

UDC 338.48-6:7/8(439)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2786-5843/2023-2-1>

## CASTLES IN HUNGARY: UTILISING OUR BUILT HERITAGE TO CREATE VALUE

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*Our study deals with a comprehensive analysis of the current situation and possible uses of castles in Hungary. The aim of the study is to explore in detail the challenges and opportunities of castles in Hungary and how these buildings can be integrated into modern society while preserving their historical and cultural values. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of sustainable use and how castles can contribute to the economic and cultural life of local communities. The research used a variety of methods, including literature review, personal site visits and website analysis, in order to provide a broad analysis of the topic.*

*The results were used to formulate recommendations that could promote a more effective and versatile use of castles. These include alternative functions to tourism, such as education and research centres, art workshops, community spaces, and economic and cultural incubators. Our analysis also highlights the role that castles can play in preserving local identity and cultural heritage.*

*The research contributes to a better understanding of the current situation of Hungarian castles and to the development of strategies for their future use. Our study highlights that properly exploited castles can not only enrich cultural tourism but also contribute to improving the quality of life of local communities. The results of our research can help policy makers, heritage professionals and castle managers to develop sustainable and economically viable exploitation strategies.*

**Key words:** cultural tourism, heritage tourism, castles, Hungary

## ЗАМКИ В УГОРЩИНІ: ВИКОРИСТАННЯ НАШОЇ БУДОВАНОЇ СПАДЩИНИ ДЛЯ СТВОРЕННЯ ЦІННОСТІ

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*Темою даного дослідження є комплексний аналіз актуального стану і можливостей використання замків в Угорщині. Його мета – детальне вивчення викликів та туристичних переваг замків у країні, а також можливостей інтеграції замкових споруд у сучасне суспільство, зберігаючи їх історичні і культурні цінності. Особливий наголос ставився на важливість стійкості використання замків та на шляхи їх залучення до економічного і культурного життя місцевих спільнот. У процесі дослідження були використані різні методи, включаючи перегляд відповідної за тематикою фахової літератури, відвідування та дослідження безпосередньо на місцевості самих споруд, аналіз релевантних веб-сайтів для того, щоб мати змогу дати обґрунтовану оцінку предметної області.*

*Результати дослідження були використані для формулювання рекомендацій, які можуть допомогти у більш ефективному і багатобічному використанні замків. Останній включає в себе альтернативні функції, важливі з точки зору туризму, наприклад, шляхи використання замків як освітніх та дослідницьких центрів, мистецьких осередків, громадських просторів, а також економічних і культурних інкубаторів. Крім того, наш аналіз виділяє й роль замків у збереженні локальної свідомості та культурної спадщини.*

*Дослідження також сприяє кращому розумінню сучасної ситуації замків Угорщини і розробленню стратегій щодо їх майбутнього використання. У роботі підкреслено, що замки, експлуатовані належним чином, не тільки збагачують культурний туризм, але й покращують якість життя місцевих спільнот. Результати наших досліджень можуть допомогти законодавцям і приймаючим рішення, а також фахівцям культурної спадщини і менеджерам розробити стратегії стійкої та економічно життєздатної експлуатації замків.*

**Ключові слова:** культурний туризм, спадщинний туризм, замки, Угорщина

**Introduction.** The use of Fejér County castles offers an exciting field of research from a cultural, economic and social point of view. These buildings are not only part of the historical and cultural heritage but also potential economic and tourist resources. Castles have a number of alternative functions, including as school institutions, hospitals or retirement homes, and in addition to their tourist attraction, they can also open their doors to other economic sectors, e.g. for the organisation of conferences or weddings.

In the following, we will analyse in detail the different uses of castles in Fejér County and explore the challenges and opportunities that these diverse uses present. Castles play a key role in shaping the identity of the region, not only through their architectural beauty, but also through their history

and associated cultural values. The diversity of castles in Fejér County provides opportunities for a variety of uses, and the transition to these can be an important step in the sustainable conservation and development of historic buildings. Moreover, the use of castles for tourism purposes can be an incentive for visitors interested in the history and cultural traditions of the region. When considering alternative functions for castles, it is important to take into account the needs and interests of local communities and the potential cultural and economic challenges.

This research will seek to determine the effectiveness of different uses of castles and their contribution to local economic vitality, and to use the results to make recommendations for more sustainable and diverse uses.

**Literature.** Cultural tourism plays a key role in the tourism market and is one of the main motivators for travel. Consumer habits are changing and discretionary income is rising, which has an impact on the dynamic growth in demand for culture. There is a growing demand for historical monuments and to learn about different cultures [1] Cultural tourism products are found almost everywhere, in a complex and diversified way [2] cultural resources are part of tourism resources [3].

The concept of cultural tourism has been interpreted in many ways in research. According to the UNWTO [4], it includes historical and cultural values, culinary values, music, literature, living cultures, traditions, which are realized through the consumption of the destination's tangible and intangible cultural attractions.

According to Rátz [5], in the implementation of cultural tourism, "the motivation of the tourist is to learn about new cultures and participate in cultural events, while the attractions are the specific, unique culture".

The National Tourism Strategy 2030 [6] also includes castle and castle tourism, film tourism, folk traditions, city visits, visiting exhibitions [7].

Closely related to cultural tourism is heritage tourism, which is considered by some researchers as a synonym for cultural tourism and by others as a branch of cultural tourism. Heritage tourism is motivated by the need to preserve the heritage of the past, to discover historical roots and to acquire new knowledge [8]. Cultural attractions also play an important role in defining the image of a destination, as they are a major attraction [9].

The experiential aspect is also emphasised in the case of cultural tourism, as cultural attractions need to increase attractiveness and interactivity [10, 11], but it is also important to develop an appropriate strategy to ensure that visitors choose the cultural attraction as the place of their visit [12]. Digitalisation is also of particular importance, including the emergence of new expectations and trends in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and the emergence of online reviews [13].

For cultural attractions, storytelling is crucial [14], which can be a driver for creative tourism [15]. Artificial intelligence and virtual reality are

expanding the possibilities and realising new interpretations in this field as well. In order for tourism to continue to grow in popularity, continuous changes are needed [16].

The development of attractions linked to cultural tourism can also have a positive impact on the local population, creating jobs and boosting the economy. At the same time, a balance must be struck in the development process, as tourism puts pressure on the transport network, built heritage and infrastructure, so sustainability aspects must be taken into account and environmental and climate protection aspects must be emphasised.

In our study we analysed two castles in Fejér County, which are used in different ways.

Castles are part of the built cultural heritage, a reminder of the past, reflecting the specificities of their time [17]. In our country there are hundreds of castles, only some of which are being used. In Hungary, problems related to the use and under-use of castles for various purposes can be attributed to several factors. These include economic, cultural, legal and infrastructural challenges, which are detailed below.

The maintenance and renovation of castles requires significant financial investment. Private and state-owned castles often struggle with a lack of the necessary funding, which hampers proper maintenance and use. The legal status of many castles is complex and their ownership may be unclear. This makes it difficult to implement heritage conservation measures and development projects. Preserving the historical and cultural values of castles is an important aspect. Modern use plans need to be compatible with heritage protection standards, which may limit the potential uses. Many castles are located in inaccessible locations and suffer from infrastructure deficiencies. This hampers the development of tourism and other uses. Castles need to be adapted to make them economically viable, which can be particularly challenging in less accessible and remote locations. The use of environmentally sound solutions in the renovation and maintenance of castles is also an important consideration, which brings additional costs and design challenges. The involvement and support of local communities is key to successful regeneration

projects. Community resistance or disregard for local needs can hinder the success of castle regeneration. The disused castles are rapidly deteriorating, and the buildings that have lost their function are becoming empty, thus posing a problem from both a heritage and a townscape point of view.

In analysing the use of castles, some researchers have grouped the main functions into different categories.

Petravich [18] classified the use of castles in Hungary into four main categories: cultural; tourism; social and health; and other.

According to Praznovszky [19] four main categories can be distinguished, namely community functions; administrative buildings; private residential or holiday functions and finally tourism (accommodation, museum, event venue).

Nagy [20] has classified the uses into three basic types according to whether the values are preserved, whether they are accessible and to what extent the new functions correspond to the character of the building. On this basis, one can speak of an inadequate category, where the castle performs a community function, as a health, social, educational or cultural institution. The mixed category refers to administrative buildings and private residences, where the values are mostly preserved, but where the requirement of accessibility is compromised. The appropriate category is tourism use, where the preservation of the asset is feasible and most often accessible.

The classification of castle stock by use in 2017 was divided by Katona [17]. into four main categories: non-utilised; socially utilised; tourism utilised and other utilised.

In addition to their tourist potential, castles in use can also serve a number of other functions, such as health, residential, administrative or even social. The renovation of castles has a prestigious value and contributes to improving the image of the municipality and the destination, and, when used for economic purposes, to creating jobs and thus improving the quality of life of the population. Their renovation and operation, however, must be carried out with particular attention to heritage protection and sustainability, but restoration is extremely resource-intensive. Our aim

is to show how the remaining castles can be put to good use and how their conservation can be ensured for future generations through the different functions they perform. We have approached the question of the use of castles from different perspectives, and we have examined how castles contribute to their environment and wider society. We looked at the historical background of each castle, the functions it performs in tourism, the various programme options, and past developments.

Under the National Castle and Fortress Programme, 18 castles and 12 fortresses will be renewed in Hungary, with the aim of ensuring that the facilities are sustainable for tourism purposes in line with 21st century requirements, while contributing to the development of the economy and the cohesion of local communities.

**Aims.** The aim of the research on the use of Fejér County castles was to find out how these buildings are used for other purposes besides tourism. We would like to identify the factors that support the use of castles for different purposes. In the research particular attention was paid to the preservation of the historical and cultural values of the buildings, in addition to the different forms of use.

A second important aim of the research was to explore the potential influence of the use of castles on local communities. This included an examination of the social, cultural and economic aspects that could be brought to bear on the lives of local communities through the re-use of castles. The aim of the research in this case was to provide a comprehensive picture of how these historic buildings can be integrated into modern community life and contribute to strengthening local identity and culture. The research went beyond tourism uses to assess the sustainability and long-term viability of the castles.

The results were used to make recommendations for a more efficient and diversified use of the castles, taking into account sustainability aspects.

The research has contributed to a comprehensive picture of the current situation of the buildings and potential future developments in tourism and other sectors.



**Materials and methods.** The study has been prepared using a combination of research methods in order to analyse the topic on the basis of the broadest possible range of information. The aim of the research methodology was to provide a comprehensive description of the current situation and possible solutions for the exploitation of castles in Hungary.

During the literature review, we relied on secondary sources that helped us to understand and develop the topic in more depth. These included articles, studies, books and online publications on the concept of cultural tourism, the role of attractions in image creation, the economic impact of attraction development, other approaches to the exploitation of castles, and the importance of experientialism in the context of castle tourism.

For the primary sources, several personal site visits were carried out, during which data collection, observation and information gathering were carried out in the study areas. These visits allowed us to gain direct experience and insight into current practices of castle use and interaction with local communities.

In addition, the research involved a critical analysis of various websites. These analyses included an assessment of the content, detailed information and interactivity of the websites. Particular attention was paid to the official websites of the castles available, as well as to the online presence of the local authorities.

Overall, the methodology of the study focused on qualitative analysis, personal experience and review of secondary sources, ensuring a comprehensive and detailed examination of the topic.

### **Results. Cultural tourism in Fejér County**

Fejér County is rich in cultural values, as it is one of the cradles of the country's history. According to the Fejér County Regional Development Concept 2030 (p17) [21], 434 monuments are registered, which is 3.2% of the country's monument stock. There are 14 monuments classified as national heritage, a significant number of which are former aristocratic castles and parks. In addition to these, there are a further 2 160 archaeological sites and 565 objects under local protection in the county.

The county has a number of unique cultural values, significant folklore (for example pottery in Csákvár) and tourist attractions (Gorsium Archaeological Park), which complement each other and offer a varied and meaningful pastime for all visitors.

In addition, its gastronomy is also unique, with specialities such as tarkedli or kvircedli. There are two historic wine regions: the Móri and the Etyek-Buda wine regions, part of which also belong to the county, which offer a wide range of specialities.

The county's cultural values are significant, so cultural tourism is a priority product, including visits to castles and towns, wine and gastronomy, and living traditions. Religious/ pilgrimage tourism is also becoming increasingly important, given the good number of church developments and the unique sacral monuments. Among these, a notable religious centre is the Bodajk shrine, whose visitor centre, built a few years ago and attracting thousands of visitors every year, was given the status of basilica minor in 2023.

The county can boast several castles: for example, the Károlyi Castle in Fehérvárcsurgó, the Brunszvik Castle in Martonvásár, the Nádasdy Castle in Nádasdladány and the Esterházy Castle in Csákvár are of outstanding value. In the following, the use of three castles is analysed, one of which is specifically used for heritage tourism, while the others are primarily used as a health facility and a school with a children's home.

**Utilisation of the Károlyi Castle in Fehérvárcsurgó.** The Károlyi Castle in Fehérvárcsurgó is located in Fejér County, in the Móri wine region. Since 1997, the cultural and tourist management has been carried out by the József Károlyi Foundation, a member of the international network of European Cultural Meeting Centres. The Foundation's historic monument and environmental rehabilitation project was awarded the UNESCO World Heritage Decade Emblem in 1995.

The restored buildings, furnished rooms, interactive attractions and cultural programmes provide a wide range of cultural opportunities for visitors to enjoy guided tours of the castle.

The aim of the operation of the castle is to

create a high-quality, complex tourism product that will increase the tourist attractiveness of the area and contribute to the development of the tourism image of the region, as it is one of the most noble castles of Hungarian castle tourism with a long architectural and horticultural tradition, and also one of the Hungarian centres of Francophone cultural history and culture, which will further increase its utilisation.

The castle is an important employer in the area, and the development will create more jobs and contribute to the economic development of the region.

The Károlyi Castle is a multifunctional cultural tourist attraction, welcoming visitors while maintaining part of its original function. The castle also serves as an event and accommodation venue, and has a restaurant.

The tourism development of the castle is a key factor in the regional development of the region and the municipality. The castle is a defining point of the image of the sub-region, and the development of several accommodation facilities and guesthouses has been linked to the tourism services of the castle.

The locals are happy that a beautiful, renovated castle building has been created from a dilapidated monument from 30 years ago, and that the surroundings have been restored. The Count and Countess who live here keep the population informed of the improvements that have been made and are planned, and the people of the village have a high opinion of the castle. This is in line with the research of Bichler [22], who argues that it is necessary to involve the local population in tourism development, as the success of local development is not possible without the local community [23].

Cultural tourism attractions can be divided into three groups [24, 25]:

- built and tangible monuments, architectural and artistic works.
  - events, festivals, other traditional events.
  - the culture, lifestyle, gastronomy or leisure activities of the people living in the destination.

Based on the above criteria, the cultural tourist attractions of the Károlyi Castle can be classified as follows.

*Built and tangible monuments, architectural and artistic works*

- Classicist castle building, outbuildings, stables
- Castle Park
- The legacy and library of Szabolcs Vayai, Professor of Heraldry and Genealogy
- The legacy and library of Ferenc Fejtő
- The church history legacy and library of Miklós Frank
- The collection and library of Count István Károlyi Count on Far Eastern and Overseas Civilisations

- Permanent exhibition on the Károlyi family
- Music history library
- 50-thousand-pieces postcards collection

*Events*

- European Ornamental Plants and Garden Art Exhibition

- „Quartettissimo" String Quartet Festival
- Concerts and concerts of serious music
- International scientific conferences
- Temporary exhibitions
- Open-air theatre performances

*Cultural and gastronomy facilities*

- Károlyi Gastronomy Workshop
- Picnic in the castle park

*Other attractions*

- Children's programmes
- Barefoot park
- Corporate events
- Weddings
- Walking in the park
- Historical playground
- Museum education activities

The events attract a large number of visitors, with the European Ornamental Plants and Garden Arts Exhibition being a highlight.

The castle and its park offer excellent opportunities for family and company events, and the tourist offer is enhanced by the French cultural heritage.

The castle also functions as a hotel, with 17 double rooms and six suites, which are particularly popular for events (weddings, conferences).

There is also a huge library, a 500 m<sup>2</sup> cellar, five conference rooms on nearly 500 m<sup>2</sup>, a private boating lake, a restaurant and the castle

has its own Catholic chapel. The castle is set in 50 hectares of ancient wooded parkland, open to visitors.

Károlyi Castle is undergoing continuous improvements, increasing its cultural use. In the second half of 2023, the Stables Building was inaugurated, which has been transformed into a modern visitor centre where the life and history of the Károlyi family can be experienced through audio-visual elements, and an event room equipped with digital tools. The exhibition is modern, interactive, exciting and complements the attractions of the castle. A historical playground has also been created and the castle park has been renewed, with the planting of a number of plants which can be visited on guided botanical walks.

The castle website offers an interactive virtual tour, a presentation on the history of the castle, and the possibility to book a visit. The service is particularly guest-friendly as visits are possible several times a day, every day of the year.

It is clear that the castle is constantly improving its services and its programmes are of high quality, making it a key destination for the development of the region.

The economic benefits of using castles for tourism are as follows, which can affect not only the castles but also the municipality and, indirectly, the whole region:

- increase in tourism revenue: by making the castle a tourist attraction, the number of visitors will increase, which could generate significant tourism revenue for the castle and the local economy;
- job creation: tourism developments such as exhibitions, events, restaurants, gift shops, etc. create new jobs for local residents;
- a boost to local services: it also generates growing demand for local services in the surrounding area, such as restaurants, cafés and shops;
- infrastructure development: infrastructure improvements linked to tourism development, such as roads, car parks, cycle paths, will contribute to the growth of the area around the castle and the tourist attractiveness of the region;
- preservation of cultural and historical

heritage: tourism development will help to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the castle;

- local economic development: tourism development creates opportunities to promote and sell local artisanal products and gastronomic specialities, which also support local producers and entrepreneurs;
- reduction of seasonality: the castle can be visited all year round, regardless of the season, thus contributing to the diversification of tourist activities at different times of the year;
- innovation and sustainability: tourism development can bring innovative solutions and contribute to long-term sustainability.

The economic impact of tourism development in castles can be wide-ranging, contributing to local economic growth, job creation and the preservation of cultural assets. However, these developments must be carefully planned and implemented, taking into account the needs of the local community and the principles of sustainable tourism.

When a castle is used for non-tourist purposes, there are several benefits that can be gained by focusing on other types of use. These benefits are based on different social, cultural and economic aspects:

- community use: the use of castles as hospitals, schools or children's homes can contribute to the support and development of local communities. In this way the buildings directly serve local residents and contribute to improving community life;
- provision of education and health services: the use of castles for education and health purposes will enable them to play an important role in meeting the basic needs of society. This type of use can help to improve local education and health infrastructure;
- preservation of cultural and historical heritage: Castles used for non-tourist purposes are often better able to retain their original function and historical character. In this way they contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and raise historical awareness;
- reduced tourism pressure: Tourism can put significant pressure on infrastructure and

the environment, particularly in popular destinations. Non-tourist uses can reduce this pressure, allowing for more sustainable development of the local community and environment;

- economic diversification: alternative uses of castles can provide an opportunity to diversify the local economy, reducing over-reliance on tourism. This could create a more stable economic base in the long term;

- local job creation: the provision of educational, health or other community functions can create local jobs, contributing to the development of the local economy;

- environmental protection: tourism activities often leave a larger environmental footprint than facilities used by the local community. Non-tourist uses can help to meet environmental objectives.

Overall, while tourism can bring significant economic benefits to a castle, non-tourism uses can offer a range of social, cultural and economic benefits that contribute to the sustainable development of local communities and the environment. Two castles that are not used for tourism but for community and social purposes are described below.

#### **Utilisation of the Esterházy Castle in Csákvár**

The Esterházy castle in Csákvár is the main attraction of the village, the foundations of which were designed by Jakab Fellner on the order of János Esterházy [26]. The first building was completed between 1760-65, and in 1778 the construction of the castle began, modelled on the castle in Fertőd. In 1782-84 the building was given a bathroom, which was covered with more than 4000 majolica tiles. In the early 1800s, the village and the castle were shaken by several earthquakes and rebuilt in the neoclassical style, according to the plans of Charles Moreau. It had a library, theatre and chapel among its 365 rooms.

After World War II, it was used as a brickworks and a military school, and from 1954 it was a pulmonary sanatorium. It is still a medical institution, with an internal medicine and musculoskeletal rehabilitation department. The extensive grounds of the castle and its soothing surroundings facilitate the recovery and rehabilitation of patients.

The conversion of mansions for hospital use involves a number of considerations, as the specific needs of health services, the characteristics of the building and the way it serves patients must be taken into account, as follows:

- spatial planning and infrastructure: separate departments for musculoskeletal rehabilitation and internal medicine treatments, such as treatment and nursing units;

- accessibility of the building to provide adequate access for patients with reduced mobility;

- equipment and technology: purchase of appropriate medical equipment for rehabilitation and internal medicine treatments, such as physiotherapy equipment, diagnostic and therapeutic tools;

- implementing IT systems to manage patient records and administrative tasks more efficiently;

- health professionals: recruiting specialists, nurses, physiotherapists and other health professionals who contribute their skills and experience to quality health services;

- patient comfort: the design of the castle's furnishings and environment to promote healing. This is particularly challenging, as castles are not designed for in-patient care, so major adaptations are needed to provide hospital care;

- functional rooms, adapted for patients with reduced mobility;

- designing rehabilitation and prevention programmes, dietary advice, organising health promotion and prevention programmes;

- cultural and environmental aspects: while providing adequate health services, it is important to preserve the original cultural character and historical values of the castle;

- engaging with the local community: working with local communities, for example by organising health talks or screening programmes;

The use of castles as hospitals also means that the historical and cultural heritage must be managed together with high quality health services, ensuring proper recovery and rehabilitation of patients.

The Esterházy Castle in Csákvár has an English park of about 77 hectares, which was started in 1779, based on the plans of Isidore Canevale. The park contains hundreds of species of trees,



with centuries-old plane and chestnut trees and special buildings, including the sundial, the Grotto and the Trinity statue. But there was much more to the castle in its heyday than what we see today.

Although the castle is not open to the public, it is one of the most important heritage tourist attractions in the municipality and attracts many visitors. The castle park is open to the public and is very popular with locals and visitors alike.

**Utilisation of the Batthyány Castle in Bicske.** Another area of our research is the Batthyány Castle in Bicske, which is also used for non-touristic purposes. The Batthyány family, one of the most important noble families in Hungary, owned several castles in different parts of the country, including the Bicske castle.

The Batthyány family has a long history in Hungary, and the castle played an important role in the history of the family and the region.

Batthyány Castle in Bicske is currently owned by the Hungarian state. The castle is home to the Kossuth Zsuzsa Children's Home and Primary School. The castle also houses an exhibition on the history of the institution, with pictures, documents and educational artefacts from the orphanage's time, including a silver ballpoint pen and crystal inkwell belonging to Queen Elisabeth and Franz Joseph. The castle also houses the Batthyány Memorial Exhibition, where visitors can see the chair and cradle of Lajos Batthyány and several paintings by Count Gyula Batthyány.

The castle and its 11-hectare English park are protected monuments. The building is a three-winged, two-storey, late Baroque/early neoclassical, transitional style, and was restored to its present form in 1796-99. The castle park is the venue for outdoor cultural events in summer and the castle banqueting hall hosts occasional exhibitions and events.

The use of the Batthyány Castle in Bicske as a children's home and school has complex effects on both the community and the building. These impacts should be considered from several perspectives:

*Positive aspects*

- Educational role: as a children's home and school, the castle has an important social and

educational function. It provides children with the opportunity to learn and develop in a historic and inspiring environment.

- Preservation and maintenance of the building: active use ensures the preservation and maintenance of the building. With such a feature, the building will not remain unused, reducing the risk of deterioration and neglect.

- Community cohesion: the use of the castle provides a local community function, which strengthens local cohesion. The presence of the institution in the castle creates opportunities for local people to learn about and appreciate the historic heritage.

- Impact on the community: the use of the castle as children's home and school can have a significant positive social impact on the local community. It provides children and young people with the opportunity to grow up and learn in a historically and culturally rich environment. It can also contribute to strengthening local community identity and to a better understanding and appreciation of historical heritage.

*Negative aspects*

- Limited access for the general public: as the castle is a children's home and school, access for visitors is likely to be more limited.

- Limited cultural and historical exhibitions: as a children's home and school, there may be fewer opportunities to exhibit and showcase the historical and cultural assets of the castle.

- Possible conflict between functions: there may sometimes be conflicts between the preservation of the historic character of the castle and modern educational needs, especially in terms of infrastructure and use of space.

Overall, the use of the Batthyány Castle in Bicske as a children's home and school fulfils a unique and valuable cultural and educational role, while ensuring the preservation of the building and providing important social functions for the local community.

**Conclusions.** The differences between castles used for tourism, accommodation and exhibitions, castles used as hospitals and castles used as schools and children's homes are evident in many areas. These differences are also reflected in the functions, infrastructure and needs of visitors or users.

### *Functions*

- Tourist castles: these castles are generally open to visitors and focus on presenting historical and cultural values. They often function as event venues, accommodation and museums.

- Castle as hospitals: in this case, the cha-teaux are used as medical facilities. When adapting the buildings, particular attention must be paid to accessibility, hygiene and patient comfort.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: these are educational and nurturing establishments. The infrastructure is focused on education and childcare, including classrooms, playgrounds and living areas.

### *Infrastructure*

- Tourist castles: often have modern hotel facilities, restaurants and exhibition halls to ensure the comfort of guests and a cultural experience.

- Castles as hospitals: they are equipped with specialised medical facilities, accessible facilities and adequate waiting areas.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: they have educational facilities, sports fields and dormitories.

### *Visitor or user needs*

- Tourist castles: visitors are usually looking for relaxation and cultural experiences.

- Castles as hospitals: patients and visitors focus on health care and a suitable environment.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: students and children in care need education and a safe, supportive environment

### *Safety requirements*

- Tourist castles: adequate fire protection systems, security cameras and security guards are necessary for the safety of visitors.

- Castles as hospitals: ensuring sterility, emergency exits and power supply for critical equipment to meet health standards is vital.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: safe playgrounds, accident-free classrooms and adequate supervision are necessary for the safety of children.

### *Accessibility*

- Tourist castles: accessible routes, lifts and special toilets for visitors are necessary.

- Castles as hospitals: accessibility is particularly important, including wide corridors, lifts and special bathrooms.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: accessible classrooms, toilets and common spaces are essential to ensure that education is accessible to all students.

### *Environmentally friendly and sustainable solutions*

- Tourist castles: solar panels, energy-efficient lighting and water-saving systems can be beneficial for sustainability.

- Castles as hospitals: in addition to energy efficiency, environmentally friendly materials and waste management solutions are important.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: green courtyards, environmentally conscious educational programmes and sustainable building management practices.

### *Technology integration*

- Tourist castles: modern guest management systems, WiFi access and interactive exhibition technologies.

- Castle as hospitals: use of the latest medical equipment, electronic health records and telemetry systems.

- Castles used as schools and children's homes: integrating smart boards, digital learning materials and online learning platforms into the teaching process [27].

These aspects all contribute to understanding how castles with different functions can effectively and appropriately serve their different audiences, while preserving and exploiting the unique character of historic buildings

There are a number of creative and versatile solutions to the problems of utilisation and under-utilisation of castles in Hungary, which go beyond their tourist functions. In our study we will attempt to formulate some proposals that can be used as alternative approaches to the exploitation of castles, but of course their financing must also be found.

Castles can be transformed into centres for education and research, providing students and scholars with the opportunity to study local history, art and architecture. They can also provide a home for arts and crafts workshops where local artists and craftspeople can work and showcase

their work. These structures can be converted into versatile community spaces for local events, markets, concerts and other cultural activities. The castles can be used as a gastronomic centre, taking advantage of the local natural resources and traditions. They can function as business incubators or start-up centres, supporting new businesses and innovation, or be converted into retirement homes/rehabilitation centres, providing a calm and inspiring environment for the residents. The spacious rooms and quiet environment could be ideal for creating libraries or archives to house special collections and documents.

These proposals can help to make the castles fit for a wide range of uses, while helping to develop the local economy, preserve cultural and historical assets, and promote community participation and heritage conservation.

The scientific results of this study can be summarised as follows.

In our study, we made recommendations for a more efficient and versatile use of castles, with

a special focus on sustainability aspects. These recommendations can help decision-makers to use castles for the benefit of local communities and wider society, while preserving their cultural and economic values.

The study has contributed to a more comprehensive picture of the current situation of castles in Hungary. This includes the challenges and opportunities that these historic buildings face, including conservation, utilisation and community integration.

In our work we also explored possible future development directions in tourism and other related sectors. This includes the diversification of the different functions of castles, new economic and cultural uses, and coordination with local and regional development.

These results will contribute to the scientific understanding of cultural tourism and the use of historic buildings and open up new perspectives for the future management and development of castles.

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- <https://kastelyok.eu/content/fej%C3%A9r-megye>  
<https://www.csakvar.hu/kult/esterhazy-kastely>  
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