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The migration of people from the southern States of New South Wales and Victoria to south-east Queensland over the course of the last couple of decades highlights the importance of natural amenities in shaping demographic transformations in Australia. The warmer climes of Queensland appear to have been the catalyst in this transformation, indicative of the value that weather may play in quality of life decisions. The collection of essays in *Environmental Amenities and Regional Economic Development* provides some pointers as to how we might better understand the extent to which climate and other natural environmental amenities influence the movement of people and the policies that could be developed to enhance locational outcomes.

The impetus for the collection has been the comparable population boom in the southern Sunbelt of the United States and the concern to map the significance of the location-specific non-pecuniary utility associated with climate. But the focus of these essays extends beyond this single dimensional attribute, weather, to consider a range of natural amenities and nature-related human-made recreational infrastructure that can shape the movement of people. Causal links between population changes and environment are explored utilising a range of different methodological techniques, including correlations of a range of variables, regression analysis and econometric modelling.

The collection has an inclination to introduce the understanding of the import of the natural environment in framing patterns of migration in fairly orthodox, and one-dimensional, terms: in terms of the value placed on natural pursuits that provide non-pecuniary utility to residents. Fortunately, after setting this problematic the essays look beyond such a basic proposition to appreciate the multiplicity of factors that shape migration and the movements of people that are motivated by more intimate associations with the natural environment.

One reference that provides something of a counterpoint for the research exercise is the fairly conventional notion that consumer preferences will place more value on environmental amenities with increased economic growth and as income grows. As they are developed, the different essays are not defined by this simplistic concept. For instance, the warmer climes of the southern Sunbelt are reckoned to have become a valued attribute that has been critical in migration patterns, but it is argued that the appeal of the sun has to be contextualised, framed by the changing cultural and political milieu of the post-civil rights era, by the availability of technologies that mitigate the discomfort of hot and humid summers, and by the numerical significance of an ageing population among those

escaping the colder weather of the north. Furthermore, the appeal of the Sunbelt is also seen as having been enhanced by the expansion in the housing stock, said to be relatively cheaper, and the magnetic force of the associated economic growth corridors and expanding employment opportunities. Most contributions generally appreciate that the demographic shift and changing consumer preferences cannot simply be viewed with respect to the endogenous force of nature's appeal, and map a multiplicity of factors, and not just environmental amenities, in the effort to explain migration.

Nor do these essays presume that there is a single natural environment which shapes the movement of people. The Sunbelt, rural areas and small towns, and forest belts and mountains each appear to impel the resettlement of distinct population cohorts. The various research findings point to the nature-migration synergy framing the settlement behaviour of relatively distinct and homogeneous socio-cultural and economic groups. In part, this is attributed to the employment opportunities afforded in particular locales that emerge with the turn to nature, such as those that arise with the development of environmental-related tourism. Furthermore, different conceptions of place in nature, indeed different conceptions of nature or what constitutes 'green areas', also frame patterns of migration. For instance, one of the contributions draws on Richard Florida's notion of the 'creative class' to argue that the economic privilege of this socio-economic cohort provides the means for some to search out their rural or wilderness retreat or partake in close-to-nature recreational pursuits.

The 'jobs versus the environment' shibboleth is also questioned in those instances where employment opportunities are generated by the migration associated with the engagement with natural amenities. But, as one of the essays observes, migration is not necessarily a one-way street. The new close-to-nature communities can affect the value of properties, driving out longer-term residents. Likewise, the distinctive social capital that is constitutive of these new denizens can effect changes in the make-up of communities and transform social constructions of nature or, through policy changes, the conservation of natural environments that alter established connections.

What is also interesting in these accounts is that the emphasis on the reasonably fluid spatial mobility that characterises the American population is not a universal phenomenon. The pattern of migration-nature connections in the United States appears to be less spatially constrained than it is in Europe where there is comparatively little cross-border migration, although decisions to partake of natural environmental amenities do play a part in shaping resettlement within national borders.

The object of this collection of essays is not simply to better understand and measure people's predilection to reap the rewards of enjoying natural environmental amenities, be this residing in 'green' belts or actively participating in nature- or environmental-related activities. As well, the studies also seek to demonstrate the importance of environmental policy in influencing the way communities can engage with the natural environment. And this is not just a

question of conservation policies to enable the exercise of preferences for engaging with nature. It is as much about understanding the migration-mix in the dynamics of regional and rural economies. There are, thus, some constructive insights that pertain to the Australian research and policy landscape that can be drawn from this collection.

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