

**‘A jumping, joyous urban jumble’:
Jane Jacobs’s *Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a
phenomenology of urban place**

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Forum:**'A jumping, joyous urban jumble': Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a phenomenology of urban place¹****David Seamon**

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In this forum report, I contend that Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* can be interpreted as a phenomenology of the city and urban place (Jacobs, 1961/1993). I consider four aspects of the book as they relate to a phenomenological approach: (1) Jacobs's mode of seeing and understanding as phenomenological method; (2) her claim that 'cittiness' is a phenomenon in its own right and has the power to draw and hold people to particular urban places; (3) her portrait of urban experience and place as they are founded in environmental embodiment; and (4) her pointing toward a constellation of place relationships and processes that potentially strengthen or weaken urban robustness. I argue that much of Jacobs's argument has parallels with the findings of space syntax research, including themes highlighted by Julienne Hanson in her 2000 article, 'Urban Transformations' (Hanson, 2000).

Keywords:

Jane Jacobs, Julienne Hanson, phenomenology of city, place, urban place, place ballet, urban diversity, place making in the city, environmental embodiment, space syntax

Introduction

In this forum report, I focus on the work of urban critic Jane Jacobs, whose influential 1961 *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961/1993) helped shift many urbanites' understanding and treatment of their cities (Klemek, 2011, p.76). Though Jacobs has never been associated with phenomenology, I contend that, in terms of method, focus, and discoveries, her understanding of the city (1916-2006) can fairly be described as a phenomenology of urban place, or *cittiness*, as I call it here. In addition, portions of her argument parallel findings of space syntax research. Because this issue of JOSS is devoted to the work of Julienne Hanson, I consider some commonalities and differences between the visions of cittiness offered by Jacobs and space syntax, particularly as presented in Hanson's 'Urban transformations: A history of design ideas' (Hanson, 2000).

In her writings about cities, Jacobs (1961/1993; 1992; 2000) said much implicitly about a phenomenology of cittiness, of urban experience, of neighbourhood exuberance, of environmental wholeness - even a phenomenology of economics that must necessarily be grounded in urban place

(Jacobs, 1969; 1984). Her hopeful city vision was 'ever more diversity, density and dynamism - in effect, to crowd people and activities together in a jumping, joyous urban jumble' (Martin 2006, n.p.) She saw and explicated 'an almost inexpressible complexity in the most modest of settings' (Klemek, 2007a, p.8) - the typical city sidewalk and street. In all her work, she declared that cities and cittiness play an integral, inescapable role in human life and in human history. If we ignore this central importance, we cripple the potential lived fullness and exuberance of the world.²

Jacobs's mode of understanding as phenomenological method

As a method of study, phenomenology aims to be open to the phenomenon so that it can reveal itself and be understood as fully as possible (Finlay, 2011; Moran, 2000; Seamon, 2000). In *Death and Life*, Jacobs argued that mid-20th-century urban design and city planning undermined American cities because professionals understood the phenomenon of city not as it actually is but as these professionals wanted it to be - for example, Le Corbusier's 'towers

in the park', Louis Mumford's network of new towns in the countryside, or Robert Moses's mega-block urban renewal policies and massive highway construction (Caro, 1974; Fishman, 1996; Laurence, 2006a; Zukin, 2006; Klemek, 2009, 2011b).

Architectural historian Peter Laurence (2006b; 2011) has traced Jacobs's growing disenchantment with post-World-War-II urban planning and design. She is often criticised as an urban 'amateur' who had no formal academic or professional expertise in urban design or policy (e.g., Ehrenhalt, 2001). Laurence (2011), however, demonstrates this claim to be unfounded - in fact, she had strong university training in geography and economic geography. Also, by the mid-1950s, Jacobs had become a formidable professional writer specialising in urban topics. She joined the staff of *Architectural Forum* in 1952 and became the journal's leading urban-planning and urban-design specialist. By the mid-1950s, she was 'recognized as one of the most knowledgeable writers in the country on redevelopment and the city' (*ibid.*, p.35).

By the late 1950s, Jacobs had become deeply disenchanted with *Architectural Forum's* support for urban-renewal projects that she realised - through first hand site visits - were dramatic failures as livable places and communities. In 1959, as she was writing *Death and Life*, she described her growing cynicism to landscape architect and friend Grady Clay:

'... in all sincerity, I had been writing for *Forum* about how great various redevelopment plans were going to be. Then I began to see some of these things built. They weren't delightful, they weren't fine, and they were obviously never going to work right... I began to get this very uneasy feeling that what sounded logical in planning theory and what looked splendid on paper was not logical in real life at all, or at least in city real life, and not splendid at all when in use' (quoted in Laurence 2011, p.35; originally written March 3, 1959).

On one hand, therefore, Jacobs's understanding of citiness developed through seeing first hand the failure of post-war urban renewal. On the other hand, she was busy observing successful urban neighbourhoods and districts with an animated, diverse street life - particularly her Greenwich Village neighbourhood of Hudson Street. This mode of inductive observation and interpretation would eventually lead to her claim in *Death and Life* that her understanding of urbanity was grounded in what the city and urban experience *actually are*: a lived diversity of place that sustains personal and group identification and attachment. In a description of her method that could serve as instruction for urban phenomenology, she wrote:

'The way to get at what goes on in the seemingly mysterious and perverse behavior of cities is, I think, to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as is possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events, and attempt to see what they mean and whether any threads of principle emerge among them.' (Jacobs, 1961/1993, p.19)

This description of her method intimates a close parallel with two key features of phenomenological effort: first, allowing the thing - in this case, citiness - to reveal itself in the course of everyday, taken-for-granted life (*lifeworld*, as it is called by phenomenologists); second, using what one sees in the lifeworld of the city as a starting point for understanding more general principles and structures that make the city what it essentially is (Finlay, 2011, p.125-38). Any conceptual understanding of the city, said Jacobs, must be grounded in how the city works as a particular kind of place.

Citiness as a phenomenon

From a phenomenological perspective, perhaps what is most striking about Jacobs's urban approach is her assumption that citiness is a *real phenomenon* in that there are qualities, behaviours, experiences, and principles that evoke and are

evoked by an authentic urban situation. In *Death and Life*, she pinpointed this urban reality as involving place regularity, attachment, and responsibility grounded in an environmental and human diversity supported by particular physical and spatial qualities. In this sense, Jacobs claimed that citiness is a unique people-place whole that can only unfold and thrive provided certain human and environmental elements and interconnections are present. Because this phenomenon involves 'the not quite definable spirit and energy that animate a city' (Fulford, 1997, p.8), the crux of urbanity is difficult to locate and demands an understanding of the city radically different from conventional social-scientific interpretations that spotlight some set of socio-economic characteristics like income, ethnicity, or social class as crucial independent variables shaping a particular urban place.

For example, in his 1962 review of *Death and Life*, sociologist Herbert Gans (1962) argued that the robust sidewalk and street life that Jacobs emphasised is only one contingent factor in urbanity, which is more correctly explained by social characteristics, especially class and cultural differences. Gans declared that only ethnic or working-class residents value Jacobs's diverse, sociable streets, whereas middle-class families, because of a different socio-economic situation, prefer anonymous, suburban enclaves (also see Gans, 2002, 2006; Gieryn, 2002). In contrast, Jacobs argued that any urban neighbourhood sturdily sustaining street diversity and vitality has the power to draw and hold people, whatever their social, cultural, or economic background.

Whereas Gans understood urban sociability as a dependent variable reliant on class, social background, and other sociological and psychological characteristics of self-interested individuals, Jacobs envisioned the relationship much differently, suggesting that, when urban places are working successfully, self-interest is overshadowed by

sociability and the singularity of place ambience (Keeley, 1989, p.52-53). In this sense, cities can survive only if we understand and respect them as one unique mode of human place:

'we must think about our cities, we must study them, above all we must love them for what they are: not poor imitations of the countryside or works of art designed by master planners but exuberant, surprising and richly diverse creations of the people who know how to use them and care for them' (Fulford, 1997, p.9).

A Phenomenology of urban place

Though published fifteen years before the first explicit phenomenology of place (geographer Edward Relph's 1976 *Place and Placelessness*), *Death and Life* can be interpreted as close kin to phenomenological explications of place (Relph, 1976; Casey, 2009; Malpas, 1999; Mugerauer, 2008; Stefanovic, 2000). These studies contend that, by its very nature, place offers a way to portray the experienced wholeness of people-in-world. As a phenomenon always present in human life, place gathers worlds spatially and environmentally, marking out centers of human action, intention, and meaning that, in turn, contribute to the making of place. '[B]y virtue of its unencompassability by anything other than itself', wrote philosopher Edward Casey (2009, p.15-16), place 'is at once the limit and the condition of all that exists ... To be is to be in place.' In other words, human connections with place are not contingent or dependent on piecemeal parts as Gans claimed. Rather, to be human is always already to be emplaced.

From this perspective, one can argue that place and, specifically, urban place, is the central phenomenon of *Death and Life*. Rather than arguing, like Gans, that the social and cultural environment calls out and establishes the physical environment, Jacobs recognised that robust urban neighbourhoods simultaneously incorporate and shape an environmental fabric of taken-for-granted daily life. In this sense, urban place for Jacobs is an integral, inescapable

constituent of human-being-in-the-world. She argued that a robust neighbourhood of lived diversity and lively street life is integral to urbanity and founds the kind of place and lifeworld that, because of its vitality and singularity, draws residents, visitors, and other users who feel attachment and belonging for that place.

Jacobs contended that the essential lived structure of robust urban places is a small-scaled functional and physical diversity that generates and is fed by what she called the *street ballet* - an exuberance of place and sidewalk life founded on the everyday comings and goings of many people carrying out their own ordinary needs, obligations, and activities (Jacobs, 1961/1993, p.65-71). Out of the many unpredictable individual human parts arises a greater environmental whole that includes a willingness to look out for and assist others. A lived geography invokes a lived community, which in turn sustains and protects a lived geography, the heart of which is a diverse street life.

In implicit phenomenological fashion, Jacobs recognised that urbanites and their urban environment are not separate but meld in a robust 'being-in-the-world' grounded in place and its street ballet. More importantly, she came to see that this melding is founded on and contributes to four specific physical and spatial conditions: *short blocks; a range in building types; a high concentration of people; and a mixture of primary uses* - i.e., anchor functions like residences and workplaces to which people must necessarily go. Physical and human dimensions of place are intertwined and interlocked in a place-grounded choreography.

From a phenomenological perspective, Jacobs's street ballet is closely related to the phenomenological understanding of *environmental embodiment* - the various lived ways, sensorily and motility-wise, that the lived body in its pre-reflective perceptual presence engages and synchronises with the world at hand, especially its architectural and place

qualities. Particularly relevant is phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of *body-subject* - pre-reflective corporeal awareness expressed through action and typically in sync with and enmeshed in the physical world in which the action unfolds (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Seamon, 2013a).

In relation to Jacobs's street ballet, a key theme is the taken-for-granted sensibility of body-subject to manifest in extended ways over time and space. How, in other words, do the routine actions and behaviours of individuals intermingling regularly in a space transform that space into a place with a unique dynamic and character - what can be called, after Jacobs, *place ballet* (Seamon, 1979; 2007; 2013a). Place ballets incorporate the interaction of individual bodily routines rooted in a particular environment, which often becomes an important place of interpersonal and communal exchange, meaning, and attachment, for example, a busy eatery, a well-used urban plaza, or an animated city neighbourhood. One of Jacobs's important contributions to understanding citiness was to demonstrate that urban place ballet is intimately intertwined with the four physical conditions and the material and lived diversity they sustain.

Recent commentators (e.g., Grant, 2011, p.92-93; Harris, 2011, p.79) continue inappropriately to label Jacobs a 'physical and spatial determinist', since she contended that district vitality was not possible without the presence of the four conditions. Like Gans before them, these commentators too readily reduce the holistic lived nature of urban place to some set of independent and dependent variables - a mode of understanding that Jacobs vehemently opposed. Rather, she recognised that urban place is a problem in what she called *organised complexity* (Jacobs, 1961/1993, p.563). Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of her theory is its understanding of a synergistic connectedness of which no particular part - experiential, social, cultural, economic, environmental, material, or spatial - could be claimed the most significant (Seamon, 2013b).

**Death and Life's phenomenological interlock:
Interaction, identity, freedom, and realisation**

In *Death and Life*, Jacobs's multi-dimensioned understanding of human-immersion-in-urban-world allows for a seamless connection to practice and policy. To see the intimate linkage among diversity, street ballet, and the four shapeable conditions is to know what planners and designers can do to kindle and sustain diversity and street ballet - i.e., they must facilitate and strengthen the four conditions. Jacobs argued that the city's formal public structures presuppose and arise from a vibrant informal structure that is exuberant street ballet grounded in diversity that sustains and is sustained by the four conditions. Jacobs's argument offers a convincing commingling and folding over of that argument's various conceptual and real-world parts.

In recognising this compelling interconnect-edness, one can identify several specific inter-relationships and interlocks in Jacob's portrayal of citiness - what I label *interaction, identity, freedom, realisation, creation, and intensification* (Seamon, 2012; 2013b). In Jacobs's view, citiness is first of all a rich, diverse fabric of people and place *interactions* concentrated in the street ballet - the typical daily and weekly actions, events, and situations of residents, workers, visitors, and passers-by who, in the course of lifeworld patterns, intermingle regularly in a singular urban place radiating a particular ambience, character, and style of human attachment. In turn, this singular character of urban place evokes a sense of place *identity*, which in turn motivates participants to take responsibility and care for the urban place. These people 'profess an intense attachment to their street neighbourhood. It is a big part of their life. They seem to think that their neighbourhood is unique and irreplaceable in all the world and remarkably valuable in spite of its shortcomings' (Jacobs, 1961/1993, p.365).

For Jacobs, place interaction and place identity are interdependent, with a lively street life facilitating

neighbourhood identification, which in turn enriches and further solidifies interaction. Also important for the ambience and love of urban place is the potential of that place to spur moments of *freedom*. In other words, interaction and identity generate an unpredictable situation of expected and unexpected encounters and events that contribute in larger and smaller measure to the pleasure of being alive, particularly in relation to *this* particular street and *this* particular neighbourhood. Much of what is most important, Kidder (2008, p.259) remarks, 'is a function of the statistical changes of serendipity'. Or as Jacobs (1961/1993, p.288) explains, successful neighbourhoods are desirable because they are 'the source of immense vitality, and because they do represent, in small geographic compass, a great and exuberant richness of differences and possibilities, many of these differences unique and unpredictable and all the more valuable because they are'. The miraculous result is unexpected moments of freedom and pleasure sponsored by the everydayness of urban place.

In turn, place interaction, identity, and freedom coalesce to allow a *realisation* of urban place itself. In other words, the unique synergism of human-beings-in-place combined with the physical ensemble of that place (primary uses, short blocks, range of building types, and concentration of people) transform a collection of buildings and streets into a singular urban place with a distinctive *genius loci* - a West Village, SoHo, Bloomsbury, or Back of the Yards. The neighbourhood's presence and character become as palpable and real as the human beings who know, encounter, and feel a sense of belonging for that place. Jacobs emphasised that we must better understand this uniqueness because it is one powerful engine for a neighbourhood's vitality:

'What makes a city [neighbourhood] magnetic, what can inject the gaiety, the wonder, the cheerful hurly-burly that make people want to come

into the city and to linger there? For magnetism is the crux of the problem. All [a neighbourhood's] values are its byproducts. To create in it an atmosphere of urbanity and exuberance is not a frivolous aim.'

(from Jacobs, 1958; quoted in Allen, 1997, p.41)

Death and Life's phenomenological interlock: Creation and intensification

Jacobs, however, was not satisfied with a portrait of robust neighbourhoods only as they are. More so, she worked to understand how robust neighbourhoods come into being and how they fall into decline. Such place *creation*, she argued, is grounded first of all in the four environmental qualities, to each of which she devotes a chapter, identifying practical ways through policy and design whereby the quality might be strengthened and thereby facilitate an *intensification* of place interaction, identity, freedom, and realisation.

From a phenomenological perspective, one cannot emphasise enough Jacobs's acknowledgement of the central importance of physical and spatial qualities for generating and strengthening a successful urban place. As mentioned earlier, she did not claim that the four shapeable urban qualities determine the human world; rather, her perspective intimates the central phenomenological claim that people and world are always already given together through place, of which an integral part is materiality, spatiality, and environmental embodiment. The spatial configuration of streets, for example, contributes to where and how far users move through a neighbourhood, just as a diverse mixture of small-scaled primary and secondary uses provide a rich weave of destinations that in turn stimulate a rich weave of pedestrian movements, situations, and encounters.

Jacobs's rendition of successful urban place is most remarkable because of the magical but reasonable way in which all the human and environmental parts belong and have a place (Seamon, 2004, p.140-41). Yes, the diverse, small-scaled

American neighbourhoods at the heart of Jacobs's citiness have, since 1961, been weakened or decimated by gentrification and corporate real-estate development, though Jacobs would also say that urban place is in continual process, and change must be recognised and accounted for (Halle, 2006; Klemek, 2007a, b, 2011; Gratz, 2010; Zukin, 2010).

Jacobs would gage progressive or regressive change on the basis of whether a city neighbourhood continues to evoke a diverse street ballet, a unique ambience, and an unshakable place attachment and belonging for its residents and users. Overall, many of the New York City neighbourhoods that Jacobs admired have changed dramatically, often for the worse. This troubling situation has most recently been examined by urban critic Roberta Brandes Gratz (2010) and sociologist Sharon Zukin (2010), who both consider how New York's neighbourhoods 'have been transformed by entrepreneurial hipsters, gentrifiers seeking their roots, aggressive real estate developers and mayors, and government grants' (Zukin, 2010, p.v).

Gratz concludes that two vastly different visions of citiness still determine current urban design and planning: on one hand, Jacobs's vision of local, self-organising diversity; on the other hand, the conventional modernist view that the city must be reshaped, controlled, and used for money-making only. Gratz (2010, p.254) accepts that the modernist approach dominates urban development today, but she also points to recent New York City efforts to create and revive lively, diverse neighbourhoods. For example:

- Community-based action against erosive neighbourhood change;
- New infill construction weaving into the existing fabric rather than replacing it wholesale;
- Conversion of vacant or underused old buildings, whether architecturally significant or just solid and irreplaceable;

- New people and businesses moving into gritty old neighbourhoods that officials label as slums to justify demolition plans;
- Environmental justice efforts in low-income, racially diverse communities;
- New and expanding industry, including green manufacturing and digitally-based companies;

These efforts, says Gratz, may seem insignificant in regard to large-scale corporate development, but they may also be 'precursors to positive, often large-scale, change' (*ibid.*, p.254). In this regard, she quotes Jacobs who explained that 'too many people think the most important thing about anything is its size instead of what's happening'. Helpful indicators of future urban vitality include 'the small, the new, the start-up, the oddity, the things that could lead eventually to "the next big thing"' (*ibid.*, p.254-55). If this 'next best thing' has developed organically, then its 'significance will be about substance, not bigness' (*ibid.*). In this sense, Jacobs's urban vision remains alive and very much possible.

Opinions vary as to whether Jacobs's Hudson Street and West Village today retain the robust street ballet Jacobs knew when she lived there. Both Sennett (1994, p.355-59) and Page (2011, p.3) suggest that the neighbourhood's demographic and functional diversity has deteriorated, whereas de Monchaux (2007, p.20-21) and Gratz (2010, p.84) argue that the neighbourhood still retains a vital street life, though its socio-economic range of residents and users may have narrowed. These contrasting perspectives demonstrate Jacobs's central point about urban place: that it is continually changing, strengthening or weakening in diversity, sociability, and *genius loci*. Place is always in process and there is no easy way to predict a neighbourhood's future, though there are significant means, through place

creation and intensification, to direct that future in either evolving or devolving ways.

Jacobs and space syntax

In its effort to identify measurable, empirical connections between spatial structure and pedestrian movement, space syntax has a significant bearing on Jacobs's understanding of the city (Hillier 1996; Hillier and Hanson, 1984). Most directly, this research offers empirical support for Jacobs's requirement of short blocks, which she contended are integral to street ballet because they provide for intermingling pedestrian cross-use as well as potential street-front locations for both primary and secondary uses (Jacobs, 1961/1993, p.238, 243).

At the same time, one notes significant differences between Jacobs's understanding of short blocks and Hillier and Hanson's emphasis on the spatial configuration of pathways. Jacobs claimed that all four conditions for diversity (primary uses, sufficient density, building variety, and short blocks) were integrally necessary for vibrant sidewalk and street life, whereas Hillier and Hanson have argued convincingly that a permeable 'deformed grid' is typically most significant and that other urban qualities, including mixed primary uses and density, then develop accordingly (Hillier, 1996, p.167-70). In integrating Jacobs and space syntax, perhaps the most useful perspective is to accept Hillier and Hanson's conclusion that pathway configuration is typically the primary engine for well-used streets, but also realise that urban place always includes primary and secondary functions, range in building types, and adequate density. In this sense, Jacobs's urban conception is an invaluable way to hold crucial human and environmental parts together and to understand how they interact and interpenetrate to sustain vibrant city neighbourhoods and districts (e.g., Bentley et al., 1985).

One useful point of comparison between Jacobs and space syntax is Hanson's perceptive historical

and sociological explication of the changing 20th-century morphology of London's largely working-class neighbourhood, Somers Town (Hanson, 2000; Hillier and Hanson, 1984, p.133-40). Through penetrating descriptive and statistical contrasts, Hanson demonstrates how a continuous, permeable, integrated system of streets and dwellings was replaced by insular housing estates severed from streets and surrounded by fragmented, segregated open spaces. Hanson argues that these dramatic morphological changes in the Somers Town neighbourhood reflect deeper ideological shifts that envisioned public housing first as rehabilitation, then later as domestication and as territorial control (Hanson, 2000, p.117-19).

Though Jacobs might disagree with Hanson's ideological interpretation (Jacobs placed most professional blame on the formalist-compositional ideology of modernist design itself), she would more than likely appreciate Hanson's convincing demonstration of how housing-estate designers removed 'control over the interface between private and public life from local residents' and reassigned 'that function, through design to the space itself' (*ibid.*, p.116). Like Gans, Hanson assumes that different socio-economic groups in the city prefer different neighbourhood arrangements (*ibid.*, p.115-17). Like Jacobs, however, she also recognises that a major role of the urban environment is to facilitate bodily co-presence among human differences in regard to age, gender, social class, inhabitants vs. strangers, and so forth: 'it is who is out and about on the streets, where they go to and which places they avoid that makes a particular place "feel" friendly, uncongenial or threatening to different people' (*ibid.*, p.120).

Ultimately, Hanson's analysis of Somers Town's shifting neighbourhood morphology provides empirical support for Jacobs' more intuitive argument for lively sidewalks and streets as the experiential core of urban robustness and for modernist design as its major disruptor. Perhaps most intriguing is Hanson's

suggestion that, because of recent developments in digital communications and virtual realities, we may need to reinvent, through design and policy, 'an urban way of life based on face-to-face community.... It may be that our increasingly fragmented and fissiparous existence requires that society itself needs once more to be embodied and spatialised' (*ibid.*, p.122). As does Jacobs's understanding of the city, the tools and discoveries of space syntax offer much toward realising this aim.

Jacobs as phenomenologist of the city

I find it important to discuss the work of Jacobs and space syntax together because both perspectives say much about a phenomenology of the city. In other writings, I have argued that space syntax is significant from a phenomenological viewpoint because it demonstrates how a world's underlying spatial configuration contributes to particular modes of human movement, co-presence, interpersonal encounter, and potential place ballet (Seamon, 2004; 2007; 2013a). In this commentary, I have taken a similar tack by considering how Jacobs reflects and contributes to a phenomenology of citiness and urban place. Most broadly, Jacobs's work can be aligned with phenomenological research because she 'took it for granted that *where* people live and work matters...' (Harris, 2011, p.80). In other words, she recognised that people are always *emplaced* and that citiness sustains and is sustained by a *specific manner of emplacement* best expressed by the street ballet. Her central interest was the lived physicality of the city as that physicality powered and was powered by both its human and material parts, all miraculously intertwined in the serendipitous regularity of exuberant street life.

This material and lived intertwinement is one real-world expression of a central ontological assumption in phenomenology: that people and their worlds are integrally interconnected and must be conceptualised together as the experienced whole-

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ness of people-in-world (Finlay, 2011; Seamon, 2013b). Through identifying the unself-conscious, bodily regularity of people-in-place supported by the four conditions, Jacobs delineated a dynamic environmental and human synergy that presupposes 'the unencompassability of place by anything other than itself' (Casey, 2009, p.15-16). In a letter written to her editor as she was writing *Death and Life*, she recognised the radical new understanding of citiness that her effort might offer:

'This book is neither a retelling in new form of things, already said, nor an expansion and enlargement of previously worked out basic ground, but it is an attempt to make what amounts to a *different system of thought* about the great city' (quoted in Laurence 2011, p.36; originally written July 23, 1959; italics added).

Grounded in her understanding of what robust citiness is, Jacobs's 'different system of thought' can well be called a holistic urban phenomenology depicting urbanites and urban place intertwined in a remarkable interconnectedness and synergy that is as much a real phenomenon as the human and environmental parts of which it is composed.

Endnotes

1. This essay is a revised version of a paper prepared for a symposium, 'Phenomenologies of schools, cities, and historic environments', held at the annual meeting of the *Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA)*, Chicago, May 26, 2011. The author wishes to thank JOSS' Editor Sophia Psarra for suggesting ways that an earlier draft of this essay could be made stronger and more lucid.

2. Page references for *Death and Life* refer to the 1993 'Modern Library' edition. Besides *Death and Life*, Jacobs's major writings are: Jacobs 1969, 1980, 1984, 1992, 2000, 2004. There is an expanding research literature on Jacobs's work; three useful edited collections are Allen, 1997; Lawrence, 1989; and Page and Mennel, 2011. Helpful overviews of Jacobs's life and accomplishments include: Allen, 1997; Flint, 2009; Gratz, 2010; Lang and Wunsch, 2009; and Sparberg Alexiou, 2006. Valuable evaluations of Jacobs's work include Klemek, 2007a, b, c; 2008; 2009; 2011a, b; and Laurence, 2006a, b; 2007; 2011.

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