

The four most terrifying words in the English language are 'there is no alternative.' Yet there is always an alternative, and Graeber and Dubrovsky prove it in this imagination-fueling tour of all the ways we live, have lived, and *might* live. Dreaming is a truly subversive act, and this book will turn you into a revolutionary urbanist with your feet firmly planted in true history and your mind set free into the infinite universe of possible futures."

—Cory Doctorow, author of *The Internet Golei*, *Little Brother*, and *Red Team Blue*

"A mind-spinning exploration of the glorious, multidimensional spectrum of human imagination. This is one of those books you'll want all your friends to read—it makes sci-fi look conservative."

—Brian Eno

Cities Made Differently is the first book in an educational series for young adults by the late anthropologist and activist David Graeber, cowritten with his wife, artist Nika Dubrovsky. This book is an illustrated dialogue that delves into the existential and universal question of what it means to be human—both as a child and as an adult.

What makes a city a city? Who says? In this delightful and provocative book, Graeber and Dubrovsky draw us into a world of history and myth, science and imagination. The authors, who collaborated over a period of years to write this book, invite us to rethink the worlds we inhabit—because we can, and because nothing is too strange or too wonderful to be true.

An illustrated dialogue, *Cities Made Differently* claims that cities can be anything we want them to be—and what we want them to be can tell us something about who we are, what it means to be human, and what's possible when we make way for wonder.

The *Made Differently* series

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Cities Made Differently exists in two versions, one for reading and thinking; the other, downloadable at skidds.org, for drawing and dreaming.

David Graeber (1961–2020) was an anthropologist, activist, and author of several best-selling books, including *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, *Bullshit Jobs*, and *The Dawn of Everything*. He was involved in the Global Justice Movement and Occupy Wall Street. His latest book was *Fire & Civilization*.

Nika Dubrovsky is an artist and author of children's books. Her book series, *Made Differently*, emerged from "Anthropology for Kids" workshops, in which she emphasized the role of imagination and artistic practice in understanding culture and society. She is a founder of the David Graeber Institute and editor of his posthumous essay collection, *The Ultimate Hidden Truth of the World*.

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Cities Made Differently

David Graeber and Nika Dubrovsky

The ultimate, hidden truth of the world is that it is something that we make, and could just as easily make differently.

Cities made differently

David Graeber and Nika Dubrovsky

This book is dedicated
to David, who always
remained a child at heart,
able to sense the worlds
of many different people—
frightening, empty, caring,
magnificent—and who thus
was well aware that we, too,
can remake our shared
world at will. And to Benjamin,
who will live in this world that
we pondered while writing
these books.

nika dubrovsky

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Introduction

In thousands of ways, we are taught to accept the world we live in as the only possible one, but thousands of other ways of organizing homes, cities, schools, societies, economies, cosmologies, have and could exist. The series of books *Made Differently...* is designed to play with possibility and to overcome the suspicion, instilled in us every day, that life is necessarily limited, miserable, and boring.

The project evolved over decades as an illustrated dialogue between the artist and author Nika Dubrovsky and the late anthropologist David Graeber. Nika's son, who then was four, also took part. It brings together anthropology, literature, play, and drawings.

Our *Made Differently* books consist of notes, quotes, photographs, film stills, and drawings, mainly by Nika. The books exist in two versions: one for reading and thinking with, the other for dreaming and drawing in. The latter can be downloaded for free at a4kids.org.

The first three books in the series are about (1) Cities, that is to say: different ways of living together; (2) Museums: different ways of thinking about values, and (3) Artists: different ways of being human.

We hope that you will feel that our book is like a kaleidoscope, in which you see changes as you are looking at it. That is why there are different ways for you to navigate these books. Following the introduction, you will find a table of contents for the illustrated chapters.

As you flip through the pages of this book, looking at different versions of how people lived together and imagining new ways that they might yet live, perhaps you might ponder what city might be best for you.

There is also an additional path that winds through the pages of this book. It consists of keywords, which connect chapters to each other. However, the keywords we picked and the connections we made are not the only possible ones.

When you look at the index of keywords in the back, please think about what is not there: which possibilities are missing from the book? These are stories not yet written, which you might want to write or think through on your own.

The section called Study Materials, located in the back, lets you learn more about the real and fictional projects, ideas, and people mentioned in the book.

These projects and ideas offer visions of the past and the future, which are quite different from things as they are now. What do you think: could things have been otherwise? Should things become otherwise in the future? Should we think about this together? After all, city, museum, and humanity itself are collective projects.

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The City of Play

what if the most essential feature of all living beings is the ability to play? many people think of play as a childish thing, but what if we built a city around it? what if carnivals, festivals, dancing, and joy became the main pastime of its townspeople?

1 Children feel like true Lilliputians here as Gulliver is 67 meters in length and 9 meters in height.

2 There are many stairs to climb and slides to slide down, some hidden in the concrete folds of Gulliver's clothes.

How to play on the playground: run very fast, pretend to be someone else, catch up, hide and seek, try a merry-go-round, meet new and old friends, show off what you can do, brag and gossip, share secrets, and be silly. Play for the sake of the game.

5 In this playground, children rule. The adult Gulliver is staked to the ground, himself made into an object of play.

6 On this playground there is a giant sculpture of a man sprawled out on the ground, which makes kids seem infinitely small, recreating Gulliver's encounter with the Lilliputians, as depicted in Jonathan Swift's classic novel, *Gulliver's Travels*.

3 Some slides are wide enough for a whole family to slide down.

4 Slides are hidden everywhere, even in the strands of his hair.

"Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man and he is only wholly a Man when he is playing."

Schiller

Do you think the 70,000 park employees who run hotels, restaurants, bus parks, monorail systems, amusement rides, and movie theaters find their work playful?

The Walt Disney Company is also known for creating the largest theme park in the world, Disney World. It houses the fairy-tale buildings featured in Disney cartoons. It may feel as if you've stepped into a real-life fairy tale.

Unlike *the City of Play*, where the rules are invented and can be changed by the players themselves, in Disney World the roles of the participants are fixed once and for all. They are divided into buyers and sellers, into those who pay and those who receive payment.

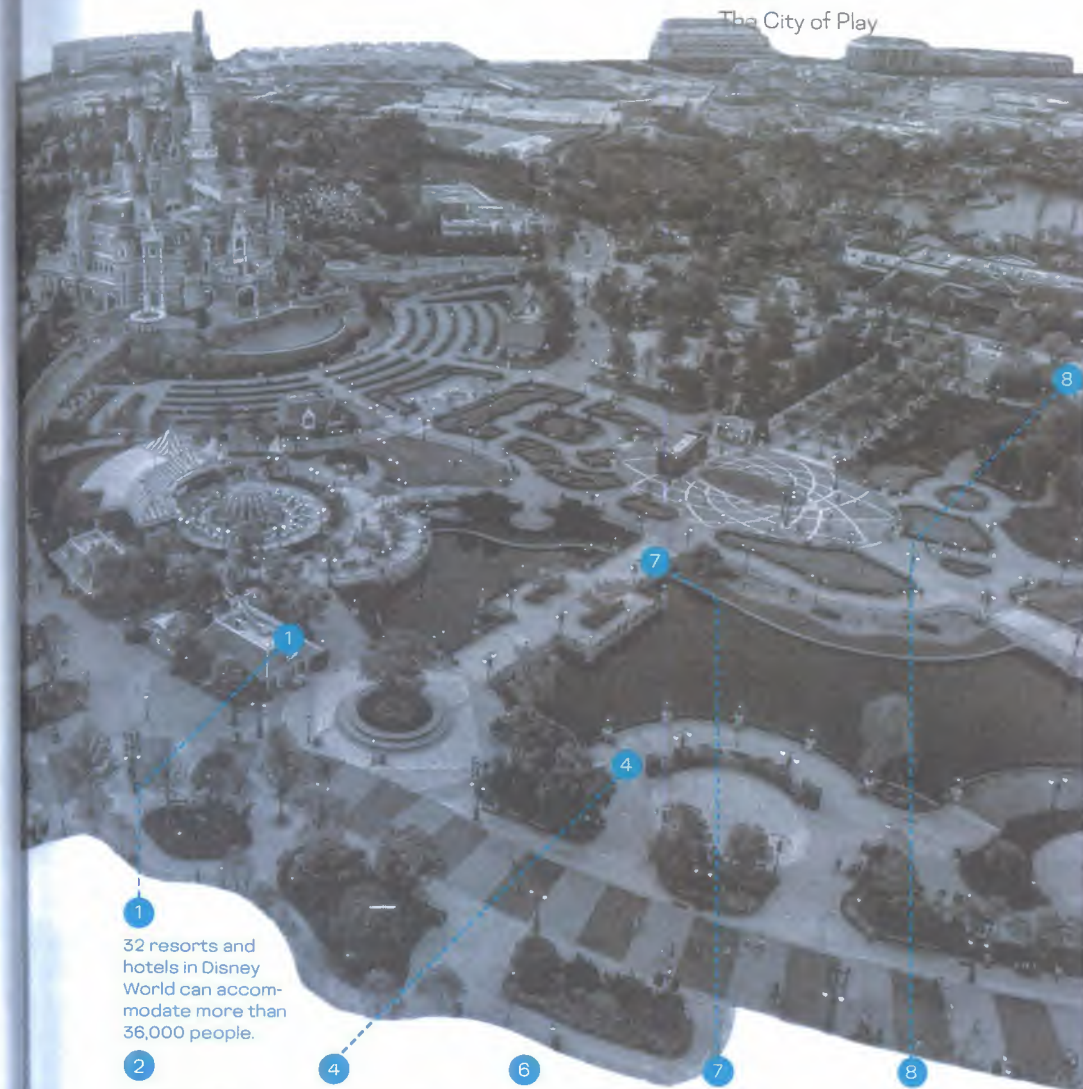
Disney World participants seem to pretend to be preoccupied with finding treasure or meeting Sleeping Beauty, while perfectly aware that the main focus of the project is making money for one of the richest corporations on Earth.



David Graeber

"Play is present when the free expression of creative energies becomes an end in itself. It is freedom for its own sake."

Perhaps as people get older, they forget how to play. They forget that rules can be remade and games can always be played differently. Children know that if a game isn't fun, then it's not worth playing.



1 32 resorts and hotels in Disney World can accommodate more than 36,000 people.

2 On busy days, Disney World can have up to 155,000 visitors. People need to plan and book their trip well in advance.

3 Disney Springs is a separate complex with 100 shops and 65 dining places.

4 Disney World governs the surrounding area and operates under specific tax regulations.

5 Four theme parks and two water parks are spread across the area, almost as big as San Francisco.

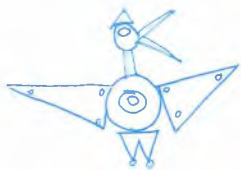
6 Some of the people you see there are actually undercover security personnel. There are also cameras all over the park for surveillance.

7 Beneath the Magic Kingdom of Disney Park, there's a huge tunnel system that crew members use for transportation. It covers nine acres and includes facilities like trash disposal, delivery services, warehouses, and a cafeteria for staff.

8 The parking lot for Magic Kingdom Park covers an area of more than 125 acres and can hold over 12,000 cars, which makes it one of the largest in the world. It's bigger than the park itself.

What if the center of your town became a playground? Think of it in a way that makes it interesting for old and young alike. Someplace people would want to gather—perhaps to figure out city affairs while they play?

Do rules keep people safe? Or is there more to safety than just rules?



Imagine a ten-story house designed especially for play and to run around in. A maze house, a garden-house, a park-house!

In large cities, playgrounds are often characterized by standardized designs and enclosed within grid-like fences. This design reflects a common belief that society is safest and best governed with careful partitions, walls, and lines, creating within itself stark divisions between public and private, work and leisure, white and black, legal and illegal, rich and poor, etc. Playgrounds are another way of dividing people in the name of keeping order. The young are separated from the old under the pretext of protecting each from the other.

Initially, New York City playgrounds were built at the request of the children themselves, who even collected money for play areas. However, the outcome was that the playgrounds built were more like prison yards than play zones. The city hired supervisors to order children to play certain games and to separate boys and girls to different sides of the playground.

In August 1904, several months after the public playground opened, the New York Tribune reported that "the great problem has been the maintenance of order... it has taken a year of ceaseless effort for the young men and women in charge to gain a semblance of control over the youngsters."

Perhaps fenced playgrounds symbolize adults' fear of children. Or children's fear of adults? Or perhaps our shared hope not to lose control of dangerous big-city life?



What if townspeople changed their social roles depending on the season?

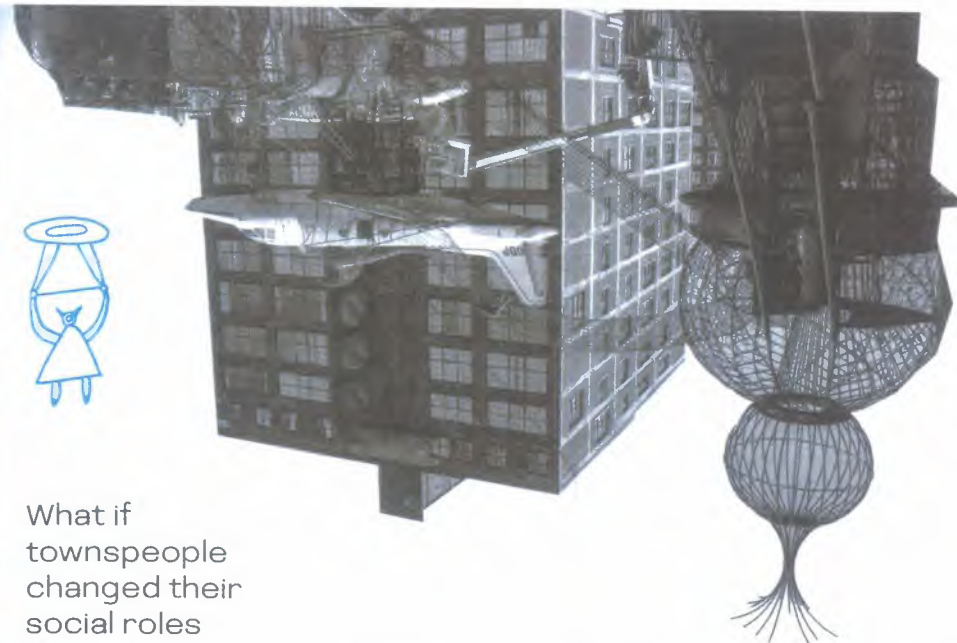
What if in the summer, everyone would be playful and disobedient, and in the winter they would work hard.

Come fall and spring, townsfolk would spend time learning from each other.



A. S. Neill

"I believe that to impose anything by authority is wrong. The child should not do anything until he comes to the opinion—his own opinion—that it should be done. The curse of humanity is the external compulsion, whether it comes from the Pope or the state or the teacher or the parent. It is fascism in toto."



The British educator A. S. Neill believed that even school should be a place for play. In 1921, he founded the Summerhill School on the basis that teachers and children should be equal. In this school, nobody is forced to go to class, and games are no less important than other tasks. Students choose subjects according to their taste, and nobody is given grades.

All decisions are made collectively and each person has a vote. Everyone behaves as they please, as long as they don't harm others.

lady town, prison town, city of fear, upside-down