

the outer rings of any other American city, with the urbanized areas surrounding Washington, D.C., and San Francisco-Oakland rapidly catching up. Remaining attached to older definitions of city and suburb can lead to some odd conclusions regarding these developments. For example, if densification and compactness are seen as the primary tools in controlling suburban sprawl, as is often the case, then one might conclude that Los Angeles is today the least sprawling, most compact metropolis in the United States, a rather startling possibility and a true strain on anyone's imagination. Sprawl in itself, however, is no longer what it used to be, whether referring to the urban designers of 1956, who considered it to be especially insidious, or to the New Urbanists of today, with their commitment to promoting densification and compact cities. Again, some radical rethinking is in order.

A more serious problem than sprawl today is the increasingly out-of-whack geographical distribution of jobs, affordable housing, and transit facilities being created by uncontrolled (and often unrecognized) regional densification and the creation of polycentric city-regions. The new urbanization processes are creating a growing number of "spatial mismatches" that are aggravating old problems, such as access to jobs for the inner-city poor as employment opportunities decentralize to peripheral centers, as well as new kinds of postsuburban degeneration, as in spanking new boom towns built on unmet promises of job growth. In what I once described as "off-the-edge cities," where as many as 15 to 20 percent of residents must travel more than two hours each way to work, severe social pathologies have been developing, with high rates of divorce, suicide, spousal and child abuse, and teenage delinquency. These worsening urban-suburban problems cannot be addressed through local urban design or planning alone. They are fundamentally regional problems and demand regional solutions.

To complete the picture of the densest urbanized area of the United States, it is necessary to give some attention to the transformation of the inner city of Los Angeles. Many inner cities around the world have been experiencing a reduction in density or what some have called a "hollowing out," tempting a few to couple the urbanization of suburbia with an equally oxymoronic suburbanization of the central city. But here the urban dynamics are much more complex. Nearly every inner city or metropolitan core in the United States has been experiencing to varying degrees two related processes, each consisting of countervailing trends: deindustrialization-reindustrialization