

Talk by Judy Wicks
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In Memory of Jane Jacobs

The community where I live and work in Philadelphia was almost torn down by developers back in the 1970's. It was during that fight to save our block that I first learned of Jane Jacobs, the legendary urban activist and visionary. This spring she passed away just shy of her 90th birthday, so I thought I would pay a small tribute to Jane Jacobs through some of my remarks this morning.

There are so many things I love about Jane Jacobs: She hated one-way streets, and loved local beer. As a schoolgirl she was sent to the principal's office for blowing up paper bags and popping them in the lunchroom. Later in life she was arrested for second degree riot and criminal mischief for disrupting a public meeting on the construction of an expressway!

But I'll have to narrow down from all the reasons I admire Jane Jacobs and share some thoughts about just a few ways in which her vision for creating vibrant communities and prosperous local economies has been an inspiration to the local living economy movement, and how her work touched by own life 35 years ago.

The first time I walked onto the 3400 block of Sansom Street in 1972, I was enchanted. The narrow tree-lined street, with a row of charming, if someone rundown, Victorian brownstone houses was a little oasis from the unfriendly institutional feeling surrounding it. Most of the old houses around the University of Pennsylvania were being torn down and replaced by modern high-rise dormitories and office buildings, strip malls, and parking garages. In contrast, the lovely one-hundred-year-old houses on Sansom St, with a few small businesses on the first floors, were human-scale – quaint, homey, inviting.

Later that year, I moved into an apartment at 3420 Sansom, future home of the White Dog, and soon learned that the entire block had been condemned to clear the land for a shopping mall. How could it be that those lovely brownstone houses would be demolished and the local business owners and residents forced out to make way for chain stores and fast food restaurants!

I was outraged! That must have been my first BALLE moment!

I eagerly joined the Sansom Committee, the local community group organized to fight the demolition and save our homes and businesses. At age 25, this was my first experience in social activism and community organizing. And my first act of civil disobedience (but not the last) was when I lay down in front of a bulldozer that came up the back alley to begin demolition of the buildings where the businesses had already been evicted, while our group sought a restraining order.

The Sansom Committee developed an alternative to the proposed shopping mall. It was Jane Jacob's fight to save her community in Greenwich Village and her vision, articulated in her classic book, "Death and Life of Great American Cities," that provided the Sansom Committee with the inspiration to save and restore our block.

From her home above a candy store in the West Village, Jacobs observed what she described as the "intricate sidewalk ballet" of urban life. The complex goings-on day and night – of shopkeepers opening up in the morning and closing down at night, the continual comings and goings of residents, people heading off to work or school, and coming home again, heading back out for leisure activities, people walking to local stores and restaurants, housewives chatting on the stoops, children playing hop scotch and jumping rope.

Jacobs wrote about the importance of mixed-use, where communities prospered from a diverse and lively mixture of residential and retail. People lived and worked in the same community. Work, school, leisure and home life were integrated in dynamic and enjoyable communities. Jacobs challenged the top-down urban renewal movement imposed by governments in the 50's and 60's where whole neighborhoods were razed, destroying vibrant communities and thriving personalized local businesses to build sterile high-rise office buildings and housing projects. She pointed out how the housing projects were segregated by class - low-income projects plagued by crime, moderate-income developments that were dull and gray, and luxury developments that were vulgar displays. Uses and activities were segregated so that residential areas were separate from retail and offices, creating dead times when no one was around. The separation severed the relationships that were the foundation of community life.

Walkable communities were replaced by the suburbs where housing plans and shopping malls were destroying rich farmlands for no more

than what Jacobs professed was "cheap parking." People no longer worked in the same community where they lived – work life became separate from home life. As Bill McKibben pointed out last night, it was this time in the 1950's during which people were separated by migration to the suburbs, when happiness in our society began its decline.

Eventually, the Sansom Committee won the fight to save the 3400 block of Sansom Street from the wrecking ball, which gave me the opportunity to purchase the house at 3420 Sansom Street, Jane Jacob's vision of vibrant urban life had become my own. I wanted to "live above the shop" in the old-fashioned way of doing business, as Jacobs had described. In 1983, I opened the White Dog Cafe as a coffee and muffin take-out shop on the first floor of my house, where I have now lived for 35 years. Today the White Dog has grown from the muffin shop to a full service restaurant with over 200 seats, occupying three of the brownstone rowhouses. Our gift shop, the Black Cat, selling unique local and fair trade crafts, books and novelties, occupies a fourth rowhouse. The other row houses are home to a number of locally owned, independent businesses including three other restaurants, a coffeeshop, real estate office, newspaper and magazine shop, and a hair salon.

On Sansom Street I found my place in the world - another BALLE moment - committing to place. Merrian Fuller likes to use this quote from Gary Snyder: "Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility from there."

By living above the shop on Sansom Street I saw my own sidewalk ballet and grew to understand first hand how the mixed use of residents and businesses, of students and non-students, of young and old, of a wonderful diversity of people added to the vitality of my neighborhood and to the success of my business. I also discovered the special role we play as proprietors in building the interwoven relationships that make up community life.

A friend who was writing a book once asked me if I ever had a moment of pure joy, and gave as an example a moment in her life when she was gardening and a butterfly landed on her hand in the sunshine. What immediately came to mind for me, was something very different. I thought of one of our summer block parties when I was dancing out in the street to a reggae band. I looked around me at the sea of people dancing together – my customers, employees,

friends and neighbors, teenagers, a few youngsters and seniors, different races and backgrounds all having fun together - it was a real urban scene, and I felt elated. It was my moment of pure joy.

Physically separating home life from work life leads also to the compartmentalization of values. Business schools tell students "Leave your values at home, when you go to work." So it's teach your children the Golden Rule at home, but at work "Gold Rules!" No wonder people are unhappy with their lives.

Living and working in the same community has not only given me a stronger sense of place, but a different business outlook. There's a short distance between me as the business decision-maker and those affected by my decisions - a basic principle of the local living economy movement. As a small business owner, I am more likely to make decisions from the heart, not just from the head, and they are more likely to be in the best interest of those around me whom I see every day - employees, customers, neighbors, suppliers. Business is really about relationships with everyone we buy from and sell to, and work with. Money is simply a tool.

When businesses continually grow larger and larger, that distance between the decision-maker and those affected grows longer, so that many CEO's rarely have personal relationships with those affected by their decisions. And of course, publicly traded corporations are required by law to serve the financial interests of stockholders above all else.

Jane Jacobs talked about the importance of human-scale - whether it be architecture or enterprises. Yet business schools teach "grow or die." Bigger is better, rather than small is beautiful. As a society, we are taught the false premise that economic growth benefits everyone and success is measured by material gain. Yet continual growth is destroying the planet by using up more natural resources than can be regenerated, and it is the rich who are getting richer, while the share of wealth for everyone else is declining.

I made a conscious decision to stay small and learned to grow in other ways besides the physical. As the Earth Charter says, "After basic needs are met, it's about being more, not having more." And as Bill McKibben said last night, "It's not about belongings, it's about belonging."

Rather than constantly growing our size, sales and profits, we can grow by expanding our knowledge, consciousness and creativity, deepening our relationships, and increasing our happiness and well-being. I focused on making the White Dog a truly unique and special place, creating many different programs, activities, and celebrations for all to enjoy, and found that I had more fun in my own community, than taking vacations to distant places.

I like this quote from Walt Whitman's "A Song of Occupations"

"Will you seek afar off? You surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,
Not for another hour but this hour."

Jane Jacobs saw cities as the natural eco-system for human beings – what works in nature, also is what works in the man-made environment. The parts of the city, as in nature, are interconnected and interdependent, not separate. Our strength comes from diversity, not sameness and monoculture. She understood that the vitality of the city was lost without the interdependence and diversity of its people and architecture.

In her obituary in the New York Times, it was said that Jacob's "prescription for cities was ever more diversity, density and dynamism – in effect to crowd people and activities together in a jumping, joyous urban jumble."

I learned a lesson in how sustainable cities are like sustainability in nature when I attended a program of our Sustainable Business Network in Philadelphia. Each month we have an educational seminar put on by a different "building block" of a local living economy so that we learn from each other and find ways to do business with each other. This one was put on by the Sustainable Landscape building block. I didn't know much about sustainable landscaping before I went to the program put on by Dale Hendricks, an SBN leader and owner of Northcreek Nurseries.

The presentation included slides that showed examples of both a sustainable landscape and an unsustainable one. The slide of the unsustainable showed the plants separate from each other in a

manicured style with no wild areas between them. Everything was controlled and regimented, just as the city planners were doing when Jane Jacobs challenged them, just as industrial agriculture does for that matter.

In the slide of the sustainable landscape, there was a diversity of plants growing together, helter-schelter, sharing the same space, which made natural habitats for insects to pollinate the plants and where birds and other creatures made up the eco-system. Here the plants were thriving. I imagine Dale's sustainable landscapes of plants, insects, birds and critters are jumping, joyous jumbles!

Jane Jacobs wrote not only about diverse and lively neighborhoods, but also about regional economies and the importance of producing goods locally - with local resources and local labor for local consumption. Today as we face the dual challenge of fossil-fuel-induced global warming and peak oil, Jane Jacobs's vision for both walkable communities with rich community life, and vibrant local economies with local production is more significant than ever.

Cheap oil has been the lifeblood of corporate globalization, making it possible for multinational corporations to ship products from distant places where labor and natural resources are easy to exploit. Corporations have pressured governments, especially in the U.S, to provide subsidies for exported agricultural products so they can compete unfairly with local growers in products such as corn, wheat, and cotton, putting small farmers out of business in less developed countries, as well as in the US.

As a result, once thriving local economies have been destroyed by cheap imports. Now people around the world, including our own communities, have become dependent on large corporations to provide basic human needs of food, clothing, energy, and building materials shipped long distances. The unnecessary transportation of goods around the globe is a major contributor to global warming. The solution is clear - we must reduce shipping by developing community self-reliance with local energy security, local food security, and interdependent local economies to provide basic needs - what Jane Jacobs described as "symbiotic nests of local producers"

Jane Jacobs wrote about the importance of “import replacements” – how cities prosper when business people use their ingenuity, to replace imported goods with those produced locally. Susan Witt of the Schumacher Society, who’s here today, was a friend of Jane Jacobs, and she recently quoted Jacobs saying that successful regional economies required “exuberant episodes of import-replacing.”

Here’s where we, as BALLE business people, are so crucially needed today. We need to use our entrepreneurial energy and creativity by starting businesses to replace imports, helping our region to be more self-reliant. We need many “exuberant episodes of import-replacing.”

Rather than expanding our businesses beyond our own region by creating chains or national brands in the cookie cutter format of the industrial era, which require long distant transport, we need to turn our attention as creative innovators to look at the needs of our community. What imports can we replace to make our communities more self-reliant? We can look within the essential building blocks of a local living economy, such as:

- Locally grown and processed food,
- Locally grown fiber crops and textile production,
- Locally designed and made clothing,
- Green building and building materials,
- Renewable energy production,
- Alternative transportation,
- Recycling and reuse,
- Earth-friendly cleaning supplies,
- Community capital,
- Independent retail,
- Local manufacturing,
- Health and well being,
- Local arts & culture,
- Independent media.

Where are the opportunities in these areas of community self-reliance to replace imports? Where are the gaps in our local economic systems that we can fill with a new business? How can we use our entrepreneurial abilities to build a stronger local economy while achieving financial sustainability at the same time? When products aren’t available locally, such as sugar, coffee, tea and chocolate, how can we create or work with import and distribution businesses that insure fair trade, supporting the producers and workers where products originate?

Zimmerman's Deli in Ann Arbor is a perfect example of this model of growth and innovation – and Paul Saginaw from Zimmerman's is speaking in a breakout today. Rather than having a chain of Zimmerman's they have created a "community of businesses" such as a creamery and bakery that close economic loops in their local economy.

There's a panel on local energy systems where panelists, such as Nadia Adawi, of the Energy Cooperative in Philadelphia are working to close the gap in local energy systems. Nadia will talk about recycling grease from restaurant grease traps into fuel and starting a biodiesel filling station. In a keynote tomorrow, we'll be hearing from Omar Freilla who is creating worker owned manufacturing businesses in south Bronx utilizing waste materials.

If our company already has a brand sold beyond the region, can we decentralize production into multiple locations so that we use local supplies and local labor for local consumption that eliminates long distance shipping? An example of this is Seventh Generation, the Burlington maker of green cleaning products, who is manufacturing locally wherever they feasibly can. We need new models from established leaders of what responsible business means in this unprecedented time of environmental crisis.

Our movement is not only about addressing the environmental crisis, but just as much its about addressing the social crisis of a growing concentration of wealth. Large corporations often eliminate local companies, as they spread their brands across the country, getting larger and larger until they are most often bought up by multinationals. Even companies that have been models of social responsibility are adding to the concentration of wealth - Odawalla Juice was sold to Pepsi Cola, Cascadian Farms to General Mills, Ben & Jerry's to Unilever (though that was against the founders wishes), Stonyfield Farms to Danone, and Toms of Maine to Colgate.

The socially responsible business movement must recognize that we have been using the old paradigm of continuous growth to measure success, while neglecting the important issues of place, appropriate scale, and broad-based ownership. Democracy depends on having many owners. The more owners, the more freedom.

Jane Jacobs talked about how ingenuity came from the “close-grained juxtaposition of diverse talents,” Diversity increases creativity and innovation. As entrepreneurs we must work consciously to build an inclusive economy so that we can all benefit from a diversity of talents and ideas, and everyone as the opportunity to contribute their gifts.

As we build a new economy of new local businesses, this is the time to make great strides in economic justice. It’s important that we help those who have been left out of the industrial economy, find ownership opportunities in local living economies.

As business owners we can:
seek to buy from companies owned by women and minorities, hire from those communities, mentor young entrepreneurs, start a mentoring program for high school students, develop “sister” relationships with minority entrepreneurs in our field as we have done with our sister restaurant program, and what Laury Hammel did with the partnership between his sports clubs and an inner city tennis club.

When I think about the challenges of peak oil and climate change, and what we must do as a community to prepare for this, I imagine scenes from movies where a town comes together to prepare for a coming storm or the invasion of a foreign army. Passing bags of sand from hands to hands, piling them up to protect the entrance ways, or rushing supplies of food in from the countryside. There is urgency. Competition is not an option - everyone is looking for ways to work together, recognizing that we need each other to survive. That is how I imagine us now in BALLE communities – moving from being a competitive society to a cooperative one in order to meet the urgent challenge of peak oil and climate change, recognizing our interdependence as a regional economy, building a “symbiotic nest of local producers” that will mean our survival as fuel becomes both unaffordable and unusable in the face of global warming.

As it turns out – we actually have a model of a country that has already met the challenge of living with less oil and that is Cuba. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the tightening of the US embargo, Cuba’s supply of oil was suddenly and drastically reduced, including the oil-based fertilizers and pesticides. They call this the “special period” – the time Cubans struggled as a society to avoid starvation and reach the point of local self-reliance. I was in Cuba several times during the “special period” in the 90’s, bringing groups

of customers and staff to see first hand how Cubans responded to the crisis. Most dramatic was the building of community gardens everywhere possible. People changed careers from teachers, soldiers, and doctors to being farmers.

Education was a big factor. We visited a high school, where students were taught community self-reliance - learning to make their clothes, even their shoes, grow their food, grow medicinal plants and how to use them. They even learned how to make wine for their high school graduation celebration.

But most of all, Cuba survived the special period for one big reason – they have a culture of cooperation and sharing.

That is what we must do, as BALLE leaders in our communities - develop a culture of cooperation in our communities in order to build community self-reliance. Michael Shuman has given a number of examples of how businesses can work cooperatively. My most significant BALLE moment came when I moved from competition to cooperation in my own business.

As you could see from the film, I love animals. For a long time I had bought only cage-free chicken and eggs, but I did not understand about the factory farming of pigs until I read about it in John Robbins book back in the 90's. There I learned about the barbaric way in which pigs are raised in confinement with unspeakable pain and deprivation - unable to move, standing on slates above a lagoon of their own excrement which goes on to pollute the community water supply. Never enjoying a breeze of fresh air, or a ray of sunshine. Though very social animals, never able to touch each other, socialize or lay in big piles, as pigs love to do. The sows are artificially inseminated, prohibited from building nests and caring for their young as their instincts call them to do. Their babies are taken away prematurely, and the process repeated over and over.

Pigs are not machines; they are intelligent, sociable sentient beings with feelings and emotions like other mammals. It's a violation of nature to treat them in this cruel and inhumane way. It's a betrayal of our sacred trust as stewards of land and farm animals. It's institutionalized cruelty that is destroying our own humanity.

I realized that the pork I was using must have been coming from factory farms, as most all pork does. I could not participate in this evil system, so I came into the kitchen, took all the pork off the menu –

the ham, bacon, and pork chops - and our chef set out to find a new humane source. A farmer who was bringing in free-range chicken from Lancaster County started bringing us pork raised by his neighbors in a small-scale, traditional way.

Next I discovered the terrible way cattle are raised – how important it was that they have a diet of grass as they were meant to rather than forced to eat corn and even ground up animal parts. So we found sources for local grass-fed beef. Eventually, all the meat and poultry on our menu came from small family farms where animals are raised on pasture and treated with respect. We finally had a cruelty free menu - that would be our market niche. I wanted to be the best –to be the only restaurant in town that could make this claim.

But then I thought, “Judy, if you really do care about those animals, if you care about the environment that’s being polluted by industrial farming, if you care about the family farms being driven out of business, if you care about the consumers eating meat full of hormones and anti-biotics, then you would not keep this as your market niche, but share what you have learned with other businesses including your competitors.

I was doing the right thing within my company, but that was not enough any longer. I had to move from a competitive mentality to one of cooperation in order to build a whole local economy based on humane and sustainable farming.

So I found a way to share our knowledge by starting the Fair Food Project. Founding director, Ann Karlen, will be speaking in a breakout today. You saw her in the film at the Fair Food Farm Stand, which she started originally because we could not find a butcher in the market who would carry humanely raised pork. For the last five years, Ann has been providing consulting to restaurateurs and chefs on how to buy from local farmers, not just for meats, but all locally grown products. She’s connected hundreds of restaurants, stores and farms, so that our region has become known for our local food system.

I asked the farmer who was bringing us pork if he would like to expand his business, and he said he would. “What’s holding you back?” I asked. He needed a refrigerated truck so I loaned him \$30,000 at a 5% return, and he bought the truck. Another BALLE movement was when I realized that the most important use of my capital was local investment. I soon divested in all stocks and invested my savings

locally, where I receive a “living return” – a modest financial return along with the return of living in a healthier local community.

I increased the Cafe’s charitable giving from 10 to 20% of our profits, putting half of it in the White Dog Cafe Foundation to support Fair Food and our local BALLE network, the Sustainable Business Network. Customers have also contributed, and it was in fact a customer who is here today, Cathy Berry-Dobens, who funded Ann’s salary for the first few years, and also went on to make the first major contributions to BALLE. Thank you, Cathy.

Another opportunity for cooperation in our movement is a political one. Community self-reliance offers a meeting place of the left and right, of liberals and conservatives. Liberals value community and collective endeavors, while often undervaluing the role of the self-reliant entrepreneur. Conservatives value self-reliance and individualism, and often undervalue the importance of working collectively for the good of all.

Community self-reliance combines the values of innovation and creativity found in self-reliant entrepreneurship favored by the right with the values of cooperation found in community life favored by the left. Community self-reliance is something we can all commit to working on together. Ours is a movement which can, and must, be embraced by all – a way of doing business that is not only beautiful in the loving relationships it builds, but essential to our survival in a changing world.

Jane Jacobs believed in the interconnection and interdependence of life. She saw that diversity is what makes us strong, and that our man-made environment must be human-scale, providing for the organic, creative growth of human enterprise. Her nemesis was NYC City Planner Robert Moses who represented the philosophy of top-down control, of regimentation and separation rather than the organic intermingling of people and activities. He had a plan to build a highway that would cut through Washington Square, destroying Greenwich Village. Jane Jacobs was leading the opposition. When Moses spoke at the public hearing on his plan for the highway, he stood gripping the railing as he looked down from the balcony and proclaimed that his plan was favored by everyone. “Everyone” he said, “but a bunch of, of, of - a bunch of mothers!” and with that he stormed out of the room.

Though he meant it as an insult, in fact, it was the highest compliment. And he was right. Jane Jacobs was acting like a mother - a mother protecting what she loved - her beloved Greenwich Village with its beautiful sidewalk ballet. It was love that caused her to challenge the city planning system that was destroying communities.

In my own experience, it was my love for animals that motivated me to challenge the industrial farming system and begin building a local living economy in my region. At its heart, our movement for local living economies is about love. And its love that can overcome the fear that many may feel in the hard days ahead brought on by climate change and peak oil. Our power comes from protecting what we love - love of place, love of life - people, animals, nature, all of life on our beautiful planet Earth. And I would say, for the entrepreneurs amongst us - a love of business. Business has been corrupted as an instrument of greed rather than one of service to the common good. Yet we know that business is beautiful when we put our creativity, care and energy into producing a product or service needed by our community.

Our materialistic society has desensitized us to the suffering that underlies our industrial economic system.

We have to open our hearts and eyes and ears - to hear the cry of the pigs in the crates, of animals in laboratories, in the fur industry.

To feel the suffering of women and children in sweatshops, or enslaved in chocolate production. The suffering of migrant workers in slaughterhouses and pesticide-soaked industrial farms.

The suffering of the people of Iraq, of Nigeria, of the rainforest tribes - everywhere where there is oil and natural resources to exploit, and fight wars over.

To hear the cry of the whales, of the polar bears, of the trees, of the natural world that is dying around us.

What provides the energy and passion for all we must do in this movement is simply to allow ourselves to love what we love.

And in so doing, find our place as humans in the family of life - in the jumping, joyous, jumble of life.

As entrepreneurs, we have a special responsibility. In closing I would like to offer my

Prayer of the Entrepreneur

Nature is the true investor in every deal we make,
We mere stewards, even of our own creations,
Ask how we might better serve the greater good,
For our debts be paid in this way or
a bankrupt world is left for future generations.

In our business lives, how often we close our hearts
for fear of losing what we think we want,
While what is most important slips quietly away.
Open our hearts, that our work be guided
by our love for what we truly treasure:

The clear water of the brook,
The freshness of the breeze,
The splendor of woods and sea,
The taste of a ripe tomato
The song of the birds,
The sweetness of cow with calf, of sow with piglets,
The beauty of all the children,
The joy of community.

Guide us in the decisions we make each business day,
knowing all living things are one, divinely interconnected.
As we do unto others, we do unto ourselves,
In the happiness of others lies our own,
By loving, we are loved.

Entrepreneurs for the common good,
We are also served, as we serve all,
Bless us in our task.