

An aerial photograph of a city masterplan. A river flows through the center, with a large, white, angular architectural model placed on a bridge or island in the upper right. The surrounding urban layout is shown in a light, semi-transparent style, revealing the underlying grid and building footprints.

# MASTERPLANNING FUTURES

LUCY BULLIVANT





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# MASTERPLANNING FUTURES

In the past, spatial masterplans for cities have been fixed blueprints realized as physical form through conventional top down processes. These frequently disregarded existing social and cultural structures, while the old modernist planning model zoned space for home and work. At a time of urban growth, these models are now being replaced by more adaptable, mixed use plans dealing holistically with the physical, social and economic revival of districts, cities and regions. Through today's public participative approaches and using technologically enabled tools, contemporary masterplanning instruments embody fresh principles, giving cities a greater resilience and capacity for social integration and change in the future.

Lucy Bullivant analyses the ideals and processes of international masterplans, and their role in the evolution of many different types of urban contexts in both the developed and developing world. Among the book's key themes are landscape-driven schemes, social equity through the reevaluation of spatial planning, and the evolution of strategies responding to a range of ecological issues and the demands of social growth.

Drawing on first-hand accounts and illustrated throughout with colour photographs, plans and visualizations, the book includes twenty essays introduced by an extensive overview of the field and its objectives. These investigate plans including

one-north Singapore, Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, Xochimilco in Mexico City and Seattle Waterfront, illuminating their distinct yet complementary integrated strategies. This is a key book for those interested in today's multiscalar masterplanning and conceptually advanced methodologies and principles being applied to meet the challenges and opportunities of the urbanizing world.

The author's research was enabled by grants from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the SfA (the Netherlands Architecture Fund), the Danish Embassy and support from the Alfred Herrhausen Society.

**Lucy Bullivant** Hon FRIBA is an architecture curator, guest lecturer and internationally published author and critic. She has a Master's degree in Cultural History (RCA, London) and was Heinz Curator of Architecture, Royal Academy of Arts, London, in the early 1990s before curating a number of highly successful exhibitions for institutions including Vitra Design Museum, the Milan Triennale and the British Council. She is the author of *New Arcadians*, *Responsive Environments*, *4dsocial*, *4dspace* and *Anglo Files: UK architecture's rising generation*. Lucy is an international correspondent to *Domus*, *The Plan*, *Volume* and *Indesign*.

# Preface

Throughout history, many people have sought to plan city habitation for work, leisure and the protection of people, from the earliest gridded towns – Miletus of Hippodamus of Greece (fifth century BC) to Baron Haussmann's remodelling of Paris as a modern city (nineteenth century) or today's Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, or city-wide plan setting an agenda for the future, PlanNYC, for example. Many plans have failed, been overcome by excessive growth, destroyed by war or social unrest, or never found the support or agency they needed to be realised.

The world's population of nearly 7 billion has doubled since I was born, with more growth in my lifetime than in the previous 2 million years humans have existed. Projections are for it to reach 8 billion in the next 14 years, and 9 billion by 2043.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand in many countries population growth is decelerating so many of the world's cities have aging populations. Eco systems are strained and the world and humanity are facing many threats, and their need for the infrastructure of modernity to provide the best possible solutions for everyone remains ever present. Many architects and urban designers today are proactively grappling with new challenges and are trying with more ingenuity to create new spatial conditions responding to the many opportunities and problems of urban growth and post-Fordist evolution of society, and improve by renewal what already exists.

The central theme of this book is the ways in which masterplanning and its variants are changing and will be of value in the near future. It analyses 24 current plans, in 22 cities, in 17 countries, on 6 different continents, chosen for their innate value to these debates, while my home city of London and other UK and world cities are the subject of my ongoing studies for further publications in the future.

Few publications have analysed masterplanning as a mediatory design process across continents responding

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Population Media Centre, Vermont, USA, [www.populationmedia.org](http://www.populationmedia.org).

to the demands of the present and the future. This is a collection of stories about new and topical solutions – each with their own distinct capacity for differentiated, progressive design and organisational and public consultation principles. The thematic clusters in which they are gathered are overlapping and interdependent. The issue is not which is better, or are they the best, but the legitimacy of each as contemporary responses to the globally present conditions in which they are grounded.

A happy and prosperous life is a universal desire and the conceptual planning and design of habitations<sup>2</sup> play

a very important role in enabling patterns of existence to generate the pre-conditions for this. The survival and well-being of the world's population may depend on the work of architects, urban designers, their collaborators and the decisions of their clients and politicians who support them and the future-oriented principles underlying urban plans.

Lucy Bullivant  
London  
August 2011

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<sup>2</sup> Habitate is a verb used by Jan van Ettinger, *Towards a Habitable World: Tasks, Problems, Methods and Acceleration* (Rotterdam: Elsevier, for the Boucentrum, 1960). Van Ettinger was the founder of the IHS (Institute for Housing Studies and Urban Development Studies), concerned with the developing world through its mission, Making Cities Work, and now based at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam.

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# Contents

	Preface	vii
	About the author	ix
	Acknowledgements	xi
	INTRODUCTION	1
<b>1</b>	<b>POST-INDUSTRIAL URBAN REGENERATION</b>	<b>25</b>
	Ørestad, Carlsberg, Loop City, Nordhavnen, COPENHAGEN, Denmark	27
	HafenCity, HAMBURG, Germany	45
<b>2</b>	<b>CITY CENTRE AND WATERFRONT NEIGHBOURHOODS</b>	<b>57</b>
	Musheireb, DOHA, Qatar	59
	Waterfront SEATTLE, USA	69
<b>3</b>	<b>SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DISTRICTS</b>	<b>81</b>
	one-north, SINGAPORE	83
<b>4</b>	<b>POST-DISASTER URBAN REGENERATION</b>	<b>91</b>
	PRES Sustainable Reconstruction Plan, CONSTITUCIÓN, Chile	93
	Make It Right, NEW ORLEANS, USA	104
<b>5</b>	<b>SOCIAL EQUITY</b>	<b>115</b>
	MEDELLÍN, Colombia	117
	Lion Park Urban Design Framework, extension to Cosmo City, JOHANNESBURG, South Africa	129
	Urban Think Tank, an interview	141

<b>6</b>	<b>'ECO-CITIES'</b>	<b>157</b>
	Masdar City, ABU DHABI, UAE	159
	Montecorvo Eco City, LOGROÑO, Spain	174
<b>7</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE-DRIVEN URBAN PLANS</b>	<b>185</b>
	Milan Urban Development Plan, MILAN, Italy	187
	MRIO, Manzanares River, MADRID, Spain	202
	Xochimilco, MEXICO CITY, Mexico	211
	Sociópolis, VALENCIA, Spain	217
<b>8</b>	<b>THE WATER CITY</b>	<b>225</b>
	Saemangeum Island City, SAEMANGEUM, South Korea	227
<b>9</b>	<b>URBAN GROWTH</b>	<b>237</b>
	Almere Structure Vision, ALMERE, the Netherlands	239
	LONGGANG, Pearl River Delta, and Qianhai Port City, SHENZHEN, China	250
	Smart Cities: Rethinking the City Centre, BRISBANE, Queensland, Australia	264
	<b>EPILOGUE</b>	<b>275</b>
	Illustrations Credit Information	280
	Index	297

# Introduction

## The bespoke city

At a time of huge global migration, across nations, from rural to urban areas, the city epitomises the critical arena of cross-cultural life within the emerging geopolitical landscape of the world.<sup>1</sup> As nerve centres and places of coexistence within a global network, the physical landscapes of cities have become vital to the continuation of an inclusive, democratic society.

Issues of cities' formal organisation, infrastructural patterns, density, intensities of programme, distributions and scale are very important socially, economically and politically. But amidst deepening social divides, globally, millions of government policies and urban policy instruments are failing to keep up with changing social patterns. Given the power of urban growth forces the network society beyond the scope of architecture and urban planning, any urbanistic intervention – if it is to be an intelligent and bespoke response that is also progressive – needs to be based on a precise analysis of what is going on in terms of geo-political and social transformations, and why. What could be done and how could it feasibly be delivered? This book examines some of the myriad of questions asked by architects and their clients in different global milieux, to help define the context of a reasoned and enlightened set of principles for wider urban regeneration and growth strategies.

## The resurgence of masterplanning

Macro urban planning has been out of fashion for the past 20 or 30 years, but it reappeared on the global scene during the height of the last construction boom, from 2000–7, and is essential if societies are going to mitigate and adapt to urban growth and climate change. During that period more development in terms of square metres was realised than in the whole post-war period.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Architect Alejandro Zaera-Polo writes about the physical space of the city as a trans-cultural vehicle as a sessionist on the theme 'Where will people congregate?', Singapore Sessions, Singapore Economic Development Board, 2009, available at: [www.sedb.com](http://www.sedb.com).

2 Architect Reinier de Graaf, 'On Hold', British School at Rome, Italy, exhibition catalogue curated by de Graaf, May 2011.



The architectural icon came to signify the universal panacea to the challenges faced by all cities. But, in reality, this media-friendly emblem and supposed magnet of people and activities is not in itself capable of helping cultures find new extrapolations of their existence, even though achieving a satisfying relationship between building structures and their masterplans remains acutely important for quality of life. What are plans for? They are metaphors, fabrications that are judged on how specific, how credible, how contingent they are – how far they might be the source of the means to defy the disappointing, inadequate or anachronistic reality of many earlier speculations that were realised. On that basis, it is hard to expect too much of them, but vital to expect the best from them – the best for all, and that is a cultural, ethical matter.

In what were conditions of market prosperity and huge demand, when city living rose in popularity for all levels of society in both the developed and the developing world, the

rise of the icon was accompanied by a boom in urban design and in masterplanning. This new surge of urbanistic interest has had intoxicating cultural motives, because of the speculative scope of new ideas for the city to trigger change. It has also bid up land prices and raised interest in leveraging public assets, with mixed outcomes.

In the wake of the global economic crisis, a lot of planning opportunities were put on hold, some temporarily, some permanently. This has created a space for reflection on strategies by architects and clients. What is the ideal, or the most appropriate conceptual framework to deal with cities' challenges in the twenty-first century? Is it a masterplan? If so, what kind of plan or plans makes best sense in a specific context? What new spatial and urban typologies are already emerging from new conditions – political, social, cultural and ecological? To what extent can informal projects play a role in innovative solutions? Do we consign the word and the principle to the scrapheap of



1 HafenCity, Hamburg, masterplan by KCAP. Dancing on Magellan Terrace at Sandtor Quay.



history and call it adaptive or future planning? This book argues that what we understand as a masterplan has changed and diversified, with many different valid approaches to processes, but still maintains overriding ideals that match today's post-Fordist era of complexity and changing attitudes towards, and patterns that drive the identities of cities and the use of land. Evaluating these is tough, but necessary.

## Masterplanning: definitions

Traditionally, a masterplan was a top-down blueprint, a convergence of form and values that has very often become just a superficial zoning exercise but nonetheless a powerful determining tool of socio-spatial relations. A myriad of factors beyond the scope of this book led to 'laissez-faire', piecemeal approaches to the city, or masterplanning being reduced to physical planning and zoning, compartmentalised into splinter groups, repairing what was dysfunctional, rather than projecting into a possible future.

While this limited approach is still common,<sup>3</sup> the contemporary masterplan is now very often loaded down with expectations of its virtue as a commercial planning tool. So people retreat from the dictatorial suggestions of 'masterplanning' (with planning by the 'servants' denied), and many see the noun, 'masterplan', as a mere oxymoron – any plan, as history has shown, is so often overwhelmed and conquered by other plans. But the definition has broadened, and a masterplan is now in many people's eyes interchangeable with the word 'vision', its framework plan based on a deeply researched envisioning exercise drawing on the views, wishes and even

votes of the public, because urban design is now a collective affair. These days, a masterplan is also an activity that occurs very early in any process of urban change, well before major costs for change are incurred in the delivery process. So there is huge scope, and an advantage in timeliness to hitting the mark at this speculative stage.

## The abstractness of the plan as impediment

'No abstract Master Plan stands between him and what he has to do, only "the human facts" and the logistics of the situation', wrote architect Alison Smithson in the *Team 10 Primer* in 1962,<sup>4</sup> referring to the architect and his role. Half a century later, can we confidently say that 'abstraction in masterplans' has decreased, and in cases where it is present, potentially suffers the fate of being challenged or thrown out by its constituencies for being distanced from human needs? The contemporary conceptual masterplan does – far more than ever before – strive to relate to 'the human facts', as a vast myriad of interconnected phenomena, as far as it is possible, based on findings from multidisciplinary research. But, in harnessing new technologies, it can now do far more with its latent relational qualities. It frequently embodies a shrewd sense of logistics – flexible processes, relational data from research and public consultation, and the benefits of input from multidisciplinary team members, incremental scenarios for phasing, and often opportunities to evolve newer forms of public-private mechanisms for funding and of delivery. That is both advantageous, but at every step the path is also strewn with challenges to define and then develop design tools to spatialise goals and help achieve the common good in a way that is durable.

Whether tending to a top-down or more bottom-up attitude, masterplanners are more likely nowadays not to prescribe a rigid blueprint, but will create a performative set of tools with the aim of incubating the future. As integrated sets of principles, they add utopias, not one single utopia, to a city or region's

3 Russia is one country where a conceptual urban masterplan, and the idea of fostering consensus among various city stakeholders, are rare. The city of Perm is an exception and the masterplan commissioned from KCAP (see HafenCity Hamburg, p. 45) breaks with old models such as the *microrayons* of prefab housing outside the city and scattered infill development, treating the city as a resource, and introducing a block strategy, along with others, with an easy-to-navigate spatial framework, as well as new decision-making processes. Interview with Sergey Gordeev, a Senator in Perm and President of the Russian Avant-Garde Foundation, *Project Russia* magazine, Moscow, 56, Feb. 2010.

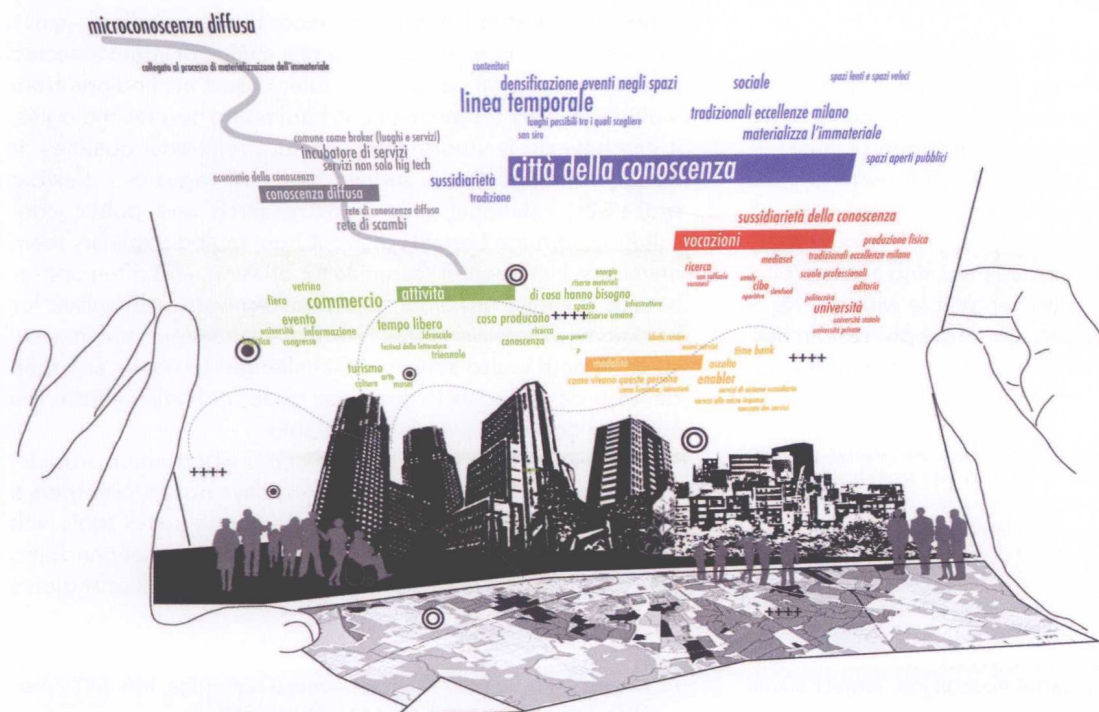
4 Alison Smithson (ed.) *Team 10 Primer* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1975, first edition, 1962, revised edition, 1968).

public laboratory of possibilities, because any plan needs to be accompanied by a lot of open debate, a good degree of openness, and must relate closely to an individual context. Furthermore, it must respond generously to the innate presence of difference of all kinds found in all cities and regions. For example, traditionally, the arsenal of approaches adopted by conventional architectural practice possessed limited scope for responses to ecological crisis, and the beginnings of localised, biodiverse adaptations to those practices is one major indicator of change in masterplan thinking.

In identity, masterplanning has become an interdependent set of principles, an integrated gestalt of a mechanism for directing change in cities, not one single tool but a synergistic and interactive set of design tools applied to key urban issues, including degrees of density and the effect of their relationship, mixed use and its application, cultural identities and their interaction, ecological and economic sustainability and their

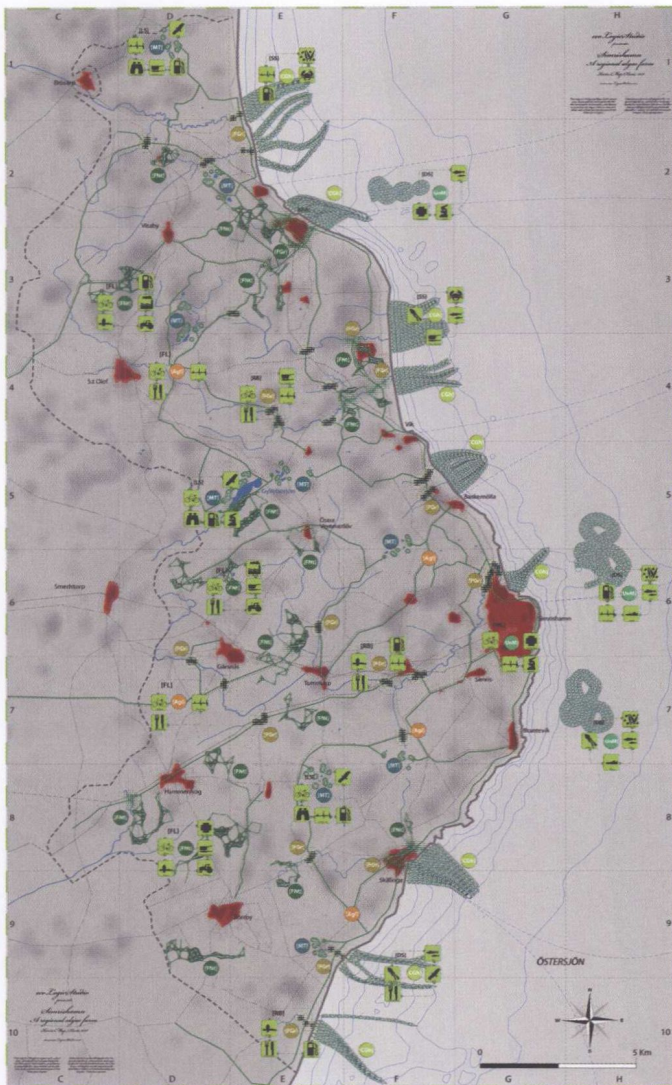
satisfactory dovetailing, cluster policies, anti-flooding policies, transport infrastructure, and families of housing models. Inevitably, a post-zoning model – a more intelligent, rather than a wasteful use of land – is at the heart of a good masterplan. No one element can afford to be compartmentalised, but must play its role as part of a conceptual network of interrelationships and elements that encourage social conditions to emerge or to be reinforced. The social engineering capacity of a masterplan is nowadays invariably applied to accrue commercial benefits; but to make a part of a city the setting for future society, considerable flexibility and adaptability – and transparency – have to be built into the process, allied to sophisticated economic mechanisms, as the story of Milan's UDP (see p. 187) demonstrates.

The imperative to create urban design tools as part of a masterplan can be manifested as a framework plan, a set of adaptive principles, as retrofitting or inventing place in the



2 Milan Urban Development Plan: Services plan for the Milan PGT (architects Metrogramma), Id-Lab.





3 Masterplan for Algae Farm for the Swedish Municipality of Simrishamn, ecoLogicStudio, demonstrates the interactive potentials for algae-related urban activities via a 'co-action' plan map with six prototypes sited in a devised network.

context of a *tabula rasa*. It can reinforce walkability, permeability, social inclusion, can introduce a new balance between the hard built environment and the soft landscape, or retrofit the rigid zones of modernist planning with a warped grid, layer grids, mend them in a new way, or put emphasis on another kind of connectivity entirely.

A masterplan's scope is today being stretched. In terms of scale, it can be as small as a neighbourhood or as large as 55 hectares, for example, the international competition-winning



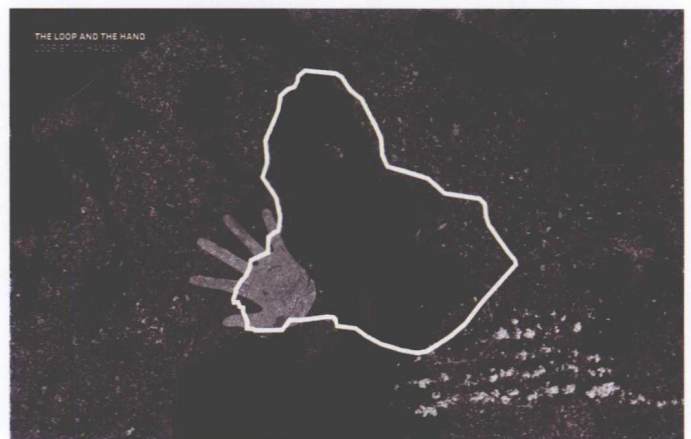
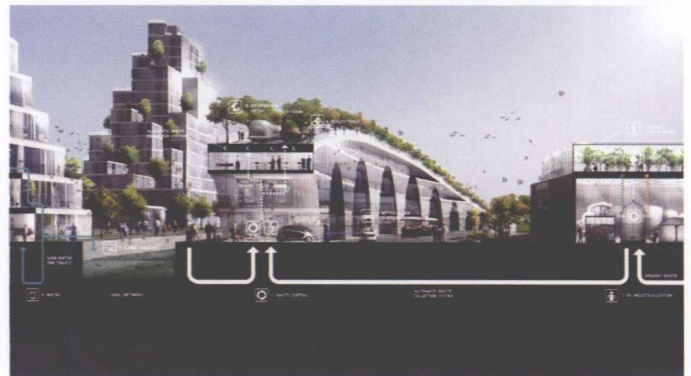
4 Aerial view of Masdar City, Abu Dhabi, masterplan by Foster + Partners, rendering.



mixed-use Kartal-Pendik masterplan by Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA), on the Asian side of Istanbul, which has six million square metres of gross buildable area for all the programmatic elements of a city, or city-wide. The proliferating numbers of Urban Development Plans with regional implications and advantages for cities demonstrate the return of macro-scale thinking. The lucidity of thinking overlays or responds to a set of coherent social, economic and ecological strategies: Milan (see p. 189) adjusting to a post-industrial era, Abu Dhabi (see p. 159), anticipating an era beyond the end of dependency on an oil-based economy, and Brisbane (see p. 264), and one-north Singapore (see p. 53), like the other two cities mentioned, making plans that interconnect the knowledge industries in a multidisciplinary way in tandem with inner city living.

Tactics vary. In the city, a drawing out through means greater than the remediation of zones of existing or evolving assets is coming to the fore. When, in 2008, French President at the time Nicolas Sarkozy launched a competition for ten proposals by international architecture and urbanism teams to envision the future of Paris, the French capital and its vast agglomeration under the heading of 'Grand Paris',<sup>5</sup> architect Jean Nouvel took all the small intervention plans and mapped them all together on one map of the city. Yves Lion's team amassed all the derelict urban sites, twice the surface area of historic inner Paris. Instead of a masterplan, Nouvel looked at what everyone else had been doing; Lion looked at land in the city, damaged through neglect, that could be humanised and stitched together, supra-urbanistically, whereas Steen Eiler Rasmussen's Finger Plan for Copenhagen of 1947 was about connecting the suburbs to the centre of the city, BIG's Loop City proposal links a ring of highly differentiated urban nodes, including work clusters in a centreless metropolitan region envisaged as a focus for dense, sustainable and recreational development of the region (see p. 42).

A masterplan's timescale for development can be set at 1–2 years, or over 15–20 years, with cumulative activities arriving at a wholly new urban condition and diversified means of financing it by, say, 2030, in the case of Abu Dhabi. Why not plan a new



5 'Grand Paris', the ten urban design proposals invited by President Sarkozy were exhibited at the Cité de l'Architecture, Paris, 30 April–22 November 2009, available at: <http://www.citechaillot.fr>.

5, 6, 7 Loop City masterplan concept to revitalize Copenhagen's suburbs linked to the cross border region between Sweden and Denmark, renderings, BIG/Glessner Group.