

49 Cities
Columbia University GSAPP
Spring 2025
ARCHA6973

Friday 10:30am-1:00pm
409 Avery Hall

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Introduction

At a time when the climate emergency is being felt daily across wildly varied regions of the planet with devastating and unequal consequences, *49 Cities* is an exploration of visionary and utopian architectural and urban projects as seen through an ecological lens. Bringing urban form together with urban performance, the seminar hopes to open up new possibilities for architecture and the built environment today, as well as critically and imaginatively expand the discipline's 'utopian canon' to include new models from which to inspire the future.

First published in 2009, *49 Cities* was conceived to move beyond purely technological approaches to sustainable design, and draw back together the possibilities for architecture and planning to work together towards projecting new forms of living. The book is a selection of 49 'seminal' visionary cities which are examined comparatively through questions of scale, density, infrastructure, typology and form as well as ratios of building to rural and natural environments, amongst other.

While certainly not exhaustive, the selection of cities constitutes an archive of Western approaches to the 'ideal city' and can be understood as an archive of archetypes which continue to be deployed across our urbanizing planet - at times with care and at others with a seeming reductionism relative to their context. It is the persistence of these models that render them interesting for us to re-examine, situating them within their broader historical context while also understanding why they might continue to be relevant (or not) for today.

As importantly, through students' class participation and final research assignments, this design seminar is intended to move beyond this 'Western utopian canon' by bringing forth historical models of cities from around the world, either in contrast to or in conversation with *49 Cities*. This new selection will constitute seeds towards expanding the discipline's repertoire of visionary cities, past and future.

Structure and Assignments

Each week, the seminar will focus on a group of cities, to be understood through their graphic representation in *49 Cities*. While a series of selected readings are included below as reference, the seminar is intended to support design research methods that bring a critical and designer's eye to drawings, data, images, and especially whenever possible, original material from Avery Library which students are highly encouraged to seek out. Every week, the group of cities will be presented and discussed, analyzed on their own terms as well as comparatively. Students are encouraged to broaden the discussion and render these models relevant to contemporary urbanization and the ecological crisis.

Student Presentations

All students are expected to be quite familiar with the cities presented every week, performing their own research and analysis as well as engaging with the bibliography of readings as well. Weekly presentations should situate the cities to be studied within a larger historical, political, social, and economic context, as well as, of course, within architectural, urban, and environmental contexts. Presentations should provide an in-depth and critical understanding of both the cities' representations in *49 Cities* and research and readings about them. Students are asked not only to illustrate the readings through visual presentation - which should include examples of architecture, buildings, cities and environments - but also to diagram ways to understand the cities: whether extrapolating sections, axonometric or other modes of representation that build on the drawings and data in *49 Cities*.

For the Final Research Assignment, students are asked to select a city – whether real or visionary – that expands and decenters the ‘Western utopian canon’ with alternate models absent from *49 Cities*. These models should build on the questions raised in class and through the book around the possibilities of urbanism and ecology to co-exist and propose in-depth critical and imaginative analysis through a combination of architectural drawings, diagrams and text of their chosen city.

Draft of the Final Research Assignment will be presented starting the second half of the semester, to take advantage of feedback from the class. The dates for these presentations will be confirmed on the first day of class.

Assessment

Attendance and Participation 20%
Weekly Readings Presentation 20%
Final Research Assignment Presentation 20%
Final Research Assignment 40%

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Pre-Concept: Visionary Urban Planning in History

Selected Cities:

Roman City (500BC-500AD)
Latin American Colonial City (1650)
Neuf Brisach (1700)
Savannah (1733)
Royal Salt Works (1775)

Selected Bibliography:

- Amale Andraos, Rami El-Samahy, Patricia Heyda, Jennifer Lee, Christina Long, Allison Mendenhall, Francisco Meza, Hunter Ford Tura, Peter Zellner: “How to Build a City: Roman Operating System.” *Mutations*, Eds. Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter, Nadia Tazi and Hans Ulrich Obrist (Barcelona: Actar, 2001 & Bordeaux: Arc en Reve, 2001), pp. 10-20
- Smith, Robert. "Colonial Towns of Spanish and Portuguese America." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol. 14 no. 4, Town Planning Issue (Dec 1955), pp. 3-12

- Bornecque, Robert. *La France de Vauban*. Paris. Arthaud: 1984
- Bannister, Turpin C. "Oglethorpe's Sources for the Savannah Plan." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol. 20 (May 1961), pp. 47-62
- Vidler, Anthony. *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Utopia in the Era of the French Revolution*. Basel, Boston: Birkhauser Publishers for Architecture, 2006

Week 3: Stirrings of Vision

Selected Cities:

Phalanstere (1800)
 Jeffersonville (1802)
 Haussmann Paris (1850)
 Marienburg (1890)
 Cite Industrielle (1917)

Selected Bibliography:

- Forrest, Aaron. "The North American Phalanx Ideology and Institution." Paper for Princeton University ARC 548-Histories and Theories of Architecture: 18th and 19th Centuries, January 2006
- Fourier, Charles. *Design for Utopia: Selected Writings of Charles Fourier*. New York Schocken Books, 1971
- Reps, John W "Thomas Jefferson's Checkerboard Towns." *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol 20, no. 3 (Oct 1961), pp. 108-114
- Gandy, Matthew "The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, vol. 24, no. I. (1999), pp. 28-44
- Wiebenson, Dora. *Tony Garnier: The Cite Industrielle*. New York: G. Braziller, 1970

Week 4: "High" Modernism and Frank Lloyd Wright

Selected Cities:

Garden City (1902)
 Rush City Reformed (1923)
 Broadacre City (1934)
 Radiant City (1935)
 Hilbersheimer's Chicago (1940)

Selected Bibliography:

- Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1945
- Sky, Alison and Michelle Stone. *Unbuilt America*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976
- Wright, Frank Lloyd. *The Living City*. New York: Horizon Press, 1958
- Le Corbusier. *Radiant City*. London: Faber, 1967

- McLeod, Mary. "La Ferme Radieuse, Le Village Radieux," *Le Corbusier et La Nature*. Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1996
- Hilberseimer, Ludwig. *The Nature of Cities: Origin, Growth, and Decline, Pattern and Form, Planning Problems*. Chicago: P Theobald, 1955

Week 5: New Towns

Selected Cities:

- Communitas 1 (1947)
- Communitas 2 (1947)
- Levittown (1947)
- Fort Worth (1956)
- Brasilia (1957)

Selected Bibliography

- Goodman, Paul and Percival Goodman. *Communitas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1947 pp. 59-123
- Gans, Herbert. J. *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1967
- Keller, Mollie. *Levittown and the Transformation of the Metropolis*. Doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1990
- Gruen, Victor. *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co, 1973
- Willy Staeubli. *Brasilia*. New York: Universe Books, 1966

Week 5: The Sixties

Selected Cities:

- Hauptstadt (1958)
- Bridge-Town over the Channel (1963)
- New Babylon (1960)
- Le Mirail (1962)
- Frankfurt (1963)

Selected Bibliography:

- Smithson, Alison & Peter. *The Charged Void: Architecture*. New York: Monacelli Press, 2005
- Lebesque, Sabine and Helene F entener van Vlissingen. *Yona Friedman: Structures Serving the Unpredictable*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1999
- Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-architecture of Desire*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art: 010 Publishers, 1998
- Candilis, Georges. *Toulouse le Mirail: Birth of a New Town*. Dokumente der modernen Architektur: Stuttgart: K. Kramer, 1975
- Smithson, Peter. "Toulouse le Mirail" *Architectural Design*, v 41 (Oct 1971). pp. 599-604

- Risselada, Max & Dirk Van Den Heuvel. *Team 10: 1953-81, in Search of a Utopia of the Present*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005

Week 6: The Metabolists

Selected Cities:

- Agricultural City (1960)
- Ocean City (1960)
- Tokyo Bay (1960)
- Helix City (1961)
- Clusters in the Air (1962)

Selected Bibliography:

- Kurokawa, Kisho. *Kisha Kurokawa: From the Age of the Machine to the Age of Life*. Ed Dennis Sharp. London: BookART, 1998
- Ross, Michael Franklin. *Beyond Metabolism: The New Japanese Architecture*. New York Architectural Record Books, 1978
- Tange, Kenzo. *Kenzo Tange, 1946-1996: Architecture and Urban Design*. Ed. Massimo Bettinotti. Milan: Electa 1996
- "Helix Plan" and "Agricultural City " Space Design no 163 (April 1978). pp. 110-113
- Kurokawa, Kisho. *Philosophy of Urban Design and its Planning Method*. Tokyo: Shokokusha, 1995
- Stewart, David B. *Arata Isozaki: Architecture, 1960-1990*. New York: Rizzoli, 1991

Week 7: The Seventies

Selected Cities:

- Plug-In-City (1964)
- Fun Palace (1965)
- Continuous Monument (1969)
- No Stop City (1969)
- Exodus (1972)

Selected Bibliography:

- Sadler, Simon. *Archigram: Architecture Without Architecture*. Cambridge, Mass MIT Press, 2005
- Price, Cedric. *Cedric Price: The Square Book*. London: Academy Editions: Chichester: John Wiley, 2003
- Van Schaik, Martin and Macel, Otaker. *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-1976*. Munich: London: Prestel, 2004
- Archizoom Associates. "No-stop City, Residential Parkings, Climatic Universal System" Domus, no. 496 (March 1971). pp. 49-54

- Van Schaik, Martin and Macel, Otaker. *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-1976*. Munich, London: Prestel, 2004
- Van Schaik, Martin and Ma.eel, Otaker. *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-1976*. Munich: London: Prestel, 2004

Week 8: Setting the Stage for Ecological Thinking

Selected Readings:

- Dome over Manhattan (1960)
- Mesa City (1960)
- Noahbabel (1969)
- Earthships (1970)
- Convention City (1972)
- Masdar City (2006)

Selected Bibliography:

- Martin, Reinhold: "Forget Fuller?" ANY: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Fuller But Were Afraid to Ask_ #17, 1997
- Fuller, Buckminster R. and Robert Marks. *The Dymaxion World of Buckminster Fuller*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960
- Soleri, Paolo. *Arcology: The City in the Image of Man*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969
- Soleri, Paolo. *Architecture as Human Ecology*. New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, 2003
- Reynolds, Michael E. *Earthship*. Taos, N.M.: Solar Survival Architecture, 1990
- Gunel, Gokce: "Exporting the Spaceship: The Connected Isolation of Masdar City." *The New Arab Urban: Gulf Cities of Wealth, Ambition, and Distress*. Eds. Harvey Molotch and Davide Ponzini. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009