

**International Conference on Religious Tourism:
*Fostering sustainable socio-economic development in host communities***

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**Session 4: Inclusive socio-economic development of local communities –
promoting partnerships that work**

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Bio:

Rev. Berit Lånke is an ordained pastor of the Church of Norway (Christian/Lutheran), participant of ecumenical dialogues, especially with regard to the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and Assembly organizer for CEC's 12 General Assembly.

She was the project leader of the European Pilgrimage 2000, a celebration among churches in Europe, focusing on pilgrimages to European pilgrim places and the co-founder of the One World in Dialogue, one of the partners behind the "Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites".

She is also involved in the "Pilgrimage for Transformation" project of the Alternative Tourism Group, Beit Sahour, and on these kinds of guidelines for travelling in the Holy Land, commissioned by the Church of Norway.

She is in charge of Trondheim's participation in the Green Pilgrimage Network and route manager for the "European Cultural Route of St. Olav Ways".

Rev. Lånke is the first manager of Nidaros Pilgrimage Center in Trondheim, Norway and first director of National Pilgrim Center of Norway and the organizer of pilgrimages to holy places and religious feasts in different countries.

Abstract:

By re-establishing the tradition of pilgrimages in the Nordic countries and the Protestant churches, where it had been banned and stopped by the Protestant Reformation more than 500 years ago, there developed other perspectives of the pilgrimage idea with its strong focus on holy places and saints. It could be places of common interest for the Christians, it could be special events, it could be a strong focus on the environment, but first and foremost it became an important means for encounter between the pilgrims and the local churches. The “living stones” became much more interesting than the old churches, ruins or history.

The travellers learned to know the local people along the pilgrim routes and at the holy places. They were enriched by local spiritual traditions and cultures. The locals shared their daily lives and their food traditions and they opened their homes and monastic guesthouses – including to people of different faiths. Important lessons were learned:

Responsible pilgrims cannot go to holy places where people are living without caring about their lives, their expression of the faith, their traditions, joys or struggles, and leave behind only dust and waste. The locals should have a fair income from the pilgrims that either could be a complete business or a solid contribution to their other income. We see some good examples in less privileged communities, but we also see this in the Scandinavian countryside.

Moreover, pilgrims will get a deeper insight in the local quality of living, the political, environmental and economic realities on the ground. In several situations we have seen this resulting in joint projects between locals and foreign pilgrims. Among the examples are partnerships based on the Green Pilgrimage Network and social projects, exchange of students, cooperation between pilgrim tour operators and a code of conduct for pilgrims.