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## Some myths about diversity

**"Mixed uses look ugly. They cause traffic congestion. They invite ruinous uses."**

These are some of the bugbears that cause cities to combat diversity. These beliefs help shape city zoning regulations. They have helped rationalize city rebuilding into the sterile, regimented, empty thing it is. They stand in the way of planning that could deliberately encourage spontaneous diversity by providing the conditions necessary to its growth.

Intricate minglings of different uses in cities are not a form of chaos. On the contrary, they represent a complex and highly developed form of order. Everything in this book so far has been directed toward showing how this complex order of mingled uses works.

Nevertheless, even though intricate mixtures of buildings, uses and scenes are necessary for successful city districts, does diversity carry, too, the disadvantages of ugliness, warring uses and con-

gestion that are conventionally attributed to it by planning lore and literature?

These supposed disadvantages are based on images of unsuccessful districts which have not too much, but too little diversity. They call up visions of dull, down-at-heel residential areas, pocked with a few shabby, shoestring enterprises. They call up visions of low-value land uses, like junk yards or used-car lots. They call up visions of garish, sprawling, unremitting commerce. None of these conditions, however, represents flourishing city diversity. On the contrary, these represent precisely the senility that befalls city neighborhoods in which exuberant diversity has either failed to grow or has died off with time. They represent what happens to semisuburbs which are engulfed by their cities but fail, themselves, to grow up and behave economically like successful city districts.

Flourishing city diversity, of the kind that is catalyzed by the combination of mixed primary uses, frequent streets, mixture of building ages and overheads, and dense concentration of users, does not carry with it the disadvantages of diversity conventionally assumed by planning pseudoscience. I now intend to show why it does not carry them, and why these disadvantages are fantasies which, like all fantasies that are taken too seriously, interfere with handling reality.

Let us consider, first, the belief that diversity looks ugly. Anything looks ugly, to be sure, if it is done badly. But this belief implies something else. It implies that city diversity of uses is inherently messy in appearance; and it also implies that places stamped with homogeneity of uses look better, or at any rate are more amenable to pleasant or orderly esthetic treatment.

But homogeneity or close similarity among uses, in real life, poses very puzzling esthetic problems.

If the sameness of use is shown candidly for what it is—sameness—it looks monotonous. Superficially, this monotony might be thought of as a sort of order, however dull. But esthetically, it unfortunately also carries with it a deep disorder: the disorder of conveying no direction. In places stamped with the monotony and repetition of sameness you move, but in moving you seem to

have gotten nowhere. North is the same as south, or east as west. Sometimes north, south, east and west are all alike, as they are when you stand within the grounds of a large project. It takes differences—many differences—cropping up in different directions to keep us oriented. Scenes of thoroughgoing sameness lack these natural announcements of direction and movement, or are scantily furnished with them, and so they are deeply confusing. This is a kind of chaos.

Monotony of this sort is generally considered too oppressive to pursue as an ideal by everybody but some project planners or the most routine-minded real estate developers.

Instead, where uses are in actual fact homogeneous, we often find that deliberate distinctions and differences are contrived among the buildings. But these contrived differences give rise to esthetic difficulties too. Because inherent differences—those that come from genuinely differing uses—are lacking among the buildings and their settings, the contrivances represent the desire merely to *appear* different.

Some of the more blatant manifestations of this phenomenon were well described, back in 1952, by Douglas Haskell, editor of *Architectural Forum*, under the term “googie architecture.” Googie architecture could then be seen in its finest flowering among the essentially homogeneous and standardized enterprises of roadside commercial strips: hot-dog stands in the shape of hot dogs, ice-cream stands in the shape of ice-cream cones. These are obvious examples of virtual sameness trying, by dint of exhibitionism, to appear unique and different from their similar commercial neighbors. Mr. Haskell pointed out that the same impulses to look special (in spite of not *being* special) were at work also in more sophisticated construction: weird roofs, weird stairs, weird colors, weird signs, weird anything.

Recently Mr. Haskell has observed that similar signs of exhibitionism have been appearing in supposedly dignified establishments.

Indeed they have: in office buildings, shopping centers, civic centers, airline terminals. Eugene Raskin, professor of architecture at Columbia University, commented on this same phenomenon in an essay, “On the Nature of Variety,” in the Summer 1960

issue of the *Columbia University Forum*. Genuine architectural variety, Raskin pointed out, does not consist in using different colors or textures.

Can it be in using contrasting forms? [he asked]. A visit to one of the larger shopping centers (the Cross County Shopping Center in New York's Westchester County comes to mind, but pick your own) will make the point: though slabs, towers, circles and flying stairs bound and abound all over the lot, the result has the appalling sameness of the tortures of hell. They may poke you with different instruments, but it's all pain . . .

When we build, say, a business area in which all (or practically all) are engaged in earning their livings, or a residential area in which everyone is deep in the demands of domesticity, or a shopping area dedicated to the exchange of cash and commodities—in short, where the pattern of human activity contains only one element, it is impossible for the architecture to achieve a convincing variety--convincing of the known facts of human variation. The designer may vary color, texture and form until his drawing instruments buckle under the strain, proving once more that art is the one medium in which one cannot lie successfully.

The more homogeneity of use in a street or a neighborhood, the greater is the temptation to be different in the only way left to be different. Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles is an example of one grand exercise after another in superficially contrived distinction, for several miles of innately monotonous office buildings.

But Los Angeles is not unique in presenting us with such vistas. San Francisco, for all its scorn of this kind of thing in Los Angeles, looks much the same at its new outskirts of sorted-out shopping centers and housing developments, and for the same basic reasons. Euclid Avenue in Cleveland, which used to be considered by many critics one of the most beautiful of American avenues (it was, in those days, essentially a suburban avenue of large, fine houses with large, fine grounds), has now been excoriated, with justice, by critic Richard A. Miller in *Architectural Forum*, as one of the ugliest and most disorganized of city streets. In converting to outright urban use, Euclid Avenue has con-

verted to homogeneity: office buildings again, and again a chaos of shouted, but superficial, differences.

Homogeneity of uses poses an unavoidable esthetic dilemma: Shall the homogeneity look as homogeneous as it is, and be frankly monotonous? Or shall it try not to look as homogeneous as it is and go in for eye-catching, but meaningless and chaotic differences? This, in city guise, is the old, familiar esthetic zoning problem of homogeneous suburbs: Shall they zone to require conformity in appearance, or shall they zone to prohibit sameness? If to prohibit sameness, where must the line be drawn against what is too nonconforming in design?

Wherever a city area is functionally homogeneous in its uses, this also becomes an esthetic dilemma for the city, and in more intensive form than in the suburbs, because buildings are so much more dominant in the general scene of cities. It is a ridiculous dilemma for cities, and it has no decent answer.

Diversity of uses, on the other hand, while it is too often handled poorly, does offer the decent possibility of displaying genuine differences of content. Therefore these can become interesting and stimulating differences to the eye, without phoniness, exhibitionism or belabored novelty.

Fifth Avenue in New York between Fortieth Street and Fifty-ninth Street is tremendously diverse in its large and small shops, bank buildings, office buildings, churches, institutions. Its architecture expresses these differences in use, and differences accrue from the varying ages of the buildings, differences in technology and historical taste. But Fifth Avenue does not look disorganized, fragmented or exploded.\* Fifth Avenue's architectural contrasts and differences arise mainly out of differences in content. They are sensible and natural contrasts and differences. The whole hangs together remarkably well, without being monotonous either.

\* Its only blatant eyesore and element of disorganization is a group of billboards on the northeast corner of Forty-second Street. These are presumably well meant because, as this is written, they are furiously exhorting the passing throngs to pray in family groups, to save for a rainy day, and to fight delinquency. Their power to reform is questionable. Their power to blight the view up Fifth Avenue from the library is unquestionable.

The new office stretch of New York's Park Avenue is far more standardized in content than Fifth Avenue. Park Avenue has the advantage of containing among its new office buildings several which, in themselves, are masterpieces of modern design.\* But does homogeneity of use or homogeneity of age help Park Avenue esthetically? On the contrary, the office blocks of Park Avenue are wretchedly disorganized in appearance, and far more given than Fifth Avenue to a total effect of chaotic architectural willfulness, overlaid on boredom.

There are many instances of city diversity that include the use of residences and come off well. The Rittenhouse Square area in Philadelphia, Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, parts of the North End in Boston, afford examples. Small groups of residential buildings can be similar or even identical to each other without imposing a pall of monotony, so long as the grouping takes in no more than a short street block, and is not thereupon immediately repeated. In such a case, we look at the grouping as a unit, and see it as differing, in content and appearance, from whatever the next use or residential type may be.

Sometimes diversity of uses, combined with diversity of age, can even take the curse of monotony off blocks that are far too long—and again without the need for exhibitionism because differences of real substance exist. An example of this kind of diversity is Eleventh Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in New York, a street admired as both dignified and interesting to walk on. Along its south side it contains, going west, a fourteen-story apartment house, a church, seven three-story houses, a five-story house, thirteen four-story houses, a nine-story apartment, five four-story houses with a restaurant and bar at the street level, a five-story apartment, a little graveyard, and a six-story apartment house with a restaurant at street level; on the north side, again going west, it contains a church, a four-story house with a nursery school in it, a nine-story apartment house, three five-story houses, a six-story apartment house, an eight-story apartment house, five four-story houses, a six-story residence club, two five-story apartment houses, another five-story apartment house of very different vintage, a nine-story apartment house, a new

\* Lever House, Seagram, Pepsi-Cola, Union Carbide.

addition to the New School for Social Research with a library at street level and a public view to the interior courtyard, a four-story house, a five-story apartment house with a restaurant at street level, a mean- and cheap-looking one-story laundry and cleaner, a three-story apartment house with a candy and newspaper store at street level. While these are nearly all residential buildings, they are broken into by instances of ten other uses. Even the purely residential buildings themselves embrace many different periods of technology and taste, many different modes and costs of living. They have an almost fantastic array of matter-of-fact, modestly stated differences: different heights at first-floor levels, differing arrangements for entrances and sidewalk access. These arise directly out of the fact that the buildings actually are different in kind and age. The effect is both serene and unself-conscious.

Still more interesting visual effects, and again without any need for exhibitionism or other phoniness, can and do arise in cities from mixtures in building types far more radical than those of Eleventh Street—more radical because they are based on more radical inherent differences. Most landmarks and focal points in cities—of which we need more, not fewer—come from the contrast of a use radically different from its surroundings, and therefore inherently special-looking, happily located to make some drama and contrast of the inherent difference. This, of course, was what Peets was talking about (see Chapter Eight) when he advocated that monumental or noble buildings be set within the matrix of the city, instead of being sorted out and withdrawn into “courts of honor” with other inherently similar neighbors there.

Nor are the innate radical differences of humbler elements in city mixtures to be scorned esthetically. They too can convey the pleasures of contrast, movement and direction, without forced superficialities: the workshops that turn up mingled with residences, the manufacturing buildings, the art gallery next to the fish market that delights me every time I go to buy fish, the hoity-toity gourmet shop in another part of town that peacefully contrasts and coexists with a robust bar of the kind where new Irish immigrants come to hear about jobs.

Genuine differences in the city architectural scene express, as Raskin says so excellently,

. . . the interweaving of *human* patterns. They are full of people doing different things, with different reasons and different ends in view, and the architecture reflects and expresses this difference—which is one of content rather than form alone. Being human, human beings are what interest us most. In architecture as in literature and the drama, it is the richness of human variation that gives virality and color to the human setting . . .

Considering the hazard of monotony . . . the most serious fault in our zoning laws lies in the fact that they *permit* an entire area to be devoted to a single use.

In seeking visual order, cities are able to choose among three broad alternatives, two of which are hopeless and one of which is hopeful. They can aim for areas of homogeneity which look homogeneous, and get results depressing and disorienting. They can aim for areas of homogeneity which try not to look homogeneous, and get results of vulgarity and dishonesty. Or they can aim for areas of great diversity and, because real differences are thereby expressed, can get results which, at worst, are merely interesting, and at best can be delightful.

How to accommodate city diversity well in visual terms, how to respect its freedom while showing visually that it is a form of order, is the central esthetic problem of cities. I shall deal with it in Chapter Nineteen of this book. For the moment, the point is this: City diversity is not innately ugly. That is a misconception, and a most simple-minded one. But lack of city diversity is innately either depressing on the one hand, or vulgarly chaotic on the other.

Is it true that diversity causes traffic congestion?

Traffic congestion is caused by vehicles, not by people in themselves.

Wherever people are thinly settled, rather than densely concentrated, or wherever diverse uses occur infrequently, any specific attraction does cause traffic congestion. Such places as clinics,



shopping centers or movies bring with them a concentration of traffic—and what is more, bring traffic heavily along the routes to and from them. A person who needs or wants to use them can do so only by car. Even a grade school can mean traffic congestion in such a milieu, because children must be carried to school. Lack of wide ranges of concentrated diversity can put people into automobiles for almost all their needs. The spaces required for roads and for parking spread everything out still farther, and lead to still greater uses of vehicles.

This is tolerable where the population is thinly spread. It becomes an intolerable condition, destructive of all other values and all other aspects of convenience, where populations are heavy or continuous.

In dense, diversified city areas, people still walk, an activity that is impractical in suburbs and in most gray areas. The more intensely various and close-grained the diversity in an area, the more walking. Even people who come into a lively, diverse area from outside, whether by car or by public transportation, walk when they get there.

Is it true that city diversity invites ruinous uses? Is permissiveness for all (or almost all) kinds of uses in an area destructive?

To consider this, we need to consider several different kinds of uses—some of which actually are harmful, and some of which are conventionally considered to be harmful but are not.

One destructive category of uses, of which junk yards are an example, contributes nothing to a district's general convenience, attraction, or concentration of people. In return for nothing, these uses make exorbitant demands upon the land—and upon esthetic tolerance. Used-car lots are in this category. So are buildings which have been abandoned or badly underused.

Probably everyone (except possibly the owners of such objects) is agreed that this category of uses is blighting.

But it does not follow that junk yards and their like are therefore threats which accompany city diversity. Successful city districts are never dotted with junk yards, but that is not *why* these districts are successful. It is the other way around. They lack junk yards *because* they are successful.

Deadening and space-taking low economic uses like junk yards and used-car lots grow like pigweed in spots which are *already* uncultivated and unsuccessful. They sprout in places that have low concentrations of foot traffic, too little surrounding magnetism, and no high-value competition for the space. Their natural homes are gray areas and the dwindled-off edges of downtowns, where the fires of diversity and vitality burn low. If all controls were lifted from housing-project malls, and these dead, underused places found their natural economic level, junk yards and used-car lots are exactly what would sprout in many of them.

The trouble represented by junk yards goes deeper than the Blight Fighters can plumb. It achieves nothing to cry "Take them away! They shouldn't be there!" The problem is to cultivate an economic environment in the district which makes more *vital* uses of the land profitable and logical. If this is not done, the land might as well be used for junk yards, which after all have *some* use. Little else is apt to be successful, and this includes public uses, like parks or school yards, which fail catastrophically precisely where the economic environment is too poor for other uses that depend on magnetism and surrounding vitality. The kind of problem symbolized by junk yards, in short, is not solved by fearing diversity, or by suppression, but rather by catalyzing and cultivating a fertile economic environment for diversity.

A second category of uses is conventionally considered, by planners and zoners, to be harmful, especially if these uses are mingled into residential areas. This category includes bars, theaters, clinics, businesses and manufacturing. It is a category which is not harmful; the arguments that these uses are to be tightly controlled derive from their effects in suburbs and in dull, inherently dangerous gray areas, not from their effects in lively city districts.

Thin smatterings of nonresidential uses do little good in gray areas, and can do harm, because gray areas are unequipped to handle strangers—or to protect them either, for that matter. But again, this is a problem that arises from too feeble a diversity in the prevailing dullness and darkness.

In lively city districts, where abundant diversity has been catalyzed, these uses do not do harm. They are positively necessary,

either for their direct contributions to safety, public contact and cross-use, or because they help support other diversity which has these direct effects.

Work uses suggest another bugaboo: reeking smokestacks and flying ash. Of course reeking smokestacks and flying ash are harmful, but it does not follow that intensive city manufacturing (most of which produces no such nasty by-products) or other work uses must be segregated from dwellings. Indeed, the notion that reek or fumes are to be combated by zoning and land-sorting classifications at all is ridiculous. The air doesn't know about zoning boundaries. Regulations specifically aimed at the smoke or the reek itself are to the point.

Among planners and zoners, the great shibboleth in land use was formerly the glue factory. "Would you want a glue factory in your neighborhood?" was the clincher. Why a glue factory I do not know, except possibly that glue then meant dead horses and old fish, and the reference could be counted upon to make nice people shudder and stop thinking. There used to be a glue factory near us. It was in a small, attractive brick building and was one of the cleanest-looking places on its block.

Nowadays, the glue factory has been replaced by a different bogy, the "mortuary," which is trotted out as a crowning example of the horrors that insinuate their way into neighborhoods which lack tight controls on uses. Yet mortuaries, or funeral parlors as we call them in the city, seem to do no harm. Perhaps in vital, diversified city neighborhoods, in the midst of life, the reminder of death is not the pall it may be on waning suburban streets. Curiously, the proponents of rigid use controls, who object so firmly to death in the city, seem to object equally firmly to life breaking out in the city.

One of the blocks of Greenwich Village which happens to be spontaneously upgrading itself in attractiveness, interest and economic value, happens also to have a funeral parlor on it as this is written, and has had for years. Is this objectionable? Obviously it has been no deterrent to the families who have put money into the rehabilitation of town houses on the street, nor to the businessmen who have been investing money in opening or refurbish-

ing quarters there, nor to the builder erecting a new high-rent apartment.\*

The strange idea that death should be an unnoticeable or unmentionable part of city life was apparently debated in Boston a century ago, when city improvers advocated the removal of the small old graveyards of Boston's downtown churches. One Bostonian, Thomas Bridgman, whose views prevailed, had this to say, "The burial place of the dead, so far as it has any influence, is on the side of virtue and religion . . . Its voice is one of perpetual rebuke to folly and sin."

The only clue I can find to the presumed harm wrought by funeral parlors in cities is contained in *The Selection of Retail Locations*, by Richard Nelson. Nelson proves statistically that people visiting funeral parlors do not customarily combine this call with shopping errands. Therefore, it is of no extra retail advantage to locate next to a funeral parlor.

In low-income neighborhoods of big cities, such as New York's East Harlem, funeral parlors can, and often do, operate as positive and constructive forces. This is because a funeral parlor presupposes an undertaker. Undertakers, like druggists, lawyers, dentists and clergymen, are representatives, in these neighborhoods, of such qualities as dignity, ambition and knowledgeability. They are typically well-known public characters, active in local civic life. Quite often, they eventually go into politics too.

Like so much of orthodox planning, the presumed harm done by this use and that use has been somehow accepted without anyone's asking the questions, "Why is it harmful? Just how does it do harm, and what is this harm?" I doubt that there is any legal economic use (and few illegal ones) which can harm a city dis-

\* This particular block, incidentally, is always spoken of locally as a nice residential street, and residence is indeed its predominant use, both in fact and in appearance. But consider what else it has, as this is written, tucked among its residences: the funeral parlor of course, a real estate office, two laundries, an antiques shop, a savings and loan office, three doctors' offices, a church and synagogue (combined), a little theater in the rear behind the church and synagogue, a hairdresser, a vocal studio, five restaurants, and a mysterious building that could be anything from a school to a craft-factory to a rehabilitation center, and isn't telling.

strict as much as lack of abundant diversity harms it. No special form of city blight is nearly so devastating as the Great Blight of Dullness.

Having said this, I shall bring up a final category of uses which, unless their location is controlled, are harmful in abundantly diversified city districts. They can be numbered on one hand: parking lots, large or heavy trucking depots, gas stations, gigantic outdoor advertising\* and enterprises which are harmful not because of their nature, exactly, but because *in certain streets* their scale is wrong.

All five of these problem uses are apt to be profitable enough (unlike junk yards) to afford, and to seek, space in vital, diversified areas. But at the same time they usually act as street desolators. Visually, they are disorganizing to streets, and are so dominating that it is hard—sometimes impossible—for any countering sense of order in either street use or street appearance to make much impression.

The visual effects of the first four of these problem uses are easily seen and often thought about. The uses themselves are the problem because of the *kinds* of uses they are.

However, the fifth problem use I have mentioned is different, because in this case the problem is *size* of use rather than *kind* of use. On certain streets, any disproportionately large occupant of street frontage is visually a street disintegrator and desolator, although exactly the same *kinds* of uses, at small scale, do no harm and are indeed an asset.

For example, many city "residential" streets shelter, along with their dwellings, all kinds of commercial and working uses, and these can and do fit in well so long as the street frontage which each one occupies is no greater, say, than that taken up by the typical residence. Literally, as well as figuratively, the uses fit in. The street has a visual character which is consistent and basically orderly as well as various.

But on just such a street, a use that abruptly takes street frontage on a large scale can appear to explode the street—make it fly apart in fragments.

\* Usually, but not always. What would Times Square be without its huge outdoor advertising?

This problem has nothing to do with use, in the usual zoning sense of use. A restaurant or snack place, a grocery, a cabinet-maker, a printer's shop, for instance, can fit well into such a street. But exactly the same *kind* of use—say, a big cafeteria, a supermarket, a large woodworking factory or a printing plant—can wreak visual havoc (and sometimes auditory havoc) because it is on a different *scale*.

Such streets need controls to defend them from the ruin that completely permissive diversity might indeed bring them. But the controls needed are not controls on kinds of uses. The controls needed are controls on the scale of street frontage permitted to a use.

This is so obvious and so ubiquitous a city problem that one would think its solution must be among the concerns of zoning theory. Yet the very existence of the problem is not even recognized in zoning theory. As this is written, the New York City Planning Commission has been holding hearings on a new, progressive, up-to-the-minute comprehensive zoning resolution. Interested organizations and individuals in the city have been invited to study, among other things, the proposed zoning categories into which streets fall and to make recommendations for shifts from one category to another if that seems desirable. There are several dozen use categories, each differentiated most carefully and thoughtfully—and all of them are irrelevant to the real-life problems of use in diverse city districts.

What can you recommend, when the very theory behind such a zoning resolution—not merely its detail—needs drastic overhaul and rethinking? This sad circumstance has given rise to many a ludicrous strategy session, for instance, in the civic organizations of Greenwich Village. Many well-loved and popular residential side streets contain mixtures and sprinklings of small establishments. These are generally present by exemption from existing residential zoning, or are in violation of the zoning. Everybody likes their presence, and no arguments arise over their desirability. The arguments, rather, revolve around the question of what kind of categories in the new zoning will be least at odds with the needs of real life. The drawbacks of each offered category are formidable. The argument against a commercial category for

such streets is that, although it will permit the small-scale uses that are an asset, it will also permit uses purely as uses, without regard to scale; for instance, large supermarkets will be permitted and these are greatly feared by residents as explosive to such streets and destructive to residential street character—as they are. Ask for residential categories, this argument continues, and then small establishments can infiltrate in violation of the zoning as they have in the past. The argument against a residential category is that somebody might actually make it seriously and the zoning against “nonconforming” small-scale uses might be enforced! Upright citizens, with the civic interests of their neighborhoods genuinely at heart, sit soberly plotting as to what regulation will offer the most constructive circumvention of itself.

The dilemma posed is urgent and real. One Greenwich Village street, for example, recently came up against a version of precisely this problem because of a case in the Board of Standards and Appeals. A bakery on this street, at one time mainly retail and small, has grown vigorously into a substantial wholesaler, and was applying for a zoning exemption to expand considerably farther (taking over the quarters of a former wholesale laundry next door). The street, which has long been zoned “residential,” has been upgrading itself recently, and many of its property owners and renting residents, in their growing pride and concern with their street, decided to fight the exemption request. They lost. It is no wonder they lost, for their case was blurry. Some of the leaders of the fight, who owned property or lived in property with small-scale nonresidential uses on the ground floors, were themselves in conflict, actual or sympathetic, with the “residential” zoning—just as surely as the relatively big bakery was. However, precisely the many small-scale nonresidential uses on the street, which have been increasing, are responsible for much of the increased attractiveness and value of the street for residence. They are acquisitions, and the people on the street know it, for they make the street interesting and safe. They include a real estate office, a small publishing company, a bookshop, a restaurant, a picture framer, a cabinetmaker, a shop that sells old posters and prints, a candy store, a coffee house, a laundry, two groceries, and a small experimental theater.

I asked a leader of the fight against the bakery exemption, a man who is also the principal owner of rehabilitated residential property on the street, which alternative in his opinion would do greater harm to his residential property values: the gradual elimination of all "nonresidential" uses on the street, or the expansion of the bakery. The first alternative would be more destructive, he answered, but added, "Isn't an implied choice of that kind absurd!"

It is absurd. A street like this is a puzzle and an anomaly under conventional use-zoning theory. It is a puzzle even as a commercial zoning problem. As city commercial zoning has become more "progressive" (i.e., imitative of suburban conditions) it has begun to emphasize distinctions between "local convenience shops," "district shopping," and the like. The up-to-the-minute New York resolution has all this too. But how do you classify such a street as this one with the bakery? It combines the most purely localized conveniences (like the laundry and the candy store) with district-wide attractions (like the cabinetmaker, the picture framer, the coffee house) and with city-wide attractions (like the theater, the art galleries, the poster shop). Its mixture is unique, but the pattern of unclassifiable diversity which it represents is not in the least unique. All lively, diversified city areas, full of vitality and surprises, exist in another world from that of suburban commerce.

By no means all city streets need zoning for scale of street frontage. Many streets, particularly where large or wide buildings predominate, whether for residential or for other uses or both, can contain enterprises of large street frontages, and mix them with small ones too, without appearing to explode and disintegrate, and without being functionally overwhelmed by one use. Fifth Avenue has such mixtures of large and small scale. But those city streets that do need scale zoning need it badly, not just for their own sake but because the presence of streets with consistent character adds diversity to the city scene itself.

Raskin, in his essay on variety, suggested that the greatest flaw in city zoning is that it *permits* monotony. I think this is correct. Perhaps the next greatest flaw is that it ignores *scale* of use, where this is an important consideration, or confuses it with *kind* of use,



and this leads, on the one hand, to visual (and sometimes functional) disintegration of streets, or on the other hand to indiscriminate attempts to sort out and segregate kinds of uses no matter what their size or empiric effect. Diversity itself is thus unnecessarily suppressed, rather than one limited manifestation of it, unfortunate in certain places.

To be sure, city areas with flourishing diversity sprout strange and unpredictable uses and peculiar scenes. But this is not a drawback of diversity. This is the point, or part of it. That this should happen is in keeping with one of the missions of cities.

Paul J. Tillich, professor of theology at Harvard, observes:

By its nature, the metropolis provides what otherwise could be given only by traveling; namely, the strange. Since the strange leads to questions and undermines familiar tradition, it serves to elevate reason to ultimate significance . . . There is no better proof of this fact than the attempts of all totalitarian authorities to keep the strange from their subjects . . . The big city is sliced into pieces, each of which is observed, purged and equalized. The mystery of the strange and the critical rationality of men are both removed from the city.

This is an idea familiar to those who appreciate and enjoy cities, although it is usually expressed more lightly. Kate Simon, author of *New York Places and Pleasures*, is saying much the same thing when she suggests, "Take the children to Grant's [restaurant] . . . they may bump into people whose like they may never see elsewhere and may possibly never forget."

The very existence of popular city guidebooks, with their emphases on the discovery, the curious, the different, are an illustration of Professor Tillich's point. Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.