



Editorial

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There are few, if any books dealing with the essential ingredients and qualities of good urban environments that have been as influential as *The Death and the Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Jane Jacobs, the author, who died earlier this year, will be sadly missed – not for any iteration of the ideas in her seminal work which will live on – but for the loss of an ever-active intellect and spirit of inquiry, which continued to contribute significantly to our understanding of urban dynamics through the outcomes of her studies published over the last five decades.

Throughout her long life, whilst Jane Jacobs often wrote and campaigned against *bad* urban initiatives, she remained convinced of the primary importance of understanding what made *good* and successful places just so, and finding ways of making further successful places from this understanding for the benefit of all sections of society.

We are indebted to Claire Parin of the Ecole d'Architecture et de Paysage de Bordeaux for the opportunity to publish her 1999 interview with Jane Jacobs, together with the photographs which she took of this legendary figure in her urban Toronto home, neighbourhood and city setting. The vitality and wisdom of Jacobs shines through this interview. Claire Parin was a particularly appropriate interviewer as she was the translator of *The Death and the Life...* into French (*Declin et survie des grandes villes américaines*, Lieges, Ed Pierre Mardaga, 1991).

Jane Jacobs' publications defy classification as a body of work. Part of her great success has been the appeal of much of her writing to the 'general reader' and much more of it to people whose interest in urbanism is not primarily that of actors in the production and control of urban environments. During the panel discussion at the Stephen Lawrence Annual Memorial Lecture held at London's Royal Institute of British Architects headquarters recently, the only theorist referred to by Lord Rogers was Jane Jacobs and when he

was asked a question about the achievement of more equity through urbanism, the London Mayor's Advisor recommended participation in public demonstrations and the vigorous assertion of democratic rights – Jane would have been proud of Richard!

When we planned the publication of Claire's interview with Jane Jacobs, we decided that it would be timely to invite others to interview major contributors to the study, teaching and practice of urban design from the middle of the last century to the present day. A number of these invitations have already been made – but if any of our readers have suggestions for potential interviewees and interviewers (themselves included in either category), we would be delighted to hear from them.

Following the interview with Jane Jacobs, we publish Emily Talen's paper on New Urbanism and the history of town planning in the USA. Talen highlights what she sees as the range of sources for the ideas of a new urbanism, including Jacobs views on 'organized complexity'. But the paper makes it clear that organizing the complexity of the diverse ideas over time about urbanism in the USA is no easy task.

Projects in the USA by New Urbanists have a distinctive regional flavour, despite their admiration of colonially influenced urban survivors such as Alexandria, Virginia. In her paper, Diane Brand examines the 300-year history of major Australasian cities: Sydney, Adelaide, Wellington and Auckland, founded as the product of British colonial expansion. She explores their urban design qualities through figure/ground analyses, leading to her proposition that what is revealed is 'a progressive dissolving of the city as a legible object in three-dimensional space.'

In his paper, Samer Ghaleb Bagaen examines the international potential of major military sites as brownfield redevelopment/regeneration



opportunities. Dr Bagaeen identifies a range of primary motivations and preoccupations in different schemes – from community participation to ‘sustainable’ urban regeneration to meeting government targets for brownfield development. His conclusion that the most important characteristic

of any scheme must be a sustainable economic future built on feasible economic opportunities would have met with the whole-hearted approval of Jane Jacobs.

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