

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

<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. URBAN PLANNING AS A MODERNIST PROJECT.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Modernism .....	1
Modernism and urban planning .....	2
<b>3. NEW TOWNS: HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
New towns as modernist planning .....	3
British post-1945 new town planning.....	4
New towns in developing countries .....	4
The Egyptian new towns programme .....	4
<b>4. SOCIAL JUSTICE, URBAN PLANNING AND NEW TOWNS .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Distributive justice .....	6
Distributive justice, the modernist planning project and new towns .....	6
Criteria of distributive justice.....	6
Social injustice inherent in the modernist planning project .....	7
Social justice as the elimination of domination and oppression .....	7
Young's five forms of oppression.....	8
Applying Young's conception to urban planning.....	8
Criteria of justice as the elimination of domination and oppression .....	8
<b>5. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE IN MILTON KEYNES AND 6TH OCTOBER .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Background.....	9
5.1 Material Resources .....	9
5.2 Employment.....	10
5.3 Physical Accessibility.....	11
5.4 Investment of surplus value and profits .....	12
Conclusion .....	13
<b>6. SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THE ELIMINATION OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION: .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>MILTON KEYNES AND 6TH OCTOBER</b>	
6.1 Exploitation .....	13
6.2 Marginalisation.....	14
6.3 Powerlessness.....	15
6.4 Cultural imperialism .....	17
6.5 Violence .....	18
6.6 Ecologically unsustainable development.....	18
Conclusion .....	19
<b>7. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I should like to express my appreciation to the following people who helped me in researching and writing this paper: Caren Levy for comments on earlier drafts, discussion, and encouragement; Nadia Taher for her support and encouragement, and for clarification of some issues for the Egypt sections; David Featherstone for a tour of Milton Keynes and discussion; Matthias Rosenberg for support, discussion, and reading earlier drafts. The case study of 6th October is based on information gathered during the DPU field trip to Cairo in May 1999, for which thanks are due particularly to Julio Dávila and Frankie Liew. I should also like to acknowledge the 1998/99 MSc Urban Development Planning group for useful earlier discussion about 6th October.

## 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 infrastructure, 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. Chapter 6 applies criteria based on Young's conception, examining injustice as oppression. I argue that distributive justice ignores broader issues of social justice which are evident in the case studies. I conclude that new towns, as a tool of the modernist planning project, cannot meet criteria of social justice as eliminating domination 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.

## MODERNISM AND URBAN PLANNING

The relationship between modernism and the urban is complex. Urbanisation, associated with the rise of industrial capitalism, created a new form of social organisation with connected problems. This provided both an undesirable situation which modernists could reject, but also desirable features to adapt for a new utopian society. Modernism has also impacted upon the urban: faith in scientific and technical progress 'gave to modernist planning the Utopian dream of the rational city'. (Sandercock, 1998a: 22). The modernist project has defined urban planning for most of the twentieth century, and remains dominant. Aiming to solve the social crises of industrial capitalism, 'the project of modernist planning is to transform an unwanted present by means of an imagined future' (Holston, 1998: 40).

Relph (1987) sees the origins of twentieth-century modernist urban planning in the works of Bellamy and Morris who exemplified modernist optimism: 'The Golden Age lies before us and not behind us and is not far away' (Bellamy, 1888, cited in Relph, 1987: 11). Morris harked back to a previous (mythical) golden age, namely the Middle Ages, but he too visualised a new future society achieved through environmental change (1890, cited in Relph, 1987).

Planning as a modernist project was related in the North to the beginnings of urban planning, which responded to the social problems of nineteenth-century fast-growing industrial cities (see Cherry, 1980), which were unable to cope with industrialisation, large-scale rural-urban migration or to accommodate natural population growth (Holston, 1986). Harvey (1989) identifies a connecting thread of modernist planning from Haussman's renewal of central Paris in the 1860s through to Howard's Garden Cities from 1898, Le Corbusier in the 1920s and the urban renewals of the 1950s and 1960s. I would add post-1945 new towns, which were influenced by the ideas of Howard (to be covered in the next chapter) and by Le Corbusier and the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM).

Modernist urban planning aimed to create a better society. Beginning as a reform movement to

improve conditions for the urban poor, planning became a tool with which planners tried to diffuse social benefits across all social groups: 'Modernist planners believe in a future in which social problems are tamed and humanity liberated from the constraints of scarcity and greed' (Beauregard, 1996: 218). Thus one way in which modernist planning strove to improve society was by reducing urban inequalities and creating more socially just urban areas where the 'good life' could be shared by all (Beauregard, 1996; Smith, 1994).

By the post-1945 era, planning had been institutionalised as a tool of the interventionist state (Beauregard, 1996). Planning was implicitly assumed to be serving the needs of all groups, because the state was considered representative and therefore working in the common good: a position not normally questioned. Efficient urban organisation was in the common social interest, and undertaken by state planning (Beauregard, 1996). Planning was a top-down endeavour, because planners were considered to have a comprehensive perspective which allowed them to recognise the 'overall public interest' (Altshuler, 1973: 193).

Modernist methodology, rooted in positivism, has been assumed to be globally applicable: 'The planners of the 1950s and 1960s believed that the concepts, methods and techniques that had been developed in the West were the social equivalents of natural laws and, as such, universally applicable' (Koenigsberger, 1980: 13). In the South, modernist planning is a major component of modernisation, the dominant post-1945 model of development. This model was exported by US social scientists (Berman, 1982) and 'justified as bringing a benevolent and progressive 'modernisation process' to a backward Third World' (Harvey, 1989: 35; see Hettne, 1995). Modernisation, the assumed universal path to progress, is also associated with post-colonial state-building. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the South have resulted in fast-growing mega-cities with housing and infrastructure problems; modernist urban planning has been applied as the universal solution to the resulting problems and perceived 'disorder'.

Clearing a path to a new future by rejecting the past is crucial to the modernist planning project: 'How could a new world be created ... without destroying much that had gone before?' (Harvey, 1989: 16). Clearing large urban areas for redevelopment has been central to the modernist quest for order in cities, from Haussman's clearance of central Paris to CIAM's doctrine of the 1920s (to be outlined below) which came to dominate twentieth-century planning and architecture (Harvey, 1989; Holston, 1986). A similar approach is seen in urban renewal programmes in North American and British cities in

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 new urban habits into being' (Holston, 1986: 63). Holston (1986) argues that Brasilia was intended to transform Brazilian society in this way. The ideas of CIAM, though rarely implemented on a large scale, have been pervasive: 'city development ... has systematically attacked, and often successfully obliterated, the "moving chaos" of nineteenth century urban life', characterised by old streets containing a 'volatile mixture of people and traffic, businesses and homes, rich and poor' (Berman, 1982: 168).

By the 1950s and 1960s, modernist planning was the international norm, applying reason to urbanisation through decision-making perceived as technical (not political) by a state assumed to be neutral. It aimed to 'produce a co-ordinated and functional urban form organised around collective goals', and to create a universal, consensual middle-class society (Beauregard, 1996: 213). By the mid-1980s, however, the modernist planning project had been seriously challenged firstly by urban realities which indicated it was failing in its own endeavour, secondly by post-structuralist questioning of the controllers and underlying assumptions of planning and finally by the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s which has promoted the market as the primary distributive mechanism, reducing the state's role in planning (Beauregard, 1996; Levy, 1999; Sandercock, 1998a).

In North and South, modernist planning sought to impose order and rationality on the perceived disorder of industrial cities to bring about social improvement. One approach sought to obliterate the city, or like Le Corbusier, to completely change its form (Berman, 1982) - an approach which nonetheless required destroying existing urban areas. Another approach has seen the construction of new towns outside the large city. The latter is arguably the ultimate form of modernist planning, and will be further explored in the next chapter.

### 3. NEW TOWNS: HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY

#### NEW TOWNS AS MODERNIST PLANNING

'WE MUST BUILD ON A CLEAR SITE!' stated Le Corbusier (1929, cited in Hall, 1988: 208, original capitals). For Le Corbusier it was essential to clear areas of large cities prior to building the new modernist city. But clearing a large site in an old city may be practically difficult or meet opposition. Creating an entirely new settlement on already 'clear' rural land is more straightforward:

'Planning in city centres has to cope with established street patterns, buildings, communities and vested interests, and is thus a politically saturated activity; planning in the city fringe or for outlying sites deals with the replacement of unpeopled countryside by built environments and is largely technical and apolitical ... new towns are the purest cases of late twentieth century greenfield development'

(Relph, 1987: 153-4).

New towns are not new to the twentieth century, but their recent history is based particularly on Howard's influential Garden City. In his book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (significantly first published in 1898 as *Tomorrow: the peaceful path to real reform*) Howard (1902) 'summarised his revulsion against the unhealthy conditions of the industrial cities' (Turner, 1980: 46). The Garden City was to combine the best features of both urban and rural life, avoiding the problems. The Garden City was to be a self-sufficient settlement of no more than 32,000, surrounded by a green belt, and linked to other Garden Cities forming a network of settlements called the Social City (Howard, 1902; Hall and Ward, 1998).

Howard was modernist in his vision of an improved future free of the social problems and poverty of the late nineteenth century. His plans were for ordered, rational and unsprawling towns, which would achieve industrial efficiency (Hall and Ward, 1998). Although less physically destructive than the CIAM doctrine, the Garden City movement nonetheless advocated a break from the past and a radical new way of living. The utopian vision aimed to improve living standards, but with a top-down approach that was paternalistic in its benevolence. While CIAM was anti-tradition, the Garden City linked the past to the future, rooting progress in the familiar (see Berman, 1982).

The Garden City has been remarkably influential. It formed the basis of twentieth-century town planning in the UK, and in British colonies to which planning was exported, and inspired numerous post-1945 new towns programmes around the

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 cities 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 cities, 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<sup>1</sup> (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<sup>2</sup>.

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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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)

<sup>2</sup> 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

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

questions of distribution. On this basis, I outline Young's (1990) conception of social justice and set out criteria relating her conception to urban planning. The criteria will be applied to the case studies in order to judge them from a standpoint external to the modernist planning project<sup>3</sup>.

## DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The distributive approach sees justice as a set of moral principles for resolving conflicting claims to resources (Harvey, 1973; Smith, 1994). Smith states: '... whatever is being distributed should go to people in the right quantities' (1994: 24). The object of distribution is the benefits and burdens of development, in the form of material and non-material resources (Harvey, 1973; Smith, 1994). Harvey (1973) terms these 'real income', defined as an individual's command over society's resources. In considering what constitutes a 'right' distribution, Smith's basic principle is that '... social justice is manifest in reductions in inequality: in a process of returning to equality' (1994: 118). Rawls (1971) argues that any unequal distribution should be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, a principle extended by Smith (1994).

The above concepts refer to just distribution as an end outcome. Importantly, social justice is not only a question of a pattern of just distribution, but also of the process of achieving this (Harvey, 1973). This introduces the social relations lying behind distribution (Smith, 1994), which are placed much more centrally in the post-structuralist approach to be considered below.

## DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, THE MODERNIST PLANNING PROJECT AND NEW TOWNS

In *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey (1973) argues that planners are crucial in social justice, because planning involves allocational decisions with distributional effects on the real income of urban dwellers. He links distributive justice and urban planning as '... the distributive effects of activities arranged in a given spatial form and the redistributive effects of changes in that spatial form' (1973: 72). He argues that the spatial structure of the city perpetuates existing inequalities: the wealthier benefit from the advantages of better locations and the reverse is true of poorer people in disadvantaged areas (Harvey, 1973). Planning is thus a key mechanism through which distributive justice is related to urban space (Smith, 1994).

Links between urban structure and social justice can also be seen in the ideas of the earlier influential movements in modernist urban planning, as outlined above. In the late 1800s Morris and Bellamy had reacted to the extremes of 'conspicuous poverty' and 'conspicuous consumption' by imagining 'future societies in which poverty, grime and inequalities of their own age had been overcome' (Relph, 1987: 12-13). Some of their ideas were applied by Howard (1902), who was also concerned with material inequalities in society, which he saw as caused and perpetuated by large cities and private land ownership (Thomas, 1985).

CIAM's ideals also included social justice concerns, notably regarding the distribution of urban resources (housing, recreation, education and health) on an egalitarian basis (Holston, 1986). Like Howard, CIAM saw private land ownership as a major obstacle to social justice and proposed means to eliminate it. CIAM advocated public ownership, controlled by an assumedly benign state (Holston, 1986), while Howard (1902) proposed co-operative community ownership: 'The ultimate goal of the new town idea was the redistribution of income and wealth - away from the city landlords towards new town residents' (Potter and Thomas, 1980: 43). The increase in land value resulting from conversion to urban use was intended to benefit the residents. Arguably the most radical aspect of Howard's ideas, reliance on major capitalists for funding meant that this goal of redistribution was diluted in the early demonstration Garden Cities at Letchworth and Welwyn (Hall and Ward, 1998). By the time of the British post-1945 programme, new towns had become primarily a tool of physical and regional planning, rather than of income redistribution (Potter and Thomas, 1980).

## CRITERIA OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Based on the conceptions of distributive justice above, I intend to use four criteria of distributive social justice, of which the first three refer to Harvey's (1973) 'real income', to analyse Milton Keynes and 6th October:

1. A new town should promote equal distribution of material resources among inhabitants. This includes housing, health services, education services, social services and open space.
2. A new town should promote adequate employment opportunities for a range of skills, both part- and full-time.
3. Physical accessibility to all urban activities should be ensured for all, through location and transport, so that people are not disadvantaged by where they live in the new town.

---

<sup>3</sup> I shall not use the Marxist approach per se, because its main premises have been incorporated into Young's broader approach (Young, 1990).

4. Surplus value created by the conversion of rural to urban land and profits from new town assets should be re-invested in the new town for the benefit of inhabitants.

These criteria will be applied to analyse Milton Keynes and 6th October from within the modernist planning project, using Smith's (1994) principle that greater equality means greater social justice. However, the modernist planning project has been accused of inherent socially injustice. In the next section, I begin with a social justice critique of the modernist planning project, before outlining Young's (1990) broader post-structuralist conception of social justice and relating her conception to the urban.

### **SOCIAL INJUSTICE INHERENT IN THE MODERNIST PLANNING PROJECT**

A conception of social justice as distribution assumes and therefore accepts the modernist planning project without challenging it fundamentally. Sandercock (1998a) argues that social justice within the modernist project has been 'preoccupied with material outcomes, with a concept of territorial social justice as the redistribution of urban goods and services ...' (1998a: 183). She argues: 'What is missing from this modernist approach is a broader definition of injustice which includes but is not limited to the material, economic realm' (Sandercock, 1998a: 183). Drawing on post-structuralist critiques of urban structure and planning, she argues that systematic exclusion in past planning practices means that future planning has to look beyond distributive justice if it is to achieve genuine social justice.

Planning in the modernist project is defined from above: planners are perceived as experts who decide how society should be improved 'for the common good' (Altshuler, 1973: 195). Resulting urban areas are therefore based on planners' visions of what is 'right', often a paternalistic environmental determinism: 'good, clean cities will make good people' (Relph, 1987: 54). Modernist planning is associated with the expansion of the middle class, indicating a quest for egalitarianism, but also 'validat[ing] the belief that society was not riven by contradictions, and thus the city could be organised physically for 'public' purposes' (Beauregard 1996: 219). Sandercock (1998b: 28) demonstrates that 'deconstructing the class, gender, race and ethnic origins, biases, and effects of the planning profession' challenges this modernist notion of rational planning in the public interest, exposing modernist planning as systematically excluding certain groups.

Some excluded groups have resisted the modernist planning project, creating 'spaces of

insurgent citizenship', which oppose dominant modernist space, achieved despite the modernist aim to maintain social order by assigning people and activities to specific places (Holston, 1998; see Harvey, 1990). Sandercock (1998a; 1998b) outlines opposing practices in the North where women's, black, indigenous and other excluded groups define the urban on their own terms. In developing countries, the most visible insurgent spaces are housing solutions created by the urban poor, who are systematically excluded from master plans which tend 'to look forward to a millennium where all squatter huts will be eliminated and replaced by regularly laid out housing in the image of the Western city' (Dwyer, 1977, cited in Cherry, 1980: 18).

Critiques of the modernist planning project typically focus on large cities. A new town provides an interesting perspective because it has little or no population at the planning stage, so the planners' degree of control is considerable. Planners have the power to define the physical and social structure of the new town and meaningful public participation is difficult. Planners and architects enjoy a 'tabula rasa' on which to practice their skills (Ward, 1993: 14), and inevitably the new town is created according to their vision, excluding or neglecting the needs and interests of other social groups.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THE ELIMINATION OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION**

The modernist planning project is shown to be exclusive and biased, demonstrating how a conception of social justice as distribution is inadequate: for planning to attempt to achieve social justice it must be based on a broader and inclusive notion of social justice which rejects the 'claims of undisputed authority' (Dear, 1986: 381) of modernist rational planners.

Young (1990) puts forward a conception which includes but goes beyond distribution, defining social justice as '... the elimination of institutionalised domination and oppression' (1990: 15). She focuses on the institutional conditions necessary for people's self-development, which is constrained by oppression, and self-determination, which is constrained by domination (1990: 37). Young (1990) emphasises the importance of overlapping social groups, rather than individuals. She sees oppression as fivefold, comprising exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence, each of which may encompass decision-making structures and procedures, division of labour and culture, as well as distribution.

Although Young sees distribution as important - 'any conception of justice should presume the

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).

### YOUNG'S FIVE FORMS OF OPPRESSION

Exploitation focuses on the workplace, drawing on Marxist analysis, and the living place, based on feminist analyses of domestic labour. It concerns the social relations behind distributive patterns, where one social group benefits from the labour or the relative position of another (Young, 1990), encompassing systems of production and consumption (Harvey, 1992).

Marginalisation concerns the people which the capitalist system cannot or will not use: 'A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation' (1990: 53). This tends to concern 'individuals marked by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, immigration status, age' (Harvey, 1992) and is not only a question of material deprivation, but also of loss of self-respect.

The concept of powerlessness concerns people whose social position and position in the division of labour limit their 'ability to express political power ... to engage in the ... politics of self-expression' and 'to be listened to with respect' (Harvey, 1992: 599; Young, 1990). This is particularly affected by the persistence of class divisions, which affect not only working life but all forms of life, resulting, Young argues, in different cultures: 'The two groups tend to live in segregated neighborhoods or even different towns, a process itself mediated by planners, zoning officials and real estate people' (1990: 57).

Cultural imperialism occurs when 'the dominant meanings of a society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's own group and mark it out as the Other' (Young, 1990: 58). One social group's way of being is universalised, through exclusive or primary access to means of communication and interpretation, and others are defined by the dominant as inferior or deviant (Young, 1990).

Young's final form of oppression is violence, namely the violence of social practices, and systematic violence. Harvey (1992) argues that some form of social control is necessary, but warns against the militarisation of public spaces.

### APPLYING YOUNG'S CONCEPTION TO URBAN PLANNING

Harvey (1992) and Sandercock (1998a) apply Young's (1990) conception of social justice to urban planning. It is important to note that Sandercock (1998a) and Harvey (1992) are primarily concerned with social justice in large cities. Although some inequalities may be more extreme in large cities, social justice is equally an issue for residents of smaller urban areas. The focus on large cities is not helpful, and I would argue that the principles should be equally applicable to smaller towns.

Young (1990) roots her conception of social justice in the contemporary US, and appears to suggest that while US appeals to justice no longer focus on distribution, distributive justice should be a priority in other places:

*'In a society and world with vast differences in the amount of material goods to which individuals have access, ... any conception of justice must address the distribution of material goods. The immediate provision of basic material goods for people now suffering severe deprivation must be a first priority for any programme that seeks to make the world more just.'*

(Young, 1990: 19; my italics).

However, on her own terms I would question this separation of distributive justice from underlying social structures, which are of equal importance. To focus exclusively on distribution in the South would be to deny the importance of empowerment through challenging the social relations underlying unequal distributive patterns (see Friedmann, 1992). I therefore consider it both valid and useful to apply Young's conception of social justice to smaller towns in both North and South.

### CRITERIA OF JUSTICE AS THE ELIMINATION OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION

To analyse Milton Keynes and 6th October, I adapt Harvey's (1992) criteria, which link Young's (1990) five faces of oppression to urban planning and which add a sixth concerning sustainable development.

Socially just planning:

1. should confront exploitation by creating systems of production and consumption which minimise exploitation of labour in the living place and the workplace;
2. should confront marginalisation so as to liberate marginalised groups in a non-paternalistic way. I apply this with sub-criteria of poverty, homelessness and unemployment;
3. should confront powerlessness by ensuring access to political power and the ability to engage in self-expression. In applying this, I consider participation in decision-making, socio-economic integration, and diversification and protest.
4. should be sensitive to cultural imperialism and eliminate it from the design of projects
5. should attempt to minimise violence. I examine this through public crime and perceptions of safety.
6. should recognise the impact of projects on future generations and distant peoples and mitigate against damaging ecological consequences.

(adapted from Harvey, 1992: 598-600)

The next chapters will consider Milton Keynes and 6th October from within the modernist planning project according to criteria of distributive justice, and from the position of a critique of the modernist planning project, applying the criteria above.

## 5. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE IN MILTON KEYNES AND 6TH OCTOBER

After outlining the background to each new town, this chapter analyses Milton Keynes and 6th October according to the criteria of distributive justice developed in Chapter 4.

### BACKGROUND

Milton Keynes, designated in January 1967, was constructed during the 1970s and 1980s on a mainly greenfield site which included a few villages. Located 80km north-west of London, Milton Keynes is well connected to London and Birmingham. The target population was 250,000 (Osborn and Whittick, 1969) and by the early 1990s, 153,000 had been reached and population growth rate was the fastest in the UK (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997; CNT, 1993). The target population was larger than for previous British new towns in order to sustain a high level of social facilities (Walker, 1981). The Master Plan was based on a grid-pattern and had seven goals:

opportunity and freedom of choice; easy movement and access; balance and variety; the creation of an attractive city; public awareness and participation; efficient and imaginative use of resources (MKDC, 1992: 2). Now a highly developed new town, Milton Keynes is not conventionally urban, described as a 'city in the country' in official publicity (CNT, 1998).

Designated in 1979, 6th October is located in the desert, 32km south-west of Cairo on the Alexandria-Cairo highway. Construction began in 1981 for a target population of 500,000. Owing to high demand for land, the Master Plan was later extended (MHUUC, 1996) and the new, ambitious, plan aims at a population of 1 million by 2020<sup>4</sup>. Current population is estimated at between 100,000 (Aboul-Atta, 1999) and 200,000<sup>5</sup>. 6th October was intended to relieve pressure from Cairo and to offer opportunities to young people, especially in high-technology industry<sup>6</sup>. Despite success in attracting industrial branch plants, including multinational companies, 6th October has yet to attract the population needed for it to develop into a convincing town.

Since it is still under construction, it is perhaps unfair at this stage to assess 6th October: Turner (1980) suggests that at least a generation is needed before a new town can reasonably be judged. Nonetheless, I shall attempt to analyse the town as it already exists, with tentative extrapolation to the future. It is also important to note the different policy contexts behind each town: Milton Keynes was planned at the end of an era of state intervention and expenditure, while the rise of neo-liberalism has impacted upon 6th October at a much earlier stage of its development. Since the towns are at different stages of development, my aim is not to compare, but to analyse each according to the criteria developed in the previous chapter. Finally, I note that my analysis of 6th October is less detailed due to relatively little information or literature.

### 5.1 MATERIAL RESOURCES

The chief architect of Milton Keynes, Derek Walker, predicted that 'we will see a kind of evenness that reflects a relative dispersion of wealth' (1981: 8). But by the early 1990s a different reality had emerged. Although partly attributable to 1980s central-government policy of state minimalism, aspects of Milton Keynes' early planning can be held accountable for some urban inequalities. In 6th October, earlier plans explicitly aimed to provide for the needs of lower-income

<sup>4</sup> Meeting and tour with Local Development Authority Officers, 6th October, 17 May 1999

<sup>5</sup> see note 4

<sup>6</sup> see note 4

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 Keynes has attempted to maintain a balance in housing provision by encouraging shared ownership and housing association building (Potter, 1991), housing problems are manifest in marked inequalities between different grid-squares, and homelessness.

Bendixson and Platt (1992) attribute some housing problems to post-1979 central-government policy changes, but others can be traced further back. Several of the older low-income estates are of poor quality and deteriorating. Netherfield grid-square is one such example, despite being described in architects' optimism as 'great terraces of worker housing' (Bendixson and Platt, 1992: 269). Fenny Stratford ward shows a percentage of households lacking or sharing use of a bath, shower and/ or inside WC at 2.3% which is above the England and Wales average of 1.3% (MKEP, 1999a).

In 6th October, housing is divided into three types: high-, medium- and low-cost. Despite attempts to build housing for the working class - by 1986, 14,500 new low-income units were under construction (Feiler, 1992) - affordability of low-income housing is doubtful. 6th October claims to

provide the cheapest public housing in Egypt<sup>7</sup>, but even if this is the case, it is not necessarily affordable and many of the urban poor in Cairo find an affordable housing solution in squatter settlements. Housing in the new towns is generally considered to be overpriced and under-serviced (Stewart, 1996).

At the other extreme, 6th October contains palatial villas with swimming pools<sup>8</sup>. A trend is reported of affluent people choosing to remain in Cairo, but speculating in property in 6th October, with the inevitable result of inflating land and house prices (*Economist*, 1999).

## SOCIAL FACILITIES

Milton Keynes exhibits inequalities in provision of social facilities (such as retail, health, leisure) between grid-squares. Finnegan's (1998) respondents report a lack of facilities as well as general deterioration in Fishermead grid-square. On the other hand, overall provision of social services is good, with meeting places, children's play areas, allotments and sports facilities as well as exceptional provision of public open space which is used by different social groups (Thomas, 1983; Waterman, 1998).

6th October suffers from a lack of basic social and educational facilities, which discourages people from moving there (Feiler, 1992; Helmy, 1999; Stewart, 1996). Since 6th October is explicitly aimed at young people and their children<sup>9</sup>, it is likely that facilities may be aimed at that specific group, neglecting the needs of others. Provision is increasingly dominated by large-scale private-sector developments for the affluent, notably sports clubs and the extensive Dreamland theme-park/ golf-course complex just outside the town, which is clearly only accessible to the wealthy. Overall, the needs of lower and middle-income people have been neglected in terms of housing and facilities

## 5.2 EMPLOYMENT

Milton Keynes focuses on high-technology and information technology industries, and higher education. A specific intention of 6th October is to offer opportunities and training in high-technology industries, but the town is mainly aimed at manufacturing, alongside agro-processing and tourism (Stewart, 1996).

With regard to Milton Keynes, Bor states, 'Whereas the historic purpose of our older cities was largely to concentrate a labour force for

<sup>7</sup> see note 4

<sup>8</sup> see note 4

<sup>9</sup> see note 4

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<sup>10</sup> (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<sup>11</sup> (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<sup>12</sup> (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 than to labourers or casual workers' (1980: 53).

6th October has succeeded in generating employment in large companies, but there has been a lack of encouragement to small and medium-sized enterprises (Attia, 1999), which could diversify employment. In addition, formal planning and development, combined with the low population, means that there is little space for low-productivity 'informal' economic growth, which might provide the dynamism necessary to provide a more diverse range of jobs (see Wilkinson and Kardash, 1992).

### 5.3 PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

With regard to physical accessibility, the most distinctive feature of both new towns is the grid-structure. In Milton Keynes, this layout aimed to achieve the goal of 'easy movement and access ... from home to jobs and other places of activity by high quality public transport and the unconstrained use of the private car' (Bor, 1992: 6). Milton Keynes is now dominated by the private car, which has further moulded the already car-based urban structure, a scenario likely to be repeated in 6th October in future.

Milton Keynes has separate residential and industrial grid-squares (Clapson, 1998), meaning that zoning is particularly marked. Employment is dispersed across the town in different locations, and population density is extremely low - projected at eight per acre for 2000 (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997) - requiring people to travel relatively long distances between activities. Potter argues: 'The needs of the motor car have determined almost every major element of this plan, from the general location of land-uses, the whole transport structure, etc. right down to the size of individual estates and the location of shops and social facilities within them' (Potter, 1976: 149-51). Despite recognition that 'true mobility is dependent on equity in the provision of a real

<sup>10</sup> This figure is for Milton Keynes and the surrounding area of North Buckinghamshire.

<sup>11</sup> 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)

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Bahgat Group's IEP television assembly plant has 1300 employees of whom only 20% live in 6th October: the rest are brought in daily from Cairo on company buses (Human Resources Manager, IEP, 6th October, 17 May 1999)

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 other areas of England and Wales. Citing figures of car-ownership at household level gives an indication of the class-based bias in transport in Milton Keynes.

The level of physical accessibility in 6th October, also a grid-zoned town, is similar to that in Milton Keynes. The town is low-density, with regulations restricting construction to a maximum of 50% of the total land area. The layout is geared toward the use of private cars, and puts non-car users at a disadvantage. Furthermore, in 6th October only a small proportion of people are likely to own a car. The town appears to be aimed primarily at car-owning socio-economic groups: for example, the Local Development Authority claims that 60% of university students in the town own a car<sup>13</sup>.

There is a gender bias in physical accessibility in both new towns. Household figures of car-ownership, as above, falsely assume equal access to the household car by different members of the household (Levy, 1992). In reality, women are less likely than men to have access to a household car, particularly during the day (Greed, 1994). For example, Potter (1976) reported that 82% of 'housewives' in Milton Keynes had no car use during weekdays. Similarly, Egyptian men are more likely than women to own and use a car.

For people without car use, the alternatives are limited. Despite the statement from the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) that 'A clear basic objective for public transport is to provide equal opportunity of movement to all parts of the city for those who depend on public transport' (MKDC, 1974, cited in Potter, 1976:

157), public transport in Milton Keynes is poor. Some of the current public transport problems can be blamed on deregulation since the 1980s (Bor, 1992), but early planning is also at fault: the dispersed road system has made the provision of good public transport difficult, and impossible to achieve in a financially viable way, as demonstrated by the early failure of the popular dial-a-bus service (MKBC/ BCC, 1990; Opher and Bird, 1981; Thomas, 1983). In 6th October, public transport is virtually non-existent, though there are a few (discouraged) informal vans and some private bus companies (Stewart, 1996).

In terms of non-motorised transport, Milton Keynes' layout includes the 'Redways', an extensive system of foot- and cyclepaths. However, combined foot- and cyclepaths can be dangerous for pedestrians (Greed, 1994), and since the Redways were an afterthought to the Master Plan, they undulate under and over the main roads meaning that 'you have to be young or athletic to enjoy cycling in Milton Keynes' (Thomas, 1983: 246). The low-density layouts of 6th October and Milton Keynes inevitably result in long walking and cycling distances.

Ward (1993) suggests that people in any town just adapt to the available public transport system. This is probably true, but ignores the issue of equity: it is easier for some people than others to adapt: 'For those with a car and the money to afford to run it, Milton Keynes is certainly an easy place to move about in, and taking advantage of all the community and recreational facilities should be no problem. However, for those without a car, life can be very restricted indeed' (Opher and Bird, 1981: 5). The urban layout and location of urban activities in both new towns is class- and gender-biased. Alternative forms of transport to the car are limited, thus restricting access to urban activities for those without a car.

#### 5.4 INVESTMENT OF SURPLUS VALUE AND PROFITS

The extent to which Milton Keynes and 6th October have followed the idea of a new town as a tool of redistribution has altered over time, particularly in the broader context of a shift towards market domination. Although neither town was aimed towards co-operative ownership, as proposed by Howard (1902), it is important to examine how inhabitants have benefited from the increase in land value 'that is generated simply by the fact that the residents live, work and shop there' (Ward, 1993: 147).

Rasmussen stated in 1981 that all land in Milton Keynes was in public ownership or held in trust for the community by the Development Corporation, but he was optimistic. Under the 1959 New Towns Act, which had established the New Towns

---

<sup>13</sup> see note 4



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 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

#### IN THE LIVING PLACE

The Reith Committee, which was behind the British new towns programme, laid strong emphasis on the importance of the family (Ward, 1993). In Milton Keynes this has found expression in an emphasis on single family housing, for nuclear families with two children, assuming a male breadwinner and female homemaker (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997; see McDowell, 1999). The problems of accessibility outlined above constrain women's mobility, increasing the domestic role (still primarily women's responsibility), thus reducing the possibility of combining domestic tasks with employment, and thereby disadvantaging women in the labour market (Hamilton, 1998). Alongside an urban structure which increases women's domestic role, assumptions about gender divisions of labour are thus built into the town, making it difficult for women who need or want to work in productive work outside the home.

Moreover, the emphasis on this type of housing can be seen as encouraging 'suburban conformity' through designing the built environment so that other household forms - single person, heterosexual or homosexual adults sharing - are difficult and even appear deviant (McDowell, 1999: 118).

In 6th October all flats are designed for nuclear families with two children. This may be intended to encourage conformity to a certain lifestyle, but people are likely not to conform to expectations and to adapt housing to suit their needs. This type of housing may be considered liberating rather

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 feminine characteristics' (Young, 1990: 23), where women are relegated, here by the mechanism of physical accessibility, to types of work which are often regarded as less prestigious. In 6th October, a similar division of productive work is seen, for example in the employment of women in certain aspects of newer industries, such as electronics assembly, where employers consider women to have 'nimble fingers'<sup>14</sup>.

## 6.2 MARGINALISATION

In this section I consider marginalisation in Milton Keynes and 6th October, looking specifically at the criterion of poverty, including homelessness and long-term unemployment.

Poverty is the most basic way of examining the issue of marginalisation, particularly in towns which have been created with an intention of improving conditions for the urban poor. Poverty goes beyond distribution, as it can reduce self-esteem and limit the opportunity of women and men to 'exercise their capacities in socially defined and recognised ways' (Young, 1990: 54). The situation in Milton Keynes is summed up by Charlesworth and Cochrane: 'The harsh realities of life for those in some of the large public sector housing estates, where poverty and unemployment are endemic, also help to define the extent to which those residents are marginal to the overall project' (1997: 228).

As a rough indication, in March 1999, nine out of Milton Keynes' 16 wards contained a percentage of households claiming family credit which exceeded the UK average of 3.2%, including two, Stantonbury and Woughton, at above 6%. Three wards showed a percentage of income support claimants in August 1998 above the Great Britain average of 6.8%, including Woughton at 11.3% (MKEP, 1999a). Again, this is a question of distribution, but also of marginalisation, as the ability of women and men on low incomes to participate in consumption, now a crucial part of expected life-style, is limited. A further dimension, already covered as a distributive issue, is that of access to a car: women and men without car access may be limited from full participation in the town.

Homelessness is again the result of distributive failure, but has broader implications, severely restricting ability to attain employment or to participate fully in society. The decline in the construction of public and social housing in Milton Keynes, combined with the central-government policy in the 1980s which entitled tenants of public housing to buy their homes, has resulted in a significant homeless population (a total of 1230 applications to the Council for assistance as homeless in 1989/90) (MKBC/ BCC, 1990). According to MKBC/ BCC (1990) the social housing shortage has left the unemployed, single parents and ethnic minorities particularly vulnerable.

Positively, marginalisation through long-term unemployment is low overall in Milton Keynes. Long-term unemployment is below the UK average of 4.6% in all wards, and over the South-East

---

<sup>14</sup> Meeting with Human Resources Manager, IEP, 6th October, 17 May 1999

average of 3.7% in one ward only, Fenny Stratford at 4.4% (MKEP, 1999a)<sup>15</sup>.

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 is administered by the LDA (Local Development Authority), part of the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities. The LDA's role is to control the implementation of the new town plans according to the Ministry's orders (Feiler, 1992).

The British 1971 Skeffington Report, which advocated increased public participation, was recognised in Milton Keynes, yet in practice 'public participation conflicted with the nature of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation which wanted to build at a fast rate with minimum interference' (Waterman, 1998: 82). Development Corporations were justified as bodies which took decisions on behalf of future inhabitants who were not yet politically represented in designated areas (Thomas, 1983). Small, existing populations were denied representation, which is reasonable insofar as they may have had different priorities from the incoming population, in some cases totally opposing the new town (Ward, 1993). Milton Keynes was thus created under a high level of central control: '... the planners of Milton Keynes have been less constrained than any others in British urban history' (Thomas, 1983: 251; Ward, 1993). This exemplifies the modernist planner,

perceived as an expert and acting in the 'public interest', taking decisions for a population which has yet to arrive. Further, Thomas commented in 1983 that 'once a development corporation is established it seems to become impossible to restore democratic control' (1983: 253). Almost a decade later, the leader of Milton Keynes Borough Council reiterated this: 'It has been very frustrating watching a group of unelected people spending our money' (Wilson, 1990, cited in Bendixson and Platt, 1992: 127).

Even if the MKDC had created a new town with a high level of distributive justice, this would have been achieved through top-down decision-making, meeting only those needs of residents which the planners had anticipated. Since the planners formed a homogenous group, it is unlikely that anticipated needs would have taken account of multiple publics and other ways of being (Sandercock, 1998a). The early designers of Milton Keynes were predominantly white men<sup>16</sup>, and the MKDC was also dominated by white men throughout its existence from 1967-92. These men were drawn mainly from technically oriented professions - architecture, engineering and surveying - exhibiting a lack of awareness of gender equality issues and of the relationship of women to the built environment (Dobbin, 1998). Milton Keynes also suffered from professional rivalry between 'experts' (Waterman, 1992), demonstrating the falsity of the notion of planning as an objective and technical endeavour.

The MKDC did commission a study into residents' opinions (Bishop, 1986) when the population had reached 85,000. Although Bishop (1986) reports that some results were acted upon, it was too late to alter the basic urban structure which continues to have an impact on residents.

In 1992, when the MKDC was wound up, the population's powerlessness increased due to the wider policy context of state minimalism and of curtailing local government. Rather than coming under local authority control, profitable new town assets were transferred to the national Commission for New Towns or privatised, and non-profit assets such as parks were put in the control of new trusts (Potter, 1991). This is well illustrated by the fate of the Shopping Building, Milton Keynes' equivalent to a High Street. This was previously managed by the Shopping Management Company, a non-governmental quango, which had the power to take decisions of a type made by elected councils elsewhere, but which had a minimal level of public accountability (Thomas, 1983). Since the centre was sold to a private company, this very minimal public control has been lost, and the company has been able to

<sup>15</sup> The long term unemployment rate is calculated as the number of claimants unemployed for 6 months or more, expressed as a percentage of the workforce (MKEP, 1999a: 9)

<sup>16</sup> See for example the designers of Milton Keynes pictured and listed in *AA Quarterly* (1974).

close the building outside shopping hours, meaning a loss of central public space and important pedestrian access in central Milton Keynes (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997; Francis, 1991).

Over 25 years, the planning of Milton Keynes had shifted from 'benevolent paternalism' to 'market domination' (Ward, 1993: 144), with 'little democratic involvement or participation either by the pre-existing population or by those who have come to live in the area' (Charlesworth and Cochrane 1997: 230).

A similar pattern can be seen in 6th October. Decision-making in Egypt is very centralised, with little public participation (Helmy, 1999). 6th October is arguably more politically disempowering than other areas because it is managed by an agency which is a direct hand of a central Ministry, and because the town represents a flagship development which Egypt is keen to display internationally. Public participation or increased local power - even the LDA has very limited powers - would threaten the control of central government to create its vision: 'new towns are often favoured ... because they give national governments the opportunity to engage directly in urban development without the encumbrance of local democratic control' (Thomas, 1985: xxiii).

Bishop argues: 'If one is going to create totally new concentrations of population moving very quickly (within twenty to twenty-five years) into an area, is there any real alternative to leaving the shaping of the settlement in the hands of a group of outside professionals?' (1986: 2). In response I would suggest that this demonstrates the impossibility of achieving social justice in new towns planning, in terms of eliminating the oppression caused by powerlessness.

#### **AVOIDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC SEGREGATION**

As discussed above as a question of distributive justice, 6th October and Milton Keynes are both clearly segregated by housing: in Milton Keynes, 'it is almost immediately clear (and is certainly part of the local urban common sense) which grid-squares have the highest levels of unemployment, poverty and other social problems and which contain the "executive housing" ' (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997: 228). While this undoubtedly demonstrates unjust distribution, class differences and segregation are also a question of power and status, and therefore of oppression/ domination (Young, 1990).

Milton Keynes' Master Plan aimed to create 'a range of housing in size, tenure and character in gridsquares to provide a mixture of social, age, racial and income groups' (Waterman, 1998: 79).

The official story states that the planners aimed to avoid the creation of demarcated neighbourhoods, yet these were implemented in practice (Dobbin, 1998). Each grid-square was named and became a neighbourhood, certain grid-squares gained a reputation for being undesirable, and people who could afford it moved on to more attractive grid-squares at the first opportunity (Waterman, 1998). The optimistic proclamation about the residents of Milton Keynes: 'They are classless. They are the new Britain', was clearly wrong (Beynon, in MKDC, 1984, cited in Bendixson and Platt, 1992: 253).

This form of social segregation through the built environment, seen also in the three classes of housing in 6th October, is a typical feature of planning for urban order in the modernist project, creating 'a spatially and socially segmented world - people here, traffic there; work here, homes there; rich here, poor there; barriers of grass and concrete in between' (Berman, 1982: 168). Yet, particularly when combined with limited non-car transport, such segregation reduces mobility.

This has been exacerbated by the location of local facilities. The Milton Keynes Master Plan intended for local retail and social services to be located on the main roads, but in practice these have been located within residential grid-squares (Bor, 1992). In 6th October, residential areas are set out as small neighbourhoods of a few blocks around local amenities. These arrangements are intended to be convenient for women in their domestic roles. However, a study carried out in the mid-1980s in Milton Keynes found that the daily activities of women tended to be confined within their residential grid-square (Dobbin, 1998; McDowell, 1983), with the likely consequence of exclusion and isolation (McDowell, 1983). In both towns, low-income women may be disadvantaged by more limited facilities within poorer grid-squares or neighbourhoods.. Overall, women's freedom and choice is reduced.

The modernist planning seen in Milton Keynes and 6th October aims to order space: 'Each activity has been assigned its territory ... The overall result is an urban landscape characterised above all by its tidy patchwork of functions, a place for everything and everything in its place' (Relph, 1987: 165). People and their activities are assigned distinct places, and the idea is that 'everyone knows their place' (Harvey, 1990).

#### **DIVERSIFICATION AND PROTEST**

A spatially ordered new town can however be contested from within (Harvey, 1990). The modernist planning project assumes a one-way process where the built environment moulds people, but once people settle in a new town, they

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<sup>17</sup>. 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<sup>18</sup>. 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).

---

<sup>17</sup> see note 4

---

<sup>18</sup> 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 imperialist in that this collective 'memory' of an English past excludes people whose cultural heritage is not white, serving to construct an exclusively white identity. Despite aims to attract a variety of 'racial' groups (Bor, 1992: 6), Milton Keynes is predominantly white, at 94.2% compared to 90.1% for South-East England. London, from where Milton Keynes was intended to draw its population, has a white population of 79.8% (Charlesworth and Cochrane, 1997). It is uncertain, however, to what extent symbols of an English past would influence a decision to move to Milton Keynes: the relatively low figure of ethnic minorities in Milton Keynes is possibly more illustrative of other forms of exclusion, for example in employment.

## 6.5 VIOLENCE

I examine violence through consideration of public crime<sup>19</sup>. In Milton Keynes, public crime appears high, but varies according to grid-square, for example, Finnegan's (1998) respondents report high levels of theft and burglary in Fishermead. A picture of public crime for Milton Keynes as a whole is provided by MKEP's (1999a) figures. From April 1998 to March 1999, levels were above the England and Wales average in nine out of 16

<sup>19</sup> I consider public crime due to the availability of data, and am aware that I am neglecting more private forms of violence, notably domestic violence.

wards for criminal damage<sup>20</sup>, eight wards for violent crime<sup>21</sup> and six for burglaries of dwellings<sup>22</sup>.

Another important issue of violence concerns perceptions of safety. The low-density, highly vegetated design of Milton Keynes results in a lack of defensible space, both within grid-squares and along main roads. This problem is exemplified by the Redways system, where bush-lined and winding paths are frequently empty because of the low-density of the town, and feel particularly unsafe at night. This may deter people from using the Redways, decreasing the mobility of non car-users, primarily women.

Information on violence in 6th October is unavailable, but it is possible to suggest that the new urban form may have a significant effect. In older urban areas, crowded streets and established social networks act as a form of protection. This is lacking in the low-density layout and wide, empty streets of 6th October, which may reduce perceptions of safety and thereby reduce personal mobility, particularly of women.

## 6.6 ECOLOGICALLY UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Neither Milton Keynes nor 6th October were built with much consideration of the impact on future generations and distant peoples of ecological consequences of new town development (Harvey, 1992).

6th October was constructed on a desert site. Nonetheless, attempts have been made to plant grass verges and trees in order to create an attractive environment for residents and employers (Attia, 1999). The Master Plan designates 10.8% of land use as 'green areas' (MHUUC, 1996). Supporting the town plus non-desert vegetation in a hot arid environment requires considerable quantities of water, which have to be piped 40km from the Nile. This has not discouraged the private sector: the most extreme use of scarce water is seen in the Dreamland golf course.

The conception and construction of 6th October, where water was clearly a major difficulty from the start, is an example of planning to conquer nature, perhaps connected to issues of national pride, as an attempt to show that even a town in the inhospitable desert is possible: 'planning would master the environment, shaping the habitats of urban man and bringing natural resources into the

<sup>20</sup> The criminal damage rate is expressed as the percentage of the ward population (MKEP, 1999a:9)

<sup>21</sup> The violent crime rate is expressed as the percentage of the ward adult population (MKEP, 1999a:9)

<sup>22</sup> The dwelling burglary rate is expressed as the percentage of ward households (MKEP, 1999a:9)

service of man's own needs' (Perloff, 1957 paraphrased in Sandercock, 1998a: 26).

The urban structure of both new towns works against ecological sustainability. By nature of their low-density, both cover a large amount of land, which in Milton Keynes was previously rural. The size and low density of each town increases the need to travel, and since the focus is on the private car, the long and short term ecological impacts of car use and increased car production are exacerbated.

Energy was hardly mentioned at the planning stage of Milton Keynes (Thomas, 1983) and there is no evidence that it has been a concern in planning 6th October. By now, Milton Keynes makes claims to energy efficiency, largely because of high-profile energy efficiency housing projects (MKDC, 1992). While these are undoubtedly to be credited, there is some irony in the claims due to the energy-inefficient urban structure and car-focus.

More positively, industrial pollution levels in both towns are likely to be low, due to the nature of the industries (e.g. high technology, food processing), which are significantly less polluting than older 'heavy' industries.

## CONCLUSION

In this section, I have attempted to show that certain groups, defined by class, gender and ethnicity, have in different ways been excluded or disadvantaged from the benefits of living in Milton Keynes and 6th October.

The criteria highlight how certain problems can indicate forms of injustice that are more complex than a problem of distribution. Transport and urban layout in both towns, for example, signify both class and gender biased distribution in accessing 'real income', but also injustices of exploitation through implicit assumptions about domestic divisions of labour, of marginalisation, in that women and men with reduced accessibility are at a disadvantage in participating in the benefits of the new towns, of cultural imperialism through imposition of a foreign urban form, and of violence in terms of perceptions of safety. These issues clearly go beyond distributive justice and further, could not be rectified simply by equalising the distribution aspect. Although distributive justice is undoubtedly important in demonstrating material inequalities, problems of distribution can be seen as indicative of much broader forms of injustice.

This chapter has also shown that distributive success does not necessarily meet Young's broader criteria. For example, Milton Keynes has a low unemployment rate, thus distribution of jobs

as such could be considered fairly just. Yet under the criterion of exploitation, employment was deconstructed to indicate both class and gender polarisations of labour.

Forms of injustice have also been raised in this chapter which do not overlap with distributive issues, mainly under the criteria of powerlessness and cultural imperialism. These criteria show particularly how new towns fail in social justice terms because they form part of the modernist planning project, highlighting the top-down and exclusive nature of new town planning, and inappropriate universal application of planning models and urban structures.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper has been to argue the contention that new town planning, as part of the modernist planning project, is incapable of creating socially just urban areas.

New town planning has been used as a tool to create new and ideal urban societies which represent some form of break from the past, in both physical form and tradition, attempting to transform society and create towns which are free of urban injustice, where social benefits are distributed among all inhabitants. However, analysis of Milton Keynes and 6th October through criteria of distributive justice has shown that this goal has not been met in these new towns. Although 6th October is still in the process of development, a lack of distributive justice can be identified at the current stage.

Failure to achieve distributive justice in Milton Keynes and in 6th October can be attributed to a number of explanations. The nature of the original plans in both towns laid the foundations for unequal distribution, for example in housing, and set out a layout which resulted in inequitable physical accessibility, forcing further inequalities in 'real income' (Harvey, 1973). Differences between plans and implementation has meant a loss of intended features which might have resulted in improved distributive justice, seen most clearly in the development of Milton Keynes' grid-squares as distinct class-based neighbourhoods. The shift in the wider policy context behind both towns to market domination has had a significant negative impact on distributive justice, which has perhaps been more fundamental in 6th October, where focus shifted to the private sector at an early and defining stage of the town's development. It is interesting to question the broader significance of this shift, which appears to be undermining many modernist ideals, in relation to the modernist planning project.

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 participation. This is not possible in a new town at the initial planning stages which define its fundamental urban form.

Thus by applying a conception of social justice as the elimination of domination and oppression, I ultimately question the justification of new towns as a planning tool and would reject new towns as a planning response to the problems of mega-cities. Through analysis of new towns as part of the modernist project in both the North and the South, I have argued the social justice limitations of new town planning, and thereby attempted to increase understanding of the shortcomings of the modernist planning project.



## 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 Advanced Urban Studies
- Bor, W. (1992) 'Milton Keynes', in *Urban Design Quarterly*, March 1992: 5-9
- Charlesworth, J. and A. Cochrane, (1997) 'Anglicising the American dream: tragedy, farce and the 'post-modern' city', in Westwood, S. and J. Williams (eds.) *Imagining Cities: scripts, signs, memory*, London/ New York: Routledge
- Cherry, G. (1980) 'Introduction: aspects of twentieth-century planning' in Cherry, G. (ed.) *Shaping an Urban World*, London: Mansell
- Clapson, M. (1998) 'Community and association in Milton Keynes since 1970' in Clapson, M., M. Dobbin and P. Waterman (eds.) *The Best Laid Plans: Milton Keynes since 1967*, Luton: University of Luton Press
- CNT (1993) 'Facts on Milton Keynes', factsheet prepared by Chesterton Consulting, Milton Keynes: Commission for New Towns
- CNT (1998) *Milton Keynes: visitors route map*, Milton Keynes: Commission for New Towns
- Dear, M. (1986) 'Postmodernism and planning', in *Environment and Planning B: Society and Space*, Vol. 4: 367-384
- Denis, E. (1997) 'Urban planning and growth in Cairo' in *Middle East Report*, Winter: 7-11
- Dobbin, M. (1998) 'Milton Keynes: the management of New Town growth: a feminist perspective, in Clapson, M., M. Dobbin and P. Waterman (eds.) *The Best Laid Plans: Milton Keynes since 1967*, Luton: University of Luton Press
- Economist* (1996) 'Go to Dreamland, forget the mosques' in *The Economist*, August 17
- Economist* (1997) 'Planned Cities: capital punishments' in *The Economist*, December 20
- Economist* (1999) *A Survey of Egypt*, London: The Economist, March 20
- Feiler, G. (1992) 'Housing policy in Egypt', in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 2: 295-312
- Finnegan, R. (1998) *Tales of the City: a study of narrative and urban life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Francis, A. (1991) 'Private nights in the city centre', in *Town and Country Planning*, November: 302-303
- Friedmann, J. (1992) *Empowerment: the politics of alternative development*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Gilbert, A. and J. Gugler (1981) *Cities, Poverty and Development*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- GOPP (1997) *Summary of the long-range urban development plan of the Greater Cairo Region*,

- 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) *Milton Keynes Insight: celebrating 25 years of achievement*, Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Development Corporation
- MKEP, (1999a) *Community Indicators 1999*, Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Economic Partnership
- MKEP, (1999b) *Milton Keynes Insight*, Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Economic Partnership, Issue 14: Summer

- 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) *The Modern Urban Landscape*, London: Croon Helm
- Sandercock, L. (1998a) *Towards Cosmopolis*, Chichester: John Wiley
- Sandercock, L. (1998b) 'Framing insurgent historiographies for planning', in Sandercock, L. (ed.) *Making the Invisible Visible: a multicultural planning history*, Berkeley/ Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press
- Smith, D. (1994) *Geography and Social Justice*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Stewart, D. (1996): 'Cities in the desert: the Egyptian New-Town program', in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 86 No. 3: 459-480
- Taher, N. (1997) *Foreign aid and power relations: the government of Egypt, USAID and housing in Helwan*, Doctoral Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science
- Thomas, R. (1983) 'Milton Keynes: City of the future?' in *Built Environment*, Vol. 9 No. 3/4: 245-254
- Thomas, R. (1985) 'Introduction' to Howard, E. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, Powys: Attic Books
- Turner, A. (1980) Part One, of Turner, A. (ed.) *Cities of the Poor: settlement planning in developing countries*, London: Croon Helm
- Walker, D. (1981) *The Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes*, London: Architectural Press
- Ward, C. (1993) *New Town, Home Town*, London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Waterman, P. (1998) 'Social development in action', in Clapson, M., M. Dobbin and P. Waterman (eds.) *The Best Laid Plans: Milton Keynes since 1967*, Luton: University of Luton Press
- Wekerle, G. and B. Rutherford (1989) 'The mobility of capital and the immobility of female labour: responses to economic restructuring', in Wolch, J. and M. Dear (eds.) *The Power of Geography*, London: Allen and Unwin
- Wilkinson, N. and H. Kardash (1992) 'Development within development: distribution of responsibilities in aided self-help in Egypt's new city settlements' in *Third World Planning Review*, Vol. 14 No. 3: 297-312
- Young, I. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Yousry, M. and T. Aboul-Atta (1997) 'The challenge of urban growth in Cairo' in Rakodi, C. (ed.) *The Urban Challenge in Africa: growth and management of its large cities*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press