

11.123
BIG PLANS
John de Monchaux
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JDM: . . . set of microphones on the table. Have any of you any guess what this is about? Have you heard of MIT's OpenCourseWare initiative? Well, 11.123 has been selected this year to go onto the OpenCourseWare site. And we agreed the other day with the people who do this, to tape this seminar and have it transcribed, and then edit it a little bit, or more or less, depending on how it comes out sounding. And that content or that material will go onto the Web as part of the OpenCourseWare site for this subject.

Have any of you been in any classes that have done this yet? What's your own feeling about having your remarks and reactions part of the public access? Any feelings? Eric? You're relaxed? John, are you? Louie? It's an experiment for me, as well. If you at any point feel uncomfortable or think we should turn the tape off because the debate is getting too noisy or something, then by all means say so.

Since we spoke to you last week, I've had a chance and Suzanne has had a chance to read half your papers. Kath has read the other half. And I just want to say that the ones that I've had a chance to read show very, very solid understanding of what the Milton Keynes plan is all about. I'm assuming, Kath, that the other half also showed an understanding. So I'd like to build on that, and use much more of today to answer your questions or your puzzles about the big plan, Milton Keynes, and also use some of the time to give you our reflections on, in a sense, the third of the three questions that we asked you. Remember, we asked you: What were the goals? How were one of those goals manifest in three different topics or policies or proposals? And on the readings that have been written subsequently, what could you tell as to whether that goal had been

achieved? And certainly I think you did a very good job of answering those three questions. Our question, or our presentation, especially Suzanne's today, will try and also answer that third part of that question: How do the outcomes on the ground relate to the vision of the plan? And most importantly: How do you explain the differences between what was proposed and what appeared?

Let me just begin by showing you what's there, so that you can get some sense of the reality of the place. (If you could, John, get the lights there? Or can you see? That's good.) You may recall that Suzanne spoke about the Greater London plan of 1944, prepared by Patrick Abercrombie. That plan provided for these successive rings, where either development would be permitted in the red zone around London, or where it would be discouraged—because in that next yellow layer, beyond the red zone— This is the center of London, and Milton Keynes is just about at the edge of that gray, that gray zone. The earlier new towns were scattered just in this I think we showed you the map on the right, in printed form, showing the location of new towns and [expand] new towns, [variation] new town program.

The plan on the right shows the 1967 southeast planning strategy. And you may remember, I explained to you that the big red square of development at the northeast— (Sorry, I can't quite reach it from here.) This one never happened. This one on the way to the Channel Tunnel never happened. This one at Southamptonshire never happened. But Milton Keynes in the northwest, and Swindon in the west, as well as the expansion in Northampton, these three did occur, as provided for in this strategy document.

In the plan for Milton Keynes, you saw this depiction of the countryside on which it is built. Here's one of the small villages. Fields are divided by hedge rows, which are long-term habitats for all kinds of wildlife. There are small roads going through the area. This is the picture. It's the railway line that takes you from to Cambridge. This is the Roman road I spoke of,

going through the village of Stoney Stratford, a historic village. Have you ever heard the phrase “cock-and-bull story”? It’s alleged that the phrase “cock-and-bull story” began in this village, where stories were told in this pub called the Cock, and next told in this pub called the Bull. And they’d get exaggerated and told again by someone who’d been here, back at the Cock, and so on, until it became unrecognizable.

The site has this remarkable and lovely canal running through the entire area designated for the city, on the same contour. There’s a tow path to both sides, and it’s inhabited by these long, thin canal barges. We hired one of those canal barges on a weekend at the beginning of the planning process, to take the team up and down the canal along with their families, recognizing that we’d be spending a lot of time, one way or another, on the site, and this was a good way to introduce everyone to it.

The planning began with this research period of three or four months, where we looked, as Suzanne has described, at both the past experience of the previous new towns, but we also looked at some fundamental considerations. For example, because it’s a national economy in Britain, if you looked at the real purchasing power for a family, at about the time that we did the plan, it was £1,400 a year. We projected that by today’s date, it would be anything from £3,000 to £4,000 a year, depending on the growth rate per annum of the GDP. That meant, in effect, that the typical family would have 2 to 3 times the disposable income in real terms. And the question to all of us was: What would they spend it on? Give me a few speculations as to what you think, if the average family’s real income went up by double or triple. What would you imagine would be the things that they spend it on? John?

Student: Home improvements, cars, and vacations.

JDM: I think that's a good What other?

Student: Higher education for their kids.

JDM: Higher education for their children. I think that would be the case certainly in this country. At the time that we did this, there were no fees charged to higher education in Britain. But that's no longer the case. So in fact, your answer, [Alice], applies today. Other suggestions?

Let's go back to your suggestion, John. How do people think the plan might try and reflect more expenditure on vacation, housing, and vehicles? Yes? Hold your answer for a moment. Do I see an answer over here? John?

Student: They definitely wanted to expand and build an airport in the future. And they provided for housing in terms of by our standards, pretty easy to go for one kind of house to, let's say, a bigger house or a different kind of house. As far as automobiles go, they left the road plan pretty open. [They let it expand] traffic. And that was the primary mode of transportation

JDM: What would you have said?

Student: People's- spend more money on basic necessities, because those went up in price too. They had to spend more money on food and things like that.

JDM: Well, this graph takes inflation into account. This is in real purchasing power. Nevertheless they probably will buy a wider variety of goods, goods from sources which seem to be more expensive, like cheese from France as opposed to domestic cheese. In that sense, yes. John?

Student: Just informationally, how right or wrong were you guys in your prediction of spending power?

JDM: You have an uncanny ability to anticipate the question that Suzanne and I asked ourselves the other day, as we prepared for this. We sent an e-mail off to an economist friend in London, and asked him that question.

Suzanne: Who in fact had worked on the plan, and was very much influential in preparing that diagram.

JDM: And he didn't know. But he's promised us an answer. So as soon as we get that answer—

Suzanne: And I don't think we were very far out. Otherwise, the things that we've anticipated that would reflect that, wouldn't have happened. But the exact figure, we don't know. We'll get it for you.

JDM: The slide on the right gives you some indication as to at least where the trends were going. This is 1957, 1967, and on a base of 100, this shows different patterns of change over that 10-year period. The population very modest bit of change. The expenditure on cars, look what's happened to that. decade and it's gone up 3 times. The passengers through airports, which corresponds to your travel, has gone up 3½ times. And private car mileage, almost 3 times. And the number of admissions to cinemas has significantly dropped. So this gave us some sort of clue, these indicators, as to what might be the expenditure.

That first period was spent also looking at alternative models more abstractly—distribution of employment in the new city—to test theoretically the model of what might be the travel effort

required by these different distributions. Which one looks like the one that we came out with? (Let's get somebody else.) Yes?

Student: [inaudible]

JDM: Number 5? Yes. Five is a little concentration of [103]. Turned out to be the model that minimized total travel effort. We also looked at site conditions, in terms of soil and suitability for different uses and activities. And there you see the emergence of the device that we used throughout the planning, which is a 10-hectare grid square as the increment or the grain by which we analyzed the site.

Existing towns were under-provided, compared to the standards that were expected in the new town. One of the very first things that corporation did was to find opportunities in which to raise the standard of social provision, in this case the recreation center, in the older town. You can see the beginnings of the adventurous architecture that the corporation became famous for.

Public transport was a very important question in Milton Keynes, and many of the critics of Milton Keynes, who said the plan did not provide in any significant way for good public transport. The logic of the region's public transport is driven by the two goals. One is the freedom and opportunity of choice, and the other is easy movement and access. If you embedded the freedom of choice, the freedom to use their car if they had one, then there was no way that you could not provide for full car use in the city. At the same time, a significant part of the population (the young and the old) didn't drive. Those who didn't own a second car, when the first car was at work, needed to be provided with access to public transport.

So the plan did two things. We put the main roads close enough together so that if the public transport system, at a minimum, operated just on the main roads, no one would be more than

500 meters (which is a little bit more than the length of the “infinite corridor”) away from transport stock. We then said: What is the annual cost in pounds, compared to the passenger volumes you’d expect in the corridor, to operate on those roads an 83-passenger bus plus a 14-passenger minibus? Obviously, a 14-passenger minibus, your [headways] will be much more frequent and you’re carrying the same volume. And it turns out to be about the same cost as somebody traveling in their private car. This was the range of corridor volumes that we expected in Milton Keynes if 20% of the workforce went to work by public transport. This would be the corridor volume if 50%, which we thought was the maximum—and it has not been realized. It’s about 20% in practice now. So this was the decision zone. And the curves represent three different modes of transport: an 83-passenger bus on its own right-of-way, having the lowest operating cost for a given volume. And this, by the way, is the model here in Boston on the Silver Line. Have any of you heard of? That’s basically what solution is: a passenger bus on a segregated right of way.

The plan argued that the decision between these sizes of bus would be a function of the degree of subsidy that would be available. None of them would pay their own way in terms of cost recovery. And I’ll come back to that. In other words, the plan provided the space where they could operate, and operate in reasonable efficiency, and at reasonable proximity to the homes and to the workplaces, but it did not determine which mode or which size. It left that as a management choice, policy choice later on.

The plan itself, at the interim report, looked like this. You can see, for example, the roads are fairly straight. There’s a major road east-west New city center is in the same location. Employment is distributed. The plan, as finalized a year later, has wiggled the roads to dodge villages and woods. That main road from the motorway into the city center has disappeared. But

fundamentally there's a great deal of similarity between the proposals halfway through the process and the recommended strategic plan.

We sought to illustrate this plan in as many ways as possible. This is a plasticine (cast into plaster) model of the city. Those of you who visit me in my office can see one of these unpainted. We made three or four of them in order to be able to show the relief and [grained] texture of the city. This is the strategic plan turned into, those squares again, showing the allocation for each of the activities in the city, and pointing out the transport, which is not shown as a dot. It takes up about 20% of each land allocation. (Stop me at any point if—)

The plan had physical proposals, but it also had management proposals. Suzanne pointed out in our last talk the critical role that monitoring and evaluation would play in looking at— When you went from the goals to the objectives to the outputs, you'd note the outputs that you expected to measure, you'd make the proposals for each plan, you'd evaluate and choose the best plan and implement it, and then you'd monitor the actual outputs and inputs for each plan in use, and go back again and modify goals or the standards. And this, you do for every policy and you do it for every local area, as you [develop]. (You're going to say a little bit about this.)

Here was a model on how you'd approach the housing market forecasts. So the plan contained—in the words that we used at the time (this was 1970)—as much “software” as it contained “hardware.” The first ten years of growth were proposed to link the existing towns in the south and the north, and you get a start on the new city center, and a start on the park system.

The development corporation itself, this is the organization structure for it during that implementation. it had a board; it had the executive committee; it had what they call advisory groups on topics like housing and employment and recreation. Then they had area teams from the different parts. And then they had teams working on city-scale issues like image and central

planning, land use and transport, main roads. This was how they were structured during the implementation phase.

This is what the implementation looked like on any given day in the early seventies. There were machines digging up the land, and road sweepers cleaning up after them.

Let me take you through four or five aspects of the plan. This was the park system along this street, and on this street. Here it is today. That's located about here, And you will notice the paving color for the bikeway is red. There is a system, what are called "redways," which are bike paths, crisscrossing the city, basically with the same grain as the grid roads but half a kilometer displaced. So they cross the roads at [safe and easy] crossing points.

This was the main road network. Here you see the public transport system such as it exists. Fairly minimal—minimal because central government determined (this was during the Margaret Thatcher administration) that the amount of subsidy that a local government could provide for public transport was limited to [defraying] capital costs, and could not go towards operating costs. And the result has been a very low grade public transport system, because the amount of subsidy available simply doesn't support anything like the cost of operating a high local quality service.

Employment sites were dispersed throughout the new city center. These were the very first prefabricated factories and warehouses, put up by the development corporation on speculative effort, to entice industry into the new city. It, to me, is about as enticing as a cold walk in the snow. But it got better.

The activity centers: There's 161 of them potentially on the plan, at every one of those midpoints. In 1978, eight years into the implementation of the plan, a study was done which pointed out that yes, some of them were on the main roads, but quite a few of them were beginning to be located off the main roads. The activity center would at minimum be the location of the bus

stop. It would have mailboxes and other facilities shared, but it would also have such shops or schools or other activities that served people within walking distance of that activity center. But notice, people would have a choice of which activity center to go to for schools or shops or buses. Here is one that was located— That's the main road. There's the safe crossing. You can see, the trees have just been planted. In this case, the architectural design is the common feature on either side of the main road. You walk up this ramp to the bus stop, which was just located there.

Here is an earlier one on the right. Absolutely minimal shopping. Rather scruffy maintenance. This is new housing, and that's in fact a new obelisk. This is much more like the character of new housing being built today in the city.

A number of you, in your paper, made it very clear that you understood this notion that the activities at any given center could serve catchments larger or smaller than the activity, and that a family at any given location would use different activity centers, depending whether they were going for piano lessons, to school, to a favorite deli or coffee shop. That would work if the activity centers all ended up at the edge. But in these very first developments, the grid square was taken as the unit of the neighborhood, and the activity centers were pushed into the center. This fundamental misunderstanding is something again which Suzanne is going to speak to. It came about in part because the post office decided to put the zip code boundaries on the main roads, thus making it difficult to have the same identity of community on either side of the main road—which was one of the bureaucratic decisions that slipped past the implementers, and made it much harder to achieve the intention.

(I've got slightly out of sequence here.) This was the model of a residential area that was illustrated in the plan, a wide variety of housing types, smaller activity centers, larger activity centers, an old village, the canal that you saw earlier, a mix of housing in terms of height and form

and density. Relatively speaking, less development near the main road crossing, and more development associated with the midpoint of the block.

This was the sketch in the plan of the typical activity center, with the roads narrowing into carriageways, being narrowed at the point of the center, so that from each road you could see the buildings that would make that up.

These were the contrasting views of the new city center. This was the one showing the plan with the main pedestrian route running through the corridor. Again, relaxed and wiggled flavor to it. This was the proposal as built, extraordinarily rigid and strongly rectangular forms. The station at the far end, with the park at this end.

Today, the city center and the city is host to major public facilities like the library, the town government building, a major shopping center (which is a massive enclosed mall), the station serving the city as a whole. These are the early days of road building and tree planting in the city center. This is a new sports facility on the left.

[laughter] Sorry to show you that one. something of an embarrassment. This is in the new city center, and it's a reminder that things haven't gone exactly as we originally imagined, which was that pedestrians and cycles would have unobstructed opportunity to cross main roads at their own level. Let me [close up] up there. Questions?

Student: What was that picture?

JDM: That was in the new city center. The new city center has, in fact, mixed reviews. For many, it's regarded as tremendously convenient. Typically it has [roads] like that, and areas of open parking alongside a building that has a shopping center, which has a pedestrian Do it this way. Entries from time to time there, and the shops, large and small, have been enclosed

covered spaces. The cars are sunk 3 feet, so that you can look over the tops of them as you walk along these boulevards. If you [run] across to office buildings, for example over here, there are pedestrian ways that are lined up with entries. And they've got nice little covered arcades over them so that you don't get wet or you don't get snowed upon. The original intention would have been to put a pedestrian crossing and a light at the point where that arcade crossed the main road. What you're seeing there is someone's decision to— It could have been even in this parking area, where this arcade Cars have the right of way going to the parking area, not pedestrians. That photograph, by the way, was taken by a student from Big Plans, a couple of years ago. She went and brought it back to me, just to see the look on my face.

Student: Why was the decision made to switch from the slightly squiggly town center to the rigid rectangular form?

JDM: I think I wish I knew. Suzanne, do you want to—

Suzanne: Well, I have strong views about it, so I'll speak them when I talk to And I talk about it because I feel very strongly about it.

JDM: Okay. Hold the answer to that.

Student: [inaudible]

JDM: Let me see if I've got the question. What you're observing is that today we see the adverse results of a national policy that allowed choice and allowed freedom, as well as local policies which accommodate that choice, for example, for the wealthy to move to the suburbs. And where did Milton Keynes come in [awareness] and possible consequences?

Student: [inaudible]

JDM: It's a very good question. Let me try and answer—

Suzanne: I'll just add. One of the principles of Milton Keynes was that there would be opportunity to do things in a way that could reflect the disadvantages that were [seen to] greater development (in the way you're talking about, in suburban America), but at the same time, the towns and cities of England were incredibly deprived of these kinds of things. So it was a question of providing an opportunity where there would be some balance between the extreme that you're talking about, what you described as a kind of mistake in suburban America, but they did not want to repeat the mistake of older metropolitan areas of Britain. So we didn't know. We weren't prophets. We tried to be. But we didn't know how those choices would be made, but we knew that some change and some provision had to be made. So what we did was try and provide an opportunity in which those decisions could be made well, through the monitoring and evaluation system, because we couldn't anticipate. We obviously didn't want to propose on the level that you're talking about, and that happened in suburban America. But at the same time, we couldn't advocate anything other than an improvement on the older cities. So I think it was somewhere in there, backed by the idea that we would monitor it very carefully and see if it did have the consequence that you're talking about.

Student: [inaudible]

Suzanne: Well, that was a problem. That was one of the problems that I was speaking of.

JDM: Let me . . . [*flip tape*] . . . wide variety of possible policies. For example, a significant subsidy for the transport, to significant restrictions on the use of a private car. And then

let the chips fall where they may, politically, informed by a good monitoring system that is giving you an annual figure on the amount of gas consumed and some other indicators. Or do you rule out certain possible uses or activities or housing densities for convenience? Because you can already see that if in the future this would be pursued in a general fashion, it would be inimical to national goals or local goals. This is a major and important dilemma in the planning. The plan for Milton Keynes, I think, comes down squarely on the side of saying: Let us be optimistic, or have some confidence in the future to make intelligent choices from amongst the array of options, and rely on the political system to going wrong. It may be argued as—

And Suzanne will tell you the story in a moment, what happened to that, that this is not necessarily the wisest choice. But I'll come back on that point. What's your sense? Remember, you rarely get this choice, this opportunity to work in such setting. Which way would you recommend it?

Student: I don't know. . . . [inaudible] . . . I guess my question is more about . . . [inaudible] . . .

JDM: It comes down to trusting the future, in a way. Other thoughts on this?

Student: I have a question. What do you think about the plan was most right? I mean, you've been pointing out things that may change, but what went the most according to plan?

JDM: We'll get to that as well.

Suzanne: I'll speak. We can speak to it at the end. But what I'd like to do first is try and explain the deviations, and then we can perhaps talk about what was good and why, and so on. I think if we can just hold that for the moment?

JDM: Okay, let's give you ten minutes.

Suzanne: Yes. As I said last week, absolutely no plan anywhere, ever, however authoritarian and autocratic the [manager] of it, has ever been implemented [more than interfering] resources, economics, whatever. And so we shouldn't be surprised if Milton Keynes hadn't quite been implemented. But there were some really outstanding deviations that will have to be explained in some way. And because we had looked so comprehensively into all of this, and some of these things did in fact fall short, those things that did were beyond the control of the planners for the most part, or because there were not adequate mechanisms in place to stop them happening. And those were things—well, some of them—we didn't foresee. And I've clumped all these things under three headings. They were either a reflection of politics, they were a reflection of people, or they were a reflection of something that was either misinterpreted or not adequately explained in the plan itself.

So I'll take first the politics. This of course was not under the control of the planners, and all we could do was to try and persuade them or provide the evidence to fuel the arguments in favor of one action rather than another, but we couldn't actually control the politics. Politics was both local and national. At a local level, we had to get the cooperation and commitment of local government to provide those facilities and services that they will be in the end responsible for. And in this case we had to deal with Buckinghamshire County, where the chief planning officer had had his nose put a little bit out of joint because he had prepared a plan for a New Town set around Bletchley. So he saw Milton Keynes not exactly as the enemy but as rather pushing him out of place. And on the whole, although they were very cooperative, they were sort of reluctant partners in this process of planning.

We were also trying for new approaches in terms of education and the size of population and so on. And they were resistant to these in what seemed to them to be a kind of takeover of their responsibilities, particularly, say, the location of the schools and so on. They wanted a say. This was traditionally their responsibility, and they wanted a say in it.

And they felt they were being asked to provide facilities and services in the new towns which were not available to the rest of the county. So there was a friction in our relationship with them, which was not manifest in the meetings or— There were a few acrimonious meetings, but not manifest, because they were cooperative with data and reviewing provisions and so on. But there were ways in which— For example, they were not able to accommodate, in the bureaucratic system, the designations of the roads. Perhaps you can explain that, John. But for example, they had no system of accepting the kind of things that the roads would They were either city roads or county roads. And on county roads you couldn't have traffic lights, so we couldn't have traffic lights. And traffic lights were essential to manage the city. So we ended up with rotaries. These are the kinds of things that just crinkled through the process, and denied the capacity of the town to manage, through traffic lights, the traffic in the town. So this was just one example.

As the implementation began, the county increasingly insisted on their own guidelines to use and to implement the plan. They were not consistent with what we had done in the plan, and this was one example of it. It was just on a daily basis.

Now, at the national level, there was a slow erosion of the social imperatives that had been so forceful at the beginning of this plan. There was socialist government, socialist— When I say “socialist,” I mean that they were concerned for a kind of community and social perspective on the town. And as the conservative governments became more and more insistent, profit and commerce displaced some of those. So when decisions were made, they would say, “Is it profitable?” rather

than “How will this affect the lives of the town?” So there was this slow erosion through national politics of the initial very powerful social imperatives that went into building the town. So those were the politics of the situation, and we can give you a few examples of decisions that were made, in terms of profit and commerce rather than the lives of the people in the town.

This is where I get to the question of the town center. The next clump of reasons for deviation was to do with people. And one of the things which was a curious process, we learned afterwards, was the need for overlap and continuity between the people who had prepared the plan and the people who had implemented it. Now, you may think this is terribly simple, but in fact the provisions of the New Town act. And the way in which it was organized did not allow for this. I'll explain that a little bit more. And the second one was that we more than ever felt the need for a continuous and systematic review or monitoring of how implementation was proceeding, because, as this gentleman here raised the question, we provided opportunity but we wanted to see how it was used. And the only way that one could do it was to constantly keep an eye on it through the monitoring process.

Well, the plan was prepared by the consultant team for the development corporation. And once it was approved by the national government, the development corporation alone was responsible for implementation. We just moved out, as a team. And so there were the designers and the implementers, and they were very distinct. And although we had fairly close consultations over the period of the plan, the implementing group was— There were six people in 1967, and it rose to 200 in 1970. And it rose to 1,500 eventually. And they were not familiar with the details of the plan, nor were they under any instruction to actually look at it. And in fact, we felt that many of those people who had been employed had never even read the plan. They were just given a job and a task and so on, and they hadn't read the plan [and knew] where what they were doing fitted into

the overall strategy. We felt that one of the very simple remedies for all of this would have been if, in the first week you were employed by Milton Keynes, you were sent to the library to do nothing else but read the plan and become soaked in it. But I think many of them didn't even see it. And they drew on older and much more conventional planning ideas that were not part of the plan, particularly in relation to the activity centers.

Now, the activity centers, as you saw, were located on the roads in order that you could have access to them, but they were not seen as anything but a catalyst for neighborhood developments. The opportunity was there for them to be that, but they were on the roads for the very purpose of providing an open and flexible way in which neighborhoods could develop. But when of course people saw the plan, they squares and put a neighborhood center in the middle. It was the power of the energy of the town itself to put the activities in the center. And of course this denied all the consequences of access and opportunity and choice that we had intended to go with the activities located on the road. When this was in fact perceived by a very perceptive group of planners, a special report was written, and the actual consequences of it were [seen], and they returned to the principles of the plan, but not before several mistakes had been made and the activity centers got located in the centers. The city was to be a lot of squares from the center. And as John said, this was not helped by the post office, who used the squares to name the postal districts of the city. And again, in my view, one very simple of remedying that, which we as planners never thought to do, was to present a sort of scheme of what might develop by making the roads recessive on the plan, and the activity centers more emphatic, and show how neighborhoods might develop around them, against the background of this road, which would then be incidental to the development of neighborhoods. But instead, this rigid image-determined view of the neighborhood came about. And I think that's one of the mistakes we made as planners, was not to

spend much more time. We just assumed in the strength of our arguments, when in fact we were talking to planners and architects where images are very powerful. And I think if we had made that image much more emphatic for them, it would not have caused this mistake.

I think that's forgivable. And here I express a rather strong view, and I hesitate only for a moment in doing so. But less forgivable, I think, was the arrogance and conceit of some newly appointed architects, who decided that the design principles of the plan did not serve their own ambitions. And very conspicuously, they did not apply them. And I think in this particular case, this is what happened in the city center.

But it happened also with some housing. And the city is now living with the consequences of this arrogance. Some early housing that looked very spectacular in the architectural magazines is now the least desirable housing in the city. And in consequence, the residents with least choice are isolated in it—which is a condition expressly sought to be avoided in the plan (that is, the isolation of those with less resources and less choice). And this has happened in some areas of the town where this housing which, as I say, looked good in the magazines but in fact had none of the provisions for people of low and moderate incomes. I don't know if you have any pictures of it, John, but anyway that's what happened.

The city center is a shopping center. I think it's regarded as a highly successful architectural shopping center, but it's a shopping center, and it had none of the richness, the organic quality, the developing quality, the choice, the growth, the kind of serendipity that we had imagined that would happen in the city. It is simply, as you saw, this rigid, monolithic, straight-lined center with none of this sort of organic quality of a developing, changing, moving, adapting city center. And that again, I think, was just simply because the architects wanted this spectacular thing, with no recognition of what in fact we had sought to have as a town center.

So one was the mistake of the perception of the plan, because they hadn't read the plan. They hadn't read it. If they had read what the activity centers were supposed to— Yes?

Student: It said in the reading that you guys tried to have the best possible developers lay out plans for your sites. But was there any designer view in any of that before the monitoring came along years later? Like when architects were drawing the plans, could you say, "No, we don't like that"?

Suzanne: We couldn't say no. And they were very powerful architects. They could stand up before approval committees and declare, "This is what would be"— You know, they were very powerful.

JDM: Let me give you a tiny example. There was a little sketch there of an area called Netherfield. The development corporation gave the designer that area, an area bounded by the main road instead of straddling the main road like that. And their design was to build row houses which ran almost to 800 meters, with only one or two interruptions. And as the topography changed,, the row house height changed, the number of stories, because they kept the roof line constant. So if the roof is constant and the topography is changing, you get a 4-story house on one end, where the topography was lower, and a 2-story house at the other end. And this was thought to be nature providing variety. They put the center in the center, and this was the one that Suzanne has described today as the least attractive to the entire community. So all those with least choice, least facilities, ended up in Netherfield. Without that overlapping school, the example instead they put it on the edge, overlapping catchments with the neighboring area, opened them up to more But this was a architecturally.

Suzanne: And had it been available to people who—you know, the sort of Martha Stewart sets or whatever, then maybe they would have responded to it. But these were provided to people who had come out of the ordinary working houses of London, and who saw the same kind of sense of what a home was. And to be thrust into this architectural special place—I mean, they used their back yards to store their prams, etc. Their way of life was not reflected in the provisions that this housing made for them. And it eventually deteriorated under this sort of incongruence with the kind of life that they led.

And I think finally, the plan, because of the failure to implement the evaluation, fell victim to its goal of flexibility of choice. We anticipated that this could happen. And that's why we wrote a very long and detailed report on the monitoring and evaluation; that in fact as choices were made, they should be measured against consequences and meaning and so on. But in fact, monitoring and evaluation, as the thing progressed and the momentum [took over], monitoring and evaluation was regarded as a luxury to be eliminated—[meaning, “We were doing what we're doing,” they said. “It is what we were doing or trying to”]— But the idea of detailed monitoring, and keeping records of outputs, and devising what those outputs should be, and undertaking a research program— Can you imagine a venture of this size and quality in the biological field or the atomic research, not having a monitoring and evaluation arm? But this was regarded as a luxury and it was abandoned, except in the case where these few groups of people would say, “Hey, wait a minute, something is going wrong,” as they did with the activity centers. And a special report was written, and it was remedied—which was a good example of what monitoring and evaluation could have done, had it been done on a systematic basis.

JDM: Never under-estimate the power of somebody like yourself, fresh, coming into an organization, and saying, “Wait a moment. The emperor has no clothes.” This young man named

..... Watson, an American, got a job just after graduation in the Milton Keynes planning office, with a thousand others, in 1977. He looked back at the plan, he looked at what he was being asked to do, and he said, “Wait a moment. This doesn’t match.” And he got a group together, six or eight other professionals, and they wrote a report, illustrating the misfit or the discrepancies between the neighborhood layout and the local layout, and what the plan And they sent this report up to the board, and each of the superiors allowed it to go forward, adding at the bottom of it, “We’re not sure whether they’re right, but we think this is important for you to see.” By the time it got to the board, the board said, “Yes. You seem to be doing it wrong. Let’s change our policy. But for goodness sake, let’s not publish this report.” So they shredded the report, but changed the policy. We happened to get hold of a copy of the report, and it made a lot of sense. It was in effect a little bit of ad hoc monitoring and evaluation, done by a small team of young people.

Student: Insofar as that report goes, you said that you tried to remedy things like the activity center being in the middle of squares. How specifically did you do that? Was there a legal framework?

Suzanne: It’s not we who did it.

Student: Well, the corporation.

Suzanne: We could not remedy activity centers which had been wrongly placed, but they could make sure that it didn’t happen again. And there have been some attempts to sort of encourage, by information and practice, movement to other places. But it’s awkward.

But before we get into all of this, I did want to just conclude, because one of the papers (I don’t know who it was; I was just trying to find it) very perceptively said, “How can I judge the

goals now, because Milton Keynes is so very young.” And I think it’s important to realize that it’s still happening, and it’s got a couple hundred years to go before we stop treating it preciously. But even at this stage, 30 years, it’s already got over 200,000 people there. The lines of people waiting to get into Milton Keynes exceed anything that Milton Keynes can provide. I mean, all private estate agents have got lists; public— People really want to move to it. The surveys of satisfaction in it are generally very positive. People like to live there. They have complaints about the buses or— but that’s, to me, characteristic of any place. I mean, people didn’t complain— There always has to be some kind of in what people do, because that’s the way people live and move in cities. So 50% of the people in Milton Keynes belong to organizations and clubs, and there’s a very powerful advocacy of Milton Keynes amongst the people who live there. They have their own political council and so on. It’s a thriving town. It has its own local government, its own university. It has this huge rock center. It has a vital life as a city, after only 30 years.

And one of the things that I really try and stress: We get so preoccupied with diagrams and intentions and descriptions and theories and concepts, but I’d like you to realize it all this happened with people, you know, people who got [mistaken] or, or who conducted conspiracies, and conspiracies were uncovered, and then we found that people— I mean, all of this. And one of the stories that I like best (and I’ll ask John to give it to us, just to show you that this whole process has a human face) is the effort that we made to get the open university to Milton Keynes. The open university was an idea that was just emerging as we were, in a simultaneous way, developing Milton Keynes. And the open university was this idea that through the media and through television and radio, everybody would have access to higher education. There was no entry fee. Just if you passed the exams, which you did through the It was known that the location of the open university’s administrative center would be a big plum for whatever urban area was able to

capture it. And we wanted it for Milton Keynes as a catalyst for growth and the idea that if that was here, then something else would come, and something else would come. So there was a huge political effort to try and get it. And I'll let John tell you the rest of the story, because he was party to it.

JDM: We were given a weekend to find the site. The board was going to meet the following week to make the decision. The open university had been proposed by the Labor government. And the Labor government in 1969 was on its last legs. It had to have an election in 1970. And it knew it didn't have a very good chance of winning that election. So in a last ditch effort, they wanted to get the open university up and running before that election, so that the conservatives, when they would come into power, couldn't kill this really quite wonderful idea. And I don't know if any of you have heard about the open university. Literally hundreds of thousands of students enrolled, pursuing a very high quality university education, by remote learning. And so all the faculty are located in Milton Keynes, and the researchers are located at Milton Keynes, but the students are throughout the nation. So it was going to be a real plum.

The chairman of the corporation (this man "Jock" Campbell) was totally persuaded that this was the right thing educationally, philosophically, politically, morally, to be a willing host to this innovation. So he said to us, "Find a site." We found the site services, [sewer] and access and so on, and he took it to the board. And the board members (there were nine of them, including himself), some of them were wavering. Some of them were conservative. That board is always balanced politically. They had heard the conservative government wouldn't support this and they might have a white elephant on their hands. Others were very keen. So at a deadlock in the conversation, he said, "Well, I know the minister who will be the Minister of Education in the new government (Tory), Mr. Joseph. I'll go and call him—he's a sensible man—and ask him what a

new government that comes in will really do. And I'll come back and tell you. So let's adjourn for a few minutes while I go and speak to Keith Joseph." So he goes out of the board room, down the hall, into his office, calls Keith Joseph. Keith Joseph, after Jock Campbell has said to him, "Look, don't you think it's a good thing? It's going to do all of these things for the people, provide education opportunities for the poor and so on."

Suzanne: A socialist talking to a Tory.

JDM: Yes. He was a socialist, a Labor party man, talking to a conservative. And he thought he was talking to a friend and he'd get a candid response. And because this man Keith Joseph was a very intelligent guy, he thought he'd get a positive response. Well, Sir Keith said Campbell on the phone, "The first thing we'll do is kill it. Notwithstanding everything you've said, Jock, that's what we're going to do." So Jock Campbell, who was a very determined, moral person, wondered what he could say to the board as he walked back to the board room.

Suzanne: Well, he's still making [decisions].

JDM: He came into the board room, sat down, and said to the board, "I couldn't get through to Sir Keith. Let's take a vote." And they took a vote, and by a margin of one, they decided to offer a site to the open university

Suzanne: And it's immensely successful.

JDM: The conservatives never touched it, as it turns out.

Suzanne: And it was established. It's been immensely successful.

JDM: So in a way, it's nice to end on story. These plans are the product of human beings, like this man, Jock Campbell, who on the spur of the moment finds a way that the decision be made fairly deck of cards

Suzanne: And the process from start to finish was sprinkled with stories of this kind, some of which we can't tell you.

JDM: We'll give you back the papers on Milton Keynes on Wednesday. So if you haven't had a chance to compare notes

[End of Class]