

From “Citizen Jane” to an Institutional History of Power and Social Change: Problematizing Urban Planning’s Jane Jacobs Historiography

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Abstract

Conventional wisdom frames scholar and activist Jane Jacobs as a skeptical housewife, heterodox/dissident critic, or common-sense neighborhood resident. Yet a comprehensive archival review of Jacobs’ professional engagement with philanthropy and urban-development organizations reveals instead an activist scholar-leader in a larger, well-funded movement that must be understood in its time and place. *Institutional partnerships* shaped and informed Jacobs’ most noted projects, and her counsel, in turn, shaped urban-development grantmaking. An historical assessment of Jacobs’ ideas, and of social change more broadly, should examine not just individuals, but also supporters, organizations, and paradigms.

Keywords

Jane Jacobs, New York, philanthropy, planning history, epistemology, communitarianism, modernism

Conventional wisdom holds that Jane Jacobs’ accessible clarity and ground-level observation in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* vastly influenced American planning in the second half of the 20th century. Jacobs and the ideas she espoused halted highways through Washington Square Park and Lower Manhattan and perhaps even brought down the entire paradigm of top-down rational, strategic planning knowledge symbolized by the wheeling and dealing of Robert Moses. An activist scholar, she moved the normative terrain of an academic field guided by managerialism and expert knowledge instead toward one with values of participation and

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community voice—a paradigm change. Scholar Marshall Berman credits Jacobs with changing the esthetic and political contours of modernism.¹ Sonia Hirt notes that Jacobs is far and away America's most well-known urban thinker, who also contributed to philosophy, sociology, and economics.²

Critiques of Jacobs fall into two traps. She is either framed as the insurgent radical lefty, an upstart “citizen Jane” taking on the status quo,³ or a narrowminded libertarian, whose ideas on the spontaneous fluidity of human interactions minimized large-scale public intervention, and whose theories did not adequately address gentrification, race, or deepening inequality—issues that characterize our current historical moment.⁴ That latter framing casts Jacobs' legacy as frozen in time, her ideas unable to be nimbly applied in today's urban age.

This paper draws on an archival review of Jacobs' work from 1957–1964, the year when she published her influential book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. This is well-trodden historical terrain: scholars like Laurence⁵ and Rowan,⁶ among others, have engaged Jacobs' archival file during this time, producing a variety of seminal works.⁷ I find from this engagement what others have remarked: Jacobs benefitted immensely from formative relationships and networks with a wide-ranging group of progressive individuals and institutions. Yet this vast network of relationships and associated urban commitments not only positioned Jacobs as a singularly brilliant person, it helped bend the field of urban planning toward new values and approaches. We might therefore ask: *why* did key planning institutions line up behind Jacobs against the dominant planning paradigm at this historical moment?

Jacobs was far from an inspired voice in the wilderness speaking truth to power. By contrast, I argue that Jacobs served as a *de facto* intellectual leader in a larger, well-funded movement that itself needs to be understood in its time and place. We might define this movement, which spanned philanthropy, civil society including journalism and media organizations, and academia, as a reaction against top-down master-planning and its associated forms of neutral “expertise” and a call for situated, street-level analysis of cities. Though it was a movement led by Jacobs, a plethora of its members were non-planners. Jacobs' relationships with foundations' urban-development grantmaking programs led to *institutional partnerships*, both formal and informal, that shaped and informed her most noted works and political projects, all while her expertise and leadership, reciprocally, shaped the field of urban-development grantmaking. Accordingly, Jacobs was a fulcrum in a nexus of people, organizations, and thinking that collectively leveraged an historical moment characterized by increasing frustration with urban renewal and its large-scale dispossession and one that inspired social movements and civil society. Moreover, Jacobs' charismatic presence and scholarly approaches engaged communities through public scholarship, giving Jacobs a natural ability to connect with all sorts of people, not just intellectuals and planners. This paper will first examine Jacobs' role as that fulcrum, or intellectual leader, and then engage the people, scope, and principles of this larger network. It concludes by arguing that our historical assessment of Jacobs' ideas, and those of other networks promoting paradigm-level change in urban planning, should examine not just Jacobs' impact, but also the work of people and organizations she helped inspire. It is important that we study this framing of Jacobs' legacies on planning practice because, as a citizen leader and public scholar, Jacobs and this larger movement engaged communities' anger about the injustices of urban renewal and top-down master planning with a constructive program of substantive content. Those seeking paradigm change today should take a lesson from the partnerships that animated this movement.

An institutional history of Jacobs' contributions to urban planning scholarship and practice places her as a key node in a broad network of urban changemakers, not as an upstart individual. That Jacobs and this network sought to upend the given social order of planning—that of the top-down master plan—can be viewed cynically as part of periodic efforts to upset and reconfigure relationships of knowledge and power. This paper's discussion section interrogates the planning

zeitgeist and active debates of this moment (1957–1964), noting where Jacobs and her comrades stood on major urban issues. This institutional history of Jacobs' life and works suggests an *ongoing* effort to engage the intersection of her scholarly ideas and this broader movement, which hinges on grassroots popular democracy and community voice more than a definitive vision of political economy or built form. A full understanding of Jacobs and her vision, and the many people and organizations behind her, therefore remains only partially realized.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, a brief debunking of two conventional public framings of Jacobs historically: motherly grassroots activist on the one hand, and anti-public NIMBY on the other.⁸ Next, it summarizes the project's methods, which include archival research from the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), 1957–1964, and a secondary-source review of Jacobs' historiography. The paper engages findings from that archival and historic secondary-source review. A discussion section follows, seeking to contextualize and understand the movement informally led by Jacobs and considering "forerunners and influencers," key individuals who supported Jacobs, and those whom she in turn inspired. This section also considers institutions supporting Jacobs and frames broader *epistemic* contributions to the field of planning, which help explain why key scholars, practitioners, and organizations followed her lead in upsetting then-standard planning thinking. I conclude by noting implications of this study as an historiographic approach for contemporary planning theory and practice.

Conventional Wisdom

When *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* was published in 1961, Jacobs had years of experience as an archive architectural critic, writer, and journalist; she was supported by institutions like the Rockefeller Foundation, *Fortune*, *Architectural Forum*, and Random House. Pieces of hers, like "Downtown is for People" in *Fortune* magazine, had already inspired significant academic debate. Nonetheless, *Death and Life's* crisp denunciations of planning orthodoxy got the mass public's attention in a new way, with choice quotes like: "... that the sight of people attracts still other people, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible"⁹ and "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."¹⁰ Writes Fulford, *Death and Life* was "perhaps the most influential single work in the history of town planning, and simultaneously helped to kill off the modern movement in architecture."¹¹

Swift public reactions to Jacobs' book perhaps set the tone and narrative for her contributions, argues Rowan.¹² In a piece titled "Home Remedies for Urban Cancer," for example, noted planning critic Lewis Mumford opined that Jacobs' proposals were "amateurish" and provincial, going so far as to frame Jacobs as having an "overruling fear of living in the big city she so openly adores."¹³ Likewise, Ed Logue, an urban renewal practitioner who had worked to redesign downtown New Haven, Connecticut from 1954 to 1960 and was now bound to do the same in Boston,¹⁴ wrote dismissively of Jacobs: "It is in the image of the Village that she would recast our slum-stricken cities."¹⁵

These public reactions to Jacobs' book and her broader normative approach to city planning stuck, and generated two historiographic narratives: Jacobs as motherly grassroots activist on the one hand, and sinister, anti-public NIMBY on the other. This paper engages each narrative in turn before complicating both framings, drawing on archives from the Rockefeller Archive Center and other secondary sources.

Conventional Narrative 1: motherly grassroots activist: Before and after *Death and Life*, Jacobs wrote on myriad topics: the urban design of Lincoln Center, political economy, Quebec separatism, and social and cultural life. At every turn, she was dismissed as a novice, or, according to *Fortune* publisher C.D. Jackson, a "crazy dame."¹⁶ Laurence frames such assessments as a

“stereotype of Jacobs as a doctrinaire and angry young woman who wanted all cities modeled on the domestic scale of Greenwich Village and opposed all planning.”¹⁷ Sexism in mid-twentieth century urban planning is unquestionably on full display in these critiques of Jacobs, as is a dismissal of Jacobs’ ideas due to her not finishing college. Until Jacobs, white, male, expert knowledges had dominated the planning profession, with scholars like Geddes and Mumford, and practitioners like Moses, dictating city-building plans and processes through their academic expertise and unquestioned authority.

Jacobs was certainly also an activist scholar, participating in neighborhood organizations and groups like the Committee to Save Washington Square Park and the Joint Committee to Stop the Lower Manhattan Expressway (LOMEX).¹⁸ Although often framed as an upstart founder of these movements, Jacobs actually played more strategic roles: shuttling statements to local newspapers like the *Village Voice* or working to gain the support of public figures like Eleanor Roosevelt.¹⁹ Moses’s framing of Jacobs’ activism only aided the conventional narrative: “Everyone is for it except a bunch of mothers!” he said of the anti-expressway movements.²⁰

Yet not just in her writing or ideas, but in practice, Jacobs won, as the conventional framing goes. LOMEX was halted, and Washington Square Park remains a public greenspace to this day. Like a story of David versus Goliath, Jacobs took on the larger-than-life Moses and his vast apparatus of public institutions, authorities, and fiscal instruments. Her victories changed the planning field for the better, making it a more participatory, just, community-minded field. Wrote Sassen in 2016, “When I first encountered this doyenne of urban activism, she offered one of the sharpest critiques I’d ever heard. Jane Jacobs was relentless, and stood up to anyone in her quest to understand what really makes a city.”²¹ Indeed, Jacobs was celebrated as having uniquely seen what expert planners missed: a street-level view of “place,” coupled with a (perhaps intuitive, compassionate, empathetic) impulse to prioritize local residents’ experiences. The Jacobs/Moses narrative was part of the problem, historiographically: it prevented scholars and readers from seeing Jacobs as anything but a solitary self-made upstart.

Conventional Narrative 2: anti-public NIMBY: A more sinister take on Jacobs’ ideas was present in the initial critiques of her work by Mumford and Logue, and has resurfaced with vengeance in the context of post-1980s neoliberal inequality: Jacobs as anti-public, racist, and exclusionary. This critique centers precisely on Jacobs’ *praising* of the city for its spontaneous fluidity of human and social interactions. Indeed, as Jacobs told Rockefeller Foundation Program Officer Chadbourne Gilpatric in 1958: “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.”²² Indeed, libertarians see in Jacobs’ praise of self-regulating order a patron saint. For example, the libertarian and Alabama-based Mises Institute calls Jacobs the “ultimate libertarian outsider,” writing that: “the basic logic of Jane Jacobs’s work must lead an attentive reader inexorably to a libertarian view of human social relations,” proceeding to compare Jacobs with neoclassic economist Friedrich von Hayek.²³ And the physical conditions of Jacobs’ *site* of observation and writing has only aided these critiques: since the 1960s, the West Village and Greenwich Village have gone from working-class zones of diversity and vibrant street life to exclusionary enclaves of yuppies. Is today’s West Village the victim of its own planning successes, or is it precisely the city Jacobs envisioned in her discussions of “unslumming?”²⁴

Other critics advance that Jacobs’ theories ignored processes of racialized dispossession central to American city-building. Historian Samuel Zipp, for example, writes that: “Today, as many more scholars, critics, and activists focus on the city’s structures of violent exclusion, from residential segregation to racist policing, [Jacobs’] street-level view appears myopic, and sidewalks, stoops, and small shops look like a recipe for gentrification.”²⁵ Indeed, the “sidewalk ballet” Jacobs celebrates on Hudson Street had a presumably white cast. And for a scholar focused on processes

of *making* cities, *Death and Life* offered little on racialized processes of city-making. Yet *Death and Life*, “Downtown for People,” and books like *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* concertedly emphasize diversity—of people, of buildings, of incomes—as requisite components of vibrant neighborhoods. Notes historian Nathan Storring, Jacobs’ core vision was not about aesthetics, but about community self-determination.²⁶ Indeed, scholars like Elijah Anderson and activist Peggy Shepard of West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) have built on Jacobs’ ideas and integrated with them explicitly anti-racist theories of change.²⁷

Both conventional frames of Jacobs’ historical contributions to urban planning are one-dimensional. They have their merits when we think of Jacobs as a single, upstart individual, frozen in time and limited to her own voice. These framings are worrisome for another reason: Jacobs inspired a paradigm shift in the field of city planning: from top-down rational or strategic planning by an ostensibly “all-knowing” technocratic expert, to one of situated, street-level research and advocacy, informed by communities most affected by planning processes and programs. To view that shift as being led by a single lone voice will frustrate those aspiring to paradigm change today. And thus, a different view of Jacobs’ historic contributions, and enduring legacies, is necessary to understand the broader movement of people and institutions in this historic moment. What follows is an archival review from the RAC, 1957–1964, coupled with a secondary-source review of Jacobs’ historiography. This review does not focus on Jane Jacobs’ life story, or her individual contributions *per se*. Rather, it examines the *institutions and networks* that helped her ideas gain visibility and traction, and the legacies of these ideas.

It is worth noting that many other scholars have focused on how Jane Jacobs was *not*, in fact, just an upstart housewife, engaging her vast bibliography on political economy, architectural criticism, and more.²⁸ And still others, like Laurence and Rowan, have studied this very archive, examining the extensive support Jacobs received from the Rockefeller Foundation and its “sprawling network of city designers and urban planners.”²⁹ This paper, however, seeks to forge an *institutional* history of the informal “movement” led by Jane Jacobs, and that movement’s contributions to urban planning. In answering the question “*why* did key planning institutions line up behind Jacobs against the dominant planning paradigm at this historical moment?” this paper provides an analysis of the links among people, organizations, and concepts, arguing that only their long-term embedded combination together, at an intentional time, generated paradigm-shifting momentum in the fields of urban studies and planning.

Methods

The Rockefeller Foundation (RF) played a pivotal role in funding mid-20th century urban-development work, including a 1929 grant that helped launch Harvard University’s graduate school in city planning, a 1954 RF grant to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for \$85,000 that helped to publish Kevin Lynch’s book *Image of the City*, and \$58,000 in funding to the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) for urban environment and design studies that helped inspire Ian McHarg’s subsequent book *Design with Nature*.³⁰ RF routinely funded conferences, like a formative convening from January 8–10, 1962 on “Education for Urban Design” at Washington University in Saint Louis, and supported critical scholars like Berkeley’s Allan Tamko.³¹ Most relevant to this paper is that Jacobs’ most celebrated book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was supported by a RF grant.³² Given this paper’s focus on Jacobs’ leadership at an institutional level, the RAC was a natural site for investigation, as it houses comprehensive archival materials from RF and adjacent institutions.³³

The archival review focuses on 1957–1964, the years between Jacobs’ first mention in RAC materials and the publication of *Death and Life*. Key archives of interest include the following: RF Program Officer Chabourne Gilpatric’s Officer Diaries from 1957–1964 (Gilpatric supported

funding Jacobs' grant and the foundation's urban work)³⁴; correspondence with Jacobs about a possible program at the RF on "criticisms of urban design"³⁵; and documents drawing on Jacobs' insights about the RF's initial interest in Urban Design and the development of a strategy for supporting it, which culminated in a dedicated Foundation "Program for Urban Design Studies."³⁶ Other reviewed documents included the "Annual Reports" or "Annual Reviews" of the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

This archival review is supplemented by a secondary-source review of Jacobs' works and commentaries about them through the RAC's Zotero Bibliography of scholarship and digitized RAC research reports on IssueLab.

Archival Findings

Rockefeller archive center's archives reveal how Jacobs, far from being an upstart or rogue individual intellectual, worked intimately with the Rockefeller Foundation and numerous partners and organizations to inspire *paradigm-level changes* in city planning and urban studies. Indeed, these documents position Jacobs and her relationship with RF Program Officer Chadbourne Gilpatric at the center of a vast network of scholars, practitioners, activists, elected officials, newspapers and media outlets, among other organizations. This network of scholars played a critical role in elevating Jacobs, to attract RF's attention. In turn, she helped elevate others, and inspired and supported organizations following her vision. Jacobs' thinking inspired work at other foundations like the Ford Foundation, and projects worldwide.

In the RAC archive, Jacobs first appears on Rockefeller Foundation's radar on February 22, 1958, when Gilpatric is having an informal interview with *Architectural Forum* editor Doug Haskell. Gilpatric writes:

DH [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 CG an advance copy of this issue.) She might be a person worth talking to soon.³⁷

In short, Haskell promoted Jacobs and her work, and helped get Jacobs' piece "Downtown is for People" on Gilpatric's desk. This was not the first time Haskell had promoted Jacobs: Laurence writes of how Haskell was unable to attend a March 1956 Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) conference (the first of its kind, led by Dean and Professor José Luis Sert) and encouraged the conference to invite Jacobs in his stead.³⁸ Her speech drew praise and inspired an article, later published in *Architectural Forum* by Haskell, titled "The Missing Link In City Redevelopment," about the pitfalls of urban renewal in East Harlem.

After engaging Jacobs about her work, Gilpatric sought approval from other planning experts about her work, too: he interviewed University of Pennsylvania Professor David Crane, in July of 1958, for his opinions on Jacobs, and solicited reactions to her work from urban planning standard-bearers and experts like William H. Whyte and Lewis Mumford.³⁹ Later, he would solicit responses to Jacobs' formal proposal from Professor Christopher Tunnard at Yale, and Dean Holmes Perkins at Penn.⁴⁰ Thus, Haskell was far from the only endorser of Jacobs' work. After writing "Downtown is for People," Jacobs' *Fortune* publication in 1957, endorsements poured in, including from Whyte and Mumford. The New School for Social Research (now called the New School) offered to serve as the institutional vehicle for the grant, with President Hans Simons, two senior Deans of the Faculty (Hans Staudinger and Arthur L. Swift), and Vice President Clara Mayer weighing in on the work favorably.⁴¹ Perhaps most impressive is a vast collection of short

letter excerpts praising Jacobs, from a cadre of Mayors, city planning commissioners, agency heads, and realtors from around the country (See Figure 1).

These extensive reactions to Jacobs as a scholar and individual *before* the book *Death and Life* reveal not just that her ideas were thoroughly “vetted” by the urban planning and studies establishment, so to speak, but that a wide-ranging cast of actors across sectors, geographies, and industries went to bat to support her. Yet they also reveal the sexism and disbelief of those supporting Jacobs as she achieved notoriety, perhaps foreshadowing the historiographic narrative to come: “Look what your girl did for us! This is one of the best responses we’ve ever had!” wrote William H. Whyte to Haskell at the top of the note.

Mumford and Whyte, when asked by RF for their endorsements of Jacobs’ work, offered unequivocal endorsements. “I am not, I should say forthwith, disinterested” as editor of *Fortune* Magazine, Whyte wrote, but: “I feel Mrs. Jacobs has a vitally important contribution to make. 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.”⁴² Mumford, too, showed praise, noting how he first met Jacobs at the Harvard conference and writing 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 lines of investigation on matters that have been singularly ignored or misinterpreted by both planners and urban sociologists”⁴³ Mumford, the follower of planning forebearer Sir Patrick Geddes and leading thinker of the regionalist movement since at least the 1920s, praised Jacobs far differently

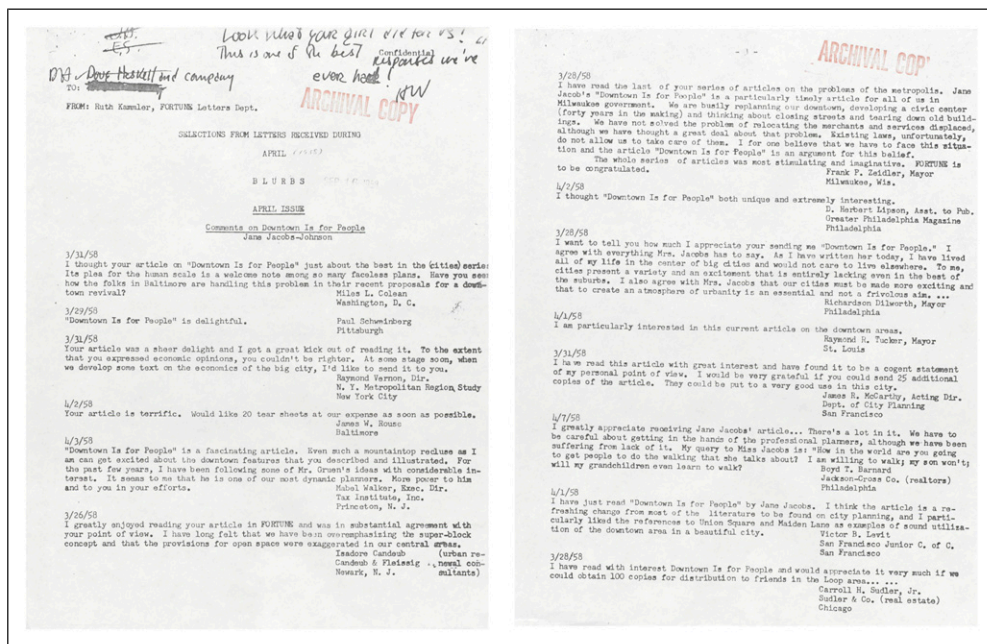


Figure 1. “Selections from Letters Received by *Fortune* Magazine.” Doug Haskell, Editor of *Architectural Forum*, is presumed to be passing along praise from Jacobs’ recent article “Downtown is for People” to RF Program Officer Chadbourne Gilpatric. A handwritten note from William H. Whyte to Haskell at the top of this multipage list of praise reads: “Look what your girl did for us!” Source: Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, Series 200R, RG 1.2, September 15, 1958. Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center.

in this private letter to RF than in his public note following Jacobs' *Death and Life*, patronizingly titled "Home Remedies for Urban Cancer." In "Home Remedies," Mumford not only insults Jacobs' "fear" of the city she claims to love, but later writes: "Mrs. Jacobs is at her best in dealing with small, intimate urban areas ... she fails to perceive that a neighborhood is more than its streets and street activities."⁴⁴ We might question whether Jacobs' intense criticism of planning's status quo went too far for Mumford in *Death and Life*, or whether the book took a different rhetorical turn than he anticipated it would. This letter from Mumford reveals how he and Jacobs thought similarly on many issues of urban policy; Mumford's views on the 1956 interstate highway act shows him to be a part of this *same* network or movement, critical of top-down projects.⁴⁵ Normative views on the city and scholarly affiliations were therefore complex and shifting. (See Figure 2).

Jacobs' thinking went against conventional philanthropic approaches to urban programs. For instance, the Rockefeller Foundation's 1960 Annual Report highlights a large-scale urban renewal program in Southwest Washington, DC⁴⁶ and stresses the importance of planning principles of

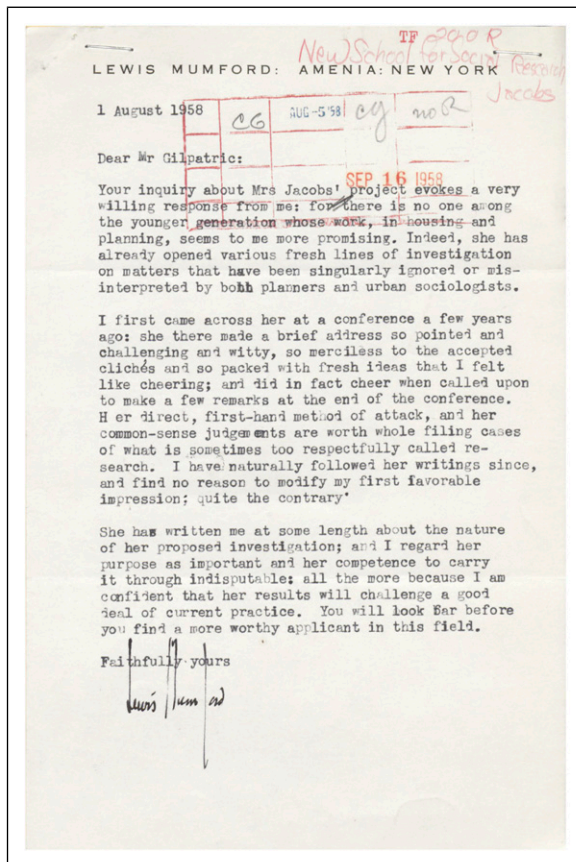


Figure 2. "Dear Mr. Gilpatric." Lewis Mumford, renowned writer and architectural critic for the *New Yorker* magazine, praises Jacobs' intellect and competence in a letter of support to RF Program Officer Chadbourne Gilpatric. Mumford's enthusiastic endorsement of Jacobs' book stands in contrast to his public review and rebuke of it in his article "Home Remedies for Urban Cancer." Source: Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, Series 200R, RG 1.2, September 16, 1958. Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center.

order and legibility extending from the domain of public health and in an era of Green Revolution agricultural technology.⁴⁷ Yet Jacobs found key allies within philanthropy, those inspired by her street-level citizenship and desire for a new planning paradigm. Gilpatric was among her staunchest supporters.

The grantmaking Executive Committee at RF would later rely centrally on both Whyte and Mumford for their approval of the grant for *Death and Life*, executing it on October 22, 1959. The Committee Resolution states: "Both Mr. Mumford and Mr. Whyte, in addition to other people consulted by Foundation officers for their interest in criticism of city planning and civic architecture, have urged support for Mrs. Jacobs as one of the most promising writers and critics in this field."⁴⁸

Key to Jacobs' enduring institutional relationship with RF was her longstanding personal relationship with Gilpatric, whom she sometimes refers to in letters as "Gil."⁴⁹ Theirs is a vast file. Testament to the intimacy of those engagements is the sheer number of conversations in the archive, with hundreds of documents spanning years of Gilpatric's Program Officer diaries, and including attendance at conferences, convenings, roundtables, and program/strategy meetings.⁵⁰ The two grew to exchange news articles and the latest books on urban design, and to casually discuss the work of interesting leaders in urban development.

With Jacobs on Gilpatric's radar from her numerous endorsements, she approached RF for support on a potential book project. From the start, Jacobs did not engage Gilpatric as a pleading applicant for funds, but as a colleague and peer. This is, perhaps, grantmaking at its best. Jacobs wrote to Gilpatric on September 16, 1958, using *Forum* magazine letterhead: "As you know from our discussions, I am eager to write a book about certain characteristics of the big city, and I hope that a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation will make it possible for me to do this. The reason I want to write this book is that we are now planning for our cities with very little idea of what the city is, what works well in it and what does not."⁵¹ Judging by this letter, perhaps it was Jacobs who opened confidently and ensured the relationship was a true partnership. Regardless, Jacobs and Gilpatric practiced tentative and negotiated grantmaking in service of Jacobs' vision, and supported by her colleagues. Later in her letter, she wrote clearly:

I am afraid this sounds very abstract; actually, however, I plan to make my points and describe the city mainly by means of specific instances and examples I would draw primarily upon Manhattan for my information...I think [Manhattan] shows, in wonderfully sharp outlines, many advantages, disadvantages and problems that are characteristic of metropolitan centers.⁵²

Jacobs knew from the start she wanted to focus on scale, density, and residential and commercial life in her book, and she knew Greenwich Village would be its setting. She also mentioned East Harlem, the subject of her 1956 Harvard GSD lecture. Gilpatric, in response, listened carefully and took pages of notes on Jacobs' ideas. From the start, he supported Jacobs' project, and coupled questions about it with an interview asking her for names of promising urban theorists and scholars.⁵³ Their wide-ranging conversations spanned topics of urban renewal for Charles Center in Baltimore, work on landscape architecture forthcoming by Ian McHarg, and her theories on street life and scale. The New School was able to sponsor Jacobs' grant, easing the logistics of funding as Jacobs began to write.

Jacobs' used her platform with the RF and Gilpatric to discuss political goals and her activism. For example, on May 26, 1958 she sent Gilpatric a copy of an article by playwright and protestor Robert Nichols titled "The Coming Struggle for Washington Square," foreshadowing efforts by Moses and other New York City planners to raze the park for automobile traffic.⁵⁴ Gilpatric wrote in response: "Dear Mrs. Jacobs: Returned with special thanks is Nichols' essay ... A few of my colleagues here read this, as I did, with amusement and edification. It is a perceptive piece that I for

one would like to see published. Looking forward to seeing you soon, Sincerely yours, CG.”⁵⁵ Jacobs was working actively in 1958 on the “Committee to Save Washington Square Park,” then led by neighborhood activist Shirley Hayes. She was also actively writing for outlets like the *Village Voice* about the planned roadway extension, not least because it was set to affect her own neighborhood. Here, we see Jacobs acting as a critical bridge between the world of activists like Hayes and Nichols, and power brokers like Haskell, Whyte, and Mumford. That bridge may have started in the largely white Greenwich Village area, but would later extend to other parts of New York, and the world.

Jacobs was also active from her initial conversations with Gilpatric about *other* urban scholars the Foundation might support. For instance, she urged Gilpatric to examine the work of Grady Clay, Ian Nairn, Nathan Glazer and Catherine Bauer as individuals worthy of consideration to Rockefeller’s urban work.⁵⁶ Argues Rowan about these engagements: “During these early meetings, Jacobs’s own grant proposal was secondary in importance to her role as an outside referee for the Rockefeller Foundation.”⁵⁷ Gilpatric listened attentively to Jacobs’ perspectives in this regard.

Nathan Glazer, of Berkeley, and William H. (Holly) Whyte, of *Fortune*, in turn supported Jacobs: they extended letters, phone calls, and meetings to find a suitable publishing outlet for Jacobs’ scholarship. They found that publisher in Jason Epstein, of Doubleday & Company.⁵⁸ Epstein wrote to Gilpatric on August 5, 1958: “I am very enthusiastic about Jane Jacobs’ proposed book on the American city and have, accordingly, offered her an Anchor Book contract.”⁵⁹ Epstein had himself enjoyed reading “The Exploding Metropolis” in *Fortune*, and heard Jacobs speak at the New School.⁶⁰ When Epstein and the Anchor Books’ staff at Doubleday moved to work at Random House, Jacobs switched the book’s contract to be with Random House as well, explaining her dilemma and decision to Gilpatric in a wide-ranging phone call about her writing process on December 30, 1958.⁶¹

In October of 1959, Jacobs wrote to Gilpatric asking for more time and an extension of her initial grant (see Figure 3). Jacobs did not do so with apology: she noted that she had had some new realizations about the city and would need more time to analyze and write about them. Writing “Attached is an accounting of the sum in which I will need to carry me through this period,” Jacobs seems to assume that Gilpatric will grant her the funding extension, given his longstanding commitment to the project.⁶² Moreover, Jacobs perceives a common understanding between herself and Gilpatric with regard to the unprecedented nature of her book and its ideas. Jacobs, in short, felt sufficiently comfortable in her partnership with Gilpatric to provide an honest assessment of the in-progress work and ask for support where needed.

The conversations between Jacobs and Gilpatric helped to inspire *Gilpatric* toward broader advocacy at Rockefeller to move beyond grantmaking that was episodic, and instead toward promoting a holistic urban design program at the Foundation. Indeed, even before *Death and Life* was published, Gilpatric invoked Jacobs’ work and their partnership as an example of the type of collaborations Rockefeller could fund in such a program.⁶³ Starting in 1960, Gilpatric began to strategize with Jacobs about the contours of this potential program, asking Jacobs for names of potential leaders and future funders (Figure 4). Jacobs, referring to Gilpatric informally as “Gil,” offered a wide-ranging list of possible intellectuals, ranging from practitioners like Stanley Tanel of the Regional Plan Association (RPA) in New York, author Herbert Gans of *The Urban Villagers* in Boston, or MIT lecturer on housing integration and racism Charles Abrams.⁶⁴ The engagements culminated in a proposal that Gilpatric wrote to RF for a 1-year pilot of a “Program for Urban Design Studies,” connecting individual studies of the city to its complex systems.⁶⁵ Writes Rowan of the Program: “Jacobs’s presence is palpable. All of the program’s objectives stress, to some degree, the importance of urban communities within metropolitan areas.”⁶⁶ Jacobs, in fact, would later serve as a consultant to the Program, helping to review potential grant recipients.⁶⁷ Jacobs

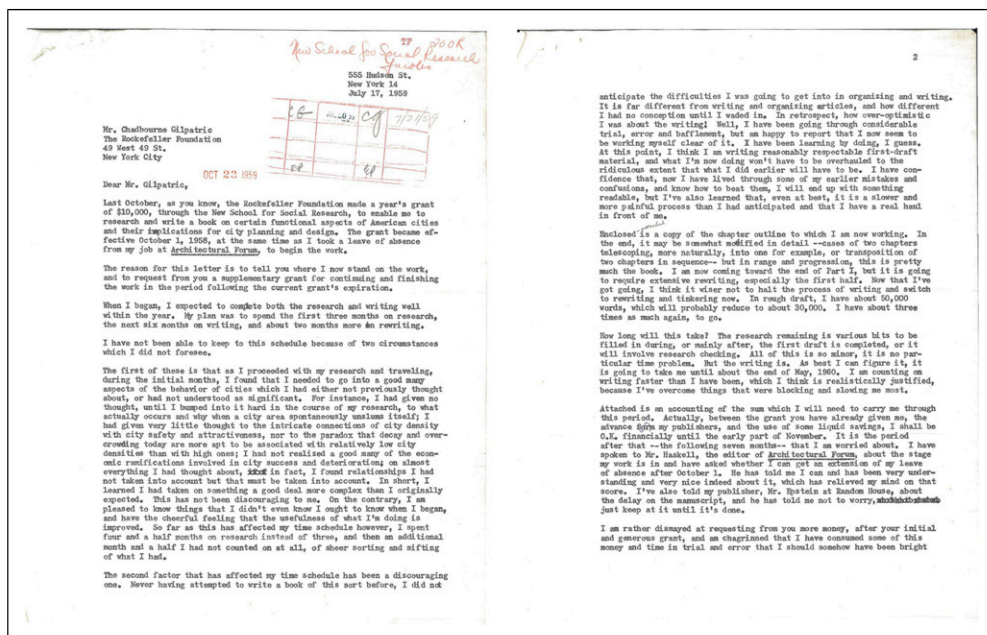


Figure 3. "Dear Mr. Gilpatric." Jane Jacobs, writing from her beloved address on Hudson Street in West Greenwich Village, justifies a request for a timeline and grant-funding extension from RF. Jacobs notes that "Never having attempted to write a book of this sort before," she will need more time to sift through unanticipated difficulties. Gilpatric responds understandingly and grants the request. Source: Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, Series 200R, RG 1.2, October 22, 1959. Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center.

evaluated entire university programs, bucking conventional wisdom and noting that Penn's might beat out Harvard's in her view.⁶⁸ Thus, to see Jacobs as a "lone wolf" scholar or amateur individual approaching RF would be an historiographic error: Jacobs and Gilpatric, themselves trusted confidants borne of endorsements from some of America's most prestigious urban thinkers, sat at the center of a network connecting concepts, institutions, and leaders. Just as Jacobs was supported by colleagues, she too lent a hand to endorse their projects.

Jacobs and Gilpatric continued their engagements, attending luncheons and convenings on urban design. On September 29, 1960, Jacobs thanked Gil for lending her a copy of a pamphlet titled "Must Britain Be a Mess?"⁶⁹ Indeed, at this stage in their partnership, Jacobs and Gilpatric were discussing issues well beyond urban design and planning: political economy, international affairs, and politics dovetailed with discussions of Kevin Lynch, Ian McHarg, and other urbanists. As expected, *Death and Life* was a smashing success when published: Epstein of Random House wrote to Gilpatric that he was "immensely pleased" with the book,⁷⁰ and positive reviews poured in, for example, from the *New York Times*' Harrison Salisbury and Martin Mayer who wrote *The Schools*, alongside familiar characters.⁷¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the last documents in the archive, dated October 3, 1961, is a copy of a piece Jacobs wrote for *Harper's Magazine* titled: "Violence in the City Streets: How our 'Housing Experts' Unwittingly Encourage Crime."⁷² Gilpatric and his colleagues at RF were sustained followers of Jacobs' work, which would continue to be paradigm changing. Before eventually leaving the United States for Toronto in 1968, seeking to avoid the Vietnam War draft for her son, Jacobs criticized public housing design, segregation in schools and housing, and continued to protest large-scale modernist projects like

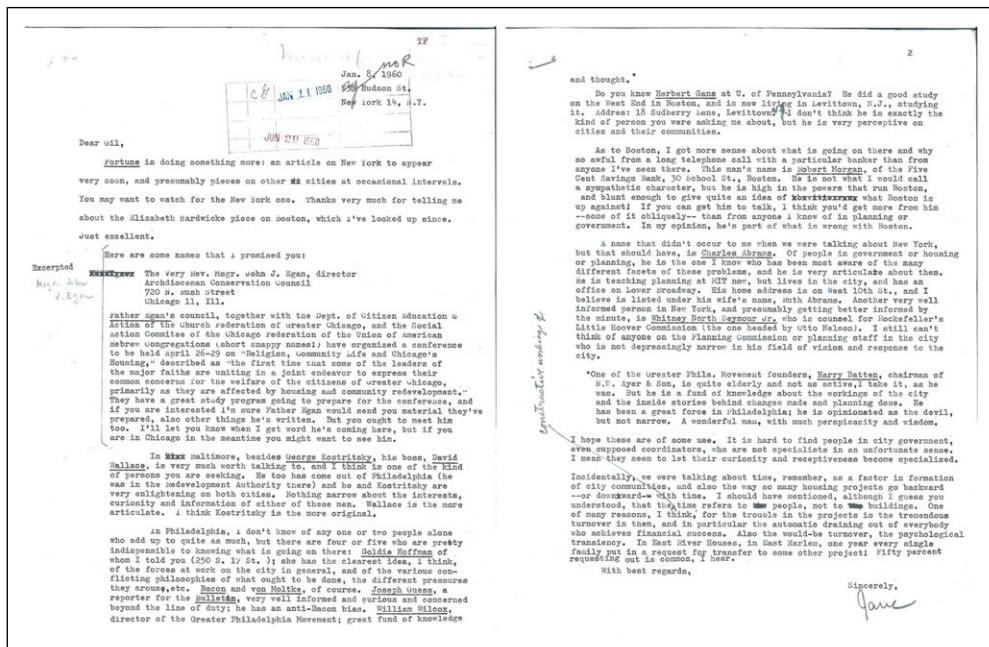


Figure 4. "Dear Gil." Jane Jacobs, at Gilpatric's request, offers a list of names of promising urban design theorists and practitioners, including Penn's Herbert Gans and New York City political leader Charles Abrams. Jacobs and Gilpatric, referred to here as "Gil," also exchange pleasantries about articles and events in planning. Source: "Interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs." 29 June 1960. Found in Chadbourne Gilpatric's 1960 January–July Officer Diary, RG 12, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center.

Moses' Lower Manhattan Expressway. Jacobs remained an active social critic on matters local and global, grounded and philosophical, well into her advanced years in Toronto. Jacobs' criticism, which was supported and fostered by a large network of urban thinkers and scholars, would ultimately bring down that top-down modernist genre of urban planning and inspire an alternative ideal.

Secondary-Source Review

Accounts by Laurence^{73,74} and Rowan⁷⁵ speak to Jacobs' central role in the network of people and institutions that was enabled by her partnership with Gilpatric at RF. Jacobs' thinking on cities arguably inspired numerous "highway revolt movements," in places like Boston, Baltimore, and even Toronto (Jacobs' home after 1968). Yet ideas typically associated with Jacobs should instead more collectively be associated with a movement of scholars, practitioners, and activists the world over who found leadership in Jacobs' work and that aspired toward embedded, street-level planning.

Intellectually, Marshall Berman, author of *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, credits Jacobs with having a major role in the contours of modernism as an esthetic and political movement.⁷⁶ And more practically, Jacobs' ideas, when positioned within broader networks of philanthropy and civil society, shaped urban planning programs and interventions the world over. Subramanian advances how the British Townscape movement in urban planning aligned with and was inspired by Jacobs' urban visions. She defines the Township Movement in architecture and urban planning

as one promoting “vernacular ... urban life” with principles of “urban density, individuality, and vibrant street life.”⁷⁷ Subramanian also notes that the publication *Townscape* was published in 1961, the same year as *Death and Life*, and both the Ford Foundation’s work on “Townscape Urbanism” and Jacobs’ thinking inspired major Townscape-inspired ideas and plans that aligned centrally with Jacobs’ urban vision, emphasizing “human-scale urbanism.”⁷⁸ Two notable examples from India include the Delhi Master Plan of 1962 and the Calcutta Basic Development Plan of 1966.⁷⁹

In an article on the “transatlantic links” between the Townscape movement and 20th century urban design, Darley positions Ian Nairn as a key player to consider, writing for *Architectural Review* and liaising with *Architectural Forum*.⁸⁰ Nairn, in contrast to Jacobs, used apocalyptic drawings of sprawl and aerial photos to convince his readership base that a new approach was needed.⁸¹ Yet we should not view Nairn and Jacobs as rivals, nor as separate individuals proceeding on parallel tracks: in as early as 1955, they were both aware of curated conversations about the city supported by *Architectural Forum*, Jacobs’ publication. And thanks to Whyte, both wrote chapters in *Fortune Magazine*’s series on American cities, meeting each other in New York.⁸²

Yet the secondary-source review convincingly reveals how some of the contemporary criticism of Jacobs’ ideas and actions should be treated suspiciously. Take, for instance, Jacobs’ supposed belief in economic libertarianism. Her subsequent books, *The Economy of Cities*, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, and *Dark Age Ahead*, take this critique head on: *The Economy of Cities* foregrounds the importance of collective public vision in sound planning. *Cities* critiques deregulated corporate graft and promotes instead *regional*/metropolitan divisions of capital and labor as keys to economic dynamism.⁸³ *Dark Age Ahead* warns of a descent into “ignorance” that can best be prevented by supporting key institutional pillars that include higher education, science and technology, and taxes coupled with governments that are responsive to citizens’ needs.⁸⁴

As to the concerns that Jacobs’ ideas promoted racist exclusion or did not sufficiently address racism, there is some merit. Indeed, while *Death and Life* promotes diversity (in incomes, buildings, and people) it does not acknowledge white supremacy as a *system* that produced cities and inscribes difference in the built environment. Indeed, Steil and Delgado advance that a planning goal of diversity (in built forms or demographic composition) is insufficient to achieve a just city, in that such forms of diversity do not in turn produce the “economic, social, and intellectual diversity on which cities thrive.”⁸⁵ Drawing on a socio-legal analysis of American institutions, civil rights, and white supremacy, Steil and Delgado propose an anti-subordination theory recognizing historic and active exploitation and domination.⁸⁶ Moreover, as Talen argues, in practice “diversity” is a slippery social scientific concept, with many axes and subjective definitions.⁸⁷

Yet Laurence, in *Becoming Jane Jacobs*, draws on newspaper articles to show how Jacobs in her activism worked hard to challenge white supremacy.⁸⁸ He draws on articles showing Jacobs publicly protesting public school segregation, and testifying to a U.S. Senate subcommittee against the discriminatory banking practice now known as redlining (then referred to as “blacklisting”).⁸⁹ Moreover, Jacobs’ opposition to policies of urban renewal and its associated effects of dispossession—what Fullilove has called “Root Shock”—helped counter decades-long violent processes of racialized removal.⁹⁰

Jacobs unquestionably foregrounded her white positionality. Yet BIPOC scholars, practitioners, and activists, ranging from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundation’s Darren Walker, to Yale Professor Elijah Anderson, to activist Franklin Thomas of the Bedford Stuyvesant Redevelopment Corporation and Community Development Corporation (CDC) movement, credit Jacobs’ ideas with inspiring in them ideas for activism and change in their neighborhoods. Walker, for instance,

got his start at the Abyssinian Development Corporation and worked in some of the same blocks in East Harlem that Jacobs first engaged in her 1956 Harvard conference.

Ideas typically credited to Jacobs, for example, her advocacy for street-level city planning informed by community voice, were indeed more than “her” ideas: they encompass the ideas of the RF Program for Design Studies and RF-supported thinkers more generally, including Edmund Bacon, Ada Louise Huxtable, I.M. Pei, Catherine Bauer, Christopher Tunnard, Holmes Perkins, and others.⁹¹ Yet that Jacobs served as the “leader” of this larger, paradigm-shifting movement speaks to her accessible, common-sense prose and approach to city life, her role as both an activist (with personal risks at stake), and the historical moment in which she wrote her works. An institutional historical analysis of Jacobs follows, examining the people (forerunners and influences of Jacobs), organizations, and ideas at the nexus of this movement.

Discussion: Toward an Institutional History of Jane Jacobs

This paper’s archival and secondary-source review shows that Jacobs was far from a homespun amateur renegade going at it alone to change American cities and urban planning. Indeed, when we closely examine her links with Rockefeller, we can instead see Jacobs as a central node of scholars, practitioners, and organizations seeking to promote paradigm change in the *field* of urban planning, and ultimately doing so successfully. Specifically, Jacobs informally led and inspired a group of scholars (like Tankel and Gans), practitioners (like Franklin Thomas and Darren Walker) and institutions (ranging from Smart Growth America to Center for the Living City) to question top-down rational master planning and consider situated and embedded urban life. Yet *why* did key planning institutions line up behind Jacobs against the dominant planning paradigm at this historical moment? Jacobs, I argue, was the right person for a unique historical moment: citizens bearing witness to the injustices of urban renewal, top-down master planning, and democratically unaccountable technocratic managerialism were angry about state militarism and physical interventions ill-suited for human scale.⁹² Yet local residents were proudly inclusive and collectivist, eschewing individualist or anti-state alternatives. In the spirit of Jacobs’ community-engaged scholarship, her case holds broader lessons for planning history: rarely does structural, paradigm change stem from a single person, but rather from dynamic amalgams of people, organizations, and ideas that leverage historical moments. We ought to take a lesson for today’s moment, where paradigm changes in planning are sorely needed.

People: Forerunners and Influences: Jacobs, as we learned from key RAC documents, was able to engage RF confidently because of the support she received from others. Initially, Doug Haskell played a formative role in Jacobs’ professional advancement, both at *Architectural Forum* and at the 1956 Harvard GSD conference. In [Figure 1](#), we see the long list of mayors, planners, authors/scholars, and organization leaders who endorsed her work, going to bat for a set of new and controversial ideas. In fact, both Lewis Mumford and William H. Whyte of *Fortune* wrote unequivocally enthusiastic letters to Gilpatric endorsing her ([Figure 2](#)). That both Haskell and Gilpatric were themselves close with Henry Luce and Jason Epstein (of Doubleday and then Random House) speaks to the relationship between social networks and publicity in media. Once Jacobs found herself in a position of peer exchange with Gilpatric and colleagues at RF, Jacobs wasted no time supporting other likeminded intellectuals and activists, passing on to Gil Robert Nichols’ piece on Washington Square Park,⁹³ and later recommending scholars like the RPA’s Stanley Tankel, author Herbert Gans, and MIT lecturer Charles Abram for a future “Program for Design Studies” ([Figure 4](#)). Finally, as Kanigel notes, Jacobs was supported to take an unconventional path by her parents (at home in Scranton), by her husband (an architect), and by her children.⁹⁴ An institutional reading of her historiography proudly rejects any idea that individual agents can affect change on their own.

Jacobs influenced scholars and activists far and wide as well. One of many examples is Franklin Thomas of the CDC movement, whose Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation inspired a national CDC and “community control” movement in under-invested neighborhoods around the country. Another is the work of Darren Walker, who employed Jacobs’ planning principles first at the Abyssinian Development Corporation and Rockefeller Foundation, and now as President of the Ford Foundation. Walker helped to operationalize a Pathmark Supermarket along 125th Street in East Harlem, in the very area Jacobs engaged in her 1956 Harvard GSD lecture.⁹⁵ The corridor was a food desert and the supermarket helped to ignite broader commercial redevelopment in East Harlem. Don Chen, who initially founded and led Smart Growth America (SGA) and supports WE ACT and now leads the Surdna Foundation, was likewise inspired by Jacobs’ planning approaches. In short, the relationships between philanthropic institutions, nonprofits, activist groups, and ideas are porous and interlinked.⁹⁶ These links speak to our need to position Jacobs historiographically not as a rogue individual but at the center of a wide-ranging network that has collectively pushed for social change.

Institutional Partnerships: From tacit counsel and support by scholars like Whyte and Mumford, to official relationships between Jacobs and *Forum* and the RF, to full programmatic partnerships with regard to the Program for Design Studies, we should center institutional partnerships in our historical reading of Jacobs’ work and legacy. Jacobs started her career in post-war New York as a journalist, first for a trade journal, then writing on everyday American life for *Amerika*, and then as a contributor to *Architectural Forum*. These publications were formative in promoting her writing and work. Other institutions were also crucial in supporting her work: The New School leadership (President Hans Simons, senior Deans Hans Staudinger and Arthur L. Swift, and Vice President Clara Mayer) were exceptionally supportive of Jacobs’ work and served as the grantmaking fiscal vehicle as Jacobs wrote *Death and Life*.⁹⁷ Jacobs’ lecture presenting for Haskell at the Harvard GSD, itself a product of urban-development grantmaking, helped Jacobs gain prominence. And of course, the Rockefeller Foundation, Random House, and other organizations were critical in promoting her work. And finally, Jacobs was herself a key player in decentralized member-affiliated organizations, not as the leader but as a *link* between agents of power in journalism and philanthropy and everyday people. These organizations, like the Joint Committee to Stop the Lower Manhattan Expressway, not only embody Jacobs’ ideal for community-centered participatory planning, but were quite effective in achieving their goals. Moreover, Jacobs’ own theory of planning foreground networks and collective partnerships. In a 1958 speech Jacobs gave to The New School titled “A Living Network of Relationships,” she criticized the luxury Park West development, saying: “None of us can have our own world in the heart of Manhattan.”⁹⁸ Here, it is as if Jacobs herself pleas for a more collective view of urban life, of the beauty of cities.

Jacobs, in turn, inspired different institutions that themselves outlive her, uniting people of various ages and backgrounds in a common quest for vitality. They include, but are not limited to: the Municipal Art Society, the Project for Public Spaces, SGA, The Center for the Living City, and others. As but one example, Center for the Living City continues their annual “Jane Jacobs Lecture Series.”⁹⁹ Invariably, these organizations have taken Jacobs’ ideas and bent them in their own directions: an esthetic vision of walkable streetscapes, a socially inclusive vision for racial justice, an environmental vision for less sprawl. But across all of the organizations lies a deep engagement with Jacobs and the set of ideas by her and associated organizations. These ideas can be distorted or mutated, or marshaled to serve interests in dubious relation to Jacobs’ original ideals. Yet there exists a relational *web* of actors, themselves in contact, which can enforce guardrails or shared expectations about what Jacobian planning truly means. Such an inclusive set of community standards, in a sense, is true to Jacobs’ own epistemology.

The role of Jacobs' Ideas in Changing Planning Practice: That Jacobs' epistemology—or her way of “reading” and “knowing” cities—helped to produce paradigm changes in planning theory and practice also speaks to the quality of the ideas themselves, to their delivery, and to a unique historical moment ripe for change. This sub-section places Jacobs' ideas within the planning zeitgeist and active debates of this time (1957–1964), interrogating where Jacobs and this movement stood on major urban issues, and what they were reacting against.

From an intellectual lineage point of view, Jacobs' theories are somewhat related to the urban theory and planning scholarship that immediately preceded her. And indeed, those planners were some of Jacobs' greatest advocates and compatriots in her movement for paradigm change in planning. Calls for political and ecological regionalism by planning scholars like Thomas Adams,¹⁰⁰ metropolitanism and dense, people-rather than automobile-oriented spaces as advanced by Mumford,¹⁰¹ or descriptive writing on urban “metabolism” and “pulse” as advanced by Chicago School scholars¹⁰² all speak to Jacobs' and this movement's conviction of city streets as active, changing, and organic. Cold War geopolitics loom large in midcentury planning scholarship, as planners debated “planned” and “market” logics and rethought fundamental institutional arrangements toward what might constitute the “good city.”¹⁰³ In *Death and Life*, Jacobs takes aim at a slightly older generation of planning scholars, for instance, those from the City Beautiful and Garden City/Suburb movements. Her critique is clear: design cities with, for, and alongside, people in the streets. Her own positionality as a woman (in a male-dominated era) and activist journalist (in a moment dominated by technocratic managerial expertise) widened differences.

To crystalize Jacobs' ideas monolithically as a manifesto is impossible, as her call was for contextually situated solutions and community leadership. Yet within the network of people, organizations, and ideas that lined up behind Jacobs, we might find the following four principles at work. (1) A Habermasian ideal, in reaction to the top-down strategic/rational planning of the modernist era, to instead advance a communicative and participatory ideal, where reasoned debate could lead to intersubjective engagement.¹⁰⁴ Jacobs inflected this Habermasian ideal with an “insurgent planning,”¹⁰⁵ or activist/advocacy planning bent,¹⁰⁶ advancing that groups of ordinary residents were the real “experts” on their neighborhoods: “The processes that occur in cities are not arcane, capable of being understood only by experts. They can be understood by almost anybody. Many ordinary people already understand them.”¹⁰⁷ Notes Hirt, Jacobs' thinking aligns with Habermas' in that “although Jacobs criticizes modernist epistemology, she also works to improve it instead of rejecting it (which in fact makes her a potential, if implicit, early ally of Habermas ...).”¹⁰⁸ (2) A scale question. Jacobs' focus was on streets, curbs, and built form with novel eyes, from a “ground level.” The top-down planning interventions to which this group was reacting operated at a wholly different scale, that of entire cities and regions. A case in point is Robert Moses' famed miniature model New York, now on display at the Queens Museum.¹⁰⁹ Jacobs understood this scale question well, writing in *Downtown is for People*: “We are becoming too solemn about downtown. The architects, planners—and businessmen—are seized with dreams of order, and they 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: buildings come first, for the goal is to remake the city to fit an abstract concept.”¹¹⁰ (3) What Sclar calls the “planning intersection,” the intersection between spatial forms and social relations, animates Jacobs' theories.¹¹¹ Good physical planning informs successful social relations, and vice versa. Speaking of the links between street blocks and social mixity, for instance, Jacobs writes in *Death and Life*: “Long blocks also thwart the principle that if city mixtures of use are to be more than a fiction on maps, they must result in different people, bent on different purposes, appearing at different times, but using the *same* streets.”¹¹² Stockard frames this intersection slightly differently: cities are complex and dynamic systems that exist at the interface of people and built structures. Given such complexity, good planning quite simply requires “planners

to spend much more time physically engaged in the neighbourhoods they are serving,” as well as with those neighborhoods’ residents.¹¹³ And finally, (4), “un-planning.” This term does not refer to the common critique of Jacobs, that she embodies a communitarian/libertarian approach against what scholars like Graham and Marvin call the large-scale unitary modern ideal.¹¹⁴ Un-planning is not planning gone postmodern. In fact, Jacobs’ ideas and their prioritization of ordinary people can certainly form a single, large-p Public from smaller-p, neighborhood “publics.” But Jacobs understands that anarchy and spontaneity are urban assets, and indeed have an *order* of their own. Chaotic city streets are something to celebrate and love, not destroy, a perspective not opposed to believing in strong taxation of the powerful and urban regulation. The proverbial question that Jacobs asks, in this sense is: who are cities for? She writes: “Whose logic? The logic of the projects is the logic of egocentric children, playing with pretty blocks and shouting “See what I made!” – a viewpoint much cultivated in our schools of architecture and design... 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.”¹¹⁵

Yet there are real epistemic concerns with the ideas of Jacobs and this movement. In “Home Remedies,” some of Mumford’s critiques stand the test of time, his sexism notwithstanding. For example, Mumford’s conviction that one needs government and *scale* to accomplish institutional change problematizes the street-level ballet.¹¹⁶ Although Jacobs and this movement’s colleagues promote community self-determination and equity among communities, the “street-level ballet” has no good answer for how to overcome inequalities and gaps in opportunities *between* places. Indeed, in *Death and Life*, Jacobs says little about *policies or programs* that might narrow the gap between the outcomes in different neighborhoods, or actions by the state to reduce those gaps. Such silence on these issues is especially concerning in the context of gentrification and dispossession. If urban neighborhoods that become livable also become unaffordable, then they drive out the very diversity of people responsible for the ballet. In sum, Jacobs’ vision for urban life happens reactively, making peace with, rather than defining, the urban condition. That lack of analysis on *city-making* extends to questions of racism in the city, where inequalities have been intentionally inscribed into built environments over hundreds of years and unequal planning continues.

Beyond the persuasive ideas themselves, rhetoric and delivery play a foundational role in Jacobs’ influence. Her writing is clear and accessible, employing concise prose. It is unpretentious. Her style quickly gained momentum and a scent. And in the spirit of her ends and professional commitments, it easily transcended academia to include practice, activism, and public life. Her rhetorical approach offers lessons for academics and practitioners alike.

Lastly, Jacobs benefited immensely from a moment of paradigm questioning, what Rogers calls an “age of fracture,” that was far larger and longer than Jacobs and the network of people and organizations in which she played a central role.¹¹⁷ Notes Berman, before Jacobs, large-scale modern planning projects felt inevitable; to oppose them felt like opposing the inevitability of historical progress.¹¹⁸ Yet Berman reflects on when he and his community found themselves *in the way* of modernism, their largely Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx demolished for Robert Moses’ Cross-Bronx Expressway. While writing, Jacobs, too, found her ideas had immediate practical relevance, fighting for the life of West Greenwich Village and Washington Square. What Jacobs, Whyte, Nairn, Gilpatric, and so many others in this relational web successfully did in this moment was not merely to pose an incisive critique of top-down planning, but to accessibly sketch out a *compelling programmatic alternative*. That alternative showed people of various backgrounds that another path was possible, and that opposing planning projects did not necessarily mean standing in the way of “human progress.”¹¹⁹ That alternative was not a call for libertarian un-planning, or for racial exclusion. Yet outcomes of the post-1970s late liberal moment do reflect worrying socioeconomic and racial injustices that continue to be inscribed in cities. Jacobs’ call

was for greater community inclusion and involvement and street-level activism alongside a compassionate and robust public sector. But her work leaves unclear how this robust, activist (and supposedly non-racist) state would interface with communities on the ground.

Implications and Conclusion

Drawing on an archival and secondary-source review of Jane Jacobs' contributions to urban planning, this paper attempts to reframe the historical assessment of Jacobs' work, moving it toward a more institutional frame. This renewed assessment foregrounds Jacobs not as a self-made anti-establishment critic, but as a community-engaged leader of a movement spanning philanthropy, academia, journalism, the arts, and architecture, and activism in city streets, only together shifting an epistemic frame and taking down a specific brand of modernist planning technocracy. That movement—which included a number of non-planners weighing in on planning debates of the day—saw success in part because of its ideas, in part because of rhetorical strategies communicating them, and in part because of the broad-based discontents with top-down rational planning in the 1960s. Jacobs' movement was ready with an alternative, optimistic, recipe.

There are key lessons in the case of Jane Jacobs for scholars and practitioners alike seeking social change in cities: we must move from 'great [wo]man' historiography to *thick institutional histories* that study power, networks, and relationships. There is need for further study at this intersection of people, systems, and thought: who does what, and how? Practically, the case of Jacobs can help bolster the role of "narrative change" that accessible intellectuals and public scholars play in making *social change*. Indeed, there is no one "answer" for why this broad constellation of people and organizations lined up behind Jacobs at this fortuitous historical moment. A combination of her social and institutional relationships, activism, ideas themselves, rhetoric and delivery, and network of supporters and influences all help explain this profound shift.

Today, we are due for another paradigm shift, another programmatic rethinking of the *field* of urban planning and its first principles. In a wide-ranging special-issue volume of the journal *Urban Planning* titled "Paradigm Shifts," a range of academics and practitioners agree.¹²⁰ Top-down state violences of modernism's rational plan have given way to fluid, decentralized violences punctuated by eviction, unaffordability, racial and economic inequalities, and unequal processes of city-building, all with less visible (more opaque) structures of contestation and opposition. Cynically, have we merely moved from one flawed academic-practitioner consensus to another? What will stop new flaws or cooptation of a future program on urban life, political economy, and "the ideal city?"

Accordingly, we must be careful not to view Jacobs as a heroic victor or her ideas as frozen in time. Yes, our historical assessment of Jacobs' ideas should examine their impact. But we should also examine the work of the people and organizations she helped inspire, who continue to fight daily to truly *enact* the epistemic and practical vision about which Jacobs wrote. Jacobs' partnerships and institutional embeddedness should not cause us to cheapen her legacy. If anything, this historiography leaves us with a more realistic appreciation for the past and ongoing work of many, all fighting in their own ways for unified, yet contextually distinct, street-level publics.

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27. See, for example, Elijah Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011); and "Peggy Shepard," *WE ACT For Environmental Justice*, 2021, accessed 11 April, 2021, available at: <https://www.weact.org/person/peggy-shepard/>.
28. Laurence, *Becoming Jane Jacobs*, and Kanigel, *Eyes on the Street*.
29. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values,'" 4. See also: Laurence, "The Death and Life of Urban Design."
30. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values,'" and: Chadbourne Gilpatric interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs, 8 February 1962, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
31. Chadbourne Gilpatric interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs, 8–10 January 1962, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
32. Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 1 July 1958. Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
33. The Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) is based in Sleepy Hollow, New York and, according to its website, "The Rockefeller Archive Center is a major repository and research center for the study of philanthropy and its impact throughout the world." RAC holds comprehensive archival materials from the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations (including grant information, Program Officers' diaries, and correspondences). In addition to this primary material, RAC offers secondary-source research reviews through IssueLab and Zotero.
34. Chadbourne Gilpatric interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs, 4 June 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
35. Rockefeller Foundation records, General Correspondence, RG 2, Series 200R, "Urban Design (G-O), 1962," Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

36. "Program for Urban Design Studies," 4 April 1962, RG 3.2, Series 911, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
37. Chadbourne Gilpatric interview with Doug Haskell, 22 February 1958., Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
38. Laurence, "Jane Jacobs Before Death and Life," 12.
39. Chadbourne Gilpatric's 1960 January-July Officer Diary, 21 July 1958, RG 12, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
40. Correspondence from Chadbourne Gilpatric (2 documents), July 29, 1958, RG 1.2, Series 200R, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
41. Ibid. July 10, 1958 and August 21, 1958.
42. William H. Whyte to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 16 September 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
43. Lewis Mumford to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 16 September 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
44. Mumford, "Home Remedies," 192–193. "Fear" is a reference to page 190.
45. Wrote Mumford of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, for example, "[the Act] was based on a very insufficient study... a study of highways, not a study of the real problems, the study of transportation in our country. [It had been] jammed through Congress so blithely and lightly, because of America's almost automatic inclination to favor anything that seems to give added attraction to the second mistress that exists in every household right alongside the wife – the motor car." Success instead, Mumford wrote, "rests on the restoring of the pedestrian scale of distances to the interior of the city, of making it possible for the pedestrian to exist." Mumford's blatant sexism is on full display here. Nonetheless, there is much that aligns with his critique and that of Jacobs. Source: Richard F. Weingroff, "The Genie in The Bottle: The Interstate System and Urban Problems, 1939–1957," *The Federal Highway Administration*, September 2000, accessed 27 April 2021, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/00septoct/urban.cfm>.
46. "The Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1960." Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC). 189–190.
47. Ibid., 18–19.
48. General Resolution, RF Executive Committee, October 22, 1959, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
49. See Figure 4, and: Interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs in Chadbourne Gilpatric's 1960 January-July Officer Diary, 29 June 1960, RG 12, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
50. Jacobs is present in Gilpatric's personal diaries from February 22, 1958 until the end of 1962. Jacobs' general correspondence files can be found in RG 1.2, Series 200R, Box 390, Folders 3380 and 3381 of the RAC archives; these two folders contain 75 and 37 pages of engagements, respectively.
51. Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, 16 September 1958., Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., May 9, 1958.
54. Ibid., May 26, 1958.
55. Chadbourne Gilpatric to Jane Jacobs, 26 May 1958., Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
56. Ibid., May 9, 1958.
57. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values,'" 3.
58. Letter from Jason Epstein to Chadbourne Gilpatric, June 26, 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
59. Ibid., August 5, 1958.
60. Ibid.

61. Conversation between Chadbourne Gilpatric and Jane Jacobs, December 30, 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
62. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1959.
63. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values,'" 6–7.
64. Chadbourne Gilpatric's 1960 January–July Officer Diary, Interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs, June 29, 1960, RG 12, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
65. Chadbourne Gilpatric, interview notes from a meeting with Jane Jacobs, "Program for Urban Design Studies," 4 April 1962, RG 12.3, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
66. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values,'" 5–8.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. Jane Jacobs to Chadbourne Gilpatric, September 29, 1960, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
70. Jason Epstein to Chadbourne Gilpatric, June 7, 1961, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
71. Compiled and abbreviated reviews of Jacobs' *Death and Life*, November 14, 1961, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
72. Copy of Jacob's "Violence in the City Streets," October 3, 1961, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
73. Laurence, "Jane Jacobs Before Death and Life."
74. Laurence, "The Death and Life of Urban Design."
75. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values.'"
76. Berman, *All That is Solid*.
77. Divya Subramanian, "The Ford Foundation and Visions of Urban Development in 1960s India," Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) Research Reports, 2020, accessed 1 April, 2021.
78. *Ibid.* See also: Divya Subramanian, "The Townscape Movement and the Politics of Post-War Urbanism," *Twentieth Century British History* (2020), 1–24. Subramanian's full book is forthcoming.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Gillian Darley, "Ian Nairn and Jane Jacobs, the Lessons from Britain and America," *The Journal of Architecture*, (Vol. 17, no. 5, 2012), 733–746.
81. *Ibid.*, see pg. 736.
82. *Ibid.*, 738.
83. Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life*, New York: Vintage, 1984.
84. Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead*. New York: Random House, 2004.
85. Justin Steil and Lauren Delgado, "Limits of diversity: Jane Jacobs, the Just City, and Anti-Subordination," *Cities* (2018), 4.
86. *Ibid.*, 4–6.
87. Emily Talen, "The Context of Diversity: A Study of Six Chicago Neighbourhoods," *Urban Studies* (Vol. 47, no. 3, 2010), 486–513.
88. Laurence, *Becoming Jane Jacobs*.
89. *Ibid.*
90. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, "Root Shock: The Consequences of African American Dispossession," *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, (Vol. 78, No. 1, 2001), 72–80. See also: Mindy Thompson Fullilove and Michel Cantal-Dupart, "Medicine for the City: Perspective and Solidarity as Tools for Making Urban Health," *Bioethical Inquiry*, (Vol. 13, 2016), 215–221.
91. Rowan, "The Redevelopment of 'Human and Social Values.'"
92. See, for example, Michael P. Brooks, "Chapter 6: Centralized Rationality: The Planner as Applied Scientist," In *Planning Theory for Practitioners*, (Chicago, IL: APA Press, 2002), 81–96.

93. Chadbourne Gilpatric interview with Jane Jacobs, May 26, 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
94. Kanigel, *Eyes on the Street*.
95. See, for example, Melanie G. West, "Talking Optimism and Opportunity With New Ford Foundation Head," *Wall Street Journal*, August 8, 2013, accessed 5 April, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324522504579000983653577844>.
96. See, for example, this article about Don Chen's professional trajectory by yet another institution influenced by Jane Jacobs, Living Cities: "Don Chen," *Living Cities*, 2021, accessed 10 April, 2021, <https://livingcities.org/people/don-chen/>.
97. Correspondence from Chadbourne Gilpatric (2 documents), July 10, 1958 and August 21, 1958, Series 200R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.
98. Jane Jacobs, "A Living Network of Relationships," speech given to The New School in 1958. Found in: Owen Hatherly, "Where Are All the People?" *The London Review of Books* (Vol. 39, No. 15, 2017). <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n15/owen-hatherley/where-are-all-the-people>.
99. "Jane Jacobs Lecture, Featuring Rachel Jones: Cities as the Staging Grounds for Social Justice, a Racial Reckoning," *Center for the Living City*, April 1, 2021, accessed 17 April, 2021, https://centerfortheivingcity.org/upcoming-events/2021/cities-as-the-staging-grounds-for-social-justice-a-racial-reckoning-with-rachel-jones?ss_source=sscampaigns&ss_campaign_id=60663b0ce0f606779ef5f3fe&ss_email_id=606b560915591448d2041d07&ss_campaign_name=Cities+as+the+Staging+Grounds+for+Social+Justice+with+Rachel+Jones&ss_campaign_sent_date=2021-04-05T18%3A25%3A20Z. The Center for the Living City also has considerable material about Jane Jacobs' life on their website. See, for instance, <https://centerfortheivingcity.org/janejacobs#jane-in-the-headlines>.
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101. Ibid.
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104. Patsey Healey, "Planning Through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," *Town Planning Review*, (Vol. 63, no. 2, 1992), 143–162.
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107. Jacobs, *The Death and Life*, 441.
108. Sonia Hirt, "Jane Jacobs: Modernity and Knowledge," *The Urban Wisdom of Jane Jacobs*, Sonia Hirt and Diane Zahm, Eds., (London: Routledge, 2012), 38.
109. See, for instance, the criticisms in: Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, (New York: Knopf, 1974).
110. Jane Jacobs, "Downtown is for People," In: William H. Whyte, ed., *The Exploding Metropolis*, (New York: Fortune Magazine, 1958), 124–131. See page 126. Available online at: <http://innovationecosystem.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/63349251/DowntownisforPeople.pdf>.
111. Sclar uses the term "planning intersection" often. See, for instance, "Dr Elliot Sclar on the Infrastructure and the Limits of Public-Private Partnerships," *The Local Knowledge Blog*, April 5, 2018, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/515063948616819/videos/1472374639552407>.
112. Jacobs, *The Death and Life*, 183.

113. James Stockard, "Jane Jacobs and Citizen Participation," *The Urban Wisdom of Jane Jacobs*, Sonia Hirt and Diane Zahm, Eds., (London: Routledge, 2012), 59.
114. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*, (London: Routledge, 2001).
115. Jacobs, "Downtown is for People," 126–127.
116. Mumford, "Home Remedies."
117. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).
118. Berman, *All That is Solid*.
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