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The Genius Loci and tourism development nexus

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4th International Tourism and Hospitality Management Congress



Christou, P. Farmaki, A., Saveriades, A. & Spanou, E. (2018). "The *genius loci* and tourism development nexus", 4th International Tourism and Hospitality Management Congress, 17-21/10, Budapest.

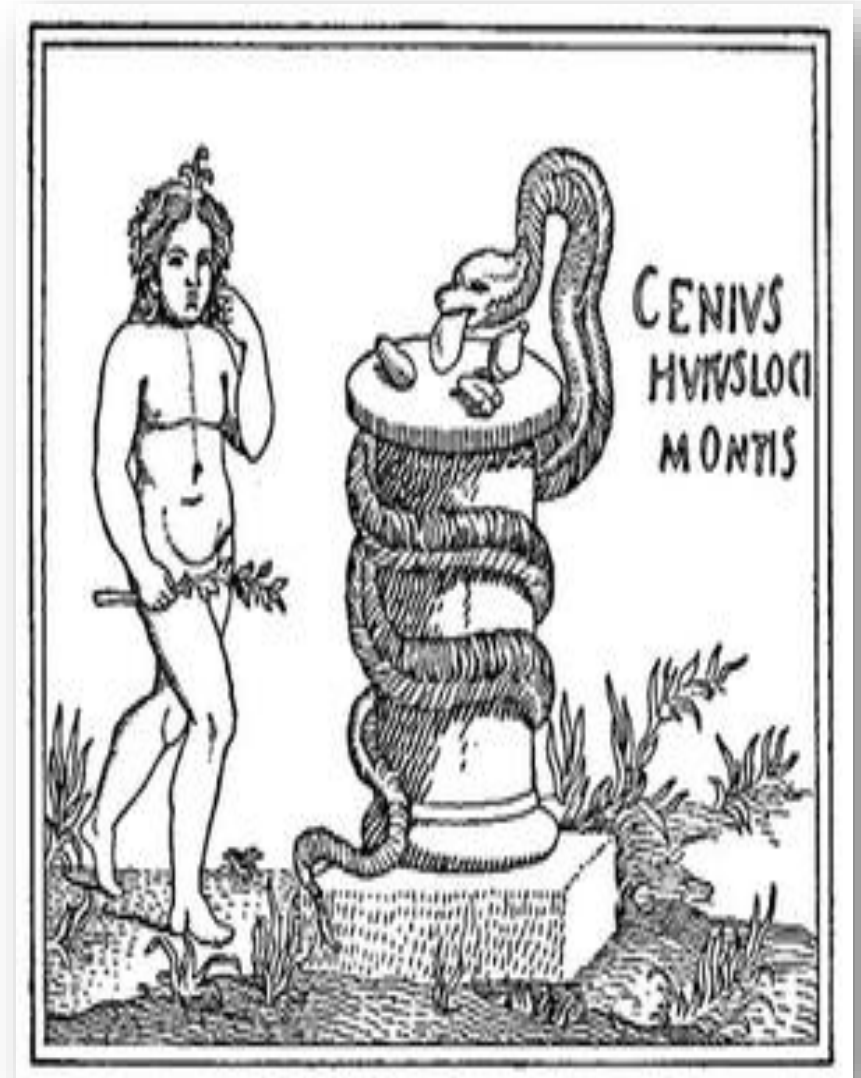
Introduction and theoretical discussion

Places are characterized by the physical setting and social processes that are carried out there (Stedman, 2003), while ‘**Sense of place**’ are people’s perceptions and interpretations of places (Hausmann et al., 2016).

Sense of place reflects the ancient concept of *genius loci* (Lecompte et al., 2017), which possesses a spiritual meaning attached to it.

The notion of *Genius Loci*

- In classical Roman religion, *genius loci* was the protective spirit of a place.
- The notion is associated with harmony, identity, soul and spirit (Neri, 2006) and should be taken seriously by places (Petzet, 2008).



Aim and importance of the study

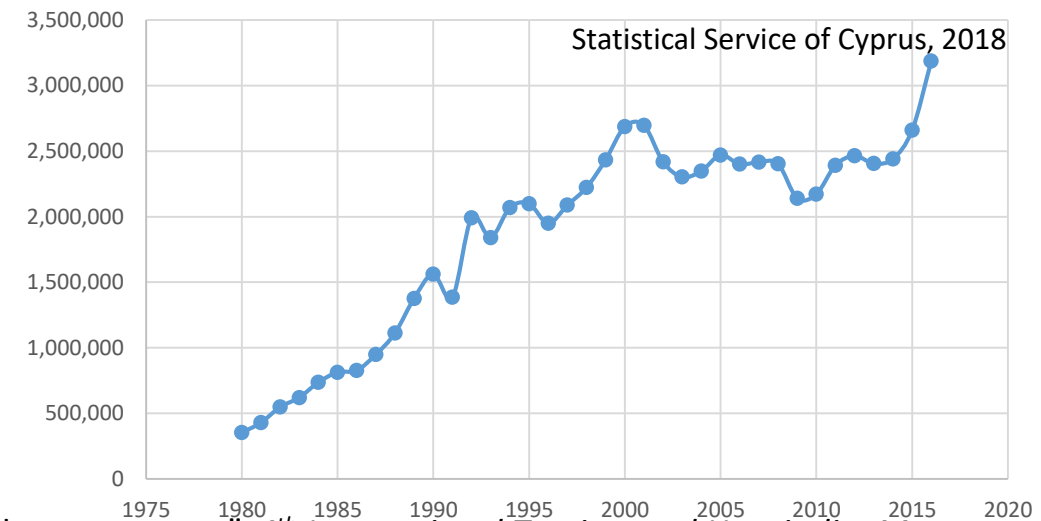
- Studies related to sense of place, seem to have overlooked the spiritual meaning attached to places. Yet, places gain a spirit and soul, through the affect experience by the generations who lived there (Neri, 2006).
- This study attempts to explore the notion of *genius loci*, within a contemporary setting; one, that has experienced intense tourism development.
- It enables understandings of an unexplored notion (Petzet, 2008), which can help us in establishing more sensitive approaches to planning and construction (Thompson, 2003).

Place context

- Ayia Napa, was chosen as an appropriate setting; It reflects other international ones that have experienced penetrating tourism growth, e.g. regions in Zanzibar, Spain and Australia (Lange, 2015; Gursoy et al., 2009; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000).
- The detrimental effects on the island's coastlines and tourism impacts in the region, were evident from the early 1990's (Witt, 1991; Sonmez et al., 2013).



Tourist arrivals in Cyprus (1980-2016)



Study methods

The study made use of ethnographic research methods (Christou et al., 2018; Kottak, 2006), and was conducted in two phases:

Phase A: The gathering and analysis of archive (e.g. landscape) photos, maps and old documentations/annotations of the region.

Phase B: Two researchers examined the current setting, by engaging in observations of the physical attributes and changes within; and informal interviews with locals (Christou, 2018) who have been residing in the area for decades.

Examination of archive place photos & maps



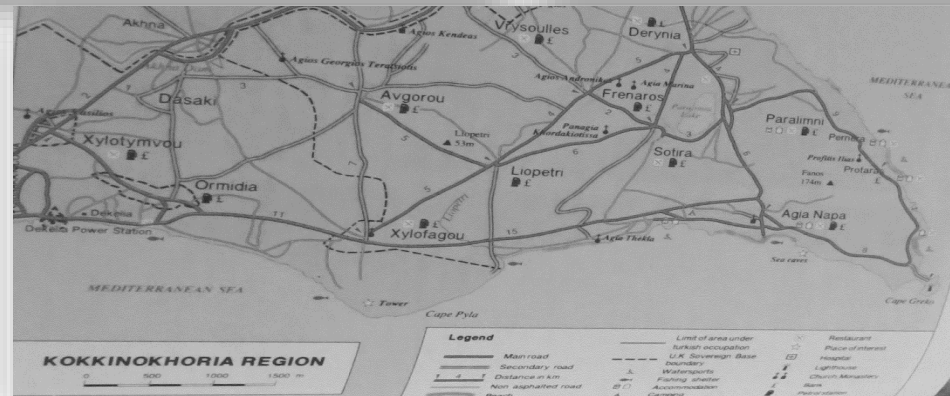
Ayia Napa



Grecian Bay Hotel, Ayia Napa.



Sandy Bay - awarded the blue flag by Ayia Napa Municipality
Pavlo Napa, Anonymous and Tasia Maris Beach Hotels



Source of books: Library of Cyprus Tourism Organization

- Observations focused on the physical and static environment of the region (e.g. on landscape changes due to tourism development).



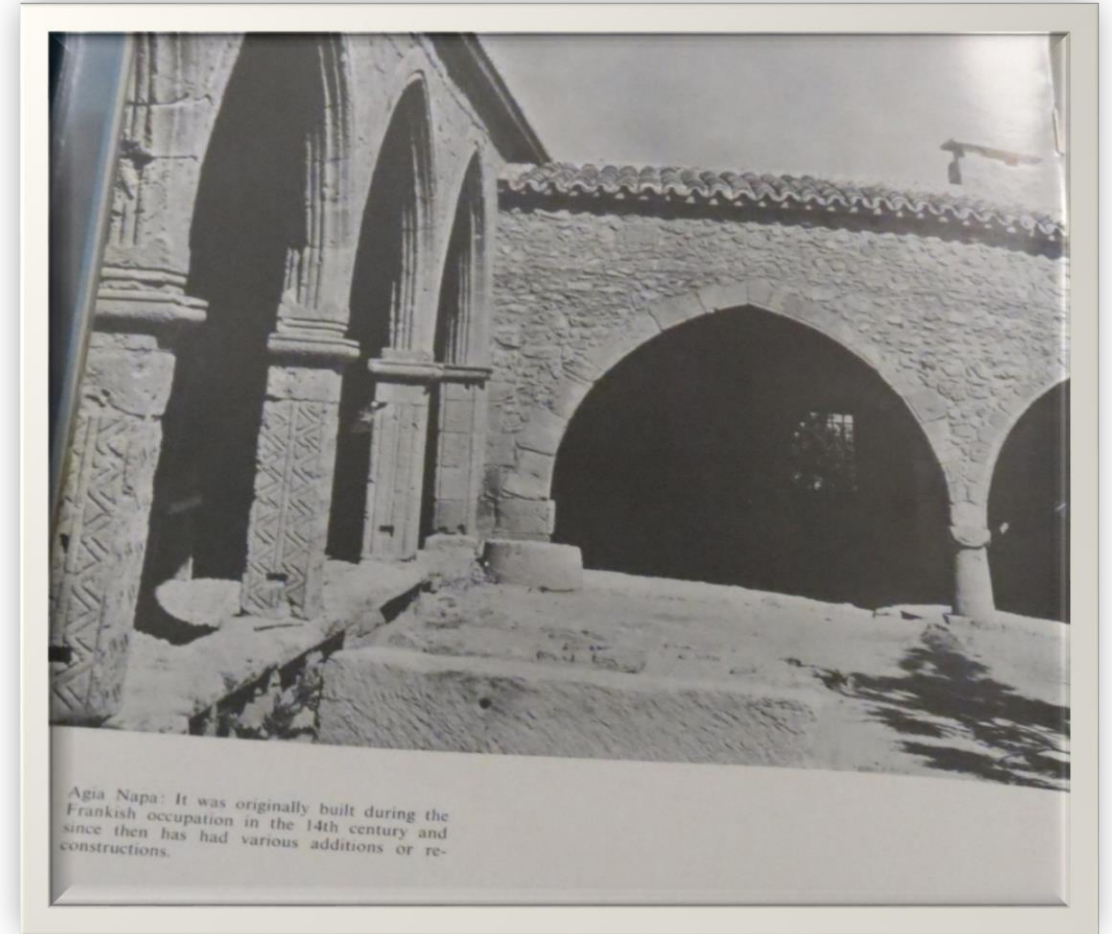
- These are complimented by visual documentation (photos), which their analysis is deemed important and favoured by academics (Balomenou et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016; Garrod, 2008;).



Study findings

The place was found to be connected directly with sanctity and spirituality (e.g. 300 years ago).

“There is also a stone cavern, a holy cave... the devoted Christian goes to this holy cave in faith and piety where it can provoke him a great devoutness...” (Arch. Filotheos, 1735).



Stavrou, P. (1979). Cyprus the Sweet Land. Nicosia-Achilles Ghinis Ltd Publications

- Areas surrounding the town centre, and coasts are those settings that experienced the most changes/alternations. Development that has occurred, is mainly due to touristic reasons.

“... The monastery was built on a hill, but now you get the feeling that the whole area is more or less a flat region full with concrete buildings... It [referring to the setting] has changed a lot, beyond recognition... I find it hard to remember how it was...” (Doros, male, 63 years old)



- The monastery, has kept its character untouched throughout the years. The sacred place experienced minor alternations. Yet, its context changes as increased inflows of tourists visit the site during the summer.

“... I enjoy the peacefulness of the place [referring to Ayia Napa monastery]... I try to avoid visiting the monastery during summer... there are too many tourists and it’s not a very quiet place to be...”
(Panayiotis, male, 47).



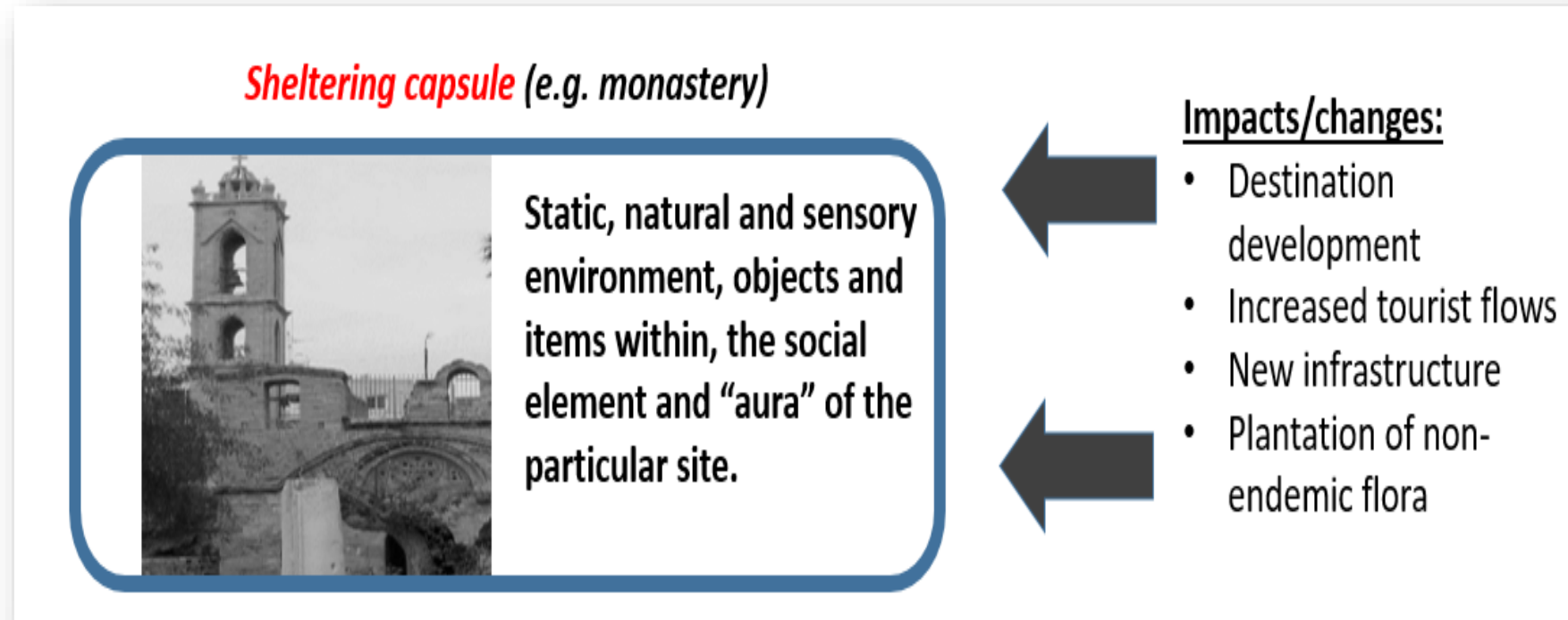
The *genius loci* of the site (elements/rudiments)

	Elements and rudiments	Example
Physical elements	The physical static environment	Building (church)
	The natural environment	Endemic flora (e.g. Olive trees)
	Objects/ items within the static environment	Byzantine icons
	The sensory environment	Candles and ethereal essences
Social element	The social element	Conversations with spiritual people
Psycho-spiritual elements	The aura, soul and spirit of the place	The mass and ceremonies open to the public
	The personal factor	Interpretations that individuals assign to the spiritual place.

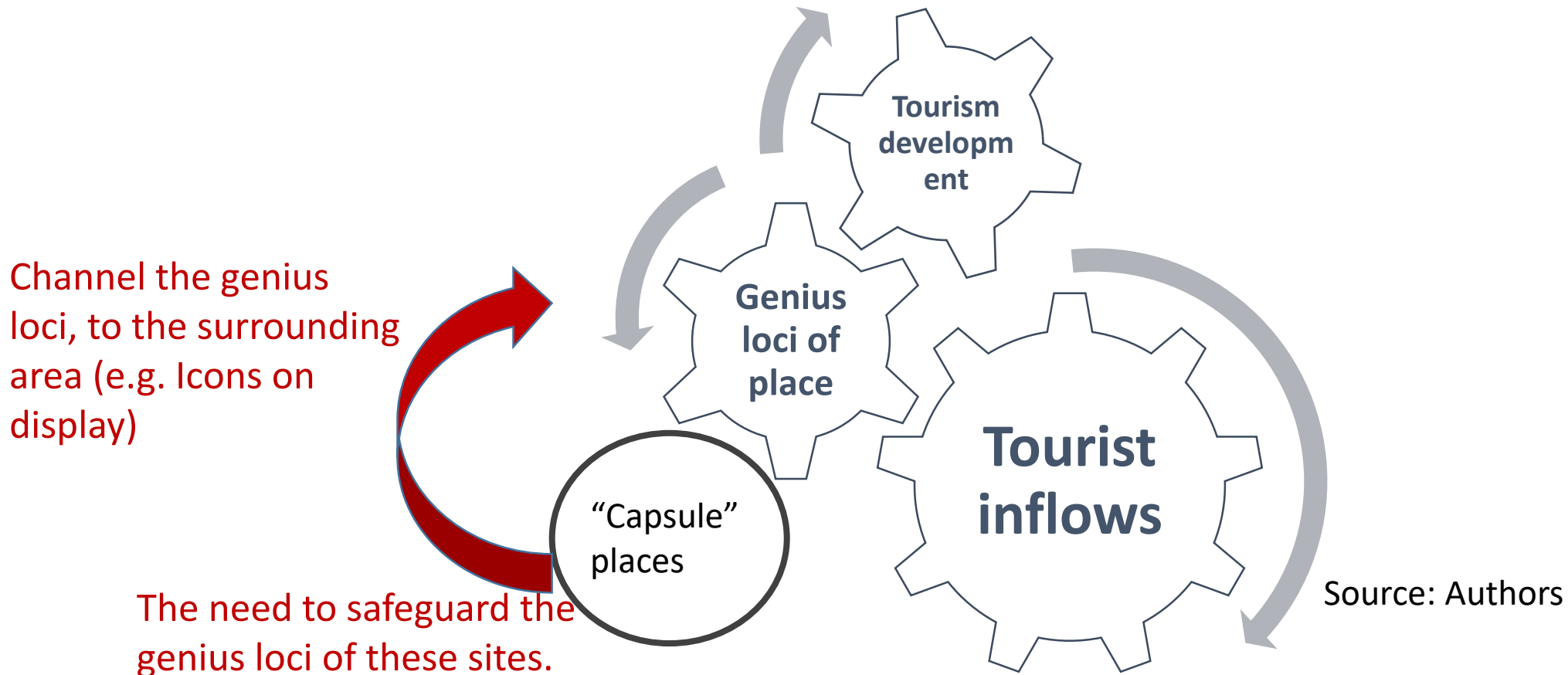
Discussion and implications

Particular sites within the place, seem to act as sheltering “capsules” against changes; In/tangible elements, within these sites have not been transformed dramatically.

The destination is called to continue protecting them, and use them as a point of reference if aiming to preserve, or even regain the place’s lost *genius loci*.



The genius loci and tourism development nexus



Conclusion and implications

Intense tourism development may dramatically alter a destination's unique features (e.g. landscape, aura/spirit of the place), that may consequently affect the manner in which it is sensed by people.

The destination may refer to “**capsule**” sites (microenvironments within places that have managed to keep their identity/soul) to establish which critical elements are to be channelled to the rest of the destination, to regain the place's lost *genius loci*.

Future researchers, may examine further the contribution/role of such “capsules” in regaining the *genius loci* of places, and explore further the notion (e.g. from a social standpoint).

Thank you

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