

POSTMODERNISM CONFRONTS PLANNING: SOME THOUGHTS ON AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE¹

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INTRODUCING POST-MODERNISM: "A TERM IRRITATINGLY ELUSIVE TO DEFINE"

During the past few decades a new and profoundly destabilising movement has threatened to overturn the great intellectual and artistic traditions inherited from the nineteenth century Enlightenment. This movement, commonly referred to as postmodernism, confronts development planners in South Africa with stimulating but uncomfortable challenges.

Introducing the concept of "postmodernism" is no easy task. As Featherstone lamented, "the term is at once fashionable yet irritatingly elusive to define" (1988:15). It is even arguable that, since postmodernism rejects final explanation and is committed to an open textuality, it is hardly appropriate to assign any formal definition to the term; "the very playfulness of postmodernism(s) precludes any premature foreclosure of its own meaning" (Turner 1990:5).

However, this observation is rather unhelpful to those who are unfamiliar with the complex and nuanced debates around the shifting meanings of the term "postmodernism" but are anxious for some understanding of a movement that is now so pervasive.

A useful beginning is Dear's (1986) suggestion that postmodernism has been used by different authors to describe a style, a method and an epoch.

As a *style* it refers to "the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between high and mass/popular culture; a stylistic

promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of the surface "depthlessness of culture ..." (Featherstone 1990:203). As a *method*, postmodernism is a form of literary analysis that is concerned with the critical deconstruction of language and text: "it implies a methodology of opposition, one that takes the master narratives of prior traditions and seeks to question their authority" (Dear 1986:373). As an *epoch* it refers to the cultural, social and political practices of a new era, the characteristics of which can be captured in such words as diversity, decentering, entrepreneurialism, localism, individualism, spectacle, consumerism, pragmatism and indeterminacy. David Harvey (1989), for example, defined postmodernism as "the culture of late capitalism" and related it to shifts within late twentieth century capitalism such as, for example, new information and communication technologies, processes of globalisation, and the emergence of a more flexible production regime.

It is important to note a fundamental difference between those who use postmodernism as a *method and a style* (and therefore can be regarded as "postmodernist") and those who refer to postmodernism as an epoch.

The postmodernist seeks to deconstruct foundational assumptions and would reject the grand narrative or the generalised theory. For the postmodernist, all theories are necessarily partial and incomplete representations of limited enclaves of experience. However, those who use the term "postmodernism" to describe an epoch are themselves constructing a grand narrative. For them, the condition of postmodernism characterises a parti-

cular phase in the evolution of capitalism that could be termed "post-modernity".

MODERNISM VERSUS POST-MODERNISM: THE NEW MYTH?

Postmodernism is often explained as the antithesis of modernism. A description of postmodernism could, therefore, usefully begin with an introduction to modernism. The industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism was associated with a change in world view that has been termed the Enlightenment. Modernism, as a broad paradigm of thinking and action, flows from the Enlightenment and has as its central organising theme the idea of inevitable human progress. Modernism replaced the traditional order with bureaucratic rationality and capitalist economic relations and introduced themes such as the intrinsic rationality of human beings, technological mastery over nature and the superiority of scientific method and knowledge (Featherstone 1988, Warf 1993a).

Modernism, whether in a Marxist or Hegelian form, is concerned with the uncovering of universal and objective truths and scientific laws. It is committed to the idea of value-free objectivity and is deeply suspicious of difference, subjectivity, human consciousness, symbolic meaning and culture. With its monolithic world view, modernism labels anything different and "unscientific" as irrational (Featherstone 1988, Warf 1993a).

Postmodernism is presented as a competing world view, a challenge to modernism. It emphasises human consciousness, symbolic meaning, the importance of language, local differences, cultural and gender diversity.

Whereas the modernist attempts to order reality with all-encompassing theories, the postmodernist recognises that the world is infinitely complex, multi-textured and chaotic. Postmodernism celebrates irony, incoherence, inconsistency, ambiguity and uncertainty and is tolerant of diversity and difference (Warf 1993, Pile and Rose 1992).

Warf (1993a:166) suggests four essential elements of postmodern thinking which stand in stark contrast to a modernist approach:

Complexity - "Metanarratives have failed to capture the enormous variations within and among social formations ... explanation is itself necessarily incomplete and limited by the language employed";

Contextuality - "when and where things happen is central to how things happen";

Contingency - "the stress upon intentionality and human consciousness ... intended actions and unintended consequences";

Criticality - "every explanation is simultaneously a legitimization of a vested interest".

For the postmodernist, modernist truths are merely socially created fictions. They are gross and often misleading oversimplifications that masquerade as scientific explanations but serve to legitimate the interest of certain groups at the expense of others. The postmodernist is concerned to expose the way these "truths" are produced, their hidden assumptions and the interests they serve.

For postmodernists such as Foucault, the idea of grand theory and reason is oppressive as it forces conformity to the dominant discourse and suppresses the voice of "the other" (Warf 1993). Instead of searching for the universal, postmodernism emphasises the specificity's of place and history. It is not surprising, therefore, that the emergence of postmodern discourse has been associated with the reawakening of interest in regional geography and locality studies (e.g. Cooke 1990).

A number of writers have drawn up binary tables showing the various elements of modernism and postmodernism as antagonistic to each other. A simplified table is constructed below which draws on the work of cited authors:

Modernism	Postmodernism
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Centering	Decentering
Distance	Participation
Grand narrative	Local narrative
Transcendence	Immanence
The "one"	The "many"
Clarity	Ambiguity
Community	Dissemination
Centre	Margin
The real	The hyperreal
Absolutism	Relativism
Foundationalism	Nihilism
Rationalism	Scepticism
Logic	Irony
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Purpose	Play
Authority	Eclecticis
Utopia	Heterotopia

(After Pile and Rose 1992, Folch-Serra 1989, Harvey 1989).

The account outlined so far and the table presented above casts postmodernism in opposition to modernism. This allows for clear conceptual categories but is an explanation that oversimplifies. Pile and Rose (1992) argue, for example, that the drawing up of such a table is a modernist trick that constructs a false set of binary opposites and forces a choice. For the modernist, the choice is between heroic and enlightened modernism and irrational and destructive postmodernism. For the postmodernist, it may be between an oppressive modernism and a liberating and democratic postmodernism. Pile and Rose (1992) call for a rethinking of the modern/postmodern controversy that goes beyond simple choice giving us "ground for reclaiming objectivity while at the same time recognising the partiality of truth claims" (Pile and Rose 1992:134).

Short (1992) is also scathing of this simplistic presentation. He refers to the "new myth" which goes something like this:

"Once upon a time there was something called modernism. This was the thing that came before postmodernism. It consisted of a belief in rationality and progress. It had a concern with uncovering universal truths and transcendent values. Its two dominant religions were Science and Marxism. Postmodernism, the thing that came after modernism is a concern with uniqueness, a distrust of metanarratives" (1993:169).

Short challenges the clear divisions, the polarised concepts, the Before and After. He points out that much of what is regarded as postmodernism is not necessarily new. He shows, for example, that, in science, Heisenberg's Principle of Uncertainty and Einstein's relativism cannot be equated with a positivist absolutism. The regional geography, which preceded the regional science of the 1960s, was concerned with geographical contextuality, while, in philosophy, Nietzschean nihilism had many elements of what we term today "postmodernism".

However, while challenging the "sterile dichotomy of the myth", Short (1993:170) acknowledges that the postmodern debate cannot be easily dismissed. He admits that there is a condition of fundamental change in the world and that some form of new world order is emerging, although we cannot be certain as to the shape of this order. He labels himself a "reluctant postmodern", accepting that "postmodernism is as good a description as any to describe the uncertainty" (p170). It is this "agnostic" position expressed by Short that underlies the arguments of this paper.

A RESPONSE TO POST-MODERNISM: INTELLECTUAL VANDALISM OR A LIBERATING DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT?

As Pile and Rose (1992:124) point out, there is a romance in postmodernism. It is "the new avant-garde that dares to transgress and trespass, invading uncharted territory, going into the modernist "house of reason" and irresponsibly vandalizing all the icons that can be found there". A self-consciously irreverent movement such

as postmodernism inevitably provokes strong response.

Negative reactions commonly heard include reference to postmodernism as:

- “an irritating set of word games”;
- “the path to an intellectual wasteland”;
- “destabilising, disturbing and subversive”;
- “the culture of schlock, kitsch and philistinism” (cited by Warf 1993);
- “vandalism in the house of reason” (Pile and Rose 1992:124);
- “intellectual anarchy”;
- “destructive nihilism”.

The “apocalyptic” (such as Baudrillard, cited by Cooke 1990) see in postmodernism a hedonism and narcissism that will destroy the values and institutions of modernism and leave us in a hyper-real world where reality blurs into mirrors and images. For the apocalyptic, a new Dark Age is descending as the values of the Enlightenment are thoughtlessly annihilated.

The philosopher, Habermas (cited in Cooke 1990), is one of the more vociferous and coherent critics of postmodernism. For Habermas, postmodernism is a threat to the foundations of the Western Enlightenment. It destroys reason and rationality and allows barbarism through the door. For Habermas, language is the means to protect the Enlightenment from destructive nihilism as it is through communication and dialogue that we can reach some consensus regarding “the truth”. Clearly, this is not possible if we accept the postmodern view that “universally comprehensible discourse is mere rhetoric” and “language is just a chain of words which refer to each other without having any direct capacity to represent the world out there” (Cooke 1990: 338).

There are others who enthusiastically welcome postmodernism, proclaiming that it is:

- “a refreshing challenge to the very basis of Western thinking”;
- “the platform for a thorough and long overdue reworking of social theory”;
- “profoundly liberating and democratic”;
- “an opening for a society more tolerant of diversity and difference”;
- “a heightened awareness of otherness and the claims of the women’s movement and ethnic minorities” (Goodchild 1990);
- “a greater sensitivity to the environment with its reaction to the aesthetic consequences of modernism” (Goodchild 1990).

It would be a mistake to dismiss postmodernism - a movement that has had such a profound impact - merely as a passing fad. However, confronting the challenge that postmodernism presents may be an unnerving experience. There is much in postmodernism that is intuitively convincing but its consequences are frightening. Dijink (1993:178) writes that he is “willing to call postmodernism a stimulating challenge but the new road ahead might end in a terrifying landscape”.

Dijink (1993) warns that postmodernism may be the black hole that threatens all our efforts to improve society. If all truth is relative, is there anything left to hold onto? If society is inherently random, chaotic and unpredictable and our theories are merely partial and incomplete illusions legitimating particular interests, on what basis can we intervene to improve the world? If we absolutely reject all absolutes, how can we secure the tolerance of difference the postmodernist wishes to guarantee? How can we attack racist, fascist or sexist narratives if no discourse can claim moral superiority to another? (Pile and Rose 1992).

Warf (1993b:182) cautions that “postmodernism severs our moorings to the security of modernist fundamentals”. Yet at the same time, how can we defend these modernist fundamentals and how can we remain convinced of

these modernist truths when they have proven so inadequate, unconvincing and oppressive?

A number of writers have tried to resolve the dilemma. Pile and Rose (1992) have stated their resentment at having to take sides for or against modernism or postmodernism. They argued that: “the wholesale adoption of postmodernism as a model epistemology would be as much a tragedy as its unconditional rejection as a shallow and meaningless intellectual fad” (1992:123). They contend that drawing the battle lines between modernism and postmodernism “ignores other tensions, other games, other fields of struggle” (p123). Short (1993) is equally cautious. He argues that he does not so much embrace postmodernism but does not have any alternative at the moment.

De Pater (1993) is another theorist who avoids a dismissive view of postmodernism but warns that postmodernism could lead us into a chaotic muddle of local facts and local theories. For De Pater (1993), postmodernism has brought us much needed scepticism and criticism and has freed us from an obsessive search for universal laws but, in its extreme forms, it brings a “dogma of disorder” and wrongly denies the possibility of constructing more generally applicable theories. He argues that, with a paradigm shift, there is inevitably an overreaction. He suggests that with the attention now on the fragmented, unpredictable and ambiguous, the regularities and similarities in the world have become invisible.

Cooke (1990) also takes a pragmatic view by arguing that postmodernism should not be regarded as a rejection of modernism but rather as a critique and potential renewal of modernism. Cooke seeks to rescue the concept of progress from a totalising and centralist perspective and restate it within the context of local control and diverse interpretation.

Cooke is informed by the work of the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty who has also sought to bridge the modern/postmodern gap. Rorty does not accept the postmodern view that language is entirely arbitrary and that all meaning is relative but does ac-

knowledge that modernist discourse is oppressive and exclusive. He does, however, recognise that the "privileging of the centred subject" (e.g. the master-author or master musician) leads to the oppressive and exclusionary differentiation between normal and abnormal ideas, practices and beliefs (cited in Cooke 1990:338). He therefore argues for the decentering of authority into multiple voices which include those in the minority and on the periphery:

"Pragmatism ... maps out a theory of action rooted in a post-modern theory of society as less centred (though perhaps not entirely de-centred) than modern society, less hierarchical, more differentiated, less clearly purposeful (end of Cold War: Green issues versus growth etc.), less exclusive (more accessible definitions of culture) and thus less distanced." (Cooke 1990:338).

Warf (1993:183) wisely counsels us to "swallow what is valuable about post-modernism and spit out the hot air of hyperbole and vitriol so abundant in academic discourse".

AN EPOCH OF POST-MODERNITY?

The argument outlined above considered an appropriate intellectual response to postmodernism. As shown we can respond by returning to modernist fundamentals or by embracing the nihilism of a postmodernist worldview or by seeking some pragmatic middle path that acknowledges the partiality of truth but does not entirely reject values of the Enlightenment such as reason, rationality and progress.

A partially related but separate question is whether we can refer to an epoch of postmodernity. Cooke (1993) suggests that a "postmodern society" is emerging that has the following features: prone to sensory domination by the media, inclined to glorify consumption, culturally plural, socially polarised, locally distinctive, democratic (socially, culturally and economic), pragmatic rather than utopian, self-supportive through economic networks, and less dominated by

master narratives such as militarism.

Harvey (1989), following on from the work of Lyotard and Jameson, related the rise of postmodernity to the shift since the early 1970s in the economic regime from mass production (or Fordism) to flexible accumulation.

Outlined below are certain of the features of postmodernity that may have important implications for the practice of planning.

i) "Smoke and Mirrors"

Postmodernity is seen by some as the cultural expression of late consumer capitalism. Cooke (1993) referred to postmodern society as inclined to glorify consumption as an expression of self. It is also a society prone to sensory domination by electronic media imagery. With the explosion of communication technologies, our sense of reality is increasingly shaped by the electronic media. This is the world of smoke and mirrors where reality and perception converge and intertwine. It is also a world of pretension, spectacle and display (e.g. glamorous waterfront developments, postmodern shopping malls and glittery entertainment centres). But this ostentatious and glittering veneer often hides a reality of increasing impoverishment, insecurity and decay. For Harvey (1989:14), "the circus succeeds even if the bread is lacking". Image has triumphed over substance.

ii) The hypermobility of capital and the instability of capitalism

Postmodernity has been associated with the globalisation of capital. It is argued that, increasingly, national economic systems are being subsumed into a system dominated by international processes and transactions. The prime-movers in this global system are Transnational Corporations (TNC's) that take the form of diffuse corporate networks that reach out across the globe and are beyond the control of any national government. This is a world in which capital is hypermobile (i.e. billions of dollars can cross the globe at the press of a button on a computer keyboard) and where the fortunes of nations and localities can

change rapidly and unpredictably. The implosion of the "Mexican Miracle" early in 1995 provides stark example of the dangers of this new volatile global economy.

iii) The shift from welfarism and managerialism to entrepreneurialism

Harvey (1989) shows how the global economic crisis since the 1970s has brought about a profound shift from traditional forms of urban governance (e.g. managerialism) and planning focus (e.g. welfare) to the promotion of economic development as a central theme. Cochrane (1990:292) writes that: "the language of welfare has been replaced by the language of growth, regeneration and public/private partnership". Other writers have referred to the sharply accelerated competition for jobs and investment.

This trend has had profound implication for planning as planners have become increasingly involved in the active promotion of economic development and have related ever more closely to the activities of investors, industrialists and property speculators. The gap between planning and the market closed markedly during the 1980s as planning activity became increasingly entrepreneurial. Fainstein (1991) refers to the change in the discourse of planning from comprehensiveness and the public interest to competitiveness and the private interest, while Beauregard (1993) laments the fact that economic development has replaced reform as the primary social goal of planners.

iv) Democratisation, decentralisation and diffusion of power

The social context of planning has become increasingly complex over the past two decades. Globally, there is a trend towards democratisation facilitated by new information and communication technologies which make it increasingly difficult for authoritarian rulers to control their subjects. At the same time, the power of national governments to regulate their economies has declined, with initiative for development shifting to regional and

local levels. Power has also diffused from state structures to a multiplicity of institutions within civil society. As power decentralised, so the importance of the locality is enhanced and local distinctiveness becomes increasingly significant.

State planners can therefore no longer command, impose and control. Increasingly, the effectiveness of planners depends on their skills in the arts of communication, negotiation, mediation, and strategising. The success of planning depends "not on the substance of the plan but on the ability of the planner to figure out the local power structure and to assume a role compatible with it" (Fainstein 1991:25).

v) Social Polarisation and spatial segregation

Postmodern society is associated with increasing polarisation. A small minority of the urban population is able to appropriate new technologies and operate within an increasingly globalised economy while an increasing majority are alienated by accelerating change and are trapped in a context of increased urban conflict, social division and environmental decay. Routine production jobs in the traditionally unionised sectors are vanishing together with lower and middle management jobs in the old corporate hierarchies. The result is that a large proportion of the population is being thrown into the uncertain world of self-employment and are suffering marginalisation and decline in living standards. At the same time the small proportion who are able to sell their expertise on emerging global markets and who operate within global networks have seen a dramatic rise in earning potential.

One consequence is that the social interests to which planning must respond are increasingly divergent. Dear (1986:379) referred to postmodern planning as a "pastiche of practices" and planning theory as a "babel of languages".

The other consequence of this increasingly unequal society is increasing levels of spatial differentiation. The new urban elite live, work, educate

and entertain themselves within exclusive spaces. They occupy the protected residential enclaves, work within luxury suburban office parks and patronise elite restaurants, gourmet shops and private health clubs. The poor are relegated to the ghetto, conveniently out of sight of the elite or, less comfortably for the elite, intrude into the exclusive space as the "street people". This is the postmodern dual city.

vi) Flexible urban form

It has been argued that other postmodern trends and processes are also bringing about a reshaping of the city (e.g. Soja 1989).

Increasingly, the city is shaped by investment capital rather than by the activities of public sector planners. With the hypermobility of capital, the urban economy is increasingly unstable and the ability of planners to intervene is further limited. Harvey (1989) refers to the volatility and ever changing form of the current capitalist condition. He wrote of the "the stimulating if often destructive maelstrom of urban-based cultural, political, production and consumption advantages" (p12) which render the competitive advantage of any particular system of cities ephemeral. Harvey cites examples (e.g. Houston, Baltimore) of spectacular change in urban fortune since the late 1970s. Cities on the brink of bankruptcy rebounded only to sink once again into an economic morass.

New information and communication technologies allow for flexible locational choices and are supporting the trend towards amorphous urban shape while postmodern "urban entrepreneurialism" is associated with place marketing, glamour projects, image building, speculation and private-sector led partnerships rather than rationally planned urban development.

In the South African context we could add the urban poor as a group who shape the city through squatting, informal settlement and informal economic activity without reference to any formal system of planning and regulation.

It is arguable that, as the city changes,

so the principles of modernist planning are becoming increasingly less appropriate:

"the master narrative of modernist planning is incompatible with a spatially problematic and flexible urban form whose articulations are intrinsically confrontational and whose purposes are more and more the ephemeral ones of consumption" (Beauregard 1989:389).

vii) A loss of faith in master narratives, ideology and utopian visions

As Levy (1992) has observed, "this is an age when tactics are dominant and grand strategies and grand visions are much less prominent". It is an age of scepticism and doubt which is suspicious of ideological fervour and vision.

Grand theories, which informed the work of mainstream and radical planners (e.g. urban ecology, neo-classical economics, Marxism), no longer provide convincing explanations of change. Many planners, for example, have simply lost faith in their ability to make an effective difference.

In 1907, a prominent Chicago architect, Daniel Burnham (cited by Beauregard 1991:191) wrote the stirring words: "Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's (sic) blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans ..." That was a great modernist statement prefiguring the comprehensive master planning of subsequent decades. Contrast this with the postmodern view that we should avoid making plans and that our texts should be "consciously fragmented and contingent, non-linear, without aspiration to comprehensiveness, singularity or even compelling authority" (Beauregard 1991:192).

viii) Cultural pluralism, fundamentalism, localism, populism

One of the ironies of the current age is that, while this is the era of globalisation, networking and the ever-shrinking global village, it is also an era of populism, regionalism, localism, fun-

damentalism, ethnic consciousness and chauvinistic economic nationalism. The deep anxiety stirred by rapid destabilising change and heightened work insecurity has prompted a return to traditional values and the security of community defined by ethnicity or locality.

This social response to globalisation has both an ugly and a positive element. On the one hand it has been associated with xenophobia, racism, protectionism, intolerant fundamentalism and ethnic conflict. At the same time the renewal of local distinctiveness, regionalism and diverse culture can be regarded as positive in an alienating world where identity can provide meaning.

The characteristics outlined above and attributed to postmodernity are undoubtedly familiar to the reader and are clearly evident in the society of the 1990s. The question is whether they are so dominant and pervasive that we can refer to a new epoch, clearly distinguishable from pre-1970 modernity. Arguably, there is much that remains that is modernist. Hierarchy, rationalism, bureaucratic organisation, the authority of national government and even planning (i.e. the attempt to order social and spatial relations) may have been challenged by the rise of postmodern representations but they are still much in evidence.

While various forms of modernism and postmodernism co-exist, there are still important elements of "pre-modernity" that remain entrenched within a context such as South Africa. Modernity was never entirely triumphant. Traditional forms of land tenure, traditional authorities, complex cultural practices and traditional resource management systems remained a feature of South Africa despite their "irrationality" in terms of the universalising modernity.

It is ironic perhaps that postmodernism gives renewed space to the diverse cultural forms that have not entirely succumbed to modernity. No longer is Western rationality the only acceptable discourse. This is a challenge to planners who have traditionally sought to bring order to kaleidoscopic and multi-textured cities and regions. Rather than listening to the multitude of

voices and immersing themselves in the complexity of the city, planners imposed a structure on the urban landscape. Rather than grappling with complexity and the role of culture, history and local circumstance in shaping urban landscape, they reduced the urban to, for example, a simple Lynchian-type form with nodes, pathways, edges and landmarks (Hoch 1992).

Instead of identifying successive epochs of development, it is more helpful to identify and respond to the various elements of pre-modernity, modernity and postmodernity that are to be found interacting within any particular geographical or social context. As Amin and Thrift (1992:574) have observed:

"The idea of a clean break between one macro-system dominated by one way of doing things and another regime with its own distinctive organisational structure is too simple a caricature of historical change and a denial of the ebb and flow, the continuity and discontinuity, and the diversity and contradiction that such change normally suggests."

However, while we may not be in an epoch that can be neatly delineated as postmodernity, the challenge to planning of that which may be regarded as postmodern cannot be ignored.

PLANNING: MODERN ROOTS AND THE CHALLENGE OF POSTMODERNITY AND POST-MODERNISM

The planning profession is a product of a reform movement within modernism that emerged as a reaction to the misery, degradation and chaos of the nineteenth century industrial city. Beauregard (1989) identified the origins of American state planning in two strands of this movement; the first concerned with public health and human congestion and the second with the chaotic juxta-positioning of urban land uses. Beauregard showed how early USA state planners sought to bring reason to bear on the "anarchic qualities of capitalist urban development".

Goodchild (1990) represented the early history of town planning in Great Britain in terms of the rise of modernism. He identified the period 1900-14 as "Early Modern". During this time, the emphasis was on public health and planners were concerned with separating industry from residence, reducing overcrowding by encouraging suburban expansion, creating garden cities and allowing for more space and sunlight to the individual residence. The style of planning was referred to as "piecemeal blueprint" and involved limited and relatively small-scale interventions at municipal level.

The inadequacy of this scale of intervention led to demands for a more comprehensive approach at national level. In the period 1920 to 1930, the modern movement in planning, associated with these demands, was avant-garde. However, there was a trend towards a more comprehensive approach indicated by the campaigns of the Garden City movement, the planning of satellite towns and the first large scale slum clearance programmes. In this period, the tradition of decentralised socialism, which had inspired early planners, gave way to a model of centralised state intervention. By the late 1930s even non-socialist movements were calling for comprehensive national planning.

World War Two was the great catalyst that brought the state to adopt the modern planning movement and set up a comprehensive planning system at national level. The vision of the time was to create a brand new world from the ashes of war. Planning was seen as an instrument of reconstruction and historical progress and the post-1945 planning system was presented as "the culmination of a century of intellectual enlightenment" (Goodchild 1990:131).

By the early 1960s, the dominant paradigm within planning was that of the rational comprehensive model. At its basis was the assumption that there is an internal logic within social relations that can be uncovered and used through planning to shape and perfect the world. This model assumes comprehensive knowledge, the predictability of the future and the possibility of value free analysis (Goodchild 1990). Planning was regarded as part of the

great modernist project of liberation and human progress and planners were seen as the experts who could lay claim to an understanding of the laws of development and who could apply objective and scientific knowledge in pursuit of a better world. They had a concern for order and control but also for liberation through rational enlightenment (Beauregard 1993).

However, even as planners committed themselves to this paradigm, political, technological, economic and social changes were undermining its very basis. Dear (1986), Goodchild (1990) and Beauregard (1989, 1993) argued that modernist planning began to come apart in the 1970s and 1980s.

Goodchild (1990) contended that, in the period 1960-79, postmodern styles of planning were part of a counterculture but during the 1980s this form of planning was adopted by the establishment. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing disillusionment with modern forms of planning. There was a gradual disintegration of the unifying consensus within planning, a reaction against large scale planning interventions such as slum clearance, and a new recognition of the environmental consequences of the ideology of progress. In the 1980s, argued Goodchild, postmodernism was incorporated into planning through a new emphasis on deregulation, decentralisation, local context, social diversity, mixed land uses and so forth. A more flexible and incrementalist planning style emerged during this decade and there were even those who argued that "the whole idea of planning should be abandoned and we should think in terms of specific interventions" (Reade cited by Goodchild 1990:133).

Beauregard (1991:193) took a more complex and nuanced view by arguing that "the modernist planning project is suspended between a modernism whose validity is decaying and reconfiguring, and, a postmodernism whose arguments are convincing yet discomfiting". Planning practitioners and theorists are "astride an everwidening chasm" (Beauregard 1989:381). For Beauregard, although styles of planning were not unaffected by the trends towards postmodernism, planning remained within a largely modernist

mode. In the 1980s, the still essentially modernist project of planning was having to come to terms with the "landscape of postmodernity".

If planners were forced to make a choice between modernism and postmodernism they would be in a critical dilemma. To reject modernism would essentially be to reject planning. While the more flexible planning styles of the 1980s and 90s may incorporate something of the postmodern critique, they remain modernist as they are still concerned with ordering spatial relationships, pursuing progress and the better society and applying human reason to particular problems. Postmodernist planning is arguably a contradiction in terms. At best such "planning" would be concerned only with enhancing "adaptive flexibility".

There would be no project of reform and no sense of vision.

For Friedmann (1989) postmodernism would take planners on the road to self-destruction:

"... we are lost in a Hall of Mirrors, with ever shifting perspectives ... the fake is real, the real is fake ... all standards, all absolutes have been relativised ... what works is money, technology, brute power, the magic of the media to create believable words. But that road leads to nihilism and ultimately self-destruction" (p128).

However, to reject postmodernism would be to ignore the compelling critique of modernism and pursue a route that is arguably less and less feasible in a world in which the elements of postmodernity are increasingly apparent. Modernism has been shown to be oppressive in its absolutism while modernist planning, despite its reformist intentions, has a murky record: functional zoning created sterile cities, slum redevelopment displaced the poor and destroyed social structures, freeways divided communities and allowed urban sprawl, growth poles created costly inefficient non-sustainable urban centres, and so forth. Yiftachel (1995), in an article on "the dark side of modernism" argued that modernist planning often served as a regressive instrument of change:

"The very same planning tools usually introduced to assist social reform and improvement in people's quality of life can be used as a means of controlling and repressing minority groups." (p218)

Hoch (1992:207 & 212) went even further by arguing that: "rational planning in the service of humane projects ends up producing effects far more perverse and destructive than the alleged problems such planning is supposed to solve ... if planning inflames the illness it is supposed to cure, it would seem prudent to stop planning altogether".

Then there is the problem of pursuing the "modernist project" within a context that is at least partially postmodern. It is arguable, for example, that the apparent inability of South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to deliver on any meaningful scale can be interpreted as the failure of an essentially modernist programme to perform within a context that is increasingly postmodern.

The RDP refers to "coherent vision", "purposeful effort", "fundamental transformation" and "comprehensive redesign and reconstruction". This is unequivocally the language of modernism and reflects the modernist roots of the liberation movement. However, this vision is confronted by the realities of a complex, diverse and ever-changing society which is less and less amenable to modernist interventions. Mabin (1995:196) writes of "the problems of having a means to handle politically, waking up in a postmodern era while equipped only with the politics and planning practices of a modernist past".

Do we then return to the security of modernist fundamentals and try to restore order to an increasingly chaotic society or do we embrace postmodernism, celebrate difference and risk losing a sense of direction and purpose?

If postmodernism is qualitatively different from modernism and represents a rejection of modernism then we would be forced to make the choice. However, if we understand

postmodernism as a renewal of modernism or an internal critique of modernism then "we can take the postmodern insight without giving up the planning enterprise altogether" (Hoch 1992:207). Furthermore, if we accept that elements of postmodernity are co-existing and will continue to co-exist with elements of modernity (and even pre-modernity) then we are not only responding to the postmodern condition but also to the modern condition which is responsive to planned intervention.

Beauregard (1989, 1991) argues for the *partial* reconstruction of the modernist project of planning whilst enhancing its links to postmodernism. He rejects the idea of a postmodernism that would destroy modernist roots and effect a complete paradigm shift. Instead, he calls for a postmodernism that would challenge modernism but not entirely displace it.

"We are not condemned to toil within a flawed modernist project, nor are we compelled to abandon it for a postmodernism that casts planners as authors of texts, eschews authoritative positions in public debates, succumbs to global forces, and in a false respect for differences, remains politically silent in the face of objective positions of inequality, oppression, ignorance and greed ... action can be unequivocal, knowledge can be helpful" (Beauregard 1991:193).

Other writers have also found a way to accept postmodern tenets such as the relativity of truth and the diversity of context without losing a modernist commitment to such goals as progress, reform and transformation. For Friedmann, for example, planning remains a moral practice although it is no longer tenable to believe in absolutes. He finds refuge in the work of theorists such as Habermas and Bernstein who argue that human beings can create consensus as to "the truth" through communication and dialogue. The "public interest" or the "common good", which provided the unifying moral basis for planning in the past, can no longer be taken as granted but this does not leave us without hope. The "common good" could be viewed as an "emergent" that can be given meaning through a process of negotia-

tion and dialogue in which all are allowed to participate. For Friedmann, planners can help keep chaos at bay by sharing a common language or discourse (rooted in our traditions of philosophy and practice): "planning discourse is the ground on which we stand" (p130).

If we accept these arguments then it is possible to continue with the "project of modernity" whilst accepting the insights and sensitivities brought by postmodernism and whilst being sensitive to the context of postmodernity.

However, our understanding of the modernist project may well be very different from that of the past. While the values of the Enlightenment such as progress, reason and knowledge would still be central, the "new modernism" would have to acknowledge diversity, listen to the "other" and be far more responsive and contextual in relation to locality, history, culture and gender. For planners, this is a challenge to standardisation, professional arrogance, comprehensiveness and technical rationality. Also, the modernist vision which provides the direction for planning and other social interventions can no longer be imposed or constructed merely on the basis of rationality and technical expertise. It would have to be negotiated, and flexibly and pragmatically adapted to a context that includes many elements of postmodernity.

In conclusion, postmodernism is a profound challenge for planning. Certainly, much of what we know as planning sits uncomfortably with the idea of postmodernism and the context of postmodernity. However, it is possible to defend a pragmatic style of planning (concerned with "the possible") that is still guided by a normative commitment to a "better society". While many forms of planning intervention may no longer be appropriate within the current context the experience of the past decade or so has shown that there are selective and strategic forms of intervention that are effective within the current context and do incorporate the postmodernist critique of modernism.

NOTES

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- 2 This paper draws on the content of an earlier paper prepared for a conference organised by the Development Planning Association of South Africa (DPASA) on *Toward and Beyond 2000: The Future of Planning and Planning Education* which was held at East London 26-27 June 1995. The title of the earlier paper was "The terrifying landscape of postmodernism: Some pitfalls for planning and planning education in South Africa".

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