamental but complex issue of balancing local self-determination and federal organization, which was of particular interest to Jacobs. James Madison’s proposed provisions for regional planning and inter-state cooperation, for example, anticipated forever vexing issues. He argued that “Power should be vested in Congress to grant charters of incorporation in cases where the public good may require them and the authority of a single state may be incompetent. The primary object of this is to secure an easy communication between the states, which the intercourse now to be opened, seems to call for.” James Wilson of Pennsylvania, who concurred, was similarly thinking of undertakings like large public works: “It is important to facilitate by canals the communication with the western settlements,” he offered.<sup>34</sup> That the TVA, which Jacobs criticized, was established by a Congressional charter of incorporation, despite the fact that such Constitutional provisions had been rejected, was certainly not lost on her. However, she would likely have been sympathetic to James Wilson’s argument that such “[federal] power is necessary to prevent a state from obstructing the general welfare.”

At another level, *Constitutional Chaff* was further evidence of Jacobs’ personal willingness to understand complex systems like cities, and others’ points of view. When applied to texts, systems, or even scientific experiments, this is sometimes described as “hermeneutic phenomenology,” and when applied to interpersonal communication, this opening out to others is sometimes termed “intersubjectivity.” Regardless of the terminology, however, this orientation toward others was a notable aspect of Jacobs’ thought process, and one that was especially

important to her understanding of cities. The intellectual mechanism was already evident, for example, in Jacobs' "working districts" essays, which emphasized the aspirations of individual city citizens. An intersubjective sensibility was also central to *Constitutional Chaff*, a hermeneutic work that evenhandedly collected the rejected arguments from the especially consequential debate about the Constitution, some of which Jacobs supported and some that she did not.

That Jacobs had opinions by this time about the limits of federalism and the nature of authority is clear. In fact, although *Constitutional Chaff* did not include her commentary, its structure provides some evidence of her thinking on the subject. Although the book was for the most part organized by chapters corresponding to the articles of the ratified constitution, which were followed by the losing or rejected suggestions of the delegates pertaining to each section of the given article, Jacobs included a few appendices. One of these highlighted a special debate of the Constitutional Convention: the question of the length of the Chief Executive's term of office.

As it happens, in 1940, when Jacobs assembled the history of this question, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was running for an unprecedented third term. Already opposed to FDR's expansion of the federal government through New Deal legislation, Jacobs was all the more opposed to this precedent. As the authors of the Constitution determined, while a single term of office "tended to destroy the great motive to good behavior, the hope of being rewarded by a re-appointment," too long a period of service for the executive magistrate would tend to centralize power.<sup>35</sup>

With these ideas in the back of her mind, Jacobs campaigned for FDR's opponent, Wendell Willkie, working as a staff volunteer in the Willkie Clubs New York campaign headquarters. Originally a Democrat and FDR supporter, Willkie, who was president of a New

York-based business that was the nation's largest electric utility investment company, came to oppose Roosevelt's TVA legislation, which Willkie argued would create government-funded competition for private power companies. Willkie became a public critic of New Deal programs that competed with private enterprise, and the Republican Party nominee for the 1940 election, although he had never held an elected office. These positions appealed to Jacobs more than Roosevelt's federalism. When it came to supporting the peoples' power of democratic self-government from below, and pushing back on power from above, Jacobs was already "a fierce and rooted partisan."

### **"Ex-Scranton Girl Helps Home City"**

In the conclusion of *Systems of Survival* (1992), a dialogue inspired by Plato's *Republic*, Jacobs wrote through the voice of one of her characters that "Where democracy means more than having the vote, many citizens engage part-time in public affairs."<sup>36</sup> Her point was that the "great numbers of people who take on public responsibilities part-time" were typically flexible and knowledgeable enough to understand and deploy the moral conventions appropriate to such roles, although their day-to-day lives may be guided by a different set of conventions. For Jacobs, who stated, "I like uncovering systems," in that aptly titled book, the work of clarifying guiding moral systems helped her to understand "how the world works." To understand the "actions and attitudes in the great world of work outside oneself," she recognized that she needed to understand the "morals and values that underpin viable working life."<sup>37</sup>

While she wrote these words later in her career, Jacobs had always been curious about “how the world works.” Thus, in the fall of 1940, when she finished *Constitutional Chaff*, she was excited to find her first full-time job, as an assistant to the managing editor of *The Iron Age*, a weekly trade magazine for the metals industry published by the Chilton Company, and to immerse herself again in the “great world of work.”

Despite the relatively dry subject matter, in late 1940, Jacobs might have taken almost any full-time job to support herself and to develop her writing career. But given her intellectual interest in the world of work, *The Iron Age* appealed to her beyond the day-to-day responsibilities, at least initially. She could find connections. The magazine not only offered a bird’s eye view of an elemental part of the national and regional economy, but Jacobs already had some practical experience of the metals industry from her work at the Peter Frasse Company that she could build on, as well as some basic knowledge of geology and chemistry from her courses at Columbia. Moreover, for a philosophically-minded writer like Jacobs, practical experiences in the world of work always had a contemplative component. As in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and her subsequent books, experiences were anecdotes that served as data from which to develop principles, whether about cities, economies, or other ecologies. Therefore, for Jacobs, engaging the world of work mean passively accepting a job description. Indeed, not long after starting her full-time work as an editorial assistant at *Iron Age* in January 1941, Jacobs became involved in projects that she regarded as related to her work, but which others, initially her employers and later the government, would find unwarranted, if not suspicious.

As she had hoped, hard work and initiative soon resulted in a promotion from secretary to editorial assistant, and with more responsibilities came a broader horizon of observation and

experience. In addition to some basic knowledge of the metals industry, Jacobs' familiarity with the cities of Scranton and Philadelphia soon became useful in her new job. Among her first tasks had been collecting information about the production rates of blast furnaces and other industry data by telephone, and this soon expanded to making weekly trips to Philadelphia and traveling around the northeast to visit metals industry firms and scrap metal dealers, to gather news and information on market conditions in person. So although the subject matter was generally tedious and specialized, Jacobs began to develop an understanding of a regional economy, which she would draw on in her later books, while also becoming familiar with a New York-Philadelphia-Washington newsbeat that she would later cover as a writer for *Architectural Forum*.

Over the next two years, Jacobs was given additional responsibilities and independence, was promoted to associate editor, and developed the experience to take on advanced editorial roles with other magazines. While cutting her teeth on the long technical articles that were *The Iron Age's* lead stories, she was placed in charge of several small editorial departments including new products, new literature, and a new metal powders department. By late 1942, she took on such tasks as attending scientific conferences and important industrial meetings throughout the New England, the northeast, Ohio Valley, and the Midwest, choosing papers to be abstracted in the magazine and developing news items from conference talks. She sought out contributions from scientists and metallurgists directly, worked with them on presenting their ideas, editing their manuscripts, and laying out their articles. When necessary, she visited the magazine's press in Philadelphia to handle last-minute layout and editing problems, and during vacation, she managed the magazine's Cleveland office.<sup>38</sup>

As associate editor, Jacobs also had the autonomy to initiate and write her own features, technical articles, and special projects, and the job security, or so she thought, to pursue activities of special interest to her. She continued to travel, visiting mining operations, refiners, fabricators, and other large-scale metals purchasers seeking information and ideas for her own articles.

After the U.S. joined World War II following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 7, 1941, the metals industry became vitally important, and Jacobs found herself on the domestic frontline. Although she had been an avowed isolationist before Pearl Harbor, she joined millions of other men and women in the war effort through her work for the magazine. *Iron Age* was soon full of reports of wartime production, photographs of women building airplanes and fashioning bayonets, stories of the latest American, German, and Japanese airplanes, ships, and subs, and advertisements by the makers of helmets, shell casings, tanks, and their suppliers. Jacobs' travels now included Washington, where she visited contacts and officials of various government agencies, including the War Production Board, the Board of Economic Warfare, the War Department, the Navy, Department of Interior, and Department of Labor, to gathering news, discover ideas for new articles, and to assist her in the interpretations of facts gleaned elsewhere.<sup>39</sup>

Jacobs' first bylined article for the magazine, "Non-Ferrous Metals," was a comprehensive overview of the new industrial metals landscape, and in it she discussed the supplies and uses of copper, aluminum, magnesium, zinc, tin, lead, and silver by the Army, Navy, Signal Corps, Ordnance Department, and private industry, as well as by allies and enemies. "All the common non-ferrous metals have become precious metals, sought after and hunted down, cherished and pampered, aliens to thoughtless use and ordinary ends," she reported.<sup>40</sup> Describing

the new economics of tin, for example, she reported that “*Lost by enemy conquest* is the brief and inexorable reason for the tin shortage. No more tin from Malaya, Thailand, or the Netherlands East Indies. No consolation that the enemy doesn’t have enough either.”<sup>41</sup>

In writing this long and detailed report of the new metallurgical landscape, she was particularly interested in innovations to deal with shortages. Anticipating her lifelong interest in practical as well as conceptual experimentation (she was rumored to tinker with inventions herself), she missed no opportunity to discuss creative solutions to shortages in all of the non-ferrous metals, as well as future peacetime applications.<sup>42</sup> Characteristic of her expansive interests, a discussion of silver, meanwhile, ranged beyond industrial production, and, for *The Iron Age*, into unexpected discussions of anthropology and economics. “Silver is taking a new role in culture,” she observed. “Since man first prized it, it has been primarily a decorative and monetary metal, used in tiny amounts by industry other than the ‘arts.’ In the last year, however, silver has become truly an industrial metal.”<sup>43</sup> The importance of silver brazing alloys had triggered debates over monetary policy and various senate hearings and legislation over whether the Treasury should sell its silver, not to mention its gold, recalling policy debates introduced to her by her former employer, financial writer Robert Hemphill.

In a subsequent article, by contrast, “Silver Alloy Brazing with High-Speed Localized Gas Heating,” Jacobs returned to the subject of silver in almost mind-numbing metallurgical detail. As compared to “Non-Ferrous Metals,” her tone had become as cold as a knife’s edge. Her managing editor, T. W. Lippert, with whom she did not get along, requested that she stick to the editorial tradition and to take the color out of her writing, and her reaction seems to have been to show Lippert, whom she later described as a chauvinist, that she could write a technical article as

well as anyone. With millions of men going to war, and women taking on new roles in the world of work, it was a time of great social change. Underscoring her own feelings about “women’s work,” Jacobs accompanied her silver alloy article with photographs of young women in flower-print dresses operating radiant gas superheat burners and brazing marine lighting fixtures.<sup>44</sup>

There were quite a few reasons for Jacobs’ conflict with her supervisor, above and beyond his chauvinism. As Lippert later told the FBI, Jacobs was “a very brilliant, intelligent young lady” who conducted herself well during her first few months of employment. However, he soon found her to be “a trouble-maker and an agitator who would cause trouble no matter where she went.” Although she could converse on any subject, he found her to be contrary and queer, sometimes found smoking a pipe in the office.<sup>45</sup> In the late 1940s, when looking back on her period of employment from the vantage point of the Red Scare, Lippert suspected that she may well have been a communist fellow-traveler all along.

At the time, however, it was not Jacobs’ eccentric behavior that bothered him. When Lippert eventually suggested that she find another job in November 1943, it was because Jacobs had become so absorbed in projects extraneous to the magazine’s primary business and was “taking so much time from her work to engage in these activities” that she was no longer focused on her work.

Three projects preoccupied her during these years. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities to write her own articles and clearly constrained by the technical writing format, Jacobs became a regular freelance writer for *The New York Herald Tribune* starting in February 1942. She eventually contributed over twenty Sunday feature articles, frequently the cover stories of the Science, Education or Editorial sections. Perhaps further irritating Lippert, these articles



sometimes expanded on her research and work for *The Iron Age*, but, from her point of view, the freelance versions told the larger human story beyond the industrial details that were the focus in *The Iron Age*.

One of these, “Trylon’s Steel Helps to Build Big New Nickel Plant in Cuba,” told of the reuse of the steel from the New York World’s Fair “Trylon” and other abandoned buildings to construct a new mining operation in Cuba. Jacobs had mentioned the new plant, which would offset a significant portion of the U.S. wartime nickel shortage, in her article on “Non-Ferrous Metals.” There, however, she was not able to discuss the geographic, cultural, and economic transformation of the Cuban peninsula on which the plant and three new towns were being built. She was particularly interested in the way that the location of the plant had caused the towns to grow. “Until last May [1942],” she wrote, “the palm-covered peninsula was inhabited only by one family of Cuban subsistence farmers living in a tiny shack. Now 6,000 construction workers and engineers have built a railroad, pier, roads, and housing, and are working twenty hours a day pushing to completion about fifteen plant buildings.”<sup>46</sup> The story likely reminded Jacobs of her time in rural Appalachia, and it was reminiscent of her essays on New York’s working districts, while also anticipating her books on city economies.

Within the Chilton Publishing offices, meanwhile, a second project that preoccupied Jacobs was an effort to unionize the office’s clerical workers. Although Lippert later described these activities as evidence of Jacobs’ communist sympathies, he acknowledged that Jacobs had told him of her intentions at the time and that he had respected the workers’ freedom of choice in the matter.<sup>47</sup> This was not out of the ordinary: after the labor movements of the 1920s and 30s, union membership was common in the New York workplace. Moreover, Jacobs’ union, the Book

and Magazine Local of the United Office and Professional Workers of America International (UOPWA), may have been left-leaning, but it was hardly radical. At a time when liberal politics in New York were robust, with socialist and communist groups being a significant presence in the political landscape, even in city government (during the war, when the USSR was an ally, two avowed communists held seats on the New York City Council), Jacobs' union was a popular organization among the New York workforce, and, by comparison with other options, quite moderate.

Demographic changes in the domestic labor force during the war gave new impetus for unionization. As Jacobs described in two of her freelance articles for the *Herald Tribune*, women were taking on the work of men who had gone overseas and were entering fields that were formerly the exclusive domain of men. In her freelance article "Women Wanted to Fill 2,795 Kinds Jobs," for example, Jacobs explained that according to the US Employment Service, many jobs traditionally filled by men would be taken up by five million women entering the workforce in 1943. She observed that before the war, "no women were listed as electricians, welders, draftsmen, or engine-lathe operators" in Employment Service directories. "Women are working now at all of these classifications," she continued, "and before the end of the war probably will have tackled the whole list and more."<sup>48</sup> Jacobs went on to joke about the titles of some service directory jobs, which included anti-squeak men, blow-off men, hotbed men, sweater men, keep-off men, and odd-shoe men, but her point, of course, was that "it can hardly be said that any occupation is absolutely unsuitable for women." Within the military, as Jacobs reported in "Waves and Waacs Go Through Assignment Classification Mill," another freelance article, the

trend was similar, with women in the Navy and Army auxiliary units “doing virtually every operation that male officers do ashore.”<sup>49</sup>

Once it was established that women worked as well or better than men in industry, as Jacobs offered in conclusion, a discussion of equal pay naturally followed. Thus, as she later explained to the Loyalty Security Board in 1949, which was suspicious of communist infiltration of U.S. unions during the Red Scare, any arguments that she used to convince others to join a union in the early 40s were “solely to do with wages, particularly equalization of pay between men and women for similar work, and job security. Neither my motives nor my comments regarding unionization had anything to do with political ideologies.”<sup>50</sup> For her, collective bargaining was simply a tool for advocating fundamental equality. This is not to say that Jacobs’ boss at *The Iron Age* was not somewhat justified in regarding her as a “trouble-maker and an agitator,” but she believed these to be activities afforded some protection in American democracy.

In the context of a general interest in social and labor issues, this spirit, and Jacobs’ prevailing interests in cities and urban economies, motivated her third important project of the early war years: organizing a campaign to protest the policies of the War Production Board and the State of Pennsylvania, which Jacobs believed were contributing to the economic decline of her hometown of Scranton. Anticipating her later writing and activism, the effort brought her interests in cities and activism together for the first time, resulting in an outcome that encouraged her later work, both writing and activism, on behalf of cities.

Jacobs’ Scranton campaign began in late 1942, about a year into the war effort, and focused on bringing attention to the city as an attractive location for war production. She knew

the city, of course, from living there, but she also understood the larger industrial landscape from her visits to metals industries in the Northeast and her visits to war production agencies in Washington. Further armed in April 1942 with a report by the Federal Anthracite Coal Commission, which recommended the Scranton region for war plants, she helped to organize a targeted letter-writing campaign in conjunction with the Scranton Chamber of Commerce, a local foundation, and a local newspaper.

As Jacobs reported in “30,000 Unemployed and 7,000 Empty Houses in Scranton, Neglected City”—an un-bylined ‘News of Industry’ section story in *The Iron Age*, published in March 1943—the city was one of “eighty-two paradoxical industrial areas of unemployment and empty houses” being underutilized at the same time when manpower and housing was in short supply in war production centers. Nevertheless, she reported that it had proved difficult to convince government officials of the city’s merits:

Since the first of the year, letters have been written to 400 officials of the Army, Navy, and WPB, setting forth in detail, in many instances with charts and figures, what Scranton has in surplus electric power, labor, sites, transportation, etc. More than 300 answers have been received and have been examined by a member of *The Iron Age* staff [Jacobs]. They provide a post-graduate course in the run-around.<sup>51</sup>

Jacobs’ meeting with the office of Pennsylvania Senator Joseph Guffey, Chairman of the Senate’s Mines and Mining Committee, proved equally frustrating, and quickly turned unpleasant. Talks with the Senator’s aide collapsed when Jacobs was told that the Scranton region had been declining for years and that a few war plants would not help. When Jacobs countered that this opinion conflicted with the findings of the Federal Anthracite Coal Commission, the aide asked “whether his questioner wanted information or an argument.”<sup>52</sup>

Jacobs must have known that the Senator was right about Scranton, and in this sense she may have been a civic-minded trouble-maker. After all, she had left the city because of the general economic decline that followed the collapse of the coal mining industry, and, as she reported in “30,000 Unemployed,” another 20,000 people from Scranton had since left the city for “crowded war boom cities.” She understood the magnetism of great cities. As she wrote in “Waves and Waacs,” an article written within days of the Scranton piece, “Location is a prime concern with the girls. Most want to be in New York or some other metropolitan center.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, although it was decades before she wrote on urban and regional economies in *The Economy of Cities* and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, Jacobs knew that despite any new factories, Scranton’s postwar fate would remain fundamentally unchanged. Indeed, her attempts to cajole the politicians and War Production Board to promote industrial relocations in Scranton was, in the context of her general mistrust of bureaucracy, an usual engagement with the government in pursuit of federal intervention. Nevertheless, it was a memorable encounter with what she later described as the “Guardian moral syndrome,” and the first in a series of city-related activist projects that she would engage in throughout her life.

The Scranton campaign gave Jacobs a sense of the power of her writing, and a feeling for writing itself as an activist project—something that she would return to with *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She followed up on her *Iron Age* piece with a freelance story in the *New York Herald Tribune* and another in the *Editor & Publisher*, a magazine for newspaper editors and executives. As a result, several hundred newspapers picked up the story, and a number of small factories and a large defense plant for the manufacture of wings for the Boeing B-29 decided to build their operations in Scranton.

On account of the success of her writing, Jacobs was asked to be one of the principal speakers at an organized labor protest rally in Scranton which, like her article, called on the government to utilize the resources of the region for the war effort, in fulfillment of recommendations of the President's economic commission.<sup>54</sup> A representative of the city's Chamber of Commerce recommended that March 25, 1943, the date of Jacobs' first article, should "go down in the history of Scranton as IRON AGE Day, for that day marks the turning point in Scranton's history."<sup>55</sup> Had it not been for the fact that her article was not bylined, it might have been "Jane Butzner Day." Later that year a Scranton newspaper summed up her efforts with the headline "Ex-Scranton Girl Helps Home City: Miss Butzner's Story in Iron Age Brought Nationwide Publicity."<sup>56</sup>

## **"Guardians and Traders" at War**

In the autumn of 1943, Jacobs left *The Iron Age* and joined the war effort as a propaganda writer for the U.S. government. In November, she applied for a position with the News and Features Bureau of the Office of War Information (OWI), located in the Argonaut Building, General Motors' former New York headquarters at the corner of 57<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway. She was hired as a Feature Writer for the Overseas Division, and signed the OWI's Declaration of Secrecy on November 29, which charged her to bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, to serve the country honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever, and to keep secret any information about the OWI's purposes and methods of propaganda and psychological warfare.

For the next two years, Jacobs served with conviction, honed her writing and editing skills, and earned praise and promotion from her supervisors. Less than a year into her work for the OWI, Jacobs was handling many of the bureau's top assignments, including special psychological warfare articles for European outposts. In October 1944, her bureau chief observed that she had "developed into one of the mainstays of the feature-writing staff." Two things, he noted, had been responsible for this: Jacobs' "quick grasp of the propaganda job to be done, and her ability to do a fast, efficient and well-handled piece of work with any assignment given her."<sup>57</sup>

The nature of Jacobs' propaganda work during the war, at least what is known about it, was not especially cunning. It was not unlike her freelance work. More public relations than misinformation, much of her work consisted of telling the story of the United States, its government, people, and way of life. She sometimes worked with overseas intelligence services to monitor and respond to false information in foreign media, whether borne of ignorance or counter-intelligence, and she may have contributed to reports that overstated U.S. war production, military readiness, and the like. She was sometimes engaged, in other words, in the "Guardian moral syndrome," which applied particularly to wartime. Characteristics of the Guardian mentality, as she defined it in *Systems of Survival*, included exerting prowess, being obedient and disciplined, respecting hierarchy, promoting monumentality, maintaining territory, and deceiving for the sake of the task—qualities necessarily exemplified in her work for the OWI.<sup>58</sup>

This was not the moral system that most suited Jacobs' nature, however, and her work for the government during World War II and the Cold War likely helped her to come to understand this about herself. Although it was years before she formulated the distinctions between the

“Guardian” and the “Commercial” moral systems, and explicitly expressed her identification with the latter, she already valued exchange, dissent, initiative, enterprise, inventiveness, and novelty, and shunned force, believed in voluntary agreement, and collaborated easily with strangers and aliens—those signal characteristics of the exchange-oriented moral system.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, although the Commercial or exchange moral system was clearly inappropriate in wartime, Jacobs was nevertheless guided by its principles in much of her propaganda work. Whether by temperament, security classification, or previous experience, most of her writing assignments were articles and pamphlets about American history, government, and culture for use by U.S. Information Libraries, especially in nonaligned nations. Drawing on her research for *Constitutional Chaff*, she wrote a pamphlet about the United States, for example, for distribution to Indian troops at the request of the British government, which outlined U.S. history, its system of government, cultural achievements, productivity, education system, and the social status of American women. A series of articles about the history of American labor, which was used in magazines in Switzerland and other countries, similarly drew on her own experience with unionization, as well as her affiliation with the American Labor Party during these years. Like her earlier freelance newspaper writing, was a weekly column on aspects of American culture whose topic were chosen by Jacobs, and other articles in a light but informative vein, including biographies of noted figures in U.S. government, education, business, and culture that were written for placement in foreign newspapers and magazines in Portugal and Spain, Sweden and Iceland, Switzerland, and the Soviet Union—countries for which Jacobs’ served as a special liaison.<sup>60</sup>



Not only did Jacobs identify with the exchange moral system, there is evidence that she consciously regarded her propaganda work an act of communication and exchange rather than of deception. During the same years that she was working for the OWI, she became interested in inter-personal dynamics and social structures as its own subject of study.

In 1944, Jacobs married architect Robert Hyde Jacobs, Jr., and, in 1945, she and her husband joined the American Sociometric Association. The organization was founded in New York by Viennese-American psychiatrist-sociologist Joseph L. Moreno (1889-1974) to advance the study of the foundations of human society and inter-personal relations.<sup>61</sup> Moreno, whose early theory of “the encounter” influenced Martin Buber’s “I and Thou” thesis on the interpersonal nature of human existence, had a particularly metropolitan sensibility. He wrote that it was in “only in New York, the melting pot of the nations, the vast metropolis, with all its freedom from all preconceived notions,” that he could fully explore the concepts of sociometric group research.”<sup>62</sup> Moreno, who had criticized Freud for destroying the spontaneity of everyday life in the artificial and intimidating setting of his office, believed that it was only “on the street” and in people’s natural surroundings that social dynamics could be effectively studied. This geographic and urban sensibility, as well as Moreno’s emphasis on “concreteness” in his study of social systems, likely appealed to Jacobs. “We have to consider every individual in his concreteness and not as a symbol, and every relationship he may bear to each other person or persons in its concreteness and not as a symbol,” wrote Moreno. He believed that sociometry could “produce as a counterpart of the physical geography of the world, a psychological geography of human society.”<sup>63</sup> At a more practical level, he believed that sociometry could be considered “the

cornerstone of a still undeveloped science of democracy.” Influenced by John Dewey’s writing on democracy, Moreno wrote that,

The so-called democratic process is not truly democratic as long as the large spheres of invisible processes disclosed by sociometric procedures are not integrated with and made a part of the political scheme of democracy. Sociometry can assist the United States, with its population consisting of practically all the races on the globe, in becoming an outstanding and permanent example of a society which has no need of extraneous ideas or of forces which are not inherent in its own structure.

Such concerns became particularly relevant to Jacobs’ generation during the war years, and especially after the horrific bombings of Japan in August 1945. Across the nation and around the world, people sought new ways to rebuild international dialogue. In October 1945, the United Nations organization was formed. Within the American Sociometric Association, meanwhile, members including anthropologist Margaret Mead were interested in ways of building intercultural tolerance, assisting war veterans, and studying American attitudes towards the Soviet Union in order to prevent future conflict.<sup>64</sup>

Although the extent of Jacobs’ engagement with sociometry is unclear (likely because she did not subscribe to the implication that interpersonal relationships were subject to objective metrics), her membership in the society suggests the self-consciousness of the intersubjective sensibility that she brought to her writing, particularly her propaganda work. As she later suggested in discussing her work for the OWI, she served the war effort not with an ambition to be duplicitous, but with the goals of a thoughtful writer: with an intersubjective sense of the point of view and interests of her reader. As she explained,

In writing these, and other, articles [for the OWI], it was necessary for me to have gained an insight into misapprehensions concerning America current abroad; a basic understanding of which common facets of American life are totally unfamiliar abroad; facets of the American scene likely to elicit the greatest interest and admiration; and methods of giving foundation and background knowledge without becoming pedestrian.<sup>65</sup>

This sensibility, which was certainly typical of her thinking and writing, posited a dialogic process between writer and reader, based on an assumption of the other's intelligence and point of view. While Jacobs' dialogue books, *Systems of Survival* and *The Nature of Economies*, made this explicit, her work as a propagandist had caused her to become more conscious of her native intersubjective orientation. What was exceptional about her approach at the time was its typicality. In approaching war propaganda as she would most any writing, her propaganda was in fact a bridge-building effort. As might be expected, however, this approach would soon cause her trouble with those who believed that any honest and open-minded communication with the enemy was suspect.

### **Amerika and Jacobs' "Un-American" Activities**

The end of World War II allowed the Office of War Information to be shut down. Anticipating her last paycheck in December 1945, Jacobs began the search for new work. Unaware that a new but nearly identical position was being created within the State Department as the government's propaganda target shifted from fight against fascism to the fight against communism, she took on a list of freelance writing projects that kept her busy until October 1946, when she returned to government work.<sup>66</sup>

In her freelance work, Jacobs took advantage of her experiences at *The Iron Age*, and edited numerous technical articles for *Powder Metallurgy Bulletin* and *Powder Metallurgy*, a textbook published by MacMillan. In familiar freelance fashion, at the suggestion of the magazine's editors, she wrote an article on Christmas traditions for *Junior Bazaar* and several

articles on New York State government for *The Empire Statesman*. Closer to her special interests in geography and human ecology, she suggested and wrote an essay for *Harper's Bazaar* on coastal islands between North Carolina to Maine, in which she “studied the way of life of their people, researched their history, and interpreted the changes in island life which had occurred,” following the pattern of her early essays on the city.<sup>67</sup>

Other projects included editing a book on historical anthropology, about which little is known,<sup>68</sup> and completely rewriting *The Coastwatchers*, a memoir of wartime intelligence work in the South Pacific by Royal Australian Navy Commander Eric Feldt, which was published by Oxford University Press in 1946. For Feldt's book, Jacobs took satisfaction not just in organizing the chaotic bundle of material and maps handed to her, but in the special challenge of interpreting the author's intentions and translating them for an American audience. “One portion of the task entailed making everything understandable to American readers without loss of the distinctively Australian character of the account,” she wrote. “To do this,” she continued, “I applied in reverse, so to speak, the special knowledge I had gained at the Office of War Information of the techniques of writing for a foreign readership.”<sup>69</sup>

Another freelance project that Jacobs pursued in December 1945, but which did not materialize, was a writing trip to Siberia. Editors at the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Oxford University Press*, and *Natural History* all expressed great interest in her proposal, and with their letters in hand, Jacobs and her husband applied for visas at the Soviet consulates in New York and Washington on three occasions. Their visa applications were ignored. Perhaps aware that she had worked for the OWI, the Soviets may have considered her a

potential spy, but more likely wanted to avoid any sight-seeing trips in the vicinity of Stalin's gulag prison camps.

Although Jacobs' desire to visit the USSR became cause for suspicion in 1948, when she was investigated by the FBI for communist sympathies and espionage, the Soviet Union was still an ally when she pursued the project in December 1945. Although tensions between the US and USSR had been growing, only months earlier Stalin had indicated his willingness to enter the Pacific War. The Soviet Union was, moreover, not only part of Jacobs' OWI assignment, but as she indicated in response to a second investigation by the FBI and Loyalty Security Board in 1949, there was considerable curiosity about Soviet life and Siberia in America at the time. She regarded the project simply as an extension of her previous work, and the proposed trip as one that would satisfy her own curiosity while providing some saleable freelance work.

It is unknown whether Jacobs mentioned her special interest in the Soviet Union when she applied for a job with the State Department's Russian Magazine Section, part of its International Press and Publications Division. However, her previous work was likely regarded as an asset, since she was hired in October 1946 as a staff writer for a new publication called *Amerika Illiustrirovannoye*, a Russian language magazine to be distributed in the USSR. After almost a year of freelance work, Jacobs returned to the Argonaut Building and a job very similar to her work for the OWI, but under the very different circumstances of the Cold War.

As someone who had been part of the OWI's USSR team, Jacobs may, in fact, have been part of group that created what was known as "*Little Amerika*," the precursor of *Amerika Illustrated*. The outcome of an exchange of information agreement between Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the magazine had been launched by the OWI toward

the end of WWII, when Jacobs was working in the Argonaut Building.<sup>70</sup> Produced by the OWI, “*Little Amerika*” was a pocket-sized magazine, crammed with “informative and uplifting” articles.<sup>71</sup>

In the months between Jacobs’ employment with the OWI and State Department, the magazine had been re-imagined as a large format, full-color magazine modeled on *Life*. As *Time* magazine reported in 1946, “*Little Amerika* left the Russians cold; *Amerika Illustrated* was hot stuff.”<sup>72</sup> Full of pictures of typical American scenes—“Arizona deserts, TVA dams, the white steeples of a Connecticut town, Radio City, the Blue-grass country, the Senate in session, Manhattan’s garment district”—the magazine quickly became a popular and coveted object in the USSR.<sup>73</sup> Unlike its exchange counterpart, *Soviet Life*, the American magazine reportedly generated long lines at Soviet newsstands and black market prices, which were only increased by distribution problems and a limited initial circulation of 10,000 copies.<sup>74</sup> Although circulation was expanded to 50,000, and although *Amerika*’s official price in 1946 was 10 rubles (83 cents) a copy, “in the black market Russians have eagerly paid 1,000 rubles (\$83) for a look at the *Amerika* most of them will never see, except in pictures.”<sup>75</sup>

Despite the pictures and greatly increased production budget, *Amerika Illustrated* published articles very similar to those that Jacobs had first written for the OWI. The mission was the same: to present a sympathetic and appealing vision of how Americans lived, worked, and played.<sup>76</sup> To this end, in addition to presenting the most favorable aspects of American history and culture in specially written or commissioned articles, *Amerika* reproduced articles from a variety of U.S. publications like *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Architectural Forum*. The approach was “strictly factual, never boasting, and never political. Never are there any direct criticisms of the

worker's paradise."<sup>77</sup> Comparing *Soviet Life* and *Amerika* in 1956, the *Christian Science Monitor* observed that, "Both put their countries' best foot forward. Both emphasize the good things of life, the cultural interests of their people, their sports, and home life. Both steer clear of any political arguments or dialectics."<sup>78</sup>

As was characteristic of work in the OWI, *Amerika's* propaganda enterprise was largely public relations. In the most idealistic sense, for someone like Jacobs whose worldview aligned with a moral system that valued "collaborating easily with strangers and aliens," *Amerika* was another opportunity for genuine cultural exchange. Although she indicated in her State Department application that she had viewed her previous propaganda work as no less straightforward than everyday communication, her viewpoint became increasingly suspect during the Cold War.

Jacobs worked for *Amerika* for close to six years, one of a staff of some twenty people, including five Russian editors and translators. As a "Publications Writer," she was required to be knowledgeable about American history, institutions, politics, and customs, and to have a basic understanding of the history and psychology of the Russian people, in addition to creative literary ability, the ability to work simultaneously with words and pictures, and an understanding of the State Department's objectives.<sup>79</sup> Her day-to-day tasks included responsibility for proposing, planning, developing, and writing "the more difficult and complex articles and those dealing with delicate and controversial subjects for publication."<sup>80</sup> Because they were producing an illustrated magazine, writers and editors thought carefully about the combination of text and images, and she worked closely with a photographer and illustrators to choose the best images to accompany each article.

In writing for *Amerika*, Jacobs recognized that the subject matter was “often potentially controversial, as respects our readership (e.g. articles on facets of the American economic system, the press, the U.S. system of government, the American legal structure) and must be treated with discrimination and judgment, to convince rather than to antagonize.”<sup>81</sup> During the Cold War, Soviet newspapers tended to emphasize the worst aspects of American life—crime, homelessness, unemployment, and racism—while also spreading rumors that the majority of the US population was poor and threatened by starvation.<sup>82</sup> Stories were also subject to Soviet censorship, and the goal was to avoid this. A great deal of time was invested in the development, writing, translation, and review process for each article. With all of these parameters in mind, Jacobs understood that her magazine’s writing required not only “clear, interesting, and literate presentation,” but,

a constant consciousness of the appropriate choice of words, specific facts and types of logic necessary to create the precise impression desired upon a Russian readership which is much misinformed by its own press regarding America and lacks background information, both in detail and in the large, which is taken for granted by Americans.<sup>83</sup>

As she gained experience and responsibility, Jacobs participated increasingly in editorial and planning meetings in which articles, sequence, and overall magazine impact was decided; supervision of article and overall magazine graphics; supervision and editing of junior writers’ work; evaluation of research material; and supervision and editing of freelance work. She also had greater discretion in initiating contact with and interviewing prominent figures for original magazine articles in all fields, from politics to science to culture, as well as in soliciting reprinted articles from other magazines and books.



The work, in other words, was, for the most part, what Jacobs' had long wanted, a permanent editorial position with a magazine of some substance and significance. Despite its unique mission, *Amerika* offered Jacobs the opportunity to pitch and write almost any story of interest to her, and to be in contact with the editors of other magazines in the city from who she could solicit stories of interest. She excelled at the job, and, despite a maternity leave in 1948, was formally promoted to Publications Editor in November 1949. By this time, she was already filling many of the responsibilities of the Chief of the Russian Magazine Section. As she wrote in explanation of her request for promotion in September 1949, "My supervisory and planning responsibilities have consistently grown and now occupy approximately seventy-five percent of my time; the remainder being devoted to developing and writing of complex articles."<sup>84</sup>

Following another maternity leave in 1950, Jacobs was formally promoted to Chief of the Pamphlets and Graphics Unit in October 1951. As an editor-in-chief, she planned future articles; reviewed story ideas; worked closely with the copy and publications editors and the art director; made critical analysis of all copy by staff, senior writers, and outside contractors; and interviewed, hired, and supervised freelance writers.<sup>85</sup> She had come a long way since writing her first freelance articles fifteen years earlier.

Having served her country, earned the respect of her colleagues, received excellent reviews from her supervisors, and otherwise dedicated herself to her work for *Amerika*, Jacobs must have been somewhat disturbed to receive a letter from the FBI in April 1948, indicating that they would be conducting a background investigation of her. Jacobs returned the requested personnel data form used for government employees, and a month later, in May 1948, she became part of the FBI's larger investigation into alleged communist infiltration of the State Department.

For the next four years, until *Amerika* was shut down and Jacobs resigned from the State Department, the FBI pursued an ongoing investigation to determine the loyalty, character, and reputation of Jacobs and her immediate family. Although she did not know it at the time, Jacobs was on the frontline of America's "Second Red Scare."

The FBI's initial investigation of Jacobs was pro forma. In fact, it was required by law. As part of congressional negotiations surrounding the passage of Public Law 402, 80<sup>th</sup> Congress, "The US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948" (commonly referred to as the Smith-Mundt Act), a clause was inserted requiring the State Department to "take all appropriate steps to prevent any agent of a foreign power from participating in educational and cultural exchange programs" regulated by the new law, including *Amerika* and short-wave broadcasts by the Voice of America.<sup>86</sup> (Originally a counter-propaganda project created by the Office of War Information, the Voice of America was, like *Amerika*, transferred to the State Department after the war's end. Given the power attributed to broadcast media, there was public and congressional debate as to whether the State Department was the appropriate supervising agency, as well as discussion about the appropriate protocols and goals of public diplomacy in the postwar era.) The personnel data form used by the FBI indicated that the investigation was required by Public Law 402-80.

Even without the new law, Jacobs might well have been investigated, however. Under political pressure associated with the Red Scare, in March 1947, President Truman signed an executive order that became known as The Loyalty Order. It required the establishment of loyalty programs within federal government departments, like the State Department's Loyalty Security Board, which would also investigate Jacobs in 1949 and 1952.

What began as a pro forma investigation, however, soon revealed that Jacobs had drawn the attention of security authorities before. Her application for a visa to visit Siberia in December 1945 had sent up red flags with SODAC, the FBI's Soviet Diplomatic Activities unit, and was recorded in a 1946 security file. As part of an exchange of information agreement, Secretary Pavel Fedosimov of Soviet Consulate General in New York City apparently reported to US authorities that Jacobs and her husband had applied for a visa and had been learning Russian in anticipation of their visit.<sup>87</sup>

The real trigger for the FBI's extended investigation of Jacobs and her husband, however, was their contact with Alger Hiss, whom the FBI had been investigating as early as 1945. Various FBI informants had claimed that Hiss, a State Department employee since 1936, had been a communist working as a Soviet agent. Unaware of this, Jacobs had turned to Hiss, one of her supervisors at the State Department, for assistance in applying for her Soviet visa in 1945, and Hiss had referred her to his contacts at the Soviet Embassy.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, in 1948—at just the time that scrutiny of Hiss had increased and as all of his State Department–Soviet interactions were being investigated—Jacobs listed Alger Hiss as a personal reference on her 1948 investigation data form.<sup>89</sup>

Security authorities became aware of this connection between Hiss and the Jacobses by mid 1947, and in June 1948, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover wrote a memo stating that the pro forma background investigation of Jane Jacobs, which had already been turned into a full field investigation on account of her interest in visiting the USSR, was now part of a new investigation, the so-called “Voice of America” investigation concerning Alger Hiss.<sup>90</sup>

A few months later, in August 1948, Hiss appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he was accused of being a former communist party member. Following additional accusations and court trials, in January 1950, he was charged with perjury (not espionage) and sentenced to five years in prison. A month later, in February 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy made an infamous speech in which he claimed to have a list of known communists who were working in and shaping policy in the State Department. It is unknown whether Jacobs was among them. However, McCarthy was adamant that all State Department employees who had transferred from the war agencies, especially those associated with “the now-convicted traitor” Hiss, be investigated. As he explained in a speech made to the Senate on February 20, McCarthy believed that there were “thousands of unusual characters in some of those war agencies,” and that they required additional screening.<sup>91</sup>

McCarthy was aware that the majority of war agency transfers had been screened prior to their reemployment. For Jacobs, this would have taken place in early 1946, between her employment for the OWI and State Department. Moreover, McCarthy was aware of the activities of the Loyalty Security Board. However, he claimed that while “approximately 4,000 employees [had] been transferred to the Department of State from various war agencies such as the OSS, FEA, OWI, OIAA, and so forth,” one thousand of these had not been subjected to a preliminary examination.<sup>92</sup> Recognizing his political motivation, a few weeks later the *Washington Post* coined the term “McCarthyism” in political cartoon.<sup>93</sup>

From June 1948 until Jacobs’ left the State Department in May 1952, the FBI conducted an ongoing investigation, personally supervised by J. Edgar Hoover on account of the Hiss connection, of Jacobs. Agents questioned Jacobs’ friends and family members, former teachers,

neighbors, and landlords, and former and current neighbors, employers, coworkers, and personal references around the country, and, by October 1948, had conducted no fewer than thirteen interviews. Although the most reliable informants were emphatic that Jacobs was loyal to the country, others—including her former supervisor at *Iron Age*, a disgruntled former coworker, and some old Greenwich Village neighbors—made disparaging remarks about Jacobs' character and politics, stated that she probably followed the communist party line, and expressed their belief that she was a security risk for the government.

Supplied with this information by the FBI, the State Department's Loyalty Security Board interrogated Jacobs in 1949, asking her to reply to questions concerning her union membership; her voting registration with the allegedly communist-infiltrated American Labor Party from 1944 to 1946; her support or affiliation with the communist party; subscriptions to communist literature; her proposed trip to Siberia; her association with suspect individuals; and why a former employer had described her as a "trouble-maker."<sup>94</sup> Despite her recent promotion, in early 1950, around the time Hiss was convicted of perjury, Jacobs was placed on probationary status at the State Department pending further investigation. A few months later she was required to sign yet another Oath of Office; the document had recently been updated to include a new affidavit regarding subversive activity and affiliation, which required government personnel to affirm that they were not "Communists or Fascists." Almost two years later, in March 1952, at the height of McCarthyism, Jacobs was interrogated again by the Loyalty Security Board, and this time responded at length to questions about her union membership and activities, including her membership in a prohibited union of federal employees, the United Public Workers of America; her views on communism and foreign policy; her American Labor Party affiliation; her alleged

subscription to the *Daily Worker*; her association with suspect individuals (and FBI informants); and her views on the Communist Party, the Soviet system of government, and the aims and policies of the Soviet Union.

When first asked by the Loyalty Security Board about her suspected affiliation with the Communist Party and its front organizations in 1948, Jacobs replied that she thought “too much of the Bill of Rights to become involved with that party.”<sup>95</sup> When writing at greater length on the subject in 1952, she explained eloquently that, in contrast to the Soviet system, she believed in decentralized, participatory, and local self-government, with “control from below and support from above”; free and uncensored experimentation, innovation, and self-expression; humanity and moderation:

I abhor the Soviet system of government, for I fear and despise the whole concept of a government which takes as its mission the molding of people into a specific “kind of man,” i.e. “Soviet Man”; that practices and extols a conception of the state as “control from above and support from below” (I believe in control from below and support from above); that controls the work of artists, musicians, architects and scientists; that controls what people read and attempts to control what people think; that turns every agency of society, as unions, schools, recreational clubs, and all economic and production activities, into instruments for the state’s purposes; that centralizes into the monolithic state every activity which should properly be controlled locally or by individuals; that makes free experimentation in any field, from manufacturing to teaching, impossible; that leaves its people without channels to express their opinions on, or to direct, the basic questions of national policy; that deals with opposition by executing, imprisoning, transporting or otherwise silencing dissidents. I think the Soviet system, in common with all totalitarian government, is a system which, once instituted, inevitably makes people the helpless victims of those with an appetite for power. I think that, as a system, it therefore puts a premium on the cynical and the ruthless, and that its methods automatically tend to elevate to power people with these qualities and to eliminate from positions of power the humane and the moderate. I believe that it subordinates every other human value to the purpose of power—power over its own citizens and power internationally among nations.<sup>96</sup>

She explained further that she believed that the fight against communism would be won by showing “that it is possible to overcome poverty, misery, and decay by democratic means, and we must ourselves believe, and must show others, that our American tradition of the dignity and

liberty of the individual is not a luxury for easy times but is the basic source of the strength and security of a successful society.”<sup>97</sup>

She indicated that she felt that her own penchant for argumentation, criticism, and interest in “chewing over odd ideas” was closely aligned with the success of American society:

I was brought up to believe that there is no virtue in conforming meekly to the dominant opinion of the moment. I was encouraged to believe that simple conformity results in stagnation for a society, and that American progress has been largely owing to the opportunity for experimentation, the leeway given initiative, and to a gusto and freedom for chewing over odd ideas. I was taught that the American’s right to be a free individual, not at the mercy of the state, was hard-won and that its price was eternal vigilance, that I too would have to be vigilant. I was made to feel that it would be a disgrace to me, as an individual, if I should not value or should give up rights that were dearly bought.<sup>98</sup>

She argued, finally, that the greatest threat to American democracy, “the security of our tradition,” was not from without, but at home. It was embodied in “the current fear of radical ideas and of people who propound them.”

“In the case of the first threat,” she wrote, “the international threat of Communist systems of government, I have been able to do something practical through my work in the State Department. In the case of the second threat, that of McCarthy—or of the frame of mind of which McCarthy is an apt symbol—there is little practical that I could do other than take a stand in assertion of my own rights.”<sup>99</sup> She recognized her own rights were broadly shared. She believed in “the right of Communists, or anyone else, to speak and publish and promulgate ideas in the United States,” in other words, just as much as she believed in her own right to “criticize my government and my Congress.”<sup>100</sup>

## Cities and People

The irony of the suspicions that Jacobs was engaged in “un-American” activities was that she was in fact deeply invested in the tradition of American government and the legacy of the U.S. Constitution. Moreover, it was ironic and troubling that part of the case made against her with regard to her work for *Amerika* was that she sought to connect with her Russian audience. As one of her former coworkers told an FBI agent, Jacobs “was always trying to present as closely as possible the picture of the average working man in America as being identical with the average working man in Russia,” which the informant felt was untrue, contributing to an assessment that Jacobs was “a bad security risk.”<sup>101</sup>

Under pressure from McCarthy and amid the growing hysteria of the Red Scare, in March 1952, the State Department announced that its Publications Branch would be shut down and moved from Manhattan to Washington, D.C., a move which Jacobs and her coworkers protested. As reported in the *New York Times*, nearly seventy of the department’s seventy five staff members refused to relocate, and branch chief Mrs. Marion K. Sanders, Jacobs’ immediate supervisor, quit in protest of the reorganization plan.<sup>102</sup> Apart from being indignant about the short-notice given to her staff, Sanders argued that the suspension of publication risked *Amerika*’s continued existence. The editors of the *New York Times* agreed; in a June 1952 editorial, they offered that the U.S. “now has only two means of communicating with the people of the Soviet Union: the Voice of America broadcasts—which are more or less successfully jammed—and *Amerika*.”<sup>103</sup> If *Amerika* was abolished, they continued, the Soviet censors would win, and the U.S. would lose one of its two tenuous links of communication with the Soviet people.<sup>104</sup>



The symbolism of *Amerika*'s move from New York, the city of exchange, to Washington, the city of government and "guardians," was unlikely lost on Jacobs. One of Jacobs' coworkers, quoted in another *Times* editorial, opined, "It removes publication specialists from the New York area, where our nation's printing, photographic art, and editorial facilities are concentrated."<sup>105</sup> Although it was years before she elaborated the moral philosophy articulated in her *Systems of Survival* (1992), from the time of her first essays on the city's working districts, Jacobs recognized that the city was largely synonymous with exchange. The city became a city, as she understood better from Henri Pirenne, when, as in Cambrai in 1077, the ruling bishop left the city and "under the direction of the richest merchants of the town, the people arose, took possession of the gates, and proclaimed a commune," ultimately giving rise to the evolution of a middle class, municipal institutions, and greater freedom from hierarchal powers.<sup>106</sup> For those who believed that *Amerika*'s mission was to exchange information, its purpose was undermined by the move to the seat of government.

Jacobs, of course, refused the move to Washington, and in April 1952, she tendered her resignation as Chief of the Pamphlets and Graphics Unit, Magazine Section, Publications Branch, International Press Service, effective May 2, 1952. Like most of her colleagues, however, Jacobs quickly found new work in the New York publications industry. As a senior writer and general editor who had experience managing staff, working on layout, graphics, and production, and writing and editing articles on topics including American architecture, U.S. cities, and urban redevelopment, she soon found a position as associate editor with *Architectural Forum*, a Time Inc. publication.

As Jacobs joined *Architectural Forum* in May 1952 and began writing on urban redevelopment, her recent encounters with Communism and McCarthyism remained with her. These experiences contributed to her lifelong suspicion of, in her words, “control from above” and of “the dominant opinion of the moment.” In the decade ahead, she would unleash the frustrations of her work for the government and her resentment of being attacked by the government in a counterattack against the Urban Renewal Administration and its cronies in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961).

Jacobs’ “attack on current city planning and rebuilding” in *Death and Life* was not simply a matter of anger, however. Although she believed that urban renewal’s federally mandated programs were contributing to the “unbuilding” of both productive cities and urban society as a whole, she believed that dissent was part of the American tradition. Thus, when Jacobs explained her minority viewpoints on such matters as unionization and the value of radical and unpopular ideas, she may well have been speaking about her minority views on urban redevelopment.

Jane Jacobs would become an ideal architectural and urban design critic. As she explained in her 1952 interrogatory, dissent was not just a national tradition, but a family tradition. She recalled a distant Quaker relative, “who, believing in women’s rights and women’s brains, set up her own little printing press to publish her own works without a masculine nom de plume.” She was equally proud of Virginian ancestors who had opposed slavery, secession, and their state’s participation in the Civil War, as well as a grandfather who was a lifelong enthusiast of third-party movements in the agrarian and populist tradition and had run for Congress on the Greenback-Labor platform in 1872. Support of dissenting third-party movements, like the American Labor Party, was part of a personal tradition, and one that she felt remained valid. As

she observed of the populist Greenback party, which supported labor rights and women's suffrage, "I am pleased to see how many of that party's planks, 'outlandish' at the time, have since become respectable law and opinion."<sup>107</sup>

Jacobs believed that dissent and diversity of opinion were essential to political and cultural development, and especially to the city. "The fact of being in a minority does not, in itself, trouble me, nor do I see anything un-American about being in a minority position," she stated. "Quite the contrary. The minority views of one day are frequently the majority views of another, and in the possibility of this being so rests all our potentiality for progress."<sup>108</sup> As suggested by Plato in *The Republic*, the city was the natural home of both dialogue and minority views, and in it lived the soul of a civilization.

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 23, 1959 (RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3381), Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Hyde Jacobs, Jr. was just starting his career at this time as an architect. He graduated from Columbia University's School of Architecture with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1942, and went from there into Columbia's "In-Training Program in Aircraft" as part of the war effort. He was working for Grummond Aircraft in Long Island when he and Jane Butzner met in 1944. Bob Jacobs' father, Robert H. Jacobs, Sr. was born in upstate New York and subsequently worked as a division engineer for New York City's transportation department during the city's subway design and construction building boom. In the early 1960s, Bob Jacobs taught as an adjunct associate professor of architecture at Columbia.

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<sup>4</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, Nov. 22, 1961 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, box 13, folder 12, John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Boston, MA), 1. A slightly different version of Jacobs' autobiographical account in this letter is republished in Max Allen's *Ideas That Matter: The Worlds of Jane Jacobs* (Ontario: The Ginger Press, 1997), 3. Columbia's University Extension program was reorganized as the College of General Studies in 1947.

<sup>5</sup> Information about Jacobs' coursework at Columbia University is from Jane Butzner [Jacobs], Applications for Federal Employment, Nov. 27, 1943; Oct. 26, 1946; and Sept. 8, 1949 (Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO); Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File no. 123-252, Jul. 20, 1948, 2. Jacobs took classes during the day for two years, for a total of 65 credits.

<sup>6</sup> Jacobs later described her one college course in sociology as "dumb." James Howard Kunstler, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Sept. 6, 2000, *Metropolis* (Mar. 2001), accessed Oct. 24, 2007, [http://www.kunstler.com/mags\\_jacobs2.htm](http://www.kunstler.com/mags_jacobs2.htm), Part 1, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Economic Geography editors, "News Items: Columbia University, Department of Geography," *Economic Geography* 2 (Apr. 1926), 332.

<sup>8</sup> Harlan H. Barrows, "Geography as Human Ecology," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 13 (Mar. 1923), 1, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Jacobs wrote about the TVA in *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (New York: Random House, 1984), 110-23.

<sup>10</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (New York: Random House, 2004), 177-78. Jacobs suggests here that Lewis Mumford's "obtuse" forward to the 1956 paperback edition of Pirenne's *Medieval Cities* was another source of animosity between them.

<sup>11</sup> Jacobs also cited Pirenne's *Early Democracies in the Low Countries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) in *Systems of Survival* (New York: Random House, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Jun. 4, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380), Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY (hereafter RAC).

<sup>13</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 13, 436.

<sup>14</sup> Kunstler, Interview with Jacobs, Part 1, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> The extent of Robert Hemphill's involvement in Jacobs' *Constitutional Chaff* is unclear. He was certainly an influence on the project, both in terms of "wisdom and enthusiasm" for which Jacobs thanked him in the Acknowledgements of the book, and indirectly through the legal research that Jacobs did for him in 1935 and 1936. Others who knew Jacobs (FBI informants in the late 1940s) believed that he was a collaborator on the book, or vice versa, although this is unlikely because Hemphill had retired to Florida by the late 1930s and died there in 1941. At the least, it was through Jacobs' work for Hemphill that she developed an interest in government legislation and publications. Her key source for *Constitutional Chaff* was *Documents Illustrative of the Formation of the Union of the American States*, 69th Congress, 1st Sess. House Doc. No. 398, Charles C. Tansill, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927). As Jacobs notes in the preface, this document made available to the general public all of the known notes on the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention for the first time.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Standard Form No. 57, U.S. Civil Service Commission, Sept. 8, 1949, Attachment K, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Max Farrand, "Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, with Explanatory Argument (book review), *The American Historical Review* 47 (Oct. 1941), 197-98. A more recent citation can be found in Douglas D. Heckathorn and Steven M. Maser, "Bargaining and Constitutional Contracts," *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (Feb. 1987), 166.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Butzner, "Caution, Men Work," *Cue, The Weekly Magazine of New York Life* (May 18, 1940), 24.

<sup>20</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), xvi.

<sup>21</sup> The bridge between past and future metaphor is from Hannah Arendt (1954), *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 13, which I am grateful to David Leatherbarrow for bringing to my attention. My use of the concept of topography, which seems appropriate in discussing the work of a geographer like Jacobs, is also indebted to Leatherbarrow.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, With Explanatory Argument* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 2, 4.

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- <sup>23</sup> Henri Pirenne (1925), *Medieval Cities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), 193.
- <sup>24</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 194-95. Jacobs cited Arendt in *Systems of Survival*, 200, 233.
- <sup>25</sup> Jane Jacobs, "A Lesson in Urban Redevelopment: Philadelphia's Redevelopment, A Progress Report," *Architectural Forum* 103 (Jul. 1955), 118.
- <sup>26</sup> Jane Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, With Explanatory Argument* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 2, 4.
- <sup>27</sup> Jacobs and Mary Rowe co-authored the introduction to *Toronto: Considering Self-Government*, Mary Rowe, ed.
- <sup>28</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 405-6.
- <sup>29</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 408.
- <sup>30</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 406, 407.
- <sup>31</sup> Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff*, 1.
- <sup>32</sup> Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff*, 2.
- <sup>33</sup> Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff*, 70.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Butzner, *Constitutional Chaff*, 153.
- <sup>36</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Systems of Survival: A Dialogue on the Moral Foundations of Commerce and Politics* (New York: Random House, 1992), 205.
- <sup>37</sup> Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*, 21, 20, xi, xii.
- <sup>38</sup>
- <sup>39</sup>
- <sup>40</sup> J. I. Butzner, "Non-Ferrous Metals," *Iron Age* 151 (Jan. 7, 1943), 140.
- <sup>41</sup> Butzner, "Non-Ferrous Metals," 236.
- <sup>42</sup> The report that Jacobs tinkered with inventions came from an informant in one of the FBI's investigations of her.
- <sup>43</sup> Butzner, "Non-Ferrous Metals," 290.
- <sup>44</sup> J. I. Butzner, "Silver Alloy Brazing with High-Speed Localized Gas Heating," *Iron Age* 152 (Sept. 23, 1943), 38.
- <sup>45</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File no. 123-252, Jul. 20, 1948, 4-5.
- <sup>46</sup> Jane Butzner, "Trylon's Steel Helps to Build Big New Nickel Plant in Cuba," *New York Herald Tribune* (Dec. 27, 1942), np.
- <sup>47</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File no. 123-252, Jul. 20, 1948, 4-5.
- <sup>48</sup> Jane Butzner, "Women Wanted to Fill 2,795 Kinds of Jobs," *New York Herald Tribune* (Oct. 18, 1942), np.
- <sup>49</sup> Jane Butzner, "Waves and Waacs Go Through the Assignment Classification Mill," *New York Herald Tribune* (Mar. 28, 1943), np.
- <sup>50</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Answers to Interrogatory for Jane Butzner Jacobs," Jul. 22, 1949 (Jane Jacobs Papers, Box 12, Folder 8, John J. Burns Library, Boston College), 1.
- <sup>51</sup> [Jane Butzner], "30,000 Unemployed and 7,000 Empty Houses in Scranton, Neglected City," *The Iron Age* 151 (Mar. 25, 1943), 94.
- <sup>52</sup> Butzner, "30,000 Unemployed," 95.
- <sup>53</sup> Butzner, "Waves and Waacs," np.
- <sup>54</sup> It is not clear from the source whether the Committee for Industry and Rehabilitation, which organized the protest rally, was within the American Labor Party or perhaps the American Federation of Labor. It indicates only a "labor" organization. Jacobs later became affiliated with the ALP, while the AFL was active in the Scranton area due to the Coal Mine Strikes of 1943, so these organization seem to be the most likely.
- <sup>55</sup> The story of Jacobs' Scranton campaign is well told in Glenna Lang and Marjory Wunsch's *Genius of Common Sense: Jane Jacobs and the Story of The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Boston: David R. Godine Publisher, 2009), 31-2, 115. They reproduce the letter from E. M. Elliott to the editors of *The Iron Age*, Apr. 17, 1943, in their well-written book.
- <sup>56</sup> The *Scrantonian*, "Ex-Scranton Girl Helps Home City, Miss Butzner's Story in *Iron Age* Brought Nationwide Publicity" (Scranton, PA: Sept. 26, 1943), reprinted in Allen, *Ideas That Matter*, 37.
- <sup>57</sup> Office of War Information, "Justification for Rapid Promotion" for Jane Butzner, Oct. 3, 1944.
- <sup>58</sup> Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*, 215.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. For Jacobs on her affiliation with the “trading” moral system, see Fred Lawrence, ed., *Ethics in Making a Living: The Jane Jacobs Conference*, (Atlanta: The Scholars Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>60</sup> J. L. Moreno, “Foundations of Sociometry: An Introduction,” *Sociometry* 4 (Feb. 1941), 15.

<sup>61</sup> J. L. Moreno, *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama & Sociometry* 42 (Spring 1989).

<sup>62</sup> J. L. Moreno, “Sociometry in Relation to Other Social Sciences,” *Sociometry* 1 (July-Oct. 1937), 207.

<sup>63</sup> J. L. Moreno, ed., “Sociometric Ballot of Research Projects,” *Sociometry* 8 (May 1945), 229-28.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Butzner Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949 (Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO), Attachment D, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Jacobs and her colleagues were terminated from their positions at the Office of War Information in December 1945, and were apparently unaware that the State Department would take over some of the OWI’s foreign affairs roles and the OWI’s New York publications offices. They were also unaware that they would have the opportunity to be rehired in positions similar or identical to those that they had held during the war. Jacobs was required to reapply for her position with the State Department and to undergo a new background check. However, her federal employment record was effectively continuous, despite the gap in employment and shift in departments.

<sup>66</sup> Jane Butzner Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949 (Civilian Personnel Records, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO), Attachment C.

<sup>67</sup> Jacobs indicated only that she edited a book on historical anthropology during this period of freelance work and did not provide any details. Jacobs may have been acquainted with Margaret Mead around this time, but Mead’s books and papers do not indicate that Jacobs edited one of her book.

<sup>68</sup> Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949, Attachment C, *ibid*.

<sup>69</sup> Howard Oiseth, “The First Magazine,” *The Way It Was: USIA’s Press and Publications Service (1935-77)* (Washington, D.C.: United States Information Agency, 1977), 56. I am indebted to Mr. Martin Manning of the Department of State for this article and related history of State Department and USIA publications.

<sup>70</sup> *Time* magazine, “Amerika for the Russians,” *Time* (Mar. 4, 1946), Time Archive, <http://www.time.com>, accessed Feb. 7, 2007.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> Oiseth, 56-57. *Amerika Illustrated* outlived the USSR, which was dissolved in 1991, and continued to be popular in Russia until it ceased publication in 1994.

<sup>74</sup> *Time*, “Amerika for the Russians,” *ibid*.

<sup>75</sup> Oiseth, 57.

<sup>76</sup> Creighton Peet, “Russian ‘Amerika,’ A Magazine About U.S. for Soviet Citizens,” *College Art Journal* (Fall 1951), 18.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Oiseth, 57.

<sup>78</sup> U.S. Civil Service Commission, “Classification Sheet,” Nov. 5, 1946, 2.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949, Attachment A, 2.

<sup>81</sup> Peet, 17. See also Jennifer Griffin, “US Stops Publishing *Amerika*,” *Associated Press* (Aug. 17, 1994), accessed online Sept. 9, 1997. With thanks to Martin Manning for these articles.

<sup>82</sup> Jacobs, Application for Federal Employment, Sept. 8, 1949, Attachment A, 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 5. Richard E. Morrissey, “Justification for Promotion,” Dec. 21, 1949, 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> Public Law 80-402, 22 USC 1442 – Sec. 1442a. National security measures.

<sup>86</sup> FBI, Jane Butzner Jacobs, Special Inquiry, Public Law 402, 80<sup>th</sup> Congress (Voice of America), May 13, 1948 (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C.), 2

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>88</sup> [J. Edgar Hoover,] Director, FBI, Voice of America investigation, Oct. 1, 1948.

<sup>89</sup> [J. Edgar Hoover,] Director, FBI, Jane Butzner Jacobs Special Inquiry – State Department, Jun. 18, 1948.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph McCarthy, *Major Speeches and Debates of Senator Joe McCarthy Delivered in the United States Senate, 1950-1951*, U.S. Government Printing Office, np.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Political cartoonist Herb Block coined the term “McCarthyism” in the *Washington Post* on March 29, 1950.

<sup>94</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Carrell St. Claire, Jul. 22, 1949 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, box 12, folder 8, John J. Burns Library, Boston College).

<sup>95</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, NY File no. 123-252, Jul. 20, 1948, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Jane Jacobs, Loyalty Security Board “Interrogatory for Jane Butzner Jacobs,” Mar. 25, 1952 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, box 12, folder 8, John J. Burns Library, Boston College), I10.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, F2.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, F1.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, F2.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, F2-3.

<sup>101</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, Jane Butzner Jacobs, Special Inquiry – State Department, Dec. 10, 1951, 2-3.

<sup>102</sup> New York Times, “Many of Staff Quit Magazine Amerika; Resist Move from New York to Washington of Periodical Distributed in Soviet [sic],” *New York Times* (Apr. 15, 1952), 4. New York Times, “Propaganda Steps by U.S. Criticized; Publications Chief Quits Over Shake-Up Plan,” *New York Times* (Jun. 1, 1952), 29.

<sup>103</sup> New York Times, Editorial: “Amerika Magazine,” *New York Times* (Jun. 28, 1952), 18.

<sup>104</sup> *Amerika* was suspended until December 1955, but, as noted above, it was published until 1994, outliving the Soviet Union.

<sup>105</sup> David Simon, “Foreign Information Program; Proposed Change in Operations is Opposed as Harmful,” *New York Times* (Jun. 9, 1952), 22.

<sup>106</sup> Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, 177.

<sup>107</sup> Jacobs, March 1952 Interrogatory, F1.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, F3.

## Chapter 4

### **“We Inaugurate Architectural Criticism”: The New Editorial Agenda at *Architectural Forum***

Would you like to know how a critic feels? As if he were building up a world of buildings. The architect uses plans and elevations. The critic uses architects. A new architect comes into his hands as into the architect's own office comes a sample of a marvelous new material: perhaps it is just a new tar that will more cheaply guarantee his roof against a leak, perhaps a new truss that will greatly change construction, or perhaps a new reflector that will help flood a whole room with mysteriously invigorating light. And so for the critic every architect serves his turn, according to his own worth whether as nail or ridgepole, to enlarge or illuminate the critic's growing City. *Douglas Haskell, “On Architectural Criticism” (1930)*

**A**lthough Jacobs valued dissent, she had little experience with critical writing when she joined *Architectural Forum* in 1952. It was something that she learned there. As dictated by State Department policy, her writing for a Soviet audience in *Amerika Illustrated* had required a subtle approach: one that treated controversial subjects with discrimination and judgment and which sought to convince rather than to antagonize. By contrast, Douglas Haskell, Jacobs' new editor-in-chief, wanted his magazine to step out of the “narrow bounds” of architectural criticism, to emulate other forms of cultural criticism, and to write the kind of architectural criticism that had previously resulted in the threat of libel suits—and he wanted Jacobs to help him in this project. Haskell, who was later dubbed “the dean” of American architectural editors for his long career in the field, regarded Jacobs as a kindred spirit. Although he was more than twenty years her senior, they had followed similar career paths and shared



similar world views; neither had training in architecture, but both had dedicated themselves to writing with a pragmatic and reform-minded social outlook. And at a time when suburbanization was a powerful cultural force, they shared a sense of the enduring importance of cities. Working alongside Haskell and a close knit team of associate editors, Jacobs learned the art of architectural journalism, and she became immersed in the architectural debates and acquainted with some of the leading architects and city planners of the time. She not only critiqued their work, she was influenced by them. Moreover, from 1952 until taking leave from *Forum* to write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1958, she contributed articles to most of the seventy-five issues produced during her tenure there. Together with Haskell and her colleagues, Jacobs helped to reshape American architectural criticism. On this foundation, she would go on to invent a new field of urban design criticism.

## **“We Inaugurate Architectural Criticism”**

When Jane Jacobs went to visit Douglas Haskell in the Time Incorporated headquarters in Rockefeller Center in May 1952, he was looking for more editorial staff. Some months earlier, in January 1952, *Architectural Forum*, *The Magazine of Building* had split into two magazines: *House & Home*, a new magazine devoted to the “brand new postwar industry” of home-building, and *Architectural Forum*, which would focus on schools, hospitals, shopping centers, office buildings, and large-scale urban redevelopment projects. Since acquiring the magazine in 1932, Henry R. Luce, co-founder of Time Inc. and *Forum*'s editor-in-chief, had worked to make *Forum* the “leading chronicler of a revolution in Construction” by integrating the various elements of the

building world—architects, engineers, contractors, and investors—into “a great single industry.”<sup>1</sup> To reorganize the magazine for an anticipated postwar construction boom, he hired Douglas Haskell in 1949 as the magazine’s new Architectural Editor. By January 1952, when *House & Home* was published under its own cover, Haskell was Editorial Chairman of two magazines and his personnel was spread thin. He needed a new Hospitals and Schools Editor, and so he offered Jacobs a trial assignment to review a new hospital designed by Edward D. Stone.

Jacobs may have hesitated when she was handed “great, indigestible rolls of working drawings and plans” of the building she was to review.<sup>2</sup> She had been considering seeking a position with *Natural History* magazine, published by the American Museum of Natural History, whose editors she had approached with a freelance essay on Siberia in 1945, the last time she was out of work. Rather than learning about hospitals, a position with *Natural History* would have given her an opportunity to pursue her interests in geography, cultural anthropology, and the life sciences. As a Time Incorporated magazine, however, *Architectural Forum* paid much better, and she had become a regular reader of her husband’s subscription and “liked it very much.”<sup>3</sup>

For his part, Haskell does not seem to have hesitated in offering Jacobs the assignment. In fact, they may have already been acquainted. During her work as a editor at *Amerika Illustrated*, she may have spoken or met with Haskell and his colleagues when she was looking for articles to commission or reprint, or when she was writing her own pieces. Among the many articles on various subjects that Jacobs wrote for *Amerika* were a number of articles on architecture, school design, housing, urban redevelopment, and American cities and neighborhoods, and she had borrowed photographs from *Architectural Forum*, as well as *Progressive Architecture*, to illustrate these. Moreover, as permitted by State Department

international press policy, she may also have consulted with Haskell or other people in the field while writing her articles.

Even if he hadn't met Jacobs before, Haskell was evidently impressed by Jacobs' resume. She had almost ten years of experience at the associate editor level, in addition to some years of freelance work, and had been serving for a number of years as a general editor of a magazine with a strategic and sensitive editorial agenda. Including her early freelance articles on Manhattan's working districts, she had already written close to a dozen articles on architecture and cities. Moreover, she knew something about architectural history. In writing a lengthy two-part series "New Horizons in Architecture" for *Amerika*, she had studied "the evolution of modern American architectural thinking and achievement."<sup>4</sup> She also knew something about the current developments in urban redevelopment. Two long articles that she wrote on urban redevelopment and new housing for *Amerika*, "Planned Reconstruction of Lagging City Districts" and "Slum Clearance," published in 1949 and 1950, were among the earliest extended treatments on the new U.S. Housing Act of 1949 published in any magazine.<sup>5</sup> She had recently written an article about modern schools and edited an article on the modern hospital for *Amerika*. And it didn't hurt that her husband Bob Jacobs was a hospital architect, who could help her read the architectural drawings, and that she was already a regular reader of *Forum* and knew something about the magazine from a reader's and an editor's point of view.

Haskell was clearly impressed by her trial assignment, which became her first feature as the magazine's new hospitals and schools editor. "Big Double Hospital," an eight-page feature on a new hospital in Lima, Peru, by Edward D. Stone and the U.S. Public Health Service, was published in June 1952. In her first assignment as an architectural critic, Jacobs showed herself to

be observant and analytical, and to be sympathetic to the aims of modern architecture, while valuing the building's life-enhancing features, its functional qualities, and innovations over its formal and aesthetic subtleties. She described the Peru hospital, for example, as noteworthy for:

1) its simple organization of tremendously complex functions; 2) its open, patio-dotted ground floor, certainly one of the world's pleasantest and easiest to navigate for patients and staff; 3) its careful regard for the customs of those who will use it; 4) its complete and decisive division of some facilities and its equally complete and convenient integration of others; and 5) its thoroughgoing traffic rationale, consistent in detail and in the whole.<sup>6</sup>

In this first critique of a building, it was evident that Jacobs was very interested in the functionalism of modern architecture in a comprehensive sense. The essence of the design problem for this "double hospital" was, as Jacobs summarized it, "how to make the maternity hospital and the general hospital completely distinct and yet completely integrated." In doing so, she appreciated the way that building's thoughtful design enabled its basic purposes, while at the same time separating the healthy and the ill. Recognizing architecture's subtle but inevitable influence on daily life and experience, she commended the design for providing comprehensibility of organization and movement, as well as a pleasant experience for staff and visitors. Moreover, she admired the way that the design preserved and facilitated local custom. In Peru, she noted approvingly, "child-birth is regarded as an exciting, wholesome event which has nothing to do with illness."<sup>7</sup> As a subtle critique of the American approach to childbirth, which she knew from personal experience, her review offered the design in Peru as a good model for hospitals, practices, and attitudes at home.

Although Jacobs's did not appear as a permanent fixture on the magazine's masthead until September 1952, she and Haskell very quickly established that they could work well together. As evidence of his approval of her trial assignment, within two months, Jacobs was

freely stating frank and even sardonic opinions of which buildings were worthy of publication in the magazine. In a July 1952 memo to Haskell typical of their interoffice communication during the decade ahead, Jacobs offered critiques of a new school, a hospital addition, and a housing project for the elderly, recommending the publication of the school project and rejecting the others.

The school design, she observed, with internal organization like “little neighborhood units” and general adaptability, presented a model of a “reasonable, flexible way to go about school building under certain circumstances.”<sup>8</sup> By contrast, she was dubious about the hospital design, particularly the addition’s connection to the old building, the phasing of additional expansion plans, and other decisions that apparently had “no thinking behind them.” Jacobs had discussed the project with the architect, who left their meeting saying he would get back to her with answers to her various questions. She wrote Haskell wryly that, “I encouraged him to do [this] because I secretly thought that even though we would not use this [building in publication], supposing the reasoning is as faulty as I suspect, these are things he ought to know anyhow.” Describing the elderly housing project, finally, Jacobs’ orientation toward others came to the fore. The architect, she wrote, knew nothing about the “people it will house, how long they are apt to live there (he never heard anybody bring that up), whether they bring or would like to bring anything with them, etc. They are numbers, one to a bed. It is a barracks.”<sup>9</sup>

This was just the kind of thinking and writing that Douglas Haskell wanted for the new *Forum*. With the work of launching *House & Home* behind him, he was ready to implement a new editorial agenda for *Forum*, but to do this, he needed someone with a progressive, unconventional, and critical mindset like his own. Someone without professional training in

architecture, and therefore less likely to be personally invested in an architectural style, school, or the work of a *Meister*, would be an asset.

In this regard, Jacobs and Haskell had much in common personally and professionally. Both had done their time as freelance writers. As a new permanent staff member at *Architectural Record* in the mid-1940s, Haskell himself had covered the schools department. Without formal training in architecture Haskell had become a respected authority on prefabricated housing in the 1940s, and he would have believed Jacobs capable of developing similar specialties.<sup>10</sup> Both had deep commitments to the social consequences and possibilities of cities and buildings, and were largely free of doctrinaire beliefs and allegiances to in achieving these. Both were pluralists who believed in a diversity of viewpoints, and were genuine modernists in the sense that they instinctively questioned dogmatic ideas and practices no matter how modern they claimed to be. For example, just a few months before he hired Jacobs, in March 1952, Haskell wrote a memo for the executive staff *House & Home* titled “Why We Publish Modern” in which he declared that, “the trouble with ‘traditionalism’ is that it cuts off at the source those mental habits which lead to deeper thinking and better solutions.”<sup>11</sup> His words could have been hers: Jacobs’s deep seated interest in “how things work” manifested itself as an epistemological interest in modern architecture that was deeper than aesthetics. Both, similarly, had a pragmatic, anti-utopian streak: a desire to solve problems now and with the tools at hand, rather than wait for a wholesale transformation of the context in which better conditions and solutions would prevail. This trait had brought Haskell into conflict with his long-time friend and sometime adversary Lewis Mumford, whose proposals were typically building “from the ground up,” and the same would later happen with Jacobs. In their individual ways, both Haskell’s and Jacobs’ world views were

expressed in an interest in buildings' participation in larger contexts: with their users, with the city, and with the "world" that they contributed to building through their writing. Haskell, finally, was no chauvinist: his co-editor at *The New Student*, a weekly that he directed following his graduation from Oberlin College in 1923, had been a woman, and he considered his spouse, Helen Haskell, his equal. During his years of freelance work, Helen had been the steady breadwinner, and since then, the Haskells took equal responsibility in the ownership and management of Camp Treetops in upstate New York, a non-denominational summer camp that emphasized diversity and progressive education.<sup>12</sup>

With this common ground quickly established, Jacobs joined Haskell's small team of associate editors early in the summer of 1952. These, as Peter Blake wrote in his memoir, were a "small kernel of people who believed in the magazine's 'mission' and in a degree of editorial sophistication and quality."<sup>13</sup> They included Walter McQuade, "a bright, witty, rather sardonic writer who had been trained as an architect at Cornell," and Louise Cooper, "an extremely knowledgeable economist who supplied an expertise to the magazine."<sup>14</sup> Blake, who knew the staff even before Haskell's tenure, rounded out the team. In the 1930s, Blake had worked as a freelance draftsman for long-time *Forum* art director Paul Grotz, and, before the war, had worked as a writer for managing editor George Nelson in 1942. In August 1950, Blake rejoined *Forum* on Haskell's staff as an associate editor, fresh from a stint as Curator of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art.

With this team in place, on July 23, 1952, the day after the publication of Jacobs's critical review of the school, hospital, and old age home, Haskell released a six-page staff memo outlining the magazine's new editorial agenda. Criticism would be central. After years of effort

and the distractions of reorganizing the magazine, Haskell had won the support of Henry Luce and Time Inc.'s executive editors for a new approach to architectural journalism.

The new approach would manifest itself in all of the magazine's departments, even its building type features, which were the traditional focus of architectural magazines. In response to new postwar building industries, methods, and trends, and what Haskell described as a "more advanced stage of the Industrial Revolution," these studies had assumed new importance. This had prompted the reorganization of the magazine and the spin-off of *House & Home*, whose "unique approach to the problem of building types" would be directed to the home-building industry exclusively. *Forum*, meanwhile, would take a progressive approach to the other major building types. In Haskell's new editorial agenda, this meant, "not just *industrial plants* is our subject, but *why new defense plants must be different*. Not just *hospitals*, but *what makes the 1940 hospital obsolete*. Not just *schools*, but *Forum's proposed school for the 1950s*."<sup>15</sup>

In all aspects of the magazine, architectural criticism would be a new focus. *Forum*, he declared, would "Inaugurate Architectural Criticism." After years of seeking to break down the barriers set up by professional gentlemen's agreements, editorial complacency, and publishers' fears of libel lawsuits, Haskell had Henry Luce's blessing to restore "the lost right of architectural criticism."

Since the 1930s, Haskell explained, American architectural criticism had been hemmed in by the threat of libel suits:

Ever since about 1929, architectural criticism in the United States has been in effect illegal, partly because of court decisions then rendered and partly because of the cowardice then of editors of certain national magazines who set the precedent of settling cases out of court. Never since has an architectural magazine stepped out of narrow bounds of architectural criticism. It was tacitly assumed that nothing could be done.<sup>16</sup>



But now, Haskell told his staff, Luce and Time Incorporated's lawyers had agreed to support a more outspoken approach:

My news to you is that *The Magazine of Building* in both editions [*Forum* and *House & Home*] has quietly restored genuine architectural criticism—not the wrist slapping kind, but the kind where you first consult your lawyers about possible action... Our encouragement for doing this came from the first-class lawyers who serve Time Inc. who told us that in case of attack, they would be delighted to defend us for the purpose of restoring to the United States the lost right of architectural criticism.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, as part of the magazine's new direction, *Forum* would intensify its effort to address the "Problems of Cities." Haskell boasted that *Forum* was already the most up-to-date American architectural journal where urban redevelopment was concerned. "We have traced the impact of redevelopment on Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia (twice), Norfolk, and now Washington," he wrote, referring to articles published between May 1950 and April 1952. "While we have been doing all these stories," he continued, "the strictly architectural magazines have published not one. They have been fast asleep and snoring."<sup>18</sup>

This agenda, inaugurated just as Jacobs joined Haskell's team, would become the foundation of her work for the magazine. *Forum's* articles on urban redevelopment—which distinguished it, according to Douglas Haskell, from "strictly architectural magazines"—were probably the features that drew Jacobs to the magazine in the first place. Although there is no evidence that Jacobs's interest in writing about the city played into her hiring—Walter McQuade and Mary Mix Foley already wrote on city redevelopment—within a few years, she would become the magazine's urban redevelopment specialist. In 1952, however, the first wave of city redevelopment projects enabled by Title I of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 were still under construction, and the coming wave was hidden from sight, often intentionally kept out of the public eye until the greatest amount of power could be brought to bear on the redevelopment

sites. Therefore, Jacobs, like Haskell and her colleagues, initially approved of the initiatives to improve U.S. cities. It was not until a few years later that the opportunity came for Jacobs to write on the city and the evidence of urban renewal projects' construction was available. But by then she would be well prepared to apply Haskell's critical agenda to this new area of architectural criticism and become urban renewal's toughest critic.

### **Douglas Haskell, Early Critic of Modern Architecture and “Dean” of Architectural Editors**

Although Jacobs was too independent-minded to admit to having a mentor, and frequently expressed disdain for her formal education, her thinking did not develop in isolation or without influence. Although she had disagreements with many people, including friends, former collaborators, and colleagues on the subject of urban renewal at the time when hers was a minority view, she was, in fact, influenced by many people, among them Lewis Mumford, Catherine Bauer, Ed Bacon, Louis Kahn, Victor Gruen, and others whose work she later criticized and praised. Among her most positive and significant influences were Douglas Haskell and her years working with him at *Architectural Forum*. For all of her independent ideas, it is difficult to imagine that *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* would have come into being without her education there and Douglas Haskell's direct and indirect support. *Forum* provided her with an alternative to the academy, another place of collegiality, research, study, feedback, and institutional support. Within *Forum*, Haskell, who was later dubbed “The Dean of Architectural Editors” for contributions to American architectural criticism and journalism that spanned from the 1920s to the 1970s, was perhaps her most important teacher.

Although his career is little known, Haskell was one of the most influential figures in American architectural journalism. He was among the first critics of modern architecture in America, and, after his near contemporary and long-time confidant Lewis Mumford, among the most accomplished.<sup>19</sup>

Like Jacobs and Mumford, Haskell's life in writing began as early as high school, holding out the promise of earning one's livelihood while making a positive difference in the world. Although born in the Balkans to a family of missionaries in 1899, the influence of his uncle Henry J. Haskell, whose career in journalism won him two Pulitzer Prizes, suggested to the teenager a progressive alternative to missionary work.<sup>20</sup> Following six years in a German boarding school at Wilhelmsdorf—the idea of his Swiss-German step-mother—he returned to the family home in Oberlin, Ohio to attend high school, and soon became involved in small publishing endeavors. At Oberlin College, which Haskell entered in 1916 (the year Jacobs was born), at seventeen, he continued printing as a small business, providing needed income.<sup>21</sup> Oberlin, meanwhile, helped shape Haskell's future editorial views. In the years he attended the school, Oberlin's social currents changed from evangelical to progressive following the trends of the local community and larger society. This drew the undergraduate into a political science major, a secular version of his family's vocation.<sup>22</sup>

Haskell's passions, however, were for art, drawing, and debates of contemporary social issues in the college's Literary Society and Liberal Club, which he served as president. While he later recalled that the Liberal Club never adopted an especially radical position, it invited to campus as guest speakers W.E.B. Du Bois and other reformers, including two editors from *The Nation*, where Haskell would later find employment.<sup>23</sup>

Although Haskell left college in 1923 without a strong conviction about his future path, his role in the Liberal Club and his fluent German (the benefit of his German boarding school education and additional high school and college courses) led to the opportunity to help organize a student exchange tour to Germany funded by the philanthropic Pratt family of New York during the summer after graduation. A visit to the four-year-old Weimar Bauhaus, where he met Walter Gropius, fused his interests in art and social reform in a life-changing revelation.<sup>24</sup> His first reaction, as he later described, was to return to school to study architecture, but upon reflection, Haskell, now a newlywed, could not see returning to school, and instead took an opportunity to co-edit a Pratt-endowed, progressive weekly called *The New Student*, in which he would promote the optimistic, Nietzsche-influenced spirit of early Weimar Germany. As Jacobs would do about a decade later, Haskell moved to New York and started his writing career.

*The New Student* gave Haskell few occasions to write about the new modern architecture, but the April 1925 issue, which used campus architecture as the jumping off point, was a notable exception. As a survey of recent writing and examples of modern architecture—the books of Louis Sullivan, Claude Bragdon, Lewis Mumford, and the Dutch journal *Wendingen*, and the architecture of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eric Mendelsohn, H.D. Wijdeveld, and Willem Dudok—Haskell’s essay “Shells” was among the earliest comprehensive assessments of the modern movement.<sup>25</sup> The most prominent American architectural magazine, *Architectural Record*, did not publish a comparable analysis of European modernism until the following year.<sup>26</sup> For its prescience, Haskell’s article received not only the praise of Claude Bragdon and Lewis Mumford, but the attention of *Time* magazine and Herbert Croley, founder of *The New Republic* and a former editor of *Architectural Record*.<sup>27</sup>

His first work of architectural criticism, “Shells” critiqued recent historicist campus architecture with a rhetorical style similar to that later employed by Jane Jacobs. He proposed that university architecture based on period styles was representative of a school’s “enslavement to shadows, to predetermined notions, petrifications, parchment, self-adulation, pretense, and the higher bunk.” If MIT’s architecture, for example, was neo-classical, what then, he asked, “can we believe about their reverence for their science, their technology? What do they know about *doing*? And what of education?” The idea that the new modern architecture, by contrast, could reveal the “imagination, independence, and the virility” of a university—or a society’s—reactions to the “real world” reflected the influence not only of Walter Gropius but the progressive education theorist John Dewey. Dewey was a contributor to *The New Student* and admired by Haskell and his wife Helen; one of Dewey’s students had founded the Connecticut school where Helen was a teacher.<sup>28</sup> Although Jacobs did not acknowledge any special debt to Dewey herself, she often similarly stressed the significance of “doing,” experience, and “how things worked in the real world.”

In the following five years, Haskell left *The New Student* to take up free-lance writing on architecture and museum exhibits and made a series of quick advances in architectural journalism, moving from a position as an editor for *Creative Art* to a temporary position as associate editor at *Architectural Record* to a long-running position as the architectural critic of *The Nation*. While these opportunities came through the usual fortunes of the job seeker, they were not unrelated to Haskell’s avant-garde interest in modern architecture as a formal and socially progressive development, and his lack of architectural training and ties to the conservative architectural establishment. Haskell, for example, was first turned down for a

permanent position at *Record* on account of his lack of technical architectural knowledge, only to be asked to substitute for the man hired instead, who had just won a traveling fellowship from Harvard Graduate School of Design to visit Rome and study the antiquities. Thanks to Haskell's experiences with the architectural establishment, lack of technical knowledge would not become an obstacle for Jacobs' work as an architectural critic.

Having followed the development of the modern architectural movement since the early 1920s, Haskell was well prepared to write about it in the early 1930s, at the moment it was legitimized by art historians and museum curators. Following a five-month trip to Europe, from October 1931 to February 1932, to study the new modern architecture in Holland, Austria, Switzerland, and Germany first hand, Haskell wrote reviews of the three exhibitions that introduced modern architecture to America: Architectural League of New York's Exposition of Architecture and Allied Art; the "Rejected Architects" show of 1931, organized by Philip Johnson; and the definitive "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition," organized by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock for the Museum of Modern Art in 1932.

Haskell's reviews for *The Nation* were characteristically mixed, criticism or approval in ways that reflected his belief that modern architecture should be an open-ended and non-dogmatic engagement with life. As he explained through the example of Ernst May's Roemerstadt-Siedlung (1928) in Frankfurt—where Haskell and his wife stayed for a few weeks, while he studied how the project came into being, interviewed some fifty residents, and observed how the buildings had weathered—modern architecture could be socially-progressive, improving the lives of those traditionally neglected even by thoughtful architects.<sup>29</sup> He understood modern architecture, in other words, to be more than a style. Thus, while Haskell celebrated the

revolutionary nature of the “Rejected Architects” show, he refused, as historian Robert Alan Benson has pointed out, to buy into the argument that the young modernists were righteous underdogs. Instead, he criticized them for having already become devotees of what Henry-Russell Hitchcock described in *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (1929) as an “international style.”<sup>30</sup> In Haskell’s view, the young architects represented—Walter Baermann, Alfred Clauss, George Daub, and Richard Wood (all of whom had worked for Howe & Lescaze, whose work was presented in the Architectural League exhibition), as well as Herbert Morgan, William Muschenheim, Hazen Sise, Oscar Stonorov, and Elroy Webber—had “not yet begun to fight.” He wrote:

Their imaginations are held captive by Le Corbusier; they are inhibited; and so, although the science and technology to which they profess devotion hold in them a greater diversity of means and a larger range of types than we have ever had before, most of these men clung tenaciously to the flat box type hung on interior posts just as the older men clung to column and to gable. Moreover, although for city purposes our best knowledge discards the freestanding house, their town planning exhibit retained it. They have not yet begun to fight.<sup>31</sup>

This ironic and critical device, where the most modern architects were described as not being modern enough, was later employed by Jane Jacobs. In *Death and Life*, she would chide architects of the late-1950s for clinging “to old intellectual excitements...*on the grounds that they must be ‘modern’ in their thinking.*”<sup>32</sup> At its heart, his argument, like hers, was that the superficial acceptance of a stylistic architectural language undermined the potential inherent in functionalism, whose virtues transcended style. Moreover, he believed, as would Jacobs, that modern architecture had a role to play in cities. The privileging of the detached, single-family house—a housing type not only associated with the suburbs, but with a privileged clientele—was not only anti-urban, it maintained the social status quo. The failure by architects to explore urban

housing typologies constituted a failure to embrace fully the possibilities of the modern movement.

The importance of defending the depth and the diversity of the modern movement was a theme to which Haskell repeatedly returned in his writing, particularly in his essays of the early 1930s. Implicit in “What the Man About Town Will Build,” the title of his review of Hitchcock and Johnson’s “Modern Architecture: International Exhibition,” for example, was a prescient warning of the consequences of the stylization of modern architecture. In this essay, which Haskell published soon after his return from Europe in April 1932, he predicted the popularization of modern architecture:

A house that is a sort of box or aggregation of boxes—flat top, flat sides with plenty of glass in them, color generally white, and the whole thing preferably raised on stilts—this, loosely described, is what you were given to see at the Museum of Modern Art... And, considering events, we can be quite sure that houses more or less like these are what the man about town will build.<sup>33</sup>

Also anticipating the criticism of superficial modernism and the inevitable decline of “Late Modernism”—which reached its zenith when Jacobs arrived at *Architectural Forum*—Haskell observed that “What the Man about Town” would build was a new style.

Contrary to Hitchcock and Johnson’s attempt to collect modernist experimentation into a unified “International Style,” Haskell argued that diversity should be maintained and that modern architecture’s diverse paths should not be diverted toward a single highway. Where leading critics looked for the uniformity of modern architectural thinking and aesthetics, he believed that the visitor who looked at the exhibition closely could, in fact, “see implicit difference leading to great new variety and change” and “even see diametric oppositions of attitude and character. All modern.”<sup>34</sup>



Haskell expanded his argument on behalf of the diversity of modern architecture in an essay published the following month, May 1932. His focus was architectural functionalism, another theme to which he would return repeatedly, especially in the 1950s, when Jacobs worked with him and when the popularization of the International Style called modern architecture's basic principles into question. In the 1950s, debates about whether modern architecture was any longer functional, and what sorts of functions—programmatic, social, spiritual, or representational—it should attend to, dominated architectural discourse as much as they had in the 1930s. They were debates that significantly influenced Jacobs' thinking about architecture and cities. In the 1930s, however, Haskell's 1932 essay "Is It Functional?" was among the earliest studies of functionalism by an American critic. It anticipated not only critiques of functionalism by later writers, but some of Haskell's 1950s arguments for more outspoken architectural criticism.

As suggested by the essay's title, by the time Haskell wrote "Is It Functional?" functionalism was already a disputed concept. Indeed, because the idea was inherently vague, there as many interpretations as interpreters. In one of the first studies of the topic, for example, the seminal 1923 study *The Modern Functional Building (Der moderne Zweckbau)*, the German art historian and architectural critic Adolf Behne had struggled to distinguish between utilitarian builders and functional architects and to give functionalism a progressive meaning. Behne believed that functionalist architects were capable of creating works that mediated between "the free creations of architects and the bare utilitarian structures of engineers and technicians."<sup>35</sup> Functionalist architects could achieve this because while the utilitarian "subordinates himself to

purposes,” the “[functionalist] architect creates purpose as much as purpose creates the architect!”<sup>36</sup>

Behne admitted that the work produced by both groups, utilitarians and functionalists, overlapped. He also realized that functionalism, in its most rigorous form, stopped short of architecture. “To be fully consistent,” he stated, “the functionalist would make a building into a pure tool” and “would necessarily arrive at a negation of form.”<sup>37</sup> But he believed that “the instinctive joys of play cannot be separated from practical matters,” and thus stressed “the double function of building... Function and play.”<sup>38</sup> Modern functional architecture, he wrote in 1923, “must maintain a balance between these two tensions.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1932, Hitchcock and Johnson would present a different vision and meaning of functionalism to the American public. In their book *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, which included a short chapter on the concept of functionalism, Behne’s utilitarians became their functionalists. In their short précis, they started out by offering that, “In its most generally accepted form, the idea of functionalism is sufficiently elastic.”<sup>40</sup> Still in keeping with Behne’s broadminded definition, they argued that the “new conception, that building is science and not art, developed as an exaggeration of the idea of functionalism.”<sup>41</sup> By the end of their analysis, however, they had reinforced an exaggerated definition, and rather than preserve the pluralistic possibilities of the concept, they identified and stigmatized “functionalists” as those who had adopted its limited sense. They concluded that “Functionalists continue to deny that the aesthetic element in architecture is important.”<sup>42</sup> They dismissed the premise, and emphasized appearances instead.

Haskell, by contrast, took exception with a modern architecture that was based on appearances, and which dismissed function. In “Is It Functional?,” for example, he reiterated his critique of the fashion for white, flat-topped boxes, and questioned the machine aesthetic. Illustrating his text and argument with before and after photographs of Peter Behren’s apartment at the Wiessenhof-Siedlung, Haskell showed that allegedly “functional” modern buildings, which claimed a machine-like reciprocity between form and function, had actually weathered far worse than more “traditional” buildings.<sup>43</sup> The captions of the photos of Behren’s apartment, which in just five years had deteriorated terribly, read: “Too ‘functionalist’ even to be functional. Stucco trying to imitate the smoothness of the machine looked handsome at first.” But, “In five years Nature took revenge. Mechanical looking ‘functionalism’ was not so functional after all.”<sup>44</sup> He wrote that,

common rain water was functionally destined within five years to wreak unusual havoc upon the smooth stucco surface. It would leave ugly stains under the windows and run a broad crack down from the roof, doing damage against which the pre-functional house with its wider sheltering projections was better protected, and under which the new one, again just *because* it looked so very smooth and so very fresh when new, would become more hopelessly disreputable and bedraggled when just a little older.<sup>45</sup>

The points of Haskell’s essay were at least threefold. First, while “‘Functionalism’, properly speaking, should indicate nothing but exact technique,” exact technique was impossible in architecture.<sup>46</sup> In reality, functionalist architecture was inevitably metaphoric, an “architect’s fairy tale” caught between an “inevitable collision between the functioning of brutal fact and function.”<sup>47</sup> Second, accepting this reality opened functional architecture to a greater range of inspirations. The machine was neither the only nor the best functional metaphor. It had been a good starting point, but there were others, among them Frank Lloyd Wright’s organicism, or organic functionalism. Haskell concluded,

I do not think that the twentieth century is ready to limit its resources. Is not mankind limited enough from the beginning in that its creation always goes largely by metaphor and simile? Can we stretch a single one of these to shelter our whole life? A “machine” in which to carry on a conversation; a machine in which to make love. A subtle machine, the last. Other symbols can be found that carry a share of truth: for instance, there is that of the tree.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, regardless of the metaphor, whether machine or tree, the success of the architectural creation depended on the architect’s imagination. “Each architect a poet according to the depth of his imagination... All we can ask is that his fairy-tale come true,” he wrote.<sup>49</sup>

Haskell’s line “Each architect a poet according to the depth of his imagination” reflected his characteristic willingness to look for the best that each architect had to offer. This quality, which could perhaps be described as an intersubjective approach to architectural criticism, was the foundation for his argument for a diversity of interpretations of modern architecture—an attitude that had parallels with Jacobs’ approach to writing and to the city. This outlook was evident in Haskell’s review of the 1932 “Modern Architecture” exhibition, where he celebrated “diametric oppositions of attitude and character,” hoping for the triumph of “variety and change” over the self-similarities that characterized the International Style.

Haskell’s intersubjective approach was even more apparent in two unpublished essays of the early 1930s. In “Three Architects,” he recognized that modern architecture, at its best, was a pluralistic endeavor.<sup>50</sup> As suggested by the title, he identified three different modern architectural attitudes, based on the figures of Wright, Mendelsohn, and Le Corbusier; and he argued that each of their approaches was not only equally modern and valid, but equally necessary for a full exploration of the possibilities of modern architecture.

In an even more remarkable but unpublished essay, Haskell used the image and metaphor of a city to illustrate his intersubjective approach and his creative view of architectural criticism.

In this metaphor for architecture and the city, he suggested that the plurality of the modern movement had a parallel in the formal and social diversity of the city. Moreover, the architectural critic played a part in shaping architectural production and in building up this “growing City,” or “a world of buildings.”

“Would you like to know how a ‘critic’ of architecture feels?,” he asked rhetorically:

As if he were building up a world of buildings. The architect uses plans and elevations. The critic uses architects. A new architect comes into his hands as into the architect’s own office comes a sample of a marvelous new material: perhaps it is just a new tar that will more cheaply guarantee his roof against a leak, perhaps a new truss that will greatly change construction, or perhaps a new reflector that will help flood a whole room with mysteriously invigorating light. And so for the critic every architect serves his turn, according to his own worth whether as nail or ridgepole, to enlarge or illuminate the critic’s growing City.<sup>51</sup>

Reminiscent of Leon Battista Alberti’s allegory of “The Stones,” in which each part of a building had its special role and proper place, Haskell’s “World of Buildings” was not quite a fully formed parable. The moral, however, was clear. As a diversity of buildings made up the city, the diversity of architectural ideas made up the modern movement. Furthermore, as much as the city was formed by many hands, from a diversity of architectural ideas, no single architect had a monopoly on the truth. The corollary of this was a belief that Haskell and Jacobs would share: the impossibility of a city designed by a single mastermind. Like the “critic’s growing City,” her city was formed by “hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes.”

Many years later, in a letter to his long-time friend William Wurster, Haskell returned to the metaphor of a “world” to explain that his approach to criticism was different than that of “propagandists and prophets.” Among these, he wrote, “You can count on Giedion to say that Le Corbusier and he alone should have had the UN to do; and you could have fairly counted on Lewis Mumford to say that Le Corbusier is wickedly ‘mechanistic’ in all his ways.” But, by

comparison, Haskell affirmed, he and *Forum* would try “to do what the great Victorian critics of literature used to try, which was to give the artist—each artist—credit for trying to produce a world, his world, that particular artist’s world.”<sup>52</sup>

Further revealing of his approach, Haskell’s “world” metaphor implied his belief in the existence of many possible “worlds,” or approaches to architecture, in contrast to dogmatists who rejected alternatives out of hand. But this is not to suggest that Haskell was equally accepting of all approaches. Like Jacobs, he believed that architecture must be imagined in the “real world,” to use one of her familiar tropes. As much as the architectural critic could not ignore architecture’s various purposes, the architect could not be only a philosopher or theorist, a sociologist or aesthete. As wrote in his “World of Buildings” essay, architecture needed the trials of weather and marketplace, politicians and users:

Where philosophy gains by purity and detachment, architecture gains by impurity and mingling with the marketplace. It is all action. ‘Till the stone and concrete of the foundation rest in the actual mud, nothing has really happened. The thought is translated back into physical reality. Everywhere exposed. To merciless Nature and her weather. To the landshark. To the money shark. To politician, walking delegate, contractor, assessor, building inspector, and to the client’s use or misuse. What an epic process! That is why small critics are always trying to divide architecture into one of its parts. Their appetite fails. Architecture becomes sociology only, or aesthetics, or construction.<sup>53</sup>

Haskell’s “appetite” for the “epic process” in which the real world weathered and misused architecture and shaped cities was among the strongest bond between Haskell and Jacobs. It was one that perhaps came easier to critics than architects, particularly critics who were not trained as architects. They nevertheless favored life, the epic process through which the common ground of architecture and cities was constructed, and looked beyond aesthetics to consider architecture in its larger cultural and social landscape.

## Architectural Criticism and the Crises of Modern Architecture and Urbanism

By the time Douglas Haskell hired Jane Jacobs as his new architectural critic in 1952, there was a growing sense that modern architecture and urbanism were in crisis. Although the crisis as it related to architecture itself was better understood, the question of how to redesign and redevelop the postwar city was increasingly fraught. As editor J. M. Richards, Haskell's counterpart at *The Architectural Review* (London), put it in 1950, "The present is a moment of crisis, not any longer because we need modern architecture, but because we have got it."<sup>54</sup>

The postwar crisis of modern architecture centered around the concept of functionalism. Although modern architecture became popularly accepted after the war, new demands were made of functionalist architecture—economy and functional efficiency were widely felt to be necessary, but insufficient. With this in mind, Haskell expressed a sentiment that had been echoing across Europe and the United States in one of his first major editorials following *Forum's* "inauguration" of architectural criticism. As he wrote in May 1953, a year after Jacobs joined his staff: "Now we cry for human architecture. Modern architecture can no longer live on its promise of simple functionalism."<sup>55</sup>

The crisis of modern architecture, and the 1950s debates about the future of functionalist modern architecture, formed the backdrop of Jane Jacobs' early experience with architectural criticism. As could be observed in her first work of architectural criticism for *Forum*, the debate surfaced in Jacobs' own architectural criticism and significantly influence her thinking about the city. Indeed, whereas her urban criticism would extend *Forum's* editorial agenda of architectural

criticism into the urban realm, her urban theory would be a new conception of architectural functionalism, applied to the city.

In other words, although Jacobs' critiques of modern architecture and urbanism were followed by the memorable critiques of "simple" and "naïve" functionalism articulated by Robert Venturi and Aldo Rossi in the mid 1960s, she participated in a long tradition of debate. Already at the time of Adolf Behne's essays on *The Modern Functional Building (Der moderne Zweckbau*, 1923), the line between utilitarian building and functional architecture was unceasingly debated.

Indeed, within a few years of Douglas Haskell's essay "What the Man About Town Will Build," his review of Johnson and Hitchcock's "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition" in 1932, functionalism had not only become synonymous with the International Style, it had also come under attack. For example, in a keynote presentation to the Annual Meeting of the American Institute of Architects in 1936, the Philadelphia architect, archaeologist, and art historian Leicester B. Holland (1882-1952) described functionalism as a "cult," presciently adding that, like other architectural cults, it was "invariably valueless" and soon to become "the trivial plaything of magazine advertisements."<sup>56</sup> In his paper "The Function of Functionalism," Holland observed that if the function of functionalism was "just to combat a popular hankering after period decoration, it is fighting a losing battle against straw men, for it can only substitute one fashion for another."<sup>57</sup>

Holland's critique echoed through the twentieth century. Playing with the modernist dictum "Form Follows Function," he invented others, including "Form is a fiction that flowers out of function."<sup>58</sup> Similarly anticipating later criticism, he condemned as "diabolic" the doctrine that "Commodity and Firmness are alone essential to Well Building, and that Form or Delight is



not in itself functional.”<sup>59</sup> With a conviction that the Vitruvian architectural triad of Firmness, Commodity, and Delight still had meaning in modern times, he mocked the over-“exposure of construction” in favor of a more modest “expression of construction.” Using the analogy of the human body, he offered that it is “one thing for an athlete to slough his restricting garments, and quite another to have a visitor take off his overcoat, and then all his other clothes, and skin, as well.” A “philosophic outlook,” Holland stated, “requires a decent integument for architectural surroundings, as well as for human beings.”<sup>60</sup>

A few years later, in 1940, functionalism became the focus of the latest attempt to establish regular architectural criticism in Anglo-American architectural journalism. In a column titled “Criticism” in *The Architectural Review*, the magazine’s associate editor James Maude (J.M.) Richards opined that the problem of interpreting functionalism stemmed in large part from the polemical statements of early modern architects themselves. Writing under the pseudonym “James MacQuedy,” the young architect and writer explained that the “overstressing of functionalism in the past for propaganda purposes by the prophets of modernism themselves has led to much of the present misunderstanding.” It was clear enough, he continued, “to anyone who has studied his books and his buildings, that Le Corbusier’s provocative and much-quoted remark about a house being a *machine à habiter* was a piece of clever journalism that had exactly the iconoclastic effect it was meant to have. It was intended to *épater le bourgeois*, not to state an architectural philosophy.”<sup>61</sup>

Richards sought to move beyond functionalist rhetoric and popular misconceptions. The popular belief that “modern architects are ‘functionalists,’ and rely on efficiency to produce beauty of its own accord,” he offered, “has been reiterated quite as often as the error that makes a

disclaimer necessary.”<sup>62</sup> He believed that it was time to leave behind an exclusive concern for “sheer reasonableness and efficiency” in architectural design. There was room, he believed, “in criticism as in actual design, for study of the aesthetic basis that the art of architecture also postulates.”<sup>63</sup>

Alternatives to the strict observance of modernist tenets were difficult to defend, however. In 1946, Johnson and Hitchcock criticized J.J.P. Oud, one of the pioneers of functionalist architecture, for “slipping back” into a “popular” architectural language with his design for the Shell Building (1942) in The Hague. “What did Oud find lacking in his earlier approaches?,” they asked. “In this instance was he unconsciously slipping back into an easily popular answer or was he seeking something new?”<sup>64</sup>

Oud turned the table by defending his design for the Shell Building in functional terms. Alluding to his canonical functionalist workers’ housing and factory buildings of the 1920s, he stated that he had “no belief in the application of the form of laborer-dwelling and factories to office buildings, town halls, and churches!”<sup>65</sup> By contrast, he explained the ornamental relief that adorned the Shell Building’s entrance, which Johnson and Hitchcock had ridiculed as “embroidery,” fulfilled a “spiritual” function. Oud defending the building, moreover, for being a great success functionally, despite transgressing some of the functionalist tenets of the 1920s:

Do you know that the Shell Building up to now already has been used for five years—sometimes by 600, sometimes by 1,000 employees—and that I never heard one complaint about the practical functioning of the building? What do you think ‘functionalism’ could do more in this respect? And why should it be forbidden to give functional doing [sic] a spiritual form? Functioning alone as a leading principle—my experience taught me this—results in aesthetic arbitrariness.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the defense of orthodox modern architecture, after World War II, the critique of functionalism intensified. The war and its conclusion in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in August 1945 dispelled many people's faith in the emancipatory powers of the machine, as well as in the notion of progress. As Richards and his colleagues Nikolas Pevsner and Hugh de Cronin Hastings wrote in a column titled "The Functional Tradition,"

The most sinister thing about the atom bomb is not so much that it may go off as that whether it goes off or not, its effects tend to be the same. Western civilization rests on its oars, awaits the issue. Result, a very appreciable slowing down of what used to be called Progress or the March of Events.<sup>67</sup>

Yet, although the era of the machine aesthetic had passed, modern architecture could not escape from its close association with functionalism. "Functionalism" continued to serve as the foil for alternative definitions and purposes of modern architecture, including humanism, regionalism, history, and a host of other architectural expressions and concerns. After the war, architectural critics in Europe and the U.S. therefore took up the debate these other conceptions of about modern architecture with renewed fervor.

Among the earliest of these critiques appeared in January 1946, in an inaugural editorial statement by Ernesto Rogers, the new editor of the Italian architectural journal *Domus*. Blaming functionalist thinking for an insufficient understanding of architecture's participation in human potential, Rogers asked, "Do we want to define ourselves as functionalists?" And his answer was clearly "no":

We want to be among those who urgently seek to reunite the threads into a synthetic knot whose every part is equally necessary to the consistency of the whole. Why renounce men? Why renounce gods? Why renounce beauty, which often take the place of virtue in connecting them? No problem is solved if it does not at once respond to utility, morals, and aesthetics.<sup>68</sup>

In the decade ahead, Rogers saw a way forward in recovering historical consciousness in architectural thinking, and worked to embed a thread of historical continuity in his "synthetic knot" of architectural design and theory. However, when Jacobs wrote *Death and Life*, Rogers'

respect for history and tradition in architecture and urbanism had yet to be widely embraced by modern architects.

Another development of the late 1940s that prefigured Jacobs' ideas of the late 1950s was J.M. Richards' proposal for addressing the "aesthetic expression of functionalism." He called it "The New Empiricism," a term he initially applied to the humanistic modernism of Sweden, but which soon described the regionalist, site-specific modernism of many other countries. The tendency of The New Empiricism, Richards explained, is "to humanize [functionalist] theory on its aesthetic side and to get back to the earlier rationalism on the technical side."<sup>69</sup> The New Empiricism brought "back another science, that of psychology, into the picture." According to Swedish theorists, "Man and his habits, reactions and needs are the focus of interest as never before."<sup>70</sup>

Richards observed that The New Empiricism was part of a widespread tendency, as architects around the world faced the challenge of post-war rebuilding efforts:

That this tendency is not purely a Swedish one is obvious from the concern being expressed in other countries, where other empiricists apparently fear that the enormous post-war opportunities of rebuilding may too easily result in the stereotyping of the functionalism of the thirties under the old argument of establishing it as the international vernacular.<sup>71</sup>

Whereas Johnson and Hitchcock were opposed to such developments, Richards saw an expression of the "New Empiricism" even in the latest thinking of J. J. P. Oud, one of the great early functionalists, and concluded that functionalism, "the only real aesthetic faith to which modern architects could lay claim in the inter-war years, is now, if not repudiated, certainly called into question; not by its opponents, but by those who were formerly among its most illustrious supporters."<sup>72</sup>

A few months later, in October 1947, these words echoed in the U.S., where Lewis Mumford, a long-time critic of functionalist architecture, quoted Richards' repudiation of it. In an essay that has since become known as "The Bay Region Style," Mumford laid out an American version of Richards' essay on "Sweden's Latest Style," linking the New Empiricism with the "Bay Region style" of the U.S. West Coast.<sup>73</sup> "What was called functionalism," Mumford wrote, "was a one-sided interpretation of function, and it was an interpretation that Louis Sullivan, who popularized the slogan 'Form follows function,' never subscribed to." The so-called "Rigorists," like Giedion and Le Corbusier, he argued, had elevated "the mechanical functions of a building above its human functions; they neglected the feelings, the sentiments, and the interests of the person who was to occupy it. Instead of regarding engineering as a foundation for form, they treated it as an end."<sup>74</sup> Mumford, by contrast, advocated "the continued spread, to every part of our country, of that native and human form of modernism which one might call the Bay Region style, a free yet unobtrusive expression of the terrain, the climate, and the way of life on the Coast."<sup>75</sup>

Because of what was at stake for modernism's champions, Mumford's attack on orthodox modern architecture and the International Style sparked further debate. In response, Hitchcock and MOMA director Alfred Barr organized the 1948 symposium "What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?" Although this rhetorical question alluded to the New Empiricisms that were springing up in Sweden, England, the U.S., and elsewhere, the primary purpose of the conference was to defend the International Style and to separate it from the now disfavored functionalism.<sup>76</sup> Barr was quick to point out in his introductory remarks that, "in spite of every effort on our part, the term [International Style] has often been used interchangeably with the word,

‘functionalism’.” It was true, he continued, that “the principle of functionalism helped generate the new architectural forms of the 1920’s and thereby contributed to the International Style, but functionalism was and still is a principle of building design which stops short of architecture.”<sup>77</sup> To distinguish the International Style as a new phenomenon, “We even considered using the term, ‘post-functionalism,’ to make absolutely clear that the new style was superseding functionalism,” but this was ostensibly not an adequate description of the movement they sought to identify. Thus, in spite of the deficiencies of the label, “it was obvious that the style had been born and needed a name... Since then, architects and critics alike have questioned the term, often referring to it as the ‘so-called’ International Style; yet no one since that time has thought of a better term.”<sup>78</sup>

Although there was actually common ground among the debaters on the inadequacies of functionalism, after defending the International Style, Barr and Hitchcock counterattacked. Largely ignoring Mumford’s or Richards’ underlying regionalist approach, Barr and Hitchcock condescendingly described the Bay Region architecture, the American counterpart of the New Empiricism, as the “New Cottage Style.” To underscore the supremacy of their architectural idiom, they observed that Bay Region architects William Wurster, Bernhard Maybeck, and others resorted to the International Style when designing office and institutional buildings. “It is significant,” Barr observed, “that when such a master of the Cottage Style as William Wurster is faced with a problem of designing an office building or a great project for the United Nations, he falls back upon a pretty orthodox version of the International Style.”<sup>79</sup> Effectively shutting out other modernisms, Hitchcock added that, “it has seemed to me almost as if we could now consider International Style to be synonymous with the phrase ‘Modern Architecture’.”<sup>80</sup>

For a few more years, Hitchcock's 1948 definition of Modern Architecture as the International Style prevailed. But his seemingly unequivocal faith in the International Style was near its end. As Douglas Haskell predicted in his review of Johnson and Hitchcock's "Modern Architecture" show of 1932, by the early 1950s, the International Style had become "What the Man About Town Will Build." Although many Americans were still unwilling to accept the *machine à habiter* for their domestic lives, Lever House (1952), the first significant postwar office building in the modern idiom, showed that corporate America had fully embraced the International Style. Meanwhile, "Googie Architecture"—a term derived from a Los Angeles restaurant called Googie's and coined by Haskell to describe the emergence of popular and commercial form modern architecture in February 1952—expressed a similarly progressive sentiment in popular culture. For architects, however, corporate modernism and Googie architecture, which Haskell also described as "Modern Architecture Uninhibited," suggested the degradation of modern architecture's formal and social progressivism into a consumable architectural style. As the International Style's advocates themselves had long been aware, becoming just another style would undermine modern architecture's *raison d'être*. As Alfred Barr observed in 1932, when modernism was being established as an anti-style, "Style smacked of the Beaux Arts, of the academic, superficial, and introspective."<sup>81</sup>

Thus, in 1951, a year before Jacobs joined *Architectural Forum*, one of modern architecture's greatest defenders admitted that a historic line of thinking had run its course. In his 1951 essay, "The International Style Twenty Years After," Hitchcock admitted that the International Style had developed into "a form of academicism... in prominent architectural schools and in large highly institutionalized offices."<sup>82</sup> While taking pride in his role in defining

an important historical movement, he concluded that “we stand now at another change of phase in modern architecture between a ‘high’ and a ‘late’ period.” We “must expect many vagaries in reaction against the too literal interpretation of the International Style” and “an academic current which is encouraging the repetition of established formulas without creative modulation.”<sup>83</sup>

Having entered the period of “Late Modernism,” the fundamental question was what would come next. But as J. M. Richards put it in 1950 in “The Next Step?,” a long essay on functionalism that was cited at the outset, “though modern architecture has come to stay, the way forward is not clear.”<sup>84</sup> He had faith, however, in “the liveliest of all the attributes of the human character: its ability to change profoundly while essentially remaining the same.” With this in mind, he believed that the next logical step for modern architecture was a “functionalism of the particular”:

There is therefore no call to abandon functionalism in the search for an architectural idiom capable of the full range of expression its human purposes require; only to understand functionalism itself, by its very nature, implies the reverse of what it is often allowed to imply: not reducing everything to broad generalizations—quality in architecture belongs to the exact, not the approximate—but relating it ever more closely to the essential particulars of time and place and purpose. That is the level on which humanity and science meet.<sup>85</sup>

Richards’ “functionalism of the particular,” a modern architecture based on “the essential particulars of time and place and purpose,” was similar to the urban theory that Jacobs would later articulate. Although it is unknown whether she read this particular essay, she, Douglas Haskell, and her other colleagues at *Forum* were great admirers of *The Architectural Review* and sought to emulate its quality of writing and level of criticism. Indeed, not only did Haskell’s team read the *Review* and follow its debates, Haskell shaped the new editorial agenda for architectural criticism with the *Review* in mind. Moreover, Jacobs would later collaborate with Gordon Cullen and Ian Nairn, her counterparts at *The Architectural Review*, in the years before she wrote *The*



*Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and she later acknowledged a special debt to them. As she recalled decades later, in the foreword to the Modern Library edition of her book, the writers at the *Architectural Review* were especially influential on her thinking about architecture and the city and her effort to expose “the unworkability and joylessness of anticity visions.”<sup>86</sup>

### ***Architectural Forum, The Architectural Review, and “Man Made America”***

Founded in 1896, *The Architectural Review* described itself as the first British architectural publication to depart from a primary concern with the business side of architectural production to focus on architecture’s aesthetic and conceptual qualities. In 1927, the son of one of the magazine’s owners, Hubert de Cronin Hastings—known to his colleagues as “H. de C.” and to readers by the penname “Ivor de Wolfe”—assumed the position of editor. Joined by J. M. Richards, whom Hastings brought in from *The Architect’s Journal*, the *Review’s* sister publication, and architectural historian Nickolas Pevsner in 1937, the magazine developed a distinctive approach to architectural criticism, combining a progressive modernist agenda with great respect for architectural history and modernism’s roots in functional vernacular architecture.

From the very start of his career, Douglas Haskell observed the development of the *Review’s* bold but broadminded approach to modernism and architectural criticism. In 1933, the *Review* offered him an early break, the opportunity to publish a critique of the Chicago 1933-34 World’s Fair, the “Century of Progress International Exposition,” which roused some of his enduring interests. Receiving special attention was a display of houses of “the new ‘prefabricated’ type,” built of standardized, insulated, steel-clad panels. As compared to the rest of the fair’s

exuberant pavilions, he observed that in the fabricated house, “the architecture of the future is actually forecast... It might not be inaccurate to predict a growth for it as rapid as that of the automobile.”<sup>87</sup>

In 1937, when Richards and Pevsner joined the *Review*, Haskell published another article in that journal that anticipated a related and shared interest in the American landscape and its roadside architecture. Documenting a 10,000-mile vernacular building study tour that followed transcontinental highway Routes 40 and 66, Haskell’s essay included a map and photographs that illustrated special architectural features, as well as the European ancestry of various regions. Highlights ranged from old European-influenced architecture, such as East Coast townhomes in the Regency style and Pennsylvania-German barns, to the new European-influenced architecture of Schindler and Neutra in the “Modern American City” of Los Angeles. Most of what Haskell observed, however, was uniquely American, for better or worse. Los Angeles, for example, appeared “to casual view as a series of parking lots interspersed with buildings,” but also had an openness of plan that favored “a modern architecture of movement and spaciousness.”<sup>88</sup> Of continued interest to him, meanwhile, were the country’s increasingly prevalent mobile houses, trailer homes, and tourist camps. While capable of sprouting “road-slums,” this new form of nomadic vernacular dwelling also seemed to parallel sentiments in early modern architecture, particularly the “intellectual talk in recent years about an architecture of ‘light and air’.” Prefiguring his populist interpretation of “Googie Architecture,” Haskell saw the desire to leave the cities and take to the road as “a parallel development, with the difference that it has arisen spontaneously out of the desires of masses of people.”<sup>89</sup>

With the postwar growth of automobile ownership and the development of car culture, less romantic interpretations of roadside architecture followed. European fascination with the U.S.A. increased after the war, however, as the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world transformed its war production into a consumer economy that was increasingly automobilized. Nevertheless, the *Review's* editors were disturbed by what they saw.

In December 1950, while Haskell was in the midst of reorganizing his magazine, the *Review* published “Man Made America,” a special issue devoted to studying “the mess that is man-made America.”<sup>90</sup> The U.S., the *Review's* editors observed, has “rejected a visual ideal, in favour of a laissez-faire environment—a universe of uncontrollable chaos sparsely inhabited by happy accidents.”<sup>91</sup> The country was turning its “superb inheritance into a combination of automobile graveyard, industrial no-man’s land, and Usonian Idiot’s Delight.”<sup>92</sup> The result was a “visually scrofulous waste-land” characterized by “vast areas that fill the interstices between the suburbs and the city centers, not to mention the highways between cities, where not anarchy but visual chaos reigns.”<sup>93</sup> “Man Made America” was thus a cautionary tale, but, at the same time, it was an opportunity to develop the new approach to the built environment that the *Review* described as “Townscape.”

Originally articulated by *Review* editor Hubert de Cronin Hastings in December 1949, “Townscape” was a reaction to poor British town planning practices and an argument for a critical conception of built environment. Although Parliament had enacted the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, dramatically consolidating the government’s control over town planning (“city planning” in American English) and development in the interest of rebuilding and modernizing London and other parts of the country damaged in the Blitz, postwar rebuilding still

frequently resulted in sprawling, low-density housing and industrial developments that were insensitive to the landscape and of low aesthetic quality. In a country that had long cherished its landscapes and did not have the an accepted tradition of roadside architecture, these developments were particularly troubling, and they reminded British observers of the often ugly and sprawling landscape that had begun to develop in America.

Thus, despite the powerful Town and Country Planning Act, which vested all land development rights in governmental planning authorities, Hastings and Richards were concerned about a comparable sprawling corruption of the British landscape. As they wrote in the introduction to “Man Made America,” the British were just as likely to make a mess of things. “Somewhere inside every Englishman is the original American,” and these “original Americans” could just as easily create an equally scrofulous British landscape.<sup>94</sup> As a way of tempering their criticism of America, while explaining that what could happen in the U.S. could happen in the U.K., Hastings and Richards explained that they identified with “the American adventure” and felt bound up, and even “personally implicated,” in its outcome, “to the point where transition to or from American nationality can be made by the individual without feeling that he is renouncing his loyalties in any way that matters.” However, they believed that Britain’s American descendants had “learned nothing from the visual fate of England—as though Americans had no other earthly ambition than to provide a bigger, more general suburbia, to add more wire, to model lovingly still huger areas of industrial and even agricultural scabberly; in the persuasion that the earth’s surface... is there for no other purpose than to do dirt on.”<sup>95</sup>

The mess that was Man-Made America was thus disappointing in many ways. The *Review* believed America’s utopian potential was being squandered at home through a failure to

notice and to learn from failures elsewhere. This, to their minds, was both a sign of “infantilism and arrested development.” In the meantime, they believed that the U.S. was exporting laissez-faire industrialism through the Marshall Plan, which demanded the adoption of American capitalist values in exchange for reconstruction dollars. The state of the American urban landscape was evidence of the questionable nature of these values:

Technocracy, as we see it, is the pistol the U.S. holds to the stomach of western civilization. Though revealing something genuinely heroic in her political handling of the post-war chaos, she is prepared to act big only so long as her fellow-travelers are ready to talk her language. But her language is baby-talk—of dollars and technics—and this is deadly dangerous to democracy. The significance of the American urban landscape is that it exhibits just the same symptoms—the symptoms of infantilism and arrested development.<sup>96</sup>

Reading this anti-American assessment in early 1951, Douglas Haskell was outraged, and with *Architectural Forum* as his bully pulpit, he replied with an indignant editorial published in April. “For some years the more recondite among U.S. architects had been quietly enjoying their subscriptions to the *Architectural Review*,” he wrote. “But late January these dotting Americans received a heavy jolt. The *Review* had set forth on the warpath directly against them... Rarely had a cultural publication, published in a friendly country, issued so wholesale a condemnation of American civilization.”<sup>97</sup>

Despite his wounded patriotic pride, Haskell found it difficult to make an effective counterargument. He gave various explanations for nature of the American landscape. America’s “scale and tempo both lie outside European experience,” he offered: “No European country had its birth at the precise moment of greatest force in the scientific-industrial revolution, in a territory of such boundless resources.”<sup>98</sup> He defended the American spirit and underscored his familiar conviction that, “There are great reservoirs of vitality even in honky-tonk. Democracy has her victories.”<sup>99</sup> And he concluded by expressing hope that the “lightness” of modern American

architecture could hope promise: “Our art must favor every invention that permits us to rest lightly on the earth, and *still* not be ramshackle.”<sup>100</sup>

But Haskell had to concur that “Man Made America”—which featured essays by Christopher Tunnard, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and Gerhard Kallmann, and photographs and illustrations by Walker Evans, Saul Steinberg, and the *Review*’s Gordon Cullen—had made many accurate and thought-provoking points. He agreed that the U.S. was building a “supremely ugly... tin-can civilization,” and acknowledged that “thoughtful Americans were unreservedly thankful for the sharp reminder, from an outside source that *some* of the ‘mess’ is really there.”<sup>101</sup> A year later he launched his new editorial agenda, with its renewed focus on architectural criticism and special attention to urban redevelopment.

Ironically, it was “Man Made America” that put British Townscape theory on the map. However, despite being a particularly “English” landscape philosophy, Hastings and his colleagues predicted that Townscape could be embraced in the U.S., perhaps even more readily than in Britain. As they wrote in the introduction, “England does not take kindly to new ideas, while the U.S. does. Thus it seems to us doubly good to try it [Townscape] out on the U.S. In the U.S., if anywhere, its significance might be appreciated.”<sup>102</sup>

In fact, Hastings and his colleagues may have consciously crafted Townscape as an attitude toward the built environment that was not unlike the American idea, or ideal, of democracy. Americans were connected to the traditions of English empiricism in philosophy, politics, and aesthetics that Townscape drew on, and, like the British, they naturally felt a connection to “the belief in individual *per se*... as a departure from conformity.”<sup>103</sup> By the same token, city design in the U.S., as in the U.K., tended to reject the rational formalism and

conformism of the Latin and French traditions, whose formally beautiful “Grand Manner” was seen as a heavy-handed unity achieved at the expense of a lively multiplicity.

As Hastings explained in his December 1949 essay on “Townscape,” his idea was to outline a new philosophy of “town planning as a visual art,” or what others, he wrote, called “Civic Design.”<sup>104</sup> As defined a few years later by *Review* associate editor Gordon Cullen, “Townscape” was a practice fundamentally synonymous with civic or urban design. As he wrote in a 1953 column:

If I were asked to define Townscape I would say that one building is architecture but two buildings is Townscape. For as soon as two buildings are juxtaposed the art of Townscape is released. Such problems as the relationship between the building and the space between the buildings immediately assume importance. Multiply this to the size of a town and you have the art of environment...<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, Townscape developed in parallel with the reinvigoration of civic design and its transformation into “urban design” in the U.S.

As compared to the diffuse agenda for U.S. urban design, however, “Townscape” (which might have been called “Cityscape” in American English) was a more individual and idiosyncratic regional, political, and aesthetic philosophy. As elaborated first in “Man Made America,” Townscape was a more radical and groundbreaking critical theory of the built environment than civic design or urban design per se.

From the outset, Townscape opposed not only of thoughtless urban redevelopment, urban sprawl, and the visual blight of laissez-faire development, but the related functionalism and internationalism of modernism. Framed by Hastings as “a third movement,” he hoped that Townscape could distinguish itself from both rational functionalism (represented by Le Corbusier) and organic functionalism (represented by Frank Lloyd Wright). Drawing on indigenous ideas appropriate to place and context, in particular Sir Uvedale Price’s landscape

theory, it was a “plea for an English visual philosophy.”<sup>106</sup> Self-consciously empirical, liberal, and inclusive, Townscape was meant to be a “radical visual philosophy” because it would involve “as in politics, a radical idea of the meaning of parts.”<sup>107</sup>

In praxis, Townscape approached design in ways that did not come naturally to modern architects—at least not yet. Open-minded toward “the embodied, the differentiated, the phenomenal world,” it exhorted the “visual planner to preoccupy himself with the vast field of anonymous design and unacknowledged pattern which still lies entirely outside the terms of reference of office town-planning routine.”<sup>108</sup> Townscape thus required of the designer a desire and willingness “to achieve a new kind of organization through the cultivation of significant differences,” and by “concentration on the urge of the parts to be themselves to make a new kind of whole.”<sup>109</sup>

The city planner, Hastings wrote, should “love, or try to love,” the diverse expressions and forms of the democratic landscape, “instead of trying to hate and rid yourself of them in one way or another.” The role of the architect and the city planner, in other words, were simply but critically different. “Are we going to accept the Spec Builder’s Venetian?,” he asked. “As *architects*, no; as *town planners*, yes. Yes, we are.” His reasoning was that, “Whatever the elements out of which the scene is built, it is on purely visual and not professional architectural grounds that we as radical planners shall admit or spurn them, and when Venetian Gothic does a useful visual job, let it be given a run for its money.”<sup>110</sup>

Townscape, in sum, separated the design of buildings from the design of cities, which, as landscapes, were complex and poorly understood physical phenomenon.



Elaborated thereafter in a regular “Townscape” column by Gordon Cullen, who was joined in 1954 by associate editor Ian Nairn, the *Review* sought to develop a serialized “Case-Book of *Out There*.”<sup>111</sup> Introducing the first installment, Gordon Cullen offered that visual knowledge about the built environment was wholly inadequate. With references to Gestalt theory (which also influenced Kevin Lynch and Robert Venturi around the same time), Cullen wrote that, “There is no Art of the ensemble, and no terminology to isolate and communicate our feelings.”<sup>112</sup>

Drawing on his work for the *Review* since 1947, Cullen thus began to identify and label some of the great multiplicity of physical urban conditions. These included such fundamental urban conditions as: Scale; Geometry; Changes of Level; Enclosure and Exposure; Projection and Recession; Buildings as Sculpture; Roofscape; Floorscape; Street Furniture; Trees; Automobile and Pedestrian Ways; and Car Parking; as well as more subtle conditions termed Closed, Implied, Screened, and Grandiose Vistas; Pattern; Foils; Intricacy; Nostalgia; Publicity (the role of advertising in the cityscape); Ornament of Function (the role of infrastructure in the cityscape); Eye as Movie-Camera (understanding the city in experiential, spatial sequence); and Multiple Use (as compared to segregated zoning).<sup>113</sup> A focus on some of these conditions would later inspire entire architectural and urban theories by Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, Peter Blake, Robert Venturi, and others who later formed an Anglo-American townscape axis of similar interests.

Cullen published his collected studies in *Townscape* (1961), but Townscape’s influence on U.S. urban design actually began as early as 1949. In that year, “Man Made America” contributor Christopher Tunnard (1910-1979) founded a Townscape-influenced civic design program in Yale’s graduate city planning department, a program that was perhaps the earliest

U.S. manifestation of the revived discipline. Described in Tunnard's "Man Made America" biography as a "new programme to co-ordinate the visual arts in town planning," the Canadian-born and British-trained landscape architect's pedagogy was directly influenced by Gordon Cullen, who had illustrated Tunnard's *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938).<sup>114</sup>

Tunnard's and Cullen's similar interests and methodology were evident in part of Tunnard's "Man Made America" contribution, a case study analysis of a typical New England city (New Haven) by Tunnard's first class of civic design students. Anticipating Lynch and Kepes's similar "Form of the City" seminar and studies around the same time, the 1950 Yale research team analyzed a topological section of the typical city, through zones they described as "Center" to "Roadtown" to the "Urban Edge." Reminiscent of Patrick Geddes's biologically-inspired landscape analyses, they highlighted morphological and social characteristics of each part of the landscape and proposed changes to planning practices, including urban design guidelines and attention to historic preservation. Critiquing the new development fronting New Haven's central square, for example, they noted that "It is still extremely rare to find an American city which zones for aesthetic reasons." And offering a more typically European interest in historic preservation, Tunnard and his students remarked that on a once-fashionable street near the square, no attempt would be made "to preserve the vanishing row houses when the site is ripe for redevelopment."<sup>115</sup> These were early expressions of the alternatives to the type of "tabula rasa" urban redevelopment and renewal that was soon to expand with the Title I provisions of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949.

The impact of *The Architectural Review's* writing and criticism could be seen not just in Douglas Haskell's first response to "Man Made America," but in later remarks he made about

that issue and the magazine's approach. In 1954, for example, Haskell wrote a long letter to Columbia University professor John Rannells to defend *Forum* against an unfavorable comparison with the *Review*. Haskell argued that an American architectural magazine like *Forum* could not be expected to publish architectural theory and criticism of the same level. *Forum*, he explained, had to turn down articles that might be appropriate for "the small, selected *Review* audience," because "for our audience they would have had to be totally rewritten."<sup>116</sup> With a fraction of *Forum*'s circulation, the *Review* could appeal to a much more literate audience. Moreover, because Great Britain was "quite admittedly a far more literate country than the U.S.," he was skeptical that a supportive audience could be found in the U.S. The problem was also financial. In Haskell's estimation, any American magazine trying to be like the *Review* would probably only get half of the *Review*'s circulation, for a total of "one tenth of ours." Therefore, it was "for the *Review*'s audience only that one could get into great detail about such concepts as *shariwaggi*," Haskell concluded, referring to Nikolaus Pevsner's 1949 article on William Temple's late seventeen-century concept of asymmetrical composition, which was discussed in the issue that launched the "Townscape" movement.<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, five years after the *Review*'s "Man Made America" issue, its essays were still on Haskell's mind. Effectively retracting his former editorial, he now extended a warm handshake to his overseas counterparts. He wrote, "We should be thankful and are thankful to the *Review*'s editors for shouting against the hash that Roadtown is making of once beautiful countryside, and we are happy to find them setting a higher standard than Americans usually dare set."<sup>118</sup> In his December 1955 essay "Can Roadtown be Damned?," he accepted that the *Review*

had been correct about “Man Made America.” He agreed that it was time for Americans to think carefully about the “Roadtown” that the landscape of the United States had become:

Two paths are open to us. One is to accept Roadtown as a formidable fact and civilize Roadtown, now that it is commanding heavier highway engineering and bigger building capital. The other is to re-examine the very roots of our endlessly shuttling civilization. On both these subjects *Forum* will gladly work with the *Review*.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, Haskell and his staff followed *The Architectural Review* closely, while trying to be realistic about what they could accomplish. In addition to limitations imposed by their business model, they recognized the nature of their audience, which, by virtue of Henry Luce’s and Time Incorporated’s overarching editorial requirements, included many participants in the building and construction industries, as well as clients and architects. Moreover, although Haskell and his staff may have aspired to the *Review*’s level of writing and criticism, architectural critics in both the U.S. and the U.K. were faced with the threat of libel suits. As J. M. Richards wrote in a November 1950 editorial, one month before “Man Made America,” there was “no regular criticism of current architecture comparable with art criticism, dramatic criticism, or music criticism” because of the libel threat.<sup>120</sup> Paraphrasing Richards’ argument in a memo to his executive editors, Haskell sought to make a case for a more critical editorial agenda. He had decades of experience with the limits of American architectural criticism and had long worked to push the boundaries. He knew that without a more robust critical culture, American architecture would stagnate and the built environment would suffer.

## Toward Urban Design Criticism: Attacking Modern Monsters

Douglas Haskell's experience with the limits of American architectural criticism dated back to the 1930s, when he became architectural critic for *The Nation* and wrote freelance articles for *Architectural Record* and other magazines. Unlike the professional architecture magazines, *The Nation* was politically progressive and offered substantial editorial autonomy. Rigorous architectural criticism, he found, was possible in *The Nation*, while it was not in the best interests of magazines that had to maintain working relationships with architects, and therefore limited by gentlemen's agreements and professional codes of conduct.

Even in magazines of general readership, however, caution was necessary when critiquing a building. In writing his "Sky Line" column for the *New Yorker*, for example, Haskell's friend Lewis Mumford often omitted architects' names in order to avoid the threat of a libel suit. Indeed before 1964, when the Supreme Court ruled strongly in favor of the freedoms of speech and press in *New York Times Company v. Sullivan*, publishers were frequently threatened with lawsuits for statements architects deemed harmful to their reputations. As Talbot Hamlin explained in his 1930 essay "Criticism Might Help Architecture: Let's Try It?," the criticized architect commonly sought "a dollars-and-cents remedy and runs to court with a libel suit."<sup>121</sup> This "distressingly prevalent" attitude, Hamlin continued, undermines "any definite attempt to evaluate current work, save by means of praise or simple description; adverse criticism can only be hinted in the most general terms."

Recalling the writing of Montgomery Schuyler, one of America's first architectural critics, Hamlin lamented a bygone age of lively criticism:

Gone are those bold days of Montgomery Schuyler's 'Architectural Aberrations' that enlivened the *Architectural Record* of the nineties... [Now] even the better class magazines generally avoid actual criticism; the ogre of a libel suit not unjustly stares at them continually from afar, and even a witty criticism may bring the architect pouncing down with bared claws.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, in concluding his essay, Talbot expressed the hope that someday, "some architectural magazine [would] establish a column of sound and careful criticism."

Douglas Haskell harbored the same hope for many decades. When he joined *Architectural Record* as a full-time associate editor in 1943, more than a decade after his temporary position at that magazine, architectural criticism remained problematic. What Hamlin had actually failed to mention was that even Schuyler's "Architectural Aberrations" column—which had run from 1891 to 1913, when *Record* was a young and rambunctious magazine—had been published anonymously and that the architects' whose buildings were criticized went unnamed.

Yet, during Haskell's tenure with *Record* in the 1940s, his hope for a rebirth of "sound and careful criticism" was undiminished. As Peter Blake later wrote, however, *Record* was then "a favorite with advertisers: it made no waves." For that reason, Blake explained, "Doug was not especially happy on its staff—he was an old-fashioned American radical."<sup>123</sup>

Thus, in 1949, when Henry Luce and Percival Prentice, *Forum's* publisher, offered Haskell a job to assist them with a major overhaul and transformation of the magazine, Haskell took the position in part because he saw *Forum's* reinvention and his promotion to "Architectural Editor" as a chance to reinvent American architectural criticism. And at the first opportunity, which was in November 1951, when the transformation of *The Magazine of Building* into *House & Home* and *Architectural Forum* was nearly complete, he turned his attention to criticism. With

subscriptions at record numbers, he hoped that Luce and Prentice would repay his efforts with support for taking *Forum* in a new direction.<sup>124</sup>

Haskell's first proposal was a new column tentatively called architectural "Monsters," and it was the first step toward establishing criticism of urban redevelopment at *Forum*. Reminiscent of Montgomery Schuyler's "Architectural Aberrations," the Monsters column would chastise the worst architecture and make a case for reinvigorated principles. Soliciting confidential nominations for the award of "most monstrous" postwar architectural projects from a handful of prominent architects, he described that his objective was to "isolate what might be called illiterate efforts by large enterprises whose public responsibility demands that they not uglify their respective cities."<sup>125</sup>

Haskell's associate editors, including Peter Blake, supported the column, as were the architects contacted for "monstrous" nominations. These included Robert Little of Cleveland, David Runnells of Kansas City, Charles Goodman of Washington, D.C., and Oscar Stonorov of Philadelphia, who proposed Kansas City's Starlight Theater; Houston's Shamrock Hotel; U.S. Steel's Fairless Works; airport terminals in Seattle, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore (which looked "hideously gross alongside the elegant planes that they are inevitably seen with"); and Boston's 1947 John Hancock Life Insurance Building.<sup>126</sup>

Perry Prentice, *Forum's* publisher had reservations, however. "I am all for the Monsters story," he wrote in a brief memo, "but I think we should get legal advice on it before we publish it."<sup>127</sup> Executive Editor Joe Hazen concurred. "Doug," he wrote, "please give me a memo on your plans for this department and I'll check the legality."<sup>128</sup> Haskell replied with a draft of the first

column. “You might submit the following to the lawyers,” he wrote Hazen, “as a probable lead.”<sup>129</sup>

What Haskell submitted for the lawyers perusal was an editorial that would never be published, but it was the first step toward the urban redevelopment and urban design criticism that Jacobs would develop in the years ahead. Although he focused on a critique of functionalist and utilitarian architecture, Haskell made a case for architecture and for a new architectural criticism that recognized architecture’s civic design responsibility, as well as its larger place in the arts. To call attention to this situation, the “Monsters” column would discuss how examples of each of the three most public modern building types—governmental, commercial/industrial, and institutional—had failed to live up to their potential and responsibilities to cities and society.

Haskell’s premise, which was founded on his decades of thinking about architectural functionalism, was that in earlier times, “important buildings were all carefully weighed to get the best not only in utility but in architectural art.” However, in the mid-twentieth century, he observed that, “Our highly placed officials—now of three kinds: governmental, commercial/industrial, and institutional—have many of them forgotten the old discussion... that whereas building is for utility, architecture is an art.”<sup>130</sup>

Haskell’s critique was two-pronged. On one hand, he argued that functionalist architecture and architectural utilitarianism, which had been thoroughly embraced by the larger culture, had to be reformed:

the great public buildings, the great commercial buildings, the great industrial buildings, and the great institutional buildings have a job to do beyond satisfying practical requirements. They represent not only the institutions that they house but, in a broader sense, the culture of the United States.<sup>131</sup>



On the other hand, he argued that the nation's leading citizens had an obligation to improve the built environment and that a new case had to be made for civic design:

The old literacy about architecture has regrettably gone lost. The idea that it is an obligation on the part of leading citizens to improve the streets, roadsides of their country not only in point of wealth but as a visual treat seems somehow to fail even to register.<sup>132</sup>

To avoid worrying the lawyers, Haskell carefully directed criticism away from architects and assigned responsibility to an abstract class of "highly placed officials," "leading citizens," and "supposed leaders." Moreover, no criticism would be made of these buildings' "usefulness, of their efficiency, of their adequacy to the program for which they were set up," he conceded. "We are, in other words, not criticizing them as buildings. We are criticizing them as architecture." In doing so, *Forum* would strive to end the confusion that "satisfying the physical functions ended their duty and... that a well-functioning building must turn out beautiful simply because it is practical."<sup>133</sup> Finally, he argued that he and his staff would be doing nothing very different that what was done in other cultural arenas. Architectural criticism, he argued in conclusion, "should be on a par with that of art, music, the theater, and other cultural manifestations."<sup>134</sup>

Despite all of these strong arguments, long-standing fears of libel killed the Monsters column. Following Prentice's request, executive editor Joe Hazen sought legal advice. In the process, he dug up a 1937 letter on the subject of libel written to Prentice's predecessor, publisher Howard Myers, who had established the magazine's cautious editorial policy. As had been explained to Myers by magazine counsel in 1937, "fair comment of architectural works is privileged in precisely the same manner and to precisely the same extent as fair comment on other matters of public interest."<sup>135</sup> Published statements of fact, if true, were immune from liability.

However, comment or opinion, in order to come within the protection of “fair comment,” had to pertain to matters of public interest, not assert alleged matters of fact, and had to be fair. In other words, the architectural critic was fully justified in criticizing architectural failures that could be measured with a ruler, but was on shakier ground when stating that a building was, for example, “not in keeping with its surroundings”—the truth or falsity of which would be a matter of opinion and “not susceptible of satisfactory proof since there may be (and usually are) honest differences of opinion.”<sup>136</sup> And, of course, if the critic’s opinion was not fair—if it was spoken with malice, ill will, or was other than “a fair minded man might reasonably hold”—the critic and the magazine’s publisher could be found guilty of libel. Just describing a building as not respecting the urban context or as being at odds with civic design principles could therefore land the critic in some trouble.

Apart from the cost of lawsuits, from the publisher’s point of view, moreover, outspoken criticism was not necessarily good for business. As Luce saw it, *Forum* needed to respect the interests not only of architects, but also builders, captains of industry, and advertisers. *Forum*, moreover, competed with other architectural magazines for the best stories and coverage of the best buildings. Haskell was well aware of this, since much of his time was spent negotiating the layout, number of pages, and cover image privilege with architects whose work he wanted to publish. He knew that *Forum* criticized the work of notable and famous architects, like the young Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright, or Le Corbusier, at its peril. A wrong word could result in Frank Lloyd Wright or another exclusive story going to another magazine (which Wright frequently threatened).

Haskell was not alone among architectural editors who sought to improve architectural criticism, nor alone in encountering its risks. About a year before, in 1950, J. M. Richards wrote an essay titled “Architect, Critic and Public,” in which he articulated the stakes involved:

The law of libel... applies more stringently to architecture than to the other arts because of the large amount of someone else’s money involved. To put up a building is not only to commission a work of architecture, but also to invest money in property, and in criticising an architect’s work it is often difficult to draw the line between what is merely an opinion on his merits as a designer and what is an opinion on his competence to handle—or incompetence to mishandle—a client’s or a company’s funds.<sup>137</sup>

At the same time, Richards also recognized that libel law had the greatest impact “not when it is really applicable, but through the atmosphere of caution it engenders.” Using words that Haskell would echo almost verbatim a year later, Richards explained that the threat of a lawsuit produced a chilling effect that was the primary reason that “There is no regular criticism of current architecture comparable with art criticism, dramatic criticism, or music criticism.”<sup>138</sup>

Lawyerly caution and self-censorship among architectural critics prevailed into the early-1950s, during the height of McCarthyism. In February 1952, Haskell published an article titled “Googie Architecture” for one of the first issues of *House & Home*, which gives a sense of what this chilling effect meant for architectural criticism. Although he held the position of Editorial Chairman, Haskell felt compelled to couch his critique in the form of morality tales reminiscent of Louis Sullivan’s turn of the century writings.<sup>139</sup> In a heavy-handed conceit, Haskell spoke through the voice of a fictional “Professor,” with readers ostensibly playing the role of the sage professor’s fictional architectural students. The Professor explained to them, for example, that “Googie” Architecture, or “Modern Architecture Uninhibited,” embodied architects’ Howard Roark complexes—their determination, like that of *The Fountainhead’s* hero, to always create unprecedented works through the exploitation of abstract form, modern construction methods,

and new materials. “The Googie architect,” opined the Professor, feels “that somehow he has to surpass *everybody* if he can—and that includes Frank Lloyd Wright.”<sup>140</sup>

Although it may appear mild and quaint, Haskell later described this essay as not only serious criticism, but as “definitely dangerous since it pointed out specific examples.”<sup>141</sup> In this case, however, the objects of criticism were a student’s design project, the Googie’s restaurant in Los Angeles (for which “Googie Architecture” was named), and an apartment building in Houston—all presented anonymously. Further tempering his criticism, Haskell characteristically found a number of genuinely favorable things to say about the works. For example, Googie architecture was said to have “brought modern architecture down from the mountains and set ordinary clients, ordinary people, free.” Like Jacobs, he believed that “sometimes fantastically good ideas result from uninhibited experiment.” And, he opined that “Googie accustoms the people to expect strangeness, and makes them the readier for those strange things yet to come which will truly make good sense.”<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, the popular phenomenon of Googie Architecture ultimately convinced Haskell of the necessity of real and robust architectural criticism. What was needed in a world where modern architecture had come “down from the mountains and set ordinary clients, ordinary people, free,” were responsible architectural critics who could separate good ideas from the bad and simply strange. The ordinary people now interested in modern architecture had “neither education nor leaders to guide them.” Caught between mortgage lenders who inhibited innovation “on one side and Googie geniuses on the other, how can they know their way? There are no responsible critics in the middle!” Through architectural criticism, Haskell offered, “something

better than accidental discoveries might come even from Google.”<sup>143</sup> Criticism was needed to guide both the public and the profession.

## ***Forum's* New Architectural Critic: Jane Jacobs**

Although Jane Jacobs would later acquire the reputation for being opposed to modern architecture, she was not only a “modernist” in the sense that she believed in the innovation, experimentation, and representational possibilities of modern architecture, but the architectural and urban theory that she developed in the years following her start at *Architectural Forum* in May 1952 complimented contemporary tendencies variously described as a *new empiricism*, *diversity in design*, and *the functionalism of the particular*. Like modern architecture’s more thoughtful critics, she also sought to recover a more inclusive and expansive understanding of architecture’s functions and architectural design.

In fact, in her trial assignment and first review for *Forum* in May 1952, which would be her first work of architectural criticism, the subject of functionalism already figured prominently. In writing her review of Edward D. Stone’s new hospital in Peru, Jacobs’ attention was directed explicitly and implicitly to the functioning of the building. She emphasized the building’s “simple organization of tremendously complex functions,” in particular the organization of its circulation system, both from the point of view of the internal logic of the building and from that of the users.<sup>144</sup> She praised the functional separation of the healthy and the ill, as well as the attention to local practices. For some of the same reasons, in her first article as a full-time staff member, published in September 1952, she praised the design approach of hospital designer Isadore

Rosenfield. “Rosenfield’s elastic definition of function,” she wrote, included “not only the machinery, but the emotional content.”<sup>145</sup>

Although these words echoed the decades of debate on functionalism, they were more than slogans in Jacobs’ mouth. While she may have absorbed something about the debate on functionalism from her architect husband, research for her earlier articles on “New Horizons in Architecture” for *Amerika*, and other sources, she was intellectually well-equipped to engage in the functionalist debate on her own. Jacobs was always interested in how things worked—and, as an architectural and city design critic, how architectural works, and cities, worked. A functionalist philosophy was an important part of her thinking.<sup>146</sup> This was evident in her 1930s essays on Manhattan’s working districts, in her architectural journalism, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and thereafter. In an interview published in 1962, a year after *Death and Life*, functionalism remained in the forefront. In response to the question, “How much do you think that fashionable architecture has to do with the disease of cities?” Jacobs responded at length in functional terms. Architects, she replied, had fallen back on novelty in their abandonment of functionalism:

If [architects] had an esthetic based on function, on the way things work, they wouldn’t have to fall back on nice effects, novelties, grotesque exaggerations... Function, which is supposed to be the basis of modern architecture, has almost unnoticed taken on a very different meaning from that it had in the beginning. Then function was meant the way a building was used. Frank Lloyd Wright revolutionized the home on this basis... Various buildings were really rethought in these terms. But now function has come to mean not the way the building is used, but the function of the structure itself, the function of the material. So that architecture with a capital A has become more and more interested in itself and less and less interested in the world that uses it.<sup>147</sup>

In other words, Jacobs saw the neglect of function as reflective not just of the shortcomings of architecture and city planning, but of larger social problems. She went on to state

that the “lack of attention to function today is not just a disease of architecture or city planning.”

She offered that it was a societal problem:

People no longer seem to know how things work. Idealized designs of many kinds ignore what objects do, or conceal what they do and how they do it. It's like locomotives we used to see, with their wheels and the whole business exposed. Then a skirt was put over them, concealing as much as possible. Much of what is called design today is cover-up.<sup>148</sup>

Jacobs had made similar comments on a number of occasions in *Death and Life*. “It may be,” she wrote there, “that we have become so feckless as a people that we no longer care how things do work, but only what kind of quick, easy outer impression they give.”<sup>149</sup>

Jacobs was thus very much a modernist in the footsteps of Behne, Haskell, and Richards—she was interested in the way buildings functioned, enabled, and revealed their use, and wanted functionalism to be more than utilitarianism. She recognized architectural styles as ephemeral and was no more and no less attracted to modern aesthetics. In *Death and Life*, she would praise Gordon Bunshaft and SOM's Lever House (published in *Architectural Forum*, June 1952), Pepsi-Cola Building (1960), and Union Carbide Building (1960), as well as Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building (1958), as “masterpieces of modern design.”<sup>150</sup> Her praise was limited, however, to the buildings in and of themselves, as objects. She saw consequences in the larger functional homogeneity of Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, which was dominated by office uses to the exclusion of other necessary city functions. On one hand, by becoming dominated by office buildings, Fifth Avenue was an example of what she later described as the “self-destruction of diversity.” On the other hand, the uniqueness of the Seagram Building's plaza was destroyed by the retreat of each additional building setback from the street edge.

With an appreciation for modern masterpieces as much as for old buildings (the subject of a chapter in *Death and Life*), Jacobs' interests as an architectural critic were not directed

toward any particular building style. While an advocate of the preservation of historic buildings, she did not advocate for what later became known as “contextualism,” the idea that a new building design should be generated by mimicking the stylistic and formal precedents of its neighbors. Quite the contrary, as an advocate of visual diversity and innovation in general, she specifically rejected the idea that the purpose of architectural design was to create harmonious and aesthetically disciplined environments. Taking exception with the architectural principles of anti-modern reactionaries, whether early twentieth century or early twenty-first century—as well as the early modernist concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art—she offered that only closed, controlled, or arrested societies could produce architecturally uniform settings. Such environments may “look to us like works of art in their physical totality” and we may regard them with “admiration or a kind of nostalgia.” However, “the limitations on possibilities and the strictures on individuals in such societies extend much beyond the materials and conceptions used in creating works of art from the grist of everyday life.”<sup>151</sup> Architectural style and aesthetics imposed on a city or a city neighborhood could be regarded as similar examples of “cover-ups” of the inner workings or actual functioning of building or city.

For Jacobs, good design revealed how things worked. A good example of this design philosophy in practice was her review of a project by Lorimer & Rose for City College of New York’s new library (which, following renovations by Rafael Viñoly, opened in 2009 as the college’s new School of Architecture, Urban Design, and Landscape Architecture).<sup>152</sup> Typical of the work she was doing for *Forum*, in December 1954, she examined models and plans of the building at the architects’ offices. After studying it, she rejected the publication of a pre-construction preview, which *Forum* did for the most compelling projects, and recommended that



*Forum* retain the option to publish the building after it was built, waiting to see “how it actually comes off completed.”<sup>153</sup>

Nevertheless, Jacobs was impressed by the organization and functional distributions of the plan, and informed Haskell and her colleagues that “It has one of those remarkable simplicities of plan and organization that never turn up, somehow, without a great deal of analysis and thought.” She described, for example, the vertical organization of primary building functions in terms of visitors’ use of the building and with great specificity:

There is a very good allocation of functions by floors. The first floor, with standard texts and the “study hall” elements, peels off most of the users; the second floor is the main reference section, and takes off most of those remaining; the top floor has special, less used reference sections... In excess space above the ramp endings are the carrels, which are used by fewest people and also, it seems to me, are properly placed psychologically, up in the attic away from it all.<sup>154</sup>

On the other hand, Jacobs was disappointed by some of the detailing. “While the general fenestration looks swell on the model,” she reported. “I wonder how it will look in the finished building. Possibly if the grid that holds it is bold and strong looking enough, it will come off.” Her greatest disappointment, however, concerned the primary circulation and organizing element, a ramp on entrance side, connecting sidewalk and the building’s three floors. In order to reveal the functioning order of the building, she thought that the ramp should have been made visible through the use of clear glass instead of opaque stone walls, glass block, and corrugated wire-glass. She was sorry to learn, moreover, that this more dramatic design approach had been rejected as too radical:

I think it is a shame the ramp was not made visible across the front of the building; it would have been very dramatic. It was not, because the city did not want to maintain the glass area, and because there was reluctance to be so “radical” in design. Visually, the thing is left as a distinct element, with blank limestone facing and narrow glass walls at the ends, but it gives no hint of what it is. A pedestrian solution and a great chance missed.<sup>155</sup>

This small example was an architectural version of the argument she would later make for cities in *Death and Life*. Design, as she offered there, should pursue “a strategy of illuminating and clarifying life and helping to explain to us its meanings and order.”<sup>156</sup> In the case of the library, a transparent ramp would not only have enhanced the urbanity of the local context by contributing “eyes on the street,” but would have dramatically illuminated the functional order of the building with a very modern, even functionalist, design approach. More profound than any naïve functionalism, she felt that the architectural work should reveal how the city worked.

Jacobs contributed articles to most issues of *Forum* during the six and a half years between her start at *Architectural Forum* in May 1952 and her leave of absence to write *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in October 1958. As she noted in July 1958, shortly before receiving the first grant to write the book, she had “written articles appearing in almost every issue beginning with May of ’52.”<sup>157</sup> This is not to suggest that her thinking remained static, however.

In her first few years at *Forum*, Jacobs focused on her work as hospital and schools editor. In 1953, following Haskell’s agenda of a critical approach to building types, the magazine’s theme for the year was “New Thinking” in building types, with monthly features on New Thinking in Hotels, New Thinking in Industrial Buildings, Parking Garages, College Buildings, and so on. Thus, in 1953 as well as 1954, most issues included a story by Jacobs on both a new school and a new hospital, with special features including “New Thinking on Hospitals” in May 1953 and a Schools Issue in October 1953. Starting in 1955, the magazine’s format became more flexible, and the emphasis of writing on building types each month gave way to essays on the future of modern architecture, urban redevelopment, and other topics.

From her first month with the magazine, part of Jacobs' role as associate editor included not just writing the reviews of new buildings, but the day-to-day work of discussing projects with architects, visiting the buildings, and deciding, along with the rest of the magazine's editorial staff, which to publish. Among Jacobs's earliest assignments following her trial article in May 1952 had been to review a new school, a hospital addition, and a housing project for the elderly for publication. In each case she made no mention of aesthetics. Her recommendation to publish the school was based on the building's functional organization as "little neighborhood units" and its adaptability. It presented a model of a "reasonable, flexible way to go about school building under certain circumstances." She had rejected the hospital and housing project, however, because these plans had "no thinking behind them."<sup>158</sup> Anticipating her later comment that architecture had become "less and less interested in the world that uses it," she criticized the architect for knowing nothing about the "people it will house, how long they are apt to live there (he never heard anybody bring that up), whether they bring or would like to bring anything with them, etc."<sup>159</sup>

Despite Haskell's and Jacobs' opinions, *Architectural Forum* could not afford to be their personal bully pulpit, however. The business of running an architectural magazine was a competitive one and journals vied for rights to publish the best buildings by the best architects, while avoiding wasted pages and praise on projects that might later be seen as lesser works. Douglas Haskell spent much of his time building relationships with the most publishable architects, and this was true to a lesser extent with associate editors. A famous story at *Forum* related to this involved an unexpected visit from Frank Lloyd Wright, who, while poking around the managing editor George Nelson's office, came upon a recently written and unfavorable

review of his updated *Autobiography* (1943), written by newcomer Peter Blake. Wright was enraged by what he read and stormed out of the office, leaving in his wake the expectation that Blake would be fired immediately and that Wright would sever his connections with the magazine, which, in Blake's words, "had invested very large sums of money in buttering up the old egomaniac in the manner to which he had become accustomed."<sup>160</sup> As "the most valuable editorial 'property' the *Forum* could boast," however, Wright was quickly assured of a better review by a senior editor, which was soon delivered by George Nelson himself.<sup>161</sup> (Despite Wright's thorough hatred of the city, the dedication of *Architectural Forum* staff to Wright can be regarded as one of the reasons that he escaped Jacobs's censure in *Death and Life*. Since she was planning to return to *Forum* after her book was published, she could not take the risk of criticizing him.)

Le Corbusier was equally demanding, and, to a less extent, so were Louis Kahn and Victor Gruen, whose friendships Jacobs cultivated. Such widely respected architects typically sought the greatest amount of publicity and number of magazine pages, sometimes pitting one magazine against another. Philadelphia hospital architect Vincent Kling, for example, might bargain for the coveted space of the front cover, but Haskell would parry by highlighting *Forum's* growing circulation and its number of published prize-winning projects, and stall by indicating the need to consult with his associates. What he wrote Kling in March 1953 is typical of the sort of salesmanship that was part of his and Jacobs' jobs as editors: "There is rarely an important job that hasn't appeared first in the *Forum*," Haskell wrote. "That means 18 of the 23 buildings in the Museum of Modern Art's current show, 16 of 20 houses in the same show, 9 of 12 in the current Architectural League Gold Medal Show," and so on.<sup>162</sup> Ultimately, however, it was not solely up

to him, he stated, as he deferred to his departmental editors. Since the project in this case was a hospital, it would have to impress the magazine's hospital editor, Jane Jacobs, who would soon visit the project with a photographer. As Haskell wrote,

As for promising ahead of time that we'll give you the cover, that I can't yet do, not having seen the material. We really can't dispose of space in the *Forum* on a competitive basis with other magazines—the strength of *Forum* has always lain in the fact that the editors were free to splurge themselves on really good stories. If the opinion of Mrs. Jacobs, our very competent hospital editor, counts for anything, I would say there is a mighty good chance in the case of Hunterdon [Hospital].<sup>163</sup>

Kling's hospital got six pages in Jacobs's December 1953 article "Hospital for the Well," but not the cover; the issue was dedicated to new churches, and so was the cover.<sup>164</sup>

Jacobs's interactions with Victor Gruen and Louis Kahn were similar. Her discussions with Gruen typically included talk about when and what would be published. As she wrote Haskell in a March 1953 memo,

This morning I was talking with Victor Gruen, and I suggested that when Southdale [Shopping Center] is finished it would be interesting to do a story on the design of the separate stores within the center. He replied that Northland [Shopping Center], being closer to completion, would be a much better vehicle for this... He also said that if we plan to do Northland he would like a firm promise on it from us as he has the other magazines at his heels.<sup>165</sup>

In the end, Jacobs recommended a feature story for when the project was finished, which she wrote for publication in June 1954.

With others, including Louis Kahn, Jacobs was more aggressive about pursuing rights and agreements to publish certain projects. She concluded the report of a long meeting with Kahn in May 1955, for example, with some thoughts of how to make sure *Forum* got the right to publish his Mill Creek housing project and "Trenton Bath House":

If any or all of these prospects seems as interesting to you as they did to me, I think a note from DH [Douglas Haskell] expressing our interest and wishes to see them would be good. [Kahn] is being very coy about letting us use his Mill Creek housing in July—in fact at this point is saying leave it out (because it will be along with other people's work!!). I have a plot to try to get him to change his mind, which I hope

works, and it would probably help if he got a note expressing interest in these other things—especially Trenton which we ought to get our hooks into soon if we want it.<sup>166</sup>

Apart from a behind-the-scenes look at the competitive magazine business, such memos show that the architects could, through the force of their personality and ideas, change the way that the critic thought. In fact, as the primary contact for Gruen and Kahn with the magazine, Jacobs met and spoke with both on a regular basis and was clearly influenced by their ideas and charisma. Although her relationship to Gruen's work is better known—she would praise and promote his 1955 plan for Fort Worth in articles and in *Death and Life*—she was also charmed by Kahn and his work. This was clearly the case with Kahn's Trenton Bath House and Yale Art Gallery, which she described as a delightful, imaginative, and marvelous creations. Of the Bath House, she wrote,

[Kahn] has a structure for an outdoor swimming pool in Trenton on which bids are to come in this week. It seemed to me a marvellous creation. The columns are actually little rooms (he is all for hollow columns, the interiors of which are used), some of them for toilets, some for the mazes by which people enter and leave the dressing areas... The roofs will be awnings, very gaily particolored, stretched over space frames. The space frames make V's on the roof down which the water will pour when it rains, and the water will spout off like fountains. The main areas are a women's dressing room, a men's ditto, and a common space, sort of a lobby, between. It should be completed by this fall. It seems to me that it will be most delightful, and its structure is certainly imaginative.<sup>167</sup>

And although “marvelous” was not a word Jacobs used often, she found occasion to use it two more times in her brief report on Kahn's rethinking of the just completed Yale Art Gallery and his new ideas on architectural structure:

Doug, [Kahn's] idea of how he would do the Yale Art Gallery over is that instead of 27 or some such number of columns, he would have only 9, of a vastly more ingenious form. From there on, his idea takes off on the subject of columns and spaceframes and does not pursue the Art Gallery further. He has marvellous sketches (he showed me slides of them) and marvellous constructions which would make terrific photographs. If he does the article at all the way he ran through this with me, it would not be "How I Would Do the Yale Art Gallery Now" (though that could be the lead-off, and a very good one), but instead on what ideas he has on framing. If the sketches and photos kept popping up in the article with his words, I think it would be terrific. He sure has some mind.<sup>168</sup>

While Jacobs is not usually thought of as particularly interested in modern architecture, let alone building structure, her praise for Kahn's work was fully consistent with her characteristic interest in invention and innovation—a theme found in almost all of her writing. And, unlike the typical targets of her criticism, neither Wright nor Kahn could be described as being “orthodox” thinkers with “stultifying” ideas (two of her harshest epithets). Later commentators, who understood Jacobs' urban theory as a blanket argument against normative, modern architectural design, did not recognize the significance of either function or experimentation in her world view.

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<sup>1</sup> Time Inc. “Organ of Integration,” *Time* (Apr. 11, 1932), np.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, Nov. 22, 1961 (Box 13, Folder 12, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, John J. Burns Library, Boston College), 2.

<sup>3</sup> In one version of the biographical letter written to Ms. Talmey [*Architects' Journal* (U.K.)?] in 1961 cited above, Jacobs wrote that, “My husband subscribed to *Architectural Forum*, and I had become a regular reader of it, first out of curiosity and then because I liked it very much. I decided that I wanted to work either for this magazine or *Natural History*. Since *Architectural Forum* paid far more, I applied, was given a trial assignment, got a job as associate editor, and was told I was the School and Hospital Expert.” (In another version, she omitted the part about *Natural History*: “My husband subscribed to *Architectural Forum*, and I had become a regular reader of it, first out of curiosity and then because I liked it very much. I decided this was the magazine I would like to work for, was given a trial assignment and got a job as associate editor, more or less in charge of schools and hospitals.”) Jane Jacobs, Letter to Ms. Talmey, Nov. 22, 1961 (Box 13, Folder 12, Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, John J. Burns Library, Boston College), 2. See also *Architects' Journal*, “Jane Jacobs: Man of the Year,” *Architects' Journal* (Jan. 16, 1963), 126.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Jacobs, “New Horizons in Architecture,” *Amerika Illustrated* (No. 29, n.d. [Jun. 1949?]), 2-11; “New Horizons in Architecture, Part II,” *Amerika Illustrated* (No. 30, n.d. [Jul. 1949?]), 26-35. In most cases, *Amerika Illustrated* was published without a discernable date due to the fact that it was unclear how long the draft would take to clear the Soviet censors. Since it could be almost nine months until a Russian reader saw the magazine, the editors tried to keep the contents fresh and timeless.

<sup>5</sup> The first of Jacobs' articles on urban redevelopment for *Amerika* was “Planned Reconstruction of Lagging City Districts,” *Amerika Illustrated* (No. 25, n.d. [Feb. 1949?]), 1-9. This title was translated from the Russian for the author by Alina Yakubova. Jacobs' second article on the subject was titled “Slum Clearance,” *Amerika Illustrated* (No. 43, Aug. 1950), 2-11. *Amerika* no. 43 was rare in having a publish date. The copy reviewed was also rare among surviving copies to have an English insert with a summary of the contents, which indicated the English title of the article.

<sup>6</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “Two-In-One Hospital; Big Double Hospital,” *Architectural Forum* 96 (June 1952), 138.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Jacobs, Memo to Douglas Haskell, July 22, 1952 (Box 4, Folder 4, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> For an understanding of Haskell's early career and writing, I am indebted to Dr. Robert Alan Benson and his Dissertation in the History of Art, *Douglas Putnam Haskell (1899-1979): The Early Critical Writings*, University of Michigan, 1987.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to Suzanne Gleaves and Perry Prentice, "Why We Publish Modern," Mar. 17, 1952 (Box 57, Folder 3, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>12</sup> Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Blake, *No Place Like Utopia: Modern Architecture and the Company We Kept* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 163.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to Staff on New Editorial Policy, Jul. 23, 1952 (Box 57, Folder 3, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of Lewis Mumford's significant contributions see Robert Wojtowicz, *Lewis Mumford & American Modernism: Eutopian Theories for Architecture and Urban Planning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially Chapter 3, "Toward an Organic Architectural Criticism."

<sup>20</sup> Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> See Leon Solon, "Modernism in Architecture," *Architectural Record* 58 (September 1925), 215.

<sup>27</sup> Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 67.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>30</sup> In *Modern Architecture* (1929), Henry-Russell Hitchcock first used the term "international style" to describe the work of the architects he called "The New Pioneers," including Le Corbusier. Hitchcock's point was to emphasize the idea that the new architecture was cross-cultural and trans-national phenomenon, but he did not capitalize the term "international style." Cf. Hitchcock (1929). *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Da Capo, 1993), 162. The label appeared the following year, with Hitchcock and Johnson's book *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* (1932), which accompanied their Museum of Modern Art exhibition. Hitchcock, who thereafter embraced the term, later equivocated. In the foreword to the 1966 edition of the book, he emphasized the fact that it was MOMA's Alfred Barr who first capitalized the term: "[This] book has for some time belonged to history, and the 'Style' (which Alfred Barr in his Preface to the book capitalized, but which we in our text did not) has been universally recognized" (p. vii).

<sup>31</sup> Douglas Haskell, "The Column, the Gable, and the Box," *The Arts* 17 (June 1931),

<sup>32</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 371.

<sup>33</sup> Haskell (1932). "What the Man About Town Will Build," *The Nation* 134 (April 13, 1932), 441-42.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Adolf Behne (1926), *The Modern Functional Building (Der moderne Zweckbau)* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Research Institute, 1996), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 122-23.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 146, 87.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>40</sup> Hitchcock and Johnson (1932). *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 39.



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- <sup>43</sup> A more recent examination of weathering is David Leatherbarrow and Moshen Mostafavi's *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
- <sup>44</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Is It Functional?," *Creative Art* 10 (May 1932), 374.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 488.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.
- <sup>52</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to William W. Wurster, Nov. 4, 1952 (Box 24, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).
- <sup>53</sup> Benson, *Douglas Haskell*, 234.
- <sup>54</sup> J. M. Richards (1950). "The Next Step?," *Architectural Review* 107 (Mar. 1950), 166.
- <sup>55</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Criticism vs. Statesmanship in Architecture," *Architectural Forum* 98 (May 1953),
- <sup>56</sup> Leicester B. Holland, "The Function of Functionalism," *Architect and engineer* 126 (Aug. 1936), 25, 32. Presented at the 68<sup>th</sup> Convention of the American Institute of Architects, May 1936, and also reprinted in *Octagon* 8 (Jul. 1936), 3-10.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. Holland's critique of functionalism anticipated Robert Venturi's wry diagrammatic critique of modernism, FIRMNESS + COMMODITY = DELIGHT.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>61</sup> James MacQuedy [J. M. Richards], "Criticism," *Architectural Review* 99 (Dec. 1940), 183.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Mr. Oud Embroiders a Theme," *Architectural Record* (Dec. 1946),
- <sup>65</sup> J. J. P. Oud, "Mr. Oud Replies," *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1947), 18.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> Hastings, Pevsner and Richards, "The Functional Tradition," *The Architectural Review* 107 (Jan. 1950), 3.
- <sup>68</sup> Ernesto Rogers, "Program: Domus, The House of Man," *Domus: Casa dell'uomo* (No. 205, Jan. 1946), 117.
- <sup>69</sup> J. M. Richards, "The New Empiricism: Sweden's Latest Style," *The Architectural Review* (Jun. 1947), 199.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 200. Richards was quoting Sven Backström from a September 1943 article in *The Architectural Review*.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>73</sup> Mumford's October 11, 1947 *Sky Line* essay was originally titled "Status Quo," and had three sections without headings. The first two sections dealt with new architecture in New York and Washington; the third discussed functionalism and "that native and human form of modernism which one might call the Bay Region style." Lewis Mumford, "Status Quo [The Bay Region Style]," *New Yorker* 23 (Oct. 11, 1947), 104-110.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.
- <sup>76</sup> Museum of Modern Art, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture? A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art," *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 15 (Spring 1948), 9.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>82</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "The International Style Twenty Years After," *Architectural Record* 110 (Aug. 1951).
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>84</sup> Richards, "The Next Step?," 166.
- <sup>85</sup> Richards, "The Next Step?," 181.

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- <sup>86</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, 1992), xiii, 390.
- <sup>87</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Mixed Metaphors at Chicago," *Architectural Review* 74 (Aug. 1933), 47.
- <sup>88</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Architecture on Routes U.S. 40 and 66," *Architectural Review* 81 (Mar. 1937), 105.
- <sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.
- <sup>90</sup> Richards, Hastings, Pevsner and Cullen, "Man Made America: A Special Number of the *Architectural Review*," *Architectural Review* 108 (December 1950), 339.
- <sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 414, 343.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.
- <sup>97</sup> Douglas Haskell, "A Reply to: Man Made America, Special Number of the *Architectural Review*," *Architectural Forum* 94 (Apr. 1951), 158.
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.
- <sup>102</sup> H. de C. Hastings, et al. "Townscape," *The Architectural Review* 106 (Dec. 1949), 341.
- <sup>103</sup> Hastings, "Townscape," 358.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.
- <sup>105</sup> Gordon Cullen, "Prairie Planning in the New Towns," *The Architectural Review* 114 (Jul. 1953), 33.
- <sup>106</sup> Hastings, "Townscape," 355. Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) was an Oxford-educated classicist who experimented with landscape design in his Herefordshire estate. His *Essay on the Picturesque, As Compared with The Sublime and The Beautiful* (1794) was a response to Edmund Burke's treatise on aesthetics, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). (Burke's treatise, in turn, drew on ideas of the sublime originally articulated by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713).) Whereas Burke argued that the Sublime and the Beautiful were antithetical, Price posited a new aesthetic category, the picturesque, which contained elements of both the pleasurable beauty of pleasing composition and form and the terrifying and awe-inspiring aspects of nature and the cosmos. Hastings' Townscape philosophy of the built environment was meant to share both the aesthetics and dialectical approach of the Price's concept of the picturesque in landscape design.
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.
- <sup>108</sup> J. M. Richards and Gordon Cullen, "Townscape," 106, 362, 354.
- <sup>109</sup> Hastings, "Townscape," 361.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.
- <sup>112</sup> Gordon Cullen, "Townscape Casebook," *Architectural review* 106, 363.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 363-74.
- <sup>114</sup> Christopher Tunnard, "Man Made America: The Scene," *Architectural review* 108 (Dec. 1950), 418.
- <sup>115</sup> Tunnard, Ford, Chamberlain, Silveira and Wilcox, "Man Made America: Case Study," *Architectural review* 108 (Dec. 1950), 367-68.
- <sup>116</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to John Rannells, Feb. 26, 1954. (Box 38, Folder 1, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University), 2-3.
- <sup>117</sup> Lang and Pevsner, "Sir William Temple and Sharawaggi," *Architectural Review* 106 (Dec. 1949), 391-93.
- <sup>118</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Can Roadtown Be Damned?" *Architectural Forum* 103 (Dec. 1955), 164.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.
- <sup>120</sup> J. M. Richards, "Architect, Critic and Public," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 27 (November 1950), 372.
- <sup>121</sup> Talbot Hamlin, "Criticism Might Help Architecture: Let's Try It," *American Architect* 137 (May 1930), 41.
- <sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>123</sup> Blake, *No Place Like Utopia*, 163.
- <sup>124</sup> Time Inc. (1952). "Enter House & Home," *Time* (January 21, 1952),

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- <sup>125</sup> Haskell (1951). Telegram to Robert Little, David Runnells, Charles Goodman, and Oscar Stonorov, November 13, 1951. (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)
- <sup>126</sup> Runnells and Goodman (1951). Telegrams to Douglas Haskell, November 23 and 27, 1951. (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)
- <sup>127</sup> Prentice (1951). Memo to Joe Hazen and Douglas Haskell, November 14, 1951. (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)
- <sup>128</sup> Hazen (1951). Memo to Douglas Haskell, November 14, 1951. (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)
- <sup>129</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to Joe Hazen, Nov. 16, 1951 (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>132</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>133</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>134</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>135</sup> Connelly, Letter to Howard Myers, Apr. 26, 1937 (Box 80, Folder 8, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> Richards, "Architect, Critic and Public," 373.
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid., 372.
- <sup>139</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Googie Architecture," *House and Home* 1 (Feb. 1952), 85.
- <sup>140</sup> Ibid., 86.
- <sup>141</sup> Haskell, Memo to Staff on New Editorial Policy, Jul. 23, 1952, 4.
- <sup>142</sup> Haskell, "Googie Architecture," 88.
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>144</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Two-In-One Hospital; Big Double Hospital," *Architectural Forum* 96 (June 1952), 138.
- <sup>145</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Rosenfield and His Hospitals: He Approaches His Jobs Like a City Planner," *Architectural Forum* 97 (Sept. 1952), 128-34. See also Jane Jacobs, Memo to Douglas Haskell, Jul. 22, 1952 (Box 4, Folder 4, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).
- <sup>146</sup> David Leatherbarrow's writing about architectural performance, how architectural works work, illuminates a complimentary interpretation of architectural functionalism. See David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 21.
- <sup>147</sup> Eve Auchincloss and Nancy Lynch, "Disturber of the Peace: Jane Jacobs (Interview)," *Mademoiselle* (Oct. 1962), 165-66.
- <sup>148</sup> Ibid., 166-67.
- <sup>149</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 7-8.
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid., 227.
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid., 374.
- <sup>152</sup> Rosalie R. Radomsky, "A Viñoly Redesign; Architecture Building at City College," *New York Times* (Nov. 3, 2002), 11-1.
- <sup>153</sup> Jane Jacobs, Memo to Haskell, Hazen, Lightbown, Dec. 10, 1954 (Box 12, Folder 4, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).
- <sup>154</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>156</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 375.
- <sup>157</sup> Jacobs, Resume, Jul. 13, 1958.
- <sup>158</sup> Jacobs, Memo to Douglas Haskell, Jul. 22, 1952.
- <sup>159</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>160</sup> Blake, *No Place Like Utopia*, 46.
- <sup>161</sup> *Forum*'s dedication to Wright did not mean that the editors did accepted all of his antics without comment. In May 1953, for example, Douglas Haskell wrote a letter to George Howe relating a recent episode. "I tried to help keep FLIW

from acting like a fool,” he wrote, “but it can’t be done. The conversation included: DH: “Frank Wright, I just can’t believe God exhausted Himself in creating even you.” FLIW: “I’m not exhausted. I am God.” Douglas Haskell, Letter to George Howe, May 23, 1953 (Box 57, File 4, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>162</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to Vincent Kling, Mar. 10, 1953 (Box 11, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “Hospital for the Well,” *Architectural Forum* 99 (Dec. 1953), 130-35.

<sup>165</sup> Jane Jacobs, Memo to Douglas Haskell, Mar. 25, 1953 (Box 8, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>166</sup> Jane Jacobs, Memo to Haskell, Hazen & Lightbown, May 16, 1955 (Box 10, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. Commonly known as the “Trenton Bath House,” Kahn’s swimming center project is located in Ewing, New Jersey and is not a “bath house” per se.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 5

### Advocating the “City Planner’s Approach”: Early Writing on Urban Redevelopment at *Architectural Forum*

How my ideas developed... Oh my God, who knows how their ideas developed?! The nearest I can pin it down is two things: First of all, I had a pervading uneasiness about the way the rebuilding of the city was going, augmented by some feeling of personal guilt, I suppose, or at least personal involvement. The reason for this was that in all sincerity I had been writing for *Forum* about how great various redevelopment plans were going to be. How delightful. How fine they would work. I believed this. Then I began to see some of these things built. They weren't delightful, they weren't fine, and they were obviously never going to work right. Harrison Plaza and Mill Creek in Philadelphia were great shocks to me. I began to get this very uneasy feeling that what sounded logical in planning theory and what looked splendid on paper was not logical in real life at all, or at least in city real life, and not splendid at all when in use. *Jane Jacobs, Letter to Grady Clay, March 1959*

A few weeks after Jacobs' first article for *Architectural Forum* was published in June 1952, Douglas Haskell announced a new editorial agenda that would make a greater effort to address the “problems of cities.” In his opinion, *Forum* was already the most up-to-date American architectural journal in its coverage of urban redevelopment. Referring to articles published between May 1950 and April 1952, he boasted, that “We have traced the impact of redevelopment on Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia (twice), Norfolk, and now Washington.” Unlike its rivals, *Forum* “alone recognized the potential in urban redevelopment and the new instruments given private enterprise by the Redevelopment Section of the 1949 Housing Act,” which, “for the first time, gave private interests a major

chance to operate in large sections in the middle of the city which formerly could not be assembled.”<sup>1</sup>

Like most Americans, Jacobs and Haskell believed that the urban redevelopment powers provided to city housing authorities by Title I of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 had the potential to improve cities, which remained in a state of deferred maintenance after the war. The nation’s housing stock, which was already inadequate and aged before the war, had deteriorated further due to wartime material rationing and a domestic construction hiatus. And, with millions of military servicemen and women returning from overseas ready to begin new lives, the country’s new enemy became a housing shortage. As country singer Merle Travis crooned in his 1946 song “No Vacancy,” the war was won, but veterans’ domestic troubles had just begun:

Not so long ago when the bullets screamed,  
Many were the happy dreams I dreamed,  
Of a little nest where I could rest, when the world was free.  
Now the mighty war over there is won,  
Troubles and trials have just begun,  
As I face that terrible enemy sign, *No Vacancy*.<sup>2</sup>

However, with the termination of the War Production Board—which Jacobs had lobbied in 1943 on behalf of Scranton’s industry—and the Marshall Plan put in place to assist the rebuilding of Europe in 1947, the U.S. was ready for an equally ambitious rebuilding program at home. As part of the “Fair Deal” launched by President Truman in his 1949 State of the Union address, the new federal initiative would finance slum clearance and urban redevelopment (Title I of the Housing Act of 1949), guarantee mortgages through the Federal Housing Administration (Title II), and fund for the construction of one million affordable public housing units by 1955 (Title III). With support from city planners, the homebuilding industry, and public housing

advocates, the bill addressed the interests of diverse constituencies, who sometimes had very different visions for the future of the American city. And among those who believed in building new towns and those who advocated modernizing cities, there were many who questioned whether the city should survive in its present form.<sup>3</sup>

Others questioned whether the city *could* survive. With skyrocketing automobile ownership, extensive highway construction, the mass production of suburban housing stimulated by guaranteed home mortgages, the age-old lure of suburban life, and Cold War fears of nuclear attack on urban centers, *decentralization* was the watchword of the early 1950s. As Clarence Stein wrote in *Toward New Towns for America* (1950), the time was “ripe for complete change in the form of the urban environment.” With new towns apparently necessary as “a defense measure,” Stein predicted that the decades ahead would see “a new era of nation-wide decentralization.”<sup>4</sup> Editor Harold Hauf, Douglas Haskell’s counterpart at *Architectural Record*, agreed. Hauf believed that the “growing congestion and concentration in urban areas is no more desirable in peace time than in war.” However, with the added threat of nuclear attack, Hauf explained in his December 1950 editorial “City Planning and Civil Defense” that every slum clearance project should be considered an opportunity to advance the strategic depopulation of cities. “Today urban dispersal appears to be the only fully effective means of minimizing the effects of atomic bombing,” he wrote. Dispersal and decentralization would thus be for the best. “If we are alert to the implications,” Hauf wrote, “we can identify this means of defense with measures for making our cities better places in which to work and live.”<sup>5</sup>

In other words, during the Cold War, and especially during the height of the Red Scare, Douglas Haskell’s editorial support of cities and urban redevelopment was not to be taken for

granted. Covering stories on “urban redevelopment,” which became known as “urban renewal” after the U.S. Housing Act of 1954, was an expression of support for the continued existence of the city in a physical and in an existential sense—and it was a sensibility that was not unrelated to the fact that *Forum* and its staff were based in Manhattan.

Haskell’s editorial agenda and the magazine’s early coverage of urban redevelopment projects in their planning and development stages had a significant impact on Jacobs’ outlook and writing career. Nowhere else could Jacobs have found the same opportunity to follow the development of urban redevelopment and renewal projects, write about them, and become an architectural magazine’s urban redevelopment specialist.

In the context of the debate for and against cities, it should not be surprising that Jacobs not only sided with cities, but with urban redevelopment and city planning initiatives. In fact, although she later came to regret her role in supporting urban renewal, she was initially an enthusiastic advocate of city planners and the “city planner’s approach.”

### **Saving the City through “Slum Surgery”: Early Writing on Urban Redevelopment at *Forum***

In July 1952, soon after Jane Jacobs joined Douglas Haskell’s staff, he boasted that *Architectural Forum* was the most up-to-date American architectural journal as far as urban redevelopment was concerned. Since soon after the passage of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949, *Forum*’s writers had reported on urban redevelopment plans for Norfolk, Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Washington. “While we have been doing all these stories,” he continued, “the strictly architectural magazines have published not one. They have been fast asleep and snoring.”<sup>6</sup>



Written by Walter McQuade, Ogden Tanner, Mary Mix Foley, and other *Forum* staff, these early articles typically supported heavy-handed and large-scale slum clearance, in the belief that many American cities were “beyond mild measures.” Despite the fact that invasive “slum surgery” was widely considered to be the “progressive” approach, some of *Forum*’s writers, like Walter McQuade, already questioned it, and recommended medicine over surgery. Although she did not cite him in *Death and Life*, McQuade established precedents for Jacobs’ criticism of the “violent,” “neighborhood leveling techniques of planners like blockbusting Bob Moses.”<sup>7</sup>

In all cases, early reviews of urban redevelopment projects were based on unbuilt plans and proposals. On account of the time needed for approvals, design, and construction, the first completed Title I slum clearance and urban redevelopment project was not reviewed until December 1953. Nevertheless, the articles written by Jacobs’ future colleagues during the years that she was working for *Amerika*, where she was also writing articles on slum clearance, give a sense of the enormity of typical city redevelopment plans and the impact on people’s lives. While reflecting some diversity of opinion, the articles also give a sense of what was considered acceptable and perhaps necessary—until Jacobs and others would point out the destruction and tragedies of urban renewal in the mid 1950s.

Published in May 1950, “The Redevelopment of Norfolk” documented the “first full-scale try-out” of Title I slum clearance and urban redevelopment.<sup>8</sup> Through the efforts of the director of Norfolk’s Redevelopment and Housing Authority, who had served as president of the National Association of Housing Officials, Norfolk’s plan was first in line for Title I funding in August 1949, beating even New York’s Robert Moses to the punch and setting a precedent for how Title I funds would be used.

Even as the first of such projects, Norfolk's plan was unprecedented in scale, comprising a third of the downtown area. Comparing the undertaking to the previous benchmark for postwar slum clearance and housing projects, Stuyvesant Town, the writer observed that "Stuyvesant Town is the biggest housing project erected anywhere since the war, but its 75 acres of slum-cleared land is little more than a third of the 207 acres now scheduled for redevelopment in Norfolk."<sup>9</sup> The first phase of the Norfolk redevelopment plan alone, a third of the total acres designated for redevelopment, made it "the biggest [slum clearance] program ever."<sup>10</sup>

Typical of urban renewal projects to come, the part of the Norfolk's downtown planned for reconstruction coincided with the home of the city's African American community. Due to poverty, racism, and segregation, people in this part of the city lived in one of the worst slums in the country, where "inside toilets [were] practically unknown and running water indoors the rare exception" and families were frequently crowded into a single room. Although the writer did not go so far as to condemn the underlying social injustices, he did observe that housing for whites in the city had kept pace with population growth related to military production during the war, while "the only new units erected for Negroes since 1940 were two public housing projects for a total of 1,200 families," despite a population increase of 20,000 in the black community.

Anticipating James Baldwin's famous 1963 description of "urban renewal" as "Negro removal," in Norfolk only a fraction of the formerly African American neighborhood would be rebuilt for its residents.<sup>11</sup> Most would be rezoned for commercial and industrial use in the interest of economic development, supported by a road widening and straightening program and the construction of a new belt highway system. Those of the 12,000 displaced slum-dwellers who

qualified for public housing would be relocated to four new “Negro projects” and one white public housing project to be built beyond the downtown area.

A few months later, “Chicago Redevelops” told an almost identical story in *Forum’s* August 1950 issue. In this case, the redevelopment site was the Lake Meadows area of South Side Chicago, “America’s biggest slum,” and the proposal for it, the author observed, “is no gentle therapy; it is drastic surgery. But cities like Chicago are beyond mild measures.”<sup>12</sup>

Similar to the situation in Norfolk, Chicago’s South Side African American population had almost doubled between 1930 and 1950 and was crowded into “blocks of miserable old mansions, [that were] inhabited, sometimes in shifts, by the Terminal City’s Negro population.” Redevelopment would dislocate eighty-five to ninety percent of the neighborhood’s residents; few would be able to afford the moderate-income rents of the planned housing project, “Lake Meadows.” Moreover, only an estimated quarter of the displaced residents would be eligible for public housing elsewhere. The remaining evacuees would be relocated by Chicago’s Land Clearance Commission into “equivalent dwellings” elsewhere in the designated slum district.

Despite all the evictions, the new neighborhood would be mostly open land: 92% of the ground would be left unbuilt. Two facing “horizontal skyscrapers,” designed by the architectural firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, each twenty-three stories high, one apartment deep, and one-third of a mile long, would define Lake Meadows architecturally. With relatively small footprints, the gigantic apartment blocks would leave “vast stretches of open green area.” In this way, the project sought to “compete with the suburbs” by creating a new “suburb,” just minutes from downtown. The proposal, as Jacobs later described it, encapsulated the principles of “Radiant Garden City Planning.”

A year later, “Slum Surgery in St. Louis,” published in April 1951, described the redevelopment plans for approximately 40% of downtown St. Louis on a similar pattern. The writer made a historic blunder by praising the housing project at the center of the St. Louis renewal scheme, Pruitt-Igoe, whose demolition in 1972 would be cast by Colin Rowe, Charles Jencks, and many others as the failure and death of modern architecture.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, as was typical during the urban renewal period, “Slum Surgery in St. Louis” attempted to find an architectural solution for an urban problem. As later described in detail by Jacobs in *Death and Life*, the fundamental error of this and other housing projects was the belief that they could replace a neighborhood. In the case of Pruitt-Igoe, architect Minoru Yamasaki’s housing project was described as a “vertical neighborhood for poor people in a city which up to now has lived 90% in single houses.”<sup>14</sup> There was no attempt to replicate the experience of living in a single family house, however. Instead, the housing project’s success was judged by the fact that the typical Pruitt-Igoe building’s skip-stop elevator plan was 16% more efficient than the typical cross plan of New York City public housing. And on this account, the yet unbuilt Pruitt-Igoe housing project was described as having “already begun to change the public housing pattern in other cities.”

“Slum Surgery in St. Louis” would become a source of embarrassment for *Architectural Forum* for within four years of completion, Pruitt-Igoe was in decline.<sup>15</sup> Without naming the project or citing the source of its former praise (her own magazine!), in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs offered the “expert praise” that the project had initially received as evidence of the bankruptcy of urban redevelopment and design theory.<sup>16</sup>

While in most ways misguided, the St. Louis plan was regarded as “a new rescue pattern” to preserve the city. The author reported that while “today everybody wants to move out” of the city, the mayor wanted to “preserve” St. Louis. He hoped that the St. Louis plan “might well set a new rescue pattern for other tight-collared U.S. cities who are watching their substance disappear to the comfortable suburbs.” In this sense, *Forum’s* editorial position remained urban. The author observed that, “Social planners in St. Louis think the population should be allowed to disperse, that even public housing projects should be built outside the city.” But then, he asked, “what happens to the city?”<sup>17</sup> The answer seemed to be “progress or death.” Quoting a representative civic leader in St. Louis,

supposing the whole city did turn itself inside out and disappear to the suburbs—once that had happened completely, the implications of the life of the city as a whole, including those suburbs, might be something to worry about. You don’t go on walking without a heart.<sup>18</sup>

### **“The Philadelphia Cure”: An Alternative to Robert Moses’ Blockbusting Approach**

In 1952, when Jacobs started at *Architectural Forum*, there was still not much urban redevelopment to write about, for better or worse. No Title I projects had been completed, and, in the interest of keeping real estate prices from spiking and to keep critics at bay, redevelopment plans were typically kept quiet until all funding and agreements were in place.

In New York, for example, the first seven urban redevelopment plans prepared by Robert Moses’ Slum Clearance Committee received little notice. In 1951, the Committee’s plan to rebuild much of Greenwich Village had attracted only a passing mention in the *New York Times*, despite the fact that it would remove almost “every familiar landmark” except Washington

Square in the process.<sup>19</sup> It was not until March 1952, when a significant but relatively small part of Moses' Greenwich Village redevelopment plan was ready to move forward, that the avant-garde among protesters began to mobilize their communities. In response to a subsequent report in the *Times*, Shirley Hayes, Parks Committee director of the recently established Greenwich Village Community Planning District, formed the "Committee to Save the Washington Square Park" to fend off Moses' proposal to extend Fifth Avenue through the park and create a Parisian-style traffic circle around the Washington Square arch. Still virtually unknown was Moses' intention to connect these new roads to a newly created boulevard, "Fifth Avenue South," which would be developed in conjunction with two superblock housing projects, "Washington Square" and "Washington Square South."

Although opposition gathered against the reconstruction of the park and the extension of Fifth Avenue, this was not true of the proposed slum clearance projects for Greenwich Village itself. In August 1952, some years before Jacobs joined the fight, Lewis Mumford voiced his support for the Hayes committee's counter-offensive to stop the reconstruction of Washington Square by eliminating all traffic through the park. However, Mumford advocated a renewal plan even larger than that proposed by Moses. Apparently unaware of the two housing projects already proposed, he wrote that the "area south of the Square, a ramshackle one at best, is ripe for a large-scale housing development" and that a plan was needed "for the redevelopment of the whole area south of the park, right down to Canal Street." Consistent with widely held beliefs about functional city zoning, such a plan would include "the ultimate removal of all industrial functions from the area." Without a comprehensive plan of this scale, Mumford argued, "nothing can save Washington Square, much less redeem it."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, in the early 1950s, a “progressive” approach to city redevelopment meant avoiding a “piecemeal” approach and renovating large sections of the city from the ground up. It meant destroying more slums to build more modern housing, even if this meant displacing more people. In an August 1952 *Forum* article “What is Urban Redevelopment?”, for example, Mary Mix Foley editorialized in favor of a plan for Washington, D.C., that would displace three-quarters of the existing population, as compared to a more “conservative” plan that would displace only one-half.<sup>21</sup> Privileging redevelopment for the middle and upper classes by moving poor people out of the city center was seen as part of this progressive approach. Siding with private redevelopment against the public housing-oriented position of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Foley presented overtly class-based, and not so subtly race-based arguments for the “high-class residential areas” and “top-rank investment” for a “well-to-do tenancy” that would allegedly ensure the success of the redevelopment project. This, in Foley’s eyes, was “bold use of the redevelopment title of the 1949 Housing Act,” and like what was familiar in Norfolk and New York.<sup>22</sup>

The “Robert Moses Approach” to slum clearance, as it was sometimes described, was not the only kind of urban redevelopment, however.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the so-called “conservative” approach that Foley rejected for Washington, D.C., had spokesmen well before Jane Jacobs. As part of their contribution to the southeast Washington redevelopment plan, architects Louis Justement and Chloethiel Woodard Smith, for example, described a diversified community plan that would avoid dull “islands of families with similar income levels, interests, and ages,” keep the “old corner grocery,” and use public and semi-public buildings to provide “welcome breaks in design and scale.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, they valued the social, economic, and physical diversity of the city

in ways like those articulated by Jacobs years later. In response to the architects' plan for diversity, however, Foley expressed the position of those who were drawn to the clarity of standardization and segregation. "To provide this variety within a large redevelopment is to take the hard way in planning. It is particularly difficult in southwest Washington," she opined, "because this area is predominately a Negro slum."<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, other city planners besides Chloethiel Smith were willing to take the hard way. In *Forum's* April 1952 issue, just before Jacobs started with the magazine, another alternative to the "Robert Moses Approach" was described in "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing Slums with Penicillin Not Surgery,". Described once again as a "conservative," but "startling new way" to rebuild the city, the author (likely Walter McQuade), described "The Philadelphia Cure" as one that,

escapes the violent postwar redevelopment pattern in our largest cities—the neighborhood leveling techniques of planners like blockbusting Bob Moses of N.Y., who smash enormous rundown areas off the map, and then hand the aching sites to single large agencies or insurance companies for slide-rule housing solutions.<sup>26</sup>

This approach was very similar, both conceptually and rhetorically, to what Jacobs articulated later. Indeed, before writing *Death and Life*, she wrote a very positive follow-up article to "The Philadelphia Cure" in 1955, and adopted many of the Philadelphia School's planning ideas as her own.

Led by City Planning Commission director Edmund Bacon with some contributions from chief coordinating architect-planner Louis Kahn, "The Philadelphia Cure" emphasized six points of the Philadelphia approach—all of which would be later advocated by Jacobs.



First, smaller redevelopment areas were defined to avoid “monstrous single-project solutions” that were dependent on “big insurance company financing,” like New York City’s Stuyvesant Town.

Second, community meetings were conducted prior to drawing redevelopment plans in order to foster “democracy and good feeling” and avoid “the friction generated in such cities as New York when a planning boss such as Bob Moses confronts the neighborhood at a ‘hearing’ with a plan already cooked in total disregard of [local] feelings.”

Third, rebuilding sought to minimize the dislocation of present inhabitants for their own sake and in order to avoid the “political headaches” experienced, for example, in Chicago, with evictions and the threat of them.

Fourth, the preservation of local institutions such as churches, schools, and clubs was regarded as protection of “the social structure of the area *as a neighborhood* held together by an institutional structure which other cities in their redevelopment and housing projects have unwittingly destroyed.” Treating “only the spots of worst infection, Philadelphia expects the cure to spread” naturally.

Fifth, to coordinate development and make “*whole areas harmonious*” while avoiding monolithic approaches to urban order, the Philadelphia Cure would engage “architects skilled in urban design (as distinguished from ‘spot architecture’) to cooperate with the various architects hired by the separate builders of the separate projects.”

Finally, sixth, the Philadelphia approach sought to “preserve the historical past of the area,” its landmarks, and “depth in time.” Despite the greater expense, this maintained “strong spiritual values in giving a sense of *continuity of life* from generation to generation.” According to

Edmund Bacon, “There is a structure of institutions (in all neighborhoods) which has vitality... which ties the people together. Redevelopment, whenever possible, should give these institutions new strength and validity.”<sup>27</sup>

In their physical design, Louis Kahn’s master-plans—developed with architects Kenneth Day, Louis McAllister, and Ann Tyng, landscape architect Christopher Tunnard, and planner-architect Ed Bacon—generally avoided super-blocks, instead arranging buildings with reference to existing city blocks. Although they continued to advance the modernist space planning ideas familiar to modernist architects, influences came equally from traditional urbanism, making the scheme an early conscious interjection of architectural history into a field that had sought for decades to deny it. Influenced by Kahn’s 1951 trip to Greece, the proposed organization of “promenades leading to open spaces” was described “as old as the oldest Greeks towns.”<sup>28</sup>

Despite perpetuating the sick city metaphor, “The Philadelphia Cure” reversed the widely held “Medicine vs. Surgery” argument described by Le Corbusier in a similarly titled chapter in *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning* (1929).<sup>29</sup> In addition to accepting a less radical approach, the physical, social, and procedural aspects of the Philadelphia Plan amounted to a paradigm shift: in the next ten to fifteen years, each of the various aspects of the Philadelphia Plan would develop into disciplines and specialties in their own right—community planning, in-fill development, historic preservation, and urban design. Jacobs recognized this early on and quickly absorbed the innovative aspects of Kahn and Bacon’s city planning ideas into her own urban theory.

## Jane Jacobs' Praise for the "City Planner Approach"

Although hired to run *Forum's* hospital and schools desk in May 1952, Jacobs was still thinking about the entire city. In her first article as a full-time staff member, "Rosenfield and His Hospitals: He Approaches His Jobs Like a City Planner," published in September 1952, her interest in the city remained in the forefront. Contrary to Jacobs' opinion of city planners in *Death and Life*, she held Rosenfield in esteem for his "city planner approach." In fact, at this time Jacobs idealized the city planning profession.

Jacobs met Isadore Rosenfield in July 1952 as part of her early hospital research and liked him immediately—so much that rather than write a typical hospital-of-the-month story, her article was intended to present some qualities of an exemplary architect, who approached his projects "like a city planner."<sup>30</sup>

Rosenfield was a Harvard-trained architect and the designer and consultant for over sixty hospitals, as well as chief architect of the New York Department of Hospitals and of the city's Public Works department. He also consulted for other architects, including Louis Kahn when he designed the Radbill Building of the Philadelphia Psychiatric Hospital, which Jacobs wrote about later in the year.<sup>31</sup> Preparing her article on Radbill, "New Hospital Type," published in January 1953, likely prompted Jacobs' and Kahn's first meeting. (Jacobs, incidentally, liked both the design and functionality of this building. "Kahn has given his building gentleness and joy," she wrote. "[But] there is nothing namby-pamby about the gentleness of Kahn's design, no homogenized simplicity. 'I like my buildings to have knuckles,' he says. The bend in the slab at the knuckly corridor intersection is primarily to express different functions of the short wing on

first and third floors and to give variety to second-floor interior vista. The bend also makes best use of slope and garden space for ground-floor dining room.”<sup>32)</sup>

But it was less Rosenfield’s design vocabulary than his non-academic way of thinking that Jacobs found most compelling. Anticipating themes and wording in *Death and Life*, she described his “inquisitive and independent approach to social thinking” as “unorthodox” and “like nothing taught in schools of architecture.”<sup>33</sup> Rosenfield, Jacobs related, had moved from the study of social ethics and settlement house work into the study of architecture in the 1920s, but had maintained his sensitivity to the human element in his work. Not unlike the way she would describe Kahn’s hospital design a few months later, she approved of the way Rosenfield made hospital service “dignified” and made patients “feel they are really considered as individuals.” This sensitivity extended from physical aspects such as site specificity to an “elastic definition of function” that included “not only the machinery, but the emotional content.”<sup>34</sup>

What distinguished Rosenfield’s methodology from that of “academic” architects, however, was his “city planner approach.” In her idealized view of 1952, this meant not unquestioningly accepting the client’s program or second-hand knowledge, but engaging the design problem with empirical and user-oriented research. As she explained:

‘The city planner gets a problem and he has to start from scratch. The architect usually asks for a program,’ Rosenfield observes. Working either as a consultant or architect, Rosenfield uses the city planner approach, does his own studies right down to digging out the facts on family income in the community. His facility with this kind of research comes out of his three years’ training as a social scientist. He is suspicious of all rules of thumb and initial assumptions.<sup>35</sup>

This investigatory, people-oriented methodology would define her expectations of architects and city planners for years to come.<sup>36</sup>

Although it was not part of her initial job description, Jacobs was determined to write about the city and urban redevelopment. She found a way to write these topics even while profiling a hospital consultant, and she persisted in this interest in writing about other larger design projects. In late 1952, as *Forum*'s editors prepared for a "New Thinking" theme for 1953, Jacobs took on a new building type, the regional shopping center, which had a significant relationship to the city. According to her own description, "New Thinking on Shopping Centers," which she wrote and published in March 1953, was the first in a list of articles that she considered most relevant to her "interest in writing about the nature of cities."<sup>37</sup>

"New Thinking on Shopping Centers" was a twenty-four page feature meant to rival the special issue on shopping centers published by *Progressive Architecture* a year earlier.<sup>38</sup> It examined four case studies of the new building typology, which had been largely invented by the architect-planner Victor Gruen to replace or compete with traditional downtown shopping districts. Jacobs would argue that "the time has come for downtown to begin borrowing" ideas from such successful shopping centers.<sup>39</sup> It was an idea that she may have learned from Louis Kahn, who proposed "stimulat[ing] more imaginative development of [the city's] shopping areas, along the lines of the new suburban shopping centers, which already provide a pattern of movement sympathetic to the pedestrian and the motor," in his 1953 article "Toward a New Plan for Midtown Philadelphia."<sup>40</sup>

The four case studies in Jacobs' essay were Gruen's Southdale Shopping Center in Minneapolis; Mondawmin in Baltimore, developed by Jim Rouse and a design team including MIT Dean Pietro Belluschi and landscape architect Dan Kiley; Parker Square in Wichita Falls, Texas, by Ketchum, Gina & Sharp Architects; and Stonestown, in San Francisco, by Welton-

Becket and Associates. In preparing the article, Jacobs got to know Victor Gruen and Jim Rouse, both of whom she later cited in *Death and Life*. She would also become a strong advocate for Gruen's city plan for Fort Worth, Texas, which sought to stem the flight of commerce out of the city that he had helped to accelerate with the invention of the suburban shopping center.

Indeed, all four shopping centers meant to compete with Main Street, USA. Unlike the relatively homogenous retail venues that shopping centers have become, these were all multi-use developments, with adjacent middle-class housing projects, medical centers, supermarkets, office buildings, community centers, and upscale restaurants designed to pull in shoppers "who might otherwise go downtown."<sup>41</sup> Although located three miles from the center of Baltimore, Mondawmin, for example, was specifically designed to be "a second 'downtown'."<sup>42</sup> As in Southdale, a broad "buffer" zone—containing offices, a medical center, a large new residential subdivision, and miles of new roads—was designed to control "parasitic" competition and create an atmosphere conducive to shopping. In addition to being monopolistic, these developments wielded the suburban version of the urban renewal tool known as "excess condemnation," through which the developer or authority profited from the anticipated spike in neighboring real estate values.

Jacobs came to regret her early favorable writing about urban redevelopment, and in later life rarely mentioned her writing before *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. However, whether it was because she was too junior to write more critically or because she had bought into the new suburban development concept, in "New Thinking on Shopping Centers," Jacobs uncritically repeated real estate boosters' arguments.

In describing Gruen's Southdale development, for example, Jacobs reported that the "town-plan conscious" developers had created a "blightproof neighborhood to increase and stabilize the value of the site." To forestall decay, she continued, "the land plan protects residential areas from center traffic; uses office buildings, apartment houses and landscaped strips as transition zones between commercial and residential areas; and protects other residential borders with parks." The Dayton Company, she continued, "will get the benefit of higher land values created by the shopping center."<sup>43</sup> These ideas were aligned with the centralized, monopolistic approach to urban redevelopment that Jacobs would later reject and attack, the overarching logic was the functional separation of "Radiant Garden City Beautiful planning" and not that of the integrated and multi-functioning city she later championed.

Indeed, through at least 1954, Jacobs made the case for the position she would later condemn. She advocated applying the lessons of suburbia to downtown, city planning, superblock redevelopment, and urban renewal. "Since the war, almost nothing had happened downtown. There has been no big store construction," she wrote. "Now the shopping centers are so far ahead, the time has come for downtown to begin borrowing back."<sup>44</sup>

Likely influenced by Victor Gruen, Jacobs argued that city planning was essential for urban redevelopment. "The first—the most elementary—lesson for downtown is simply the importance of planning," she wrote. "Every unplanned suburban strip losing out to a planned shopping center is a lesson in survival that cannot be ignored."<sup>45</sup> By this she did not mean just avoiding competitive anarchy or visual blight, but the very type of controlled planning—with condemnations and the clearance of all "nonconforming (as residential) buildings and blighted structures"—that she later excoriated. In Chicago, these lessons were being applied by the city's

Planning Commission to rehabilitate two shopping districts north and south of the Loop. Jacobs wrote approvingly of the creation of super-blocks with “one-way traffic perimeters, elimination of most interior streets, and removal of blighted and irrelevant buildings” to “help save the city’s core.”<sup>46</sup>

Real estate developers also offered lessons in realistic and community-oriented planning. In order to protect their investments, the best shopping center planners, Jacobs reported, have “become community planners in self defense.” A year of planning preceded Southland’s zoning approval, and included the distribution by the developers of more than five thousand “attractive little brochures to everyone in the area, explaining exactly what they proposed to do and why, showed slides of the project, invited and answered questions.” At the crucial town meeting, she reported three hundred voters turned up, and only three persons voted against rezoning. City planners, she concluded, could learn something from the real estate developers:

The developers explained their purposes to the citizenry and won zoning changes in a way to give experienced city planners pause. Here is the idealism of town planning actually become reality—not another buried report—because it fits the cold facts of good merchandising. Frightened downtown merchants, please take note.<sup>47</sup>

Jacobs’ favorable attitude toward current trends in city planning persisted into 1954, as evident in a June 1954 review of Victor Gruen’s Northland Regional Shopping Center in Detroit. Although she later condemned Clarence Stein’s planning ideas, for example, as being fundamentally anti-urban, at this time she still believed in the merits of Stein and Henry Wright’s design for Radburn, N.J. (1929), which was initially touted as “a Suburban Garden City for the Motor Age.”<sup>48</sup> Northland, Jacobs wrote, “is a classic in shopping center planning, in the sense that Rockefeller Center is a classic in urban skyscraper-group planning, or Radburn, N.J. in suburban residential planning.” It was “a new thing in modern town planning.”<sup>49</sup>



Northland was indeed a “classic” suburban mall—it was a giant suburban building surrounded by a sea of 12,000 parking spaces and a ring of highways. Blind to its inadequacies, Jacobs saw its best attributes. She saw what Victor Gruen wanted her to see—“a city within a city”—a modern version of the traditional city.<sup>50</sup> That she was influenced by Gruen and believed this at the time is clear. Northland, she wrote, “is a rediscovery rather than an invention.”<sup>51</sup>

Although Jacobs reported that the most frequent comment by visitors to the shopping mall—as many as 50,000 a day—was, “You wouldn’t know you were in Detroit,” she saw in it architectural imitations of the city. The ground floor simulated “main street.” The basement level provided “what side streets are to the downtown area.” And the “strong, clear, over-all architecture” was designed “to permit downtown variety.”<sup>52</sup>

Writing about Northland must have reminded Jacobs of her first essays on the city, in which she had examined Manhattan’s “working districts,” as well as her reading of Henri Pirenne’s books on the rebirth of cities and commerce in the Middle Ages. Despite the automobile, and the acres upon acres of parking lots circling the mall, Northland had “old roots.” She saw within it an echo of medieval market towns like old Ludlow in Shropshire, a plan of which illustrated her point. Northland had an “urban-character” that was different than the typical American attitude toward open space, which she described as having the “rural-character” of the minimally-defined village common. It was also unlike the typical vehicle-oriented American Main Street: although one could only get to Northland by car, within the mall, “Shopping traffic has come full circle. It is right back where it started—with the pedestrian.” Northland was thus “a planning classic because it is the first modern pedestrian commercial center to use an urban

‘market town’ plan, a compact form physically and psychologically suited to pedestrian shopping.”<sup>53</sup>

These were lessons that Jacobs believed could be naturally applied within the city. Northland’s “flexible market-town use of open spaces looks like a natural for coping with rehabilitation of blight-spotted decaying shopping districts,” she wrote.<sup>54</sup> Whether she suggested this to Gruen, or vice versa, is uncertain—although it is clear that prior to Northland Gruen was already a forceful advocate of decentralization and that his shopping centers were specially designed to compete with downtowns.<sup>55</sup> Regardless of who influenced whom, however, Gruen’s plan for the redevelopment of Fort Worth, Texas, which Jacobs praised in a 1956 review, would attempt to apply the old “market-town” ideas to the redevelopment of the modern city.

## **Decentralization is Centralization**

Interested in cities and economies, Jacobs was initially attracted to the new shopping center, seeing in it a suburban simulacrum of the city. Yet, she later came to regret believing and advocating the city’s adoption of suburban models, even if these originated in the traditional city itself. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she condemned the displacement of local stores by supermarkets and chain stores, and bemoaned downtowns “that are lackluster imitations of standardized suburban chain-store shopping.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, she characterized “shopping center planning” as a form of “monopoly planning” and “repressive zoning” that created not just commercial monopolies but civic ones.<sup>57</sup> “Monopolistic shopping centers and monumental cultural centers cloak, under the public relations hoo-haw, the subtraction of commerce, and of culture too, from the intimate and casual life of cities,” she wrote.<sup>58</sup> This type of planning, she

explained, “artificially contrives commercial monopolies for city neighborhoods... [but] although monopoly insures the financial success planned for it, it fails the city socially.”<sup>59</sup> Jacobs’ experience as one of the first architectural critics to review shopping centers, in other words, made her especially sensitive to the deployment of shopping center planning principles in the city.

Although it was a few years before Jacobs began to formulate her critique of “shopping center planning,” she remained in the early 1950s the same person who believed in the city as an embodiment of diverse interests and decentralized government, and these points of view soon reemerged in her writing for *Forum*. Indeed, for the first time since her 1952 Loyalty Security Board interrogation, in *Death and Life* she alluded to her admiration for Chicago community activist Saul Alinsky, author of *Reveille for Radicals* (1946), and their shared suspicion of “plans which work from the top down” in her writing.<sup>60</sup> Her suspicion of top-down planning, that is, increasingly included city planning.

In fact, only a month after “New Thinking on Shopping Centers,” signs of her developing criticism of suburbanization began to appear, in her April 1953 article “Good-by Neighborhood Schools?” (a pun on *good-bye*, to *do good by*, and *good buy*).<sup>61</sup> Here she editorialized that a plan by the City of New Orleans to consolidate city schools into a new suburban school complex for financial reasons was bad for social reasons. Prefiguring her critique of shopping centers in *Death and Life*, she observed that the planners had “hit, *at least economically*, on a plausible solution to the intolerable poverty of the public schools in many of our big rich cities.” However, she regarded the city’s proposal for busing city children to a centralized, suburban “school village” as a substitution of bureaucratic regimentation and standardization for local participation in

neighborhood affairs and even “amateur” control of the school. Although the suburbs, she argued, were thought to advance physical and social decentralization, the opposite was actually true:

It has become fashionable to call shifting anything to the suburbs “decentralization.” But the school village idea, suburban or no, is centralization. It makes a homogenous big thing out of diverse little things. It carries the potential (perhaps inevitable?) flaw of centralization: loss of “amateur” community participation, increase in remote and ingrown bureaucratic control.<sup>62</sup>

The so-called “school village” in the suburbs, Jacobs believed, was “inherently unfitted to play the easy, intimate role in community life” that the neighborhood school could play in the city, and it would do nothing to meet the needs of a community that lacked in “almost any sort of meeting hall, banquet room, exhibit gallery, library and clubrooms.” She regarded the neighborhood school, in other words, as not only embodying community participation and control, but also as functioning as a multi-purpose community building that served everyone in the neighborhood, not just students.

Thus, Jacobs argued against the suburban super-school and in favor of a new neighborhood school design, the Thomy Lafon Elementary School—a long, corridor-less, modernist bar building raised on piloti. Although she would later be stereotyped as being opposed to modern architecture, Jacobs had many good things to say about the design of this school, which was built in 1954, and whose architects, Curtis & Davis, became known for their regional modernism and received an American Institute of Architects award for the project.

Jacobs, however, was less interested in the design per se, than its social functioning. She recognized the validity of arguments of New Orleans’ reformers, who felt that the children bused to the new “school village,” mostly African American children from a slum known as “Back-A-Town,” would have an opportunity to spend their school day away from “a pretty nasty environment” known for high illiteracy, disease, crime and delinquency rates. However, she

offered that one needed to look beyond the superficial appearances of their disenfranchised neighborhood and recognize its underestimated community values. Rehearsing her arguments about the hidden order that could be found under the superficial chaos of cities, Jacobs stated that, The tangible beauty, charm and spaciousness of good schoolhouses are easy to recognize as excellences. The queer, complicated excellences that are able to abide with happenstance ugliness and inefficiency—but not with imposed perfection—are harder to see; and how are they to be valued? What is the worth of a PTA that aggravates a principal as much as it supports him? What is the worth of a paper boat in a sidewalk puddle between home and school? It takes some mighty delicate scales to find the answers, but the answers are vital.<sup>63</sup>

A month later, Jacobs wrote further on the topic of local knowledge and self-determination. Although not directly concerned with city planning, her May 1953 article “Marshall Shaffer: Teacher-at-Large of Hospital Architecture,” which was part of a feature on “New Thinking on Hospitals,” provided the opportunity to discuss her changing views of the design and planning professions. Whereas her profile of Isadore Rosenfield had praised his “city planner approach,” her ideas now had much more in common with the critical views that she would articulate in *Death and Life*.

Marshall Shaffer was director of Hospital Facilities Division of the U.S. Public Health Service and a former associate of Richard Neutra.<sup>64</sup> In him, Jacobs found an exemplar of good government and a teacher unencumbered by dogmatism. His philosophy, which Jacobs again quoted in *Death and Life*, was summed up in a sign that hung above his desk: “A fool can put on his clothes better than a wise man can do it for him.”<sup>65</sup>

Shaffer’s aphorism expressed the wisdom that Jacobs later used to criticize top-down and paternalistic city planning. Rather than set up a centralized Federal hospital authority, with its own hospital design staff or list of approved firms, Shaffer created a “decentralized” regional

network designed to train local architects to build hospitals for their own communities. “When the government prepared to parcel out money for locally owned hospitals [under the Lanham and Hill-Burton Acts of 1941 and 1946],” Jacobs wrote, “he could have argued convincingly that the hinterland was not ready to cope with the design problems.” This would have been the “logical” thing to do, she acknowledged. But when it came to hospital design, Shaffer asserted that,

These jobs must be done by *any architect* the local community or hospital board chooses. If he [the architect] doesn’t know how to design hospitals we will help him learn... You can’t legislate good design. Let’s have no cut-and-dried answer. Let’s keep booby traps out and red tape down. Good design has to come up from the architects, not down from the government.<sup>66</sup>

Shaffer, like Jacobs, simply rejected paternalism. “He runs a government office,” Jacobs underscored, “*that does not duplicate anything that outside individuals or organizations can be taught to do for themselves.*”<sup>67</sup> Redefining the slogan concerning regional “decentralization,” she believed that this approach required “imagination, gregariousness, ingenuity, and a passionate belief in decentralization.”<sup>68</sup> Embracing the overarching principle that “all architects are created equal,” Shaffer set up a regional and state network to assist local architects at six key stages during the design process. In doing so, he regulated only “an absolute minimum, a floor; there never would be a design ceiling or even an ‘suggested standards’ or ‘ideals’.”<sup>69</sup> Rather than over-designing, he found that the most common problem was “design that skimps too much at the expense of reasonable quality.” “One of the best things about this job,” Shaffer told Jacobs, “has been watching the architects rise to the occasion, and I mean especially the men nobody had ever heard of outside their own town... They’ve done a magnificent job, better than Washington could possibly have done for them.”

Shaffer was clearly cut from the same cloth of Jacobs, and years later, when Jacobs wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she thought of him as she tried to think through the

problems of public housing. City, state, and federal housing authorities had set qualitative and quantitative caps on public housing, she observed, but there was no logical reason for the government to dictate so severely the use of public housing subsidies. Government did not, as a rule, take over the running of museums that receive public subsidies, nor did it run subsidized hospitals, she argued, with the late Marshall Shaffer's legacy in mind.

### **“Now, At Last, Office Towers in a Park”: Pittsburgh's Radiant City Experiment**

Nineteen fifty-three was a year of firsts in *Forum's* writing on cities. It was during that year that *Forum* would write about Kitimat, British Columbia, “the first complete new town in North America,” designed by Clarence Stein and Albert Mayer. It was the year that *Forum* reviewed the first completed Title I slum clearance and redevelopment project, Pittsburgh's Gateway Center. And it was the year that Douglas Haskell first came to recognize Jane Jacobs' abilities as a writer on cities and redevelopment issues: within a year of her start at *Forum*, Haskell initially picked her to write the feature on Kitimat, telling executive editor Perry Prentice that, “It seems to me the only writer we can assign to this is Jane Jacobs. She alone will have the capacity of giving it the human touch while digging into the details.”<sup>70</sup>

In the end, architect Albert Mayer wrote the Kitimat story himself, although Jacobs edited the piece for publication in July 1954. Nevertheless, working on the story gave her some time to think about Stein's prior housing and town plans—Sunnyside Gardens, Radburn, Chatham Village, Baldwin Hills village, and the Greenbelt towns—all of which she would

criticize in *Death and Life* for being fundamentally anti-urban. But it would not be until about a year later the opportunity came around again for her to write a major city feature on her own.

In the meanwhile, however, architectural criticism at *Forum* would pass a new threshold, setting the stage for Jacobs' later writing. The review of Pittsburgh's Gateway Center included the editorial "Architecture: Stepchild or Fashioner of Cities" by Douglas Haskell, which he later described in a letter to his friend William Wurster as "the first piece of architectural criticism that has been so direct and outspoken since around 1928, when two or three magazines retreated in the face of libel suit threats."<sup>71</sup>

Located on the point of Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle, Gateway Center was a slum clearance redevelopment project first reviewed by *Architectural Forum* in September 1950, when the project being prepared for construction not long after the passage of the Housing Act of 1949. The design deserved special attention. Not only was it an early urban redevelopment project under the new legislation, it was being orchestrated by large, pre-Title I public-private redevelopment interests in New York, including real estate giant Robert Dowling, the Equitable Insurance Company, and the architectural firm Eggers & Higgins, who were also architects and consultants for a number of Robert Moses' contemporaneous Slum Clearance Plans. Project architect Irwin Clavan had been job captain for the Empire State Building and designer of the building's mooring mast, and was a key member of the "Board of Design" of Williamsburg Houses, Parkchester, and Stuyvesant Town—projects whose site planning and building forms bore a distinct resemblance to Gateway's buildings, as well as Le Corbusier's Radiant City ideas and "Cartesian" skyscrapers of the late 1920s. Nevertheless, as Haskell indicated in "Pittsburgh



and the Architect's Problem," his pre-construction review published in September 1950, "Perhaps no other project dramatizes so clearly the problem of the architect at mid-century."<sup>72</sup>

The problems of the architectural profession and of Gateway Center were in fact more complicated than Haskell saw them at the time. When the project was finally completed in 1953, *Forum's* December 1953 review was headlined "Le Corbusier Made This Prophetic Sketch in 1922... Now, At Last, Office Towers in a Park" and was accompanied by an image of Le Corbusier's City for Three Million."<sup>73</sup> The article read, "Some may see in Gateway not much more than three rather undistinguished buildings. To planners, however, Gateway is surely something more important":

Here, for the first time in US city planning, the concept of office towers in a park has made good sense in economic terms. It has made sense to men who may have never heard of Le Corbusier's "Ville Radieuse." And having once made sense to these eminently practical men, the concept can no longer be shrugged off as the dream of some unrealistic visionary.<sup>74</sup>

Decades after Le Corbusier's original idea, Gateway Center thus played out a scenario from the architect's thirty-year-old proposal to rebuild the city center to ensure its economic and productive success. This, however, was not seen to be a problem. Douglas Haskell described the project, which replaced a twenty-three acre derelict industrial district with a park adorned by three cruciform office towers similar to Le Corbusier's Cartesian skyscrapers, as making "good sense." His words were written without cynicism. To the contrary, as Haskell had written in 1950, "The basic concept of big city office buildings widely spaced in a 23-acre park is indeed noble—the first realization of Le Corbusier's generation-old dream."<sup>75</sup> Although he had reservations about the buildings' design, which he repeated in his 1953 editorial, the underlying city planning concept made the completed project a "major accomplishment."<sup>76</sup>

What Haskell and others regarded as a problem was that Gateway Center's planning and its similarities to Le Corbusier's Radiant City were accidental. As revealed in discussions with Robert Dowling, despite an architectural tradition dating back millenia, site planning, or "plot design," was not regarded as part of the architect's purview. Plot design, Dowling asserted, "has to do with economics. It is basically an economic question." Only after the financial structure and the rentable space was accounted for were architects brought in, and, "if they have any better ideas, it is too bad, because the basic plan has already been worked out."<sup>77</sup> But the idea that the architect was excluded from the planning stage, and only brought in to "clean up" the design, was so dissatisfying to Haskell that he organized a roundtable on the subject of "The Need for Better Planning" to discuss the problem and the project.

As part of his argument for the importance of the architect's contribution to city planning, Haskell asserted that an architect *had already* contributed to the project's basic design. The credit for this, Haskell argued, had to go to Le Corbusier:

One reason that Mr. Dowling got the plot plan that he has for his Gateway project in Pittsburgh is because of ideas through out by that great man, Le Corbusier, in France, many years before. He maintained that you should put your cities into parks instead of putting parks into cities. If it hadn't been for that architect's idea, Mr. Dowling's plot plan would bear no resemblance to what it now is.<sup>78</sup>

To this the Dowling replied that, "Despite Le Corbusier, with all his greatness, we were not conscious of his influence," which, in turn, drew the comment from roundtable participant Victor Gruen, "Either consciously or subconsciously, that is where it came from."

The discussion, in other words, revealed that thirty years after their conception, early modernist city planning ideas were still novel, experimental, and being tested for the first time. Despite the fact that architects were not the direct agents of the plan, and that Le Corbusier had

been developing very different ideas since the war, his prescient ideas and powerful rhetoric still had great currency. And although other modernist architects like Louis Kahn were developing less utopian city planning ideas after the war, in the early years of Jacobs' work at *Architectural Forum*, the unrealistic, paternalistic, and utopian ideals of "orthodox" modernism, as she later described it, still had tremendous momentum.

Although *Forum's* editorial agenda included a new focus on urban redevelopment and architectural criticism, Haskell felt no need to criticize the underlying modernist planning concepts that were visible in the Pittsburgh project, and focused primarily on critiquing architectural design and the architect's role in site planning.

In his architectural critique, Haskell decried Gateway's stainless steel-clad buildings as "painted-on" architecture, a "weak modernique, lacking in proportion, texture, and dignity, let alone the mystery or power that would differentiate them from 'up-ended diners'." <sup>79</sup> This was not a completely new line of criticism. It echoed two of his earliest pieces of architectural criticism: a 1930 appraisal of the "modernique" Chrysler Building and a 1931 review of the Empire State Building, in which Haskell described Irwin Clavan's mooring mast design as among the worst parts of the new building. In his critique of the broader aspects of the project, Haskell did not object to the tower-in-a-park city planning concept, but he made a few important arguments. First, he advocated for a greater role for the architect in the site and city planning process. In Gateway Center, he felt that the plan was uninspired, and that this was because the architects had been "[left] out until the last minute," until after "the basic pattern had been set." <sup>80</sup> As a consequence, the architecture was "not up to the genuine poetry of its ideas" or its site; the "arrangement of the towers in their park [was] purely mechanical"; and the "the landscaping

between them [made] no fresh statement about our grand new world.”<sup>81</sup> He emphasized that “a great architect *working with the planners from the very start* could have contributed... the inspiration to make the whole greater than the parts, the creativeness to make the buildings really sing.”<sup>82</sup> Robert Dowling confirmed that it was real estate developers and other economic interests, not architects, who were defining postwar city planning.

Haskell made a related criticism against the “vulgarization” of modernism in the early 1950s, or “late modern” period. Gateway’s Design, he argued, was still a product of outdated functionalist thinking. “The Architect’s Problem,” he stated, would “not be resolved until everyone abandons the hope that naïve functionalism is any guarantee of beauty.”<sup>83</sup> Haskell and his contemporaries, including Jacobs, recognized that vulgarized modernism, still attached to a misunderstood functionalism, was beginning to have an impact on the city through new urban redevelopment, and that in order to solve the “crisis” of modern architecture and the city, this “naïve functionalism” needed to be replaced by a more meaningful modern architecture.

Finally, Haskell made a general argument for city-building in the remainder of his editorial, which would open the door to Jacobs’ later criticism and urban theory. Citing Florentine and Venetian civic spaces, Haskell argued that architecture had a city-building function, and that Gateway Center had missed an opportunity to create a “civic center” that would be “the crown and focus of urban life.”

Haskell considered his 1953 editorial, an important, even historic, advance in American architectural criticism. He sent an offprint to Bill Wurster with a letter in which he observed that the editorial was “the first piece of architectural criticism that has been so direct and outspoken

since around 1928, when two or three magazines retreated in the face of libel suit threats.” To this day, he continued, “Even Lewis [Mumford] is compelled by *The New Yorker* to work very carefully around such situations.” And, despite Haskell’s caution, he told Wurster that one of Gateway Center’s developers had contacted *Forum’s* executive editors and, using “the kind of language which indicated previous talks with a lawyer,” expressed the “unmistakable suggestion that we lay off him.”<sup>84</sup>

Although the critique of Gateway helped somewhat to build up *Architectural Forum’s* editors’ confidence in their architectural criticism, Haskell’s inability to articulate his criticism more forcefully—whether for fear of a libel suit or for fear of alienating his readership and his employers—contributed to some confusion. He noted that the project’s site planning, for example, was uninspired, and indicated that architects had been brought in only for window-dressing, but the review implicated Le Corbusier as the author of the first completed Title I project and thereby closely associated modern architecture with urban renewal. Despite the fact that Haskell had effectively proven in “The Need for Better Planning, and How to Get It” roundtable that the project’s basic concept was a vulgarized version of the Radiant City, he thought the planning was the best thing about the project. Thus although he lamented that site planning or “plot design” was not considered part of the architect’s design process, by focusing his critique on the architectural window-dressing instead of the city-building aspects of the project, he tended to give into the idea that architects would not be involved in site planning and city-making.

Gateway Center was a memorable project for Jacobs. She returned to it in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and described Gateway Center more or less as Haskell had done—

as “a Radiant City office and hotel project with the buildings set here and there in empty land”—although for her this was exactly what was wrong with it.<sup>85</sup>

When Jacobs wrote those words, she was not the first to connect Le Corbusier’s Radiant City with postwar American real estate development. Although her substitution of the term *Radiant City* for urban renewal project was a new rhetorical punch, her description of the Modernist city planning paradigm in *Death and Life* as “Radiant Garden City Planning” was significantly influenced and largely borrowed from Catherine Bauer’s review of city planning practices for *Architectural Forum* in 1956, as well as sociologist Nathan Glazer’s 1958 editorial “Why City Planning is Obsolete.”<sup>86</sup> Moreover, many critics, including Jacobs, recognized that Le Corbusier’s ideas had been vulgarized; Haskell indicated as much in his review of Gateway Center, and, in 1956, Jacobs herself wrote that, “Almost every big city today has vulgarized this [Radiant City] concept.”<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, the Gateway Center episode suggested to her that architects, city planners, and real estate developers were “all just about even” in their misunderstanding of city planning and design. As Haskell and Gruen had insisted, Gateway Center’s best ideas had come from Le Corbusier. And this led Jacobs to make one of the most problematic rhetorical choices in writing *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*—the abuse of the term *city planner*, which she applied to everyone involved in the urban redevelopment. Equating the sort of urban renewal done in Norfolk and Chicago with Le Corbusier’s or most other city planner’s ideas was misleading and unfair. She explained her reasons for this, in *Death and Life*, in this way:

Bankers, like planners, have theories about cities on which they act. They have gotten their theories from the same intellectual sources as the planners. Bankers and government administrative officials who guarantee mortgages do not invent planning theories nor, surprisingly, even economic doctrine about cities. They are enlightened nowadays, and they pick

up their ideas from idealists, a generation late. Since theoretical city planning has embraced no major new ideas for considerably more than a generation, theoretical planners, financiers and bureaucrats are all just about even today.<sup>88</sup>

Regardless of the “intellectual sources”—which were certainly more complex, cultural, and inseparable from everyday life than she described—Gateway Center was representative of the type of project that she had accepted in the early 1950s, and its failure was an important object lesson for her. Breaking with the way she and her contemporaries saw the site and the city at the time—as Douglas Haskell described city-building in “Architecture: Steppchild or Fashioner of Cities?”—she would soon experience a “paradigm shift,” which Thomas Kuhn would define around the same time that Jacobs was writing *Death and Life*. Kuhn described this as a new way of looking at the same thing, like “a change in visual gestalt [where] the marks on paper that were first seen as a bird are now seen as an antelope, or vice versa.”<sup>89</sup>

Based on a better understanding of the way cities worked, Jacobs experienced a similar transformation, and soon saw urban renewal projects very differently than Haskell had described Gateway Center. Quoting Richard Nelson, whose studies of urban behavior preceded Holly Whyte’s similar work, Jacobs observed that on a typical September afternoon, Nelson counted only three people using Gateway Park—“one old lady knitting, one bum, one unidentifiable character asleep with a newspaper over his face.” By contrast, in downtown Pittsburgh’s Mellon Square there were too many people to count. From evidence like this she concluded that, City park users simply do not seek settings for buildings. They seek settings for themselves. To them, parks are foreground, buildings background, rather than the reverse.<sup>90</sup>

From the time of her earliest essays on the city’s “working districts,” Jacobs was well prepared to understand the city as an ensemble of typical situations and practical affairs. In this

sense, she already understood that not every building had to be a monument or an object of contemplation that demanded notice. However, she better recognized the meaning of this fact when presented with the alternative, when architectural projects began to eliminate the human settings present, and latent, in the existing city.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to staff on new editorial policy, Jul. 23, 1952 (Box 57, Folder 3, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).

<sup>2</sup> Merle Travis and Cliffie Stone, "No Vacancy." Recorded by Merle Travis, Capitol Single #258, May 1946 (Hill and Range Songs, 1946, 1975).

<sup>3</sup> I am alluding here to *Should Our Cities Survive?*, the original title of José Luis Sert's book *Can Our Cities Survive?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1944). Although Sert may have been more certain than others that the old city was too poorly designed and organized to provide adequate living conditions and efficiencies for modern life, other European and American architects and city planners were asking similar questions. I am indebted to Eric Mumford's books on Sert and Modernist city planning theory in my understanding of this history, especially *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Clarence Stein (1951), *Toward New Towns for America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Hauf, "City Planning and Civil Defense," *Architectural Record* 108 (Dec. 1950), 99. Hauf's consideration of city planning as a defensive measure was not new in the twentieth century. After World War I, Le Corbusier argued that his Radiant City concept could protect cities from aerial bombardment. "Only those cities which are conceived along the lines of the Radiant City are capable of emerging victoriously from an air war," he declared. Le Corbusier explained that the Radiant City's "scattered arrangement of the buildings [would] considerably limit the effectiveness of bombs; damage [would be] limited solely to the places that suffer a direct hit." Le Corbusier (1935), *The Radiant City* (New York: Orion Press and Grossman Publishers, 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Haskell, Memo to staff on new editorial policy, Jul. 23, 1952, 1.

<sup>7</sup> [Walter McQuade], "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing Slums With Penicillin Not Surgery," *Architectural Forum* 96 (Apr. 1952), 115.

<sup>8</sup> *Architectural Forum*, "Redevelopment of Norfolk: Federal Slum Clearance Gets Its First Full Scale Tryout," *Architectural Forum* 92 (May 1950), 132-37.

<sup>9</sup> I have written about the important case study of Stuyvesant Town in "The Death and Life of Urban Design: Jane Jacobs, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the New Research in Urbanism, 1955-65," *Journal of Urban Design* 11 (Jun. 2006), 145-172.

<sup>10</sup> "Redevelopment of Norfolk," 132.

<sup>11</sup> Baldwin "The Negro and the American Promise," Interview with Kenneth Clark, WGBH TV, Spring 1963. Relating a conversation that he had with a teenager from San Francisco, Baldwin recalled, "He said, 'I've got no country. I've got no flag.' Now, he's only 16 years old, and I couldn't say, 'you do.' I don't have any evidence to prove that he does. They were tearing down his house, because San Francisco is engaging—as most Northern cities now are engaged—in something called 'urban renewal,' which means moving the Negroes out. It means Negro removal, that is what it means. The federal government is an accomplice to this fact."

<sup>12</sup> *Architectural Forum*, "Chicago Redevelops," *Architectural Forum* 93 (Aug. 1950), 99-105.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977). See also, Katharine G. Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44 (May 1991), 163-71.

<sup>14</sup> *Architectural Forum*, "Slum Surgery in St. Louis," *Architectural Forum* 94 (Apr. 1951), 128-36.



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- <sup>15</sup> In “The Case History of a Failure, *Architectural Forum* 123 (Dec. 1965), 22-25, James Bailey recanted all of the magazine’s former praise, but also reported on the Public Housing Administration’s and the architectural firm HOK’s unsuccessful attempts to save the project from the social implosion that preceded the physical one.
- <sup>16</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 77.
- <sup>17</sup> “Slum Surgery in St. Louis,” 129.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.
- <sup>19</sup> New York Times, “Topics of The Times: New Face for the Village,” *New York Times* (Mar. 13, 1951), 30.
- <sup>20</sup> Lewis Mumford, “Fifth Avenue, For Better or Worse,” *New Yorker* 28 (Aug. 16, 1952), 56.
- <sup>21</sup> Mary Mix Foley, “What Is Urban Redevelopment? Replanning of Washington’s Famous Capitol Slums Poses a Basic Question for Every U.S. Community,” *Architectural Forum* 97 (Aug. 1952), 124-31.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.
- <sup>23</sup> The “Robert Moses Approach” to urban redevelopment was sometimes also called the “New York Approach.” Joel Schwartz wrote a book by this title, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993).
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 128. Chloethiel Woodard Smith (1911-1993) was one of the first women to “break the glass ceiling” in the American architectural profession.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> [McQuade], “The Philadelphia Cure,” 115.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-14.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.
- <sup>29</sup> Le Corbusier (1929), Chapter 14, “Physic or Surgery,” *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning (Urbanisme, 8th ed.)* (New York: Dover, 1987), 253-76.
- <sup>30</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “Rosenfield and His Hospitals: He Approaches His Jobs Like a City Planner,” *Architectural Forum* 97 (Sept. 1952), 128-34.
- <sup>31</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “New Hospital Type,” *Architectural Forum* 98 (Jan. 1953), 118-21. Kahn’s rocky relationship with Rosenfield is described by David Brownlee in *Louis I. Kahn: In the Realm of Architecture*, David B. Brownlee and David G. De Long, eds. (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 40-41.
- <sup>32</sup> Jacobs, “New Hospital Type,” 120-21.
- <sup>33</sup> Jacobs, “Rosenfield and His Hospitals,” 128-29.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.
- <sup>36</sup> Jacobs’ approach to studying the city was similar to that developed in the Chicago School of sociology in the mid-1920s. Roderick D. McKenzie’s 1925 essay “The Ecological Approach to the Study of the Human Community” described an approach that was particularly sympathetic with Jacobs’ interests in human geography and ecology. It is unknown whether she was exposed to this work or the book in which it was collected—*The City, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie*, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925)—in her geography courses at Columbia.
- <sup>37</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “New Thinking on Shopping Centers,” *Architectural Forum* 98 (Mar. 1953), 122-45.
- <sup>38</sup> See M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 112-16.
- <sup>39</sup> Jacobs, “New Thinking on Shopping Centers,” 122.
- <sup>40</sup> Louis Kahn, “Toward a New Plan for Midtown Philadelphia,” *Perspecta* 2 (1953), 11.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 127, 132.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-23.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 125, 132.
- <sup>48</sup> Stuart Chase, “A Suburban Garden City for the Motor Age,” *New York Times* (Jun. 24, 1928), 4.
- <sup>49</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “Northland: A New Yardstick for Shopping Center Planning,” *Architectural Forum* 100 (Jun. 1954), 103.
- <sup>50</sup> Hardwick, 129.
- <sup>51</sup> Jacobs, “Northland,” 103.

<sup>52</sup> Jacobs, "Northland," 106, 110-11.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 103-4.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobs and Gruen were friendly, advocates of each other's work, and certainly influenced each other's thinking. While Jacobs was a very favorable reviewer of Gruen's shopping centers and his Fort Worth Plan in 1956, Gruen appreciated her writing and later made very complimentary comments about Jacobs' participation at the First Harvard Urban Design Conference in the same year. Jeffrey Hardwick, meanwhile, quotes Gruen discussing American urbanism in 1964 in very Jacobsian terms: "I haven't seen the kind of life and vitality and intermingling of very many human functions and urban functions [in the U.S., as compared to European cities]," Gruen stated. Although Hardwick was unaware that he was quoting Jacobs' un-bylined review of Northland, he also suggests that it was only in December 1954 that Gruen began to apply Jacobs' "market-town" idea to decaying downtown shopping districts (165).

<sup>56</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 192, 454.

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 71.

<sup>60</sup> Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 24. Jacobs cited Alinsky in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and thanked him in the book's Acknowledgements.

<sup>61</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Good-by Neighborhood Schools? The School Village Plan: 'Junk the Neighborhood School'," *Architectural Forum* 98 (Apr. 1953), 129-34, 174ff.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>64</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Marshall Shaffer: Teacher-at-Large of Hospital Architecture," *Architectural Forum* 98 (May 1953), 125ff.

<sup>65</sup> Jacobs, "Marshall Shaffer," 125; *Death and Life*, 324.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>70</sup> Douglas Haskell, Memo to Perry Prentice, Aug. 25, 1953 (Box 38, Folder 11, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, Columbia University).

<sup>71</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to William W. Wurster, Jan. 14, 1954 (Box 24, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University).

<sup>72</sup> Douglas Haskell, "Pittsburgh and The Architect's Problem," *Architectural Forum* 93 (Sept. 1950), 127.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas Haskell and Editors, "Gateway Center: Now, At Last, Office Towers In A Park," *Architectural Forum* 99 (Dec. 1953), 112-16. Douglas Haskell, "Architecture: Stepchild or Fashioner of Cities?," *Architectural Forum* 99 (Dec. 1953), 117.

<sup>74</sup> "Gateway Center," 113.

<sup>75</sup> Haskell, "Pittsburgh and The Architect's Problem," 127.

<sup>76</sup> "Gateway Center," 113.

<sup>77</sup> Douglas Haskell and Editors, "The Need for Better Planning, and How to Get It," *Architectural Forum* 98 (Jun. 1953), 146-55. The latter comment was made by real estate developer Charles Luckman.

<sup>78</sup> "The Need for Better Planning," 152.

<sup>79</sup> Haskell, "Architecture: Stepchild or Fashioner of Cities?," 117.

<sup>80</sup> Haskell, "Pittsburgh and The Architect's Problem," 127.

<sup>81</sup> Haskell, "Architecture: Stepchild or Fashioner of Cities?," 117.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Haskell, "Pittsburgh and The Architect's Problem," 127.

<sup>84</sup> Haskell, Letter to William W. Wurster, Jan. 14, 1954.

<sup>85</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 106.

<sup>86</sup> Catherine Bauer Wurster and Jane Jacobs, "What City Pattern? First Job: Control New City Sprawl," *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 105-13. Nathan Glazer, "Why City Planning Is Obsolete," *Architectural Forum* 109 (Jul. 1958), 96-8, 160. See also, *Death and Life*, 18.

<sup>87</sup> Jacobs, “What City Pattern?”, 111. Jacobs edited the “What City Pattern?” feature, including Bauer’s contribution, and wrote the captions.

<sup>88</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 12.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, 1970), 85.

<sup>90</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 106.

<sup>91</sup> In *Uncommon Ground: Architecture, Technology, and Topography* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), David Leatherbarrow discusses the siting of buildings and their relationship to the city in similar terms (cf. 11, 15, 18-19, 24, 63, 69-70, 72, 79-80, 91 for passages especially relevant to Jacobs’ ideas). In this paragraph I am also paraphrasing Leatherbarrow from *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 89.

## Chapter 6

### **“Oases in the Desert,” or “Seeds of Self-Regeneration”: Urban Renewal in Five Cities in the Mid-‘50s**

And still the deserts of the city have grown and still they are growing, the awful endless blocks, the endless miles of drabness and chaos. A good way to see the problem of the city is to take a bus or streetcar ride, a long ride, through a city you do not know. For in this objective frame of mind, you may stop thinking about the ugliness long enough to think of the work that went into this mess. As a sheer manifestation of energy it is awesome. It says as much about the power and doggedness of life as the leaves of the forest say in spring. Hundreds of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild the city. All else can only be oases in the desert. *Jane Jacobs, “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment,” July 1955*

**O**n August 2, 1954, President Eisenhower signed the U.S. Housing Act of 1954 into law, creating the federal Urban Renewal program, and in November, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously on the constitutionality of the police power necessary to make “urban renewal” a reality.

City rebuilders like Robert Moses had been waiting since the early 1930s for developments like these. Whereas the Housing Act of 1949 had provided for slum clearance and “urban redevelopment,” the new legislation, which introduced the term “urban renewal,” inaugurated “a broader and more comprehensive approach to the problems of slums and blight, [and] a redirection of the urban redevelopment program.”<sup>1</sup> Whereas the previous objectives had been clearing slums and redeveloping the razed areas, the new laws granted local governments the power to attempt to *prevent* the spread of urban blight and the “cancerous growth” of new

slums through conservation, rehabilitation, modernization, and razing—a much more ambitious, subjective, and constitutionally questionable set of tasks.

Soon thereafter, *Berman v. Parker*, a case stemming from a slum clearance master-plan for Washington, D.C., cleared away the remaining obstacles in the path of the nation's city planners and rebuilders. According to a news story in the November 1954 issue of *Architectural Forum*, just a few weeks before the Supreme Court's ruling, "cities in the past few years have been challenged repeatedly on the constitutionality of their slum clearance laws... As of last month, in 21 of 23 states where the question has been put to test, the laws have been validated."<sup>2</sup> *Berman v. Parker* put the question to rest at the federal level by ruling against the plaintiff, whose viable and non-blighted department store was slated to be taken through eminent domain and razed as part of the District of Columbia Redevelopment Land Agency's blight-fighting plan. In an unanimous decision, the High Court declared on November 22, 1954, that, "It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean, well-balanced as well as carefully patrolled." It followed, the Court argued, that urban renewal "need not, by force of the Constitution, be on a piecemeal basis—lot by lot, building by building."<sup>3</sup> Even sound structures could be taken and destroyed if they fell within the determined urban renewal area.

*Berman v. Parker* thus not only upheld the ambitions of Federal and State urban renewal programs, as *Forum's* news editor (perhaps Jacobs herself) anticipated, it "cut back an undergrowth of litigation that is hampering their efforts."<sup>4</sup> Disentangled from the understory of grassroots resistance, beginning in 1955, the number of urban renewal projects in planning and construction rose dramatically each year through the early 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Housing Act of 1954 accepted compromises that had precedents in the Housing Act of 1949, historian Richard Flanagan has characterized the new legislation as a historic turn in national urban policy.<sup>6</sup> Before 1954, he wrote, “New Deal politicians and liberal interest groups struggled against conservatives to expand federal sponsorship of public housing construction. Liberals argued that federal aid was needed to replace slum housing and meet potential housing shortages for the poor and working class. Conservatives retorted that public housing was expensive, unnecessary, and socialistic.” However, the Housing Act of 1954 “transcended the acrimonious divide between liberals and conservatives, forging a new consensus that emphasized commercial redevelopment instead of public housing as the answer to central city decline... The Eisenhower administration sought to satisfy moderates in both parties with urban renewal, a policy intended to revitalize the commercial prospects of downtown business districts and increase the size of the urban economic pie.”<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that urban renewal’s theorists and practitioners were later vilified, by Jacobs and others, its federal policies received sustained and broad social support. And, in this context, Jacobs’ own early acceptance and even advocacy of urban renewal was not surprising, especially at a time when there were still few completed Title I redevelopment projects. Indeed, what is more remarkable is how relatively uniformed Jacobs, who was otherwise one of the most knowledgeable architectural critics on U.S. urban redevelopment, was in 1955—but also how quickly she began to develop a new vision of the city.

Within ten months of the passage of the federal urban renewal legislation, Jacobs’ idealized view of city planning began to dissipate—and she was not alone. That month, Jacobs, her colleague Walter McQuade (also a Greenwich Village resident), and Lewis Mumford joined

Greenwich Village Community Planning District parks committee director Shirley Hayes' ongoing battle with Robert Moses to save Washington Square from reconstruction. Now in its third year, Hayes' Committee to Save Washington Square Park organized a petition and letter writing campaign to oppose Moses' continued attempts to bisect the park with an extension of Fifth Avenue. In its latest incarnation, the road would take the form of a depressed roadway, a smaller version of the Cross Bronx Expressway, which had recently resumed construction a few miles to the north after overcoming lawsuits and protests.

The petition, signed by Jacobs on April 30, 1955, marks the start of her Greenwich Village activism. It read: "I am opposed to the proposed plan for a depressed four-lane roadway, or any other highway through or around Washington Square Park. I am for the Alternate Plan to close Washington Square Park to all vehicular traffic with a bus turn-around back of the Arch." Handwritten at the bottom was Jacobs' personal note to Hayes: "Thanks for your good work. I've written the Mayor and Borough President, each, the attached letter. Please keep me informed of any other effective action that can be taken."<sup>8</sup>

Jacobs' short letter to Mayor Wagner and Borough President Hulan Jack is revealing not only of changes in her frame of mind, but her shock. Jacobs, the person perhaps most closely associated with opposition to urban renewal today, and at the time an architectural journalist, seems to have been unaware of the plans for her own neighborhood. "I have heard with alarm and almost with disbelief, the plans to run a sunken highway through the center of Washington Square," she wrote.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, although the letter reveals her love of the city, it also shows that perceptions about slums infiltrated even her thinking. She recognized that transforming a storefront building

into a family home, as she and her husband had done, was considered eccentric at a time when developments like Stuyvesant Town and Levittown were the popular middle-class choices for dwelling. “My husband and I are among the citizens who truly believe in New York,” she continued, “to the extent that we have bought a home in the heart of the city and remodeled it with a lot of hard work (transforming it from slum property) and are raising our three children here.”

But, at the same time, Jacobs’ letters to the mayor and borough president reveal the unraveling of her idealism, which, by the time she finished writing *Death and Life*, had turned to cynicism. “It is very discouraging to try to do our best to make the city more habitable,” she concluded, “and then to learn that the city itself is thinking up schemes to make it uninhabitable.”<sup>10</sup>

Jacobs was not alone in believing in New York as “a decent place to live and not just to rush through.” Also in April 1954, Lewis Mumford’s contribution to Hayes’ Washington Square campaign was in the form a letter to the editor of *The Villager* that was far less polite. Foreshadowing Jacobs’ later rhetoric, Mumford’s letter—which was certainly an inspiration for her—sanctioned public outrage and protest.

“The proposed plan to connect West Broadway with Fifth Avenue, by means of an open-cut speedway running through Washington Square is almost too inept to be taken seriously,” he wrote. “If there were any general planning intelligence among those responsible, it would have been laughed out of existence long before this.”<sup>11</sup> Alluding to his prevailing belief in the functional zoning of the city, Mumford argued that “to preserve Fifth Avenue for display and business, and to preserve the Washington Square district for residence are both more important



than to provide a traffic link to the downtown tunnels and bridges, only to clog these passages even worse than they are now clogged.” The Washington Square viaduct, he concluded, “is a masterpiece of mis-planning; and those who oppose it are serving the public interest.”<sup>12</sup>

Although Mumford had not altered his views about the need to rebuild South Greenwich Village “from the ground up,” he was now less assertive about Village renewal than his editorial of February 1952, in which he had proposed a rebuilding plan even more extensive than Robert Moses’. The once-favorable public opinion of Robert Moses and the “Robert Moses approach” to city redevelopment had begun to change, and this just when his “blockbusting” approach was determined to be both reasonable and legal. Following a visit to East Harlem in early 1956, Jacobs became convinced that urban renewal was doing more harm than good, and that her hopes for city planning had been misplaced.

### **“Seeds of Self-Regeneration”: Edmund Bacon and Louis Kahn’s Living City**

After three years of writing about the city indirectly, through her articles on hospitals, schools, and shopping centers, Jacobs at last wrote her first city feature for *Architectural Forum’s* July 1955 issue, “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment: A Progress Report.” It was a transformative experience. She had been effectively preparing for such an assignment for almost twenty years, since her first essays on the city. In many ways, the assignment, her first such essay as a professional architectural critic, would return her full circle to the amateur, freelance writing of her early twenties. In Philadelphia, she would encounter ideas about the city and its redevelopment, conceived by Ed Bacon and Louis Kahn, that resonated loudly with her own.

Whether as a form of remembering or simply because of Kahn and Bacon's direct and charismatic influence, she absorbed their ideas into her own understanding of the "ecology of the city," as she later described it.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from having the opportunity to write her own redevelopment feature, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment" was an ideal assignment. Jacobs knew Philadelphia well. As a native Pennsylvanian (her parents had worked and met in Philadelphia), she had been assigned to cover the city's region in her work for *The Iron Age*, and she had written about the city for *Amerika*. She also already served as *Forum's* Philadelphia liaison, and, in fact, during her research trips for "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," she visited Vincent Kling's office to review a selection of recent hospitals and schools for publication, and made a similar visit to Louis Kahn's office in May 1955, resulting in the enthusiastic report to Douglas Haskell about Kahn's Trenton Bath House and Yale Art Gallery projects, described in the previous chapter. "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," moreover, had the advantage of being a follow-up story to "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing Slums with Penicillin Not Surgery," which was published in April 1952, the month before her first assignment for *Forum*. Walter McQuade, who was likely the author of "The Philadelphia Cure," was also likely helpful with the assignment, which would ultimately lead to Jacobs taking over as the magazine's new "redevelopment specialist."

At last at liberty to write about the city, Jacobs' familiar voice and many of her characteristic ideas could come to light. Having recently come to believe that city planners were thinking up schemes to make the city less habitable, the scales had, for the most part, fallen from her eyes. And thus, in the opening sentences of her essay, she dismissed a half century of city

planning movements with a recognizable skepticism for simplistic slogans and unrealistic solutions:

Once upon a time the general problem of the City Chaotic looked so simple. Boulevards and civic monuments were going to create the City Beautiful. After that proved insufficient, regional plans were to create the City Sensible. These proved unadoptable and now we are struggling, sometimes it seems at the expense of everything else, to improvise the City Traversable.<sup>14</sup>

Taking a step back from this received wisdom, as well as from her busy work as a reviewer of hospitals, schools, and shopping centers, she looked at the city afresh, with a contemplative, “objective frame of mind,” and, as she would do again in the opening pages of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she recommended that others do the same. As in Plato’s allegory in the *Republic*, Jacobs had ascended out of the cave of shadows, in her case on a bus ride through Philadelphia, and described her own rediscovery of the city. As the landscape of the city unfolded block after block around her, she came to realize that the parts of the city redeveloped and renewed without public participation could only be “oases in the desert”:

And still the deserts of the city have grown and still they are growing, the awful endless blocks, the endless miles of drabness and chaos. A good way to see the problem of the city is to take a bus or streetcar ride, a long ride, through a city you do not know. For in this objective frame of mind, you may stop thinking about the ugliness long enough to think of the work that went into this mess. As a sheer manifestation of energy it is awesome. It says as much about the power and doggedness of life as the leaves of the forest say in spring. Hundreds of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild the city. All else can only be oases in the desert.<sup>15</sup>

Despite her recognition of these truths, Jacobs’ ascent, to follow Plato’s parable, was not yet complete; she remained partly in the shadows of half-truths that she would later reject. She still saw, or accepted, the city as an ugly and chaotic “mess.” And she described the idea that “people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild

the city” as an “appalling fact.” Philadelphia, she wrote “is a city, perhaps the only US city thus far, that has looked at this appalling fact and begun to deal with it.”<sup>16</sup>

When Jacobs wrote “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment,” the city’s dogged and awe-inspiring life force was still a mystery to her. On one hand, she observed there an “unprecedented display of public-spirited, private rebuilding” and praised the work of individuals and citizen’s groups, but she could point to no particular reason for the collective effort. “What is happening in Philadelphia,” she related, “is of such scope and involves so many people there is no neat and easy explanation for what started it or why. Physical rejuvenation of the city seems to be related to a booming hinterland, dissatisfaction with long do-nothing, a surge of municipal reform and citizen activity, the jolt of the war years.”<sup>17</sup>

What Jacobs did understand, and what made a great impression on her, however, was that Ed Bacon, executive director of Philadelphia’s City Planning Commission, and Louis Kahn, chief coordinating city planner, respected grassroots rejuvenation. She appreciated that Kahn himself was a native of Philadelphia’s “slums” and that his was not simply a theoretical understanding of city life—he had a personal and intimate understanding of the social life of city neighborhoods, especially the fragility of poorer ones. In the 1952 article on “The Philadelphia Cure,” for example, Kahn was quoted as stating that,

A slum is the most closely knit social neighborhood of all. There is more kindness and more natural behavior than anywhere else. There has to be. So you have got to make any redevelopment a product of the neighborhood, or it fails. You have got to search for the things which give the neighborhood its patriotic unity, and retain them. The amateur quality of the building should not be a consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the reputation he later developed for pushing controversial urban redevelopment projects, at the time Bacon had a similar feeling for directing the redevelopment process in a way

that complimented Kahn's (and Jacobs') respect for "amateur" architecture. In "The Philadelphia Cure," Bacon was shown to be a keen observer of what Jacobs later described as the "unslumming" process and was quoted as observing that the city had the "latent capacity" to restore itself:

In almost any neighborhood in Philadelphia it is a shock, as one wanders about decaying sections, suddenly to come upon three or four houses, a half-block or a whole street where each property owner has kept his home in fine condition, all of the houses painted, new fronts, and sometimes even a whole street with the same colored awnings... These cells have within them the latent capacity to restore themselves.<sup>19</sup>

As an example of this, Jacobs praised Kahn's plan for the redevelopment of the Mill Creek neighborhood, complimenting the "wonderfully clever and practical devices for jacking up the district, almost by its own bootstraps."<sup>20</sup> Among these were his reinforcement of important local institutions and landmarks such as churches, schools, and playgrounds. Quoting Kahn, the Mill Creek plan, Jacobs wrote, sought to "bring out, instead of burying, the things built by unselfish effort."<sup>21</sup> Or, in Bacon's words:

'The efficiency and order which the planner desires is less important than the preservation of individual democratic liberties and, where the two are in conflict, the demands of the democratic process must prevail.'<sup>22</sup>

The enthusiasm with which Jacobs described Kahn and Bacon's ideas is clear. Their words could have been spoken by any one of her heroes, whether Benjamin Franklin, Saul Alinsky, Marshall Shaffer, or, later, Jacobs herself. They respected people and communities, neighborhoods and democratic process, amateur building and modern architecture, change and continuity. "Philadelphia's abrupt embrace of the new, after long years of apathy, has by some miracle not meant the usual rejection of whatever is old," she wrote. "When a city can carry on a love affair with its old and its new at once, it has terrific vitality."

The influence of Louis Kahn and Ed Bacon on Jacobs' thinking cannot be underestimated. "The Philadelphia Cure" described a process in which city planners respected bottom-up redevelopment and local interest in improvement—an approach that Jacobs would embrace and relate as her own. Her understanding of city dynamics, especially the process of "unslumming," and even the language that she used to describe the process owed Kahn and Bacon a certain debt. Bacon, for example, summarized the concept:

We developed a hypothesis: neighborhoods are dynamic organisms which have within themselves the seeds of self-regeneration. They consist of pockets of decay intermixed with substantial sections, which with proper stimulus can be induced to fix themselves up.<sup>23</sup>

This idea was at the heart of Jacobs' understanding of the city as a complex and dynamic organism—it was the basis of her "death and life" thesis. The regenerating seed metaphor, moreover, was repeated in the concluding sentence of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*—where she wrote that "lively, diverse, intense cities contain the seeds of their own regeneration, with energy enough to carry over for problems and needs outside themselves."<sup>24</sup>

To develop her own "ecology of the city," Jacobs later augmented Kahn and Bacon's concepts of "the living city," as described in a 1958 *Architectural Forum* article to which she contributed, with research from the life sciences. But based on her lifelong interests in geography and ecology, she already appreciated their "organic," landscape metaphors. Their sensibility and theoretical approach suggested that city planning was more a matter of husbandry, or working with the nature of the city, than an imposition of the arts.

Kahn and Bacon's proposed "greenways," for example, were an effective alternative to imposing large-scale order through architectural means, especially by a single architect. It was a

landscape device that worked “as a unifier of new projects, as a unifier of time, as a unifier of scale.” As Jacobs described it, the “greenways” concept was,

a strong, clear system of grove-shaded walks, patterned and textured pavements, little open squares and vistas. The vistas focus mainly on the older significant institutions of the neighborhood, creating a sense of depth in time. Commonly these institutions are visually overpowered and lost behind new construction. Curiously, the problem of unifying a variety of new projects by different architects is an even more difficult problem than reconciling old and new... Nor is giving a large area over to one architect usually satisfactory; without the variety of differing minds and viewpoints, urban scale and texture are sacrificed. Planning Director Ed Bacon thinks that the new greenway device will go far toward solving this problem by making most of the problem disappear.<sup>25</sup>

The greenways, in other words, were a new infrastructure of public space, “a new kind of Main Street, primarily for pedestrians.”<sup>26</sup> It was city-building.

Jacobs understood that Kahn and Bacon’s idea of redevelopment was to create catalysts, not “oases” or “spectacular” architectural projects. It had to learn, as she said it must in *Death and Life*, from the real life successes in cities:

In Philadelphia, a redevelopment area is not a tract slated only—or necessarily—for spectacular replacements. In short, it is not simply to be an oasis... Some of Philadelphia’s redevelopment money is to be spent very thinly and very, very shrewdly in interstices of these areas to bring out the good that already exists there or play up potentialities... Whether a new oasis is public or private, Philadelphia’s planners look at it not simply as an improvement, but as a catalyst.<sup>27</sup>

And from this she concluded that, “Philadelphia’s inexpensive devices toward the enormous gain of restoring the neighborhood to the desert may be its greatest contribution to city planning.”<sup>28</sup>

Although Jacobs used the “oasis” metaphor only a few times in *Death and Life*, in a discussion of the use of neighborhood parks in that book, she wrote at length on the effects of urban redevelopment funding and massive architectural and city planning projects as creating not so much oases as “cataclysmic” floods of expenditure and transformation. She did not reject either planning or redevelopment. Rather, like Bacon, she proposed creating catalysts to intensify

neighborhood strengths, particularly in a chapter titled “Gradual Money and Cataclysmic Money,” where she compared evolutionary versus revolutionary city change to the difference between life-giving irrigation and a torrential, eroding flood.<sup>29</sup> “City building that has a solid footing,” she wrote in *Death and Life*, “produces continual and gradual change, building complex diversifications. Growth of diversity itself is created by means of changes dependent upon each other to building increasingly effective combinations of uses.”<sup>30</sup>

Of course, by the time Jacobs wrote *Death and Life*, she would no longer describe the city and its diversity as chaotic and messy, as she did in “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment.” Her experiences in that city helped to dispel those shadows. In fact, she came to recognize the question of what was “messy” to be an important esthetic and intellectual question. To complete Plato’s parable, she had discovered the city’s true forms, and, seeking to share this understanding with others (returning to the cave, as it were), she wrote in *Death and Life*,

Let us consider, first, the belief that diversity looks ugly. Anything looks ugly, to be sure, if it is done badly. But this belief implies something else. It implies that city diversity of uses is inherently messy in appearance; and it also implies that places stamped with homogeneity of uses look better, or at any rate are more amenable to pleasant or orderly esthetic treatment. But homogeneity or close similarity among uses, in real life, poses very puzzling esthetic problems. If the sameness of use is shown candidly for what it is—sameness—it looks monotonous. Superficially, this monotony might be thought of as a sort of order, however dull. But esthetically, it unfortunately also carries with it a deep disorder: the disorder of conveying no direction.<sup>31</sup>

The esthetic desire to create order, or the appearance of order, Jacobs indicated, put at risk not just the life of the city, but the possibilities of human understanding and experience of it. She asserted that “*a city cannot not be a work of art*,” because when the artist’s goal was to eliminate the city’s so-called “chaos” with the order of art, the order and organization of the



living city was obscured or destroyed, thereby substituting the mere perception of chaos with genuine chaos:

In places stamped with the monotony and repetition of sameness you move, but in moving you seem to have gotten nowhere. North is the same as south, or east as west. Sometimes north, south, east and west are all alike, as they are when you stand within the grounds of a large project. It takes differences—many differences—cropping up in different directions to keep us oriented. Scenes of thoroughgoing sameness lack these natural announcements of direction and movement, or are scantily furnished with them, and so they are deeply confusing. This is a kind of chaos.<sup>32</sup>

From this, Jacobs concluded that, “So long as we are content to believe that city diversity represents accident and chaos, of course its erratic generation appears to represent a mystery.”<sup>33</sup> To dispel this mystery and to understand cities for what they are took understanding: “To see complex systems of functional order as order, and not as chaos, takes understanding,” she admitted.<sup>34</sup> She came to understand that, “Intricate minglings of different uses in cities are not a form of chaos. On the contrary, they represent a complex and highly developed form of order.”<sup>35</sup>

Thus, it was in no way an “appalling fact” that only through the plans of hundreds of thousands of people could the city be rebuilt. This was the city’s essence and the source of its life and diversity. Jacobs would come to understand clearly that “Cities are fantastically dynamic places, and this is strikingly true of their successful parts, which offer a fertile ground for the plans of thousands of people.”<sup>36</sup> Rather than deny the prosaic life-world of the city, she argued that architectural design and city planning should reveal it. Cities’ “intricate order—a manifestation of the freedom of countless numbers of people to make and carry out countless plans is in many ways a great wonder,” she wrote. “We ought not to be reluctant to make this living collection of interdependent uses, this freedom, this life, more understandable for what it is, nor so unaware that we do not know what it is.”<sup>37</sup>

In other words, she would come to see and seek to prove that cities are “dynamic organisms which have within themselves the seeds of self-regeneration,” as city planner Ed Bacon had suggested.

## **Re-Diversifying and Re-Integrating Cleveland**

In August 1955, the month after “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment” was published, Jacobs’ “Cleveland: City With a Deadline” alluded to and reinforced some familiar themes. As in her discussion of Philadelphia, she remained optimistic about city planning. “City planning, per se, is not a problem in Cleveland,” Jacobs wrote, “because it is being done so well... The city has some of the finest slum clearance and low-income housing in the country.” This was because, as in Philadelphia, the planning process was not wholly top-down:

Most important, planning has a real democratic foundation under it; every step of the way Cleveland’s planners work with a remarkable local institution, the neighborhood ‘area councils’ which cover most of the city, poor and well-to-do both... In effect, they are active, grass-roots planning bodies. They are a bright omen for success of the city’s program of rehabilitation under the urban renewal law.<sup>38</sup>

In “Cleveland,” however, Jacobs focused on the related problems of city planning, social dynamics, and race. As seen in the first “try-out” of Title I slum clearance in Norfolk in 1950, and in subsequent plans for St. Louis, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., “urban renewal” sometimes meant “Negro removal.”<sup>39</sup> In Cleveland, however, the problem that Jacobs described was a different type of removal, what became known as “white flight.” Her reaction to the phenomenon was that “no big city can afford to allow its heart to become a ghetto for the underprivileged,

surrounded by prosperous suburbs.”<sup>40</sup> Anticipating familiar themes in *Death and Life*, she argued that Cleveland needed to “diversify [its] central city population.”<sup>41</sup>

Echoing the Chicago School of Sociology’s research of the 1920s, in “Cleveland,” Jacobs described an urban phenomenon that she indicated was typical—the migration of well-to-do city dwellers from aging city center neighborhoods to newer rings of development. As city residents’ economic status improved, she wrote, “they moved further out, sometimes renting the old house to the next comer, sometimes selling. The next wave of inhabitants moved on, and the next and the next, with the housing progressively deteriorating.” This socio-geographic evolution broke down in American cities, however, because African-Americans were denied access to the suburbs. Beginning in the twenties, she continued, African-Americans moved in, but “they have not moved on, because the suburbs will not let them in. Today 98% of the Cleveland metropolitan area’s 207,000 Negroes live in the city proper, many in this central city area.”<sup>42</sup> The area she was referring to was, unsurprisingly, a slum.

As a means of improving deteriorated conditions, Jacobs was already searching for an alternative to slum clearance. Echoing Ed Bacon’s observations about neighborhood’s “the latent capacity to restore themselves” and anticipating her own idea of “unslumming,” she noted that the residents of Cleveland’s central city slum “who can afford to own homes, have upgraded the rundown districts they inherited.”<sup>43</sup> But it was clear to her that even if the neighborhoods could be physically improved, an enormous problem would remain. In another generation, she wrote, “all of eastern Cleveland might well become a giant Negro ghetto backed up against white suburbs—a financial and social catastrophe.”<sup>44</sup>

Reintegration of the city and society was essential. “The solution is not simply to replace the ghetto housing with better housing,” she concluded, “but to break up the ghetto pattern itself by bringing some of the suburb back into the central city.”<sup>45</sup> By “bringing some of the suburb back into the central city,” Jacobs meant white, middle-class residents, and, to this end, she went on to describe and commend a mixed-income Cleveland redevelopment project called Garden Valley.

Jacobs described Garden Valley as “one of the boldest and most imaginative redevelopment jobs conceived by any city.”<sup>46</sup> She had high hopes for Cleveland’s city planning department, and later described Ernest Bohn, director of Cleveland’s Housing Authority, and James Lister, director of its Planning Commission, along with Ed Bacon and a few others, as among the country’s best city planners. “Out in Cleveland, a supposed tour by car with Planning Officials Ernest Bohn and James Lister actually amounts to a series of short automobile hops and long exploratory stops.”<sup>47</sup>

She had high hopes for Garden Valley’s mixed-use, mixed middle and low-income housing development, which she believed “will permit families hitting hard times, or those graduating out of low-income housing, to move without breaking ties”—a common problem in typical urban renewal. “Green Valley could turn out to be city-rebuilding in a profound sense,” she wrote, “because, as one observer of the [nonprofit Cleveland] Development Foundation has said, ‘Here are a group of topflight business and industrial leaders learning their way around in city planning, in urban renewal, in race relations and in housing financing... If Garden Valley can stimulate the city’s powerful men to look at Cleveland again with the vision of what can be built, it will indeed be a key to rejuvenation’.”<sup>48</sup>

The city, moreover, was the key to social transformation and reintegration. Jacobs concluded that “only in the city proper can middle-income relocation housing be built without restriction of the color of residents.”<sup>49</sup>

Jacobs’ hope for Green Valley was buoyed by Cleveland’s public housing history. Its older developments, “after fifteen to twenty years of use, show how humanely and well the city began the job of replacing slums with something better.” Moreover, its directors respected those they served: “Cleveland has never called its low-income housing units ‘projects.’ They are called ‘estates.’ The people who live in them are not ‘tenants’; they are ‘residents’. And they [accordingly] behave like residents and treat their homes like estates.”<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, Green Valley—“the community of the future” and a “model neighborhood for all of Cleveland”—would not live up to the high hopes many had for it. Within two years of the construction of the first units in 1957, Green Valley was already considered run-down and undesirable, and its bad reputation would grow and deepen with time.<sup>51</sup> Designed by a young Cleveland native, Allan Jacobs—who had just graduated from the City Planning program at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied with William L.C. Wheaton, Lewis Mumford, and Martin Meyerson—the development could not overcome the larger problems of poor management; failure to follow through with the plan to foster diverse housing demographic, resulting in a de facto “Negro removal” situation; and failure to complete key design elements such as landscaping and a transit line in the wake of the city’s economic downturn.<sup>52</sup> Allan Jacobs (no relation of Jane and Bob Jacobs) would later blame some of Green Valley’s problems on a lack of public participation in the design process, despite Jane Jacobs’ hopes for its “grass-roots” approach, as well as his own design. In his Greenbelt-influenced, super-block master-plan, where

both single-family and row-houses were ruled out in favor of apartment blocks surrounding open space, connections to the surrounding urban fabric were minimal.<sup>53</sup>

Allen Jacobs, who later became a champion of “Great Streets,” came to believe that the development’s “street design was inappropriate and that the placement of buildings and roads fostered neither a sense of publicness nor a feeling of ownership and responsibility.” But although he now believes that “An overall street and block pattern is the beginning of a community and most of the rest follows,” he thinks it unlikely that *any* physical design could have significantly mitigated the problems of poverty and racism faced by many of Garden Valley’s residents.<sup>54</sup>

Allen Jacobs learned from his experiences as Jane Jacobs did from hers. Despite her later criticism of plans to suburbanize the city, she advocated this in Cleveland. Moreover, she did not criticize the super-block plan in her article, despite her later criticism of such city plans. Rather, she bought into the hope that the development would “transform a desolate industrial wasteland and an enormous, steep, barren ravine into a neighborhood... [and] integrate it with an existing neighborhood which will be rehabilitated under the urban renewal law.”<sup>55</sup>

In *Death and Life*, Jacobs would state that public contact and the social contract that were enabled by city fabric, “taken together, bear directly on our country’s most serious social problem—segregation and racial discrimination.”<sup>56</sup> In “Cleveland,” she promoted a plan to “break up the ghetto pattern” by bringing middle-class residents back into the central city.” She would soon argue, however, that urban renewal projects that enforced gentrification through their typical super-block designs were ultimately destructive. On one hand, the process typically involved displacing poor people for the affluent, which often meant replacing black or ethnic neighborhoods for white. In Philadelphia, for example, Ed Bacon’s plans for Society Hill, a

renewed neighborhood meant to attract the middle and upper-classes back to Center City, involved evicting about 1,000 families from their homes, which would permanently tarnish his reputation in Jacobs' eyes and others'. The same would happen with Boston city planning director Ed Logue. On the other hand, as Jacobs wrote in *Death and Life*, another result of such urban renewal projects was a different type of segregation. "Look what we have built with the first several billions," she observed. "Low-income projects that become worse centers of delinquency, vandalism, and general social hopelessness than the slums they were supposed to replace. Middle-income housing projects which are truly marvels of dullness and regimentation, sealed against any buoyancy or vitality of city life. [And] luxury housing projects that mitigate their inanity, or try to, with a vapid vulgarity."<sup>57</sup> Such projects were the result of a belief that the traditional city was obsolete and the perceived need to redevelop large sections of the city at once. Allen Jacobs described how it was virtually impossible for city planners to imagine recreating the inherited city fabric. "There was no way" to design "a street pattern like the existing neighborhoods. The mindset of decision-makers was so different. They had in mind places like Radburn and Greenbelt."<sup>58</sup> By showing how the city fabric that had evolved over time functioned to make cities livable, Jacobs would help to transform the intellectual foundation of city planning and design.

### **"Breaking with Recent Planning Practice by Returning to an Old Pattern" in Washington, D.C.**

"Washington: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Capital?," published in *Architectural Forum's* January 1956 issue, was Jacobs' first bylined article.<sup>59</sup> She was listed as a "Staff Writer," and Carl Feiss, an itinerant

architect and planning consultant, and Frederick Gutheim, a Washington-based city planner, served as editorial consultants. “Washington: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Capital?” was a twenty-four page feature on a variety of architectural and planning projects in the city, “a series of snapshots” of “exploding Washington”—a description which anticipated *The Exploding Metropolis* series, to which Jacobs contributed two years later.<sup>60</sup> As suggested by the skeptical title, the article was not only Jacobs’ public debut as an architectural critic, but an early example of what some would later describe as “urban design criticism.” With “Washington,” Jacobs at last expanded Haskell’s agenda for architectural criticism into the realm of urban design.

“Washington” was a collection of redevelopment proposals and critiques. Topics included the proposed National Air Museum—which Jacobs argued should not be located on the Mall, but at Bolling Field, an defunct military airport; the new façade for the Capitol—of which Douglas Haskell was a staunch opponent for many years; the preservation of historic buildings—such as Robert Mills’ Patent Office, which was threatened by a proposed parking garage; the city’s parking problem—which prompted Jacobs’ description of Washington as “the city of magnificent parking lots” because of the way “parked automobiles greedily devour the grand spaces” of the city; and the city’s recent neo-classical architecture—which she described as a “failure” and a “dead end”.<sup>61</sup> The remainder considered “exploding” Washington’s urban renewal and rehabilitation projects.

For Jacobs, Washington was representative of the threatened livability of America’s “exploding” cities. It was poised for gigantic change—\$250 million in new construction and “the dominance of overpass and underpass, cloverleaf and ramp”—that would overwhelm the L’Enfant plan.<sup>62</sup> Change was coming at a rapid pace, but time had “been standing stock still in the



brains of many of the men who will have much to do with shaping the 20<sup>th</sup> century capital... The emerging 20<sup>th</sup> century capital will become a miserable hodge-podge instead of the inspiring city Americans deeply desire, unless thought catches up with event.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, Jacobs wrote, “As a 20<sup>th</sup> century city, Washington is beset with the same problems as every other booming city—choked downtown, haphazard suburban sprawl, blight at the heart—with the exception that its downtown streets are lined with trees, the air is clean, and there are many little downtown parks, assets becoming recognized in other cities.”<sup>64</sup>

Washington, in other words, had become emblematic of the city and city planning at mid-twentieth century. Much of what was good about the original design of the city had been inherited, but that inheritance, like a natural resource, was in the process of being depleted. “Exploding Washington simply cannot avoid remaking itself as a 20<sup>th</sup> century capital of *some kind or other*,” she stated. But “What kind?” was her question.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the suggestion of a broader-minded environmentalism, or of the expanded field of design, Jacobs did not yet believe that city planners, decision-makers, or larger forces were conspiring to destroy the city. In fact, although she was increasingly apprehensive, she held out hope for the kind of city Washington could become through urban renewal. In this regard she quoted Supreme Court Justice William Douglas’ decision in *Berman v. Parker* that, “It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean, well-balanced as well as carefully patrolled.” This idea, she opined, “has always been the idea behind Washington; this is why George Washington commissioned from L’Enfant a grand plan, why Washington has its temples and columns and

memorials, its parks and its wealth of trees. It is something that must not be lost in exploding Washington.”<sup>66</sup>

Faced with the problems of the exploding metropolis, Jacobs still had faith that planning decisions could bring positive change to cities. In Washington, the Justement-Smith plan for Southwest Washington and an urban design proposal by Frederick Gutheim and Willo von Moltke for “a new heart” at the Washington Monument end of the Mall provided some beacons of hope.

Whereas Mary Mix Foley had criticized the Justement-Smith plan in “What is City Redevelopment?,” Jacobs saw things differently. Regarding the part of the Southwest plan called Area B—the “national testing ground” where the department store at the center of *Berman v. Parker* had since been razed—Jacobs supported Smith’s opinion that design decisions should not be predetermined by FHA and zoning overlays. In practice, Jacobs observed that such rules had an impact on site schemes that displayed “how desperately real such conflicts are in terms of livability and economics.” They meant the difference between isolating an apartment building on a “sacrosanct high-rise block” or allowing it to be surrounded by row houses and increasing overall density.<sup>67</sup> “Architect Chloethiel Smith (co-author of the Justement-Smith plan, forerunner to current plans for the Southwest, as well as architect on this project),” she wrote, “thinks that a simple, over-all density and utility-access specification... should be the only operative land-use regulations for a project like Area B.”<sup>68</sup> Jacobs’ title for this section of her article expressed her opinion—“Redevelopment Test Ground: Who shall draw the site plan—FHA, local zoners, or the men who know the subject best?”

For the overall Southwest plan, Jacobs thus sided with the architects, I. M. Pei and Harry Weese, and developer William Zeckendorf of Webb & Knapp. “Whatever goes on in the [planning] committee’s head, planning does not,” she chided. “Planning implied, at the least, a sense of progression and enlightenment of the public, while the committee runs in secret circles.” By contrast, she praised the “architecture of city space” created in Pei and Weese’s plan for the “South Mall,” a new monumental axis that would run perpendicular to the Mall along 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Making note of the design’s various functional qualities, she wrote that, “In overall concept, mall, [the new L’Enfant] plaza, and the terminating [Potomac River] outlook [of South Mall] are brilliantly and harmoniously suited to their local, citywide, and national functions, each aspect supporting the others and the whole adding up to a genuine architecture of city space.” The scheme’s civic design, or what would later be called its “urban design,” offered a “feeling of enclosure, of continuity, to make the mall a strongly designed outdoor room.”<sup>69</sup>

What most appealed to Jacobs in the designers’ “civic planning” was their “break with recent planning practice by returning to an old pattern.”<sup>70</sup> Where the South Mall was in keeping with formality and monumentality of the old L’Enfant and McMillan Plans, Pei and Weese’s designs for so-called Area C, like Gutheim and von Moltke’s design for the Great Plaza, were similarly sympathetic with inherited city patterns.

In Area C, Pei and Weese broke with the super-block planning typical of renewal projects to propose modern “town or row houses... built to the street line.” The advantages of the old pattern, Jacobs observed, were that, “the street becomes an interesting architectural space, instead of a road between ends of buildings (houses will have common cornice and floor lines, will vary in plan and design); gardens and interior courts are really private; parking can be directly off-

street under the houses; existing streets and trees can be used; [and] the scheme is economical of utilities.”<sup>71</sup> Moreover, “throughout the area, historic buildings will be preserved.” Similar to redevelopment in Philadelphia, she observed that the successful rehabilitation of the “seedy streets and deplorable alleys” of Georgetown over the previous twenty years could be a model for similar improvements in slums like Fenton Place if public investments were made in “street planting and neighborhood outdoor breathing space.”<sup>72</sup>

As in Pei and Weese’s modernist interpretation of old city patterns, Jacobs similarly praised Gutheim and von Moltke’s design for the Great Plaza at the west end of the mall. Their “new park squares and the related plaza would all be treated in the great tradition of urban squares, not as transplanted suburbia. They would make an exciting complex of vista and grand enclosure.” This, moreover, would be done without mimicking traditional architecture. Their modern parking structure, for example, “would be handsomely clothed, respecting its monumental neighbors in the essentials of mass, skyline, color, materials and scale, but not attempting to imitate their renaissance details.”<sup>73</sup>

A new conception of urban design was taking form, in other words, in Jacobs’ mind. Learning from architects like Pei, Weese, Gutheim, and von Moltke, she recognized that city design could return to “an old pattern” without reviving “traditional” architecture, or resorting to suburban models.

## **Kahn’s Poetry Made Practical: Gruen’s Plan for Ft. Worth**

In November 1954, some months after Jacobs reviewed Victor Gruen’s Northland Shopping Center, the *Harvard Business Review* published the shopping center pioneer’s “Dynamic

Planning for Retail Areas,” an essay in which he proposed applying “the lessons learned in building suburban developments” to cities.<sup>74</sup> The article, which cited diverse sources including CIAM’s *The Heart of the City* (1952) and *Women’s Wear Daily*, was read by a Texas businessman, who commissioned Gruen to develop a plan for Fort Worth. Jane Jacobs, who knew Gruen and his work well from covering his shopping center projects, was a natural to cover the story for *Forum*. In fact, she likely encouraged him, and certainly supported his idea, to apply the lessons of Northland shopping center, which reminded her of historic market towns, to downtown America. She may even have suggested that he study the work of Louis Kahn in developing his new city plan.

Gruen opened his 1954 essay with a hardboiled analysis that Jacobs found compelling: the positions staked out by both “decentralizers,” the city-hating advocates of suburbia, and the “downtowners,” those who regarded “the regional trend as a satanic device,” were both wrong.<sup>75</sup> The argument, for example, that suburban living was in various ways healthier or better for people, made by advocates like Frank Lloyd Wright, was “vitiating by his abandonment of the city.” Gruen countered that the city, “with its concentration of commerce, finance, and industry, cannot escape fulfilling its role as a social and cultural center. And there are congenial city dwellers who must be [counted] among ‘the people’ Wright bleeds for.” However, it was a “fantasy” to believe “that somehow people will stop building in the suburbs.”<sup>76</sup>

Thus, while Gruen thought that there was “no choice but to accept the establishment of outlying shopping centers,” he also felt that the time had come for urban redevelopment “on a broad scale: slum clearance, creation of green areas within our city cores, provision of parking

areas, improvement of traffic arteries, and enrichment of our social, cultural, and civic life.”<sup>77</sup> He believed, in other words, in urban renewal.

There were many paradoxes in Gruen’s thinking. He had pioneered the regional shopping centers that were contributing to downtown’s decline, and continued to design them, but wanted to “save” the city and its downtown shopping core. His malls were surrounded by parking lots, but he hated cars.<sup>78</sup> He championed private enterprise, the diversity of consumer choice, and “a *democratic* responsibility for the condition of our urban environment,” but he designed “*planned*” centers “under the control of single owner.”<sup>79</sup> He was interested in the social, cultural, and civic life of cities, but believed that the city’s salvation lay in restoring “the health of our entire retail establishment,” urban and exurban.<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, Gruen’s conflicting ideas were no more paradoxical than the generally prevailing sentiments about the built environment. His shopping “centers” responded directly to the growth of suburbia, while his ideas for re-conceiving the city center were developed in the same context as the urban renewal Housing Act of 1954.

Gruen’s “organic solution,” as he described it, to the centralization/decentralization question clearly appealed to Jacobs.<sup>81</sup> As she wrote in “New Thinking on Shopping Centers,” in March 1953, “the time has come for downtown to begin borrowing” ideas from suburbia. In his 1953 “Plan for Midtown Philadelphia,” which Jacobs quoted in “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment,” Louis Kahn had made a similar proposal, seeking to “stimulate more imaginative development of our [Center City] shopping areas along the lines of the new suburban shopping centers.”<sup>82</sup> Toward this end, all agreed that the key idea was city planning. “The first—the most elementary—lesson for downtown is simply the importance of planning,” Jacobs wrote in her review of Northland.<sup>83</sup> Gruen concurred: “The keynote for any development is planning, if it is to be a sound

investment,” he wrote in *Dynamic Planning for Retail Areas*.<sup>84</sup> The headline of her May 1956 article “Typical Downtown Transformed: The Fort Worth Plan” thus read: “The architects who designed today’s most successful shopping center have come up with a plan for bringing similar success to the dense heart of the city.”<sup>85</sup>

As in Kahn’s Plan for Philadelphia, the movement of traffic was the essence of Gruen’s Fort Worth plan. Like Kahn (and Jacobs), Gruen believed that one of the primary problems of city centers was cars. This generated Gruen’s basic city plan, where—as in a regional shopping mall—ring roads provided access to downtown, visitors parked in peripheral garages, and where the city center (like the shopping center) was reserved for pedestrians. Only buses and electric carts, “like those used at world’s fairs,” would be permitted the pedestrian zone. This was similar to Kahn’s plan, where peripheral parking garage “harbors” reduced the center’s parking requirements, although Gruen’s plan differed in that Kahn sought to “*re-define the use of streets*” and to separate the “staccato” movement of buses and trolleys from the “go” movement of private cars, and “thereby encourage rather than discourage the entrance of private cars into the center of town.”<sup>86</sup>

Although Jacobs later rejected Kahn’s metaphorical “city of movement”—where expressways were like rivers, parking garages were like harbors, through-streets were canals, and stopping places were like docks—at the time, she was a believer. In “Philadelphia’s Redevelopment,” for example, she matched metaphors and wrote that, “Philadelphia is a long way from becoming Kahn’s city of movement, but the seeds of this thinking are germinating and a few of their tender sprouts can even be seen in the pages that follow.”<sup>87</sup> She was charmed by Kahn’s poetry and imagination, as well as his intelligence and innovations; he was “no narrow

specialist, no ‘experts’ expert’.”<sup>88</sup> As suggested by a two-part profile of Kahn co-written by Jacobs—“Architect Louis Kahn and His Strong-Boned Structures,” published in October 1957, and “Louis Kahn and the Living City,” published in March 1958—he provided her with new ways of thinking about the city, which they tended to see from similar points of view.<sup>89</sup>

Kahn, like Jacobs, opposed the contemporaneous trends of decentralization and suburbanization:

[Decentralization] ‘disperses and destroys the city,’ he says. Decentralization puts shopping centers miles outside the city limits; decentralization puts a sports arena in the suburbs—only because nobody could get to it if it were located in Center City; decentralization cuts up the city’s body, hoping that it will be easier to feed the parts separately than to feed the whole in one operation.<sup>90</sup>

Kahn also believed in what Jacobs later described as “close-grained working relationships” that operated in space and in time.<sup>91</sup> He believed that spatial proximity generated diversity:

An arena placed outside the city for reasons of parking is isolated from its other living companions... In the Center its space will stimulate ideas for its use and strengthen other places of meeting and commerce by its presence.<sup>92</sup>

Kahn’s interest in spatial proximity, meanwhile, had a temporal aspect, resulting in an argument that has since become a commonplace and attributed to Jacobs—the idea of the 24-Hour-City:

Most American downtown areas, Kahn maintains, operate on a part-time basis only—either on week days or on week ends, either during working hours or after working hours. No city can afford to have its most valuable real estate lie idle most of the time. This is the point where the poet should begin to make eminent sense to the businessman.<sup>93</sup>

Jacobs, finally, believed completely in Kahn’s theory of “the living city”—that “if you give the city the right and capability to live, the living city will inevitably solve its own



problems—creatively, colorfully, humorously, and ever changingly; that planning serves only to *initiate* life, not dominate it.”<sup>94</sup> Comparing these words to Jacobs’ conclusion in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Kahn’s theory of the living city was very much her own.

In *Death and Life*, however, whereas Kahn received no direct mention, Victor Gruen and his Fort Worth plan did. Although Jacobs admired Kahn’s imagination, when she felt that the city was at stake, she ultimately sided with Gruen’s realism and his research methods. As observed in “Typical Downtown Transformed” and in *Death and Life*, Jacobs greatly admired the way Gruen and city planner Edgardo Contini, Gruen’s associate, posed and sought to answer Fort Worth’s “typical” problems—problems that were familiar in many American cities.

In the Fort Worth plan, for example, of particular interest to Jacobs was “the way the traffic problem was *posed*: this seems to be the first city for which actual dimensions of the problem have been calculated and faced,” she wrote. “The method shows up usual traffic ‘planning’ for what it is—pursuit of expedients to solve an unmeasured problem.”<sup>95</sup> Given various rates of population growth, Gruen and Contini calculated how much space in roadway and parking would be required by a given number of cars.

The figures were staggering, suggesting that the city center would have to expand physically just to accommodate the cars, and this in turn would increase the distances between things, making cars even more necessary. The effect, as Jacobs indicated in *Death and Life*, was a “positive feedback” loop—a self-increasing or accelerating dynamic. “As Gruen pointed out here,” she wrote, “the more space that is provided cars in cities, the greater becomes the need for use of cars, and hence for still more space for them.”<sup>96</sup> It was from Gruen, in other words, that Jacobs learned that cities faced a choice between being eaten up by cars or by eliminating them,

and thus effectively dedicated Chapter 18 of *Death and Life*, “Erosion of Cities or Attrition of Automobiles,” to Gruen and the Fort Worth plan.

Apart from Gruen’s research, it was “the way the planner’s part is conceived” that Jacobs most appreciated about the Fort Worth plan.<sup>97</sup> Unlike authoritarian and paternalistic planners who repressed all plans but their own, Gruen’s team “resisted the temptation of confusing their wishes with the will of the citizenry.” Moreover, “there was no attempt to force it over or finagle it backstage”—as Jacobs had seen done in Washington and New York. Typical of her expectations for American democracy, and its responsibilities, she saw it necessary for the citizenry to be convinced of the plan’s virtues and for them to meet the planners half way. With this in mind, she felt that after Gruen’s presentations and public discussion, “It is actually probable that right now there are more citizens, especially more leading citizens, in Fort Worth who understand what city planning is about than in any other U.S. city—including the largest,” she stated. At that point she believed that “the citizens must assume initiative.” As in her analysis of the U.S. Constitution in *Constitutional Chaff*, the plan provided “a strong skeleton... [but] fleshing out is left to the city’s users.”<sup>98</sup>

In Jacobs’ estimation, the physical Fort Worth plan respected “the plans of others”—the plans and ambitions of the city’s many inhabitants. “Remarkably little of what exists is interfered with,” she wrote. “The Plan respects the variety of healthy city growth, and provides for it.”<sup>99</sup> As compared to the wholesale clearance of typical urban renewal projects, Jacobs emphasized that, “Gruen’s planners surveyed every single building in Fort Worth’s downtown, noting use, height, structure, age, condition. Thus guided, the plan places garages and roads for minimum

destruction. *Not a single major building is touched.*” “The close analysis of the plan’s effect on the interests of everyone involved,” she claimed, was “something new for city planning.”<sup>100</sup>

In an editorial published concurrently with “Typical Downtown Transformed” in *Forum’s* May 1956 issue, Jacobs described her visit with Contini in Fort Worth. In her editorial, “Pavement Pounders and Olympians,” she praised city planners who knew their cities intimately, having studied them with their eyes and feet, and not from the distance of an “Olympian” height.<sup>101</sup>

Among “the pavement-pounding city planners” was Ed Bacon. With some delight of her own, Jacobs wrote that Bacon “delights in having figured out, by trial and error, a zig-zag route across Philadelphia, from river to river, that never subjects the walker to a dull vista or uninteresting street.” Moreover, she noted that the “same passion for intimate examination of the city extends right through his staff.”<sup>102</sup>

Another representative of the Pavement Pounders was Gruen’s associate Edgardo Contini, who, Jacobs wrote with a grin, quickly wore out his walking shoes.<sup>103</sup> During her trip to Fort Worth, Contini’s shoe problems seems to have inspired her notion of the “Pavement Pounder”:

Talking about the city, it quickly developed over a cup of coffee, also meant walking about the city, and over the next few hours the visitor [Jacobs] began to understand why Contini’s walking shoes needed replacing. He knew that square mile of downtown, on foot, the way most people know their own block. Between side excursions into back yards, prowls into alleys, sallies into the middle of the street (future domain of the pedestrian), and plunges up stairs (for a different angle of vision), he enthusiastically detailed the history of this store, the activities on that block, the qualities of the restaurant yonder, the potentialities of around-the-corner.<sup>104</sup>

Contini, Jacobs concluded, “belongs to a breed which seems to be on the increase—the pavement pounding city planner.”

But what inspired Jacobs’ lyricism was not the Pavement Pounder’s empiricism. It was partly his intimate experience, but mostly his love of the city:

The pavement pounders are coming up with by far the best planning these days, but we doubt the relationship is simple cause-and-effect, salutary as first-hand knowledge is. More likely, the walking and the good planning are two sides of the same attitude, two sides of the pavement pounder’s fascination, on an intimate level, with all details of city life and city relationships, of his consuming curiosity about the way the city develops and changes, of his endless preoccupation with the *living* city, and—at the bottom of it all—of his affection for the city.<sup>105</sup>

Such affection, Jacobs believed, was not shared by all city planners. The “Olympian” type “conscientiously studied, from Olympian heights, their maps, their density patterns, their social statistics, their traffic patterns—then waved their clearance wands.” They had no real interest in the “*living* city,” the details of city life and relationships. They were removed and aloof because they were not in love. The pavement-pounders, she concluded, “are a new breed: they are the men who want to change and rebuild the city not out of fundamental disgust with it, but out of fascination with it and love for it.”

## Urban Renewal’s “Guinea Pig”: The East Harlem Experiment

Although the case of *Berman vs. Parker* concerned redevelopment in Washington, D.C., the cityscape of New York City was immediately and dramatically transformed. Less than two months after the Supreme Court decision, in December 1954, Manhattan’s Lower East Side and Harlem neighborhoods were, more or less in their entirety, designated as urban renewal “areas suitable for development and redevelopment.”<sup>106</sup>

Harlem and the Lower East Side, among the most crowded and aged city neighborhoods in the country, had long been the site of experimentation in housing reform and “creative destruction,” giving rise to some of the best and some of the worst redevelopment projects. In the 1930s, the Lower East Side became home to the first public housing project in the U.S., First Houses, and, soon thereafter, the more ambitious and carefully designed Harlem River Houses rose in North Harlem. The two projects are still considered among the best-designed public housing anywhere. In the 1940s, after the public housing experiments at Queensbridge and Fort Greene in Brooklyn, the Lower East Side became the site of Stuyvesant Town, the highly controversial pilot project for public-private urban renewal, and Harlem got its racially-segregated doppelganger, Riverton Houses. Harlem and the Lower East Side, in other words, housed some of the most poorly designed housing projects for the same reasons that they were home to some of the best.

Part and parcel of this long history, a locally-driven and initially progressive planning “experiment” of the late 1940s in East Harlem contributed to creating the greatest concentration of housing projects in the country. Inaugurated well before the passage of the Housing Act of 1954, and even before the Housing Act of 1949, the East Harlem experiment would become a testing ground for the nationalization of urban renewal policy, and become part of the context for the 1954 Manhattan Master-Plan, resulting in the all-encompassing, dramatic, and troubling transformation of the neighborhood. And it would be here, on urban renewal’s frontline, that Jane Jacobs would see first-hand the unintended but unstudied consequences of the newly nationalized planning experiment.

The story of East Harlem is more complicated and nuanced than most urban renewal case studies. As is often the case, the pendulum in East Harlem swung from one extreme to the other. In the late 1940s, the fundamental problem in the neighborhood had been the lack of building and redevelopment, which led vacant and neglected urban land to become dumping grounds. In a September 1948 exposé, *New York Times* city columnist Charles Grutzner described the scene that rail passengers traveling through Harlem and the decrepit parts of the Upper East Side saw as they were carried to the downtown train stations. The city's "Front Door," as this railway entrance to the city was described in words and photographs, was a scandalous mess: "Courtyards were found to be garbage dumps; alleys between buildings were repositories for refuse of all kinds; and lots made vacant by the razing of condemned buildings were covered with piles of junk, some of them afire."<sup>107</sup>

The immediate reaction to Grutzner's exposé was to ask who was to blame for the mess, the landlords or the "slum dwellers." To his credit, Grutzner was relatively even-handed about this, remarking that some lots and courtyards "were as well kept and free of refuse as others were filthy." A subsequent *Times* opinion piece similarly took a step toward making "The East Harlem Problem" a larger social problem. The Editors opined that the neighborhood's plight should "engage the determined attention of the whole city government and, beyond that, the conscience of the people of New York City." They continued that, "We, as a city, are not providing decent living conditions in that area—and there are other areas as well, of course."<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, consistent with the paternalistic attitude toward slum residents that had long been the flip-side of well-intentioned housing reform, commentators came to conclusion that the city's responsibility was to help "remake" East Harlem, both physically and socially.

Comparable to the approach of many architects and city planners, physical rebuilding was proposed as the means of remaking the people. According to the *Times*,

The basic problem here, of course, is to remake people—the people of East Harlem. We are not at all sure we know how that can be done, but New York, officially and unofficially, cannot rest easy while these people are living up there in that condition and in the frame of mind it helps to produce... We shall, for one thing, have to remodel, rebuild the physical Harlem before we make more sympathetic good citizens out of the Puerto Rican, Spanish, Italian, Negro, and other families who now live there in such drab and cheerless surroundings.<sup>109</sup>

Following up a few days later, in another opinion page piece titled “Rebuilding East Harlem,” the editors concluded that the city needed “a broad, frontal approach” to building new housing and providing new community services. This would “encourage these neighbors of ours in East Harlem to feel that they are accepted as good Americans, that we are genuinely interested in their welfare, and that they enjoy the benefits and have the obligations of all decent Americans.”<sup>110</sup>

Despite the patronizing attitude expressed for “these neighbors of ours,” the *Times* coverage of the East Harlem story, which continued for three months, immediately resulted in some positive changes. It caused a shake up of the Sanitation Department and the Department of Housing and Buildings; prompted discussions about the conversion of vacant lots into neighborhood playgrounds; and instigated a neighborhood clean-up campaign that spread throughout the city in the following year. This helped to precipitate the campaign for the wholesale rebuilding of East Harlem, which was, at least initially, a welcome development.

Exemplary of the breadth of belief in the ineffectiveness of “piecemeal” city redevelopment, the idea that East Harlem needed comprehensive rebuilding was shared by local community groups. In December 1948, for example, the *Times* published a letter by the East Harlem Council for Community Planning, which argued that while turning empty lots into

playgrounds was a good idea, “a unified plan for the land use in East Harlem” was needed.<sup>111</sup> In agreement with city planners, they wrote, “Piecemeal or patchwork planning for land use will not help. New housing, which is so badly needed, and playgrounds, recreation centers, health clinics, schools and other public services should be integrated into a total plan.” They suggested that “the Mayor and the City Planning Commission designated East Harlem as an area in the city which an experiment in integrated planning should be done.”<sup>112</sup>

“Bottom-up” community support started the process, and less than two years later, in August 1950, the East Harlem Council for Community Planning got at least part of its wish. Not only did city officials take heed of their proposal, the East Harlem Council for Community Planning became a model for Manhattan Borough President Robert F. Wagner Jr.’s program to divide Manhattan into twelve community planning districts. (Another of these was the Greenwich Village Community Planning District, of which Shirley Hayes was a committee member.) Elected mayor in 1953, Wagner saw this structure as a way of involving communities in planning decisions and the beginning of “a new method for more comprehensive planning of the borough.”<sup>113</sup> In a rare moment of harmonious thinking among city officials and community leaders, Wagner and the East Harlem Council worked together on an experimental redevelopment “pilot project” for a new East Harlem Hospital, described by Wagner as “a first-rate example of how neighborhood groups could aid borough officials in important phases of borough planning.”<sup>114</sup> To help facilitate the redevelopment process, the council expedited the clearing of the site for a new hospital by assisting with “the removal of tenants from the site and finding new homes for them.”<sup>115</sup> At the outset, the redevelopment of East Harlem was exactly the sort of cooperation between a community and city planners that Jacobs advocated at this time.



The East Harlem “experiment in integrated planning” was so “successful” that by mid-1955, housing projects had replaced a third of the seventy-block neighborhood, but the experiment’s failures were becoming increasingly clear. Just under five years after the city backed the East Harlem Council for Community Planning’s “pilot project,” the *Times* reported that “East Harlem civic leaders are alarmed about the effect that ‘a stereotyped approach to housing’ is having” upon the area.<sup>116</sup> More widely known by this time as “urban renewal,” the slum clearance experiment was degrading the quality of neighborhood life. Paradoxically, “slums” seemed to be better than new, modern housing.

Community groups now tried to reverse the redevelopment process. Assisted by a neighborhood residents, Ellen Lurie, a social worker at Union Settlement House—an East Harlem-based community organization founded by graduates of Union Theological Seminary in 1895—documented the neighborhood’s destruction through door-to-door, block-by-block surveys, counting the remaining storefront businesses and the evictions scheduled to make way for future housing projects. With these studies in hand, Union Settlement director William Kirk sought to make the problem known to the city newspapers and others interested in city redevelopment, including Douglas Haskell at *Architectural Forum*.

Kirk first contacted *Forum* in March 1955, and subsequently described to Haskell and his colleagues, likely including Jane Jacobs, “the structure of neighborhoods in Harlem and what produces this structure.”<sup>117</sup> In May 1955, he told a reporter from the *New York Times* something similar: that replacing storefront buildings with apartment blocks was eroding the neighborhood’s ability to provide for basic community functions, and that with more housing projects in the planning stage, the social and economic sustainability of the neighborhood was clearly at risk.

Offering an explanation that Jacobs would later repeat almost verbatim, Kirk explained that, “In an area where income is depressed, a store is not only a place where articles are vended, but a social center... a meeting place. Storefronts are also used for churches and for political and social clubs. None of this is taken into account in the new housing projects.”<sup>118</sup>

It was not until January 1956, however, when Jacobs and Haskell were outlining a major feature on “city patterns” that she followed up on the East Harlem story.

By then, ten housing projects—East River Houses, James Weldon Johnson, Lexington, Washington, Carver, Madison, Franklin, Jefferson, Taft, and Wagner Houses—had consumed fifty-seven blocks, more than two-thirds of East Harlem.<sup>119</sup> Ellen Lurie and the East Harlem Small Business Survey and Planning Committee documented the eviction of 1,569 small businesses, affecting the employment of over 4,500 people. Going door-to-door, storefront-to-storefront on the five-block site of Franklin Houses super-block, they documented the elimination of 211 enterprises, including 2 appliance stores; 4 baby carriage storage locations; 4 bars; 8 barber shops; 11 bakery and pastry shops; 2 beauty shops; 1 bicycle shop; 14 candy stores; 2 carpenters; 10 cleaners; 11 clothing and dry goods merchants; 5 building contractors; 3 cheese stores; 2 drug stores; 2 egg stores; 7 fruit shops; 2 funeral parlors; 6 furniture and rug stores; 1 fortune teller; 5 parking garages; 14 grocery stores; 2 hardware stores; 2 jewelry stores; 6 laundries; 2 law offices; 2 liquor stores; 1 loan-maker; 1 luggage store; 1 mattress store; 4 meat markets; 1 moving and storage company; 1 novelty shop; 3 paint stores; 1 stationer; 1 pet shop; 1 plumber; 1 poultry store; 4 printers; 3 radio and TV repair shops; 1 real estate and insurance business; 7 restaurants; 4 shoe repair shops; 2 toy stores; 2 travel agencies; 13 manufacturing businesses; 15 wholesalers; 2 union locals; 3 churches; 8 social clubs; and 1 political club.<sup>120</sup>

Until the East Harlem Small Business Survey and Planning Committee acknowledged that much of the housing in East Harlem needed improvement, they argued that “*real improvement*” included the diversity and various community functions provided by schools, public institutions, small businesses, churches, and political and social clubs. It meant “keeping the best of our old housing and our established businesses” and maintaining “a community made up of all peoples, not creating a segregated neighborhood, economically or culturally.” Lurie concluded, in her January 1956 report, that that it was “not desirable to root out and eliminate all owner-occupied dwellings and enterprises” and urged the city “to carefully review and study all changes made in East Harlem since World War II.”<sup>121</sup>

Soon thereafter, an increasingly frustrated Ellen Lurie described East Harlem as “the world’s most extensively experimented public-housing guinea pig.”<sup>122</sup> Once the experiment was initiated, however, there had been little interest in understanding its effects. As Lurie commented, “In this proportionately small section [of the city], fourteen public-housing projects have already been or soon will be constructed. But no self-respecting laboratory technician would dare subject one guinea pig to fourteen identical tests in order to discover the efficacy of a method.”<sup>123</sup>

Despite the fact that the East Harlem urban renewal experiment had recently received the sanction of federal legislation, Jane Jacobs was quickly convinced by Lurie and Kirk’s analysis and arguments. By September 1956, she had made many trips to Harlem, and in the years ahead she would continue to study the East Harlem situation as a member of Union Settlement’s Board of Directors, with whom she worked to improve the architectural and urban design of housing projects destined to be built.<sup>124</sup>

Indeed, once she was made aware of East Harlem's situation, Jacobs was prepared to understand it in a larger context, like few others at the time. Having followed the course of city redevelopment since at least 1949, she understood East Harlem's problems as not particular to the neighborhood or its people, as some wanted to believe. Thus, although Jacobs agreed with Lurie's assessment that East Harlem was "the world's most extensively experimented public-housing guinea pig," she did not believe that was the best way to tell the story. When Lurie wrote these words for an article titled "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing," published in *Architectural Forum* in 1957, Jacobs, who edited the feature, deleted them. Despite her sympathy for Lurie's provocative rhetoric, she drew a more universal conclusion. While Lurie offered that "public housing did not bring neighborhood renewal to East Harlem," Jacobs saw the problem as far larger. "Public housing," she wrote sweepingly, "has not brought neighborhood renewal."<sup>125</sup>

In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs referred to East Harlem more than a dozen times and cited Lurie's research on the dysfunctional social life of the new housing projects, where, on account of forced relocations, broken social networks, and the housing design, there was found to be "no normal public life."<sup>126</sup> The East Harlem experiment showed that city rebuilding may have been necessary, but it was not sufficient; modern planners did not understand the essential structure of the city, or the relationships between the public and private spaces of the city. As New York clergyman S. Parkes Cadman once said, "A little experience upsets a lot of theory."

In the introduction to her book, Jacobs credited William Kirk's influence in her coming to understand how the city worked. She wrote that,

The basic idea, to try to begin understanding the intricate social and economic order under the seeming disorder of cities, was not my idea at all, but that of William Kirk, head worker of Union

Settlement in East Harlem, New York, who, by showing me East Harlem, showed me a way of seeing other neighborhoods, and downtowns too. In every case, I have tried to test out what I saw or heard in one city or neighborhood against others, to find how relevant each city's or each place's lessons might be outside its own special case.<sup>127</sup>

The East Harlem experiment, in other words, was in many ways the beginning of Jacobs' own research into the functions, design, and life of cities. As seen in her editing of Ellen Lurie's essay on public housing, Jacobs studied the East Harlem experience carefully, and sought to induce widely applicable principles from this "experiment in integrated planning." In the next few years she would assimilate these local lessons into "a way of seeing" and her own theory of the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Ashley Foard and Hilbert Fefferman, "Federal Urban Renewal Legislation," *Urban Renewal: The Record and the Controversy*, James Q. Wilson, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966), 96. See also B.T. McGraw, "The Housing Act of 1954 and Implications for Minorities," *Phylon* 16 (Spring 1955), 171-82.

<sup>2</sup> *Architectural Forum*, "Slum Clearance Faces Supreme Court Test," *Architectural Forum* 100 (Nov. 1954), 120.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 187-88.

<sup>4</sup> *Architectural Forum*, "Slum Clearance Faces Supreme Court Test," 120.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer*, 43.

<sup>6</sup> Richard M. Flanagan, "The Housing Act of 1954: The Sea Change in National Urban Policy," *Urban Affairs Review* 33 (Nov. 1997), 265.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Jacobs, Tear-Off Campaign Petition to the Washington Square Park Committee, Apr. 30, 1955 (Box 4, Folder 1, Shirley Hayes Papers, The New-York Historical Society).

<sup>9</sup> Jacobs, Copy of letters to Mayor Wagner and Borough President Hulan Jack, June? 1, 1955 (Box 3, Folder 10, Shirley Hayes Papers, The New-York Historical Society).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* With thanks to Dr. Jean Ashton and the New-York Historical Society's Shirley Hayes Papers, this letter and the history of Jacobs' early activism was first brought to light in my article "Jane Jacobs Before *Death and Life*," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66 (Mar. 2007), 5-15.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Mumford, Letter to *The Villager*, Apr. 1955 (Box 3, Folder 10, Shirley Hayes Papers, The New-York Historical Society).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>13</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Foreword the Modern Library Edition," *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), xvi.
- <sup>14</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Philadelphia's Redevelopment: A Progress Report," *Architectural Forum* 103 (Jul. 1955), 118.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," 118.
- <sup>18</sup> "The Philadelphia Cure," 118.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," 126.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>22</sup> Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," 120.
- <sup>23</sup> Ed Bacon quoted in *Progressive Architecture*, "Urban Design: Condensed Report of an Invitation Conference, Harvard University, Apr. 9-10, 1956," *Progressive Architecture* 37 (Aug. 1956), 108. Jacobs was a participant at this conference.
- <sup>24</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 448.
- <sup>25</sup> Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," 127.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>27</sup> Jacobs, "Philadelphia's Redevelopment," 118.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 293.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 293-94.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 223-24. Jacobs' assertion, on page 372, that "*A city cannot be a work of art*" was the opposite of the belief and goal of many twentieth-century city planners before Jacobs. As late as 1963, O. M. Ungers argued that architecture and urbanism were largely synonymous in "City as a Work of Art," *Werk* (July 1963), 281.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.
- <sup>38</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Cleveland: City with a Deadline," *Architectural Forum* 103 (Aug. 1955), 131.
- <sup>39</sup> James Baldwin, "The Negro and the American Promise," Interview with Kenneth Clark, WGBH TV, Spring 1963.
- <sup>40</sup> Jacobs, "Cleveland," 131.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-36.
- <sup>47</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Pavement Pounders and Olympians," *Architectural Forum* 104 (May 1956), 164.
- <sup>48</sup> Jacobs, "Cleveland," 136.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 138. The term "project" was used to describe public housing developments from the time of their origins in the 1930s. It was around 1955, when Jacobs wrote about public housing in Cleveland, that the term acquired a negative connotation.
- <sup>51</sup> Bradley Flamm, "The Garden Valley: Remembering Visions and Values in 1950s Cleveland with Allan Jacobs," *Berkeley Planning Journal* 18 (2005), 101.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-13.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-9.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>55</sup> Jacobs, "Cleveland," 136. Her article also included descriptions of a mixed-use (and therefore unlike the typical urban renewal project) super-block redevelopment project called Charity Hospital and a more typical public housing project. Contrary to expectations, however, she did not criticize them for their urban design or planning concepts.

- <sup>56</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 71.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.
- <sup>58</sup> Flamm, "The Garden Valley," 114.
- <sup>59</sup> Until around 1956, only specially commissioned articles received bylines in *Architectural Forum*.
- <sup>60</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Washington: 20th Century Capital?," *Architectural Forum* 104 (Jan. 1956), 92-115.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-113.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, 103.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-7.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>74</sup> Victor Gruen, "Dynamic Planning for Retail Areas," *Harvard Business Review* 32 (Nov-Dec. 1954), 53.
- <sup>75</sup> Jacobs later adopted the "decentralists" versus "downtown" trope, but used the term "decentrists" in *Death and Life*. She attributed the term to Catherine Bauer (19-20).
- <sup>76</sup> Gruen, "Dynamic Planning," 57.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>78</sup> M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 182. In Chapter 7, "Saving Our Cities," Hardwick outlines Gruen's transformation from retail architect to city planner, and provides a history of the Fort Worth plan. Nevertheless, more research appears necessary to understand the details of Gruen's move into city planning.
- <sup>79</sup> Gruen, "Dynamic Planning," 56, 62.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.
- <sup>82</sup> Louis Kahn, "Toward a New Plan for Midtown Philadelphia," *Perspecta* 2 (1953), 11.
- <sup>83</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "New Thinking on Shopping Centers," *Architectural Forum* 98 (Mar. 1953), 122-45.
- <sup>84</sup> Gruen, "Dynamic Planning," 55.
- <sup>85</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Typical Downtown Transformed: The Fort Worth Plan," *Architectural Forum* 104 (May 1956), 146.
- <sup>86</sup> Kahn, "Toward a New Plan," 11.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.
- <sup>88</sup> "Louis Kahn and the Living City," *Architectural Forum* 108 (Mar. 1958), 115. Although this article was not bylined, *Forum* memos suggest that Blake was the primary author and that McQuade and Jacobs were contributors.
- <sup>89</sup> "Architect Louis Kahn and His Strong-Boned Structures," *Architectural Forum* 107 (Oct. 1957), 135-43 carried Walter McQuade's byline, although Jacobs contributed to it. The feature began with Jacobs' review of Kahn's work in May 1955 [Cf. Memo to Haskell, Hazen & Lightbown, May 16, 1955 (Box 10, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers)], which was followed by a list of work that Jacobs compiled in 1957 for research on the article [Cf. Jane Jacobs, List of Louis Kahn's projects, 1957 [n.d.] (Box 10, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers)]. In June 1957, Haskell wrote Kahn stating that Jacobs would start the article but that McQuade would finish it [Cf. Douglas Haskell, Letter to Louis Kahn, Jun. 10, 1957 (Box 10, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers)]. Jacobs may well have suggested the title: in her May 1956 editorial "Pavement Pounders and Olympians," in which she praised Ed Bacon, Jacobs used the phrase "the living city."
- <sup>90</sup> "Louis Kahn and the Living City," 118.
- <sup>91</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 14.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>93</sup> "Louis Kahn and the Living City," 118.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.
- <sup>95</sup> Jacobs, "Typical Downtown Transformed," 147.

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<sup>96</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 351.

<sup>97</sup> Jacobs, "Typical Downtown Transformed," 147.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* Apart from telling the story of boosterism in the Fort Worth Plan, both Gruen's self-promotion and the city's, Jeffrey Hardwick has observed that the Plan was not without its opponents. Some citizens believed that solving other problems, like providing for better water supply and schools, was more important. Ultimately, however, it was the State Highway Commission and property rights advocates who defeated the Gruen's plan. The State Highway rejected Gruen's belt highway; private parking garage owners defeated a bill that would have allowed the city to construct the plan's six municipal parking garages (which they described as vaguely socialistic); and the state legislature rejected, by one vote, the urban renewal legislation that would have allowed the city to tap the federal funds necessary to fund Gruen's plan (*Mall Maker*, 187-89).

<sup>99</sup> Jacobs, "Typical Downtown Transformed," 147.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>101</sup> [Jane Jacobs], "Pavement Pounders and Olympians," *Architectural Forum* 104 (May 1956), 164.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Hardwick suggests that, as compared to Contini, Gruen was concerned with the details of a city primarily to make an effective presentation. He reminded himself to "INSERT LOCAL DATA" because he otherwise delivered the same speech in different cities (*Mall Maker*, 191).

<sup>104</sup> Jacobs, "Pavement Pounders and Olympians," 164.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>106</sup> New York City Planning Commission, "Master Plan Map RS-5M, Borough of Manhattan," *Master Plan of Sections Containing Areas Suitable for Development and Redevelopment*, (Dec. 30, 1954), 13.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Grutzner, "City's 'Front Door' Obscured by Litter; Officials Depressed by Dirt and Refuse that Introduce New York to Rail Visitors," *New York Times* (Sept. 21, 1948), 29.

<sup>108</sup> *New York Times* Editors, "The East Harlem Problem," *New York Times* (Sept. 22, 1948), 30.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *New York Times* Editors, "Rebuilding East Harlem," *New York Times* (Sept. 25, 1948), 16.

<sup>111</sup> Rita Morgan, Maryal Knox, and Clyde Murray, "Letter to the Editor: For Action in East Harlem, Utilization of Area for Experiment in Integrated Planning Suggested," *New York Times* (Dec. 7, 1948), 30.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Charles Bennett, "Wagner Advances Borough Planning; Makes East Harlem Hospital 'Pilot Project' for 12 Civic Districts of Manhattan," *New York Times* (Aug. 12, 1950), 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *New York Times*, "Shops a Problem in East Harlem; Only 2 of 9 Housing Projects Provide for Them and Civic Leaders are Concerned," *New York Times* (May 8, 1955), 46.

<sup>117</sup> William Kirk, Letter to Douglas Haskell, Mar. 17, 1955 (Box 22, Folder 1, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University). See also Haskell, Letter to William Kirk, Jan. 17, 1956 (Box 22, Folder 1, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Ellen Lurie, *East Harlem Small Business Survey & Planning Committee Fact Sheet*, Jan. 16, 1956 (Series V, Box 35, Folder 7, Union Settlement Association Records, Union Settlement Association Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University), 1. Some of the figures quoted in the "Fact Sheet" were quoted in the May 8, 1955 *Times* article "Shops a Problem in East Harlem," indicating that some of the research had already been done before then.

<sup>120</sup> *Times* reporter Charles Grutzner later returned to East Harlem to see the aftermath of the destruction of these city blocks and buildings. See Grutzner, "Housing Projects Make Bitter D.P.'s; Some Merchants Cite Loss of Business and Savings as City Confiscates Land," *New York Times* (Mar. 18, 1957), 29.

<sup>121</sup> Lurie, *East Harlem Small Business Survey & Planning Committee Fact Sheet*.

<sup>122</sup> Ellen Lurie, Draft of essay for *Architectural Forum*, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing" (Series V, Box 35, Folder 7, Union Settlement Association Records, Union Settlement Association Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University), 1.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*



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<sup>124</sup> See Douglas Haskell, Letter to Catherine Bauer Wurster, Sept. 12, 1956 (Box 24, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers), and Union Settlement Association Records.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. See also Ellen Lurie, "The Dreary Deadlock of Public Housing II: 'Bring in the Private Builder and Owner,'" *Architectural Forum* 106 (Jun. 1957), 140.

<sup>126</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 68, 278. The idea of the forced "togetherness" of housing projects that Jacobs' refers to in the discussion of Lurie's research was very influential on Jacobs, enough to merit its own entry in the book's index. Jacobs may even have edited out some further discussion of this dysfunctional dynamic of housing projects. Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jacobs's contact at the Rockefeller Foundation, who read an early draft of the book in May 1960, thought there was too much discussion of the "togetherness" phenomenon. See Gilpatric, Letter to Jane Jacobs, May 19, 1960 (RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folders 3381, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>127</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 16.

## Chapter 7

# Urban Design, Urban Sprawl, and Urban Design Criticism: The New Research and Criticism of the 1950s

I think there is enough content in this to rate serious go-around in our next editorial discussion to weigh giving Jane a big hunk of space for exposition and debate. I can imagine it would make many an existing planner furious at first, just as my own temptation was to be furious, but it is likely to rouse a very unexpected enthusiasm and give a new point for leverage in thinking and action about the city. *Douglas Haskell, Nov. 1957*

In the early 1950s, “urban design” was a new term, although the city design practice that it described was an old one, as old as cities. Twentieth-century architects and city planners, however, traced the new field’s origins to the “Civic Art” movement that emerged following Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. That movement manifested itself in a trove of books and treatises concerned with the civic, or public, realm of the city—Charles M. Robinson’s *Modern Civic Art, or, The City Made Beautiful* (1903), which popularized the City Beautiful Movement; Patrick Geddes’ essays “Civics as Applied Sociology” (1904), an argument for the systematic study of cities; Daniel Burnham’s *Plan of Chicago* (1909), which promoted the concept of the “Civic Center”; Thomas Mawson’s *Civic Art: Studies in Town Planning, Parks, Boulevards, and Open Spaces* (1911); and Werner Hegemann and Elbert Peets’ *The American Vitruvius: An Architect’s Handbook of Civic Art* (1922).

As the titles of these treatises suggest, Civic Art gave rise to the “American City Planning” and “Civic Design” movements. In 1909, the First National Conference on City Planning was held in Washington, D.C. in 1909, and, in 1917, Frederick Law Olmstead and Flavel Shurtleff founded the American City Planning Institute, later renamed the American Institute of Planners.<sup>1</sup> At this time, Civic Art was regarded as the companion of the new science of City Planning, although in the 1930s and 40s, the term *civic design*, which suggested a more professional and scientific practice, came into favor.

The linguistic metamorphosis of *civic design* into *urban design* was a smooth one, with the term *urban design* already found in use in the late 1930s.<sup>2</sup> In 1937, urban economist Miles Colean (an author later cited by Jane Jacobs) used the term in what appears to be the familiar sense in an article published in *The Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science*. There Colean associated city design with large-scale housing design, a connection that it would keep for some time, when he described the intention of his article “to point out the kind of influence which urban design, whether complete in its scope, partial, or wholly uncharted, has had upon housing.”<sup>3</sup>

With the passage of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 and federal sponsorship of “urban redevelopment,” the neologism *urban design* appeared with increasing frequency. In 1951, Lewis Mumford reiterated Miles Colean’s implied questions about the possibilities of the practice of “urban design” in his introduction to *Toward New Towns for America* (1951), written by his long-time colleague Clarence Stein, a pioneer of housing and urban redevelopment. Speaking of Stein’s work, but more broadly about the state of urban design practice, Mumford opened his essay by stating that, “Except for colonial times, hardly a beginning has been made, up to now, on the history of American city development and urban design.”<sup>4</sup>

By 1953, the term *urban design* had become more common. At an American Institute of Architects roundtable titled “The Architect and Urban Design and Urban Redevelopment” in October 1953, for example, urban design was drawn into a rhetorical parallel with urban redevelopment.<sup>5</sup> Organized by Louis Justement, co-designer of the Justement-Smith redevelopment plan for Southeast Washington (reviewed by Jane Jacobs for *Forum* and discussed in Chapter 5), the conference was held in Washington, D.C., where “urban renewal” legislation was being debated for inclusion in the Housing Act of 1954.

The term “urban design” did not immediately replace “civic design,” however. As late as 1958, founding theorists of the new field described urban design as a neologism.<sup>6</sup> The city rebuilding needs of the postwar period revived interest in the practice of civic design—and the work of its eminent practitioners, including Clarence Stein, Wallace K. Harrison, and Gordon Stephenson—but it was evident that the generation-old practice was due, in the spirit of the times, for modernization. Thus, although the *urban* emphasis of the *urban redevelopment* component of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 and the *urban renewal* provisions of U.S. Housing Act of 1954 motivated a profession focus on *urban* design, the new term did not necessarily define clear roles for the architects, landscape architects, and city planners, or a body of knowledge.

As much as the field of city planning emerged to address the concerns of the early twentieth-century city, urban design became the theoretical and practical counterpart of mid-century urban renewal efforts. To state this slightly differently, urban design was the academic and professional response to postwar urban redevelopment and renewal. It emerged as a field because academics and professionals from the fields of architecture, city planning, and landscape architecture were aware of the mismatch between their professional training, knowledge, and practical experience and the needs of postwar reconstruction. The construction of a new field of

urban design knowledge was, on one hand, a response to this shared lack of experience, and, on the other hand, was meant to be an interdisciplinary common ground for otherwise independently operating designers. In other words, as a developing field and academic discipline, urban design paralleled Jane Jacobs' study and writing on urban redevelopment for *Architectural Forum*. In fact, she played an important role in helping to establish the new field and its new theoretical foundation. Despite her anti-academic and anti-theoretical rhetoric, Jacobs was a founding figure of the urban design discipline.

### **“Getting a More Humanistic Element into Planning”: New Research on the City and the Origins of “Urban Design”**

In September 1952, the month that Jane Jacobs' name first appeared on *Architectural Forum's* masthead, the portrait of architect Wallace K. Harrison, one of the most accomplished practitioners of large-scale design and redevelopment, appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. Behind him were images of landmark urban redevelopment projects: Rockefeller Center (where Jacobs now worked), the 1939 World's Fair, and the nearly completed United Nations complex. An internationally recognized architect since his work on Rockefeller Center in the 1920s and 30s, Harrison was then at work on one of his crowning achievements, organizing a design team to create a master-plan for Lincoln Center, which Jacobs would later attack for being a super-block urban renewal project in the tradition of precious and pretentious City Beautiful-era civic design thinking.

However, Harrison changed the urban landscape in unexpected ways, unintentionally helping to develop a forum for Jacobs' criticism and her championing of a different approach to

city design. As a recently appointed executive and trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation, Harrison recommended that the Foundation support research on city design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a project that would launch a ten-year Rockefeller Foundation initiative for urban design studies and support seminal research by Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes at MIT, E. A. Gutkind and Ian McHarg at University of Pennsylvania, Christopher Tunnard at Yale, Jane Jacobs (who would affiliate with the New School for Social Research for granting purposes), and others, including Ian Nairn, Grady Clay, and Edmund Bacon, all of whom would help to establish the new field of urban design. Starting in 1958, Jacobs would play an important role in the Foundation's urban design research initiative. In addition to writing her own book on cities, she reviewed research proposals submitted to the Foundation by Ian McHarg and others, suggested initiatives, and was part of a network of grantees and affiliates. She had direct and indirect connections to early urban design theorists even before her contact with the Rockefeller Foundation, however, and was aware of their work. She was one of first architectural or urban design critics to take note Kevin Lynch's sponsored research, some years before *The Image of the City* (1960) was published, for example, and referred to his work on a few occasions in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). In fact, it was the perceived similarity of Lynch's and Jacobs' studies of the city that first drew the attention of the Rockefeller Foundation.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology was awarded the Rockefeller Foundation's first urban design research grant in large part because Pietro Belluschi, dean of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, was an associate architect on Wallace Harrison's Lincoln Center master-plan, and fellow Rockefeller trustee Karl Compton was a former president of the university. Other reasons were that, in 1952, Belluschi was considering the establishment of a

new Civic Design program, and that two of his faculty members, Kevin Lynch, Assistant Professor of City Planning, and Gyorgy Kepes, Professor of Visual Design, had recently begun collaborative research on the form and experiential qualities of the city in a graduate seminar examining “The Form of the City.”<sup>7</sup>

In the context of the widespread concern for postwar city redevelopment that led to the U.S. Housing Act of 1949, Belluschi, Lynch, and Kepes were not alone in their interest, however. Many U.S. universities were discussing the establishment of new city planning and civic design programs around this time. City planning itself was still a relatively young field. The first city planning degree program had been established at Harvard, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation, in 1929, but approximately half of the degree programs that existed by the early 1950s had been established in the postwar years.<sup>8</sup> As discussed, landscape architect, civic designer, and Townscape advocate Christopher Tunnard established a new graduate program in city planning and a subsidiary civic design program at Yale in 1950. And around the same time, in 1950, Clarence Stein discussed the establishment a Civic Design program at University of Pennsylvania’s School of Fine Arts with Dean G. Holmes Perkins.<sup>9</sup> Stein’s interests in civic design education were likely influenced by another accomplished civic designer and educator, Gordon Stephenson, who collaborated with Stein in writing the manuscript of *Toward New Towns for America* in 1948 and ‘49. In the same years, Stephenson was appointed director of the University of Liverpool’s Civic Design program, the oldest such program, in 1948, and he established the first British graduate program in Town and Regional Planning in 1949, but he was interested in returning to and teaching in the U.S.<sup>10</sup>

With their extensive experience in housing and civic design, Stein and Stephenson recognized the historical moment. As a student, Stephenson had worked for Wallace K. Harrison

on Rockefeller Center in 1929, and later studied at L'Institut d'Urbanisme in Paris, during which time he worked for Le Corbusier on the Palace of the Soviets project. He taught architecture at the University of Liverpool and then returned to the U.S. for graduate studies in MIT's newly founded Department of City Planning in 1936. After graduation in 1938, he worked on the postwar reconstruction of London in the Ministry for Town and Country Planning as a senior planner under William Holford and Sir Patrick Abercrombie. Like Lewis Mumford, he believed that the projects collected in Stein's new book suggested a new beginning in civic design.<sup>11</sup> As Stein wrote in *Toward New Towns*, as a "result of the Redevelopment powers under the Housing Act of 1949, the way is now open for large-scale rebuilding of decaying sections of old cities." In the spirit of his forbear Ebenezer Howard, Stein saw the time as ripe for "a new era of nationwide decentralization" (the creation of new towns, "widely separated from each other, may be imminent as a defense measure," he wrote)—and for the wholesale rebuilding of great cities.<sup>12</sup>

In 1953, Stein and Stephenson brought their message to MIT, and soon thereafter Stephenson was tapped to succeed Frederick Adams, his former instructor, as chair of the city planning department. (However, he was unable to take the position when he was denied a permanent visa, possibly because his work for Le Corbusier on the Palace of the Soviets raised red flags during the McCarthy era.)<sup>13</sup> In the meanwhile, following up on Wallace Harrison's recommendation, Charles Fahs, director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, began a series of conversations with MIT architecture and city planning faculty, as well as Stein, Stephenson, and John Ely Burchard, MIT Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, to discuss possible research initiatives for funding.<sup>14</sup>

It was not Stein's agenda that sparked the Foundation's interest, but Burchard's. Burchard wanted to "get a more humanistic element into planning" and the idea intrigued and



resonated with Fahs, who appreciated the concern for “more consideration by planners of the aesthetic and intellectual problems of dwellers in the community being planned.” Fahs noted that the discussion “failed to indicate any more specific way in which this was being brought into education in the field of city planning,” however, and it would take more than a year to develop a sound research proposal.<sup>15</sup> But the seed had been planted, and this would grow into the research program that would eventually support Jacobs’ likeminded work.

Although the term *urban design* may have become more common in 1953, in the early 1950s, the discipline was unformed conceptually, and this was also true of the Rockefeller Foundation’s urban design research initiative. Recognizing this, the foundation’s humanities directors took an active role in shaping the agenda of both sponsored research and the new field: helping to launch and support new academic fields of study, such as city planning and literary criticism, was part of their mission. MIT was an ideal place to embark on a new direction for research on the city—one that would marry art and science with the humanistic desire that characterized the Foundation’s research initiative, and, more broadly, urban design itself.

MIT Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences John Ely Burchard himself embodied many of these qualities. With a background in both the liberal arts and architectural engineering, he was a passionate proponent of developing programs for the study of art in conjunction with general education, with a particular interest in architecture and its education for both majors and non-majors.<sup>16</sup> He was also an amateur urbanist, and would later write on “The Urban Aesthetic” (1957) for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, where he made observations about the phenomena, experience, and life of the city in terms later associated with Jane Jacobs.<sup>17</sup> At the time the Rockefeller Foundation was considering a new grant initiative,

Burchard felt that city planning had neglected “aesthetic elements to concentrate largely on technical ones of communication, hygiene, and economics.”<sup>18</sup> He therefore supported faculty and research projects that sought to develop more holistic approaches to the study of the city.

Established in 1953, MIT’s new Center for Urban and Regional Studies, directed by city planner Louis Wetmore, was such a project, and it was an institutional step for MIT toward the new discipline of urban design, both in conception and terminology. The research center held out the promise of a much sought after synthesis of the art and qualitative sensibilities of architecture and the science and quantitative orientation of city planning, and it would become the institutional home for urban design research.<sup>19</sup> Pietro Belluschi described it “as a means of bringing together architecture and planning.” He believed that “architecture could not flourish without connections with its application in planning, and also that city and regional planning needed architecture, with particular emphasis on the visual element.”<sup>20</sup>

In September 1953, MIT faculty were still feeling their way forward, but had narrowed their ideas for a research proposal. They outlined three possible research initiatives: (1) the study of relationship of economic activity and city structure; (2) the value of decentralization in response to the threat of enemy attack; and (3) visual aspects of the physical environment.<sup>21</sup> The first topic was of particular interest to Wetmore, whose work concerned urban economics and industrial location, and the second was of interest to city planning chair-elect Gordon Stephenson and architecture department head Lawrence Anderson. Ultimately, it was the third topic, a study of the phenomenological characteristics of the urban environment, that was of interest to the Foundation, and led to the foundation’s first urban design research grant to Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes in 1954.

As a collaborative project between an architect-city planner and an artist who was oriented toward environment, science, and visual design, Lynch and Kepes' proposal to study the visual aspects of the urban environment was fundamentally concerned with the human experience of the city, an interest that Jacobs shared. Unlike Jacobs, who was then just beginning her work for *Architectural Forum*, Lynch and Kepes had already begun their investigation. In 1952, they initiated a graduate seminar studying the "The Form of the City," in which they sought to analyze effects on the city landscape of new buildings, for example, like Boston's John Hancock Building (the first tower, built in 1947, now known as the Berkeley Building), which was regarded by some as destroying the "aesthetic skyline;" through urban analysis they hoped to develop techniques to anticipate such effects.<sup>22</sup> More broadly, they were interested light, color, and other phenomenological qualities of the urban landscape, as well as in developing a "grammar of visual features," which was similar to the "Townscape" research being done by Gordon Cullen during the same years.<sup>23</sup> In September 1953, as the MIT faculty prepared to draft their first grant proposal, they articulated the ambitions of their *urban design* project and the questions that they sought to answer as follows:

What are the effects of urban design from the point of view of the citizen? What is the meaning which such design has for people? What is the relationship of form to individuals? [How could urban design provide] a sense of location so that the resident both knows his way around and feels at home?<sup>24</sup>

In the initial research proposal, "The Three-Dimensional Urban Environment," presented in October 1953, the significance of these questions was clearly framed within the context of contemporary urban redevelopment and urban renewal projects and programs. Making explicit the association between *urban design* and *urban redevelopment*, the proposal referred to recent

urban transformations that were often large and self-similar, and which would shape urban life for many decades:

Technical and economic developments have advanced our ability to produce vast urban areas rapidly, and we have begun to cast in one piece large units of our environmental setting... The scale of new urban development is tremendous in its total and the trend is toward simultaneous development of numerous structures in large urban units. One evidence of magnitude is the fact that new urban development in one year in the U.S. equals twenty complete towns of 25,000 population. The forms impressed all over the world at this moment of rapid urban expansion will be dominant for many decades to come.<sup>25</sup>

The proposal acknowledged a lack of knowledge about urban design. The authors—who at this time likely included Lynch, Kepes, Burchard, Stephenson, and other members of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies—recognized that “Our visual images, the sounds, odors, and weather we experience, the physical limits which channel our actions—all in great measure are the resultants of the material city: streets, houses, shops, bridges, plantings, utilities.”<sup>26</sup> However, they observed that “little systematic research has been done which has the three-dimensional city as its core.” Anticipating Jacobs’ criticism and research of a few years later, they wrote:

We possess several fragmentary concepts of desirable urban form: density relations, neighborhood organization, superbblock design, specialization of traffic ways, standards for public facilities and housing, greenbelts, and so on. Currently useful in city planning practice, they are partly based on intuition and are the centers of controversy. Architects and planners, although centrally concerned with this subject, are only now beginning to turn to research to provide the desperately needed information, criteria, and techniques.<sup>27</sup>

A better understanding of the nature of cities, which would help planners anticipate the impacts of rebuilding them, was thus the overarching objective of the research project. As Burchard remarked at an early discussion, “it is only once in a while that a Corbusier has a chance to build an [entire] city, and the cost of empirical experiment of this sort is large. Surely something can be achieved by rational analysis and laboratory experiment.”<sup>28</sup> Directing research

to empirical analysis of what worked and what did not work in city form and experience, the project aligned closely in principle with Jacobs' idea that it was cities and not drafting rooms that should be the laboratories for developing knowledge and proposals for future city form.

The October 1953 draft proposal went on to list "possible lines of inquiry," some of which were soon dropped from the final research proposal, delivered in December 1953. Eliminated were more literary, historical, and public policy-oriented studies, including investigations of the effects of the urban environment on the individual as represented in "Literature, Painting and the City;" "Consumer Preferences in Design and Choice of Residence;" and "How the City Has Acquired Particular Characteristics" through federal housing policies and new residential patterns. Excluded as well were proposed studies of "Density and Residential Development;" influential "Technological Factors;" "Planned Communities;" and "Decisions Creating New Forms."<sup>29</sup>

The lines of inquiry that were eventually pursued, and which ultimately found their way into in *The Image of the City*, were concerned with two major topics: developing (1) a "theoretical concept of city form" and (2) new "urban design tools and techniques."

The first ambition, the development of a theoretical concept of city form, sought to explain the "desirable form of the city," and to answer "the problem of giving clear and expressive form to our physical environment." Recognizing that the city had "a complex relationship to a large number of interacting economic, social, technological, and psychological forces," Lynch and Kepes offered that,

we require, not a preferred diagrammatic solution, but a well-developed theoretical concept of city form, which could supply the fundamental criteria, imply a confidence in our ability to create urban form, and furnish techniques for conceiving, expressing, and controlling it.<sup>30</sup>

The new “urban design tools and techniques” would similarly be “for use of the practicing architect or planning in conceiving and expressing his effects in urban design.” Reiterating their desire to avoid negative consequences of city rebuilding, Lynch and Kepes offered that such “tools of this type would have immediate application in current design work, thus preventing many unintended effects.”<sup>31</sup>

At the foundation of Lynch and Kepes’ theory of form was the desire to understand the experience and impact of built form on the city dweller, the “psychological and sensuous effects of city form on the individual.”<sup>32</sup> Pursuing questions very different from those that had motivated earlier modernist city planners, Lynch and Kepes would develop, a new, basic approach to the concept of urban form: a program of studies centering about the psychological and sensuous effects of the physical city on the individual inhabitant and how the city has come to have these particular characteristics.<sup>33</sup>

To this end, their experiential analysis would study “the nature of the sensuous effects themselves,” analyzing the urban environment to develop descriptions of significant visual elements: spaces, surfaces, silhouettes, masses, color, and detail, as well as “the dynamic interrelation between these elements and the beholder: complex effects, scale relations, observation through time or in motion, changes in effects due to rhythms of activity or season, they way in which the city communicates messages to the observer, and the like.”<sup>34</sup>

Phenomenological research would thus,

concentrate on the sensuous impact of the physical city by sight, smell, sound, and touch; on the interactions of these sense data as they combine with each other in place and time and with the preconceptions of the observer; and on the decisions or outside influences that have created such particular sensations in the physical setting.<sup>35</sup>

Through this research they hoped to learn how to build “a rich sensuous world out of the urban environment, one capable of generating new forms, new values, new imagery.”<sup>36</sup> They wanted to know what effects “the total visual environment of the city have on the inhabitants, and what would be the effects of various changes in the visual environment?” And they asked if “the loss of unity in the architectural designs in modern cities produce[d] unhappiness in the population, and how can happiness be restored by improving the unity of urban design?”<sup>37</sup>

Lynch and Kepes’ project was a critique of functionalist urbanism that was similar to the ongoing Townscape research in London, and it anticipated Jacobs’ analysis. “The basic assumption is made that there are important psychological satisfactions, going beyond direct functional efficiency, to be derived from urban forms as perceived by the various senses,” Lynch and Kepes wrote.<sup>38</sup> Influenced by gestalt theory—and likely the gestalt-influenced Townscape theory of Hugh de Cronin Hastings, Gordon Cullen, and others at the *Architectural Review*—Lynch and Kepes’ conception of the city was a tacit criticism of the Functionalist City, with its simplistic Four Functions of work, dwelling, recreation, and circulation. Similar to Jacobs’ ideas about the form and complexity of the city was their interest in understanding whether there was a “unity, connectedness, or organization in the urban environment allowing the inhabitant to sense the whole, orient himself within it, and grasp the relation of part to whole.” They believed that “a high level of meaning in the physical forms of parts and whole, expressive of their particular natures and functions, allow[s] the user to ‘read’ the city easily and to feel that it is ‘warm,’ stimulating, that it has character, or is well adapted to human ends.”<sup>39</sup>

After further discussions and meetings in early 1954, Rockefeller Foundation program officers decided to support Lynch and Kepes’ study of “The Perceptual Form of Cities,” and,

more broadly, the new field of urban design. Distinguishing that new concept from city planning, the foundation's directors wrote:

The Division of Humanities has no intention of entering the general field of city planning. Urban design, however, is one of the fields in which the arts have most direct impact on the quality of human life. In view of the relative neglect of aesthetic aspects in connection with city planning during the last few decades, an effort to restore the balance in thinking in connection with city design seems well justified...<sup>40</sup>

Humanities Division director Charles Fahs offered that the new field was made particularly significant by the Eisenhower administration's push for "the renewal of cities." Research was needed, he believed, to understand how a continuity of urban experience could be brought into the large-scale redevelopment projects. Presciently anticipating the shift from city redevelopment focused on slum clearance, to the more broadly defined goal of "urban renewal" that would be enacted in the Housing Act of 1954, Fahs added that the "present emphasis on urban redevelopment rather than slum clearance makes consideration of some of the problems, e.g., continuity, particularly important, while the magnitude of the need for such redevelopment and the possibility of federal assistance means that there should be sizable opportunities."<sup>41</sup> Unlike revolutionary and utopian conceptions of city rebuilding, urban design techniques were proposed as a solution to the unintended and ultimately dystopian consequences of urban redevelopment and renewal. The foundation had been laid for Jane Jacobs' advocacy for the living city and city life.

## **From East Harlem to Harvard Square**

In April 1956, a few months after Jacobs came to understand East Harlem's plight, she presented an enthusiastically received paper at the First Urban Design Conference at Harvard University.



Although it was one of her first public speaking engagements, the “Harvard Planning Conference,” as some described it (since *urban design* was still an unfamiliar neologism), would make Jacobs’ name a familiar in architectural and planning circles. She presented the first substantial articulation of the ideas that she would develop in *Death and Life*, and the event, with its “foggy atmosphere of professional jargon,” would galvanize her conviction about the wrongness of contemporaneous city design practices and their underpinning theories.

Despite her unanticipated participation in the conference, with her eyes recently opened to the effects of urban renewal “on the ground,” Jacobs was one of the most knowledgeable people present. Without any professional training or credentials, she may have been regarded as a layman and amateur by other participants, but she had been studying cities since the 1930s, and had followed the progress of city redevelopment since the passage of the Housing Act of 1949 and had published one of the first substantial reviews of the subject in *Amerika Illustrated* in 1950.<sup>42</sup> As urban redevelopment progressed and was transformed into urban renewal, she had reported on the major urban renewal plans and experiments in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Washington, New York, and, most recently, Fort Worth, all of which were familiar points of reference during the course of the conference. With some twenty years of study, she had come to regard the field’s leading practitioners as having eyes that did not see, as Le Corbusier had put it during an earlier period of transition.

The Urban Design Conference was an invitational event and its participants were among the most respected in the design fields. As described in the invitation that José Luis Sert, dean of Harvard Graduate School of Design, sent to Douglas Haskell in January 1956, the purpose of the conference was to discuss “urban design and the role of planners, architects, and landscape architects in the design and development of cities,” and its goal would be “to find common basis

for joint work of the three professions in urban design.”<sup>43</sup> Although Haskell initially accepted the invitation, when conference organizer and GSD professor Jaqueline Tyrwhitt telephoned to confirm, he realized that the event conflicted with his annual trip to Europe, and he sent Sert regrets that he would not be able to attend the “Harvard Planning Conference.” In his stead, he recommended *Forum*’s redevelopment specialist. “If another woman beside Miss Tyrwhitt would not be out of place,” he wrote, “might I suggest that my substitute be Mrs. Robert Jacobs—Jane Jacobs on our masthead. She has handled more of our redevelopment stories than anybody and will be fresh back from Ft. Worth.”<sup>44</sup>

Despite being somewhat condescendingly described as Haskell’s “assistant,” Jacobs’ talk on city redevelopment was among the conference’s highlights, and the reaction to it was a testament to the novelty of her presence and her ideas. As remarked in a conference follow-up report in June 1956:

The second day started off with one of the bons mots of the Conference when the Planning Chairman punned his way long with a routine about some prophets named [Charles] Abrams, [Reginald] Isaacs, and [Jane] Jacobs, and then these three plus [Hideo] Sasaki, [Gyorgy] Kepes, [Lloyd] Rodwin, and [Ladislas] Segoe put on a panel of planning problems that ran a broad and stimulating gamut. Perhaps the high points were the fantastically composed alliterative machine-gun phrases of Charley Abrams relative to the human economics of city blight, and the warm and direct appeal of Jane Jacobs (assistant to Douglas Haskell of *Architectural Forum*), who pointed out that a supermarket may replace thirty little stores but doesn’t replace thirty little storekeepers and their social place in the community—and a lot of other things that only a layman of considerable feeling could tell a group of planners and architects.<sup>45</sup>

These words identified a substantial void in professional knowledge and vision. As Mumford later recalled,

Mrs. Jacobs gave firm shape to a misgiving that many people had begun to express. But she saw more deeply into the plight of both those who were evicted and those who came back to live in homogenized and sterilized barracks that had been conceived in terms of bureaucratic regimentation, financial finagling, and administrative convenience, without sufficient thought for

the diverse needs of personal and family life, thus producing a human void that matched the new architectural void.<sup>46</sup>

Sert believed that the conference, and the new discipline of urban design, could help fill the architectural void, but urban design would be intellectually hamstrung by old ideas about the nature of the city and the concurrent crisis of modern architecture. As Victor Gruen wrote to Douglas Haskell after the event,

The conference was an interesting one, but it suffered under the weakness of all professional conferences—that too many high-hat words are used which, because they are worn out by now, are ineffective. Everyone was using the expressions “human scale” and “warmth” but Jane was the only one who really talked about it, without ever using any of the big words. She was like a fresh wind in the airless room. It must also be stated that not only what she had to say was excellent, but also the way in which she said it. She’s an excellent speaker. Her simplicity and her sincerity and her thoughtfulness swept everybody off his feet. There’s no doubt that she was the “star” of the show.<sup>47</sup>

Like the new civic design studies and programs at Yale, MIT, and Penn, the Harvard Urban Design Conference aimed to serve the need for better education in the wake of the new urban renewal legislation. Like his counterparts, José Luis Sert was aware of the new federal legislation as it developed, and his earliest direct engagement with the new field can be dated to late-1953. As historian Eric Mumford has observed, Sert participated in Louis Justement’s October 1953 “Urban Design and Urban Redevelopment” roundtable, delivering a paper titled simply “Urban Design.”<sup>48</sup>

By mid-1954, Sert was aware of discussions about the new field that had been going on at the other end of Massachusetts Avenue, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In June 1954, he hosted an Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture conference at Harvard on the theme of Architectural Education. Attesting to the newness of “urban design,” just a few

months into his research under the Rockefeller urban design research grant, Kevin Lynch from MIT delivered a conference paper on the subject of urban design titled “A New Look at Civic Design.”<sup>49</sup> (It was likely no coincidence that the term *urban design* was first prominently used at Harvard later that year, when Siegfried Giedion, who had taught seminars on civic design at MIT, renamed his course “History of Urban Design” for the Fall 1954 semester.<sup>50</sup>) As Lynch observed in his “New Look” talk, “A great number of individuals, a number of schools, a number of practicing architects have become extremely interested in the subject of the sensuous form of the city and are beginning to think about it and are beginning to work on it.”<sup>51</sup>

Although Sert himself did not talk about specifically about civic design or urban design at the 1954 ACSA conference, he noted that “modern architecture and city planning, which is very closely tied to architecture, today are going through decisive years. I have lived, like all of you, through the changes of the ‘20s and ‘30s and the old ways of teaching architecture, and of course, we are always thinking about architecture and the changes in the programs in the schools.”<sup>52</sup> He was likely already thinking of the need for new courses in the new discipline, although it would not be until 1960 that Sert established what was nominally the first graduate program in Urban Design.

One of the primary contributions of the Harvard Urban Design Conference in 1956, however, was its definitive break with “civic design” and alignment of the design professions with the “urban” focus of the new nationwide urban renewal program. As seen in the conference program, Sert explicitly preferred the term “urban design” over “civic design.” He wrote that the conference “avoided the term ‘Civic Design’ as having, in the minds of many, too specialized or too grandiose a connotation,” with its allusions to the City Beautiful movement and its limited emphasis on “civic centers.”<sup>53</sup> That design approach was seen as simply applying window-

dressing to the city. As Sert reiterated in his introduction to the conference, “We cannot screen slums with marble fronts and colonnades, nor establish balance and harmony in a community [by] developing monumental civic centers, ignoring the living conditions of people in neighborhoods around those centers.”<sup>54</sup> This was a criticism of civic design and the City Beautiful movement that Jacobs would take to heart, and repeat in *Death and Life*.

Sert went on to make a case for the design professions becoming more involved in the urban design practices that had been largely taking place without their participation. Referring to the “large-scale redevelopment projects” since 1949, he observed that, “Urban design has in the last years, been a no-man’s land that architects, city planners, engineers, and landscape architects did not invade.”<sup>55</sup> He concluded that “City planners and architects and landscape architects can only be part of larger team of specialists required to solve [city] problems.” It was time “to join hands and to do teamwork.”<sup>56</sup> As “programs become realities, things have to take shape,” he affirmed, “and urban design is concerned with the shaping and re-shaping of our cities and giving them the proper physical form.”<sup>57</sup> It was time for the design fields to contribute actively and collectively to this “re-shaping of our cities.” After “many years of effort, research, and rediscovery on an individual basis,” he believed that “an era of synthesis” was at hand.

Despite Sert’s sincere argument for improving the living conditions of city dwellers, and his memorable critique of civic centers and beautification efforts, Jane Jacobs, who was in the audience, must have been shocked and exasperated to hear Sert’s “apology” for the city, as he phrased it, and his familiar call to re-shape the city “as a whole” and give it “proper physical form.”<sup>58</sup> She had recently witnessed the results of such ambitions in East Harlem—and would relate her observations in her own conference talk.

Suggesting the massive dimensions of the void that urban design needed to span, Sert went to great lengths to explain the importance of being “urban-minded”—and Jacobs must have agreed with him in principle. He emphasized that planners, architects, and landscape architects “must believe in cities, their importance and value to human progress and culture,” and to do so “must be urban-minded to get such a position and attitude.” Despite America’s rural and pioneering traditions, there was also “an American culture that is civic and urban,” he reminded the audience. Alluding to the new American suburbanization, but taking exception with Clarence Stein and other Decentrists—as Jacobs did—the design professions needed to reject the familiar impulse “to leave the city, to live outside it, [that] has become a goal.”<sup>59</sup> Contradicting the message of his 1944 book *Can Our Cities Survive?* (which had originally been titled *Should Our Cities Survive?*),<sup>60</sup> the overarching conception of city planning needed to be “not one of decentralization, but rather one of re-centralization.”<sup>61</sup> Reiterating the postwar rebuilding theme of CIAM’s Eighth Congress, co-organized by Sert in 1951, and the long-standing Corbusian belief that cities must be renewed and not relocated, Sert explained that, the “urban” in “Urban Design” alluded to the “growing interest in the problems of the city proper, the center area, [or] the core.”<sup>62</sup>

Despite this argument *for* cities, Sert also repeated the revolutionary tropes originating in Le Corbusier’s outlines of city planning from the 1920s. Sert, for example, paid homage “to the great generation of city builders in this country who had the courage to do great things.”<sup>63</sup> However, while the skyscraper was “one of the greatest creations of America—the mistake was not to have planned the city to precede it.” The “design” aspect of “Urban Design” in Sert’s formulation thus continued to underscore the long-standing belief in the need to re-shape the city as a whole. Proposing a renewal strategy similar to Ebenezer Howard’s network of Garden Cities

and Stein's New Town proposals, Sert concluded that "the solution lies in re-shaping the city as a whole, including the central structures, [and] that every American city, because of its growth, has to break up into constellations of communities," each with its own center.<sup>64</sup>

It is unclear, at the time of the 1956 conference, to what extent Jane Jacobs recognized how little Sert's re-shaped city differed from Howard's Garden City or Le Corbusier's Radiant City, or what she later described as the "Radiant Garden City" model in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Her criticism of urban theory developed more fully in the year following the conference. At this time, however, she must have been suspicious of the new theory of "urban design" described by Sert. It probably dismayed her that one of its most prominent proponents was a reluctant apologist for the city.

As Sert explained to the gathered conference attendees, "In defining for our first year students what urban design can do, I generally give them an example that is right here on our doorstep. I make them compare Harvard Yard with Harvard Square."<sup>65</sup> Harvard Yard was the campus precinct in which the Harvard Graduate School of Design was located, in Robinson Hall, and Harvard Square, as today, was the town outside the brick walls and ornamental wrought-iron gates of the campus. Harvard Square was irregular in its city plan, having evolved over a few hundred years. Within the campus walls, however, large formal green-spaces, planted with trees and surrounded by dormitory and classroom buildings, defined spaces not unlike the layout of a modernist housing project. Remarking on the differences between Harvard Yard and Square, Sert stated that "In one there is design that results in balance and harmony; in the other, there is no coordination of design elements or harmony whatever." The campus was an ordered and park-like setting:

In Harvard Yard the buildings are harmonious, dignified, and well-scaled. The relationship of those buildings to the open space they define is correct. Man is surrounded by trees, grass, and natural elements that were created to live with him. These elements are part of man's natural environment, as protected from noises and mechanized traffic. The squirrel comes to eat from his hand.

By contrast, the town was a hellish, chaotic, denatured place:

A few steps away, there is a gateway that opens to Harvard Square and like Dante's door to Hell, could carry over it the inscription "Abandon All Hope," meaning all hope of finding these elements that make our environment human, because across the gate there is noise, disorder, lack of visual balance, and harmony. There is naturally no place for trees and you will search in vain for a squirrel.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, Sert opined that "on one side of the gate there is design at its best, and on the other it is totally absent."

Sert's exemplar of urban design would have immediately struck Jacobs as tinged by misunderstanding and motivated by an inherent dislike for the city, as well as a privileged, Olympian point of view. Hardly a great city, Harvard Square may have been noisy and had traffic problems, but it was hardly "Hell," let alone as rough as the neighborhoods like Manhattan's Hell's Kitchen, not far from where the Jacobses lived. Harvard Yard was an elegant and staid gated-community. Moreover, the ordering, compositional impulse and the attendant sentimentalization of nature had little to do with a concern for the slums hidden behind brick or marble walls, which could not be simply composed out of existence.

Jacobs' view of the city was the inverse of Sert's, like the shift of a gestalt image. In fact, in the June 1956 issue of *Architectural Forum*, which reprinted Jacobs' conference talk, she offered a visual comparison. One photograph portrayed a "living neighborhood" in East Harlem; another a "dead" housing project. The caption of the former, an old Harlem street typical of those being destroyed for super-blocks, read, "The living neighborhood is a complex of little organisms



like this East Harlem store-front church and store.” The other, a photograph of the new Stephen Foster Houses at 112<sup>th</sup> and Lenox (later renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Towers), stated that “new housing developments like this one in East Harlem, New York City, take into account little beyond sanitary living space, formal playgrounds, and sacrosanct lawns.”<sup>67</sup> If the Stephen Foster Houses or Harvard Yard represented “urban design,” Jacobs would have nothing to do with it. In fact, despite her active involvement in the history of urban design, she would not use the term in her writing. Instead she preferred “city design,” which she used throughout *Death and Life*. As she set out to write the book, she explained that she did not like “urban design” because both “urban” and “planning” had by then acquired “objectionable connotations.”<sup>68</sup>

## **Pavement Pounders and Olympians**

If Sert’s and Jacobs’ unique ways of seeing the city tended toward the difference between “top-down” and a “bottom-up” views of the world, they carried with them different images of the city, and correspondingly different methodologies for studying it. In his conference introduction, for example, Sert noted that architects and planners had unprecedented means for studying the city. “In late years we have developed a new view of the city, one that only birds could enjoy before,” he observed. “We have to recognize that nothing gives a clearer idea of the vitality of a country than this total picture of our community. The Cinerama views of American cities are the most eloquent documents of the greatness of this country. They are more convincing than hundreds of pages of statistics.”<sup>69</sup>

These tools for studying the city, however, were not new, and not necessarily effective ways of developing new knowledge. Sert’s recommendation of aerial city analysis recalled his

fascination with the “urban façade” seen from the airplane in *Can Our Cities Survive?* twenty years earlier.<sup>70</sup> This proposal, in turn, echoed Le Corbusier’s similar arguments for using the airplane to study and plan cities in *Aircraft* (1935). The use of statistics as a primary city planning tool had also found enthusiastic endorsement in Le Corbusier’s *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning* (1929), where the architect claimed, in a chapter dedicated to the subject, that statistics were, in a particularly Olympian metaphor, “the Pegasus of the town planner.”<sup>71</sup>

In the year of the Harvard Urban Design conference, the fascination of modernist architect-planners with the airplane view found its most literal manifestation in the planning of Brasilia, a city planned from the air and given the plan form of an airplane or a bird. Neither Le Corbusier nor Sert, however, were not insensitive to the uncertain consequences of such airborne design practices. In 1948, Le Corbusier devised the Modulor, a proportional system based on the human body, and was extraordinarily sensitive to the human scale in his architectural designs. As early as *Aircraft*, observing cities from the air provoked in him a sense of melancholy proportional to his distance from the scale of human intimacy.<sup>72</sup> During the course of the conference, Sert revealed similar misgivings about contemporaneous architectural design in relation to the tools that were used to create it:

“I also have the feeling that a lot of the work being done in architecture and city planning is scale-less. We design things that look very well as models, or blown down to magazine-page size, but very bad when blown up to full size,” he commented. “We can actually have today as much richness as ever before, but we are accepting buildings that do not have the human value and the visual impact they should have if thought about more carefully in terms of the man in the street who looks at them and moves around them.”<sup>73</sup>

In this regard, Sert and others seemed attuned to the need for the type of perceptual and phenomenological research being done by conference attendees Lynch and Kepes. And many

attendees were similarly responsive to what Lewis Mumford described as Jacobs' observations of "the intimate social structure" of city life.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, tools like the airplane view and statistics, which flattened and condensed city particularities from their Olympian viewpoints, exacerbated disengagement for the peculiar conditions of the street-level, and this, in turn, reinforced the motivations to rebuild the city from the ground-up along functionalist lines—defining zones for living, working, playing, and transportation that could actually be observed from an airplane. The Olympian planner's attitude toward the city, in other words, was represented by his choice of tools, which reflected back to him a particular image of the city. Like Lynch and Kepes, whom she likely met at the conference, Jacobs now saw the city differently.

In the weeks following the Harvard Urban Design Conference, Jacobs published an unbylined editorial titled "Pavement Pounders and Olympians." Published in the May 1956 issue of *Architectural Forum*, it was followed in June by a reprint of her conference talk, "The Missing Link in City Redevelopment." These essays were the beginning of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. The editorial described differing approaches to the city—in terms of both method and affection—that Jacobs articulated at greater length in her book, while the article described some of the fundamental principles of urban design in its broadest sense that she would elaborate there. A critical difference, however, would be found in her treatment of "Pavement Pounding" city planners in *Death and Life*, where she would be less generous to Edmund Bacon and others.

Jacobs' conference talk and article focused on the lessons she had recently learned in East Harlem, although she did not focus on the particular geography. Her observations were more than empirical notations: she had already assimilated East Harlem's lessons into more widely

applicable principles that were needed to mend the flaws of contemporaneous redevelopment practices and functionalist city planning theory. In contrast with decades of antagonism toward the historic city and the modernist philosophy of separating city functions, she urged the Urban Design Conference audience (and later her readership in *Architectural Forum*) to look at the relationships of city street, sidewalk, stoop, and storefront. Echoing her earliest studies of the city, as well as the research on East Harlem done by Ellen Lurie and William Kirk, Jacobs emphasized the relationships between the built environment and human practices. Relationships, she emphasized, were essential:

Look at some lively old parts of the city. Notice the tenement with the stoop and sidewalk and how that stoop and sidewalk belong to the people there. A living room is not a substitute; this is a different facility. Notice the stores and the converted storefronts.<sup>75</sup>

These relationships, moreover, were successfully *functional*, despite the fact that functionalist zoning and urban renewal projects had destroyed the public spaces of street, the subtle in-between space of the stoop, the flexible functionality of the storefront building, and the complex social life that took place in these multi-functioning public and semi-public spaces. In the city, a storefront was about more than shopping, she explained:

A store is also often an empty store *front*. Into these fronts go all manner of churches, clubs, and mutual uplift societies. These store-front activities are enormously valuable. They are the institutions that people create, themselves.<sup>76</sup>

Since the time she had praised shopping malls for imitating city form and had suggested that their lessons could be brought back to the city, Jacobs' ideas had substantially developed. Stores in city neighborhoods, she realized, were "much more complicated creatures which have evolved a much more complicated function. Although they are mere holes in the wall, they help make an urban neighborhood a community instead of a mere dormitory."<sup>77</sup> She observed, for

example, that “most political clubs are in store-fronts,” and that “when an old area is leveled, it is often a great joke that Wardheeler so-and-so has lost his organization.” But, she continued, “This is not really hilarious”:

If you are a nobody, and you don't know anybody who isn't a nobody, the only way you can make yourself heard in a large city is through certain well defined channels. These channels all begin in holes in the wall.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, although planners and architects thought, “in an orderly way, of stores as a straightforward matter of supplies and services,” storefronts and other city buildings were not single-function entities. At stake was more than a sense of scale and visual “richness.” She observed that important institutions, “real ornaments to the city have started this way.” Meanwhile, neighborhood's mundane, everyday institutions were also essential to the city: the “little struggling ones are even more important in the aggregate.”<sup>79</sup>

These essential parts of the city could not be easily planned for or designed. By their nature, they organized themselves: the “physical provisions for this kind of process cannot conceivably be formalized,” Jacobs stated. The answer was “*not* in providing multi-purpose public rooms for them. They will die on the vine. The essence of these enterprises is that they have a place indisputably their own.” When displaced by new urban redevelopment, “the creative social activity and the vitality [was forced to] shift over to the old vestigial areas because there is literally no place for them in the new scheme of things.” Thus, around the benchmark urban redevelopment project Stuyvesant Town (1945-49) was “an unplanned, chaotic, prosperous belt of stores, the camp followers around the Stuyvesant barracks,” and, beyond that belt, “an even more chaotic area,” where the “hand-to-mouth cooperative nursery schools, the ballet classes, the do-it-yourself workshops, and the little exotic stores which are among the great charms of a city”

could be found. And the same pattern could be found “whether the population is middle income like Stuyvesant Town or predominantly low income like East Harlem.” When it came to city dynamics of this kind, demographics were irrelevant. As she explained at greater length in a chapter in *Death and Life*, cities needed old, even run-down, buildings—they were one of the critical “missing links” in urban redevelopment. Paradoxically, by “improving” cities, urban renewal tended to make them worse. This was “a ludicrous situation, and it ought to give planners the shivers.”<sup>80</sup>

What was required, Jacobs offered in conclusion, was “study of whatever is workable, whatever has charm, and above all, whatever has vitality, in *city* life.” And, in the meantime, “the least we can do is to respect—in the deepest sense—the strips of chaos that have a weird wisdom of their own not yet encompassed in our concept of urban order.”<sup>81</sup>

Jacobs’ use of the word “chaos” to describe the city was a rhetorical commonplace at the time, but one that she would abandon when she wrote *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In writing the book, Jacobs felt she had achieved an understanding the city’s “urban order,” which could no longer be accurately described as such. Following the Harvard conference, she better understood *how* to go about developing this understanding, and how not to. She saw clearly that some planners and designers sought to impose order on the city, while others expected to find it there, and in “Pavement Pounders and Olympians,” she condemned the former and praised the latter.

Among the Pavement Pounders, the city planners who knew their cities intimately, at street level and block by block, were those whom she had gotten to know while writing reviews of urban redevelopment plans for *Forum*: Cleveland’s Ernest Bohn and James Lister,

Washington's Carl Feiss, Fort Worth's Edgardo Contini, and Philadelphia's Edmund Bacon, a conference participant and direct influence on her editorial. Alluding to Bacon's, as well as Louis Kahn's, respect for "the living city," she praised the Pavement Pounder's method of study and affection for the city. She believed that,

walking and the good planning are two sides of the same attitude, two sides of the pavement pounder's fascination, on an intimate level, with all details of city life and city relationships, of his consuming curiosity about the way the city develops and changes, of his endless preoccupation with the *living* city, and—at the bottom of it all—of his affection for the city.<sup>82</sup>

Unlike those who studied cities with their eyes and feet, "Olympian" planners knew their cities only abstractly, statistically, and from a bird's eye view. These planners, she wrote, "conscientiously studied, from Olympian heights, their maps, their density patterns, their social statistics, their traffic patterns—then waved their clearance wands." But lacking knowledge or interest in their city's neighborhoods, such planners "were in process of committing economic, esthetic, and social outrages."

City planners' method of study, in other words, corresponded to their values and "systems of thought"—both of which were subject of continued interest to Jacobs in her later writing. In a more elaborated prelude to *Death and Life*, Jacobs' 1958 essay "Downtown Is For People," she returned to the dichotomy between the interpretive horizons of the street-level view and the airplane view of the city, and their implications. Architects, planners, and businessmen, she wrote, "have become fascinated with scale models and bird's-eye views. This is a vicarious way to deal with reality, and it is, unhappily, symptomatic of a design philosophy now dominant." The city, however, required close reading, and more intimate understanding: "You've got to get out and walk. Walk, and you will see that many of the assumptions on which the projects depend are visibly wrong."

Certain representational tools, in other words, promoted the destruction of city fabric in favor of super-blocks, while others promoted an interconnected, living city. The Olympian vantage point of the drawing board resulted in alienation from place. In ignoring the city on the ground, city planners took a “short cut in their analytical techniques,” and they therefore allowed super-blocks to prevail and old city fabric to be “statistically sunk without a trace.”<sup>83</sup> By contrast, she praised the unpublished urban design research of Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes’ “study of what walkers in downtown Boston notice.”<sup>84</sup> And suggesting a specific representational alternative that privileged the public space of city streets and captured the interconnected complexity of cities, she remarked that, “If redevelopers of downtown must depend so heavily on maps instead of simple observation, they should draw a map that looks like a network, and then analyze their data strand by strand of the net, not by the holes in the net.”<sup>85</sup>

Modes of study and engagement with the city remained an important theme for Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and she remarked there on how different types of observation—telescopic, airplane, naked-eye, and microscopic—influenced approaches to the city, and how some of them, like statistics, were inadequate precisely because they obfuscated the complexity of the city.<sup>86</sup> The analytical tools of nineteenth and early twentieth-century science embraced by Ebenezer Howard’s and Le Corbusier’s generations had been particularly inadequate, she observed. Howard, for example, had understood “the problem of town planning much as if he were a nineteenth-century physical scientist analyzing a two-variable problem.”<sup>87</sup> He believed that many of the city’s problems could be solved by solving an equation of population and jobs. A few decades later, the tools became more sophisticated: “Beginning in the late 1920s in Europe, and in the 1930s here, city planning theory began to assimilate the newer ideas on probability theory developed by physical science.”<sup>88</sup> Le Corbusier, for example, believed



that statistics were “the Pegasus of the town planner.” More advanced mathematics, like the airplane, had only increased the distance between the city planner and his subject, however: “the new probability and statistical methods gave more ‘accuracy,’ more scope, made possible a more Olympian view and treatment of the supposed problem of the city.”<sup>89</sup> The resulting city planning paradigm was “a celebration, in art, of the potency of statistics and the triumph of the mathematical average.”<sup>90</sup>

Jacobs believed that “Systems of thought, no matter how objective they may purport to be, have underlying emotional bases and values.”<sup>91</sup> In understanding, however, that a combination of subjective values and purportedly objective methods were the basis of systems of thought, she argued for a different kind of scientific method that could match a “different system of thought about the great city.” Her observations of Pavement Pounders and Olympians in East Harlem, Cambridge, and Philadelphia had taught her that the living city needed to be studied “inductively, reasoning from particulars to the general, rather than the reverse.” Whereas deduction was a top-down intellectual approach favored by the Olympian, induction was the corollary of the Pavement Pounder’s ground-level horizon. Only from this perspective could “the unaverage,” statistically-invisible qualities of city life be observed and interpreted.<sup>92</sup> And only in this sense, in her rejection of the Olympian conception of “theory”—theory exclusively as a form of looking—was Jacobs herself anti-theoretical. From the time she wrote “Pavement Pounders and Olympians,” she argued for new forms of analysis, interpretation, and representation that were needed to understand the city and which formed the basis of her own theory of the city.

## “What City Pattern?” Concentration or Urban Sprawl

Jacobs’ participation in what Douglas Haskell called “Harvard Planning Conference” in 1956 came at a time when Haskell and the *Architectural Forum* staff were working on a “big planning issue.”<sup>93</sup> In fact, Jacobs’ visit to East Harlem earlier that year had begun as part of her research for the issue. Although William Kirk, director of East Harlem’s Union Settlement Association, had initially contacted *Forum* to call attention to the neighborhood’s situation in March 1955, it was not until January 1956 that Haskell follow up on their conversation: “*Forum* is seriously interested in a study of city patterns, and we recall how explicit you were about the structure of neighborhoods in Harlem and what produces this structure,” he wrote Kirk.<sup>94</sup>

Although East Harlem’s transformation had a dramatic impact on Jacobs, Haskell was not interested only in urban redevelopment or matters of public housing, and he was hardly alone in being interested in the suburbs as well. These were widely felt to be a new context for the city that could not be ignored. As *Forum*’s sister magazine *Fortune* reported in 1953, suburbia was a new “way of life that seems eventually bound to become dominant in America.”<sup>95</sup> By 1956, José Luis Sert already believed this to be the case, and in fact framed his “apology” for the city, and the work of urban design, in terms of suburbia. In his opening address to the conference, he stated:

First of all, we must believe in cities, their importance and value to human progress and culture. We must be urban-minded to get such a position and attitude. In late years we have heard much talk about the evils of the city, of its being a breeding place for crime, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, diseases of all kinds, traffic congestion, accidents, etc. To leave the city, to live outside it, has become a goal. It has been said of the American businessman: “He is born in the country where he works like hell so he can live in the city where he works like hell so he can live in the country.” Everything good and healthy became suburbanite, and to solve the problems of our cities, our city planners turned their back to them.<sup>96</sup>

Although critical of Sert's modernist planning ideas, Jacobs certainly shared his concern for "the heart of the city," as much as his concern for "open sprawl," which was already well understood to be a corollary of suburbanization.<sup>97</sup> The term "sprawl" had been used to describe unplanned and unattractive urban growth since at least the 1930s; Lewis Mumford used it in this way in *The Culture of Cities* (1938).<sup>98</sup> Moreover, the Townscape movement, which was familiar to Haskell and his staff by the early 1950s, and more widely known by the mid 1950s, was conceived by *Architectural Review* editor Hugh de Cronin Hastings (AKA Ivor De Wolfe) and his colleagues J.M. Richards and Gordon Cullen, not only as a form of "Civic Design," it was also fundamentally a reaction to the impact of urban or suburban sprawl on the English landscape.<sup>99</sup> As Hastings wrote in his inaugural 1949 essay "Townscape":

It is not only the decay of rurality, it is the waste in the towns and outside them, the clutter, the vast areas of No-Man's-Land. We foul our nest. The contemporary world is a kind of visual refuse heap, if not insanitary, inelegant, with the shameless utter inelegance of an upset dustbin. Nor can those who feel deeply the inelegance of the contemporary world, communicate their distress to others since there exists no literature or vocabulary of landscape.<sup>100</sup>

Moreover, the first substantial Townscape publication, *The Architectural Review's* "Man Made America," which influenced *Architectural Forum's* agenda for architectural criticism, was a reaction to sprawl, although in the American context. "Man Made America" described "vast areas that fill the interstices between the suburbs and the city centres, not to mention the highways between cities, where not anarchy but visual chaos reigns." Townscape philosophy, and "Man Made America" in particular, was concerned with what the built environment implied about the society that built it:

Briefly, the theory is that the landscape, regarded as the full complement of townships, roads, railways, electricity grids, clearings, afforestation schemes, backyards, real estate ventures, wastes, wilds, ornamental parkways, ribbon developments—the landscape, whether created consciously or unconsciously, by acts of commission or omission, by a given society, is in the

nature of things a realization in three dimensions of that society's *form-will*—a realization of its will to shape life in a certain way; and that it provides a picture of that society from which informed analysis should be able to draw accurate conclusions.<sup>101</sup>

In this assessment of the American landscape, the *Review's* editors believed that they were far more critical than Americans:

When it comes to the greatest community art of all, the man-made urban and rural landscape, nobody seems to give the matter a second thought. In the U.S. especially there are few signs of a desire to analyze the existing state of affairs and even fewer leading to an intention to do something about it. Moreover, where other countries have at least a tradition of the art, and consequently some first principles to fall back on, the United States has not.<sup>102</sup>

By 1955, this state of affairs had begun to change. In December, Douglas Haskell extended a warm handshake to *Forum's* counterparts at the *Review* with his editorial “Can Roadtown Be Damned?”

Two paths are open to us. One is to accept Roadtown as a formidable fact and civilize Roadtown, now that it is commanding heavier highway engineering and bigger building capital. The other is to re-examine the very roots of our endlessly shuttling civilization. On both these subjects *Forum* will gladly work with the *Review*.<sup>103</sup>

Although Haskell had initially been taken aback by “Man Made America,” not only had suburban sprawl become more evident, he was likely mollified and inspired by the fact that *The Architectural Review* had done a “big planning issue” of their own. Written by Ian Nairn and Gordon Cullen and titled “Outrage,” the June 1955 special issue of the *Review* was directed at the English built environment, and relentlessly criticized everything from street furniture to the anti-urbanism of suburban housing estates. The greatest force of their comprehensive attack, however, was aimed at suburban sprawl, which they described as a “subtopia.” The *outrage*, Nairn wrote, “is that the whole land surface is being covered by the creeping mildew that already circumscribes all of our towns. This death by slow decay we have called Subtopia, a compound word formed from suburb and utopia, i.e., making an ideal of suburbia.”<sup>104</sup> The urbanity of cities,

and the distinction between town and country, Nairn observed, was being smothered by this new form “anti-urban” of urbanization:

Urban sprawl has come to its second stage; with everyone gone to the suburbs the centre has been left to decay. Towns have become half alive: one is where you work, but can't live, the other half is where you live but don't work. Half alive towns will produce half alive people, and the most immediate result is that in between working and living there can be up to two hours of limbo, nearly fifteen percent of one's waking hours: forced and frustrating comradeship in public transport or forced and frustrating isolation in private cars.<sup>105</sup>

The power of Nairn and Cullen's critique was such that, for a few years, *townscape* rivaled *urban design* as the term of art, despite the confusion inherent in the different English and American definitions of “town.”<sup>106</sup> Haskell referred to “Man Made America” again in an editorial that accompanied *Forum's* big planning issue, which was published as “What City Pattern?” in September 1956. In “Architecture for the Next Twenty Years,” he wrote that, “Back in 1950, friends of ours across the Atlantic, editing England's *Architectural Review*, cut deeply into our native pride with a complete issue devoted to ‘Man Made America’. What they said still rankles—because there was some justice in it.”<sup>107</sup> Jacobs, who took on the role of editing *Forum's* “What City Pattern?” after the Harvard Urban Design conference, was especially inspired by Nairn and Cullen's efforts, and alluded to “Outrage” in the introduction to the feature. She would also take Haskell's invitation for collaboration between *Forum* and the *Review* seriously: in the following years she would join forces with Nairn and Cullen on her “blockbuster” on the super-block, bring them into the Rockefeller Foundation's urban design research program, and cite their influence in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.<sup>108</sup>

“What City Pattern?” featured an introductory editorial by Jacobs titled “By 1976, What City Pattern?”, followed by “First Job: Control New City Sprawl,” an essay by Catherine Bauer along with a reply from *Forum's* editors, and an analysis of three aspects of the built

environment: “Central City: Concentration vs. Congestion,” by Jacobs; and “Fringetown: Just Another Central City?” and “Roadtown: The Great American Excursion” by *Forum’s* other editors.<sup>109</sup>

In her introduction, Jacobs recognized that the urban redevelopment of cities was not the only problem facing the United States. The whole of the built environment was facing a growth crisis—a crisis in the growing number of cars and the suburbanization that they left in their wake:

The US is heading into a growth crisis, the like of which was never seen before. It is an unprecedented crisis simply because we are an unprecedented nation of centaurs. Our automobile population is rising about as fast as our human population and promises to continue for another generation... And because asphalt will not grow potatoes, the pavement that will be demanded by two cars for every one that we have today will have to come out of [our] other-purpose acreage. There’s the rub. For the car is not only a monstrous land-eater itself: it abets that other insatiable land-eater—endless, strung-out suburbanization.

The reality, she concluded, was that,

Traffic and all it means is the key factor in urban renewal. Now we must recognize that this renewal is only part of an over-all pattern of urbanization taking in spaces far beyond, and between, the old cities. Cities used to be an incident in countryside; now countryside is become an incident in City. The last ten years have given us an unholy mess of land use, land coverage, congestion, and ugliness.<sup>110</sup>

Jacobs indicated that *Forum’s* editors did not have answers. Similar to early Townscape efforts, she wrote that “It is as an eye-opener that this issue is intended.”<sup>111</sup>

Jacobs found hope in the criticism that Catherine Bauer wrote in the lead essay. When Jacobs read the draft in May 1956, she was ebullient, and told Douglas Haskell that Bauer’s essay was a wonderful and hopeful turning point, a start of a new direction for both architectural criticism and urban theory:

I think this kind of article itself represents a turning point... If the next generation’s equivalent of the Steins and Mayers and Mumfords can begin to follow the line of thought started here, and show what can be done with the different type of planning it implies, Americans may well end up liking cities. As long as the great planning ideas, both inside and outside the city, have been

stimulated and intellectually fertilized by city-rejectors, as they have been, how could less imaginative planners and the unimaginative body of citizenry help but take their cue? What and who was there to lead them in any other direction? In this article of Catherine Bauer's is the start of a new direction and I think it is very exciting.<sup>112</sup>

What Bauer had written was a critique that Jacobs later repeated: a wholesale rejection of generations of city planning theory as anti-urban, utopian, and unworkable. And despite the attention that Jacobs later received for the critical introductory chapter of *Death and Life*, Bauer's critique had been even more comprehensive. While Jacobs famously focused on the "Radiant Garden City," Bauer criticized not only Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City* and Le Corbusier's *Radiant City*, but Frank Lloyd Wright's *Broadacre City* and Buckminster Fuller's "nomadic noncity" as well.

Illustrated with photographs of the original concepts and the vulgarized versions that they had inspired, Bauer's essay critiqued these planning concepts as utopias, a motif that Jacobs would also repeat in her book. "Utopia No. 1" was the Garden City, the model for Clarence Stein and Henry Wright's Radburn and thereafter vulgarized across suburban America. "Utopia No. 2" was Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City, whose "principle has been perverted everywhere, as the typical suburb shows." In the vulgarized version, Wright's sense of organization was gone: "What is left is neither city nor country, only aimless scatteration, congestion, and needless waste." Lastly, "Utopia No. 3" was Le Corbusier's Radiant City, illustrated by what became a familiar visual trope, the juxtaposition of the "Voisin Plan" with housing projects from Manhattan's Lower East Side. "Almost every big city today has vulgarized this concept," the caption read. In the Corlears Hook housing project, for example, "the towers are dropped helter-skelter, the green space around them is shapeless, and there is no sign of relief that Corbu built into his plans with the lower buildings that formed the semicourts."<sup>113</sup> Written by Jacobs, the

captions, like her memo to Haskell, indicate that Jacobs understood the difference between the model and the example, although she may have overestimated their influence.<sup>114</sup>

Despite Jacobs' initial liking of Bauer's argument, however, a few weeks later her spirits would crash. Having been encouraged by Bauer's promising start, Jacobs was sorely disappointed by the conclusion in her final piece. Bauer's proposal to "Control New-City Sprawl" was ultimately not so different from the utopias she condemned, at least as Jacobs saw it. Bauer's prescient analysis of population growth and demographic trends over a twenty-year horizon indicated that central cities could not absorb the anticipated growth of fifty million people and their fifty million automobiles. This led Bauer to propose an updated New Towns program that would control sprawl while accommodating the new population. The result would be compact, transit-oriented satellite cities. Although a far-sighted idea still valid decades later—but no easier to achieve—Jacobs suspected that Bauer's proposal stemmed from a pre-existing preference for developing new communities outside of the old cities. To Jacobs, Bauer's position was an argument to "forget the old city."<sup>115</sup>

When Jacobs read Bauer's final copy she went to Douglas Haskell in a near panic. "Forget the old city" was not the message that Jacobs wanted *Architectural Forum* to promulgate. She saw it as going against the larger editorial position that *Forum* had been pursuing—which was one of the reasons she had been interested in working for the magazine in the first place. Moreover, Jacobs did not believe that the U.S. had the political will or legislative tools to engage in effective regional planning, a position that shaped her own efforts on behalf of cities and ultimately distanced her from Bauer and other "Decentrists." As Haskell wrote Bauer in July 1956,



Jane Jacobs was in here worried almost sick with fear lest I jump completely into new city planning problems. Her greatest concern: we don't have the political apparatus nor the economic leverage to create the greenbelts. "In the United States nothing gets done until the situation is desperate; only because the central city situation is desperate does anything get done about it now and we have the instruments. Don't you go escaping out into the country on paper!"<sup>116</sup>

To Jacobs' apparent dismay, Haskell was responsive to the facts of Bauer's essay, if not sympathetic to her argument. Typical of his synthetic approach to architectural criticism, he was inclined to seek common ground even between apparently mutually exclusive propositions, whether Jacobs' focus on the city center or Bauer's on the region. He agreed with Bauer that "we couldn't duck the fact that so large a part of the problem will in fact be out in the country, whether we yet know of anything we can do about it or not."<sup>117</sup> But, as he also explained to Bauer, "I don't need to tell you that we don't ourselves agree that urban renewal should be forgotten and our whole energy put on new cities."<sup>118</sup> He reassured Jacobs that *Forum* would keep its focus on the city, but not to the neglect of other issues. As he wrote Victor Gruen on the same day, "we shall argue with [Bauer's] conclusion that you decide between redoing downtown and taking care of the new outlying growth. We shall demand that both things be done."<sup>119</sup> His position was that attention needed to be paid to "the continuity of America's entire 'human habitat' problem, embracing both 'new-towns' and renewal."<sup>120</sup>

Jacobs was not so compromising. When the preservation of cities was at risk, rather than stand with Bauer in what she believed was the quixotic cause of regional planning, she would side with urban renewal. In an editorial reply shaped and partly written by Jacobs and appended to Bauer's essay, *Forum's* editors wrote that they "promptly acknowledge the problem of giving decent shape to America's scatteration, but will not for that reason surrender their deep concern with urban renewal for today's central city."<sup>121</sup>

Jacobs' own contribution to "What City Pattern?" was relatively brief. "The Central City: Concentration vs. Congestion" made a case for the city, discussed the difference between concentration and congestion, and then made an argument for the need to relieve congestion through the rationalization of traffic systems—like her support for urban renewal, a logical deduction from her understanding of the nation's automobile crisis and a logical step in the development of her thinking.

Since Jacobs' primary task was to discuss traffic solutions, her case for the city was quite brief, a prelude to her larger argument. In a few sentences she summarized much of what she would elaborate in *Death and Life*: that the very essence of the city was the "intense concentration of people and activities."<sup>122</sup> Concentration meant "exchange, competition, convenience, multiplicity of choice, swift cross-fertilization of ideas, and variety of demand and whim to stimulate variety of skill and will." And from this she concluded that, "The suburbs may be incubators of people, but the city stands supreme as the incubator of enterprises," economic, social, and cultural.<sup>123</sup>

Concentration often led to congestion, but, using her favored geographic metaphors, she explained that they were not the same thing. Reminiscent of her essay on the city's infrastructure from fifteen years earlier, as well as Louis Kahn's Plan for Midtown Philadelphia, she drew an analogy between cities and ecological systems:

Geologists have a saying that rivers are the mortal enemies of lakes, because the feeder streams tirelessly seek to clog, and the outlet streams to drain. Just so, once the rivers of congestion are out of hand, as they are in our towns and cities today, they become the mortal enemies of pooled urban concentration. The elements of the city are clogged and eventually sundered from one another by the rivers of traffic, moving and still... Even more serious, the rivers of congestion insidiously drain away those less visible urban strengths of convenience and swift, easy human interchange—and with them drains the historic, fruitful meaning of the city.<sup>124</sup>

The question Jacobs posed was thus how to “manage the streams of traffic so they feed and nourish instead of choke and kill?” Her answer was to have faith that the city would offer up solutions to its own problems. The city, she explained, was fundamentally “an invention in specialization, and the time has come to apply that urban talent for specialization to traffic.” Further echoing Louis Kahn’s ideas for Philadelphia and Victor Gruen’s proposal for Fort Worth, Jacobs offered that we “have begun the first (often fumbling) experimental inventions in sorting out the different local traffics of central city.” Likely alluding to Kahn’s analysis of stop and go traffic, she wrote that the “distinction between auto ‘through’ and ‘local’ traffic is also increasingly recognized and accommodated.”<sup>125</sup>

Jacobs’ thinking at this time was quite similar to that of traditionally functionalist city planners. Unlike the conclusions that she drew by the time of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*—basically that the choice came down to the attrition of automobiles or the erosion of cities—she initially believed that passenger cars, pedestrians, delivery vehicles, and mass transit all needed different accommodations “suitable to their different natures.”<sup>126</sup>

When it came to examining the solutions that had been tried, however, Jacobs was already skeptical, although some of her views would change. On the one hand, she actually thought that the possibilities for expressways in and around cities “for good (traffic relief, blight-clearance and blight protection) are magnificent.” On the other, she believed that the “possibilities for ill” were “appalling.” Anticipating conclusions she would draw later, she observed that central city freeways like Boston’s new Central Artery, for example, might move traffic more quickly to the heart of downtown, but once it was there congestion would be compounded.<sup>127</sup> In contrast to her later conclusion that surface streets could best diffuse traffic,

however, she criticized Kansas City's ring road allowing automobiles to do just that, "criss-cross[ing] through downtown street."

Among "the most promising of our present models" was the Fort Worth plan, because it directed traffic into parking garages that formed an interface between highways and a pedestrian-zoned downtown. Although she believed that mass transit was best, she then thought it was a "delusion to think it will solve downtown's auto problems." Quoting Philadelphia architect-planner Oskar Stonorov, she wrote that "if parking is an indispensable adjunct of culture, downtowns must have parking."<sup>128</sup>

In her thinking about downtown traffic, urban redevelopment, or urban sprawl, Jacobs was a realist who was willing to compromise. She was open to new ideas, but was more interested in performance, or "what worked." Her deductions about traffic planning, like her support for urban renewal, would give way to evidence, which would stimulate her to privilege an inductive methodology.

## **The City in the Expanded Field of Design and Planning**

Although *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was sometimes criticized for being myopically focused on city centers, it emerged during a period of growing awareness of the larger "urban environment." The mid 1950s, for example, were a time of reinvention for the field of landscape architecture, which helped to bring that term into common usage. Indeed, around the same time as the Harvard Urban Design conference, Ian McHarg, the new head of the Landscape Architecture department at University of Pennsylvania, was developing research proposals for the pedagogical re-imagination of the field with the urban environment in mind. With Jane Jacobs'

support and recommendation, his proposals would eventually be funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>129</sup> By this time, however, many thoughtful people understood a statement made by landscape architect Garrett Eckbo at the Harvard conference:

The urban landscape has no boundaries—it is a continuous thing—but all of us, as architects, are conditioned by our jobs to work within isolated fragments. We will have to learn to work in terms of continuity of design, which doesn't have boundaries.<sup>130</sup>

Jacobs' experiences with East Harlem, the Harvard conference, and thinking about city patterns in early 1956 would also cause her to think further about the role of cities in the context of the larger built environment—and ultimately her decision to invest her energies in cities was strategic rather than myopic. She was, in fact, not only interested in the question of cities and city regions (a subject that she would return to in *The Economy of Cities*), but in the greater problem of urban sprawl, and addressed these topics in articles as well as in *Death and Life*. As indicated in her memo to Douglas Haskell in May 1956, however, she believed that the continued vitality of cities was immediately at risk. In the United States, Jacobs affirmed, “nothing gets done until the situation is desperate; only because the central city situation is desperate does anything get done about it now and we have the instruments.”

Thus, although Jacobs shared with Catherine Bauer, Lewis Mumford, and others regional planning advocates fundamental concerns about the larger city region—as she did not believe that the U.S. had the political apparatus or the economic leverage to create greenbelts and other regional planning techniques. Catherine Bauer's belief that New Towns and regional planning were the best way to address the growth of cities was therefore not acceptable to Jacobs, and it would ultimately end their five years of friendship. In *Death and Life*, Jacobs would somewhat

callously dismiss Catherine Bauer and Lewis Mumford, who supported her work (even with letters of recommendation to the Rockefeller Foundation in 1958), as being anti-city:

While they thought of themselves as regional planners, Catherine Bauer has more recently called this group the ‘Decentrists,’ and this name is more apt, for the primary result of regional planning, as they saw it, would be to decentralize great cities, thin them out, and disperse their enterprises and populations into smaller, separated cities or, better yet, towns.<sup>131</sup>

Nevertheless, Jacobs’ characterization and her analysis had some truth. Moreover, by the time she wrote *Death and Life*, Jacobs had considered the issues of regional planning and urban sprawl in some detail.

In March 1957, for example, Jacobs published an editorial on the subject of “Our ‘Surplus’ Land,” in which she sought to call attention to the fact that the nation’s land resources were not endless. “Everybody is using land and more land,” she observed, “as if the reservoir of open land were inexhaustible.” Predicting a future where farm land would be in short supply, she offered cities as the new horizon for new construction. Anticipating a future of urban brown-field and grey-field redevelopment, she wrote:

Very few cities have made inventories of their land reservoirs. The few that have demonstrate that the slums are a drop in the bucket, for much of the urban land reservoir is not residential at all. Much is cast off and semi-abandoned industrial; much is underused commercial; much is interstitial land which was never developed or which now stands derelict and empty. Even in inner city cores, supposedly the most intensively used areas on the map, pools of surplus and underused land abound.<sup>132</sup>

The first step, she concluded, was “to realize that unlimited land is not where we think it is”—in the country—“but that a wealth of it lies almost unnoticed where we think it isn’t.”

To further develop an argument a focus on cities, in August 1957, Jacobs followed “Our ‘Surplus’ Land” with an essay titled “Metropolitan Government: The Complicated Instrument Cities Must Design Before They Can Redesign Themselves,” which further articulated her sense

of the problems of regional planning. Reminiscent of her writing on government, her fondness for the urban histories of Henri Pirenne, and the discussion of the “guardian moral syndrome” in *Systems of Survival*, she believed that cities were hamstrung by overlapping territorial authorities. “Sprawling over municipal lines, township lines, school district lines, county lines, even state lines, our 174 metropolitan areas are a weird mélange of 16,210 separate units of government,” she wrote.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, in the cases of eighteen U.S. “super-cities,” two or more metropolitan areas met in webs of conflicting jurisdictions, complicating the ability to deal with metropolitan problems. “Our states, divided into their revealingly named *counties*,” she concluded, “are an organizational heritage from feudal territorial warlords who fitted the city into their scheme of things as a special, chartered ‘exception.’” In terms of their governance, “we have never really come to full grips with the fact of cities.”<sup>134</sup>

On this account, she observed that the states which authorized regional planning activity, and prescribed research, studies, and the drafting of master-plans, necessarily left vague the question of what was to be done with those plans. Quoting Harvard law professor Charles M. Haar—whom she had met at the Harvard Urban Design Conference and whom she would cite again in *Death and Life*—Jacobs wrote that, ““Without such clarification, there is small hope for a reconciliation of divergent interests, without which planning becomes simply a pleasant intellectual hobby.””<sup>135</sup>

As for federal intervention, assuming that the federal government could miraculously coordinate its own parts with respect to their impacts on the metropolis, it was impossible to imagine Washington filling a planning role satisfactorily for the metropolitan area. Jacobs observed that, as it was, deliberately or not, the policies of the Federal Housing Administration and the Public Housing Administration “probably had more to do with the progressive

ghettoizing of core cities, the class segregation of the suburbs, and the form of metropolitan scatteration than any other factors.”<sup>136</sup>

On the positive side, Jacobs noted that the very idea of contemporary metropolitan government was not much older than the eponymously titled book, *Metropolitan Government* (1942), by political scientist Victor Jones. Drawing on his work, and that of Charles M. Haar, Jerome Shestack, and Regional Plan Association director Henry Fagin, she outlined possibilities for creating state-level agencies and the federation of metropolitan governmental units, as had been established in Toronto (the city, probably not coincidentally, that would later become her home).

Such new layers of government would be controversial, far from perfect, and would take many years to establish. However, they would be “one of the greatest adventures in inventive self-government that any people has ever had a chance at.”<sup>137</sup> Calling up her own deeply held beliefs about U.S. democracy, she quoted architect Henry Churchill as stating that those who despair that self-government can ever be worked out with neatness and certitude should remember that ““Within the broadest possible framework of the general good, disorder must be allowed for, lest the people perish. Any form of initiative is disordering of the status quo and so needs encouragement, not suppression, if democracy is to retain vitality.””<sup>138</sup> Taking Churchill’s idea a step further, she related it to another of her deeply held beliefs, the importance of trial, error, and experimentation. As she wrote,

The first thing to understand about metropolitan government is that it is going to be dealt with not by abstract logic or elegance of structure, but in a combination of approaches by trial, error, and immense experimentation in a context of expediency and conflicting interests. Whatever we arrive at, we shall feel our way there.<sup>139</sup>



In the short term, however, regional planning was politically inconceivable and thus potentially destructive. By the time the metropolitan governmental structures were in place, it was possible that both the countryside and city would have been destroyed. To Jacobs' mind, "the number, size, and complexity of metropolitan problems add up to a metropolitan crisis."<sup>140</sup> And, at the time, she believed that urban renewal could provide some form of a response to this crisis: "Only because the central city situation is desperate does anything get done about it now and we have the instruments."

In the long term, however, Jacobs remained very concerned about urban sprawl, and she returned to the subject in her January 1958 essay "The City's Threat to Open Land," which analyzed an "Open Land" roundtable organized by Douglas Haskell and William "Holly" Whyte, assistant managing editor of *Forum's* sister publication *Fortune* magazine, whose participants included Catherine Bauer (who read and offered comments on the draft), Charles Abrams, Ed Bacon, Charles Haar, Henry Fagin, and Carl Feiss.

Jacobs described the sprawl debate as already well developed and understood, even by contemporary standards. The roundtable panelists "did not waste time discussing whether there is a problem," she wrote.<sup>141</sup> It was clear that "whole counties of rolling land are being swallowed in repetitive suburbia" and "vast city sprawls" were growing between the "megapolises" and "supercities." Scenic landscape was being destroyed and precious Class I farmland was being consumed. Impervious surfaces abounded with rain "unable to percolate through uniform new carpetings of roofs and roads." Streams were being polluted and watersheds fouled. Moreover, the waste of "scatteration" left in its wake and at its flanks an astonishing amount of open space that counted for nothing and bore "no relationship to soils, water, topography." What was left

over was “too random, too formless, too inefficient” to amount to anything. “It is too blighted even to retain its attraction as a place to fill in,” she wrote.<sup>142</sup>

The only question was “how to steer the bulldozers before it is too late.”<sup>143</sup>

As underscored by Jacobs, the immediate acquisition of open land was the answer. Her prescription was “Action First” to avoid “Paralysis by Analysis.” As Jacobs put it, “Set aside open land before it is too late; rationalize its use later.”<sup>144</sup> “There is no such thing as ‘unused’ open land,” she remarked. Conversely, “To remain open may be by far the highest use of a piece of land in both the public and private interest,” she continued. “Scatteration... had outdated the old concept of ‘developed’ versus ‘undeveloped’ land—the concept that a favor is done for any land when it is built on.”<sup>145</sup>

Ad-hoc preservation was thus a necessity, and, moreover, “no betrayal of the cause of regional planning.” On the contrary, each ad-hoc “incident of improvement” could “accelerate *de facto* regional planning as nothing else could.”<sup>146</sup> As compared to the ambiguity of how, for example, Bauer’s proposed satellite communities might fit within a politically-fraught, comprehensive and long-term regional master-plan, open land preservation was immediately and empirically comprehensible. “Open land amid sprawl is tangible, it is understandable, its benefits to a huge cross-section of population and interests can be made obvious,” Jacobs wrote hopefully. “And the dismaying truth about its desperate urgency is already registered in the brain of anyone with eyes to see what has happened to the metropolitan countryside of five years ago.”<sup>147</sup> Ad-hoc preservation, she anticipated, could be the focus of action and the “informed, intelligent pressure” of activists.<sup>148</sup>

Jacobs’ conception of open land preservation, in other words, had its counterpart in her bottom-up approach to the preservation of the living city. As in the city, ad-hoc planning could

save places from destruction while the comprehensive plans were being drawn up, debated, and fought in legislatures, courts, and the court of public opinion.

Jacobs concluded *Death and Life* with a rarely quoted but prescient commentary on suburbia's rapid and fearful consumption of rural land:

Each day, several thousand more acres of our countryside are eaten by the bulldozers, covered by pavement, dotted with suburbanites who have killed the thing they thought they came to find. Our irreplaceable heritage of Grade I agricultural land (a rare treasure of nature on this earth) is sacrificed for highways or supermarket parking lots as ruthlessly and unthinkingly as the trees in the woodlands are uprooted, the streams and rivers polluted and the air itself filled with the gasoline exhausts (products of eons of nature's manufacturing) required in this great national effort to cozy up with a fictionalized nature and flee the "unnaturalness" of the city.<sup>149</sup>

Written shortly before Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, and decades of subsequent writing about pollution, sprawl, loss of agricultural land, and environmental degradation, the passage shows that Jacobs' ideas about the city and country were part of a dawning environmentalism.

However, although she regarded both city and the country as human habitat, she gravitated to the city, the "fire" that extended its radiance into a "field of darkness," carving out a space of habitation from the wilderness. Moreover, she had long seen herself as a "city naturalist," and thus decided to focus her efforts there. Others were doing an admirable job raising awareness about the problems of urban sprawl. In fact, in the same month that Jacobs' article on "The City's Threat to Open Land" appeared in *Forum*, an article titled "Urban Sprawl" by Open Land roundtable co-organizer Holly Whyte appeared in *Fortune*.

Thus, by this time, Jacobs was most interested in raising awareness about the problems of urban redevelopment, which she had been dwelling on since her visits to East Harlem and writing

her talk for the Harvard conference, her editorial on “Pavement Pounders and Olympians,” and her contributions to “What City Pattern.” The result would be what Douglas Haskell later described as “the first comprehensive piece” on the subject of urban redevelopment, and a prelude to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

In November 1957, Douglas Haskell described the outline of Jacobs’ feature to his editorial colleagues and supervisor—Ralph “Del” Paine (publisher of *Forum* and *Fortune*), Joe Hazen (managing editor of *Forum* and *House & Home*), and Lawrence P. Lessing (assistant managing editor of *Fortune* and science writer). Jane, he told them, “has been talking about an approach to city pattern which I think we should discuss very seriously with her because it just might make an impression in *Forum* as strong as our September 1956 [“City Patterns”] issue.” Jacobs was prepared to take on generations of city planning theory: to argue for small blocks instead of super-blocks; to argue for more streets instead of fewer; and to argue for a greater number of smaller public spaces over a smaller number of large ones. Haskell explained that she was ready to make the case for fine-grained and intimately-scaled city fabric instead of the large-scaled, top-down planning approach:

Jane is moving right with the times because the ideas she is talking about do not require large-scale land acquisition, large-scale project planning, large-scale bureaucracy, etc., etc. Nevertheless, Jane is quite dauntlessly going in the face of some seventy-five years of tradition in city planning derived out of the original Garden City concept.

The super-block has been one of the main pillars of this concept, along with the greenbelt idea and the satellite town. What Jane is saying is that we do too much super-block thinking and, if anything, we need to cut our present blocks still smaller because the nervous system of the city is the street system.

As I understand it, we would have a great deal of individual action on tightly packed small parcels by individual owners and no great dedications of land immediately contiguous to the houses, to space, light and air. This space, light and air would be brought in to the fabric by municipalities through condemnation of a great many more little squares for outright park use. So

the kids of the vicinity could jump from their tightly-packed houses right into an open space the way my nephew used to be able to run down into Gramercy Park.

By late 1957, in other words, Jacobs had developed many of the key ideas that she would elaborate on in *Death and Life*.

Although Haskell had been taken aback by Jacobs' ideas at first, she had convinced him. He recommended Jacobs' feature for further discussion at the next executive editors' meeting and that she should be given "a big hunk of space" to elaborate her argument, despite the hostile reaction that they might receive at first from architects and city planners:

I think there is enough content in this to rate serious go-around in our next editorial discussion to weigh giving Jane a big hunk of space for exposition and debate. I can imagine it would make many an existing planner furious at first, just as my own temptation was to be furious, but it is likely to rouse a very unexpected enthusiasm and give a new point for leverage in thinking and action about the city.

A few weeks later Jacobs was given the go-ahead on her "blockbuster on the superblock."

## **From Jane's "Blockbuster on the Superblock" to "Urban Design Criticism"**

Jacobs' "blockbuster on the superblock" was published in *Fortune* magazine in April 1958 as "Downtown Is For People." To Douglas Haskell's disappointment, Time Inc.'s editors decided to divert her feature to *Forum*'s sister publication where it would have more space, greater exposure, and where it would become the capstone of an on-going series of articles on cities and urban sprawl being organized by Holly Whyte, assistant managing editor at *Fortune*. They hoped to repeat the success that Whyte recently had with another series—a sequence of interviews with

corporate executives that led to his best-selling book *The Organization Man* (1956), a study which had stimulated Whyte's interest in the sociology of the suburbs.<sup>150</sup> And Haskell was right about the enthusiastic reception of Jacobs' contribution. By mid April, "Downtown Is for People"—which was published with illustrations by drawn by the *Architectural Review's* Gordon Cullen from photographs taken by Ian Nairn, and the sidebar "What Makes a Good Square Good" by Louisville journalist Grady Clay—received among the most positive responses of any article published by *Fortune*. Whyte sent Haskell a transcription of thirty glowing letters from mayors, city planning directors and academics, real estate developers, and urban renewal consultants, including New York planning director Raymond Vernon, Baltimore developer James Rouse, Milwaukee mayor Frank Zeidler, Philadelphia mayor Richard Dilworth, St. Louis mayor Raymond Tucker, Shreveport mayor James Gardner, San Francisco city planning director James McCarthy, Berkeley city planning professor Francis Violich, *Landscape* editor J. B. Jackson, MIT professor Gyorgy Kepes, and Jacobs' acquaintances Ellen Lurie, and William Kirk.<sup>151</sup> "Look what your girl did for us!" Whyte penciled on the top of the memo. "This is one of the best responses we've ever had!"

Haskell was delighted with Jacobs' success, but, after all that he had worked for, he was disappointed that it was *Fortune* rather than *Forum* that was seen as leading criticism of urban redevelopment in America and that it was *Fortune* that had published "the first comprehensive piece on this subject by *Forum's* own best writer."<sup>152</sup>

"Downtown Is For People" rearticulated points Jacobs' made in her previous essays—the significance of the city's concentration and centrality, and the need to protect it from the automobile; the need to study it on foot and to design it from eye-level, and for the human horizon, not that of cars, birds, or airplanes; the collaborative process of city-making; and the

flaws of statistical design techniques and urban renewal projects like the “ersatz suburb” of Gateway Center—and expanded on them. Anticipating points that she would elaborate in chapters of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she argued that the street, not the block, was the city’s essential formal and functional element, and that the multiple functions of the public space of the street needed to be respected and augmented, as in the example of Rockefeller Center. She argued the need for old buildings and short blocks, compact public spaces, focal points in city design, and the variety and function of a mixture of old and new. New buildings, she observed, invited “the chain store and the chain restaurant,” not the marginal and exceptional enterprises that only a city could support.<sup>153</sup> She argued for mixed uses, multiple functions, a twenty-four hour city, and the public spaces and planning that would facilitate these interactions and relationships. She argued for thinking beyond the limits of a redevelopment site: “Look at the bird’s eye views published of forthcoming projects,” she remarked, “if they bother to indicate the surrounding streets, all too likely an airbrush has softened the streets into an innocuous blur.”<sup>154</sup> And she argued for designing with the “peculiar combinations of past and present, climate and topography, or accidents of growth.” She explained, for example, that,

A sense of place is built up, in the end, from many little things too, some so small people take them for granted, and yet the lack of them takes the flavor out of the city: irregularities in level, so often bulldozed away; different kinds of paving, signs and fireplugs and street lights, white marble stoops.<sup>155</sup>

Cities, she argued, were physical and perceptual topographies, and city-building needed to be a collaborative and phenomenological affair, an activity of common senses, not one devoid of many people’s plans and perceptions. “The remarkable intricacy and liveliness of downtown can never be created by the abstract logic of a few men,” she affirmed. Rather, “the citizen can be the ultimate expert on this; what is needed is an observant eye, curiosity about people, and a

willingness to walk.”<sup>156</sup> She believed that “There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans.”<sup>157</sup>

Among those captivated by Jacobs’ “blockbuster” was Chadbourne Gilpatric, associate director of the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. By this time, Gilpatric—Rhodes scholar, former professor of philosophy, member of American intelligence agencies, and polymath with an interest in literary criticism—had become the champion of the Foundation’s urban design research initiative, with an interest in developing both the field, and criticism of urban design and redevelopment. In fact, in February 1958, even before “Downtown Is For People” was published, he contacted Douglas Haskell, who recommended that Gilpatric speak with Jacobs. And on the subject of criticism, Gilpatric and Haskell were of like minds. Gilpatric noted that,

Douglas Haskell deplores the paucity of critical thinking about new demands for architecture and design in city planning. One of the few able and imaginative people concerned with this domain is Jane Jacobs, on his staff. She has just completed a long piece for the next issue of *Fortune* on the problem of the overloaded central city, i.e., congested downtown areas in American cities. (Jay Gold of *Fortune* will send an advance copy of this issue.) She might be a person worth talking to soon.<sup>158</sup>

Gilpatric would do so, because, despite all of Haskell’s efforts to advance architectural criticism, with the exception of Lewis Mumford and Grady Clay’s writing, there was an “almost complete absence of critical writing about the design of cities in the American popular and professional press”:

Lewis Mumford’s columns in the *New Yorker* magazine are apparently the only regularly published critical writing on urban design in any American magazine. Grady Clay’s articles in the *Louisville Courier Journal* are the only regularly published criticisms of urban design appearing in any American newspaper. The few articles in the architectural and planning press lack depth, and appeal to the narrowest audiences.<sup>159</sup>



Thus, Gilpatric contacted Jacobs because, as he put it later, “One form of the question was where there were to be found other Lewis Mumfords, who could bring his critical, philosophical, and historical background to bear on problems of urban planning.”<sup>160</sup> Although he was not necessarily convinced that he had found another Mumford in Jacobs, he was intrigued, and sent a Humanities director Charles Fahs a copy of “Downtown Is For People.”<sup>161</sup> Referring to Lynch and Kepes’ sponsored research, he wrote, “You will find some interesting ideas and formulations in the attached forthcoming essay in *Fortune Magazine*. Jane Jacobs, borrowed from the staff of the Architectural Forum to do this piece for *Fortune*, has obviously drawn heavily on the RF-financed MIT research.”

After some preliminary conversations, Gilpatric and Jacobs had a long conversation in May 1958. They talked about her recent trip to Baltimore to visit the new Charles Center redevelopment project—led by planner David Wallace (originally from Philadelphia’s redevelopment authority), architect George Kostritsky, consultant William L.C. Wheaton, and the Greater Baltimore Committee—which she described as currently the best of its kind because, although it was large in scale, many city departments and civic groups had been involved, because the streets and public spaces would be city-property, not private property, and because numerous developers would be involved. With such an organization, “there would be no overall developer who could impose design and the kind of objectionable features typical of many big development projects.”<sup>162</sup> In “New Heart for Baltimore,” published in *Forum’s* June issue, Jacobs admitted that Charles Center, “like all urban redevelopment, will cause hardship and perplexing injustices to some people now on the site.” Despite the hardship to businessmen like Issac Hamburger, a third generation men’s wear store owner, however, Jacobs praised Charles Center for drawing on more than a decade of “trial-and-error experience” with city redevelopment

maintaining central city functions and their concentration; site-planning that made the redevelopment less “a ‘project’ than an integral, continuous part of downtown”; and creating “undiluted urbanity” through “architecturally design and architectural organized [open] spaces,” which she associated with a scale and tradition closer to medieval and renaissance public spaces. “The open spaces, and the paths that join them,” she observed, “are not simply places left without buildings.” Thus, Jacobs was hopeful that the redevelopment project would contribute to genuine improvement: “as a whole, the design of the Center is concentrated, intricate, lively and full of changes. It is a celebration of city core qualities.”<sup>163</sup>

In addition to work in practice, Jacobs and Gilpatric also discussed academic work in the field. Jacobs was enthusiastic about a proposal submitted to the Foundation by Ian McHarg at University of Pennsylvania (which she would later review for Gilpatric) for a series of books on civic design and landscape architecture.<sup>164</sup> She also spoke highly of city planning chair William L.C. Wheaton (who she knew from Charles Center project research), Louis Kahn (“one of the most fertile idea men in urban design and originator of ideas for which Victor Gruen has become so noted in the Fort Worth Central City Plan”), city planner Joseph Mitchell, sociologist Anthony Wallace, President Gaylord Harnwell (who played an important role in the Greater Philadelphia movement), and local architect-planners such as Henry Mitchell—she believed the school offered the best atmosphere for architectural and city planning research and was “the most productive and influential center at present in the United States.”<sup>165</sup>

When asked how the Rockefeller Foundation could best support the design and planning of cities, Jacobs told Gilpatric that she would like to see the foundation “give opportunities for observation and writing to some first-rate architectural critics who could develop helpful new ideas for the planning of cities.” She recommended Ian Nairn (possibly “the best man there is on

cityscapes”), Grady Clay (“the best man she knows at the present time” in the U.S.), and Catherine Bauer (who “is far ahead of her time and full of ideas”). She also recommended Nathan Glazer, associate professor of sociology and social institutions at Berkeley, who had recently submitted an excellent essay, “The Great City and the City Planners,” to *Architectural Forum*—which Jacobs would later cite in *Death and Life*.<sup>166</sup>

Jacobs also indicated that she had a project in mind. She was interested in making an intensive three-month study of New York focused on the city’s public sphere: its streets and their sociological function; the scale of neighborhoods and the relationship of the size of social groups to their function as neighborhoods or communities; social mixture and interaction, which she believed was “the essence of urban life”; and the implications of these scales and mixtures on the city’s public streets and places. The studies would probably be published in *Architectural Forum*, but she needed a few months leave from her other editorial responsibilities to write them. The New School for Social Research would likely host her and administer a foundation grant; she believed Arthur Swift, the school’s dean, who she knew from the Union Settlement’s board of directors, would be interested in such research.<sup>167</sup> She had recently given a well-received talk that was a follow up to “Downtown Is For People” at a New School symposium on the subject of “New York City: A Look into the Future”—in which she criticized the adjacent Lincoln Center and Amsterdam Houses redevelopment projects and Robert Moses’ newly revived plan “to make a parkway out of Washington Square Park, by extending Fifth Avenue through the square, as projects that were destroying New York’s “enormous variety of activities and people, and the intricate relationships among them.”<sup>168</sup>

Taking Jacobs’ recommendations and suggestions to heart, in the following days, Gilpatric talked with William Wheaton about developing “a program on urban criticism.”

Wheaton suggested a small one-day conference of persons who had contributed most in recent years to this field, including Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Grady Clay, Catherine Bauer, Holly Whyte, and a few others. Wheaton followed this with a proposal for “A Conference on Criticism in Urban Design” in June 1958, which led to the Rockefeller Foundation – University of Pennsylvania “Conference on Urban Design Criticism” on October 2-4, 1958, organized by Wheaton and urban design theorist David Crane, whose participants included architect Arthur C. Holden, *Landscape* editor J.B. Jackson, Louis Kahn, Kevin Lynch, Ian McHarg, I. M. Pei, Gordon Stephenson, and Penn School of Fine Arts dean G. Holmes Perkins, in addition to Gilpatric, Mumford, Clay, Bauer, and Jacobs.<sup>169</sup>

In the meantime, Jacobs had also thought further about her project and decided it should probably be a book rather than a series of articles. She was interested in “how to interpret human needs in modern city life” and the focus of the book would be “*what is the city* or *what should the city be for people*, although neither of these phrases would be acceptable as a title.” With Henri Pirenne’s *Medieval Cities* in mind, the primary theme of the book would be showing the flaws of the contemporary planning concept of the city “as a castle where the overall plan is subject to a single or collective mastermind,” in contrast to a “highly pluralistic concept of the city which allows for many forces and chance factors.” She would also expand her research beyond New York, to other great American cities.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 95.

<sup>2</sup> The outstanding histories of urban design are David Gosling's *The Evolution of American Urban Design: A Chronological Anthology* (West Sussex, GB: Wiley-Academy, 2003) and Eric Mumford's books—*The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) and *Defining Urban Design: CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline, 1937-1969* (New York: Yale University Press, 2009), as well as Eric Mumford and Hashim Sarkis' edited collection, *Josep LLuis Sert: The Architect of Urban Design, 1953-1969* (New York: Yale University Press, 2008). More research remains to be done to find the *locus classicus* of the term *urban design*, however, if that is possible. Gosling—who knew the field well as a student of many of the field's founders, among them Gordon Cullen, Christopher Tunnard, Gyorgy Kepes, and Kevin Lynch—erroneously attributed the term to Sert and the First Harvard Urban Design Conference (34). I have offered some earlier examples, but suspect that the switch from *civic design* to *urban design* could have taken place as early as the development of the Civic Design movement, since the component terms were familiar and made for an easy neologism: the term *design*, of course, can be traced to the Italian Renaissance, and had been used in the context of shaping cities since the Civic Design movement of the 1930s; meanwhile the Latinate adjective *urban* had been commonly used to refer to the city since the nineteenth-century. As I argue here, however, U.S. urban redevelopment legislation was essential to the linguistic and disciplinary transformation.

<sup>3</sup> Miles Colean, "Economic and Social Significance of Housing Design," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 190 (Mar. 1937), 101.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Mumford, Introduction to *Toward New Towns for America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Eric Mumford, "The Emergence of Urban Design in the Breakup of CIAM," *Harvard Design Magazine* 24 (Spring/Summer 2006), 11. Eric Mumford notes that Harvard Dean José Luis Sert contribution to this discussion with a paper simply titled "Urban Design."

<sup>6</sup> David Crane, "A Working Paper for the University of Pennsylvania Conference on Urban Design Criticism" (RF RG 1.2 University of Pennsylvania – Community Planning Conference, Oct. 1958-61, Ser. 200, Box 457, File 3904, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY), 6.

<sup>7</sup> MIT School of Architecture and Planning Visiting Committee, Meeting of the Visiting Committee to the School of Architecture and Planning, MIT, Apr. 7, 1952 (Box 34, Folder 5, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University), 2. Douglas Haskell, then Jacobs' new supervisor, was a member of MIT's Visiting Committee.

<sup>8</sup> Charles B. Fahs, Interview with Dr. John Burchard, Clarence Stein, Prof. Frederick Adams, Jan. 6, 1953. (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>9</sup> Ann L. Strong and George E. Thomas, *The Book of the School: 100 Years of the Graduate School of Fine Arts of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Graduate School of Fine Arts), 141.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon Stephenson, *On a Human Scale: A Life in City Design* (South Fremantle, Australia: Fremantle Arts Center Press, 1992), 108.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Clarence Stein, *Toward New Towns for America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon Stephenson's appointment as chair of City Planning was made impossible when he was denied a permanent visa, ostensibly because of suspicions aroused by his work on the Palace of the Soviets for Le Corbusier and subsequent trips to the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Stephenson, *On a Human Scale*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Stein and Stephenson sought support for *Town Planning Review*, which was then struggling. They explained that the publication, which was the only such at the time that published articles on urban history was of particular importance to the field. In the same conversation, Adams described his studies of education in the field of city planning, and details of the twenty-three U.S. degree programs, the majority of them new, including their disciplinary foundations (ten developed out of architecture programs, five out of social sciences, four out of landscape architecture, one out of engineering, and so on). Fahs, MIT Interview, Jan. 6, 1953.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See John Ely Burchard, "My Worries about the Education of Architects," *Journal of Architectural Education* 10 (Spr. 1955), 5. Another aspect of Burchard's influence on architectural education was his service on the Harvard and Princeton Visiting Committees. See Leland Devinney and Edward D'Arms, Interview with M.I.T. Architecture and Planning Faculty, Feb. 17, 1954 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 6.

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<sup>17</sup> John Ely Burchard, "Metropolis in Ferment: The Urban Aesthetic," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 314 (Nov. 1957), 112-22.

<sup>18</sup> Charles B. Fahs, Interview with Dr. John Burchard, July 24, 1953 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>19</sup> MIT's Center for Urban and Regional Studies preceded the establishment of similar research institutes at Harvard and Penn. Louis Bemis Wetmore was Visiting Professor of City Planning and inaugural director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies. As compared to more "humanistic" direction proposed by the Rockefeller Foundation and Burchard, his research focused urban economics and the "problems of intra-regional industrial location." Wetmore left MIT for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1955. (Cf. Wetmore Papers, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign).

<sup>20</sup> Edward D'Arms and Leland Devinney, Interview with M.I.T. Architecture and Planning Faculty, Feb. 17, 1954 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 1. Also present at the early meetings were John Burchard, Frederick Adams, Gordon Stephenson, and architecture department chair Lawrence Anderson.

<sup>21</sup> Charles B. Fahs, Interview with J. Burchard, L. Anderson, L. Wetmore, F. Adams, G. Stephenson, Sept. 18, 1953. (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 1.

<sup>22</sup> D'Arms and Devinney, Interview with M.I.T. Architecture and Planning Faculty, Feb. 17, 1954, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fahs, Interview with J. Burchard, L. Anderson, L. Wetmore, F. Adams, G. Stephenson, Sept. 18, 1953. 2. Lynch and Kepes were not present at some of the early meetings. Although the details of their early participation is unclear, their research agenda was communicated through the Center for Urban and Regional Studies.

<sup>25</sup> M.I.T. Center for Urban & Regional Studies, "The Three-Dimensional Urban Environment," Draft Research Proposal, Oct. 7, 1953 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 1-2. The proposal was submitted by the Center for Urban and Regional Studies while Kevin Lynch was in Florence, studying city form and the experience of the city. At this point, however, the proposal may have had multiple authors as it remained an amalgamation of research interests.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Fahs, Interview with J. Burchard, L. Anderson, L. Wetmore, F. Adams, G. Stephenson, Sept. 18, 1953.

<sup>29</sup> "The Three-Dimensional Urban Environment," 5-10.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>32</sup> M.I.T. Center for Urban & Regional Studies, Lynch and Kepes, "Proposed Study: The Perceptual Forms of Cities," Dec. 23, 1953 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>34</sup> "The Three-Dimensional Urban Environment," Draft Research Proposal, Oct. 7, 1953, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. To understand the "Psychological Reactions to the City," Lynch and Kepes indicated that they would consult with a social psychologist about interviewing a "well-selected but relatively small sample, perhaps twenty to thirty persons, in order to investigate their attitudes toward the city, their perception and grasp of it, the elements most important in giving them pleasure or displeasure, and their history and memories in relation to the city." This aspect of the research, more so than their critical theory, eventually dominated the analytical and objective sensibility of Lynch's book *The Image of the City*.

<sup>37</sup> D'Arms and Devinney, Interview with M.I.T. Architecture and Planning Faculty, Feb. 17, 1954, 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Proposed Study: The Perceptual Forms of Cities," 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>40</sup> Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Division, Grant Report for M.I.T. Lynch-Kepes City Planning Study (RF 54034), Apr. 7, 1954 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 2.

<sup>41</sup> Charles B. Fahs, Visit to MIT, Mar. 2, 1954 (RF RG 1.2, MIT City Planning. Series 200R, Box 375, Folder 3330.30, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC), 2.

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<sup>42</sup> I have written about Jacobs' writing on urban redevelopment for *Amerika* in "The Death and Life of Urban Design: Jane Jacobs, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the New Research in Urbanism, 1955-65," *Journal of Urban Design* 11 (Jun. 2006), 145-72.

<sup>43</sup> Harvard Graduate School of Design Alumni Association, "Urban Design Conference," *GSD Alumni Newsletter* 1 (Dec. 29, 1955), 1. The conference was organized with the support of the Alumni Association.

<sup>44</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to José Luis Sert, Mar. 19, 1956 (Box 20, Folder 5, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>45</sup> Harvard Graduate School of Design Alumni Association, "Urban Design Conference Report," *GSD Alumni Newsletter* 2 (Jun. 7, 1956), 2.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Mother Jacobs' Home Remedies," *New Yorker* 38 (Dec. 1, 1962), 151. Mumford's review of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was partly complimentary, partly condescending, and justifiably bitter. He had been supportive of her work and encouraging, and had written a letter of recommendation for her Rockefeller Foundation grant. Although Jacobs paid Mumford some compliments in *Death and Life* on points of agreement, she was dismissive of his "from the ground up" approach to the city, as well as his friends and heroes Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, and Clarence Stein. After a cooling off period, they remained cordial, because, as Robert Wojtowicz has observed, they ultimately shared a belief in the cultural significance of cities, despite their views on the best way to achieve the good city. Cf. Robert Wojtowicz, *Lewis Mumford & American Modernism: Eutopian Theories for Architecture and Urban Planning* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 158.

<sup>47</sup> Victor Gruen, Letter to Douglas Haskell, Apr. 16, 1956 (Box 8, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>48</sup> E. Mumford, "The Emergence of Urban Design in the Breakup of CIAM," 11.

<sup>49</sup> Kevin Lynch, "Proceedings of the June 1954 ACSA Conference: A New Look at Civic Design," *Journal of Architectural Education* 10 (Spr. 1955), 32.

<sup>50</sup> E. Mumford, "The Emergence of Urban Design in the Breakup of CIAM," 16. See also Richard Marshall, "The Elusiveness of Urban Design: The Perpetual Problems of Definition and Role," *Harvard Design Magazine* 24 (Spr/Sum. 2006), 26.

<sup>51</sup> Lynch, "A New Look at Civic Design," 32.

<sup>52</sup> José Luis Sert, "Proceedings of the June 1954 ACSA Conference: Welcome Address: The Challenge Ahead," *Journal of Architectural Education* 10 (Spr. 1955), 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Progressive Architecture*, "Condensed Report of an Invitation Conference Sponsored by the Faculty and Alumni Association of the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, April 9-10, 1956," *Progressive Architecture* 37 (Aug. 1956), 97. See also Jonathan Barnett, "The Way We Were, The Way We Are: The Theory and Practice of Designing Cities Since 1956," *Harvard Design Magazine* 24 (Spr/Sum. 2006), 61.

<sup>54</sup> José Luis Sert, Introduction to the Urban Design Conference, Harvard GSD, Apr. 9, 1956 (Sert Papers, Loeb Library Special Collections, Harvard Graduate School of Design), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Sert's statement that "urban design was a no man's land that architects, city planners, engineers, and landscape architects did not invade" was an exaggeration, at least with regard to architects. City planning and landscape architecture, as discussed in this chapter, were both relatively new and small fields. Architects, however, were involved in redevelopment and renewal projects before the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 and after, although, as a profession, they may not have played leadership roles, or been especially interested in city redevelopment (as compared to designing new towns and landscapes outside of city cores). As discussed in previous chapters, well-known architects were involved in designing New York City Housing Authority projects like Williamsburg Houses and Fort Greene Houses; public-private slum clearance projects like Stuyvesant Town; and Robert Moses' early Title I projects for Greenwich Village, Harlem, and other city sites.

<sup>56</sup> Sert, "Introduction to the Urban Design Conference," 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. In the *Progressive Architecture* transcript, the editors changed Sert's "apology for the city" to "a case for the city." See *Progressive Architecture*, "Urban Design: Condensed Report," 97.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> E. Mumford, The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 133.

<sup>61</sup> Sert, "Introduction to the Urban Design Conference," 11.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Jane Jacobs, "The Missing Link In City Redevelopment," *Architectural Forum* 104 (Jun. 1956), 132-33.

<sup>68</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Oct. 17, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives).

<sup>69</sup> Sert, "Introduction to the Urban Design Conference," 4.

<sup>70</sup> J. L. Sert and CIAM, *Can Our Cities Survive?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1944), 10.

<sup>71</sup> Le Corbusier, *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 107.

<sup>72</sup> In *Uncommon Ground*, David Leatherbarrow has argued that while Le Corbusier was fascinated by the airplane view, he did not reject the intimate, human scale. For Le Corbusier, the problematic zone was the middle-ground between the city's aerial image and its everyday life.

<sup>73</sup> *Progressive Architecture*, "Condensed Report of an Invitation Conference," 99.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>75</sup> Jacobs, "The Missing Link In City Redevelopment," 133. Some of this and other parts of Jacobs' talk were edited out of the *Progressive Architecture's* "Condensed Report." Cp. *Progressive Architecture*, "Urban Design: Condensed Report," 103.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Pavement Pounders and Olympians," *Architectural Forum* 104 (May 1956), 164.

<sup>83</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Downtown Is For People," *Fortune* 57 (April 1958), 134.

<sup>84</sup> Jacobs, "Downtown Is For People," 138. Lynch's article "A Walk Around the Block," co-authored with Malcolm Rivkin, was not published until a year later. See Lynch and Rivkin, "A Walk Around The Block," *Landscape* 8 (Spr. 1959), 24-34.

<sup>85</sup> Jacobs, "Downtown Is For People," 140.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 132, 439.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 435.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 436

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 436-37.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 436.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 440.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to Catherine Bauer Wurster, May 28, 1956 (Box 24, File 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>94</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to William Kirk, Jan. 17, 1956 (Box 22, Folder 1, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Michael Johns, *Moment of Grace: The American City in the 1950s* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 91.

<sup>96</sup> Sert, "Introduction to Urban Design Conference," 8-9.

<sup>97</sup> In the opening of his Urban Design Conference talk, Sert stated, "The American cities, after a period of rapid growth and open sprawl, have reached maturity and are starting to work on large scale redevelopment projects" (1). Sert's recent work was familiar to Jacobs' colleagues and almost certainly Jacobs herself. In 1953, Sert and Wiener's plans for Cuba and other Latin America cities were reviewed in an article titled "Can Patios Make Cities?," *Architectural Forum* 99 (Aug. 1953), 124-31. Although the authors praised Sert and Wiener's architecture and public space-making strategies, they questioned whether the patio device was adequate for making cities, as suggested by the title of the article. Jacobs would appreciate Sert's housing plans that incorporated low-rise and high-rise buildings, as in Cambridge, however. She praised similar plans by I.M. Pei and Harry Weese for southwest Washington in "Central City Housing: Return of the Outdoor Room," *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 121. She was particularly interested in row-house plans, which she admired on various occasions, including her un-bylined article "Row Houses for Cities," *Architectural Forum* 106 (May 1957), 148-52. Jacobs herself was involved in the design and development of a new row-house scheme for the West Village in the mid-1960s.



<sup>98</sup> Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 119.

<sup>99</sup> Hastings made the connection between Civic Design and Townscape in the following passage, which concluded his essay and introduced a “casebook” of visual studies compiled by Gordon Cullen: “To bring things down to practical politics the section which follows tries to demonstrate in a purely token way the Case-Book idea applied to town planning as a visual art, termed by Thomas Sharp *Civic Design* and by the *Review*, I think, *Townscape*.” Ivor de Wolfe, “Townscape,” *The Architectural Review* 106 (Dec. 1949), 362.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>101</sup> H. de C. Hastings, J.M. Richards, et al. “Man Made America,” *The Architectural Review* 108 (Dec. 1950), 341.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>104</sup> Ian Nairn and Gordon Cullen, *Outrage* (London: Architectural Press), i.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>106</sup> As *urban design* emerged as a term of art, *townscape* rivaled it, despite its inadequacies. In 1958, for example, city planner William L.C. Wheaton discussed the terminology. He indicated that “while *townscape* is by now a fairly orthodox term, with standard connotations in Britain, it seems to have little currency in the United States, and indeed invites confusion in the contrast between town and city.” Although he was thus uncomfortable with the term, he found it “preferable to such alternatives as ‘urban texture’ and ‘cityscape’.” The more descriptive phrase that Wheaton was comfortable with, “design of the urban environment,” was a bit of a mouthful. (Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with William L.C. Wheaton, May 27, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 University of Pennsylvania – Community Planning, June 1958-59, Ser. 200, Box 456, File 3900, Rockefeller Foundation Archive, RAC).

<sup>107</sup> Douglas Haskell, “Architecture for the Next Twenty Years,” *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 164.

<sup>108</sup> Jacobs later acknowledged Nairn, Cullen, and *The Architectural Review*’s influence in the introduction to the Modern Library edition of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Modern Library, 1993), xiii—and she was not alone. Other Townscape ripple effects were seen in the late 1950s in Grady Clay’s column on city development in *The Louisville Courier-Journal* and his “Townscape” column in *The Louisville Magazine*.

<sup>109</sup> Douglas Haskell, Jane Jacobs, Walter McQuade and Ogden Tanner, “What City Pattern?” *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 103-29. Key authors identified from correspondence.

<sup>110</sup> Jane Jacobs, “By 1976 What City Pattern?” *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 103.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Jane Jacobs, Memo to Douglas Haskell, May 28, 1956 (Box 24, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>113</sup> Catherine Bauer Wurster, “First Job: Control New-City Sprawl,” *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 111.

<sup>114</sup> Recognizing that Jacobs distinguished between the imaginative and experimental city planning concepts of the 1930s and the vulgarized copies of the 1950s is critical to understanding her work. Although she criticized theorists like Ebenezer Howard, Clarence Stein, and Le Corbusier, because she valued innovation as much as she valued the city (the natural place of the development of creativity, innovation, and problem-solving), she was more critical of students, practitioners, and dogmatists who accepted their ideas without independent thought and reflection. As discussed in Chapter 8, she made this point a number of times in *Death and Life*.

<sup>115</sup> Bauer, “First Job: Control New-City Sprawl,” 105. The editorial caption to the article, probably written by Jacobs, read: “This novel argument says ‘forget the old city’ because 1976 will see new cities of up to a million people in today’s countryside. This provocative concept sets off *Forum*’s discussion of the city pattern to come.”

<sup>116</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to Catherine Bauer Wurster, July 13, 1956 (Box 24, Folder 6, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library), 2.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Douglas Haskell, Letter to Victor Gruen, July 13, 1958 (Box 8, Folder 7, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library).

<sup>120</sup> Haskell, Jacobs, McQuade and Tanner, “What City Pattern? *Forum* Editors Reply to Catherine Bauer,” 113.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* Parts of this un-bylined reply indicate Jacobs’ authorship, other parts Haskell and McQuade’s.

<sup>122</sup> Jane Jacobs, “What City Pattern? The Central City: Concentration vs. Congestion,” *Architectural Forum* 105 (Sept. 1956), 115.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>129</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, May 9, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC). See also, Peter L. Laurence, "The Death and Life of Urban Design: Jane Jacobs, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the New Research in Urbanism, 1955-1965," *Journal of Urban Design* 11 (Jun. 2006), 159-60.

<sup>130</sup> *Progressive Architecture*, "Urban Design: Condensed Report," 97.

<sup>131</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 19-20. After reading this, Bauer took extensive notes on *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and, like other reviewers of the time, found many points of agreement and disagreement. Ultimately Bauer affirmed that she preferred low-density development to that advocated by Jacobs. Bauer also thought that Jacobs was a Bohemian, Greenwich Village intellectual who was nostalgic and romantic about the city, its ethnic neighborhoods, and street life, and who privileged "public values" over middle-class values of private and family life. Bauer also wrote to the LA Police Department to find statistics to contradict Jacobs' claims in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that dense cities had less or equivalent crime to low-density cities like Los Angeles. See Catherine Bauer Wurster, "J. Jacobs... notes..." and Letter to Los Angeles Police Department, Dec. 11, 1961 (Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers, MSS 74/163c, Box 7, Folder "Nov-Dec. 1961," The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA).

<sup>132</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Our 'Surplus' Land," *Architectural Forum* 106 (Mar. 1957), 101-2.

<sup>133</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Metropolitan Government," *Architectural Forum* 107 (Aug. 1957), 124.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 124-25.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>141</sup> Jane Jacobs, "The City's Threat to Open Land," *Architectural Forum* 108 (Jan. 1958), 87.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>144</sup> Jane Jacobs, "Breathing Space for Americans" [Draft of "The City's Threat to Open Land"] (Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers, MSS 74/163c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley), 2.

<sup>145</sup> Jacobs, "The City's Threat to Open Land," 89.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>149</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 445.

<sup>150</sup> William "Holly" Whyte, Jr. and Jacobs were contemporaries, almost the same age, although Whyte joined *Fortune* and Time Inc. in 1946 and was senior to her in the organization. Although Whyte's friendship was important to Jacobs' career, and although she cited *The Organization Man* in *Death and Life* (136), Whyte later overstated his influence on her. In the preface to the second edition of *The Exploding Metropolis*, he sought to take some credit for *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and stated that when he met Jacobs, her work at *Forum* "consisted mainly of writing captions" and that she had "never written anything longer than a few paragraphs"—which, as explained here, was not the case (*The Exploding Metropolis*, 1993, xv).

<sup>151</sup> Gyorgy Kepes' and J. B. Jackson's letters are most interesting for the relevance to Jacobs' work, since she would get to know Lynch and Kepes' Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored research and would meet Jackson at the Penn-Rockefeller Conference on Urban Design Criticism later that year, in October 1958. Kepes wrote: "I read ["Downtown Is For People"] with great interest and joy. It had not only understanding but a human warmth which is one of the most important guides, it seems to me, in all issues where we have to take a strong stand." Jackson wrote Jacobs: "I think it is the sanest, most stimulating discussion of current urbanist tendencies that I have read in many years, and what I think particularly valuable is your emphasis on the pedestrian scale, on the street. I am glad that such ideas as yours could reach such a large and influential public through *Fortune*; I should live very much to know what response you have had... Congratulations... I only wish you had time to write for *Landscape*."

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<sup>152</sup> William H. Whyte and Ruth Kammler, Selection of letters received in March and April 1958 by Fortune magazine Letters Dept. re “Downtown is for People” by Jane Jacobs (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives). Soon after the *Fortune* series, Haskell attributed its success to Jacobs and *Forum*, and described Whyte as their “student,” rather than the reverse. As Haskell wrote in May 1958 to Ian Nairn, one of Jacobs’ collaborators on “Downtown is for People”: “Of course your praise of *Fortune* was all deserved. I am proud to say, though, that far ahead as they were as compared to architectural thinking in America, they got their cram course from *Forum*, and, alas, they got the first comprehensive piece on this subject by *Forum*’s own best writer. Since it will travel farther in *Fortune*, we can only be happy that Holly Whyte was so brilliant a student. Moreover, the work he is doing under his own steam, and with no help from us, on open space, is quite wonderful” (Douglas Haskell, Letter to Ian Nairn, May 7, 1958 (Box 2, Folder 3, Douglas Putnam Haskell Papers, Avery Architectural Library). Insofar as Whyte’s work studying the social life of cities came later, it is probably fair to say that he was as much Jacobs’ student as he hers.

<sup>153</sup> Jacobs, “Downtown Is For People,” 138.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 134. In *Uncommon Ground* (2000) and *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (2009), David Leatherbarrow has offered a way of thinking about architectural design that seems sympathetic with Jacobs’ approach to the city, as articulated here. In his most recent book, Leatherbarrow has written, “Architecture has neither the power nor the responsibility to give rise to communicative space [i.e., the city]. All the best intentions in the world are useless toward this end, for the city (the concrete embodiment of common culture) is not something that single designs can form, shape, construct, or achieve—only condition and approximate” (15).

<sup>158</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Douglas Haskell, Feb. 22, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archive, RAC).

<sup>159</sup> William L.C. Wheaton, “A Proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation for a Conference on Criticism in Urban Design,” Jun. 12, 1958 (RF RG 1.2, University of Pennsylvania - Community Planning, Ser. 200, Box 457, File 3904, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>160</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview visit to Institute for Urban Studies, University of Pennsylvania, May 7, 1958 (RF RG 1.2, University of Pennsylvania - Community Planning, Ser 200, Box 456, File 3900, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC). The quest to find another Lewis Mumford had also motivated the Rockefeller Foundation’s second major grant in the urban design research initiative. Following the MIT grants, the foundation supported an ambitious history of Western planning and urbanization by E. A. Gutkind at University of Pennsylvania. Gutkind was seen as a successor to his friend Lewis Mumford, who was then teaching at Penn. Follow the model of Mumford’s work, Gutkind’s research project was believed to be an opportunity to balance the “social science or social engineering” direction of Penn’s School of Fine Arts. The Gutkind project, he wrote, “will tend to balance this tendency and at the same time to provide materials which will make it possible to introduce historical perspectives and materials into the field of urban studies”; to “restore a humanistic balance to the program of the School of Fine Arts”; and to build “historical depth into the school”. The first volume of E. A. Gutkind’s *International History of City Development* appeared in 1964, and the eighth in 1972. The first Penn grant also included a smaller amount for Ian McHarg’s research on pedagogy in the field of landscape architecture. Cf. Edward F. D’Arms, Interview with University of Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts Faculty, Mar. 16, 1965 (RF RG 1.2 University of Pennsylvania – Community Planning, Ser. 200, Box 456, File 3899, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC); Edward D’Arms, Memo to Humanities Directors of the Rockefeller Foundation, Apr. 6, 1956, *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> Prior to the publication of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Gilpatric was still looking for another Mumford in August 1961. As he wrote, “I myself have felt that one good model for urban design criticism is the kind of thing Lewis Mumford has done in the New Yorker “Skyline” series... Unfortunately, I know of no other individual who does this kind of searching and well-rounded criticism of developments or projects significant in the civic design field. I have been on the lookout for individuals who might have the capacity and tenacity of Mumford. He himself doesn’t know of any such person and I haven’t found one in this country.” Chadbourne Gilpatric, Letter to Roger Montgomery, Aug. 30, 1961 (RF RG 1.2, Washington University - Urban Design (Montgomery), Ser. 200R, Box 469, File 4009, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>162</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, May 9, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

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<sup>163</sup> Jane Jacobs, "New Heart for Baltimore," *Architectural Forum* 108 (Jun. 1958), 88-90. Charles Center project director George Kostritsky was later the "K" in the architectural firm RTKL. Jacobs cited him and her friend Penny Kostritsky in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

<sup>164</sup> Jacobs reviewed Ian McHarg's four research and book proposals following her May 9, 1958 meeting with Gilpatric. See Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jun. 6, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 456, Folder 3901, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>165</sup> Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, May 9, 1958, *ibid.* Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, June 4, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

<sup>166</sup> Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, May 9, 1958, *ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> New School for Social Research, "Excerpts from a Speech by Jane Jacobs," Apr. 20, 1958 (Shirley Hayes Papers, Box 4, Folder 6, The New-York Historical Society). The New School symposium "New York City: A Look into the Future" was moderated by Raymond Vernon (whom Jacobs cited in *Death and Life*) was director of the New York Metropolitan Region Study, and panelists apart from Jacobs included Charles Abrams (also cited in *Death and Life*), long-time housing activist and director of the New York State Commission Against Discrimination, Victor Gruen, and developer Robert Dowling. Lewis Mumford attended the symposium and praised Jacobs for her talk.

<sup>169</sup> I have written further on the 1958 Penn-Rockefeller Conference on Urban Design Criticism in "The Death and Life of Urban Design: Jane Jacobs, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the New Research in Urbanism, 1955-65," *Journal of Urban Design* 11 (Jun. 2006), 145-72.

<sup>170</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, June 4, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Ser. 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC).

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

### ***The Death and Life of Great American Cities:*** **A New System of Thought about the Great City**

I think it is because the planners of these projects—and certainly the theorists from whom their ideas came—have been preoccupied only with what they conceived to be wrong with the city, and have been uninterested in what is right with it and what should be strengthened. The art of living successfully in a city does not consist in regarding all those other people and their doings as a distasteful but necessary evil. The art of living in a city, and the art of planning for a city, consist of making a great virtue out of the presence of so many people, and the richness of their variety, and their activities. Jane Jacobs, Talk at the New School for Social Research, April 1958

This book is neither a retelling in new form of things already said, nor an expansion and enlargement of previously worked out basic ground, but it is an attempt to make what amounts to a different system of thought about the great city. Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Rockefeller Foundation, 1959

**W**hen Jacobs outlined her “Book on American Cities” in the summer of 1958, the time was ripe for criticism and a new way of thinking about cities. The ambitions, compromises, and unstated premises shared by urban renewal’s advocates did not make its problems easy to grasp or articulate, but for those willing to look at the evidence of early redevelopment experiments as Jacobs did, criticism and analysis were within reach. As Douglas Haskell had indicated when Jacobs outlined her “blockbuster on the superblock,” her criticism of large-scale land acquisition, large-scale project planning, and large-scale bureaucracy was “right with the times.” In a complimentary letter to Jacobs after the publication of “Downtown Is For People,” Catherine Bauer, whose 1956 critique of planning theory and practices were influential on Jacobs’ thinking, expressed a similar sentiment. “Your

piece was absolutely knockout, also splendidly timed, I think, to make a major dent. A couple years ago would have been too much on the up-tide... and you would only have sounded sentimental,” Bauer wrote. But “now that the South Side of Chicago really looks like the City of the Future of 1930, however, and many other cities are visibly on the way, there are some tremors of doubt... though less in architectural offices for the most part than elsewhere...”<sup>1</sup>

With the revolutions of the 1960s just over the horizon, criticism of all sorts, spoken by “angry young men” and women (some of whom, like Jacobs, were not that young), was just beginning to blossom. Jacobs herself intimated as much as in her reply to Bauer. In fact, she suggested that “Downtown Is For People” and the follow-up that she was planning were “a symptom of the times”:

Thank you ever so much for your very nice and very encouraging note. I wish I could take credit for wisely judging the time was ripe for the viewpoint in the downtown article; but the fact is I am just a symptom of the times. These ideas have just been stewing around in me for the past two years or so, not before. Wish I could claim more foresightedness and forbearance, but it wouldn't be true. Right now I am just dying to do a series for *Forum* on what we can learn from the existing city about what is right, and the implications of this both for city rebuilding and new, fresh building. I believe they think I am kind of nuts, but sooner or later I will get permission to do it, and I know it will be interesting.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Bauer was right that “Downtown Is For People” was “splendidly timed,” and this would be true for *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* as well. During the years that Jacobs wrote *Death and Life*, between October 1958 and March 1961, other writers, notably her “Downtown” collaborator Grady Clay, developed comparable criticisms and alternatives to the “orthodox” practices that she criticized.<sup>3</sup> Like Jacobs', other critics focused on environmental concerns, both in terms of the built environment and the natural environment. Also in 1958, for example, Rachel Carson began writing *Silent Spring* (1962), a book which took on the goliath

chemical industry in a cause comparable to Jacobs' attempt to reform urban renewal practices, and launched the "environmental movement."

In 1958, however, Jacobs was in the avant-garde of cultural criticism in the U.S.—it wouldn't be until 1963 that Bob Dylan sang "the times they are a-changin'." In Britain, where criticism was somewhat more advanced, Jacobs' friends at *The Architectural Review*, Ian Nairn and Gordon Cullen, had published a book version of *Outrage* in 1956, followed by *Counter-Attack Against Subtopia* in 1957, both of which Jacobs would cite in *Death and Life*. Also in England, "an architecture of Angry Young Men" was developing in parallel with Townscape and the New Empiricism—an architecture that emphasized a clear display of structure, an emphasis on materials as found, "topological" conditions of circulation and threshold, and, similar to Kevin Lynch's urban studies, a concern for "imageability," or memorability of an image. Beyond their buildings, the architects of "The New Brutalism," as Reyner Banham first described it in 1955, shared a renewed interest in the human "habitat." Similar to the focus on everyday life and urban environments that Jacobs had emphasized already decades earlier, there was "an awakening interest in the real life of the cities, something of an ecologist's approach to urban man" among modern architects.<sup>4</sup>

Rendering much of Jacobs' criticism of him in *Death and Life* anachronistic, Le Corbusier himself had left the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, which he and Siegfried Giedion had founded in 1928, in advance of CIAM 10, its tenth conference, held in 1956, and had developed an architectural sensibility that was both far removed from his machine aesthetic of the 1930s and roundly criticized by other modern architects. His chapel of Notre Dame du Haut (1954), in Ronchamp, France, was inherently a criticism of early modern architectural functionalism and an abandonment of the tenets of modern architecture that Le

Corbusier himself had defined, but it was reviled in part because did not offer a direction easily followed by the younger generation.<sup>5</sup> This was all the more troubling because he had turned over CIAM's future to "Team 10" in advance of CIAM 10 with a letter in which he stated that only the younger generation was "capable for feeling, personally and profoundly, the actual problems, the goals to follow, [and] the means to reach them... They are in the know. Their predecessors no longer are, they are out, they are no longer subject to the direct impact of the situation."<sup>6</sup>

On one hand, Team 10 architects, including Peter and Alison Smithson, Jacob Bakema, John Voelker, and Aldo van Eyck, had a sense of new direction. As part of their new interest in questions of habitat, they criticized the tabula rasa approach of the Functionalist City, "seeking the ideal habitat for each particular place at this particular moment" and applying themselves to a "proposed built environment of a particular place with all its accidental and special features, the unique solution to a unique situation."<sup>7</sup> At a meeting in 1959, Team 10 decided to disband CIAM, acknowledging the need to "begin again with a new confrontation of the present reality as did the first organizers of CIAM."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the rhetoric and images of the 1930s were extraordinarily powerful, and thus, according to Banham, the "vision of the Radiant City survived everything, and continued to dominate the minds of the Team 10-Brutalist connection even after the Athens Charter had been declared obsolete."<sup>9</sup> Although architects Aldo van Eyck (1918-99) and Ernesto Rogers (1909-69) would find their own ways to address the particulars of place and time, many others remained committed to a more utopian project of "total architecture." They believed that "if we don't work for an architecture expressing three-dimensional human behavior in total life, architects will lose their natural function in society, and they will end as decorators of mechanization-administration schemes. If we don't realize total architecture, we will end in no-architecture."<sup>10</sup>



Despite a renewed interest in the “context” and “real life” of cities, Jacobs was thus not mistaken in observing a reluctance to abandon the utopianism and paternalism inherited from nineteenth and early twentieth century reform movements in the late 1950s. Moreover, she was greatly disturbed by the dogmatism she also observed in the schools of architecture and planning that she visited during these years.<sup>11</sup> Discussing city and transportation planning in one of the more biting passages in *Death and Life*, she attacked not the leaders of the modern movement, but its followers:

It is understandable that men who were young in the 1920s were captivated by the vision of the freeway Radiant City, with the specious promise that it would be appropriate to an automobile age. At least it was then a new idea; to men of the generation of New York’s Robert Moses, for example, it was radical and exciting in the days when their minds were growing and their ideas forming. Some men tend to cling to old intellectual excitements, just as some belles, when they are old ladies, still cling to the fashions and coiffures of their exciting youth. But it is harder to understand why this form of arrested mental development should be passed on intact to succeeding generations of planners and designers. It is disturbing to think that men who are young today, men who are being trained now for their careers, should accept *on the grounds that they must be “modern” in their thinking*, conceptions about cities and traffic which are not only unworkable, but also to which nothing new of any significance has been added since their fathers were children.<sup>12</sup>

With a reluctance among many young modern architects to abandon the idea that architecture had to be “totalizing”—an idea that motivated the emerging “mega-structural” movement, which continued to conflate architectural and urban design—until *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was published in 1961, and for some years after, Jacobs’ criticism of urban renewal and city planning theory remained a minority viewpoint in the fields of architecture and city planning. As Catherine Bauer suggested, many architects and city planners in the U.S., both in academia and practice, relished the possibilities of large-scale urban redevelopment, and were often more interested in executing their design ideas, tapping into urban renewal funding streams, and solving real or perceived problems with the old city than in

studying its attributes. Jacobs, however, had the relative advantage of having no training in these fields, and no concomitant financial or intellectual stake in an urban redevelopment agenda or image of the city. Although she may have idealized the self-determination and democracy of American society, she was well poised to analyze the urban landscape with perhaps more objectivity than the architects and city planners who were deeply invested in their visual transformation.

Despite the stereotype that Jacobs' understanding of the city was grounded exclusively in the confines of Greenwich Village, in 1958, there were in fact few students of the city who were as well disposed to analyze urban renewal's successes and shortcomings. She had watched her hometown of Scranton decline, and had worked for its revival during the war. She had studied and written about New York City's neighborhoods, and experienced almost two and a half decades of life in "Changing New York," as Berenice Abbott had already described it during the Depression. She had regularly visited other U.S. cities, including Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Cleveland, and Fort Worth, for *The Iron Age*, *Amerika*, and *Architectural Forum*, and had followed and written about urban redevelopment since soon after the passage of the U.S. Housing Act of 1949. Moreover, not only did she have the opportunity to study urban renewal with the support of Douglas Haskell and *Architectural Forum's* well-funded research and travel expense accounts, she had her own bird's-eye view of New York's redeveloping skyline from Time Inc.'s headquarters in Rockefeller Center, as well as the street-level view from the stoop of her storefront home on Greenwich Village's Hudson Street.

In April 1958, Jacobs could therefore write an analysis of the federal program with knowledge and experience, even though there was relatively little evidence of urban renewal's actual outcomes. As she wrote in "Redevelopment Today," an un-bylined article in *Forum's*

April 1958 issue, “after nearly a decade of federal aid to urban redevelopment, only 17 Title I projects are now in use.” Among the completed projects, she nonetheless saw “much material for a serious reevaluation of redevelopment.” The elimination of urban “decay and squalor which these first 17 projects have achieved is heartening,” she admitted, “but it is sobering to scrutinize the architectural results of the rebuilding. Is this indeed the city of the future, the hope of redevelopment? Architecturally or socially the results do not match the political ingenuity that made them possible.”<sup>13</sup>

With the encouragement of various friends and supporters, during the summer of 1958, Jacobs’ research project on the city evolved from a series of articles focused on New York into a book on American cities at large. Following her talk on the future of New York at the New School in April 1958, for example, Lewis Mumford suggested that she pursue a larger audience.

He wrote her:

Your talk at The New School gave me the deepest satisfaction: perhaps because you stated, with such refreshing clarity, a point of view that only a few people in city planning circles, like Ed Bacon, even dimly apprehend. Your analysis of the functions of the city is sociology of the first order... You ought to reach a wider audience for your ideas. Have you thought of the Saturday Evening Post? They seem in a mood for serious contributions these days. At all events, keep hammering: your worst opponents are the old fogies who imagine that Le Corbusier [circa] 1922-25 is the last word in urbanism.<sup>14</sup>

Jacobs was grateful, and praised Mumford’s work in turn, particularly a recent article on the highway building boom following the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, in turn. With a characteristic interest not just in criticism, but in understanding the underlying principles of flawed ideas, she replied:

Your article on highways in the [*Architectural*] *Record* was splendid. It was so good to read not just a criticism of the way highway planning is being done, or an exhortation to do it better, but

an analysis of the destructive and lopsided premises on which the very existence of the program, as it stands, is based. You made a statement I've never seen before, and that I think is terribly important: about the relationship between the cost of feeding this automobile way of life, and the poverty of our public standard of living, schools, libraries, and the like. I wonder what proportion of our national income goes into roads, cars, repairs, gas, parking, and insurance, to say nothing of the indirect drain the whole thing exacts in sprawl, blight, urban obsolescence, inefficiency, etc. Certainly it is wildly in another realm from our expenditures of energy on anything else.<sup>15</sup>

But rather than an article for the Saturday Evening Post, she asked him what he thought about a book. Mumford responded with enthusiasm and generous encouragement:

Though I can't guess how the public would take to it, you have a duty to produce the book! There's no one else who's had so many fresh and sensible things to say about the city—and it's high time these things were said and discussed... But have a contract sewed up after you've done a chapter or two.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, Jacobs had already sent the Rockefeller Foundation a book proposal, and by the end of June 1958, had both the interest of the foundation and a book contract. Associate humanities director Chadbourne Gilpatric told her that he and his colleagues at the Rockefeller Foundation were interested in “promising projects in the broad area of civic design, and more specifically, how planned development might better serve cultural and human needs” and were seriously considering her proposal.<sup>17</sup> And at the suggestion of Holly Whyte and Berkeley sociologist Nathan Glazer—author of the influential essay “Why City Planning is Obsolete,” which Jacobs edited for publication in the July 1958 issue of *Forum*—she had contacted Jason Epstein, an editor at Doubleday, who offered her an advance.<sup>18</sup>

Following their meeting in May—in which Jacobs suggested to Gilpatric that the Rockefeller Foundation “find and give opportunities for observation and writing to some first-rate architectural critics who could develop helpful new ideas for the planning of cities”—Jacobs outlined her proposed study and elaborated it over the next few months.

Jacobs explained that she would like to create an alternative “image of the city, not drawn from mine or anyone else’s imagination or wishes but, so far as this is possible, from real life; an image more compelling to the reader than the abstractions, because he is convinced it is truer.” Her goal, moreover, was not just to present image, but to “open the reader’s eyes to a different way of looking at the city for himself and understanding what he sees.”<sup>19</sup>

The need for this new vision, she explained, was because there were two “dominant and very compelling mental images of the city” that had come to shape the thinking of both citizens and city planners. One was “the image of the city in trouble, an inhuman mass of masonry, a chaos of happenstance growth, a place starved of the simple decencies and amenities of life, beset with so many accumulated problems it makes your head swim.” The other image was of “the rebuilt city, the antithesis of all that the unplanned city represents, a carefully planned panorama of projects and green spaces, a place where functions are sorted-out instead of jumbled together, a place of light, air, sunshine, dignity, and order for all.”<sup>20</sup> Echoing Nathan Glazer’s criticism of previous city planning theory in “Why City Planning is Obsolete”—which prefigured Jacobs’ “Radiant Garden City” epithet with its criticism of the suburbanism of Ebenezer Howard’s low-density garden city and Le Corbusier’s high-density garden city—she argued that city planners substituted what was wrong with the city with a pattern of life and appearance that was more suitable for suburbs and small towns than urban life.

Closely related to the sentiments expressed at the University of Pennsylvania Conference on Urban Design Criticism in October 1958, which Jacobs prompted and participated in, her book would offer both the professional and the citizen an alternative, although she would privilege the latter. “In style, I would aim at the general interested citizen, rather than writing for the specialist. But I hope (and think) that the book would interest specialists,” she wrote. Both, she believed,

would benefit from “thought and observation about how the big city really works [and] what it does well.”<sup>21</sup>

She acknowledged that this was a “pretty ambitious aim” because of the complexity of the subject matter and her thesis:

That within the seeming chaos and jumble of the city is a remarkable degree of order, in the form of relationships of all kinds that people have evolved and that are absolutely fundamental to city life—more fundamental and necessary to safety, to convenience, to social action, to economic opportunity, than anything conceived of in the image of the rebuilt city. Where it works at all well, this network of relationships is astonishingly intricate. It requires a staggering diversity of activities and people, very intimately interlocked (although often casually so), and able to make constant adjustments to needs and circumstances; the physical form of the city has also to be full of variety and flexibility for people to accommodate it to their needs—not as isolated family units but as a living community.<sup>22</sup>

In her book, as in the city, she concluded, “Complexity is thus of the essence, but it won’t do to throw these intricacies at the reader like a basket of leaves.” She would build up “a pointed accumulation of examples, illustrations, and explanations of cause and effect” through incremental organization of the argument. Her goal would be “to present this accumulation of facts, and inferences from facts, so it really adds up for the reader and persuades him of its significance, instead of overwhelming or confusing him.” But she felt that this could be achieved by “taking up certain aspects of the city, one at a time, without evading the intricacy of each aspect, but by choosing the sequence of subjects so that an understanding of each illuminates the next one and lead into it.”<sup>23</sup>

To this end, Jacobs initially proposed investigating a sequence of elements of the city—the street, the park, the scale, the mixture, the edges, and the centers—that revealed “what the big city is and how it functions.” She would conclude by analyzing the implications of her study for city planning, and by also discussing what she believed to be the limitations of planning: “the

things in the city that must be left to happen, that no planner can do for people, but that will be done well or ill or not at all, partly depending on whether the general framework hampers the functioning of the city or fosters it.”<sup>24</sup>

Following enthusiastic letters of recommendation from Lewis Mumford, Holly Whyte, Catherine Bauer, and Jason Epstein, and supportive letters from Penn Graduate School of Fine Arts dean G. Holmes Perkins and Martin Meyerson, director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies at Harvard and MIT, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded her the first of a series of grants (administered through the New School for Social Research), on September 8, 1958, to write a book on the “relations of function to design in large cities.”<sup>25</sup>

Jacobs thought she could complete the book in nine months: three for interviewing, observing, investigating, and reading (“a process in which I am already engaged, of course”), then five months of writing (“supplemented with more investigating as it proves necessary”), and one month of revision and rewriting. She began her study in October 1958 as planned, taking a leave from *Architectural Forum* immediately following the Penn-Rockefeller Conference on Urban Design Criticism, which was an exciting and motivating starting point for her research. Her first task was to interview individuals who had particular insight into the forces shaping large-scale development and renewal projects in large American cities. To this end, she was most interested in speaking at the Penn conference with architects I. M. Pei and Arthur Holden, who were “trying to see architectural needs in light of existing laws and regulations, but also for the social consequences of architectural schemes and development projects.”<sup>26</sup> Interviews with Baltimore developer James Rouse; Washington, D.C. developer William Slayton, who was appointed commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration by President Kennedy in 1961; Edward

Logue, director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority; Martin Meyerson, and many others followed—many of them contacts that Jacobs knew from writing about urban redevelopment in the previous years.<sup>27</sup>

*The Death and Life of Great American Cities* took Jacobs three times longer than expected to research and write, but it evolved and grew accordingly. At first, she had planned to concentrate primarily on Manhattan, particularly on East Harlem, Greenwich Village (“a big range is represented among these two,” she wrote), and “the series of downtowns which Manhattan has grown from south to north.” Manhattan, she argued, “represents a kind of caricature of the qualities of the big city and it shows, in wonderfully sharp outlines, many advantages, disadvantages, and problems that are characteristic of metropolitan centers, at least in the United States.” But she also recognized the need to study other cities, to “open my eyes to things I have ignored, by taking them for granted, in the places I know best.”<sup>28</sup> Her research therefore expanded with visits and study of Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in addition to the cities she knew from previous writing. Her visit to Boston’s North End in November 1958, which she described in the introduction to *Death and Life*, was of particular significance. Jacobs fell in love with the neighborhood and with the residents’ love for their neighborhood. “With no sights of big building projects,” she told Gilpatric, “the residents have undertaken to improve their homes, stores, so that outside and inside there is new and attractive decoration, as with awnings, painting, benches put out. The streets and alleys are full of quite evidently happy and communicative people who, in response to odd questions now and then, expressed immense joy in their life and the situation.” Although officials from Boston’s Redevelopment Authority told her in interviews that they regarded the area as a “slum,” she expressed admiration for the residents “taking care of themselves, with a sense of social solidarity



and social values, and resisting ‘big projectism’ as it might be launched by municipal government or real estate speculators. In the area there are some two hundred residential units per acre and Mrs. J would be far from saying that conditions are ideal, but there is a zest, friendliness, social responsiveness and responsibility which one would like to expect in certain city areas.”<sup>29</sup> She would make similar comments about Chicago’s Back-of-the-Yards. These neighborhoods clearly reminded her of Greenwich Village, but it was their self-determination and public social life that most inspired her.

Jacobs’ early research quickly expanded the number of components of the city that she felt needed study and analysis, with *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* eventually expanding into twenty-two chapters. Her initial proposal to study the street—the “most important organ of the city”—and the park—“a sort of specialized extension of the street, in the sense that many of the same principles of social safety and informal use seen to operate for both”—grew into the book’s first five chapters. Her initial interest in the scales of the city and its elements—“the frequency with which similar things occur” and “the characteristic scale of different kinds of commercial and cultural enterprises, the scale of big-city neighborhoods, the scale of the kinds of institutions that have grown most spontaneously or have been most responsive to needs”—informed chapters on The Uses of City Neighborhoods, The Need for Small Blocks, Governing and Planning Districts, and many other parts of her thesis. Her early focus on “mixtures”—those occurring “in business areas that have shown the best survival value, the kinds of mixtures of people and activities that occur in areas which fight political battles for community survival or improvement most successfully, what happens to areas of extreme sorting-out of people or activities, and why, what opposing forces are at work for mixing and sorting”—was elaborated even more extensively, particularly in the chapters on The Generators of Diversity, The Need for

Primary Mixed Uses, The Need for Aged Buildings, The Need for Concentration, Some Myths About Diversity, and The Self-Destruction of Diversity. Her early interest in focal centers and borders did not grow as significantly in length, being discussed primarily in one chapter, The Curse of Border Vacuums. However, her sense that focal centers were “places within a city community, large or small, that are important out of all proportion to their size” reflected a principle of tremendous significance, that great cities produced and thrived on “unaverage” qualities that were easily destroyed but not easily created through city planning.

As the project grew, so did Jacobs worries about completing the project, and her sense of its importance. By July 1959, when her foundation support was about to end, she feared having to return to work at *Architectural Forum* and postponing the project, losing her job, or having to borrow money to continue without a paycheck or financial support, so she made a case for the foundation’s continued support. She wrote Gilpatric,

Without wishing to sound immodest about it, I feel very deeply that it is important for this book to get finished and published, because I think it is needed... We are copying failure, in new architectural and planning dress, and we are creating city which is, more and more, composed of mutually hostile or non-interacting islands, city which at worst lacks even such primitive necessities as built-in safety for humans from one another in its public spaces, and which at best is inhospitable to urban variety, vitality, and experimentation. We are doing this, not because we have to, but from lack of the understanding required to do better.

In my book, I am not rehashing old material on cities and city planning. I am working with new concepts about the city and its behavior. Many of these concepts are quite radically opposed to those accepted in orthodox and conventional planning theory. I think I am proving the validity of these new concepts and giving evidence, from experience in the city itself, which shows that the alternative to ignoring them is not the rebuilding of some improved type of city but, rather, the social, economic, and visual disintegration of the city. I am trying to get the theory and practice of city planning and design started on a new and different track... My contribution is the organizing of these observations and ideas into workable systems of thought about the city, and in indicating the new aims and tactics which planning must adopt to catalyze constructive and genuinely urban city behavior.<sup>30</sup>

In the following year, the book as a whole came together with an outline similar to that of the published manuscript. A primary difference was the twentieth chapter, “Visual Order for the City: Its Possibilities and Limitations,” which in this draft was the concluding chapter. Here, in what became the nineteenth of twenty-two chapters, Jacobs articulated her argument for the limits of city design and planning, that “*a city cannot be a work of art*,” and why. “To approach a city, or even a city neighborhood, as if it were a larger architectural problem, capable of being given order by converting it into a disciplined work of art, is to make the mistake of attempting to substitute art for life,” she argued. Criticizing the emerging mega-structuralist movement, she wrote that “when city designers and planners try to find a design device that will express, in clear and easy fashion, the ‘skeleton’ of city structure (expressways and promenades are current favorites for this purpose), they are fundamentally on the wrong track. A city is not put together like a mammal or a steel frame building—or even like a honeycomb or a coral.” She believed that a city’s “very *structure* consists of mixture of uses, and we get closest to its structural secrets when we deal with the conditions that generate diversity.”<sup>31</sup>

Jacobs opined that “architects who venture into city design often face a blank in trying to create visual order in cities except by substituting the order of art for the very different order of life. They cannot do anything else much. They cannot develop alternate tactics, for they lack a strategy for design that will help cities.” She argued, however, that “designers do not need to be in literal control of an entire field of vision to incorporate visual order in cities.” Their goal, she believed, should be to find strategies for “illuminating and clarifying life and helping to explain to us its meanings and order—in this case, helping to illuminate, clarify, and explain the order of cities.” And this, she concluded, should be done primarily through “tactics of emphasis and suggestion.” Suggestion, “the part standing for the whole,” is the principal means by which art

communicates, and it was a tactic that allowed “people make, for themselves, order and sense, instead of chaos, from what they see.”<sup>32</sup>

Ultimately, it was not a focus on design that was Jacobs’ primary concern, nor was it criticism. In fact, when Chadbourne Gilpatric read the final manuscript in March 1961, he argued that she should cut the 669-page manuscript by half and make the book a more concise work of criticism. He was “exhilarated” by her bristling first chapter, he wanted to see a more critical position. Commenting on the concluding chapter, he wrote, for example, “I was sorry to note that you didn’t include in this chapter a critique of some of the governing images of city organization and physical layout, which are out-dated. This is more than made up, perhaps, by the lambasting you give the Garden City planners and addicts of the Radiant City.”<sup>33</sup> In addition to eliminating much of the anecdotal material that served as data for Jacobs’ theses, he recommended cutting extended references to Kevin Lynch’s work and her quotation of Rockefeller Foundation life sciences director Warren Weaver’s essay on “Science and Complexity,” which served as a capstone for her conclusion.

While Jacobs shortened excerpts of Lynch’s *Image of the City*, in which she saw parallels to her own work (as Gilpatric had predicted some years before), to a few citations, she felt that Gilpatric’s editorial suggestions disregard the integrity of the work and her goal of creating a new system of thought about the great city. She did not reply to Gilpatric’s letter for some six weeks, by which time the manuscript was being set in type. When she did write, moreover, her primary purpose was to seek permission to quote from Warren Weaver’s essay published in the Rockefeller Foundation’s *1958 Annual Report*, permission which Gilpatric politely extended in reply.

Jacobs' discovery of Weaver's ideas of complexity was a serendipitous consequence of her Foundation grant. She discovered the essay "Science and Complexity" in a modest festschrift upon Weaver's retirement from the position of Foundation Director of Life Sciences in the Foundation's *1958 Annual Report*, which was the same volume which reported Jacobs' first Foundation grant for the study of "the relation of function to design in large cities." The essay, however, galvanized Jacobs' thoughts about the complexity of the city and provided the theoretical conclusion for the sequential and cumulative observations which Jacobs' described in the preceding chapters. Applying Weaver's concepts, Jacobs argued that the city was like other living things, a system of "organized complexity," of interrelated and interdependent variables. In making this leap, Jacobs became one of the earliest promulgators of complexity science outside of scientific circles, and the first person to allude to their relationship to urban dynamics.

Weaver's science, however, only proved what Jacobs already knew—that a city could not be designed like a building or a work of art. The art of living in a city, and the art of planning for a city, Jacobs believed, consisted of making a great virtue out of the presence of so many people, and the richness of their variety, and their activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Bauer Wurster, Letter to Jane Jacobs, Apr. 27, 1958 (Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers, MS 774/163c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

<sup>2</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Catherine Bauer, Apr. 29, 1958, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> In "Metropolis Regained," published in *Horizon* magazine in July 1959, Grady Clay criticized such influential conceptions of "the city of the future" as Norman Bel Geddes' and General Motors' "Futurama," as well as Ebenezer Howard's Garden Cities movement and less theoretical motivations for decentralization and suburbanization. The "New Urbanists," he said, coining a term, "are appalled at your civic centers, your housing projects, and your expressways." Cities, he said, quoting Leon Battista Alberti, "were created for no other reason than for men to live

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together in comfort and contentment”—and they “have been around too long for our generation to desert them so precipitously.” Cf. Grady Clay, “Metropolis Regained,” *Horizon* 1 (July 1959), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism,” *The Architectural Review* 118 (Dec. 1955), 355-60; *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (New York: Reinhold Publishing, 1966), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. James Sterling, “Ronchamp: Le Corbusier’s Chapel and the Crisis of Rationalism,” *The Architectural Review* 119 (Mar. 1956), 155-61.

<sup>6</sup> Le Corbusier quoted by Nathaniel Coleman in *Utopias and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2005), 106. Coleman discusses the work and ideas of Team 10 architects, and focuses on two architect-planners of significance to this study, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, as well as Aldo Van Eyck. Another excellent and related study is Marina Lathouri’s “Reconstructing the Topographics of the Modern City: The Late CIAM Debates,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006 (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 71.

<sup>8</sup> Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Stuttgart: Karl Kramer Verlag, 1961), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, 3. A debate between Peter Smithson and Ernesto Rogers on the Smithson’s London Roads Study (1959) at the meeting captured the essence of two very different approaches to the city:

Rogers: Excuse me for bringing up the controversial Soho [London] area again. It seems to me that you are destroying everything but the directions. If you destroy the context, the context of Soho, why do you bother to conserve the directions? What in fact do you conserve and what do you destroy?

Smithson: In the end we would probably destroy everything, stage by stage. But as you know cities are not rebuilt like that. The way it would actually work is this: you have a general objective of making a connected system of the buildings, that is clear, but the immediate objective would be such that because of the construction of the motor-way, certain parts would no longer be valid in their old use. They would acquire a new land value and in consequence there would be a need to change. And in these areas you would start constructing the system... We do not conserve Soho at all but we conserve other areas because of the newness of the buildings in these areas...” (76-77).

<sup>11</sup> See Lathouri, “Reconstructing the Topographics of the Modern City: The Late CIAM Debates,” *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 371.

<sup>13</sup> [Jane Jacobs], “Redevelopment Today,” *Architectural Forum* 108 (Apr. 1958), 108-113. The redevelopment projects included by Jacobs were only a certain subset of redevelopment projects related to the U.S. Housing Act of 1949. Her list did not include earlier redevelopment projects like Stuyvesant Town, many locally funded housing projects, or Pittsburgh’s Gateway Center, for example. Her list included Corlears Hook, Kingsview Homes, Delano Village, Morningside Gardens, and the Columbus Circle Coliseum project, all in New York City; Spring Garden Homes, Penn Towne, Harrison Plaza, and Cambridge Plaza Homes in Philadelphia; Lake Meadows in Chicago; a public housing project in Norfolk Virginia; the Waverly redevelopment and the Johns Hopkins – Broadway projects in Baltimore; the Willard Street project in Providence, RI; and two downtown slum clearance projects in Manchester, NH and Syracuse, NY. However, Martin Anderson later confirmed the relatively small number of completed projects in 1958 and through 1962 in *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-62* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 43.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis Mumford, Letter to Jane Jacobs, May 3, 1958 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 11, John J. Burns Library, Boston College).

<sup>15</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Lewis Mumford, Jun. 17, 1958 (Lewis Mumford Papers, University of Pennsylvania, unlocated). Jacobs referred to Mumford’s April 1958 article “The Highway and the City” in *Death and Life* (358). The article was republished in Mumford’s book *The Urban Prospect* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 92-107.

<sup>16</sup> Mumford, Letter to Jane Jacobs, Jun. 18, 1958 (Jacobs Papers).

<sup>17</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Letter to Jane Jacobs, Jun. 17, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY).

<sup>18</sup> Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Jun. 26, 1958 (RAC). Later that year, Jason Epstein and his editorial staff moved to Random House, which published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Epstein was Jacobs’ longtime editor. She dedicated *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (1984), her fourth major book, to him.

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<sup>19</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 1, 1958 (Jane Jacobs Papers, MS95-29, Box 13, Folder 11, John J. Burns Library).

<sup>20</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 1, 1958 (Jacobs Papers).

<sup>21</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jun. 14, 1958, (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>22</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 1, 1958 (Jacobs Papers).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jun. 14, 1958 (RAC).

<sup>25</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric solicited confidential letters of recommendation from all of those listed and including Christopher Tunnard, who had received a Rockefeller grant to study city planning and the built environment as part of the foundation's urban design research initiative. Tunnard was the only respondent who was not enthusiastic; he did not know her work, but believed that "studies of the city and of urbanization and urban aesthetics are suffering because they are being done in an amateur fashion by people who think it's an exciting new field." Among the most enthusiastic were Lewis Mumford and Catherine Bauer, who Jacobs criticized somewhat callously in *Death and Life*. Although she may never have seen his letter, Mumford, for example, wrote Chadbourne Gilpatric that "there is no one among the younger generation whose work, in housing and planning, seems to me more promising. Indeed, she has already opened various fresh lines of investigation on matters that have been singularly ignored or misinterpreted by both planners and urban sociologists." Bauer concurred: "I'd back Jane Jacobs if I were you. She's already proven her effectiveness in promoting what has been a highly unfashionable viewpoint on the brutalities and banalities of present-day large-scale civic design. She's a good writer, sensitive and imaginative, with real personal concern for the qualitative visual and social aspect of modern American cities." Perkins, who was later alienated by the rhetorical attacks on city planners in her book, wrote that "Her interest in the subject and her enthusiastic way of tackling the problem have truly brought new life into the discussion of the city. On these counts she is deserving of all the possible support that can be given her. She is a keen observer and to my mind a good writer." Holly Whyte was even more generous. He wrote: "It is not merely that she likes the city, she has an extraordinarily perceptive eye for what makes it work. She has the intellectual capacity, furthermore, to see the general in all these particulars-to comprehend, for example, the function of the street as a unifying element, rather than as a divider. (I believe she is the first person to have recognized the fallacy embedded in the planners' traditional practice of assembling data about a neighborhood by block units; I recently heard an architect venture that this point of Mrs. Jacobs may turn out to be one of the most valuable ones that have been made about planning in many years.) I am, in short, wholeheartedly enthusiastic. The Rockefeller Foundation is to be commended for considering this imaginative proposal, and I believe the result may prove to be one of the great contributions to the whole field of urban planning and design." Letters to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Aug. 1-Aug. 18, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>26</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Oct. 17, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>27</sup> Among Jacobs' contacts, it should be noted that just because William Slayton was closely involved with urban renewal, Jacobs did not single him out for criticism. As commissioner of the Urban Renewal Administration, Slayton was popular, a champion of cities, an advocate of design, and an activist against racial discrimination in housing, all qualities which would have appealed to her. Cf. Eric Pace, "William Slayton, 82, Official Who Aided Urban Renewal," *New York Times* (Aug. 11, 1999), C23.

<sup>28</sup> Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jun. 14, 1958 (RAC).

<sup>29</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Interview with Jane Jacobs, Dec. 2, 1958 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200R, Box 390, Folder 3380, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>30</sup> Jane Jacobs, Letter to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Jul. 23, 1959 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200, Box 390, Folder 3381, Rockefeller Archive Center).

<sup>31</sup> Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 372-76.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 375-78.

<sup>33</sup> Chadbourne Gilpatric, Letter to Jane Jacobs, Mar. 27, 1961 (RF RG 1.2 Series 200, Box 390, Folder 3381, Rockefeller Archive Center).