Urban Design

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The End(s) of Urban Design
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Urban design has reached a dead end. Estranged both from substantial theoretical debate and from the living reality of the exponential and transformative growth of the world's cities, it finds itself pinioned between nostalgia and inevitabilism, increasingly unable to inventively confront the morphological, functional, and human needs of cities and citizens. While the task grows in urgency and complexity, the disciplinary mainstreaming of urban design has transformed it from a potentially broad and hopeful conceptual category into an increasingly rigid, restrictive, and boring set of orthodoxies.

In many ways, the enterprise was misbegotten from the get-go. The much marked conference at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD) in April 1956 both is a useful origin point for the discipline and reveals the embedded conflicts and contradictions that have brought urban design to its current state of intellectual and imaginative inertia. For José Luis Sert—dean of the GSD, convener of the gathering, and president of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) since 1947—the conference was surely part of a last gasp at recuperating the increasingly schismatic CIAM project, which finally collapsed at the CIAM 10 meeting in Dubrovnik the following year, largely because of the growing dissent of the younger Team 10 group, one of whose mainstays, Aldo van Eyck, had groused that since CIAM 8 in 1951 the organization had been "virtually 'governed' from Harvard."

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Sert's project was both a strategy for including U.S. cities in the expat ambit of the Euro-Modernist urban fantasies of the Charter of Athens and a bid to recover the lost influence of architecture—erstwhile mother of the arts—from its dissolution in an urban field dominated by planners. In his introductory remarks, Sert observed, "Our American cities, after a period of rapid growth and suburban sprawl, have come of age and acquired responsibilities that the boom towns of the past never knew." This trope of maturity, suggesting that American cities were reaching a point where their undisciplined native morphologies needed to be brought under the umbrella of some greater idea of order, has proved durable (as has the repeated appropriation of the Harvard imprimatur for the personal ideological projects of imported celebrities from Sert to Gropius to Koolhaas).

Sert identified two hostile forces at which urban design was to be directed. The first was the "superficial" City Beautiful approach, which, he argued, ignored the "roots of the problems and attempted only window-dressing effects," presumably both by failing to observe the "functional city" strictures of the Athens Charter and through its nostalgic forms of expression. The second hemming discourse was that of city planning itself, which, Sert suggested, had evolved to a point where the "scientific phase has been more emphasized than the artistic one." Urban design, by contrast, was to be "that part of city planning which deals with the physical part of the city, . . . the most creative phase of city planning and that in which imagination and artistic capacities can play a more important part."

The delicacy of this criticism surely reflected the dilemma of Modernist urbanism, with its growing conflict between a proclaimed social mission and a dogmatic formalism less and less able to make the connection. Nonetheless, Sert's contention that academic planning had become preoccupied with economic, social, policy, and other "nonarchitectural" issues was certainly true, and fifty years of subsequent experience—marked by intramural indifference and open hostility—only reinforced the conceptual estrangement. The other pole, the assault on the Beaux Arts formalism of the City Beautiful movement—a weirdly anachronistic straw man in 1956—was to prove more contradictory, if unexpectedly prescient. Sert, after all, was arguing that it was necessary to create a discipline that would restore an artistic sense to urban architecture, but he clearly had issues of taste with the City Beautiful, whatever his affinities might have been for its scale of operation, its protofunctionalist zoning, and its foregrounded for-

malism. The charge of superficiality, however, was not simply an orthodox Modernist riposte to historicist architecture; it was meant to resonate with the social program embedded in CIAM's discourse—the sputtering effort to globalize European styles of rationality in its putative project of amelioration—and to concretely realize insights shared with planners who lacked the inclination and the means to produce architectural responses.

This constellation of arguments—that cities were important to civilization, that abandoning centers for sprawling suburbs was no answer, that design could reify, for better or worse, social arrangements, and that "correct" and deep architectural projects that commanded all the physical components of city building could solve their problems—has dominated the field of urbanism from the early nineteenth century to the present. And the critique of this discourse has also had a consistent focus: we must be wary of all totalizing schemes, especially those that propose universal formal solutions to complex social and environmental problems, that obliterate human, cultural, and natural differences, and that usurp individual rights through top-down, command application.

Many of those gathered at the conference clearly felt some disquiet not simply at the 1950s America of conspicuous consumption and sprawl but also at the America of urban renewal, then in the years of its raging glory. Strikingly, the nondesigners in attendance—including Charles Abrams, Jane Jacobs, Lewis Mumford, and Lloyd Rodwin—were those to voice the claims of the intricate social city, to decry the racist agendas of urban renewal, to argue for the importance of small-scale commerce, and to denounce the "tyranny" of large-scale, market-driven solutions. Indeed, the presence of this group—none of whom was a member of either the architect-dominated CIAM or Team 10—represented the seeds of doom for the constricted urbanism promoted by CIAM, the inescapably contaminating *other* that continues to haunt the narrow project of urban design.

This critique of the CIAM project was scarcely news. In his indispensable volume on CIAM, Eric Mumford quotes a letter from Lewis Mumford that sets out his reasons for declining Sert's invitation in 1940 to write an introduction to what was eventually published as the remarkably flakey *Can Our Cities Survive?* in 1942. As with the demurral of the nonarchitect conferees of 1956, Mumford's disagreement was with a reading of the city that seemed to exclude politics and culture, to reduce the urban function to the schema of housing,

recreation, transportation, and industry. "The organs of political and cultural association," wrote Mumford about an especially conspicuous lacuna in Sert's polemic, "are the *distinguishing* marks of the city: without them, there is only an urban mass."

In 1961—a year after Harvard formally established its degree program in urban design—Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* still the definitive critique of functionalist urbanism. As the 1960s progressed, this attack on the forms and assumptions that comprised the pedigree of virtually every aspect of contemporary urbanism came hot and heavy from various quarters. The civil rights movement exposed the racist agenda behind much urban renewal and highway construction. The women's movement revealed the sexist assumptions underlying the organization of suburban and other forms of domestic space. The environmental and consumer movements showed the toxic inefficiencies of the automotive system and the selfish, world-dooming wastefulness of U.S. hyperconsumption. The counterculture protested the anemic expressive styles of Modernist architecture and the homogeneous spatial pattern of American conformity. Preservationism celebrated the value of historic urban textures, structures, and relationships. Advocacy planning and the close investigation of indigenous "self-help" solutions to building for the poor espoused user empowerment, democratic decision making, low-tech, and private expressive variety. And the assault on functionalist orthodoxy fomented by both rebellious visionaries and liberated historicists within the architectural profession made the CIAM writ seem both sinister and ridiculous.

All of this called into question the form the new urban design would take as well as what urban ideology it would defend—its response to the complex of social, political, and environmental crises everywhere exposed and exploding. New York City was to be the most visible battleground, and 1961 opened the decade with a clarifying statement of thesis and antithesis: the simultaneous publication of *Death and Life* and the passage of a revised bulk-zoning law that overturned the pioneering regulations of 1916—with their codification of street walls and setbacks—in favor of the paradigm of the slab in the plaza, the official enshrinement, at last, of the *Ville Radieuse*. This was controversial from the outset—such planning had already dominated public housing construction and urban renewal for years—and the atmosphere in the city was roiling. The tide

was turning against Robert Moses—Le Corbusier's most idiomatic legatee—who, thanks to Jacobs among others, was soon to suffer his Waterloo downtown with the defeat of a planned urban renewal massacre for Greenwich Village and of the outrageous Lower Manhattan Expressway, intended to wipe out what is now SoHo to speed traffic across the island.

This triumphant resistance—galvanized too by the contemporaneous loss of Penn Station—helped both to create an enduring culture of opposition and to revalue the fine grain of the city's historic textures and mores, asserting the rights of citizens to remain in their homes and neighborhoods. Jacobs's nuanced conflation of neighborhood form and human ecology was—and continues to be—precisely the right theoretical construct to animate the practice of urban design. Unfortunately, although her example continues to be tonic for neighborhood organization and defense, her legacy has been deracinated by its selective uptake by the far narrower, formally fixated concerns of preservationism, by an ongoing strain of behaviorist crime fighters (from Oscar Newman to the Giuliani "zero tolerance" crowd), and by the spreading mine field of institutionalized urban design, narrowly attached to its Disney version of urbanity and its fierce suppression of accident and mess, the wellsprings of public participation and the core of Jacobs's argument about urban vitality. And Jacobs's focus on a circumscribed set of U.S. environments and disdain for the idea of new towns unfortunately helped retard the investigation of how her unarguable ideas about the good city might inform other realizations.

Nineteen sixty-one was an urbanistic *annus mirabilis*, bringing publication not only of Jacobs's text but also of Jean Gottman's *Megalopolis* and Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*. This astonishing trifecta—to which I would add Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* of 1963 and Ian McHarg's *Design with Nature* of 1969—are the headwaters of a critique that urban design shares with virtually all thoughtful students of the city. Together they reinstated the conceptual centrality of ecology—first systematically introduced by the Chicago School decades earlier—in the production of urban models. But ecology is not a fixed construct and is comprehensible only in its specific inflections. On the one hand, an ecological understanding of urban dynamics can promote stewardship, community, and responsibility. On the other, it can support a fish-gotta-swim determinism that implies

that the urban pattern is as genetic as male pattern baldness and that urban design is equivalent to intelligent design, revealing only the inevitable.

In this debate, Mumford retains special importance (although his reputation is often submerged as the result of his boorish and myopic treatment of Jacobs). Mumford was an unparalleled reader of the forms and meanings of the historic city, direct heir of the regionalist ecology descending from Patrick Geddes, and an unabashed fan of the Garden City so reviled by Jacobs: the omega point of Mumford's urban teleology was the movement for new towns, incarnate in a history spanning Letchworth, Radburn, and Vallingby. Mumford was retiutopian in the received Modernist sense, a believer both in the therapeutic value of thoughtful order and in the importance of formal principles, qualities he actually shared with Jacobs. But Mumford also understood the depth of his oppositional role and saw with clarity the way that the "pentagon of power" inscribed itself in the tissue of the city. For Mumford, the city was infused with the political, and he understood its future as a field of struggle for an equitable and just society. Alas, this principled insight only seemed to reinforce his unyielding formal partisanship.

Within the academy, skepticism about urban design's narrowness as a discipline paralleled its consolidation and growth. In 1966, Kevin Lynch published the first of an increasingly critical series of articles in which he sought to distinguish urban design from a more expansive idea of "city design." Lynch's critique was—and is—fundamental. Objecting to urban design's fixation on essentially architectural projects and its reliance on a limited set of formal typologies, Lynch argued throughout his work for an urban discipline more attuned to the city's complex ecologies, its contending interests and actors, its elusive and layered sites, and for complex readings, unavailable within the discipline of architecture, that would allow the city to achieve its primary social objective as the setting for variegated and often unpredictable human activities, behaviors that had to be understood from the mingled perspectives of many individuals, not simply from the enduring Modernist search for a universal subjectivity, however "egalitarian."

But Lynch's was clearly a minority view, and urban design as practice rapidly developed along the lines he feared. In 1966—the year of Lynch's initial sally (and of Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*)—John Lindsay set up his Mayor's Task Force

on Urban Design, which soon morphed into the Urban Design Group (UDG), inserted as a special, semiautonomous branch within the City Planning Department and intended to make an end run around its lumbering bureaucracy. The Planning Department was itself then in the throes of producing a new master plan for the city, the last such to be attempted. Despite the inherent dangers of giant, single-sourced plans, this ongoing willed incapacity to think comprehensively now haunts the city with a counterproductive imaginative boundary, a suspicion of big plans that refuses, however provisionally, to sum up its parts.

The department's plan—ambitious, outdated, and strangely reticent about formal specifics—was ignominiously turned down by the City Council in 1969, victim both of its own unpersuasive vision and of a then-boiling suspicion of master planning in general. Urban design represented a clear alternative to the overweening command style of such big, infrastructure-fixated, one-size-fits-all, urban-renewal-tainted plans. Reflecting the reborn interest in neighborhood character and the relevance of historic urban forms, the UDG's main m.o. was to designate special districts, each subject to customized regulatory controls intended to preserve and enhance (and sometimes invent) their singular character. This districting—and its zoning and coding strategies—was later extended politically by the devolution of a degree of planning authority to local community boards, part of a larger wave of administrative decentralization that included, catastrophically, the school system. The move to neighborhood planning, however, has proved a generally positive development, if seriously undercut in practice by the restricted budgets and limited statutory authority of the boards themselves and by a continuing failure to balance local initiative with a more comprehensive vision.

The work of the UDG was very much the product of its time, weighted toward the reestablishment of traditional streetscapes threatened by Modernist zoning formulations and visual sensibilities; the group's recommendations were an amalgam of prescribed setbacks, materials, arcades, signage, view corridors, and other formal devices for consolidating visual character. These prescriptions defined, at a stroke, the formal repertoire of American urban design and fixed its more limited social agenda on supporting the centrality of the street (whose life was the focus of Jacobs's urbanism) and efforts to reinforce the "character" of local identities in areas like the Theater District, the Financial District, and Lincoln Center, where it sought

to create hospitable, reinforcing environments for already concentrated but weakened economic uses.

The operational conundrum in the approach lay in finding the means for finessing and financing the formal improvements intended to engender the turnaround, and the search for implementation strategies produced two problematic offspring that remain central to the city's planning efforts: the bonus and the Business Improvement District (BID). The importance of these instruments has only grown as government has become increasingly enthralled by the model of the "public-private partnership," the ongoing redescription of the public interest as the facilitation of private economic activity—government intervention to prime the pump of trickle-down. The bonus system, which exchanges some specified form of urban good behavior for additional bulk or for direct subsidy in the form of tax relief or low-rate financing, is founded on a fundamental contradiction: one public benefit must be surrendered to obtain another. In the case of increased bulk, access to light and air and limitations of scale are traded for an "amenity," for a plaza, an arcade, or simply a shift in location to some putatively underdeveloped area. With financial subsidy, the city sacrifices its own income stream—with whatever consequences for the hiring of teachers or police—in favor of the allegedly greater good of business "retention" or a projected rise in property "values" and downstream taxation. Of course, both systems are rife with opportunities for blackmail and corruption, and these continue to be exploited fulsomely.

While BIDs do not involve the same levels of public subsidy, they collude in creating a culture of exception in which the benefits of urban design (and maintenance) are directed to commercially driven players operating outside normal public frameworks, disproportionately benefiting the rich neighborhoods able to pony up for the improvements. This nexus of special districts and overlays, bulk bonuses, tax subsidies, BIDs, preservation, and gentrification has now coalesced to form the primary apparatus for planning in New York and most other cities in the United States. This outcome is yet another triumph for neoliberal economics, the now virtually unquestioned idea that the role of government is to assure prosperity at the top, an idea that has produced both the most obscene national income gap in history as well as the unabated froth of development that is rapidly turning Manhattan—where the average apartment price now exceeds one million dollars—into the world's largest gated community.

Urban design has acted as enabler in this precisely because of its ostensible divorce from the social engineering of planning, nominally expressed in its circumspect scales of intervention and resensitized approach to the physical aspects of urbanism. In New York—where our municipal leadership evaluates all development by the single metric of real estate prices—the Planning Department has largely refashioned itself as the Bureau of Urban Design, executor of policies emanating from the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, the city's actual director of planning, the man who would be Moses. While attention to the quality and texture of the city's architecture and spaces—both new and historic—is of vital importance, the role of design as the expression of privilege has never been clearer. Whether in the wave of celebrity architects designing condos for the superrich, the preservation of historic buildings and districts at the ultimate expense of their inhabitants, the sacrifice of industrial space in favor of more remunerative residential developments, or the everyday cruelties of the exodus driven by the exponential rise in real estate prices, the city seems to everywhere sacrifice its rich ecology of social possibilities for simply looking good.

The most important physical legacy of the UDG approach is the 1979 plan for Battery Park City by Alexander Cooper (a former member of the UDG) and Stanton Eckstut, which—because of its successful execution and succinct embodiment of the new traditionalist lexicon of urban design—has achieved a conceptual potency unmatched since the *Plan Voisin*. This project, created ex nihilo on a spectacular landfill site, was controlled by a specially created state authority with a raft of special condemnation, bonding, and other powers, including relief from virtually all local codes and reviews (another Moses legacy and an ever-increasing element in the collusive style of large-scale development in the city), and attempted to channel the spirit and character of the historic city in a completely invented environment. It was surely also heavily influenced by the seminal *Collage City* of Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, published in 1978, an argument for looking at the city as a series of interacting fragments, a promising strategy dissipated—like so much subsequent urban design—by inattention to the contemporary capacity for assuming meanings derived from the formal arrangements of imperial or seventeenth-century Rome. Battery Park City, by translating the UDG's historicist ethos of urban design as a contextual operator into an agent for something entirely new and literally disengaged from the existing city, was the crucial

bridge to the emerging New Urbanism and its universalizing polemics of "tradition."

Like many subsequent New Urbanist formulations—not to mention the original cities from which its forms were derived—Battery Park City has its virtues. Its scale is reasonable, and its look conventionally orderly. Its waterfront promenade is comfortably dimensioned, beautifully maintained, and blessed with one of the most spectacular prospects on the planet. Vehicular traffic is a negligible obstacle to circulation on foot (although there is almost no life on the street to get in its way). The deficit is the unrelieved dullness of its bone-dry architecture, the homogeneity of its population and use, the repression of alternatives under the banner of urban correctness, the weird isolation, the sense of generic simulacrum, and the political failure to leverage its economic success to help citizens whose incomes are inadequate to live there.

By the time of the construction of Battery Park City, the assault on Modernist urbanism and the spirited defense of the fabric and culture of the historic city had long been paralleled by a withering interrogation of life in the suburbs. These were not simply the most rapidly growing component of the metropolis but were—largely under the analytical radar—increasingly taking over center-city roles en route to becoming the dominating edge city of today. The difficult reciprocities of city and suburb were longstanding as both facts and tropes. Indeed, the city itself was first recognized as a "problem" at the moment its boundaries exploded to produce the idea of the suburban during its industrialization-driven expansion in the nineteenth century. At that moment were realized the political, economic, social, technical, and imaginative forces that created the repertoire of forms of the modern city—the factory zone, the slum, and the suburb—as well as the array of formal antidotes that constitute the lineage of urban design. More, the invention of the city as the primal scene of class struggle, of self-invention, of a great efflorescence of new ways of pleasure and deviance, of habit and ritual, and of possibility and foreclosure, had immediate and deep implications for the creation and valuation of fresh form.

The mainstreaming of urban design in the 1960s and 1970s was, in part, a product of the diminished appeal of the suburbs, contingent on a parallel revaluing of the city as the site of desirable middle-class lifestyles, the happinesses that a previous generation had understood itself obliged to flee the city to achieve. The widespread critical re-

visiting of suburbia—which was showing strong signs of dysfunction and fatigue—gave urban design's project both relevance and register by establishing it as an instrument of a broader critique of the sprawling spatiality of the postwar city. Like the threat to city life posed by the obliteration of neighborhood character, the attack on suburbanism was both formal and social. Strip development was reviled for its chaotic visuality and its licentious consumption of the natural environment. Highways were defended from obtrusive billboards and honky-tonk businesses via "beautification." Suburban living was criticized for its alienating, "conformist" lifestyles. Racist and sexist underpinnings were assailed. Tract houses were denigrated for being made out of ticky-tacky and looking all just the same. Cars were unsafe at any speed. Even the nuclear family was becoming fissile, chafing at life in its split-level castle.

However, like Modernist urbanism, suburbia was not simply the automatic outcome of market forces and its hidden persuaders but had a strong utopian tinge. Heavily ideological realizations of the American dream of freestanding property, new frontiers, and unlimited consumption, the suburbs felt, to millions, like manifest destiny. However, as they leapfrogged one another farther and farther into the "virgin" landscape, their destruction of the very qualities that had defined them became an increasingly untenable contradiction. The critique of the one-dimensionality of suburban sprawl that arose as a result was both social and environmental, and it reciprocated on both levels with the development of more deeply ecological views of city and region. This was advanced by such observers of the meta-scale as Jean Gottman, by a series of mordant observers—from Peter Blake to Pete Seeger—of suburban forms, and by social commentators—like Vance Packard, Herbert Gans, and Betty Friedan—who analyzed their patterns of consumption, conformity, and exclusion. And the boomer generation—invigorated by rebellion and fresh from its intensive introduction to the newly accessible cities of Europe—confronted its own oedipal crisis and increasingly drew the conclusion that it could never go home again to the pat certainties of its parents' uptight lifestyles. As it had for centuries, the city represented an alternative.

But comfort and consumption had been too thoroughly embedded, and the vision of the city that emerged as the model for urban design was highly suburbanized—suburban conformities reformatted for urban densities and habits. The incrementalism of urban design, although conceptually indebted to the generation of activists that had

risen in defense of the fragile balance of neighborhood ecologies, had none of their rebellious edge: urban design became urban renewal with a human face. While it took a little longer for the "this will kill that" antinomies of suburb and city to become theoretically re-consolidated in the neither here nor there formats of New Urbanism, a consistent disciplinary discourse was quickly consolidated under the rubric of "traditional" urbanism. This formulation provided—at least initially—what seemed a very big tent, capacious enough to shelter neighborhood and preservation activists, Modernists looking for a reinvigorated schema for total design, defenders of the natural environment, critics of suburban profligacy, and cultural warriors in pursuit of transformative lifestyles of various stripes.

Collisions were inevitable, and urban design's prejudice for the formulaic, for a reductive "as of right" approach to planning based on the translation of general principles (formal variety, mixed use, etc.) into legal constraints, was necessarily imperfect. And each of the positions that urban design sought to amalgamate into its increasingly homogeneous practice came with its own evolving history and arguments about the bases of correct urban form, replete with potential incompatibilities and often driven—like the city itself—by a refusal to be fixed. Questions of the relationship of city and country, of the rights of citizens to space and access, of the limits on their power to transform their environments, of zoning and mix, of the role of the street, of the meaning of density, of the appropriateness of various architectures, of the nature of neighborhoods, of the relations of cities and health, and of the epistemological and practical limits of the very knowability of the city, have formed the matrix of urban theory from its origins, and its constant evolution is not easily repressed.

This continuous remodeling of paradigms for the form and elements of the modern good city is also—and necessarily—an architectural enterprise. Models of the city—from those of Pierre L'Enfant to those of Joseph Fourier, Ebenezer Howard, Arturo Soria y Mata, Le Corbusier, Victor Gruen, and Paolo Soleri—remain indispensable conceptual drivers for urban progress, for making urban life better by refreshing choice and by holding up one pole of the indispensable dialectic of permanence and provisionality that describes the city. Unfortunately, such concrete visions have become thoroughly suspect—victims of the failed experiences of Modernist urbanism—tarred with the brush of authoritarian totalization, by the willful insistence that every utopia is a dystopia, that certain scales of imagining can only

come to bad ends. The theoretical underpinnings of urban design seek to deflect—and correct—this problem by claiming to find principles situationally, via the sympathetic understanding and extension of styles and habits already indigenous to the sites of its operations. The imputation is not simply that urban design is respectful in some general sense but that its formal preferences—because they are "traditional"—embody consent.

In staking this claim, urban design operates as a kind of prospective preservationism. As a result, it becomes radically anticontextual by assuming that the meaning of space, once produced, is fixed, that an arcade is an arcade is an arcade is an arcade. By extension, it remains an item of faith for urban design that—however far removed from its originating contexts of meaning—an architectural object retains the power to re-create the values and relationships that first gave it form. This is a remarkably utopian position in the very worst way. Urban design's project to reconfigure America's towns and cities along largely imaginary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century lines, enabled and buttressed by rigorously restrictive codes, is chilling not simply for its blinkered and fantasmatic sense of history but also for its reductive and oppressive universalism and staggering degree of constraint.

But what exactly—beyond its stylistic peccadilloes—does urban design presume to preserve, and how does it know it when it sees it? In the already existing city, the recognition of living social systems and accumulated compacts about the value of place are necessary points of departure for any intervention. The formal medium for generalizing from such situations is the identification and analysis of pattern, the translation of some specific observation about the experience of people in space into a broader assertion about the desirable. This mode of inquiry—whether practiced by Aristotle, Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, William H. Whyte, or Christopher Alexander—mediates between the limits and capacities of the body, a rich sense of individual psychology, and a set of assumptions about the social and cultural relations immanent to a specific place and time. Each of these is susceptible to great variation, and as a result, any pattern produced by their conjunction will inevitably shift, however slowly.

Architecture can respond to the dynamism of social patterns by closely accommodating well-observed particulars, by creating spaces of usefully loose fit, or by proposing arrangements that attempt to conduce or facilitate specific behaviors outside the conventions of the

present and familiar. The last of these possibilities—which can include both amusement parks and prison camps—always understands architecture as an agent of transformation because, by being inventive, it brings something experientially new to a situation. And because it changes the situation, it begs the question of the terms of participation, of the means by which a user or inhabitant is persuaded to take part, of the difference between coercion and consent. Here is the central dilemma for utopia, for master planning, for any architecture that proposes to make things better: what exactly is meant by "better"? and better for *whom*?

The language of pattern seeks to deal with this problem either by the quasi-statistical suggestion that the durability, "timelessness," and cross-cultural reproduction of certain forms are markers of agreement or by more direct psychological or ethnographic observations and measurements of contentment and utility. Urban design borrows the aura of such techniques of corroboration to validate the grafting of a particular system of taste onto a limited set of organizational ideas. This entails a giant—and absurd—conceptual leap. As framed by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU)—the Opus Dei of urban design—pattern is not understood in the manner of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* but rather that of *The American Builder's Companion*. These patterns do not emerge from the patient parsing of the networks of social behavior in some specific community but from pure millenarianism—from the idea of the utter singularity of the "truth"—that produces tools not for analyzing patterns but for imposing them. The validity of these patterns—promulgated in insane specificity—is established tautologically. Because obedience produces a *distinct* uniformity, one to which particular values have already been imputed, urban design argues that its codes are merely heuristic devices for recovering traditional values and meanings *already* encoded in the heart of every real American, faith-based design.

Urban design has successfully dominated physical planning both because of this resonant fundamentalism and because it has, from its inception, been able to appropriate a number of well-established reconfigurings of "traditional" architecture. Urban design's remarkable timing allowed it both to claim to embody the meanings of the historic city and to fit into a space already replete with a range of tractable and demanding prototypes—or patterns—produced by the market without direct benefit of academic theory and prejudice. The current urban design default is, for the most part, a recombinant

form of various developer-driven formats for suburban building that themselves became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. The extensive emergence of greenfield "town house" developments (often as a means of realizing the appreciated value of inner-ring suburban land), the transformation of shopping centers to "street"-based malls, the proliferation of "autonomous" gated communities, the rehabilitation of exclusionary zoning to restore traditional styles of segregation, and the uninterrupted semiotic refinement of the appliquéd historicity of virtually all the architecture involved, had, by the 1960s, already become ubiquitous. And behind it all loomed the synthesizing figure of America's preeminent twentieth-century utopia: Disneyland. The theme park is the critical and synthetic pivot on which both the ideological and formal character of urban design continues to turn.

Disneyland—fascinating not just to a broad public but also to a gamut of professional observers including Reyner Banham, Charles Moore, Louis Marin (who memorably described it in a 1990 book as a "degenerate" utopia), and even Kevin Lynch—is urban design's archetype, sharing its successes and failures and grounded in a common methodology of paring experience to its outline. Disneyland favors pedestrianism and "public" transport. It is physically delimited. It is designed to the last detail. It is segmented into "neighborhoods" of evocative historical character. It is scrupulously maintained. Its pleasures are all G-rated. It is safe. Grounded in the sanctification of an imaginary idea of the historic American town, each park enrolls its visitors in its animating fantasy with an initiating stroll down a Hollywoodized "Main Street" that acculturates its diversity of guests to a globally uniform architectural inflection of good city form.

But what is most relevant about Disneyland—like all simulacra— is the power of its displacement. Disneyland is a concentration camp for pleasure, the project of an ideologue of great power and imagination, the entertainment industry's version of Robert Moses. Disneyland is not a city, but it selectively extracts many of the media of urbanity to create a citylike construct that radically circumscribes choice, that heavily polices behavior, that commercializes every aspect of participation, that understands subjectivity entirely in terms of consumption and spectatorship, and that sees architecture and space as a territory of fixed and inflexible meanings. Like shopping malls or New Urbanist town centers, Disneyland provides evanescent moments of street-style sociability within a larger system entirely dependent on cars. And, of course, no one lives in Disneyland, and

employment there is limited to "cast members" working to produce the scene of someone else's enjoyment. Girded against all accident, Disneyland produces no new experiences, only the opportunity for the compulsive repetition in its rigorously programmed repertoire of magic moments.

America's greatest export is entertainment: hedonism has become our national project. But our cultural mullahs—from Michael Eisner to Pat Robertson—want to tell people exactly how to have fun, to force our product on them, just as we force democracy on Iraq or "Love Boat" reruns on Indonesia. Urban design, with its single, inflexible formula, is also produced for customers—or worshippers—rather than citizens. This fetish for the correct betrays to the core the urbanity evoked by Jane Jacobs, the vital links between sociability, self-determination, and pleasure. The 1960s—which Jacobs did so much to help found—were constantly engaged in sorting through the meanings and relationships of pleasure and justice. Crystallizing slogans—like "Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out" and "Beneath the Pavement, the Beach"—were post-Freudian assaults on an enduringly Puritan style of repression and saw free expression and the pursuit of pleasure as instruments of cooperation and equity, a way of making a connection between the personal and the political, insubordinate fun. One of the singularities of postwar American culture was surely the degree to which the terms and proprietorship of enjoyment became both central to the character of the national economy and the object of struggle and critique. The movements for racial, gender, and sexual equality, the spread of environmentalism, the revaluing of urban life, and the assault on colonialism and its wars were all filtered through the perquisites of prosperity, which insistently argued that the fight was never simply for bread but always also for roses.

Urban design, from its origins, was a way into the system, a means for architecture to recover its lost credibility and continue its own traditional role as an instrument of power. The perfect storm of urban design's invention was a miraculous convergence of the overthrow of the old Modernist formal and social model, a broad reappreciation of urban life, a freshly legitimated historicism with a new sophistication in the formal reading of the structure and conventions of urban environments, an expanded system of consumption that particularly glamorized European lifestyles (we were suddenly eating yogurt), and the scary emptiness of available late-Modern alternatives like the

megastructure. Its success was also immeasurably aided by the defection of many architects from the field, a desertion that continues to mark a political split in the profession, reinforced by the inexorable drift to the right of the CNU and its fellow travelers.

Indeed, the social and political priorities of a large cadre of baby boomer architectural graduates led, for quite a few, to a suspicion of architecture itself, which—seen as an inevitable coalescence of power and established regimes of authority—became an impossible instrument. The focus on "alternative" architectures, on small-scale, self-help solutions, and on repair rather than reconstruction, all foregrounded notions of service and consent, disdaining grand visions of any sort as incapable of embodying the shifting, diverse, and plural character of a democratic polity. Such arguments were only reinforced as the decade wore on by the easy connection between DDT and urban renewal at home with Agent Orange and carpet bombing in Vietnam. The consequences were both inspiring and crippling, discouraging a large cohort of fresh-minted architects and planners from establishing themselves in mainstream practice either permanently or temporarily, turning many to communalism, self-reliance, lifestyle experiment, and various modes of righteous exile. Seeking gentler solutions and warmed by a soft, Thoreauvian glow, youth culture created a profusion of alternative communities in the form of urban communes squatting abandoned tenements, rural settlements under karmic domes, or nomadic enclaves cruising in psychedelic school buses, even if such places were more envied than engaged by the majority, who, for their part, pursued altered consciousness through other means.

Because of their antiauthoritarian foundation, these styles of settlement never received—never could receive—a formal manifesto that strategically summed them up, despite a profuse, if diffuse, literature ranging from *The Whole Earth Catalog* to *Eros and Civilization* to *Ecotopia*. Nevertheless, this collection of forms and actions was clearly a cogent urbanism, one that continues to inform contemporary debates, if only because the boomers who were their authors are now in their years of peak social authority, dragging their lingering consciences behind them. Without doubt, the environmental ethos of a light lie on the land and of self-sufficient styles of consumption, the fascinations of the nomad as an urban subject, the ideal of a democratic architecture expressively yoked to new and cooperative

lifestyles, the antipathy to big plans, the prejudice for the participatory, and the fetishization of the natural are the direct progenitors of today's green architecture and urbanism.

The debilitating paradox of these positions lay in seeing the meaning of assembly—and citizenship—as increasingly displaced from fixed sites and patterns. The ideas of the "instant" city and global village were seductive constructs for a generation for which the authority of permanence seemed both suspect and dangerous. The ephemeral utopia of the rock festival was, perhaps, the most coherent expression of an urbanism that sought to operate as a perfect outlaw and suggested an architecture of pure and invisible distribution, a stingless infrastructural rhizome that established a planetary operational parity, a ubiquitous set of potentials accessible anywhere as a successor to the city. The idea of the oak tree with an electrical outlet and a world grid of caravan hookups was the ultimate fantasy of a postconsumption nomadology, resistant to The Man's styles of order, a "place" in which possessions were to be minimal, nature at once wired and undisturbed, and money no longer an issue. The vision was warm, silly, and prescient, virtuality before the fact. Like the rock festival, this was a clear proposition for organizing a world in which location has been radically destabilized, and it anticipated one of the great drivers of urban morphology today with its Web-enabled anything-anywhere orders.

One group—Archigram—was particularly successful in formalizing all of this, tapping, with insight and wit, into the tensions between the contesting technological and Arcadian visions of the era. Operating on the level of pure but architecturally precise polemic, Archigram was a master of *détournement,* of playing with goaded migrations of meaning and at embedding critique in the carnavalesque. From their initial fascinations with the high-tech transformation of nineteenth-century mechanics into the "degenerate" utopias of the megastructuralists, Metabolists, and other megalomaniac schemers, they moved quickly to describe a range of nomadic structures: moving cities, aerial circuses floating from place to place by balloon, self-sufficient wanderers wearing their collapsible "Suitaloons." They proposed the infiltration of small towns and suburbs by a variety of subversive pleasure-parasites and sought, during the productively unsettled post-McLuhan, pre-Internet interregnum, to reconfigure the landscape as a new kind of commons, a global fun fair. Operating within the bounds of the physically possible and producing a stream

of intoxicating forms, their project was at once hugely influential formally and almost completely ineffectual politically. Not exactly an unusual fate for countercultural product.

However, the most important attempt to create an alternative style of formal urban practice at the point of emergence of urban design was advocacy planning, which—given the nature of the times—arose as explicitly oppositional, dedicated to stopping community destruction by highways, urban renewal, and gentrification. In its specifically physical operations, the focus was on restoration and self-defense, on the delivery of municipal services to disadvantaged communities, on the repair of the frayed fabric of poor neighborhoods, on tenement renovations, community gardens, and playgrounds in abandoned lots. The redistributive logic of advocacy work looked on architecture and planning with suspicion as an instrument of destruction or privilege. The problem—an analysis descending from Engels—was not a lack of architecture but the fact that too much of it was in the wrong hands.

While this was both a logical and a consistent position, its morphological modesty was a hard sell for anyone eager to build and offered no clear proposition for greenfield sites, certainly no strong insights for transforming the suburbs, which were also viewed with suspicion as enemies of diversity and as economic threats, sucking the inner city dry of resources. Advocacy's visual culture, such as it was, was very much fixed on community expression, on self-built parks, inner-city murals, and the improvisational workings of the favela, its own over-romanced utopia. These preferences were infused by an old dream of a political aesthetic, but advocacy's taste was reductive, looking for the artistic reproduction of social content only when it was presumed direct, when it was authored (not simply authorized) by "the people." This position, which looks to produce design as midwifery, continues to enjoy substantial currency in a range of community-based design practices and has found coherent ideological backing both from the school of "Everyday Urbanism" as well as from the progressive wing of planners and geographers—for whom equity and social justice are the gold standard—which is still the most lucid voice on urban issues in the academy.

These multiple strains remain the dialectical substrate of urban design today. A matrix of traditionalism, environmentalism, Modernism, and self-help configures the practices—and ideological accountancy— for virtually all contemporary design that purports to build the city. Although every current tendency embodies some degree of conceptual

hybridity, the basic terms of the argument about urbanism have remained remarkably consistent from the nineteenth century to the present. What has shifted—and continues to shift—are the political and ideological valences associated not simply with each formation but also their rapid pace of conceptual and ideological reconfiguration, and the promiscuity of meaning and representation that attach and slip away from each. These migrations of meaning are crucial: the way we make cities marks our politics and possibilities, and the struggle over their form is, as it has ever been, deeply enmeshed with the future of our polity.

Today, U.S.-style urban design—global exemplar from Ho Chi Minh City to Dubai—has arrived at a set of concerns and strategies, as well as a formal repertoire, that is as limited as those of CIAM, though with an ultimately even more chilling social message. The current default is essentially a splicing of Modernist universalist dogmatism, City Beautiful taste, and the cultural presumptions of neoliberalism, producing its urbanist double spawn: gentrification and the neotraditional suburb. Not since the Modernism of the 1920s has a visual system so successfully (and spuriously) identified itself with a particular set of social values: The elision of an architecture of stripped traditionalism (a pediment on every Shell station and 7-Eleven) with the imagined happinesses of a bygone golden age has been breathtaking.

It was surely no coincidence that this specificity grew out of a more general turn to the right, the new Republican majority that took to historicist expression as a means of instant authentication and prestige, all with a redemptive gloss derived from a thin idea of the social authority of convention that culminated in the mendacity, indifference, and sumptuary Hollywood taste of Reaganism. New Urbanism was the perfect theory of settlement for the Age of Reagan, the urbanistic embodiment of "family values," forcefully enshrined at the very moment that American culture was moving in the direction of transformative diversity. The New Urbanists' success is surely the result of making common cause with a right-tinged social theory, the Puritan-inspired vision of a "shining city on a hill" that ascendant neocon intellectuals and the burgeoning religious Right thought to so embody the values of a "traditional" America, and the New Urbanist idea of a single set of correct urban principles is surely balm to those upset with the dissipation of real Americanism under the assault of an excess of difference, the threatening pluralism of an America no longer dominated by WASP culture, a place of too many languages,

too many suspect lifestyles, too much uncontrollable choice. As Paul Weyrich, founding president of the reactionary Heritage Foundation, recently remarked, "New Urbanism needs to be part of the next conservatism."

Of course, this oversimplifies both origins and outcomes. The broad acquiescence to the neotraditional approach that characterizes American urban design is also the result of its proclaimed embodiment—sometimes tenuous and occlusive, sometimes genuine and persuasive—of many of the elements of more progressive approaches to the environment that provided much of the amniotic fluid for its gestation. Indeed, the powerful attraction of neotraditional urbanism must be seen not only in its neoliberal, end-of-history arguments, in which historicism stands in for capitalism and "Modernism" for the various forms of vanquished collectivism, but also in its claims on the inescapably relevant politics and practices of environmentalism, a genuine universalism with a very broad consensus. Self-proclaimed as the nemeses of sprawl, as friends to the idea of neighborhood, as advocates for public transportation, and as priests of participation, the New Urbanism and much of the current urban design default would seem to be a logical outgrowth of many of the progressive tendencies so lively at their origins. A number of the tendency's nominal proponents—Peter Calthorpe, Doug Kelbaugh, Jonathan Barnett (a UDG stalwart), and others—tilt to these positions as priorities, designing with greater tolerance, modesty, and depth. More, the CNU cannot be faulted for seeking solutions consonant with the scale of the problem: the idea of the creation of new towns and cities is crucial not simply to the control of sprawl but also to housing the exponential growth of the planet, urbanizing at the rate of a million people a week.

In fact, nothing in the charter of the Congress for New Urbanism, with its spirited defense of both urban and natural environments and its call for reinvigorating both local and regional perspectives, is likely to be opposed by any sensible urbanist. The controversy, rather, is over the dreary and uniform translation of principles to practice, the weirdly religious insistence on "traditional" architectural form, the dubious bedfellows, and, most especially, the weakness of most New Urbanist product, almost invariably car-focused, class-uniform, exclusively residential, and without environmental innovation. At this point, the clarion principles seem so much cover, much as the CNU's vaunted instrument of community participation—the charrette (one

of advocacy planning's more successful tools)—seems most often used not to produce new ideas or to give citizens entrée to the process of design, but to manufacture consent for New Urbanist predilections. No matter what the input, the outcome always seems the same.

Such remorseless formal orthodoxy is what killed Modernism, and it is not exactly surprising that the New Urbanist charter and congress are structural vamps of the Charter of Athens and its organizational vanguard, CIAM, nor that New Urbanism relies on charismatic, evangelizing leadership, the star power that is such a uniform object of CNU derision. This is the very definition of old-fashioned utopianism. The net effect is a vision that reproduces the self-certain, universalizing mood of CIAM both formally and ideologically, but that offers a new, if equally restricted, lexicon of formal behaviors. The ideological convergence of Modernist and "New" Urbanism is striking. Both are invested in an idea of a universal, "correct" architecture. Both are hostile to anomaly and deviance. Both have an extremely constrained relationship to human subjectivity and little patience for the exercise of difference. Both claim to have solutions for the urban crisis, which is identified largely with formal issues. Both purport to have an agenda that embraces an idea of social justice, but neither has a theory adequate to the issues involved. Finally, both are persuaded that architecture can independently leverage social transformation, become the conduit for good behavior, the factory grinding out happy workers or consumers.

It is not surprising that the two most celebrated formal accomplishments of the New Urbanism—Seaside and Celebration—are both figuratively and literally Disneyesque. That is, both are programmed and designed to produce a specific visual character held to conduce a fixed set of urban pleasures. Such pleasures are encoded in stylistic expression and heavily protected against deviancy, in a privileged typology in which the single-family house is the invariable alpha form, in highly static and ritualized physical infrastructures of sociability— the porch, the main street, the band shell—in compaction and the careful disposition of cars, and in an idea of sociability rooted in homogeneity and discipline. These are model environments for a leisured class, and they do produce both a dull serenity and a set of spaces for "public" activity with clear advantages over the thoughtlessly cul-de-saced McMansions whose pattern they interrupt.

Seaside is the Battery Park City of the New Urbanism, its first comprehensive codification and expression, and a clear expression of its possibilities and limits. A small, upper-middle-class holiday community, it is modeled on the indisputable charms of Martha's Vineyard, Fire Island, and Portmeirion, environments whose beautiful settings, consistent architectures, and common programs of relaxation support that special amiable subjectivity of people on holiday. These atmospheres are both delightful and artificial, and their viability as precedents for more general town making is limited precisely by the inevitability of their exclusions, the things that one takes a vacation to escape: work, mess, encounters with the nonvacationing other, unavoidable inequalities, demanding formal variety, schools, mass transit, unsightly infrastructure, nonconforming behaviors, and so on.

Celebration, an actual project of the Disney Corporation, is slightly closer to the idea of a town. It is larger, its residents work, it has a bit more social and economic infrastructure and a slightly wider spread of price points for the buy-in, but—like most New Urbanist work— is mainly a repatterning of the suburbs. Celebration's sole economic sector is consumption, and its residents are no less dependent on the automobile to get to work than suburbanites anyplace else. Like Seaside, its orderliness is assured by strict covenants that conspire to produce both hygienic conformity and the vaguely classical architecture that is of such bizarre importance to the New Urbanist leadership. The homeowners' associations that provide the necessary instruments of governance and constraint are, as organizations, something between co-op boards and BIDs, with similar agendas to maintain property values, to police levels of otherness, to secure the physical character of the place, and to supplement and evade normal democratic legality.

Although New Urbanists' work has been primarily suburban, their rhetoric derives much of its authority from the example of the city, and there has been much reciprocation between the New Urbanist project and the broader workings of American urban design in the richer and more resistant environment of actual cities. Both tendencies understand their performative tasks as the provision of "urban" amenity, and the good city is primarily associated with the ability of its physical spaces to support a rich and intricate visuality that promotes what is, in practice, the pleasures of the yuppie lifestyle and its program of shopping and dining, of fitness, of stylishness and mobility, and of a certain level of associative urban connoisseurship, based on the recognizability of their programs and architectures. To the degree that they embody a social or political affect, it
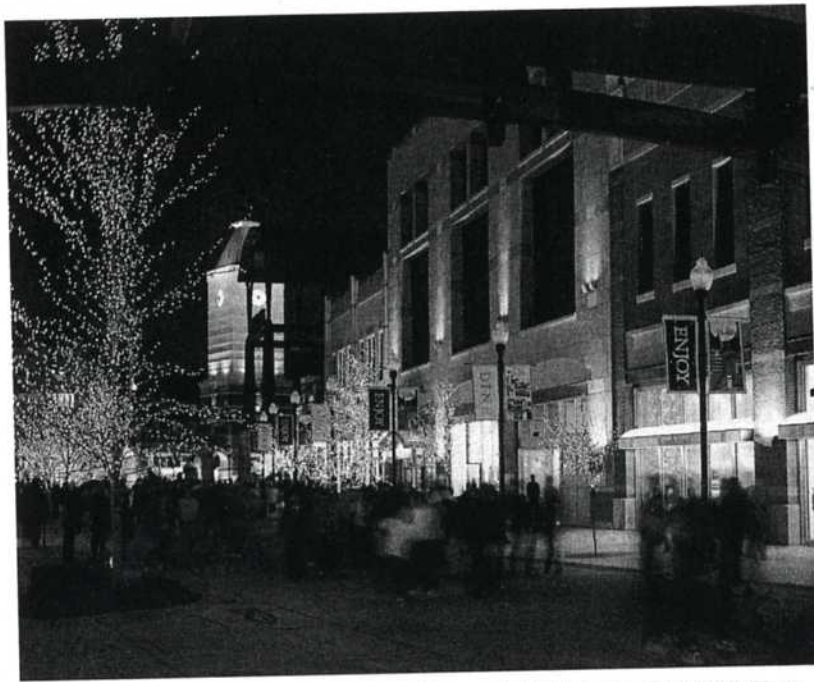
Jerde Partnership, The Gateway (Rio Grande looking north), Salt Lake City, Utah, 2001. Photograph by Michael McRae. Courtesy of Jerde Partnership.

revolves around old-fashioned forms of bourgeois decorum and the deployment of a limited set of signifiers of sustainability. Over the past twenty-five years many American cities have seen dramatic—if restricted—transformations in form and habit, and virtually no town of any size now seems to lack zones replete with sidewalk cafés, street trees and furnishings, contextually scaled architectures, artistic shop fronts, loft living, bike paths, and other attractive elements from the urban design pattern book. This collusion of pleasant infrastructures has, in fact, emerged as the salient professional measure of urban quality.

I had the opportunity, not long ago, to look over plans for a major extension to the core of Calgary, a succinct encapsulation of the progress of urban design since Battery Park City. The plan had many fine features, including light-rail, mixed-use buildings, variegated scale, attention to solar orientation, a well-manicured streetscape with a wealth of prescribed detail and a strong rhetoric of urbanity. But the net effect was formidably dull, and its gridiron plan and fastidious coding insufficiently responsive to the possibility of exception, a fore-

closure visible in the plan's unnuanced response to the very divergent conditions around it (river, park, rail yard, and downtown core), in its limited ability to accommodate architectures (such as a proposed university complex) that might be sources of creative disruption, and in its standard-issue pattern book of formal moves, from its little plazas to its proscriptions on nonconforming signage. The image of the plan conveyed in a series of winsome renderings was a perfect rendition of urban design's certifying palette of amenities—the wee shops and artistic signage, the Georgian squares, the bowered streets—all depicted in an apparently perpetual summer.

The Calgary plan was Starbucks urbanism, a suitable home for forms and traditions already translated into generic versions of themselves. With its derivation from the idea of the isolated district in its descent from the tabula rasa of urban renewal though the special districting and BIDs that succeeded it, the plan was more inflected by ideology than by place, by urban design's Platonic city form, increasingly identified with the Seattle/Portland/Vancouver prototype. Of course, these are cities that have achieved many successes, and as a default for urbanism, one could surely choose a lot worse. The issue is not the many good formal ideas embodied in the urban design—or the New Urbanist—paradigm but rather in their roles in dumbing urbanism down to create a culture of generic urban "niceness" intolerant of disorder or exception, in stifling the continued transformation and elaboration of urban morphologies under the influence of new technical, social, conceptual, and formal developments, and in disallowing the influence of communities of difference. Urban design and the New Urbanism are the house styles of gentrification, urban renewal with a human face.

The problem with this is not with the pursuit of the subtle visualities and comfortable infrastructures of humanely dimensioned neighborhoods, it is rather with gentrification's parasitic economy, feeding on the homes of the poor, on precisely the order of mix central to the arguments of Jane Jacobs. Today's dominant urban design is all lifestyle and no heart, and has nothing to say to the planet's immiserated majority, whether Americans victimized by our obscenely widening income gap or the billion and half people housed in the part of the world's cities undergoing the most explosive growth: slums. Modernist urbanism, for all its ultimate failings, was the extension of social movements for the reform of the squalid inequalities of the urbanism of the nineteenth century, and the clear subject of its address was

slum dwellers, men and women victimized by oppressive economic arrangements and by the urban environments that grew out of them, the workers' houses of Manchester, the *Mietkasernen* of Berlin, and the tenements of New York. If the sun, space, and greenery of the Radiant City and its identical architectures appear alienating and vapid today, it is crucial to think about what they were meant to replace: the dark, disease-ridden, dangerous hypercrowding of the industrial city.

The New Urbanism substitutes sprawl for slum as its polemical target, and its ideal subjects are members of the suburban upper-middle class whose problem is a mismatch between existing economic privilege and inappropriate spatial organization. The difficulty here is of having too much, rather than too little, and if this is a rational observation from the perspective of the environment, it is a radically different issue from the perspective of what is to be done. What is missing is an idea of justice, a theory that addresses not simply the reconfiguration of space but also the redistribution of wealth. The reduction of urbanism to a battle of styles is a formula for ignoring its most crucial issues. For example, there is no doubt that the neotraditionalist row houses that have replaced the penitential public housing towers being demolished in so many American cities represent a far more livable alternative. But it is equally clear that the net effect of the Hope VI program behind this transformation is the cruel displacement of 90 percent of the former population and that arguments about architecture obscure the larger political agendas at work. Likewise the continued, virtually unquestioned association of Modernist architecture with progressive politics has long since been insupportable, given the lie by the real meaning of urban renewal, by its expressive congeniality for multinational corporatism, by the ease with which it becomes the ready emblem of the Chinese ministry of propaganda, by the abandonment of politics by most of the leading lights of the architectural avant-garde.

At a conference in New York last year convened by the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics, Rem Koolhaas began his presentation with a slide of Jane Jacobs, whom he snidely denounced as an anachronism and an ideological drag. As a leading advocate of a robust, top-down idea of bigness and as one of globalization's most sophisticated and visible model citizens, Koolhaas was surely consistent in recognizing Jacobs's position as an affront to his own ethical ambivalence and corporatist cultural proclivities. And

it was surely an enjoyably naughty performance to stage in front of New Yorkers for whom Jacobs is widely thought a saint. Koolhaas has a fine aptitude for irony, for blurring the line between critique and apology, accepting the market-knows-best inevitability of what he appears to disdain, and then, self-inoculated, designing it. For him, critical interrogations of the megascale and its received formats are simply doomed, and any attempt to redirect the forms of the generic global city is hopeless naïveté.

"New" Urbanism and Koolhaasian "Post"-Urbanism represent a Hobson's choice, a Manichean dystopianism that leaves us trapped between *The Truman Show* and *Blade Runner*. There is something both infuriating and tragic in the division of the urban imaginary into faux and fab, and the tenacious identification of the project of coming to grips with what is genuinely a crisis with the cookie-cutter conformities of the former and the solipsistic, retro avant-gardism of the latter. Cities are becoming inhuman in both old and new ways, in the prodigious growth of slums, in the endlessness of megalopolitan sprawl, in the homogenizing routines of globalization, and in the alienating effects of disempowerment. But the scale has so shifted that the future of cities is now implicated with an inescapable immediacy in the fate of the earth itself.

Urban design needs to grow beyond its narrowly described fixation on the "quality" of life to include its very possibility. This will require a dramatically broadened discourse of effects that does not establish its authority simply analogically or artistically but that is inculcated with the project of enhancing equity and diversity and of making a genuine contribution to the survival of the planet. Our cities must undergo continuous retrofit and reconfiguration, their growth rigorously managed, and we must build hundreds of new towns and cities along radically sustainable lines as a matter of utmost urgency. It also means that Sert's call for an urban discipline that narrows the field of its intelligence to formal matters has become a dangerous anachronism, that the aesthetics of the urban must recapture the idea of their inseparability from the social and the environmental: as an academic matter, this will entail more than another repositioning of urban practices within the trivium of architecture, planning, and landscape. Finally, urban theory must renounce, for once and for all, the teleological fantasy of a convergence on a singular form for the good city.

The thwarting configuration of the traditionally isolated design

disciplines must now yield to the broader relational understandings of environmentalism and take up the challenges of finitude and equity. This refreshment of design's epistemology is a necessary and inevitable outcome of our ability to read both global and local ecologies as complex, comprehensive, and contingent, and to see our own instrumental and haphazard roles in their workings and meanings. It is simply no longer possible to understand the city and its morphology as isolated from the life and welfare of the planet as a whole or to shirk the necessary investigation of dramatically new paradigms at every scale to secure happy and fair futures. Cities—bounded and responsible—must help rebalance a world of growing polarities between overdevelopment and underdevelopment, offer hospitality to styles of difference that globalizing culture does not require, and rigorously account for and provide the means of their own respiration without prejudice to the survival of others'. This calls for the recovery of the "utopian" idea of heroic measures *and* a rigorous defense of the most widely empowered ideas of consent.

Which brings us back to those two model New Yorkers, Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford. Both loved cities passionately, and both dedicated their lives to understanding their character and possibilities. Both fought tirelessly to help give shape to the inevitability of urban transformation based on the desire for social justice and a deep connection to an urban history that inhered in intersecting forms, habits, and rights. Neither argued for the stifling imaginary fixities of a golden age, but each saw the good city as an evolving project, informed by the unfolding possibilities of new knowledge and experience. Jacobs celebrated her centuries-old neighborhood but happily rode the subway that ran beneath it. Mumford lived in the suburban fringes but never learned to drive. Each found happiness in a different relationship to the city, and both based their advocacy on preferences they actually lived. A future for urban designing must not dictate the good life but instead endlessly explore the ethics and expression of consent and diversity.

Bad Parenting

Emily Talen

It is time to wrestle urban design away from the bad parenting of architects. Instead of embracing its emerging social utility, they seem intent on casting it as their shameful problem child. Michael Sorkin's hyperbolic and pained assessment in "The End(s) of Urban Design" (previous chapter, this volume) is the familiar architect's rant. Urban designers' accomplishments are trivial, their idealism is absurd, and their orderliness is enough to make architects retch. Lessons like Paul Goldberger's "the absence of something wrong is what's totally wrong" (see "Urban Design Now: A Discussion," this volume) show a certain contempt for the field.

Sorkin is annoyed with urban design because, naturally, he is thinking like an architect. Architects crave originality—a cliché, but a true one. Transfer this to the design of human settlements and you get frustration: success in urban design is often about unoriginal things. And when architects look to urban design as the outlet for their creative genius, it tends to make them desperate, even hostile. Witness Sorkin's call for an urban design of "creative disruption."

Architects like Sorkin clearly recognize the importance of connecting urban design to social objectives, but they are uncomfortable with how that connection is usually created. Funny that he heralds Lewis Mumford as someone who understood the endless possibilities of relating justice