



Research Paper

Turning place into space – Place motivations and place spaces in Tasmania

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ABSTRACT

Strong attachments to places are important in understanding the politics of environmental planning, but, as in Tasmania, Australia, are not usually incorporated in planning criteria and standards. We determine whether groups of individuals have similar spatial patterns of attachment at a State scale in Tasmania, and whether attachments to these ‘place spaces’ are differently motivated, and socially or environmentally determined. We used respondents’ lists of places to repeatedly classify the groups of people attached to different place spaces. The associations between stated motivations and the distinctive features identified by place spaces, and between socioeconomic and demographic variables and both motivations and place space groups, were determined for the 293 respondents with complete data using Chi square and ANOVA. Eight of the nine groups of people had spatially well-defined place spaces. Four place spaces were similar to the territories of Aboriginal nations. Two place space groups focused on places with cultural heritage. All others had a strong nature focus. Family activities and childhood memories most influenced the choices of those born in Tasmania, while immigrants focused on heritage. Single features of the landscape, such as kunanyi (Mt Wellington), motivated attachment in many different ways and in many place space groups. Demographic and socioeconomic variables did not strongly differentiate between people in place space groups. Patterns of attachment to place spaces and the diversity of reasons for attachment to them can be determined using our novel methods, potentially facilitating incorporation of place attachment into the planning process.

1. Introduction

Place is a foundational concept within geographical scholarship. It has a long and complex philosophical history extending back at least as far as the ancient Greeks (Algra, 1995; Canter, 1977; Casey, 1997; Gregory, 1994; Malpas, 1999, 2012; Sack 1997). Cresswell (e.g. 2004, 2011) builds upon Agnew’s definition of place (Agnew, 1987) as comprised of: (i) location; (ii) locale; and (iii) sense of place. To briefly summarise, following Aristotle, place can refer to a particular location as “the where of something” (Cresswell, 2011, p. 236). On this basis, place is primary, the basic requirement for existence, as to exist is necessarily to be somewhere. The second aspect of place, locale, focuses attention on the specific socio-material arrangements of particular places. The third aspect, sense of place, highlights how places are given particular meanings by people.

Massey’s (e.g. 1993, 1994) emphasis on ‘power geometry’s’ and the notion of a ‘global sense of place’ highlighted the idea that places were not primarily defined by processes internal to them, but by their relational qualities: their connections with other parts of the world. Following Massey (and others, e.g. Lefebvre, 1991), poststructuralist

theorists have advanced a conceptualisation of place (and space) as dynamic, hybrid and relational (e.g. Murdoch, 2006). On this account, places are continually emergent and performative achievements constituted from particular assemblages of humans and non-human entities and their practices. Henderson (2009, p. 540) summarises thus: “place is not derived from something else (as place from space); it is rather an always-already ongoing assemblage of geographically associated, ontologically con-constitutive elements and relationships”. This perspective has also been associated with a focus on place as a deeply political concept, reflecting particularly powerful orderings and organisations of the world.

The way in which space is conceptualised, and the assumed relation of space to place, are key points of divergence between scholars. For example, place is often understood to refer to abstract and neutral space upon which human significance has been bestowed, the meaning we have adopted herein. On this account, space is primary and place is derivative. By contrast, some approaches (e.g. Malpas, 1999, 2012; Relph, 1976) have advanced a conceptualisation of place as *the* basic category of existence.

In the present paper, place is distinguished from space in that we

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focus on the spatial patterns that emerge from the positive meanings that people attach to particular places. We define geographic patterns of coincident expression of attachment to sets of locations as ‘place spaces’.

There is a large literature on motivations for place attachment and their socioeconomic and demographic correlates (Lewicka, 2011). The pioneering work of Kaplan (1989), Korpela (1989) and later work indicates the importance of childhood and the duration of later experience in influencing attachment, with other socioeconomic variables being inconsistent in their relationships.

The growing recognition of the political importance of a sense of place in land and resource allocation and in land management debates has been reflected in investigations of the areas that attract the most place attachment (e.g. Lin & Lockwood, 2014a, 2014b). One research approach involves public participatory geographic information systems in combination with statistical modelling (Brown, 2005; Brown & Raymond, 2007; Brown, Raymond, & Corcoran, 2015; Brown & Weber, 2013; Tyrväinen, Mäkinen, & Schipperijn, 2007). Questions of how to include multiple kinds of values (e.g. Rolston & Coufal, 1991) within landscape management and planning have seen some researchers focus on the geographical identification of socio-ecological ‘hotspots; places or natural areas that are significant in terms of both cultural and ecological values (e.g. Alessa, Kliskey, & Brown, 2008; Davis, Daams, van Hinsberg, & Sijtsma, 2016; De Vries, Buijs, Langers, Farjon, & van Hinsberg, 2013).

While studies have mapped the landscape preferences of geographically-based communities (e.g. Bijker, Mehnen, Sijtsma, & Daams, 2014; Plieninger, Dijks, Oteros-Rozas, & Bieling, 2013) and communities of interest (e.g. Ribiero, Migliozi, Incerti, & Correia, 2013; Sijtsma, Daams, Farjon, & Buijs, 2012), as far as we are aware, there is no work that classifies people by their geographic patterns of place attachment. In investigating sense of place as a spatial phenomenon, such segmentation helps avoid most of the problems of differing proportionate representation of socioeconomic and cultural groups within a sample. The segmentation also allows an analysis of varying sets of reasons for attachments both within and between geographic groups. An understanding of place space groups is likely to provide a better input into decision-making than the production of a single place importance index, although such an index is highly useful in many circumstances (Brown & Raymond, 2007). Analysis of place spaces could complement the understanding of the different forms of place attachment in Lin and Lockwood (2014a, 2014b), who worked in conservation reserves in Australia.

An understanding of the new concept of place spaces and the motivations for their existence is particularly important in environmental planning in places where conservationists and developers engage in protracted political conflict. In Tasmania, Australia, since the early 1970s, conservationists in non-government organisations have worked to build up public attachment to wild places and forests in order to prevent hydro-electric development in wild country, expansion of logging into old growth forests, and, tourism development in reserves (Ajani, 2007; Crowley, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 1988, 2012; Sharples, 2001). The statutory planning processes that have been in effect during the period of the debates do not explicitly recognise place attachment, although place attachments have almost certainly been responsible for some of their provisions.

In the present paper, we determine the relationships between place spaces, motivations for attachment and socioeconomic, and demographic, predictor variables, in order to demonstrate a novel way of providing information on place relevant to urban and environmental planning. Our primary aim was to describe the place spaces of Tasmania, our hypothesis being that such spaces existed. A second aim was to test the hypothesis that motivations for attachment to particular place spaces varied between them. A third aim was to test the hypothesis that the places within place spaces most important to people conformed to the concept of *genius loci*, in that motivations for

attachment were the same. A fourth aim was to test the hypothesis that demographic and socioeconomic variables predicted place spaces and motivations. Our fifth aim was to draw out the implications of our results for urban and environmental planning.

Our empirical approach employed mixed methods. We undertook a well-publicised web survey that asked people to list the places to which they were attached and describe the motives for their attachment; repeatedly classified respondents using lists of places to which they were attached; using high levels of fidelity and constancy to identify characteristic places within groups as evidence for place spaces; tested if individual motives, extracted from qualitative responses were associated with groups significantly more or less than expected by chance; determined whether motivations were constant between people attached to particular places by examining the range of responses in relation to the most mentioned places; and, tested whether socioeconomic or demographic variables significantly varied between groups or motivations.

2. Methods

2.1. Study area

Aboriginal people first entered Tasmania more than 40,000 years ago, when Bass Strait did not exist. The 6.9 million ha of present day Tasmania was invaded by European people a little over two centuries ago. In 1803, the time of the European invasion, Aboriginal people mostly occupied the environmentally diverse largest island of Tasmania. It has been suggested that there were nine Aboriginal nations in Tasmania in 1803 (Ryan, 1996, 2012). The evidence is scant on exact boundaries. However, there were groups of people with distinct languages (Fig. 1). Most Tasmanian Aborigines are descended from the North East nation (Cameron, 2011).

The invading Europeans cleared 40% of the island for agriculture, plantation forests and dams and established cities, towns and holiday resorts, mostly close to the coast. The population of Tasmania was 519,050 in the 2016 census, with 23,572 people identifying as Aborigines.

The State is renowned for its extensive Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, in which Cradle Mountain is the most visited place, other national parks and reserves, of which Freycinet National Park is the most visited place, as well as for the best-preserved evidence of the early colonial era in Australia, in places such as Battery Point, Port Arthur, Maria Island and Ross; so attracts many tourists. Its two largest cities are Hobart and Launceston, both juxtaposed to outstanding natural features, a mountain in the case of Hobart and a gorge in the case of Launceston.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the Tasmanian-born population was among the poorest and most poorly educated in Australia. Immigrants to Tasmania tend to be of higher socioeconomic status than the Tasmanian-born, and are more inclined than locals to argue for conservation rather than development (Kirkpatrick, 1988).

2.2. Procedure

After we gained approval from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania, we distributed the questionnaire using Survey Monkey. We gained a high level of publicity in the Tasmanian media (e.g. Kirkpatrick, 2016). We also circulated an invitation to participate through various email networks.

The first question provided the raw material for our first and second aims. It was open-ended: ‘In this section we want you to list the places (e.g. Burnie waterfront, Sandy Bay, Rocky Cape, Mt Ossa, Blundstone Oval) and regions (e.g. Bass Strait Islands, Tasman Peninsula, Southwest) in Tasmania to which you feel strongly attached. Please also write about your reasons for any or all place attachments if you feel

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