

neighborhood and helping cities preserve and restore older neighborhoods and historic districts have turned out to be major activities for urban designers, another place where design has become a significant part of the decisions that shape urban and suburban development.

The sponsors and participants of the Harvard conference undoubtedly agreed on the importance of neighborhoods, a principle accepted by CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) and seen in the work of even such an iconoclast as Le Corbusier. But the speakers, including Jane Jacobs, do not seem to have perceived the neighborhood as an element shared by city and suburb, and thus a basic unit of the multicentered modern metropolis. Instead they described city and suburb as at war with each other, and the suburb as the city gone wrong.

When they spoke, Jean Gottmann was beginning the research that he published in 1961 as *Megalopolis*, a book that demonstrated that formerly separate cities were growing together into conglomerations that extended over big geographic areas. He helped change everyone's understanding of the modern city. In 1956 downtowns were still found only in the historic centers of big cities or suburban towns. Today a mixed-use town center is a real-estate concept that might be attempted in many kinds of places. Office buildings and other urban elements that used to be found exclusively downtown can be scattered over the landscape, forming what has been called "edgeless cities." Today's city is a complex metropolitan organism still in the process of formation, and guiding its development is the principal challenge for urban designers.

José Luis Sert and most of the speakers at Harvard in 1956 would be pleased to see that today hundreds of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning firms offer urban design services as a significant part of their professional practice, and that many urban design concepts have actually been implemented. However, they would look at today's rapidly urbanizing world and tell us that there has also been a big increase in the kinds of problems urban designers need to solve. Experts tell us that the world's population will have stabilized at about ten billion people in the next fifty years. If we are spared worldwide war, famine, and plague, the correctives for overpopulation that the Reverend Thomas Malthus predicted, perhaps people will then be able to perfect the built environment and its relationship to nature. Let us hope that there will be a collection of essays like this one published fifty years from now.