

Re-Development and Lost Industrial History: Darling Harbour of Sydney

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Abstract : Urban waterfront re-development is a well-established phenomenon internationally since 1960s. In cities throughout the world, old industrial waterfront land is being redeveloped into luxury housing, offices, tourist attractions, cultural amenities and shopping centres. These developments are intended to attract high-income residents, tourists and investors to the city. As urban waterfronts are iconic places for the cities and catalyst for further development. They are often referred as flagship project. In Sydney, the re-development of industrial waterfront has been exposed since 1980s with Darling Harbour Project. Darling Harbour waterfront used to be the main arrival and landing place for commercial and industrial shipping until 1970s. Its urban development has continued since the establishment of the city. It was developed as a major industrial and goods-handling precinct in 1812. This use was continued by the mid-1970s. After becoming a redundant industrial waterfront, the area was ripe for re-development in 1984. Darling Harbour is now one of the world's fascinating waterfront leisure and entertainment destinations and its transformation has been considered as a success story. It is a contradictory statement for this paper. Data collection was carried out using an extensive archival document analysis. The data was obtained from Australian Institute of Architects, City of Sydney Council Archive, Parramatta Heritage Office, Historic Houses Trust, National Trust, and University of Sydney libraries, State Archive, State Library and Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority Archives. Public documents, primarily newspaper articles and design plans, were analysed to identify possible differences in motives and to determine the process of implementation of the waterfront redevelopments. It was also important to obtain historical photographs and descriptions to understand how the waterfront had been altered. Sites maps in different time periods have been identified to understand what kind of changes happened on the urban landscape and how the developments affected areas. Newspaper articles and editorials have been examined in order to discover what aspects of the projects reflected the history and heritage. The thematic analysis of the archival data helped determine Darling Harbour is a historically important place as it had represented a focal point for Sydney's industrial growth and the cradle of industrial development in European Australia. It has been found that the development area was designated in order to be transformed to a place for tourist, education, recreational, entertainment, cultural and commercial activities and as a result little evidence remained of its industrial past. This paper aims to discuss the industrial significance of Darling Harbour and to explain the changes on its industrial landscape. What is absent now is the layer of its history that creates the layers of meaning to the place so its historic industrial identity is effectively lost.

Keywords : historical significance, industrial heritage, industrial waterfront, re-development

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