IMAGINING SUBURBIA AS THE ROOTS OF SEA-CHANGE AND TREE-CHANGE: A STUDY OF SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE'S MEDIA

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Like all places, suburbs do not exist *a priori* but are constructed through social and cultural processes.[1] This does not refer simply to how these environments are materialized through planning and building, but rather emphasises the way that they are represented through books, maps, film, literature, art, and, of crucial importance in contemporary society, a range of media sources, including newspapers, websites and television.[2] Such representations are what give different localities their particular identities. Consequently, places, including the various manifestations of suburbia, cannot be experienced and interpreted apart from their circulated images.[3]

In this brief paper we explore how Sydney's and Melbourne's 'suburbia' is *imagined as a place* in a range of popular media. Particular attention is paid to how suburbia is imagined in the context of the recent demographic shifts known as 'sea-change' and 'tree-change'. The commentaries analysed are taken from popular media sources widely circulated in Sydney and Melbourne – *The Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph* and *The Age* – as well as from sources in some of Sydney and Melbourne's popular sea-change and tree-change areas. Commentaries have been selected from the period between the early 1990s and the present. The early '90s was selected as a suitable starting point because it was marked by new trends in settlement patterns. One such trend was the shift to downtown city precincts and the redevelopment of inner-city sites, a phenomenon Bernard Salt claims: '… started in South Sydney in 1992… moved to Melbourne's South Bank in 1993 [and to] Brisbane's New Farm and Fortitude Valley in 1995'.[4] This shift towards inner-city life has been paralleled by a second trend away from the suburbs: a steadily growing migration to the coast, and to the bush. And as Taylor observes, blend the two together and you have heightened competition for residential developments where water and city meet.[5]

While commentaries on suburbia, sea-change and tree-change numbered in the thousands, some 550 sources were located which referred to *both* sea-change/tree-change *and* suburbia. Closer analysis of these commentaries suggests that the popular media has constructed a binary relationship between suburbia and both sea-change and tree-change. While the contours of this binary relationship are unstable and shifting, differing across the commentaries, the general impression conveyed is that contemporary suburbia is perceived negatively when set against an increasingly pro-urban and increasingly pro-'sea-change' or pro-'tree-change' mindset. Manifest and latent content analysis was used to extract the six most common recurrent themes for the purpose of discussing these binary relations.

The first recurring theme highlights the key role that dreams of an idyllic suburbia lost or under threat plays within the ongoing imagining of contemporary suburbia. This, in turn, acts as a progenitor of change in the search for lost ideals and particular values. Sitting somewhat uncomfortably with the notion of sea-change as a search for lost ideals, and exposing the instability of the binary that exists between suburbia and sea-change, the second theme presents both sea-change and tree-change as the outer fringe of suburbanisation – an ongoing suburban sprawl dependent on cars, and growing without consideration for community, or values, or the very seaside and country towns it engulfs! In parallel, yet as an inverse of this, the third theme reveals the way in which current pro-urban change is seen as a threat not only to sea-change and tree-change locations but also to the core values of suburbia. The fourth and fifth themes focus more directly on the way in which suburbia and sea-change/tree-change are imagined in relation to each other. These themes thus analyse the complex cause-and-effect dynamic that is established between the search by pro-sea- and pro-tree-changers for ideal environments, and the potential impact that the swelling population and economic change have on transforming these 'idyllic towns' into the very suburbia the changers are seeking to avoid. Turning full circle the final theme illustrates an ironic [re]integration of suburbia and sea change, highlighting the ways in which contemporary suburbia is being sold under the marketing strategy of providing precisely those lifestyles sought by sea-changers/tree-changers!

In the following discussion each of these themes is examined in turn. In so short a paper only the most representative and explicit examples are presented and discussed.

Suburban dreams

Within an increasingly urbanized context the idea of the suburban dream, both as a repository of 'olde worlde' values and a haven of appropriate architectural styles, still flourishes. Reflecting the enthusiasm of the Bicentennial the *Sydney Morning Herald* reports that 'South Chatswood could remain a little corner of turn-of-the-century suburbia if Willoughby's chief town planner has her way'.[6] Quoting the town planner of the time in respect of not-to-be-contested positives – 'some good examples of early 20th century architecture', 'consistency of… scale, and age of development' and 'well-vegetated streetscapes and generous private gardens' – the veiled warning is against inappropriate change, or perhaps even change itself: 'Inspection of the area has highlighted some unsympathetic alterations'.[7] Sydney is not, of course, alone in recognising such suburban exemplars, and similar paeans to tradition, good taste, and visual demonstration of the 'right values' can be found from a Melbourne perspective.[8]

It is thus this polyglot sense of safety, community, appropriate architectural and streetscape values and the comfort of the past that, ironically, drives not only certain sectors of the anti-suburb movement – and thus fuels the sea change phenomenon – but also the trend to what might be called 'suburbanisation with an acceptable face'. 'New Urbanism has swept America and is heading here, with planners trying to bring a sense of community back to the suburbs. Tree-lined streets, plazas and a village atmosphere… are seen as the answer to many of society's ills.' Thus begins a 1996 *SMH* article by Anne Susskind entitled *Back To A Future Of Places For People*. Citing American architect and planner Andres Duany as '… one of America's foremost proponents of traditional neighbourhood development, a move back to old-style town planning…', Susskind reports 'The parts of Sydney created by our forefathers… were a string of jewel-like

suburbs, wonderful, authentic communities making ours the best colonial city in the world. …. The problem is that since the war, the model has changed'.[9] This change, it seems, lies not only in an ever-expanding suburban network, increasingly car-reliant, but in an impoverishment of suburban living by virtue of losing or abandoning the traditional values associated with 'community' and planning and architectural imagery that self-evidently 'speaks' of this. And surely, the implication is, this should be obvious. Referring to Duany again, Susskind writes: 'People who have the choice… have always gone for the superior quality of life embodied by traditional suburbs… on lots that might be smaller but where there is an authentic community and there is more to do'.[10] Setting aside the rather *more* obvious fact that many people do actually *choose* to live in 'non-traditional' suburbs – and not simply on the basis of their inability to afford the luxury of 'superior' quality, nor of their 'dumbed down' desire for mere quantity[11] – this presentation of and appeal to a notion of 'good', and therefore the inference of a parallel notion of 'bad', is suggestive of a number of potential perspectives or attitudes. Four necessarily cartoon-like characterisations must suffice here:

> (i) 'I subscribe to these values and find them in my suburb': values good / suburbs good. The dream is alive and well and attainable in the suburbs – or, at least, in the 'right' ones!

> (ii) 'I subscribe to these values but find them disturbingly absent in my suburb (and in suburbia in general): values good / suburbs bad. The basis of the dream remains, betrayed by the transformation of suburb into suburbia.

> (iii) 'I understand these values, and the planning and architectural principles that are demonstrably effective in providing them, and believe that future suburbs should be designed on this basis': values good / suburbs fine provided they *embody* the good. The dream is alive and, in principle, attainable in the suburbs – but it must be deliberately reinscribed against the trend of increasing mediocrity.

> (iv) I subscribe to these values, and desire them, but finding them (and/or believing them to be) absent in suburbia, I seek them elsewhere': values good / suburbs bad / where do we go from here? The dream, it seems, is alive, but it must no longer be confused with the suburb – values and attainability have migrated. Welcome to sea change…

To these must be added a fifth characterisation, a plausible alternative that we have already deliberately set aside: values good / suburbs good / except *your* values are not *my* values, and your good is not my good! The dream is alive and attainable in the suburbs – but now it's a different dream!

Suburban sprawl, sea change and the commuter lifestyle

Not merely indicative of a general lifestyle change or a turning away from either suburb or city, for many the very idea of *sea* change is to be taken literally. As McGregor observes, 90 per cent of Australians now live within an hour of the coast, including, he claims, between 750,000 and 1 million people living on the NSW coast outside metropolitan areas.[12] While he identifies the areas of greatest statistical growth as being the far north coast (Ballina and Byron Bay), the mid-north coast (Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie), the Central Coast (Gosford) and the south coast (Nowra and Merimbula), McGregor points out the effect such apparent dispersal has on Sydney city itself, namely that '…places like Gosford and the Central Coast become virtual outer suburbs of

Sydney; an estimated 30,000 people commute from the Central Coast to the city every day.'[13] In this way sea-change becomes extended suburbanization.

Whether what the ABS 2006 Census calls '…a surging fringe population…' is attributed to this phenomenon of 'sea-change as attenuated suburb', or whether it is more accurately the continued distension of the outer suburbs, the effect is an ever-increasing reliance on the private car.[14] Despite government policies seeking to contain such urban sprawl, and notwithstanding the fact that, at least in relation to Melbourne, overall growth was reported as being consistent with Government expectations and intentions, the census makes the important point that its *distribution* was not . With the exception of the ongoing development and popularity of Docklands – another example of Salt's shift to downtown city precincts – which made it the second fastest-growing residential location in Melbourne during the period 2001-2006, it was in the outer suburbs, or the euphemistically named 'fringe municipalities', that the greatest increases were noted, accounting, the census reported, for more than 50%, of total metropolitan growth. While these figures do not reveal the net population rise in terms of warm bodies they certainly indicate an ongoing trend in suburban expansion and/or fringe incursion. They also signal a potential, if not yet actual, discrepancy between state government policy and the real world of demographics and developer-led population spread. While not yet inconsistent with the *Melbourne 2030* metropolitan strategy plan, with its aim '…to rein in the sprawl and concentrate development around public transport and services in major centres' and thus to effect '…a gradual slowing of growth in outer Melbourne' such continued 'expansion at the peripheries' does suggest both greater urban sprawl and an increasing dependence on private car use[15]. Not unexpectedly, the highest rate of car ownership is reported as being in Melbourne's middle and outer municipalities[16]. Moreover, the continuation of this expansive situation seems to have been guaranteed by the Government's own actions, as witnessed by Millar and Guerrera's 2005 reportage that 'The State Government's vow to curb Melbourne's [sub]urban sprawl has been jeopardised by its decision to release 25 years worth of new development land on the city's fringe…'.[17]

Sydney fares no better. As Michael Duffy observes, 'Sydney is a city eating its own environment. Urban sprawl is devouring parklands and market gardens; sewage and litter foul waterways, and air pollution from cars is so bad… alerts will soon be sent to asthma sufferers.'[18] By the same talismanic date of 2030 Sydney's population is predicted to have increased by 1.1 million people.[19]

And the consequence of this? As Duffy warns, 'The suburbs, now so vast, exist only because of cars.'[20] While some suggest that Sydney's transportation problems are simply indicative of a need for more freeways, others abhor the car dependence that increasing population numbers seemingly entail. Yet the situation here is surely one of 'chicken and egg': if cars make both suburban sprawl and 'sea-change within reach of the city' possible, then so too do ever-expanding suburban networks and 'more-distant-but-still-close-enough' lifestyle choices make cars a necessity. Interestingly, Duffy observes that 'Although the winners in this case seem to have largely been the car and the suburbs, those opposing them have often been more vocal and articulate in public debate than their defenders. For some reason, a dislike of the suburbs has come to be part of the armoury of many intellectuals and commentators.'[21]

Urban sprawl, the dream recedes

Given the observations of Melbourne and the scale of its peripheral expansion it is interesting to note Goodsir's 2005 account of the Sydney situation. 'Eighty per cent of Sydney suburbs will be quarantined from home developments under an ambitious 25-year government planning blueprint,' he reports, a strategy 'that aims to squeeze 1.1 million residents and 500,000 jobs into a few key areas in order to save scores of single-home neighbourhoods.'[22] With the intention of, at least partially, embargoing further outward expansion, the NSW Premier is reported as introducing what Goodsir describes as a '…clustering strategy [along major arterial corridors, which] would leave most suburbs free of housing growth, and keep intact much-loved village life. Only 200,000 of the 640,000 new dwellings needed by 2030 will be built in greenfield zones on the city's fringe.'[23] Under the plan the city itself is expected to accommodate an additional 55,000 new homes which, as Goodsir points out, means 'more high-rise towers in the city's heart and surrounding suburbs.'[24]

This pro-urban, pro-apartment stance is decried in a 2006 *SMH* article ('A dream recedes', *Sydney Morning Herald (First)*, 04 February 2006, p.36) which romanticises and laments the supposed passing of the quarter acre block. 'NSW home builders are constructing comparatively fewer freestanding homes than their counterparts in other states,' the article reports. 'In Sydney the trend is particularly strong. Approvals for flats here outnumber those for new freestanding homes nearly two to one... Unlike the other big state capitals, the house with a backyard is an option for a shrinking proportion of Sydney's population. If this trend continues it will change the character of this city, differentiating it even more from the rest of the country.' While rejecting sentimentality the unknown author notes that 'Images of the Hills hoist, the toolshed, the lawnmower, the vine-covered trellis, and the swimming pool provide a homely, unpretentious backdrop to modern Australian life for which many will feel nostalgia', even going so far as to suggest that 'It is also possible that the backyard's semi-rural character may have helped preserve Australians' ideal of themselves as somehow country people, even though they choose to live mainly in cities. Backyard chook-runs and vegetable patches, common earlier last century, helped preserve this self-sufficient image. That such homes were mostly owned, not rented, reinforced a feeling of independence. The quarter-acre block has formed the national character more than life on the farm.'

Opposition to such views are legion. In a 2005 article in the Melbourne *Age* Minchin and Millar report on an RMIT University study by Buxton and Scheurer which warns of the dangers of failing '…to cut average lot sizes by at least a third within four years', of failing to increase housing densities in the *outer* suburbs, and of failing to enforce the so-called Urban Growth Boundary legislated to halt urban sprawl, thus '… forcing developers to use sites more efficiently.'[25] Swinging once more to the opposition view, Minchin & Millar then cite the executive director of the Housing Industry Association to the effect that the boundary 'stifled people's freedom to choose where they want to live.'[26] Yet it is not only the outer suburbs that elicit such pro-suburban and/or anti-urban or anti-contemporary feelings. Chris Johnston reports on the antipathy held for many contemporary houses improperly encroaching into the inner suburbs. It is to this antipathy, and to its antithesis, the love of the established suburb as is, that Johnston attributes what he calls '… the extraordinary rise of watchdogs such as Save Our Suburbs…'[27] With their opposition to 'the new ugliness' such groups, he maintains, have

become powerful lobbyists, in favour of maintaining the appropriate character of *their* suburb.

Sea change, lifestyle choice, lifestyle threat

Protection of character and amenity is not the sole prerogative of the suburb, however. Reporting the apparently positive news that 'Coastal development between Ballina and Tweed Heads will be restricted under a new 25-year blueprint…' journalist Sherrill Nixon immediately adds the significant rider '… but locals say it does not go far enough to protect their village lifestyle.'[28] Indeed, at first glance the restrictions seem far from restrictive: 'The draft Far North Coast Regional Strategy, made public yesterday by the Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor, allows for 51,000 new homes and for 32,500 new jobs for the 60,400 more people expected to live in the region by 2031… Mr Sartor said the strategy aimed to encourage prosperity and protect the area's unique character.'[29]

What, then, is the balance between the growth and potential increased prosperity provided by sea-change 'incomers' and the significant changes to local character and lifestyle that would seem inevitably to accompany such development? Indeed, is this growth itself not causing a mini suburban sprawl in (and between) many coastal and inland towns? Are not sea changers actively killing the very qualities that drew them there?

This, of course, is both cause and effect in one. But we should also look past the sea-changers to the politics of local development. Reacting to political toing-and-froing about the putative establishment of green zones to restrict Sydney's urban sprawl, on the one hand, and the restriction of personal development opportunities that would follow from this, on the other, the *Sydney Morning Herald* ('With no green zones, urban sprawl will rule the land', 11 August 2005, p.12) made the observation that a politician would only have to announce '… that all landowners in Sydney have the right to have their land rezoned for more development and you have the self-interest and greed vote sewn up' before asking: 'But why stop there? Why not extend this generosity to our coastline, mountains and beyond? Just imagine how wonderful life will be as every one of us uses our right to make a killing out of our land. We would soon have a city, a coastline and beyond covered in concrete-paved, car-dependent, sprawling, energy-hungry housing estates.'

Yet some would suggest that this is precisely what we already have! Under the rubric of sea-change, and welcoming the fact that 'The drift to the coastline that began elsewhere 20 years ago is only just gathering momentum [in Victoria]', *The Age* ('Coast guarding is a role for the state', 12 January 2005, p.14) suggests that 'Much of the eastern coastal strip from Wollongong to north of Brisbane looks like nothing more than a continuous strip of ugly suburbia', adding that 'A similar process is in train along the coastline south of Perth.'

Such reportage is legion. It is interesting that the concerns / complaints are often presented in a language couched not in terms of potential over-development but of potential *suburbanization*. It appears that it is the *character* of future development, not the mere increase in size, that attracts most attention, with the descriptors 'suburb', 'suburban' and 'suburbia' inevitably signalling the 'bad' or the unacceptable. Hence we find Mark Skelsey reporting that 'population growth could be dramatically halted on the

NSW central coast to stop the area's valued 'sea change' atmosphere becoming bland suburbia…' while Skelsey and Clark note that 'The future of the central coast is the subject of fierce debate. The area's civic fathers are worried that its `sea change' feel could turn into suburbia.'[30] The 'could' here is somewhat ironic given a later sentence in the same report which neatly brings together several previously-noted issues: 'The State Government,' write Skelsey and Clark, 'is happy to see farms cleared for housing estates, especially around Wyong, but up to 30 per cent of the area's workers spend up to five hours a day commuting to Sydney for work.'[31]

Once again the dream remains, but while it would be nice to say that it is no longer a suburban but rather a sea-change dream, where the suburb (or the suburban) is precisely that which has been left behind, in cases like the above this becomes extremely difficult. Aspects of the suburb seem to have been dragged to the coast, and the 'change' in the term sea-change can easily take on a quite different connotation – suburbanization takes command. Concentrating 'the estimated 500,000 seachangers who will migrate to the coast over the next 25 years[32]' into the larger towns of Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree and Batemans Bay, as indicated in the NSW State Government's mid-North-Coast strategy released in January 2007, does little to solve this problem, and it is the sea towns themselves that are likely to be subject to change. This is borne out by the story of Justin and Kathryn who 'moved to Cobaki four years ago for peace, privacy and rural quiet for their children that Sydney's western suburbs could not provide. Now… they face the prospect of up to 40 people living close by, despite Tweed Shire Council planning limits of no more than one house per 40 hectares. 'We may as well be back in the suburbs of Sydney,' said Mrs Leary.'[33]

And the effects of this? Salt is cited as proposing that this shift 'was creating a third Australian culture - after those of the city and the bush - in which city migrants imposed their habits and values on coastal communities. Signs of the new culture included the rise of cafes and minimalist architecture on the coast, the spread of beach fashion, and new demands on councils to fund services.'[34] As a consequence 'the change was creating tension and disappointment as 'residents complain that `the place isn't what it used to be' ' and new arrivals find that the seaside village they imagined had disappeared.'[35]

This phenomenon is frequently bemoaned not simply as a loss of amenity but a loss of character: 'To laypeople, coastal change is often seen as the nibbling away of local character, boundary-to-boundary homes usurping old timber-and-fibro beach houses. 'It's suburbia by the sea,' says architect Colin Brady…'[36]

The tree-change difference

If we are, in the main, seeing 'sea-change' within the long tradition of coastal settlement, then 'tree-change' presents a two-fold possibility. On the one hand it has been equated with a move to inland towns, with centres such as Wagga Wagga, Orange, Tamworth, Dubbo and Lismore often cited. On the other, suggestions are that increasingly 'Sydney's favourite tree-change destinations are within two hours of the city.'[37] Setting aside our earlier discussion of the coalescence of sea-/tree-change with commuting distance, a further factor affecting the choice between sea-change and tree-change is the reportage that properties on the coast are considerably more expensive, with Salt opining that: '… a tree-change will always cost [about] half the value of the equivalent sea change.'[38]

Yet there is a further irony here. While country prices may be significantly lower than coastal prices, country prices have in turn been severely affected by incoming tree-changers. 'In 2000, Orange, Tamworth, Dubbo and Lismore were among the most popular places for first-home buyers,' reports Angela Saurine, '[in 2005] they didn't even make the list.'[39] Why? Because of the changers changing their new location! The same article thus reports that, while Wagga Wagga – ranked 20th among the most popular places for first-home buyers in 2005 – 'had attracted the 'tree change' movement', the effect of this had been 'city escapees moving in and lifting the bar on house affordability.'[40] A quite expected effect of market forces, one might suggest, and a boon for the town, but as Salt explains 'As the threshold is lifted by economic and population growth, first-home buyers are being relegated to smaller towns within commuting distance [of these country centres]'[41] i.e. a quasi-suburbanisation of country towns themselves!

Selling suburbs as sea-change

Yet there is one last element of the 'conventional' media portrayal of the suburbs that should be examined here: their almost inevitable portrayal as bleak, inhospitable, uncultured, dangerous, grossly under-serviced and comprising a housing stock – the word 'architecture' is surely out of place here – of banality, poor taste, and shoddy construction; small boxes for the down at heel, super-sized for the greedy wannabes! It is in reaction to this received view that Chris Vedelago suggests that 'Those who don't live there have the wrong idea about life in the outer 'burbs. Pitilessly mocked on television and in movies, suburbia has become synonymous with blandness - row upon row of cookie-cutter houses along identical streets in neighbourhoods seemingly devoid of anything interesting to see or do.'[42]

The tenor of Vedelago's article, however, is that this is about to change: ' 'People make passing judgements about outer suburbia and many times when we ask, 'When was the last time you visited?' they often can't tell you when that was,' says… developer Delfin's Victorian general manager. 'There's a significant part of the broader community that is less well-informed about the quality of the places that are being created'.'[43]

Whether or not the new generation of suburbs is better planned, better designed and better serviced than its predecessors, and whether this means a return to community and the 'right' values, or an appropriate meeting of a new set of values for a new set of suburbanites, must remain outside the scope of this paper. Yet it is worth noting that the increasingly-persuasive sales pitches appear to be offering in the new suburbs the very qualities and lifestyle choice associated with the sea-change / tree-change phenomenon. As Vedelago notes: 'The TV ads paint these new suburbs as slices of idyllic living set amid lakes, parks, vineyards, golf courses, boardwalks and cafes; self-contained communities where neighbours become friends and friends become family. It's easy to scoff at emotional, nostalgic pitches such as these, but latte-drinking, chardonnay-swilling inner-city dwellers may find they have less and less at which to sneer.'[44]

Vedelago is also careful to distance the new suburbs from the old, adding 'These are not your grandparents', or even your parents', suburbs[45]', and for very good reason. If our 'normal' perceptions of the suburbs are skewed, either to the assumed banalities of the 'outer suburbs' or to the cosy old-style values still attainable in those tree-lined 'suburbs-that-are-not-suburbs-at-all', then the developers would suggest not only that we look

again, but that we note who has set the new agenda: 'Potential residents were asked what they wanted. 'We listened to what the marketplace was telling us,' says Delfin's [Bryce] Moore. 'People like to identify with a place and we create places people identify with.' The guiding concept of the new master-planned developments is that residents are buying into lifestyle, joining a neighbourhood where their needs have been anticipated.'[46]

Let us leave the last word to Cameron Alderson, Victorian general manager of Stockland: how do you establish this identity, this community, this feeling of belonging, this notion of 'good'? 'It means not just allowing anyone to build any old house but putting a set of rules in place that creates something not too much the same, but not too different. A balance of houses.'[47]

Conclusion

As mentioned at the outset of this paper the identities of different places, such as sea-side towns, country towns, or suburbia, are not 'natural' but are constructed through social and cultural processes. In contemporary western society the media is a key producer and disseminator of place images and identities. This paper has thus sought to add to our understanding of this phenomenon by exploring how both the suburbias of Sydney and Melbourne, and the phenomenon identified as sea-change and tree-change have been represented in and through the popular press. On this basis several specific conclusions can be drawn here.

First, both sea-change and tree-change are most often envisioned as the search for particular values and for a lifestyle that seems to have been lost within contemporary suburbia. The dream of idyllic suburbia thus seems to go hand in hand with the dreams that drive sea-change and tree-change. Second, and while not contradicting this search for idyllic lifestyle, the influx of people into towns within commuter distance of Sydney and Melbourne is increasingly portrayed as extending the fringes of suburban sprawl, rather than making a 'clean break'. Third, while accepting the complex contours of the shifting and unstable relationships between sea-change and suburbia, the media commonly identifies a further factor that threatens both: the increasingly healthy pro-urban movement. Fourth, the influx of people into country and seaside towns in search of particular lifestyle values is paralleled with the potential negative consequences accompanying this shift – the very real fear of the suburbanisation of just such coastal/country towns themselves. Finally, while it is against a sense of loss of lifestyle – and loss of faith – in suburbia that commentaries in the late 20th and early 21st century found cause for sea-change and tree-change, more recently a new link has emerged between the two, a link which has seen developers seeking to promote new suburbia as itself being imbued with the idyllic lifestyle sought in country and sea-side towns, a cycle of influence that, in the short space of two decades, has turned back upon itself.

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