

A number of countries have had the creation of new towns as part of their political agenda. The policies have resulted in fiat towns, some large enough to be thought of as cities. Between 1950 and 1990, the Soviet Union employed new settlements to extend central control over its constituent republics. The reasons elsewhere have been economic or social. During the latter half of the twentieth century, over 20 new towns were built in the United Kingdom in order to keep London's population down to a manageable size and to encourage industry to locate outside the southeast corner of the country. Runcorn is an example (see Chapter 4).

In Europe the new towns tend to have been the products of government policy. In North America, in contrast, private companies have built the genuine new towns (rather than simply large suburbs) not the public sector. Columbia in Maryland and Reston, Virginia are probably the best-known examples. Begun in the 1960s, Columbia has a population of 100,000 and employment opportunities approximating the number of workers in the city although many people commute into Columbia to work and many residents in the city commute out. There are few such new towns in the United States because the land acquisition and infrastructure costs are high and the developing company must be capable of considerable investment prior to any return on capital being received. New towns do, however, continue to be built in the country. Las Colinas in Texas has been under construction for almost 20 years now (see Figure 3.1a to see the imagery sought). Elsewhere too they are being built, especially satellite cities. Shongshang Lake in southern China, for instance, is barely underway (see Figure 3.1b).

Many new towns are company towns. Some have a mining or other resource base and others have been manufacturing cities or military settlements. Some of the non-military examples are the products of government policy, particularly in socialist countries, but others have been built by private industrial organizations to suit their own purposes. The towns vary considerably in size and longevity. They have been as small as 500 people while others have over a hundred thousand inhabitants.

The designs of the new towns fall into a number of categories depending on the paradigms prevalent at the time of their creation. The new towns in the Anglo-American world have generally followed Garden City principles while those in continent Europe and East Asia have followed Rationalist principles. Even within the prevailing paradigm there have been differences in designs. British new town designs, all loosely garden cities, fall into four eras depending on contemporary perceptions of the problems to be solved and the patterns required to solve them. Las Colinas is being designed with the automobile in mind. In addition, individual designers strive to stamp their own identity on the designs.

## **Precincts**

Most urban designs do not deal with new towns but with precincts – smaller areas of cities and new, predominantly residential, areas on the edge of cities. They may