The Naming Game: The Politics of Place Names as Tools for Urban Regenerative Practice?
The Naming Game: The Politics of Place Names as Tools for Urban Regenerative Practice?

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial initiatives to regenerate disused urban industrial landscapes are now typical of urban renewal programs in Australia. These initiatives involve highly flexible collaborations between public and private sectors that aim to replace the derelict meanings of the industrial past in favour of positive visions of a postindustrial future. To achieve these transformations, highly strategic image reorientation campaigns have become critical to the success of such redevelopments. Involving both physical and discursive reorientations, these campaigns reflect current theorisations on the complexities of landscape. Specifically, the act of creating a new postindustrial place regularly necessitates the destruction of the industrial space. However, the process of sanitising the identities of former industrial landscapes through marketing materials and physical reconstruction is often inadequate. In some instances, a place may be so infused with a subtext of negativity that attempts to renegotiate its meaning are unviable. Considering this, developers often seek new methods to create new discursive landscapes within existing places. This paper investigates one such method employed by the Newport Quays development consortium in the revitalisation of the Port Adelaide waterfront. Stigmatised as Port Misery for over 150 years, the name of Port Adelaide and its adjacent suburbs are still infused with the meanings of their derelict past. Due to this entrenched discourse of negativity, the development consortium sought to short-circuit the need to aggressively reimage the existing name of Port Adelaide by imposing a new suburb name, New Port. While the consortium was successful, the political battle for renaming revealed fierce contestation over identity and conflict over space. This paper seeks to problematise the political process involved in renaming landscapes and seeks to contribute to more critical understandings of the policies involved in urban regenerative practice.
Introduction
The adoption of entrepreneurial initiatives to regenerate disused urban industrial landscapes is seen as the panacea for urban decline. Underutilised and decaying buildings stand as sombre reminders of past prosperity which is now elusive in a post-industrial economy. Not only are they considered echoes of an undesirable past, they are also contemporary indicators of ongoing malaise. Within such landscapes a policy framework of highly flexible, entrepreneurial collaborations between public and private sectors coalesce to reclaim their squandered potential. The template for these forms of landscape regeneration programs is now ubiquitous. Large-scale, mixed-use developments promoting postindustrial identities and lifestyles are juxtaposed against the former industrial, blue collar identities of these places. Augmenting this is the aim to reorient such redundant landscapes of production to postindustrial places of consumption. Effectively, this postindustrial transformation witnesses the rebirth of places as progressive, vibrant and economically prosperous.

To realise this transformation, the physical landscape of the industrial past is demolished. Concurrently, aggressive reimaging campaigns are mobilised to diffuse or submerge the stigma attached to and communicated through the industrial landscape. The act of creating new post-industrial places demands that industrial spaces be destroyed. Zukin (1991) refers to this process as ‘creative destruction’. However, this process is never absolute. Traces of industrial heritage and identity often linger and emerge to problematise the newly reconstructed post-industrial discourse (see Healey 2005; Rofe 2004; Rofe and Szili 2009). This is particularly pertinent to local communities whose identities and heritage are intimately tied to the industrial landscape. This paper draws upon ongoing research that has been investigating the redevelopment of the Port Adelaide waterfront in South Australia (see Rofe 2007; Rofe and Oakley 2006; Szili and Rofe 2007; Rofe and Szili 2009). Specifically, it focuses on the recent approval to create a new suburb within Port Adelaide by renaming the redevelopment site, New Port. Building on previous research (see Rofe and Szili 2009), the authors contend that place names such as Port Adelaide may be so infused with negativity that attempts
to renegotiate its meaning through physical redevelopment and traditional place marketing strategies are seemingly unachievable. Considering this, developers may often employ more radical strategies to inscribe new discursive landscapes within existing places. However, the processes of redevelopment and renaming also herald material and political outcomes. This paper aims to problematise the political process of renaming and the fierce contestation over identity and conflict over space that continues to be played out in the Port Adelaide waterfront redevelopment. In doing so, the authors seek to contribute to more critical understandings of the policies and politics involved in urban regenerative practice. Stigmatised as Port Misery for over 150 years (see Rofe and Oakley 2006), the meanings attached to the name of Port Adelaide are so infused with the derelict past that the name itself is beyond discursive rehabilitation. As a result, the name has been discarded by the development consortium.

Located 14 kilometres to the northeast of the Adelaide CBD (see Figure 1), Port Adelaide is on the verge of an urban “renaissance” (Hoyle & Starick 2005, pp.10-11). Central to this renaissance is the redevelopment of 52 hectares of former waterfront industrial land to provide for mixed residential and commercial use (see Figure 2). This redevelopment straddles the harbour including sites in the suburbs of Port Adelaide, Ethelton, Glanville and Birkenhead (hereafter referred to as Port Adelaide). The redevelopment of this site is overseen by the State Government’s Land Management Corporation (LMC) in collaboration with the private sector development company Urban Construct. Trading as Newport Quays Consortium, this venture is typical of the entrepreneurial collaborations between government and private property developers. It is estimated that the redevelopment will generate 6000 jobs and realise approximately A$1.2 billion in reinvestment capital (LMC, n.d.). Reflecting the scale of this project, the redevelopment will be undertaken in six stages beginning in 2005 with completion anticipated in 2014. The master-planned development is envisaged to drive the “grime out” of Port Adelaide (Craig 2002, p.), aiding the area’s transformation “from working class to world class” (Mansell 2005, p.18). However, the fiercely contested renaming process suggests that from the developer’s perspective,
only New Port will achieve world class status, while Port Adelaide will languish in the past.

**Figure 1:** Study site location. *Source:* Rofe and Oakley (2006, p.273).

**Figure 2:** Postindustrial *New* Port within Industrial *Old* Port. *Source:* Newport Quays brochure (2005, p.16).

**The Power and Politics of Place Names**

Place names are an integral part of landscape and are redolent with meaning. Beyond the assemblage of letters and their syntax, they are infused with real and imagined subtexts. As part of landscape communication, place names are much more than a means of facilitating spatial orientation and transportation (Azaryahu 1997; Mitchelson *et al.* 2007). They also function as symbolic texts within cities and are embedded in larger systems of meaning and ideology that are read, interpreted, and acted upon socially by people (Alderman 2008; Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002). As Rofe and Szili (2009, p.262) assert, place names can also be regarded as rhetorical devices, “in that they communicate a sense of the landscape to which they are attached”. In view of this, place names are neither accidental nor haphazard. Rather, they are deliberately chosen and imbued with meaning. For Hauser (1986, p.2) rhetoric is the “…*instrumental* use of language” (original emphasis) to achieve a specific objective through the communication of meaning. Thus, place names can be considered as instrumental in that the ability to name place is to exercise power. Pinchevski and Torgovnik (2002, p.366) support this assertion stating that the very act of naming landscape is indeed “a political act, for a name is always given to something or someone by an external force having the legitimacy to do so”. Unpacking the intersections of naming and power is vital for more critical understandings of landscape. This is particularly in the case in the Australian context. Here *Australia* is considered to be a European creation that subsumed Indigenous societies and their relationship with *country*. As a postcolonial society the Australian context provides a plethora of examples of the erasing of Indigenous place names with those of the European colonisers. While this paper does not
explicitly address issues of Indigenous occupation prior to European colonisation the authors are cognisant of these issues and wish to acknowledge that the place now referred to as Port Adelaide is the traditional land of the Kaurna people whose name for this area is *Yertabulti*.

As rhetorical tools, place names are politically embedded and discursively loaded. Whilst Rofe and Szili’s (2009) preceding paper discussed the discursive consequences of place naming, this paper aims to unravel the politics of these processes. Recent studies of place naming have highlighted the important role that geographical naming plays in the legitimisation of cultural and political identities (Alderman 2008; Azaryahu 1997; Kearns and Berg 2002; Rose-Redwood 2008). As part of larger struggles over social and political identity, place names are used for resisting and reinforcing hegemonic order (Alderman 2000). Pinchevski and Torgovnik (2002) similarly affirm that place naming is ultimately a triumvirate political act. First, as being the result of a political struggle where one name is chosen over several others, naming place is like “any other political contest in having a potential for conflict” (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002, p.367). Secondly, the decision to name and rename is ultimately made by “political-bureaucratic institutions having the legitimate monopoly to name” (original emphasis) (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002, p.367) It is therefore quintessentially a political practice of ‘power over space’. This reveals the scope of control entrusted in the political-bureaucratic institutions having the exclusive right to classify and attach definitions to an existing social space (Celik et al., 1994, p.4). For Plumwood (2005, pp.384-385), this is problematic as the naming of landscape, with its “grid of bureaucratic or political power” registers obeisance to “those in favour with the current [politic]”; whilst neglecting the voices of minority groups. Following this idea, Pinchevski and Torgovnik (2002, p.367) finally posit that decisions over place naming are conducted by political actors who endeavour to engrave their own ideological views in the social space. Thus, there is not only an important politics to place names and naming (Plumwood 2005), but the political struggles inherent within reflect unequal power relations.
Renaming landscape similarly raises questions of power and political struggle. Much of the literature addressing the renaming of place centres around the political landscape of the nation-state (see Monmonier 1995; Saparov 2003; Gill 2005; Yong 2007). Place names not only convey ideologies of the state, but also the political climate and processes by which a nation-state makes their impression on the landscape (Yong 2007). Indicative of this are attempts by new regimes to dissociate themselves from the landscapes of fallen regimes. To assert their new authority, the successor will often construct new monuments and generate new symbols such as flags and anthems, replacing the symbols of the past with a new symbolic culture (Gill 2005, p.480). However, it is not only the physical landscape and the artefacts that constitute it that is altered. Since place names connote power and ownership, new regimes eager to validate themselves and replace a fallen regime will often erase the names or “toponyms commemorating the previous government’s accomplishments” (Monmonier 1995, p.57). Gill (2005, pp.480-481) similarly asserts that the creation of this new symbolic culture includes the renaming of streets and places for:

...place name that are linked to the symbolic world of community help to locate people spiritually by linking geographical location and space with the legitimating structures of that community and its regime.

Gill (2005) stresses the importance of place names as people come into contact with them every day, rendering an immediate and practical reality that cannot be gained from a flag or an anthem. Thus the symbolism imbued within place names is critical to the successful restructuring of society (Gill 2005; Yong 2007).

Saparov (2003) aptly demonstrates this through his discussion of place name evolution in Soviet Armenia. During 70 years of Communist rule, the country was subjected to a rigorous renaming policy which sought to replace place names aligned with relict religious affiliations in favour of names more befitting of the Soviet consciousness (Saparov 2003, p.187). Here, the replacement of former Muslim names was particularly significant as it reinforced the
continued vilification of the Turkic population. The occupation of the former Arabic town of Ramle by the Israeli army in 1948 provides another salient example. Following a short period of military administration, Ramle was declared to be an Israeli town and was opened to Jewish settlers (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002, p.370). Arabic Ramle of course bore many Arabic street names such as ‘Suliman Eben Abed-El-Malek’ (Ramle’s Muslim founder), and ‘Malek Feistal’ (the Iraqi king). However, soon after the Israeli occupation, one of the first actions of the new administration was to erase all Arab street names and replace them with names of figures, events and symbols from the history of the people of Israel (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002, p.371). In present-day Ramle, over one-third of the population is Arabic and concentrated in two main areas: the ‘old town’ and in the Juarish area (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002, p.373). Interestingly, the Juarish area was exclusively built to house Arabic residents; however, the area is absent of street names. Pinchevski and Torgovnik (2002) astutely observe that although this area is under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Ramle, the deliberate omission of street names also symbolically omits the presence of Arabic residents. Whilst the monopoly of the municipality was challenged through a partisan attempt to name one of the streets after an Arab-nationalist figure; this was deemed a seditious action and quickly quashed by the administration (Pinchevski and Torgovnik 2002). Thus, the politics of naming landscape is imbued with what Bourdieu (1991) refers to as ‘symbolic violence’. By refusing to name the streets of Juraish, the Israeli administration symbolically exerts its power, whilst marginalising the Arabic community and effacing their past.

Similar to the nation-building agenda, renaming as a mechanism to erase previous meanings is also evident at the local scale of revitalisation projects. The naming of revitalisation projects is akin to a re-branding of place. Project names are imbued with a sense of progress, and, in the case of former industrial sites, environmental improvement (Szili and Rofe 2007). In an Australian context, the Honeysuckle redevelopment site on Newcastle’s waterfront is a prominent example. Throughout the city’s history, the place name of Newcastle has communicated a series of meanings (Metcalfe 1993; Dunn et al. 1995; Rofe 2000; 2004). Once fêted as Australia’s ‘steel city’,
following the decline of the industrial economy during the 1980s, Newcastle earned the title of "problem city" (Docherty 1983, cited in Dunn et al. 1995, p.156). To submerge its pessimistic identity, aggressive marketing campaigns that drew upon images of leisure and consumption aimed to position Newcastle as Australia’s ‘best city’ on Australia’s ‘best coast’ (Dunn et al. 1995; Winchester et al. 1996; Rofe 2004). However, as Rofe (2004) maintains, the transition from ‘problem city’ to ‘promise city’ has been fraught with tensions as the new identity threatens existing identities.

Pfeiffer’s (2006) discussion of Cabrini Green in the United States strikes a similar cord. As a public housing development in northern Chicago, Cabrini Green came to be stigmatised as an African American ghetto from the 1960s (Pfeiffer 2006, p.43). Throughout its history, the area had given residence to a variety of ethnic groups and colloquially identified under various monikers including Swede Town and Little Sicily to more stigmatised names such as Smokey Hollow and Little Hell. Despite the constant flux in the social nature of the area, Cabrini Green had always remained a low-income area imbued with the malady associated with public housing estates in the United States. To acquit the “...harrowing portrait of the community” (Pfeiffer 2006, p.46) and attract new middle-class residents, place-marketers and policy-makers sought to reorient the area’s image. To achieve this, the Cabrini Green tenements were to be demolished and the area renamed as Old Town. In doing so, the redevelopment not only physically sanitised the landscape, but discursively negated its stigmatised identity through the politics of renaming. The lengthy debate surrounding the renaming of another American suburb, West Paterson, is another noteworthy example.

Similar to the litany associated with Cabrini Green, West Paterson has always been synonymous with crime and poverty (Wamsteker 2001). In an effort to shake this stigma, state-led urban regeneration initiatives were mobilised during the late 1980s. However, given the entrenched discourse of negativity surrounding the suburb’s name, some of the newer residents sought to rename West Paterson to Woodland Park in 1989 (Wamsteker 2001, p.5). This initial proposal failed by more than 1300 votes; however, it marked the
beginning of several contested attempts to rename the increasingly affluent suburb. In 1995, only 156 votes prevented “West Park” from becoming the new name to adorn official letterheads (Wamsteker 2001, p.5). In 2001, new resident and real estate agent, Lucy DeFeo, lead another charge for a name change (Wamsteker 2001). Insisting that her proposal was not motivated by ethnicity or race, she stated that the name change would help the suburb escape the negative stigma as a poor and dangerous place (Wamsteker 2001). Moreover, a “nicer-sounding place name would mean higher property values” (DeFeo cited Wamsteker 2001). Once again however, vociferous public debate ensued with many opponents citing the proposal as an insult to the history of West Paterson. It was not until 2008 that the fourth referendum to change the borough’s name to Woodland Park finally succeeded (Appel 2008a). Following the vote, 200 angry residents assembled at a community meeting to discuss their options for saving the borough’s historic name (Appel 2008b). From local businesses posting signs to urge residents to resist the name change (see Figure 3); to name change opponents willing to raise money for a special re-election, the renaming debate was fiercely contested. Reflecting this discord, one West Patersonian (2009) declared,

...the name change has split the town. And it is going to get worse before it gets better. You are either in the Woodland Camp or the West Paterson Camp. Friends and families are divided by this issue... My great-grandparents bought a farm and raised their family here. My grandmother was born here in a house in town... I will not allow people [to] put down my heritage... I would like someone to show us in black and white how the values of homes are going to up now with the new name when foreclosures are happening everywhere because people are out of work. Show me how this name change is going to be so much better.

Nevertheless, the supporters of the shift to Woodland Park were the eventual victors. Whilst it is too early to determine whether this change has realised the perceived positive impacts of improving the town’s image and property values, the remaining dissension illustrates the highly politicised and uneven nature of
place naming (Alderman 2008). As Pfeiffer (2006), Avraham (2004) and Zelinsky (1989) contend, the use of language, and place names in particular, is central to implementing the process of redevelopment. Thus, the act of renaming is never a simple act, but deeply invested in a socio-political context that is often inequitable and always contested.

**Figure 3**: “Save our name” placard displayed on a street in West Paterson.  

**New Name: ‘New’ Port?**

The revitalisation of Port Adelaide aptly demonstrates the politicisation and contested nature of landscape. Despite the physical landscape being altered to submerge the blighted images of its industrial heritage and fit within a post-industrial discourse, the development consortium mobilised another discursive strategy to consolidate this transformation. The strategy was to change the name of the land contained within the redevelopment site to ‘Newport Quays’. Commenting on the name change proposal, a prominent member of the development consortium stated that the renaming was “...vital to the success of the redevelopment”, adding that a new name “...would help [with the] marketing strategies” and demonstrate that a “new era and face of the Port has arrived”. Consequently, the name change can be seen to shed the stigmatised mantle of ‘Port Misery’. However, as documented through a series of interviews with key stakeholders and press materials, this proposed name change was met with great hostility by the local community.

From the inception of the redevelopment concept plan in 2002, the transformation of the Port has been vehemently contested. This contestation has largely centred on the scale and nature of the redevelopment process and the lack of transparent public consultation (Rofe and Oakley 2006). Issues of debate have included the proposal to build multi-storey buildings, which are deemed to “visually smother” (Westthorp 2007a, p.8) the Port’s built heritage. Similarly, environmental concerns such as the remediation of contaminated land and the impact of the redevelopment on the unique dolphin population have been topics of further disputes (Szili and Rofe 2007; Milne and
Westthorp 2006; Jenkin 2008). Despite the persistent public protest, the development consortium has repeatedly triumphed. This may be attributed to the involvement of the South Australian State Government who granted the redevelopment Major Project Status. Major Project Status effectively negates the validity of local planning policies. In doing so, the statutory power of local government is rendered impotent. Here, the inequitable nature of entrepreneurial governance becomes transparent, while simultaneously its decision making process become increasingly opaque (Rofe and Szili 2009, p.366).

Having lost all appeals regarding the built form of the redevelopment, the local community suffered a final setback. In 2006, the development consortium proposed to create a new suburb to assist in the reimaging of the Port. This supports Zelinsky’s (1989) assertion that place names play an important role in place promotion, with developers very aware of their “image generating potential” (Alderman 2008, p.201). To shed the unfavourable working class, industrial image of the “...less glamorous suburb names of Ethelton, Glanville and Birkenhead” the development consortium proposed to have a “...more marketable name” for the waterfront land earmarked for redevelopment Naughton 2006, p.29). A spokesman for Urban Construct, Mr Todd Brown, confirmed this through a media statement, claiming that Newport Quays was a “...separate type of structure and style [from the surrounding area] and so... should have a different suburban name” (cited in Naughton 2006, p.29). The need to rename the waterfront landscape emphasises a level of insecurity felt by the development consortium. In an interview with a local resident and community group member, the creation of a new suburb name “cut[s] away from the nasty, working class connotations of the 150 year old suburbs [that] the [redevelopment] stand[s] in and shows blatant fear by the developers”. The respondent further added that the developers and government are “getting scared that they might not sell their development fast enough”, so a name change is “just another piece of arsenal in their marketing missile”. Monmonier (1995, p.61) supports this assertion, claiming that “the need to rename places is perhaps strongest among [those who are] insecure about their territory”. Thus, the practice of place naming can be seen to assert
dominance whilst masking an inherent wariness of the multiple layers of the history of landscape.

Additionally, this proposal directly contrasted previous sentiments espoused by the consortium that the redevelopment was inclusive and sought to integrate with the existing community. This was echoed in an interview with a local resident who perceived the redevelopment as “a more inclusive thing” and stated that the renaming only exacerbated the tension between the local community and developers (Netschitowski, cited in Kerrison 2007). Moving quickly from its public announcement, the consortium lodged a proposal with the Geographical Names Unit (GNU) to rename the new suburb as ‘Newport Quays’ in October 2006 (Westthorp 2006, p.3; Naughton 2006, p.29). However, in keeping with the ubiquitous hostility already harboured for the development consortium, local community groups together with the Port Adelaide Enfield Council strongly opposed the new name.

For several months, a bitter battle ensued between the developers and Council and community groups. For Council, the renaming of the redevelopment site would facilitate the creation of an exclusive enclave and contravene the developer’s promise of integrating the old and the new areas (Westthorp, 2007b, p.9). These sentiments were reiterated by several local residents who insisted the renaming would pander to the ‘Club Med types’ who were construed as a threat to local identity (Hammond 2006, p.16; Hastings 2006, p.16; Lloyd 2007, p.12; Shields 2007, p.14). Hammond (2006) continues, stating that renaming the area to improve the value and image of property would denigrate the existing suburbs of the Port and alienate the existing community. However, not all factions of the community were in opposition. An interview with a prominent local business owner revealed support for New Port;

I really don’t think that it [renaming] is a big deal. I mean sure, we probably all have romantic notions about the Port... there is some history in the dilapidated shacks around the Port river and the crumbling buildings... but it’s time to reclaim the Port and its river and
reverse its image as a grimy dump. If renaming helps us reverse this [the negative images], then I think it’s a good thing.

Similar discussions with a local real estate agent and resident also favoured the new name. Although the respondent admitted that the renaming should have been settled prior to the commencement of the redevelopment, from a realtor’s perspective, the name “is a fair choice”. For the respondent, the new name “...will definitely attract investors” and “enhance the overall image of the Port”. Commenting on the historicity of the name, the resident concluded by stating that the new name

...is not offending the Port’s history – it is [about] moving forward... New Port still keeps with the area’s maritime heritage, so I think it’s a reasonable choice.

For the vast majority of local community groups however, the erosion of traditional suburb names for the benefit of the consortium’s marketing campaign disregards the historical significance and heritage value of these suburbs (Westthorp, 2007c). Analogous to the discourse surrounding the West Paterson name change, Portonians similarly argued that the new suburb name would “kill off 150 years of history” of the area (Westthorp, 2007c, p. 1). Thus, the construction of a new postindustrial suburb within existing industrial suburbs challenges the meanings of place and draws attention to issues of social equity within such entrepreneurial redevelopments.

In a bid to end the conflict, Deputy Premier and Port Adelaide Member of Parliament Kevin Foley, proposed in April 2007 that the site be called New Port. A spokesperson from the GNU supported the Minister stating the “...name reflects the area’s maritime history and recognises the significant change the development will bring to Port Adelaide and the surrounding suburbs” (Westthorp, 2007d, p.5). This acknowledgement of history was reflected in an interview with a senior LMC spokesperson. The respondent blithely quashed claims that the new name ignores the area’s history, stating that it is a “celebration of its history” as “part of the redevelopment falls in an
area that was labelled ‘New Port’ in the 1800s”. Figure 4 reveals that these claims are accurate. Whilst not officially being declared as such, the ‘new port’ was constructed a “mile or two downstream” of the original Port Creek settlement (Parsons 1997, p.37) and represented on various maps during the 1800s. This marked an optimistic stage in the Port’s history, where the “new Port afforded...great facilities... and was loudly acclaimed” (Parsons 1997, p.41). For the LMC representative, the new name evoked a similar optimism of the landscape’s past.

Figure 4: ‘New port’ map. Source: Parsons (1997).

Nevertheless, for many residents, renaming was perceived as a tokenistic gesture. Chairman of the Port of Adelaide National Trust, Tony Kearney scorned the new name arguing that ‘…just taking the Quays off the name doesn’t really change anything…it still sets it [the redevelopment] as a bit of an enclave’ (Westthorp, 2007d, p.5). These concerns were echoed in an interview with a resident and local environmental activist who maintained that “the name change will [ ] create an enclave of exclusivity”. The local historical society similarly voiced their opposition by lobbying government with placards emblazoned with slogans such as ‘New Port is an insult’ and ‘Leave our historic names alone’ (Westthorp, 2007e, p.8). Despite continued local resistance, on July 11 2007, Infrastructure Minister Pat Conlon announced the creation of the suburb New Port (Conlon, 2007; Zed, 2007, p.9), stating the new name reflects the history of the Port as well as the significant changes that the development heralds for the area and surrounding suburbs.

Despite Foley’s compromise and Conlon’s attempt to bridge the existing landscape with that of the new, local community groups remain unmoved. For them, the renaming is a blatant marketing device that insults the meaning of those generations of residents and workers whose combined agency created the physical and discursive landscapes that the renaming is sweeping away. For these community members the existing suburb names are not simply words; they are the echoes of the past that are falling silent in the face of an uncertain future. For the consortium and new residents, place naming is a
form of symbolic capital and “a marker of prestige” (Rose-Redwood 2008, p.438; Bourdieu 1991). However, for marginalised groups and local community members, the role of place naming can also be viewed as a site of ‘symbolic resistance’ (Rose-Redwood 2008). That is, whether successful or not, these groups have the ability to “resist the imposition of elite naming practices” (Rose-Redwood 2008, p.438), highlighting the politicised and contested nature that place names imbue. However, as Alderman (2000) and Rose-Redwood (2008, p.447) caution, it is theoretically and politically important not to “reduce the symbolic struggle over street [and place] naming to a binary opposition between the ‘elite’ and the ‘marginalized’ because such a characterization obscures the multiple axes of exclusion at stake” in the production and reproduction of place.

**Conclusion**

Postindustrial landscapes are created through the methodical destruction of industrial landscapes. During the planning and execution phases of large scale redevelopment projects marketing strategies deliberately and systematically create distinctions within the landscape delineating the industrial past from postindustrial future. This juxtaposition of old industrial against new postindustrial structures and styles within revitalisation projects is neither new nor unique. Examination of government and advertising materials for the Port Adelaide waterfront redevelopment reveals the stereotypical grainy black and white images of derelict industrial structures contrasted against architectural renderings of progressive and vibrant postindustrial consumptionscapes (see Rofe & Oakley, 2006; Rofe, 2007; Szili & Rofe, 2007). However, what is unique in the case of Port Adelaide’s redevelopment is the explicit imperative to rename as a central strategy in the revitalisation process. Whilst much of the literature addresses the renaming of streets and nation states; the creation of new suburb names corresponding with the boundaries of redevelopment projects within existing areas remains significantly under-researched. This paper builds on previous research that has identified the name Port Adelaide as a rhetorical device imbued with a stigmatising discourse (Rofe and Szili 2009). Taking into consideration that texts as elements of social events have causal effects (Fairclough, 2003, p.8),
it is not surprising that the development consortium sought to short circuit the
need to aggressively re-image the existing name Port Adelaide by imposing a
new name. Tuan (1991, p.688) develops this idea by acknowledging that
renaming has the “power to wipe out the past and call forth the new”. Similarly, for Monmonier (1995, p.57), renaming is a quick and inexpensive
way of “redecorating the cultural landscape”. Thus, renaming as a marketing
strategy for former industrial landscapes is an effective and powerful tool for
development consortia.

However, for local community groups, existing suburb names are not
inconsequential; they are a part of daily rhetoric through which their sense of
place, identity and belonging is articulated. Nor are they negotiable. In tracing
the political debate surrounding the renaming of Port Adelaide, this paper
problematises the political process involved in renaming landscapes and
provides much needed dialogue of place renaming in an Australian context.
For the development consortium, these place names communicate a much
different sense of place to that which they are seeking to vision, create and
commodify. Given the political and symbolic importance that place names
convey, we must refrain from reducing them to a mere “potentiality for aiding
or realising” capitalist gain (Plumwood 2005, p.382). Whilst renaming place
may serve as an effective marketing tool, as a dynamic and evolving society,
we should be able to democratise and allow for greater and more equitable
community engagement in the naming process (Plumwood 2005, p.388).
References


LMC (n.d.) *Developing Opportunities*, Design: Do-Da; Photography: Milton Wordley, Mark Spaven; Printed and Bound: Finsbury Printing.


Figures

Figure 1: Study site location. *Source*: Rofe and Oakley (2006, p.273).
Figure 2: Postindustrial New Port within Industrial Old Port. Source: Newport Quays brochure (2005, p.16).

Figure 3: “Save our name” placard displayed on a street in West Paterson. Source: Tariq Zehawi (2009). Available at: http://www.northjersey.com.
Figure 4: ‘New port’ map. Source: Parsons (1997).

As explored by Rofe and Oakley (2006), the origins of the *Port Misery* discourse stem from personal and political acrimony between the Colony of South Australia’s first Governor, Governor Hindmarsh and the Surveyor General, Colonel William Light. In short, Hindmarsh considered Light to be his social inferior given that Light was an illegitimate son of mixed-racial birth. Further to Hindmarsh’s annoyance Light was given the authority of ‘royal prerogative’ to locate the new colonial capital, a right Hindmarsh was adamant should have been his. A key weapon employed by Hindmarsh’s supporters was to question the logic of Light’s settlement decisions. Foremost amongst these was a concerted attack on the suitability of the colonial harbor, thus giving rise to the alternate place name *Port Misery*.