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Ignatius of Loyola’s traces in Manresa. A new incentive for religious tourism?

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The city of Manresa, located in the heart of Catalonia, has spent years trying to make profitable its cultural and urban heritage as a strategy for a better tourism positioning among other mid-sized cities that are competing for attracting tourists in an increasingly competitive global context. However, for various reasons the city has not been able to earn a place in Catalonia’s tourism scene, and it still remains in a preliminary tourism development stage. In this sense, the latest initiative taken by the city council has to do with its religious heritage, through the project ‘Manresa 2022’, which consists of recovering the figure of Ignatius of Loyola; taking advantage of that year during which will be commemorated the Fifth centenary of the stay (almost one year) of this celebrity in the city. It was in Manresa where he had his mystical experiences that were the source of his famous work *Spiritual exercises*, the cornerstone of the Society of Jesus. However, despite Manresa being a world centre of pilgrimage for Jesuits, this has not come to be translated into a tourism movement perceived at the city level. In this chapter we address the difficulties that the city may have to face in order to be successful in making religious tourism into a real economic driver for the city that also contribute to a process of urban regeneration in some areas. The need to differentiate between niche markets and target each with specific initiatives is suggested. Moreover, the local population has not been traditionally aware of the tourism potential of their own city, but this could be a good opportunity to reverse this trend.

**Key Words**: Ignatius of Loyola, Manresa, religious tourism, urban heritage.

**Introduction**

Manresa, located in the heart of Catalonia, is a good example of a city that although it has not been very touristic so far, it has a good chance to profit from its urban heritage as a vector of tourism development, in order to achieve better positioning and gain a significant foothold in the sector. To reverse the situation, the council aims to use its religious history through the ‘Manresa 2022’ project, which seeks to recover the figure of Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Society of Jesus), thus, taking advantage of the Fifth centenary of this celebrity’s almost year long stay (almost one year) in the city. It was in Manresa where he had his mystical experiences that were the source of his famous work *Spiritual Exercises*, the cornerstone of the Society of Jesus. However, although Manresa is an important center of Jesuit pilgrimage, this has not been translated into becoming a recognised religious tourism destination, both at the city level and externally.

In this paper, the difficulties and enablers of making religious tourism a real engine that helps revitalise the built heritage and certain urban areas are addressed. In other words, it explores tourism as a tool for the regeneration and embellishment of historical centres experiencing high levels of degradation and deterioration, as well as for undertaking what would be a more comprehensive process that transforms an area into a place that attracts new businesses and residents.

First of all, the relationship between heritage, religion and tourism as a basis for an urban economic development in which the latter vector has a prominent role, is addressed. A special mention is also made, of the need to differentiate between market niches, especially for those cities where tourism has not developed at all, particularly considering that the religious and pilgrimage tourism markets are very specific. Next is a brief analysis of the tourism context of Manresa, reflecting that the city has been left behind in the process of expansion of tourism in the Catalan context. Finally, some issues of the ‘Manresa 2022’ project are analysed in more detail.

**Heritage, Religion and Tourism: pillars of an urban economic development strategy**

The expansion of cultural tourism has served to place on the tourist map many places which otherwise would
have received little recognition or experienced some difficulties to gain a foothold in the market. The label of ‘cultural’ is so broad that it has often been used to group highly diverse elements. It could be argued that we have witnessed a process first, of excessive valuation of heritage and second, the commodification of that heritage. On the one hand, the process of spatial expansion of tourism has favoured the heritage conversion of any resource or activity, while on the other hand, it goes from a heritage justified by social or identity reasons, to another heritage seen under a strictly developmental conception. In this sense, ‘religious’ is a type of heritage that has never been questioned and an innovative trend is its transformation into an object of tourism consumption, as another strategy within a framework of economic growth. The adoption of religious heritage can be a starter for a city to be made known in a growing tourism sector.

Religion-based tourism has become a way of encouraging masses of tourists and also an effective tool to market culture. Religion is promoted, marketed, sold and consumed: visitors who travel to iconic shrines (for example, Fatima, Santiago de Compostela, the Vatican, Montserrat, Czestochowa, Loreto, Lourdes, Medjugorje, Guadalupe, Jerusalem, Mecca) do it for various reasons, and therefore it is crucial to know if they are pilgrims, tourists with a healthy curiosity for all religious things, secular tourists with a strictly cultural interest, or a mixture of these situations. A pilgrimage can be as heterogeneous as is the tourism experience in general, while sacred sites have become multifunctional and multifaceted places where converge so many different sensitivities that it would be more accurate to speak of ‘permanent pilgrimages’ than religious tourism (Cebrian and Garcia, 2014). Maybe for that reason differentiating between a ‘profane tourist’ and a ‘religious tourist’ has never really been an issue, while for others, it has been a topic of discussion and it has contributed numerous perspectives: from authentic ‘classic’ studies like Turner and Turner (1978), Morinis (1983), Pfaffenberger (1983), Nolan and Nolan (1989), Aucort (1990), Cohen (1992), Rinschede (1992) or Bauer (1993), to more recent studies such as Blackwell (2007), Ron (2009), Collins-Kreiner (2010), Cànoves et al. (2012), Palmer et al. (2012), Maddrell and della Dora (2013) and Olsen (2013, 2014).

Religious heritage has been ‘reinvented’ in a way that it has become an excellent potential tourism opportunity for many destinations. This is confirmed in the broader literature, particularly if we consider that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates between 300 and 330 million annual religious tourists worldwide, with an annual expenditure of over $18,000 million, while in Europe about 30 million Christians, especially Catholics, annually spend their holidays on a pilgrimage or visiting holy places. Given the magnitude of these figures, religious heritage, while it mobilises huge volumes of tourists, may be seen as simply another form of cultural tourism. However, it can also show the same ‘dark side’ as other equally overcrowded tourism activities (superficiality, morally irresponsible, lack of involvement with the local population and exogenous control of businesses). Everything depends on the stage of tourism development at the destination, and how the activity is managed (Millán et al., 2012).

Although places have heritage assets that could constitute a good ‘raw material’ to become new and attractive tourism resources, this is not a guarantee that the tourism potential is eventually transformed into a (successful) tourism product. In this regard, ‘successful product’ being understood as a that product that becomes widely recognised in the tourism market, and obtains good numbers of visitors. This paper seeks to stress this particular topic, focusing on the case of the city of Manresa.

**Manresa: staying at the edge of tourism’s territorial spread in Catalonia**

In Catalonia during recent decades, tourism has been seen as a viable strategy for socio-economic revitalization in many inland areas, where the weight of other traditional activities and industries has gradually been declining. The development and multiplication of new tourism products and activities in areas where the presence of tourism is modest, reflects the commitment for this industry made by (public and private) local and regional stakeholders. During this period, the municipal tourism administration in Catalonia have seen growth in the number and institutionalisation of tourism management bodies (López Palomeque and Font, 2014). The city of Manresa has been no exception and there has been tourism initiatives implemented over the past two decades, although with a very limited success. The result is that it still does not appear on the map of the most important tourism destinations in Catalonia (Coma, 2014). However, Manresa, with its 74,655 inhabitants (2015), is the third most important city of inland Catalonia, only after the provincial capitals of Lleida and Girona.
limited and low-to-medium quality tourism accommodation (in the case of Manresa, the city only offers 3 tourists 4 hotels, 4 tourism apartments, and one youth hostel); tourism supply mainly based on culture and trade (monuments and heritage, museums, and shopping streets, fairs and events); and a low importance of the tourism sector in the local economy.

To this we must add other defects that are not exclusive to Manresa, but, they appear clearly in this case (Cors, 2014):

- Lack of a strong tourism image;
- Lack of awareness of the importance of tourism to the local economy by residents;
- Lack of involvement of local stakeholders (government, employers and citizens);
- The enhancement of urban heritage for tourism purposes has never been a priority;
- The urban, social and economic fabric is not adapted to tourism;

This situation could be explained through two main reasons. First, the city has a disadvantageous situation in the Catalan tourism map, since in this region tourism is mainly focused on Barcelona and the coast (Costa Brava and Costa Daurada) and to a lesser extent the Pyrenees mountains. As a consequence, the main tourism flows ignore much of the area of Central Catalonia, precisely where Manresa is located (see Figure 1). In fact, the tourism brand of Central Catalonia could be considered to be ‘invisible’ in the Catalan tourism context (Colom, 2014). Moreover, the city has been separated from the process of specialisation and territorial extension of tourism in Catalonia that was described in the 1990s by López Palomeque (1997).

Second, urban tourism in medium cities in the interior of Catalonia is underdeveloped and in this sense, Manresa perfectly meets the pretty common characteristics for this type of destination: predominance of same day visitors over tourists;
the city council saw this as an opportunity to, once and for all, make tourism a pillar on which to base a policy of revitalization of urban heritage and also a vector of economic development. However, precedents do not play in favour of the project, because this is not the first local attempt at religious tourism: in 1995 the so-called ‘Trans-Pyrenean Pilgrimage Route’, connecting the sanctuaries of Lourdes (France) and Montserrat (Spain) through Manresa was introduced, although the initiative did not work as it was expected (Llurdés, 1995). It is also true that twenty years later the context has changed and now the citizenship may see tourism as an industry to consider; this new initiative may have more possibilities to succeed.

The presence and legacy of Ignatius of Loyola in Manresa

The founder of the Society of Jesus, Iñigo Lopez de Loyola, was born in the castle of Loyola (municipality of Azpeitia, in the Basque Country, Spain) in 1493 and died in Rome (Italy) in 1556. He was the youngest of a noble family and during his youth served in the family of the chief accountant of the kingdom of Castille, Juan Velázquez de Cuéllar. After the latter died, his widow sent him to Navarre to serve the Viceroy. In 1521 he was wounded in the defence of Pamplona from the attack of the French, and after his convalescence, decided to undertake pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1522). Following the route of the Via Real (Royal Way), passing through Catalonia, before arriving to Barcelona, he veered off the route to Manresa (March 1522). His stay in the city lasted 11 months, time enough to leave a significant imprint on the places that had a great mystic impact on him and led him on an
In 1537 Ignatius of Loyola was ordained priest and the foundation of the religious order of the Jesuits was adopted in 1540. He died in 1556, was beatified in 1609 and canonized in 1622. Since then there has been, a progressive increase of pilgrims to the places related to Saint Ignatius. The increased presence of faithful and the final establishment of the Society of Jesus in Manresa brought about several urban changes in the city. New buildings were constructed, that dignified the natural cave (La Cova) where Ignatius wrote his *Spiritual Exercises* and through the centuries these structures have become what it is today, an architectural ensemble of Baroque and Neoclassical styles. This architectural ensemble of La Cova de Sant Ignasi (Saint Ignatius Cave), together with La Seu (Basilica), and El Pont Vell (the Medieval ‘old bridge’ over the Cardener river), form the monumental facade or the best known ‘postcard’ of Manresa (see Figure 2).

Apart from these key elements, one can find inside the city many other places and heritage elements that recall the presence of the saint (see Table 1). These places and elements, that we can call ‘Ignatian tourism inspired path of spirituality and dedication to others. In turn, in the famous ‘Cave’ he began writing his *Spiritual Exercises*, the cornerstone of the Society of Jesus thought.

### Table 1. Ignatian Tourism Resources in Manresa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Type*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cova de Sant Ignasi (Saint Ignatius’ Cave)</td>
<td>Traditional place for eremites, main Ignatian interest point in Manresa, where the Saint began writing his <em>Spiritual Exercises</em>.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museu Comarcal (County Museum)</td>
<td>Old Saint Ignatius School (1625), managed by the Jesus Company until 1892.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella del Rapte (Chapel of Abduction)</td>
<td>Old Santa Llucia Hospital, where the saint had a spiritual abduction (his most famous mystic moment).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Seu (Basilica)</td>
<td>Gothic style church (from the 14th and 15th centuries).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrer del Balç (Balç Street)</td>
<td>A good example of medieval street, where today there is an interpretation center of medieval Manresa.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plaça de Sant Domènec (Sant Domènec Square)</td>
<td>A square in the old city center, where there used to be a medieval monastery.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella i cru de la Guia (Guia Chapel and Cross)</td>
<td>Place where the Saint first arrived in Manresa and where he had a vision that led him to the Cave.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pont Vell (Old Bridge)</td>
<td>Medieval bridge (12th and 13th centuries), over the Cardener river, across which Saint Ignatius travelled on arrival to Manresa.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creu de Beuys (Beuys Cross)</td>
<td>Monument by a German artist (20th century) inspired by Saint Ignatius.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella de Sant Marc (Sant Marc Chapel)</td>
<td>Tradition says that here the Saint had a spiritual vision.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pou de la Gallina (Well of the Hen)</td>
<td>Tradition records a miracle by the Saint at this point.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creu del Tort (Tort Cross)</td>
<td>Holy place of the Saint where he had mystical revelations.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creu de la Culla (Culla Cross)</td>
<td>Cross where the saint often stopped to pray.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pou de la Llum (Well of Light)</td>
<td>Well dug by the Chilean artist Fernando Prats representing the will to reach the source of all inspiration.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torre de Santa Caterina (Santa Caterina Tower)</td>
<td>This site has no historical relationship with Saint Ignatius (XIX century), but its location makes it a stopping point for some Ignatian routes, and is located in a place with wonderful views.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella de Sant Ignasi Malalt (Chapel of Saint Ignatius the Sick)</td>
<td>Located in the former Amigant house, here the Saint was welcomed by the family on several occasions.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convent de Santa Clara (Monastery of Saint Claire)</td>
<td>Place of passage of the Saint on his way to the Sanctuary of La Salut (Viladordis).</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santuari de la Salut (Sanctuary of La Salut)</td>
<td>Located in the neighbourhood of Viladordis, it was one of the churches most visited by the Saint.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella de Sant Pau (Sant Pau Chapel)</td>
<td>Small church frequently visited by the Saint.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Canyelles (Canyelles’ house)</td>
<td>House in Sobrerroca street, where the Saint stayed for some time.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Església del Carme (El Carme church)</td>
<td>Built on the highest hill in the city, it has long been a place of devotion of the Saint.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(1) Resources prepared to receive visitors; (2) resources that have no tourism service, but can freely be observed by visitors.

Source: Adapted from Ajuntament de Manresa (2014).
The project includes three horizons: short-term (2015-2016) as the first jubilee of the Ignatian Way, medium-term (second year jubilee of the Way, from 2021 to 2022, coinciding with the 5th Centenary of the stay of the Saint in Manresa) and finally, in the longer term with the aim that the city will become a benchmark of spiritual tourism and pilgrimage. However, the project should not involve any additional or extraordinary investment for the city, but should be based on the use of regular resources and participation of the private sector and potential sponsors and patronage. One way or another, it is expected that tourists who travel to the city do not limit their visit to the main nodes of Ignatian heritage, but that they will have an excuse to visit the city centre and become not only religious tourists but also cultural and urban tourists. With this objective it is intended to contribute to the enhancement of the rest of the monumental heritage of the city, and also benefit commercial and economic activity in the city.

Outside the urban area, another notable aspect considered by the Master Plan is the adaptation of the final section of the Ignatian Way, from Montserrat to Manresa (see Cànoves and Prat, 2016). The Ignatian Way is a long route - 650 km in length - structured in 27 sections, that connects Loyola in Euskadi (the Basque Country) with Manresa in Catalonia, recreating the route that Ignatius of Loyola, being a knight, ran in 1522 (Figure 4). The tradition of pilgrimage to the shrines of Loyola and Manresa dates back to the seventeenth century, after the canonisation of Saint Ignatius, and has been increasing in recent decades. But this ‘Way’ started working as such (as a tourism product based on pilgrimage and religious tourism) in 2010. Although there is no official data on the number
of pilgrims that travel the Way each year (see Abad-Galzacorta, et al., 2016), it is expected that in 2022 about 100,000 pilgrims will reach Manresa via the Way. Furthermore, in order to enhance it, two jubilee years in both sanctuaries are foreseen.

It should be noted that the Master Plan and the Ignatian Way are two projects which are not related to each other, although it is expected by Manresa City Council that both will converge. That is, the two jubilee years which will probably bring more pilgrims to Manresa, will take place, regardless of whether the city makes an effort to capitalise on them. It is hoped / estimated that a similar pattern will occur to that which happened during jubilee years in Santiago de Compostela, when the number of pilgrims increased by several times, when compared with non jubilee years (Cànoves et al., 2012).

Discussion: Ignatius of Loyola, Manresa, and tourism, more shadows than light?

Everything said thus far does not help us to clear the uncertainties that exist in relation to this project. But this does not negate that this context can be seen as an opportunity for the future, instead as a barrier. However, there are more questions than answers, more shadows than light. Some of them are outlined in the following sections.

First, Manresa is not ready to be marketed as a structured urban tourism product. As discussed, the city does not have a lodging infrastructure of a certain volume and quality and the services that do exist are located outside the historical centre (the only facility that meets the requirements of pilgrims - in relation to service and price level - is the youth hostel). From the point of view of lodging infrastructure, it is often emphasised that the proximity of Manresa to Barcelona City (65 km) is a factor that makes unnecessary the overnight stay of visitors coming from there (most visitors who travel to the Cave come from Barcelona, being residents or tourists). Hence, to enhance the Ignatian way in order to ensure that pilgrims spend one or several nights in Manresa (and visit the city), appears as an unavoidable necessity, if it is desirable that the city becomes an tourism destination and not just a day-visitor attraction.

Second, and derived from the above, since the lack of hotel accommodation does not seem easy to solve in the short term, this implies serious difficulties for attracting a particular type of tourist. Thus, it might be best to focus on a genuinely pilgrim profile. In other words, activities could consist of promoting pilgrimage in the strict sense of the term. Here it would also be necessary to look at similar experiences, draw conclusions and accept that the commitment to this profile can have a longer term effects. Nobody knows how many people will really visit Manresa on the occasion of the two jubilee years, and the reality shows that even consolidated pilgrimage routes (i.e. the Santiago Route or Camino de Santiago, also in Spain) took several years to establish and often after a specific or important event (Cànoves et al., 2012; Pardellas and Padin, 2014; Santos and Pena, 2014).
Thirdly, from the point of view of monumental heritage, while it contains some valuable resources, the city is not very different from many others, and for this reason it would be more likely to succeed as a destination linked to the Ignatian pilgrimage. This would provide an added uniqueness and singularity. However, the difficulty of basing this product on an intangible resource (although it manifests itself through several tangible assets) is also argued: experience shows that joining together different ‘parts’ of the heritage of a place to construct a coherent tourism narrative is not easy, and less so, if they have to serve as an interpretive tool of what it is being seen and ‘lived’ (Hughes et al., 2013). Even so, the intangibility of a product based on the historical memory of a particular celebrity appears as a very useful tool to also ‘showcase’ the more tangible elements. This could be another example of the growing interest in heritage related to specific personalities or historic events, which aims to satisfy a ‘hunger for stories’, a more experiential and existential tourism (Sánchez and Font, 2014). Such a ‘product’ can serve to differentiate and give identity to a destination. After all, a special event could strengthen the tourism policy of the city and lay the foundations for a structural development, the positive effects of which would remain over time (Campillo, 2012).

Fourth and finally, local stakeholders (such as the local administration, commercial and restoration sectors) have never believed much in tourism, and even the citizens themselves use to think that the city has nothing worthwhile to offer, especially when the constant degradation of the city’s historic core is evident, this being the area that potentially would gain more interest among tourists (Berengueras and Claret, 2015). In fact, visitors and tourists to Manresa attracted by the Ignatian resources are barely visible through the streets of the city, since most of them go to Manresa expressly to visit the Cave. The peripheral location of the site in relation to the centre of the city does not ‘invite’ visitors to prolong their stay. It is also true that the budgetary efforts of the city have not put an emphasis on urban renewal and tourism initiatives, however, accepting the need to rebalance some pretty indebted municipal coffers, is leading to a visible change in the situation. It does not seem that these urban deficits are easy to solve if, as mentioned earlier, one of the conditions of the Master Plan ‘Manresa 2022’ is that its implementation does not involve an extraordinary investment from the city (the municipal budget does not include major specific investments oriented towards this project, but more general urban and heritage investments, that bring about an improvement of the urban environment).

Conclusions

Manresa has never been a tourism city and attempts to reverse the situation have been unable to make tourism a real economic and strategic vector for the city, especially if it wants to revitalize its urban heritage and the historic centre, where much of that heritage is located. The city has not benefited from the expansion of tourism that has affected much of Catalonia in the last two decades and has not prompted a synergy of local development that serves to prevent the serious aging and degradation of the urban fabric and commercial network of the historic centre. Moreover, the city has not been characterised until recently as having a clear policy on its heritage. It also has the added difficulty that this heritage is not considered to be a ‘high level’ product at the regional and national scale. In addition, there has been a lack of successful initiatives leading to important issues such as a true product policy (resources, accommodation, restaurants, etc.), city marketing, awareness among the local population etc. It seems that both city council managers and the private sector have not been able to emulate the experiences that have taken place in other medium-sized cities in the interior of Catalonia which, although they are related to other different initiatives, have made possible that the tourism sector became more powerful.

Derived from the above, it is logical to think that in the case of Manresa, strategic planning related to tourism and economic promotion of the city cannot be built upon the Ignatian heritage. However, this heritage can play an important role as it is based on a figure of great religious significance worldwide. Such a policy cannot just value the urban heritage fabric which, in one way or another relate to Ignatius of Loyola, but also and above all, must offer a tourism product that puts in the forefront the importance of the stay of the Saint in the city. Consequently, the city must be aware of the niche that it wishes to pursue with greater prominence, and offer a religious tourism product which is well designed (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Murray, 1997). Otherwise, there is a risk of losing the opportunity of the ‘Manresa 2022’ project, which should help the city become a recognised tourism city. In this task, a key element is to reach the segment of the market you want to attract.

In addition, the figure of Saint Ignatius may be an appropriate vehicle to explain and interpret the urban
heritage so as to generate a holistic experience in the visitor; it would serve to explain the Gothic present in the city (when Ignatius of Loyola arrives in 1522 he found it intact), as well as Baroque (in 1622 - the year of his canonization - Manresa was living in the splendour of this style). The intangible and historical memory components linked to a particular character should not be seen as an obstacle for the tangible or built heritage, on which to base a solid tourism product. The temporary nature of the event of the 5th centenary of the stay of the Saint in Manresa may raise some doubts about what will happen after 2022. For this reason, it is important to consider a tourism product that goes beyond this event.

This paper presents an increasingly evident relationship between tourism and heritage with the former as an activity much more present than before in many places. The concept of heritage has been extended, its meaning includes more and more resources and activities than before. Therefore, there is a three-way relationship between heritage, tourism and economic development that raises questions on the viability of heritage as an element of interest for tourism (Prats, 2011). While the proponents of Manresa 2022 are highly optimistic, in many such cases the margin of error is not inconsiderable and the possibility of failure quite high. We will have to see what happens in the case of Manresa and the promotion of its Ignatian heritage.

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