

Negotiating green built environment at the margins

Abstract

The *Creative margins* described in this paper were manifested in the conceptual systems of people engaged in public discussion of the environmental and social appropriateness of a property development concept known as North Port Quay in Fremantle, Western Australia. The concept was launched publicly in May 2008 by a consortium of property developers claiming that North Port Quay would revolutionize environmentally sustainable living and achieve the highest possible rating for environmental sustainability. The consortium's legitimization strategy relied on North Port Quay meaning green urbanism in the minds of people making representations in the public domain. An analysis of newspaper texts describes how this strategy failed when the language deployed by North Port Quay's backers in legitimizing the project encountered a diverse variety of languages in the community of Fremantle.

Key words

Discourse, meaning, Bakhtin, green, built environment

Public discussion of a property development's environmental impact may determine its legitimacy and therefore its realization despite the recent meteoric rise of institutions certifying the greenness of future buildings. This paper examines *creative margins* occurring in the conceptual systems of people, indicated through their public representations about the environmental impact of a proposed property development. The examination is conducted on a corpus of texts about the environmental appropriateness of North Port Quay in Fremantle, Western Australia. This paper describes the operation of *creative margins* in language, as perceived by Mikhail Bakhtin, and touches on the visibility of these margins in academic discourses about environmental risk and ecological modernization. The paper describes how *creative margins* are indicated between texts about the environmental appropriateness of North Port Quay.

Creative margins in language

Mikhail Bakhtin spent much of his academic life figuring out the production of *creative margins* particularly in relation to literature (Morson and Emerson 1990, 414). Bakhtin (1981, 276) focussed on describing the creative process within which an utterance, produced at a particular spatial-temporal moment, was understood against a background of other utterances (each with their own unique set of dialogic threads) loaded with contradictory opinions and perspectives, complicating the path of any word towards its object. Bakhtin indicated that *creative margins* occurred in the mind of the sensing subject (the listener) when incoming words encountered and were assimilated into the mix of languages already present. This assimilation process (which we understand here to be a *creative margin*) in the mind of the listening subject cannot be analysed until the subject makes a subsequent utterance, which can be compared to prior utterances around the subject.

A word's relationship with an object is extremely complex. In Bakhtin's view, all objects were open to dispute and wrapped in qualifications. An object was highlighted from one side by a speaker while dimmed from other sides by multi-voiced social opinion. Bakhtin (1981, 276) used the metaphor of a word being directed as a ray of light towards an object breaking up into spectral dispersion in 'an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgements and accents through which the ray passes on its way toward the object'. A word harmonized with some elements in this atmosphere and created dissonance with others because words were not neutral. Each word carried its past social contexts: its use in conversations of commerce, of family, of friends, etc.. Speakers appropriated words, adapting them to their own expressive intention, from other contexts in which they had served other people's intentions. A speaker's appropriation of words could fail in discourse because language was not a neutral medium passing 'easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions' (1981, 294). Rather, words were overpopulated with the intentions of others and could sound alien in the voice of their latest speaker. Discourse was complicated further by a speaker's intention of using words in conversation in anticipation of a future response or answer. Speakers attempted to get readings on their own words by breaking through to the alien conceptual horizon of listeners and constructing their utterances on alien territory in which words were assimilated into listeners' conceptual systems. This dialogic interaction between the alien world views of speakers and listeners was the space in which words and languages were formed in *creative margins*. Bakhtin argued that centripetal and centrifugal forces of language operated within this space. Centripetal forces served to move verbal-ideological

practice towards a unitary language working at every moment against centrifugal forces of stratified languages and social *heteroglossia*; the polyphony present within any instance of linguistic activity (Mikula 2008, 87). Bakhtin (1981, 291-292) argued that centripetal forces working towards a particular unitary language existed alongside centripetal forces unifying other social languages, each embodying a unique view of the world: the unitary language of an ethnic group, a trade group, an elite, a profession, a religion, an age group, etc.. Each language was a specific world view, a specific form for conceptualizing the world in words, characterized by its own 'objects, meanings and values'. Amid these stratified languages, the centripetal forces unifying any language stratum operated alongside centrifugal forces pulling apart or resisting its unification. This process of language strata encountering one another, subject to centripetal and centrifugal forces, occurred in listeners' minds. Put eloquently by Frow (1995, 70), utterances or texts had no intrinsic meaning in themselves but were the 'locus of struggle in which the business of belief is negotiated by readers choosing textual sense on the basis of their worldly experience'.

Hajer (1995, 56-57) argued that unification of a language stratum depended upon the routine cognitive commitment of speakers using specific language and imagery consistently. By consistently using word-image assemblies, speakers enabled the production of simplified meanings for complex objects in the minds of listeners. The process made facts seem hard and further discourse about an object's truth apparently redundant. However, the reproduction of simplified meaning could be disrupted (by what we understand here to be centrifugal forces) in a dialogic of expressions in different language strata around an object, thereby revealing its complexity. As an object's complexity is revealed, alternative word assemblies about it can be articulated by speakers. An opportunity for reproducing an alternative word assembly is created which may advance different world views and interests.

Beck (2000, 221) argued that the production of hard facts in actor-networks had to be accounted for in addressing the ecological risks of industrialization. Latour (2004, 22) argued that dealing with these risks required an epistemological analysis of the discursive work of scientists, and that scientific certainty was in the process of being undermined because objects were no longer being contained in the well-organized boundaries of modernist thought. The simplified meaning of asbestos, for instance, has been disrupted over several decades; changing from an inert, effective, profitable object to an object of illness, scandal, legal action and risk. Latour seemed to suggest that centripetal forces unifying scientific

language were being appropriately overwhelmed by centrifugal forces in *creative margins* through encounters with other languages. In the following section, I focus on *creative margins* in the production and disruption of claims in the public sphere about the environmental appropriateness of North Port Quay in Fremantle, Western Australia.

Public representations of North Port Quay

Proponents positioned the North Port Quay property-development concept as a project in environmental sustainability. This was articulated clearly on North Port Quay's homepage:

Welcome to **North Port Quay**, an exciting development concept that will revolutionise environmentally sustainable living in Western Australia.

At a time when the world is moving towards a greener future, **North Port Quay** is looking to set the standard by aiming to achieve the highest possible rating for environmental sustainability. (*Welcome!* n.d.)

Throughout public relations campaigns of 2008 and 2009, the consortium proposing the property development (to be built over water off the North Head of the Fremantle port) attempted to associate environmental sustainability with the development in the minds of its target audience through advertising and public relations processes. These processes relied on centripetal forces unifying the particular stratum of ecological modernist language used by the consortium which included word assemblies such as a 'greener future' and 'highest possible rating for environmental sustainability'. These phrases, used commonly in institutional discourses about future property developments by organizations such as the Green Building Council Australia, support the perspectives and interests of sophisticated property developers and their consultants. Such language frames sustainability discourses as discussions of the performance of future buildings rather than the environmental impact of constructing such buildings (Kerr 2008, 12). The consortium deployed this type of language to legitimize the development – which would require substantial changes in urban planning regulation – through the stabilisation of a publicly accepted fact that North Port Quay would be a green built environment. The attempted production of this publicly accepted fact and its disruption would occur through *creative margins*, indicated in texts published in Fremantle's weekly newspapers, the *Fremantle Herald* and the *Fremantle Gazette*.

From May 2008 to June 2009 these newspapers published 136 articles, advertisements, opinion pieces, cartoons and letters containing at least one ecological risk and mention of

North Port Quay (see Figure 1). The ecological risks were explicit such as ‘environmental damage’ and ‘climate change’. They were also implied in the potential non-realization of articulated ideals like ‘sustainable development’, a solution for our planet’s limited capacity in providing natural resources and absorbing pollution. The frequency of ecological risks in these newspaper texts clustered around 3 major events: the launch of North Port Quay in late May 2008, the state election in early September 2008 and the Fremantle by-election in mid May 2009. There was a smaller cluster in December 2008/January 2009, partly caused by the articles reflecting on the major news events of 2008.

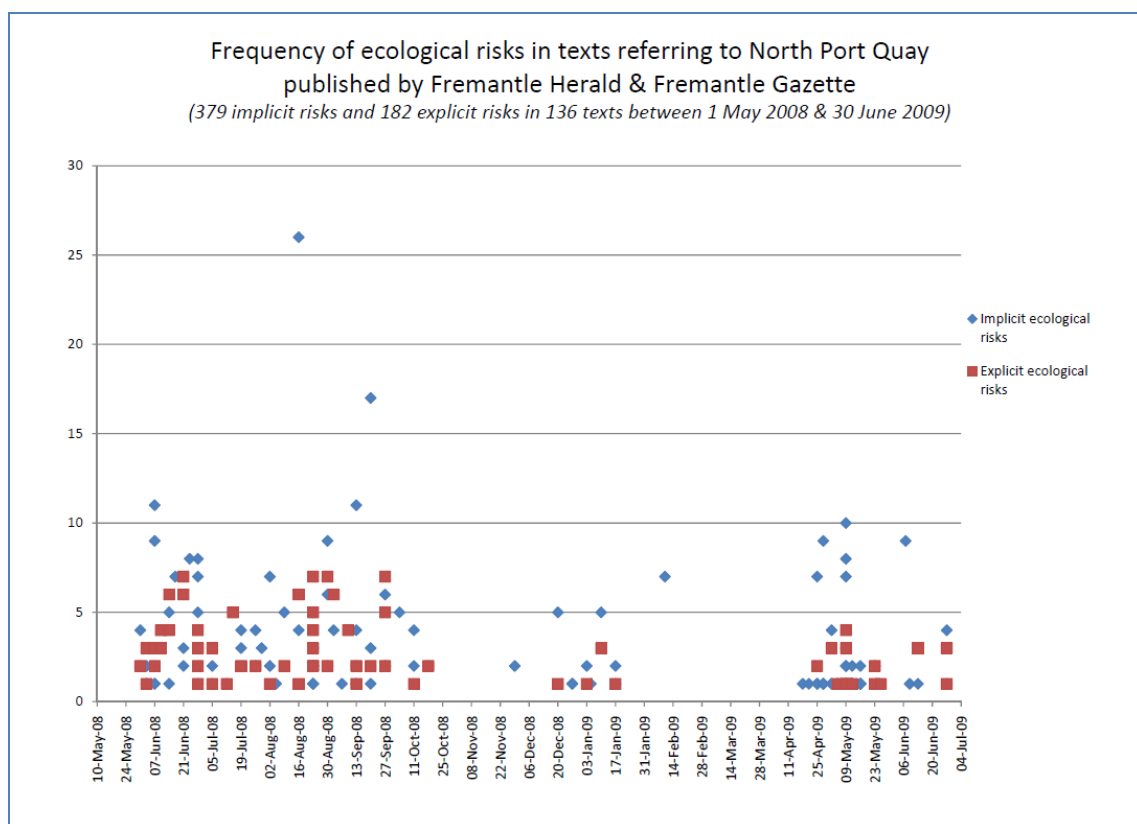


Figure 1: Frequency of ecological risks in newspaper texts about North Port Quay.

Bhaktin (1981) wrote that journalism was a rhetorical genre, tending towards dialectic in unitary language rather than a dialogic of *heteroglossia* as would be encountered in typical daily life. This may be true for an individual newspaper article, but less so for a collection of newspapers with their mix of languages across articles, advertisements, opinion pieces, cartoons and letters. In a collection of newspapers, we can encounter – albeit limited – *heteroglossia* produced by editors, journalists, photographers, contributors, cartoonists, publishers, sponsors and readers; all with their own world views however constrained. The

constraint for some, but also agency for others, is produced through hierarchies of credibility (Ericson, Baranek, and Chan 1987, 7) in determining who can speak as a credible news source or be published as a letter writer; and through the application of financial capital resources for advertising, procurement of expertise and for creating public relations events. Of the 122 people or institutions identified among the first five sources in any of the newspaper texts, the newspapers' most frequent voice (see Figure 2) was the North Port Quay consortium (NPQ company) due to frequent advertising and well-organized public relations events; followed by Adele Carles, an established news source for community-activism against developers building on Fremantle's beaches and later the Greens candidate for the seat of Fremantle; followed by Peter Tagliafferi, the Mayor of Fremantle and later the Labour candidate for the seat of Fremantle; and Peter Newman, Professor of the Fremantle-based Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute.

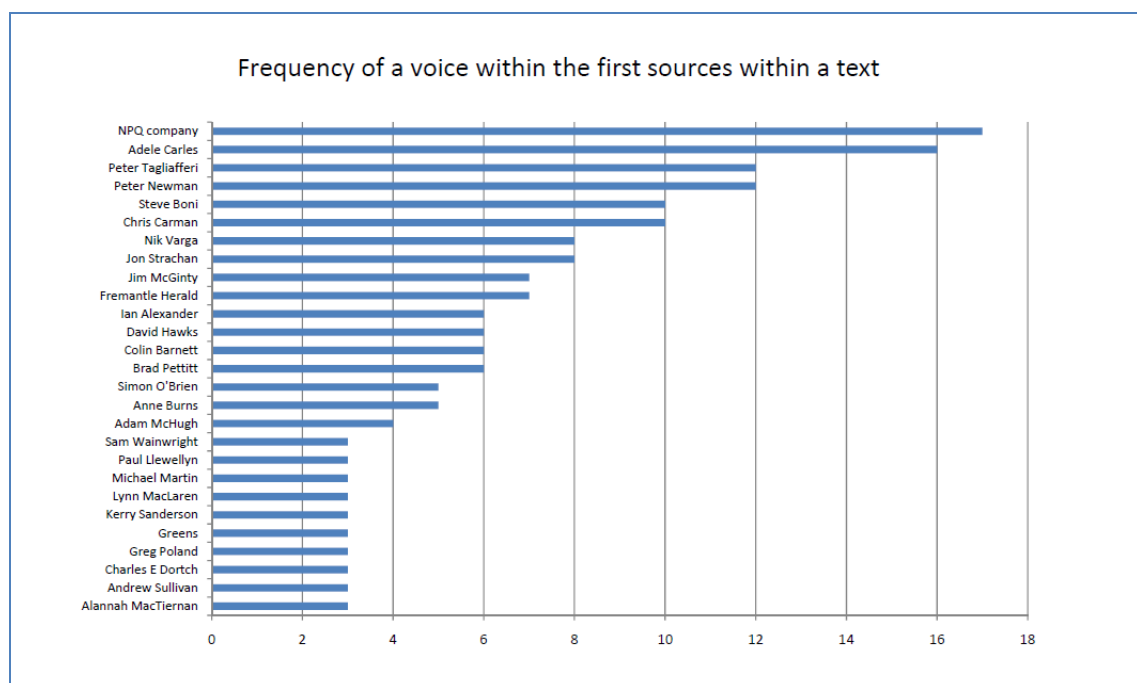


Figure 2: Foremost sources in the newspaper texts.

Green city's rise, fall and repair

The North Port Quay issue entered the press in late May 2008 largely because of the consortium's own initiative in officially launching and then advertising the project with a view to establishing its environmental credentials and to being able to represent a legitimate amount of public support for the project. Obtaining development approval for the project would be a challenge because of its occupation of 345 hectares of public sea bed and because

of recent conflicts between developers of large coastal projects and affected communities in Fremantle. The consortium took the public relations offensive at the concept's launch with the support of Professor Newman in defining the related environmental problem as being about carbon emissions in the operation of future built environments. Control of the environmental-problem definition from the outset would be in the consortium's interest so that it could put forward effectively its green built environment solution in the form of North Port Quay. As Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1987, 56-57) argued, 'control over problem definition and solution is a primary vehicle for assertion of claims to authority'.

The consortium was apparently successful in the first week of the project launch. Page one of the *Fremantle Herald* on 31 May 2008 (Figure 3) represented a political storm raging over the scale and fashion of the 'Dubai-style development' protected by 3.5 kilometres of 'sea walls designed to withstand global warming sea surges'. However, the consortium appeared to have control – mediated through Professor Newman – in representing the environmental problem as carbon emissions and its solution as North Port Quay. The first paragraph of the *Herald*'s front-page article, entitled 'Green city an Oz first' is a good example:

FREMANTLE sustainability expert Peter Newman says the North Port Quay plan, the first carbon-neutral development in Australia, would be a virtual power station.

Professor Newman was the only source for this article and his position as expert in claiming that North Port Quay would be a green built environment is without question. Centripetal forces contained a particular stratum of ecological modernist language in the journalist's production of this text in which a 'green city' is a carbon-neutral city. In this instance of language-stratum unity, carbon emission is the project's only environmental issue.



Figure 3: Page 1 of Fremantle Herald on 31 May 2008

A week later, however, the centrifugal forces of this ecological modernist language encountering *heteroglot* local community world views became apparent in the public sphere; disrupting the unity of language applied by the consortium and the project's green credentials. Letters to the editor published in the *Herald* on 7 June 2009 (Figure 4) reveal a range of languages. The first letter on page 4, entitled 'Energy costs', reveals an alternative ecological modernist language stratum focusing on emissions from a product's manufacture rather than just net emissions from its use. The letter argues that the construction costs of building, infilling of sea and construction of sea walls would make a positive energy return on this "Dubai-style" development light years away. The letter asked Peter Newman to make his calculations of the concept's carbon neutrality public, and asked whether buildings exposed to the harsh environment of the Indian Ocean could be sustainable. The letter ended in moral language, arguing that it was a crime against nature to build over the sea when so much land was available. The language in the next letter, 'Promote population policy', tended towards environmental and social activism in associating North Port Quay with a series of

public representations about damage caused by developers of large projects like the nearby Port Coogee:

Professor Newman should get real and promote a sustainable population-limit policy and start protecting the natural environment from cashed-up private developers and their friends.

Also on the same page, the letter 'No fake islands for Fremantle' was written in a more populist local language: 'We have one planet, one Australian coastline. Go away!!!' Above this letter, the *Herald's* cartoon, 'Rooshead Project' was a populist parody in the perceived language of the North Port Quay consortium ('www.bigseabucks.com'): 'A wonderful concept in money-making with eco aspects tacked on to get the locals on side'. The letters continued on page 6. 'Whale of a time', written in a spiritual language, described the value of natural encounters at the Rous Head site which the consortium was planning to destroy. Another letter on this page, 'Wind power?' applied ecological modernist language in mentioning global warming and petroleum scarcity, and then revealed North Port Quay's ecological modernist failure by asking why slips for power boats were a prominent feature in the project plan. The last letter on page 6 'Green WDV' argues against the project by joining its proponents' ecological modernist language stratum with a stratum similar to that used in the first letter on page 4, which focuses on problems with the project's manufacture:

We need sustainable and visionary development, but building onto the seabed cannot be efficient or sustainable. Why can't these principles be carried into developments proposed for urban in-fill areas or the new developments along the freeway?



Figure 4: Pages 4 & 6 of *Fremantle Herald* on 7 June 2008

The consortium attempted to counter representations of community resistance in the public sphere and reconstruct its case for the alien conceptual horizon of listeners through its advertising and public relations programs. The advertisement on page 7 of the *Herald* on June 14 deployed patriotic language apparently raising Western Australia's interest above Fremantle community concern: 'Why can't Western Australia lead the world in sustainable development?' The advertisement's images included underwater marine life suggesting healthy ecology; solar panels and wind turbines suggesting green technologies; a surfer suggesting Fremantle's coastal amenity; a woman with a baby on the beach suggesting a healthy environment for future generations; the motor scooter suggesting a fun coastal, urban lifestyle. The bottom section of the advertisement contains an aerial rendering of the concept and a sentence associating it with 'carbon free', a relatively little known assembly of wordsⁱ which could provide the consortium an opportunity for producing routine cognitive commitment to new meaning for its target audience:

North Port Quay would create an entirely new, environmentally sustainable coastal development and could become the world's first carbon free development.



Figure 5: Page 7 of *Fremantle Herald* on 14 June 2008

Public interest in North Port Quay, as represented in the local newspapers, increased in the lead-up to the state election on 6 September 2008. Peter Newman's opinion piece, 'Wealth,

purity and sustainability: A personal journey’, published on page 6 of the Herald on 16 August helped reinvigorate public discourse of North Port Quay’s relation to ecological threats. Professor Newman’s message to the Fremantle community was don’t be too concerned, ‘all aspects of this North Port Quay project will be subject to planning and environmental assessment’. He attempted to trivialize the problem of sea-bed development arguing that ‘every site for major development is always highly contested by its local community’:

They chose a site that hasn’t been pristine ocean for 100 years, after C.Y. O’Connor’s great engineering carved out the harbour. The project is not pure and perfect, but it is a great opportunity for significant demonstration of the carbon-constrained future.

Professor Newman’s opinion piece contained an interesting *creative margin* in constructing a case for North Port Quay through the switch from scientific to managerial language when representation of North Port Quay met representations of global capital’s dominance of resources:

Arguments about what governments should do about peak oil and climate change has come down to how they can implement change without upsetting business. There’s plenty of community awareness about the issues, but they seem caught in the act of balancing and can’t lead unless they feel business follows.

It’s why I believe business leadership on sustainability is so important. If companies can demonstrate how to be carbon-free, especially oil-free, then markets will take over and drag governments with them. Bold sustainability needs to be demonstrated by business before governments can be bold.

The piece ended with an appeal to pragmatism in confessional language:

As soon as we get up in the morning and flick a switch or drive or even take the train, we are part of a city that is not ultimately sustainable. None of us can claim too much purity when it comes to sustainability. We have to live with imperfection and seek a better world.



Figure 6: Page 6 of *Fremantle Herald* on 16 August 2008

Letters to the *Herald* on 23 August demonstrated how centrifugal forces of language had undermined Professor Newman's message, that planning and assessment processes would take care of any of North Port Quay's potential environmental problems, by calling into question the credibility of the expert speaker. A letter on page 4, entitled 'Just no faith!', articulated this clearly:

The problem is that we who live and love Fremantle have no faith that the developers, architects and state politicians will turn these (*carbon neutral city* – my italics) ideas into reality.

The other letters (which do not refer to North Port Quay) on page 4, provided a sense of the dialogic in community discourse of local problems acting through centrifugal forces to undermine Professor Newman's credibility as an expert as well as his argument for North Port Quay, with its overt faith in the market as a force for social good. The letter 'Big losers?' referred to nearby Melville council losing up to \$21 million worth of investments placed through multinational expert organizations. The letter 'Heavy cost!' condemned the state government for allowing lead carbonate to be transported through Fremantle despite failing to have the mining company, Magellan Metals, clean up its lead carbonate contamination in Esperance. Besides arguing against economic gain over community health, the letter asked readers to exercise caution around all expert speakers:

DR John Yeates, in his bid to convey Magellan Metals as a socially responsible corporate citizen, flaunts his 'Dr' salutation. However, when I wrote to him some

time ago to ask in what field his doctorate was granted, and from which university the degree was obtained, he declined to provide any details.

It is important information because a medical doctor would know the health implications of lead carbonate, whereas a spin doctor might not. A medical doctor would know that the latest research shows that there is no safe level of lead in children! A spin doctor would cling to outmoded but suitable research findings.



Figure 6: Page 4 of *Fremantle Herald* on 23 August 2008

During the state election campaign, North Port Quay was represented as a threat to the environment. The advertisements on pages 15 & 16 of the *Herald* on 30 August demonstrate how centripetal forces unified community activist language about North Port Quay's threat to local beaches. The left-hand advertisement, placed by the Save Freo Beaches Alliance, asked

readers to vote for candidates who opposed North Port Quay in order to undermine any attempt by the consortium to represent the concept as having public support:

Meanwhile, the backers of the North Port Quay mega-development spruik its supposed environmental credentials and aim at 'proving' public support before they take their proposal to the next State Government.

In the right-hand advertisement, Greens candidates Andrew Sullivan and Adele Carles are shown with South Beach (site of an enduring community struggle against a large property developer) apparently in the background. The language of the advertisement is revolutionary with a call to arms headed by a paraphrase of Winston Churchill ('We Will Fight Them On The Beaches!'):

Andrew & Adele have led brave and just public campaigns to defend our beaches from environmental and social vandalism.

Each has faced slander, intimidation, threats of financial ruin and determined, aggressive campaigns of misinformation organized by some developers and their lackeys.

The highly controversial Port Coogee and spectacularly uninspired South Beach developments ARE NOT PROGRESS. They are the irrevocable and disastrous results of a weak council and compliant WA government response to corporate pressure, against which a staunch but unequal battle is fought.

WE MUST NEVER ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN AGAIN!

Never before has the pressure been so great for development on our beaches and foreshore.

THE NEW BEACHES ALLIANCE IS CONCERNED ABOUT OUR COASTLINE

Who can you trust to protect our beaches?

We Will Fight Them On The Beaches!

On Saturday 6th September VOTE 1 Andrew Sullivan in Cockburn VOTE 1 Adele Carles in Fremantle

For our beaches, our community, our democracy, our future.

Figure 7: Pages 16 & 17 of *Fremantle Herald* on 30 August 2008

On election day (6 September 2008), the *Herald* reported on page 1 that Peter Newman had told a North Port Quay forum that development planning for large projects should be handed to the state after the election because local council couldn't handle it. The newspaper's editor consciously or unconsciously put together a potentially powerful representation on this page (Figure 8). The article, 'Prof: give Freo planning to the state', was published directly above the image of a bulldozer raising a riverfront home and its corresponding article referred to the state Heritage Minister's decision not to stop the demolition of '100 years of heritage'. This representation of Peter Newman's statement generated community reactions in various language strata for publication in the subsequent weekly edition of the newspaper.



Figure 8: Page 1 of *Fremantle Herald* on 6 September 2008

After the state election had been resolved, the North Port Quay issue dissapeared from the local press for several weeks until 20 December when the *Herald* published an article entitled, ‘ACCC probe an abuse of the law’ (Figure 9). The article, which represented the consortium as responding to a complaint lodged with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) about its statements that North Port Quay would be the world’s first carbon-free development. The article introduced the language of consumer law, particularly consumer protection against ‘green wash’. Its author also used parody (exploiting centrifugal forces) in combining religious language, ‘fellow devotee’ of North Port Quay, with scientific language in the same sentence:

Fellow devotee and international sustainability expert Peter Newman said the objectors weren’t experts and were probably unaware of rapidly emerging technologies.



Figure 9: Page 3 of *Fremantle Herald* on 20 December 2008

The consortium set out to repair the damage done to the environmental credentials of North Port Quay with a highly strategic advertisement positioning the project as international best practice in sustainable development. The advertisement, published as a two-page spread in the *Fremantle Gazette* on 10 February 2009 (Figure 10), contains a list of overseas examples of ecological modernization projects mostly relating to green built environment. The advertisement suggests that the overseas projects are great examples of sustainable development, although it is impossible to tell without considerable research into the projects. However, it can be assumed that the list was created to operate as a discursive mechanism associating North Point Quay with other green built environment projects in the mind of the reader; although in reality their only relationship was their appearance together (Fairclough

2000, 161-162) in this advertisement. This list of symbols of green built environment was associated with the abstraction of an ideological dilemma – whether the reader was for or against doing things sustainably – and it called on the reader to take a stand on this dilemma (Chourliaraki 2008b, 219) by supporting the North Port Quay project. The languages employed were generally patriotic, managerial and scientific, although the language in the final section switches radically to the sort of populist language (an appeal to local patriotism) used by the Fremantle Football Club: ‘C’mon Freo, let’s put it all together and lead the world’.

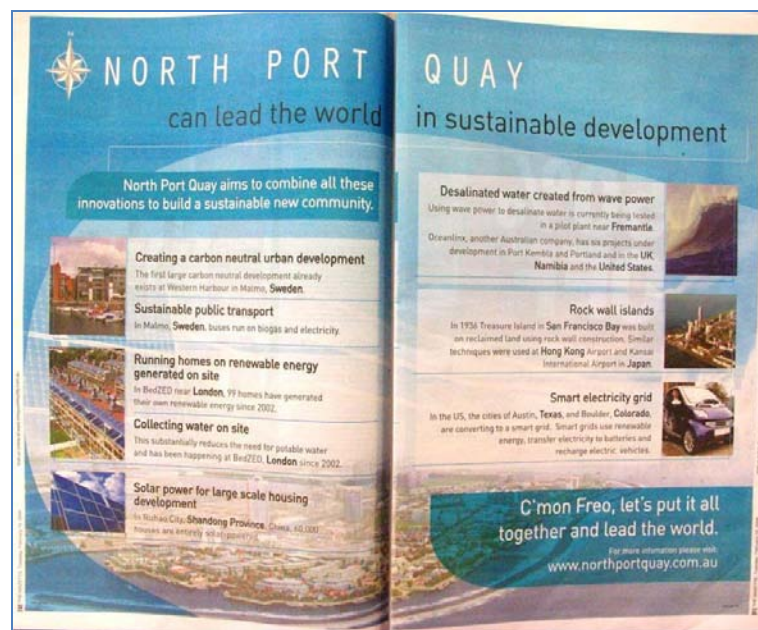


Figure 10: Pages 24 & 25 of *Fremantle Gazette* on 10 February 2009

The struggle for Fremantle’s future

For several months there were no more newspaper representations about North Port Quay and implicit or explicit ecological threats, but in the second half of April 2009 the consortium resumed its advertisements in the lead-up to a by-election on 16 May for the state parliamentary seat of Fremantle. The consortium’s new advertisement (Figure 11) focussed on ‘Fremantle’s future’ applying languages of economics and work: ‘Fremantle – the perfect place for North Port Quay. An investment in our environment, jobs and our way of life’. The closing line of the advertisement, ‘It just makes sense’ is either an appeal to common sense to remove Fremantle Port shown in the background of the advertisement’s image or is meant to indicate that little would change through the construction of North Port Quay (hence the conservative image that shows no renderings of the project or new technologies). Either way,

the consortium seems to have misjudged popular reading in its choice of image and tagline for this advertisement.



Figure 11: Pages 14 & 15 of *Fremantle Gazette* on 21 April 2009

In response to this advertisement, the Greens attempted to exploit a common sense that the port is an integral part of Fremantle culture.ⁱⁱ This was done by way of press release containing an image of its by-election candidate, Carles, and three other Greens women at the same site in a mock physical defence of Fremantle port and coastal amenity against attack by North Port Quay. The image was published by the *Gazette* on page 3 on 5 May (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Page 3 of *Fremantle Gazette* on 5 May 2009

Centripetal forces contained populist language about North Port Quay being a risk to Fremantle in the state by-election campaign. Carles' called, apparently successfully, for social action against North Port Quay in the form of votes for her. The discursive resource of the North Port Quay threat was stabilized by representations of Bob Brown, an established symbol of environmental activism against corporate greed, with Carles (figure 13).



Figure 13: Page 3 of *Fremantle Gazette* on 12 May 2009

In the final days of the campaign, the defence of North Port Quay all but collapsed after allegations (see Figure 14) emerged that at least one of the independent candidates, who endorsed the North Port Quay project, was receiving campaign assistance from people associated with the consortium. The set of claims on which the case for North Port Quay had been constructed was severely undermined by this direct encounter with the language of democratic propriety, which had been deployed regularly in Fremantle and Western Australian media reporting of scandals involving developers' making campaign donations to influence planning processes. A simultaneous blow was dealt to the consortium when the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission called on North Port Quay to tone down its carbon neutral claims.



Figure 14: Page 1 of *Fremantle Herald* on 9 May 2009

Carles' supporters placed advertisements (shown left in Figure 15) calling on Peter Tagliaferri to resign from the position of Mayor, partly for positioning himself as an environmental campaigner while refusing 'to reject the total destruction of Port Beach by NPQ'. Tagliaferri, who had been publicly represented earlier as supporting North Port Quay in his role as Mayor of Fremantle, refused to condemn or support the concept during the by-election campaign in his new role as the Labour Party's new candidate. The Tagliaferri campaign strategy avoided mention of North Port Quay and avoided ecological modernist language. Instead, Labour's strategy focussed on associating Tagliaferri with popular images of Fremantle (see advertisement shown right in Figure 15) including local businesses and jobs, traditional port industries, the Dockers (Fremantle Football Club), the community's

unique lifestyle and a working father's heroic defence of family against ecological risk from Fremantle port operations.ⁱⁱⁱ



Figure 15: Pages 6 & 7 of *Fremantle Herald* on 9 May 2009

Labour's campaign strategy failed to prevent it losing the seat of Fremantle for the first time in 85 years (D'Anger 2009, 3). Adele Carles' electoral victory dominated the media and apparently dashed the consortium's chance of representing broad public support for North Port Quay. A cartoon entitled 'HOW GREEN IS MY CITY' (Figure 16), published in the *Herald* a week after the election, celebrated the Greens' historic victory while parodying the victory's significance in achieving an alternative green-built-environment vision for Fremantle. The cartoon image of this ideal green Fremantle includes people and a dog relaxing in a park or suburban back yard. The only overt indication of built environment is the traditional corrugated fence in the background. An elderly woman, sitting on a sawn log, rather than a manufactured chair, speaks in a familial language of the meaning of the Greens victory:

Well we can all relax now. NPQ is history. The market rents will be renegotiated. The Soap man will return. The lead nasties will ship via Hilarys No high rise will sully our skyline. And we'll keep the beaches how we want them.

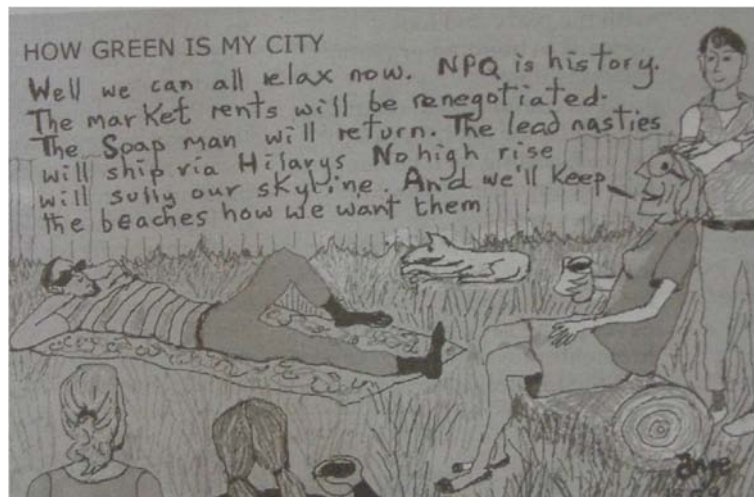


Figure 16: Cartoon on page 4 of *Fremantle Herald* on 23 May 2009

This cartoon had considerable potential for disrupting the apparently dominant meaning of the Greens victory in Fremantle within the conceptual systems of readers. It embodied a *creative margin* of centrifugal forces at work through the author's deployment of familial language within a time and space dominated by political-analysis language.

Conclusion

The newspaper texts cited above which interrogate the environmental appropriateness of North Port Quay indicate the production of *creative margins* within their authors' conceptual systems. These margins seemed to be particularly significant when radically different stratified languages (embodying radically different world views) encountered one another. In these encounters centrifugal forces potentially disrupted existing links between words and objects, enabling the production of new word-object assemblies to be unified by co-existing centripetal forces. We saw the backers of North Port Quay set out in a particular ecological modernist language stratum to claim environmental high ground, and how this ground slipped away in encounters with other ecological modernist language strata and various other languages. As indicated by Fremantle newspaper representations and the state by-election results, the ecological risk of a carbon-constrained future articulated by North Port Quay's backers was transformed within the conceptual systems of most listeners into the ecological risk of North Port Quay's construction. Also, the claim of investing in Fremantle's future was transformed into unacceptable risk for most members of the community.

ⁱ A Google search on 2 November 2009 produced 8,600,000 listings for 'carbon neutral' and only 402,000 for 'carbon free'.

ⁱⁱ The Fremantle Football Club, established in 1994, successfully established a fan base and football club culture based on populist notions of Fremantle's port history; which is why the players are called 'Dockers'. (Haimes 2006, 153-154)

ⁱⁱⁱ The working man protecting his family from ecological threats through Fremantle Port is a popular local image. Tom Edwards died on 4 May 1919 after being struck by a policeman following Fremantle dockworkers' refusal to unload a ship until a 7-day quarantine period for Spanish flu had expired. After a mile-long funeral procession for Edwards (Bunbury 2006, 80), the Tom Edwards memorial fountain was constructed.

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