From Public Housing to Public Choice: Jane Jacobs, Friedrich Hayek, and the Antinomies of Urban Liberalism

JONATHAN MARTY, University of California, Berkeley, jonathanmarty@berkeley.edu

Abstract

An internationally celebrated icon of community planning and grassroots activism, the late American urbanist Jane Jacobs is frequently reduced to a caricature of polite, all-purpose sentiments which obfuscate both the complexity and the political specificity of her work. In the first portion of this paper, I examine the popular representation of Jacobs by prominent urban nonprofits, as well as the ambiguity of her intellectual legacy in both urban scholarship and in recent media about her career. Highlighting Jacobs's warm reception among libertarian thinkers, I devote the second portion of this paper to exploring the intellectual affinity between Jacobs and the famed Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek. Demonstrating their key points of convergence on matters of social policy, governance, and expertise in relation to watershed moments in planning history, I conclude with an analysis of Jacobs's little-discussed writing on American public housing, noting the various parallels between her argumentation and the radical reformation of American housing policy during the turn to "advanced liberalism" which occurred in the decades following the publication of her classic 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Introduction

> If you hoist your sails in the wind, you will go where the wind blows you, not where you choose to go; if you put seeds in the ground, you must be prepared for lean as well as abundant years.
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> – Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (2002 [524], 18)

Since the publication of her beloved polemic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961, Jane Jacobs has stood as one of the most influential thinkers in the fields of urban planning, design, architecture, and public policy. Written at a critical mid-century juncture during which the cold economism and austere aesthetic principles of high modernist planning were coming under increased public scrutiny, Jacobs's book managed to defy the prevailing institutional dogmas of her day and formulate a more compassionate, community-oriented planning model for the future. Castigating the social engineering and morphological determinism of the professional and academic planning establishment, Jacobs (1961, 14) powerfully contended that "the kind of prob-

lem which cities pose" is not one of idealized societal trajectories, visual order, and compartmentalization of uses, but rather, "a problem in handling organized complexity." Therefore, she argued, the dynamism and prosperity of great cities is not a matter of rigid, top-down, expert-led master planning (as was being taught in the design schools), but rather, a matter of cultivating "a fertile ground for the plans of thousands of people" (Jacobs 1961, 14).

Given the broad and consequential effects of her prescriptions in the urban professions, Jacobs can be viewed as something of a historical wedge figure – an intellectual whose outlook was formed by the distinctive conditions of high modernist planning in the first half of the 20th century, and whose critiques would eventually help to catalyze and orient American planning's radical reformation under the turn toward "advanced liberalism" in the second. Coined by British sociologist Nikolas Rose (1996, 40-41), the term "advanced liberalism" describes a mode of governance where – in contrast to the laissez-faire political economy of classical liberalism or the "society"-oriented vision of post-war Keynesianism – "individuals are to be governed through their freedom…, but as members of heterogeneous communities of allegiance," with the notion of "community" operating "as a new way of conceptualizing and administering relations amongst persons."

With such a transformation in mind, revisiting Jacobs's seminal work offers scholars the opportunity to untangle the intellectual currents which can be found at play in her distinct brand of urban liberalism – notably that of the Austrian School economist Friedrich Hayek. Building from the quasi-libertarian planning scholar Nolan Gray's (2018) identification of the two thinkers' overlapping concerns with local knowledge, decentralized planning, and spontaneous order, I offer a critical re-reading of Jacobs's proposed remedies for urban governance, specifically on the question of publicly subsidized housing. In so doing, I offer a preliminary outline of the intellectual precedent which subsequently enacted urban policies like HUD's "housing choice" program found in *Death and Life* and in the work of Jacobs more broadly. As a paradigmatic concept of urban modernism which was later eschewed in favor of private enterprise and housing vouchers in the United States, public housing provides an ideal object through which to interpret the particular strands of Hayekian liberal individualism present in Jacobs's urban vision, and to parse out the various contradictions such a logic would help engender soon after being structurally incorporated into the governance models of American cities.

Locating Jane Jacobs

Through her resounding and vibrant denunciation of modernist planning missteps, Jane Jacobs has come to enjoy widespread recognition in the world of mainstream urbanism. Since 2007, admirers of her work have congregated in over 130 cities across six continents for Jane's Walk, "an annual festival of free, community-led walking conversations" inspired by Jacobs's work. That same year, the Municipal Art Society

(MAS), the established Manhattan-based nonprofit, began awarding the Jane Jacobs Medal – a Rockefeller Foundation-supported prize granted to "individuals whose work creates new ways of seeing and understanding New York City, challenges traditional assumptions, and creatively uses the urban environment to make New York City a place of hope expectation." In 2016, MAS hosted the Jane Jacobs at 100 Celebration, a multi-month event which sought to "honor [Jacobs's] impact by bringing together hundreds of self-organized events and activities under a single banner that reveal the dynamic energy, innovation, and creativity of cities" (Municipal Art Society 2016). That same year, a laudatory documentary about Jacobs titled *Citizen Jane: Battle for the City*, depicting her legendary David and Goliath-like showdown with New York City "power broker" Robert Moses, was released to rave reviews. The year 2016 would also see the publication of the sharply researched intellectual biography *Becoming Jane Jacobs* by urban historian Peter L. Laurence, with Robert Kangriel's *Eyes on the Street: The Life of Jane Jacobs* following shortly after in 2017.

However, with the recent resurgence of interest in Jacobs and her urban philosophies, discussions have emerged between planning professionals and scholars regarding the seeming ambiguity of her political program. Proudly describing herself as "not ideological" in an interview shortly before her death, Jacobs is indeed distinguished by her attitude of indiscriminate social critique, avoidance of partisan political affiliations, and relative paucity of references to any particular intellectual or academic tradition (Jacobs 2000). Such a dearth of direct political identification is, without question, a key element in her bipartisan icon status, rendering her a usefully noncontroversial representative of broad, anodyne concepts like "the dynamic energy, innovation, and creativity of cities" (to quote the Municipal Art Society). While the political indeterminacy of Jacobs's writing has undoubtedly rendered her the mascot of what scholar Margaret Crawford (2015) has referred to as "feel good urbanism" – evidenced, for instance, by Jacobs's designation as a "Placemaking Hero" by the nonprofit Project for Public Spaces – it has also rendered her works into political Rorschach tests, with certain urban coalitions finding what they perceive to be reactionary, destructive, or just simply outmoded facets of her oeuvre.

However, faced with a debilitating housing shortage and rising income inequality, contemporary urbanists in the United States have questioned the aptness of Jacobs's neighborhood-oriented planning vision to solve the pressing challenges of today. In addition to a section of *Citizen Jane* which sees the documentary's interviewees grappling with the scalability of her vision in our present moment, this question was posed directly by Janette Sadik-Khan, the celebrated New York Department of Transportation Commissioner during Michael Bloomberg's mayoralty, in an article for her former boss's magazine in 2016 titled: "Faced With Today's NIMBYs, What Would Jane Jacobs Do?" While Sadik-Khan and her co-author Seth Solomonow (2016) insist that appropriation of Jacobs's ideas by affluent, white NIMBY communities to "oppose dense new housing, new public space, bike lanes, or redesigned streets to

combat dangerous driving" represents a misreading of her philosophy ("using Jane-Jacobs-like language of neighborhood preservation as a decoy to oppose Jane-Jacobs-like projects"), prominent planning figures such as Stephen Smith of the classical liberal YIMBY organization Market Urbanism have argued that such NIMBYism is in fact merely a natural outgrowth of Jacobs's own political theory. "I used to think the NIMBYs were co-opting Jane Jacobs," Smith wrote in a 2018 Twitter thread, "then I read more about what she advocated for in the real world (as opposed to the generalities disconnected from actual proposals) and decided that it's actually the urbanists who are co-opting her" (Smith 2018).

Further to the left, within the realm of more overtly "critical" scholarship, academics working in urban disciplines have widely divergent conclusions about Jacobs's life and work. In addition to writing in the "tradition of Jane Jacobs," the late architect and outspoken left-wing social critic Michael Sorkin celebrated her 100th birthday by telling *Archpaper*: "Jacobs revered the city as the preeminent site of choice and possibility and she saw architecture's duty as enabling, not domineering… Her gift to designers was the rejection of fixed formulas in favor of an ever-unfolding dialectic of form and life" (Stephens 2016). Prefacing the conclusion of her blistering New York City-centered memoir *A Gentrification of the Mind*, the CUNY Staten Island professor and AIDS-activist Sarah Schulman writes "of course no book on gentrification is complete without a final word from Jane Jacobs…" (Schulman 2013, 179). However, such celebratory readings tend to clash with other, more skeptical evaluations. In an article for Radical History Review, Tochterman (2016, 66) places her at the root of a genealogy of "Neoliberal Urban Development" which concludes with the work of University of Toronto professor Richard Florida, arguing that Jacobs's "forecast" the now-dominant practice of "neighborhood rehabilitation and resettlement by a pioneering upper class." In a plethora of similar critiques, Jacobs has been branded a "crypto-libertarian" (Bratishenko 2016), or simply as a somewhat myopic thinker who failed to grasp the compatibility of her work with the process of gentrification (Haas 2020).

As opposed to Sorkin's celebration of Jacobs's dialectical and liberatory thought, Schulman's unconditional portrait of Jacobs as a righteous anti-gentrification activist, or certain retrospective critiques of Jacobs's insidious intellectual legacy, the late Marxist-humanist political philosopher Marshall Berman evaluates Jacobs in a far more ambivalent manner in his seminal 1982 book *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Writing fondly of her "brilliant" argumentation and depth of thought, and celebrating *Death and Life* as "the prophetic version of this new urbanism" of the 1960s and 1970s, Berman confirms the unique wedgelike quality of Jacobs in the history of city planning. Yet, similarly to Sadik-Khan, Berman notes that while "Jacobs's street and family are microcosms of all the diversity and fullness of the modern world as a whole," there are "some people who seem at first to speak her language" who nonetheless employ her work in service of the "ideology of the New Right," with its attempt to "turn people against all modern ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit

of happiness for all." Such a "misuse," he argues, is left open due to the "anti-modern subtext" of her otherwise modernist vision, "a sort of undertow of nostalgia for a family and a neighborhood in which the self could be securely embedded, ein'feste Burg…" (Berman 1982, 322-324).

The internal complexity and diverging political interpretations of Jacobs's work, as well as the resulting difficulty of situating Jacobs's views on a clear ideological spectrum is perhaps best reflected in *Straight Line Crazy*, a stage play held at The Shed in New York City's decidedly un-Jacobsean Hudson Yards megadevelopment in the Fall of 2022 following an earlier run in London. A dramatic retelling of the story of Robert Moses and his ascent from an optimistic young reformer to New York's master builder in the early 20th century, the play presents Jacobs as a righteous and quick-witted gadfly whose cunning and passionate ideals ultimately defeat Moses' tyrannical plans for her community. As the play concludes with the successful thwarting of a destructive, late-era Moses planning intervention for her beloved Greenwich Village, the Jacobs protagonist – and thus playwright David Hare (2022, 167) – acknowledges the ambiguity of her legacy in a final monologue which amounts to something of a political asterisk:

> I was lucky. I'd known New York when everyone, from all backgrounds, lived together. But our efforts to preserve Greenwich Village and SoHo succeeded in transforming it into the most expensive piece of real estate in the world. What was once a community was cleansed of everyone but the rich. The Village was saved, but it was also destroyed. Whether that was Robert Moses' fault or whether it was mine, I really can't say.

More than any other section from these recent retrospective evaluations of Jacobs's life and work, this concluding speech highlights the complexity of Jacobs's legacy in light of recent developments in the urban condition. As a pensive conclusion to an otherwise celebratory play, this addendum serves to admit the contradictory effects of the Jane Jacobs approach, wherein the doctrine of democratic, citizen-informed planning eventually came to enable the wealthy and the politically connected to shirk what some hold to be citywide responsibilities to construct housing and, in so doing, leaving the less fortunate with significantly less consumer choice and leverage in the artificially scarce private housing market.

With this said, the task of excavating Jacobs's intellectual influences is not undertaken here as a means of confining a dynamic thinker into a rigid and inflexible political category. Instead, this task is approached as a means of uncovering the fluctuations of the broad urban liberal tradition in the United States, and in doing so, delineating a genealogical line from watershed urban policies of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s to the sentiments present in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. In order to situate Jacobs's own internally contradictory role in the formation of these recent

policies, however, we must first excavate the similarities between her thought and her distinctive brand of urban liberalism with the work of Hayek.

Jacobs and Hayek

More so than any of her colleagues and friends like William "Holly" Whyte and other assorted New York intellectuals, the thinker who affords the most fruitful insight into Jacobs's work comes in the unlikely figure of Friedrich Hayek, the Austrian School philosopher and economist best known for his defense of classical liberal ideals in works such as *The Road to Serfdom*. Despite the fact that Jacobs herself "rejected the libertarian ideology and label for various reasons and in various ways" (Laurence 2016, 500), and despite her contemporary association with progressive nonprofit organizations like the Municipal Art Society and the Project for Public Spaces, the overt parallels between her work and that of Hayek have nonetheless made her a hero in libertarian circles, where the work of the Austrian School occupies a privileged theoretical perch.

In an article for the Von Mises Institute, an organization which educates scholars in the Austrian School tradition to advance the struggle for "a free-market capitalist economy and private-property order that rejects taxation, monetary debasement, and a coercive state monopoly of protective services," journalist Jeff Riggenbach (2011) affectionately describes Jacobs as a "libertarian outsider." In 2016, the libertarian think tank celebrated Jacobs's 100th birthday with an adulatory podcast highlighting her contributions to free-market thought. That same year, the planning scholar and former Mercatus Institute fellow Nolan Gray (2016) highlighted the conceptual overlaps between Jacobs and Hayek in an article for Market Urbanism, concluding that: "As Hayek did in the case of economics, Jacobs stood up to an urban planning orthodoxy that enjoyed the support of policymakers, academics, and all the 'Very Serious People.'"

By analyzing Jacobs from these Hayekian and libertarian perspectives, both of which are derived from the broad liberal tradition but occupy its most fiscally conservative wing, scholars can heuristically arrive at a firmer conception of the politics and influence of Jacobs's thought. Following the schema offered by Gray (2016), yet highlighting discrepancies and omissions in the comparison when necessary, I attempt here to parse out the points of convergence in such an intellectual affinity through the concepts of local knowledge, decentralized planning, and spontaneous order – each of which, I argue, occupy central positions in the arguments of both Jacobs and Hayek.

Local Knowledge

In his 1945 article "The Uses of Knowledge in Society," Hayek mounts a critique of the increased tendency toward centralized economic planning which he saw taking hold of Western governments both during and after the Second World War. Just as Jacobs found a quixotic naivety present in the overarching social visions and all-encompassing urban renewal plans of postwar American city planners, Hayek saw in

New Dealers, Keynesian economists, and other proponents of centralized planning an "erroneous transfer to social phenomena of the habits of thought we have developed in dealing with the phenomena of nature" (Hayek 1941, 520).

Foundational to both Hayek and Jacobs's arguments is an insistence upon the importance of local knowledge. For these two thinkers, the task of planning – despite being a critical human tendency in both economic and urbanistic matters – was impossible to accomplish in a purely abstracted, centralized fashion from above. As Hayek writes, "the peculiar character of the problem of a rational economic order is determined precisely by the fact that the knowledge of the circumstances of which we must make use never exists in concentrated or integrated form, but solely as the dispersed bits of incomplete and frequently contradictory knowledge which all the separate individuals possess" (Hayek 1941, 519). Similarly, on the act of city planning, Jacobs writes that planners "must know [the city] not in some generalized way, but in terms of the precise and unique places in a city with which they are dealing." Such knowledge, she contends, is possessed by "no one but the people of the place, because nobody else knows enough about it" (Jacobs 1961, 409-10) – a near echo of Hayek's insistence that "the economic problem of society is… a problem of how to secure the best use of resources known to any of the members of society, for ends whose relative importance only these individuals know" (Hayek 1945, 519-20).

Decentralized Planning

With their overlapping assertions that the problems of economic and urban planning are "[problems] of the utilization of knowledge not given to anyone in its totality" (Hayek 1945, 520), Jacobs and Hayek envision different (yet intimately related) mechanisms of decentralized planning as appropriately flexible and sophisticated means of utilizing said dispersed knowledge. Again, it is worth complicating Gray's schema here, namely to stipulate that Jacobs was in many ways far more open to "centralized" government intervention than the notoriously state-weary Hayek, namely in the realms of education, transportation infrastructure, and even cultural institutions (Laurence 2016, 500-501). Regardless, it is on this notion of decentralized planning that Hayek and Jacobs find their strongest point of agreement, with both developing the notion at length in various portions of their respective oeuvres.

For Hayek, an incisive solution to plannerly quandaries comes in the subtle ingenuity of the price system – one whose significance he finds in the vast "economy of knowledge with which it operates" and simultaneously "how little the individual participants need to know in order to be able to take the right action." Given the fragmented and piecemeal development of the price system, no single administrative institution can summarily lay claim to it. Yet, as Hayek (1945, 526-7) writes, "if it were the result of deliberate human design, and if the people guided by the price changes understood that their decisions have significance far beyond their immediate aim, this mechanism would have been acclaimed as one of the greatest triumphs of

the human mind." As such, the price system in Hayek resembles a sort of transcendental Kantian noumenon in that, despite revealing itself in necessarily piecemeal and incomplete objects of perception to individual consumers (for example, in the prices of goods encountered at a grocery store on a given day), the system itself intrinsically rejects any attempts by the minds of individuals to understand its true essence from any Archimedean point or Borgesian Aleph (Kant [1781] 1998, 347). Similarly, the price system in Hayek is reminiscent of divine providence in the New Science of Italian proto-Enlightenment philosopher Giambattista Vico ([1725] 1999, 127), in that it too is presented as "a historical fact" which, amidst the reality of naked self-interest and violent competition amongst human beings, is responsible for poetically and metaphysically bestowing order "on the great polity of humankind without the knowledge or advice of humankind, and often contrary to human planning."

In what reads as a practical, albeit tempered application of such Hayekian logic in the political realm, Jacobs, in *Death and Life*, proposes a mechanism of decentralized planning which entails the horizontal division of "great cities" into "administrative districts" which "correspond with reality, instead of fragmenting it under a new device." Envisioned as an "invention to make coordination possible where the need is most acute–in specific and unique localities," Jacobs's administrative districts would eschew the "'pure' or 'doctrinaire'" forms of vertical administration then-present in urban governance in favor of a new "framework of intelligence" corresponding to the way in which respective districts operate "as social and political Things" (Jacobs 1961, 419). Such districts, Jacobs argues, "would promptly begin to act as political creatures, because they would possess real organs of information, recommendation, decision, and action," thus functioning, in turn, as "fulcrum points where [citizens of big cities could] apply their pressures, and make their wills and their knowledge known and respected" (Jacobs 1961, 422). As such, Jacobs can be seen as responding to "problem" according to Hayek: "how to extend the span of our utilization of resources beyond the span of the control of any one mind; and therefore, how to dispense with the need of conscious control and how to provide inducements which will make the individuals do the desirable things without anyone having to tell them what to do." (Hayek 1945, 527). In order to highlight the similarities between Hayek's conception of the price system and Jacobs's conception of cities, it is instructive to compare the strikingly similar analogies with which each describes their respective object of inquiry. Near the conclusion of "On the Uses of Knowledge in Society," Hayek (1945, 526) writes of the price system:

> The whole acts as one market, not because any of its members survey the whole field, but because their limited individual fields of vision sufficiently overlap so that through many intermediaries the relevant information is communicated to all. The mere fact that there is one price for any commodity – or rather that local prices are connected in a manner determined by the

> cost of transport, etc. – brings about the solution which (it is just conceptually possible) might have been arrived at by one single mind possessing all the information which is in fact dispersed among all the people involved in the process.

Envisioning the price system as "a mechanism for communicating information" between individual consumers and producers, Hayek's parallactic thesis is unquestionably emblematic of liberal individualism – a concept present in the works of classical liberal philosophers like John Locke and Davie Hume, as well as in more recent thinkers such as Karl Popper (Kukathas 1989). Here, the individual, armed with his own personal money, his own incomplete information and oftentimes random or arbitrary consumer preferences, is designated as both the primary agent and one of the many component parts of the overall network of capitalist liberal democracy. As such, Hayek argues that the soundest fiscal policy is that which allows markets to function in a relatively unencumbered fashion, so as to preserve the informative quality of prices, protect the individual's right to enjoy a range of consumer choice, and, therefore, to "provide inducements which will make the individuals do the desirable things without anyone having to tell them what to do" (Hayek 1945, 527). With this quote in mind, particularly Hayek's image of various "members" in a "field" whose "limited individual fields of vision sufficiently overlap so that through many intermediaries the relevant information is communicated to all," the following quote from Jacobs's *Death and Life* (1961, 376-377) about the best way to understand cities lays bare the Hayekian flavor of her perspective:

> Being a structural system in its own right, a city can best be understood straightforwardly in its own terms, rather than in terms of some other kinds of organisms or objects. However, if the slippery shorthand of analogy can help, perhaps the best analogy is to imagine a large field in darkness. In the field, many fires are burning. They are of many sizes, some great, others 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. But the space and the shape of that space exist only to the extent that the light from the fire creates it.
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> The murk has no shape or pattern except where it is carved into space by the light. Where the murk between the lights becomes deep and undefinable and shapeless, the only way to give it form or structure is to kindle new fires in the murk or sufficiently enlarge the nearest existing fires murk has no shape or pattern.

In Jacobs's vision, the field is understood as the city, the fires as individual citizens and communities within the city, and the size and shape of the fires as citizens' respective levels of opportunity for self-actualization, social connectedness, and economic vibrancy. As such, the distant or dying fires and the murky voids left between them represent urban poverty, blight, or a simple dearth of dynamism and a stunted or non-existent "sidewalk ballet." By arguing that the only method by which one can restore shape and definition to the city's murky sections is to "kindle new fires in the murk or sufficiently enlarge the nearest existing fire," Jacobs, like Hayek, articulates a distinctly liberal individualist notion – one which finds the solution to societal problems in the encouragement and preservation of choice for individual actors or small communities, rather than in the ostensibly collectivist, top-down government interventions embodied in a moderate form by the works of modernist planners like Robert Moses, or in a more radical form by the "Social Condensers" proposed by architects of the Soviet Avant-Garde in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Kopp [1967] 1970, 115).

Spontaneous Order

In lieu of prescriptive planning regimes which viewed the economy or the city as a blank canvas upon which experts would paint "rational" pictures, Hayek and Jacobs contend that the most effective planning is that which enables users (individual consumers and entrepreneurs in the economy, individual citizens and communities in the city) to paint their own pictures on their own respective canvases. It is here that Gray (2016) argues that the two thinkers strike their final major point of convergence: the virtues of spontaneous order. Of Gray's trio, it is worth noting that this third point is the most problematic, in that the divergence between Jacobs and Hayek is the widest. "In ways that Hayek ignored," Laurence (2016, 501) writes, "Jacobs understood that spontaneous self-organization was not always positive," evidenced by her fierce criticism of "self-segregated urban and suburban 'turfs'" which she identified as emerging in a cynical yet no less authentically "spontaneous" fashion." Yet, despite the superior degree of nuance in her admiration of spontaneous order, Jacobs would nonetheless foreground the notion in many of her most influential concepts and critiques.

For instance, in the reductive functionalism of Le Corbusier-inspired modernist architecture and planning, with its dogmatic conflation of decluttering with spiritual nourishment, inflexible calculation with efficiency, and the symmetry of straight lines with civic health, Jacobs (1961, 15) finds "a quality even meaner than outright ugliness or disorder," i.e. "the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the real order that is struggling to exist and be served." Jacobs's infinitely complex "real order" here closely resembles that which Hayek finds expressed through the price system. Like the planners of Jacobs's polemic, the economists of Hayek's are hindered by their unfortunate inability to understand that the "real order" of the economy is "not the product of human design and that the people guided by it usually do not know why they are made to do what they do" (Hayek 1945,

527). This failure to understand the boundlessly variegated "order" of human behavior and choice, as Jacobs argues, is born of a lack of the precise understanding required "to see complex systems of functional order as order, not as chaos." Whereas the planning practitioners, professors, and students of her day sought a panacea for urban problems in fashionable control freak solutions like urban renewal, the Garden City, or CIAM-inspired towers-in-the-park designs, Jacobs argued to the contrary that "no single element in a city is, in truth, the kingpin or the key. The mixture itself is kingpin, and its mutual support is the order" (Jacobs 1961, 376).

As is colorfully discussed in *Death and Life*'s opening chapter, the MIT- and Harvard-trained urban planners of mid-century Boston saw in the city's North End a chaotic, physically imprecise, and derelict "slum," while Jacobs, with her tremendous urban acuity, saw a vibrant and zestful community of "functional order" fortunately spared by the Faustian "improvements" of the plannerly bulldozer. Such planners, from Hayek's perspective, can be categorized alongside the myriad administrative variants of "those who clamor for 'conscious direction'--and who cannot believe that anything which has evolved without design (and even without understanding it) should solve problems which we should not be able to solve consciously" (Hayek 1945, 527). Therefore, according to the overlapping elements of Jacobs and Hayek's visions, it is only by learning to admire the spontaneous order of communities like the North End, harnessing the strength of local knowledges, and developing appropriately decentralized planning mechanisms, that planners and public administrators of other sorts can cultivate and accommodate "the inclusiveness and the literally endless intricacy of life" (Jacobs 1961, 373).

Jane in the City

Ebenezer Howard, the Decentrists, and Le Corbusier

In excavating the influence of Hayek on Jane Jacobs's work on cities and urbanization, as well as Jacobs's own influence on the development of "advanced liberalism," much is to be gained from her denunciation of three major planning figures in *Death and Life*'s earliest pages. Attempting to dispel the "folklore" quality of accepted planning doxa, Jacobs offers "a quick outline" of "the most influential ideas that have contributed to the verities of orthodox modern city planning and city architectural design" (Jacobs 1961, 16-17). It is in this section that Jacobs begins to historicize her critique of modernist planning, noting how the pervasive influence of ambitious urban schemes to rejuvenate mankind have led, ultimately and tragically, to drab, lifeless environments in which individual freedoms are impeded and public choice is constrained. In addition to offering a crisp Hayekian polemic against planning history and prevailing planning theory, this section also contains the fundamental critiques of contemporary planning practices which would orient Jacobs's proposed remedies for cities in the future.

"The most important thread of influence" in urban planning, according to Jacobs, begins with Ebenezer Howard, an English social reformer who developed the influential garden cities concept in his 1898 book *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. For Jacobs, the flaws in Howard's utopian vision begin with its innately anti-urban call to "halt the growth of London and also repopulate the countryside" through "the creation of self-sufficient small towns" which, Jacobs adds, were "really very nice if you were docile and had no plans of your own and did not mind spending your life among others with no plans of their own." Following this latter critique of the lack of individual autonomy within these planned developments, Jacobs (1961, 17) adds: "As in all Utopias, the right to have plans of any significance belonged only to the planners in charge." Interestingly, such a critique highlights the failure of Garden Cities to realize the purported ideals of Howard (1898, 26) himself, who wrote that, in these developments, it will not be "the area of rights which is contracted, but the area of choice which is enlarged." Whatever the purity of his intentions, Jacobs argues that Howard's ultimate miscalculation lay in his belief that "the way to deal with the city's functions was to sort and sift out of the whole certain simple uses, and to arrange each one of these in relative self-containment." Such "paternalistic, if not authoritarian" goals, Jacobs writes, unfortunately came to be "powerful and city-destroying ideas" upon which "virtually all modern city planning has been adapted from" (Jacobs 1961, 18-19).

Following Ebenezer Howard, Jacobs moves her target to the Decentrists, "a group of extraordinarily effective and dedicated people–among them Lewis Mumford, Clarence Stein, the late Henry Wright, and Catherine Bauer" who advocated for regional planning and the "decentralizing" of dense urban agglomerations in the United States during the 1920s. Given the Decentrists' enthusiastic embrace of the ideas of Howard and kindred figures like Patrick Geddes, Jacobs finds in their work the same fatal micro-managerial instinct present in their idols, arguing that they "pounded in Howard's premises that the planned community must be islanded off as a self-contained unit, that it must resist future change, and that every significant detail must be controlled by the planners from the start and then stuck to. In short," she concludes, "good planning was project planning" (Jacobs 1961, 20). Chief among the faults which Jacobs finds in the work of the Decentrists, though, comes in their "[incuriosity] about successes in great cities," evidenced by the inability of figures like Mumford to find anything but a lamentable and "solidified chaos" in the bustle of Midtown Manhattan. Because "they were interested only in failures," Jacobs argues that none of the Decentrists' positions, especially their nationally influential theories of housing provision, "had anything to do with understanding cities, or fostering successful large cities, nor were they intended to" (Jacobs 1961, 21).

The third and final planning figure who Jacobs sets her sights on is Le Corbusier, the legendary Swiss-French architect who, possibly more than any other individual designer, helped pioneer the development of high modernist architecture through his influential building concepts, his classic treatises *Towards a New Architecture* and *The*

City of To-morrow, and his foundational role in the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). As she did with Howard, Jacobs (1961, 22) notes how Corbusier-inspired planning projects belie their creators' liberatory visions for the development of humanity:

> Le Corbusier was planning not only a physical environment. He was planning for a social Utopia too. Le Corbusier's Utopia was a condition of what he called maximum individual liberty, by which he seems to have meant not liberty to do anything much, but liberty from ordinary responsibility. In his Radiant City nobody, presumably, was going to have to be his brother's keeper any more. Nobody was going to have to struggle with plans of his own. Nobody was going to be tied down.

Finding aesthetic beauty in the technological efficiency of the products of modern engineering, Le Corbusier indeed sought to advance the human condition through the mass production of standardized residences, each of which would function as a "machine for living in." By emulating his housing designs after the "lesson of the airplane" which he found "in the logic which governed the statement of the problem and its realization," Le Corbusier ([1931] 1986, 4), according to Jacobs, eventually produced cities "like a wonderful mechanical toy," but whose "dazzling clarity, simplicity, and harmony" privileged orderliness, easy legibility, and architectural vanity over the more minute and unglamorous aspects of actually functional, pleasant, and livable cities. The Corbusian city of dead streets and towers-in-the-park, Jacobs writes (1961, 23), offers "nothing but lies."

In her critiques of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, the work of the Decentrists, and the design theories of Le Corbusier, Jacobs remains a steadfast opponent of the imposition of particular cultural values, judgements, and modes of life on the urban masses by planners. Within such environments, she argues, citizens lack the personal autonomy to make "plans of their own" – a point reminiscent of the work of the famed liberal philosopher John Rawls' pertaining to "plans of life." Such Rawlsian "plans," as argued by philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990, 36), are roughly equatable with "individual self-definition or ends," the promotion of which is central to the "modern restriction of the concept of justice to formal and instrumental principles." With Jacobs's Hayek-esque liberalism and her denunciation of the three aforementioned pillars of modernist planning thought in mind, both her criticisms of and recommendations for the provision of government-subsidized housing reveal both the complexity of her own thought, and that of her legacy in the sphere of urban affairs.

From Public Housing to Public Choice

Public Housing

Though the concept was approached in a heterogeneous fashion by different countries and cities, public housing is in many ways a model institution of urban modernism and modernist planning. A simultaneous embodiment of high-minded social ideals and state-of-the-art technological innovation, publicly subsidized urban housing projects represented an attempt by planners and public officials to meet the increasingly frenetic, confusing, and phantasmagoric nature of modern cities with the same technological rationality that powered their unruly and chaotic development. While Le Corbusier did not publicly align himself with any specific political party, his modernist design principles were undergirded by an ambitious social vision premised on "an inevitable social evolution" which he believed would transform "the relationship between tenant and landlord" and modify "the current conception of the dwelling-house" (Le Corbusier [1931] 1986, 237). Such an attitude, coupled with the economical practices of mass production and standardization which enabled the construction of his modernist building style, would eventually crystallize the Corbusier-inspired tower-block model as the iconic face of public housing in the United States. Furthermore, the proliferation of such housing can be partially attributed to the work of Decentrists like Catherine Bauer, who, through advocacy and her 1934 book *Modern Housing*, successfully advocated for an incursion of European-style social housing into the United States.

Because these large, Corbusian public housing developments were often developed on land cleared through the demolition of planner-designated "slums" in American cities like New York, it is not particularly surprising that the city's stock of public housing would factor so heavily in Jacobs's critique of the urban planning of her day. For instance, the very first example offered in *Death and Life* of "unsuccessful city areas which lack… intricate mutual support" as a result of the plannerly obsession with "how a city 'ought' to look" is a housing project in Manhattan's East Harlem. Writing of the campus's "conspicuous rectangular lawn which became an object of hatred to the project tenants," Jacobs's critiques are confirmed by the interviewed residents' detection of the planners' vainglorious, self-serving, and ultimately detached and inhuman interventions in the built environment: "Nobody cared what we wanted when they built this place… Nobody cared what we needed. But the big men come and look at that grass and say, 'Isn't it wonderful! Now the poor have everything!" (Jacobs 1961, 15).

While Jacobs did take offense with the virtue-signaling and egoism presented by these modernist developments, it would be incorrect to read her critiques of public housing as being of a merely architectural or physical nature. As is shown in the relatively under-discussed seventeenth chapter of *Death and Life*, "Subsidizing dwellings," Jacobs's opposition to government-owned housing was rooted in a political-economic orientation toward the maximization of public choice, and a concomitant weariness of the increased role of government in the provision of services. This chapter, once again,

highlights the significant resonance of Hayekian ideas within Jacobs's conception of the economic machinations of cities, and within her views regarding the respective roles of the public and private sectors in the provision of goods and services.

Though Hayek did not devote significant periods of his career to studying the development and management of public housing, the topic does factor into his work in a significant and illuminating fashion. In a chapter of his influential 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom* titled "Economic Control and Totalitarianism," Hayek warns against the desire among "socialists" to transition from the "pecuniary motive" to "non-economic incentives," writing that

> if all rewards, instead of being offered in money, were offered in the form of public distinctions or privileges, positions of power over other men, or better housing or better food, opportunities for travel or education, this would merely mean that the recipient would no longer be allowed to choose, and that whoever fixed the reward, determined not only its size but also the particular form in which it should be enjoyed (Hayek [1944] 1994, 93).

This theme of the impediments placed on individual consumer choice through the "dictatorial" practice of central economic planning is further developed in Hayek's 1960 book *The Constitution of Liberty*, in which he devotes an entire chapter to "Housing and Town Planning." After acknowledging that "the general formulas of private property or freedom of contract" fail to "provide an immediate answer to the complex problems which city life raises," Hayek ([1960] 1978, 342) sets out on an extended, unmistakably proto-Jacobsean critique of "the haphazard manner in which governments, with seemingly no clear conception of the forces that determined the development of cities, have generally dealt with these difficult problems…" Hayek denounces rent restriction, a policy which he charges with producing "a situation in which administrative authorities acquired highly arbitrary powers over the movement of men" in addition to contributing "much toward weakening the respect for property and the sense of individual responsibility." Then, he moves to the provision of "public housing or building subsidies," both of which he argues have regrettably "come to be accepted as a permanent part of the welfare state" (Hayek [1960] 1978, 343-345). Consistent with his overarching critique of the slippery slope toward rigid authoritarianism created by the government-exclusive provision of certain goods and services, Hayek ([1960] 1978, 345-346) worries that continued provision of public housing will lead to a situation wherein the "personal liberty" of individuals will be "gravely threatened," as "any far-reaching change in housing conditions will be achieved only if practically the whole of the housing of a city is regarded as a public service and paid for out of public funds."

Public Choice

In Hayek's concern about the problematic and insatiable determination of government to shoulder a larger and larger portion of the housing problem, it is useful to return to Jacobs's analogy of the city as a "large field in darkness" in which "many fires are burning." From the disastrous logic decried by Hayek ([1960] 1978, 345-346) wherein "practically the whole of the housing of a city is regarded as a public service and paid for out of public funds," it follows that Jacobs conceives these same planning tendencies as quixotic attempts to artificially give "structure" to the "light" (city life) by blanketing the murky voids left between the distant and dying fires (poverty, blight) with a benevolent flamethrower of social policy (i.e. slum clearance and government-owned public housing construction).

Because Hayek and Jacobs each maintain that the infinite variegation and diversity of urban and economic life cannot be comprehended, let alone planned for, by a single all-powerful body, and because they both seek to enable the autonomous and voluntary decision-making of individual actors, the mass production of government-operated housing is posed by both as a fundamental danger to human liberty and the free exercise of choice in housing consumption. Such a sentiment is summarized well by Hayek ([1960] 1978, 260-261) in *The Constitution of Liberty* when he writes:

> If government wants not merely to facilitate the attainment of certain standards by the individuals but to make certain that everybody attains them, it can do so only by depriving individuals of any choice in the matter. Thus the welfare state becomes a household state in which a paternalistic power controls most of the income of the community and allocates it in the forms and quantities which it thinks they need or deserve.

In the "Subsidizing dwellings" section of *Death and Life*, following a critique of the "strategic lunacies" routinely carried out by planners in the development of subsidized housing projects, Jacobs offers a vision of public housing reform which is rich in theoretical insight. After acknowledging the need for "subsidies for at least some portion of city dwellings," Jacobs attributes the failure of previous public housing projects to the widely accepted notion that such housing "is to provide for that part of the population which cannot be housed by private enterprise." No matter the virtue of its intended social visions, Jacobs (1961, 323-4) argues that an externality of such plannerly dogma is the political construction of "people who cannot be housed by private enterprise, and hence must presumably be housed by someone else." As an immediate result of the state's clumsy foray into mass landlordism, she argues "the city as organism has disappeared. It becomes, in theory, a static collection of sites for planning these sorted-out sets of statistics" (Jacobs 1961, 325).

Ultimately, what buttresses Jacobs's (1961, 324) frustration at the paternalistic reduction of the poor into "a special collection of guinea pigs for Utopians to mess

around with" is her overarching contention that "perfectly ordinary housing needs can be provided for almost anybody by private enterprise." As she argues, the provision of subsidized housing units does not need to be managed entirely by the government itself. Instead – as is the case in "other, logically analogous forms of capitalism and of government partnership" such as publicly subsidized farms, airlines, museums, and community hospitals – housing subsidies should be precisely formulated to solve "the problem of how to make up the difference between what [users] can pay and what their [desired service] costs" (Jacobs 1961, 325).

One of Jacobs's specific policy proposals is what she calls "the guaranteed-rent method," a tactic which she describes as "a means of introducing new construction gradually instead of cataclysmically, of introducing new construction as an ingredient of neighborhood diversity instead of as a form of standardization, of getting new private construction into blacklisted districts, and of helping to unslum slums more rapidly" (Jacobs 1961, 326). In order to incentivize this infusion of private firms into the provision of subsidized housing, Jacobs calls for the creation of a government agency called the Office of Dwelling Subsidies (ODS) which, among other things, could "guarantee to the builder that he would get the financing necessary for construction," and "guarantee to these builders (or to the owners to whom the buildings might subsequently be sold) a rent for the dwelling in the building sufficient to carry them economically" (Jacobs 1961, 326-7). Thumbing her nose at planners and, in a certain way, the modernist project itself, Jacobs writes of her proposed solution: "This is no vague, futile, and humiliating transaction in all-purpose uplift of the human soul. It is a dignified, businesslike transaction in shelter rental, no more, no less" (Jacobs 1961, 327).

Jane Jacobs and Public Housing in the Age of Advanced Liberalism

With the development of her iconic status in the world of planning non-profits, academia, and community organizing, it can be somewhat disorienting to confront Jacobs's Hayek-esque views on public housing in the early 1960s. On the question of the government provision of housing, Jacobs proves herself to be far more closely aligned with the explicit political orientations of her libertarian disciples at the Von Mises Institute than her progressive followers at the Project for Public Spaces. With the recent growth in interest in the production of social housing resulting from the advocacy of progressives like California State Assemblyman Alex Lee (2022), and by the New York City nonprofit Community Service Society (Mironova and Waters 2020), the fact that Jacobs – the legendary grassroots urban activist celebrated across the field – would call for the end to the government provision of housing in her seminal work runs, much like her intellectual kinship with Hayek, contrary to many of the narratives shared about her life and work. In addition, such views reveal the degree to which Jacobs's highly consequential theories would find themselves reflected in subsequent housing policy, most prominently in the case of President Ronald Reagan's notorious Department of Housing and Urban Development in the 1980s. As he oversaw the tran-

sition of American politics from the dying embers of Fordist-Keynesian welfare state liberalism to the newly kindled flames of "advanced liberalism," Reagan's infamous decimation and redefinition of the country's approach to public housing would often proceed along Jacobsean lines.

As previously mentioned, the sociologist Nikolas Rose (1996, 40-41) defines "advanced liberalism" as a formula of rule which "seeks to degovernmentalize the State and to de-statize practices of government, to detach the substantive authority of expertise from the apparatuses of political rule, relocating experts within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand." Well exemplified by the policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively, the rise of advanced liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s proceeded according to the sentiment of the latter's famous quip that "there's no such thing as society" (*The Guardian* 2013). Eschewing the governmental unit of "society" for "heterogeneous communities of allegiance," Rose writes that advanced liberalism governs "through the regulated choices of individual citizens, now construed as subjects of choices and aspirations of self-actualization and self-fulfillment" (Rose 1996, 40-41). As I argue, the views espoused by Jane Jacobs on the question of public housing in the "Subsidizing dwellings" section of *Death and Life* fit neatly within this epochal shift to advanced liberalism, as theorized by Rose.

Consider, for instance, Jacobs's argument that, "so long as [they] are based on flexible and gradual change instead of cataclysms," her proposed subsidized housing programs "would move not only the individual but also his home back into the free market stream" (Jacobs 1961, 334-5). As was stated explicitly at the time, such a desire to liberate individuals from the monopolistic hold of public housing authorities, and to minimize government expenditures through the reduction of social spending, were chief aims of both the Nixon and Reagan administrations (Freemark 2015, 125-127). Notably, from the time of Nixon's election in 1970 to the beginning of Reagan's second term in 1985, the national stock of low-cost public housing units had decreased from 6.5 million to 5.6 million units. Meanwhile, "the number of low-income renter households had grown to 8.9 million" (Dreier 2004).

Such a decline was due in part to the enactment of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, a bill formulated under Nixon and ultimately passed by his successor Gerald Ford. Amending the original U.S. Housing Act of 1937, this bill authorized the creation of HUD's Section 8 program, also known as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, under which qualified low-income individuals receive a voucher from the government which they can use to subsidize their rent. Today, despite the Reagan administration's subsequent funding cuts for the program (Higgins 2017), the Housing Choice Voucher program "is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development n.d.). Often critiqued as a flawed method of housing provision, and as a

stigmatizing entity which is the cause of a litany of unchecked housing discrimination due to landlords' frequent refusal to rent to Section 8 tenants (Dreier 2004), the program is nonetheless an emblematic product of advanced liberalism and, more subtly, of Jane Jacobs's prescriptions for the provision of subsidized housing in the United States.

Tellingly, several of Jacobs's proposals for urban housing ills in *Death and Life* can be read as prescient forecasts for a variety of other HUD policies enacted during the federal government's transition to advanced liberalism. In fact, there exists a tremendous degree of intellectual overlap in the works of Jacobs and those of E.S. Savas, a political scientist who served as assistant secretary of HUD under Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1983. A chief architect of the Reagan administration's de-statizing of former government responsibilities in the realm of housing and community development, Savas (1982, 130) writes in his book *Privatizing the Public Sector: How to Shrink Government*: "In principle, people should be required to pay the full cost of their housing, for they are the personal beneficiaries of this indubitably private good. Cities should gradually move toward the elimination of rent controls, indirect subsidies, and tax abatements and slowly divest themselves of troubled public housing, while using housing vouchers for the indigent." Similarly, in addition to advocating for a curtailment of indirect subsidies, Jacobs writes in *Death and Life*: "The problem of how to administer subsidies for people unable to carry their own dwelling costs is fundamentally the problem of how to make up the difference between what they can pay and what their shelter costs" (Jacobs 1961, 325). While Savas is more bullish on the need to minimize the amount of people receiving government aid in their search for housing, he and Jacobs appear to be in lockstep agreement regarding the need for housing units to be treated as "pure, or nearly pure private goods" like "shoes, bread, automobiles…, haircuts, dry cleaning, [and] watch repair" (Savas 1982, 35). Like Savas, the objection to public housing put forth by Jacobs is not one of a disillusioned ex-idealist (like Catherine Bauer would prove to be after her disappointment at the empirical results of American public housing), but rather that of someone who objects to the mere notion of public housing on principle.

Elsewhere, Jacobs's vision of "new construction as an ingredient of neighborhood diversity," with its implicit aim of incorporating subsidized developments seamlessly into their surrounding communities closely resembles the middle-class consumer values and architectural determinism of HOPE VI – the major housing redevelopment program carried out under President Bill Clinton and Commissioner Andrew Cuomo's HUD, inspired in large part by architect Oscar Newman's distinctly Jacobsean theory of "defensible space" as well as the similarly Jacobs-influenced New Urbanism movement. As urban historian D. Bradford Hunt (2015) writes, "Oscar Newman's Defensible Space (1972) added social science heft to Jacobs's observations by analyzing the designs of building entrances and the allocation of common space in New York projects that resulted in different rates of disorder and crime." With the

implementation of Newman's Defensible Space theory in service of HUD's HOPE VI program, Jacob's celebration of her low-rise Greenwich Village apartment, combined with her calls for a demarcation of public and private space and her insistence that "there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street" (Jacobs 1961, 35) proved to be highly influential well beyond her Hudson Street block.

HOPE VI famously replaced high-rise public housing blocks, deemed as possessing insufficient "defensible space" (i.e. lacking an adequate amount of communal "eyes" as well as clear delineations of public and private space), with primarily low-rise redevelopment projects which HUD sought to seamlessly integrate into existing neighborhoods so as to minimize stigmatization. HOPE VI has been harshly criticized by a variety of housing professionals, nonprofits, legal aid groups, and tenant organizations, most notably for its failure to adequately rehouse those displaced by the demolition of "severely distressed public housing," and in its disproportionate effect on majority-Black housing complexes (Kost 2015; Urban Institute 2004).

In stark contrast to the crowd-pleasing heroism of the film *Citizen Jane* or even the stage play *Straight Line Crazy*, a careful examination of housing policy enacted in her wake could reveal the intellectual influence of Jane Jacobs on many of the most emblematic, polarizing, and scrutinized urban housing programs of the "advanced liberal" era of today. Far from some crudely causal or conspiratorial thesis about Jacobs' "true" intentions or any other vulgar speculation of the sort, this excavation of the intellectual throughline from Hayek to Jacobs to the revolutionary reinvention of housing policy in the twentieth century is intended, on the one hand, to offer a more substantive and critical analysis of Jacobs' work and legacy than tends to be offered by the hagiography of planning nonprofits and, on the other, to inspire a broader reckoning with similar epochal moments in planning history.[1] No longer the rebellious firebrand of Hudson Street rallying her community against the arrogant might of the malevolent state, nor a spokesperson of the "radical and critical" wing of early "Post-Modern culture" as architecture critic Charles Jencks (1986, 6) once affectionately labeled her, Jacobs, or at least many of her ideas, have long since found sympathetic ears in the halls of power of local governments, Congress, and the White House.

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1 For just one international example, a similar observation can be found in French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's late career work *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Describing "the French housing law of 1977" as "the culmination of a whole set of initiatives aimed at steering towards ownership the 'choices' of those social categories who were up until that point the least inclined to satisfy their housing needs in this way," Bourdieu ([2000] 2005, 12-16) draws attention to "the French politicians and senior civil servants who, in imposing, doubtless in good faith, a new policy of housing subsidy in the 1970s, a policy inspired by a neoliberal version of the economy and society, did not know that they were preparing the ground for the conflicts and dramas that were later to bring the inhabitants of the large public estates, now deserted by their better off occupants, into a long-lasting opposition to the inhabitants of petit-bourgeois suburban housing."

Conclusion

In studying the complexity of Jane Jacobs's work and uncovering the surprising avenues in which her policy proposals found support, scholars are provided a meaningful opportunity to disentangle the various strands of liberal thought which inspired the most fundamental shifts in urban policy during the turn to "advanced liberalism" in the 1970s and 1980s. By foregrounding the overtly Hayekian flavor of certain animating ideas in her work, Jacobs's particular emphasis on localized decision making and the maximization of individual choice rather than rigid, centralized planning can be understood in a new light. Far from the depoliticized and malleable icon of anodyne "community planning" which she is presented as by certain urban nonprofits, Jacobs, through her own writing, reveals herself to be solidly immersed in the classical liberal tradition – one whose influence would come to redefine the role of government in the provision of low-income housing in American cities, and which would itself be transmogrified in the move to "advanced liberalism" during the Reagan-Thatcher era. Furthermore, in observing the strands of her policy proposals in eventually enacted programs like Housing Choice Vouchers and HOPE VI, scholars can thus arrive at a more internally variegated conception of urban liberalism over the last half-century, and how the policies advocated by the liberalism of yesteryear often find disapproval in the liberalism of today.

Years before policies similar to those proposed in her book were enacted by the Presidential administrations of Nixon, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton, Jane Jacobs would find agreement on the topic of publicly subsidized buildings with her most legendary mythologized foe: Robert Moses. Attending the 1966 grand opening of Co-Op City, a massive cooperative housing development in the Northeast Bronx designed in part to retain middle-class families amidst debilitating white flight, Moses (1966), the constructor and longtime overseer of much of the city's publicly-owned housing stock, had seemingly changed his approach, concluding his speech by saying: "The hope of slum clearance is in the cooperatives, as the hope of democracy is in local initiative and home rule. The cry is for government aid to overcome initial handicaps and for partnership of government and private enterprise in independent public authorities, but not for the dead hand of government ownership." Here, following Jacobs's successful attempt to block his destruction of her neighborhood just a few years earlier, Robert Moses, though still wedded to the grander and monumentality of large-scale urban renewal projects, had begun singing a remarkably similar tune to hers on the merits of local knowledge and of public-private partnerships in the provision of urban housing. Having defeated Moses a decade before in the battle of Greenwich Village, such an about-face from her former opponent proves, if anything, that Jane Jacobs had won the war as well.

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