

Reconsidering Jane Jacobs: What stories do we tell about postwar New York history?

Linus Glenhaber, Columbia University Laidlaw Scholar

Introduction

There are two figures who dominate discussions about postwar New York history: Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs. The story usually told about both begins with Moses, who built most of the highways of New York. Jane Jacobs, meanwhile, fought for community control, successfully fighting off a highway slated to go through Washington Square Park. As much of the city fell into decline—a famous moment from the 1970's is a burning building caught on camera during a world series game—only the areas protected by Jacobs managed to survive. I was interested in interrogating this common tale, in order to see which voices were silenced for this story to be told.

Main Questions and Conclusions

Why do we tell this myth?

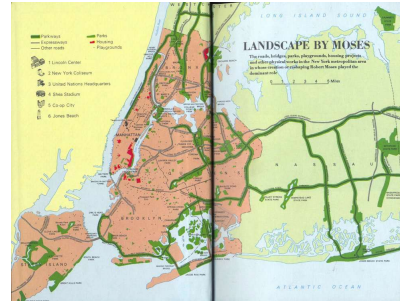


Photo credit: Front cover of Robert Caro's *The Power Broker*

The second part of my research focused on why we focus on Moses and Jacobs. While there were many reasons, the main one is it removes culpability. Moses was responsible for the destruction of the city through his many projects (right), removing underlying causes of divestment in neighborhoods.

What stories are we leaving out, then?



Photo Credit: Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College

While there are many, I found the story of Evelina Lopez Antonetty to be a good foil for Jane Jacobs. Antonetty, a Bronx neighborhood activist became one focus of my research, and the focus of the article I wrote in *Public Seminar*.

Methodology

Due to the unique set of challenges of 2020, my research was conducted entirely remotely, using online databases of secondary and primary sources, in addition to conducting two interviews.

Acknowledgments

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Further information

My research was published by Public Seminar, an online publication. The article can be found [here](#).