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Article

People–Place Narratives as Knowledge Typologies for Social Sustainability: Cases from Urban Contexts in the Global South

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Abstract: In the dynamic interplay between people and their physical environments, the Global South stands as a mosaic undergoing a multitude of transformative influences in architecture and urbanism, within which examining social sustainability becomes imperative. While the prevailing attention remains on environmental and economic sustainability, this study addresses a persistent gap in the urban literature by focusing on the dynamic and manifold nature of social sustainability. Positioning itself within the context of sustainable development, the study links the pursuit of social aspects of sustainability with selected unique urban contexts from the Global South. Five cases, including Alexandria (*Egypt*), Tripoli (*Libya*), Basra (*Iraq*), Lilongwe (*Malawi*), and Accra (*Ghana*), are discussed through multi-layered investigations which involve attitude surveys, interviews, focus groups, participatory systematic observations, and behavioral mapping, engaging directly with inhabitants and stakeholders. Uncovering people–place narratives in the identified contexts, the cases are developed into five knowledge typologies that serve as practical tools for planning and design decision-making, policy formulation, and academic discourse. Discussions are conceived to demonstrate the transformative role people–place narratives play in fostering a more sustainable and equitable urban future. Conclusions are drawn to offer practical insights for stakeholders involved in various capacities in shaping the urban landscape of the Global South.

Keywords: social sustainability; urban transformation; housing; inclusive public spaces; youth spaces; quality of urban life; knowledge typologies; people–place narratives

1. Introduction: Prelude to People–Place Narratives (PPN) and Social Sustainability

In the intricate tapestry of urban life, the nexus between individuals and their environments forms the heartbeat of a city. This is particularly evident in the Global South, which is undergoing a multitude of influences, with architecture and urbanism witnessing significant transformations that raise critical questions about urban growth, sustainable development, city regeneration, retrofitting, quality of urban life, health, livability, identity, and multiculturalism. In various areas of the Global South, the development of urban environments takes place alongside challenges of environmental degradation, ethnic and regional conflicts, mass displacement of refugees, political and economic instability, and other harsh realities. As the Global South grapples with distinctive urban challenges and