
The Emergence of Post-Suburban Landscapes on the North Coast of New South Wales: A Case Study of Contested Space*

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Introduction

Over the last 10–15 years, a restructuring of the Australian urban and regional system has begun to take place. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (1992) predicted major transformations to the urban pattern into the twenty-first century, including the emergence of a near-continuous line of urban development along the eastern seaboard from Cairns to Melbourne; a trend for cities to become multi-centred and suburban with a reduced role for the central cores; for state boundaries to become less important in growth regions (such as south-east Queensland, northern New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory/south-east NSW); and for isolated nodes of development in parts of Queensland and Western Australia to have stronger international links than with the state or nation. These transformations are attributed to economic restructuring and rationalization, technological change and the ageing of the population. As such, these expected patterns and processes of urban change bear resemblance to the new urban forms emerging in otherparts of the world, especially the post-suburban landscapes of California.

The principal aim of this paper is to consider recent changes to the urban landscape of Australia in light of the processes which have been shaping development elsewhere in the world, particularly as the Australian example appears to be in a period of transition. Focus is placed on the mechanics, outcomes and implications of change at the local scale and on the conflicts arising from contested development, whereby a host of different groups and interests compete for space. The difficulties of reconciling the aspirations of all interest groups, of exercising control by planning, of protecting natural environmental resources and of managing development in such a way that the scale of the new urbanization does not overwhelm the landscape represent the issues being faced by developers, planners and local communities as the urban restructuring of Australia takes place.

The paper will draw on evidence of urbanization on the North Coast of NSW and will provide a detailed examination of two shires in the region — Ballina and Byron — where

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a study was carried out by the authors in 1994 and 1995. Both shires are areas of high environmental value and have been subject to substantial population growth since the 1970s. A particular feature of the social environment is the presence of vocal community groups which have formed to defend vigorously the area's qualities. The planning system is experiencing considerable operational problems by attempting to balance the demands for new development with claims for restricting further growth. The strength of local opinion has a number of implications for the likely success of planning intervention in this aspect of urban management.

The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, the literature on post-suburban landscapes is reviewed; in the second section, previous research on the population and development trends in Australia are considered; in the third section, these patterns are related to NSW and its North Coast; and, in the fourth section, the implications of new development with reference to Ballina Shire and Byron Shire are discussed. In considering the emergence and impacts of post-suburban landscapes in this particular area of NSW, the paper explores the extent to which the notions and ideas of the postfordist concept may be applied. At the heart of the postfordism is the process of decentralization, increased local empowerment and a trend towards de-integration. Whether the model genuinely encapsulates the processes operating in Ballina Shire and Byron Shire clearly requires detailed discussion based on empirical investigation.

Post-suburban urban forms

A number of urban studies in the United States have identified a new and well-advanced pattern of urbanization. The established urban structure of metropolitan concentration based on industrial growth surrounded by economically inert, provincial and dormitory-based suburbs has begun to shift to increasingly economically active, polynucleated and amorphous suburbs with a less dominant central city (Kling *et al.*, 1991). Various terms have been coined to describe this new form of urbanization, including 'post-suburban' (Kling *et al.*, 1991); 'edge city' (Garreau, 1991); 'exopolis', 'technoburbs', 'silicon landscapes' (Soja, 1992); 'cyberbia' and 'ageographical city' (Sorkin, 1992). Key features of these extended urban forms are a homogenous landscape of low-rise buildings, often extending for hundreds of miles, with specialized residential, commercial and industrial zones (Gottdiener and Kephart, 1991: 34).

A unifying explanation of this new pattern of urbanization is postfordism, which encompasses a full sweep of related economic and social transformations such as the transition from industrial to post-industrial society and from modernism to postmodernism (Esser and Hirsch, 1989; Graham, 1992) (see Table 1). Postfordist technology, involving more flexible and specialized production, have meant that urban areas are no longer bound to mass production and large-scale assembly lines. New peripheral urbanization becomes possible to capture the new 'scope' economies of postfordist technology (Soja, 1992), allowing the deconcentration of ordinary labour intensive manufacturing (Gottdiener and Kephart, 1991). Also bound up with these changes has been the structural transformation to a post-industrial society, involving the replacement of an economic base dominated by manufacturing, with one dominated by service and information industries (Gottdiener and Kephart, 1991: 35). Kling *et al.* (1991: 15) have coined the term 'information capitalism' to describe occupations in which the processing and distribution of information are the central and time-consuming activities. These activities stimulate deconcentration of the urban form because of their use of mass communications and computer technology which frees them from central locations, and because such industries are more likely to require a greenfield site and a clean environment. Advanced technology and communications eliminate the importance of spatially defined communities (Winner, 1992: 54), and enable a shift from provincialism

Table 1 *Representations of fordist and postfordist frameworks*

	Fordism	Postfordism
<i>Economic relations</i>		
Production	Mass production (large-scale assembly lines), deskilled labour, mass consumption.	Flexible production (specialized production units), skilled labour, market niches. Post-industrial: growth of service industries and 'information capitalism'.
Markets	Provincialism and regional markets.	Globalization/cosmopolitanism and international markets.
Management	Corporate management, centralized control, application of scientific principles ('taylorism').	Deconcentration, autonomous roles to section/division managers within/between organizations.
<i>Political relations</i>		
Role of state	Economic growth provided resources for state provision of infrastructure to promote production and improve productivity. Authoritarian regulation.	Economic instability eroded public expenditure and political legitimacy of state spending. Replaced by 'strong state, free economy'. Deregulation.
Local government	Large-scale, bureaucratic, management and control. Expert-driven intervention.	New flexible forms of corporate policy-making. New forms of local governance.
<i>Social relations</i>		
Social impacts of economic system	Worker alienation.	Two-tier workforce: 'core' (skilled and enhanced conditions) and 'peripheral' (low job security, part-time/temporary, contracted, poor conditions, low wages).
Dominant culture	Welfarism/collectivism. Shared belief in infallibility of science and progress (modernism).	Enterprise culture/individualism. 'Safety net' welfare provision. Loss of faith in ideology of progress and science (post-modern). Growing environmentalism and development of alternative perspectives.
<i>Patterns of urbanization</i>		
Geography	Metropolitan concentration, economically inert and dormitory-based suburbs.	Decentralization. Less dominant central city, economically active, polynucleated and amorphous suburbs.

Table 1 (continued)

	Fordism	Postfordism
Form	Urban containment and concentration. Heterogeneous landscape. Functional architecture and design (modernist).	Urban sprawl and peripheral urbanization. Homogeneous landscape of low-rise buildings. Specialized zones. Aesthetic architecture and design (postmodernist).
<i>Land use planning</i>		
System	Emphasis on public sector regulation of land use.	Emphasis on enterprise culture/free market forces in more flexible allocation of land.
Dominant actors	Public sector agencies.	Private sector 'Growth networks'. Real estate developers.
Public involvement	Limited.	Increased public participation and empowerment. Environmentalism.
Outcome	Controlled development, maintaining 'status quo'.	Ad-hoc development. Conflict and contested space.

Source: Based and developed from Henry (1993, Table 7.1: 181).

to increasing globalization or cosmopolitanism (Kling *et al.*, 1992: 20). Local economies can be transformed from regionally-based markets to strong economies of international dimensions, where the importance of local space, linkages and control are reduced.

The homogeneity of post-suburban residential landscapes is attributed to private real estate developers, who are largely responsible for the construction of new properties. Developers tightly control residential developments by predetermined styles and designs, which venture too close to 'private-sector socialism' for some tastes (Soja, 1992: 114). The result is an urban landscape with little visual variety reflecting a standardized, quasi-global culture (Zukin, 1991: 20) and an expression of postmodernism shaped by aesthetic aims and principles (Harvey, 1989). Planning regulations play a role in stipulating the form and outcome of new urban development, although the underlying economic forces are beyond its control. Planning zoning laws usually favour relatively large plots and control building design, which act to keep property prices high (Zukin, 1991: 140). The regulation and intervention imposed by planning on private development under a fordist framework begins to be questioned as the economic instability of postfordism shifts the balance in favour of private enterprise. The formation of 'growth networks', consisting of coalitions of public officials (who are often significant owners of property), the real estate sector and representatives of finance and corporate capital, are other forces at work in the development process under postfordism (Olin, 1991: 224).

The implications of the post-suburban form are being increasingly recognized in the literature. Zukin (1991) focuses on the social inequalities emerging in these post-suburban areas. Kling *et al.* (1991: 23) discuss how post-suburban spatial organization may turn out to be far less than utopian as communities become increasingly segmented — spatially, economically, ethnically and socially. Within the globalization of the postfordist economy, Olin (1991: 223) highlights how powerful outside businesses begin to displace

established local business interests, although not without opposition. Local businesses have the most to lose in such competition as they are tied to the growth of the particular region in which they are located. Conflicts can also emerge within local communities as new values, new cosmopolitan political agendas and new development are imposed on local populations. A feature of postmodern society is increased public participation in planning and heightened environmental sensitivity, which translates into an eagerness to defend the existing environment. Ironically, this empowerment becomes an obstacle to the emergence of alternative forms of urbanization and serves to perpetuate forms that were originally tied to fordist consumption patterns (Filion, 1996: 1654). Contested space therefore emerges as a central theme in the development of post-suburban landscapes and provides the focus for this study.

Restructuring of the Australian urban system

The population of Australia is not only highly urbanized, but is also concentrated in a small number of sprawling coastal cities. Moreover, Australian cities have traditionally been characterized by low population densities and high levels of suburbanization. This settlement pattern originates from the dominance of the colonial capital of each state (Logan *et al.*, 1981; Hamnett and Bunker, 1987), the clear, perhaps culturally ingrained, preference of Australians for low density living (Bunker and Houston, 1992) and the abundant availability of land. Since the 1980s, important changes have begun to modify this well-defined urban pattern. Hugo and Smailes (1985; 1992) have shown that during the 1970s there was a reversal in the established pattern of population concentration in large urban centres, as significant population increases began to be experienced in non-metropolitan areas. The non-metropolitan increase was spatially concentrated in the attractive areas of the south-east and east coast and the areas around the margins of the commuting zones of large cities. The growth involved the retention of established residents and net migration gain from major urban areas. Paris (1994) has suggested that, in the last 10–15 years, a restructuring of the Australian urban and regional system has begun to take place. He described this change as the development of a national urban system, involving a linkage between the three dominant sprawling conurbations (south-east Queensland, Newcastle-Sydney-Illawara and Melbourne) and a rapidly growing and extensive coastal zone of consumption centres and suburban development. Other research verifies Paris's findings. Mullins (1990; 1992; 1994) used the term 'tourism urbanization', to describe the rapidly developing cities and towns specially built for the 'consumption of pleasure'. The Gold Coast of south-east Queensland serves as the best example of this new form of urbanization in Australia. Murphy (1976; 1981; 1985) has demonstrated the importance of retirement settlement in the urbanization of the coast, especially in New South Wales.

For Sant and Simons (1993), recent shifts in the Australian urban settlement pattern were associated with processes of counterurbanization, where people's resources and desire for different (and sometimes new) lifestyles have demanded the creation of new urban spaces. Although the process of counterurbanization is rather nebulous in its definition, it is generally taken to mean the deconcentration of population from urban areas to remoter rural areas, which have previously been losing population (Berry, 1976; Vining & Pallone, 1982; Perry *et al.*, 1986; Champion, 1989). Attempts to explain the underlying motives which prompt counterurbanization have been multifaceted, ranging from a change in values and the rejection of urban lifestyles; the spatial freedom for populations and industries provided by technological advancements; the role of diseconomies of agglomeration in existing centres; and the exploitation of lower-waged and non-unionized labour in peripheral regions.

Sant (1993) has identified distinct forms of coastal development in Australia which can be related directly to the population growth. One of the most common forms of

coastal development has been the extension (or infill) of existing settlements, although recent expansion of this sort has involved ribbons of development stretching along adjacent waterfronts. Existing freestanding, greenfield developments have also grown to become small urban centres. Marina villages and canal estates have been developed on low-lying land previously left vacant because of flood hazard, but which are now usable as a result of flood control engineering. Development on agricultural land, which has been subdivided into residential lots to achieve a higher return, has also become commonplace. These forms of coastal urban development have contributed to the spread of suburban landscapes in Australia, although they are in a much earlier phase of evolution than the post-suburban landscapes of California.

The implications of the new forms of urbanization are increasingly being recognized, especially in terms of being wasteful of productive rural land, destructive of environmental resources and a strain on local infrastructure. These concerns culminated in a government inquiry, which advocated the adoption of the concept of ecologically sustainable development in the management of Australia's coastal zone (Resource Assessment Commission, 1992). Paris (1994) has suggested that, as coastal urbanization becomes more dominant, significant political, economic and social implications will also take effect. The implications of continued coastal development will include increased local opposition to new construction, higher building densities to cope with the demand, and the gentrification of settlements, particularly in the more expensive coastal areas. Many of the new migrants, while contributing to this development process themselves, are well educated and effective in organizing and publicizing their opposition to new further development and their support for environmental protection. The behaviour of these activists in seeking to preserve their local environment appear to be universal and represent a common value system that contributes to a more homogeneous form of urban restructuring. Such groups can become extremely powerful due to the high profile they can achieve in what are still relatively small communities. The sociological changes and emerging conflicts involved in the population shifts associated with the restructuring of the Australian urban system present considerable implications and contradictions for the operation of planning and resource management, which this paper will explore further.

North Coast of New South Wales (NSW)

New South Wales (NSW) and its North Coast provides an appropriate case study to investigate these issues. The state has the country's largest population (c. six million people) and population growth. The North Coast possesses a highly valued environment and has experienced consistent population growth since 1976. Much of this growth has been associated with pressures from the bordering state (and from the Gold Coast conurbation of south-east Queensland in particular) rather than from pressures within NSW. At a very simplistic level, the North Coast of NSW represents a region in which the traditional dominance of the state capital is breaking down and being replaced by a developing national urban system. In this sense the processes of urban change in NSW bear the hallmarks of increasing postfordism whereby a trend towards decentralization and a multi-centred urban structure has evolved.

NSW covers 10.4% of the land surface of Australia and contains 34.1% of the country's population (Farrell, 1993). Sydney accounts for the largest proportion of the state's population (1989: 62.9%) and population growth (1981–89: 65.3%) (NSW Department of Planning, 1990) (see Figure 1). The metropolitan primacy of Sydney has been a long-established feature in NSW, often attributed to the city's role as the main gateway for international migration (Sant, 1993). Sydney is arguably Australia's only 'world city' (Berry and Rees, 1994). Outside the Sydney region, the majority of the population growth has occurred along the coast (especially the Illawarra, Hunter and

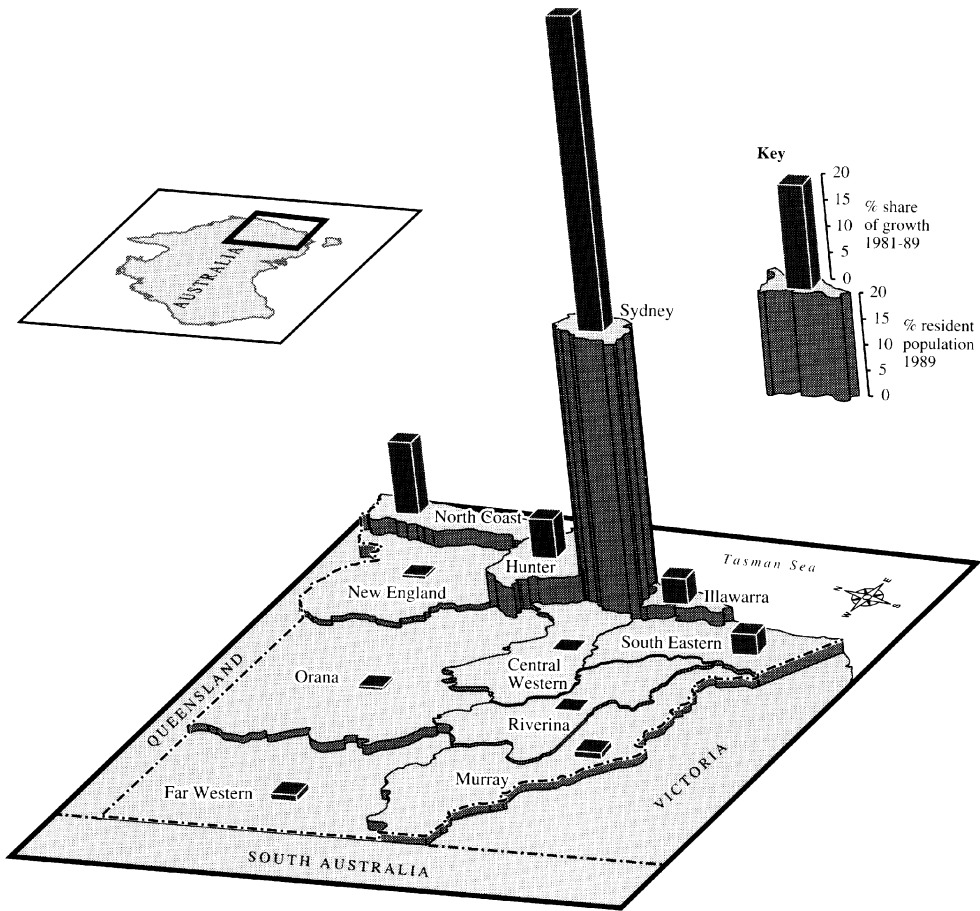


Figure 1 Distribution of population (1989) and share of growth (1981–89) in New South Wales (source: NSW Department of Planning, 1990)

North Coast regions). A total of 80% of the population of NSW is located in local government areas bordering the Pacific Ocean (Coastal Committee of NSW, 1994; Hugo, 1994).

The North Coast accounts for 6.8% of the population of NSW and 16.8% of the population growth (1981–89). Within the North Coast region, significant and consistent population growth has been evident since 1976, particularly in coastal shires such as Ballina, Byron, Hastings, MacLean, Nymboida, Tweed and Ulmarra (see Figure 2). In fact, the North Coast region is expected to increase its share of NSW’s population from 6.5% in 1986 to between 9% and 11% by 2021, largely as a result of in-migration (NSW Department of Planning, 1993). The growth of population in this region has been rapid and significant: resulting in extensive urban development.

The extent and rate of development on the North Coast since the early 1980s is indicated by the key planning statistics produced by the state government, which relate to new dwelling approvals (NSW Department of Planning, 1994). Most shires reflect the pattern for the North Coast as a whole, which is characterized by cycles of boom (1981, 1983–84, 1986–89, 1992–93) and recession (1981–83, 1984–86, 1989–92) (see Figure 3). The overall trend has been for an increasing number of approvals per year and for a

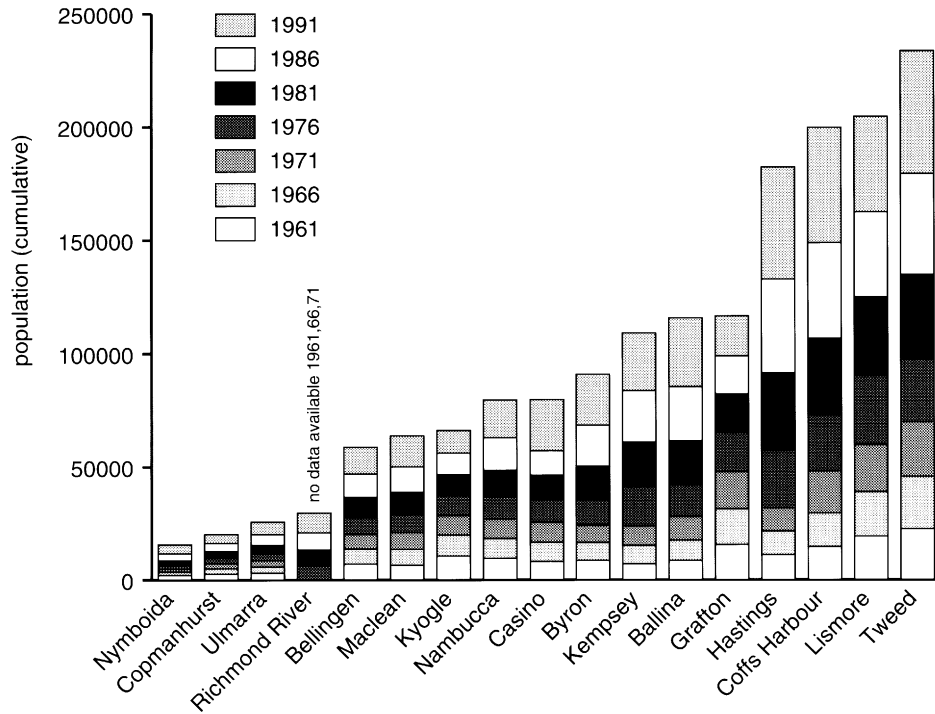
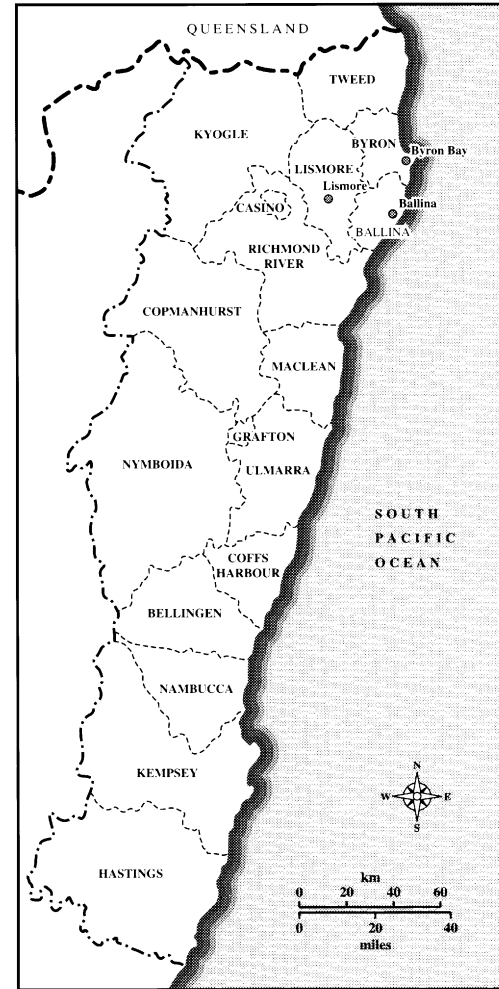


Figure 2 Population change in the North Coast region of New South Wales (source: NSW Department of Planning, 1984–94)



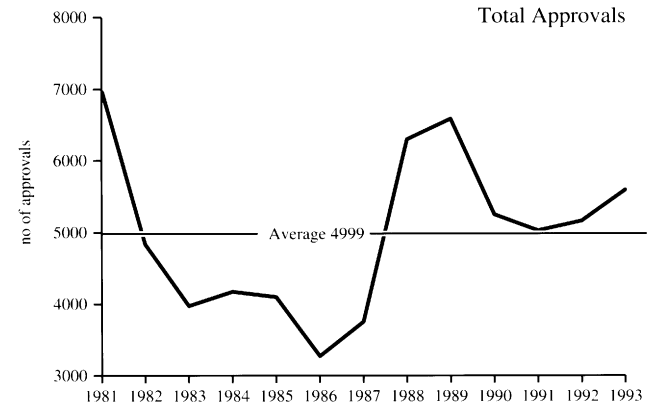
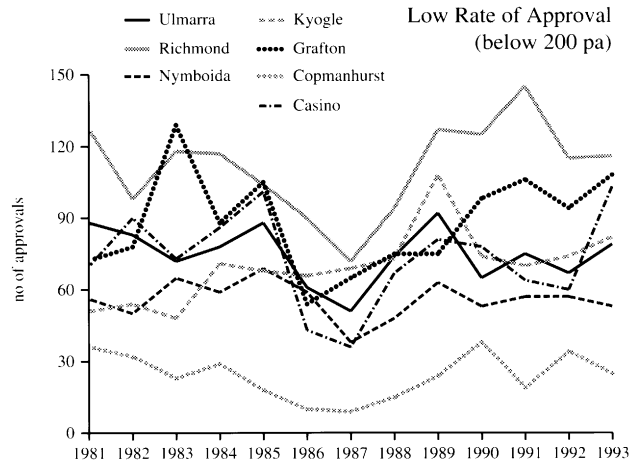
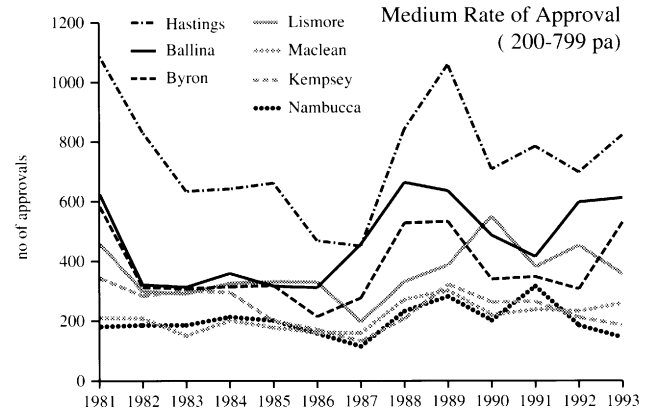
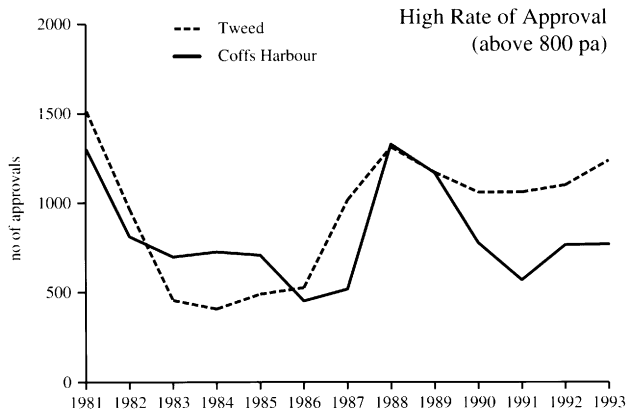


Figure 3 *New dwelling approvals in North Coast of New South Wales, 1981–93 (source: NSW Department of Planning, 1984–94)*

considerable amount of development since 1981 (64,989 approvals). Geographical variation is evident in the number of approvals for new dwellings over the period, 1981–1993. Consistently high rates of approvals (above 800 approvals per annum average) are concentrated in Tweed and Coffs Harbour, which represent the major coastal urban centres in the region. A small group of shires have approval rates of 300–799 per annum, including Ballina (470 per annum), Byron (378 per annum) and Lismore (361 per annum) forming a ‘triangle’ of growth in the far north of the area. Another group of shires have approval rates of 200–300 per annum (Kempsey, Maclean and Nambucca). The remaining seven shires have approval rates of less than 200 per annum, although these figures mask the real rate of development in some areas because of exemptions made by local planning regulations.

Ballina Shire and Byron Shire

The shires of Ballina and Byron present themselves as case study areas because of the high rates of development experienced in recent years and because they possess high landscape and ecological values. Both also exhibit a characteristic lifestyle which is cherished as an important element of contemporary Australia. Byron Shire, in particular, has evolved into a mecca for surfers and has achieved national recognition as a centre for people seeking an ‘alternative’ lifestyle. There is a strong desire among residents of Ballina and Byron Shires not to duplicate the type and scale of urban sprawl experienced on the neighbouring Gold Coast of south-east Queensland (Edols-Meeves and Knox, 1996).

The scale of population growth in the two shires since 1921 is shown in Figure 4. Both shires lost population prior to the 1970s, with Ballina Shire experiencing marginal losses between 1921 and 1947 and Byron Shire losing population in two periods (1921–33 and 1954–71). Even the gains in population experienced in Ballina Shire from 1947 and in Byron Shire between 1933 and 1954 were minimal, with growth never reaching more than 10% in an intercensal period. In contrast, however, the growth rates for both shires have increased markedly since 1976. These figures clearly show that there was a significant turnaround in population in the two shires after 1976.

As the population of the shires has increased, its composition has also changed. A comparison of the population pyramids for 1961 and 1991 for Ballina and Byron indicates an ageing of the community (see Figure 5), reflecting both national trends and the area’s function as a destination for retirement. Slight increases are also evident in the age groups 30–44, pointing to an in-migration of people of working age. Population forecasts for both shires by the NSW Department of Planning indicate that Ballina Shire will increase from a recorded population of 30,192 in 1991 to 44,000 by the year 2000, while Byron Shire will grow from a recorded population of 22,629 in 1991 to 29,200 by the year 2001. Byron Shire Council have estimated a slightly higher population for its shire of 32,123 by the year 2000 (see Figure 4). Population pressures in the two shires are thus set to continue into the next century.

Given that statistics of building approvals provide only a partial and incomplete guide to the true scale of new development in Ballina and Byron, the manifestation of population growth on the rate of residential development in the two shires is difficult to illustrate in statistical terms. Figure 3 has already shown that Ballina Shire and Byron Shire have experienced an above average rate of building approvals (i.e. 300–799 per annum) over the period 1981–93 and that these rates broadly reflect trends on the North Coast as a whole. Further data on building approvals for Ballina Shire were available to provide a complete set of figures from 1966 to 1993 (see Figure 6).

In order to obtain a better understanding of the impact of new development in the two shires, a series of aerial photographs were examined. The spatial pattern of development was plotted, focusing on the growth of the area in and around the towns of Ballina and

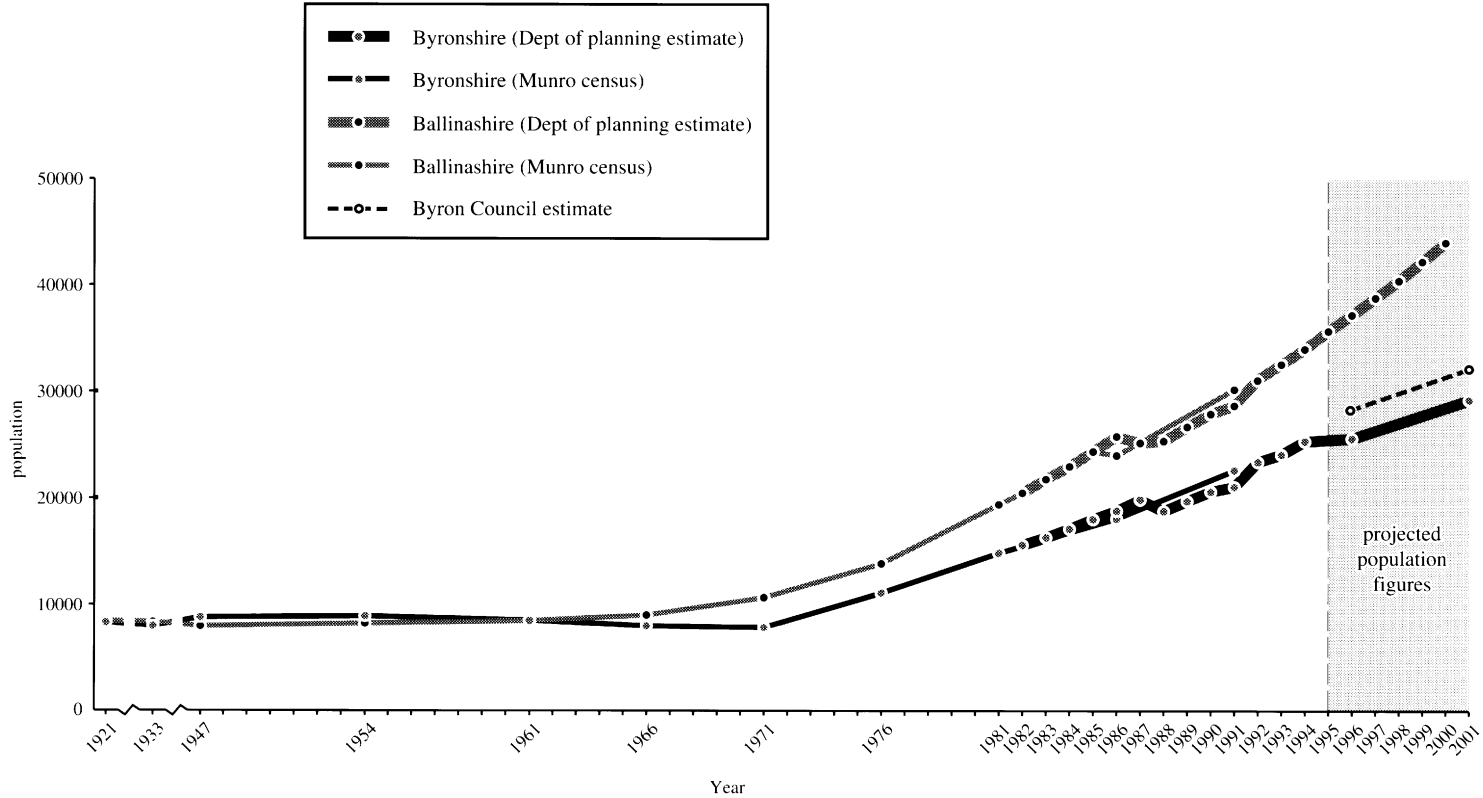


Figure 4 Population change in Ballina Shire and Byron Shire, 1921–2001 (sources: Munro, 1976; NSW Department of Planning, 1984–94; Byron Shire Council, 1994)

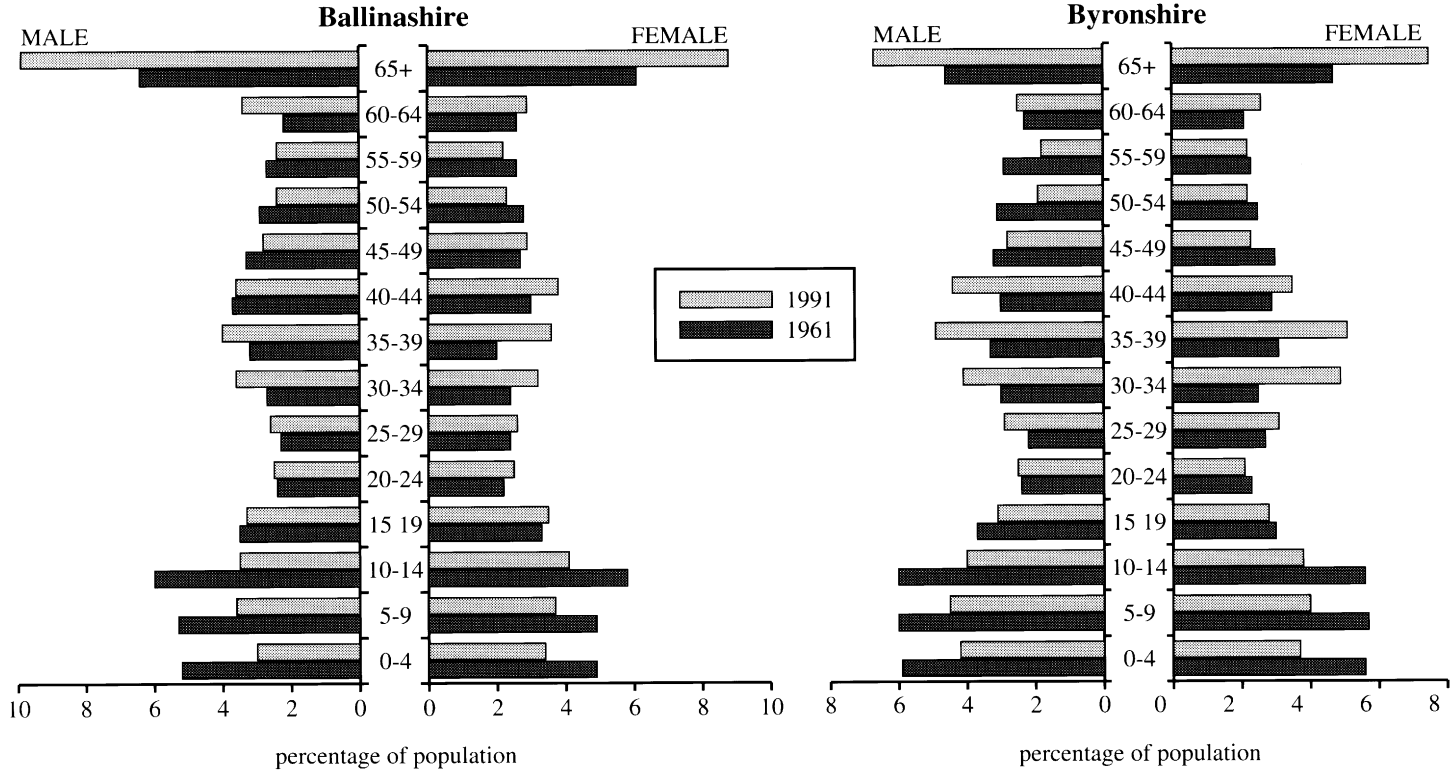


Figure 5 Population pyramids for Ballina Shire and Byron Shire, 1961 and 1991 (sources: Munro, 1976; Ballina Shire Council, 1993; Byron Shire Council, 1994)

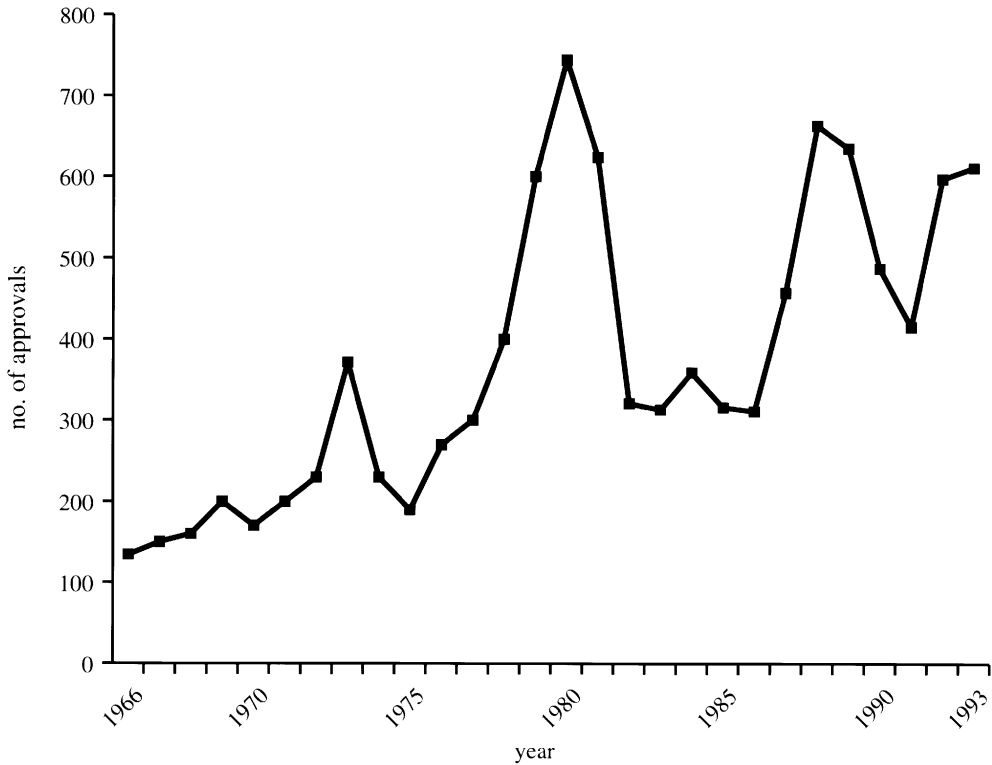


Figure 6 Building approvals for Ballina Shire, 1966–93 (sources: Derrett, 1994; NSW Department of Planning, 1994)

Byron Bay. The photographs provided a sequence of development for Ballina (1974–94) and for Byron Bay (1947–79), and was supported with reference to planning documents and field checking (1994).

The analysis revealed that, in the mid 1970s, urbanization in and around Ballina was concentrated in the town itself straddling both sides of North Creek (see Figure 7). A separate, beachside settlement to the north of Ballina, at Lennox Head, was starting to be developed. During the 1980s, the predominant form of urbanization occurred in the coastal strip between Ballina and Lennox Head thereby taking advantage of the seaward aspect. A marina development had also been established on the western side of Ballina on the Richmond River by the end of the 1980s. The coastal strip has continued to be developed in the 1990s and is being vigorously marketed as a ‘lifestyle investment’. The subdivided plots are sold under slogans such as ‘Life’s too short not to live here!’, which is a clear indication of the role of real estate developers in the emergence of these new urban forms and the emphasis placed on the ‘quality of life’ rather than ‘functional’ values of settlement.

The form of building development in Byron Bay apparent in 1947 indicates a low density ‘village-like’ township (see Figure 8). The seafront area of the town was not built up, enabling the sea and sand to encroach inland. There was also no development on Cape Byron, apart from the Lighthouse Keepers’ Cottages. By the end of the 1970s, however, housing development on Watergoes, Cape Byron Headland and a suburban development to the south of Byron Bay at Suffolk Park was evident, together with a more formalized sea front in the settlement of Byron Bay itself. Field observations made in 1994 show

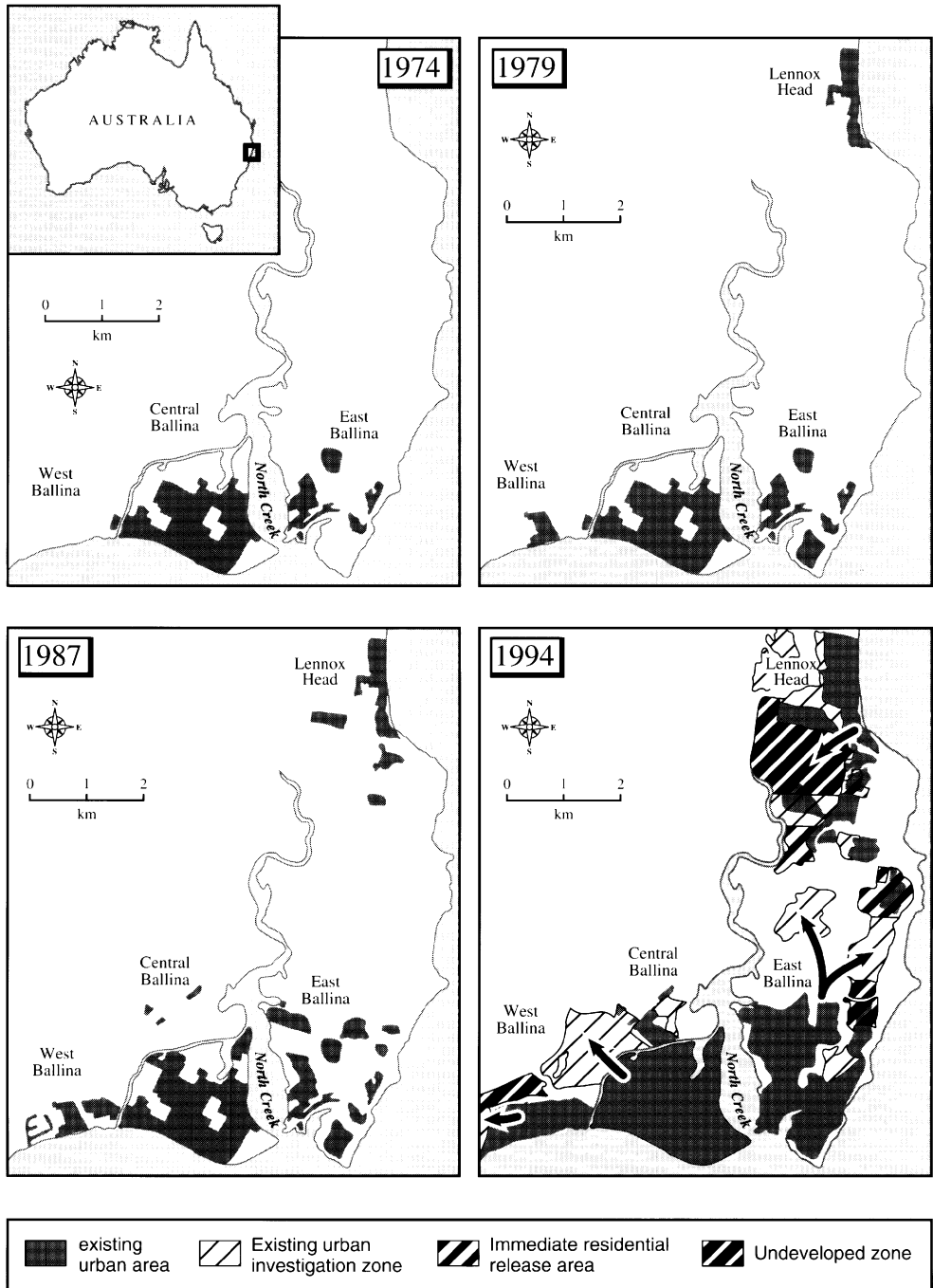


Figure 7 Spatial development of Ballina, 1974–94 (sources: CMA Ballina 9640-3-N, 1:25,000 Second Edition 1984 Topographic map; Aerial photographs (14 March 1974, 3 April 1979, 1 August 1987, 14 March 1994); field checking in November 1994; Ballina Shire Council, 1993)

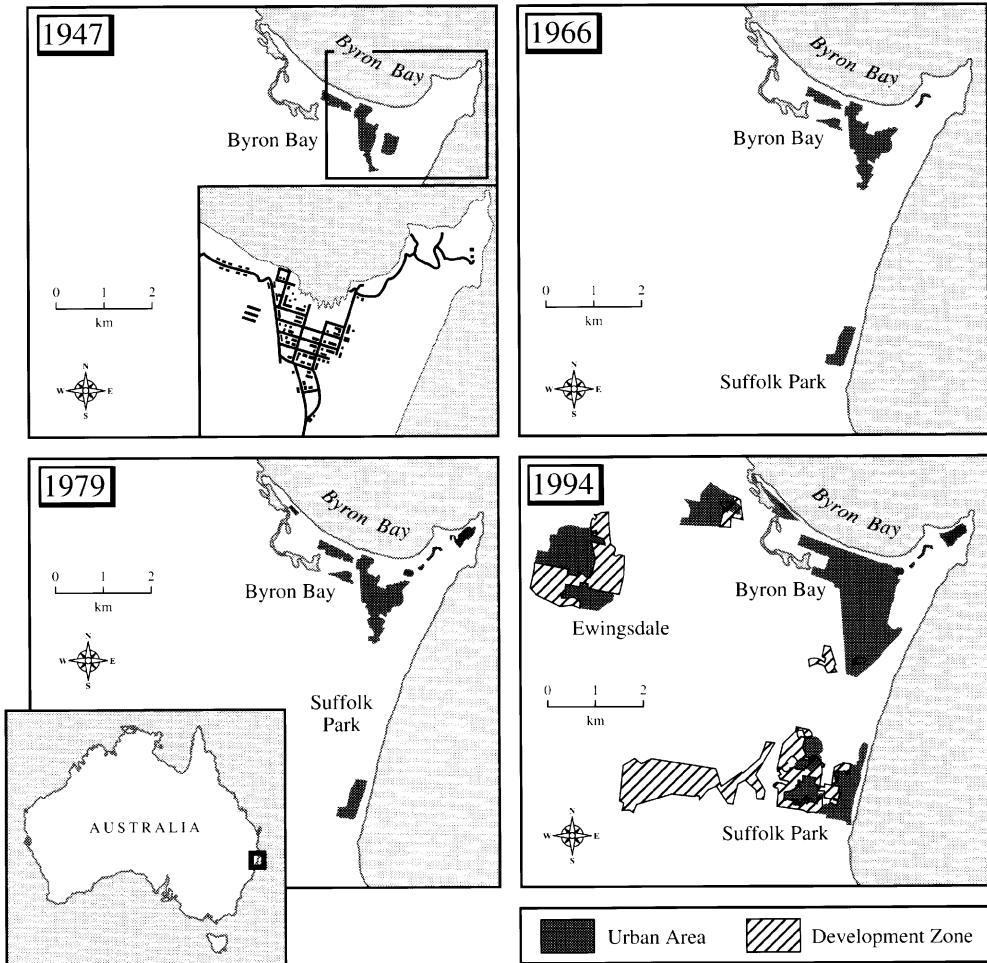
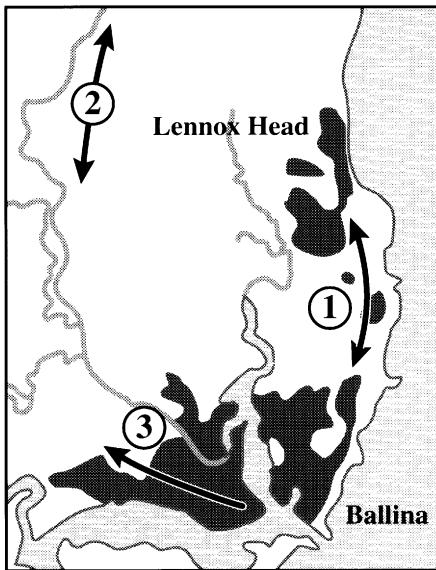


Figure 8 Spatial development of Byron Bay, NSW, 1947–94 (sources: CMA Byron Bay 9640-4-S, 1:25,000 Second Edition 1984 Topographic map; Aerial photographs (27 May 1947, 22 September 1966, 3 April 1979); field checking in November 1994; Byron Shire Council, 1990)

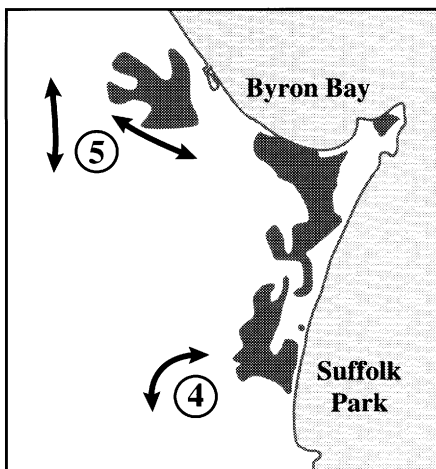
further extensions to the existing housing developments producing a much larger urban area, at a much higher density.

One consequence of population pressures in the area has been that land values in central Byron Bay have sharply increased. This change has encouraged some people living in the sought-after locations to rent their properties to visitors or short-term tenants and move to the suburbs, thus fuelling further development. Families remaining in Byron Bay have complained that many neighbourhoods now lack a sense of community spirit, representing a less tangible aspect of the wider experience of population and tourist pressure (Shantz, 1994).

The pattern of recent urban development around Ballina and Byron has not produced a sprawling amorphous suburb, bearing resemblance to the post-suburban landscapes of California, but perhaps represents an early stage in the transition to such an urban landscape. The scope for further growth of both Ballina and Byron Bay appears limited due to physical constraints. It was recognized in the North Coast Draft Urban Planning



- ① Urbanization of the East Ballina-North Creek corridor is likely with increases in urban density on Ballina Island.
- ② Possible urban development in the Cumbalum-Sandy Creek area.
- ③ Limited expansion of West Ballina if fill is available to raise land above flood heights.



- ④ Southern expansion of Byron Bay is limited by sensitive Broken Head habitat areas and buffers around extractive industries. Long-term expansion south-west of Suffolk Park may be possible.
- ⑤ Infill of land to the west of Byron Bay is an option but may lead to the loss of good agricultural land. Important to consider a coastal habitat corridor based on remnant vegetation.

Figure 9 Future expansion of Ballina and Byron Bay, NSW (source: NSW Department of Planning, 1993)

Strategy (NSW Department of Planning, 1993) that Ballina is likely to expand northwards along the coastal corridor to Lennox Head with some additional expansion to the west (see Figure 9). The possibility of urban development in the Cumbalum-Sandy Creek area was recognized, to provide a new focus of development, but otherwise infill and increased densities were regarded as the only realistic options to accommodate further growth. These planning options represent another challenge to retaining the sense of community and low rise urban form valued by the local residents. The explanation for the growth of the local population and urbanization in the North Coast area is related to three factors: consumption-led factors, production-led factors and the inability of the planning system to regulate these processes.

Consumption-led factors

The main cause of the population growth on the North Coast is seen as the redefinition and re-evaluation of the region's natural and lifestyle resources (Burnley, 1988; Murphy, 1992). The North Coast possesses rich land resources and a sub-tropical climate that has traditionally supported primary activities, such as agriculture, forestry and fishing. An appreciation of the area's scenic qualities was signalled by a growth of tourist numbers during the 1960s. Low land prices, relative to Sydney and other major cities, also contributed to the attraction of the area for settlement. Migrants of retirement age have been attracted to the area by its high environmental amenity, often having already purchased a second home in the region for recreational purposes. A survey of second home owners on the North Coast of NSW showed that 35% of buyers had future retirement as a purchase motive (Murphy, 1976). In the North Coast region, the proportion of retired population (over 65) is expected to increase from 14.3% in 1986 to 19.3% in 2016 (NSW Department of Planning, 1993). The migrants have also included younger people of working age who depend on business opportunities created by tourists and retirees. The staging of the Aquarius Festival at Nimbin in 1973 encouraged a large influx of people seeking a different way of life and an escape from the 'rat-race' of city life. These migrants, described as 'alternative' settlers, have been strongly motivated by lifestyle opportunities and the environmental quality of the region. Some of the migrants have professional backgrounds and have continued to pursue their careers in an environment which contrasts with their former residence. Others, who have moved onto large properties or have joined communes, have been able to adopt self-sufficient lifestyles. However, some are 'welfare' recipients (other than pensioners) who, while unemployed, benefit from the lifestyle, environment and lower cost of living of the region. Much of the population growth can therefore be considered as consumption-led, based on the residential choice of retirees, business operators and alternative lifestyle groups.

Questionnaire surveys in Byron Bay have indicated some of the main motivations for moving to the region. A consultancy study undertaken for Byron Shire Council in 1983 showed that the 'relaxing lifestyle' was the most valued feature about living in the area (Table 2) followed by the 'pleasant climate' and 'attractiveness of the coastal location' (Planning Workshop, 1983). Similar results were obtained from the responses to a question on the factors influencing the purchase of land in Byron Shire. The 'scenic beauty', 'existing character' and 'climate' were the main factors which were found to influence the purchase decision (see Table 3) (Planning Workshop, 1983). These results indicate the motivations of residents and migrants in the early 1980s, after the first decade of population growth, although studies undertaken in the 1990s have produced similar

Table 2 *Features enjoyed about living in Byron Shire*

	% of First Ranks	Mean of 3 Ranks
Relaxing lifestyle	19.6	18.0
Pleasant climate	18.1	18.7
Attractive coastal location	16.8	18.7
Low intensity and scale of development	11.6	2.6
Good place to raise a family	10.0	11.9
Attractive rural environment	9.4	9.7
Good farming land	4.8	3.8
Opportunity for growth and development	4.4	8.3
Good compromise between city and rural living	4.1	4.4
Proximity to Gold Coast/Brisbane	0.8	3.5
Availability of employment opportunities	0.4	0.4

Source: Planning Workshop (1983).

Table 3 *Factors influencing the purchase of land in Byron Shire*

	Strongly Influenced		Influenced		Not Influenced		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Climate	315	63.8	163	33.0	16	3.2	494	100.0
Availability of land/ housing	76	19.6	137	35.4	174	45.0	387	100.0
Competitive prices	62	16.9	128	34.6	180	48.6	370	100.0
Quality of beaches	231	54.5	139	32.8	54	12.9	424	100.0
Services provided	37	10.4	114	32.0	205	57.6	356	100.0
Scenic beauty	326	69.1	128	27.1	18	3.8	472	100.0
Anticipation of growth and development	117	28.8	125	30.8	164	40.4	406	100.0
The existing character of the area	281	61.6	139	30.5	36	7.9	456	100.0

Source: Planning Workshop (1983).

results. In 1993, a survey into reasons for living in Suffolk Park, a suburb of Byron Bay, showed that the 'attractive coastal location', the 'pleasant climate' and that the area was a 'good place to raise a family' were important to the residents (Shantz, 1994). The strength of 'environmental value' as a motivation for moving to the area gives an initial indication of the likely concern by the local community over further urban development.

Production-led factors

The influence of production-led factors in the population growth on the North Coast must also be highlighted (Sant and Simons, 1993). Although it should not be overemphasized, the growth of new employment sectors, such as tourism, has played an important role in attracting people to the area through the business opportunities created. Statistics, based on the three year averages of 1989, 1990 and 1991, indicate about 1.031 million domestic and 57,923 international tourists visit the upper North Coast region (Lane, 1993), with growth partly due to the 'spillover' effect of tourism on the Gold Coast, rather than to linkages with the rest of NSW (Hall, 1990). Accommodation statistics show a low level of serviced provision, with hotels and motels accounting for only 10% of visitor nights. Staying with friends and relatives accounts for 41% of stays and various types of budget accommodation account for the residue (backpackers hotels 20%, youth hostels 11%, camping and caravans 10%). However, the Tourism Commission of NSW (1987) has been encouraging the development of purpose-built resorts, large three-star hotels, holiday apartments and farm-stay accommodation as well as more motels and backpacker hostels. In many settlements, tourism development is concentrated in the more densely developed coastal fringe and orientated on the major north-south transport route of the Pacific Highway. It should also be noted that tourism can represent the initial stage in the resettlement process whereby satisfied tourists may ultimately return as part of a future wave of permanent working or retiree migrants (Burnley, 1988). This relationship highlights the significance of tourism in the urban restructuring of the North Coast of NSW, both as a form of new tourism-related development and as a stimulus to later residential development.

The influence of tourist-related development has increased in both Ballina and Byron shires. The number of visitor nights spent in Byron Shire increased by 94% between 1983 and 1993 and now stands at 1.5 million visitor nights. In Ballina Shire, the volume of visitor nights increased by 18% over the same period and now stands at 1.1 million visitor

nights (Tourism Commission of NSW, 1986; 1989; 1994). The level of informal forms of accommodation provision, such as camping and caravan establishments, has changed very little in the shires, although Byron has experienced considerable growth in the number of private apartments — some of which have been able to command rents as holiday accommodation in excess of AUS\$2000 per week. In addition, a number of the small, specialized hotels, which have recently been developed in Byron, charge room rates equivalent to those of five star hotels in Sydney. With the exception of a new three star beachside resort, Ballina continues to be dominated by two to three star motels which cater for the family holiday market and commercial travellers.

The shires are actively promoted by the Regional Tourism Organization using the slogan 'Tropical NSW' to evoke the natural and cultural attractions of the region. The North Coast of NSW is also receiving considerable federal assistance to promote and develop tourism in the region, through an eco-tourism strategy from the Commonwealth Department of Tourism (AUS\$200,000) and a development strategy from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (AUS\$2.5 million). These initiatives are also a significant influence on the restructuring of regional Australia, and are a rare example of public sector investment in postfordist times, which is usually characterized by a worsening fiscal crisis and growing scepticism concerning large-scale infrastructure projects (Filion, 1996: 1640).

Population growth on the North Coast has been facilitated by another production-led factor: the development and marketing of residential properties. Developers purchase land and then offer plots to prospective buyers. Buyers can have a considerable influence on the style and design of their property, usually by modifying one of the designs offered by the development company or builder. The end result is a housing estate of considerable local diversity but standardized in terms of building materials, architecture and quality — a situation noted by Zukin (1991). Many of the new estates on the North Coast of NSW offer residential environments that are difficult to distinguish from those of the suburbs of Sydney. The operation of the development control system in Australia is also important to understand as an influence on the style of new development and is now considered.

Public sector regulation of development

Numerous federal, state and local government agencies exist with duties to guide decisions about development (RAC, 1993) (see Figure 10). However, in terms of the day to day decisions over development applications, responsibility lies with the local shire councils. The Local Environment Plan (LEP) sets out the land zoning in the shire and therefore provides an indication to developers as to the suitability and location of different types of development (e.g. Ballina Shire Council, 1987). The Urban Land Release Strategy guides the release of undeveloped land for development according to forecasts of population growth and occupancy rates (e.g. Ballina Shire Council, 1990). The Strategy also determines the location, lot sizes and densities for new buildings and facilitates the planning of infrastructural requirements. These documents follow state guidelines on the release of land and design of development (NSW Department of Environment and Planning, 1988; NSW Department of Planning, 1989a; 1989b). This process assumes that a council's plan accords with private developers' views of the demand and location of new property. In cases where developers or landowners wish to utilize land not classified for urban uses in the LEP, commonly over the subdivision of land released from agricultural uses, a rezoning proposal can be considered. Decisions about rezoning proposals are based on the merits of the application and require a period of 'urban investigation', of about three to four months. During this time an Environmental Impact Assessment report is prepared and the public have a chance to comment on the proposed change of use. Rezoning of the LEP is demand led and is a constant and ongoing process. The

COMMONWEALTH/ FEDERAL LEVEL	Federal Government (Canberra)			
	INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS eg. convention on wetlands of International Importance	LANDHOLDER eg. Dept of Defence, Australian Maritime Safety Authority	LEGISLATION eg. World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983	PROGRAMS eg. Ocean Rescue 2000, National Landcare Program
STATE LEVEL	New South Wales Government Department of Planning			
	ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICIES guide and control particular land uses or environments eg. SEPPP14 coastal wetlands SEPPP26 Littoral rainforests	REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS guide future development eg. North Coast REP 1988	URBAN PLANNING STRATEGY guide release of land for future development	OTHER STATE AGENCIES Coastal Policy Review Committee (1990 & 94), Dept of Conservation and Land Management, NSW Fisheries, National Parks & Wildlife Service, NSW Tourism Commission
SHIRE LEVEL	Shire Councils			
	LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS maximise productivity while maintaining ecological resources. Specify land use zones	URBAN LAND RELEASE STRATEGY guide release of land for development	OTHER eg. local tourism plans	
Public Participation				

Figure 10 Levels of planning in the Australian Coastal Zone (based on Resource Assessment Commission, 1993)

development process in Australia is therefore controlled by public sector regulation, but is responsive to private sector demands. However, as the role of planning is rooted in fordist and modernist patterns of production and consumption, involving rigid land use zoning, public regulation is experiencing increasing difficulties in adapting to the changing private sector pressures of postfordism, which require greater flexibility in land allocation decisions. It has been suggested that the planning system in Australia as a whole, and in NSW in particular, has three main weaknesses, which reflect these emerging conflicts.

First, the complexity of the planning system has been questioned. The Resource Assessment Commission's Inquiry on the Coastal Zone (RAC, 1992) took NSW as one of its case study areas and noted that existing practices, mechanisms and structures had not been effective in dealing with many issues that had arisen. The principal deficiencies of the system were noted as (RAC, 1992: 41):

- the fragmentary nature of decision-making between different levels of government;
- inadequate management mechanisms;
- inadequate public involvement;
- lack of a national approach to management;
- failure to implement procedures that ensured that decisions about the use of resources took account of the resources' real value to society;
- failure to integrate economic and environmental considerations into coastal zone management.

These issues highlighted the fact that the central problems with the planning system were related, not so much to the rate of population growth or to the absolute number of people wishing to live in coastal areas, but to the way in which competing demands for resources were being managed.

The second main weakness relates to the operation of planning in societies such as Australia, where emphasis is placed on private freehold ownership and minimum 'interference' in the right to develop land (including town and country planning) (McLoughlin, 1992). As a result of such cultural attitudes, common in Australia, planning laws tend to be subverted or even ignored by landowners and developers who feel they possess the development rights over their land irrespective of policy. The strength of these 'rights' is so strong that planners tend to acquiesce quietly or are politically impotent to resist (Foyel and Houston, 1992). In addition, development at the rural-urban fringe is often considered to be inevitable (Bunker and Houston, 1992). Traditional activities, such as agriculture and mining, often find their operations disrupted as residential areas encroach into the countryside and residents' complaints about smells, noise, agricultural spraying, harvesting and haulage increase (Ballina Shire Council, 1982). In some rural areas, the shadow of impending urbanization also raises land values beyond the ability of agriculture to remain commercially viable as a land use (Bunker and Houston, 1992). These circumstances, together with landowners' expectations of development rights irrespective of local planning policy, create a short-term approach to the investment, management and utilization of the land by landowners. This so-called 'impermanence syndrome' reinforces the inevitability of urbanization in the rural-urban fringe (Foyel and Houston, 1992). Planning systems seem unable to control such pressures.

A third weakness relates to concerns over corruption in the planning system, which have been raised in connection with the high level of involvement by the private sector, particularly in relation to rezoning proposals. Land development on the North Coast of NSW was investigated by an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry in 1990 (ICAC, 1990). The Commission established that improper payments to public officials and politicians had been made by consultants acting for landowners in return for favourable rezoning decisions. As a result of these circumstances, it is a common public perception that the planning system has been unable to control development pressures and has contributed to the strong public feelings and involvement in these issues. It might be argued that planning is part of the process of urban restructuring, but also appears to be unable to satisfactorily intervene in the operation of the free market.

Public concerns about development

The rate of new urban development on the North Coast of NSW has aroused considerable concern about the detrimental effects on the environment and society. The region has the second highest level of biodiversity in Australia, exceeded only by the wet tropics (National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1992, cited in NSW Department of Planning, 1993). It contains the majority of NSW rainforests, the largest number of eucalypt species and the habitat for many rare, endangered and migratory species. Aboriginal sites, buildings from the early period of European settlement and a vibrant community arts scene are evidence of the region's cultural heritage. The result is an area of great scenic, recreational and conservation value. Continued development may damage these environmental features and undermine the lifestyle so valued by its residents and prospective migrants.

In 1991, the National Parks and Wildlife Service calculated that 36% of the North Coast had already been cleared of natural vegetation and that the rate of population

growth had outpaced the development of supporting physical infrastructure and human services (NSW Department of Planning, 1993). The Urban Development Strategy for the North Coast highlighted a number of locations where sewage treatment works were reaching capacity, where extra water supplies were required and where regional centres were not providing desirable levels of specialist medical, cultural and recreational facilities for the growing population.

Rural residential development, created by sub-division and producing a very dispersed settlement pattern, has aroused particular concern. Such development is considered to be extremely wasteful of land; is often uneconomic to service with basic infrastructure (roads, sewers, community facilities); can sterilize agricultural, geological and land resources; and can reduce the scenic and amenity value of the rural hinterland. The ad-hoc manner of such development can have significant implications for the environment as well as for the pattern of future urban growth. It is easy to appreciate why, in the late 1980s, there was a public perception that development along the NSW coast was uncontrolled (Coastal Committee of NSW, 1994).

The results of the 'Coast wise' project, undertaken by Southern Cross University to measure public opinion and awareness of coastal development on the North Coast of NSW in 1994, underlined some of these concerns (Dutton, 1994). The study showed that the three main threats perceived by over 70% of respondents were poor planning, lack of development control and overdevelopment. There was a great deal of public cynicism, made evident in the survey, about the will of government to control coastal urbanization.

Public contestation

Public opinion and involvement in planning issues can be very influential. Indeed it was acknowledged in the North Coast Draft Urban Planning Strategy that many settlements may grow more slowly in the future, not only as a result of natural constraints, but also due to the wishes of local communities (NSW Department of Planning, 1993). In many cases, public involvement in development issues can become a negative force. The RAC study in NSW reported that public groups often concentrated on technical or procedural aspects to prevent a development rather than on the merits of the proposals or decisions (RAC, 1993). Planners may also avoid making controversial decisions over applications and adopt a 'bunker mentality' for fear of causing public outcry. These issues represent potential barriers to the complete evolution of post-suburban landscapes in Australia, but also raise contradictions. While many of the local residents have contributed to the new patterns of growth and are willing to participate actively in planning decisions over new development, both of which are elements of postmodernist society, their opposition to change indicates an attachment to fordist consumption patterns (Filion, 1996: 1652).

Residential and tourism development in Ballina Shire and Byron Shire has received a vocal and sometimes hostile reaction from the local community. This situation is particularly the case in Byron Shire where, partly as a result of the characteristics of the migrants, a number of organized environmental groups have been established (e.g. Byron Environmental Centre and Byron Environmental and Conservation Organisation (BEACON)). These groups have a high profile, make their feelings known about planning and development issues and are critical of local government planners. For example, in 1993, BEACON held a conference which sought to create a future vision for the shire (BEACON, 1993). Considerable emphasis was placed on principles of ecological sustainability and public participation and provided tangible evidence of the level of commitment to environmentalism and empowerment in the community.

Specific tourism development proposals have faced vigorous local opposition. A Development Application (DA) submitted by Club Méditerranée (Club Med) to develop

an existing tourist resort complex into an 800 bed resort in Byron Bay was narrowly approved by the Shire Council in 1994. The decision was successfully challenged in the Land and Environment Court by 'Byron Businesses for the Future', a group of local businesses which had been formed to oppose the DA. The reason for the court's decision was that the developers had not submitted a Fauna Impact Statement. This decision was regarded on the one hand as a moral victory by those who had opposed the development, but on the other hand, Club Med regarded it as a temporary delay, caused by a procedural technicality. The case is a good example of how local vested business interests successfully resisted powerful outside business interests (Olin, 1991; Mullins, 1994), in this instance a French multinational company. However, the means by which this outcome was achieved were not necessarily democratic or by a true representation of the facts.

The proposed Club Med development attracted considerable media attention. Local newspapers were used as a medium to promote a wide range of competing perspectives and the debate gained prominence following meetings which were held as part of the 'community consultation' process initiated by the developers. Interest, at the national level, was reflected by magazine articles and television documentary programmes. Opposition groups gained support from national figures, residing in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, for whom the preservation of the status quo in Byron Bay was seen as a *cause célèbre*. The role of the media was influential in the way in which views of particular interest groups, especially the opposition, were given prominence. The strength of opposition to the Club Med proposals portrayed in the media was contrary to previous research in Byron Bay which indicated that residents were in favour of tourism, particularly if there are benefits to them individually and to the community. Nearly two-thirds of a sample taken in Byron Bay supported the passive use of the shire's natural features as its major tourist attraction (Byron Shire Council, 1984). In a later survey, Brown (1992) showed that while there was concern about the impact of new tourist related development in Byron Bay, nearly 80% of the respondents perceived no threat from further development. The anomaly between the results of these previous surveys and the response to the Club Med proposal would seem to be a product of the ability of articulate, well-connected groups to promote their views in local and national media.

The rejection of the Club Med development does indicate that regional restructuring in Australia can be influenced by selective local participation in the development process. The role of the media in this process would appear to be critical. Local newspapers, in particular, are the usual source of information about a specific development issue. Journalists and editors of newspapers are therefore in a very influential position as they can sway local opinion depending upon the content, frequency, priority, debate and sensationalism attached to information presented on such issues. The ability of local interest groups to gain media attention to forward their views is also relevant to this process. Indeed, the role of the media in informing, stimulating and 'filtering' public participation in the development process would be a possible avenue of future research. The Club Med case would seem to suggest that the adoption of an open, inclusive form of communication may have negative consequences if community consultation is portrayed in the media in a way which serves to highlight the concerns of particular groups, whether local vested business interests or the vanguard of the environmental movement. This conclusion does not suggest that stakeholders should be excluded from the planning process but it does imply that conflict resolution may need to be attempted in a less widely publicized way. Public participation might then become more constructive and planning decisions reached for the benefit of the whole community and economy. A consequence of a community's myopic concentration on a single issue is that it allows other, less contentious, but sometimes significant, developments to proceed unopposed.

Conclusion

A new phase in the development of the Australian urban system is undoubtedly occurring, with an increase in population and development along the coastal zone. These movements are connected with aspects of the post-industrial society, such as the growth of service industries, tourism and leisure-related urbanization and retirement. The new patterns have obvious implications for the environment, in terms of the extent of built land, disruption to landscape and nature conservation and increased pollution, but they also have more subtle implications for the community and for cultural values, as illustrated in the case study of the North Coast of NSW. Both local residents and businesses have become motivated to protect their environment from further development, although the representation of the community in such opposition may be selective and may be biased from the use of the media to gain support and validation.

The maintenance of environmental and cultural values in light of development pressures has been particularly difficult to resolve by the existing planning structures. This situation exists not just because of the magnitude of the issue, but because of the strength of perceived development rights, the problems of establishing appropriate planning structures, the suspicion of corruption in development and planning and because of the often extreme positions taken in public participation in planning. In a few instances, strong public opinion and opposition to development has caused planning to work by restraint, rather than by policy and positive creation. Often developments have been halted by public participation on the basis of technical or procedural aspects rather than the merits of the proposals, as in the Club Med example. Under conditions of strong public resistance to local development, there is the potential that the trajectory of urban restructuring in Australia might be significantly modified in the future so as not to replicate the post-suburban forms of California and elsewhere. The post-suburban landscapes of Australia, while low-density, based on service industries (particularly tourism and the elderly) and incoming overseas investment, might be characterized by higher levels of environmental conservation and urban containment.

The case study, while only partial, does highlight a number of key issues in understanding the nature of urban development within a postfordist framework. The recent urban development on the North Coast of NSW has been rapid and extensive, but remains many stages behind the post-suburban landscapes of California. Nevertheless, some of the processes of urban restructuring in this region of Australia are similar to processes identified elsewhere, particularly in terms of the role of lifestyle aspirations, retirement, tourism and real estate development which are inextricably linked to postfordist trends. The contribution of spillover effects from the sprawl of the Gold Coast of south-east Queensland into the North Coast of NSW is an indication of the emergence of a national urban system, associated with the amorphous suburbanization of postfordism. The importance of tourism development to urban restructuring on the North Coast of NSW was particularly significant. Tourists, attracted to the area for holidays because of the local environment and culture and consequently stimulating tourism-related development, may later form a future wave of permanent working or retirement migrants, fuelling further residential development.

Within these strong postfordist processes, there were some remnant fordist forces at work, related to the involvement of the public sector. Some of the development and promotion of tourism in the region had been with the assistance of substantial public sector investment. Planning also contributed to the sprawling nature of the new urban development through regulations stipulating zoning, plot size and building design. The inability of the planning system to respond to the new flexibility in land allocation decisions required by postfordist developers has produced weaknesses in the system. Indeed, the effectiveness of public opposition to new urban development by both local

residents and business interests have created barriers to further urbanization of this type. What the case study serves to highlight is an emerging contradiction in seeking to explain these trends with postfordist theories. On the one hand, the underlying forces of change and the empowerment of the public within the development process exhibit clear postmodernist tendencies. On the other hand, the most significant constraints on the development of a new pattern of urbanization are public opposition and planning regulations, which cling to fordist values and patterns of consumption. Clearly the postfordist concept provides a useful, but incomplete, explanatory framework or model within which the processes of change in Ballina and Byron Shires may be placed. Its failure to encapsulate entirely the trends observed in this area of NSW should not be seen as a critical flaw in the application of postfordist thinking in an empirical context. Instead, its strength lies in providing a set of ideas and perspectives which help to shape and sharpen analysis and discussion.

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