

©Urbanism, the conceit is often the same. In the marketing of urban design schemes, sites that more often than not would be unable to cultivate occupation by a sufficient range or quantity of peoples, or sustain occupation for any significant duration, or, worse yet, do not have the capacity to be in any legal or social sense public are (merely) *rendered* “public.”

A second assumption is that most urban designers, faced with the history of oppressive politics and vaunted failures of large-scale planning and the speculative real-estate market’s dominance of city making, have believed that because the city seems to be built project by project, no serious thinking or imagination needs to be directed toward the larger metropolis. Whether one chooses to call this new city a mass-conurbation, a megalopolis, or a metacity, this entity’s aggregate networks, patterns, scales, and temporal expressions defy easy calculation and elude the imposition of simple hierarchies and unifying planning strategies once thought feasible. Instead of engaging this metropolitan reality, New Urbanists, for example, have insisted on approaching every urban project as an exercise in small-town planning.² Conversely, our mostly ersatz architectural avant-garde adopts the metropolis—or its filmic facsimile—as an *atmosphere*, but without understanding the metropolis in its own terms and challenging its very definition as a system of real estate or social organization.

Perhaps urban design has always been a counter-metropolitan discipline, intent on retrieving those historic urban qualities most adored by its adherents, but as such it cannot progress. The endless, polyglot modern city is a vastly different creature than the relatively small pre-industrial settlements most often held up as classic cities.³ Because today’s city is a new creature, practicing urban design there is not just a matter of making the new parts act like the old, or vice versa, but rather one of contending with how the habits, lifestyles, and patterns of building that grow up in one place become transplanted to another. Even the American suburb now dates back more than a century and is arguably equal in cultural import to the industrial gridiron and colonial cities that preceded it. So, for example, when the children of the postwar American suburb bring their sensibilities to bear on the much-touted revitalization of the old downtowns, or when people live in converted office towers in the center and commute to office parks at the edge, as now occurs in Chicago, the codes that distinguish what is and is not urban change. In this new city, the shifting, contentious borders of class and ethnic affiliation—that