

Analysing Sustainable Tourism Development through the Lens of Sense of Place

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ABSTRACT

The growth of tourism activity in a destination has commonly involved the phenomenon of 'homogenization' of places. There are examples worldwide of previously unique destinations that have become just one more 'tourist place'. Current discussions of sustainability suggest that a place's environment, economy and socio-cultural characteristics constitute an interchangeable system. In landscape architecture theory, 'sense of place' is a concept that resonates with this holistic view of place. It holds that, through an adaptative and creative process, the environment influences and is influenced by human intentions, activities and built form. This paper supports the contemporary view that for tourism to be sustainable, its development must be based on an understanding of the destinations' 'sense of place'. The discussion extends to evaluate current planning policies for sustainable tourism development in regard to sense of place. In particular, it considers the context of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge within the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River (AMR), Western Australia.

The study shows that planning policies create significant regulations to encourage tourism development to be sensitive to the 'sense of place' of AMR. It also highlights contrasts to the design approach of two specific tourism developments. The contrasts refer to the adaptation/imposition of outsiders' intentions, activities and built form upon the place. The paper suggests that developers and designers must become 'involved' with the local environment and communities to develop an authentic sense of place. It also suggests that policies must demand further assessment of the conceptualization process of new developments, to ensure the enhancement of local sense of place and achieve sustainable tourism.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism development, sense of place, landscape architecture, planning and design, Shire of Augusta-Margaret River*