CHAPTER 13

Disaster, Place, and Justice: Experiencing the Disruption of Shock Events

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13.1 Introduction

Unprecedented global processes such as climate change and urbanisation are likely to not only change and transform urban areas but also metamorphosise and disrupt the concepts and certainties that support everyday life to make what was "*unthinkable yesterday … real and possible today*" (Beck, 2016). Our interest lies in this distinction between events that change or transform urban and peri-urban places, and events that disrupt or undermine their very meaning and value for residents and communities. Specifically, we explore how this distinction between impact and metamorphosis of place is illustrated by the experiences of loss reported as a result of shock events—in this case a peri-urban bushfire.

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This approach requires engaging with and beyond empirical, physical, or infrastructural impacts of such events to examine what Carpenter, Folke, Scheffer, and Westley (2009) would term "noncomputable" factors of resilience—the emotional, personal, and innately subjective individual experiences of those whose lives are not only simply impacted, but thoroughly and conceptually redefined. Almedom and Tumwine (2008) define resilience, in part, as the ability of society to actively extract meaning from a shock event with the goal of maintaining normal function without fundamental loss of identity. This recognition of ontological factors of resilience is critical considering the increasing evidence that the emotional, lived experiences of place disruption have the potential to harm individual and community well-being through time (Askland & Bunn, 2018; Tschakert, Ellis, Anderson, Kelly, & Obeng, 2019). In the resilience literature, calling for increased awareness of intangible human loss is not only important, but also a means of justice in the face of coming shock events (Glandon, 2015; Magee, Handmer, Neale, & Ladds, 2016). These arguments suggest that the focus of resilience research must increasingly be turned towards experiences and meaning, rather than physical impacts of shock events alone, because ultimately "*resilience is experienced as a social narrative, not as a set of numbers*" (Glandon, 2015, p. 27); or, more specifically, the costs of property damage. Identity and attachment to place and community are key to such an expansive understanding of resilience. Indeed, placing meaning and identity at the heart of resilient communities becomes critical in a metamorphosing world in which relationships, experiences, and attachments are at risk.

In order to engage with the disruption of lived experiences, we draw on the concept of place attachment (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013). As attachment is about the bond between people and the places they live, a focus on the concept can bridge an exploration of changes in the physical world and subjective experiences and meanings of these changes. Place attachment is a dynamic, two-way relationship between specific environments and individual and community identity, and is emotionally constituted through place-based experiences, memories, and understandings through time (Devine-Wright, 2015). Events that alter the lived environment may require people to remake or redefine their emotional connections to place (Fullilove, 1996) and this is particularly true of shock events (Morrice, 2013). We use this conceptual approach in order to analyse and compare the experiences of community members

after a major bushfire in the Blue Mountains outside of Sydney, Australia, in 2013. We draw on resident and service provider focus group discussions to examine the relationship between shock events, conceptual disruption, and loss of place.

Our aim in this chapter is to consider the experiences of loss associated with this shock event in order to better understand the meaning of loss of place, its experience over time, and the relationship between that loss of place and other impacts to individuals and communities. We start with a discussion of the meaning of place attachment, and its relationship to a concept of environment and climate justice in the context of resident identity. We then illustrate the relationship between this idea of place attachment and the threat of shock events with reference to the bushfire. And we explore why and how this discussion pushes against more traditional infrastructure-focused understandings of approaches to resilience, closing with a suggestion for more place-aware resilience policymaking.

13.2 Place Attachment and Resilience: Identity, Emotion, and Imagined Futures

Physical places give people ontological meaning in their day-to-day material lives. Important here is Graham et al.'s (2013, p. 49) concept of "lived values", or the everyday practices or articulations through which communities and individuals express the values that define "*what is important in their lives and the places they live*". Events that change that relationship between experiences of the physical world and their meaning can significantly disrupt these values and change how people relate to their environment (Rawluk et al., 2017). As Tweed and Walker (2011) and Amundsen (2015) highlight, the increasing intersection of events that disrupt the habitual functions of urban areas suggests that engaging productively with questions of community resilience requires understanding processes of disruption.

Askland and Bunn (2018) highlight the ontological nature of place attachment, and that its interruption or discontinuation may create not simply actor-centric psychological distress, but rather an ontological concern. In other words, disrupting this connection to place may fundamentally challenge the way a person understands the world and their place in it. Real or perceived changes to the values that make a place special may trigger unwanted community conflicts (Gee, 2010), or it may trigger

feelings of dissatisfaction and loss in individuals and communities, especially when that change challenges multi-generational constructions of home and identity (Nicolosi & Corbett, 2018). The loss of personal agency and identity as a result of changes in day to day life can lead to "*cascading social and environmental problems*" above and beyond the original disruption (Barnett, Tschakert, Head, & Adger, 2016, p. 977). There is an emerging literature on the emotional impact of climate displacement in the form of place disruption. Tschakert et al.'s (2017, p. e476) work finds that climate change related disruption to daily life may manifest as stress, loss, grief, hopelessness, and alienation if it impedes identity and agency, ultimately affecting the "mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being" of individuals and communities. One recent paper on the emotional impacts of the damage occurring on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia coins the phrase 'Reef Grief' to describe feelings of loss (Marshall et al., 2019). Ultimately, such an experience can be described by the concept of "solastalgia", the existential distress experienced by people when they feel that their identity is no longer supported or reflected in their home places due to profound environmental change (Albrecht, 2005). The Guardian (Macfarlane, 2016) has highlighted solastalgia as an important part of the necessary language of the Anthropocene, "*a modern uncanny, in which a familiar place is rendered unrecognisable by climate change or corporate action: the home becomes suddenly unhomely around its inhabitants*".

Much of the recent work on place attachment and loss looks at experiences of climate change. One key argument is that it is this unique ability of place attachment analysis to place lived experiences of loss at the forefront of analysis that makes it "*a better starting point for climate change adaptation than an emphasis on climate change impacts*" (Amundsen, 2015, p. 257). Again, this recognises that it is not change events themselves that are significant in isolation, but how such events disrupt the qualities that make a place special to its inhabitants (Gee, 2010; Morrice, 2013) to an extent that diminishes the capability of individuals and communities to live the lives they desire or expect, in the way that offers connection and continuity to place and each other.

Overall, there is a growing body of literature to suggest that when people are unable to remake or redefine these connections to place due to shock event disruptions, they are likely to experience feelings of loss. Loss here is defined as occurring when people "*are dispossessed of things that they value, and for which there are no commensurable substitutes*"

(Barnett et al., 2016, p. 976). In this, feelings and experiences around identity, safety, and belonging (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013) are implicated in emotional experiences of physical change that disrupt relationships to, and experiences of, place (Barnett et al., 2016; Carrus, Scopelliti, Fornara, Bonnes, & Bonaiuto, 2014).

The experience of place-based change and ontological loss is linked with temporal meaning and evaluations. This is emphasised in Manzo's metaphor of place as a "*bridge to the past*" (2005) in which specific places embody memories or values that act as a connection to the past, providing a point of access to and continuity with significant emotional and ontological experiences. Again, the emotional implications of place attachment and its disruption are most evident in personal perceptions of feelings of safety, threat, or belonging, particularly where place intersects with ongoing communal social identity (Manzo, 2005). Thus we can see that place attachment is not solely a result of present associations, but importantly, associations through time in such a way that place-based disruption "*due to spatial and temporal dissonance underpins ontological anxiety*" (Askland & Bunn, 2018, p. 16). Manzo's bridge metaphor can be extended here to incorporate constructions of the future, long established as a critical aspect of place attachment (see Askland & Bunn, 2018; Milligan, 1998), particularly with respect to the desirability of imagined futures (Della Bosca & Gillespie, 2018; Schlosberg, Craven et al., 2018). Changes to local environments may enable or challenge the continuation of valued constructions of the past, as well as the desirability of specific futures.

Disruption to longstanding connections and meanings of place have also long been understood as an issue of social and environmental justice, relating to power, inequity and vulnerability, recognition, procedural justice, and capabilities (Glandon, 2015; Schlosberg, Craven et al., 2018; Stanley, 2009). Issues of power and agency have become apparent through the increased recognition that day-to-day experiences are shaped by emotional and values-based constructions of place and time (Stanley, 2009). The inclusive recognition of the emotional implications of place-based identity threats is key in procedurally acknowledging and representing contested or conflicting community experiences in decision-making processes (Ojala & Lidskog, 2017). Both Barnett et al. (2016) and Tschakert et al. (2017) call for procedural acknowledgement and integration into people-based climate resilience approaches that account for the meaning and values embodied in place. It has led Groves (2015), Agyeman, Schlosberg, Craven, and Matthews (2016), and more recently Schlosberg, Rickards, and Byrne (2018) to

argue that the disruption of the day-to-day capabilities that enable individuals and communities to live as they want to live is an aspect of environmental injustice.

Such an understanding of the importance of relationality and place in the concept of environmental justice is growing. As Delaney (2016, p. 3) notes, "*(in)justice is intrinsically social and relational in the sense that claims of injustice necessarily call into account inherently social states of affairs concerning contingent social arrangements—including socio-spatial arrangements*". In addition, Groves (2015) has argued that the colonisation of attachment to place, driven by the diverse impacts of a changing climate, can be conceptualised as a distinct form of environmental injustice. According to his argument, if attachment is a constitutive part of how people inhabit particular environments, then disrupting those attachments can do damage to both individual and collective well-being. Harms to attachment erode "*forms of agency embedded in attachments to place and collectives*" (p. 870), resulting in people losing "*a sense of themselves as doers and actors*" (p. 858). This rupture of residents' identities has marked effects, essentially taking away their capacity to "*negotiat[e] a future for themselves and their children*" (p. 859). As Schlosberg, Rickards, and Byrne (2018, p. 593) argue,

> *how we live in an environment [and] people's experience of and relationship to places is an important element of broader questions about environmental justice (or injustice). Here, justice hinges on a sense of a positive place attachment—and avoidance of negative impacts on place, such as pollution and threats to environmentally based, culturally valued practices.*

In addition, and from a capabilities approach to justice and environmental justice, the undermining of a broad range of capabilities is related to loss of place. Disruptions to place attachment can bring loss of cultural attachments to place as well as harms to a range of basic needs, including water, shelter, food, health care, and more—and do so in ways that are inequitably distributed. The links between place disruption and environmental injustice are numerous.

The significance of emotional and personal constructions of place is increasingly recognised in the resilience literature, particularly through a lens of hope (Head, 2016) or—more commonly—grief (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018; Marshall et al., 2019). In a review paper of the Rockefeller Foundation's Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN)

program, Friend and Moench (2013) highlight that resilience is experienced by urban residents as the comparative difference in day-to-day life before and after a shock event. This reinforces Pelling and Manuel-Navarrete's (2011) observation regarding the innate subjectivity of resilience. The increasing attention to place attachment in resilience literature speaks to "*a spatially and socially situated approach to assessing vulnerabilities and resultant strategies*" associated with local experiences of change and transition (Barr & Devine-Wright, 2012, p. 527). Beyond resilience as a theory, a set of capacities, or a strategy, we can see that resilience is an emergent property of interwoven capabilities undermined by this type of place-based loss. As we will go on to show, for example, we can identify place attachment or its absence as a 'fertile functioning' or 'corrosive disadvantage', respectively (Wolff & de-Shalit, 2007)—they can lead to a cascading relationship, positive or negative, across complex phenomena that support or undermine the capabilities necessary for justice. Resilience, then, can respond to the complex impacts and interactions surrounding shock events that can provide a 'fertile' and just policy response to the impacts on place, identity, and well-being.

All of this marks an important departure from the scientific and technical detachment of conventional resilience approaches which were understood to produce "*objective knowledge that is unmarked and disembodied and thus epistemologically and normatively superior*" (Stanley, 2009, p. 1008). The academic realm of resilience literature contains an abundance of research that focuses primarily on physical disruptions to place, neglecting the "*psychological, symbolic, and particularly emotional* aspects *of healthy human habitats*" (Agyeman, Devine-Wright, & Prange, 2009, p. 509). Conceptions of resilience that privilege infrastructure and services can devalue or exclude 'noncomputable' (Carpenter et al., 2009) lived experiences, and are unable to capture or reflect important factors of individual and community well-being, and justice, through time. This is not to discount the role of the physical damage of shock events plays in the physical, mental, and emotional recovery of individuals and communities, but rather to highlight that exclusively focusing on physical impacts renders the intangible experiences of loss invisible.

And yet, even with the evolution of the literature, the criticality of the emotional, social, and cultural impact on identity, agency, and justice has not often been translated into official strategies or approaches to minimise experiences of loss. Such intangible impacts of shock events tend to be overlooked in state assessment models of shock events (Magee et al., 2016).

While there are inevitable challenges in making room for place attachment's intangibilities in policy fields that respond best to quantitative-centric datasets, this mounting evidence suggests that if we, as researchers, want to inform holistic and just resilience applications, we must better represent these less obviously visible yet critical realities of change, disruption, and loss.

Our contribution to emerging work on the intersection of urban resilience and experiences of place attachment disruption is twofold. First, we offer an empirical examination of lived experiences in peri-urban Sydney, Australia, of an important shock event—one that will inevitably repeat across the country in a climate-challenged environment. Second, in engaging with both residents and a range of community service providers, we respond to calls in the resilience literature (see Hassler & Kohler, 2014) for wider stakeholder input in understanding these processes of disruption, specifically through engaging with the lived experiences of local individuals and communities. Our approach and analysis aim to draw explicit policy focus to the processes of place attachment disruption underpinning trauma in experiences of shock events. In so doing, we provide an evidence base for place-sensitive resilience approaches that more effectively support and enhance community well-being.

13.3 Methodological Context

In this chapter we examine community experiences of a key shock event in the greater Sydney region—the 2013 Blue Mountains Bushfires. In October 2013, hot and windy conditions triggered widespread bushfires across NSW. On 16 and 17 October, three separate fire fronts broke out in the Blue Mountains, originating in Lithgow, Springwood, and Mount Victoria. 196 homes were destroyed, and significant damage done to 132 others, totalling $180 million in losses. 65,000 hectares of mostly national parkland were burnt, taking a dramatic toll on wildlife (Milman, 2013). The State government declared the bushfire areas a natural disaster zone, with the Blue Mountains Council stating that the bushfires were the worst disaster in Blue Mountains history.

This event is one of a number identified in Resilient Sydney's 2016 Preliminary Resilience Assessment (PRA) of major shock events (Resilient Sydney, 2016). While the scale of participation for this single case study inhibits more broadly representative conclusions being drawn, we believe it provides a valuable entry point into lived community experiences, invites

comparative research, and is sufficient for the narrative exploration taken in this paper. Below, we provide an overview of the methodology and recruitment strategy used in this study, before outlining the case study and participant groups.

The study employed System Effects, a mixed method framework that aims to capture the lived experience of complex phenomena (Craven, 2017) and enables a high level of individual participant detail to be reflected within aggregated findings. The System Effects method requires individual participants to create a series of impact maps to capture their individual experience, followed by small group discussions that allow reflection and further elaboration of individual and communal experiences. The results and discussion of this paper are based entirely on the participant transcripts generated through these focus group discussions, as they provide the level of narrative detail required to enable place attachment analysis. We found that the holistic thinking demanded of participants for the System Effects mapping exercises enabled them to think about the rich and layered interconnections between the different aspects of resilience and individual and community well-being.

This work involved recruiting Sydney participants with personal experience of the 2013 bushfires. Participants were invited to attend a three-hour focus group (held within the community of the target event), between August and December 2017. We identified two participant group types to target for recruitment—local residents and professional/voluntary service providers attending the area at the time of the event. Both groups were identified as having distinct lived experiences, and as groups with a high level of policy relevance. An important aspect of this research was to broaden the definition of who and how people are 'impacted' in these types of shock events, and the experiences of these two different groups were central to achieving a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder impacts.

All recruitment was conducted by the office of Resilient Sydney. Resident recruitment was achieved through a combination of residential letterbox leafleting and targeted advertising via social media (in relevant Facebook groups) and through posters and leaflets in community organisations such as government buildings, public libraries, and other local service facilities. Residents self-identified as impacted by the target event and were screened by Resilient Sydney staff in a brief phone call prior to event registration and confirmation. Residents were provided with a $50 grocery voucher for their time. Service provider recruitment was achieved

by accessing existing networks run or contributed to by Resilient Sydney, local emergency management committees, local emergency management officers, and community groups.

Two impacted groups were identified. First, local residents of the area who self-identified as impacted, including residents who had lost their homes, had been evacuated, or who had had to take time off work to care for others. Two resident focus groups were held in Springwood and were attended by participants in the 25–34 to 65+ age range, with annual incomes varying from under $20,799 to over $156,000. All participants were either homeowners or living with home-owning relatives, and the majority had lived in the Blue Mountains LGA for eight or more years. Second, we engaged with professional or volunteer service providers who had been involved in response and recovery efforts associated with the fires. One service provider focus group was held in Lawson and was attended by representatives from an emergency service provider, a community charity, and a community resource organisation.

13.4 The Experience of the Blue Mountains Bushfires

Disruption to place attachment—in terms of both physical place and conception of community—was central to those impacted by the 2013 bushfires. The experience of our interviewees highlights the relationship between physical disruption, ontological disruption, and perceptions of well-being in the way that people experience shock events. We begin with the reflections of residents, followed by service providers. These groups provide different lenses through which to examine shock event disruption as it relates to issues of identity, place, values, and futures associated with places under threat.

It is important to note, as many of our focus group participants did, that bushfire is a longstanding and natural event in the eucalyptus forests of the Blue Mountains. Many spoke of their own previous experiences with fires in their lifetimes, and of the stories of their parents, grandparents, and communities over multiple generations of living in the region. These stories made clear that bushfires are understood as part of the natural place of the Blue Mountains, and part of the identity of both the place and the living within it. They also illustrate that there is a historical role such fires have played in the development of community identity and

values—that fire has traditionally brought people closer to both place and each other. And yet, residents and service workers alike talked about a growing fear of the expected increase in disruptive fires. They see larger fires coming in historically unique and threatening ways, and have begun to reflect on new fire regimes due to climate change as potentially threatening the nature of the Blue Mountains, the nature of community, and the traditional rebuilding of lives and houses after such events.

Several participants in our resident focus group lost pets and property as a result of the 2013 fires; some lost their homes after fleeing an oncoming fire, or becoming trapped and narrowly escaping. These were highly traumatic events. Participants communicated long-term emotional impacts associated with the physical impacts of the fire, including sadness over the loss of pets, the anxiety as a result of having to permanently house family members who lost their own homes, the stress of dealing with governments and insurance companies in the rebuilding process, and the ongoing post-traumatic stress disorder of a child. There was evidence of significant feelings of loss, particularly around the loss of animals, as well as photographs as symbols of childhood memories. Many had continuing emotional associations of guilt and regret around the event. Many lost material objects, from homes to photo albums, represented crucial socially constructed meanings and values in their daily lives. One focus group participant whose house was burnt down highlights how this event disrupted feelings of belonging, continuity, and familial meaning, as they could not transfer their emotional associations about place from the old family home to a newly rebuilt one.

> *Long term—… my eldest daughter…hardly ever comes out to the house. She feels really weird.… We've rebuilt in the same place. But she just doesn't feel like it's home.*
>
> *[Other participant:] She didn't grow up there.*
>
> *That's not the house she grew up in, yeah. Yeah.*

Focus group commentary on the destruction of material objects suggests that experiences of loss are most strongly felt for items with irreplaceable value, a value that is emotionally constructed through memory, identity, and belonging in place and through time. Objects such as photo albums and memorabilia and indeed houses themselves may enable these particular emotional connections through time, and 'replacements' are never fully embraced. However, the material destruction of the fires was

also discussed in comparatively light-hearted ways, highlighting a diversity of emotional impacts between and within participant experiences. This was evident in humorous comments on the benefit of fire in 'decluttering' efforts, as well as reflections on the potentially positive opportunity to rebuild a more suitable home with insurance money. This contrast highlights the limitation of using physical destruction and damage as a blanket measure for loss, as for some the physical destruction of the bushfires redefined or destroyed valued associations with place, while for others it did not.

Beyond the individual or familial experience, the fire has also led to a range of complex reactions to the deeply embedded associations in the Blue Mountains community. Many residents stated that the sense of community cohesion they experienced as a direct result of the fires increased or reinforced their connection to place, with the event emphasising the strong civic life of the community, even as the physical place faced severe damage and change.

> *But I guess the good things were how helpful everyone was afterwards. I don't think I've said thank you so many times in my life.*
>
> *What made it easier was the fact that we had neighbours who had been through all this before, including someone who had been there in '67, there was a major fire, basically went through the entire suburb. And he was great because he was like, "Don't worry, just do this, do this, wait for this, if this happens"—so that was invaluable, having neighbours who were experienced.*
>
> *So in that sense, it's made me very, very happy about where I live because yeah, I have a community life or civic life here that I don't think is available—well, I think it may be available in other places, but I'd never experienced it. I think the fires had a particular role in that in the sense that they made that incredibly apparent. I think the fires didn't create it, but it makes it more visible, like when you drove up and down Hawkesbury Road, it would just be "Thank you RFS, thank you RFS" on every second tree.*

This consistency of participant reflections on the strength of community cohesion during and after the fires as a positive aspect of the experience suggest that this bushfire was not perceived simply as disruptive to place, but also part of an ongoing characteristic of Blue Mountains life and community.

Other comments began to get at the reality that fire was an accepted aspect of living in the Blue Mountains, though something was different and particularly threatening about this one.

[I]t was just another fire, really. It was just that it was such a big fire and I've never seen a fire event—probably not since 1977—stretch the resources of the fire brigade and everything so much.

[I]t was definitely unprecedented and so a lot of people that have been through many fires behaved or reacted completely different to probably everything they've ever thought they knew how to do.

These comments reflect an understanding of bushfires not as entirely unexpected shocks, but rather as historically present and regular events in the local area. They illustrate that relationship between the physical characteristics of place, experiences of fire, and a sense of historical continuity. Yet, at the same time they demonstrate a sense of a difference and a break from that history.

Many participants expressed this sense of change—that fire is normal, but this event was something different, and it could be seen as an example of a new and more intense fire regime with the potential to upend a long history of fire, recovery, and rebuilding. The ontological significance of place attachment and the historical norm of fire influenced community patterns of response around safety, control, and responsibility for the family home. 'Stay and defend' behaviours were a by-product of historical experiences, as was 'return and rebuild'. But the experience of this particular fire may have changed these historical attachments. The attachments and associations with place, and the emotional responses they trigger, are now articulated in ways that differentiate residents from the historical norm, as the response of one participant conveys:

I've always stayed and fought to defend my house every single time, but as of this year, if a fire comes to my house this year, I'm leaving. I'm not doing it. I won't do it again because yeah, I don't have the emotional stuff to get through it any more.

This reconstitution of the relationship between emotional attachment and fire and future bushfire events is significant as it reinforces the fluidity of place attachment while also providing insight as to how and why highly entrenched place-based behaviours are being altered and changed in the face of growing climate change-enhanced events. This work mirrors that of Morrice (2013) on the relationship between emotional impact of events and decisions to return home among victims of Hurricane Katrina.

For service workers, the relationship between fire and history, and behavioural norms and values in the Blue Mountains, can also be seen in this exchange between two participants suggesting that changes to the socio-political contexts of fire response have contributed to unexpected feelings of loss of the nature of the community.

Service Provider: *Because a lot of the older members have left because now you've got to do a 13 week course to get your chainsaw certificate and you've got to have a road certificate and - - -*

Service Provider 2: *You've got to have a licence to order the sandwiches as well.*

P1: *Yes, it's become so over-regulated. You do. It's like you've got to have food handling to work in the kitchen, you've got to have chainsaw certificates, backhoe certificates, you've got to have - - -*

P2: *And that used to be the women's auxiliary. That's what the women's auxiliary used to do and none of them had food handling certificates.*

Moderator: *Red tape.*

P1: *And I don't think any firefighters died because of a bad sandwich.*

This comment is indicative of wider participant discussions around fire response back when everyone pitched in and volunteered their time for communal benefit. Such practices are understood to form the basis of positive community cohesion, valued as a characteristic of the community as a result of historical bushfire threats. The reflection is about loss of community of a different type, and the lack of government attention to the impacts of regulatory structure on community cohesion and responsibility, which has always been a part of the meaning of, and attachment to, place.

Comments such as this from service providers highlight the complexity of place attachment meaning and impact, as well as the intersection of both values and experiences, and of policy structures, that contribute to changes in personal and community identity. To extend this reflection, we draw briefly on the experiences of one service provider and the clear and growing tension between public and private roles after the fire.

Service Provider 3: *It's just that—yeah, I think for a long time, I lost my identity as a resident and you become the organisation*

and, you know, you're not a parent anymore and you're not a person, so you get…

Service Provider 4: *Sucked into a role.*

P3: *Yeah, you get a lot of—it's hard to just do anything normal in your community and it's hard to just be a parent at the school or do anything normal and like my record was I took three hours to get bread and milk once—I just wanted bread and milk and it—just those things. It just takes a long time to do anything.*

This participant, who assisted in providing both basic needs and counselling, talked about a professional identity that was constantly 'on' in public space, consuming their private 'off-time', even when simply shopping for milk (see also Chap. 12). The reflection illustrates key changes as a result of the event—a growth in the demand for such service providers, a shift in the needs of community members, and a need for more extensive services necessary to address the mental health and social well-being impacts of the event and ongoing threats. But this provider continued about how difficult it was to remain in their own community when trauma became woven into their everyday life—not just their professional life. It was another example of a resident's existential concern about the strain of continuing a life in a threatened place.

Overall, both resident and service worker experiences of the Blue Mountains fires reveal that, for many people, bushfires were in the past understood as physically disruptive but ontologically valued and part of the identity of living in place. After the 2013 events, while there was evidence of significant trauma from the physical damage itself, less obvious sources of existential uncertainty about the meaning of place and the future of the community became part of the conversation. Reflections on the event demonstrated a changing understanding of what fire means to the Blue Mountains, both to the place itself and to people's lives with that place and each other. Fear of loss of the physical place and community connections in future is clear.

13.5 Discussion and Conclusions

We began this investigation into the relationship between resilience and loss through the metaphor of metamorphosis, the term used by Beck (2016) to emphasise that the element of ontological consistency that enables adaptation or transformation may no longer be available in the

processes of change shaping modern cities. This is critical, as our case study findings demonstrate that participant experiences of loss and reduced well-being were tied to ontological disruption arising from changed relationships to place.

For residents in the Blue Mountains, the historical familiarity with bushfire had led to strong response practices that benefited community cohesion, but changes in the nature of both fire events and emergency response have changed socio-political expectations. This has led to disruption and detachment, and an ongoing fear of the inevitable future fires. In the aftermath of the event, the shocks themselves caused significant and varied physical damage and emotional trauma. However, participant discussions reveal that the disruption of lived values (Graham et al., 2013), in a way that triggered feelings of loss, was a common result of these social responses and changed meanings.

These events were associated with a wide variety of experiences about the relationship between place, meaning, and well-being. Participants noted the value they put on attachments to place—and the impacts of these shock events on their changed relationship to those places. Primarily, we see that a loss of meaning—or a creation of new meaning—leads to a loss of connection and harm to well-being. The key accelerator of these impacts, in the Blue Mountains, was the fear of the change in and the growth of fires, which are due to increase given the impacts of climate change on Australia.

The changing temporal frame also plays a significant role. For Blue Mountains residents, the temporal loss is of the historical role that bushfires have played in the development of community identity and connectivity in place, and the growing and future existential threat of catastrophic bushfire events. Traditional views of resilience often fail to emphasise these key longer-term temporal dynamics.

We started with the premise that emotional and intangible place-based attachments form one element of a conceptual stability that enables individuals and communities to maintain a cohesive and desired life trajectory in the face of change. This concern with the relationship between place and well-being, place and the provision of capabilities, we argued, is a growing concern in the environmental justice literature. Our results contribute to a growing body of evidence that suggests that when it comes to shock events and disasters, such qualities are not reducible to physical impacts, and require attention to the people- and place-specific meaning of such threats in order to address minimise experiences of trauma and

loss. The essential human experience of shock events is about more than property or infrastructure impacts. The key to the distinction between understanding such events in this traditional way and more fully engaging change-as-loss lies in these personal intersections of identity, emotion, and place. For our participants, resilience is a measure of their quality of life, well-being, and connection to place before versus after a shock event. It is this engagement with what people value, and why, in their local environments that inform the critical difference between a traditional material approach to shock events, versus one that addresses the crucial nature of change and loss. Both the justice and resilience question thus become one of connection—how do people remake and redefine the connections to place that support well-being through protection of their places, their identity, their agency, and their idea of their place and role in the world. We need to ask how place attachment is the connective tissue that binds a range of individual and collective goods, and ties together justice and well-being in resilience responses and policies.

While we have examined only a single event here, it is clear that the threat of the impacts of climate change is on the rise. The future is already one of uncertainty and precarity, and these examples and findings illustrate further threats to place, community, attachment, and well-being. The grief that comes with undermining connection to place is real, and it extends far beyond the loss of iconic places like the Great Barrier Reef (Marshall et al., 2019), to every place threatened by new, different, shock events.

In response to these findings, just resilience policies and initiatives must be capable of supporting and encouraging positive place attachment while addressing problematic 'invisibilities', capabilities, and issues of exclusion. Head (2016) discusses numerous examples of how "hope" can be engaged, rather than grief, in response to the impacts of climate change, colonialism, and the Anthropocene in general. The focus is on efforts that can foster attachment and empower individuals and communities to actively shape their own associations in order to minimise feelings and experiences of loss—a longstanding demand of environmental justice movements, and now a core desire in the face of resilience to shock events. As Ojala and Lidskog (2017) highlight, participatory processes that genuinely engage with communities can help uncover place-specific values associated with local understandings and responses to environmental changes. Such processes counter homogenous and infrastructure-focused resilience policy by engaging heterogeneous experiences of complex pre-existing and shock-related vulnerabilities related to the

experience of place. These inclusive and attentive policy responses can increase both the efficacy and equity of the governance of the challenges of shock events—and the reality of a just resilience or a just adaptation. Engaging people in threatened places about the meaning of change, and designing new ways to support social well-being in changing places, is key to how we might incorporate place, attachment, identity, and justice into resilience policy in the face of shock events.

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