

Article

Clumsy City by Design—A Theory for Jane Jacobs’ Imperfect Cities?

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Abstract

How do different concepts of justice correspond with the principles of diversity in cities introduced by Jane Jacobs? This contribution connects Jane Jacobs’ ideas on the diverse city with Mary Douglas’ Cultural Theory and its concept of clumsy solutions. According to Douglas’ Cultural Theory, every social situation can be described in terms of the four ideal-typical “rationalities”: individualism, egalitarianism, hierarchism, and fatalism. These four rationalities are again linked to different concepts of justice: libertarian, utilitarian, or social justice. Douglas’ Cultural Theory assumes that in every social situation all four of those rationalities emerge in some way and concludes that if a situation is not polyrational, it is less robust. This opts for imperfect and “clumsy solutions”. It is argued that clumsy solutions, the four rationalities and related concepts fit Jane Jacobs’ claim for more diversity in urban design. This essentially calls for imperfect cities by design, ‘built’ by Jacobs’ generators for diversity. Although this outcome might not be revolutionary in the current debates about urban design, the concept of clumsy solutions provide a foundation for Jane Jacobs’ atheoretical claim for a diverse city. This contributes to new reflections on the urban planning paradigms of Jane Jacobs.

Keywords

clumsy solutions; Cultural Theory; diversity; Jane Jacobs; just city; libertarianism; Mary Douglas; social justice; urban design; utilitarianism

Issue

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1. Introduction. Urban Design Principles for Diversity in Cities

Jane Jacobs regarded diversity as a natural feature of big cities (Jacobs, 1961). Cities, however, do not generate diversity “automatically [...] just by existing, [but] they generate it because of the various efficient economic pools of use that they form” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 148). Since then, the ideas of Jacobs have been reflected numerous times in urban design and planning. The debate on diversity in cities has not diminished and is still relevant for contem-

porary urban planning. Declarations such as “cities are by definition places of intense diversity and heterogeneity” (Dahinden, 2013, p. 39) or “diversity represents the new guiding principle for city planners” (Fainstein, 2005b, p. 3) reflect the tone in the discussion about this condition in cities. Fainstein sees diversity—among others—as a key criteria for the just city, encompassing diversity of the physical environment as well as social relations (Fainstein, 2010). Diversity matters in urban planning.

Jacobs formulated the idea that “the ruthless, oversimplified, pseudo-city planning and pseudo-city design

we get today is a form of ‘un-building’ cities” (1961, p. 408). This is a phenomenon which we were able to observe in past years during the modern urban planning era, which was fuel for conflict for Jacobs’ fight against Robert Moses and still can observe today, while recognizing that there is a trend again towards large-scale redevelopment projects (Schubert, 2014, p. 9). Jacobs recommended to generate diversity by urban planning. She prefers “fine-grain, block-by-block diversity” (Larson, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, she suggests four design principles in her most famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961, p. 150):

- Mixed use of an area which attracts the presence of people on the streets and places;
- Short blocks with frequent street crossings and opportunities to turn corners;
- Fairly close-grained mingle of buildings (age and condition);
- Dense concentration of people, including dense concentration of residents.

Jacobs’ design principles pursue diversity. This advice for urban design shall serve urban planners as a basis to design more diverse cities.

Jacobs complained that city planning in the 1960’s ignored urban theory and instead misused the cities as “an immense laboratory of trial and error” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 6). But Jacobs’ design principles also lack theoretical foundation. So, can we justify Jane Jacobs’ design principles with theory? Contemporary authors raise the concern that planning theory in general does not sufficiently address substantive aspects of planning, namely urban design (Fainstein, 2005a; Jabareen, 2006; Sternberg, 2000; Talen & Ellis, 2002). Urban design is often assigned to values such as beauty; planning theorists are diffident and cautious towards such normative issues (Talen & Ellis, 2002). Instead, urban design relies on “architectural ideas whose theoretical justifications are unclear” (Sternberg, 2000, p. 265). Urban design is understood here as the self-conscious creation of cities (Lang, 2009) by a public planning authority. Urban designers have generated urban design based on “eclectic reading, common sense, on-the-job experience, and personal predilection” (Talen & Ellis, 2002, p. 44). Theoretical discussions in planning predominantly address procedural aspects of planning (Sternberg, 2000; Talen & Ellis, 2002) and the justification of the planning activity itself (Hartmann & Needham, 2012). Recently, Beauregard reaffirmed the need for a planning theory that is more concerned with the planning substance itself.

There is not only a lack, but also a need, for more theoretical considerations of the ideas of Jane Jacobs, specifically for her claim for diversity in cities. Planners make choices over issues which are often highly contested (Campbell, 2006). Because these choices are contested—Needham points out that planning “makes people poorer or richer” (Needham, 2006, p. 3)—it is an activity that

is profoundly concerned with justice (Campbell, 2006). The decisions made by urban planners and urban designers, about place-making shape our living environment. “[T]he ethical dimension in question cannot be separated from the ‘physical’ dimension of the city (i.e. urban design, technology, architecture, and related fields)” (Kidder, 2008, p. 254). Planners raise the question, why they plan and what is planning for. The inherent normative dimension and complexity of planning (Hartmann, 2012) and planning interventions have been tried to justify for instance in the building environment by economic theory (Moore, 1978).

How to deal with normativity? There are in social and political science two conceptual camps of dealing with the normativity: one camp builds on the assumption that societies function on same or similar normative premises; the other camp acknowledges pluralism and assumes that the complexity of society impedes the development of policy solutions (Benford & Snow, 2000). The rational choice theory or the *homo oeconomicus* are typical contenders of the first camp. They approach policy issues with the idea to find one perfect fitting solution (Hartmann & Hengstermann, 2014). Mary Douglas’ Cultural Theory also belongs to theories acknowledging pluralism in social situations, rejecting approaches from the first camp. It provides a simple analytical scheme that allows reducing the pluralism to a manageable number of four without rejecting pluralism. This theory cannot resolve normativity, but it can help to reflect on it in a structured way. This paper is an attempt to provide this theoretical reflection relating different concepts of justice with Mary Douglas’ Cultural Theory and its clumsy solutions, which have been introduced by Marco Verweij, Michael Thompson and their colleagues (Verweij, 2011).

The remaining paper is subdivided in three main sections. First, an overview of three fundamental and competing concepts of justice is provided, and they are used to examine today’s issues and outcomes in spatial planning. Second, a theory is introduced dealing with the diversity of different rationalities and justice approaches, which is Cultural Theory, as developed by Mary Douglas, Michael Thompson, and fellows. This theory is used to derive the concept of the clumsy city as an approach to deal with pluralism, thus creating diversity in the city. In the third section, this concept is compared with Jane Jacobs’ ideas on design principles for a diverse city. The combination of Jane Jacobs, Cultural Theory and the concepts of justice thus provide not only a theoretical foundation, and to some extent a justification of Jane Jacobs’ ideas, but also a solution—a clumsy one—for dealing with diversity in urban design and planning.

2. Different Concepts of Justice and the City

A range of different opinions explore what is just and what is not (Davy, 1997). Different schools of thought have produced different concepts of justice (Sandel, 2007). Concepts of justice—most of the time implicitly—

are grounded in people's daily lives, their moral understanding, and general ethics. But they are also embedded in law and politics. People's notion of justice helps them to justify and legitimize activities, because a concept of justice defines what the right thing to do is (Sandel, 2010).

Why should urban planners be concerned with different concepts of justice? A concept of justice has always been part of the urban planning construct and eventually different concepts of justice contradict each other (Thaler & Hartmann, 2016). Acting according to one concept inherently implies neglecting and even acting against other concepts of justice (Davy, 1997). Inevitably the result is injustice in urban planning. Urban planners need to be equipped with the knowledge and ability to reflect on different concepts of justice. Our focus will be, according to Douglas' Cultural Theory we introduce later in this paper, on the concepts of justice known as Utilitarianism (Bentham, 1907/2007; Mill, 1863/2007), Libertarianism (Hayek, 1944/1991) and Social Justice (Rawls, 1971/2005). These concepts of justice in their main ideas are still being used and seen as common perspectives among concepts of justice. Therefore, in the following sections, we will briefly sketch the basic rationales of each of these three concepts and outline their principles and influences for urban design.

2.1. Utilitarian Justice—The City for the Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number

Utilitarian justice in its fundamentals pursues the key axiom 'maximize happiness' (Bentham, 1907/2007). It is developed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Bentham is deemed to be the founder of Utilitarianism and became famous through his book *An Introduction of Moral and Legislation*, where Mill represents a more moderate notion of Utilitarian justice (Mill, 1863/2007). The utilitarian concept of utility involves two main outcomes: (1) pleasure (positive reaction) and (2) pain (negative reaction). The resulting distribution of 'pleasure' and 'pain' benefits the majority (at the costs of minorities). We can conclude that Utilitarianism starts from the premise that every decision should be based on weighing happiness and pain, and likewise costs and benefits. The end purpose is to raise happiness and to minimize pain (Sandel, 2010).

How can we translate this moral principle into public decisions? Here, we are not just evaluating our own happiness and pain, but instead assessing an approach that strives for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong" (Bentham, 1907/2007). This slogan implies that it's not just the intensity of happiness that counts, but also the size of the group who is benefitting (Sandel, 2007).

So, what does it mean for urban design? In planning processes, the "greatest happiness principle" or the "principle of utility" is achieved in utilitarian justice when we gain more *utility* than *pain* for society. In this way, Util-

itarianism acts as a spokesman for powerful urban planning. According to this concept of justice, the state has the task to protect the happiness of the majority (Davy, 2012). So utilitarian urban planners need to ask whether a certain planning measure will, in sum, increase more pleasure than inducing pain. This implies that such planning accepts sacrifices (e.g. expropriation of landowners, imposing nuisances to some) if with this measure the benefits of more land users will be increased. This provides a clear guideline for urban planners, if they manage to assess costs and benefits of certain plan alternatives. Urban planners are equipped with multiple methods, such as cost-benefit analysis, GIS models, and so forth. The result of a utilitarian urban design would most likely be a very functional and almost sober city with rather straight lines, clear rules and separated functions. The city of Le Corbusier, or urban design according to Bauhaus principles, might resemble ideas of a utilitarian city (Steinø, 2013), as well as the social welfare function (Alexander, 2002).

We agree with Steinø that "cities should be more than just functional entities, providing merely for utilitarian needs" (Steinø, 2013, p. 73). Furthermore, there are two main objections against utilitarianism: first, it's hard to fully evaluate all benefits and costs (pain and pleasure, respectively) in a fair way, and it is also difficult to achieve consensual evaluation methods. Second, one mode of thought suggests individual rights are a value in itself. In this case, the question rises of what the other concepts of justice are.

2.2. Libertarian Justice—The City of Freedom and Opportunities

Libertarian justice emphasizes the liberty of individuals (Sandel, 2010). The state should be as minimal as possible, reducing its interventions to the reduction of market failures (Hess & Ostrom, 2007; North, 1990). Libertarian justice supports the idea of an invisible hand in the market, which ultimately leads to fair outcomes. Libertarian principles are hostile to utilitarian principles, because the latter focuses on the maximization of happiness for the greatest number, which brings losses, but consents to them to maximise the happiness of each individual. Freedom of individual self-determination is central in libertarian justice (Hayek, 1944/1991; Johnson, Tunstall, Priest, McCarthy, & Penning-Rowsell, 2008). This can be summarized in the principle that libertarianism supports individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This doctrine can also be found in the "The Declaration of Independence" in the United States. Important thinkers of libertarian justice are Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick and Friedrich A. Hayek. John Locke is also a central figure because he applied libertarianism to the concept of property rights (Hartmann, in press).

The libertarian city would designate itself as a city of freedom and opportunities. This translates into an urban design with minimal rules. Most likely this city will

develop with large plots of individually owned land and minimal public spaces. In the Netherlands, there is an experiment that resembles this concept of justice: the case of Almere Oosterweld. This is an area of about 4,300 hectare, which will accommodate circa 15,000 new residential houses. Within this ongoing project, building regulations have been minimized to allow each landowner to develop his or her own idea of home. It is promoted as an area that embraces creativity and opportunity. Summarized, in a perfect libertarian world, a libertarian city facilitates liberty and self-ownership for each individual in the society.

Critiques on libertarian justice address the inherent increase of inequalities. Privatization and gentrification processes, for instance, are two negative examples of possible symptoms caused by a libertarian planning policy. Critics suggest that the initial resource allocation supports the haves against the have-nots. Therefore, the initial unequal assignment of property rights to different persons undermines the very principle of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

2.3. Social Fair Justice—The City of Fairness and Equality

The *Theory of Justice* in 1971 from John Rawls is one of the key publications on social justice (Sandel, 2010). Rawls' thoughts became very influential in debates on concepts of justice, but also gained attention in the planning literature in recent years (Basta 2015; Basta & Moroni, 2013; Campbell & Marshall, 2002; Fainstein, 2010). As a critique of utilitarian principles, Rawls offered a new point of view on social justice that shares some ideas with Utilitarianism and cannot be seen as entirely detached from that theory (Campbell, 2006). Rawls's main point of criticism was that Utilitarianism is just looking for an overall sum of happiness, but not how is it distributed in the society (Basta & Moroni, 2013).

According to Rawls, we need a social contract with defined rules based on ethical aspects, which foster our daily life as we coexist. Rawls puts one's position, that is potentially involved in the construction of the social contract, behind a so-called "veil of ignorance" (Rawls, 1971/2005). This puts one in a position where all the members of a society slip into the same role: ultimately describing his first principle. This means we don't know anyone's rank or status in society. Executed further, this means we don't know if these members are poor or rich, or if we are dealing with talented or untalented people. Since our own position is unknown as well, ideally, when we raise the veil of ignorance, all rights, chances and opportunities are distributed equally among the society (Rawls, 1971/2005).

The socially just city is designed in a way that all groups of the society are included. There is space for bankers and beggars, children and elderly, citizens and refugees. From Rawls's standpoint it would not be fair for all groups to have their space, but instead emphasizes improving the life prospects of the least advantaged, as

we're living in a world full of inequalities. In a socially just city under Rawls, this leads to spacious communal areas, affordable housing, and open and attractive public spaces.

There exist variations and related concepts to social justice, which shall not be in the focus in this paper. For further reading we recommend Sandel (2010) and Harvey (1996). Critiques on social justice focus on its actual realization. Although many people see an inherent and intuitive moral supremacy of social justice compared to the other concepts, it is a very costly concept of justice. In addition, libertarians criticize that in a purely socially just world, incentives for innovation and performance are lacking. As in utilitarianism, the socially just city needs strong and powerful urban planning to enforce the redistribution and allocation of resources.

3. Mary Douglas' Cultural Theory and Clumsy Solution

The previous section leaves us with a dilemma: there are three different but opposing concepts of justice. None is ultimately superior to the other as each concept has its justification and its inherent logic, but also has its pitfalls. They contradict each other. This section compares the three concepts of justice with Cultural Theory.

Cultural Theory is a social-constructivist theory. Although Cultural Theory originates from anthropology and has been much used in research on risk-perception (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Renn, 2008), it has also been applied and discussed in planning theory (Davy, 1997, 2004; Hartmann, 2011; Hartmann & Hengstermann, 2014; Hendriks, 1999). In contrast to many other approaches in cultural anthropology, Mary Douglas developed a theory that enables analyzing social interactions without complicated ethnographic analysis. Her claim was to develop a framework "that is able to deal with culture everywhere". Thus, her field work was not confined to Melanesia or Africa, but includes western societies (Mamadouh, 1999). Cultural Theory does not restrict itself to analyzing cultures with all its variations in definition, but instead refers to social solidarities (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990).

Basically, Cultural Theory is built on the assumption that every social situation can be described in terms of four ideal-typical (Hendriks, 1999) "cultures" (Ellis & Thompson, 1997) or "rationalities" (Davy, 2008; Hartmann, 2012): individualism, egalitarianism, hierarchism, and fatalism. These rationalities can be acted out by individuals, groups of individuals, or institutions (Douglas, 1986). They describe different rational ways to perceive and act in certain situations. It is an important notion to assign rationalities to situations, not to persons. A situation-oriented approach asks how, not by whom, rationalities are involved in certain situations (Davy, 2004). The situation-oriented approach to Cultural Theory assumes that a persons' actions do not determine situations but rather situations determine a persons' actions. This is an important premise to translate this theory to

urban design. The same person can act out one rationality in one particular situation, and another rationality in another situation.

The rationalities are assumed to be internally consistent, mutually contradictory, and jointly exhaustive (Schwarz & Thompson, 1990). This means that each rationality is rational on its own, but irrational from the perspective of the other rationalities (Thompson, 2008). The four rationalities are mapped out in the two-dimensional “grid and group” scheme (see Figure 1). “Grid” indicates the extent of decision-making autonomy to which a decision maker is bound to externally imposed structures, rules, and prescriptions. A high grid stands, accordingly, for heteronomous decision-making; a weak grid refers to a high degree of self-determination. “Group” indicates whether an individual is likely to join a group or prefers to act as an individual. The higher the group dimension, the more community-bounded an individual acts (Ellis & Thompson, 1997). Since the two dimensions are independent, they form a diagram with two axes and four quadrants. The four rationalities can be located in each quadrant, so that each rationality can be described by a combination of the two dimensions, grid and group. The differences between the rationalities are illustrated with a pictogram, showing a ball in a landscape. The ball represents the world; the landscape represents the behavioral characteristics of the world towards interventions (Ellis & Thompson, 1997) (see Figure 1). These pictograms explain how the rationality believes that the world reacts on disturbances and helps build understanding about appropriate problem-solving mechanisms for the four rationalities. They are characterized in the following paragraphs.

Individualism: The individualistic pictogram shows a ball on the bottom of a valley (see Figure 1). It cannot crash down; rather it is in a relatively stable equilibrium. In this world, trial and error allow exploration of new possibilities. Individualism is the most libertarian rationality. It rejects regulations and does not believe in collaborative governance styles. Instead, individualism prefers market approaches. Urban design serves to achieve effi-

cient allocations of goods (Sorensen & Day, 1981). For individualism, private property is regarded as a driving force for economic growth and welfare (Ostrom, 2000). Public goods are considered a source for market failure (Cooter & Ulen, 2004). Individualism fits the concept of libertarian justice.

Egalitarianism: The egalitarian rationality is illustrated by a ball on the top of a hill. It is an unstable equilibrium. This rationality neglects governmental interventions and market schemes, and instead places a strong emphasis on community. As the organizing principle of individualism is the market, moral commitment to the community is the egalitarian principle of organization (Thompson, 2008). Participative and collaborative approaches such as “communicative planning” are welcome (Huxley, 2000). Planning should be carried out less by law and regulations and more by consensus and cooperation. Accordingly, urban design should create social spaces to allow communities to assemble and collaborate. This is a radically different leitmotif than the individualistic idea of maximizing private property. Egalitarianism has a strong link with the concept of social justice.

Hierarchism: This rationality is depicted by a ball embedded in a small dip on top of the hill. The preferred mode of governance is by rules and regulations. Theoretically, as in Thomas Hobbes’s “Leviathan,” members of society give power to an institution that governs the welfare of all people. The integrity of the institution is essential to keep the ball on top of the hill. Such institutions do not necessarily need to be governmental (Douglas, 1999). It is often put forward that hierarchism is able to prevent a tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968). This rationality prefers to regulate common goods, instead of using market approaches or community schemes to allocate and distribute goods. The rationality of hierarchism is linked with utilitarian justice.

Fatalism: Whereas the three previously presented rationalities are often categorized as active rationalities, fatalism is the passive rationality. It stands for a laissez-faire governance approach. This rationality neglects planning because of the complexity and wickedness of the world. According to fatalism, it is simply not possible to predict the chaotic jumble of the world. This is a very planning-hostile rationality, because every intervention depends on luck and fate. The ball lies in a flat landscape: this pictogram reflects the unpredictability of the equilibrium. Fatalism does not prefer any of the three presented concepts of justice, but does not believe in justice at all: just luck and fate.

Each of the four rationalities prefers its own concept of justice (or none, in the case of fatalism) (Schwarz & Thompson, 1990). Still, Cultural Theory does not determine which concepts of justice are the best or most suitable. Cultural Theorists regard the four rationalities as a system of plausible, rather than empirically demonstrably true, rationalities (Dake, 1992; Hartmann, 2012; Renn, 2008). For urban design, the dilemma of competing concepts of justice remains, in addition we are in a

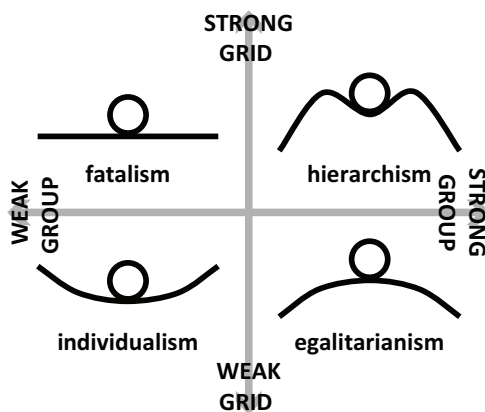


Figure 1. The rationalities of Cultural Theory (“grid and group” scheme).

dilemma of four rationalities, each of those thinking to be the only plausible rationality.

One of the central assumptions of Cultural Theory is that in every social situation, all of these four rationalities occasionally emerge in some way, which is known as the ‘impossibility theorem’ (Ellis & Thompson, 1997). This impossibility theorem implies that if a situation is perfectly monorational (e.g. a well-ordered utilitarian and designed city), the respective other rationalities reject this situation. Vice versa, polyrational situations in which all four rationalities and their related concepts of justice are embraced, are more robust than a single-rational situation (Davy, 2004). This leads to the idea of designing cities in a way that all rationalities are embedded, in the building process as well as in the ideas of the outcome. From the point of view of each rationality, such a city can never be perfect so the urban design is always a compromise, and it appears clumsy. From this argument, the concept of clumsy solutions originates, which has been developed by Marco Verweij, Michael Thompson and their colleagues (Verweij, 2011).

A clumsy solution is seemingly the opposite of classical city planning back in the 1950’s and 1960’s when Jane Jacobs was in the heyday of her political activities and critique against orthodox city planning (Jacobs, 1961). A clumsy solution isn’t looking for the well-designed city (e.g. the grid system, as used in the United States to provide a car-friendly environment). Rather, a clumsy solution would be an approach to provide a car-friendly setting, but also opt for a city that embraces all four rationalities and their related concepts of justice.

4. Diversity in Cities as Clumsy Solutions

So far, we discussed how different concepts of justice, as with the different rationalities introduced by Douglas’ Cultural Theory, are reflected in cityscapes and how they correspond with the principles for diversity in cities introduced by Jane Jacobs. In one last step, we combine the concepts of justice with urban design by referring to Douglas’ Cultural Theory’s clumsy solutions. Clumsy solutions, as outlined above, support the idea of an imperfect—even clumsy—urban design. Clumsy means the embodiment of different notions of justice in a clumsy solution. This means embracing libertarian principles (providing individual liberty), utilitarian justice (greatest happiness for the greatest number), and social justice (equality of outcome) at the same time. Fatalism then opts to not design the city completely, but to leave some aspects of urban design open.

How can we picture such an urban design? The resulting city might come pretty close to the ideal city pursued by Jane Jacobs. She frames design principles in her famous book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, whose functions are to create a basis to tap a city’s full potential: mixed uses, aged buildings, small blocks and an adjusted population density (Jacobs, 1961, pp. 150f.). Furthermore, Jacobs specifically formulates the need for

economic diversity in a city, a consequence from her design principles and that is far more than just touching the physical design of a city. She supports the idea of a mixed use of economies, which means neighborhoods cannot flourish if merely offering a single use economy. A neighborhood needs big firms and retailers, but also needs small and local economies since the smaller ones are as important as the big ones to vitalize a neighborhood. Hospers, vice versa, agrees that “diversity is of major importance not only from a social perspective, but also from an economic viewpoint” (2014, p. 127). This gets underlined by Moroni as well, who argues for diversity, to let “economic urban vitality” emerge (2016, p. 4). In a next step Jacobs states that her physical design principles combined with her recommended economic condition unleash commercial diversity. When Jane Jacobs explains that the: “Commercial diversity is, in itself, immensely important for cities, socially as well as economically” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 148) she describes the process that richness in a cities’ commerce, produces diversity in various other forms as for instance social diversity, a cities’ population and its users. Put together, Jacobs’ vision of a well working and functioning city includes neighborhoods where there is space for everybody. This can be translated into the terminology of Cultural Theory: Space for different rationalities in a clumsy city.

This builds a bridge between Jane Jacobs’ thoughts and different rationalities of Douglas’ Cultural Theory with their inherent concepts of justice. Jacobs’ claim for diversity is not based on a theory but stems from an intuitive normative claim for how a city should work. Douglas’ Cultural Theory argues for diversity and provides such theoretical underpinning. But how does the diversity in urban design as put forward by Jacobs fit the diversity of different rationalities by Cultural Theory?

To understand the relation between Jacobs’ and Douglas’ ideas, the cities that are a result of a city built to Jane Jacobs’ generators for diversity needs to be compared to the clumsy city that Douglas would promote. Based on the statement that “urban design can change the spatial organization of the city, and consequently how it works” (Madanipour, 2006, p. 185) it can also change the emerging social situations. The emergence of different rationalities creates a more diverse population and therefore more diverse urban spaces. Assumed that Jacobs’ generators for diversity are adopted, the city creates diversity in uses through insisting on a mix of primary uses. Through this, the city creates a higher diversity in social interactions during the whole day, and logically as a consequence different emerging rationalities. Ensured short blocks again raise the possibility of more social interactions and social situations. Further on, varied aged buildings make room for different social classes as well as new economies and this engenders again the presence of different rationalities. Through her last condition in having a minimum density she also tries to make sure of more social interactions that create social situations. Seifert reflects this: “returning to Jacobs: in the first instance, de-

sign, structure, and form do not here mean what is material, built, but something socio-cultural, that endows built objects, in their various realizations, with meaning” (Seifert, 2014, p. 57). So, a city ‘built’ by Jane Jacobs’ design principles is more polyrational. We can picture this situation, when imagining the contrary, for example a district with no mixed uses, large blocks, large and modern concrete buildings including large streets with few crossings. This would mean rather more monorational social interactions, thus social situations and ultimately unstable conditions since they are not clumsy. When Hirt discusses zoning in the American and European planning system, she declares that we make decisions about “social and spatial ordering” (Perin in Hirt, 2012, p. 389) and that these decisions “both reflect and construct social norms” (Hirt, 2012, p. 378).

5. Conclusion

Finally, Jacobs and Cultural Theory both reject cities entirely designed according to elegance and a rational-comprehensive planning, but promote cities that embrace imperfection and clumsiness. Jacobs prefers clumsiness over elegance because of her claim that “genuine, rich diversity of the built environment is always the product of many, many different minds, and at its richest is also the product of different periods of time with their different aims and fashions” (Jacobs, 1981). Cultural Theory and its clumsy solutions agrees with this but justifies clumsiness via its robustness against perfect solutions. Clumsy solutions embrace all four rationalities and their inherent concepts of justice. Jacobs promotes diversity out of a normative claim, in the clumsy city diversity is a result of different and competing rationalities. In that way, Douglas’ Cultural Theory helps to justify Jacobs’ urban design principles.

What can we ultimately learn from the particular perspective of Cultural Theory and assigned concepts of justice about the relevance of Jane Jacobs’ urban design principles for today’s cities? Jane Jacobs’ ideas on how cities should look like have been criticized as being normative, and she has been blamed as being an urban activist (Fainstein, 2005a; Sternberg, 2000). To some extent, this cannot be rejected from the arguments above. However, in terms of Cultural Theory, Jane Jacobs’ ideas can be an indication of the impossibility theorem. Jacobs opposed monorational city planning, such as the utilitarian ideas of Robert Moses in rebuilding New York. From the point of view of Cultural Theory, it is not a surprise that she pushed forward ideas of social justice and even libertarian elements in her concepts of the city. The design principles of Jacobs also resemble utilitarian aspects, such as the clear grid she prefers for blocks. The polyrationality in Jacobs’ approach lies also within her diverse approach to design a city, because when we look at Jacobs’ design principles, they’re not solely about physical design. Her words of advice go far beyond the form of buildings. Also Klemek agrees when he says “robust func-

tional diversity was fundamentally more important to her than superficial stylistic distinctions” (Klemek, 2011, p. 120). One of the reasons why the urban design based on Jacobs’ design principles seems so appealing is because it is clumsy as well as the resulting diversity. In Jacobs’ vision of a diverse city, there is space for everybody. Space for various situations, space for differing rationalities, space for different concepts of justice, space for diversity. In a nutshell: space for clumsy solutions.

There could be better ways to embrace four different rationalities and their related concepts of justice, but this contribution provides a theoretical framework and justification to pursue clumsy cities by design. Ultimately, the theoretical underpinning of Jacobs urban design principles does not only provide a justification of her ideas from the 1960’s, but because the argument of Cultural Theory prevails still today, it argues for the continuing relevance of the design principles for diversity in cities. This asks for further empirical research testing and proving this argument. Ultimately, the discussion on connecting the visions of Jane Jacobs with Cultural Theory can contribute to revitalize the—often normative—debates on the just city and question existing paradigms in urban planning.

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