

Sydney

A Harbour of Sheltered Coves, Iconic Points and Communal Bays

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Harbour Bridge, Opera house - the harbour is Sydney's most iconic landscape feature. Stretching from Parramatta in the west to Manly in the north. Sydney's 'ocean' beaches maybe where the city escapes to, but it is the harbour that is at the heart of Sydney's demonstrative public life, around which the city's commercial and cultural activity primarily revolves.

The harbour acts not only as a large watery plaza but it's convoluted jagged nature runs into a myriad of different coves that are public and intimate. The position, shape and size of these Coves create a diversity of topographical characteristics that provide a focus for different communities to gravitate to. It is proposed that Sydney as a city is unique in having public beaches that operate both to the internal (everyday) and external (escapist) life of the city with its harbour and ocean beaches in close proximity. While both Melbourne's circular bay and the Gold Coast's strip beach provide a coastal feature that unifies the city. Sydney Harbour however never provides one vantage point in which the city is understandable. It is a harbour of coves you must enter to view, unveiling its secrets and communities only as a process of discovery and searching.

The purpose of the profile is to show the importance of the cove's points as iconic touchstones for the character of Sydney Harbour, and the cove's bays in determining the social interaction of Sydney's communities.

Keywords: Sydney Harbour, Icon, Topography, Public Foreshore

The Opera House and Harbour Bridge: Sydney's iconic images derive their power from the harbour stage, but just as the harbour unifies and promotes, it also segregates and conceals.

Introduction

The harbour is Sydney's most singularly recognized iconic image, projecting the image of Sydney and Australia internationally. Indeed the Iconic as defined by the Cambridge dictionary 'the use of

symbols and images to represent ideas' (Cambridge 2016) and Sydney, meet on the points of Sydney Cove. The topographical features of the harbour however, mould Sydney in more fundamental ways, it's myriad of different coves nurtures diversity and it's small bays encourage community.

The iconic requires viewability. Great metropolises with a singular Iconic image of the city, are relatively sparse. Those cities that achieve it have an iconic feature that is viewable from a distance. The City Icon needs to dominant the view: Rio - Christ the Redeemer, New York - Statue of Liberty, Paris - Eiffel tower, Sydney - Opera House. Other great cities without a singular iconic image, don't allow one feature to dominate the view of the city: Tokyo, London, Rome, etc. There is a correlation between viewability and iconicity.

Sydney harbour's large expanse of open water, provides unobstructed views. Points: the end of harbour ridgelines, push into the view, inviting the Iconicness. Thus the "view" has a pre-eminence in Sydney unlike any other Australian city due to the Harbours topography. In Sydney the Icon on Points and their importance to Views and thus property values are recognized in law by the NSW Land and Environment Court ..."Water views are valued more highly than land views. Iconic views (eg of the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge or North Head) are valued more highly than views without icons."... (Tenacity Consulting v Warringah, 2004). Unfortunately Bays and Beaches that are more important to Sydney's social and communal fabric find no such protection in law.



Source: Moore, D. 1966. Sydney Harbour from 16,000 feet. Art Gallery NSW.

Methodology

The quantitative research methods used in the analysis of Little Manly Beach and Little Manly Point was a survey of the “intensity of use” conducted at 3pm on the 1st of January 2016. More generally Botany Bay and Sydney's Ocean beaches were excluded from the study. The Harbour being quintessentially Sydney whereas the bay and the ocean beaches speak to larger Australian coastal typologies, of which Melbourne and the Gold Coast respectively exemplify.

The impetus for this paper is the current foreshore development opportunities opening up at the “Bays Precinct” near central Sydney. Previously the NSW government has sold off state foreshore at

Barangaroo and Darling Harbour. Manly Council has attempted to sell off council foreshore at Little Manly Beach. In the case of Barangaroo high rise casinos are being justified with words like Iconic attributed to buildings, and at Little Manly Beach it's value is being undermined by a beach v. point equivalence of area argument. More generally there is a concern that our current political leaders are complacent about the importance of public foreshore to the economic and cultural life of Sydney. This is in contrast to our society building politicians of yesteryear who over 100 years intuitively recognized the need and protected our foreshore from private ownership. The rationale for this paper therefore is to attempt to make what was once intuitive, visible. An investigation of scholarly papers addressing the connection between foreshore, social activity and ownership was undertaken. There appeared to be a gap in the literature. This paper makes a start in addressing this gap.

Paper Structure

The structure of this paper is as follows. The harbour cove topography is defined. An historical analysis of the use of the harbour at First Contact given. Then a breakdown of the elements that constitute the features of a cove: elevation, slope, shape, morphology and material will be investigated against the example of an existing cove - Little Manly. The way these elements affect the use of Bays, Points and Fingers is then investigated, and from this knowledge the role these features play in the functioning of the city is uncovered. The Coves importance to the public realm and a socially well functioning Sydney is then highlighted.

Harbour Topography definitions

To understand the Harbour is to understand Sydney. Port Jackson is a heavily embayed drowned river valley. Ridgelines, spurs and gullies have become their harbour equivalents. Ridges are Fingers or Arms stretching out into the harbour. Spurs are Points or Headlands terminating in the harbour. Gullies are Bays (with or without Beaches) inviting the water in between these points and arms. The Cove here is defined as this set of topographical features; Point(Head), Fingers(Arms) and Bay (often with a Beach).

Historical - Port Jackson, Sydney Cove, Bennelong Point and Manly Beach

The importance of topography to settlement is an exercise in re-remembering the intuitive mental analysis Governor Phillip would have used in choosing Sydney Cove. First Contact history illustrates the importance of the particular topography of the harbour in the development of the Colony. From the original choice of the harbour to the choice of cove and then the impact of the social interactions at the points and on beaches.

Port Jackson, the Harbour was the choice of first settlement ahead of the Bay (Botany Bay). The topographical features of the harbour invited this choice, prioritizing the safety of ships for a colony that would depend on them. "...and had the satisfaction of finding the finest Harbour in World, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride in the most perfect security.."(Phillip 1789).

Within the Harbour the choice became which Cove. "The different Coves were examined with all possible expedition: I fixed on the one that had the best spring of Water, and in which the Ships can Anchor so close to the Shore, that at a very small expence, Quays may be made at which the largest Ships may unload." (Phillip 1789). Sydney Cove is close to a model of an idealized cove, it has a strongly defined parallel arms, prominent points with a shallow bay (beach) at its head. Each of these features was to be instrumental in the success of Sydney Cove as centre of first settlement. The sides allowed ships sheltered anchorage, the points provided lookouts and protection, while the bay allowed settlers and aboriginals easy personal access to the water where they could walk down to the beach to fish, launch canoes, etc.

Governor Phillip's first interaction with the natives of Port Jackson was with a community of aboriginals the "Kayeemy" that came out to him from a beach. A beach he would name 'Manly' cove based on their demeanour. It was also on this beach he met the first women of Port Jackson briefly changing the name of Manly cove to Eve's Cove (Champion 2004). It is the same beach from which Colbee and Bennelong are kidnapped and they escape back to, and the one that Governor Phillip is once again asked back to for a whale feast where a member of the tribe spears Phillip in the shoulder in front of Bennelong. This was possible payback for Bennelong's kidnapping (Clendinnen 2003). The harbour beach at Manly was obviously an important meeting place for this tribe if not their home base. Sydney Cove's bay is used in a similar manner.



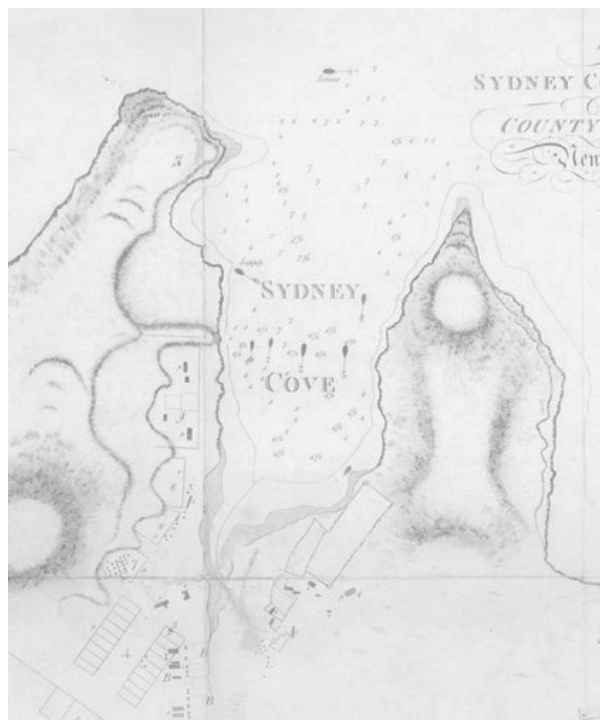
First interview with the Native Women at Port Jackson New South Wales, February 1788 by William Bradley, 1789. Watercolour, 230 x 165mm © Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

When Bennelong returns to Governor Phillip he is given a house at the end of the eastern point of Sydney Cove “Cattle Point” that he then renames “Bennelong Point” in Bennelong’s honour (Lawrence 1987) The point is used to honour Bennelong but it also literally isolates Bennelong from the activity of Sydney Cove and removes him from the Manly beach community he was a part of. Bennelong becomes an Iconic figure for the dilemma of an aboriginal trying to straddle two cultures (Dortins 2009). “Bennelong Point” becomes the site for Australia’s most Iconic building the Sydney Opera House projecting Australia to the world.

From the beginning of Colonial history the harbour’s topographical features are already determining where a settlement is established, where a community thrives and where the state celebrates (or controls ?) important assets of the colony. How do the features of a Cove determine social interactions ?

Cove: Little Manly case study

An analysis of the Cove and how its topographical features have underpinned the prominence of Icons and Community within Sydney Harbour is followed in a case study of Little Manly Cove. Little Manly Cove is not unlike a quarter scaled version of Sydney Cove. Sydney Cove is about 320m across to Little Manly Cove’s 160m, yet Little Manly faces south-west rather than Sydney Coves north. Both had streams at their head and deep water access. Little Manly Cove is thus similar to the idealized cove that Sydney Cove is, but with an intact beach for study. I have rotated and mirrored Little Manly below for ease of comparison.



Sketch of Sydney Cove, Port Jackson, in the County of Cumberland, New South Wales, July 1788. Captain John HUNTER, William DAWES



Map of the Village of Manly, County of Cumberland, New South Wales, July 1908. Metropolitan Land District NSW.

Coves: Positional and Scale Characteristics

The Cove “topography” defines a Cove “typology”, a typology that engenders certain activities and social dynamics. The harbours convoluted jagged edge generates a great diversity of different cove characteristics. These positional and scale traits can be assessed as: position, aspect and size. And in themselves create cultures and communities of different characteristics.

Position: The most important position of a cove is how far it is from the ocean. The closer to the ocean the cleaner and sandier it is. thus the more it is used as a beach. Little Manly Cove is close to the Ocean and thus its beach is well used. Bays near the city or on the other side of the harbour bridge like Blackwattle bay may have sandy beaches but concern about cleanliness stop them being used. The more the beach is used the more informal the social interaction.

Aspect: The degree of exposure to the sun, wind and currents. Sheltered traits: the potential to get out of the elements and thus linger. Beaches like Little Manly are used right into a summer evening as it faces the setting sun (south-west), while Sydney Cove faces north making it inviting and sunny the whole working day.

Scale: The harbour is fractal, larger features scale down to smaller ones, there are large points within bays and bays within points,etc. Scale dictates the intimacy. (Big) Manly Cove is a bay for a village and accommodates fireworks and ferries while the smaller more intimate Little Manly Cove next to it caters to children and kayaks.

Cove: Topographical Elements



Little Manly Cove Diagram. Source of Map data: © Google, © Aerometrex. Imagery date : 1/1/2014

The topographical features of the Cove: Point, Finger and Bay are defined by their shoreline edge, the relationship between water and land. These topographical features can be re-ducted back to their topographical elements. Elements of the harbour edge that have different quantifiable values depending on the feature. The topographical elements investigated here are: Elevation of the shoreline, Slope into the water, Plan shape of the topography, Morphological form of the topography and the Material at the harbour's edge. The points investigated above are calculus derived and were surveyed by the author.

Elements	Topographical Features of Cove Typology		
	Bay - Turning Minima	Finger - Inflexion Point	Point - Turning Maxima
Elevation: height 5m inland from HWM	Low - 1m high. Relatively close to water level.	High. LMF - 5.5m, MF - 4m. Elevated position over the water.	High. LMP - 5.5m, MP - 12m. Elevated position over the water.
Slope: deg. steepest with in HWM 5m	Shallow. 13 deg., allows easy access into the harbour	Steep: 90 deg., access, difficult to enter the water.	Steep: 90 deg., access, not easy to enter the water.
Shape: The plan shape of the harbour's edge	Concave. The land hugs the water. The focus point is on the water, surveyable over a 90deg. arc from the shore. As the <i>bay</i> brings the water furthest inland it is surrounded by land, thus well connected, and a natural destination. Paths run across a <i>bay</i> .	Straight. Linear edge that runs parallel to the water. There is no focal point. View preference over the water or along the edge, perpendicular to each other. The water is surveyable over a 180deg. arc from the shore. Paths run along a <i>finger</i> , connecting <i>bays</i> to <i>points</i> .	Convex. The water hugs the land; there is no single focus, the focus is the water through a 270deg arc. Paths run to a <i>point</i> . A <i>point</i> is isolated from the mainland.
Morphology: The contoured form of the surrounding topography	Gully. A bay has an amphitheatre shape that reinforces the focus on the water in the vertical dimension, in the same way the concave shape does in the horizontal; correspondingly a bay has great	Ridge. Defined by a ridge running parallel to the water. Prioritizes movement along the edge (the traverse) rather than across it (the transect). From the edge the land and water are equally weighted in the landscape.	Spur. The edge of a ridge slopes/drops down to the water. The water dominates the surrounding landscape. The point is a natural lookout or stage into the water. The approach is distant and visible drawing you along the ridge then opening up with distant views,

	visual connection back to the surrounding areas. Being a gully, the immediate neighbourhood is defined by the surrounding ridge. The water appears suddenly on approach when the ridge is breached. Land dominates the landscape yet the water remains the focus.		strong sense of open space.
Material: The texture/ material of the harbour edge	Sand. Soft under foot. Bay is defined by sand (beach), and the detritus that washes up, seaweed, driftwood, plastic etc.	Stone. The finger edge is made of sandstone, defined by cliffs and rock pools.	Stone. The point is made of sandstone, defined by large boulders and cliffs.
Morphology: The contoured form of the surrounding topography	Gully. A bay has an amphitheatre shape that reinforces the focus on the water in the vertical dimension, in the same way the concave shape does in the horizontal; correspondingly a bay has great visual connection back to the surrounding areas. Being a gully, the immediate neighbourhood is defined by the surrounding ridge. The water appears suddenly on approach when the ridge is breached. Land dominates the landscape yet the water remains the focus.	Ridge. Defined by a ridge running parallel to the water. Prioritizes movement along the edge (the traverse) rather than across it (the transect). From the edge the land and water are equally weighted in the landscape.	Spur. The edge of a ridge slopes/drops down to the water. The water dominates the surrounding landscape. The point is a natural lookout or stage into the water. The approach is distant and visible drawing you along the ridge then opening up with distant views, strong sense of open space.

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Why do the Points and the Bays act differently and how are their roles used differently in the construct of the city ?

Bay: The Community maker

So why does the bay beach work so well as a public space, are bays the ideal environment for the creation of neighbourhood and community? Bay (Beach) as community maker. The bay is close to an 'ideal' neighbourhood space. The special physical qualities of bays invite people to linger, play and interact - requirements for creating community space. On top of that residents are likely to engage in physical activity in a very informal way, adding egalitarian and health aspects to that communal space (as well as certain amount of hedonism).



Little Manly Beach.. Imagery date : 1/1/2016. Source: Saul Deane.

A communal space that supports "optional and social activities" (Gehl 2001) with a breadth of activities is essential to creating "neighbourhoods" (Hester and Randolph 1976) and a strong sense of local "genus loci" or local identity (Dalby and Mackenzie, 1997). Jan Gehl highlights 'activities in it' and the 'quality' of those spaces. What are the morphological and material qualities of the bay that lend itself to creating great community spaces?

Elevation:

The citizen is at sea level; the invitation to immerse in the water is thus an open and tempting invitation. The potential to bathe and swim in water allows for a very different interaction with the natural environment than can be achieved on land (White 2008). Closeness to water and immersion

changes formality; the closer to the water the more we disrobe, the greater the degree of disrobement, the greater the informality, class and social status are literally stripped away. The bay has an inherently “egalitarian” forum in its engagement with the public.

Slope:

Bays have a wide, shallow sloped access into the water. This easy, broad and safe access supports a wide active engagement with the water.

1. Easy access means ease of entry, inviting multiple visits.
2. Broad access means that a range of water activities are supported: swimmers, boats, windsurfers, kayaks, divers etc.
3. Safe access means the whole age spectrum of the community can participate from children to seniors.

Most of these activities are physically engaging activities requiring more than one person and some co-ordination to engage in, they are inherently social activities. A bay and its activities are an ideal Whyte social triangulation feature (Whyte 1980), providing natural prompts for strangers to talk to each other, thereby creating shared stories in shared spaces and thus communal relationships.

Shape:

Bays are concave shaped and thus internally focused on the water. From anywhere in the bay you can see the water and everyone around it immediately, thus quickly identifying activities and previous acquaintances, and increasing the chances of engaging in unplanned meetings and activities. (Gehl 2001)

Bays reach deep inland and are unusual in being a destination with a transverse path. A destination, because it is the closest body of water to most people inland. A path, because it's a pinch point for the most direct access to somewhere else. The bay is a natural obstacle to land based travel concentrating traffic around it. A bay is thus a desirable destination with high passing traffic.

Morphology:

Bays are gullies, sheltered from the wind and in the water from the currents, encouraging citizens to relax and linger within a bay out of the elements. The gully is shaped like a natural amphitheatre with high visibility into the surrounding neighbourhood extending its usage limit (Bangs and Mahler 1970) and generating a focus for that neighbourhood, a requirement for successful neighbourhood spaces (Hester and Randolph 1976). The amphitheatre form increases natural surveillance of the bay, making them safe social spaces and increasing their use by women and families.

Material:

Bays are made of sand and collect flotsam. Sand as a groundcover is hard to move across quickly, moulds to the body and can be engaged actively in play, it is also cleansed daily by the saltwater and sun. All these factors require you to slow down and invite you to linger. The special quality of sand itself is used to invigorate public spaces in European squares with the introduction of artificial beaches. (Kim 2015).

Bays are not insular or “local” places, they are the interaction points for the local community with the outside. Manly Beach was the first meeting point between the harbour aboriginals and British soldiers, but when Governor Phillip later returned and kidnapped 2 random aboriginals from the same beach, they were not even from the local tribe, Colbee was Cadigal from the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney (Smith 2008) and Bennelong was Wangal from Homebush Bay near Parramatta (Smith 2013) the bay has never been insular. Today if you were to take 2 random people from the shores of Little Manly Beach the chances of them being local would be just as slim.

A bay is open to those of all ages to engage in a diverse variety of passive and active activities in a very informal, safe and relaxed atmosphere. The physical characteristics of an ideal communal space. Important to the social health of the local and regional communities. Little Manly beach fits this type with people of all ages staying for much longer than 5 minutes often in couples or large family groups engaging in water/sand activities intermittently.

Point: The City maker

The Point is a complementary feature to the bay. While the bay’s prominence is in its relationship to the surrounding land, the Point’s prominence is in its relationship to the surrounding water. The Point plays on the larger stage of the harbour. Points are at once exposed but isolated, and it is from those characteristics that its roles within Sydney harbour is defined. What are the elements of the Point that lend itself to creating great city spaces.



Little Manly Point. Imagery date : 1/1/2016. Source: Saul Deane.

Elevation:

Points provide elevated views of the surrounding water, allowing easy surveillance for people coming to view the harbour and in particular to see harbour celebrations: North and South Head for the Sydney to Hobart races, Blues Point and Barangaroo for the New Year's Eve fireworks and Bennelong and Dawes Point for Australia Day activities, etc. It is also the reason they have

historically been used as military lookouts, being chosen as forts (Dawes Point), gunneries (Bradleys and Middle Head) and Artillery bases (North Head).

Slope:

Points are isolated from the water, not visually but in terms of accessibility. Point slopes are steep and are often cliffs, so direct personal water activities are curtailed.

Shape:

Points jut out into the water, becoming not just destinations to view the harbour but isolated point of land. A Points isolation means they attract no passing traffic and are unlikely to be places to accidentally meet someone thus attractive to the romantic and morbid, valued spots for romantic dates (Lady Macquarie's Chair) and perversely suicide attempts (the Gap) and occasionally murder (North Head).

Morphology:

Points are exposed, being at the end of spur surrounded by water. Conversely from the water points become prominent and the bays disappear and become difficult to get to. The wind, waves and currents are strongest at Points, thus there is an element of danger that is exhilarating in short bursts but tiring over longer periods. This exposure limits the time people linger on points. The focus of an observer at a point is outwards and diffused into the harbour, from the harbour however a point is a singular focus. This visual exposure makes them ideal for promoting state institutions: cultural (Opera House - Bennelong point), state power (Admiralty House - Kirribilli point), state progress (Harbour Bridge - Dawes and Milsons point) or safety (Greenway's Lighthouse -South Head).

Material:

Points are stone - cliffs, large boulders and now concrete. The ground cover does not encourage reclining.

A Point plays a role in the larger context of the Harbour and thus the city and necessarily needs to be analysed at the city scale. An interesting note about Points is that most of them remain in public hands. A Points isolation from community activity and its importance in projecting the state into the city's harbour plaza often ensures they end up in public ownership.

At the neighbourhood level points are ironically both where the community comes to participate in metropolis events and celebrations but also for privacy. Little Manly Point fits the type, it is most used when the Sydney to Hobart yacht race starts, yet is the most private part of Little Manly Cove indeed the most intimate cuddle in the survey was of a couple on the point (also the more dangerous after dark), right on the point no one stayed for much longer than 5 minutes after taking in the view due to its exposure to the wind and sun.

Cove: Activity

From the above spatial type analysis we could presume that each topographical feature enables, different intensities of use, for different social activities. A survey of Little Manly Beach, Finger and Point taken at 3pm on January the 1st 2016 bears this out. Videos and Photos were taken at this point in time, and activity and numbers counted from this documentation. January the 1st 2016 was 26C with clear skies. The date was chosen because it is an annual summer holiday with a set date, but not a day of great celebrations, it is also a day that appears busier than a summer work day but not as busy as a summer weekend.. While Manly Point west of Little Manly Point has greater views of the Heads and Spring Cove, it was not surveyed as they have been sterilized of public activity by private ownership.



Little Manly Beach. Source of Map Data: © Land and Property Information NSW, © Aerometrex. Imagery date : 1/1/2014

The highlighted area is 7139 m². The Harbour edge is 160m long. This is the area surveyed on the 1st of January 2016 at 3pm. There were 392 people using the beach. 321 people were in the yellow area: beach and foreshore (232 on the sand, 89 on the grass), and 71 in the water (not highlighted in yellow but only accessible from the beach). The demographic appeared to incorporate all ages from "0" to "80", with an even gender split. Activities spotted within the beach were: Picnicking, Reading,

Viewing, "Cafeing", Sunbathing, Kayaking, Stand up Boarding, Swimming, Diving, Bathing, Inflatable playing, ball throwing, sand castle building, drinking, walking and chatting.



Little Manly Point. Source of Map data: © Land and Property Information NSW, © Aerometrex. Imagery date : 1/1/2014

The highlighted area above is 7507 m². The Harbour edge is 264m long. It is the area surveyed for use on the 1st of January 2016 at 3pm. There were 46 people using the point. 27 people were sitting within 2m of the edge fishing and 19 people were picnicking, lying on the grass or walking around the point. The demographic appeared to be mainly young adults to middle aged, more men than women.

Though both places are roughly the same size, Little Manly Beach is used about 9 times more intensively than Little Manly Point. At both places the large majority of people were actively engaging with the water. At Little Manly Beach out of 392 people, the only people not in swimming costumes were about 10 people in the cafe and 20 people on the grassed foreshore near Stuart St. At Little Manly Point no one looked like they were going to swim, but the majority of them 26 were dangling a fishing line into the water.

The ease of access to the water's edge increased the use of the harbour foreshore. In both cases the closer one got to the harbour's edge in plan or sea level in elevation the greater the "intensity of use" of the foreshore.

Points and Bays in a Harbour civic plaza

In Sydney the great public realm is the harbour. Public space in the literature is normally defined within a strict urban context, the space between buildings (Gehl 2001), a structure created by streets where real life happens (Kahn 1971), with the great public realms of plazas and squares giving focus to a city. But the harbour is where Sydney goes to celebrate as a metropolis. The harbour is flatter and larger than any land plaza. Sydney's city spectacles occur on the harbour: New Year - Fireworks, Boxing Day - yacht races, Australia Day - harbour performances, Vivid etc. Historically it has been the harbour too that has been the first point of introduction to the outside world as visitors and immigrants sailed into Sydney. Because citizens can't actually walk through this plaza the foreshore at the Harbour's edge becomes the necessary publically occupiable component needed for it to function as a city plaza.

Sydney's interaction with the harbour as civic plaza relies on access to its foreshore to observe, celebrate and enter, without which the harbour as civic space dies. Kohn's definition of a public space has three core dimensions: 'ownership', 'accessibility' and 'a place that facilitates social encounters and interactions.' (Kohn 2004) while Nemeth & Schmidt identifies 'ownership', 'management' and 'use/users' (Nemeth & Schmidt 2010). Sydney Harbour is an unusual plaza, as no physical interactions occur within it; it's important public space is the edge. The degree to which this space is used by the public to engage with the harbour as observers, travellers or participants is dependent on the foreshores public accessibility. Foreshore accessibility depends on:

- Depth of open foreshore: greater the depth, greater the public engagement
- Accessibility: ease of greater Sydney access and ease of local use.
- Ownership: is the foreshore in public or private ownership

Bays are the connective tissue of community. In a well-functioning communal bay no one lives on the foreshore but back from it, in the surrounding ridges, they can only act as the ideal community gathering points if they are public and accessible. All citizens need to be able to occupy foreshore space, for an unlimited time, generating low-intensity contact (Gehl 2001) the genesis for a vibrant community. Where bays have lost their public foreshores they no longer exist as communal spaces, the bay the ideal community maker has been sterilized, even their names become lost to the general public. Few Sydney residents will recognize the names of Blackburn Cove, Felix Bay or Kutti Beach, Sydney Harbour bays without public foreshores.

Conclusion



Sydney Cove. Source: Destination NSW

The Opera house and Harbour Bridge are the gatekeepers to the city, unbuildable without the harbour points from which they spring, an iconic power derived from Sydney Harbour great civic plaza. A harbour that can both promote and reveal while simultaneously segregating and concealing. The Cove is the harbours defining typology. Coves with Bays that generate community and internal identity and Points that projects the City's public face internationally and provides a forum for civic engagement. No other Australian city is as fundamentally defined by its topography as Sydney.

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