Article

Developing Place Attachment in Master-Planned Residential Estates in Sydney: The Influence of Neighbourhood Parks

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Abstract: Master-Planned Residential Estate (MPRE) is an integrated housing development form in Australia. MPREs are aimed to build a sense of place attachment and community via the provision of environmental and social infrastructure. Neighbourhood parks are regarded as a significant built environmental factor linked to residents' place attachment and well-being in the literature. Understanding place attachment is crucial for promoting residents' well-being in neighbourhoods and enhancing the attractiveness of real estates in the housing market. However, we know little about how place attachment is facilitated for park users in neighbourhoods. The psychological process of place attachment in MPREs is unclear in the literature, with a particular lack of qualitative studies in this area. This study explored the psychological process of place attachment and its associations with neighbourhood parks in MPREs in Sydney via a qualitative case study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 residents residing in two selected MPREs in Sydney during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022. Interviews found three themes and several subthemes regarding the process of place attachment for park users in MPREs: affect (emotional bonds), behaviour (place-related fulfilment of needs, place-related social bonds, and community participation), and cognition (membership of the community, place-related memory, and cultural significance). This study contributes to understanding place attachment and human-environment relations in sustainable neighbourhoods by adding new items into place attachment models from the perspective of MPREs in Sydney. It provides valuable qualitative evidence gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings furnish empirical insights for policymakers, developers, and urban planners involved in sustainable neighbourhoods' development and housing management in Sydney and global regions.

Keywords: place attachment; Master-Planned Residential Estate (MPRE); neighbourhood parks; sustainable neighbourhoods; COVID-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has made people realise that the forms of real estate and housing management have significant impacts on people's lifestyle and well-being. It lets people to rethink their relationship with the environment where they live around the world. Master-Planned Residential Estate (MPRE), as a dominant form of residential real estate, has experienced significant growth in Australia over the past few decades [1,2]. MPRE is defined as 'large scale, integrated housing developments produced by single development entities that include the provision of physical and social infrastructure' [3] (p. 186). The growth of MPREs can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as population growth and the encouragement of urban consolidation in state governments' metropolitan plans [4,5]. Past studies identified that market logics behind MPREs are in two main domains: community creation and social distinction [6,7]. Literature shows that the concept of community is often used in marketing MPREs to enhance the value of estates and to attract residents to access to community creation [4,8]. However, the concept of community in MPREs is

intricate. It is unclear in the literature how MPRE residents create and experience a sense of community.

Place attachment is regarded as the most critical factor in promoting a sense of community and well-being [9,10]. Place attachment focuses on people's psychological bonds to a place, which is defined as 'the emotional bonds between people and a particular place or environment' [11] (p. 29). Place attachment can influence people's emotional bonds to their neighbourhood, thereby having a very crucial impact on the health and well-being, as well as sustainability of the community [12,13]. Scholars suggested that a sense of attachment is a significant indicator of constructing and evaluating social capital and social sustainability within neighbourhoods [14]. The literature shows that place attachment is a concept that has been investigated in many disciplines [15,16]. Somanath et.al. (2021) [14] pointed out that 'the social theme of sense of attachment is the most referenced in the literature' in the field of research of social sustainability in neighbourhoods (p. 781). Numerous place attachment models have been proposed to explore the psychological ties to places [17,18]. However, due to place attachment being a diverse, multidimensional, and context-dependent concept [19], the psychological mechanism of building place attachment is still unclear in the literature. Specifically, the behavioural process of place attachment is not clear, and the topic of social bonds related to place attachment is inconsistent in the literature [16,20]. Limited studies have examined the relationship between public open spaces and place attachment across different types of neighbourhoods. The way place attachment develops in urban neighbourhoods and its relationship with neighbourhood parks is unclear in the literature, with a particular lack of qualitative studies in Australian MPREs.

Previous studies have recognised that neighbourhood public open spaces are significant built environmental factors linked to residents' sense of place attachment and their social well-being in their living areas [21,22]. Neighbourhood park refers to a communal open space to meet residents' needs for individual and social activities in their neighbourhood, which 'consist of open spaces that can exist in the form of parks, athletic fields, and playgrounds.' [23] (p. 84). Past studies show that green and natural environments are able to provide vital therapeutic and ecological services in urban areas [13,24], hence neighbourhood parks have been regarded as a special source of community sustainability and resilience, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic [25,26]. In the literature, neighbourhood parks are recognised as the most commonly used public open spaces within Australian MPREs [27]. Australia's 'Classification Framework for Public Open Space' asserts that neighbourhood parks provide three types of functional spaces: recreation, sport, and nature, offering various venues and opportunities for residents' recreational and social activities within their communities [28]. However, in past studies, 'less attention was directed to the psychological attachment process of park users' [29] (p. 28). Few studies explored the psychological mechanism of place attachment and its relationship with neighbourhood parks use in MPREs in the Australian context.

Due to the importance of neighbourhood parks in fostering place attachment and the existing knowledge gaps in the literature, this study puts emphasis on neighbourhood parks to explore the process of place attachment in MPREs. It contributes to filling the knowledge gaps by investigating the psychological attachment process of park users in MPREs via a qualitative case study in Sydney. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this marks the first investigation into the psychological process of place attachment of park users in MPREs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. New urbanism presents a theoretical linkage between a neighbourhood-built environment and a sense of community (via social interaction and place attachment) [10,30].

This study aims to explore how neighbourhood parks impact the psychological mechanisms of place attachment in MPREs. Based on this new urbanism claim, this paper proposes a hypothesis: that neighbourhood park use is significantly and positively associated with residents' place attachment in MPREs. This hypothesis leads to the research question (RQ): 'What are the psychological processes of place attachment related to neigh-

bourhood park use in MPREs?'. To address this research question, this study developed a conceptual framework to guide the study (see Figure 1).
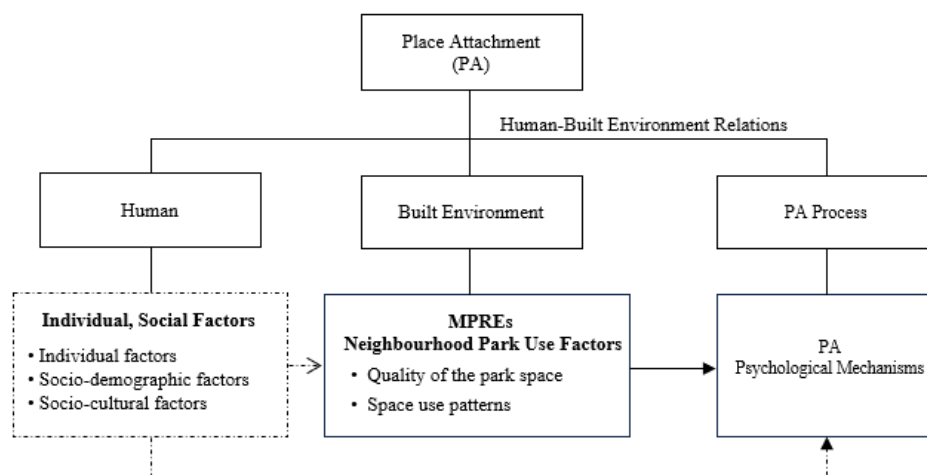

Figure 1. Associations between neighbourhood park use and place attachment. Note. MPRE = Master Planned Residential Estate.

The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in 2022 in Sydney. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful to investigate residents' behaviours, experiences, feelings and opinions of place attachment [31]. Interview questions are developed based on the research question, conceptual framework, and the related theories. The following sections address the key issues of this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. MPREs in Australia

Several distinct characteristics of MPREs have been recognised in the literature. Thompson (2013) [32] summarised the common features of MPREs: 'a consistent design and aesthetic, and some level of private infrastructure that may include social infrastructure, community facilities and residential amenities' (p. 86). In addition, due to the environment and social diversity, MPRE phenomenon in Australia is complex and diverse [33]. Scholars indicate that a better understanding of the multidimensions of MPREs is crucial to understand the social diversity and socio-spatial differentiation of MPREs [34]. MPREs encompass a range of different types in Australian cities [35], which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification of MPREs in Australia.

Classification	MPRE Categories	References
Enclosure of Built Form	open symbolically enclosed gated	Dowling et al. (2010) [35]
Lifestyle Types	lifestyle type prestige type security communities	McGuirk and Dowling (2007) [36]
Scale Types	large scale: >500properties medium scale: 50–500 properties small scale: <50 properties	Kenna et al. (2017) [4]

Table 1. *Cont.*

Classification	MPRE Categories	References
Density Form	high density medium density low density	McGuirk and Dowling (2011) [6]
Location Types	outer suburban greenfield MPREs inner urban brownfield MPREs	Dowling and McGuirk (2005) [33]

2.1.1. MPRE Analytical Themes

The MPRE literature mainly focuses on three analytical themes: housing market; governance mechanisms; and nature of community [36], based on McGuirk and Dowling's (2007) [36] theoretical framework for analysing MPREs. Firstly, housing market: market logics are the dominant driving forces for MPRE development. MPREs are marketed as providing an enhanced sense of community and a lifestyle akin to a resort. MPREs are also perceived as form of social status, particularly appealing to the middle class and young individuals seeking to elevate their social standing [4,32]. Moreover, scholars pointed out that MPRE research needs to distinguish different submarket contexts [32,36,37]. Secondly, governance mechanisms: the governance mechanisms focuses on how developers' planning and management processes work with residents' cooperation and management companies' governance [38]. The literature indicates that the governance mechanisms established in MPREs are focused on the integration of community titles by providing social and environmental infrastructure [39,40]. Scholars have also discussed the impact of governance and privatism on MPREs' social and spatial segregation issues [35,41]. Thirdly, nature of community: the theme of community has consistently held significance in the MPREs literature [8,32]. MPREs are aimed at meeting residents' individual and social needs to create a sense of community by providing facilities [34,42,43]. However, the process underlying a sense of community in MPREs is quite complex and unclear to date. We have limited knowledge about the lifestyles, social activities, and interactions between residents and their environment within the context of MPREs.

2.1.2. Public Open Space in MPREs

Past studies indicated that the public open space (e.g., neighbourhood parks) is the most important physical feature may play an important role to promote residents' place attachment [44–46]. Public open spaces can influence residents' perceptions, emotions, and attitudes toward their community through visits to public open spaces, and in turn to foster a sense of attachment between people and their environment [47]. A growing body of research emphasises the positive connections between quality of neighbourhood parks and well-being [46–48]. For example, Abass and Tucker (2018) [44] identified significant associations between public spaces and neighbourhood attachment in the Australian context. However, there is still limited understanding regarding the connections between residents' emotional attachment to green spaces in the neighbourhood literature [49].

Overall, empirical or comparative research on different types of MPREs in Australian cities is notably limited [32]. In-depth investigations and empirical research on the existence of inner urban MPREs in Australia are very limited, with a lack of in-depth quantitative and qualitative work. This study helps to address this gap by concentrating on MPREs in the inner west area of Sydney.

2.2. Neighbourhood Place Attachment

Place attachment refers to 'the emotional ties that individuals establish with those places to which they feel attracted and usually have close and familiar bonds' [16] (p. 316). In the context of neighbourhoods, place attachment involves the 'feeling especially connected to a place that is meaningful to people' [19] (p. 258). Scholars identified place attachment can make a critical contribution to create sense of community in neighbour-

hoods [9]. Place attachment focuses on place-related human needs, which are essential for improving residents' well-being and social sustainability [50,51].

Most place attachment research is based on the attachment theory [52] in developmental psychology [15]. The attachment theory claims that 'people's experiences, over time, become internalised into internal working models' [50] (p. 288). Previous studies developed several theoretical models to explore the individuals' place attachment to their neighbourhood. Raymond et al. (2010) [53] developed a three-pole place attachment model including personal, community and natural environment. Williams and Vaske (2003) [18] presented a two-dimensional framework for place attachment, consisting of place-identity and place dependence. Similarly, Diener and Hagen (2022) [54] presented a place-based model of place attachment to demonstrate how place attachment forms, including three dimensions: meaning, social relations, and nature. Most notably, Scannell and Gifford (2010) [17] introduced a PPP model (Person-Place-Process) to illustrate the process of place attachment, consisting of person, place, and process dimensions through an affective-cognitive-behavioural psychological system. Specifically, the affective mechanism includes the sense of pride, love, and happiness; the cognition mechanism comprises memories, knowledge, beliefs, and meaning; and the behaviour mechanism refers to actions to maintain closeness to a certain place [17,19].

Previous studies indicate that the perception of the residential environment plays a crucial role in shaping neighbourhood attachment [19,44,55]. However, many studies ignored the importance of place-based psychological ties to the community in neighbourhoods [56]. There is limited understanding of how the process of place attachment develops in neighbourhoods [50]. In addition, as individuals live in different communities, the neighbourhood context might also affect residents' place attachment; therefore, analysing place attachment requires taking into account various neighbourhood contexts [46]. More studies need to explore place attachment at the neighbourhood scale across different urban residential contexts.

3. Methods

This research utilises a qualitative case study approach. This study chose two cases with significant similarities but different built forms. Firstly, cases were selected based on the criteria with similarities, such as same locations, similar built age, large scale, and open space features to control those influences on place attachment. Secondly, this study chose two cases with different built forms to represent the two major types of MPREs in Sydney: one open and one symbolically enclosed (or gated). MPREs can be categorised into three types in the Sydney context based on their enclosure-built form: open, symbolically enclosed, and gated [35]. As a result, two cases were chosen in Sydney: One is Breakfast Point (BP), an open MPRE; another one is Liberty Grove (LG), a symbolically gated MPRE. These two instances share similarities in the criteria: both cases are large-scale encompassing more than 500 properties [4]; both cases are located in the same local area in the inner west area of Sydney; both cases were built around the year 2000; and both cases have high-quality open space features.

The semi-structured interview method was employed to collect data. The methods of sampling for the interviews are purposive sampling and snowball sampling. There are several residents' socio-economic status can influence residents' place attachment, such as age, gender, education, and length of residency [57,58]. To represent the population of the two selected MPREs, the sample includes variations in demographic characteristics across different respondent groups, classified according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics [59] and literature [57,60]. Interview participants were selected from adult residents if they reside in either BP or LG and are aged over 20 years and across three age groups: 20–39; 40–59; and 60+, to represent all socio-demographic factors associated with place attachment, including age, gender, marital status, work status, education, dwelling type, family composition and length of residency [22,30].

Interviews were conducted with selected residents from BP and LG between February to June in 2022. The researcher accessed participants through social media groups and face-to-face distributions. The interview invitation letters (including the Qualtrics link and QR code) were posted to the closed neighbourhood social media groups. If the residents were willing to do the interview, they could click the Qualtrics link or scan the QR code to read the information sheet and e-sign the consent form; and leave their email address through the Qualtrics platform. Participants were also accessed through face-to-face distribution before the COVID-19 lockdowns. Data were collected after obtaining digital consent forms collected through 'Qualtrics'. Interviews were conducted via Zoom which were audio or Zoom recorded. The interviews lasted from approximately 25 min to 70 min, depending on participants' living experiences and communication styles. Information was gathered using a series of questions from the interview protocol, such as 'How would you describe neighbourhood parks in BP/LG? What do you like about the neighbourhood parks in BP/LG? Which types of individual or social activities that take place in these neighbourhood parks give you a sense of attachment to BP/LG? And why do you feel that way?'. The sequence and contents of questions might change in response to the logical flow of participants' responses. All participants answered the questions posed by the researcher above. Additionally, participants were also encouraged to discuss relevant issues.

The data analysis followed the thematic analysis method [61], using Nvivo v12. After 16 interviews, saturation was reached, during which no new themes emerged in subsequent interviews [62]. Out of the 16 participants in the qualitative study, eight were residing in BP, and eight were residing in LG. In terms of age distribution, five were aged 20–39 years, 7 were aged 40–59 years, and 4 were over the age of 60. Regarding gender, 11 were female and 5 were male. Regarding marital status, 13 self-reported as married or de facto, 3 participants were single. In terms of education, 7 participants had a bachelor's degree, 4 held a master's degree, 4 had a high school diploma, and 1 held a doctoral degree. As for employment status, 8 were employed full-time, 5 worked part-time. In addition, 13 participants resided in apartments, while 3 lived in houses or townhouses. The majority of participants (11) had been living in BP or LG for over 5 years, with 4 of them having resided there for more than 10 years. Three participants had lived in BP or LG for 1–5 years, and 2 had been residents for less than one year. Table 2 summarises the characteristics and the socio-economic status of the interview participants. Participant identities have been anonymised using numerical designations (P01–P16) to ensure confidentiality.

Table 2. Characteristics of the interview participants.

Case 1-BP					Case 2-LG				
Person	Gender	Age (y)	Education	Length of Residency (y)	Person	Gender	Age (y)	Education	Length of Residency (y)
01	Male	20–39	Bachelor	5–10	09	Female	20–39	Bachelor	<1
02	Female	20–39	Bachelor	5–10	10	Female	20–39	Highschool	5–10
03	Female	40–59	Master	5–10	11	Male	20–39	Bachelor	1–3
04	Female	40–59	Diploma	5–10	12	Male	40–59	Master	>10
05	Female	40–59	Doctor	>10	13	Female	40–59	Bachelor	5–10
06	Female	40–59	Diploma	1–3	14	Female	60+	Bachelor	<1
07	Male	40–59	Bachelor	>10	15	Female	60+	Highschool	>10 (21)
08	Female	60+	Master	5–10	16	Male	60+	Master	3–5

Note. Participant identities have been anonymised using numerical designations (P01–P16) to ensure confidentiality.

4. Results

This section aims to address the research question, 'what are the psychological processes of place attachment related to neighbourhood park use in MPREs?'. The interview data was coded, focusing on specific aspects connected with participants' place attachment. The interview data analysis revealed three themes regarding the process of place attachment

for park users when utilising nature, recreation, and sport spaces in parks in MPREs: affect, behaviour, and cognition. The themes were further used to frame the thematic analysis of place attachment in MPREs. Themes and subthemes of psychological processes of place attachment identified from interviews are summarised in Figure 2 as below.
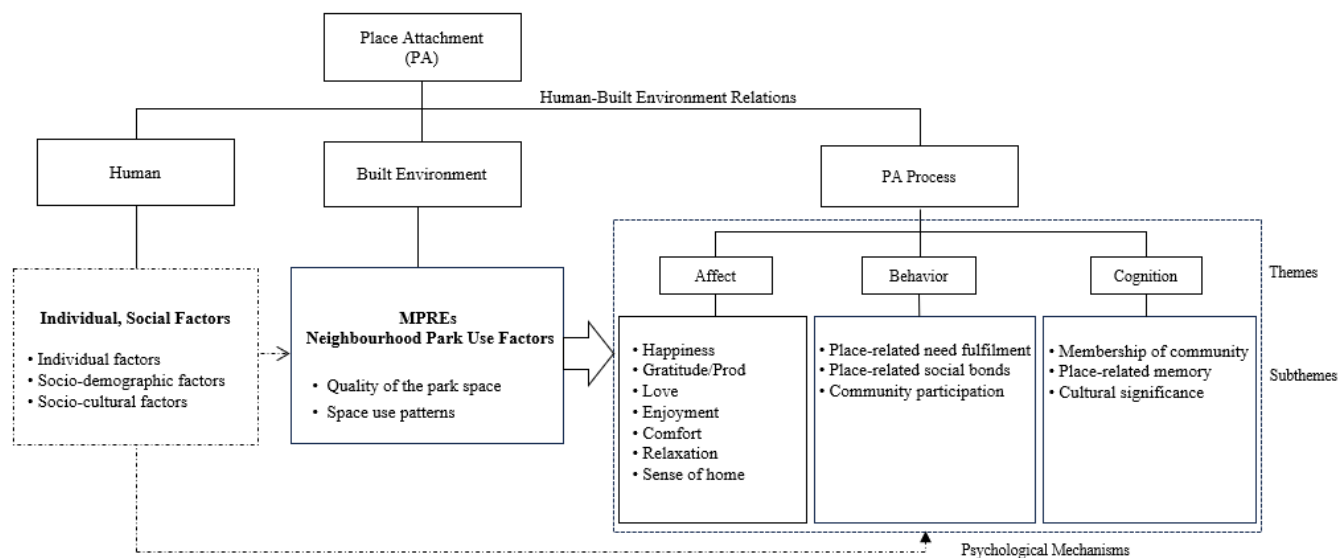

Figure 2. Themes and subthemes of psychological processes of place attachment via thematic analysis. Note. MPRE = Master Planned Residential Estate.

4.1. Affective Process

The affective process was the first main dimension of meanings of place attachment that emerged from the data analysis: emotional bonds. A consistent narrative was evident across the interviews, which highlighted the emotional bonding associated with place attachment.

Emotional Bonds

Emotional bonds here refer to emotional connections with place or community, which is the primary source or meaning of place attachment. Almost all respondents emphasised the significant emotional impact that neighbourhood parks have on them. Many people feel that the park evokes positive emotions in them. The interview participants reported several emotions about the public open spaces in their neighbourhood, including happy (e.g., P01, P02, P06), a sense of home, comfortable (e.g., P02, P07, P11), grateful (e.g., P05), enjoyable (e.g., P05, P10), quiet (e.g., P02, P04), feel beautiful (e.g., P01, P03, P08, P09), lovely (e.g., P08, P09) and relaxed (e.g., P05, P12). As one participant stated:

P03: 'Breakfast Point is nice. It's a nice location. It's combination of green spaces. It's open. It feels very clean and tidy place. When you think of it, always, it's a nice place.' (BP, age 40–59).

P10: 'Community parks, (...) they are enjoyable.' (LG, age 60+).

P08: 'We just fell in love with the way Breakfast Point looked, it was beautiful. It was perfect. (...) I would describe the community parks really well and just a lot of space.' (BP, age 20–39).

In addition, some participants expressed that visiting parks helped to reduce their mental stress during the COVID-19 period (e.g., P05, P12, P16). Some participants said they have no other options for activities during the pandemic, so they need more surrounding open space for activities, and they needed more opportunities for social engagement during COVID-19. Many residents expressed being grateful to live in such a neighbourhood with many parks and facilities for using and general socialising during COVID-19. In short,

most respondents believe that they use parks more and the sense of place attachment has been strengthened during the pandemic. As two participants said:

> P10: 'During the COVID pandemic, I would come to parks quite a lot. I would probably use it more, because this was my very local area. It was more because of COVID and it will be the more outside spaces.' (LG, age 60+).

> P16: 'I have been using parks more than before (COVID), because it's just good to be out and get out some pressure. Even so, we are working from home, just take a rest to visit the park and come back here.' (LG, age 20–39).

4.2. Behavioural Process

Behavioural process was the second main dimension of meanings of place attachment that emerged from the interview data. Three subthemes identified from the qualitative data are discussed below: fulfilment of needs, and better neighbourhood for building social bonds, and community participation.

4.2.1. Place-Related Need Fulfilment

Many residents mentioned that the MPRE provides many conveniences and facilities to meet their living needs in the community, which help to create a sense of the desire to remain close to a place. Some respondents expressed that an MPRE is a better type of neighbourhood for living at their current life stage (e.g., P02, P05, P06, P10, P11), compared with some apartment buildings blocks or traditional house suburbs. MPREs provide quite a few parks with natural, sports, and recreation facilities, which is valuable. Interviews revealed that these value-added facilities were one of the attractors and motivations for residents to live there (e.g., P04, P05). In terms of parks, they can use facilities for various activities, including individual activities and social-community activities. Some participants expressed that it was convenient for them to live in the MPRE, which in turn generated a sense of attachment (e.g., P04, P10, P11).

> P10: 'You can get some social support there. Liberty Grove has been getting most residents' needs. (...) I wouldn't have any problem in getting some help.' (LG, age 60+).

4.2.2. Place-Related Social Bonds

Another subtheme related to the behavioural level of the psychological process of place attachment is place-related social bonds in the neighbourhood. Participants mentioned social interactions and social ties give them a feeling of acceptance, a feeling of being welcome or a sense of belonging. These feelings help to build place dependence and identity, as two participants stated:

> P03: 'I think Breakfast Point is nice. Some people know your name when you go to the shop. They recognise you which let you feel part of a community.' (BP, age 40–59).

> P04: 'I consider Breakfast Point as my home. It is kind of a social place to live.' (BP, age 70s).

Additionally, some respondents stated that the MPREs' parks can offer more social interaction opportunities for them compared with other types of neighbourhoods, such as independent house suburbs or apartment blocks; as one parent resident (P09) stated below. Similarly, another apartment resident (P05) compared BP with other types of apartment blocks and explained how the MPRE's parks help them obtaining more social interaction and place attachment. Another elderly resident (P10) stated that living in an MPRE can mean a larger social network than living in suburban house or apartment. As they noted:

> P09: 'I think community parks are so important because when we go down to parks, my son can interact with other people from the community. But if you live in a suburb in an independent house, there could be nothing around you. So, we may not have anything to do on the interactions for our growing kids. They need the interaction, they need people, they need friends.' (LG, age 40–59).

> P05: *'I guess the parks are the important point for social life in Breakfast Point. (. . .) It compares to living in like the city apartment block, for example, in there is not a lot of greenery, and their people sort are rushing to enforce that. Having the spaces like community parks that have helped. (. . .) For another example, there are a lot of apartments in Rhodes as well, but there's not as much green spaces as there are in Breakfast Point or even the surrounding suburbs, like, even if we looked outside of Breakfast Point, and there are three or four parks that I can easily walk to there. It's just got that completely different feel.' (BP, age 20–39).*

> P10: *'In my view, living in this type of neighbourhood maybe could help you to be more social network, certainly than living in a house or just an apartment somewhere, definitely much more. (. . .) I feel it's a really companionable place. I think I consider Liberty Grove is my home considering other places. I think there is a feeling of that.' (LG, age 60+).*

In addition, it was noticeable from interviews that place dependence has been greatly strengthened during COVID-19, especially for people living in apartments, residents with young children or older people. Interview analysis showed that parks meet residents' needs for most individual activities or weak ties social interaction as usual during COVID-19. As one participant stated:

> P05: *'During the COVID restrictions, when we tried working from home and having kids at home, what we would do is take advantage of the green spaces that we had. (. . .) we would get out every day, get some fresh air, and exercise as well.' (BP, age 20–39).*

4.2.3. Community Participation

Interviews found that community participation is another behavioural item influencing residents' place attachment. Interviews found that in MPREs, community participation takes two main forms, which is unlike other residential communities: First, MPREs provide community-based participation which may contribute to neighbourhood improvement. These activities could be organised by the residents' committee or self-government by residents. As one participant stated:

> P04: *'We recently had an invitation to all in our block to maintain the green space and have a drink and get together.' (BP, age 40–59).*

Second, MPREs offer various organised community activities and events which significantly enhance residents' place attachment. These community activities could be organised by MPRE strata, a residents committee, or resident groups. Most community activities and events were conducted in public open spaces within the MPREs. As one LG resident marked:

> P09: *'We have a fantastic community event during Christmas in the park. (. . .) There were free barbecues, singing and dancing. (. . .) Hundreds of people in the park, and you just went there for free.' (LG, age 20–39).*

4.3. Cognitive Process

The third dimension of meanings of place attachment identified from the interview data was cognitive process, also in terms of place identity. Three subthemes identified from the qualitative data are discussed below: membership of community, social ties, and social distinction.

4.3.1. Membership of Community

Most respondents considered themselves to be a member of the community also in terms of community belonging. Interviews suggested that social and community activities can form a sense of belonging, which is one main sources of place attachment. Most respondents expressed that they could feel some similarities with community members, which generated a feeling of emotional safety and in turn builds a sense of belonging. As one participant marked:

> P10: 'Liberty Grove, it's referred to as a community. There might be a little bit more of a feeling of safety, and people who are walking around 95% of the time are the residents, not strangers. Whereas out in the street, anyone walking by could be just a stranger I don't know. The people feel safer and similar in all of that. Maybe it's the proximity or even just the word 'community.' (LG, age 60+).

4.3.2. Place-Related Memory

The second identified process of place attachment from interview data was place-based memory. Many people mentioned that they have some impressive memories and experiences about public open spaces. For some participants, these memories became motivations for them to move back into the community years later (e.g., P05, P11). In parks, the places of sports, children's playgrounds, BBQs, and party areas were most commonly mentioned in terms of their memory, also including some landmarks (e.g., P08). Of these, the most commonly mentioned were about family-time memories, especially about the growth of children. For example, some respondents mentioned that they had had some parties for children in public open spaces, which left many precious memories for them. As two participants stated:

> P05: 'One of the things that we noticed before we moved to Breakfast Point was the parks. For example, Silkstone Park, we spent time there and move up to the photo shoot there. So we went there, and it was just such a nice place to be.' (BP, age 20–39).

> P11: 'Because we have lived here for a long time, we have a lot of memories here and the feelings in good experiments here.' (LG, age 60s).

4.3.3. Cultural Significance

Most participants interpreted a sense of social distinction for socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. Interviews showed that the culture diversity adds complexity to the concept of the MPRE. For example, out of 16 participants, three self-identified that they have Chinese cultural backgrounds, three participants self-identified as having Indian cultural backgrounds, and one self-identified as having a Brazilian cultural background. Interviews indicated that place identity can be built through participating in group activities, such as an immigrant group, cultural group, or aged group. Residents mentioned that most of these group activities were held in parks. For example, there are some Indian cultural festivals in LG in parks. These cultural festivals in parks created opportunities for social interaction to meet people with a similar cultural background and created a sense of belonging to the community. As an Indian background resident stated:

> P09: 'There are some Indian festivals in the community. The kids played in Indian festival of colours. (. . .) Everyone gets together and has dinner. I'm sure the other Asian countries also have similar festivals. (. . .) there are a lot of events in the community like that for multiple cultures. It's wonderful.' (LG, age 40–59).

Similarly, some residents with a non-Australian cultural background stated that they regularly participated in some culture-based group activities in parks. These sorts of social activities could provide social support for them. For example, there was an immigrant elderly group, as one participant stated:

> P02: 'The Chinese elderly often get together in parks, which provides a kind of social support and benefits their physical and mental health, especially during the COVID pandemic.' (BP, age 40–59).

5. Discussion

This study identified three psychosocial process of place attachment of park users in MPREs: affect, cognition and behaviour, and related subthemes: including affect (emotional bonds), behaviour (place-related fulfilment of needs, place-related social bonds, and community participation) and cognition (membership of community, place-related memory,

and cultural significance). This study tested the place attachment theory [52] under Australian MPRE circumstances and found support for Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model. This study expanded Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model by modifying the underlying items at affective–cognitive–behavioural levels and adding some new items into the model: (1) adding the affective items of enjoyment, comfort, relaxation, and sense of home into the model; (2) adding behavioural items of place-related fulfilment of needs, place-related social bonds and community participation into the model; (3) adding cognitive item of cultural significance into the model. These findings add new insights to the place attachment literature and MPRE research. Therefore, the findings of this study differ from the PPP model and other previous place attachment studies. These findings are based on the evidence gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting specific characteristics of neighbourhood park use in MPREs during the pandemic, which are discussed as follows.

5.1. Affective Process

This study found that the most significant elements of place attachment are affective items. This is consistent with most previous studies [16]. This study found the subthemes of place affect include emotional bonds and place memory, which is related to recent studies such as (Mihaylov et al., 2020) [63] and Scannell et al. (2020) [64].

This study confirms that emotional bonds are associated with place attachment. This result corroborates the findings of previous work, which found that emotional factors such as happiness, pride, and love are the main factors in place affect [17,63]. The findings expanded affective items, by adding Comfort, Gratitude, Enjoyment, Relaxation, and Sense of Home into the Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model in the context of MPREs in Sydney. This result reflects that of Lestari and Sumabrata (2018) [58], who found that emotional bonds between residents and neighbourhood were not only affected by the physical environment, but also affected by the social interaction with neighbours.

5.2. Behavioural Process

This study explored the characteristics of residents' place attachment of park users in MPREs and found that behavioural items influencing place attachment consist of three dimensions: place-related need fulfilment; place-related social bonds, and community participation. These findings focused on a specific MPRE neighbourhood park circumstance, which differs from the behaviour items of previous place attachment models in the literature. Specifically, the findings illustrate a significant relationship between community participation, social items, and place attachment, which differs from Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP models' behavioural process. As discussed above, behaviour items in the PPP model are underexplored in the literature to date. In particular, social interaction behaviours to place attachment were not included in the PPP model. The findings of this study added the behaviour items to Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model in the MPRE neighbourhood park context.

This study's interview found that place-related need fulfilment is an essential behavioural item influencing place attachment. This result aligns with the findings of prior research in the place attachment behavioural component [18,19,56]. Scannell and Gifford (2017) [19] investigated the psychological benefits of place attachment through a qualitative study and found activity support is an important meaning of place attachment. Specifically, their study identified specific place-related behavioural needs, including relaxation, activity support, and entertainment. Of them, relaxation is the most important place attachment influencer [19]. This result is in agreement with Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] findings, which showed that continuous activities help maintain closeness to such a place, which is the most important component in the behavioural level of place attachment. They revealed that residents are most likely to generate place attachment for two types of places: home and outdoor space (e.g., parks). This study is consistent with these previous findings and confirms that meeting needs is one of the main behavioural processes of place attachment in neighbourhoods. Place attachment studies have not included clear behavioural items to

date [16]. Interviews in this study found that residents' behaviours in public open spaces consist of various individual activities and social activities. These findings contribute to filling this knowledge gap about place attachment behavioural items.

This study found that social activities influence place attachment in MPREs, including weak-ties social interaction and strong-ties social interaction. These findings align with the results of earlier studies that identified that social bonds may affect place attachment, such as strong-ties social interaction with neighbours, closeness to the neighbours, daily interactions, and intimacy among residents [58,65]. In the literature to date, it remains uncertain whether social engineering has influenced people's perceptions of place attachment [20]. This finding is consistent with some scholars who stated that neighbourhood attachment reflects a general feeling of wellbeing with the residential area [16,66]. For example, this result is in agreement with Casakin et al. (2021) [16], who pointed out that neighbourhood place attachment can come from 'a general feeling of well-being that is developed through daily social interactions among neighbours' (p.318). This finding is consistent with some recent studies that found the importance of social bonds to place attachment in urban neighbourhoods [20,67]. Interviews implied that fulfilment of residents' social needs would help promote a sense of place attachment. One possible explanation is that MPRE public open spaces provide facilities and venues that may facilitate the occurrence of social activities and, in turn, build place attachment. Because of the MPREs' characteristics, such as diversity, this study argues that MPRE planning should fully consider the need of different types of social activities for diverse groups.

This study's interviews found that community participation is another behavioural item influencing place attachment. This finding aligns with certain earlier research that also identified community participation as an essential item of the behavioural theme to form place attachment, in particular participation related to place reconstruction [17]. This result reflects those of Scannell and Gifford (2010) [17], who found that the behavioural level of place attachment includes two items: desire to remain close to a place and place reconstruction. These findings are also in line with Manzo and Perkins (2006) [56], who stated that the behavioural meaning of place attachment mainly refers to community participation, especially participation in neighbourhood planning, protection, and improvement.

In the Australian MPRE literature, few studies investigated the behavioural meanings of place attachment related to community participation. The findings help to fill this gap with two new insights. First, interviews found that MPREs provide a variety of community-based participation, which may contribute to neighbourhood improvement. For example, the MPRE residents committee may contribute to self-government by residents, as also reported by Thompson (2013) [32]. Second, interviews indicated that MPREs may offer more organised community activities and events than other neighbourhoods. These community activities may be organised by MPRE strata, a resident committee, or resident groups. Most community activities and events were conducted in public open spaces within the MPREs. Interviews also hinted that participating in these community activities could positively influence place attachment at the behaviour level. Further research is required to investigate how community activities affect place attachment in the MPRE context.

In previous studies, the behavioural process of place attachment was unclear. This study claims that the behavioural process of place attachment includes community participation, which encompasses two concepts: place improvement and community events. This finding may contribute to place attachment research across various neighbourhoods globally. This study analysed the place-based residents' needs, social ties, and community participation in place attachment in MPREs. More studies are required to comprehend the behaviours and diverse meanings of place attachment in order to create successful places for residents' well-being [56].

5.3. Cognitive Process

In the MPRE context, this study identified there are three cognitive items of place attachment which are discussed below: membership of community, meaning, and cultural significance.

This study found that residents' place attachment may come from a sense of membership of community or a sense of belonging. This is also consistent with some recent studies, which pointed out that place attachment is developed 'not only from their personal experiences but also from the group to which they belong' [16] (p. 318). These findings are in line with those of Seamon (2020) [11], who found that place identity comes from 'feel a part of place and associate their personal and group identity with the identity of that place' (p. 29). This finding reflects the characteristics of Australian MPREs, which show a characteristic of social distinction. These findings are in line with some researchers who assert that MPREs are often highly homogenous [3,4]. For example, this finding is consistent with Francis et al. (2014) [3], who noted that Australian MPREs show a characteristic of exclusion by 'emphasising separation and difference from surrounding areas to generate a positive sense of exclusivity' [3] (p. 190). This study argues that the social distinction may create a social segregation issue, but on the other hand, it may also help to create a sense of identity, which is a resource to form place attachment in MPREs. MPREs' homogenous and social distinction characteristics may help residents form a social identity, which in turn strengthens place attachment in MPREs.

Interviews in this study found 'meaning' is an important item to form place identity and a sense of belonging. These findings are in line with Manzo and Perkins (2006) [56], who assert that place identity consists of various dimensions of personal emotional connection with the physical environment, including 'means of a pattern of beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, and goals' [56] (p. 337). In the context of MPREs, this study's interviews found that residents may create place-related meanings in recognition of the MPRE lifestyle, values, and goals. This is consistent with the MPRE literature, which shows that MPREs' lifestyle packages provide people with opportunity to rediscover meaning and purpose in their lives [68]. This may be one of the cognitive items to form place attachment in MPREs which distinguishes them from other neighbourhood contexts.

Interviews found that the presence of place-based memories in public open spaces is an important factor associated with place attachment in MPREs. This finding is consistent with quite a few previous studies that have identified memories as the main resources for shaping a sense of place attachment [58,64,69]. Interviews of this study indicated that park-related memory facilitates positive emotions such as happiness, enjoyment, and love to promote place attachment in MPREs. Hence, this study argues that memory is a subtheme of place affect because it reflects existing associations between emotional bonds and place memory, which need further qualitative studies to explore.

Another new finding from the interviews of this study is that cultural significance is regarded as one of the sources of place attachment in the Australian MPRE context. This is probably because of the multicultural backgrounds and diversity characteristics of MPREs in the Australian context. This finding is related to some prior studies that recognised the importance of cultural and traditional factors in forming place attachment [20,70,71]. For example, this finding aligns with a recent study by Dlamini and Tesfamichael (2021) [20], who found that 'places have cultural significance, and this leads individuals to distinctly identify themselves with such spaces and express their sense of identity' (p. 2436). This finding reflects some previous studies, which revealed that MPREs' public spaces provided important grounds for social and cultural diversity in everyday activities [72,73]. In sum, this study expands Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model, by adding a new subcategory of cultural significance at the cognition dimension in the Australian MPRE context. In the context of MPREs, cultural significance and its relationship with neighbourhood parks have become important factors influencing place attachment (PA). This may be related to the significant cultural diversity feature of MPREs. The finding of this study emphasises the importance of culture and tradition for place attachment, highlighting the crucial

role of neighbourhood parks in this process. This finding provides implications for the development of international communities.

This study identified some new insights into psychosocial mechanisms of place attachment and expanded Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP place attachment model, by adding several new subcategories of place attachment dimensions for the Australian MPRE context. The findings, therefore, differ from previous place attachment studies in other neighbourhood contexts [17,67]. This study helps to fill the knowledge gaps discussed above by providing empirical evidence under the Australian MPRE context.

6. Conclusions

Based on the qualitative evidence, this study identified three psychosocial components of place attachment on public open spaces and MPREs: affective, cognitive, and behavioural components. This study makes several original contributions to the field, encompassing theoretical, empirical, and practical aspects.

Firstly, for theoretical contributions, this study tested and expended Scannell and Gifford's (2010) [17] PPP model by adding new items to the model. The findings have led to modifications in the underlying subthemes in the PPP model at affective-cognitive-behavioural levels within the MPRE context: (1) adding the affective items of enjoyment, comfort, relaxation, and sense of home into the model; (2) adding behavioural items of place-related need fulfilment, place-related social bonds, and community participation into the model; (3) adding cognitive items of cultural significance into the model. These findings introduce fresh perspectives to the place attachment literature in Australia and global regions. Secondly, this study contributes empirically to sustainable neighbourhoods and Australian MPREs literature by investigating human-built environment relations regarding place attachment. The findings contribute to our understandings of human-environment relations, not only for Sydney MPREs but also for global sustainable neighbourhoods. Thirdly, this study presents contributions by incorporating evidence obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data can be used for future before-and-after pandemic comparative studies. The data and findings can also help understand human-environment relations in times of crisis or uncertainty globally. Lastly, this study offers practical implications for real estate development and housing management from the perspective of Sydney. The study's outcomes furnish new insights for policymakers, developers, and urban planners involved in real estate development and housing management in Sydney and global regions.

This study acknowledges potential limitations regarding the reliability and validity of the data: (1) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the data response rate was lower than expected. Online interviews faced challenges related to technology issues, ethics, safety, and privacy considerations. While there were enough respondents to perform the necessary data analysis, the response rate was lower than desired, which may limit the reliability of the data. (2) Online interviews could not provide the same opportunity to build rapport with participants as face-to-face interviews, making it harder for the researcher to establish a personal connection. The lack of non-verbal cues and personal interaction in online interviews could introduce data biases. (3) Technical difficulties, such as internet or microphone issues, could disrupt interviews and negatively impact participants' responses, potentially causing data biases. (4) Additionally, because the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, the unprecedented situation could have influenced individuals' feelings and responses, possibly introducing biases.

To sum up, MPREs have become a dominant residential real estate form in Australian cities, but there are significant knowledge gaps in MPE research. Further work is required to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implications of the diversity and complexity of MPEs. Particularly, this underscores the need for more extensive qualitative studies within the realm of MPRE research.

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