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## Postmodern cities and life in Melbourne in the year 2000

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### **Abstract**

Life in post modern cities is fundamentally different from life in previous periods of the city. Despite the changes, common community values still exist. Communities in this century will continue to strive for economic efficiency, equity for all people and environmental protection. This paper will examine what constitutes a post modern city by compiling and exploring the range of criteria which have been developed by previous writers. The paper will then consider life in Melbourne in the year 2000 and raise issues for consideration.

After an examination of the writing on post modern cities it is possible to define these cities using many inter-related criteria. At the most basic level, post modern cities are de-industrialised cities in which international capital is looking to invest in the services, information technology and high technology fields. This investment potential encourages governments to act in a proactive way to encourage economic survival, after the decline of the manufacturing sector in the 1970's and 1980's. Entrepreneurial governments, engaging in negotiated planning with investors, compete with each other to survive.

Governments involve themselves directly in the rejuvenation of the built environment, particularly redundant industrial areas, warehouse sites and former transit areas such as rail and port facilities. Gentrification of the inner city is another response to the deindustrialization of these post modern cities and is a further adjunct to the rejuvenation of the built environment. Post modern architecture is favoured as landmark buildings, playful, decorative or historically meaningful structures are recreated or newly fashioned. Historical precincts, docklands, riverwalks and skyscrapers dominate the landscape in cities with increasingly privatized open spaces. Public infrastructure and major buildings (for example, stadia) are often joint public/private sector ventures. These arrangements

allow for the funding and management of many hastily planned initiatives designed to capture international capital and create the new cities.

Once these new cities emerge their space needs to be used to its optimum capacity. Events are organized to utilise the boulevards, the parks, the shopping complexes and the harboursides. Cities like Melbourne pour enormous resources into creating a calendar of events aimed to cater for local, intrastate, interstate and international audiences. People are encouraged to participate in events, visit, invest or set up business in this new city of spectacle. Post modern cities take on a new image and a new meaning in the international market place.

Place marketing becomes critically important to ensure that the redefined image of the city is known, accepted and celebrated world wide. Cities become products marketed to targeted audiences around the globe and are placed, priced and promoted according the needs of their potential markets.

This story is about Melbourne and many other world cities. Melbourne is a post modern city. Melbourne looks and feels more international than it did a few decades ago. However the remodelled post modern landscape creates winners and losers. There is a significant degree of social and spatial polarization of the population. The role of the community through community groups has been limited by the decision making process, including the speed with which the negotiated planning entered into by the state and the market has been undertaken.

Many questions arise as to where Melbourne is heading in the future. Whose city is Melbourne? Who is enjoying and profiting from the post modern city and who is disenfranchised? These are important questions to ensure that economic efficiency, equity and environmental agendas are successfully achieved in the future.