

as a distinctive subfield seems to me to be conceptually and analytically trapped in a static and stranded space, consisting of little more than pods of buildings hiving together. What lies outside this insular cluster has relatively little specific relevance to what happens within it, despite soft references to larger urban, metropolitan, regional, national, and global scales. Cut off in this way, urban design has little else to draw upon other than the idiosyncratic creativity of the architect-designer.

To the degree it is adhered to, this spatial reductionism disconnects urban design from the larger-scale spatiotemporal dynamics of urban development, as well as from nearly all other contemporary approaches to studying the city outside architecture. Moreover, the effects of this disconnection have become magnified by the still ongoing transformations of the modern metropolis. Forces such as the globalization of capital, labor, and culture, the emergence of a “new economy” of flexible capitalism, and the revolution in information and communications technologies have been dramatically reshaping the city and necessitating the development of new ways of understanding and dealing with the challenges of contemporary urbanism and city building. I will elaborate soon.

After the full administrative separation of urban planning from architecture and urban design at UCLA in 1994, my connections with the “other side” were significantly reduced, although I have heard that there is no longer a distinct specialization in urban design. Instead, all architecture students are seen as studying the urban in its fullest sense. In this past year, this reurbanization of design led to nearly forty students from Architecture and Urban Design (the name is still there) venturing into the Urban Planning Department to take my course on contemporary urbanism. Their openness and eagerness were refreshing, as I attempted to get them to think more like geographers.

More recently, I have established a new relation to urban design as a Centennial Visiting Professor in the Cities Programme at the London School of Economics. Over each of the past eight years, I have been spending one term at LSE teaching the course I teach at UCLA as part of a master’s degree program in City Design and Social Science. The aim of the program is to bring together a dozen or so students from around the world trained in design but interested in learning more about geography and social science with a dozen or so students trained in the social sciences interested in learning more about de-