

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 theological fantasy of a convergence on a singular form for the good city.

The thwarting configuration of the traditionally isolated design