URBAN PLANNING AND URBAN VALUES:
A JACOBSIAN ANALYSIS

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Abstract: *The great urbanist Jane Jacobs details how urban planning impacts the social interactions and social networks responsible for the economic death or life of a city. How might urban planning impinge on the moral values that underlie that development? I draw on Jacobs's work on the moral foundations of commercial society to identify two "urban values" (tolerance and innovation). I then examine how these values support the social networks and processes that facilitate urban-based innovation and how urban planning can strengthen or undermine those values. I use the examples of urban planning in the 15th Ward of Syracuse, New York and of city building in the private development of Cayalá in Guatemala City to illustrate these points.*

KEY WORDS: Jane Jacobs, urban values, urban planning, safety, social distance, strangers, tolerance, diversity, innovation, social network, weak ties, strong ties, Robert Moses, Baron Haussmann, Léon Krier, Syracuse, Cayalá

When the city of Syracuse, New York constructed a freeway in the 1950s, it chose to cut directly through the 15th Ward, an African-American enclave in a predominantly white city. As Otay Scruggs, a professor of history at Syracuse University, describes it:

> The Ward … was a refuge from discrimination [found elsewhere]. Social cohesion was provided by clubs, churches and the Dunbar Center, the most prominent community institution. But most of all, the ties that bound rested on the camaraderie that blossomed from knowing virtually everyone in the community.[1]

But residents of the 15th Ward had neither the economic clout nor the political support to prevent local authorities and urban planners from slicing the federally funded I-81 highway across their community. As reported in *The Atlantic* in 2014, "a strong highway network, city leaders argued, would make Syracuse one of the largest cities in the country because people would be able to easily commute to downtown from outlying areas." Poor

[1] Quoted in "The Destruction of Syracuse's 15th Ward," Onodaga Historical Association, https://www.cnyhistory.org/2018/02/15th-ward/.

but lively before I-81, the 15th Ward today still suffers from the conse-
quences of that decision.

> The poverty is more evident a few blocks away [from the freeway],
> where families are crowded into public housing near the overpass
> of I-81, an elevated highway that cuts through the heart of the city.
> There are no supermarkets here, just small convenience stores that
> advertise that they sell cigarettes and accept food stamps .… Darlene
> Sanford … remembers walking to the black-owned small businesses
> that lined the streets here when she was a girl, but most of them have
> disappeared .…[2]

The overpass now serves as a massive, concrete impediment—a border
vacuum—to neighborhood socializing

This same story of urban planning insensitive to community connections
has been repeated across the United States, in cities large and small that
implemented a policy of "urban renewal" after World War II.[3] The con-
struction of I-81 not only altered the physical infrastructure of the 15th Ward,
but by obstructing the community pathways and social networks of its
residents, it likely undermined the values that supported the community.
The aim of this essay is to trace more explicitly the connection between the
design of public spaces and "urban values," and to show how urban plan-
ning, by influencing that design, can jeopardize values that are critical for
economic and cultural innovation.

I. WHY CONNECT URBAN PLANNING WITH ETHICS?

Changes to the built environment—that is, the physical constructions in
cities such as streets, sidewalks, and buildings—influence the way people in
a city behave toward one another. The renowned urbanist Jane Jacobs warns
that when urban planners fail to take adequate account of the impact of
design on human interactions, the consequences can threaten the life of a
city. Jacobs famously argues that something as seemingly innocuous as

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[2] Alana Semuels, "How To Decimate a City," *The Atlantic* (November 20, 2015), https://
www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/syracuse-slums/416892/?utm_source=
SFTwitter.
[3] There is no better source for these accounts, with emphasis on New York, than *The Power
Broker*, Robert Caro's biography of the "Masterbuilder," Robert Moses. See Robert Caro, *The
Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).
The Center for Architecture in New York City also recently curated an exhibit, "Fringe
Cities," which focused on the impact of urban renewal on smaller cities, https://www.
centerforarchitecture.org/exhibitions/fringe-cities-legacies-of-renewal-in-the-small-american-
city/. See also this commentary by the Congress of the New Urbanism: "As written in a March
2016 article in *The Atlantic*, 'The completion of the highway, I-81, which ran through the urban
center, had the same effect it has had in almost all cities that put interstates through their hearts.
It decimated a close-knit African American community. And when the displaced residents
from the 15th Ward moved to other city neighborhoods, the white residents fled.'" Quoted in
https://www.cnu.org/highways-boulevards/campaign-cities/syracuse.

widening a city street can threaten crucial social connections important for local safety and security. In her best-known work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*,[4] Jacobs explains through careful reasoning, detailed observation, and extensive case studies, how this happens and how, with fairly modest strategies, urban planning can promote the material and cultural richness of a great city and avoid damaging, or even repair prior damage to, the fine social structure of the urban fabric.

While Jacobs does not explicitly address the connection between urban planning and what I am calling "urban values," interpreting her argument in those terms can better our understanding of an important connection between the techniques of urban planning and ethics, which I believe is strongly implied in Jacobs's discussions of urban planning.[5] Thus, in the context of *values* I will focus on Jacobs's observations that certain planning techniques create obstacles to forming and sustaining important urban relationships. I will emphasize in particular the impact of these planning techniques on the relations among strangers and "socially distant persons"—that is, people whose connection with one another is indirect, remote, and often entails differences in cultural background as well as knowledge, skills, and tastes. According to Jacobs, these relations are especially important for fostering the creativity and dynamism that make a city great. As Jacobs observes:

> Great cities are not like towns, only larger. They are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers. To any one person, strangers are far more common in big cities than acquaintances. More common not just in places of public assembly, but more common at a man's own doorstep. Even residents who live near each other are strangers, and must be, because of the sheer number of people in small geographical compass.[6]

It is therefore by analyzing the impact of planning on the treatment of strangers that I intend to connect urban planning with urban values.

II. What Does Jacobs Say about Urban Values?

I will draw on Jacobs's work on the moral foundations of commercial society to identify two urban values. Jacobs does not identify specific values

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[4] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961).
[5] I am certainly not the first to make a connection between urban planning and ethics. See, for example, Paul Kidder who, however, looks at ethical values different from the ones I examine here. Paul Kidder, "The Urbanist Ethics of Jane Jacobs," in *Ethics, Place, and Environment* 11, no. 3 (2008): 253–66.
[6] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 30.

as urban, but in her later work, *Systems of Survival*,[7] she does specify certain values as "commercial." How is this relevant here?

First, the way in which Jacobs defines her subject matter, a great city, is key. For Jacobs a great city is one "that consistently generates its economic growth from its own local economy."[8] Jacobs thus sees a great city as essentially an economic entity; moreover, her focus is on economic growth driven by innovation. Along with the role of strangers, this focus on innovation will be important later for connecting urban planning to urban values. But for now the economic nature of a great city allows me to link "urban values" with what Jacobs terms "commercial values." Second, to the extent that she characterizes a great city as a locus of economic development, commercial values partially overlap with urban values. But which commercial values?

In *Systems of Survival* Jacobs lists the following values (in the form of imperatives) as constituting what she calls the *commercial moral syndrome*:

Shun force

Come to voluntary agreements

Be honest

Collaborate easily with strangers and aliens

Compete

Respect contracts

Use initiative and enterprise

Be open to inventiveness and novelty

Be efficient

Promote comfort and convenience

Dissent for the sake of the task

Invest for productive purposes

Be industrious

Be thrifty

Be optimistic[9]

It would take me too far astray to explain Jacobs's reasons for including these particular values in the commercial moral syndrome, since I am only

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[7] Jane Jacobs, *Systems of Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1992).
[8] Jane Jacobs, *The Economy of Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1969), 262.
[9] Jacobs, *Systems of Survival*, 215.

concerned with identifying the overlap of this list with what I am calling urban values. (Neither will I explain her justifications for the contrasting set of values in her *guardian moral syndrome*, which are the values appropriate for people involved in governmental activity.)[10] For present purposes not all of the values in the commercial moral syndrome are relevant.

Keeping in mind the particular emphasis and critical importance Jacobs places 1) in *Death and Life*, on how a great city copes successfully with strangers, and 2) in her books *The Economy of Cities* and in *Systems of Survival*, on the dynamism and innovativeness of a great city, I can exclude the values, as important as they are, of "shun force," "come to voluntary agreements," "be honest," "respect contracts," "be efficient," "promote comforts and convenience," "invest for productive purposes," "be industrious," "be thrifty," and "be optimistic." These do lay the foundation for economic freedom and commerce in general, but their focus is not specifically on what, from Jacobs's own perspective, characterizes a great city.

What remains from the list, then, are the values I believe are germane for what is central to a great city: economic development. The value of particular importance for dealing with myriad strangers is "collaborate easily with strangers and aliens," and for creativity and innovation are the values "dissent for the sake of the task," "compete," and "be open to inventiveness and novelty." For "collaborating easily with strangers and aliens," I will use *tolerance* as shorthand, keeping in mind that here it refers particularly to tolerance of strangers and aliens; and for "dissent for the sake of the task," "compete," and "be open to inventiveness and novelty" I will use "creative innovation," or simply *innovation.*

I finally note that, in *Systems of Survival*, Jacobs makes the connection between strangers and cities explicit:

> The principal places in which strangers do business together are big commercial cities. The cosmopolitanism of these cities is no accident. It's an instance of functional necessity becoming a cultural trait. To make mundane, everyday deals with strangers, demands tolerance for people outside one's own background and personal preferences and, often enough, even respect for them as well.[11]

And regarding innovation it is notable that there are thirty-three references to "innovation" in *The Economy of Cities*, alone.[12] I will reinforce these

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[10] Ibid., 215.

[11] Ibid., 35.

[12] In a unpublished paper, Jacobs's biographer Peter Laurence has also noted the theme of urban values or "cosmopolitanism" in Jacobs's work along the same lines I have identified here: "She believed in cities' cosmopolitanism, and, as she wrote in Systems of Survival, her treatise on ethics, *she associated them with tolerance, trust, cooperation, and invention.*" Peter Laurence, "Jane's Urban Ethics: Jane Jacobs on Racism, Capital, Power, and the 'Plantation Mentality'," unpublished essay in *Academia* 2018; emphasis added.

points with additional references from Jacobs to tolerance and innovation, below.

III. Safety and Security Are a Great City's Bedrock Attribute

The mingling of strangers and people from afar is a peculiar feature of a *great city*, that is, a city where rates of per capita innovation and wealth creation are higher and whose population is larger,[13] compared to smaller cities, towns, or rural areas. "[T]he fact is that big cities are natural generators of diversity and prolific incubators of new enterprises and ideas of all kinds,"[14] and this is because great cities effectively solve two problems that confront an innovator: How to acquire the specialized and often new knowledge and skills needed to innovate, and how to effectively communicate the innovation to others in order to competitively exploit a profit opportunity?[15]

The first we may call the problem of *discovery.* Because great cities attract an extraordinary range of diverse persons seeking opportunities, the chances of encountering novel information in them is far greater than in smaller settlements. This is especially true if there is tolerance for challenging experiments ("dissenting for the sake of the task"). The other problem is one of *diffusion.* There have to be people (users or customers) who appreciate the fruits of experimentation, otherwise the enterprise would be in vain. Moreover, diffusion through advertising, but especially by competitors who copy and try to displace the successful innovator, is at the heart of economic and cultural development. These distinguish great cities from smaller cities or towns.

But a great city accommodates strangers and opportunity seekers, and incubates new ideas and innovations in commerce and culture, only if it provides sufficient safety and security to all. Jacobs argues that if people don't feel safe and secure, then the informal interactions that help engender creative experiment will be fewer, and innovation will be more problematic. It is the role of public space and the rules and norms that operate within them to create those conditions.

That is, the values of tolerance and innovation mean that inhabitants of a great city, other things equal, are more likely to allow and to engage in experiments of various kinds—for instance, in lifestyles, business, and art— to the extent that they feel personally safe and secure in *public space* (that is, places in which we expect to encounter strangers). Jacobs argues that in a

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[13] This is related to the studies of Bettancourt and West on the "super-linearity" of large cities. See Luis Bettancourt and Geoffrey West, "Regardless of Our City's Size, We All Live in 'Villages'" in *News* (Santa Fe Institute, July 1, 2014), https://www.santafe.edu/news-center/news/interface-bettencourt-west-village-networks

[14] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 145.

[15] See Sanford Ikeda, "Economic Development from a Jacobsian Perspective," in Sonia Hirt, ed., *The Urban Wisdom of Jane Jacobs* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

great city in which on any given day the vast majority of contacts and informal interactions we have are with strangers, feeling safe and secure among them is paramount.[16]

> To keep the city safe is a fundamental task of a city's streets and its sidewalks ….
>
> The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers. He must not feel automatically menaced by them. A city district that fails in this respect also does badly in other ways and lays up for itself, and for its city at large, mountain on mountain of trouble.[17]

She argues that to the degree that public spaces do not attract ordinary people at all times of the day and night throughout the year, they will become social and cultural deserts that few will want to use at all. They become the kinds of places that appeal to people who do things they would rather others didn't see and whose behavior is not likely to promote a general feeling of safety and security.[18]

To say that people in a public space feel safe and secure implies that they trust strangers not to threaten their bodily safety and comfort level or significantly interfere with their plans. Someone who trusts that others will not threaten her or make her feel uncomfortable in a plaza probably would not worry about using that plaza to run an errand, to commute to work, or to sit and play the guitar. In public spaces where people feel safe and secure, a wide range of interactions can happen, from passing by a group of strangers, to smiling at a "familiar stranger,"[19] to people-watching, to meeting someone for a date, to rendezvousing with friends or family, to buying or selling food, to having a business meeting or throwing an impromptu party.

Sociologist Richard Sennett provides an example from Mumbai of this correlation between sociability, social distance, and publicness:

> Mumbai has high levels of violence, *except* in big public spaces where people can look at other people. Even if they never talk to each other, they see people unlike themselves. Those tend to be the most peaceful places in Mumbai, whereas the little intimate streets and alleyways— all populated by people who know one another—are crime zones. It's a kind of basic rule of urbanism—remember "eyes on the street."[20]

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[16] Jacobs, *Death and Life,* 29.

[17] Ibid., 30.

[18] Ibid., 34.

[19] William Whyte, "The Design of Spaces" [1988], in R. T. LeGates and F. Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1996): 109–18.

[20] Quoted in Ivan Klaus, "What Would a More Ethical City Look Like?" in *Bloomberg Citylab* (April 24, 2018), https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-24/what-an-ethical-city-looks-like

Each of these interactions presupposes a set of beliefs or expectations that people have about how others, strangers and familiars, will respond to their actions—that is, they presuppose that a person using public space has a reasonable belief that everyone including herself shares a set of mutually understood values and norms that justify these expectations.

These mutually understood, mutually shared expectations obviously coincide with tolerance and innovation. The urban values might manifest themselves as knowing that you are going to see some weird stuff when you go outside and that you should be tolerant of it and not sneer or openly criticize it, although of course this is sometimes violated in practice; and it would include knowing that you can pursue your individuality there and, again with some exceptions, not be hassled by anyone, including the local authorities, even if what you are doing deviates from the norm. Other expectations might include there being a certain amount of noise, congestion, and unpleasantness in the hustle and bustle of public spaces that you are going to have to cope with.

On the other hand, feeling very unsafe or disconnected in public space discourages people from seeking out the diversity and uniqueness of others for mutual gain, and it also tends to discourage them from announcing their own differences or developing their own individuality if it departs from the norm. Frequently encountering abnormality tends to foster a tolerance for abnormality, but the opposite tends to happen when we seal ourselves off in bubbles. With less contact, those complementary diversities within a heterogeneous population might still be there, but the net advantage to making potentially valuable contact with outsiders would be much less.[21] Withdrawing from strangers and strange persons reinforces values of exclusivity (and strong ties) and undermines norms of inclusivity (and weak ties) in our social networks. Support for aliens immigrating into our cities and neighborhoods would wane. Fear makes us less welcoming.

IV. TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY ESSENTIAL FOR INNOVATION

Why this emphasis on socially distant strangers and aliens? To put it simply, to locals, strangers and immigrants tend to have strange ideas, or at least ideas that are strange to them: a different way of seeing the world, of doing business, of dress, food, music, and religion. And as I argued earlier, that diversity is fodder for discovery. When norms of tolerance and respect for individuality prevail, competition can transform differences in background, knowledge, skills, and tastes into opportunities and heterogeneity into complementarity.[22] Under these circumstances, other things equal, the greater the diversity the greater the gains from trade and association.

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[21] Sanford Ikeda, "Urban Diversity and Cohesion: A Jacobsian Solution," in *Cosmos and Taxis* 8, nos. 8/9 (2020): 28–45.
[22] Ibid.

In *Death and Life* Jacobs focuses mainly on land-use diversity, but it is the diversity of the people who use the land that brings diversity—that is, new kinds of businesses, places of worship, schools, and so on—that, in turn, exposes locals to novelty that can broaden and enrich their own experiences.

We might reasonably question the premise that most people are attracted to strangeness *per se*, but they may be willing to put up with it when gainful opportunities are wrapped in that strangeness. And in a great city, a person may be exposed to more strangeness in a single day than she would experience in a month or more someplace else.[23]

Other things equal, strangeness also correlates with mobility. That is, urbanites have to depend a great deal on the ease of mobility, less in terms of miles travelled and more in terms of the number and variety of places they need to get to—for necessaries, conveniences, and amusements —on a regular basis owing to the granularity of a great city's built environment. There is also the need for another form of mobility, namely mobility among social networks and across greater social distances, in the process of pursuing the novel opportunities, individuality, and experimentation made possible by a great city.

But there is a paradox: How does a great city attract these socially distant people and at the same time keep them and everyone else comfortable in public spaces? The answer lies again in the urban values of tolerance and innovation.

Jacobs sets out four conditions that mutually generate land-use diversity. In brief, these are 1) multiple attractors that bring people into a given area (mixed primary uses), 2) cheap working space that typically occurs naturally as buildings age (old buildings), 3) intricacy of pathways that encourage informal interaction (short blocks), and 4) a high concentration of people (population density).[24] In the presence of norms of tolerance and an ethos of innovation, these four conditions act together to generate a wide range of land-uses that offer opportunities for discovering complementarities among people, places, and things, and opportunities for people to experience and consume the resulting goods and services. The many who use a public space at different times of the day then serve as reliable "eyes on the street" that informally monitor public interactions. The mingling of many strangers in that granular space, everyone going at different times to

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[23] Individual communities (*Gemeinschaften*) within the great city (*Gesellschaft*) are often communities of immigrants that may be fairly homogeneous economically, culturally, or ethnically, at least initially. (See Ferdinand Tönnies [1887], *Community and Society [Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft]*, trans. Charles P. Loomis [New York: Dover, 2002].) That was probably true of the 15th Ward, which was a refuge not only for refugees from the South but for African-Americans from other parts of Syracuse looking for a safe place to live and to work free from discrimination. Though it was a slum, it was at least tolerated and allowed to flourish within its limits to some degree.

[24] Jacobs devotes a chapter to each of these factors. Jacobs, *Death and Life*, chaps. 8, 9, 10, and 11.

different destinations, creates a liveliness and variety that, once again, enables competitive discovery and innovation. According to Jacobs one of the natural and unplanned accompaniments of all this is an emergent feeling of safety and security among all these people who don't know one another—emergent, that is, if it is not stifled by, among other things, physical structures that block mobility or by regulations that artificially separate diverse land uses and thereby reduce the likelihood of serendipitously discovering valuable complementarities.

V. URBAN PLANNING UNDERMINES URBAN VALUES TO THE EXTENT THAT IT DISRUPTS THE BASIS OF "WEAK SOCIAL TIES"

We form weak ties with people we don't know well, but these ties can grow stronger as we get to know them.[25] Urban networks also depend on these stronger ties, such as those Jacobs emphasized in the case of long-standing, well-connected residents who set and enforce the general norms and character of a neighborhood[26]— a kind of tightly knit *Gemeinschaft* that stabilizes the dynamism of a great city.[27] Following Mark Granovetter,

> The strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie.[28]

For people to feel free to move from one social network to another, to break old ties and form new but weaker ones, social networks need to be on the whole more inclusive than exclusive. Urban values promote inclusive social networks, which as Granovetter demonstrates, brings more novelty into various dimensions of our lives. [29] Both those wishing to enter a new social network and those who might welcome them need to have a high level of tolerance of difference. Fruitful urban interactions depend on this kind of movement from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

At the same time, Jacobs observes that an important factor in keeping people in a neighborhood for the long term, perhaps generations, is mobility: "Here is a seeming paradox: To maintain in a neighborhood sufficient

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[25] Of course, if we learn that we don't like the person, the ties can grow weaker or disappear altogether.

[26] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 38.

[27] Thus, one way of interpreting Jacobs's criticisms of urban planning approach of Robert Moses (see footnote 24) is that Moses didn't consider that a large-scale commercial *Gesellschaft* is actually composed of many highly integrated informal *Gemeinschaften* (such as the 15th Ward). Plans for a street widening or a border-vacuum-generating sports facility should appreciate that the interconnections among neighborhood residents create the safety and freedom of mobility necessary to preserve the urban values that connect neighborhoods to the greater *Gesellschaft*.

[28] Mark S. Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1361.

[29] Ibid.

people who stay put, a city must have the very fluidity and mobility of use."[30] Great cities then manifest this kind of dynamic stability between stay-putness and mobility.

Once again, according to Jacobs, a city achieves safety and security among strangers by allowing people with widely different knowledge, skills, and tastes to establish diverse land uses that attract great numbers of different people into a given public space throughout the day. These "eyes on the street" discourage behavior at odds with the safety that serves as the bedrock for the weakly tied, dynamic social networks essential to a great city. Therefore, planning techniques that interfere with mobility and weaken the multiple attractors that bring eyes into public space will also tend to undermine urban values.

There are many examples of this phenomenon. While the 15th Ward of Syracuse was a poor community pre-urban renewal, and so perhaps not a driving force for urban innovation, it did not lack cultural vitality.[31] It was the kind of community that Jacobs terms an "unslumming slum."[32] What she said in her Vincent Scully Lecture would seem to apply to an unslumming 15th Ward:

> … as many a Little Italy and Chinatown attest, along with less cele-
> brated examples, immigrant neighborhoods that succeed in holding on
> to their striving populations are neighborhoods that improve with
> time, becoming civic assets in every respect: social, physical, economic.
> Progress on the part of the population is reflected in the neighborhood.
> Increasing diversity of incomes, occupations, ambitions, education,
> skills and connections are all reflected in the increasingly diversified
> neighborhood. Time becomes the ally, not the enemy of, such a neigh-
> borhood.[33]

With the construction of the I-81 overpass, however, the unslumming process and the promise of emerging cultural and economic creativity, came to a halt. As described earlier, the extension of I-81 diminished local social hubs and destabilized ties, which led to the decline of the community in both population and economic well-being.

> The construction of Interstate 81 in Syracuse came with the forced
> displacement of nearly 1,300 residents from the city's 15th Ward. It
> devastated a historic black community, severing the social fabric of the
> community and razing swaths of buildings, and with them, affordable

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[30] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 139.
[31] One example was its Dunbar Center. See https://www.syracusedunbarcenter.org/.
[32] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 270.
[33] Cited in Samuel Zipp and Nathan Storring, *Vital Little Plans: The Short Works of Jane Jacobs* (New York: Random House, 2016), 353.

housing options. Neighborhood deterioration, a glut of surface parking lots, and citywide population loss followed.[34]

The earlier report goes on to say: "What Syracuse needs, more than anything else, is a way to knit back together a region torn asunder by the construction of an urban highway and the outmigration that followed."[35]

The logic of my argument, then, is that planning techniques that don't effectively account for how changes in the built environment impact safety, mobility, and urban values can ultimately destroy the creative character of a great city or its districts. Appropriate urban planning should constrain the disruptions that inevitably occur in the urban process and preserve its spontaneous nature and focus on policies that enable and adjust to the emergence of beneficial, though typically unpredictable, change. Appropriate planning also avoids catering to strictly middle-class sensibilities that often prevent, to cite but one example, low-cost, multi-unit housing. At a minimum, appropriate planning has to avoid forcing a predetermined, especially visionary, outcome. This would range from the apparently simple project of widening a street to projects of enormous scale and design ambition—Brasilia and Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris come to mind. (Later I will examine a recent example of the latter in the New Urbanist development of Cayalá in Guatemala.)

Changes in the built environment that disrupt physical contact and social mobility, or that discourage openness to new ideas and people, will tend to undermine urban values and the creative processes that issue from such openness. While it is not possible here to give a complete outline of Jacobs's explanation of the interaction between the built environment and social interaction, and consequently urban values, I will briefly explain a few of its aspects that are relevant to my argument.[36]

A. Sidewalks

I will begin with the classic Jacobsian example of widening a city street by narrowing the public spaces that border it. As Jacobs points out, pedestrian walkways—"sidewalks"—are indispensable in a great city compared to smaller towns, where they may not even exist or suddenly disappear after a stretch. Sidewalks that are wide enough to accommodate a steady stream of people going about their business and still allow them to stop and comfortably talk or interact are ideal venues for informal face-to-face contact.[37] Moreover, "Lowly, unpurposeful and random as they may appear, sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city's wealth of public

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[34] Quoted in https://www.cnu.org/highways-boulevards/campaign-cities/syracuse.
[35] From "How To Decimate a City" in *The Atlantic*, November 20, 2015: https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/syracuse-slums/416892/?utm_source=SFTwitter
[36] A more detailed discussion can be found in Ikeda, "Urban Diversity and Cohesion," 28-45.
[37] Small plazas adjacent to sidewalks can sometimes serve this purpose.

life may grow."[38] Such contacts are a basis for safety and informal social networks. While not the only kind of public space that can serve this vital, socializing function, safe sidewalks help to assimilate neighbors and "familiar strangers" who regularly come and go in our daily lives. But in a city, widening a street typically means narrowing this vital public space and reducing the incidence of informal contacts, eyes on the street, safety in public, and everything that follows.

How much more damaging, then, other things equal, is running a highway that cuts through a neighborhood like the 15th Ward. The *Syracuse Times* reports:

> Carol Ehrsam of *The Post-Standard* spoke to John C. Louise, who owned a grocery store on South Salina Street; Louise stated the new highway "hurts my evening business because people on their way home go right past on 81. There's much less traffic and it is quieter." Another couple on South Salina stated they could no longer sit on their front porch because "the trucks were so loud we couldn't hear ourselves talk." "It's killing us," said motel owner John Neri. Diner owner Gerry Kosnetatos said his business had fallen 60 percent, "I hope I survive," Kosnetatos said.[39]

Such an intervention into the built environment favors the population of commuting drivers who are insulated from the consequences of their convenience.

B. Border vacuums and cataclysmic money

If well-functioning sidewalks draw people into public space, border vacuums repel them. A *border vacuum* is a single use or feature that dominates an area. It can be either natural or manmade, such as a riverbank or football stadium. A riverbank is a natural border that, because it is relatively impenetrable, can disconnect people from different neighborhoods across a city; with a few exceptions, riverbanks, unless planners are sensitive to their impact on informal contact, tend to be notoriously depressed areas. Similarly, a football stadium that draws unusually large crowds on certain days and times of the year, typically lies dormant, and when left unused creates a dead zone with little or nothing to draw people in. A roadway such as I-81 is thus also a border vacuum.

Man-made border vacuums are often the result of enormous expenditures that are typically funded through public revenue or some combination of public-private partnership. Projects funded purely privately tend to be

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[38] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 72.
[39] Quoted in David Haas, "I-81 Highway Robbery: The Razing of Syracuse's 15th Ward," in *Syracuse Times* (December 12, 2018), https://www.syracusenewtimes.com/highway-robbery-5-decades-ago-syracuse-neighborhoods-were-razed-to-construct-interstate-81/

smaller in scale, unless aided by government assistance such as eminent domain or the issuance of tax-free bonds. Today, large-scale municipal projects, in part perhaps owing to Jacobs's influence, often try to mix commercial and residential uses with whatever the primary land-use being funded may be—for instance, apartments and office space bordering a downtown basketball arena. This partly counteracts the effects of a border vacuum to the extent that parts of the development attract users more regularly. Massive projects, however, face two other problems.

First, since the built environment of the project is new, rental values tend to be relatively high, which discourages land uses that are too risky or too small-scale to be profitable, which in turn discourages genuine experimentation and investment except by wealthy, established organizations. Second, such projects tend to be built within a short time frame in order to quickly generate an income stream to cover their enormous costs; that means that the built environment will age all at the same time and then likely require very expensive project-wide maintenance and renovation. A more organically and granularly developed neighborhood, like a diverse, old-growth forest, would stand a better chance of economic viability than, say, an enormous mall,[40] which can quickly and easily transform into a massive border vacuum.[41]

The problem of border vacuums is greatly multiplied when the design ambition is on an urban scale. Here, planners seek to establish a new district or an entire city without considering the "invisible social infrastructure"— the social networks and the values that support them—that fosters the mingling of diversity, experimentation, and the unpredictable creativity of a true, living city. The result of such projects, if they get off the ground, tends not to be a place of experiment and innovation but, like huge shopping centers, somewhere people go mostly to consume—too often, they become enclaves for the rich.

A great city cannot be deliberately created. It must emerge from and adjust effectively to changing social and market forces.

VI. The Case of Cayalá

Like any other living discipline, urban planning is diverse and evolving. We might generalize and say that urban planning has always reflected the prevailing scientific methods and available technologies of the times. In the early twentieth century, for example, when "high modernism," that is, an

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[40] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 11–52.

[41] From my personal experience, Fiesta Mall in Mesa, Arizona, where I grew up, began to decline when another, even larger shopping center opened in 1997 in nearby Tempe. When it opened in 1979, Fiesta Mall itself had pulled the economic rug out from under of an even older mall, Tri-City Mall. See, for example, https://www.constructionreporter.com/news/once-thriving-now-abandoned-fiesta-mall-in-mesa-may-see-redevelopment

attempt to apply the then-new methods of the natural sciences to social problems, was the prevailing scientific paradigm,[42] the leading figures in urban planning were men such as Le Corbusier,[43] who used statistical measurement in his approach to urban design. Later in the post-modern era, which turned away from the machine-analogy of society, there arose figures such as Rem Koolhaas,[44] who embraced kitschy commercial culture; Léon Krier,[45] who argued for the genius of pre-modern architecture; and Kevin Lynch,[46] who brought a street-level sensitivity to the design of public spaces. Jane Jacobs also falls into the post-modernist category; she, like Lynch, rejects the modernist principles of urban planning in favor of principles that take seriously the way people actually use public space at the street level and the social patterns that arise therein as complex, organic, and largely emergent orders.

Recent planning techniques and strategies have veered away from the heavy-handed approach, exemplified by Robert Moses, that visited such vast destruction in the United States, in significant measure because Jacobs's warnings are now taken more seriously in American planning circles.[47] For current examples of ambitious, "giga-projects" one should look abroad, perhaps to the massive constructions of the "ghost cities" of the People's Republic of China or to the "Palm Islands" of Dubai, UAE.

In the Western Hemisphere, the designs of the planner and co-founder of the New Urbanism movement, Léon Krier, offer a useful, contemporary case study in the form of an ambitious project called Cayalá within the metropolis of Guatemala City. Unlike the brutal reconstructions of Moses's New York or Baron Haussmann's Paris,[48] Cayalá is being built on land that is privately owned and previously undeveloped.[49] But it offers an interesting conflation of Jacobsian functional sensibilities with an almost anti-Jacobsian understanding of how cities work.

[42] Scott, *Seeing Like a State.*

[43] Le Corbusier, "A Contemporary City," [1929] in R. T. LeGates and F. Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1996): 367–81.

[44] Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Montacelli Press, 1994).

[45] Léon Krier, *Architecture: Choice or Fate?* (London: Papadakis Publisher, 2007 [1998]).

[46] Kevin Lynch, "The City Image and Its Elements," [1960] in R. T. LeGates and F. Stout, eds., *The City Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 98–102.

[47] To the great regret of some. See Thomas J. Campanella, "Jane Jacobs and the Death and Life of American Planning," in Max Page and Timothy Mennel, eds., *Reconsidering Jane Jacobs* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2011).

[48] Michel Carmona, *Haussmann: His Life and Times, and the Making of Modern Paris* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002). All references to the Kindle Edition with locations given by "Loc."

[49] On the private nature of Cayalá's development see "Guatemalan Capital's Wealthy Offered Haven in Gated City," *The Guardian* (January 9, 2013), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/09/guatemalan-capital-wealthy-haven-city.

In terms of functional sensibility, Krier's ideas overlap in many ways with those of Jacobs. For example, he favors walkability,[50] values street corners and mixed uses in a neighborhood,[51] recognizes that "the feeling of security in public spaces increases with the efficiency and density of the street pattern,"[52] warns against placing massive, single uses in the midst of the urban core,[53] and disdains zoning that separates land-uses.[54]

Unlike Jacobs, however, Krier rejects modernist twentieth-century architecture.[55] And in terms of their understanding of the nature and significance of cities, there are even more profound differences. Krier's pronouncement that "the city is not a laboratory,"[56] although written in the context of the design of public spaces, is a sentiment Jacobs would never express. For Jacobs, as we have seen, it is the nature of a great city to be a laboratory for new ideas and a driving force for innovation. It follows that a great city will evolve in unpredictable and messy ways, usually contrary to the original planners' best intentions.

In the present context, this means that the process in which safety evolves unplanned within a framework of urban values is unlikely to emerge spontaneously, not least because only the very rich in a country such as Guatemala, where more than half the population lives in poverty, would be able to afford to live or find much welcome in the sixty-plus-acre luxury development. With its isolation from the rest of poverty-stricken Guatemala City, and its high-end shopping and dining environment, Cayalá is far from the sort of indigenous, organic development that Jacobs argues is a natural source of social infrastructure and urban values. The approach seems to be, "Why not skip the process of an evolving social infrastructure and go directly from undeveloped land to an urban paradise?"

> Cayala's backers promote it as a safe haven in a troubled country, one with an unusual degree of autonomy from the chaotic capital. Detractors, however, say it is a blow to hopes of saving the traditional heart of Guatemala City by drawing the well-off back into the urban centre to participate in the economic and social life of a city struggling with poverty and high levels of crime and violence.[57]

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[50] Krier imposes a strict norm of walkability in which "the pedestrian must have access to all the usual daily and weekly urban functions within ten minutes' walking distance, without recourse to transport." Léon Krier, *Architecture: Choice or Fate?* (London: Papadakis Publisher, 2007[1998]), 128).

[51] Ibid., 125.

[52] Ibid., 129.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 19.

[55] Ibid., 156.

[56] Ibid., 143.

[57] Associated Press, "Guatemalan Capital's Wealthy Offered Haven in Gated City," in *The Guardian* (January 9, 2013). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/09/guatemalan-capital-wealthy-haven-city

But it lies more on the urban periphery than the center, and instead of eyes on the street, hired guards provide security with guns and sophisticated monitoring equipment.[58]

> The first thing to understand is that the public peace—the sidewalk and street peace—of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.[59]

Extensive surveillance and policing is, as Jacobs suggests, indicative of community failure.

For Krier, successful cities must be master-planned; they cannot be left merely to the whims of the market,[60] and "the beauty of an ensemble, of a city or landscape, represents an extremely vulnerable and fragile state of balance."[61] Maintaining this fragile balance requires strict adherence to a masterplan devised by master architects and enforced by local authorities.[62]

For Krier, the masterplan should abide by the following rules:

1. A plan of the city, defining the size and form of its urban quarters and parks, the network of major avenues and boulevards.

2. A plan of each quarter, defining the network of streets, squares and blocks.

3. The form of the individual plots on each urban block: number, shape and function of floors that can be built.

4. The architectural code describing materials, technical configurations, proportions for external building elements (walls, roofs, windows, doors, porticoes and porches, garden walls, chimneys) and all built elements that are visible from public spaces.

5. A code for public spaces, defining the materials, configurations, techniques and designs for paving, street furniture, signage, lighting and planting.[63]

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[58] See "Guatemalan 'Safe City' Recognized after Reforming Its Security System," in *asmag*, https://www.asmag.com/showpost/24205.aspx.

[59] Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 31–32.

[60] Krier, *Architecture*, 117.

[61] Ibid., 207.

[62] It should be noted that the renowned urban planner Alain Bertaud is highly critical of such masterplan approaches, not because they are useless but because the overwhelming tendency on the part of politicians and urban planners is to assume that their job is done once the masterplan is in place and implemented. This approach has proven to be useless or worse. What Bertaud argues is that the planning, implementation, and follow-up should be an ongoing process, data-driven, and economically informed. See Alain Bertaud, *Order without Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), 353–72.

[63] Krier, *Architecture*, 113.

Points 1–2 are common to all urban plans, and 3 is often expressed in the form of floor-area ratios and functional zoning codes (although for Krier the number of floors in any edifice is strictly limited to five). But points 4 and 5 represent increasingly greater substitution of the planner's vision for the individuality and granularity that emerges from Jacobsian decentralized development. The result may be visually pleasing, but the impact on the spontaneous complexity of genuine urban environments, with its necessary messes and apparent disorderliness, is deadly.

Today, Cayalá strkes one as a playground for the wealthy, difficult to reach and too expensive for the vast majority of Guatemala's citizens. Indeed, it is seemingly designed to exclude the poor, mostly indigenous population despite being touted as "a public space created by the private sector."[64] I have been told that this enormous project is just the beginning in a long-term plan for expansion. I have also been told that for locals Cayalá is a kind of oasis and an inspiring example of what is possible in this poverty-stricken country via private financing.[65] Time, as it always does, will tell.

But a universal application of the Krierian approach to city building would not create a world of traditional cities; on the contrary, it would undermine the dynamic processes that foster the kind of built environment future generations would venerate, the way Krier and people like myself today venerate the architectural achievements of a messy urban past. The problem with Krier's characterization of the urban problem is that it focuses too much on the form (for example, skyscrapers, glass curtains, and so forth) and not on the unseen values and the unplanned, unpredictable, and innovative, wealth-generating city that issues from them. Cayalá is not a place of experiment and innovation. Instead, at least for now, it is a place for the rich to come to spend and consume.

In an environment without dynamic social networks and meaningful informal contact, there is no great need to rely on locals, such as they are, to practice tolerance and seek innovation; and what urban values there are, people bring with them in their wallets.

VII. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When large numbers of strangers come together in one place, their choices range from isolation, exclusivity, and familiarity to social interaction, inclusivity, and novelty. In a great city, an optimal balance between these

[64] Héctor Leal, engineer and general manager of the Cayalá project quoted in "Crean ciudad Privada" para los Ricos en Guatemala" por Romina Ruiz-Goiriena, Associated Press, (January 9, 2013).
[65] A colleague who is an architect for the Cayalá project related both the expansion plans and confirmation that the financing is totally private, although the city operates the streets and the developers work with city government for public thoroughfares. But see also https://news.yahoo.com/crean-ciudad-privada-para-los-ricos-en-guatemala-231448179--spt.html and https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/09/guatemalan-capital-wealthy-haven-city

extremes tends to favor weak ties, but balance they must in order for strangers to productively and creatively interact.

In a great city, the resulting social networks depend critically on the urban values of tolerance toward aliens and strangers and embrace creativity, competition, and innovation. When in place, they encourage the "eyes on the street" that, for Jacobs, are mainly responsible for providing safety and security in public spaces, and on which development of all kinds depends. Effective urban planning is sensitive to this invisible social infrastructure and the processes it supports; it promotes mobility—social and physical—and policies that allow markets to build spaces to live and work that are affordable. Urban planning that is insensitive to these interdependencies constructs public spaces or enacts policies that discourage sociability and inclusiveness of the socially distant, and risks substituting an artificial social order for one that may be messy and seemingly chaotic but that is nevertheless spontaneous, complex, and creative. Carried far enough, such approaches can, as Jacobs argues, kill a city or leave stillborn the cities of our imagination.

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