49 CITIES

WORKac
SCALES COMPARISONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>43 CITIES IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 1:26,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 1:133,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 1:250,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Fear Timeline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amae Andraos and Dan Wood</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 Mesa City</td>
<td>116 Population Density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Latin American City</td>
<td>117 Total Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Neuf-Brisach</td>
<td>118 % Greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Savannah</td>
<td>119 % Parkland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Royal Salt Works</td>
<td>120 Density by Land Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Phalanstère</td>
<td>121 Density by Surface Use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Jeffersonville</td>
<td>122 Floor Area Ratio: 3D Area/2D Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 Paris (1850)</td>
<td>123 Site Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 Marienburg</td>
<td>124 Density vs. Built Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 Garden City</td>
<td>125 Density vs. Greenspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Readstown</td>
<td>126 Sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 Cité Industrielle</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>42 Rush City Reformed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>44 Broader City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Radiant City</td>
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<tr>
<td>48 Chicago</td>
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<td>50 Communities 1</td>
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<td>54 Levittown</td>
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<td>58 Brasilia</td>
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<td>66 Dome over Manhattan</td>
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Communitas 1
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Ocean City
Mesa City
Agricultural City
Tokyo Bay
Bridge City
New Babylon
Dome over Manhattan
Helix City
Clusters in the Air
Toulouse-Le Mirail
Frankfurt
Mound
Plug-in City
Ratingen-West
Tetrahedral City
Fun Palace
Linear City
Noahbabel
No-Stop City
Continuous Monument
Earthships
Satellite City
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Throughout history, architects and planners have dreamed of better and different cities—more flexible, more defensible, more monumental, more organic, taller, denser, sparer or greener. With every new vision, radical visions were proposed, ones that embodied not only the desires but also, and most often, the fears and anxieties of the time.

With the failure of the suburban experiment an ongoing and the world predictions—from global warming to peak oil energy crisis—seem even more urgent, more immediate, more insistent than ever. The New Urbanists, we set ourselves to figure out ways to move beyond mapping our "on-speed" condition and redefine alternative modes to re-visit the city.

The 49 cities were selected amongst more than one hundred cases studied, based on their ability to illuminate the time and the ambition, the best representing their contemporaries by being radically ahead of their time. These cities were built in one form or another, but most of them remained on paper. And yet today, many have indelibly influenced our global urban landscape. While the repercussions of Radiant City, Broadacre City and Garden City have been widely acknowledged, it is interesting to compare recent developments in China and Japan to some of these visionary plans, ranging from the more utilitarian to the more esoteric. These essays, along with the new developments, are almost always shaped by capital flows, the 49 cities were all shaped by ideology and an ambition to reorient society's modes of being and operation, an ambition that produced widely varying results depending on their time and place.

Beyond their particularities and specific preoccupations, there are two characteristics that most of the 49 cities share. The first lies in the embrace of scale and radical abstraction to question their impact on the planet as a whole. A better city for the future always seems to hinge on the broader ideology it embodies. The second is that each of the 49 cities is born as a reaction to the grid, as an effort to redefine relationship to "nature" and the environment, a relationship in which whether it requires sprawl to embrace wilderness or isavation to minimize impact on the broader ideology it embodies. The second is that each of the 49 cities is born as a reaction to another city, the dominant urban form in 22 of the 49 cities, and used as the basis of design. The ultimate expression of urbanity, the grid, ledoux's Saltworks to the communitas projects and many of the authors of the 49 cities have had to confront the same conflicts and choose which approach to take. The grid is the only form used when the environment, a relationship whose form—beyond the coast towards the interior, a relationship whose form—beyond the coast towards the interior, a relationship whose form—beyond the grid towards the interior, an ambition that produced widely varying results depending on their time and place.

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The Roman City, developed over centuries throughout the Roman Empire as an outpost of colonial rule, was ideally a walled, grid-like settlement. Established initially with north-south and east-west axial streets, known as the cardo and decumanus, the city was laid out as a grid, with soldiers’ tents giving way to more permanent structures along the grid of streets over time. Each block, or insula, was envisioned as a programmable slot and was mixed-use, containing apartments, houses, shops and workshops, creating a dense city core surrounded by the wall. Between the urbanized zone and city wall was the pomerium, a buffer zone, and beyond the wall lay agricultural lands. Urban amenities such as plumbing, reservoirs, drainage and sewers, pedestrian sidewalks and traffic calming measures were employed throughout the city, along with public amenities like markets, public baths and toilets, theaters, and religious and governmental buildings.
The design of Ledoux’s Salt Works at Chaux was guided by an attempt to rationalize industrial production and to reflect a proto-corporate hierarchy of labor. Informed by Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, the Salt Works made a clear attempt to influence the behavior of its occupants: the quarters of the workers were placed in a semi-circle around the main director’s building, flanked by industrial buildings; ostensibly this created an atmosphere of “being watched,” fostering obedience in occupants.

Arc-et-Senans, France, 1775
Claude-Nicolas Ledoux

ROYAL SALT WORKS
Le Corbusier’s Radiant City attempted to open the city to light, air and nature, while simultaneously achieving extremely high residential densities. The park-like ground plane of the city was completely open to the pedestrian, crisscrossed by elevated highways and dotted with towers on pilotis. Horizontally, the city was zoned into specific areas of residential, administrative/business and industrial functions. Residents inhabited superblocks, self-contained residential neighborhood-buildings of 2,700 residents that had communal amenities and recreational facilities. Cruciform office buildings in the business zone of the city were to be forty-stories tall, housing 3,200 workers per building. The plan was highly influential in residential and commercial planning for decades after it was introduced.
Levittown, New York, built from 1947 to 1951 to accommodate returning soldiers starting families, was the first mass-produced suburb. Comprised of six models of houses built on concrete slab foundations, Levittown provided an affordable entry to suburban living for thousands of people wanting to leave New York City. Levittown was divided into master blocks of roughly one square mile, which were in turn subdivided into “sections,” each containing 300 to 500 houses. Each neighborhood had a public school, and main thoroughfares featured churches, public facilities and shopping. Residential streets were designed as “traffic-calming” curvilinear and without four-way intersections; a number of greenbelts were interspersed throughout the neighborhoods. While initially derided as extremely homogenous, the residents of Levittown have modified and added on to their homes so extensively that few unaltered houses remain.
Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer’s Brasilia was constructed from 1956 to 1960 as Brazil’s new capital city, in an attempt to rectify regional inequalities. Closely following the principles of the Athens Charter (CIAM75), the Radiant City-inspired plan was superimposed on the jungle landscape in the shape of an open-winged bird. The north-South monumental administrative axis at the center of the city was flanked on either side by residential blocks. These subdivisions, known as Superquadras, uniformly contained several Modernist mid-rise apartment building slabs, local commercial enterprises like cinemas and shops and public amenities like schools.
New York, 1965
Buckminster Fuller

One of Buckminster Fuller’s numerous domed projects, the Dome over Manhattan was an attempt to rectify the wasteful nature of the urban environment. The domes would keep warmth inside, and prevent rain and snow from entering the business core of the city. Fuller was obsessed with the efficiency of a climate-free city, citing the enormous savings in elements such as snow removal to promote its superiority over traditional urban development.
Kenzo Tange’s massively scaled plan for expanding Tokyo along Metabolist principles centered on creating an enormous central, infrastructural spine jutting into Tokyo Bay. This spine would contain a civic axis of governmental and business districts and would grow the city in a line out from the existing urban agglomeration. The spine would be flanked by high-speed roads without intersections, and the islands themselves would feature buildings on pilotis, to allow the ground plane to be used communally. Housing branches would extend at 90-degree angles from the central spine, and be connected to the core by a monorail system. Industrial areas would be created on landfill near the existing shoreline. Like most other Metabolist projects, the Tokyo Bay expansion could accommodate the addition of both individual units and large sectors in a “tree”-like manner.

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Kisho Kurokawa’s Helix City was one of a number of Metabolist urban visions that was to grow from an existing city outward on the surface of a body of water. The helical megastructures comprising the city allow for a plug-in style occupation of their levels; the city expands both by adding units within each helix and by adding new towers. The levels of the helixes were proposed to be completely covered in gardens, allowing for a maximal green surface.
Proposed by Buckminster Fuller for multiple locations, including San Francisco and Tokyo, Tetta City was to be a floating or land-based residential pyramid that could grow to accommodate one million inhabitants. The building was to have "three triangular walls of 5,000 living units apiece," 200 stories tall with two-mile long walls at its base. Large openings in the structure would occur every fifty stories, allowing sunlight to enter the public garden at the bottom of the interior. Three city centers would rim the structure at different levels. Each of these featured "a community park, complete with lagoon, palms and shopping center in geodesic domes." Fuller employed the tetrahedron shape due to its having the most surface per volume area of all polyhedra, and therefore its ability to provide the most living space with full access to the outdoors.
The Continuous Monument was a reaction to the Pop culture and hyper-saturated projects of the 1960s by the Italian "radical architecture" group Superstudio. The earth-spanning gridded network made of indeterminate material was to contain the entire human population and to connect the key expressions of humanity around the world—large monuments like the Colosseum, the Kaaba and the Taj Mahal. In a flippant retort to both Modernism and megastuctural architecture, the infinite grid extends and undermines the supposedly rational systems of Le Corbusier and the International Style. Here, as the grid runs through Manhattan, bits of the existing city are surrounded and treated as historical artifacts in a Museum-like setting.
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DENSI\T Y: BY SURFACE USE