

# Dreamed Cities

by

Heidi N. Hosein

A Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Department Landscape Architecture  
Faculty of Architecture

University of Manitoba

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Page 2  
Page 3  
Page 4

*for gloria rahamut hosein*

## table of contents

title	i
acknowledgments	ii
dedication	iii
table of contents	v
abstract	1
preface	3
introduction	23
city in the trees	29
city because of pollution	39
city of utopias	49
conclusion	57
references	63

table of contents v

all illustrations by the author

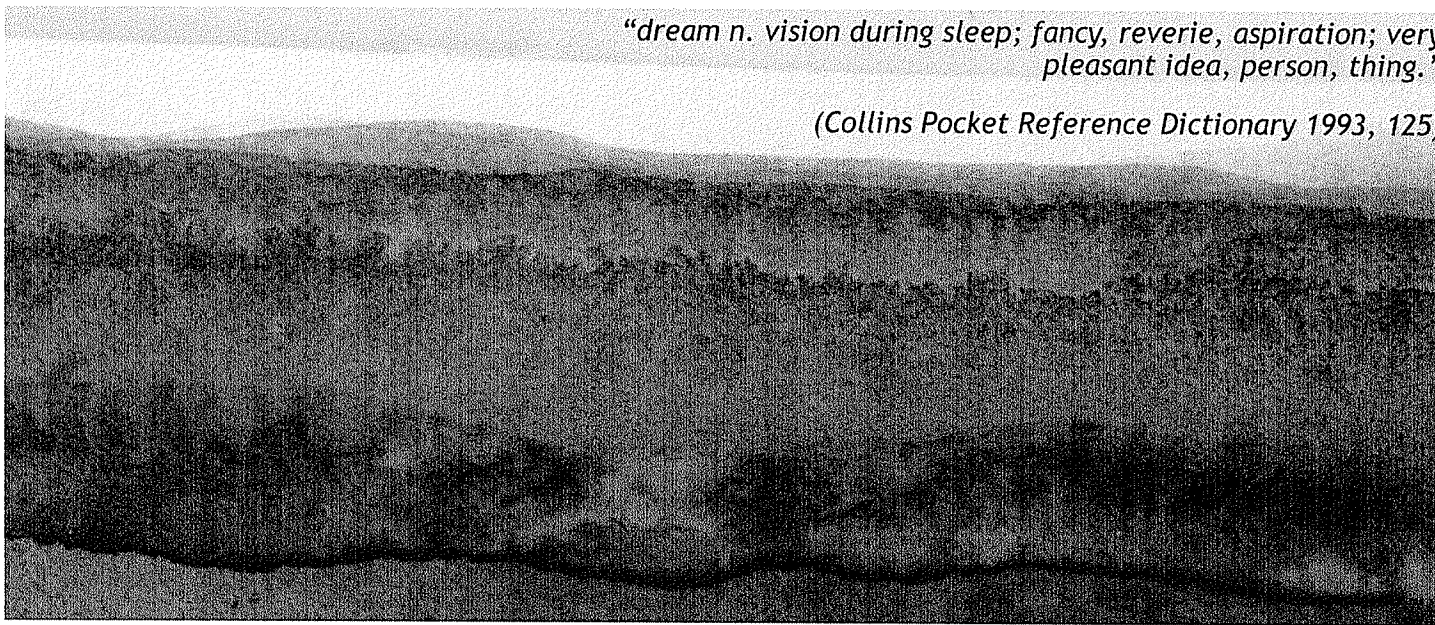
11





*"dream n. vision during sleep; fancy, reverie, aspiration; very  
pleasant idea, person, thing."*

*(Collins Pocket Reference Dictionary 1993, 125)*



What cities may have to look like in the future.

What we want cities to look like.

What we do not want cities to look like.

What we hope cities will look like.

## abstract

It is about cities that are dreamed.

Cities that do not yet exist.

Cities that come from one's imagination.

Descriptions of cities that make the reader question the city.

Question what the city may look like.

Question how the city may work.

Descriptions of cities that make the reader want to make up  
their own city.

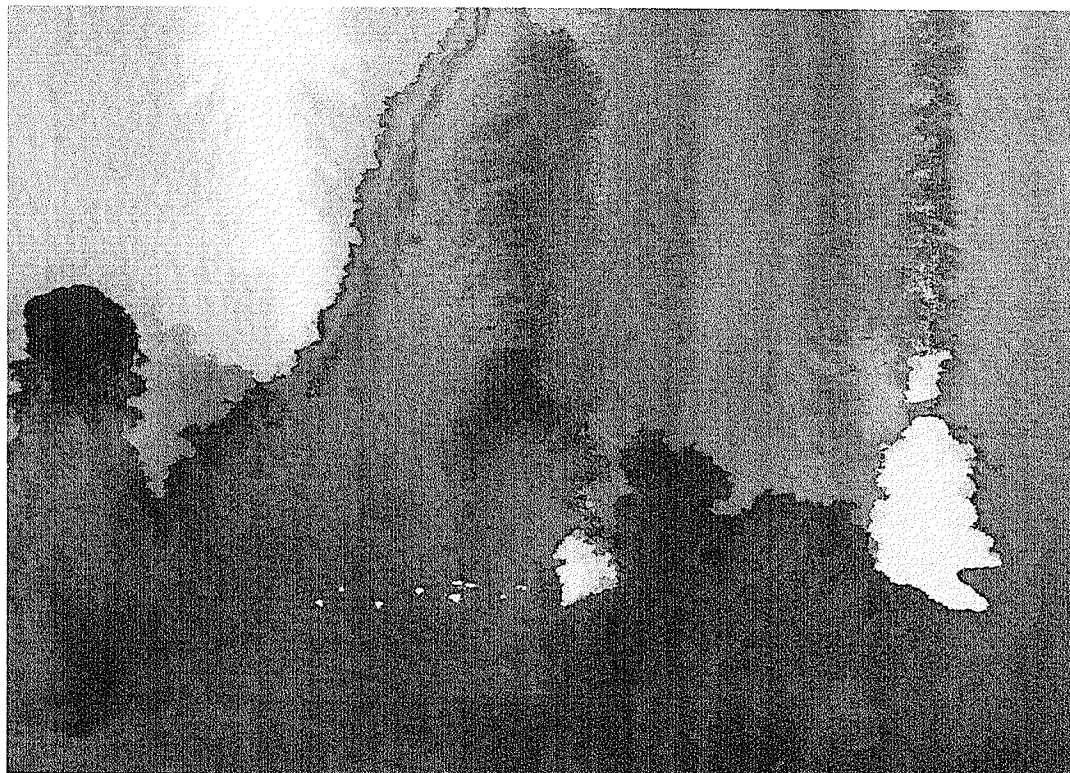
Dream their own city.

Want to imagine what cities will look like if they are forced to  
change.

What cities will look like if the world around them changes.

What cities *can* look like in the future.

abstract 1



## preface

preface 3

This work began through research of current and past practices of suburban design. I first studied traditional neighbourhoods, post WWII American sprawl, and new suburbs, and had the intent of proposing an alternative scheme for the approach to neighbourhood design currently available. I then investigated the New Urbanists who have attempted to create new developments that fill a void between urban, rural and town. I came to the conclusion that an improvement in existing suburban design might come through a new alternative suburb for the *non-urban, un-suburbanite*. The design of a new theoretical suburb would offer a different choice from both the traditional neighbourhoods and the ever increasing urban suburb.

This topic stems from the frustration of trying to find a home within the city of Winnipeg. Not the house itself particularly, but an area that is inviting and designed for those who live there, rather than those who travel through it, to it, and from it. I have looked at the attempt

of streetscaping and “façade” design versus designing for the dweller (designing first and foremost for the inhabitant of a neighbourhood). This has led to different types of residential design. First, that of the **new** suburb; what people who are buying into these suburbs (generally constructed in the late 1990s to the present) *think* that they want because it is what is available. Second, it is designers telling us what is better, as in New Urbanist communities. We, as buyers and designers are being presented with a choice: the suburb, the anti-suburb, the rural or the urban. Anything outside these options is either unacceptable or unfathomable. Our preconceptions of a neighbourhood can be swayed very strongly by what we see around us. Front-facing garages, two-storey houses, front porches. If we could not see what other suburbs look like, would we still design them the same way?

I have researched the move from traditional neighbourhood design, to suburban areas designed by landscape architects, to suburban areas designed by developers and then to themed suburbs, such as the Christian themed developments of *Kingdom Ridge* and *Providence Pointe*, Tennessee. Along with *The Shire* in

“Suburbia has remained curiously invisible in the accounts of modernity. The suburban is seen, if at all at best, as a consequence, an excrescence, a cancerous fungus, leaching the energy of the city, dependent and inert and ultimately self-destructive.”

(Silverstone 1997, 4)

Bend, Oregon and *Seaside* and *Celebration*, Florida. By questioning what gives meaning to our neighbourhoods and by designing different forms of neighbourhood, (styles, layouts) I hope to generate new conceptions as to what neighbourhoods can look like. These alternatives are not meant to be a debate between traditional and suburban, infill and sprawl, nor are they a dispute about designing for the rich or the poor. They are alternative residential designs that aim to improve current suburban neighbourhoods. However, I have found that to point out the issues that may arise out of existing designs is insufficient compared to the thoughts that are generated by critical questioning. We should be questioning the reasons behind neighbourhood designs, why we need them, and to what extent the design principles are in place because of reasons due to situational circumstance.

Originally found in pre-WWII plans, the *traditional neighbourhood* consists of a mix of commercial and residential properties. Traditional neighbourhoods are pedestrian friendly, while also being able to accommodate vehicles. They carry a variety of facilities from parks, and schools to civic buildings. These areas are walkable in terms of distance from the home to everyday

destinations. Traditional neighbourhoods also house people of different incomes within a variety of housing types, such as higher density building units, townhouses, single family dwellings and rental units.

*New suburbs*, generally referred to as sprawl, began after WWII. These areas are located outside the denser urban core. They are comprised of single family units typically placed in the center of a large lot. Suburban sprawl is characterized by wide, winding streets with a lower density than traditional neighbourhoods.

In the United States, after WWII, the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration provided mortgages for millions of people. These mortgages were often lower than rent, and in combination with an interstate highway program, provoked the boom of sprawl. Construction commenced on solely residential areas, but by the 1970s retail stores began to establish their new locales on neighbourhood peripheries.

As people began to head out into the suburbs, they moved to strictly residential areas. However, as the peripheral commercial and work business parks

“... the sweet sense of home is strongest when home is  
not only familiar but distinctive as well.”

(Lynch 1960, 4-5)

developed, these residential areas that were solely intended for residential use became mixed. The residential suburb developed into a mini-urban zone. This begins the shift to a new type of *mini-urban sprawl*, a model that is predictably repetitive, in terms of the way suburbs are built. Phase after phase, and in many cases, afterthought following afterthought. It first begins as residential, then the tacked-on commercial areas surrounding them.

During post WWII suburbanization land, outside of existing cities, was set aside only for residential use. There were no provisions made for any type of retail. “...shopping required not only its own distinct method of financing and development but also its own locations. Placed along the wide high-speed collector roads between housing clusters, the new shops responded to their environment by pulling back from the street and constructing large freestanding signage. In this way the now ubiquitous strip shopping centre was born.” (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2000, 9) As the suburbs evolved separately and foremost from their commercial counterpart; they were the first, the experiment. But what of current developments? Is it assumed today that



## preface 8

"The infant towns Howard saw in the United States awakened him to the fact that the location of cities, their size, and their shape are factors over which people can have considerable control"

(Munzer and Vogel 1974, 7)

when you buy into the suburban dream, that it is only a matter of time before it will all change and the box stores and office buildings will follow? Is this part of the dream? Why is there still the market, the demand for these areas? What do they offer that many people want? Or is it simply something *kind of* what they want, but must be compromised because of the unavailability of that desired place? These new urban-suburbs offer the convenience of the shops and work place, almost at their doorstep, yet separate enough that a car is still required. "For a time, most jobs stayed downtown. Workers traveled from the suburbs into the centre, and the downtown business districts remained viable. But, as with the shops, this situation could not last; by the 1970s, many corporations were moving their offices closer to the workforce - or, more accurately, closer to the CEO's house...The CEO's desire for a shorter commute, coupled with suburbia's lower tax burden, led to the development of the business park, completing the migration of each of life's components into the suburbs." (Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck 2000, 9)

The new alternative suburb is based on the notion of the home as a refuge, the home as the neighbourhood, as a

"The 21st-century Las Vegas is a tourist destination, a crudely effective retail catalyst, and a neon-tinged playground surrounded by concentric layers of diffuse development - but it is not a community. Las Vegas has become more of an abstract concept than an actual place - a synonym for an exaggerated lifestyle and a way to escape reality rather than a fully realized human space."

(Sykes 2005, 64)

place where we want to return to. As a place where we relax, feel comfortable, want to call our own and live our lives. This has led to a culmination of ideas that I have called *Dreamed Cities*. Questions are posed to determine how we reach a point where we attempt the re-creation of the fundamentals that make our residences, our neighbourhoods, and our cities home. Once that point is reached, how do we even determine what it is that we desire?

If we do not propose alternatives, even just as thoughts and questions, we run the risk of stalling when it comes to neighbourhood design. As it is, we can drive through different suburban neighbourhoods and see the mass similarity, with the exception of perhaps a new material, or colour that was introduced that year. Are such minor "improvements" the only ones we are capable of making? The only improvement that needed to be made?

When we look back at how areas were developed, the ones we learn about are the ones that were planned. But not just planned for the sake of planning, but planned as a new idea, as something to try. Ebenezer Howard, for example, proposed a plan in reaction to the overcrowding

preface 10

“visionary a. Marked by vision; impractical - n. Mystic.  
Impractical person.”

(Collins Pocket Reference Dictionary 1993, 451)

in the city of London. This led to the *Garden City Movement* and later the *New Town Movement*. His ideas of drawing on the positive aspects from the places in which we live led to the *Garden City*. “If people, Howard concluded, could combine the advantages of the city and the country and eliminate most of the draw backs, they would have something far more desirable than either.” (Munzer and Vogel 1974, 15) The first of these Garden Cities was *Letchworth*, England and was followed by others such as *Welwyn* and *Hampstead Garden Suburb*. Howard’s ideas not only influenced designers in the UK, but in the US as well, where Clarence Stein brought the *Garden City Movement* through communities such as *Sunnyside Gardens* in Queens, New York and *Radburn*, New Jersey. Had these ideas worked, would we be living in a utopia today? There are many reasons as to why the designs of these visionaries failed. Not in the ideas themselves, but in the circumstances that surrounded them. Whether it be gaining the confidence of investors, the scaling back of plans because of the depression, or the obsession of the private vehicle that represented freedom, many of these utopian ideas were never fully produced.

It is worth looking at the circumstances in which their ideas were generated. Do we, today, have the same problems of misery (slums and unemployment) as in Howard's time? (Beever 1998, 31) Is it a different misery? The ideas of past visionaries could provide us with links to improving our cities. "...successful innovations become naturalized, no longer consciously associated with the movement that forged them. If the ideas and products of New Urbanists are the important thing, and if they are useful, they will be adopted and flourish independently of any branding. Perhaps the movement's greatest legacy could be a future tradition of new urbanism, without 'New Urbanists'?" (Marshall 2003, 192)

There was always that search for a utopian place to live, a utopian idea of a neighbourhood that eventually developed, not as a utopia, but as a suburb. Utopia is a fantasy until we have realized it. In the meantime, we call it a suburb. Fantasy has come up in all my research as the basis for how suburbs can begin to be improved. To design a suburb that is based on fantasy, based on elements that have yet to come together in one neighbourhood. Fantasy only because I have not found

a consensus as to the perfect neighbourhood, the perfect area, the perfect location. There have been attempts at this fantasy type of suburb, *Seaside* and *Celebration* in Florida, even *Las Vegas* as a city and to some extent many attempts at New Urbanist communities. *The Shire* in Bend, Oregon is one community that has put the idea of imagination into practice. Based on the old world English countryside, and J.R.R Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, *The Shire* contains everything from thatched roofs to unique handmade doors. All within a community of connecting paths and using technologically advanced materials. (The Shire Place Of Enchantment, 2008) It is a concept that not only goes back to a long lost time, (or one imaged by others) but one that begins to mix the dreamed world with that of the present. The merging of our dreamed worlds with our reality creates a balance that we can now accept as close to a utopia as we can presently achieve. It is a step forward, but will this be as far as we are able to reach in our search for the ultimate utopia?

Visionaires such as Thomas More, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Fournier, Ebenezer Howard wrote in their *own* time. Whether it be about how neighbourhoods

(suburbs) could look or how society could be improved, these visionaires are the ones whose ideas have evolved into different, successful and unique communities that were alternatives to what was available at that time. But what of our time? We need to write in our time, in what we think will be the future. The work of visionaries is extraordinary. They imagined fantasies of the future, possibilities and attempts at solving problems that were present in *their* time. Why attempt visionary drawings? Would we even call it visionary today? Maybe not, it seems pompous. Let me rephrase, what is the validity in fantasy thought? What will it provide landscape architecture? I hope, through *Dreamed Cities* to generate new thoughts, within myself as well as in others.

*Dreamed Cities* is a means of exploring what it is in a city, in a neighbourhood that makes us feel satisfied with where we live. What is it that keeps changing that makes everyone want to move? Are other places becoming so much better that we need to move to that place? Research has shown that the average American moves every six years. What is it that people are looking for? What needs are they trying to satisfy? There is an obsession with everything that is new, and it seems

as though this desire for newness extends to the latest community for sale as well. Or is it that perhaps the place people initially choose does not meet all of their needs and requirements but is close enough, with the hope that something better will come along in the near future?

The move from the post WWII suburb has produced a society of consumerism. We no longer purchase houses that will satisfy us forever. They last for a while, and then we move on. We have evolved the suburb around our culture of disposability, without having gained anything beneficial but the knowledge of what we did wrong. "Not nature, not culture; not country, not city; suburbia is a physical embodiment of a mythical solution to an essential contradiction." (Silverstone 1997, 8)

*Neighbourhood* should evoke a sense of community, a sense of something a group of people has in common, a vision of comfort. Where one lives. So much importance is given to the word *neighbourhood*, but not to the actual design of one. Once existing neighbourhood concepts become formulas, many developers and designers will not stray from its parameters. For example, the

incorporation of commercial property in New Urbanist developments is vital to their developments. However, in these developments such as *McKenzie Town* in Calgary, Alberta the commercial areas are often vacant and residents have also opposed other propositions such as a school in the main square. (Grant 2002, 76) "Based on the experience in Calgary, where growth is strong and the housing market very tight, Carma [the developer] says New Urbanism appeals to a small market segment. Residents like the architectural details and public spaces, but buyers prefer homogenous neighbourhoods with single-family detached homes." (Grant 2002, 77) Is this an oversight into the geography (the climate), and the context in which this type of plan has been placed? Or is it an example of an attempt at a new type of community that we can now learn from? In addition to the sense of place, a *sense* of neighbourhood should also be translated through the physical properties of where one lives, elements which are beneficial primarily to those who live there, but also to those who visit. We move through spaces that we are in awe of because they are designed well. Our neighbourhoods should include principles of good design and elements of design that not only make a place memorable physically, but psychologically



comforting.

Urban Planner and author Kevin Lynch, and his suggested elements of a successful city make sense. Scale makes us feel wanted, welcome, embraced. Boundaries and edges make us organized. Street layouts, landmarks and nodes keep us oriented. (Lynch 1960) We can walk along tree lined streets, or roads or changes in material with direction. We can orient ourselves with buildings and monuments to keep direction. We can have beautiful vistas and views in our environment that can ground us and enrich our lives. So why do we not consider them in a residential/suburban location? How many of the same suburbs will it take to create a better one?

An alternative would be a new evolution of the suburb. Just as many paper architecture projects indulge in a type of fantasy architecture, we can look at the places we live, the neighbourhoods and cities in the same way. We view movies that take us to a place that seems unimaginable in real life. We go on vacation to escape, to go somewhere perceived to be more desirable than where we live. Fantasy becomes unimaginable as a reality, and instead many settle for what is the norm, not that they have a

choice. If fantasy draws many of us out of the everyday as a pleasant escape, then why can we not apply it to our refuge, our home, our neighbourhood?

The alternative could be the creation of a fantasy suburb, a dreamed city where there are forests for some, cottages, or a high density neighbourhood for others. This is a place which many would say is not a reality. People simply masking the real world. However, living there would make it real. *Celebration* and *Seaside*, Florida are, for many, not real either. Based on New Urbanist principles, the architecture and landscape of these towns are strictly controlled and regulated. They have been criticized for using architecture as a means of directing behaviour in an attempt at re-creating a nostalgic community in a modern world. "New Urbanism promotes another style of universality that is similarly over reliant on visual cues to produce social effects." (Sorkin 1998, 39) However, they are successful and desirable places for those who have chosen to call it their home. A fantasy is an escape, and many would find that escaping to a fantasy world where they would live a welcoming thought. Why do we go on vacation? Why is there such a need to leave what we have for something

better, if only for a week or two? To get away? Yes. For a warmer climate? Yes, for some. But an escape can be as close as your own neighbourhood. Is Wildwood Park in Winnipeg a fantasy suburb? It is different, with housing facing an interior park and rear lanes acting as "front" streets. It is successful, and it is desirable. An alternative is not just a giant fantasy, but could be based on reality. How can this work? By mixing good city design with good residential design. We must not forget that many suburbs are still part of the city. Yes they are growing into what seems like their own town, but the city is still vital. The city still provides specialty shops, civic buildings and major transportation nodes. It is not disjointed from where we live. People have progressively moved from the dense urban centers out, to more residential suburbs, seeking something they did not have previously. The alter-suburb is not downtown, it is non-urban, but included as part of the city. It is not a normal, conventional suburb, it is un-suburban. Not for everyone, but neither is downtown living. This alternative suburb, more than being fantasy or themed is an opportunity to improve on the suburban design of today. Perhaps it is the inadequacies of current suburbs that compel us to be ever seeking something better. This is best summed up

in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* where he writes: "Who does more earnestly long for a change, than he that is uneasy in his present circumstances?" (More 1885, 20)

Should I disguise the topic of making a better suburb by calling it a fantasy suburb or a dreamed city? Perhaps to get your attention. But really, a better suburb for the majority of people is still a dream. Dreamed cities are thoughts that can stimulate ideas for improvements of the current suburb, improvements that are needed and so extensive that they rival fantasy. They are set in other surroundings so as to draw out the possibilities and ideas without the constraint of the present day environment and restrictions.

The city has many meanings to people of different places. City size has a lot to do with this. Do we live in the city or the suburb? In a place like Winnipeg is the suburb part of the city? If so then why do we label it a suburb? Regardless of the confusion it is the part of the city that we live in that is my concern. This is the part of the city that we leave from every day and where we strive to return to at the end of the day.

My goal is to keep searching for a development that has meaning. A development that for now is a fantasy. Questioning what already exists; questioning what *can* exist will lead to this fantasy city.

*“Each year, we construct the equivalent of many cities, but the pieces don’t add up to anything memorable or of lasting value. The result doesn’t look like a place, it doesn’t act like a place, and, perhaps most significant, it doesn’t feel like a place. Rather, it feels like what it is: an uncoordinated agglomeration of standardized single-use zones with little pedestrian life and even less civic identification, connected only by an overtaxed network of roadways. Perhaps the most regrettable fact of all is that exactly the same ingredients - the houses, shops, offices, civic buildings and roads- could instead have been assembled as new neighbourhoods and cities.”*

*(Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck 2000, 12)*



“Designers are people who feel passionately about the world, but rather than composing songs or writing novels, they express themselves by making decisions about the way material is organized, shaped, colored, and assembled.”

(Levitt 2007, 1)

## introduction

My practicum is about questioning and provoking thought. It is about dreamed cities. Looking at how cities may appear in the future. How cities can have the ability to deviate from the current North American standards. It is about thinking in new ways of how to live. It is about asking questions with the hopes of inciting imaginary thought. It is to question everything. Is all thought not imaginary until it is put into practice? It is to ask questions in order to generate even more questions. My hopes are that *Dreamed Cities* will create initial images for the reader, with the intent that these thoughts may grow and elaborate in the reader's mind as their own fabrication of dreamed cities. These cities do not exist. They have been sparked by the thought of designs from an uncertainty of the future, the instability of the environment, our current suburban designs and for the sake of dreaming. It has been brought about by my research of existing suburbs and the criticism in the way in which they are designed, or for that matter, poorly designed. The details and elements of what are deemed



to be successful in suburban designs are assumed to have the ability to be transposed anywhere geographically with continued success. However, the formula for successful suburban plans varies greatly depending on the site, the climate and the surrounding environment. From here the questioning began. Looking at my immediate surroundings I questioned why neighbourhoods were designed as such, why streets were laid out the way they were, and how logically can the design for an area in a southern climate be expected to work in a northern city.

When our surroundings change, when the landscape around us is altered, we need to rethink the way in which our spaces are designed, and the way we use these spaces. We are **forced** to rethink our world. If we no longer have the luxury of the earth beneath us, if we are driven to live underground, never seeing the sky, if our home becomes the sky, never being able to go back to earth, then will we design our spaces differently? The radical ideas that may come about from one's own *Dreamed Cities* may never evolve into a reality. Its validity, therefore, then lies in the process of thinking in a state of mind where there are no restrictions and no inhibitions, in creating a whole new world as a designed

space.

Aspects of our culture, of our society play a large role in how different spaces in the world are designed. Our social hierarchy, our standards of living, our perceptions of richness in life, have these all come about because of the design of our surroundings? Or have designs evolved and developed around these aspects? Perhaps in order to inject new life into our world, we must first imagine that our world has changed. Not slightly, but drastically. Could Global Warming force us to live in the sea? What if we no longer had the sense of touch or hearing? What types of design would we conceive as reactions to our new situations and changing circumstances? Conditions that we have never been faced with, nor have we ever dreamed would become a reality.

When we design our dream worlds they can be any type of world. Is it not more realistic to design a dreamed city as a reaction to an environmental disaster, than it is to design one's own utopia? No. To design these perfect places has as much strength as designing for places that we are forced to live in, or places that we are currently living in even if it is to provide us with information

for improvement. Striving for perfection, designing a utopia, just as much as designing because we have been forced to, may cause us to break down and identify the fundamentals of what we deem to be requirements of our world. Most importantly it should compel us to rethink these requirements. If we are faced with a tragic situation, a desperate situation, we can then pull out the necessities, the characteristics of design that are crucial in aiding our situation, to help it become a more liveable place, even, depending on the situation, to make it a more tolerable place.

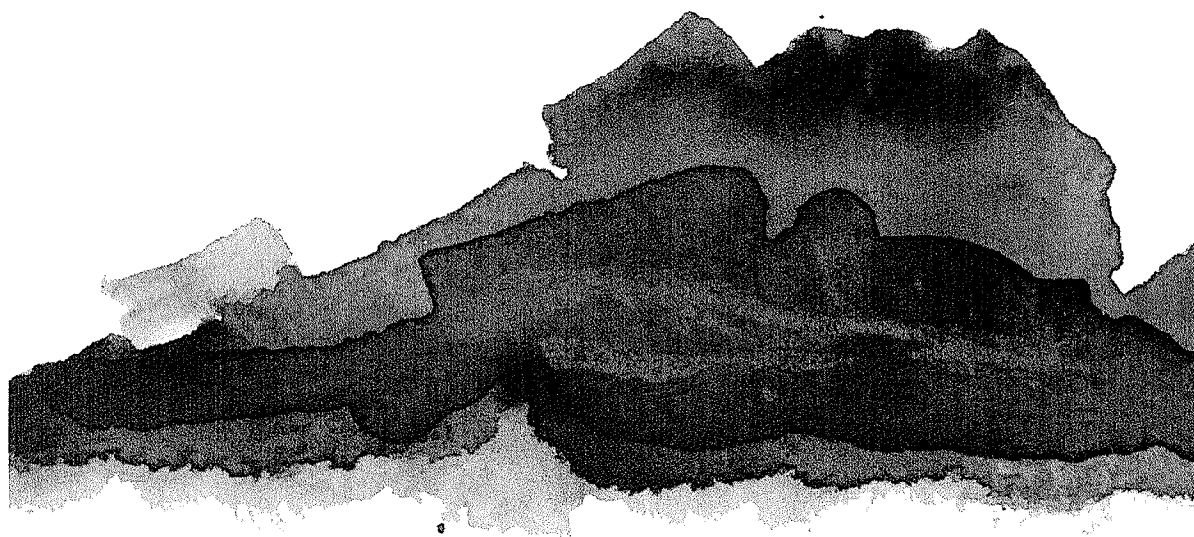
Design takes place in our everyday life. When our conditions are well, we design everything, and so we label it. Our home, our yard, our sofa, our cutlery. But when there is a disaster, a hurricane, an earthquake, a flood, is the word *design* even attached? Is it a word of luxury that we dare not say in a tragic situation? Does it imply pro-longed thought in a state where time is so vital? Solutions to situations, whether they be strategic or built are still designed. They are perhaps less dwelled over, but they are designed. To begin to write down your dreamed cities may one day be beneficial, as even a flicker of an idea that may lead someone to design

*“So, Rule #1: Don’t experiment on the poor; they have no choice. Experiment on the rich, who can always move.”*

*(Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck 2000, 53)*

something truly needed. To collect everyone’s dreamed cities may one day lead to the ultimate Dreamed City.

My work is not meant to complete the entire city for the reader. It is meant to pose questions, to appeal for questions to be asked and for the reader to fill in the gaps where the city then becomes the reader’s own.



## city in the trees

city in the trees 29

What would happen if we did so much damage to the earth that only a drastic measure would save it? What if that drastic measure was to leave the ground? To live above it, in the trees? To return to a type of land before there were too many people to compromise the earth in its most natural state. Would we breathe cleaner air if we lived amongst the trees? Would we use the world differently? What would our view be like from atop the trees? Would we appreciate the land more if we saw it from above? Why create a city of trees? What if the population of the earth increased so much that we had no choice but to move up and branch out? Would we let the vegetation grow beneath us or do we cultivate it and use it as crops?

Walking up to the *City in the Trees* you first see a glow from afar. Different coloured lights create an ambient radiance that never seems too bright even as you reach

the city itself. Looking up from the ground the *City in the Trees* is high. High enough that the inhabitants in the trees have very limited effects on the land below. The branches of the trees are intertwined from one tree to another. Houses and shops dot the leaves on the branches which, at night, are not brightly illuminated, but have a subtle glow that make the trees look dimly flushed. The intertwined branches allow for many possibilities in colour patterns. What first comes to mind when anyone thinks of the *City in the Trees* is not the trees themselves, but its light. At night it is the glowing of the trees, and during the day it is the shadows created by the sun and the branches that make the City look like a labyrinth. Each individual tree is coloured differently, with a smouldered light from trunk to the tips of the branches. Voids of darkness are frequent throughout the City; these areas are the most natural spaces within the *City in the Trees*. At night only mechanical trees are lit as their branches intertwine with the natural trees. The City is not meant to be a beacon within the trees, but a tree within a forest. The forest areas in the *City in the Trees* are spaces where there are no inhabitants, no structures

and no lights. They are the wildest, most natural parts of the City that people use for recreation.

We live in the trees. Each tree has branches with either residential houses or shops and civic buildings. The trees that are used for housing, shops and civic structures are artificial; they mechanically grow amongst the natural trees. The rate at which the mechanical trees grow is according to the amount of sunlight that is desired. The greater the need for sunlight the higher the tree will elevate. This means that there is some flexibility in the growth and positioning of the City. However, paths are primarily dictated by where the branches of the natural trees mature. Since trees are not all the same height, the level at which you live in a particular tree dictates your neighbourhood. From our house that sits on a leaf we walk down our twig, the walkway to get to the streets. The branches become the streets that are connected to the entire network of branches throughout the City. The branches intersect, and it is easy to get from one branch to another. Traditionally neighbourhoods are thought of as embracing a horizontal plane. But



what about the vertical? What if one lives in a high-rise building? (A tree). Would the building itself act as a neighbourhood? Or would it be a series of buildings that comprise a neighbourhood? What is the difference between a neighbourhood contained within a building as opposed to one contained by separate detached dwellings? Does a high-rise/condo/apartment/tree provide elements that make a good neighbourhood and that can be transposed, or identified so that we may use this structural type as part of the *City in the Trees*? How are the concepts of a neighbourhood used on each floor? Each branch? When we change the structure of how we live, essentially the height at which we live, the volume that we now take up needs to be re-thought. Because the branches themselves are not completely vertical or horizontal, altitude now becomes the determinant for a neighbourhood. What do we now associate ourselves with spatially if we are no longer being bound by static streets, which give the illusion of permanence? If the level at which you live is the neighbourhood, then what is the tree itself? Must we label it? Or is it just called the tree?

During the day the structure of the trees is the dominant feature as it encompasses the majority of the physical space. Colour however, does not encompass physical space. As each tree emits a different coloured glow, colour itself becomes the spatial link that bonds people together, just as a neighbourhood should. But at night, when so much importance is placed on colour as a distinguishing feature it replaces the tree structure as the pronounced visual. What about our neighbourhoods now? What distinguishes them from one another at night? Can we tell neighbourhoods apart from their light intensity? What if all of the street lights and house lights were dimmed? How does the character of a neighbourhood that is physically seen during the daytime translate at night? Must everything be visual to count as contributing to the character of a place? Each tree is a different colour, and will this colour give people a common tie as the tree becomes their home? Would we describe where we live first by the city, the *City in the Trees*, then by the neighbourhood, the *Yellow Tree*, then by the street, the *Branch*? Is this the hierarchy we would use in the *City in the Trees*?

“...a city, however perfect its initial shape, is never complete, never at rest. Thousands of witting and unwitting acts everyday alter its lines in ways that are perceptible only over a certain stretch of time.”

(Kostof 1991, 13)

We generally travel in a horizontal way through streets. But what if the streets were vertical? Curved? Branched? Our land, the City, is made of the trees themselves, with the trunks as the core. The streets, the walkways, the parks are all part of the tree. How do you get between these trees? Are the branches intertwined to create a transportation system? Should we travel through the trunk, the branches or the roots? We need to travel through the branches to get to our homes, and individual leaves. Some branches can be dedicated travel routes, but remember that these routes will slowly change and grow. Or do we create one central tree whose branches become the transportation system and whose span reaches all other trees? Horizontal travel through the branches and vertical travel through the tree trunk.

Adaptation becomes a necessity in the *City in the Trees*. We adapt our lives, our routes, and our transportation. Living in trees is a dynamic type of living. Our house and our neighbourhood and our whole city would be part of a growing connective network. What would change throughout time? Light, wind, views, perhaps even who

our neighbours would be.

If our location has the ability to change, would people not move as frequently? Would other leaves growing give us the ability to expand our living space without having to move? Is moving something that people need to do for reasons other than change of scenery? If we are going to the point of moving into trees to save the land below us, will moving be prohibited? Especially for superficial reasons?

How high would the City be? The woodland within and around the neighbourhood would continue to grow and the mechanical trees increase as the forest around it matures, which ensures that there is enough sunshine for each tree with residences. With a natural city there is also the question of lifespan. Trees will eventually die and that is the reason why mechanical trees are used for more permanent structures. What will become of them? Do we cut them down or leave them as a reminder of what they once were? Would dead trees pose a danger if they fall? If the natural trees were cut down once dead, there

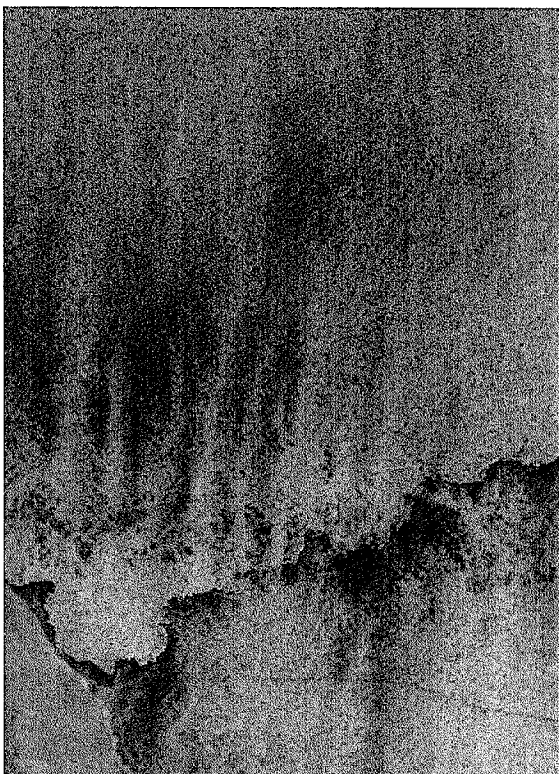
would be a void in the landscape of the *City in the Trees*. It would take generations until a tree of the same size would take its place. Would this be the only opportunity to create a new tree? A mechanical tree? As populations continue to grow an increase in mechanical trees is inevitable. Yet, the branches themselves will expand to allow for new construction, but there will be a height restriction. As the natural trees grow and eventually die, the heights of the mechanical trees are not to excessively exceed the height of the natural trees. The point is not to dominate the woodland with mechanical trees, but to live within the natural woodland and forest.

What about outdoor space? What is a park when you are amongst trees all day long? Does a city within a forest solve the need for greenspace? What about water and rivers? Can we still see them from our tree neighbourhoods? Or can levels of trees contain land like structures that can house lakes and, like a waterfall, fall to another tree mass below.

Are only a few people allowed on the ground to cultivate

the land below? Or does it become public? Or now forbidden? How do we prevent people from over using and re-contaminating the land beneath? Does the land then become a resource which the whole city benefits from? The land below cannot be bought or sold. If we leave things be, as in the wild, what becomes of the animals? Will they live in an unaltered existence that is only possible if people had not been on earth?

After centuries have passed, those who live in the *City in the Trees* will wonder what it would be like to live on the ground. Will they ever know? Will they ever be allowed back?



## city because of pollution

What happens if we contaminate the land on earth so much that it becomes unusable? Would we have to live above the land, not to protect it like the *City in the Trees*, but to escape from it? Land that once provided for us now becomes toxic. It has been happening slowly but it has now reached the point that the land is more harmful to us than we are to the land. We cannot use it, we cannot profit from it, we cannot abuse it, we cannot enjoy it, we cannot help it, and we cannot live with it. So we must abandon it. Where would we go?

We move up. We live in pods above the land. Always wanting to come back down, but we are in a state of constant hovering. We no longer rely on the land beneath. Perhaps we do not realize that we can no longer use the land, perhaps we are in denial that we can no longer return to the land. Our homes, our situation, our whole lives have changed. The entire environment as our



city because of pollution 40

“pollute vt. make foul; corrupt; desecrate”

(Collins Pocket Reference Dictionary 1993, 316)

dwelling, the trees, the light, the wind, our experiences, our breath, our surroundings have vanished. So we hover, waiting for the earth to cleanse itself.

Looking out towards the landscape leaves you with the feeling that something is missing. The *City Because Of Pollution* always seems temporary to the people who experience it. There is no ground, no land, and no base from which the City is built. The sky is filled with oval-shaped balloon-like structures that cannot be seen until you are almost at the City. They wander in the sky in a mournful slow dance. The air is grey, foggy, smoggy and still. Below, the air is at its most dense. Not solid, but a deeper grey that seems like you can fall through it if not careful. We cannot see the land below, nor the sky above. There is nervousness to the City, almost like a feeling of being somewhere you should not be. But there is nowhere else to be safe, to call home. We are ourselves contained.

Do we live in these hovering pods forever? Each pod a home? Or each pod a neighbourhood? Or do we have

a central pod that our homes can dock to? Do we float away and leave earth behind? Or do we continually hover within its atmosphere? Waiting for the chance that we can return? Is our food artificially made? Or do we have agricultural pods? We would either have to re-generate and create soil or salvage what we can from the ground before we abandon it. Is it abandoning? Or is it that we were forced to leave? And we were probably forced to leave because of what we have done.

Our new situation will mean that things will inevitably change. What about a social hierarchy? Will we try to re-create what we are accustomed to? Or will it evolve because of our new situation? Perhaps we will band together and forget about social class and hierarchy. Because of our situation there is no one better than anyone else. Our circumstances are identical. Maybe we band together initially due to shock but eventually we may migrate to where we once were. Hierarchy may spread out into "neighbourhood" sections of hovering pods clustered together. Or perhaps like the *City in the Trees*, elevation becomes the new neighbourhood. The

rich at a higher elevation than the rest below, closer to the toxic earth surface.

Once our environment has changed, once we are somewhat comfortable in the way we are living, once the technical aspects of everyday life are figured out, plumbing, food etc. what would our next progression be? After our basic necessities are met, can we then move on to meaning of place? How can we design a city or a neighbourhood that people will be proud of? If a city is built in response to a situation, for example environmental, and the city is not built progressively, but almost at one time, is there then still a feeling of ownership? The bonds people establish with their neighbourhood take time, and it is over this time that we grow proud and attached to a certain place. Would this occur in a brand new place? What of an established neighbourhood of different economic backgrounds? If we were to move into a rich neighbourhood, having never lived there before, are we more likely to accept this neighbourhood as our own because it is what the conventional life strives for? Moving up in the world? What if one from a more privileged area had to move into a poorer neighbourhood? Would it no longer be

their neighbourhood? Is it too difficult to go the other way? From rich to poor? What is it between these two neighbourhoods that creates a difference? What if we were to take the rich and the poor and move them all into each other's neighbourhood? What would happen? Would the rich have enough money to rebuild an area to mimic their own previous neighbourhood? What of the rich neighbourhood? If the physical characteristics of a neighbourhood were to remain the same, but the people were the ones who moved, then would we still refer to a neighbourhood with large mansions as the rich neighbourhood? Or is it people that make a place? Would isolation be welcomed to those coming from a higher density neighbourhood? Would they try to make it more community friendly? Is it a matter of density? Size? Material? Location?

Would we have standardized pods? Everyone or every household receives a pod? Or do we once again use money? Can we buy pods, the bigger the better? Once we have settled both physically and mentally with the notion of our new way of life, is it then that we begin re-structuring our society? Right now the hierarchy

is primarily based on money. How much one earns determines what he or she may buy and afford, what house is bought, in what neighbourhood, in which city. But when we are all forced into one type of situation the dust of confusion needs to settle before we once again resume our way of distinguishing ourselves from everyone else. Is that a need we must fulfill? Even in as grave a situation as we are in? Or can we move on and work towards the common goal of creating a new and better life in the sky? Once we are comfortable in our new situation will we try to re-create our previous environment? Will we need all our own houses, yards, shopping malls? Will the change be so drastic that it forces us to rethink the aspects of our lives on earth?

What if each pod was to be independent of one another? What if governments collapsed and there was no order? Would people form their own pods with their own laws? Would there be some type of civility amongst the pods? Perhaps certain pods would band together and form their own city. But what of the pods that are not as well organized? Do they then wage war on the organized city-

*“...let the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the sense of anxiety and even terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and well-being. The very word “lost” in our language means much more than simple geographical uncertainty; it carries overtones of utter disaster”*

*(Lynch 1960, 4)*

Pods? Or do they become independent pods, organized in their own way, who perfect certain skills that we can then trade with? Do they become “rural” pods? Does a pod then act as a jurisdiction boundary? Or do we venture out further and claim the sky as part of a boundary? Would pod use dictate its laws? Or do we conform to world pod rules?

What about the notion of transit? What is transit when everywhere we go, where we live, has the ability to move? If we are hovering, will that take care of issues of distance? Can we just hover and move to a location which suits us best? We migrate to the working pods during the day, and then slowly the pods float away in the evening? But does this mean that we will never walk? Perhaps the pods do not roam freely but are on a pattern of strings that guides them. They may travel, but only along predetermined systems. Or perhaps the pods rotate around a central core. Is it a web-like structure? This may provide for a map of the *City Because Of Pollution*, but what is direction in a web? Is a map a map if it is more confusing than if one did not exist? What

do we associate ourselves with in the landscape to get our bearings? All around is space and sky, grey smoggy sky. Would this type of movable city cause people to be anxious? Would it cause confusion? What is a landmark in a city that continually changes its position?

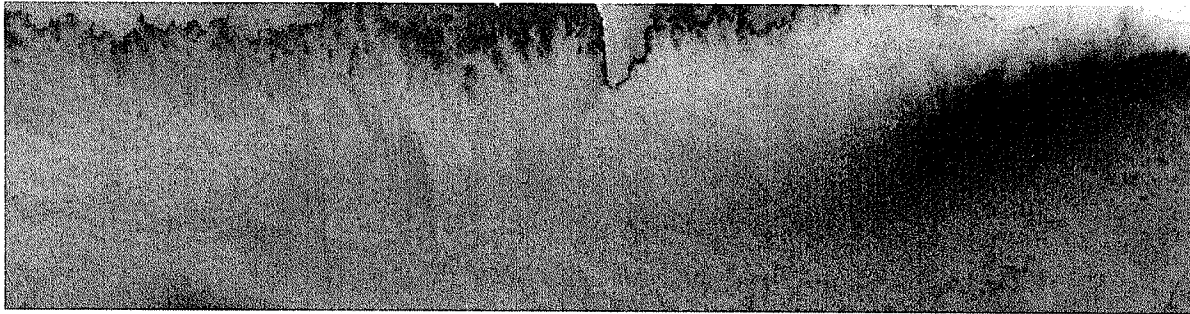
Where would our pod cities be situated? Would we hover over the cities we once lived in? Would our pods be stationary? Or can we roam freely? What becomes of the environment? The entire sky containing the pods? Or just what is within the pods themselves? How are the pods identified from one another? What about our outdoor space? Are pods the best way of maximizing "open" space? Parks and play grounds? Would they become their own pods that are now destinations? Or is that something we have had to sacrifice? Inevitably there would be sacrifices that need to be made. Would these sacrifices now become more valued? What will be valuable to us now? Not grand buildings, or sports arenas, not historic castles or pyramids. What becomes our physical history? Would we re-create the Great Pyramid of Giza and it would become its own pod that

we visit? The Louvre, Stonehenge? Do we re-create a museum within a pod to reflect all of our history? Or can we still see the earth, the ground? If we are still within the atmosphere of earth do we now look at the surface of the earth as a museum itself? However, we are no longer the ones looking from behind the glass but are trapped within our own glass.

What would we do with our waste? Would we find solutions for it? Or will we dump it on to the surface (of the earth) because it is already polluted?

Would there be less people who are alive now? Would there have been enough time for everyone to evacuate the surface? Or were some left behind? Would some have preferred to stay? Are they still alive? Will they find a way to unpollute the earth? If so, would they let the pod people come back? The ones who abandoned it? Would the surface people learn to live with how polluted it is? Or does the surface become too toxic.





## city of utopias

city of utopias 49

The *City of Utopias* is composed of neighbourhoods that are all utopian for those who live there. This city would look very similar to today's city. The difference being that the neighbourhoods would be the ultimate in a designed space. The entire city is not one utopia, but of many different utopian neighbourhoods. The idea of a utopian neighbourhood may be superficial in the way that it only lasts as long as you are at home or in the vicinity, as each utopia has boundaries as a neighbourhood would, and to leave is fairly easy. But once you are in the utopia, your utopia, it is anything but superficial. Utopia is you and it surrounds you until something in your environment emerges that does not fit into your utopia and you break from the utopian state.

Where would we choose to live if we could? Not to go away from everything we know, not to leave the city we would like to live in; but to escape to our own homes, in an area that is perfect for us. What would our perfect neighbourhood look like? Would it look rural? Urban?

Would the houses blend into the surroundings? Would they be almost invisible? With so many people living in a city, would all the neighbourhoods look similar? Would they all be different? Would people have a choice between certain styles of house and landscape? It would all depend on the certain type of utopian neighbourhood.

Perhaps there are two utopias that are identical in layout; however, one lends itself to freedom of expression when it comes to individual properties, while the other is strictly controlled. Architecture is controllable, yes. What of the landscape? Vegetation does not stop growing. If we were to take a snapshot of the perfect sight/site as it is how long can we keep calling it perfect before trees are considered overgrown? How controlled is controlled? Does perfect to some mean unchanging? Even in the slightest respect? And if it does, how do we still keep this utopia? For it may be a utopia for some to see growth and change. To keep elements as they are, do we use artificial trees? And grass? Could something be created so realistic that we can fool ourselves into thinking they are authentic? Could we make trees that smell like the real thing? That blow in the wind and make the same sound of rustling leaves? That remain the perfect height,

*"If the experiment had been successful, its example might have encouraged developers during the 1940s and 1950s to build something better than the monotonous land-gobbling suburbs. In the plan for Radburn there was originality, perceptiveness, and a boldness that might have caught on. Instead of suburban sprawl, we might have built hundreds of New Towns that would have significantly reduced or prevented urban and environmental crisis."*  
(Munzer and Vogel 1974, 61)

shape and colour? Can we devise a way of controlling the weather to create the perfect outdoor climate? We can already control our interior climate, so why not extend it to the outdoors? Can we make a virtual utopia? Even if we are distinguished by neighbourhood, each individual would have their own version of utopia. So then can you ever create a utopia? A utopia for all? What about experimentation? Is that the only way we can work through to accomplish the perfect neighbourhood? Is it fair to those who live in our experiments? But if we do not try out designs, if we do not first live them, how would we know if they will really succeed?

Can we call a place a utopia when social organization is at its most successful for everyone? Does a utopia have to be beautiful? Are these the two types of utopias that exist? A socially perfect utopia and a beautiful utopia? Can there be two types of utopia? Would the visual differences be obvious between the two? Can these two utopias be combined into one? Can we call it a utopia only once they are united and co-exist seamlessly?

What would be interesting to see is how housing markets would react. What people may think is their

utopia initially, may change if they are exposed to other utopias. Right now, are certain areas more popular? Would we covet certain utopias (as neighbourhoods) over others? If so, then why not just move to that utopian neighbourhood if everyone has the ability to move? What would make them more popular? Would a specific utopia have mass appeal? If so many people think of this one neighbourhood as utopian, will the design of other neighbourhoods follow this formula? Could there be a neighbourhood that is so well designed that it becomes great? Will it then become the ultimate utopian neighbourhood? Could we be searching for the ultimate designed neighbourhood? And once this is accomplished will we then label it utopian? Could utopia be the epitome of design? If a neighbourhood is designed to specific criteria, in a city full of utopian neighbourhoods, how far would the architectural restrictions stretch? How much control would go into the individual properties? What would the mentality be of a person who comes and goes from their utopian neighbourhood on a daily basis? How would they feel when they left? Sad? Envious? And when they arrived back home, relieved? Would they wish that their utopia continued into their surroundings? At work? Would leaving make them appreciate their

utopia even more? What would happen if a utopian neighbourhood is built and occupied, and everything is going fine until one day a new utopian neighbourhood is built and those from the first neighbourhood prefer the new utopia? Would there be envy? Would this defeat the idea of a utopia? Do our ideas of our own utopia change? Would this lead to conflict within a neighbourhood? If a neighbourhood is created as a utopian neighbourhood, would changing or modifying it destroy this vision?

How would a neighbourhood remain utopian? Is it when its occupants agree of its *utopicness*? Would a utopian community grow as population grows? Would streets be added onto a neighbourhood based on demand for that neighbourhood? Would this anger those who already have their own utopia within the neighbourhood? Does change cause negative reactions?

If an older utopian neighbourhood is added onto, what would happen to evolving architecture; materials, colours, and trends? Would it be kept consistent with the older streets? Or would elements such as those brought on by technology be taken advantage of? What can make a utopia change? What happens with an aging population?

Will their tastes change? Will people grow out of their utopia as they get older? Are there changing utopias? Or will new generations find the old neighbourhoods appealing? Do all the neighbourhoods become a rotating network as people age? Do people's idea of utopia change as their situation changes? As their independence deteriorates? As their health is compromised? Will a utopian neighbourhood ever expire? Will it ever become deserted? Will it ever become obsolete?

Why are we always on a continual path for change? What are we striving for? Is it perfection? Is it utopia? Is there a world changing around us that we must keep up with? Are we creating our own destruction? Or are we now attempting to improve ourselves, our world after having created our own problems? What more can we change? What changes can we make now that will make any difference in the future? What changes in the past have made a difference? Was it war, revolution, technology? Or was it visual, art, architecture, landscape? Was it circumstance? Is it what we see that can change the whole perception of what we want and what we need? Once our basic needs are met, then what? What are the next improvements? What causes

us to want change?

city of utopias 55

*"The frequency with which Americans move from one town to another or one part of the country to another has been celebrated as an expression of freedom and opportunity. But it is also something very different - a reflection of the shallowness of the places they leave behind. People hop from suburb to suburb or from one part of the country to another because few suburbs are compelling enough to command their affection."*  
(Langdon 1994, 18)





“...they are generally more set on acquiring new kingdoms, right or wrong, than on governing well those they possess.”

(More 1885, 5)

## conclusion

What is a dreamed city? Is it a city that can never happen? Is it a city that is unreal? Is it a city that we make up because we lack something in our own cities? Dreamed cities are the questions we all have about the places in which we live, in the way they are designed, in the way that they are planned, and the way that the planning of a city affects the rest of our lives. *Dreamed Cities* is from the questions that have grown out of what were, first small inquires. My house is so close to my neighbour's house that when we both shovel our driveways we have nowhere to put the snow. Why would *they* design a neighbourhood like that in such a climate? Are our neighbourhood designs intended for a warmer climate, without snow? Are we living in a copy and pasted neighbourhood plan? Is it so that *they* can squeeze as many houses into one area as possible? If so, does that mean they do not care about how it was designed in the first place? We are living in a designed world. But it was not designed for us, it was designed for profit. Is it really designed for an object rather than

people? That is not true, is it? Yet if it is, it only means that our world can be so much better. It only increases the possibilities of what we can make our cities become.

We can think of many ways of how a city can look. We may dream that they are in the sky or under water, but under what circumstances do we reach these places? Once we are in these new environments how do we transpose what we have established as a civilization on earth for centuries? How can we call a new place home? The intent of this work was to provoke questioning, through which insight may be gained into what we really desire for our cities. Or perhaps what we do not want. Questioning also exposes us to different scenarios and possibilities for design and living. Neighbourhood has a sense of community, a sense of something a group of people have in common. Where we live. So much importance is given to the word "neighbourhood", but not always to the same place that is labelled "where we live", our home. In adding to the sense of place, a sense of the neighbourhood should be the physical properties of where one lives. If a home is one's castle and the castle evokes fantasy then there comes a point where we may question the validity of fantasy as just that. Bringing fantasy

*Suburbia is a state of mind. It is constructed in imagination and desire, in the everyday lives of those who struggle to maintain hearth and family and in the words of those who still brave (or mad) enough to define and defend bourgeois values. It has a long history. Maybe it still has a future."*

(Silverstone 1997, 13)

into reality in terms of living space and community neighbourhood.

What is the perfect city? From a social aspect what would be perfect? To force people to live in harmony may be good morally, but this force can be detrimental. Would it provoke hatred? Underground organizations? Is anything that is forced ultimately bad? Or could it be beneficial? Could it be a force that is desperately needed?

When urban planners such as Ebenezer Howard form new ideas based on attempts at social remedy, efficiency and human health, the way in which they have laid out their city, their ideals are effectively the design of the city. Therefore, when we design a city/town with the social aspect in mind, are we guilty of dictating social behaviour by design? Do we condemn, or help people flourish by the way we design the places they (we) live? Today, when profit is at stake, when profit and marketability is what most ultimately seek how can it be that we justify our neighbourhoods being designed for these reasons?

The questions that are asked, the questions that are posed, and the questions that are generated cannot be

answered definitively. What people want and what people desire is so personal that creating areas, a neighbourhood that pleases all is impossible. However, creating an area that is pleasant, and that is comforting is possible. We may not, as of yet, be able to find design solutions for a utopia. But we are in a place that we can continually improve and give meaning to the places we call home.

The culmination of our history, our current neighbourhood designs, and of all the questions and dreams we have for our cities is *Dreamed Cities*. It is thinking of our neighbourhoods in different contexts and drawing out what provides us, as individuals, with meaning of where we live.

When our surrounding environment has been radically altered and we are forced to pose the questions about what it was that made our cities desirable places to be; perhaps it is until then when we are actually in this situation that we can hope to obtain the truest answers to our questions.

*What questions will we still need to answer for the designs of the future?*

*How can we design the most comfortable place to live?*

*Will we ever be able to design a utopia?*

*Will anyone be able to design a neighbourhood without profit being the number one concern?*

*Will there ever be an entire neighbourhood that we will be able to call home?*

*Will there ever be a neighbourhood that is built and designed for a lifetime?*

*Can a neighbourhood be designed so beautifully that no one will want to leave it?*

*Can we design and live in a neighbourhood that we are confident and proud of?*

*Can we design a neighbourhood that not only means our home, but is the meaning of home?*



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