Robert Moses – The Master Builder

Kara Younkin
Carlos Carrion
Jack Lu
Profile

- In power from 1924-1968 over 40 years
- Built roads, bridges, parks, playground
  - 658 Playgrounds
  - 36,000 acres of parkland
  - 416 miles of parkway
  - 13 bridges
  - 15 expressways
- Workaholic
Time line of events

- 1888 – Robert Moses is born
- 1922 – Joined governor Smith’s inner-circle
- 1924 – President of Long Island State Park Commission
- 1933 – Head of City Parks Department and Triborough Bridge Authority
- 1946 – City Constructor Coordinator
- 1949 – Moses establishes Slum Clearance Committee
- 1965 – Arranges the 64/65 World’s Fair
- 1968 – Moses looses his last position of power
- 1981 – Moses dies at age of 92
Important actors

- Governor Alfred E. Smith
- Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller
- Mayor William O’Dwyer
- Jane Jacobs
- The citizens of New York
Organizations

- Municipal Research Bureau
  - Moses’ first job that essentially lead him to his political contacts.
- Long Island State Park Commission
  - Moses’ first major position as president.
- City Parks Department
  - Gave Moses power over every park and parkway in New York.
- The Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority
  - Created by Moses himself and has control over seven toll bridges and two tunnels, a major source of income for Moses.
- City Construction Coordinator
  - Probably Moses’ most influential position, giving him authority over all public construction projects in New York.
- Slum Clearance Committee
  - Created by Moses due to the Urban Renewal-program which made him responsible for it in New York.
New York in 1924

- The city was congested and was only getting worse
- Cars were seen as the future
- There needed to be a solution for congestion.
Parkways

- Loophole for building parkways.
- “Roads” were the purview of State Highway Department and the federal Bureau of Public Roads
- Gained popularity with the building of the parkways.
- New government agencies that ran the toll booths on bridges to raise funds for the parkways
- A new source of income for Moses to build other projects.
Robert Moses Built This

**Parkways**
- Jones Beach
- Southern State
- Wantangh State
- Ocean
- Northern State
- Meadow State
- Bronx River
- Interbourough
- Grand Central
- Belt
- Cross Island

**Bridges**
- Henry Hudson
- Triborough
- Verrazano-Narrows
- Bronx-Whitestone
- Trongs Neck

**Expressways**
- Cross-Bronx
- Whitestone
- Major Deegan
- Staten Island
- Van Wyck
- Prospect
- Long Island
Robert Moses Built This
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- Robert Moses and The Modern City
Robert Moses vs. Jane Jacobs

- Community Planning
- Grassroots Organizing
- Life of the Street
Policy Implications

- Eminent Domain
- For the Greater Good
- Urban Renewal
Legacy

- Robert Caro
  - For better or worse

- Robert Moses and the Modern City
  - Re-writing the history in 2007
  - Columbia University

- Kenneth Jackson
  - New perspective
Discussion

- Is power centralization key to an effective city planning? Should Robert Moses be repeated?
- Did the outcomes justify the means?
- Where would New York be without Robert Moses?
- Is there a median between the Robert Moses and planning process of today?
- What other examples of power models are there rather than checks and balance?