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Sense of Place, Neolocalism and Craft Beer: Identity Shaping through Culinary Tourism in Québec, Canada

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Title: Sense of Place, Neolocalism and Craft Beer: Identity Shaping through Culinary Tourism in Québec, Canada

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Abstract:

The past few decades have seen the number of craft breweries significantly increase across North America. The Canadian brewing industry has transitioned from an industry monopolized by three companies (Molson, Labatt, & Carling O’Keefe) into a diverse market. Canadians are now able to choose from hundreds of different producers, thousands if we count products from the United States. With over 150 craft breweries, Quebec is the province with the highest concentration in Canada and is famous for hosting many of the most renowned in the country and the world.

The few studies that have taken a look at the growing phenomenon of craft breweries in North America have identified some links between them and what social geography calls a sense of place. Wes Flack (1997), the first author to address these links, defined neolocalism as the way craft breweries draw from their place of establishment to shape their own identity. For example, it can manifest in the name of the breweries and their beers, in what is depicted on the label and in the choice of ingredients used in the recipes. References are often geographical but sometimes historical or cultural. Neolocalism also manifests economically, with the push to consume local products, and socially, most craft breweries will participate in fundraisers, support different causes, and engage in sustainable practices. Craft breweries are also involved in the life of their communities and partner with local actors. The phenomenon is consistent with smaller and bigger craft breweries in both urban and rural areas.

In Quebec, culinary tourism is seen as a development factor, particularly in outlying regions and rural communities. This research will therefore look at how this phenomenon is affecting the tourism landscape of Quebec by identifying how neolocalism manifests itself in Quebec craft breweries and how they themselves participate in shaping the identity and the development of these places. Considering that neolocalism is a successful marketing approach for craft breweries (Murray, 2012), we will take a particular look at the motivations of brewers to engage in these practices and question whether or not economical success is the driving factor. In a province where every region now has its own local brewery, craft breweries offer an interesting window into understanding relationships between sense of place and identity in a culinary tourism context.

References:

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- Murray, A. (2012). Factors influencing brand loyalty to craft breweries in North Carolina. *Mémoire de maîtrise en tourisme durable*, East Carolina University.