

**Is “Progress” No Longer Progressive?  
Reclaiming the Ideology of Progress in Planning**

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## **Is “Progress” No Longer Progressive? Reclaiming the Ideology of Progress in Planning**

### **Abstract**

Contemporary planning scholars are ambivalent about progress, overtly dismissing the ideology of progress as an antiquated faith and tacitly believing in it. Yet progress is the planning profession’s stock in trade, and the rejection of progress is the rejection of planning itself. I explore the contradictory uses of "progress" in contemporary planning debates and examine three historic causes: the crisis of modernism, the emergence of sustainable development, and the privatized fragmentation of the public interest and public works. I argue for a critical rehabilitation of the ideology of progress as a means to reconcile progress and planning.

“Progress might have been all right once, but it has gone on too long.”

-- Ogden Nash

### **Introduction**

This paper re-examines the role of “progress” in planning ideology. The once-enthusiastic embrace of progress -- from the Progressive Era's City Beautiful Movement through the New Deal's Works Progress Administration<sup>1</sup> to postwar modernist urban renewal – is now perceived by planners as at the very least quaint, and at worst a dangerously excessive faith in modernism and human rationality. It has become easy to ridicule the naiveté of the “march of progress” by reciting its litany of past sins: sterile high-rise public housing, freeways cutting through neighborhoods, historic buildings demolished to build strip malls, and so forth. The contemporary focus on sustainable development, historic preservation, and new urbanism suggests that planning has rejected modernist progress and entered a new, "post-progress" era.

This paper takes the contrarian view that the rejection of the ideology of progress is both unwise and premature. Planners dismiss the visions of progress that were once heralded by the likes of Daniel Burnham, Rexford Tugwell, Le Corbusier, and Robert Moses, as well as more contemporary notions of progress asserted by their non-planning public. But this retreat from progress as an enduring goal for planning is strategically risky: progress is the planning profession’s stock in trade, and the rejection of progress is the rejection of planning itself.

Planners have rightly questioned the merits of many projects and policies rationalized as "progress"; yet planners have nevertheless been too quick to withdraw their support for progress itself as a central ambition for their work. This distancing from progress has also created a political vacuum: progressives have largely abandoned the powerful symbolism of progress to conservatives who are more than willing to embrace the rhetoric to advocate economic progress and yet oppose many socially progressive agendas. The result is a shift from a commitment to *universal* progress (common access to public services, grand public spaces and great public works) to an increasingly privatized vision of progress.

This paper explores planning's problematic relationship to "progress" and proposes a way out of this dilemma. I trace the field's once-ambitious conception of progress back to planning's

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<sup>1</sup> Notably, the WPA altered its name in 1939 to the less ambitious Work Projects Administration when it was made part of the Federal Works Agency. Subject to criticism, the WPA was eliminated in 1943, when virtually full-employment during wartime mobilization meant the old Depression-Era goal of putting people to work was no longer timely.

origins in the Progressive Era. I then examine the contemporary retreat from progress ideology, as reflected in the ambivalent and contradictory uses of the progress rhetoric in both professional and popular land use debates. To explain this withdrawal, I consider three postwar challenges: the crisis of modernism, the emergence of sustainable development, and the privatized fragmentation of the public interest and public works. These three movements do not negate the essential social merits and political power of progress so much as compel planners to assertively update their vision of progress -- a reconciliation of planning and progress that reinvigorates the public interest through major civic works.

The viable choice is therefore not between progress and no progress, but instead between two divergent visions of progress: the current neo-liberal vision of progress as predominantly private economic growth, and a return to a belief that planning's mission is to balance two complementary sources of progress -- private entrepreneurship and public governance. Continued reactive opposition to progress merely puts planning on the defensive, allowing opponents of planning redefine progress in narrow terms and rhetorically use it in their attacks on planning. One forgotten lesson of the Progressive Era was that the politics of progress were used to expand the public interest and thus also public civic spaces and planning itself. To have a vision of progress is to stake a claim on the future and to assert the importance of planning as a viable counterbalance to private markets in the design and construction of this future.

In arguing that planners should re-engage in the progress debate, I recognize that the term itself is somewhat elusive: progress has neither a simple definition nor a single political agenda. In the abstract, progress is defined as "going on to a further or higher stage, or to further or higher stages successively; advance, advancement; growth, development, continuous increase; usually in good sense, advance to better and better conditions, continuous improvement" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). To be "progressive" means "favoring, advocating, or directing one's efforts towards progress or reform, esp. in political, municipal, or social matters" (*ibid.*). These are perfectly acceptable definitions, but their neutral generalities make them hardly adequate as guides to planning action. The concept only takes on its full power within its social context, especially as it is allied with other social movements and political institutions and thus takes on normative consequences. For planners, this social context is the built environment: the idea of progress takes concrete form through civic projects that simultaneously improve individual utility, promote collective interests, and symbolize community values and identities.

### **The Retreat from Progress: from the Progressive Era to the Present**

Contemporary planning scholarship's use of the language of progress has dramatically declined since planning's inception in the early twentieth century, when progress was the *lingua franca* of the field. A content analysis of several recent planning journals (including this one) uncovers very little use of the term, and none as the kind of momentous economic, social or technological progress that was implied during the Progressive Era.<sup>2</sup> A search for "progress" on the American Planning Association ([www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)) site led to comparable results.<sup>3</sup> Now,

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<sup>2</sup> An electronic search of the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (JAPA) since 1988 led to these results: "progress" appeared only three times in titles of full-length articles (excluding book reviews), and less than 20 times in abstracts. The term was used in the prosaic sense of "progress report" or "making progress" towards achieving a specific planning goal. A deeper "full-text" search of on-line JAPA articles since 1988 led to a similar outcome: the term "progress" in these several hundred resulting articles simply indicated advances or improvement in a specific area.

<sup>3</sup> Among over 500 results with the term "progress," these were predominantly of two commonplace forms: a work

planners typically only modestly use the term as a synonym for “underway” (i.e., a “work in progress”) or “advances in the field” (see, e.g., Teitz 2002). For example, the British journal *Progress in Planning* (published since 1973) refers primarily to scholarly progress within planning rather than to a broader connotation of advancing social progress.<sup>4</sup> At most, progress occasionally serves as a neutral synonym for “development” (e.g., economic progress = economic development/growth).

This represents a historic change. From late 19<sup>th</sup> century urban industrialization through the early post-World War Two era, writers were far more ambitious and explicit in their use of the term progress in the context of urbanization and planning. “Progress” was a central force behind urban growth, and the term was enthusiastically used in boosteristic historical narratives of city development, such *History of the city of New York: its origin, rise, and progress* (Lamb, Harrison, and Portnoy 1877).<sup>5</sup> In these early, pre-urban-crisis accounts, the notions of progress, development, modernization, growth, boosterism and even manifest destiny were intertwined. Progress reflected a belief in the inevitable rise of the city. It also was a prominent rhetorical tool in place marketing, as in the 1933 “Century of Progress” Exposition in Chicago. Rapid industrial urbanization was the local, concentrated expression of national progress. And the advancement of this progress required the scientific guidance from the new field of city planning, including zoning and other new regulatory tools that were “of vital importance to modern progress” (Haldeman 1912; see also American Institute of Architects. Committee on town planning 1917).

This earlier vision of progress revealed an optimistic faith in society’s rational ability to engineer and control change. For progress’s critics, this represented an arrogant assumption that contemporary society was not only at the apex of evolution so far, but also that humans possessed sufficient knowledge of the past to make this historical assumption (Foster 1998). Progress did not just signify a quantitative increase in wealth, but instead the movement towards a fundamentally better society. And whether one believed in a model of reclaiming a lost civic paradise or constructing a wholly new ideal, the booming industrial metropolis -- in all its past ills and prospective perfection -- was the crucible of progress.

### *The Progressive Era*

As the above makes clear, the Progressive Era (ca. 1890 - 1920) engendered both the ideals and the institutional structure of modern city planning, and shaped the vision of progress that is at the center of what today’s planners at once reject and embrace. This reformist movement was a predominantly middle class effort to rein in big business, promote civic communities and social efficiency, harness new technologies, address labor conflicts, promote

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or program “in progress,” and “making progress” (advances) towards a specific goal.

<sup>4</sup> The journal was first published in 1973 as “Education for Planning: The Development of Knowledge and Capability for Urban Governance” (Report of a Working Group at the Centre for Environmental Studies, London.) (edited by DR Diamond and JB McLoughlin). Its introduction stated: “educational provision for planning, though changing and developing, was not doing so sufficiently fast or fundamentally to match the community’s needs” (p. 7). Curiously, the introduction defines many important social and planning terms, but not “progress” itself.

<sup>5</sup> In later years one still found a few uses of “progress” in city accounts, such as *Cincinnati, no pause in progress* (Dalzell 1970). The use here is to provide reassurance that the city is still moving forward despite deindustrialization and urban decline, but the former spirit of the term is largely gone. Contemporary uses of the term include the Oregon Progress Board (the state planning agency) and Central Atlanta Progress (a non-profit promoting downtown development, whose name dates back to 1967).

women's rights, and shift from individualism to collective, civic interests (Rodgers 1982; Filene 1970; McGerr 2003; Buenker 1973).

The Progressive Era both gave rise to modern city planning and imbued the field with its core values: an expanded sense of the public interest, good government, social efficiency, housing reform, public sanitation, conservationism, and civic aesthetics (Peterson 2003). Important instruments to achieve these goals included expanded social services for the poor, business regulation, home rule, and local commissions and city-managers as alternatives to the easily-corrupted mayor-city council format of local government.

Central to the Progressive Era vision was an emphasis on a balance between individualism and the community. Though the era represented a multitude of often conflicting political approaches and voices (including Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Jane Addams) its reformist path represented the "radical center," supporting neither the status quo of big business nor the revolutionary change of socialists. Presaging a core planning challenge of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Progressives strove to reconcile the contradictions between individual rights and the common good/public interest: "Progressivism, however defined, was distinguished by a powerful impulse to advance the public interest over special interests" (Connolly 2005). Progressives believed that planning and scientific management would counteract the inherent waste and disorder of laissez-faire capitalism that bred congestion, pollution, and overcrowded housing. Planning did not mean halting progress, but rather channeling and guiding rapid urban industrialization along a middle path between individual wealth and the larger commonwealth. Unlike the modern era that glorified large-scale, technologically advanced solutions, and the post-modern era that too-often viscerally rejects mega-projects, the Progressive Era employed large-scale public works projects, not as an end in themselves, but as a means to achieve a vision of civic progress to address the individual needs of a growing metropolitan middle class. Urban planning thus came out of the Progressive Era with a strong yet nuanced view of progress linked to an enlarged public interest, an acute awareness of technology's possibilities and limits, and an optimism about the complementarity of the visible and invisible hands.

These impulses of the Progressive Era live on in progressive planning today. Both contemporary (small "p") progressives and their 1910 counterparts share many common goals: reform, social justice, women's rights, conservation, the regulation of business, and an expansive view of the public interest. Contemporary progressives (e.g., the Planners Network<sup>6</sup>) certainly have a more complex and expanded notion of social justice -- promoting ideas about racial equality, cultural diversity, gay rights, environmental justice, and a more comprehensive vision of local and global sustainability that would have been alien to their predecessors. Likewise, postwar progressive urban politics have expanded the structure of urban coalitions, economic justice and citizen participation (Clavel 1986; Mier 1995; Krumholz and Forester 1990). Lost from the Progressive Era, however, are several valuable qualities: a more pragmatic ability to form liberal-conservative alliances to balance private enterprise and public management, a greater willingness to engage in large-scale technical projects, a stronger optimism about the future of cities, and above all, a more engaging and ambitious vision of progress that resonated with the larger public.

It is admittedly easy to wax nostalgically about the Progressive Era, and the period was full of contradictory impulses, such as both its grass roots and elitist tendencies. But these

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<sup>6</sup> Founded in 1975 by Chester Hartman, the Planners Network defines itself as "a voice for progressive professionals and activists" with a focus "on issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and environmental justice as they relate to the physical, economic and social environment of cities and rural areas" (<http://www.plannersnetwork.org/>).

contradictions are remarkably relevant for today's world: "When historians fight about Progressivism—and fight they do—they are not just arguing about events of a century ago. They are also struggling over the basic meanings of American democracy. ... [T]he improvement of our public life depends in part on continuing to re-democratize the Progressive Era" (Johnston 2002). This task is acutely relevant to urban planning: the tensions between Progressivism with more recent planning ideologies continue to demarcate present-day planning debates. The clashing impulses of the Progressive Era (e.g., social justice or social order? democratic reform or making cities safe for capitalism?) would reappear in late 20<sup>th</sup> century battles over public-private partnerships, urban renewal, and the privatization of public space (e.g., Foglesong 1996; Harvey 1985; Squires 1991; Logan and Molotch 1987).

The reconciliation of Progressivism and contemporary planning traditions requires the rapprochement of progress and planning. This paper's assertions that "progress is planning's stock in trade" and "the rejection of progress is the rejection of planning itself" are therefore not just abstract logical claims. They instead arise from planning's deep roots in the Progressive Era -- and an enduring (if unacknowledged) reliance on the Progressive vision of progress. If the field continues to embrace other legacies of the Progressive Era (an enlarged public interest, social justice, regulation of big business, and conservationism) as central planning values, then it is both wise and strategic to also reclaim the piece of planning's origins that linked all these other values together: an ideology of balanced social and economic progress.

The subsequent breakdown of planning's Progressive-Era ideology of progress had major repercussions for the field. There has been a long-standing divide concerning how progress is achieved: does it emerge from conscious, centrally-planned intervention or from the inexorable market forces and aggregated human and capital? Clearly, elites in the Progressive Era believed strongly in planned interventions. But the balance has shifted, and so have the old alliances that once lined up in support to progress. The market-logic version has come to dominate both popular discourse and current political thinking, and, for this and other reasons (see below), planners have disengaged from the notion of progress.

### **The Contradictory Uses of the Term “Progress” in Public Debates over Planning**

“If planning has been evoked in the name of progress, equally has it been denounced in the same cause” (Teitz 2002, 179).

In this section I examine the divergent use of the language of "progress" by planners and the public. As we shall see, the public, more than planners, has retained a belief in the idea of progress, even when they perceive negative consequences. Rather than dismissing the public's statements as merely imprecise vernacular, this "folk" language reveals significant discrepancies between professional and popular views of progress. These popular viewpoints also reveal opportunities for planners to capitalize on the public's enduring deference to progress.

#### *The Use of "Progress" by Planners*

As we have seen, planners' overt use of the term "progress" -- at least in its grand sense of fundamental societal betterment -- has declined precipitously since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. With its heyday in the Progressive Era, it was revived in modified form during the New Deal, and had an unfinished afterlife through to Johnson's Great Society. Planners may have once learned in graduate school that "planning came to signify national progress" (Bastéa 2000, 43), and that the

progress of a complex industrial state necessitated planning (Galbraith 1971). Nowadays, progress is misleadingly associated with utopian thinking, rather than pragmatic reform. Planners seldom speak of "progress" to explicitly justify their activities. More commonly progress is merely insinuated by noting the dangers of its opposite (e.g., stagnation, decline, blight, obsolescence).

Yet this silence does planners a disservice, and leaves them vulnerable to criticism. Without a holistic and compelling claim on a vision of progress, their work is often characterized as an obstacle to the real economic and social progress that will only come from more natural (and unplanned) forces. Critics assert that markets, rather than planning, best match the dynamics of symbiotic, emergent, self-organizing systems (Pennington 2002). Relatedly, some see intrinsic an incompatibility between planning and progress: the bureaucratic rigidities of planning inhibit the very dynamics of innovation that drive progress (Langlois 1987). Important planning endeavors such as historic preservation and environmental protection are often characterized as barriers to progress, indicating a failure on our part to effectively integrate these efforts into an overarching vision of progress. Thus, by ceding the territory of progress to its critics -- and by failing to put forth a strong, well-defined vision of progress in the field -- planners have become conspicuously ineffective and marginalized in the current debates surrounding such matters as large-scale development projects, infrastructure, eminent domain, alternative energy and transportation technologies.

#### *Evocation of "progress" in land use debates found in the popular press*

If professional planners are often oblique or silent about progress, the public certainly is not. A search of the popular press -- newspapers, magazines, on-line newsletters and web logs ("blogs") -- results in a flood of quotes in which "progress" continues to be used as a powerful rhetorical trope. These texts are increasingly challenging town hall meeting as the vital lingua franca of public planning participation. Communicative action is a central motif of the profession -- an element arguably added in response to the limitations of Progressive Era scientific management -- and thus we must listen, and learn, from this public discourse.

One emergent theme is that the public still embraces the idea of progress as a compelling, and desirable, goal. One group of authors expresses unqualified support for progress; for example: "Compared to the tenements and flats of yesteryear, single-family homes with private yards represent a huge leap in progress. .... Our unsurpassed technological progress — both economic and agricultural — has allowed us to venture beyond the city .... And I, for one, am not about to relinquish that choice willingly" (Katz 2003). In this quote, one hears clear echoes of the continued belief in a conscious scientific path towards progress, enabled by rational choice and individual liberty.

More frequently, however, one hears a naturalistic view of progress, as if progress were an autonomous and unstoppable force intrinsic to history or technology itself, or an inevitable law of nature (like evolution). A resident of a growing neighborhood in Memphis laments: "There's a whole slew of traffic going down Stage [Road] that wasn't there 5 years ago. But that's the price of progress. You can't stop progress - then you're stagnant" (Stamm 2003). In Chico, California, a journalist laments the imminent loss of the century-old El Rey Theatre: "The phrase 'you can't fight progress' sounds so defeatist, yet it's fairly accurate" (Brown 2005). These quotes suggest that human intervention -- i.e., planning -- is futile, or an impediment to economic growth (even if that growth is messy and has undesirable consequences.) Planning, in this view, is outside of the domain of progress.

Many public statements reveal a resigned assumption that material growth and spatial expansion are the only alternative to stagnation. A resident of a growing neighborhood in Memphis laments: "There's a whole slew of traffic going down Stage [Road] that wasn't there 5 years ago. But that's the price of progress. You can't stop progress - then you're stagnant" (Stamm 2003).

Even when they take action against particular proposals, the public often feels a need to defend their belief in progress. For example, a Pittsburgh flower shop owner distances himself from anti-progress accusations when he fights eminent domain: "I am fighting to save [my shop] not because I oppose progress, but because I feel an obligation to preserve the 101-year-old legacy my father left to my care" (Harris 2002). Likewise, opponents of a massive Richard Meier tower in their Manhattan neighborhood say: "Progress is fine ... but does it make sense to plop a 50-story high-rise next to a three-story brownstone?" (Rich 2003). This is a frequent rhetorical strategy: state your general acceptance of the merits of progress, but reject "progress for progress's sake." Though this truism is often not further defined, the underlying implication is significant: progress still carries weight in the public's eyes. Planners can learn from this: many social groups continue to recognize "progress" as a legitimate social goal and governmental purpose, and they are hesitant to be seen as opponents of progress.

A remarkably common rhetorical tactic is to sheathe "progress" in quotation marks or precede it with qualifiers. A sardonic letter-to-the-editor criticizes Tucson's unending sprawl: "After 50 years of this so-called progress, Tucson ranks low in wages and high in inability to afford a home" (Horowitz 2000). A critic of disruptive modernist urban planning in Greece laments: "Worst of all was the ideology of 'progress', which could only be realized by rending the previous urban fabric" (Salingaros 2004). At best, this strategy creates a critical stance towards the prevailing ideology of progress. But among intellectuals it too often can indicate ironic detachment -- a post-modern derision without ever offering a concrete alternative to "progress." This detached disdain towards progress is hardly an effective strategy for planners.

### *A Case of Progress? Kelo v. City of New London*

The 2005 U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Kelo versus City of New London* represents a milestone of this growing gap between planners' and the public's view of progress. This controversial 5-4 decision ruled in favor of a city's right to use eminent domain to promote local economic development. The court majority cited the project's broader "public purpose," rejected a narrow interpretation of "public use" in the takings clause, and deferred to the local legislative judgments and the city's "carefully considered development plan."<sup>7</sup> This case may come back to haunt planners, not only in a possible backlash against local planning power, but also in the way it has further distanced planning from a more progressive conception of progress. If Progressive Era planning led to the expansion of the ideal of the "public interest" to curb big business, this court's decision instead leads to the expansion of the "public use" doctrine to emphasize private enterprise and an economic development notion of the public interest.

Neither the court majority nor the dissenting opinions explicitly discussed the relationship of the takings clause and eminent domain to progress. This is likely a wise juridical strategy, since there is no simple legal definition of progress, and the U.S. Constitution is effectively silent on progress.<sup>8</sup> The APA's own amicus brief made only a single and rather

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<sup>7</sup> *Kelo et al. v. City of New London et al.*, certiorari to the Supreme Court of Connecticut. No. 04-108. argued February 22, 2005--decided June 23, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> The Constitution mentions "progress" once in the delineation of Congressional powers relevant to copyrights and

innocuous mention of progress that praised community development corporations for advancing "economic and social progress".<sup>9</sup>

If both the court and the APA were silent on the relationship between the takings clause and progress, the public and mass media have aggressively seized upon the case to assert their own political beliefs on progress, private property and the role of government planning. Planners should be troubled by the odd bedfellow alliances in opposition to the decision, including "property-rights conservatives, anti-government libertarians and anti-corporate progressives" (Haar 2005). In particular, these groups' shared animosity towards "progress" demonstrates how the term has gotten away from the best spirit of progressive planning: "the vision of progress is shortsighted, based on a dangerous mix: the addictive high of construction dollars, with money thrown blindly from some seat of government far away" (ibid). The old vision of progress as promoting social justice is replaced by a contempt that government action is both unjust and inept: "Politicians, usually arm-in-arm with special interests, often manufacture grandiose economic development schemes whereby little guys get trampled in the name of progress" (Keating 2005). The private property-rights organization *Reason* lamented the fate of a soon-to-be-displaced elderly woman: "She'll be a victim whose dreams have been paved over by progress, government style, in which the rights of citizens to their homes are trumped" (Lynch 2001). Here the cliché, "you can't fight progress," is translated into another truism, "You can't fight city hall," and intrusive government actions are painted as both a false, misappropriated conception of progress and as the enemy of genuine, private property-based progress.

The overall result is that progress has been turned on its head: instead of the Progressive Era's populist sense of fighting big business monopolies to help the little guy, the opponents of planning have opportunistically portrayed "progress" as big government assisting large developers in the forced eviction of the little guy. Planning's resulting public relations challenge is further exacerbated by the asymmetry of the case: the losers (the displaced residents) are personalized, visible, and sympathetic. The supposed gainers (the public at large) are more abstract, dispersed, and invisible. When progress is portrayed in this light -- where the beneficiaries are more numerous but less visible than the victims -- then populist opposition is more likely to arise.

The case also highlights the complex and problematical way that the ideal of the "public interest" has morphed over the years, placing economic development at the forefront of the public interest. Importantly, the city did not deem the properties as "blighted" (the otherwise commonly-cited barrier to progress), but instead emphasized the net economic gain of the proposed development projects as a public use. When the high court endorses the equating of "public use" primarily with economic benefit, this is sending us down a risky path in which market logic predominates a broader conception of civil society and the concept of progress is increasingly privatized.

And if planners were hoping that the court would find a wise third path out of this Solomon-like dilemma -- one that endorsed the good parts of planning power (to promote the

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patents: "To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries" (*U.S. Constitution*, Article I, Section 8, Clause 8).

<sup>9</sup> "Community development corporations produce affordable housing and create jobs through business and commercial development activities, and are a vital force in empowering low-income communities across the nation to achieve economic and social progress" (Echeverria and Beekman 2004, 2).

common good and defend the disenfranchised) without the bad (the abuse of government power to support wealthy developers) -- they were surely disappointed.

The frequency and passion of the progress rhetoric in response to the *Kelo* and other cases make clear: progress is not a vanishing, outmoded term. It is still at the center of numerous land-use and economic-development controversies, and the public commonly associates planning with "progress," for good or ill, even if planning professionals and scholars themselves shy away from the word.

Planners should also take note of progress's disquieting appropriation by two divergent social groups who both rebuff planning: the laissez-faire advocates who reject public planning as a barrier to economic progress, and the libertarians who lump planning and progress together, rejecting both as combined threats to private property rights. In addition, a third group poses a somewhat surprising -- and perhaps even more troublesome -- threat to planning because they are assumed to be natural allies of planning: the environmentalists. In attacking "progress" as a threat to the natural environment, they may unwittingly reject the very ideology of planning that can best lead to a future reconciliation between economic, social and environmental priorities (this idea is discussed later in the paper).

Furthermore, professed debates over progress often reveal themselves to be proxy debates over other material, social or political interests. The relationship can also run the other way round: conflicts over concrete matters such as land development or infrastructure projects may also have, at their core, fundamentally different value systems regarding social progress. To categorically reject or embrace progress is to do battle over an abstraction that is not sufficiently tied to a set of specific individual or collective interests. But one can make the opposite mistake: to be silent on progress is to cede ground on seminal social debates. For planners to take full advantage of "progress" to promote their efforts, they would wisely recognize the power of progress in its dual role as a fundamental social goal in itself and as a proxy for other social interests, and actively built pro-progress alliances.

### **Reconciling Planning and Progress: Three Challenges**

What explains planning's recent retreat from the ideology of progress? The causes lie in the encounter between planning and three historical transformations of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century: the crisis of modernism, the crisis in unlimited technological and economic growth, and the crisis in the provision of universal public works. A renewed commitment to progress will therefore require reconciliation with these post-Progressive Era shifts.

#### *The crisis of modernism*

Assailing modernism as the source of numerous urban planning woes has become contagious in recent times (Beauregard 1989; Berman 1988; Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000; Holston 1989; Frisby 2001; Ellin 1999; Dear 2000; Harvey 1989; Soja 1989; Scott 1998). This autopsy of modernist city planning has led down two major paths: questioning the procedural assumptions of modernist, rational planning; and criticizing the substantive failings of the modernist built environment. In this two-front attack on modernism, progress also gets dragged into the fray, rejected both as a scientific process and as a measure of substantive city improvements. In this postmodern view, progress has functioned as modernism's propaganda apparatus, making false promises of a better future to excuse a disruptive and destructive present. The result has been a historic shift in planning's relationship to modernism: planning's former

alliance with progressives and modernists over conservatives has given way to a new alliance with preservationists over modernists.

In this postmodern view, modernization theory maintained and reinforced the ideology of progress: "The invention of modernization theory after World War II allowed the bourgeois idea of progress a certain afterlife" (Jameson 1999). Similarly, Richard Norgaard, in his aptly titled book, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future*, argues that "the belief in progress is so much a part of modernism ... that to openly question modernism is to openly question the idea of progress, tantamount to being a pessimist, giving up, dropping out, and becoming a social misfit" (Norgaard 1994, 50).

Some critics of progress have even turned the once-derogatory concept of "Luddite" on its head (Pynchon 1984) -- despite laissez-faire criticisms that "neo-Luddites" are no better than the original (Bailey 2001, 2002). The bio-regionalist Kirkpatrick Sale has embraced the term Luddite for the post-industrial age (Sale 1996). In this revisionist history, these early-19<sup>th</sup> Century British anti-industrialists are reinterpreted as opponents of exploitative market relations of early capitalism (Thompson 1963). This post-modern view reinterprets progress as a conflict over economic power and class relations, and rejects the premise that progress and tradition are inevitably in conflict (Olwig 2002, 50-2).

This backlash reflects in part a reaction to a vision of progress linked to the modern ideology of social evolution. Earlier advocates viewed progress as not just change over time, but instead an inevitable improvement: "Nature delights in progress; in advance from worse to better," notes a writer in 1742 (*OED*). This assertion of systematic betterment would become more powerfully explicit in the age of Darwin, when "the paradigm for the interpretation of cumulative changes was no longer the theoretical progress of science but the natural evolution of the species" (Habermas 1984, 151; see also Kirkpatrick 2003, 103). The post-modern skeptic warns against ennobling human progress through an analogy with natural evolution; progress might instead simply reflect the contingent and idiosyncratic dynamics of history (Owen 2002). Other critics take this one step further, arguing that our model of natural evolution as advancement is wrong: evolution itself can lead to greater diversity without advancement (Vale 2002, 1-2). Things might just get different, but not necessarily better. This skepticism could be extended to various popular models of progress based on intrinsic stages of ever-higher development (e.g., Condorcet, Marx or Rostow). Thus the debate over progress of the human condition is pulled into the debate over Darwinism, and advocates of social progress cannot necessarily defend their cause based on a crude model of natural evolution.

Critics also cite twentieth century historical events as damning evidence of progress's failings, starting with the "war to end all wars" at the end of the Progressive Era. The modernist faith in progress is rattled by the observation that "nothing in history suggests that we may expect anything but wars, tyrants, sickness, bad times, calamities, while good times are always temporary" (Lessing 1994). Christopher Lasch asks: "How does it happen that serious people continue to believe in progress, in the face of massive evidence that might have been expected to refute the idea of progress once and for all" (Lasch 1991, 13)? The realist asserts that humankind fails to learn from history, but instead blunders through the same disastrous mistakes. The attack on modernism became an attack on progress as scientific utopianism, which arguably blinds one to actual events, whereby persistent faith in progress continues only out of stubborn unwillingness to fathom the systemic ills that progress has wrought. But if wars and other tragedies are reasons to question a naive view of unbroken, linear progress, are they reason enough to dismiss the possibility of human betterment altogether?

The objection to modernism's so-called master narrative, and the resulting emphasis on seeking out a wide range of voices, has further undermined the belief in progress. One of the spoils of victory is the power to write history: to narrate progress as the conquest of backwardness, ignorance and superstition. This applies both to economic upheavals (the industrial revolution over Luddites, global free trade over entrenched localism) and to progress in scientific knowledge. The victors of scientific revolutions get to define scientific progress (Kuhn 1970, 166). The postmodern call to step outside this circular tautology and listen to oppositional voices (Sandercock 1998) therefore has paradoxical consequences: while it may represent a necessary step towards inclusive social development, it also makes it far more difficult to construct a collective storyline of progress.

To its credit, postmodern rhetoric has provided the planning field with a playful and stinging language with which to gain a critical distance on the failures of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century planning. Yet progress, like modernism (or reason, rationality and the Enlightenment project), has too often become a scapegoat for a broad set of social woes with more complex origins. (It is ironic that a universal explanation has been employed to reject the universalism of modernist progress.) Too many writers have eagerly anticipated a structural collapse of modernism that hasn't entirely happened, arguably because of modernism's enduring strengths. The spirit of modernism captures both progressive, socially minded aspirations as well as its often-decried authoritarian, insensitive tendencies. Norman Etherington warns against "the idea of a monolithic juggernaut of modernism," and emphasizes the contested historical terrain of both modernism and progress (Etherington 1996). Marshall Berman, who saw modernism as "a struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world," (Berman 1988, 6) viewed both Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs as modernists, albeit of very different types. In a remembrance of the legendary planner Ed Logue, architecture critic Herbert Muschamp both criticized Logue's excessive belief in progress and softened the criticism by saying it was the spirit of the age, not just a solitary stance by planners. Reflecting on New York City's current preoccupation with glittery skylines and skyrocketing real estate prices as measures of success, Muschamp also nostalgically admired the spirit of modernism and its commitment to social equality, whereby "New York and other cities could continue to regard themselves as engines of democracy" (Muschamp 2000).

In the end, both modernism and progress are more complex than the caricatures created in their name. True, one facet of progress has encouraged a radical, modernist rejection of the past and the creative destruction of familiar, endearing built environments. But other assertions of progress involve postmodern, multiple-coded incorporations of past and present elements -- as if to say, we can now do it better than before, since we can master *all* styles and technologies from past and present. A rehabilitated ideology of progress can indeed be allied with nostalgia, historic preservation and adaptive reuse as well as with modernism. In retrospect, modernism and humane planning are not inherently at odds. Similarly, the ideology of progress is more compatible with -- and more vital to -- contemporary planning ideals than we allow ourselves to believe. Modernism did not hijack planning from its progressive roots; the modern era gave rise to planning and imbued the profession with its progressive though also problematic ideals. The astute path for planning is to constructively address the contradictions of modernist progress, not to nihilistically reject them.

### *Limits to growth and the ideology of sustainability*

"Already huge patches of once green countryside have been turned into vast, smog-filled deserts that are neither city, suburb nor country. . . . You can't stop progress, they say, yet

much more of this kind of progress and we shall have the paradox of prosperity lowering our real standard of living" (Whyte 1958).

Environmentalism and the sustainability movement pose a second impediment to the ideology of progress. This has been a two-front challenge: a questioning of the underlying assumptions of ever-expanding human settlements, markets and consumption as the driving force behind progress; and a concrete encounter with resource scarcity, crises of accumulation, and global environmental degradation. The modern conception of social progress is historically linked to the industrial revolution and capitalist growth (Habermas 1984, 152) -- two characteristics that seem increasingly at odds with the ideology of sustainability.

Among contemporary environmental groups, "progress" is frequently a codeword for over-consumption and technological arrogance. These critiques of progress often link unsustainability to the failures of modernism: "... most people who still call themselves progressives oppose this vision of 'progress.' During the 1930s, for example, American progressives backed Roosevelt's plans to promote economic growth by building highways and dams; progressives today are more likely to sue to stop highways and dams." (Siegel 2000). The fittingly titled group "Progressives against Progress" combines opposition to global capitalism, market competition and GM food with a belief in localism and risk-aversion, and is "dedicated to the idea that the citizens of the world have the right to be protected from the risk associated with change" (<http://www.bureaucrash.com/campaigns/progressives/>).

This emphasis on limits to growth is not wholly new. A century ago, Progressive Era planners emphasized conservation and regulation to rein in the excesses of laissez faire growth. In 1937, Lewis Mumford argued that "limitations on size, density, and area are ... the most important instruments of rational economic and civic planning," and he rejected "the assumption that all upward changes in magnitude were signs of progress" (Mumford 1937, 61). The planning field has revived this Mumfordian view in its contemporary articulation of sustainable development. Though most sustainability writings have not overtly painted progress as the sole villain, they frequently implicate "progress" as a dangerous misstep down a dead-end path. In particular, sustainability's emphasis on growth limits, steady-state economics, anti-consumerism, and controlling sprawl and land conversion has collided with conventional assumptions about economic progress's inevitability and merits.

But if sustainability is incompatible with progress, that leaves planners in the untenable position of having to choose one or the other. This either/or choice is inescapable only if one measures progress based narrowly on industrial growth and natural resource exploitation. A broader conception of development allows one to conceive of "sustainable progress" not as an oxymoron, but instead as a viable planning goal: the expansion of GDP without increasing natural resource consumption or pollution through greater productivity (Weizsäcker, Lovins, and Lovins 1997), cleaner technologies, higher value/material input ratios, and shifts from material to non-material consumption (culture, information, services). This offers both an appealing way out of the "economic growth = environmental decline" conundrum and an alternative to the rigid sustainability constraints of flat material consumption and zero GDP growth. Even conservatives such as Steven Hayward at the American Enterprise Institute see win-win advantages in the sustainability approach over the older "limits to growth" philosophy (Hayward 2003). A viable search for sustainability thus leads neither to preserving the status quo nor to a mythic pre-industrial state of nature (Campbell 1996). Instead, the push for sustainable development will compel high rates of socio-technical progress.

But one encounters a dilemma. Increased consumption in the so-called service industry

typically triggers increases in material consumption as well: tourism triggers fuel consumption, telecommuting triggers more auto trips, etc. The service sector is often used to market the increased consumption of material goods as well. So the substitution of services for manufacturing, though it has allowed significant improvements to the environment, has limits. Furthermore, one should not underestimate the powerful momentum of territorial and resource expansion -- the so-called "spatial fix" for crises of capital accumulation (Harvey 1975) -- that binds together progress, accumulation and growth. The idea of a non-material "fix" is an appealing alternative, but what are its prospects in a world economy where consumption of information and culture too often complements, rather than replaces, consumption of scarce natural resources?

An alternative strategy to break the progress-versus-sustainability gridlock is to redefine both progress and sustainability in broadly social terms. For example, Neil Thin proposes a diverse aggregation of progress measures, including GDP, health and environmental quality, gender empowerment, happiness, etc. (Thin 2002, 115-6). The Oakland, CA-based non-profit *Redefining Progress* promotes the Genuine Progress Indicator and the ecological footprint to promote sustainability (<http://www.rprogress.org/>). Another promising path is the current revitalization of the long-dormant urban planning/public-health link (Hebbert 1999), which is now preoccupied with the urban sprawl/obesity connection but hopefully will expand into broader issues of health care access, food systems, and environmental justice.

A serious challenge in this sustainability/progress dilemma is the problem of inequity and underdevelopment. Equity is typically the weak link in the so-called "three E's" of sustainability, and there is a real danger that social elites will eventually agree to support a form of sustainable development that incorporates economic development and environmentalism but conveniently neglects equity, particularly in international development. It is one thing to call on advanced industrial nations to shift much of their consumption (and thereby their measures of progress) from material to non-material items. But it is another matter altogether to promote this redefinition to impoverished communities who would understandably resist a form of sustainability that condemns them to long-term substandard levels of consumption and access. This leads to an internal contradiction of sustainable development: it is often erroneously seen as either transcending class or intrinsically redistributive, when in fact both its support and its conceivable consequences are frequently conservative and unequal (see, for example, Beckerman 1992; Marcuse 1998; Olpadwala and Goldsmith 1992).

Therefore, a reconciliation of progress and sustainability will require compromise and adaptation on both sides: not only should advocates of progress consider the environmental consequences of their beliefs, but promoters of sustainability should confront the unsettling consequences of an anti-progress stance for social equity and democracy. In the words of FDR: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

### *Privatization and Fragmentation of Public Works / Public Interests*

The transformation of public works provision represents a third challenge to the ideology of progress. Massive infrastructural projects have historically been the symbolic showpieces of progress, and the alliance between progress and progressive politics was grounded in the belief that these publicly funded works promoted collective improvement and social equality. In fact, these public works often benefited the privileged and were not just targeted to the poor and underrepresented. But the necessities of scale economies, natural monopolies, populist politics,

progressive ideologies and legal challenges led to the collectivized, universal provision of these infrastructural services, such as potable water, sewers, schools, parks, electric power, roads and grand public buildings. They were critical factors in bringing massive numbers of people into the middle class and reducing income disparities. Building public infrastructure is, in David Perry's words, "building the public city" (Perry 1995, 1).

Privatization is an obvious suspect in the breakdown of these once-public functions (Lowi 1969; Squires 1991; Sorkin 1992). The city, traditionally the provider of public services as public goods, is evolving into a seller of amenities, the citizen is increasingly transformed into a consumer of quasi-private goods, and a new sector of private firms is emerging to manage and operate these privatized services. Scale economies are captured not through the traditional planning pathway of regional consolidation of public services in metropolitan-level public agencies, but through the bundling of many municipal service accounts in the portfolio of these consolidated private service providers.<sup>10</sup> The result is the privatization of agglomeration economies and collective consumption.

This privatization is part of a larger historic expansion of market logic into areas traditionally guided by public-welfare ideology. Ignacio Ramonet, the editor of *Le Monde diplomatique*, views this as the shift from a machine-age belief in progress to a contemporary preoccupation with the market as the dominant mode of communication (Ramonet 1996). In this "ownership society," the market has replaced the great civic places as the forum for progress. If Progressive Era reform expanded the public interest, the current era has contracted it. A century ago the masses of industrial society heavily relied on public works to access urban amenities and elevate them into middle-class status. Today, this middle class -- now suburbanized and a political majority -- increasingly turns to the private market for services and social advancement, leaving the minority central city residents without sufficient public infrastructure to promote their own social advancement. Planners, who have traditionally used public works projects to advance their vision of progress, find these outlets increasingly constrained by privatization and limited funding.

Even when these services are still under the public domain, their allocations can be highly unequal. Rather than remediating inequities arising from market failures, collective consumption too often exacerbates the inequalities of the private sector (Castells 2002). Such inequalities arise because service allocation and funding are tied to residential location in a highly segmented and unequal local geography. This has become more prevalent in an era of deregulation and customization, aided by new distribution, billing and GIS technologies that allow for individualized service plans targeted to caste-specific neighborhoods.

Graham and Marvin warn of this decline of universally provided public infrastructure, often replaced by bifurcated service delivery systems (Graham and Marvin 2001). The result is a fractured infrastructural landscape of privilege and neglect, with the highly mobile technology creating not the familiar concentric model of high-service core and low-service periphery, but instead an archipelago of discontinuous and uneven spaces.

This new infrastructure model is analogous to advanced industrial organization: infrastructure has shifted from being mass produced (with universal access) to being flexibly specialized and catering to a fragmented market with disparate purchasing power. This new

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<sup>10</sup> Proponents of privatization would be quick to emphasize that it does not necessarily involve private ownership, but instead a public-private partnership where the city merely contracts out the operation but retains resource ownership (Tsybine and Evans 2003). Others would argue that the larger public interest is served not by public ownership and control *per se*, but by providing lower service prices.

post-Fordist infrastructure breaks down the old social contract of public works driving a model of shared progress in the public interest. The transition from the TVA's Norris Dam and Robert Moses' Jones Beach of the 1930s to the publicly funded airport terminals and sports stadiums for the elites of today highlights the loss of the populist spirit of public works. No longer aiming to overcome social inequalities, this restructured conception of progress loses its progressive agenda and is reduced to advances in technology, economic multipliers and GDP growth.

This shift has demoralized progressives, who had once embraced notions of technological progress to aid those of modest means and limited power. Yet progressive planners have often misread this shift in the infrastructural landscape. They too quickly withdrew their engagement with such projects, having falsely attributed their inequitable or unsustainable outcomes to intrinsic qualities of public works projects (e.g., mammoth-sized, engineering-orientation), rather than to larger shifts in the ownership, funding and politics of these projects. The rejection of the overly simplified, high modernist model of progress -- and its preoccupation with massive, complex, austere projects -- should not lead to the over-generalized rejection of the richer, more balanced model of progress that planners inherited from the Progressive Era.

Perhaps this wistful view of a bygone era of progressive public works reveals a naïve modernist nostalgia. After all, the high-flying regionalist idealism and public works populism of the TVA and other projects have been habitually intermingled with more conventional battles over industrial capital, pork-barrel politics, inter-agency power struggles, and bureaucratic entrenchment. Elites have used the rhetorical credibility of progress to maintain and reinforce their wealth and privilege, whereby "the theory of progress was sometimes a shield that concealed their aspirations" (Romero and Gutiérrez Girardot 1999, Ch. 6). As Kaika and Swyngedouw argue, "The fascination with technology and technological construction in themselves made progress appear to be merely a matter of construction, of technological innovation and of connection. The fetish role of networks and the emphasis put on the new and the innovative masked the underlying relations of production and social power relations, which remained symptomatically the same" (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2000, 130). Habermas also emphasizes this class-nature of progress and warns against viewing scientific-technical progress as universally experienced by all members of society when in fact its experience is highly segmented (Habermas 1971). The assumption that public works would invariably bring about universal social progress was based in part on a noble but flawed belief about their inherently liberating aspects, while neglecting their intermediary role in the larger political economy.

Nevertheless, massive public works projects simultaneously offer the promise of universal social improvement and reinforce existing social power relations. This tension between public good and privatized gain aptly embodies the spirit and dynamics of progress, for better and for worse. Importantly, these projects provide opportunities for alliances between populists, progressives and technocratic elites to serve the larger public interest. Planners' increasing ambivalence towards embracing massive public works (such as huge sports and convention centers) historically arises from an understandable skepticism about community displacement, big project arrogance, misspent resources, and greed masquerading as concern for the common good (Reisner 1993).

But scale too often becomes a scapegoat for other culprits. The role of scale is often contradictory, highlighted by the case of Boston's Central Artery/Tunnel Project ("Big Dig"): though it might seem ironically regressive to use a contemporary mega-project (expressway tunnels) to rectify the problems of a previous mega-project (1950s elevated highways), big problems might require big fixes. And the 2005 controversy over Mayor Bloomberg's proposed

Jets/Olympics stadium on Manhattan's West Side had less to do with scale *per se* but rather with public subsidies, team ownership, competing uses of public land, and quarrels between municipal and state governments. Standing on the sidelines of these mega-projects may be a form of protest, but it also marginalizes planners from the very projects that are still seen by the public and the nation as the embodiment of "progress."<sup>11</sup>

In this retreat, what is lost is a planning vision of the future with which the public can identify: substantial public works projects such as canals, roads, highways, hydroelectric dams, and urban parks.<sup>12</sup> What has replaced these iconic planning projects of the Fordist Era, and why haven't they generated as much public support as the old ones? When modernism, modernization, development and progress became disentangled, planners gained greater reflectivity over the ideological origins and consequences of their goals, and became less likely to endorse projects with potentially devastating social and environmental consequences. But planners also lost a tighter convergence of their elite, expert goals with a more populist set of aspirations.

The legacy of large-scale projects from the Progressive and New Deal eras can be seen in urban infrastructure, which at its best captured a pragmatic merger of function and imagery: "New York built an infrastructure with a great architectural integrity, one that it could later draw on for an expression of its culture as much as its function" (Gastil 2002, 40). One can see signs of a renewed belief in progressive public works projects in Mike Wallace's compelling book, *A New Deal for New York*, which advocates a New Deal-like program of federal spending for post-9/11 New York City (Wallace 2002). Rather than a 1930s revival, these future projects would be "bolder, smarter, more inclusive." If the Depression-Era projects built libraries, clinics, homeless shelters, pools, police and fire stations, an airport, FDR Drive, and tunnels under the Hudson River, these new projects would emphasize affordable housing, alternative energy, health care, mass transit, and diversifying the economy beyond the financial sector. The overall spirit is one of federal involvement, public good, and the reversal of postwar angst about large civic projects.

Planners may believe that small is beautiful, and that a sustainable, inclusive future lies down the path of small-scale community development. But the task of reclaiming the progressive spirit of progress will also require a critical engagement -- and employment of our planning graduates -- at the other end of the spectrum: highly capitalized, transnational development projects and the accompanying big players of construction and place-making (Bechtel, Fluor, KBR/Halliburton, URS, HOK, Skanska, Hochtief, and the like).<sup>13</sup>

### **Conclusion: Prospects & Implications for Reclaiming the Rhetoric of Progress**

This paper has argued that the planning profession should move beyond its reactive opposition to progress and retrieve progress as a legitimate and persuasive term in the planning lexicon. Progress is not just a measure of incremental betterment; to have a vision of progress is to assert a claim on the future of cities and to influence the direction of urban growth coalitions. Don't abandon progress: if you do, others will define it for you. Categorical opposition to

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<sup>11</sup> For example, opponents of the massive Narmada dam project in India have been marginalized as unpatriotic opponents of development. (D'Souza 2002).

<sup>12</sup> One can even see this shift in the public reception of Robert Moses' activities in New York, from the popular Depression-Era projects such as Jones Beach, swimming pools and parkways to the embittered battles during the 1950s and 1960s over Lincoln Center, the Cross-Bronx Expressway and other disruptive projects.

<sup>13</sup> Several planning authors have recently taken on the topic of mega-projects, especially the problem of egregious cost-overruns (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003; Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius, and Rothengatter 2003).

progress is a defensive and strategically marginal position. Contemporary skeptics may no longer believe in the natural inevitability of human progress, but they can still believe in its merits. In fact, the planning profession does not have a viable alternative to believing in progress.

This presents a challenge: to reclaim the positive aspects of progress without either regressing into the unreformed ideology of either Progressive Era or New Deal-era progress or assimilating into contemporary neo-liberal boosterism. The political agenda for planning is to update its vision of progress to be responsive to present-day values of planning (diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, equity). Planning's foundational conception of progress arose during its early Progressive Era years and its conception of a single public interest, a coherent, monocentric city, and an emerging profession of planners as comprehensive generalists. As Jon Peterson eloquently analyzes, these three premises have been fundamentally undone by subsequent 20<sup>th</sup> century developments: the segmentation into interest group politics, the fragmentation of the now sprawling, decentered metropolis, and the diversification of the planning profession itself into a specialized, "fragmented art" (Peterson 2003, 330-1). These transformations do not undermine the underlying power of the progress ideology. But they do require a contemporary reinterpretation of progress. A century ago, rampant urban-industrial intensification catalyzed Progressive Era reforms to address urban poverty, housing congestion, woeful sanitary conditions, and local government corruption. Contemporary distress about unsustainable sprawl, megacities, the urban underclass, and global environmental decay likewise provide an impetus towards a new vision of progress for planning.

The agenda for planning also leads to the pursuit of civic projects with which the public can identify. These projects should capture significant revenues and/or public resources: progress is expensive and requires long-term investment. They should not only advance the revitalization of struggling central cities, but also serve metropolitan-wide needs (e.g., transportation, water resources, recreation, open space) and thus facilitate allied city-suburb political support. This is not an easy agenda. In hindsight, the icons of Fordist-era progress (hydroelectric dams, divided highways and steel factories) are readily identifiable; designing contemporary icons of progress is not so straightforward. This apparent lack of consensus is revealing: planners will find it more difficult to agree on a singular vision of "progress" and translate their contemporary emphasis on collaboration, participation and local quality-of-life amenities into iconic markers of "progress."

Despite cries of unfair corporate welfare, cities will continue to support public-private partnerships to build stadiums, convention centers and airport terminals as cathedrals of progress. But planners should also push for projects with a broader appeal to the public interest. Some will be familiar prototypes of civic progress, such as the planned Moynihan Station to replace Manhattan's subterranean Penn Station. Others will be hybrids of the traditional and the innovative: waterfront greenways to restore the barren landscape of highways, brownfields and abandoned marine terminals (Gastil 2002); a new era of dramatic public school design and construction; innovative civic museum spaces as counterbalances to private theme parks; and a new generation of metropolitan parks, bringing civic spaces not only to the underserved Sunbelt cities, but also knitting together the sprawling regional landscapes. These steps can reverse the recent contraction of the public interest and civic spaces. These efforts also imply the revitalization of dormant alliances between architects, planners, landscape architects and civil engineers, and point towards importing the European tradition of international design competitions for great public spaces.

Planners cannot simply cherry pick the progressive, appealing elements of progress they like and dismiss the unpleasant elements of progress. It would be politically strategic for planners to construct a vision of progress that not only fits their own professional goals and values, but also retains enough of the traditional character of progress that it remains recognizable as such to the larger public -- rather than developing a wholly alien vision whereby "progress" simply becomes a misleading code word for sustainability, limits to growth, etc. The public still has a strong sense of "progress" that planners need to tap into.

Specifically, a compelling configuration of "progress" would need to address the three challenges addressed earlier: the end of modernism's monopoly as the sole ideological foundation of progress; the rise of sustainability as an alternative model of development; and the transformed role of public works in an era of fragmented, privatized infrastructure. Engaging these three oppositional tendencies to progress could not only lead to a revitalization of "progress" in the planning vocabulary, but also work the other way around. Rethinking progress would trigger a healthy, corrective revision of planners' stances towards modernism, sustainability and public works projects -- three areas that suffer from an outdated and caricatured view of progress that is stuck in the imagery of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The bringing together of the ideological power of progress with planning's contemporary emphasis on sustainability, localism, diversity and equity will be a heady mix, as much a collision as an integration. It is understandable that many shy away from this confrontation and instead remain in the oppositional camp, viewing planning and progress as increasingly at odds with one another. But retreat represents a lost opportunity. Isn't the planning profession the child of the Progressive Era and, if not its best caretaker, then at least a legitimate inheritor of the ideology of progress?

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