Urbanity as Diversity: On the architectural conditions of urban life

Jarre Parkatti
Aalto University
Jarre.parkatti@aalto.fi

Abstract

Urbanity is a frequently but often vaguely used notion in both urban design and social science. My intention is to contribute conceptually and programmatically to attaining a richer urbanity by analysing its traditional character and some literature treating it, such as Jane Jacobs's classical work. The assumption behind my conceptual clarification and conceptual development is thus that the current confusion of ideas not only hampers informed public and academic discussion on planning objectives but also adversely affects its results, even in cities with a strong planning organisation, such as Helsinki. In elucidating the concept, I shall distinguish between architectural and social urbanity. One may identify a rudimentary variant of the former centring on efficient land-use and (rough) functional synergy. A more sophisticated conception, supporting a socially well-working environment, requires an account in design terms including notions such as efficiency and synergy but also the key concept of diversity, vital for urbanity in a social sense. Complications still appear when concretising the notion: different types of diversity may conflict, there may be competing diversity-related values, and diversity may degenerate into chaos or meaningless discord. Scale may affect the relative benefits of diversity and homogeneity. To clear up some of the puzzles, I shall present a minimal but strict interpretation of architectural urbanity building on prototypical traits of the traditional European city and compare the account especially with Jacobs's discussion. Key elements of such prototypical urbanity are the public street space delimited by perimeter blocks, communicating ground floors and small building units. While the ideal-typical character of the description entails some normativity of sorts in picking up features considered essential, it should be intuitive enough not to be easily dismissed. Nonetheless, if genuine urbanity is sought for, the account, once accepted, takes on a more clearly normative role, shifting the burden of proof to anyone suggesting solutions deviating from it. This also holds for Jacobs's ideas, if not refuted. Thus, if one acknowledges her prescriptions as scientifically rational and the nature of such knowledge as professionally binding, architectural solutions contradicting it are unacceptable, even when resulting from apparently diversity-generating artistic freedom. Respecting the guiding function of analytical, theoretical and empirical arguments is important not to let tangible interests and strictly sanctioned technical, economic and juridical requirements alone condition urban design and planning. However, if social scientists, too, disregard or deny the value of such knowledge, important questions will remain unexplored. Among them are architectural urbanity as a precondition for social urbanity and mechanisms impeding its realisation. Concerning the procedural issue of how to generate architectural diversity and urbanity, Jacobs sometimes comes close to rejecting planning, trusting spontaneous order to emerge from interaction and free enterprise. Alternatively, however, detailed steering might have the desired effect. A presupposition for successfully using available political or organisational means for producing a truly urban and socially well-working city, is a clear comprehension of the ends pursued. The treatment tries to contribute to such an understanding. However, the task remains of more unambiguously connecting architectural to social urbanity.

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Introduction

Urbanity, the catchword of contemporary town planning, remains under-defined in the parlance of practitioners. This is also the case in the Finnish capital with its powerful planning institution, illustrating my theoretical treatment. The conceptual vagueness is reflected in the results of urban design, affecting the urban experience and urban life. Sociologists studying town planning, again, sometimes find architects' strivings naïve from the social viewpoint. However, the former tend to avoid dealing with specific design traits and thus entering the latter's professional field. While social scientists scarcely reject the idea that architectural properties somehow affect liveability and social interaction, many still seem sceptical of 'social design knowledge' such as that of Jane Jacobs, treat the design issue abstractly or limit themselves to citing the divergent standpoints of actors involved in planning conflicts. Consequently, in Finland at any rate, there is little detailed professional or academic reflection on architectural urbanity[11] as such and on its relation to urbanity in the social sense. To address these issues, I shall try to clear up the conceptual problem and suggest an understanding, congruent with classics such as Jacobs, that simultaneously guides architecturally focused town planning (urban design).

What everyone appears to agree on is that diversity is pertinent to urbanity (cf. Lindner 2012, 175f). Together with some other generally acknowledged but often unspecified physical-functional traits, it supports a notion of architectural urbanity going beyond the rudimentary idea of mere concentration and some synergic efficiency. However, it is not evident what kind of diversity is relevant and how the desired property differs from chaos or unwanted forms of it. In basic respects, abstractly understood or within a given theoretical framework, diversity and the other characteristics, such as concentration, efficiency, synergy and intensity, are internally related to urbanity, as their interconnection may be ascertained by logical or definitional clarification concerning how the terms are or should be used rather than requiring empirical investigation. Therefore, rushing to measurement or to suggesting new forms of urbanity adaped to contemporary conditions without satisfactorily treating the conceptual question might further obscure the idea.

Nevertheless, the above features are undoubtedly part of an elementary comprehension of urbanity, which partially rests on everyday language and culturally contextual meanings. This conception, as well as more scientific ones, have been influenced by ecology.[12] A prominent ecological analogy is that of transitional zones, rich in biodiversity, such as the common edge of a wood and a field. Other biological analogies serving architecture, urban design and town planning – in this Finnish or Scandinavian context, I shall not treat these spheres as clearly separate – is the (semi-)permeability of buildings or perimeter blocks, comparable with the properties of cell membranes.

Today, at the same time as a certain scientism lingers on in social science (Manicas 1987; 2006) and urban design theory ([Author …]), natural scientific influences on social science, such as social Darwinism,[13] have become the target

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[11] I shall not follow the critical use of the term by Lars Marcus (2000) who ties it to 'architectural knowledge' and the early 20th century breach with traditional city building.

[12] Ironically enough, there may be a tension between the need to protect ecological diversity and town planning aiming at urban diversity. Conceptual clarification may reveal whether the issue concerns liveability or ecological sustainability strictly defined. Ideally, urban efficiency *and* biodiversity, adding to other kinds of urban diversity, may be increased simultaneously (e.g. by sacrificing overground car parks).

[13] Although 'biological Spencerism' might also be imagined as the influences may not have been unambiguously unidirectional (Gronow 1996, 144).

of standard criticism. Nevertheless, such analogies form the basis of all thinking, scientific conceptualisation included. It is therefore critical to identify the limits of them rather than trying to purify science of everything except unambiguous terms and hypotheses serving as the foundation of self-sufficient, internally consistent theoretical systems. Dependence on common sense and metaphors become problematic only when differing interpretations impede clear theoretical treatment or rational action. For example, interested parties or external observers might not grasp what ends town planners are aiming at in referring to urbanity.

Within social science, the architectural aspect of urbanity is sometimes treated as an empirically or conceptually insignificant surface manifestation of a phenomenon that only the social aspect of the notion may properly capture.

When narrowing down the meanings, the architectural and social sense of urbanity and diversity must be distinguished, as much confusion has resulted from not keeping them separate. To attain that purpose, the four notions following from the distinction – architectural diversity, architectural urbanity, social diversity and social urbanity – must be analytically separated precisely to allow for an investigation into the ways they are interrelated. Within social science, the architectural aspect of urbanity is sometimes treated as an empirically or conceptually insignificant surface manifestation of a phenomenon that only the social aspect of the notion may properly capture (Mäenpää 2011; Lindner 2016). While social scientists might criticise the vague meaning of the notion or failures to realise its complexity,[14] empirical, even quantitative, studies are carried out within the field of urban design to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon (e.g. Iltanen 2011; Garau and Annunziata 2022).

The present elucidation of architectural urbanity is mainly descriptive to begin with, although the effort of determining ideal-typical urban traits contains a judgemental element of a formally normative nature. In practice, the description should be commonly acceptable. Nonetheless, in line with its guiding purpose, the account turns more decisively normative once town planners themselves are aiming at distinct architectural urbanity. To stand a chance of producing substantial consensus, the treatment needs to keep to the core of the explored notions. This, I hope, might contribute to making academic discussions less obscure. In addition, the clarification should in principle help town planners approach their ideal. To be sure, these theoretical pretentions do not imply that conceptual confusion is the only obstacle to reaching true urbanity.

The starting point of the present argumentation analysis, conceptual analysis and conceptual development is thus the articulation of an architectural notion of the urban. This involves a basic or prototypical urban structure, which will be related to Jane Jacobs's and other classics' account of a well-working urban environment. The characterisations are compared with some contemporary treatment of urbanity and diversity. Without needlessly interfering with artistic freedom, the descriptive-normative view argued for complements the current technical-juridical-economic boundary conditions for urban design with those set by 'social design knowledge'.

Prototypical architectural urbanity and diversity

To prevent common confusion relating to its meaning, architectural urbanity will here be given an intuitive minimal, if strict, interpretation involving prototypical traits of the traditional European city. These properties are intended to translate into default norms for contemporary city building with a pronounced urban intent. The conceptualisation is meant to be trivial rather than idiosyncratic, yet useful in making some fundamental principles of traditional urbanity explicit. As such, it

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[14] Extreme examples are Thomas Wüst (2004), regarding urbanity as a myth, and Loretta Lees (2012, 24), denying its definability as it is always in the process of 'becoming'. A 'moderate' critic, Klaus Selle (2011, p. 11), finds the meaning of the notion lying somewhere 'in between the "hopelessly ambiguous" and "solemnly imprecise"' (Ger. 'zwischen »auswegloser Vieldeutigkeit« und »feierlicher Unschärfe«').

reveals frequent breaches against them in contemporary town planning, which occur even when marked urbanity is the declared aim. The account is minimal, first, in being purged, as far as appropriate, of social content. Even though all traits emphasised have social implications, the description is aimed at capturing fundamental urban forms from an architectural viewpoint. Second, it excludes any obviously controversial elements of an architectural or urban design kind. The expectation is therefore that some might find the conceptualisation incomplete (e.g., Jane Jacobs) while few should regard any of the conceptual components redundant for the *architectural* dimension (which, as such, is of little interest to Jacobs).

The most important characteristic of the architecturally urban is the – socially significant – public street space, usually defined by buildings delineating it (occasionally the demarcating function being filled by mere walls or fences, natural elements such as hills or waters, etc.). Reflecting this, the perimeter block becomes another basic building block of the traditional city (for its benefits, among other things as a shared semi-public space, see Linn 1974; Panerai et al. 2004; Hausleitner 2010; Minoura 2016; Godø 2019). In various places, the street space is intensified or attenuated, depending on dimensions, functions and location, into a square. Instead of perimeter blocks, of course, there may be larger squares or parks. Public space is supported by buildings and particularly ground floors that typically communicate with the street functionally and visually. At least along main routes, the function is realised by corner shops, other businesses and public services. A further feature is that the urban spaces for the most part are of moderate or, specifying the degree or kind of urbanity, intimate scale. Equally, plots are usually of moderate or small scale, implying several buildings in each urban block (Askergren 2016).[15] Likewise, façades are detailed, reducing mental distances.[16] Lastly, some properties of the urban space to the same effect, such as curved streets (Sitte 1889) or alternatively, in a grid structure, architectural backdrops of streets, also diminishing psychological distances, might be added. Yet, they may rather be part of a more elaborate and contestable programmatic understanding.

This characterisation of architectural urbanity includes several traits furthering *social* diversity. Thus, the street space enclosed by the perimeter block collects people into a theatre of public life. The perimeter block potentially articulates different kinds of spaces: the public space of the street, square and park and the semi-public or semi-private space of the enclosed courtyard – enabling different kinds of activities. Small building units and ground floor premises, again, as well as the scarce dimensioning of streets and squares, allow for proximity. Thereby, diverse activities and people are brought into actual contact with each other, furthering interaction, rather than diversity just being present in principle as an unrealised potential. This might happen in suburban conditions even when enterprises within business parks, commersial centres and housing are situated relatively close to each other.

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[15] Architectural critic Mikael Askergren (2016) agrees with those denying the existence of a commonly accepted concept of urbanity, making it useless for science. Responding to this, he singles out the above specific dimension of urbanity as a sufficient determinant of the notion, operationalised by his 'u number' (Swe. u-tal), defined by the relation between the length of the internal plot boundaries within an urban block and that of the outer plot boundaries defined by the street.

[16] The qualifiers relating to dimensioning may be specified by typical metrical widths of central streets and measures of building units in different contexts of traditional urbanity. More important than the exact measures is the contrast to modernist design solutions shattering the human proportions of streets and buildings.

So far, constraints on architectural diversity have been suggested to ensure traditional urbanity. Simultaneously, the constraining principles generate architectural diversity in requiring small units and detailing of buildings. On the macro plane, more radical architectural diversity might still be achieved by allowing for modernist free-standing towers and large open spaces. Such 'new urbanity' has indeed been realised in the significant development area and traffic junction of Pasila in Helsinki. The location of this 'second centre' might be assumed to support such experimentation if being developed as part of the fringe-area of the inner city. Yet, the reasons stated for such 'urbanity' by the Italian architect Cino Zucchi in outlining an earlier version of the project are noteworthy.[17] According to him, the impossibility today of creating urban gems such as the Esplanade in the Finnish capital forces us to invent the city anew. No account of why the traditional ideal cannot be achieved (on a suitable level of abstraction) or for the reasons for jumping to its opposite, heavily criticised by Jacobs (1961), Jan Gehl (1980) and others, have been given by Zucchi or the project managers.

Another example of untraditional architectural diversity on the level of the urban structure, closer to the old-style city, are the broken-up *îlots ouverts* in Quartier Masséna in Paris by Christian de Portzamparc (1995/2012). Each urban block of the area is characterised by (in principle, at least) several freestanding buildings, with variousy active ground floors, separated by narrow spaces. Courtyards, visible to the street, might be assumed to contribute to their social or even biological diversity, but are not consistently designed for such uses. Some planning academics, however, have welcomed his design principles in the name of (architectural) diversity and as an alternative to the dichotomy between traditional and modernist urban structure (Carpio-Pinedo et al. 2020). The project is also relevant for evaluating current town planning in Helsinki as the city's new inner-city districts on former harbour areas partly approach his idea with their broken-up quasi-perimeter blocks.

What benefits might the deconstruction of the perimeter block bring for urban diversity? Portzamparc's solution partly conforms with, but does not add to, the prototypical urban structure by including several buildings in each urban block rather than only one or two extensive ones, as is often the case in the new developments in Helsinki. It does intensify the dynamics of the urban landscape by disclosing architectural background layers and visual foci on the street level through the gaps between the buildings. While the solution also opens up more views from flats and might increase their access to sunlight (op. cit., 3), removing building masses from the street line to the courtyard lessens this quality outdoors as compared with the perimeter block without backyard buildings (Godø 2019). Further, gaps along the street weaken the territorial sense (cf. Minoura 2016) and, in central locations, spreads noise to flats and courtyards. Lastly, a prototypical urban structure might be an ample resource in both central Helsinki and Paris *intra-muros*.[18] Nevertheless, so is suburbia. In addition, most town planners of central Helsinki (*pace* Zucchi) perceive themselves as enlarging the real inner city.

Zucchi's and Portzamparc's solutions might diversify cities on the macro level in an architectural sense and preserve – here largely irrelevant – functionalist virtues such as abundant sunlight (which at most partially is attained by their means, though). Nevertheless, to be *urban* in a strict sense, architectural diversity depends, just as social diversity does, on a consistent pattern of a few building

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[17] The presentation took place at the then City Planning Office's former exhibition and conference space the 'Platform' 19/11/2009.

[18] However, precisely the 13th arrondissement, where Quartier Masséna is situated, has suffered exceptionally from large-scale destruction of the perimeter block structure.

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blocks. To increase architectural diversity at street level within its limits, one may decrease the lengths of buildings along streets, let different architects design neighbouring buildings, vary building materials, colours et cetera. At least some of these measures simultaneously increase social diversity and urbanity. For instance, small units make for numerous small businesses on the ground floor. At the macro level, one may vary 'organic', grid and node-based urban structures. No-one would prefer classical 'corridor streets' such as (the main part of) the Boulevard in Helsinki to be broken up by more empty spaces between the buildings.

Jacobsian urban diversity

The principle of limiting architectural variation to a stable combination of the most efficient key elements for effecting a high degree of social diversity most obviously characterises the thinking of Jane Jacobs. Part of her minimalism is to regard the grid as a fully satisfactory form of the urban macro structure. Nonetheless, it should be noted that there is some intricacy in other basic elements she suggests, as each is to secure various uses by offering different kinds of places in the vicinity. The physical-functional traits she singles out are those playing an obvious social and economic role. This priority differs from that of the above account, indirect from the social viewpoint, focusing on properties that primarily make up a traditional architectural setting for urban life. Whereas the idea of a prototypical urban structure is essentially compatible with Jacobs's principles, Portzamparc's alternative partly departs from them while Zucchi's defines their opposite.

For Jacobs (1961, Ch. 7), urban diversity essentially consists of or, depending on the viewpoint, is produced by, mixtures of uses. Instead of therefore starting out by asking what traits are most characteristic of traditional built urban environments (if also known to generate social diversity), she immediately focuses on what traits in the built urban environment correlate with and, by some easily grasped mechanism, produce (social) diversity. The property depends on four preconditions or generators: First, the general condition of mixes or combinations is specified by requiring neighbourhoods to have more than one primary use. A plurality of primary uses, in its turn, brings about more diverse secondary activities serving the primary ones. Streets are thereby kept active at different hours. Second, urban blocks should be short, securing alternative pedestrian routes and better accessibility to services, again allowing for alternatives, as well as for specialisation. This trait is architectural, in an elementary sense, but does not characterise all parts of the traditional European city. Third, buildings of different ages and conditions are needed to ensure, among other things, that different kinds of corner shops may afford the rents. Fourth, the population must be concentrated to achieve a high enough density.

Jacobs restricts the validity of her findings to the central parts of big cities. If one nonetheless considers applying the results elsewhere, it should be noted that she only studies American conditions and that she wrote her magnum opus more than half a century ago. The world might therefore have changed in significant respects. Nevertheless, one should not, by interpreting the context-dependence of social science too strictly, reject a generalisation of her penetrating and systematic mapping of conditions for urban diversity unless it is made clear how the provisos indeed invalidate its application in a certain case. Thus, there is no definite reason why the four principal rules would not apply to small European towns.[19] Still, all principles need some critical attention before being implemented.

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[19] For example, the former head of the town planning department of Jakobstad, Roger Wingren (2019, 11), has indeed suggested that her principles should be implemented in his town.

The first principle, recommending mixed uses, is certainly difficult to modify without abandoning the essentials of Jacobs's thinking. One might ask whether the specification of the rule as more than one primary use of a neighbourhood makes its application to some parts of the city impossible, even central ones, where some function, typically housing, clearly dominates. Yet, an incontestable definition of what amounts to a primary use is hardly called for here; the main point is to avoid a functionalistic separation of activities.

The second principle, that of short urban blocks, might be more dependent on big city conditions. Jacobs's point of long street sections being wasteful of resources and frustrating for users may be valid given that there are people enough to support the spreading of services to different streets. At this point Jan Gehl (1980, Ch. 3) appears to argue for the opposite position, as he emphasises the need of collecting the flows of people for supporting diverse services and supplementary activities. However, what he criticises is the typical suburban structure with 'buildings in a park', where each can choose his or her own path and people never meet to support other than primary or necessary activities, even when the population within the area is relatively dense. In other words, the urban block structure as well as dimensioning and quantification are critical here.

The third principle, according to which there must be both new and old buildings and thereby premises in different states of repair, is less dependent on the size of a city, although unaffordable rents is typically a big-city problem. More relevant are the general socio-economic conditions. The requirement of historical variation, of course, makes it hopeless to urbanise new districts without improbable regulations reserving some plots for future development. Societal circumstances, again, are critical for whether the link between the age of a building and the level of the rent necessarily holds in the first place. In a welfare state like Finland, where the state and municipalities regulate markets, uses may be subsidised, depending on the form of tenure. Thus, one may ask whether this condition is necessary for urban diversity or might rather be regarded as a factor supporting the liveliness of street life.[20] A more general question to be posed is how Jacobs's laissez-faire economy in fact works on street level, given real-world capitalism. It can hardly be denied that economic processes need an infrastructure of rules, partly achieved by planning.

The fourth principle, presupposing sufficient density, might, in view of the context, appear to imply big city standards but need not. The rule of concentration is applicable almost anywhere even if at some point principles for achieving Jacobsian urbanity become futile and questionable. Although, abstractly enough interpreted, one might learn something from her even in respect of our 'villages with a church' (Fi. kirkonkylä, Swe. kyrkby) or smaller population centres, other principles for creating a socially well-working built environment besides those relating to urbanity and urban diversity should not be forgotten. To recognise the real variation, one may work with axes from the urban prototype to the rural and the suburban, respectively, while trying to find local optima on the way.[21]

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[20] Contemporary sociological accounts of urbanity tend to regard historical layers as necessary for other reasons as well, typically for an urban atmosphere to be realised (e.g., Lees 2016), at the cost of design traits as such.

[21] San Vittorino Romano and Telč, as towns that are squares (Gehl 1980, 82f), might be perfect small towns for uncompromising urbanists. Such exemplars are indeed interesting and might be socially well-working. Nevertheless, taken as an ideal to be emulated, the solution might unjustifiably restrict diversity without living up to Jacobs's urbanity. Clear-cut models may enhance understanding and, when appropriate for reaching common goals, shift the burden of proof to those against implementing them. Yet, real-world planning must also respond to local tradition and exigences.

The goal of Jacobs's urban design recommendations, in any case, is the production of urban diversity and thereby lively streets, again being socially beneficial in various ways. The principles themselves are partly simple (e.g., the grid containing small enough perimeter blocks), partly intricate (e.g., the design of parks, which must contain many kinds of places enabling various activities, at the same time connecting to the surrounding city). Nonetheless, the rules are strict, even if their abstractness allows for various realisations. There are still clear limits to architectural diversity following exactly from the requirement of securing social diversity.

Within aesthetically focused and pragmatic architecture, the pressure towards originality, which an artwork is conceived to depend on for its value, sometimes make practitioners reluctant to heed such restrictions in addition to more strongly sanctioned ones. The latter are typically of a technical, juridical, economic or political character. There is also the tension – rather than opposition – between decidedly urban and prevailing modernist principles, as the latter tend to focus on what is perceived as the aesthetically and functionally essential. Refraining from extras, such as ornaments, there is a risk of throwing the baby (socially essential variation) out with the bathwater (the freeing of creativity from the ballast imposed by tradition) if not special care is taken in the detailing of buildings and urban environments. As far as such environmental properties have real effects on urban life, it appears sociologically important to explorie knowledge and power related to their realisation. This presupposes that the knowledge and the issue itself are recognised as irreducible to politics.

Layers adding to the Jacobsian urban structure

The Jacobsian principles are neither architectural in any demanding sense nor aesthetically centred. The virtue of Jacobs's teachings lies in their relative simplicity, emphasising consistent application of straightforward rules to produce urban diversity. Nevertheless, to make space for ideas introduced by other writers, more architectural ones included, and accommodate her views to European exemplars of urbanity such as that of (central) Helsinki, Prague or Paris, one may regard Jacobs's recipe for pronounced urbanity as a base on top of which variation that does not interfere with the spirit of her work may be added. Also, one may suggest attenuating her principles stepwise in a conceptually disciplined manner, without abandoning the core ideas, to derive principles for developing less central areas and to allow for public buildings and other exceptions to the prototypical urban structure. The critical question is what modifications the rules permit and, insofar as they forbid indisputably urban traits, how they may need to be revised.

A feature characterising the exemplar cities is their partial deviation from the urban grid (largely present in Helsinki, though). The non-grid structure supports the generally expected form-independent variation in the intensity of urban life, concentrating it at nodes (the accessibility of different locations being quantifiable e.g. with Space Syntax). This, again, brings the variation in the publicness of urban spaces to the fore and thereby the problem of how to treat less central streets and spaces. With high enough densities, no street will be left deserted despite the gradient created between nodes and peripheral areas. This applies, for instance, to an Haussmannian urban structure characterised by focal points, such as notably the Place de l'Etoile in Paris.

Even so, efforts to secure activity along peripheral street sections may be advisable, implying a diversification of the elements generating urban life. For instance, in quiet streets, where residents will not be disturbed by traffic noise and passers-by, suitably dimensioned forecourts (Gehl 1980, 174–189) may ensure the communicability of ground floors towards the street. Except for

working as transitional zones between the privateness of the home and the publicness of the street, forecourts – perceived as anti-urban by some – contribute to diversity in activities and lifestyles by offering small semi-private outdoor spaces and the possibility of gardening in the city.

One may here refer to other classics. Whereas Jacobs bases her views on systematic observation and common-sense identification of mechanisms, Christopher Alexander et al. (1977, ix) 'seamlessly' ground their theory formulated in *A Pattern Language* on the 'philosophical' worldview formulated in *A Timeless Way of Building* and often base their specific recommendations not only on their professional experiences as architects but also on scientific findings. Instead of presenting a limited number of necessary measures securing well-working urban diversity, they offer a graded set of rules pertaining to different levels of design.[22] A crucial way in which their work challenges or complements that of Jacobs is in emphasising the importance of creating different levels of urban vitality (op. cit., pattern 36: degrees of publicness) for different needs and groups of people.

The categories of Kevin Lynch (1960), such as nodes and borders, define an opposite to Jacobs's indefinitely continuing grid. His focus is on orientability and sensemaking rather than on social diversity. The urban hierarchies required still entail diversity of different kinds. Jacobs secures the coherence of the city 'mechanically', for example in prohibiting gaps between buildings. In contrast, Lynch guides the designer along different dimensions.[23] Nonetheless, there is a need to keep to Jacobs closely enough for prototypical urbanity not to be lost when other ideas are introduced. The real problem, however, is not competing theories but analytical unjustified schemes appearing within urban design when architectural trends are followed without theoretical reflection (cf. Panerai, Castex and Depaule, 134f).

Town planning might run counter to principles of urban coherence not only programmatically or by overemphasising aesthetic trends but by simply abandoning the urban design level of architectural thinking (or trivialising it to the point of emptying it of true professional content). When a coherent urban design grammar is dropped, whatever its nature, diversity turns into senseless chaos. Not the least in Finland, the phenomenon involves a diluted Corbusian ideology, which in breaking up the urban structure has secured (tedious) views and, above all, cheap parking spaces. The consequences have been accumulating in the central grid areas of the Finnish cities and towns, except for that of the capital, at least since the 1960s.

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[22] This seems a promising way of addressing the question whether design rules should be binding or work as inspiration. While their theoretical basis hardly stands a philosophical analysis, this does not necessarily invalidate their findings due to the underdetermination of facts by theories (cf. the Duhem-Quine thesis), which implies that there may be different theories explaining independently established facts. This is so both on the level of explaining people's behaviour in public places and that of grounding a theory. Yet, some of the alleged scientific facts, impeccably cited in their work, are startling enough to necessitate a critical review of the (today possibly dated) sources. This most obviously pertains to the rule belonging to their most trusted category forbidding buildings that exceed four stories (op. cit., pattern 21) as inhabitants are otherwise supposedly driven crazy. (The problem here is the categorical nature of the rule rather than the recommendation itself, for which they themselves present additional plausible arguments.)

[23] Stephen Marshall (2012) misinterprets the metatheoretical status of Lynch's thinking (cf. Dovey and Pafka 2016) and therefore requires his abstract comprehensive categories to be empirically grounded. Repudiating such a view, complementary elements may instead be added in his spirit. One possibility are (successive) city gates, where routes meet borders, as may be observed along the approach roads of Helsinki.

There are examples of deficient adherence to well-known principles of urbanity even in the Finnish capital, which is planned in an architecturally disciplined if not always theoretically rationalised way (cf. op. cit., ch. 6). Examples of occasional breaches against notably Jacobs's rules in the inner-city extensions into former harbour areas are lacking corner shops, insufficiently communicating ground floors, plots and buildings taking up half an urban block, as well as frequent ungrounded openings towards the courtyards destroying the perimeter-block structure. The gaps, perhaps less obviously problematic than the other deficiencies, weaken the urban feel sought for as well as the articulation of the difference between semi-public/semi-private and public space. This is particularly disturbing when technical considerations defeat aesthetic ones (rather than being refined into architectural motifs).

Returning to some difficulties in Jacobs, justifying a partial deviation from her rules, some urban diversity is simply forbidden by her. Such is perhaps most obviously the case for that created by semi-public or semi-private courtyards contrasting with the public life of the street. In allowing for activities different from those of the street, courtyards potentially promote social diversity. For Jacobs, however, such competing spheres detract from the public street life characteristic of big city life as distinct from the privatised life among acquaintances in suburbs or small-town communities.

Another reason for departing from the Jacobsian principles is the need to accommodate structures larger than normal urban blocks. For there to be diversity, its opposite must be present: there must be comparatively homogeneous components making it up. Families, businesses, schools and hospitals need to carry out their activities and develop their cultures in relative isolation.[24] Although Jacobs recommends premises and buildings of varying size to increase the diversity of possible functions, this variation is to be kept within limits not to act contrary to her rules. She therefore finds bulky monofunctional elements, such as university campuses, breaking up the normal, socially diverse urban structure, problematic. Jacobs's brutally straightforward view on causal mechanisms might partly depend on an American logic logic rather than, for instance, Scandinavian conditions: the lack of diversity causes the interest in the area among potential passers-by to diminish, entailing less people, therefore less eyes watching the area, the vicious circle eventually producing damage, criminality and slum.

Nevertheless, structures not easily integrated into Jacobs's normal grid might still add to urban diversity, including social diversity, on the macro level. If one therefore goes beyond Jacobs, it should be considered how an efficient interface (transitional zone) and communicating elements (like bipolar molecules, if you wish)[25] between the foreign body with its semi-permeable boundaries and the rest of the city may be secured. Attention should also be paid to how the exceedingly large structure itself, even if only semi-public, might emulate the beneficial properties of the prototypical urban structure or of some of its elements, such as a park. The physical-functional organisation of the establishment must then find a balance between its component groups specialising in isolation and their sharing of ideas at hierarchically ordered meeting points.

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[24] Thus, minorities need their own spaces for preserving their distinctiveness. Monolingual institutions such as schools might be needed for the diversity defined by multiculturalism to prosper (cf. Taxell 1986).

[25] Schools, e.g., instead of consistently being relegated to the wood fringe so as not to let the unruly children disturb normal city life and instead have them learn from nature, the building complexes might have 'agoraphilic' as well as 'agoraphobic' poles, the former combining the educational aspect of urban life with an input to it.

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There are thus some difficulties with strictly following the concise and instructive Jacobsian rules already in the context of the central parts of big cities as the grid in principle generates an endless undifferentiated urban structure. Neither do the rules allow for desirable variation on the private-public axis. In addition, wholeheartedly embracing Jacobs's message might be problematic for a sensitive appreciation of urban values outside the central streets and parts of big cities. Jacobs herself allows for diversity on this count in stating that there is nothing wrong with suburbs and small towns – for people appreciating their calmness, who lack ambitions et cetera … Yet, to achieve some desirable urban traits may depend on partially implementing Jacobs's thinking even there.

To avoid some of these problems, one might regard the urban environment produced by Jacobs's key principles as a kind of prototypical urban structure on top of which architectural and aesthetic elements not critically conflicting with her stated conditions may be added. However, for slightly less urban, but still urban, areas to be recognised and developed, there is also a need conceptually and practically to deconstruct big city urbanity in a controlled stepwise fashion. This presupposes a prioritisation of principles. In addition, it requires a relatively strict definition of hierarchical types of built-up environments according to which various traits of the prototypically urban may be dropped or attenuated. Such zones are readily identifiable in our cities and towns. New Urbanist Transect principle is an exemplar of such a conception. Its function is precisely to define degrees of urbanity from the central business district through the suburbs to the countryside, specifying architectural traits appropriate for each environment. However, to be commonly acceptable, even for Finnish modernist architects, the basic idea must not be interpreted as depending on the specific instructions of the rather detailed New Urbanist design rules.

Architectural and social urbanity and diversity

Anthony Giddens (1981, ch. 6) has pointed out that the city has lost its peculiar and all-important role after the Middle Ages, when the city wall encircled a world wholly different from the surrounding countryside. The wall thereby carried much more weight than its physical mass. Preserved walls have lost their power to protect a divergent juridical and cultural order inside. Nevertheless, for the present treatment it matters that they still delimit an area that not only offers reminiscences of times passed and an intense urban feel but enbles distinctive behaviours and economic activiy inside. This is not only for touristic reasons but due to the area's intense architectural diversity and urbanity, achieved by dimensioning and architectural detailing, bringing different activities and people closely together in a context of a vibrant urban athmosphere. Provided certain minimal (e.g., locational, socio-economic) conditions, the design would work even if the 'old town' were a reconstruction or a new (retrospective) development with such (possibly abstractly realised) architectural traits. When part of a larger city, the old town thus offers diversity on the city level as well.

Since the symbolic breakdown of the medieval city walls, urban culture has spread all over. Giddens's argument, referring to Marx with the quote 'Modern history … [is] the urbanisation of the countryside' (op. cit., 148), might be regarded as a generalisation of the point made by Pasi Mäenpää (2011, ch. 1), that suburban and even rural Finns are in fact urban in a cultural sense – however much the thinness of our urban heritage is emphasised in some circles. Nevertheless, even if there is no absolute demarcation line between the urban and the rural in contemporary society, one can hardly deny the existence of cultural differences between, on the one hand, rural and small town life, where everybody knows everybody, and, on the other, to a large extent anonymous big city life. Just as Jacobs's depiction of small town life may be biased, there always remain cases disconfirming any supposed invariances relating the size of a place to behaviour. Still, cultural differences are real. For those ill-adapted to the

occasional narrow-mindedness of tightly-knit groups, the age-old saying *Stadtluft macht frei* might not be wholly obsolete.

What again counts in the present context, however, is whether architectural traits contribute to cultural differences spontaneously developing between large and small, culturally cosmopolitan and locally attached communities. Obviously, some minimally architectural conditions define the urban in the first place (there must be houses and structures housing activities). Also, the urban structure constitutes the setting (or Giddensian locale) for urban life presupposed by the sociological classics treating urbanity. Doubtless, for Georg Simmel and others, the intense diversity described took place in an environment of a prototypically urban architectural kind.

A difficulty with diversity as a conceptual and programmatic foundation for urbanity is its dependence on an implicit commonsensical normative understanding. For example, segregation or functionalistic town planning is criticised for decreasing diversity. However, in a literal sense, no-go areas, gated communities or noxious industries within housing areas increase diversity on the macro level. Not all phenomena logically implying diversity will therefore be accepted by language users as part of what is in fact intended by the word. Also, certain kinds of diversity will restrict other kinds of diversity, as the Pasila and Quartier Masséna examples intended to show.

Admittedly, common use of language has established typical meanings enabling 'normal' political and scientific discourse. Yet, especially within the pragmatic and conflict-ridden field(s) of architecture, urban design and town planning, trusting intuitive intentions does not necessarily suffice to clarify issues or solve problems. This defines a real difficulty when (as such possibly sophisticated) social scientific treatment of urban problems starts out from an everyday understanding of socially significant urban-design properties. Sometimes, such a point of departure is tied to certain misgivings about planning. Exactly this problem appears in some of the contributions to a collection treating new forms of urbanity in Europe and the USA (Helbrecht and Dirksmeier 2012).

For example, Rolf Lindner (2012, 184), comparing new developments such as Hamburg's Hafen City with traditional environments, writes: 'With regard to diversity, each city ... must distinguish itself in terms of culture, lifestyle and milieus. ... [T]his achievement is not something one can "plan".' Realising that any intentional action or goal achievement nonetheless presupposes planning in some sense, Lindner continues by instead suggesting a 'policy of diversity', which should 'create and preserve an environment which is necessary in order for diversity to be able to prosper'. However, the measures he suggests, such as anti-discriminatory ones, are of a social kind. He concludes that there cannot be any 'magic formula for the future design of cities' (loc. cit.). While the word 'magic' forestalls criticism, according to the present interpretation, architectural urbanity, whether self-generated (as with Jacobs) or achieved by meticulous planning (as in Helsinki), might form the needed foundation for social difference and diversity to thrive. According to Lindner, however, perfect planning of a kind he finds in the Hafen City of Hamburg, produces 'mono-cultural diversity' (op. cit., 182). The idea is certainly worth exploring.[26] Yet, when he continues by asking 'in a place where nothing is left to chance, is there any hope for chance meetings and chance

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[26] This, however, is not necessarily an urban-design problem. According to interviewed town planners in Helsinki, urban design should partially abstract from the identity of users, instead concentrating on achieving a well-working urban environment for all. The idea should certainly be complemented with measures paying attention to specific needs of actual users. Nevertheless, there are generally acknowledged, reasonably urban new environments that are 'mono-cultural' in being inhabited by primarily affluent people. Except for Lindner's Hafen City, one may mention Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm.

discoveries at all?' (loc. cit.), one might suspect some rhetoric obscuring the substance of the matter. If buildings and roads are laid out in a random fashion (from the viewpoint of the requirements of urbanity), random meetings are less likely than when carefully designed to concentrate flows of people. Back-stages and secret places, called for by Lindner, definitely belong to such an environment. If, as he claims, they are missing in Hafen City, its planners, after all, have not 'thought of everything'.

Under the following subheadings, I shall sum up some key issues relating to architectural and social diversity and urbanity. There are often values competing with them – and syntheses. For instance, except for architectural diversity, harmony is needed. The same goes for even more politically laden social objectives. What kind of architectural and social diversity is desirable is ultimately a political question. However, one should not hurry to that conclusion but consider how urban design knowledge might contribute to making an informed choice, given shared general values.

Architectural diversity

Architectural diversity on the street level, emphasised by Jacobs, is to be prioritised as it affects the urban experience more tangibly than diversity on the macro (district or city) level. There are two potentially contradictory kinds of architectural diversity. The first is achieved by strict rules for the urban structure securing small enough building units preferably designed by different architects. The second results from breaking or varying the rules governing the first kind of architectural diversity. Such breaches may be unjustified even when outspoken urbanity is not the goal. This applies to situations where architectural diversity is attained at the cost of a socially well-working environment. On the other hand, varying the rules may be justified even when consistent urbanity is aimed at. For example, a relaxed version of the prototypical urban structure allows for exceptions increasing architectural diversity on the urban block level, such as freestanding public buildings (criticised by Sitte). Analogues of Transect principles, again, might graduate the level of urbanity in a controlled way.

Architectural urbanity

There are different degrees of architectural urbanity as well as sophistication in its understanding. As to the first, there is an axis from central big city (CBD or old town) urbanity to small town urbanity, suburbanity or rurality. A shared commonsensical conception of urbanity accentuates concentration, efficient land-use and perhaps some synergy between functions, and even (unspecified) diversity. Nonetheless, a popular grasp might lead us astray, in for example focusing on massiveness and highrise building, which makes up a mechanical or even primitive concept of urbanity. At least as problematic, however, is not to distinguish the architectural dimension of urbanity and, as a consequence, to introduce sociological criteria at the cost of attention to architectural traits affecting urban life. Although diversity is a key concept, integrally involved in (architectural) urbanity, it is as important to generate synergy and intensity in the interaction between diverse elements. Enclosed and appropriately dimensioned public spaces are significant in this respect. Dynamism, achieved by juxtaposing elements of contrasting character and size as well as by emphasising movement, is a further possible element in (big city) urbanity. However, all characterisations of architectural urbanity do not present necessary conditions. The role of the notion of a basic or prototypical urban structure is thus to point out some essential elements.

Social diversity

In my treatment, the assumption has been that architectural diversity consistent with prototypical urbanity unproblematically supports social diversity. Still, not any social diversity is desirable. For example, some kinds of impressive big city social

diversity might presuppose huge differences in wealth. Typical Finnish urban environments, on the other hand, providing for standard needs for everybody, might be tedious in their homogeneity. In social terms, a balance must be struck between diversity enabling various lifestyles and and social diversity presupposing material and cultural inequalities, the results of both reflected in architecture. In any case, one may hold that human life as such generates diversity that architectural solutions should enable to flourish. Given a sound geographically possibilistic or structurationist background understanding, the issue of environmental determinism hardly arises.

Social urbanity

In my treatment, the nature of social urbanity has largely remained implicit and unexplained. A proper elucidation of it would have turned the focus from the main issue. Sociologists emphasising the spread of urban culture to the point of emptying the notion of a clear content are probably right. Again, the concept should be clarified, and preferably in a way that does not alienate it from the architectural viewpoint. The existence of mechanisms producing divergent social life in big cities and small villages is an almost trivial fact. The issue is in what ways architectural traits are truly (rather than epiphenomenally) involved. In the present discussion, not completely ortodox in relation to Jacobs, much of the architectural diversity supporting social urbanity might catalyse small town characteristics, such as neighbourhood *Gemeinschaft* developing in courtyards and along forecourts. Nonetheless, the prototypical urban structure is meant to serve as an ideal-typical background for an understanding of the social life and possibilities that a traditional city supports.

Concluding discussion

My treatment has aimed at an identification of design principles securing architectural urbanity, in its turn creating preconditions for social diversity and thus for urbanity in a social sense. As to diversity, it is critical to be clear on its kind, level and content since the unspecified word is highly ambiguous. While architectural diversity to further social diversity must be strictly conditioned, Jacobs's principles might be liberalised to allow for differentiation of different levels of publicness, as recommended by Alexander et al. Lynch's basic categories help grasp and organise variation at the macro level, as does the Transect principle of New Urbanism. Here as elsewhere, it is important not to mix abstract ideas and rules with their specific architectural realisation. Equally critical, though, is to understand the real constraints that fundamental rules such as Jacobs's impose once accepted.

However, one might ask to what extent each of Jacobs's key principles are necessary or sufficient for achieving urban diversity, or just contribute to it. There is also the procedural issue of whether, or to what extent, planning is needed to realise the urban design principles promoting the objectives. A presupposition for the treatment has been not only that some planning is necessary but that strict comprehensive town planning might further the aims of architectural urbanity better than anonymous capitalistic processes giving rise to a 'spontaneous' order. The same might be said in relation to political procedures, however democratic, if not all aspects of the knowledge base of urban design are taken seriously.

Urbanity, in its different guises, connects to wide-ranging societal concerns, such as the democratic formation of public opinion in a pluralistic society. Theoretically, it is tied to the general issue of how spatial properties and artefacts with spatial and symbolic dimensions affect social life. Clearing discursive space amid a field governed by the power of aesthetic judgement enables a rational discussion of issues that exceed that of artistic quality. On the other hand, the conceptual

Clearing discursive space amid a field governed by the power of aesthetic judgement enables a rational discussion of issues that exceed that of artistic quality.

apparatus might also help architects verbalise their tacit knowledge and so to defend their strivings.

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