

was turning against Robert Moses—Le Corbusier’s most idiomatic legatee—who, thanks to Jacobs among others, was soon to suffer his Waterloo downtown with the defeat of a planned urban renewal massacre for Greenwich Village and of the outrageous Lower Manhattan Expressway, intended to wipe out what is now SoHo to speed traffic across the island.

This triumphant resistance—galvanized too by the contemporaneous loss of Penn Station—helped both to create an enduring culture of opposition and to revalue the fine grain of the city’s historic textures and mores, asserting the rights of citizens to remain in their homes and neighborhoods. Jacobs’s nuanced conflation of neighborhood form and human ecology was—and continues to be—precisely the right theoretical construct to animate the practice of urban design. Unfortunately, although her example continues to be tonic for neighborhood organization and defense, her legacy has been deracinated by its selective uptake by the far narrower, formally fixated concerns of preservationism, by an ongoing strain of behaviorist crime fighters (from Oscar Newman to the Giuliani “zero tolerance” crowd), and by the spreading mine field of institutionalized urban design, narrowly attached to its Disney version of urbanity and its fierce suppression of accident and mess, the wellsprings of public participation and the core of Jacobs’s argument about urban vitality. And Jacobs’s focus on a circumscribed set of U.S. environments and disdain for the idea of new towns unfortunately helped retard the investigation of how her unarguable ideas about the good city might inform other realizations.

Nineteen sixty-one was an urbanistic *annus mirabilis*, bringing publication not only of Jacobs’s text but also of Jean Gottman’s *Megalopolis* and Lewis Mumford’s *The City in History*. This astonishing trifecta—to which I would add Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* of 1963 and Ian McHarg’s *Design with Nature* of 1969—are the headwaters of a critique that urban design shares with virtually all thoughtful students of the city. Together they reinstated the conceptual centrality of ecology—first systematically introduced by the Chicago School decades earlier—in the production of urban models. But ecology is not a fixed construct and is comprehensible only in its specific inflections. On the one hand, an ecological understanding of urban dynamics can promote stewardship, community, and responsibility. On the other, it can support a fish-gotta-swim determinism that implies