No. 108

NEW TOWNS, THE MODERNIST PLANNING PROJECT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE CASES OF MILTON KEYNES, UK AND 6TH OCTOBER, EGYPT

Jane Hobson
September 1999

Working Paper No. 108

NEW TOWNS, THE MODERNIST PLANNING PROJECT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE CASES OF MILTON KEYNES, UK AND 6TH OCTOBER, EGYPT

Jane Hobson
Development Planning Unit
University College London
9 Endsleigh Gardens
London WC1H 0ED
United Kingdom

Tel: + 44(0) 207 388 7581   Fax: + 44 (0) 207 387 4541

NEW TOWNS, THE MODERNIST PLANNING PROJECT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

THE CASES OF MILTON KEYNES, UK AND 6TH OCTOBER, EGYPT

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

By 2005 over half the world's population will be living in urban areas. These will include an estimated 26 cities with populations over 10 million, of which 21 will be in developing countries (UN, 1993, cited in Badshah, 1996). Many mega-cities already suffer from well-documented problems of poverty, overcrowding, and poor infra-structure, housing and sanitation. In the twentieth century, one attempted solution to real and perceived problems of large cities has been the construction of small new urban areas, intended to redistribute population and activities from the main city, creating a new form of urban society. In the North, national new towns programmes have been implemented in the post-1945 era, but have become increasingly discredited. However, when Relph states that 'the planning of new towns is an idea whose time has passed' (1987: 157), he is referring only to the North. New town planning as a policy has survived in the South, notably in Egypt, Brazil and Nigeria (Stewart, 1996). As urban populations rise, new towns may be considered a planning option in attempting to relieve the pressures on mega-cities in other developing countries. This paper focuses on two new towns, Milton Keynes, considered 'the epitome of Britain's new towns' (Potter, 1991: 297), and 6th October, one of Egypt's more successful new towns.

I examine new towns as part of the modernist planning project, arguing that new town planning is the ultimate form of modernist planning. Having emerged as a reaction to problems of the nineteenth-century industrial city, modernist planning has in different guises defined urban planning in the North for most of the twentieth century. Its quest for an ordered and rational urban form claimed to offer universal solutions to the problems and perceived chaos of the industrial city, and modernist planning was exported to the South. New towns gave modernist planners a blank canvas on which to create their vision of the ideal urban society. In Chapter 2, I consider the meaning of urban planning as a modernist project, and in Chapter 3, I outline the history and ideology of new town planning.

The modernist planning project aimed to improve the urban environment, improving conditions for the urban poor and creating a new urban society. The relationship between social justice, urban planning and new towns is examined in Chapter 4, in which I firstly develop criteria of distributive justice with which to analyse the case studies. Through a critique of the modernist planning project, based on a deconstruction of the notion of planning in the 'public interest', I argue that a conception of social justice as a question of distribution is inadequate for assessing social justice in new towns. I secondly outline Young's (1990) conception of social justice as the elimination of domination and oppression, and criteria based on this with which to analyse the same case studies.

In Chapter 5, I apply the criteria of distributive justice to Milton Keynes and 6th October, and demonstrate how neither town has achieved social justice on modernist terms, as a distributive issue.

and oppression.

On the basis that 'We cannot imagine a different future for planning unless we understand the shortcomings of the modernist planning project' (Sandercock, 1998b: 2), my contention is that new town planning, as a form of planning within the modernist project, is not capable of meeting the principle of social justice.

2. URBAN PLANNING AS A MODERNIST PROJECT

MODERNISM

Modernism seeks alternative, utopian futures through the pursuit of knowledge and objective science (Harvey, 1989; Holston, 1998). In the words of Berman, 'Modernists ... celebrate and identify with the triumphs of modern science, art, technology, economics, politics: with all the activities that enable mankind to do what the Bible said only God could do: to "make all things anew" ' (1992: 33). This is also destructive, in the sense that it requires a 'ruthless break' with all that has gone before (Harvey, 1989: 12; Berman, 1982). Modernism is 'generally perceived as positivistic, technocentric, and rationalistic', and after the destructive break, is 'identified with the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of an ideal social order, and the standardisation of knowledge and production' (*Precis* 6, 1987, cited in Harvey, 1989: 8).

The modernist project emerged from ideals and assumptions associated with the eighteenth-century 'Enlightenment' in Western thought (Mautner, 1996), which advocated the pursuit of knowledge to achieve human emancipation from natural calamities and scarcity. This liberation requires rejection of 'irrational' tradition, myth and religion (Harvey, 1989): modernism is thus both destructive and optimistic in its pursuit of a utopian future (Harvey, 1989).

The modernist project is associated with changes brought by industrialisation and industrial capitalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After 1945, argues Harvey (1989), it developed into high or universal modernism, strongly associated with Fordism, Keynesianism and US hegemony. The claim towards universalism is a crucial aspect of modernism in this era.

M

the 1950s and 1960s, and in evictions from squatter settlements in contemporary cities in the South.

The rational modernist built environment is intended to break with tradition and initiate social change, with a vision of a new urban society in an ideal physical urban structure. The CIAM city idea rejected any existing urban and social structure in its pursuit of physical order and social change, to be achieved through the shock of defamiliarisation, imposing 'a new urban order through a set of architectural conventions that negate previous expectations about urban life. The objective of such negation is to restructure society by shocking

world. Building new towns captured the imagination of planners (Cherry, 1980) and the Garden City became an authoritative model for new town programmes, although Howard's original ideas were always adapted and diluted.

Post-1945 new towns continued to be based on the modernist 'conviction that the present problems of cities can be transcended by looking to the future' (Relph, 1987: 24). With utopian visions similar to those behind the Garden City, 'New towns offered a solution to the problems of decaying cites and a model for a new type of urban society' (Relph, 1987: 157). Osborn and Whittick (1969), major protagonists of the British post-1945 new towns programme, write of 'urban evils' and the 'vice' of urban problems, considering large cities and 'town overgrowth' to be the root of many problems (1969: 40-46). The British post-1945 new towns programme was also a 'conscious step in the construction of a new social order' after World War Two (Cherry, 1980: 10; Ward, 1993).

BRITISH POST-1945 NEW TOWN PLANNING

British post-1945 new town planning owes much to the lobbying of Osborn, a keen proponent of Howard's ideas, and the Town and Country Planning Association (previously the Garden City Association). In 1944 the Greater London Plan advocated the out-migration of over 1 million people on planned schemes. Following the Reith Commission and New Towns Act of 1946, 28 new towns were eventually built, including 11 around London. The original aims were to stabilise London's population and prevent the growth of employment in central London by dispersing population to self-contained towns of 20,000 to 60,000 (Hall and Ward, 1998; Merlin, 1971; Osborn and Whittick, 1969). New towns were also planned and built around other major cities, notably Glasgow.

There was initially some debate about whether the new towns should be built on completely greenfield sites, as favoured by the Reith Commission. In practice, several were constructed around existing villages (Merlin, 1971), but all benefited from some form of 'clear site' on which new development was possible without hindrance from an existing urban built environment and population.

The programme can be divided into three waves. 'Mark One' new towns, 1946-50, were most influenced by the Garden City. In the early 1960s, 'Mark Two' new towns were modest and the programme slowed during this time. 'Mark Three' new towns of the late 1960s and 1970s resulted from the official 'South East Study', which proposed large new developments to meet projected population growth (Hall, 1992; Merlin,

1971). The most ambitious of these was Milton Keynes, the last to be designated.

Although new town construction continued into the 1980s, planning policy in the late 1970s refocused on inner cities (Hall and Ward, 1998). The new towns programme had been innovative and ambitious, but also controversial. By 1990 the new towns contained a total population of 2 million (Hall, 1992), but failed to stabilise London's growth and have been criticised for their cost and for accelerating inner-city decline (see Aldridge, 1979; Potter, 1989).

NEW TOWNS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Exported to British colonies under the imperial proclamation 'We want not only England but all parts of the Empire to be covered with Garden Cities' (*Garden City,* 1907, cited in King, 1990: 44), the 'modern' new town first arrived in developing countries in the early twentieth century. Since 1945, new towns have been used as a tool by post-colonial governments for various purposes (Gilbert and Gugler, 1981; Turner, 1980; Stewart, 1996). Perhaps most grandiose have been new capital cities, such as Brasilia (see *Economist*, 1997). In response to problems in large cities, new twin cities have been constructed, as in Mumbai, and, closest to Howard's ideas, satellite towns around large cites, such as Shanghai and Cairo.

Many of these new towns have been problematic, despite the 'imaginative and optimistic philosophies underlying their construction' (Gilbert and Gugler, 1981: 191). The construction of satellite towns has often failed to recognise some of the problems encountered in the British new towns programme (Stewart, 1996), and the application of this tool to ease the problems of large and fast-growing cities in developing countries is questioned. Due to the economics of development, new towns are unlikely to provide space and employment for the urban poor, and moreover may divert resources away from the central city (Turner, 1980).

THE EGYPTIAN NEW TOWNS PROGRAMME

Egypt has a history of constructing new urban areas dating back to Memphis in 3100 BC and, more recently, Helipolis in 1906. The current new towns programme, initiated by Nasser in 1969, has drawn on the British and French experiences and on Soviet planning models (Stewart, 1996).

This programme was originally conceived as a solution to Cairo's overcrowding and congestion,

and resulting poor housing conditions[1] (Stewart, 1996). The programme also intended to curtail development on arable land in the Nile Valley, where 95% of Egypt's population live on 5% of its land (*Economist*, 1999; Yousry and Aboul-Atta, 1997). The ideology behind the programme 'reflects a desire for order and social control' (Denis, 1997: 10), and stems from the sentiment that large fast-growing cities should be contained and controlled, supported by comments about Cairo made by former Minister Kafrawi[2].

The new towns aimed to create self-contained growth poles in the desert which would absorb and redistribute population and activities from Cairo, offering cheap housing and a healthy environment (Peel, 1998b). By 1977 the programme had been expanded to include various types of urban development (Stewart, 1996). Some new towns, notably 10th Ramadan and 6th October, have seen considerable success in attracting industry, attributed to their favourable location near Cairo. Others, such as Sadat City, have experienced much slower economic growth (Meyer, 1989; Stewart, 1996). However, success in encouraging people to relocate to the new towns has been limited, and most employees in new towns near Cairo commute from Cairo (*Economist*, 1996; Stewart, 1996).

A central criticism of the Egyptian programme is that all new towns together will have absorbed a maximum of 20% of population growth by the year 2000, thus not even providing a medium-term solution to population growth (Feiler, 1992). This is despite considerable financial investment which could, again, arguably have been more effectively invested in improving conditions in Cairo (Stewart, 1996).

* * *

In this paper I examine Milton Keynes, UK and 6th October, Egypt, new towns constructed outside the major cities of London and Cairo. These new towns exemplify the modernist planning project's attempt to create urban areas where all inhabitants share a 'good life'. On the basis of this and Harvey's (1973) argument that social justice should be the guiding principle in urban planning, I analyse each town according to criteria of social justice, examining to what extent the modernist project has succeeded in planning and

constructing towns where all inhabitants share social benefits.

It is also important to note that each of these new towns has been exclusive in a broad sense, which is not covered here. Although Milton Keynes offered to accommodate 'socially dependent groups' from London (Aldridge, 1979: 147-8), and 6th October aimed to attract low-income people from Cairo, usually only people above a certain income level have been able to relocate. My intention, however, is not to look at these towns in relation to London and Cairo, but as places in themselves.

It is first necessary to examine the meaning of 'social justice' in relation to urban planning and new towns, which is the purpose of the next chapter.

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE, URBAN PLANNING AND NEW TOWNS

New towns have been built on the premise that society can be improved through a new built environment. The motivation to pursue 'social improvement' in this way has often been, as outlined, a reaction to material inequalities in large urban areas, and to poor conditions endured by sections of the population. Underlying the creation of new towns has been a recognition of urban injustice, and a desire to create more 'socially just' urban areas. In this chapter I explore the meaning of social justice in relation to urban planning and new towns, and develop criteria of social justice with which to judge Milton Keynes and 6th October as part of the modernist planning project.

Laws (1994) outlines three schools of social justice which have influenced urban studies. The liberal approach, based on Rawls (1971), sees social justice as a question of distribution, and is drawn on by Harvey (1973: Part 1) and Smith (1994). The Marxist approach focuses on inherent inequalities in capitalist society, and criticises the liberal approach for implicitly accepting the underlying capitalist structure (Harvey, 1973: Part 2). Finally, the post-structuralist approach, based on Young (1990), broadens the Marxist approach significantly to reach a conception of justice which is based on the elimination of domination and oppression.

I shall firstly outline distributive conceptions of social justice, and develop criteria of distributive justice as a means to judge Milton Keynes and 6th October on the terms of the modernist planning project. Secondly I consider post-structuralist critiques of the modernist planning project, which deconstruct underlying assumptions and expose inherent social injustices which go beyond

---

[1] An estimated 6 million people live in squatter settlements and densities reach up to 100,000 per square kilometre in older areas (Bayat, 1997; GOPP, 1997)

[2] Meeting with Hasballah Kafrawi, who from the 1970s to 1993 was Minister for Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities (responsible for the new communities), at Automobile Club, Cairo, 16 May 1999

value of meeting material needs, living in a comfortable environment, and experiencing pleasures' (1990: 37) - she argues that the distributive approach tends to concentrate on the pattern of allocation of material goods or social positions such as jobs, ignoring the social structures, processes and institutions underlying this. Further, to use the notion of distribution for non-material attributes - like power, self-respect and opportunity - is both inappropriate and confusing, for it represents the non-material as static objects, and neglects the role of people as 'doers and actors' (Young, 1990: 37).

Y

people, but were later swamped by a policy change to enabling private sector development. Again, features of the original plans also point to inequalities. I shall further examine this criterion looking at the provision of housing and social facilities.

HOUSING

In both new towns, housing is unambiguously segregated by income-level. In the early years of Milton Keynes the need to provide housing for low-income people was recognised (Walker, 1981), but by 1991 no more public rental housing was constructed and the thriving private housing market dominated (Ward, 1993). One Master Planner, Walter Bor, claimed in 1992 that one of Milton Keynes' successes was the large choice in housing (Bor, 1992). Although there is a broad choice of styles for those who can afford them, there is a lack of choice of tenure. In the early 1990s two-thirds of housing was owner-occupied with only 10% in private rental and housing association and 22.4% public rented (CNT, 1993), compared to original aims of 50% public rental and 50% owner occupation (Clapson, 1998). High income 'executive' housing has been promoted as a means to attract multi-national companies (Ward, 1993). This emphasis on owner-occupation and private market domination has resulted in a growing proportion of people excluded from the housing market altogether (MKBC/BCC, 1990). The market fails to offer affordable housing to first-time buyers, a significant problem in Milton Keynes which has disproportionate number of younger people (MKBC/BCC, 1990). Although Milton

manual task[s], the purpose of our future cities - for which Milton Keynes could be a prototype [-] must be to provide a setting for learning, for the development of imagination, and for the exchange of information' (1992: 5). The ideas were grand, but the advantageous location of Milton Keynes meant that the town was able to exercise an element of choice in attracting employers, unlike other British new towns (Thomas, 1983).

By now, Milton Keynes operates as a regular town, with employment opportunities in the usual range of retail and other services, and in four higher education institutions including the Open University, Milton Keynes' largest employer (Bendixson and Platt, 1992). Unemployment rates are now low, at 2.1% in May 1999[10] (MKEP, 1999b), although the overall figure disguises local differences. In April 1999, Fenny Stratford ward had an unemployment rate of 4.4%, which is above the 3.7% average for South-East England, although just below the UK average [11] (MKEP, 1999a). On a more local level, MKBC reports one estate where over 22% of the economically active population were unemployed or on government schemes (1993, cited in Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997).

These inequalities can be attributed partly to the emphasis on high-technology and higher education, which require a specialised, skilled or highly educated, workforce. In addition, this type of economy can generate polarised employment, where high-skill, professional and managerial work is supported by a workforce of low-grade service staff. It is thus likely that large earning differentials exist.

There is a marked gender bias in employment in Milton Keynes, where the proportion of women in paid employment in the late 1980s was lower, at 42%, than in the UK as a whole (47%) (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997). This is attributed partly to the nature of work available and the lack of part-time work, often preferred by women with domestic responsibilities. Charlesworth and Cochrane (1997) argue that women in Milton Keynes suffer a double disadvantage in the labour market, because there is low availability of part-time work and a high proportion of available part-time work is done by men.
Apart from construction work, employment opportunities in 6th October favour the well-educated (Peel, 1998b) and jobs for unskilled

workers are limited. Further, since most of the workforce of 6th October live in Cairo[12] (Meyer, 1989), skilled workers are most likely to be worth the transport expense and inconvenience borne by companies. Unemployment rates, if available, might be unhelpful at this stage of development, because people without (secure) jobs are unlikely to have relocated to the town. So far, the situation supports Turner's statement that new towns in developing countries 'could have uses, ... but the advantages may accrue more to industry, commerce, skilled workers and managers rather

---

[10] This figure is for Milton Keynes and the surrounding area of North Buckinghamshire.
[11] The ward unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed claimants by a ward estimate of the workforce, where the economically active population is assumed to be 55% of the total population (MKEP, 1999a: 9)

freedom of choice between high quality facilities for all modes [of transport]', the layout of Milton Keynes was unable to fulfil these goals (Potter, 1976: 148). The layout is based on an assumption of universal car use and to benefit from living in Milton Keynes, a car is essential. The Development Corporation realised this in the 1970s, advising residents, 'if you haven't got a car, you might have to think about buying one' (Milton Keynes Gazette, July 1975, cited in Potter, 1976: 156). Twenty years later, access to a car was still far from universal.

Although levels of car ownership in Milton Keynes are, unsurprisingly, higher than national and regional averages, 27% of households are reported as having no car, and 47% have only one (Chesterton Consulting, 1995, cited in Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997). In four wards the number of households without a car is above the England and Wales average of 32.4%, including two at over 40% (MKEP, 1999a). These figures are particularly significant because car use is more important in Milton Keynes than in some

Commission to take over assets once the Development Corporations were dissolved (Thomas, 1983; Ward, 1993), from the start, Milton Keynes' assets were held in trust not for the community but for the national treasury. Policy change in 1979 required Development Corporations to privatise their assets, since when assets have been lost to any form of public ownership, national or local (Thomas, 1983). Thus unearned increments in land values, and profits from other assets have not been redistributed for the benefit of new town residents, who have contributed to the increases in value. Instead, the private sector has profited (Potter, 1991; Ward, 1993).

6th October was from the outset a focus for Egypt's 'Open Door' policy of liberalisation, which aimed to foster foreign investment. However, although 6th October was always intended as a location for private industrial investment, the Local Development Authority (LDA) initially controlled land and land use. A policy change came in 1993, since when the LDA no longer constructs, but sells plots of land to the highest bidders regardless of whether the community will benefit from proposed developments (Helmy, 1999; Peel, 1998a). Further, the public sector has provided expensive infra-structure in order to attract private companies, which will profit not only by the substantial increase in land values, but also from this investment. Surplus value generated by the conversion of land from desert to urban is not likely to benefit inhabitants.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined, through criteria of distributive justice, the extent to which two new towns have met the modernist goal of creating an urban environment where social benefits are diffused to all inhabitants. With Smith's (1994) principle in mind, that greater equality means greater social justice, I would argue that Milton Keynes and 6th October have not been successful in achieving distributive justice. Apart from social facilities provision and aggregate employment figures in Milton Keynes, neither town has a good record on distribution, showing clear class and gender inequalities. These are particularly marked in housing and physical accessibility. Redistribution of surplus value created by the growth of the town is no longer a possibility in Milton Keynes since privatisation, and is a unlikely to happen in 6th October in the current context of market-led development.

Many inequalities in Milton Keynes can be traced back to the original design of the town, although the situation has been exacerbated by increased private-sector control. It may be too early to judge 6th October, but the development of the town so far indicates increasing inequalities, attributed to original plans and to the increased role of the private sector.

6. SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THE ELIMINATION OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION: MILTON KEYNES AND 6TH OCTOBER

The previous chapter demonstrated that Milton Keynes and 6th October have shown limited success in achieving distributive justice. This chapter re-considers the same towns from the position of a critique of the modernist planning project, as outlined in Chapter 4. I apply Young's (1990) post-structuralist conception of social justice, as above, through different forms of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence, to which Harvey (1992) has added an ecological dimension.

6.1 EXPLOITATION

I

than exploitative by women, if their households have relocated to 6th October from a situation in Cairo where housing shortages have forced them to remain in the husband's extended family, which can be oppressive for daughters-in-law (Taher, 1997).

This analysis demonstrates that housing provision and urban design has broader significance than a distributive question of access to and quality of housing, involving meanings, implicit assumptions and expectations behind housing types which can create and perpetuate social change through the built environment.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Workplace exploitation is evident in both towns. In 6th October, although employees of plants in the new town benefit from work in new industries, job security appears to be low. Many employees work on a temporary basis, being required to sign resignation papers on arrival, so that they can be fired at any time (Al-Mahdi, 1999). In Milton Keynes, marketing by the Development Corporation to attract employers has emphasised the flexible workforce, low levels of unionisation, and an absence of notified industrial disputes (Clapson, 1998).

Bearing in mind women's assumed domestic responsibilities, and the inadequacies of public transport in Milton Keynes, the Development Corporation recommended that 'as much employment as possible particularly female employment should be within walking and cycling distance of home' (MKDC, 1975, cited in Potter, 1976: 177). While this might serve to improve women's ability to juggle domestic work and employment, it is based on a gender division of productive labour. 'Female' employment is likely to be in low-grade service work which reflects women's traditional domestic labour, or in industrial work which requires a 'flexible' work force (see Wekerle and Rutherford, 1989). The Development Corporation, through the built environment, is perpetuating 'the conscious or unconscious association of many occupations or jobs with masculine or ve 19nne ohanact eritic s' e(Youg, i9980: 23),where homen'arr reloegted , Dere hy the Dmehangismof puhsiscl wccess biliti, wo Bypes wf pork which rrr rofendrelgared ts plss tTjT*0.0001 Tc-0.0025 Tw(Dresstigous   In Mth October, alsigilya division o

fng rs 'TjT6.4 0 0 76.4 088.7 1 2.1703 Tm-0.0001 Tc-(14Tj12.02 0 0 10.02 195.9 1 0.7 23 Tm-0.0002 Tc-( )TjT-3.9162-1.1

average of 3.7% in one ward only, Fenny Stratford at 4.4% (MKEP, 1999a)[15].

Lack of data means that analysis of 6th October in this section is limited. It is possible to suggest that at this stage there is unlikely to be significant marginalisation among residents, as people are unlikely to have moved to the town without employment or housing. Valid assessments of marginalisation in 6th October will be possible once the town is more established.

6.3 POWERLESSNESS

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Public participation in the construction of a new town is clearly not possible at the start, since there is either no public inhabiting the designated area, as in 6th October, or a small existing population in villages which will form part of the new town, as was the case in Milton Keynes. Although the political systems in the UK and Egypt differ, and the above conceptions of social justice were based on a context of capitalist democracy, there has arguably been little difference in political arrangements in both new towns. Milton Keynes, until 1992, was under the control of the MKDC (Milton Keynes Development Corporation), an unelected body appointed by central government, but operating relatively independently. 6th October

adapt it, particularly where aspects of the planned town fail to meet their needs. Examples of these 'insurgent' spaces and practices can be found in different forms in both Milton Keynes and 6th October.

In 6th October, people have already adapted the urban form. The solution of low-income inhabitants to inadequate retail provision is seen in a thriving 'informal' market, the existence of which is denied by the LDA[17]. This market also appears to serve as a place of social interaction, the old 'street', which is denied in the ordered low-density grid pattern. In response to unsuitable housing types, there are reports of unauthorised extensions to low-income housing, and of animals kept on upper storeys: not ideal for the household, but also a rebellion in the face of the planners' intention for a modern conforming society, where everything is in its place (Attia, 1999; Peel, 1998a).

In Milton Keynes, inhabitants have associated and protested to demand improvements to meet their needs. Examples include the Milton Keynes Hospital Action Group which campaigned for a hospital in the town, Beanhill Tenants Action Group which protested about poor-quality housing and the Doctors and Chemists Action Group, formed by women on Fishermead and Oldbrook to demand facilities for their grid-squares, all of which were successful (Clapson, 1998). Groups such as these have been crucial in the development of Milton Keynes' now strong civil society, seen also in charities working with homeless people and low-income families (Clapson, 1998).

6.4 CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

New towns, as argued, are the ultimate tool of the modernist planning project because planners begin with a blank canvas. Although physical destruction was unnecessary in Milton Keynes and 6th October, both towns show evidence of attempts to reject tradition, by rejecting conventional urban forms and to transform society by imposing new physical structures and arrangements (see Holston, 1986).

Milton Keynes and 6th October are both based unequivocally upon imported US ideas, manifested most obviously in the grid-pattern and in the low-density layout which give the feeling of an entirely suburban town. The planners of Milton Keynes looked to Los Angeles for ideas (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997; Mars, 1992) and produced a town which offers, according to its chief architect, 'a "modern" way of life - which has, outside Milton Keynes, no physical expression in Britain' (Walker, 1981: 10).

Interestingly, 6th October drew on the US model already mimicked in Milton Keynes[18]. The town exudes 'modern', Western and ultimately US imagery and influence. A number of US-style fast food joints are located along main roads, and the nearby complexes of Medialand and Dreamland stand as 'modern-day monuments to Western culture' (Peel, 1998a). 6th October exemplifies the 'ordinary modernist style' which was commonly constructed in the North in the 1950s and 1960s (Relph, 1987), a form of universalised modernist planning which has resulted in the construction of an urban form which negates local culture in its attempt to emulate perceived ideals based on foreign ideologies, values and planning models (see King, 1990).

While North America is culturally relatively close to the UK, the urban form of Milton Keynes nonetheless represents cultural imperialism through imposition of a style of built environment that evolved in a different context, demanding that inhabitants adapt to it, perhaps in the hope that they will live according to its implicit suburban ideology. The urban form of 6th October is more startling, because it stands out in marked contrast to conventional Egyptian urban forms and culture, as exemplified in Cairo. The Egyptian new towns exhibit a lack of attention to the needs, desires and traditions of Egyptian people (Attia, 1999).

Foreign consultants were employed to play a major role in formulating the original Master Plans of 6th October, in order to introduce 'comprehensiveness' and 'scientific planning', mainstays of the modernist planning project (Hegab, 1984: 173). Egyptians were only brought in at a later stage, in order to adjust the plans to avoid conflict with customs and traditions, but significantly, very few changes were made (Hegab, 1984). It appears that 6th October represents a political statement of an intention to 'modernise' Egypt as a whole, in the image of the West.

This argument would suggest that the cultural imperialism manifest in 6th October is paradoxically imposed from within, albeit with foreign help. Yet the very 'choice' of this type of development is symptomatic of more pervasive cultural imperialism. Kumar suggests that physical change in the built environment can be crucial to the creation of 'culturally relevant markets for Western goods' (1980, cited in King, 1990: 79). Elite groups in 6th October, including producers and consumers of private developments as well as planners and politicians, can be seen as defining development according to capitalist criteria and aspirations to Western culture, and not according to Egyptian values and traditions (see King, 1990).

---

[17] see note 4

[18] Demonstrated by the enthusiasm for Milton Keynes expressed by former Minister Hasballah Kafrawi, who has made official visits to Milton Keynes (see note 2)

As well as attempting to create a market for Western goods, a further, more pragmatic explanation is that 6th October had to create a location which potential foreign investors would find more familiar, ordered and therefore attractive than Cairo, in order to generate employment.

Milton Keynes, perhaps with the exception of the town centre, avoids the 'ordinary modernist style' described by Relph (1987) by paradoxically also making links back to an image of an idyllic past:

'Alongside the consciously US-oriented borrowing of malls, boulevards and drive-thru restaurants, the 'pioneers' of Milton Keynes seem equally dedicated to constructing a bucolically English retreat into a simulacrum of village life'

(Charlesworth and Cochrane 1997: 224).

Milton Keynes thus also draws on a mythical English rural past, via the Garden City, in some texts harking as far back as 17th and 18th century landscape gardening (Rasmussen, 1981). Charlesworth and Cochrane (1997) argue that this aspect of the design of Milton Keynes is culturally

Neither Milton Keynes nor 6th October can be considered distributively just urban areas. This does not necessarily demonstrate that the modernist project is incapable of planning and implementing new towns which meet criteria of distributive justice: it is interesting to question whether this would in fact be possible. However, my argument is that a conception of social justice as distribution is inadequate in judging new towns, because it fails to recognise broader forms of injustice in the modernist planning project.

Using Young's (1990) conception of social justice as the elimination of domination and oppression, I have attempted to expose forms of injustice in new towns which are neglected by the distributive analysis. These demonstrate inherent flaws in the modernist planning project which result in oppression, regardless of the level of distributive justice. New towns, as the ultimate form of modernist planning, provide a clear illustration of the social justice limitations of the modernist urban project.

New towns have attempted to create an ideal society, often based on a consensual universal middle-class, through an ideal urban area. Yet this cannot work for the simple reason that a vision of an ideal formulated by one social group - here, planners, architects and politicians - excludes the different desires and needs of other social groups who may not aspire to middle-class conformism. This has been shown by examining the case studies with criteria of cultural imperialism and powerlessness.

The assumption of universal applicability in modernism has been deconstructed as cultural imperialism. Both the examined new towns exhibit cultural imperialism in the form of emulating North American urban form, arguably symptomatic of the global influence of the US. 6th October further demonstrates the problems of transferring planning models which are assumed to be universally applicable. Looking to previous new town programmes and particularly the new town of Milton Keynes, and aspiring to US cultural forms, the planning of 6th October has rejected Egyptian culture and tradition. Moreover, 6th October shows many of the same problems seen in Milton Keynes, for example, those of physical accessibility, indicating that the planners copied, rather than learnt from, the experience of Milton Keynes.

Powerlessness can be seen as the crucial criterion in the analysis of new towns, particularly in terms of lack of decision-making power, illustrating how differences in the wider political systems of Egypt and the UK have had little bearing on each new town, since the construction of each has been carried out by unelected bodies without popular representation. Analysis of powerlessness in the

new towns further links the post-structuralist criteria of social justice, since it is primarily the groups which suffer from powerlessness who suffer from other forms of oppression, namely exploitation, marginalisation and violence. In both towns, low-income women and men, and women as a gender are disadvantaged, and in Milton Keynes, those of non-white ethnicity also suffer group-based oppression of this type. This supports the argument that planning in the 'public interest' is impossible, tending to support one social group's interests (see Sandercock, 1998a).

Nonetheless, inhabitants of 6th October and Milton Keynes have demonstrated the falsity in the modernist assumption that people are passive in relation to the built environment. Far from being transformed by the built environment, men and women have adapted it to meet their needs.

It is interesting to question whether it would be possible to create a new town which met the criteria of social justice as formulated by Young (1990) and Harvey (1992). On the basis of my analysis of two new towns, I am doubtful that this is feasible, since inclusive planning which avoids the oppression of powerlessness would only be achievable through some form of public Keynes.

REFERENCES

AA Quarterly (1974) 'Designing for Milton Keynes', in *AA Quarterly*, Vol. 6 No. 3/4: 26-35

Aboul-Atta, T. (1999) lecture and discussion on urbanisation and urban policies in Egypt, Cairo University, Cairo, 19 May

Al-Mahdi, A. (1999) lecture and discussion on the economics of Egypt, Cairo University, Cairo, 16 May

Aldridge, M. (1979) *The British New Towns: a programme without a policy,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Altshuler, A. (1973) 'The goals of comprehensive planning', in Faludi, A. (ed.) *A Reader in Planning Theory,* Oxford: Pergamon

Attia, A. (1999) lecture and discussion on the design of Egypt's new towns, Ain Shams University, Cairo, 16 May

Badshah, A. (1996) *Our Urban Future,* London/ New Jersey: Zed Books

Bayat, A. (1997) 'Cairo's poor: dilemmas of survival and solidarity', in *Middle East Report*, Winter: 2-6

Beauregard, R. (1996) 'Between modernity and postmodernity: the ambiguous position of US planning' in Campbell, S. and S. Fainstein (eds.) *Readings in Planning Theory*, Oxford/ Malden: Blackwell (first published 1989)

Bendixson, T. and J. Platt (1992) *Milton Keynes: image and reality*, Cambridge: Granta   Editions

Berman, M. (1982) *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, London/ New York: Verso

Berman, M. (1992) 'Why modernism still matters', in Lash, S. and J. Friedman (eds.) *Modernity and Identity,* Oxford: Blackwell

Bishop, J. (1986) 'Milton Keynes: the best of both worlds?' *Occasional Paper* 24, Bristol: School for
Advancxso02 Tc-0.0026 T86) 'Milton Keynes:o/1.0022 Tw[(24, Br8e198lhulWn, M. (1992) 'Milton Ke)TjT*0.0001 Tc-0. 0 T

Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities: General Organisation for Physical Planning

Greed, C. (1994) *Women and Planning: creating gendered realities*, London/ New York: Routledge

Hall, P. (1988) *Cities of Tomorrow*, Oxford: Blackwell

Hall, P. (1992) *Urban and Regional Planning*, London/ New York: Routledge

Hall, P. and C. Ward (1998) *Sociable Cities: the legacy of Ebenezer Howard*, Chichester: John Wiley

Hamer, D. (1990) *New Towns in the New World*, New York: Columbia University Press

Hamilton, K. (1998) 'Women and the transport poverty trap', in *Broadsheet* 31, London: Women's Design Service, September: 1-3

Harvey, D. (1973) *Social Justice and the City*, Oxford: Blackwell (1988 edn)

Harvey, D. (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Oxford: Blackwell

Harvey, D. (1990) 'Between space and time: reflections on the geographical imagination', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 80 No. 3: 418-434

Harvey, D. (1992) 'Social Justice, postmodernism and the city', in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* Vol.16: 588-601

Hegab, M. (1984) 'New towns policy' in Evin, A. (ed.) *The Expanding Metropolis: coping with the urban growth of Cairo,* proceedings of Seminar Nine in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, Singapore: Concept Media for Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Helmy, R. (1999) lecture and discussion on the design of Egypt's new towns, Ain Shams University, Cairo, 16 May

Hettne, B. (1995) *Development Theory and the Three Worlds,* Harlow: Longman

Holston, J. (1986) *The Modernist City: architecture, politics and society in Brasilia*, Doctoral Dissertation, Yale University, UMI facsimile

Holston, J. (1998) 'Spaces of insurgent citizenship', in Sandercock, L. (ed*.) Making the Invisible Visible: a multicultural planning history*, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press

Howard, E. (1902) *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, Powys: Attic Books, 1985 edition

King, A. (1990) *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy*, London/ New York:Routledge

Koenigsberger, O. (1980) Foreword to Turner, A. (ed.) *Cities of the Poor: settlement planning in developing countries*, London: Croon Helm

Laws, G. (1994) 'Social justice and urban politics: an introduction' in *Urban Geography,* Vol.15 No. 7: 603-611

Levy, C. (1992) 'Transport' in Østergaard, L. (ed.) *Gender and Development: a practical guide,* London/ New York: Routledge

Levy, C. (1999) lecture on 'The planner as communicator and promoter of consensus in conflictive urban realities', Development Planning Unit, London, 22 February

McDowell, L. (1983) 'Towards an understanding of the gender division of urban space', in*Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* Vol. 1: 59-72

McDowell, L. (1999) *Gender, Identity and Place*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Mars, T. (1992) 'Little Los Angeles in Bucks' in *The Architects' Journal,* No. 15 Vol. 195: 22-26

Mautner, T. (ed.) (1996) *Dictionary of Philosophy*, London: Penguin

Merlin, P. (1971) *New Towns: regional planning and development*, London: Methuen

Meyer, G. (1989) 'Problems of industrial development in the New Desert Cities of Egypt', in *Applied Geography and Development,* Vol. 34: 90-105

MHUUC, (1996) *Twenty years of development 1976-1996*, INTA 20 Cairo International Conference, 13-17 October

MKBC/ BCC, (1990) *Milton Keynes: safeguarding the future,* Milton Keynes and Aylesbury: Milton Keynes Borough Council and Buckinghamshire County Council

MKDC (1992)

Opher, P. and C. Bird (1981) *Architecture and Urban Design in Six British New Towns,* Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic Urban Design

Osborn, F. and A. Whittick (1969) *The New Towns: the answer to Megalopolis*, London: Leonard Hill

Peel, M. (1998a) 'Cracks in the utopian dream', in *Financial Times Survey of Egypt*, May 12

Peel, M. (1998b) 'Homes, but only for some' in *Financial Times Survey of Egypt*, May 12

Potter, S. (1976) *Transport and New Towns Volume 2: The transport assumptions   underlying the design of Britain's new towns, 1946-76,* Milton Keynes: Open   University New Towns Study Unit

Potter, S. (1989) 'North-South divide in the new towns programme' *in Town and Country Planning*, November: 296-301

Potter, S. (1991) 'Going, going, nearly gone' in *Town and Country Planning*, November: 296-207

Potter, S. and R. Thomas (1980) 'What is a new town for?' in International Federation for Urban Planning: *New Towns in National Development*, Milton Keynes: Open University

Rasmussen, S. (1981) 'Introduction: Reflections on Milton Keynes' in Walker, D.: *The Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes*, London: Architectural Press

Rawls, J. (1971) *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Relph, E. (1987)   ,