Reinventing Dublin Docklands: The Post-Industrial Transformation of a European Capital City

Principal Researchers

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Abstract

Formerly the heart of the historic port and somewhat at the periphery of mainstream urban life, Dublin Docklands is now the centre of the Irish financial world and a hive of student activity. While it is well known by those from the world of business, for many Dubliners and others, it remains relatively unknown territory and has yet to be integrated into their activity and mental maps of the city. This research aims to contribute to this process by focusing on the changes in governance and the radical physical, economic, social and environmental transformations that have taken place over the last twenty-five years.

Project rationale:

- The docklands project in Dublin is twenty years old in 2007
- Lessons can be learnt in terms of the difficulties of promoting development and balancing the needs and desires of a range of users.
- To date, no research has taken stock of past development as a means of planning and maximising the future potential of this part of Ireland's capital city.

Project output:


Preliminary conclusions:

- Dublin Docklands has become synonymous with particular political personalities; global economic institutions have become part of the everyday landscape; and the new cultural economy has become a key site through which the Celtic Tiger has been nurtured and grown.
- The project initially emerged out of the search for a solution to the inner-city crisis, redevelopment in docklands but has become increasingly associated with the needs of the national economy.
- In some parts of docklands, the landscapes created by redevelopment could be considered more theme-park than city, suffering from a human deficit and becoming functional as opposed to lived spaces.
- The story could be described as a composite of several separate yet interconnected plots, involving networks of private capital, national...
economics, environmental degradation, and shifting political culture and power.
- The image portrayed on the international stage is of a high-grade business and residential environment, but is in places an environment devoid of any real symbolism or sense of itself.

In the words of former city manager Frank Feely that 'in the last analysis, this city is a reflection on the people who live and work there', what will our new waterfront quarter say about this society to future generations?