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Alan Clarke
Univeristy of Pannonia Veszprém, Hungary, alanhungary@hotmail.com

Ágnes Raffay
University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary, raffay@turizmus.uni-pannon.hu

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Religion, Local Produce and Sustainability at Religious Sites in Hungary

Alan Clarke & Ágnes Raffay

University of Pannonia Veszprém, Hungary
alanhungary@hotmail.com

There is a growing awareness of sustainable practices at religious tourism sites and we have observed this in Hungary, with the focus shifting from one aspect of sustainability to incorporating all three major aspects, the environmental, the economic and the socio-cultural (Rees and Wackernagel, 1996). Although the economic aspect used to be predominant (Shackley, 2001; Mangeloja, 2003) now we can find more examples of practices that aim to promote socio-cultural sustainability, while taking the natural environment also into account (Tanaguay et al, 2010).

Several religious tourism sites have started to offer local produce in their souvenir shops and to incorporate them into the services they provide, even turning them into part of the attraction. However, we cannot label this as a new phenomenon as centuries ago it was the practice of the monasteries to produce potentially everything they needed, and the names of some of the goods we consume today still refer to orders or monks (such as cheese, wine, beer, etc.) We can argue that the use of local produce is not merely a marketing tool or an additional source of income for the religious tourism sites but is also aimed to both satisfy the needs of the order the sites are run by and to preserve some of the lesser known traditions that were once part of the everyday life of the Church (Thurley and Wood, 2010; UNESCO, 2014).

This article aims to explore the traditions of producing local goods at selected religious tourism sites and to assess their current practices. The assessment is based on site visits and interviews with the managers of the sites to explore the breadth of local produce in their offering of services and goods (primarily souvenirs), the origin of those (both in terms of tradition and manufacture) and how they contribute to sustainable development. The utilisation of local produce reinforces the links between the sites’ core religious values and those of the communities they operate within and are part of, thereby supporting not only religious values but also wider social cultures and heritages.

Key Words: local produce; local craft traditions; sustainability; authenticity, religious heritage

Sustainability

The sustainable management of tourism contributes in terms of environmental, cultural heritage, social and economic aspects. In order to understand the sustainable management of tourism, we first need to explore both sustainability and the way it can work with tourism.

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainability as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Although there are many definitions of sustainability, they all require that we view the world as a system that is connected by space and time (IISD, ND). The three overlapping areas can be addressed separately, yet every aspect will affect the others in some way due to their integrated nature and therefore a holistic approach is necessary.

The term ‘sustainability’ has become a central topic in the tourism industry (Byrd and Cardenas, 2007), and it is suggested that the concept has become the subject for a contemporary assessment of progress and responsibility, freedom and culture (Bachmann, 2010). Liu has observed how:

Sustainability, sustainable tourism and sustainable development are all well-established terms that have been used loosely and often interchangeably (2003: 461).
Sustainable tourism represents a direct application of the sustainable development concept which became popular in the 1980’s. The origins of this rooted from environmentalism which grew in the 1970’s. The UNWTO (2004) formal definition of sustainable tourism states that:

*Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.*

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them (UNEP and UNWTO, 2005: 11-12).

While the term is becoming increasingly popular, Jenkins and Schroder (2013) indicate that doubts have been raised about whether the promised harmonisation of ecological or environmental, social and economic goals associated with sustainability is actually achievable. There is also debate about the term sustainable tourism which is said to be patchy and disjointed, often flawed with false assumptions and arguments (Liu, 2003).

A simple representation of sustainability is the triple bottom line (see Figure 1), which is a common theme evident in many of the definitions as they seek to minimise ecological and socio-cultural impacts while providing economic benefits. Farrell (1999) refers to it as the ‘sustainability trinity’ as it aims for the smooth and transparent integration of the three. Therefore, in the context of the sustainable management of tourism, it is necessary to incorporate all three elements.

However, a question regularly asked is how sustainable is sustainable tourism? For example Collins (1999), asserts that if an explicit natural capital perspective is adopted, current sustainable tourism development cannot be considered as genuinely sustainable. Butler (2015) argues that sustainability, whilst desirable, may not be possible. All these, and other arguments, lead to Collins’s assertion that sustainable tourism might not be as sustainable as is currently believed. Furthermore, Collins points out, the level of natural capital deemed adequate for sustainability by current generations may eventually prove insufficient in the future. While sustainable tourism is questionable, it is apparent that the term and concept is here to stay and it now underpins notions we take to be central to the development of religious heritage tourism.

Tourism attractions need to adapt to changes in management. They cannot afford to ignore the issue of changes in the pattern of demand and the type of tourism they offer (Tourism Sustainability Group, 2007). The sustainable management of tourism is being consolidated at an international level. Indicator systems and criteria for the sustainable management of tourism destinations demonstrate a precedent for the management of tourism destinations globally. This is evidenced in both the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for Destinations (2012) and the European Commission’s, European Tourism Indicator System (2013) for sustainable management at destination level. These guides are generally prepared and tested on a number of different member states and can prove a very useful tool for tourism managers and planners alike.

In 2010, the European Commission proposed a new political framework for tourism in Europe. This insisted that it is essential that all operators in the sector combine their efforts and work within a consolidated political framework that takes into account the new EU priorities which were set out in the ‘Europe 2020’ strategy: Europe must remain the world's

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**Figure 1: Sustainability**

Source: Author’s adaptation of UNWTO model
number one destination, able to capitalise on its territorial wealth and diversity. The action framework seeks to:

1. Stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector
2. Promote development of sustainable, responsible, high-quality tourism
3. Consolidate Europe's images as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations
4. Maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism (EC, 2010)

Liu (2003) does not agree with the notion of limiting growth, instead, any and all growth must be properly managed. This growth must be managed in a way that is appropriate to the tourists, the destination, the environment, the host population and the religious heritages involved.

McCool (1995) suggested that in order for sustainable tourism to be successful, societies and their tourism operators must consider the following:

1. How tourists value and use natural environments
2. How communities are enhanced through tourism
3. Identification of tourism’s social and ecological impacts and
4. Management of these impacts.

Even though economic development and growth may be a priority, sustainable development requires a change for the long term.

The UNWTO acknowledges that sustainability principles may be applied to all aspects of tourism and that relevant stakeholder participation is required as well as strong leadership. Crucially it indicates that the process is continuous and that measurement is needed to ensure success (Graci and Dodds, 2010). Most importantly, sustainable tourism should not be regarded as a rigid framework, but rather as an adaptive paradigm which legitimises a variety of approaches according to specific circumstances.

Sustainable tourism is not just an academic concept, it has gained the commitment of the commercial industry. In 2008, Tjolle stated: ‘No longer an activity, sustainable tourism is set to become a feature’ (2008:1). Thus, the demand for responsible products has been recognised (Chafe and Honey, 2005; SNV, 2009; Mil-Homens, 2011; Nielson, 2012).

Sustainable tourism destination management sees destinations as more than a sum of their parts and seeks to create destinations that are healthy and viable in the long term for tourists and residents alike. With several management areas, there lies a challenge in moving the sustainable management of tourism into practical implementation (Miller and Twining-Ward, 2005; Graci, 2007; EPA, 2008; Dodds and Butler, 2009; Graci and Dodds, 2010). Ideally, this implementation should integrate the elements of substantial commonality which were identified within tourism planning in Moscardo’s (2011) critique of 36 tourism planning processes.

The European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS, 2013) developed by a team of researchers in the University of Surrey, on behalf of the European Union, demonstrates a comprehensive model for the sustainable management of tourism destinations, however this work lacks detail on how it may be realistically implemented at the destination level. These indicators complement and could be mapped onto the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC, 2012) which have been designed to lead destination managers on a path towards sustainability.

The sustainable management of a tourism destination requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders (Clarke and Raffay, 2015), and this will be discussed in detail in the following section.

**Stakeholder Involvement in Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable development and sustainable tourism have evolved through the collaboration and coming together of stakeholders. The development of tourism in a sustainable manner is unattainable without stakeholder participation (Ap, 1992; Gunn, 1994; Andercek and Vogt, 2000; Gursoy, Jurowski and Uysal, 2002; Andriotis, 2005; Byrd, Cardenas and Dregalla, 2009). Clarke (2008) has outlined the conditions required for effective participation processes to take place. The necessity of creating links with stakeholders has been widely acknowledged in tourism ever since the publication of Murphy’s (1985) Community Approach (Hall, 1999; Sirakaya et al., 2001; Simpson, 2008; Clarke, Raffay and Wiltshier, 2009; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013). Murphy (1988) contended that mutually beneficial partnerships were essential for tourism planning. Stakeholders should not only be recipients of sustainable tourism plans but are needed to participate in all steps of management covering the planning processes (Southgate and Sharphey, 2002; Byrd, 2003). Through various projects, we have observed this to be the case at religious heritage sites, where the partnerships may include aspects of commercial relationships as long as the core heritage values are retained in the host religious community.

In taking this process forward, Freeman’s observations regarding the notion of organisational management and stakeholder theory is universally accepted with the
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Movement toward these 12 aims is a well-established objective in Europe (Flanagan et al., 2007). These criteria should be included for any scoping of effective sustainable management of tourism (UNEP-UNWTO, 2005; Flanagan et al., 2007). The economic aims are economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality and social equity. The social aims are comprised of visitor fulfilment, local control, community wellbeing, cultural richness, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency, and environmental purity. The aims of sustainable tourism were identified in 2005 by UNEP and the UNWTO. For sustainable tourism to be successful, the interrelationship between the triple bottom line aspects must be acknowledged (Swarbrooke, 1999; Byrd, Cárdenas and Greenwood, 2008). The twelve aims are mapped upon the triple bottom line (Figure 2).

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These aims have provided a beneficial baseline for sustainable tourism however there have since been further developments. Cultural heritage has grown in significance possibly due to the growth in cultural tourism (UNWTO, 2009). Furthermore, cultural heritage is fragile and easily damaged if not taken care of (IFT, UNESCO, 2007)

How Local is Local Produce

With the rising awareness of sustainable practices, we have witnessed a growing interest in local produce. Some emphasise the importance of buying local from the economic and environmental point of view, i.e. the less that transport is involved between the sites of production and consumption, the more economically efficient and environmentally friendly the process is. It must also be noted that partially for the above reasons local produce has also become fashionable, and therefore it is good ‘raw material’ for marketing as well. In the discussions about local produce, the term is most often associated with local food, and although this article will take local produce in a much wider sense than the definitions of agricultural / local food produce, these are used to discuss the features that are associated with all local products.

There is no universally acknowledged definition of local produce. Even the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service says:

“There is no consensus on a definition of ‘local’ or ‘local food systems’ in terms of the geographic distance between production and consumption.

Many people now equate the terms ‘local food’ and ‘sustainable food’, using local as a synonym for characteristics such as fresh, healthy, and produced in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. (www.sustainabletable.org). However it must be noted that for the average consumer, local produce, especially in the case of food products, are attractive because they are fresh and flavourful as they get harvested when ripe and with minimum shipping they retain their nutritional value (Bruhn et al., 1992), and not necessary because of the sustainable approach. In a 2008 report entitled Consumer Understanding of Buying Local, the Hartman Group said:

While ‘buy local’ is a phrase that continues to grow in popularity, the specifics of what such a term means to consumers is hazy and has diverse meanings (www.produceretailer.com).

Most definitions refer to local produce as goods produced / manufactured near the point of sale (e.g. within X kilometres). In a small number of cases, this
is measured in period of time (Whole Foods Market, Austin, Texas, measures ‘local’ in hours). A 2008 US survey found that half of the consumers surveyed described ‘local’ as ‘made or produced within a hundred miles’ (of their homes), while another 37% described ‘local’ as ‘made or produced in my state’. (www.sustainabletable.org). A similar survey conducted in the UK in 2012 found that ‘local’ is produced within a 30-mile radius, which is a relatively smaller area than in the US, however, we must take into account the distances which European consumers are used to when compared with US citizens.

Although most of the discussions on local produce refer to the location of production, there is more to local produce. Thompson et al. (2008) suggest that production methods (such as sustainable production and distribution practices, reduced use of synthetic chemicals and energy-based fertilizers, etc.) are equally important attributes of local produce. Furthermore, the producer of the product comes into play, so the personality and ethics of the grower, the attractiveness of the farm and surrounding landscape; and other factors that make up the ‘story behind the food’. are becoming important factors in the eyes of consumers. Despite the enormous forces of globalisation we can see this as an attempt to present a glocalised offer within the market (Hortobágyi, 2010).

Certification provides information to the consumer that products or services have met certain levels of environmental, economic and socio cultural performance. When Foh (1999) conducted research on this topic, the results indicated that certifications were considered by governments and environmental groups as powerful, high-profile, low cost, market oriented instruments to promote protection of the industry. In comparison to other forms of voluntary instruments, authenticity certification is more credible if the products and services are endorsed and verified. Certification may enhance the quality of tourism products and may also improve destination image and quality. As a tool for sustainable management of a tourism destination, sustainable tourism certification is recognised as the broadest in coverage. It puts a focus on the local and the shaping of ethnic identities in the globalised world (Hortobágyi, 2012).

Recent research on crafts (Brown, 2014) suggests that crafts’ relationship with the local are very diverse. Some craft makers strongly root themselves in a particular place or come to express a sense of a particular place. Authenticity can be claimed because of the long established historical roots which are being tapped (BOP, 2012), or a specific location can provide a sense of ‘local’ inspiration allowing the creation of one-off pieces or leading to a new tradition. Growing numbers of makers respond to their localities by supporting sustainable making and the use of local materials and / or local production techniques as core elements in their practices.

Brown (2014) also noted that crafts as material forms of cultures vary within and between urban, suburban and rural environments and at different socio-spatial scales. Crafts are influenced by the physical, social, cultural and political conditions of their production. However, crafts today are increasingly neither spatially nor culturally confined - even in religious contexts we will demonstrate how the internet has opened up new possibilities for consumption (Schwarz and Yair, 2010).

The following part of the article will look at how local produce can be assessed in the case of various religious tourism attractions where the gift shop or a designated part of the attraction focuses on local produce.

**Local production and local produce at Hungarian religious tourism sites**

In the Middle Ages, monasteries and abbeys used to be self-supporting, producing all the goods that the people in and around the monastery needed for their daily operation, including food, drink, candles, etc. In Hungary this tradition was broken after World War II when land around their centres was repossessed by the state and most often the orders were also abolished. A few years after the political changes of 1989 the orders started to revive and gradually built up their new centres, usually on the site of their previous homes, and from around the year 2000 we have witnessed the reintroduction of some of their ancient practices and daily routines which included producing goods. However, these goods serve multiple functions nowadays, as partially due to the reduction in numbers of monks actually living in the monasteries, and partially because of the growing interest for local produce, some of these goods end up in the gift shops and visitor centres of the religious sites.

Even though some monasteries and abbeys were seriously damaged by the wars, a lot of their books and archives, also containing the recipes, were found intact and therefore were available for a new generation of monks to produce the goods that were once associated with the various orders. **Pannonhalma Arch Abbey**

**Pannonhalma Arch Abbey**, a World Heritage Site, provides one of the most extensive examples of local produce. The Benedictine Order has a long tradition of agricultural production for various uses, including wine, which Pannonhalma has probably become best known for. The monks used to grow grapes on the hills around the abbey and also further afield. Around the year 1900 Pannonhalma Abbey had wine plantations...
on Somló Hill as well as Tokaj, and they used to sell bottled wine to both the domestic and international markets. After WW II both the fields and the cellar were made property of the state. However, the monks never gave up their plans and after the regime change they started building a new wine cellar in 2000, with tourism in mind. So, in the design they planned for visiting groups. The new wine cellar opened in 2003 and was extended in 2008. Interestingly, an acknowledged wine producer from Eger was invited to help with designing the technology. This shows Pannonhalma’s commitment to the highest quality, even if it means sacrificing the ‘local’. However, we must bear in mind that some of the most important local produce attributes, ‘the producer’ and the ‘story behind’ the product are still to be observed here.

After the re-establishment of the wine production, Pannonhalma entered the field of herb production as well, another area with ancient traditions. The herb garden is both a production site and an area open to visitors, and a herb distillery has recently been installed where for example lavender is turned into consumer items such as lavender oil, soap, etc. The distillery also offers refreshments containing products from the herb garden.
These products are manufactured in Agárd, again one of the best quality distilleries in Hungary, some 100 kilometres away from Pannonhalma. Alongside alcoholic drinks, chocolate usually sells well in gift shops, and Pannonhalma is no exception to that. As there are no direct references to chocolate production in ancient manuscripts, the reason for having chocolate on offer may be more commercial than traditional or religious. However, the website makes the local connection in the case of chocolate as well:

The Rózsavölgyi Manufactory creates these handmade chocolates by adding high proficiency and raw materials from their own plants (www.bences.hu).

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As the above examples show, in Pannonhalma the emphasis is on local methods, featuring traditional recipes rather than the place of production. The popularity of the products may partially be due to their active presence in marketing. The products have their own Facebook page (See Figure 10).
When researching local produce at religious tourism attractions, one of the sites we assessed the practices of was Zirc Abbey, home of the Cistercian Order (a subgroup of the Benedictines). Zirc Abbey is a site of regional or perhaps of national importance, however, it is much less well known and visited than the Archabbey of Pannonhalma. The range of the products on offer reflects this.

The Abbey was recently refurbished, and with the refurbishment, a herb garden was created here, similar to the one in Pannonhalma, with the intention of using the locally grown herbs for products sold in the gift shop. Although the Cistercians primarily focus on education, they also aim to produce goods for their own consumption. Documents prove that beer brewing used to be a traditional activity of Cistercian monks, when they primarily produced beer for the period of lent (beer was still allowed even on fasting days). Even though there are no specific records of this traditional beer manufacturing in Zirc, a Craft Brewery will open at Zirc Abbey in August 2015, bringing back old production methods. The beer will be available for tasting on site as well as for sale in Budapest and Veszprém county.

The gift shop found in the visitor centre of Zirc Abbey offers a range of products which we may consider as local. In many ways, they are similar to Pannonhalma,
as the products include lavender and herbal cosmetics, herbal teas and dried herbs, using the locally grown herbs. (When the Abbey and its grounds were refurbished, a herb garden was created here as well with the intention of using the locally grown herbs for products sold in the gift shop, as well as reinforcing a long tradition of the order.)

Further products that can be found in the gift shop include hand crafted souvenirs, featuring candles from a manufacturer at a farm just 10 kilometres away.

Some products from a Cistercian nunnery, about 100 kilometres from Zirc, are also available in the gift shop. In this case, it is notable that the Cistercian traditions, the producer and the narratives behind them constitute the local feature rather than the actual location of the production site.

**Saint Mauritius Monastery in Bakonybél**

Another Benedictine monastery, close to Zirc and
Pannonhalma (Saint Mauritius Monastery in Bakonybél), follows a threefold themed arrangement of their products:

1) Products produced locally:
- Herbs and dried medicinal plants (grown in their own organic herb garden)
- Medicinal herb ointments
- Jams
- Mint cordial
- Chocolate
- Lacrima Güntheri herb liqueur
- Hand crafted crosses (silver and bronze items, made in the workshop of the monastery)
- Candles (from the Monastery Candle Making Manufactury)
- Books (Lectio Divinaseries)
- Products from the BookBinding Workshop of the Monastery (albums, diaries, etc)
- T-shirts
- Bags

As indicated in the list above, the monks produce some of the items themselves, using herbs grown in their own organic herb garden and crafted in their own workshops. For the production of some other items, they have chosen acknowledged manufacturers to ensure the highest possible quality of the product – as in the case of their chocolate, where they co-operate with Szamos Marcipán, a famous Hungarian chocolate and marzipan dessert producer based in Budapest.

The monastery products are also available through a webshop:

- Fridge magnets (with monastery symbol)
- Wine glass (with monastery symbol)
- Book binding – private enterprise working closely with the monastery (and it was originally set up in 1835)
2) Products of other Benedictine abbeys and monasteries:

They sell all the products from Pannonhalma, plus Lavender and almond chocolate from Tihany, with books and diaries also available.

3) Other products: Religious books, items (rosary, etc.)

As mentioned before, growing hops and brewing beer was a traditional activity of some of the orders. The Saint Mauritius Monastery at Bakonybél took on the almost 1000 years old tradition and has entered the market with ‘Mauritius’ craft beer, produced at the Bors Serfőzde brewery in Győrzámoly (circa 40 kilometres from Bakonybél). Please note the name and the imagery on the label derive directly from the religious community and their founding saint rather than any touristic connection!
Concluding Thoughts

We have observed that the dynamics of the relationship being developed in the production and consumption of ‘local produce’ are constructed and reconstructed around the:

- Engagement of the local
- Celebration of the local
- Compromising the local

The first two of these can be viewed as very positive with engagement including the producers and the population in exchange with the tourist/visitor. There is positive support for the value of the local, both through any financial transactions but also through the symbolic value read into the meaning of the local. Celebrations of the local are also often about the symbolic and even iconic values of the local produce, drawing value from the local experience as much as local production.

In this way, we see the emphasis placed on ‘local’ as opening up the sense of ‘local’ to possible compromise. We would question the authenticity of the local produce offered at the sites reviewed here, but we would also point to the possibility that meaning - and therefore value - can be constructed through alternative discourses related to the history of the produce or the narratives from the location. In this sense, value might be found in locations where the sense of local has been ‘compromised’ by trading in produce not necessarily produced or purchased in the specific location.

Sites are constantly playing with ‘local’ and the senses of local used in making the offer. We do not know what is meant by a claim to deal in ‘local produce’. It is clear that more than a simple production analogy is needed to capture the values realised within the exchanges around the notion of local produce. There are examples of local production which can be found in our sites but we also have to recognise that the use of the term ‘local’ is legitimised by the use of local recipes, reinforcing local traditions and rituals. However for some, the value - and especially the financial value - is realised through the locality of the sales. Here, locality includes the actual place and the virtual ‘space’, through the use of internet sites. At the beginning of the research we believed that celebration of the ‘local’ would also include the notion of local consumption but our observations and research did not support this, as much of the consumption happens a long way away from our sites. The notion of souvenirs and the gift relationships experienced should have prepared us for this, and it is further reinforced by internet shopping which is now widely available.

Religious heritage sites can derive and are deriving value from the enhanced sense of an augmented locality, grounded symbolically rather than spatially or temporally. This value comes from the celebration of traditional values found at the core of the sites and the reinforcing of the narratives underpinning these identities. There is value in celebrating the meanings in the message(s) promoted by the sites. However, we must also recognise that there is value in the exchange. The financial payments received through the commercial transactions are very important to the survival of our sites as vibrant communities. As we have argued elsewhere these commercial exchanges are most effective if they centre around ‘local’ produce which has both economic and symbolic harmonies with the religious heritages celebrated at the sites.
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