

Third Places for Social Sustainability: A Planning Framework Based on Local and International Comparisons

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Abstract : Social sustainability, as an independent perspective of sustainable development, has gained some acknowledgement, becoming an important aspect in sustainable urban planning internationally. However, limited research aiming at promoting social sustainability within urban areas exists within the South African context. This is mainly due to the different perspectives of sustainable development (e.g., Environmental, Economic, and Social) not being equally prioritized by policy makers and supported by implementation strategies, guidelines, and planning frameworks. The enhancement of social sustainability within urban areas relies on urban dweller satisfaction and the quality of urban life. Inclusive cities with high-quality public spaces are proposed within this research through implementing the third place theory. Third places are introduced as any place other than our homes (first place) and work (second place) and have become an integrated part of sustainable urban planning. As Third Places consist of every place ‘in between’, the approach has taken on a large role of the everyday life of city residents, and the importance of planning for such places can only be measured through identifying and highlighting the social sustainability benefits thereof. The aim of this research paper is to introduce third place planning within the urban area to ultimately enhance social sustainability. Selected background planning approaches influencing the planning of third places will briefly be touched on, as the focus will be placed on the social sustainability benefits provided through third place planning within an urban setting. The study will commence by defining and introducing the concept of third places within urban areas as well as a discussion on social sustainability, acting as one of the three perspectives of sustainable development. This will gain the researcher an improved understanding on social sustainability in order for the study to flow into an integrated discussion of the benefits Third places provide in terms of social sustainability and the impact it has on improved quality of life within urban areas. Finally, a visual case study comparison of local and international examples of third places identified will be illustrated. These international case studies will contribute towards the conclusion of this study where a local gap analysis will be formulated, based on local third place evidence and international best practices in order to formulate a strategic planning framework on improving social sustainability through third place planning within the local South African context.

Keywords : planning benefits, social sustainability, third places, urban area

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