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 ‘citiness’ 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 urban place. David Seamon.

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.

Published in 1961, Jane Jacobs’s The Death and Life of Great American Cities examines the shortsightedness and failure of this philosophy. The era after World War II saw America’s urban planners treat the lives of city-dwellers with disdain. It spawned a philosophy of urban renewal that valued the efficient movement of cars more than it valued the lives of people, and that wiped out entire neighborhoods dismissed by bureaucrats as slums. Published in 1961, Jane Jacobs’s The Death and
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

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Life of Great American Cities examines the shortsightedness and failure of this philosophy.