tropolis in the United States in terms of employment for most of the past fifty years.

The reconstitution of the urban core of Los Angeles is perhaps an extreme case of what has been happening to major cities around the world, as flows of immigrant workers replace domestic populations, often creating new frictions that cross older racial, class, and gender boundaries and cleavages. Along with the still uneven urbanization of suburbia and the growing mismatches in the distribution of jobs, housing, and public transit, the new urbanization processes have been generating almost everywhere increasing problems of social and economic polarization. Today, the income gap between the super-rich 1 percent and the poorest 40 percent of the U.S. population is the greatest it has ever been, making the United States the most economically polarized among all industrialized countries. And these disparities peak in Los Angeles and New York, providing another dramatic contrast with conditions fifty years ago, when the booming expansion of the American middle class was reaching levels unparalleled anywhere in the world, and income inequalities were significantly declining.

A straightforward conclusion suffices to this discussion of metropolitan transformations: If the city-building professions today, and urban design in particular, are to respond effectively to the urban problems of our times, they must address the actual new urbanism rather than some well-meaning simulacrum of it.

Epilogue

In many ways, the practice of urban design today may be more widely recognized in the public and private sectors as a source of potential solutions to urban problems than it has been over the past fifty years. But, as I have been arguing throughout this essay, these recent successes have been built on an inadequate and often misleading interpretation of the actual new urbanism. Furthermore, many of the present trajectories of urban design are working to distract attention away from dealing with the most critical urban problems, especially those related to growing income disparities and the increasing political and economic conflicts between domestic and immigrant populations. I am not saying that urban designers can resolve these problems on their own, but rather that their potential role is being deflected by current developments in the field.