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Nonpermanent Residents, Place Attachment, and "Sea Change" Communities

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Rapid population growth and an increase in the number of nonresident second-home owners are altering the environmental, social, and economic stability of many Australian seaside communities. The impact of the growing proportion of nonpermanent residents in these regions has not yet been subject to much research. This article explores the usefulness of place attachment to provide insight into the actions and behavior of second-home owners. Place attachment, or human-place bonding, has been linked to positive behaviors such as environmental conservation, volunteering, and the reverse of neighbourhood decline. This article examines second-home owners' sense of place attachment in Western Australia's Augusta–Margaret River region. Findings indicate positive relationships between levels of place attachment, the amount of time spent in the region, support of local businesses, and contributions to community through membership in voluntary organizations. The relevance of supporting the place attachment of nonpermanent residents in rapidly developing coastal areas is discussed.

Keywords: *place attachment; environment; second-home ownership; Western Australia; Augusta–Margaret River; sea change; nonpermanent residents; sustainability*

Deliberate lifestyle changes away from metropolitan environments are becoming more common, with the terms *sea change* (Burnley & Murphy, 2004) and *downshifting* (Breakspear & Hamilton, 2004) being coined to describe the phenomenon. In addition to growth in the permanent population, local properties in many Australian coastal communities are

being purchased by nonpermanent residents,[1] that is, people whose primary place of residence is elsewhere and who use the coastal property infrequently or rent it with the intention of eventually retiring there. This mobility trend is not limited to Australia; the nonpermanent resident phenomenon occurs the world over and is especially prevalent in regions offering appealing climates and interesting natural surroundings (Aronsson, 2004; Gallent, Mace, & Tewdwr-Jones, 2003; Gustafson, 2002).

According to Aronsson (2004), the degree of mobility in modern society is challenging traditional values, including people's attachment to places. Research (e.g., Gooch, 2003; Hummon, 1992; Low & Altman, 1992) has demonstrated links between attachment and community commitment, commonly manifesting as a willingness to participate in community life through volunteering, fundraising, or environmental conservation. Reduced participation in community affairs is threatening the social sustainability of some communities (especially in rural areas of decline; see Kelly, 2000; Whiteley, 2004), and a rising ratio of nonpermanent residents to permanent residents in sea change communities could affect the future development of these areas if the number of people willing to contribute to community life decreases. This article investigates the usefulness of place attachment theory to explore the impact of social change in coastal regions.

The article reports on the findings of a survey of nonpermanent residents in the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River in the southwest of Western Australia (see Figure 1, below). This area is a "sea change" region, a popular national and international tourist destination, and a favorite spot for both permanent residents and second-home owners. Research exploring sustainability options (Kelly & Hosking, 2004) identified the growing number of absentee owners as potentially problematic for future planning, and the survey described in this article was designed to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and intentions of this segment of the population. The article begins with a description of sea change regions and a brief review of the notion of place attachment. Results from the survey are presented, and the relevance of place attachment in relation to nonpermanent residents and coastal development is discussed.

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Sea Change Regions and Nonpermanent Residents

In 2003, 70,000 people moved to coastal areas in Australia, seven per cent more than the previous year (Salt, 2004a). As disposable income and leisure time has increased for some, and transport and road access has improved, coastal areas that are within a three to four hour drive from Australian capital cities are now affordable, and these locations draw a high proportion of their migrants from the capital cities (Gray & Lawrence, 2001; Haslam McKenzie & Johnson, 2004; Salt, 2004b; Tonts, Paull, & Haslam McKenzie, 2004). Consequently, environmental, economic, and social sustainability are highly topical issues as sudden influxes of in-migrants are resulting in natural resource depletion, reduced physical amenity, problems of housing affordability, loss of demographic diversity, and social upheaval (Kelly & Haslam McKenzie, forthcoming; Müller, Hall, & Keen, 2004; Salt, 2004a).

Housing supply and costs is a fraught issue in sea change regions. There are three main areas of demand for existing and new housing stocks: permanent homes for "sea changers," investment homes for the tourist sector, and holiday or second homes for nonpermanent residents (Burnley & Murphy, 2004; Salt, 2001). In regard to the latter, although the growth of second-home development is a global issue largely because of the rise in regional and international leisure migration since the 1960s (Gallent et al., 2003; Visser, 2004), the affects on the target communities are not yet clear. Primary motivations of second-home owners to purchase property in sea change locations include proximity to water (coast, rivers, lakes), distance from primary residence and social networks (friends and family), and the physical attractiveness of the area (Burby, Donnelly, & Weiss, 1972, as cited in Halseth, 2004; Clout, as cited in Girard & Gartner, 1993). Other motivations include financial investment, pursuit of leisure activities, future retirement locations (Girard & Gartner, 1993), and an escape from the urban environment (Hall & Müller, 2004). There is general agreement that low density living, rural or coastal settings, avoidance of big city problems (e.g., crime, noise, fast pace), the solitude of nature, access to outdoor activity, status and relative cost are the most commonly cited preference factors.

A potentially important sustainability challenge in some regions is the loss of community commitment as manifested through participation and volunteering, support of local businesses, and care for the natural environment. This may occur in both permanent and nonpermanent resident sectors of the community, for a range of reasons. Research identifying links between community commitment and attachment to place indicates that place attachment can be a motivator for participation in civic affairs (e.g., see Gooch, 2003)

and policies and processes which enable and support place attachment in relation to nonpermanent residents may help sustain the environmental and social characteristics of sea change regions.

Place Attachment

The notion of "place" is concerned with locations, their meanings, and the ways people relate to them—human-place bonding is at the heart of the place attachment concept (Hummon, 1992). According to Hummon, people form emotional bonds to places as well as to other people, and place attachment, therefore, reflects the embeddedness of individuals within their social-physical environments. Research suggests that people's perceptions of their physical environment most strongly influence their feelings toward their community (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; La Gory, Ward, & Sherman, 1985). Thus, the evaluation of both the social aspects of communities, such as friendliness and personal safety, and the physical environment (built and natural) are important predictors of community satisfaction (Herting & Guest, 1985). One component of place attachment is the emotional investment people have in their community; referred to as community attachment (Hummon, 1992). Community attachment is thought to be a *process* not necessarily linked to aspects of community such as size, type, or density (Goudy, 1982; Sampson, 1988). For example, Sampson found that individuals' length of residence and participation in community affairs strengthen their attachment to place.

Research has linked place attachment with environmental and cultural benefits such as developing and sustaining environmental volunteering (Gooch, 2003), reversing social and physical decline in suburban neighbourhoods (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003), helping preserve urban parks (Ryan, 2005), providing a sense of cultural identity (Low & Altman, 1992), and enabling resource managers to better facilitate affected groups of stakeholders (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). Researchers have also considered the restorative or "escape" aspects of favorite places (e.g., see Hartig, Kaiser, & Bowler, 2001; Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Kaplan, 1995) and found that some places are perceived to be "restorative environments" by contributing to stress reduction and enhancing positive moods (Scopelliti & Giuliani, 2004). People seek out different environments in which to relax and recover from the stressful aspects of their daily lives, and attachment is enhanced to places that provide a means of escape from personal and social pressures (Kyle et al., 2004).

In relation to place attachment in nonpermanent residents, Aronsson (2004) and Gustafson (2002) have investigated the relationship between place attachment and mobility (or "roots" and "routes"). They argue that as society becomes increasingly mobile, these two concepts cease to be mutually exclusive. Aronsson states that "vacation residence is both an expression of escape from modernity and a longing for authenticity, roots and identity in a place. . . . In a more and more placeless world, vacation residence stands out as meaningful and filled with sense of place" (p. 77).

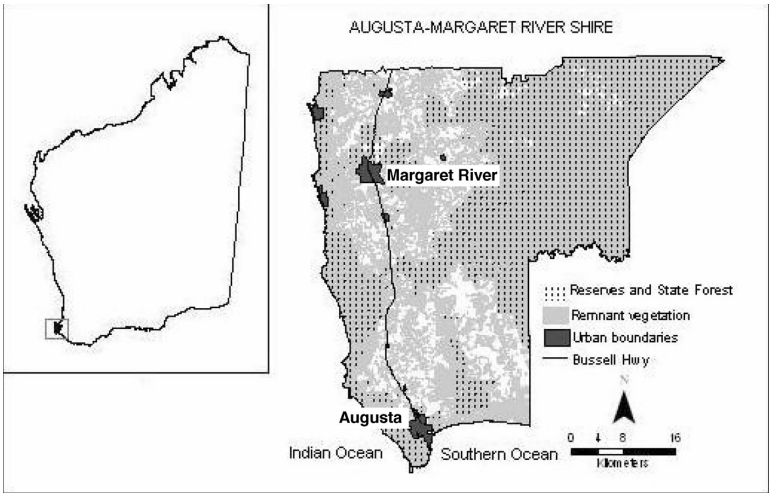
Extensive research has been conducted to investigate the notion of place attachment and its links to positive environmental and social benefits. There also exists a small but growing body of research into nonpermanent residents, in terms of their characteristics and motivations. However, with few exceptions (e.g., Aronsson, 2004; Gustafson, 2002; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001), there is little research linking the two.

Case Study: The Shire of Augusta–Margaret River

The Shire[2] of Augusta–Margaret River is located in the southwest of Western Australia, 290 kilometres from Perth (population 1.4 million people; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001). The shire covers an area of 2,370 km^2 (see Figure 1 below) and the population (permanent residents) at the 2001 census was 9,851. Two major highways link Perth to Margaret River, making the shire easily accessible from Perth for weekends. The region has many attractive natural features, including 30 km of varied coastline, diverse topography, productive agricultural land, and a Mediterranean-style climate. Adding to the considerable pressures on the environment are more than 1 million tourists a year, requiring the local population to provide services and protect the fragile coastal ecosystem of the region (Shepherd, 2005).

Margaret River is a typical sea change town; until 25 years ago, its raison d'être was to service primary industries and small-scale domestic tourism. Although broadacre agriculture is still important to the local economy, new industries have developed, including viticulture, agricultural value-added produce and boutique artisan production, and tourism and leisure industries such as surfing and fishing. A significant number of new residents have been attracted to the area, and sophisticated infrastructure enables people to access a broad range of services and to enjoy lifestyles considered more common in the city. The parcels of land in private ownership are under significant development pressure, with more than 600 development applications received by Council each year (Shepherd, 2005), a significant number given the total

Figure 1
The Shire of Augusta–Margaret River in South Western Australia



housing stock was around 2,000 dwellings in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Although the distribution of absentee ownership varies across the region, a calculation of the number of nonpermanent residents (shire database) as a percentageage of dwellings (based on Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001) suggests that close to 45% of property owners in the shire have a primary residence elsewhere. This is similar to that estimated for Australian sea change localities in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland. The outcomes from a joint sustainability research project between Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the shire identified ownership of property by nonpermanent residents as potentially a critical issue for the future of the region. To help inform future planning, the project also surveyed nonpermanent residents to determine their views and intentions.

Method

Survey forms were sent to 2,314 property owners with a mailing address outside the shire. The 911 property owner surveys, 65 property manager

forms, and 109 incomplete or "return to sender" forms resulted in a response rate of 46%. In addition, the researchers conducted 20 phone interviews to gather more in-depth information.

The property owners' survey gathered information about the property and its owners and included a number of open-ended questions and 22 attitudinal statements to gauge respondents' attachment to place by means of a 5-point response scale. The statements were based on a scale developed by Syme, Fenton, and Coakes (2001) to measure attachment to local parks and wetlands. Some statements were adjusted to better reflect the characteristics of the local region. The original scale developed by Syme et al. was considered to be made up of six subcomponents: accessibility, ownership, participation, comfort, security, and action.

Participants' Demographics

Second-home owners are often assumed to be of retirement age, with a relatively high income and no dependent children (e.g., Halseth, 2004; Svenson, 2004). On average, these assumptions were correct for the respondents, but they are not a homogeneous segment of the population. Table 1 shows some of their demographics.

The social and economic profile of this segment of the population differs from that of permanent residents[3] as follows: the nonpermanent residents (on average) are more educated, have higher household incomes, are older, have fewer dependent children, and are more likely to fully own their property. These differences suggest that the nonpermanent resident segment of the population has a life experience different from that of the permanent residents. A similar survey with lakeside property owners in northern Wisconsin (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001) produced a sample that had demographic characteristics remarkably analogous to those of the current sample, suggesting the demographic characteristics of second-home owners may be generic regardless of geographic location.

Results and Discussion

Principal component analysis failed to confirm any clear factors or subscales similar to those described by Syme et al. (2001); subsequently, a total place attachment score was calculated for each respondent (possible minimum, 22; maximum, 110). The mean total place attachment score was 90, indicating a high overall sense of attachment. To better explore the relationships between variables, two categorical variables were created:

Table 1
Selected Demographics of Respondents

Gender	Age	Annual Household Income (Australian Dollars)	Permanent Residence	Employment Status
Males: 63%[a]	<30: 2%	<40,000: 8%	Intrastate: 92%	Full-time: 39%
Females: 33%	30-40: 10%	40,000-70,000: 22%	Interstate: 4%	Part-time: 10%
Couples: 4%	41-50: 26%	71,000-100,000: 19%	Overseas: 4%	Self-employed: 32%
	51-60: 38%	>100,000: 51%		
	>60: 24%			Retired: 16%

a.The survey was mailed to the first-listed property owner where the properties were owned by multiple owners (e.g., couples); hence the preponderance of male respondents.

place attachment (high group ≥ 94.01, medium group 87.01 to 94, low group ≤ 87) and time spent in region (not stated, $n = 227$; low [0 to 30 days per year], $n = 225$; medium [31 to 75 days per year], $n = 221$; high [≥ 76 days per year], $n = 228$; 10 of the 911 returned surveys could not be counted because of incomplete responses). The current version of the scale has not been validated against other place attachment measures (e.g., Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989), although it demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .83). The statements and mean scores are shown in Table 2.

A number of statements had an extremely high score. For example, "I feel that the region is an important part of this state" (4.80) indicates respondents' awareness of the iconic status of the region as a tourist and wine growing area. The two statements "I plan to keep visiting the region for some time to come" (4.78) and "I care about what happens to the region" (4.75) denote personal attachment and signify a commitment to the future of the region. Finally, the statement "I really like the rural feeling of the region" (4.78) indicates that this aspect of the region is highly valued by nonpermanent residents. The rural ambience also emerged in the qualitative data as one of the most liked characteristics of the area.

In contrast, the two statements with the lowest mean score ("I feel that I could influence the planning of the region if I really wanted or needed to," at 2.75, and "The region feels as though it belongs to the community, not the Council," at 3.11) refer to feelings of ownership and control in regard to the region. This result, in conjunction with the qualitative data from open-ended questions, indicated low levels of sense of ownership and a powerlessness in being able to contribute toward planning for the region's future. These

Table 2
Place Attachment Measurements Used in the Augusta–Margaret River Survey of Nonpermanent Residents

Statement	Mean Score
I care about what happens to the region.	4.75
I plan to keep visiting the region for some time to come.	4.78
I feel that the region is an important part of this state.	4.80
I feel that the region is an important part of the history of this state.	4.28
The region is easy for me to get to.	3.78
The region feels as though it belongs to the community, not the Council.	3.11
I have my own favourite spot in the region.	4.19
I don't feel very safe when visiting the region.[a]	4.47
I think it is important that the region is kept as a natural area.	4.43
I really like the rural feeling of the region.	4.78
I feel that I could influence the planning of the region if I really wanted or needed to.	2.75
The region provides important habitat for native plants and animals.	4.43
I feel very attached to the region.	3.38
I believe my neighbours would be concerned about what happens to the region.	4.26
I have a lot of friends who live in the region.	3.42
I would be willing to contribute my time to maintain the region.	3.62
Overall, the region is attractive.	4.60
I do not feel very relaxed when visiting the region.[a]	4.53
I like to watch the wildlife in the region.	4.14
The region is not in good physical condition.[a]	3.61
I would be willing to become involved in future planning for the region.	3.60
I often have friends from elsewhere come and stay with me in the region.	3.72

a. Recoded prior to analysis.

results reflect the current contextual conditions within the shire. In 2004, the Augusta–Margaret River Shire Council altered the way in which rates payable were calculated, with nonpermanent property owners being required to pay more than permanent residents were.[4] Although the Western Australian state government has since overruled this policy, it was evident from survey

responses that nonpermanent residents felt aggrieved at being charged more than permanent residents were. We suspect that the low scores on the "planning" and "belonging" questions reflect the rate raise and general dissatisfaction with the Council, which led nonpermanent residents to feel disenfranchised.

As outlined earlier, some researchers (e.g., Sampson, 1988) have argued that place attachment is a process, with length of residence and increased participation in civic affairs strengthening an individual's attachment to place. Findings from the current study support this notion in relation to place attachment of nonpermanent residents. Table 3 shows the mean place attachment scores for the low, medium, and high groups (defined by the number of days spent in the region in the past 12 months).

An ANOVA comparing the mean attachment score across the three groups was significant ($F = 23.4$, $p < .05$). Further analysis (Tukey) indicated significant differences in attachment between the "low number of days" group and both the medium and high groups, but there was no significant difference in place attachment between the medium and the high groups. This suggests that there is a plateau effect that occurs in the relationship between the number of days spent in the region and the strength of place attachment (the cutoff between the low and medium groups was 30 days, or 1 month, per year). Similarly, Aronsson (2004) found the length of stay of second-home owners to be very significant in the development of their attachment to the area.

A phi coefficient was used to explore the relationships between place attachment and a range of demographic and other variables (see Table 4).

Positive and significant relationships exist between place attachment and time spent in the region, plans to move to the region, amount of money spent on local goods and services, and whether nonpermanent residents are members of local groups and organizations. No significant relationship was found between respondents' length of property ownership and level of place attachment, and there was also no significant correlation between place attachment scores and whether the properties had been in the family for more than one generation. That is, owners of multigeneration properties were not, in this sample, more attached to their places than first-generation owners were. Jansson and Müller (2004) noted that when second homes were inherited, those properties became a permanent fixture in the owners' life courses. Jansson and Müller suggested that some people purchase second homes with future generations in mind (this was born out by the Augusta–Margaret River qualitative data), with the properties becoming a common project for the entire family, enabling family members to engage in a range of activities.

Table 3
Mean Place Attachment by Length of Time Spent in Region

Number of Days Spent at Augusta–Margaret River Property, 2004-2005	Mean Place Attachment Score
Number of days spent not stated (n = 227)	88.9
Low group: 0 to 30 days (n = 225)	87.2
Medium group: 31 to 75 days (n = 221)	91.7
High group: 76 days or more (n = 228)	92.5

Note: The n's total 901 because 10 of the 911 property owner surveys returned did not contain complete data.

Table 4
Correlations Between Place Attachment and Other Categorical Variables

	Place Attachment	Age Group	Plan to Move	Time in Region	Local Expenditure	Belong to Groups	Ownership Length
Age group	.07						
Plan to move	.19**	.26**					
Time in region	.26**	.30**	.14*				
Local expenditure	.25**	.18	.11	.42**			
Belong to groups	.15**	.12	.08	.26**	.21**		
Ownership length	.12	.48**	.23*	.36**	.23*	.22**	
Generational ownership	.06	.09	.09	.09	.14*	.00	.50**

* $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

In the case of Augusta–Margaret River, we speculate that people may have higher levels of attachment when the decision to purchase was their own rather than a decision made by a parent or other relative. It is interesting to note that although the results suggest that the more time nonpermanent residents spend in the region, the stronger their sense of place attachment and the longer they maintain property ownership, owning the property for a long time does not necessarily lead to a stronger sense of attachment.

There was also a significant correlation (r = .14) between whether the property had been in a family for multiple generations and the level of local expenditure. Other factors significantly correlated with local expenditure included membership in community organizations (r = .21) and length of

property ownership ($r = .23$). We surmise that the longer people own properties, the more likely they are to get to know permanent residents, leading to greater community commitment through the support of local businesses and community organizations. In regard to the future plans of nonpermanent residents and their developmental stage of life, there were small but significant correlations between place attachment and plans to move to the region ($r = .19$) but no significant relationship between place attachment and age.

Based on the correlations, a multiple regression analysis was performed to identify how much of the variance in nonpermanent residents' sense of place attachment could be explained by five variables: belonging to community organizations, plans to move to the region, local expenditure, length of ownership, and time spent in the region. In order of strength, plans to move to the region, amount of money spent with local businesses, and time spent in the region each year significantly explained place attachment. However, although these factors are partial predictors of nonpermanent residents' attachment to place, in total they accounted for only 10% of the variance, suggesting place attachment is a complex variable and factors such as personal characteristics, values, and beliefs need to be considered when trying to predict what might influence nonpermanent residents' attachment to their host communities.

Place attachment signifies an attachment to people associated with places as well as to the physical landscape in which those people are situated, and an expression of this social attachment is involvement in community groups and organizations. Approximately 30% (268) of the survey respondents stated they belonged to a community group of some kind, but there proved to be no significant difference in place attachment between those who belong to groups and those who do not ($F = 1.54$, $p > .05$). However, significantly more of those who were members of community groups were in the medium and high place-attachment groups (chi square = 13.09, $p < .05$). This confirms other findings from this study that in the case of nonpermanent residents, there is a relationship between membership in a community group and place attachment. However, this membership is not a predictor of greater place attachment and provides no insight about cause and effect or the direction of the relationship between these two variables.

There is a variation in the social and physical spatial characteristics of the shire, with small urban centers, large rural areas with viable farms, and extensive areas of the shire in state forest and other reserves. Some nonpermanent residents own properties in or close to the urban centers, others are adjacent to the coast, and some have chosen more isolated rural and bush locations. We explored whether these different spatial patterns of ownership influenced place attachment. The different localities within the shire, the size of the

Table 5
Survey Response Rates Across Shire Localities

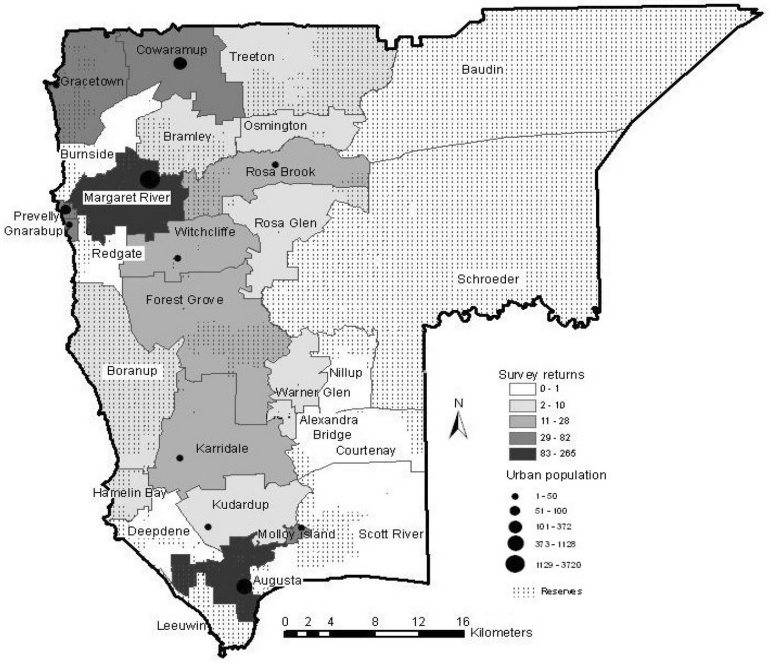
Locality Name	Permanent Population of Urban Center	Area Private Land (hectares)	Number of Survey Returns
Margaret River	3,720	5,286	265
Augusta	1,128	3,012	250
Prevelly	<100	44	82
Molloy Island	<100	234	73
Cowaramup	372	6,762	61
Gracetown	<50	3,918	56
Gnarabup	<50	159	45
Witchcliffe	<50	5,395	28
Karridale	<50	9,776	20
Rosa Brook	<50	4,748	18
Forest Grove	N/A	9,634	18
Hamelin Bay	N/A	796	10
Rosa Glen	N/A	6,074	9
Osmington	N/A	3,319	6
Alexandra Bridge	N/A	552	5
Treeton	N/A	4,661	4
Bramley	N/A	2,256	3
Warner Glen	N/A	2,818	3
Boranup	N/A	828	2
Kudardup	<50	5,722	2
Scott River	N/A	10,468	1
Burnside	N/A	2,895	0
Redgate	N/A	1,592	0
Nillup	N/A	2,385	0
Courtenay	N/A	5,253	0
Leeuwin	N/A	141	0
Deepdene	N/A	2,686	0
Baudin	N/A	46	0
Schroeder	N/A	510	0

Note: N/A = not applicable; the total number of surveys in this table, 961, represents the total of 911 surveys from property owners and 65 from property managers, minus 15 that could not be used because of incomplete responses.

urban center if one exists, the amount of private land available for settlement (large areas of the shire are in state forest and reserves), and the number of nonpermanent resident survey responses (respondent-selected locality) are shown in Table 5. This information is also represented spatially in Figure 2.

The highest response rates are from or adjacent to the main urban centers (Margaret River, Augusta, Cowaramup) and coastal localities (Prevelly,

Figure 2
Nonpermanent Resident Survey Response Across Localities



Gracetown). A comparison of the larger urban centers of Margaret River and Augusta with the smaller localities indicated no significant differences in place attachment. We suggest the main reason for this result is that the majority of respondents have their permanent place of residence in large cities, and the Augusta–Margaret River region, including the main urban centers, appears to be predominantly rural by comparison. However, there was a significant difference in place attachment between the nonpermanent residents with properties in or close to the two main townships of Margaret River and Augusta ($F = 4.93$, $p < .05$). These two townships have distinctly different qualities (demographics, community contribution, service access, landscape), and this finding suggests that the characteristics of places (and not necessarily their size) may influence the formation of the place attachment of nonpermanent residents.

Generally, respondents chose extreme positions (1 or 5) in response to the statements, suggesting that they felt strongly about the questions being asked, and this may provide further evidence as to the level of attachment to the region. Tuan (1990) coined the term *topophilia* to refer to a love of place, and many survey respondents took the time to express such sentiments. When asked, "What influenced your (or your family's) decision to purchase a property in the Augusta–Margaret River Shire?" approximately 20% of respondents provided answers such as "We love the place."

Research has identified that motivation for second-home purchase in sea change communities includes the unspoiled nature of the natural environment and that the host community characteristics contrast to those of the second-home owners' usual primary residence (predominantly in urban areas). The qualitative data from the open-ended questions and interviews suggest nonpermanent residents' sense of place attachment is strongly intertwined with their view of how these regions should remain. For example, "I strongly feel that it is important that the region doesn't turn into city clutter, i.e., houses sitting on top of each other. The feel of openness is the best part of the region" (interviewee 19); "When I first started going down south in the early '80s, it was quite sleepy and very natural; it won't be long and all of that will be destroyed by greedy developers" (interviewee 10); and "Keep it in a natural state and protect the environment—people live there because of the lifestyle and beauty, not to have big development. . . . Please don't let it get ruined—it's special" (interviewee 5).

Concluding Discussion

The Augusta–Margaret River region has many attractive social and physical features. However, these positive characteristics are creating pressure on the region to rapidly develop. Prior to this research, the nonpermanent residents of the shire were an unknown quantity; little information was available about their intentions, motivations, and preferences. Although nonpermanent residents are a diverse group, the survey established that most feel a deep attachment to the place and its community and value the region's natural beauty very highly and that many are averse to seeing further urbanization of the area. It is in their interests, as property owners and in many cases future full-time residents, to try to ensure that the region remains attractive and livable.

The purpose of this article was to explore how the notion of place attachment might assist us to understand the functioning of sea change communities,

and the results supported the findings of earlier research (e.g., Moore & Graefe, 1994) that the more frequently people visit places, the stronger their attachment. Place attachment was also significantly correlated with plans to move to the region, membership in local community organizations, and local expenditure. We argue that these behaviors demonstrate that nonpermanent residents care for and are committed to the region, that is, they are "attached" to the place. We believe that acknowledging and encouraging the contributions of nonpermanent residents will help maintain and enhance their sense of attachment to the region, and the failure to consult with this segment of the population when planning for the future could further alienate and drive away the more committed nonpermanent residents. This could lead to an increase in the number of people buying property purely for investment reasons and reduce the proportion of "attached and committed" second-home owners. Results from this study indicate such consequences would have a negative impact on the region by decreasing expenditure in support of local businesses and reducing voluntary contributions through community organizations.

The exploration of the spatial location of the properties of nonpermanent residents found mixed results. On one hand, the results suggested that their attachment to the region was based on a comparison between their permanent place of residence (city) and the shire as a whole. However, the social, economic, and physical characteristics of the main townships appear to have an influence on place attachment. Further research designed to better understand the impact that the spatial spread of human values such as place attachment and subsequent behavior may have on a region is warranted.

Many property owners purchased in the Augusta–Margaret River area because of the beauty of the natural landscape, the relaxed rural atmosphere, and the opportunity to pursue a range of different activities. In our view, this connects well with Hull's work (1992) on *image congruity*, or the fit between self-image and the meanings and values people associate with places, and this concept may prove useful in helping understand the motivations of nonpermanent residents. For example, whereas an individual's primary residence may meet day-to-day functional needs, second homes might fit more closely with perceptions of self as reflected in the types of activities second-home owners engage in. As Hull argued, supporting people's image congruity can lead to greater place attachment, which in turn has been linked with positive affective outcomes such as health and social interaction.

Relaxation and escape from city life were cited as key reasons for owning second homes. This is congruent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Hartig et al., 2001; Hartig et al., 1991; Kaplan, 1995; Scopelliti & Giuliani,

2004) who described health benefits, such as mood enhancement and stress reduction, as outcomes of being in "restorative" environments. Feelings of escape from the city and other social pressures are therefore also likely to contribute to nonpermanent residents' sense of place attachment. There is, of course, an ironic side to Australians' mass movement to coastal regions in search of relaxation or a "better environment" (Burnley & Murphy, 2004): As the population rises in a region, it may well become less relaxing, with the condition of the local environment declining.

The detailed and thoughtful responses to the survey demonstrated a high degree of interest in the Augusta–Margaret River region, in contrast to the preconceived notions of some permanent residents (Kelly & Hosking, 2004). In accordance with Vaske and Kobrin's findings (2001), we believe that if nonpermanent residents' sense of place attachment is acknowledged and supported, more sustainable behaviors, such as environmental volunteering and water conservation, may be encouraged. Furthermore, a greater public recognition of the contributions of second-home owners may help mitigate conflict between permanent and nonpermanent residents. Kyle, Mowen, and Tarrant (2004) suggested that understanding the bonds that people share with places will help facilitate better relationships among stakeholders, in the case of Augusta–Margaret River, between permanent and nonpermanent residents.

The timing of this survey may have artificially increased the strength of the findings. Many respondents expressed the view that they were not being listened to by the shire council or that the survey was the only voice they had. Emotions were running high, and respondents' place attachment scores may have been higher than they would have been at a less politically sensitive time. However, responses indicated a deep commitment to the region, expressed through words of emotional attachment to the place, membership in local organizations, and the stated intentions of more than 50% of respondents to move permanently to the region in the future. This response suggests that nonpermanent residents' ties to the area are not merely ephemeral and that many are likely to play an ongoing role in the region's evolution.

Research (e.g., Ryan, 2005; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001) has demonstrated that attachment to places makes people more concerned about protecting nature. Our findings are therefore important given the ecological threats coastal regions face because of population growth and rapid expansion. If the development of place attachment can be enabled and encouraged through local policies and processes, this is likely to increase pro-environment behavior and to assist planners and natural resource managers in sea change regions to better manage the interests of competing stakeholders.

Notes

1. This segment of a population is also commonly referred to as second-home owners and absentee landowners. These terms, although arguably different, are used interchangeably in this article.

2. The term *shire* refers to a local government authority area in regional Australia.

3. As at the 2001 census.

4. This ruling applied only to those with a primary residence outside the shire and did not include other second-home owners such as permanent residents who owned more than one property in the shire.

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