

Fire and smoke: savouring ethnographic encounters with sustainability in Cyprus' rural tourism spaces

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Abstract

Cyprus, a Mediterranean island and a popular sun-and-sea destination for over half a century, has, in recent years, been desperate to diversify its tourist product and attract 'quality tourism'. The requirements of unsustainable seasonal and party tourism have exploited the natural resources of the island and have left rural areas under economic and cultural ruin. Actions backed by EU funding have seen Agrotourism emerge as a development opportunity for year-round rural tourism for international audiences. This paper uses ethnographic evidence collected over the course of a year, and analysed through anthropological theory on tourism, to interrogate claims of rural authenticity and sustainability that emerge within Agrotourist spaces. With a focus on fire, it understands Agrotourism as an occasion for negotiation between sets of dichotomies such as tradition and modernity, past and present. Agrotourist spaces hence become battlefields where rural heritage narratives fight for legitimization.

Keywords: Anthropology, Ethnography, Agrotourism, Sustainability, Rural tourism, Heritage, Cyprus, Food, Identity, Tourism, Sustainable tourism

Introduction

Agrohotels have slowly become popular hospitality establishments in the Mediterranean island state of Cyprus, following their introduction and EU backing in 1991, long before the nation's accession to the EU. Their year-round attraction claims the benefits of a sustainable rural business, and a sustainable tourism product. The goal of a competitive, quality tourism has been on the papers of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism for many years, at a time when the Deputy Ministry was still called the Cyprus Tourism Organization (CTO), pre-2018. This paper uses ethnographic evidence to investigate Agrotourism's potential for sustainable rural development (Boukas, 2019) and to examine the problematics of its emergence as a sustainable tourist product.

Sharpley (2004) reports that tourism became integrated into sustainable rural development in a process of applying a single solution to two problems; as rural life came under threat due to urbanization (Attalides, 1981), the tourism industry was also identified as having a toxic focus on the short-term. In beginning to consider rural tourism as a sustainability solution for rural areas (for example, Aronsson, 2000; Keane, 1992) as well as a new tourism product itself, Lane's (1994) suggestions involve the implementation of better management systems that will allow rural communities to take the lead in their own economic development, as well as facilitate the debate between 'conservation' and 'development' of rural areas. Lane's definitions established the idea of rural tourism as something 'identifiable'; what has become known as Agrotourism.

In Cyprus, following decades of 'sun and sea' and party tourism the priorities had to move to a more sustainable and quality tourism product and market (Andronikou, 1993). Not only had tourism been unsustainable for the seaside areas, exploiting its resources and establishing seasonality, it also had immediate effects onto marginalised rural areas. Agrotourism, mainly as a mode of rural accommodation and less a set of agricultural experiences as in its other EU implementations, emerged as a solution to both the decline of rural areas and the toxic mass tourism industry. The key to this was attracting international tourist interest towards the interior mountainous areas of the island, thus shifting some of the weight off the coastal areas which remain popular destinations. The initial focus of Agrotourism funding in Cyprus was on the conversion of abandoned rural buildings into tourism accommodation (Welz, 2017, Kagermeier and Gronau, 2013) while it has become a growing industry since, claiming

responsible travel opportunities, food and wine tourism and activities. The Cyprus Agrotourism Company (CAC), formed by the hotel owners themselves under the aegis of the CTO, boasts over 100 traditional houses and boutique hotels in 60 villages.

Considering the emergence of Agrotourism as a product aiming at tourism sustainability and rural development, this paper uses ethnographic evidence to interrogate Agrotourism's potential as a sustainability mechanism for rural areas. The findings illustrate how a tourist product created for an international audience (Gascón, 2013; Mowforth & Munt, 2015), is consumed domestically and becomes a negotiation with an already contested heritage narrative. The expectations of a perceived authenticity touch on questions of cultural sustainability, indicating that there is a need for a more holistic sustainability model for rural tourism. Through snippets from within the space of an Agrohôtel these main themes are interrogated, contributing ethnographically to debates on rural tourism. In the excerpts that follow, the findings are focused through the multi-sensory experiences of fire in a particular Agrotourist setting, as a vehicle for the discussion.

The Fieldsite

The Cyprus Tourism Organization welcomed increased funding in 2004 with its admission to the EU, to create new tourism offerings that would provide year-round and quality tourism, support disregarded areas, and improve the international image of the island. Sharpley (2009) has written that despite the inherent dependency of island tourism, Cyprus has indeed been a successful development project despite its inclination toward mass tourism. EU investment was highly focused on rural tourism which Boukas (2019) summarises as agricultural, cultural, religious, nature-based, and event tourism. It is important to note that the definition of Agrotourism varies across Europe and this paper responds to the CAC's general use of the term as also understood by the Cypriot public: '*Holidays in the Cyprus Countryside guided by nature and culture*' (from the CAC website). The CAC goes on to state their vision '*To develop and improve in a sustainable way rural tourism in Cyprus*'.

Contributors to Lane's 1994 special edition identify rural tourism as a largely domestic phenomenon, a fact which does not undermine the importance of its income. In Cyprus, while initially targeted at international audiences as an alternative to the coastal areas, Agrotourism became popular domestically, particularly after the economic crisis. The additional benefit of

domestic tourism to the creation of a circular economy was a positive development, and highly encouraged. Domestic tourists contribute to rural economic and cultural sustainable development in similar ways to external tourists, while the lack of strong transport systems to rural areas means car-owners have an advantage (Kagermaier and Gronau, 2007). While Cyprus' tourism businesses often tend to focus on either domestic or international audiences, on occasion the two agendas overlap. Particularly for Agrotourist establishments, the gap created in international arrivals by seasonal tourism is often filled by domestic tourists. In the research that informs this paper, undertaken in 2016, Cypriots made up almost the entirety of the winter guest bookings, while a more balanced percentage between local and foreign guests was reported for the summer months. During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic specifically, when able to, these establishments have received almost exclusively domestic tourists.

The hotel I found myself working at as part of my PhD research had been, at least on paper, one of the small success stories: a local-made hospitality business helping support the life of an ageing village. This is notable, as often it is not locals from the community who are developing Agrotourist projects, but external players. The village is found in the Pitsilia area, a large and diverse rural region on the on the Troodos mountain range, at altitudes of over 1000m above sea level. The hotel owner, George, born and bred in the small village, was self-made and entrepreneurial; he took advantage of existing funding to create and promote his business. The middle-aged man turned his abandoned family house into a 13-room hotel, using traditional building techniques and materials (for example *'plithari'* - a cob material made of clay and straw), sourced and made by himself. The hotel featured an internal veranda, balconies with mountain views, rooms with fireplaces and jacuzzi baths, a pool and a restaurant. A mix of modern amenities and traditional style, the hotel's design was reminiscent of rural life in the 19th century but with the luxuries of the 21st. This fit in with the strict design guidelines for funding of Agrotourism establishments that Welz (2017) has argued is an attempt to align local culture with the idea of authenticity brought in by tourism professionals.

Built on the mountainside facing a valley and the main village across the stream, the hotel was the only remaining business based in the village. Shops, tavernas and *kafeneia* (traditional cafés) were long closed, as the village population aged and diminished, the larger villages of the area became the local centres, and urban centres became more accessible at forty minutes to an hour away. There was little to attract tourists to the village, or to keep them there for any length of time, other than the hotel. This area is well known for its gastronomical heritage of wood smoked meat delicacies and wine, and yet, not much of either was any longer part of the

village's economy. The few remaining residents of working age sought employment in nearby villages or the city. Some larger villages have in fact managed to create an economy around tourism and attempts to make this sustainable have been supported by the CTO/Deputy Ministry of Tourism and other national and international organizations.

Fire and smoke

It is a regular weekend evening at the small Agrohôtel's restaurant. Guests are flowing in from their rooms, looking to enjoy the traditional atmosphere and the nostalgic food it promises. The crackling fireplace in the corner attracts much attention, and those who have managed to book the spot next to it are enjoying prime atmosphere and comfort. The restaurant is decorated, similar to the rest of the hotel, with artefacts of a gone rural era. Among these are agricultural tools, bread-making moulds, animal traps, woven baskets; genuine artefacts that have seen their status change from essential tools to decoration. George salvaged most of these from his family's home, and he makes sure to say this when the guests check in; an added piece of authenticity to add to the puzzle of the imaginary (Salazar and Graburn, 2016). The restaurant is buzzing with chatter, releasing clouds of smoke over the sleeping village.

The rooms with fireplaces are charged at a premium, although the fire is merely an atmospheric addition, as the rooms are centrally heated, and a/c is also available. In one of the nicer rooms, the original fireplace from the restored house stands covered in ancient soot; it would have been the central point of the original home. '*This is where my great-grandparents cooked their food and smoked their meats*', George, the owner, explained during my initial tour. I later found out that a branch of his family went on to make a business out of this, and that one of the brands of cured and deli meats found in supermarkets today had been born out of this very fire. The legacy of the fireplace is not encouraged however in its new tourist setting; it has become a prop. Several times when guests arrived, they did so with a bag of raw meat, envisioning that the fire they had paid extra for would serve a double purpose. George had already installed signs on each fireplace that they were not to be used for cooking, which many guests were happy to ignore. '*They ruin the terracotta floors with grease and the smell of oily meat sticks to everything*', he explained to me in private. He usually offered to cook the guests' food in the kitchen instead, to which he got a variety of reactions. The hotel got several bad reviews online due to this as it did not sit well with the imaginary of 'authentic rural life' that the domestic

tourists were hoping for. But tonight, everyone seemed to be enjoying being served their orders in the restaurant.

It was on this weekend that I came to realise the complexities of Agrotourism as a development opportunity for rural businesses, and thus rural life. A group of Cypriots from the city were guests at the hotel, and they came with more expectations than most. They were hospitality professionals, and as such, were critical about the running of the hotel. On their first day they suggested we keep a fire going in the lounge regardless of whether people were sitting there or not. The lounge was a cold and unwelcoming space in the winter, keeping most guests in their rooms and those manning the reception desk fully coated. George responded with a smile and later led me to the damp basement. *'This is where I keep the wood'* he explained *'it has to stay out of the rain and dry out in order for it to be used'*. He chopped, carried and stacked each piece of firewood with his own arms. *'I cannot keep up with 'atmospheric' fires that are not paid for'*. It seems the reality of rural life was not as fire-coloured as the guests would have liked.

The same group of guests was having dinner at the restaurant tonight. They ordered a *'meze'* - a traditional set menu of small plates that builds up to a main of excessive meat. 'Excessive' is not used here by way of judgement but rather to highlight the cultural understanding of extreme generosity, affluence and waste that accompanies a traditional meze as part of proper Greek *'philoxenia'* (hospitality) (Welz, 2017, Christou and Sharples, 2019; Zarkia, 1996). It is meant to be a long group meal that results in full plates and fuller bellies, and the kitchen was at full speed. As volunteer help at the hotel, at the evenings I took the role of waitress at the restaurant, serving those people I had checked-in earlier in the day. People were familiar with me and my role (as a volunteer and a researcher) and they felt I would listen if they made complaints. *'Come here, let me tell you what my problem is with your boss'* the man called out as I delivered some small plates of *lountza* (smoked pork) and grilled halloumi cheese. *'This is not lountza, this is the mass-produced type that they sell at supermarkets in slices. How can he serve this to us? Tell him it's unacceptable'*. They had similar concerns about the cheese. Why was the restaurant not delivering on the authentic? Why was the food sourced in mass from supermarkets and not local producers? In an area known for its smoked meats, guests were expecting both the fire and the smoke.

Gastronomy as a tourist product touches on many of the issues of authenticity that come with rural tourism; what food is served, where it is sourced, how it is cooked, are all challenges to

the levels of authenticity of Agrotourism's imaginary. The search for authenticity in tourist spaces I have understood elsewhere as part of the search for identity in a post-colonial and post-conflict society and yet here I wish to highlight the distinction between the search for 'reality' and the search for 'authenticity'. 'Reality' is not a tourist product, but the experience of life for those who live it, while 'authenticity' in tourism refers to an imaginary reality (MacCannell, 2013). The search for authenticity, Appaduarai has argued (1996) is a modern concern while the concept of 'tradition', Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) have established is invented. The imaginary of authenticity allows the consumer to have an experience they understand as 'real', or as close to 'reality' as they like, and they have paid for this benefit. The commodification of 'reality' thus deems it automatically in-authentic, a paradox underappreciated in the tourism literature.

Paying for authenticity comes with sets of expectations and levels of tolerance which call for what MacCannell has called 'staged authenticity' (2013). In his 'ethnography of modernity' MacCannell has borrowed Goffman's (1990) idea of 'performance' to understand tourist spaces as having 'front' and 'back' staging. 'Staged authenticity' refers to the occasions where the backstage comes to the front, in an attempt to evidence reality. In truth, MacCannell argues, much of this is part of the performance, and the backstage is staged itself. Agrotourist environments can be seen as part of this complexity as they claim to show the reality of rural life (often of the past), through inviting guests into restored homes with the added bonus of personal artefacts, home spaces and traditional cuisine. At the Agrohotel the quasi-functional fireplace, the tools decorating the walls, even the music, were props in the staging of authenticity, and yet why was this place not delivering a proportional level of authenticity in food?

As neither objective nor constructive authenticity are attainable in tourist spaces, a fact both guests and hosts are increasingly aware of, Wang (1999) argues it is 'existential authenticity' that is being sought. For the postmodern condition, it is experiences deriving from activity that are most valued. Borrowed from philosophy, existential authenticity refers to the sense of being that the liminal experience of tourism offers. The novelty of change, new movements within new environments, relationships, place and sensory stimulation all parts of the imaginary of being an Agrotourist, and thus existentially authentic (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). While for guests the distinction might not be of much interest, gaps in the staging of authenticity simply break the illusion. In this sense, Agrotourist spaces can be understood in the context of an 'experience

economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), where experience takes the form of a transformative performance as a trip in space and time.

Welz (2017), on investigating the 'Europeanization' of Cypriot heritage, writes on Western notions of authenticity that it is perceived as the antithesis of technology-driven progress. And therefore, while hotel guests enjoy the conveniences and comforts of modern life, such as thermostats and central heating, they expect them to be disguised by the authenticity of the fire and wood-smoked treats. Authenticity then, is a trick game on aware and paying guests, who tend to often correlate rurality and the past, in an attempt to define 'tradition' in binary opposition to 'modernity'.

Where there is smoke there is fire and, back in the restaurant, the *lountza* was indeed not locally sourced, and nor was the halloumi, the bread was pre-frozen and not baked in a wood-burning oven, the trout was frozen, not caught daily from the river below. Yet if Agrotourism and rural tourism in general are tools of development for the rural areas, a circular economy of local production and consumption appears to be the most sustainable structure. And therefore, why is the hotel not serving local, 'traditional' produce? The answer given by George himself: Mass produced and pre-frozen products are cheaper and more efficient, and for a struggling business person that means the difference between keeping the hotel alive and losing their livelihood. Similarly, keeping a fire alive at all times costs time and money, and when it comes down to it as George explains: in the reality of rural life, and especially in that of the past, people could not sustain an undying fire. 'Real' sustainability then trumps authenticity as 'reality' trumps the performance of rural life.

The varying levels of 'authenticity' must feed the illusion and create seamless transitions from the past to the present, from tradition to modernity, from rurality to sophistication. In reality, however, the consumption of rural life has economic and practical implications, manifested here in the controlled and smoke-less fire of the gas kitchen. The following sections consider how and why domestic tourists have reified and sanitised a clear image of rural pasts inherited from older generations and seek immersion as part of the consumption of rurality. These images are capitalised upon by the Agrotourist businesses through the use of original artefacts, traditionally used materials, rustic-looking furnishings or factory-made textiles.

Sharpley (2004) has argued against the assumption that all rural tourists or Agrotourists are wanting to experience rurality, and this is taken aboard, as the ethnographic evidence confirms it. While many domestic and international guests were visiting for a romantic getaway as the

CTO has advertised, or various other sets of activities, within the limitations of this paper I remain focused on those who indeed seek some sort of rural experience. It must be stated however, that even those not concerned with rurality or sustainability are contributing to the market by consuming the product. While Agrotourism was not initially as concerned with authenticity as it was with sustainability, the following section discusses how the two are interlinked.

A note on Sustainability

Sustainability's three pillars, social, economic, and environmental, have become a central theoretical backbone in academia, development projects and decision-making (Gibson, 2006) Often illustrated as interlinked circles, to accentuate their interdependence and many overlaps, they have been central to the UN's formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (Purvis et al., 2019). Sioni and Birkeland (2014) investigate the growing interest in academia and policy-making to incorporate culture as a fourth pillar; in this paper, the fourth pillar becomes central to the discussion of rural sustainability.

Tourism's relationship to sustainability has been theorised in academia and incorporated into policy. Due to tourism's ability to provide jobs, become an income bearing industry, and establish business among other benefits, the socio-economic pillars are the most obvious links. The same applies for the emergence of Agrotourism in rural areas. Tourism's impact then on the environment and attempts to neutralise or bring beneficial change through development, also make tourism central to discussions within the environmental pillar and its overlaps with the aforementioned two. The addition of the cultural pillar opens up the discussion to some of the deeper and more hidden issues within tourism sustainability discourse; issues of identity, heritage and representation. (Cohen, 2002; Fusco Girard & Nijkamp, 2009). It is in the emergence of the fourth pillar and the overlaps between the other three that this paper makes its links between rural tourism, sustainability and authenticity.

Cypriot rurality and sustainability

With an understanding of the above, the discussion investigates sustainability as a holistic concept that tourism must aim at to be able to claim rural development. Cultural sustainability through a focus on heritage and identity, becomes especially contested in a society of multiple conflicts such as that of Cyprus. The search for authenticity then is part of an identity negotiation that escapes the bounds of this paper but encompasses the binary oppositions of modernity and tradition in very similar ways. Authenticity's paradoxes are met in tourist spaces across the anthropology of tourism, but the marketing of rural life takes a step beyond that, towards self-exoticisation and voyeurism. In the processes of commodifying rurality, by local and non-local actors, rural heritage becomes a product. This product consumed domestically and internationally, shapes the identity narrative of the nation, packaging the past and present in a heritagisation process which creates a legitimising discourse.

Cypriot identity politics and the issue of cultural sustainability reveal further layers of meaning on the subject of tourism narratives and consumption. A brief historical understanding is useful to contextualise the ethnography and this will inform the interrogation of rurality. Argyrou's (2005) research records the memories of the older generations of a hard rural life of poverty and famine, which justifies movement towards urban centres or mining areas, and the cultural inclination towards education. The abandonment of rural life is also understood in the context of class and colonial and post-colonial conceptualisations of modernity that Argyrou himself has referred to as 'symbolic domination'. Argyrou argues that the CTO's realisation that modernity 'does not sell' initiated the process of re-inventing the exotic and traditional past that incorporate cultural traits such as 'hospitality'. Much of the reinvention of rurality therefore, has been a top-down process. In this ethnographic snippet, rurality in the emergence of Agrotourism can be understood as an internal identity struggle between modernity and tradition framed by 'symbolic domination'.

Sharpley in 2002 recorded an initial lack of interest that challenged the sustainability claims of Agrotourism. This can be historically placed as part of Argyrou's understanding of 'symbolic domination'. Eftychiou (2013) identifies the emergence of interest in the 'rural landscape' in the 1980s as a consequence of the introduction of the concepts of 'environment', 'sustainability' and 'heritage'. The binary opposition of 'urban' and 'rural' up to that point was disproportionate in favouring what locals translated as 'modernity' over 'tradition'. The colonial-influenced denunciation of a peasant past (Argyrou, 2005) is reflected in society's

initial rejection of Agrotourism when it was first introduced in 1991 as Welz (2017) notes. Herzfeld's 'cultural intimacy' (2016) applied here can explain the common shame, planted by colonial power, of the peasant past that preceded the arrival of the British and that might still be encountered across Cypriot society. Following a 20th century of British modernization methods, independence attempts of establishing a new nation, internal conflict, invasion and division, the new millennium brought a European return to the rural which Cypriots struggled embrace. As Europe began turning its eyes inwards, the binary oppositions remained present in the already tortuous process of identity making in Cyprus. For Cypriots the terms 'European' and 'modernity' were synonymous and thus there was little space for the appreciation of tradition and rural life.

Gray (2000) has problematised the definition of rurality as a de-spatialised concept based on a socially constructed locality or a locally constructed sociality. When speaking of rural tourism and rural studies therefore, the evading definition requires bounds that reproduce the binary between rural and urban. Rurality as a tourist product, Eftychiou (2013) has then argued, encompasses the friction between local perceptions of urban and rural, therefore grounding it in the capitalization of one by the other. The binary becomes part of the narrative that creates a product of imagined authenticities of Cypriot rurality, based on socially constructed concepts of locality and temporality.

Welz writes of the '(re)invention of the rural' in a flipping of the narrative that involved EU influence, internal development processes and CTO marketing. Rural life was thus reinvented as a depiction of a peaceful past that would provide temporary escapes from modernity; a touristic novelty. Eftychiou and Philippou (2010) refer to this as the 'traditionalization' of Cypriot culture particularly focusing on institutions such as the *kafeneio* (village coffee shop). The touristic *kafeneio* has gone from the centre of a village's gendered political space to a romanticised depiction of rural life. In the heavily urbanised society of Cyprus, rural life today is correlated with an imagined recent past; a glorified era of young grandparents; agriculture and closeness to nature; wood burning fires and mudbrick walls; a time before conflict and division ravaged the island and dominated socio-political life; a past of an imaginary authenticity and peace; a time before modernity and its technologies complicated life-inventions that feed an imagined national narrative (Anderson, 2016) and are often linked with an Agrotourist stay.

In this small village, following the establishment of the hotel, a bridge was built over the river to connect the two sides of the valley; an access point where hotel guests can flow into the village. The quiet village became an immersive museum, a voyeuristic experience of rural life, an additional element of ‘authenticity’. George insisted on the refusal of locals to engage with the hotel and its guests, resonating with Eftychiou’s (2013) findings of a certain resistance by locals to ascribe to Agrotourism’s many guidelines. The interruption of the local ecosystem by the presence of the hotel generated constant clashes, as evidenced on a certain day when the hotel was woken up by gunfire. It was hunting season and the hotel stood in the way, on the mountainside that used to be far enough from the main village to hunt on. The ‘*hunting is prohibited*’ signs that George had convinced the authorities to install bore holes that materialised this resistance. Herzfeld’s (1991) study on the monumentalisation of vernacular architecture echoed in the mountains that day, designating a similar interruption of rural life forced to be sanitised and preserved for tourist consumption.

Meanwhile, near the Agrohotel, I stopped one day to talk to an old man who was smoking his own meats in a makeshift outdoor oven. He pointed to a mandarin tree on the hillside- ‘*treat yourself*’ he said which I interpreted as a genuine moment of ‘*philoxenia*’ often packaged and marketed as part of the agritourism experience. He told me about his family’s tradition of making sausages and other types of meat using local wine and smoking techniques that his father had taught him and his father before him. But this was not sustainable as a lifeline; instead he became a farmer, generating small amounts of produce which he drove to the city to sell. I joined him on the trip one day talking about his lifelong experience of rural life as he expertly skidded on icy roads. Rural communities have been forgotten, he explained. As urbanization drew young people away from villages and agricultural work, rural communities were slowly marginalised. The temporary visitors of the hotel, no matter how interested in the local environment, do not resemble a return to rural life. But how could you blame people for seeking a better life for themselves, he said.

The demographics confirm this, as the population of villages has shrunk and aged dramatically over the past century. Yet in recent years, life has slowly crept back in a different form, a consumerist one, and this has created a need for human capital. While the CTO’s rural sustainability policy has been to cover needs in human resources mainly by Cypriots (Lenz, 2011), in reality it is a rarity. Lenz has written about the host and guest relations of tourism that conflict with the local-versus-outsider dynamics of an imported workforce. Labourers from Eastern Europe and South-East Asia make the bulk of the tourism workforce (Lenz, 2011).

Before my arrival at the hotel the 3 multi-tasking staff had been exclusively non-Cypriot Europeans. Guests were always surprised to see me working there- a young Cypriot, with a city accent, living and working in such a remote place, and I was often questioned about my role. But labour permanence is also a major issue (Ziakas and Boukas, 2014, Sharpley and Forster, 2003) either due to visa issues, or as migrant workers find that they have similar problems with rural life than the Cypriots who left it behind. The disintegration of rural communities comes full circle when its sustainability processes cannot weather a permanent demographic. This evidences that sustainability through tourism is not covering all needed bases for development as is promises.

The sustainability claims of Agrotourism become ambiguous as social and economic structures that are established to deal with the influx of visitors to rural areas shake the core of rural living. The need for resources can be a cause of destabilization of local eco-systems that might resist the very definition of rurality. Telfer and Wall (1996) have argued that for local people to benefit economically from the Agrotourism industry, structures must be put in place whereby the need for resources is met locally. If not set up properly, the promise of rural development is a sham that reinforces dependency, as was seen in the ethnographic example. Similarly, a major source of the need for sustainability is often the tourism sector itself; the carbon emissions of tourism transportation, creation of waste, or the effect on communities. When speaking of sustainable rural tourism then, is tourism inviting positive change to rural areas or is it merely aiming to make a destination of them while minimising its impact?

A discussion on tourism sustainability is not complete without the consideration of global factors that have effect on small island states such as that of Cyprus. Using a chaos theory perspective, Ziakas and Boukas (2014) have investigated the implications of moments of crisis on Cypriot tourism. They focused on unforeseen events such as the economic crisis to support that a sustainable model is inherently susceptible to global forces. While these factors can have internal effects, however, they also bring new opportunities for sustainability. During the economic crisis domestic tourism became a popular alternative to travel, and Cypriots flocked to rural areas as tourists, altering the expected target audience. As the audience changes, expectations do so as well, another way that crises threaten sustainable models, indicating a need for an impossible sustainability model that is self-reliant.

'The tourist' has been used as a metaphor of the social world (Dann, 2002) and as a symbol of modernity (MacCannel, 2013). Not only is the tourist a product of the times but also a

representation and an opportunity to decipher complex socioeconomic concerns such as that of rural development. Sharpley (2002) has concluded that for sustainability to succeed as a rural development tool it needs long-term financial and technical support. Gronau and Kauffman (2009) then propose a shift in perspective, rather than looking at the possibility of a sustainable tourism industry, to observe how tourism can support sustainable development. The ethnographic analysis in this paper identifies the need for both of these to coexist, as well as a need to think about sustainability more broadly before applied to the rural tourist setting.

Savouring heritage

Food becomes gastronomic heritage through the narratives of its preparation, presentation and consumption. So far, this paper has identified gaps in a desired and necessary circular economy of food production and consumption. The search for authenticity by domestic Agrotourists, however, indicates the need for a culturally sustainable gastronomical product as well. Kaufman et al (2012) in their case study on Cyprus argue that ‘agrifood’ can play the form of the mediator between tourism, agriculture and identity, while enhancing the development benefits of agritourism. Indeed, local food is a highlight of the Agrotourist experience rather than a side-note (either cooked and served or in the form of souvenirs, from tavernas to produce festivals) and yet the consumption of it can be as commodified and exotified as in any other tourist product. Through the sensorial interaction with what is perceived as authentic, a form of identity is solidified, and for this reason domestic Agrotourists expect the authenticity that suits their identity narrative.

Others, such as Everett and Aitchison (2008) have argued for the role of food tourism in sustaining identity as a potential link between authenticity and reality. The opportunity for establishing an identity narrative lies largely in the production and marketing but the interpretation of these then depends on the consumer. The consumption of a ‘gastronomical heritage’, with its claim to authenticity, establishes an essentialised connection with places that may enhance a domestic tourist’s perception of belonging or a foreign tourist’s constructed perception of a cultural identity. It is, however, a constructed connection, and as any production for the tourist market it must be put under the microscope of authenticity.

Sims (2009) argues for the importance of food in the formation of a connection between people and place, going beyond the ‘objective or constructed authenticity’ debate to understand it as a

more symbolic relationship. Indeed, the very sensoriality and tangibility of food creates a connection with the culture and natural landscape of a place, grounding tourists in moments of existential authenticity. Symbolic meaning-making through food and the senses has been written about extensively (for example Sutton, 2010) opening up new realms of ethnographic methodology and theory. Food, stripped of its cultural meaning, authentic or not, touristic or not, is a compilation of ingredients and in the sensory consumption of these lie important connections with the natural world. The metaphor of place consumption has been used literally in the case of food tourism by Hall et al. (2003) whereby the cycle of growing, harvesting, cooking and eating is seen as a direct consumption of the landscape. While the connection through food is valued, as seen in the ethnography, the concept of rural sustainability in relation to food sourcing and production must incorporate the sustainability of a running business and the complexity of the supply chain and modes of consumption tangle the narrative of authenticity.

Cultural identity and food have been formalised through international processes. At the time of writing, the Pitsilia *lountza* and sausage are in the process of following Pitsilia's *chiromeri* to gain PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) status from the EU. The Ministry of Agriculture, having received much criticism in the past for unsuccessful attempts to gain similar status for *halloumi*, has highlighted the need for clear manufacturing specifications. The contested recipe and origin of halloumi had left it exposed to the global market (Welz, 2015) and incited a sense of loss from the Cypriot society. This raises concerns of heritagisation (Bessiere, 2013) where strict guidelines on the designation of heritage guide production and limit adaptation, creativity and change. Existing classifications require boundaries and definitions which can be unrepresentative, yet for policy and legislation (such as the building guidelines for Agrotourism establishments) these are required. This is particularly important in this discussion; as the processes of 'traditional' rural life are standardised, sustainable development guides the future of rural life. This explains why Agrotourism spaces tend to appear static in time, while in the backstage of the 'backstage' (McCannell 2013) tensions between tradition and modernity are high.

Conclusion

A lot of expectation has been put on tourism to solve 21st century's problems. In Cyprus, Agrotourism was introduced as a double benefit solution to the unsustainable tourism industry and to rural development. Agrotourism's popularity with international and domestic guests indicate that as an alternative tourist product, it has been successful. This paper has considered whether Agrotourism may then have the potential to support sustainable rural development, concluding that, a more holistic approach is needed to do so.

As Agrotourism's popularity rose with international as well as domestic audiences, so did the need to define its potential for sustainability beyond that of an alternative tourist product. Ethnographic immersion reveals the complex underlying dynamics of Agrotourism as a development mechanism for rural areas and as a tourist product. The evidence presented in this paper supports the argument that for a circular sustainability model to be possible for Agrotourism, further support is needed in rural areas much beyond the spectre of the tourism sector. Tourism alone cannot be the solution, particularly on occasions where it is also the problem.

The Agrotourism paradigm, including the feature of gastronomic heritage, can elaborate on the complexities of authenticity and heritage. These concepts have been understood in the context of an ongoing battle between modernity and tradition within the complex identity politics of Cyprus. As the ethnography illustrates, the expectations of authenticity threaten to create new authenticities that compromise the 'real'. The metaphor of smoke and fire has been a vehicle for observing the contradictions between rural life and its consumption, along with the assumptions of the past and present that these evoke.

Finally, as places and people become commodities, they become exposed to all of the dangers of capitalism and the limits of sustainability are challenged. In a discussion focused on rural sustainability, the expectation of authenticity highlights the need for the addition of the cultural sustainability pillar to the three-pillar model. Environmental, economic, cultural and social sustainability are interconnected and inter-reliant and all four pillars must be able to hold up the existence of rural life. Sustainability may only work within a circular model that creates the need for products and for sustainability itself.

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