

THE CHALLENGE TO (RE)PLAN THE MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS AND PORT ADELAIDE INNER HARBOUR: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR SUSATAINABLE RENEWAL OF URBAN WATERFRONTS

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ABSTRACT

Despite massive public and private investment in the renewal of Melbourne and Adelaide's waterfronts many suggest they are not working. There are serious questions as to whether they deliver good planning; well designed environments; social equity and engaged citizenry; are good investments; have an image which meshes with reality; offer local employment options and quality amenity. This is despite concerted master planning and dedicated authorities overseeing their development. These limitations have real implications for those who live in but also plan these sites and for metropolitan and state governments who have made significant capital and symbolic investments in them. Not only are these sites the focus of huge capital investments but the future of whole cities are bound to the re-imagining of their waterfronts as cosmopolitan hubs, to their physical regeneration, to their revitalisation as centres of employment and for significant population return to the inner and middle city and into high rise living. Planning iterations for these two sites have been subject to partial documentation but what is needed is a more systematic assessment of their often poor planning and better alternatives. This paper provides a brief background to what drove these renewal projects and their current status, the changing priorities of government, the shifting commercial environment and current challenges faced by those seeking to plan these new urban spaces. Attention is then paid to a research agenda which could inform better planning for future stages of development in these two sites as well as other major renewal projects.

INTRODUCTION

The renewal of waterfront sites into new forms of cosmopolitan living and economic activity is a notable international (Brownill, 1990; Harvey, 1992; Merrifield, 1993; Hoyle, 2000) and Australian (Winchester, *et al* 1996; Searle and Byrne, 2002; Waitt, 2004; Dovey, 2005; Oakley, 2005, 2007a, 2009a) trend. Since the 1970s urban planners have grappled with how to revitalise urban waterfront landscapes as industries and shipping have shut down or relocated leaving bulky but often impressive infrastructure and large tracts of contaminated land behind. In London, for example, the Bankside Power Station became the Tate Modern Art Gallery, while Canary Wharf has been redeveloped for commercial and residential use. Closer to home, derelict docklands in Sydney's Darling Harbour has been transformed into an entertainment and tourist hub. Similar goals continue to be pursued, if on a smaller scale, elsewhere in Australia. Recent projects at Melbourne Docklands, Victoria and at Port Adelaide, South Australia are typical of waterfront renewal activity worldwide. In the 21st century these renewal projects have taken on a new urgency and their development has increasingly become politically, socially and economically significant as urban populations have burgeoned, and governments have sought ways to house, employ and ensure quality environments in already congested inner urban areas.

Despite massive public and private investment in the renewal of Melbourne and Adelaide's waterfront, many suggest that they are not working. For a number of academics, the many proposals developed for Melbourne have failed to deliver good planning, well designed environments, social equity and an engaged citizenry (Dovey and Sandercock, 2002; Dovey, 2005; Wood, 2009). For many other commentators, such as journalists, architectural critics and bloggers (see Styland-Browne, 1998; Houston, 2009; Holden, 2010; Macleod, 2010), there are serious questions as to whether they may be good investments, have an image unrelated to their realities, offer limited employment options and have residential environments of mixed quality with limited amenity. Similar concerns have been raised about the renewal of the Port Adelaide waterfront. The capacity for meaningful public participation and consultation and the scale and design of the

redevelopment have been noteworthy foci of academic critique (see for example Oakley, 2007a, 2007b, Rofe and Oakley, 2006; Szili and Rofe, 2007); while media condemnation is gaining traction because of a failure by the redevelopment to live up to the promotional hype of the State government and developer (see for example Kennett, 2008; Lloyd, 2009; Williams, 2010; Wills, 2010). This is despite concerted master planning and dedicated authorities overseeing their development.

These limitations have real implications for those who live in but also plan these sites and for state and metropolitan governments who have made significant capital and symbolic investments in them. Not only are these sites the focus of huge capital investments but the future of whole cities are bound to the re-imagining of their waterfronts (along with other brownfield sites) as cosmopolitan hubs, to their physical regeneration, to their revitalisation as centres of employment and for significant population return to the city and into high density living. Since the goals of government and planners appear worthwhile in the face of population pressure in Australia; since living or working near water continues to be highly desirable; and since there has been a strong market for housing of all types, if these redevelopments have failed to live up to their promise, it is important to examine the reasons why.

Inner Melbourne and Adelaide – differentiated by their scale and place in the urban hierarchy – are currently being renewed. For this reason they are ideal case studies for examining whether they are achieving the goals of improving the urban environment and increasing housing density. Comparable to a major suburban development in scale, the renewal of the Melbourne Docklands and Port Adelaide were approached in very different ways: as major extensions of their cities; requiring a separate planning authority outside of normal democratic and local government processes; on brownfield sites requiring massive remediation; and, involving a range of land uses (Oakley, 2011). Yet to date planning has been piecemeal and reactionary and subject to ongoing revision and injection of funds to ‘improve’/correct past decisions and imperfect outcomes. The initial principles guiding both redevelopments raised expectations for quality outcomes but these were often changed in the interests of commercial confidentiality, fast-tracking of development plans and altered plans.

This paper sets out a research agenda for critically evaluating the ‘success’ of planning these types of urban projects. For an evidence-based model outlining principles and practices to guide the planning and delivery of major brownfield sites is long overdue. Informing current planners and those in comparable areas of best (and not-best) practice in delivering sustainable environments in renewal areas is critical. Equally this model should provide a framework for planners on how to better engage residents and the public in the future planning of these sites. This is relevant not only for waterfronts but other redevelopment sites oriented towards urban densification in an environment largely wedded to the suburban dream. Against this backdrop, the paper offers a brief discussion of the two waterfront sites from early aspirations for the pre-developed to their development thus far. This is followed by a proposed research agenda that can firstly take into account lessons learnt from past practices and secondly identify future directions for better planning, participation and delivery of sustainable large-scale urban renewal. The paper draws on secondary data from research undertaken by the authors (see Oakley, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2009a, 2009b; Rofe and Oakley, 2006; Johnson, 1994, 2010), and other Australian academic research on waterfront regeneration (see Winchester *et al*, 1996; Dovey and Sandercock, 2002; Waitt, 2004; Dovey, 2005) and primary data including an analyses of State government planning documents and the recent Federal Government’s Discussion paper *Our Cities* (2008).

BECOMING A WATERFRONT CITY: THE MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS

For Melbourne the rhetoric, initially advanced by the Docklands Authority, was that the redevelopment would not only transform an abandoned port site but re-orient the entire city through high-density residences and new economic activity. Currently, the development authority VicUrban is charged with overseeing the redevelopment of the site. Covering nearly 220 hectares of land and over 7 kilometres of waterfront – the Melbourne Docklands involves an array of uses which include commercial, recreation, tourism and residential. With around 50 percent of its spaces intended to be residential, the challenge for VicUrban is to negotiate the ongoing construction of high-rise residences at a time when there is a slowing-down of growth in the housing market.

To date the waterfront accommodates high-rise residential apartments, multi-storied offices, film studios, public spaces lined with urban art, a piazza that is used for hosting events as well as two permanent screens

set up to enable up to 10,000 people to come together to watch live sport. A mix of retail, cafes, restaurants, contemporary art, boutique shops and a shopping complex accommodating speciality and factory direct brand stores are located within the site. This transformation is expected to take over 20 years to complete (VicUrban, 2007). The scale and nature of the redevelopment thus far would indicate that it is being redeveloped as a multi-destination space for multiple publics. Touted as a 'world-class mixed use precinct', it is expected to accommodate 20,000 residents and more than 40,000 workers by completion (VicUrban, 2007, p.3).

Its design history however is complex and has been subject to change largely due to the economic recession of the 1990s, housing market fluctuations (see Dovey and Sandercock, 2002; Dovey, 2005; Woods, 2009), and more recently the global financial crisis. Nevertheless the Melbourne Docklands can be described as a post-modern fantasy redevelopment oriented to the water:

Returning Melbourne Docklands to the people of Melbourne will add a whole new dimension to the central city. Docklands will offer new employment opportunities, new recreational activities, and a unique residential lifestyle. Most importantly, it will turn Melbourne into a waterfront city, intimately linked to the river and Port Phillip Bay (Docklands Authority, 1996, p. 4).

Yet this area was never really integral to the people of Melbourne, with the exception of the Yalukit-Willam clan of the Boon Wurrung and the Depression poor, as for most of its history it was a blighted industrial and port area. However, in light of changing port technologies and inter-city competition for mobile global capital, people and major events, the Docklands was first envisaged as such in 1987 when it figured in Melbourne's bid for the 1996 Olympic Games. The quest for global investment continued in 1990 when it became one of a number of Australian urban sites vying for the location of a Japanese funded Multi-Function Polis of high tech and high touch technologies and residents (Inkster, 1991; Johnson, 1994). The victim of recession and inter-city rivalries such efforts came to no avail until the election of the neo-Liberal Kennett government in 1992. Premier Kennett observed in 1997:

Today, Docklands is the under-utilised western edge of the city...with no life. Tomorrow...the Docklands waterfront should become the city's showpiece – a liveable, high technology entertainment and recreational precinct with few parallels around the world...Docklands will give one of the world's most liveable cities a unique waterfront environment, a playground, a workplace, a tourism destination, and an incomparably beautiful place to live (Docklands Authority, 1997, p. 5).

Realising even a part of this vision has taken two decades and a host of remediation works, failed tenders, massive public investment in infrastructure and plans – to breach the many boundaries created by port infrastructure and build the huge sports stadium on the city edge of the site – and public relations. In the process, the many vague visions for the site were translated into private sector bidding wars and ultimately into a set of un-co-ordinated precincts, often wind-blown open areas, irregular connections to the adjacent CBD and a hotch potch of retail, residential and office developments. In the late 1980s there was however a commitment by the then Labor government to public consultation and involvement in the development plans. This included the preparation and publication of a set of evaluations of possible planning options by the Social Justice Coalition (Social Justice Coalition, 1991). With the election of a Liberal Kennett government public consultation and participation effectively ceased. The market was seemingly given free rein with the public reduced to merely a 'recipient' of information about the redevelopment. In response a 'People's Committee for Melbourne' was created and in 1996 organised a highly critical forum on the Docklands planning process and outcomes. The forum demanded meaningful input into the planning which included the inclusion of social housing as part of the redevelopment.

As a means of instilling developer confidence in the Docklands project the normal planning process was dramatically transformed. This included excluding Council from the planning approval process within the Docklands area. One community activist noted 'that the processes for Docklands have been deliberately designed to exclude the public' (Long, 1998, p. 52). Nevertheless interested publics continued to agitate and demand a voice. In response the Docklands Authority hosted a public information seminar (1997) in one of the abandoned goods sheds on site. Few of the demands from this forum were realised with the lack of meaningful ongoing participation in planning and social housing a continued source of public criticism.

No doubt in part as a consequence of public agitation, there are a few architectural marvels – such as highly energy efficient campus style medium density headquarters of banks and a few notable apartment towers. In general the site has become identified with poor planning, exclusive but isolated residents; failed icons such as the 120 metre Southern Star Observation Wheel which cracked and was closed 40 days after opening (Houston, 2009); the Central City film studio complex now running at a significant loss (Austin, 2009) and various food outlets. Businesses within the redevelopment were vocal in blaming the closure of the Observation Wheel for a loss of much needed trade (Fig. 1). Plans are therefore afoot to further soften the hard edged, expansive open spaces, infill the major roads with laneways and extend public transport into the area as gestures to further integrate the spaces and entice an absent public. A more expansive public consultation process now that the area has over 6,000 residents is evident. Criticism around aspects of the urban design, social exclusivity and sterility however continue to plague the Docklands development.



Figure 1: The closure of the Southern Star Observation Wheel.

RHETORIC AND PROMISE: THE PORT ADELAIDE WATERFRONT

Long considered a place of social and economic obsolescence, a derelict dockland - stagnant and lifeless, the Port Adelaide waterfront redevelopment was judged to be a much needed panacea for the inner harbour and Greater Port area (Oakley, 2009a). The redevelopment received Ministerial approval in 2004. Situated 16 kilometres from the city's CBD, the inner harbour is considered an ideal location to support the South Australian government's urban densification policy. Expected to accommodate around 6000 residents within the 56 hectare inner harbour site, the redevelopment is integral to the state's 30 year plan to create walkable neighbourhoods combining mixed economic activity with an increase in residential density along well serviced public transport routes (Day, 2008, p. 7). The waterfront renewal was also touted as bolstering state-region economic development for the Port area by creating a regional hub for 21st century industry and living (Land Management Corporation, 2009).

Similar to the Melbourne Docklands, the language of progress and global relevance is evident in promotional material for a re-imagined Port waterfront:

...A natural harbour, a Mediterranean climate, a cosmopolitan lifestyle, a brand new address with an exciting future like no other. A Future where the inner harbour and Greater Port Adelaide area will grow and reclaim its rightful status as a world class destination for tourism, shopping and leisure (Newport Quays, 2006).

From a planning perspective the redevelopment has been besieged with problems. The Land Management Corporation (LMC), a commercially run public entity of the South Australian government, is charged with responsibility for the planning and delivery of the redevelopment. In the early concept planning stages a series of public forums and consultations were undertaken by LMC. The highly choreographed consultation process failed to galvanise local community support for the scope and scale of proposed residences to be built along the waterfront (Oakley, 2007b). The urgency by the State and local government to have the redevelopment commence overrode community disquiet. Furthermore at the local government level there was concern that the planning process was fast tracked at the expense of careful scrutiny of the proposed development plans (Oakley, 2009a, p. 313).

The pace with which the first two stages progressed through the planning application process in local government and the momentum with which residences were purchased in the first two stages of the redevelopment triggered a re-thinking of the scale and density of stage 3. In the revised plan three 12-storey buildings were proposed for this stage. This was clearly at odds with the original plan which specified the construction of only two 12-storey buildings (Fig. 2). Revising plans to increase the density and scale of stage 3 however suggests a confidence that these changes would be approved by both State and local government. Yet this move triggered a long drawn out and publicised battle between Council and the developer. Initially the plan was withdrawn, re-worked and re-submitted following strong criticism by the Council. In the revised plan the three 12-storey buildings were replaced with one 14-storey, two 9-storey and one 7-storey apartment complex. These changes effectively increased the number of apartments from 421 to 507 as outlined in the original plan, which had previously received approval from the State government (Todd, 2008, p.1). While the State government's planning department supported the revisions, the Port Waterfront Redevelopment Committee, an independent sub-committee of the State government's Development Assessment Commission rejected this revised plan. The design plan was deemed unsuitable because the taller buildings exceeded height restrictions, would create wind tunnels, diminish the quality of public space by over-shadowing and 127 of the apartments would have bedrooms without windows (Wheatley, 2008, p. 7). The developer is currently working on yet another revised development plan for stage 3.

In many ways the Port Adelaide redevelopment is repeating similar mistakes of past waterfront renewal projects. For example lessons should have been learnt from the notable international example of London's Canary Wharf and closer to home the Melbourne Docklands. The intense speculation and over-investment in commercial real estate within Canary Wharf and high-rise apartments within the Melbourne Docklands in the initial stages of their development was short-sighted because of the inevitable cyclical economic cycles of boom and bust. In both cases a downturn in their respective economies during the late 1980s-1990s through to the early 2000s justified criticism for an emphasis on profit over the building of not directly profitable social infrastructure as well as a focus on mono-use development rather than planning and delivering a mix of economic use from the outset (see Brownill, 1990, 2011; Merrifield, 1993 in particular for a critique of Canary Wharf). With a changing housing market coupled with the current global financial crisis it is evident how precarious redevelopments of this nature can be. Public stoushes between developer and Council have the potentially negative bearing on market confidence. The challenge for planners involved in the Port Adelaide waterfront renewal is three fold: firstly, what form should the redevelopment take in terms of scope, scale and economic activity; secondly, how to generate new market (and developer) confidence and investment; and thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, how to renew the confidence of new residents and surrounding communities of the value; quality of urban design, amenity and sustainability of a revitalised inner harbour. All that is known currently is that the redevelopment is proceeding.

DECISION | Developers forced back to drawing board



Figure 2: Concept plan for stage 3 which was rejected.

LEARNING LESSONS IN PLANNING

These questions are equally applicable to the Melbourne Docklands. The Docklands is not immune to the current national housing market downturn. Having the flexibility to reactivate the site through different forms of economic endeavour has, in the past enabled the redevelopment of the Docklands to progress and to some extent weather past economic recessionary challenges as witnessed in the 1990s. The extent to which the Melbourne Docklands can continue the pace of commercial and retail development in this current economy is less clear. Port Adelaide and the Melbourne Docklands reveal similarities and differences in the way the sites are being re-activated. They also reflect that the process of urban governance can be multi-dimensional, fluid and context driven accommodating both local circumstances and a diversity of situations in development. The role of local government is a notable example of the differences in governance arrangements driving these two renewal projects (see Oakley, 2011). To date, however, there has been no evaluation of the planning at a point in time where results can improve that process, public participation and the resulting physical, economic and social environments. As these two waterfront projects are still in progress there is an opportunity to provide an evaluation that can inform the further development. In critically documenting and evaluating the planning process of these brown-field sites, a research agenda should undertake a comparable exercise to that done for suburban master planning, thus highlighting the differences and similarities in the planning of these two very different development environments. Further, examining the connection between planning and residential experience – long called for in planning theory – would offer critical new insights.

The 'suburban dream': current story so far

While there are many studies on 'master planning', these are mainly on suburban estates (Bosman 2003; Gwyther, 2005; McGuirk and Dowling, 2007; UPR, 2010). Master Planned Estates (MPEs) are large integrated housing developments, serviced by comprehensive physical and social infrastructure (Minnery and Bajracharya, 1999; McGuirk and Dowling, 2007). Their essential features are a 'definable boundary; a consistent, but not necessarily uniform character; and overall control...by a single development entity' (Yigitcanlar *et al*, 2007, p. 2). While exhibiting considerable diversity (McGuirk and Dowling, 2007), such planned estates generally contain a range of residential and non-residential land uses, open space, public services and facilities, all supporting resident populations. Such estates aim to provide residents with a complete living experience, from schools and shopping centres to parks and, in some cases, employment and retirement options. MPEs tend to involve concerted efforts to create 'community' (see Kenna, 2007; Johnson, 2010). For this reason they have often been referred to as 'cradle to the grave' developments (<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/property/mawson-metamorphosis/story-fn682mc9-1226016073848>). The

concept of master planning is rarely ever applied to major inner and middle urban development or ones involving a range of land uses. Yet this is what has been occurring for both the Melbourne Docklands and Port Adelaide inner harbour with a series of plans – ranging from vague concept drawings to strategic statements and guides for tenders to more detailed precinct plans covering virtually all major land uses (see Dovey and Sandercock, 2002; Oakley, 2007a). There are therefore parallels with Master Planned Estates and these waterfront projects in their scale, mixed land uses, master and then precinct planning as well as efforts to build communities.

But if in Australia MPEs involve areas of a comparable size, long time frames and residential populations to date master planning rarely involves brownfield sites, massive remediation, significant non-residential land uses (i.e. business and tourist uses) or waterways and separate planning authorities. Nor are master planned estates loaded with the weight of symbolic value that sees their success linked to state government/city promotion as well as being the focus for major policy agendas on, for example, urban consolidation and employment creation (see Dovey, 2005; Oakley, 2005, 2009b). It is therefore highly appropriate and timely to subject the master planning of waterfronts to the same sort of analysis to address their similarities but particularly differences to Master Planned (suburban) Estates. For example what elements of MPEs could be applied to these waterfront redevelopments, and what aspects of MPEs that reflect the different contexts, processes and objectives of waterfront redevelopments should be considered?

This is particularly critical, not only because of the financial and symbolic investment in these sites and their master planning, but also because they are the focus of major policy and demographic shift, to move much of the Australian population from low density, detached suburban housing into medium and high rise inner dwellings. As Johnson (2006) notes, such moves involve a revolution in housing design and the mind set of Australian households. While a policy dating from the 1980s, urban consolidation has only recently attained traction in Melbourne and Adelaide, arguably more suburban cities than Sydney. The revolution is therefore more recent and far reaching in these cities. Just how successful the change to high density inner and middle city living has been for residents has only been sporadically analysed (see for example Fincher, 2007). It is timely that a more detailed and comparative understanding of the experiences of residents living in these developments is therefore undertaken and fed back into the next and future stages of their planning and delivery.

RESEARCH AGENDA 1: RESIDENT EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATION

Any contemporary planning in Australia recognises the importance of including the voices of those affected into decision-making. There are also increasing moves to plan for social and cultural 'difference' (Friedmann, 1987; Healy, 1997; Sandercock, 1998; Thompson, 2007). Participatory planning – actively eliciting the aspirations of those who are being planned for or for whom may be impacted by planning decisions – into the land use decision-making process, is now standard practice in Australian urban planning. When it comes to 'greenfield' and 'brownfield' sites where there are no existing communities, such consultation is limited. However where a development takes a number of years and is done in stages, then there are opportunities and, under current planning practice, real expectations for, and obligations to, consult. In the case of major redevelopment projects, such as in Darling Harbour in Sydney, Honeysuckle Creek in Newcastle, Beacon Cove in Melbourne and the Melbourne Docklands and in Port Adelaide, the creation of separate authorities has been accompanied by an abrogation of the obligation to involve multiple publics in the planning process, which has been a source of both academic and popular criticism (Huxley and Kerkin, 1988; Winchester *et al*, 1996; Long *et al*, 2005; Oakley, 2007b). A core part of any research agenda should include ways of activating the voices of incoming new residents at these two sites. Actually engaging those who live in the waterfronts has yet to occur in Australia or offshore. Little is known about the motivations and aspirations for living in these redevelopments; their views on the level and nature of amenity, infrastructure and services provided within these areas; or their views on living in medium and high rise rather than low density environments. Nor has any research focused on the importance of engaging those residents who have bought into the early stages of the redevelopment into the planning process of future stages in the project. This element of research would contribute important new dimensions to waterfront and dockland renewal literatures and to policy and planning in Australia.

RESEARCH AGENDA 2: INCORPORATING THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

A research agenda should also build on national and international debates regarding the process of planning and public participation in dockland renewal. Increasingly planning processes are less transparent to the public. For example the reappraisal and streamlining of planning regulations of such proposals is common procedure (Owen, 2002). Market led regeneration often involves little or no public participation (Huxley, 1993) or highly orchestrated consultative processes which significantly reduce the capacity for meaningful public participation (Oakley, 2007a). Further, research suggests there is a tension between the image projected to prospective residents of a highly desirable lifestyle and the national even global aspirations vested upon dockland redevelopments (Oakley, 2009a). The tension is between the previously low density suburban residents and their new high rise apartments and between their local needs and the place of dockland renewal in larger agendas of state development and city re-imagining. The existence of such tensions and how they play out is of vital significance for the success and liveability of waterfront renewal sites.

Academic and community critiques over the years have been elicited but often ignored by the planning authorities (see Huxley and Kerkin, 1998; Winchester *et al*, 1996; Long *et al*, 2005; Oakley, 2007b). A research agenda would seek to document these critics and recognise their value in highlighting planning limitations that must ultimately be addressed. The initial principles guiding these redevelopments raised expectations for quality outcomes but they were often changed for a range of reasons such as economic cost, opportunity or planning approval. Thus the planning process may well have been compromised as a result of ignoring original principles. A re-evaluation and reflection on these initial principles and practices will produce insights that can inform better practice and deliver a redevelopment that is integral and builds on the existing local economy and people.

RESEARCH AGENDA 3: DEVELOPING AN EVIDENCE-BASED MODEL FOR RENEWAL

Waterfront redevelopments have the potential to provide residential opportunities for thousands of Australians in what could be described as a novel urban experiment, high rise, near city living with governance and planning arrangements unlike MPEs. For the Federal Government, newly concerned with issues of sustainability, liveability and quality of life (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2010), these sites assume importance because of their scale, while for State governments, waterfront renewal is often the centre piece of metropolitan promotion and part of an overall densification agenda. Waterfront renewal is a social and spatial experiment. Yet there is little to no research for example as to the impact these urban developments have on housing stress, housing affordability and private rental (see Dodson, 2008). Further, the Australian Government's Discussion Paper *Our Cities* points to a gap in Australian urban research regarding the interrelationship of population growth, planning processes and new urban development, which has led to significant and unnecessary costs in housing and large-scale urban renewal projects (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2010, p. 54). This has only added to ongoing and competing demands on Federal and State government budgets. Increasingly waterfront renewal projects are promoted as supporting large urban populations therefore it is timely that projects underway at the Melbourne Docklands and Port Adelaide inner harbour are evaluated for their capacity to provide planning processes that deliver social and economic infrastructure, services and housing in a cost-effective, timely and efficient manner. If assessing sustainability and liveability involves abstract measures of political stability, service provision and the quality of physical, social and cultural environments, there is a need to broaden these indicators to encompass resident experience, amenity, services and governance (Gerrard Brown, 2006). How sustainability and liveability are actually defined can be modified and enhanced through engagement with residents. This is particularly pertinent given the Federal government's reorientation towards place-based innovation as one strategy in its national urban agenda in creating future liveable cities (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2010, p. 54).

CONCLUSION

Massive urban investments have been made in a number of waterfronts across Australia but they are not necessarily delivering quality urban environments. This not only raises questions about the wisdom of such major public and private investments, but also the veracity of the planning process. It is imperative that these urban projects are evaluated for their costs and benefits in terms of their integration into the planning system, expectation and reality, employment and service provision, and equally importantly, the quality of life

for those now occupying these new areas of urban high rise. If residential densification and quality urban living are key policy directions at all levels of government then such projects deserve scrutiny to ensure quality social and environmental outcomes. With the recent Global Financial Crisis and ongoing occupancy of these sites by residents, it is timely to ascertain, as part of the research agenda, the extent to which these economic changes impact on governance arrangements between development agencies, the developers and local government, whether there is a re-thinking of the type and scale and nature of development proposed in current and future stages for each waterfront and the extent to which these changes allow for public participation and consultation. There is also time and an opportunity to feed back into the planning process insights learnt from evaluating their success or otherwise. There is a need for research that can access the experiences of living in these places; add theoretical and empirical insights from elsewhere; and that can generate a new evidence-based model of renewal. The findings would provide a more transparent planning framework for government, planners and developers. While such a research agenda has utility for planners and policy makers the conceptual contribution to scholarship is also evident. The notion of re-planning and the location of this research within the complex geography of governance in terms of planning strategies, processes, participation and outcomes are the precursors of new conceptual insights that can inevitably emerge from such research.

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