CHAPTER FOUR

# The Death and Life of American Regional Planning

**ROBERT FISHMAN**

> The city and its suburbs are interdependent parts of a single community, bound together by a web of transportation and other public facilities and by common economic interests. . . . Increasingly, community development must be a cooperative venture. . .[that] requires the establishment of an effective and comprehensive planning process in each metropolitan area embracing all major activities both public and private that shape the community.
>
> — President John F. Kennedy's Special Message to Congress on Housing and Community Development[1]

> A Region, someone has wryly observed, is an area safely larger than the last one to whose problems we found no solution.
>
> — Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*[2]

American regional planning in the 1960s underwent the collective equivalent of a near-death experience: an unprecedented, nearly total breakdown of both planning theory and planning practice. To be sure, American planning has never been entirely healthy,

and its history is filled with badly conceived, imperfectly implemented, or wholly ignored initiatives. In the 1960s, however, planning theory at the regional level aimed at a totalizing comprehensiveness that only imperfectly masked its pervasive ineffectuality; meanwhile, urban renewal in the cities mandated "solutions" that were, if possible, worse than the existing problems and imposed terrible costs precisely on those who were supposed to benefit. Nevertheless, planning survived this crisis, and as a near-death experience is supposed to do for individuals, American planning emerged from its ordeal with a new set of values and priorities. These traumatic lessons have continued to shape American regional planning into the 1990s.

The chapter title is, of course, a tribute to the work that above all others delivered the coup de grace to dying planning ideas and pointed the way toward revitalization: Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.*[3] Jacobs's contributions are vital and important, although her book is neither a full critique of the failures of postwar American planning nor a complete guide to the new synthesis that would emerge. Jacobs very deliberately limited herself to the central cities and indeed, to certain districts within those cities. She believed that the great city possessed an inherent vitality that made it self-healing—if only "antiurban" planners, bankers, and bureaucrats would cease their meddling.

Almost as much as her opponents, Jacobs missed the full structural dimensions of an urban crisis that was radically redefining the concepts of "city," "suburb," and "region": the decentralization of population that shifted the majority from central city to suburb; the simultaneous "urbanization of the suburbs" that brought the majority of industrial production, retail sales, and eventually office space to the suburbs; and the creation of a low-density, multicentered or perhaps centerless region where growth and vitality seemed concentrated at the edge rather than the former center. Perhaps more surprisingly, Jacobs's book also virtually ignores the "great black migration," which in the context of the structural changes to the regions reinforced the divisions between city and suburb and left the once-dominant central cities in a perpetual crisis, caught between rising social responsibilities and a shrinking tax base. (If only the problems of the central city had been limited to meddling planners!) But Jacobs certainly saw clearly the extent of the threat to the American city itself. What was tragic was that other 1960s planners complacently claimed to possess a wholly "modern" approach to regional problems but failed to understand

that, taken together, the structural redefinition of the region and the great black migration rendered at best irrelevant and at worst horribly counterproductive virtually their whole theory and practice. At the beginning of the 1960s, that theory was still responding to the problems of the turn of the century, when urbanists first confronted the challenge of metropolitan regions that extended functionally beyond the borders of the central cities. Although the plans and drawings of the 1960s looked modern, they unconsciously and anachronistically assumed a city and a region that no longer existed. For this reason, the "death" of planning in the 1960s must be understood as the last gasps of planning theory from earlier in the century. Similarly, planning's new "life" began when Jacobs and others began to face the realities of the postwar American city and region.

This outmoded planning theory took the form of two rival traditions that had both reached their (theoretical) heights in the 1920s: the *metropolitanist* and the *regionalist* traditions. From the first, the metropolitanist tradition was the dominant establishment view and was embodied in two great monuments of American planning: Daniel Burnham and Edward Bennett's *Plan of Chicago* and *The Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs.*[4] The metropolitanists believed that the basic urban form established in the nineteenth century would persist into the twentieth, even if the metropolitan area grew to 20 million people and stretched fifty miles or more from its historic core. This giant city would still be defined by its downtown, the overwhelming economic and cultural focus of the metropolitan area. The bulk of the population would still cluster relatively tightly around the downtown in a massive "factory zone" that would be the productive heart of the metropolis. Beyond this zone would be the residential suburbs—still a refuge for a relatively small elite—and beyond that the "outer zone" of farms, forests, and parklands.

For the metropolitanists the main challenges of planning were to

— create a monumental downtown worthy of a great urban civilization;

— construct a massive network of rail public transit to connect all the residents of the metropolis with the downtown;

— make the factory zones not only the most efficient places on the planet for industrial production, but also decent places for the bulk of the city's population to live;

— maintain the outer zone as a source of fresh air, fresh water, and open space for the metropolis;

— establish parks and other recreational facilities in the outer zone and build the transit lines and parkways that would enable urbanites to experience unspoiled nature.

Between the 1920s and the 1960s, there were two significant modernizations of the metropolitanist tradition, both disastrous and both symbolized by Robert Moses's massive projects for New York. Where the metropolitanist tradition had originally concentrated on rail mass transit investments to knit the region together, Moses and his acolytes believed in the total dominance of the automobile. The city must be rebuilt to accommodate the expressway. The second updating was the embrace of urban renewal as the total solution to "urban blight." Only the complete leveling of whole neighborhoods and their rebuilding in the new superblock "tower-in-the-park" pattern could create a viable modern central city.[5]

Jane Jacobs's critique of urban renewal, urban expressways, and other aspects of this late decadent stage in the metropolitanist tradition constitutes one of the most important and effective polemics in American writing. To her critique one might add the idea that the metropolitanist tradition was built on the assumption that there was a "metropolitan elite" who had a natural interest in the prosperity and growth of their region in competition with others throughout the nation. Where politicians were necessarily parochial in their outlook, the elite could override local interests to sponsor a genuinely regional perspective. The Chicago and New York regional plans were specifically designed to provide such a long-term, unified vision. Whatever the limitations of this easy identification of the elite's interests with the general good, there is no doubt that in the Progressive Era, this kind of regional leadership contributed to the remarkable flourishing of various metropolitan park districts, water districts, and port, rail, and mass transit projects that united cities and their suburbs.[6]

However, by the 1960s it was clear that the metropolitan elites had at best a highly selective attachment to their regions. They still took a great interest in the downtown cores, at least as prestigious corporate and cultural headquarters, but they had no loyalty to the people or the jobs in the now-aging factory districts that surrounded the cores. The managers of national corporations understood very well that the federal government's provision of highways, electric power, and other vital infrastructure in the suburbs and in the Sun Belt meant that the old urban factory zones were no longer the most efficient locales for production. For example, Pittsburgh's Allegheny Conference, the

model post-1945 organization for regional business planning, brought together the city's industrial and financial establishment to sponsor the redevelopment of the downtown as a suitable setting for corporate headquarters. Meanwhile, this same establishment oversaw the dismantling of Pittsburgh's industrial base.[7]

Although urban renewal was originally inspired by the utopian design theories of the great masters of modern architecture, the actual practice of urban renewal tended to reflect the elite's real priorities. The older districts near downtown—whose historic structures and eclectic enterprises gave a sense of character and history to the whole city—were usually the first to be declared "blighted" and ruthlessly leveled, especially if their residents were black. Black neighborhoods also were the favored locale for the new highways built to connect the downtown to the suburbs. Finally, as Arnold Hirsch has shown for Chicago, public housing projects were intentionally located to provide a seemingly permanent color line—a "second ghetto," as he calls it—between white and black neighborhoods.[8]

More subtly, the decay of the metropolitanist tradition meant that one could no longer count on the old downtown elite to speak forcefully for the region as a whole. As deindustrialization ravaged the old urban factory zones and especially condemned the black migrants who had recently moved there to long-term unemployment, one would have expected pressure for an urban "industrial policy" comparable to the vast sums that were spent to keep the downtowns prosperous. But this never happened, because it would have challenged the underlying pattern of urban industrial disinvestment that was the real industrial policy of the 1960s. Instead, the 1960s saw a highly subsidized regional shift of industrial production from the cities to industrial parks in the suburbs. As the older impulse toward common regional action decayed, the regional reality turned into a war for tax base and other resources between the central cities and their suburbs—a war that the suburbs were destined to win.[9]

This profound city-suburb split gave an air of unreality to the metropolitan councils of governments and the elaborate regional plans that occupied so much of planners' time in the 1960s. Perhaps the most important of these was the Year 2000 Plan for the Washington, D.C. region. A worthy theoretical successor to the Chicago and New York plans, the Year 2000 Plan advocated channeling growth into six corridors extending out from the hub of downtown Washington, corridors defined by new highway and rail transit lines. Separating the

corridors would be "wedges" of controlled open space that kept growth from consuming the whole region. This corridor-and-wedge plan would thus combine an efficient pattern for regional expansion with the preservation of open space close to new development.[10]

The Year 2000 Plan really did look to the future in its advocacy of rail mass transit lines as a focus for controlled suburban development. The plan especially foreshadowed Peter Calthorpe's "transit oriented development,"[11] and its vision for the region was certainly important in winning support for the (much-reduced) transit system that was built as the Washington Metro. The plan's concern for preserving open space was admirable but more problematic. Precisely in advocating "controls" for an area covering five counties in two states and the District itself, the Year 2000 Plan raised the unanswerable question of how the local governments who had the actual jurisdiction over land use could be persuaded or compelled to follow the pattern of open-space wedges that the plan advocated. In fact, with devastating speed, the plan's wedges were invaded by low-density development, and the neat pattern of corridor-and-wedge never took shape.[12]

One might imagine that the regionalist planning tradition would have fared better in the 1960s than that of the metropolitanists because this school had long anticipated and urged the decentralization of the cities. Led by such notable 1920s designers and social critics as Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, and Clarence Stein, the regionalists tried to adapt the doctrines of Ebenezer Howard and the English Garden City movement to American conditions. They saw the crowded cities of the turn of the century as a temporary phenomenon, the inhuman result of the backwardness of nineteenth-century technology and the concentration of power in the hands of a metropolitan elite. In the new age of electricity and the automobile, the big city was, in Clarence Stein's phrase, a "dinosaur city" whose crowding and inefficiency consumed society's resources and stunted its residents' lives.[13]

The twentieth century would see a return to the dispersed settlements characteristic of the early nineteenth century, but with regional networks of highways and electrical power that would bring the benefits of advanced technology to every point in the region. The regionalists criticized infrastructure investments designed to maintain the crowded urban cores and called for a decentralized highway system that would serve a regional network of planned "new towns." As central cities shrank, the urban region would consist primarily of these new towns located throughout the region and set in an open, green

environment, each combining both work and residence. This true regional city would occupy, in John Thomas's phrase, the "middle ground" between the old crowded cities and the old isolated rural areas.[14] The middle ground could combine all the economic benefits of living in a technologically advanced society with the human scale, local identity, and community of small-town America.[15]

In the 1930s and 1940s, the federal government's massive investment in roads, regional electrical systems, and other infrastructure went far beyond what the regionalists of the 1920s or 1930s could have hoped. But the federal commitment to new towns—the Greenbelt program of the New Deal—halted after only three prototypes had been started: Greenbelt, Maryland; Greenhills, Ohio; and Greendale, Wisconsin. More important, the postwar years revealed that the sprawling, corporate-sponsored growth that resulted was the opposite of the human-scaled community-building that the regionalists had hoped to promote. With power over land use fragmented among the hundreds of counties and municipalities at the edge of most regions, there was no means to limit or direct the destructive force of large-scale speculation fueled by government subsidies. Regionalists had argued in the 1920s that the cities must decentralize into the regions. Now this tide of decentralization was a reality, but it was simultaneously devastating the central cities and overrunning the regionalists' cherished middle ground.

Nevertheless, the heirs of the regionalists in the 1950s and 1960s still nurtured the hope of an American new-town program comparable to the one launched in Britain after World War II. The new town was, in effect, reinvented—not as a way of depopulating the cities, which was already happening, but as "the alternative to sprawl," a way of preserving open space and channeling low-density development at the edge into bounded, coherent, relatively dense settlements. The new-town idea received an unexpected endorsement when two private developers, Robert E. Simon and James Rouse, both undertook ambitious new towns in the Washington, D.C., area: Simon's Reston in northern Virginia and Rouse's Columbia between Washington and Baltimore. Columbia, backed by Rouse's considerable development and public relations organization, seemed to revive the idea of planned new towns as the best solution to the growth of metropolitan areas. But the financial difficulties that overtook first Simon and then Rouse also seemed to indicate that the new-town concept required more than private enterprise to succeed.[16]

After a decade of debate, Congress included in the 1970 Housing Act a provision for "new communities": Title VII.[17] The concept behind Title VII was that the up-front costs of providing planning and infrastructure for a new town were more than even the largest private developer could handle. Rather than shift responsibility for new towns to a public corporation, Title VII promised that private developers who undertook a HUD-approved new town would receive extensive federal mortgage guarantees, planning subsidies, and coordinated services from other federal and state programs. A year later, nine new-town proposals were approved by HUD for federal aid. It appeared that the regionalist tradition would at last make a significant impact on the American region.[18]

Nevertheless, by the recession years of 1974 to 1976, it was obvious that the Title VII new-town program was in disarray. In the end, only one new town called The Woodlands, thirty miles north of Houston, survived largely because the developer was an oilman with deep pockets in a region that benefited from the oil crisis. If urban renewal represented the failure of the metropolitanist tradition, the Title VII new-town program represented a similar (but less publicized) failure of the regionalist tradition. Indeed, the failure was so complete that it has been virtually erased from the collective memory of the planning profession. Nevertheless, its lessons are perhaps as significant as those of urban renewal.

First, in spite of seemingly generous federal loan guarantees, the difficulty of pursuing long-term, complex goals (especially in a decade of economic turmoil) left new-town developers extremely vulnerable compared to more conventional developers, who could move quickly to catch a rapidly changing market. Second, whatever the inherent merits of 1960s–70s new-town design, it was ultimately a compromise that failed to establish itself as a real alternative to conventional subdivision. Despite talk of "mixed use" local retail and community centers, bike paths, and sidewalks, the plans were almost as spread out and automobile dependent as typical sprawl. (Here, perhaps, the more radical attempts by the 1990s "new urbanists" to create genuine "pedestrian pockets" are in the long run more practical.)[19]

Finally, and perhaps most important, the new towns sought to produce the benefits of metropolitan governance without its reality. Instead, they demonstrated that without some form of metropolitan growth and transportation policy, the new-town ideal is virtually impossible. In Britain the new-town movement was backed by an

activist national government that was able to impose a strictly maintained greenbelt around all of Britain's major cities and to limit growth beyond the greenbelt to new towns (or infill within existing towns). The new towns fell victim to the same forces of rapid piecemeal development that had doomed the corridors-and-wedges design of the Washington Year 2000 Plan. There was no regional land-use policy that favored new-town development strongly enough to prevent conventional suburban development from seizing the land around the new town and enveloping it in an environment of sprawl.[20]

If the failures of both the metropolitanist and regionalist traditions represent the near death of American planning, where then was its new life? The revitalization of American planning in the 1960s stemmed from three sources:

— a new appreciation of the fragility and importance of "urbanity," especially as propounded by Jane Jacobs;

— a new appreciation of the fragility and importance of open space and respect for the environment, best represented in Ian McHarg's *Design With Nature.*[21]

— the beginnings of an understanding that these two seemingly dissimilar goals—urbanity and open space—were in fact necessary elements of a new kind of regional plan and above all, a new kind of regional coalition.

To begin with Jacobs, her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* concentrated on the recent failures of urban renewal but also criticized virtually all the icons of American planning from the City Beautiful to the new-town movement. The problem in all these design strategies, she charged, was that planners responded to what they saw as the "disorder" of the city by imposing their own designs, but they completely failed to understand and to respect the far more complex order that healthy cities already embodied. This complex order—what she calls "close-grained diversity"—was the result not of big plans but of all the little plans of ordinary people that alone can generate the diversity that is the true glory of a great city.[22]

Jacobs brilliantly supported these critiques with an abundance of detailed observations that contrasted the bleak and dangerous terrain of the planned public housing project with the vibrancy of traditional "unplanned" urban streets like Hudson Street in Manhattan's West Village where she then lived. Although Jacobs's demolition of bureaucratic urban renewal theory was the most brilliant and most necessary part of her book, there were other aspects of her work that ironically

proved highly useful to a planning revival. By drastically devaluing theoretical expertise, Jacobs was in a sense returning to the eclectic, pragmatic roots of American planning. By trusting the evidence of her own eyes, she countered the academicization of planning and helped to restore the "urban conversation" that had traditionally been at the core of the American planning tradition. Perhaps most important, Jacobs provided what urban planning needed most in an era of decentralization when almost all urban functions were rapidly suburbanizing: she provided a justification for the city.

In her analysis urban density serves a positive function because it provides the rich, complex setting in which individuals and small businesses can best pursue their own plans. A big corporate bureaucracy could function in isolation, but to succeed, a small business needs a multitude of complementary enterprises nearby. The diversity of small urban enterprises sustains and is sustained by a dense and diverse urban population with highly varied tastes and needs. As Jacobs emphasizes, this special urbanity is made manifest in the street life of a great city. For Jacobs, what happens on the sidewalks is just as important as what happens in the buildings. A successful urban street is a complex blend of neighbors and strangers, a constantly changing "urban ballet" of familiarity and chance encounters that both defines a neighborhood and welcomes the outsider. These streets are safe not because they are constantly policed, but because the citizens watch out for each other. Safe, lively, diverse streets are the essence of true urbanity.

In ways that Jacobs herself never foresaw, her analysis of the city became the starting point for redefining the goals and methods of urban planning. She not only indicated the new aim of urbanism—the preservation of the older urban fabric, with its precious legacy of human-scaled streets and other public spaces—but equally important, she identified the limitations of planning. Where urban renewal had sought total control, post-Jacobs planning returned to Alexis de Tocqueville's perception in *Democracy in America* that the American style of governance is most powerful when it steps back and leaves room for the initiative and creativity of the citizens.[23] The areas that urban renewal had targeted for demolition were now identified as the areas to be lovingly protected, and the prime movers for this historic preservation movement were now individuals willing to buy and renovate older structures.

However, planners soon performed more important tasks than just providing brick sidewalks and fancy streetlights in historic dis-

tricts. Successful historic preservation often involved the adaptive reuse of historic structures, which required the imagination to conceive effective new uses and the ability to recruit private developers who could carry out the transformation. Downtown planning became increasingly a kind of public entrepreneurship, in which the planners brokered deals to attract new investment. The model for this public-private partnership was the 1976 alliance of the city of Boston and the developer James Rouse to transform the 1826 Quincy Market into a contemporary shopping arcade that would soon prove to be one of the liveliest public spaces in the city. Downtown planning today aims at an eclectic mixture of preservation and adaptive reuse with new office towers, atrium hotels, convention centers, and sports stadiums.[24]

If the urban crisis had impelled Jacobs and her successors to rethink and reaffirm the meaning and importance of cities, the explosion of suburban sprawl similarly impelled the regionalists to rethink and reaffirm their commitment to human settlements in harmony with nature. The single figure whose importance for the regionalist tradition comes closest to Jane Jacobs's importance for the metropolitanists is Ian McHarg, the Scottish-born landscape architect and author of *Design With Nature*.[25] Like Jacobs, McHarg understood the fundamental problem to be combating a way of thinking and building that imposed a destructive simplicity on a complex system. For Jacobs, this complexity was the diverse city itself, imperiled by planners seeking to impose a simple pseudo-order. For McHarg, the complexity was the wonderfully varied ecological structure of the region, which was being destroyed by sprawling suburban building patterns that imposed the same destructively simple pattern of subdivisions and highways from the lowlands to the ridge tops.

McHarg's solution was to "design with nature," that is, to allow the ecology of the region to guide building. Only after a profound examination of the land—both scientific and aesthetic—could one identify the right sites for new construction and the form it must take. This "ecological view" would similarly define the areas that would best be used for varied types of agriculture and the areas that must be preserved as wilderness.[26] McHarg thus reexpressed the fundamental ideals of Benton MacKaye and the earlier regionalists in terms the growing environmental movement could understand. *Design With Nature* never attained the canonical status of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, but its ideas underlay the powerful upsurge of environmental activism on the regional periphery. Just as important, *Design*

*With Nature* provided a language that acknowledged the place of human settlements in nature, a language that could accommodate the new coalitions between urbanists and environmentalists that began to emerge in the 1970s.

These new coalitions reflected what was perhaps the major lesson of the 1960s: although the major trends of decentralization and suburbanization were destructive both to urbanity and open space, careful regional planning could counter both trends by simultaneously strengthening regional centers and limiting growth at the edge. These two strategies reinforced each other: a dense, vital center would help decrease the pressure for peripheral development and increase ridership for mass transit; limiting growth at the edge would encourage the kind of infill development at the center that would keep the older central cities alive.

Thus effective regional planning implied a new kind of regional coalition, first seen in the Portland region in the mid-1970s. In the city of Portland itself, Mayor Neil Goldschmidt led a coordinated program of urban revitalization: downtown preservation and upgrading; neighborhood renovation; and improved mass transit. Portland even removed a waterfront highway and replaced it with a park and in 1975 cancelled a proposed highway and used the money for a new light rail line. At the same time, Governor Tom McCall, responding to rural and suburban concerns, sponsored legislation to create the Land Conservation and Development Commission, whose best-known achievement was the 1979 urban growth boundary around the Portland region. The result was a regionalism that balanced urban and environmental concerns, based on a regional coalition that extended from farmers to suburbanites to neighborhood activists to downtown business and civic leaders.[27]

Portland, to be sure, never experienced either the rapid suburbanization of other regions in the 1950s and 1960s or their racial polarization. One need only mention Los Angeles to indicate the difficulties of pursuing a true regional policy, especially a regional mass transit policy, in a larger, more complex, and more divided metropolis.[28] But if the Portland experience does not yield an easy model to imitate, it certainly indicates that the travails of American regional planning in the 1960s were not in vain. Out of the wreckage of outmoded ideas and practices, planners have fashioned both a new vision of the American region and the promise of new coalitions to implement that vision.

This vision may seem vague and tentative compared to the grand designs produced earlier in the century, and the new coalitions seem weak compared to the massive power that Robert Moses and the other masters of the growth machine mustered at midcentury. Nevertheless, these very weaknesses reflect crucial and positive lessons. Planning in the 1960s sought to establish, in the words of President Kennedy's Special Message to Congress (quoted as the epigraph of this chapter), "an effective and comprehensive planning process in each metropolitan area embracing all major activities both public and private that shape the community." Such hubris inevitably brought retribution. American planning today is most effective and comprehensive precisely when it eschews all-embracing powers and works instead within the limits of the pluralistic systems that actually define the American-built environment. These lessons of the 1960s could be summarized as follows:

— Distrust the "grand design."

— Recognize regional diversity and accept local jurisdictions and local concerns.

— Plan as a "regional conversation" rather than as a top-down exercise in power.[29]

These lessons are demonstrated in an exemplar of current planning, the New Jersey State Plan. Established in 1986 by moderate Republican governor Thomas Kean in response to the depredations of the 1980s building boom, the New Jersey State Planning Commission was supported by his Democratic successor James Florio and is currently an important part of the agenda of Republican governor Christine Todd Whitman. The state's Development and Redevelopment Plan is comprehensive in the sense that it embodies the idea of limiting growth at the edge while redeveloping New Jersey's older cities and transit corridors. One looks in vain for a grand design equivalent to the corridors-and-wedges of the Washington Year 2000 Plan. Instead one finds an attempt to zone land use according to a flexible tier system that seeks to identify appropriate uses ranging from wilderness preservation to targeted urban redevelopment.[30]

However, real power over land use lies not at the state level but with New Jersey's 567 municipalities and 21 counties. Under the leadership of Herbert Simmens, the New Jersey State Plan is, in practice, a kind of invitation to each of these local units to engage in a statewide "conversation" to reexamine needs and priorities and bring them into harmony with the plan's regional goals. The plan is also an invitation

to have a dialogue with other state and federal agencies about how they can use their resources to advance the plan's goals. Finally (and this is the greatest challenge), the plan is an invitation to a conversation between New Jersey's cities and suburbs to find some common ground—a conversation far more difficult than in the Portland region because of the deep racial divide between cities like Newark and Camden and their affluent suburbs.

Under the direction of architect Carlos Rodrigues, the New Jersey State Plan is also developing a design component, but once again its goals and methods are far more flexible and eclectic than in the 1960s. There is no equivalent here to the self-confident panaceas of the past, either tower-in-the-park urban renewal or suburban new towns. Instead, Rodrigues and his colleagues have drawn largely from new-urbanist concepts of concentrated development mixed with historic preservation to safeguard the cities and towns that already possess the density, transit links, pedestrian scale, and public spaces that new-urbanist theory prizes. Above all, the plan recognizes that planning in practice is a messy process of protracted dialogue—seeking to balance, for example, the need to reduce development at the edge with the need derived from the New Jersey Supreme Court's "Mount Laurel decisions" to provide affordable housing in the suburbs.[31]

This strategy of planning is the exact opposite of the unified, top-down "metropolitan government" that 1960s planners vainly hoped would emerge out of the metropolitan councils of government of that era. But paradoxically this weaker current form of metropolitan regionalism might generate far more effective power in the end. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville addresses this very American paradox of formally limited government and surprisingly effective policies. He argues that the very power of a nineteenth-century European centralized government tends to produce apathy and passive resistance among the governed because it operates without public knowledge or discussion.[32] Such a critique anticipates the failures of top-down American planning in the 1960s.

By contrast, Tocqueville identifies the true effectiveness of democratic planning. The absence of a controlling central power, he observes, invites collective action outside a bureaucratic hierarchy. "Under [democracy's] sway, the grandeur is not in what the public administration does, but what is done without it or outside of it. Democracy does not give the people the most skilful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to cre-

ate; namely, a superabundant force, and an energy which is inseparable from it, and which may, however unfavorable circumstances may be, produce wonders."[33]

Today we need wonders, because regional planning is attempting to address simultaneously the two most difficult domestic issues that face this country: first, the great divide of class and race as expressed physically by the separation of inner city and suburb; and second, the destructive impact of an ever-expanding technological society on the natural environment that must sustain our lives. If these issues often seem paralyzing in their difficulty and complexity, we can at least hope for the superabundant force that only regenerated democratic planning can produce.

## Notes

1. John F. Kennedy, "Special Message to Congress on Housing and Community Development," March 9, 1961, quoted in National Capital Planning Commission and National Capital Regional Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000* (Washington Metropolitan Regional Council, 1961), p. 26.

2. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Random House, 1961), p. 410. Jacobs was a classic "outsider" when she published this seminal book. Without professional credentials or even a college degree, Jacobs was a journalist who worked as senior editor at *Architectural Forum*. In 1961 she was known more for her opposition to Robert Moses's plans to put a highway through Washington Square Park than for her limited published work. Nevertheless, *Death and Life* was an immediate success (nominated for a National Book Award), which propelled her into a lifetime of writing. Her other books include *The Economy of Cities* (Random House, 1969) and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (Random House, 1984).

3. Ibid.

4. Daniel Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago* (Chicago: Commercial Club, 1909); Committee on Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, *Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs: The Graphic Regional Plan* (New York, 1929).

5. Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (Knopf, 1974), part VI.

6. Robert Fishman, "The Regional Plan and the Transformation of the Industrial Metropolis," in David Ward and Olivier Zunz, eds., *The Landscape of Modernity* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1992), pp. 106–28.

7. Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940–1985* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), chap. 2.

8. Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

9. Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 1996), chaps. 5 and 7.

10. National Capital Planning Commission and National Capital Regional Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000* (Washington Metropolitan Regional Council, 1961), pp. 46–47.

11. Peter Calthorpe, *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), pp. 46–71.

12. Mel Scott, *American City Planning Since 1890* (University of California Press, 1971), pp. 573–80.

13. Clarence Stein, "Dinosaur Cities" (1925), reprinted in Carl Sussman, ed., *Planning the Fourth Migration: The Neglected Vision of the Regional Planning Association of America* (MIT Press, 1976), pp. 28–36. For Stein and his colleagues Lewis Mumford and Benton MacKaye and their debt to Ebenezer Howard, see Edward K. Spann, *Designing Modern America: The Regional Planning Association of America and Its Members* (Ohio University Press, 1996).

14. John Thomas, "Holding the Middle Ground," in Robert Fishman, ed., *The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Politics* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), chap. 2.

15. Ibid.

16. Gurney Breckenfeld, *Columbia and the New Cities* (New York: Ives Washburn, 1971).

17. Urban Growth and New Community Development Act (1970). Title VII of the act provided aid for new towns.

18. American Institute of Architects, *New Towns in America: The Design and Development Process* (John Wiley, 1973).

19. Lloyd Rodwin, "The Next Generation of New Towns," in *New Towns in America*, pp. 126–30.

20. Robert Fishman, "America's New City," *Wilson Quarterly*, vol. 14 (Winter 1990), pp. 24–55.

21. Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday/Natural History Press, 1969). Born outside Glasgow, Scotland, McHarg was profoundly shaped by the contrast between the rugged countryside and a Glasgow that he called "one of the most implacable testaments to the city of toil in all of Christendom, a memorial to an inordinate capacity to create ugliness, a sandstone excretion cemented with smoke and grime." (*Design with Nature*, p. 1). After serving as a parachute officer in World War II, McHarg studied landscape architecture at Harvard and then joined the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. There he cofounded the influential Philadelphia planning firm of Wallace, McHarg Associates (the present-day WRT). As faculty member and consultant, he pursued the important case studies of the New Jersey shore, the Philadelphia watershed, and the Washington-Baltimore metropolitan region that form the heart of *Design with Nature*.

22. Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, chap. 7.

23. Alexis de Tocqueville, "Political Activity Which Pervades the United States," in *Democracy in America*, ed. Richard D. Heffner (New American Library, 1956), part I. Originally published in 1835 and 1840.

24. Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.: How America Builds Cities* (MIT Press, 1989).

25. McHarg, *Design with Nature.*

26. Ibid., pp. 55–152.

27. Carl Abbott, Deborah Howe, and Sy Adler, eds., *Planning the Oregon Way: A Twenty-Year Evaluation* (Oregon State University Press, 1994).

28. William Fulton, *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles* (Point Arena, Calif.: Solano Press, 1997).

29. For the politics of this new regionalism, see especially Myron Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Brookings, 1997).

30. New Jersey State Planning Commission, *Communities of Place: The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan* (Trenton, N.J.: Office of State Planning, 1992).

31. The "Mount Laurel decisions" of the New Jersey State Supreme Court in the 1970s and 1980s prohibited this New Jersey suburb and all others in New Jersey from "zoning out the poor," that is, using zoning regulations to exclude affordable housing. To implement the decision, the justices required that each suburb make provisions to include within its boundaries its "fair share" of affordable housing for its region. The decisions and their consequences are discussed in David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, and Larry A. Rosenthal, *Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia* (Rutgers University Press, 1995) and Charles M. Haar, *Suburbs Under Siege: Race, Space, and Audacious Judges* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

32. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* p. 108.

33. Ibid., p. 110.