

## Parallel Session 35: The role of place attachment in sustainable development

*Time: Wednesday, June 29 2016: 16:00 - 18:00*

*Location: Large lecture hall, IKDC*

*Session chair: Maria Nordström*

### Presentations:

#### ***Residents' relationships with place in a suburban planned community: Place attachment and the role of nature***

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Place attachment of residents of a suburban planned community was investigated in this study. The aim was to understand planned communities' qualities as a place and evaluate them from the perspective of residents' long-term psychological relationships with the environment. In-depth interviews were conducted to residents of one of the largest planned communities in Japan (called "new towns") in a suburb of Tokyo. They were interviewed about their life history, experiences living in the town, and evaluations, opinions and feelings towards the environment. Interviewees fell in distinctive categories in terms of age level and length of residence. They were: First generation over 60 years old who settled as the first residents of the town under construction; Second wave in their late 40s and 50s with a length of residence between 10 and 20 years; New comers in their 30s who moved in less than 10 years ago to the completed town; New town raised in their 20s, children of the first generation.

First generation, second wave, and new town raised residents felt attachment to the town. However, new comers had mixed feelings and expressed resistance to being attached to the town because they were not sure whether they would settle ("I try not to become attached"). Second-wave residents also expressed some reservation ("I don't want to admit it, but I came to feel attached"). Their choice to live in the new town was a practical compromise between dwelling conditions and price, and the fact that it was not the ideal place in the beginning made them reserved. In contrast, the first generation had little choice in acquiring a house at their time due to housing shortage, and viewed the town with a taken-for-granted attitude.

Interviewees were generally satisfied with the environment and resources of the town. However, they rarely came up with specific features or places of the town that were emotionally significant to them. Emotionally important elements were mostly places, landscapes and views in existing rural communities outside the new town. They were important not only for their restorative qualities, but as reminders of hometown to the first generation, and where the new town raised used to play as children. The rural landscape was considered a part of interviewees' images of "home", though social interaction with surrounding communities was almost non-existent.

Varieties were observed in views and processes of developing attachment to the town. They

corresponded to certain age levels, and interviewees of the same category had common feelings and attitudes towards the town. This pattern likely emerged because each group moved to the town at the same time in certain stages of the town's development. The rural landscape around the town played a fundamental role as a source of residents' sense of place. Greenery in the planned town and nature in the rural landscape played different roles: greenery was amenity while nature had diverse meanings in relation with individual experiences. In case of this particular new town, the rural context helped the town become a place.

#### ***Place, identity and pro-environmental behaviors: Theoretical and applied understanding for collective environmental action***

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As argued in a 2010 special issue of the Journal of Environmental Psychology by Dr. Devine-Wright and Dr. Clayton, a greater conceptual and methodological integration in future research on the interconnections among place, identity, and behavior should be pursued. Also, with the impending need of promoting collective pro-environmental action to cope with climate change (IPCC, 2014), it is wise to apply the study of the above-mentioned theoretical issue on pro-environmental behaviors occurrence. Accordingly, we structured a research project aimed at understanding the interconnections between place attachment and group identity in shaping pro-environmental behaviors. In fact, past research shows that place attachment ambiguously predicts environmental action, and further research is needed to understand such a relationship. In two studies, we demonstrated that the place attachment relationship with pro-environmental behaviors is moderated by a third variable, namely the identification with a reference group enacting the desired behavioral outcome. Because social norms consistently predict individuals' behaviors, identification with a specific group approving and enacting the behavioral outcome should strengthen the place attachment-environmental action consistency. On the contrary, identification with a group not approving neither enacting the behavioral outcome should weaken such a relationship. Within our framework, we tested this general hypothesis for identification with groups approving and enacting pro-environmental behaviors. In experiment 1, we hypothesize that group identity moderates the relationship between place attachment and pro-environmental behaviors: specifically, this relationship will be maximized for higher identification with the reference group. Within a University campus, we administrated a survey measuring students' attachment to the campus, their identification with the student group, and their in-campus pro-environmental behaviors. Results show a significant interaction effect between place attachment and group identification confirming our hypothesis. In experiment 2, we tested the same hypothesis within a lab-based 2 by 2 full factorial experiment. By manipulating place attachment and group identity, we replicated the results emerged in our first experiment. Specifically, the relationship between place attachment and pro-environmental behaviors is strengthened for higher group identification. Moreover, a third real-world experiment aimed at replicating the results emerged in experiments 1 and 2 is actually being conducted using an online sampling procedure through the use of social networks. Results will be eventually presented once the experiment will be completed. The overall set of results will further explain the complex