



# World Heritage / Patrimoine Mondial

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Development: Planning for Distinctiveness and Sustainability in  
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**Please provide a 500 words abstract outlining your thesis; you may wish to attach a table of contents or any other relevant material:**

The urban form of historic cities is the physical representation of internal societal processes and external interactions with the environment. The distinctiveness of historic urban fabrics results from self-representations through local cultural expressions in urban design and socio-cultural interactions. Both the urban form and life within the historic fabric attract tourism, a major source of national income for several developing countries. However, the distinctiveness and socio-cultural and physical sustainability of historic cities are threatened with current planning approaches that overlook local residents. These approaches perceive destinations as tourism products, emphasize their physical attributes, and focus only on tourists' activities. By ignoring local residents' activities and needs such approaches jeopardize the cultural and physical sustainability of historic cities and lead to the loss of distinctiveness, the quality that initially attracts tourism.

This research explores an alternative approach to planning, one that incorporates the local perspective and investigates how this active involvement in the planning process affects the destination's distinctiveness and sustainability. Specifically, the research examines the impact of local residents on the tourist experience through self-representations in urban design and tourism-related services. The research proposes a model that links self-representation to current planning approaches (place-as-product) and to the outcomes (distinctiveness and sustainability). The model tests how these outcomes influence the destination's ability to meet residents' and tourists' needs and to compete in the global heritage tourism industry.

The research methodology embraces a mixed strategy that consists of a secondary quantitative method embedded within the primary qualitative method. The analytical framework is a comparative analysis of three case studies: Aleppo in Syria, al-Salt in Jordan, and Acre in Israel. Data collection tactics combine interviews, observations, questionnaires, material culture analysis, cognitive mapping, and documents and archives.

The interdisciplinary nature of tourism research and its relatively short history led to gaps in theoretical understandings and to gaps between research and practice. The theoretical contribution of this research is the links it establishes between the place-as-product and place experience models. The research contributes to planning practice through the integration of local residents' needs in planning and their empowerment to sustain the cultural and physical distinctiveness of destinations.

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