CREATIVE TOURISM IN SMALL CITIES AND RURAL AREAS: LESSONS FROM THE CREATOUR PROJECT, PORTUGAL

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Abstract

Bridging culture/heritage, tourism, and local development, CREATOUR is a three-year research-and-application project that is developing an integrated approach to creative tourism development in small cities and rural areas across Portugal. The project takes a cultural development approach, fostering a diversity of "bottom-up" ideas and experimentation, coupled with knowledge-sharing and capacity-building through networking. The project involves 5 research centres and 40 pilot projects that are independently designed, implemented, and managed across four regions. In the context of limited knowledge of creative tourism models in small communities and rural areas, these pilots are our co-researchers of creative tourism development approaches and challenges in extra-metropolitan areas. This paper presents an overview of the types of models being developed and some of the lessons learned in implementation.

Key Words: *creative tourism, rural development, Portugal, sustainable cultural tourism, innovative cultural tourism, heritage*
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Introduction

Creative tourism can be described as a reaction to a growing 'mass cultural tourism' mixed with the growing desire of travellers to play more active roles in their journeys. Although the scope and array of activities related to creative tourism has diversified in recent decades, with changing definitions accompanying these evolutions (see Duxbury and Richards, 2019a), an original definition by Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond (2000) continues to be a touchstone for the field:

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> Tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken. (p. 18)

In reviewing various definitions of creative tourism that have been published, the CREATOUR team selected four reoccurring aspects that resonate most strongly with the type of creative tourism activities the project aims to catalyze: active participation, creative self-expression, learning, and a link to the local community. The CREATOUR vision of creative tourism is centred on active creative activity encouraging personal self-expression and interaction between visitors and local residents, inspired by local endogenous resources (place and people), and designed and implemented by local residents for community benefit. These activities are based in and pull from the talents and cultures of residents and their relations with the place in which they live.

In an era of "overtourism" replete with issues of cultural homogenization and sustainability, creative tourism promises a framework for developing innovative approaches for a sustainable cultural tourism that is place-responsive and community-engaged, balances local and visitor interests, and offers small-scale activities that may be well suited to smaller communities. However, there are still many gaps in our knowledge about creative tourism development, its evolutionary dynamics, and strategies for sustainable approaches. The question of how to catalyze and develop a creative tourism "sector"—especially in non-metropolitan contexts—is rarely addressed in the creative tourism literature.

With this as its context, the CREATOUR project brings together teams in five research centres and 40 pilot organizations to learn, promote, and develop a variety of place-specific, small-scale creative tourism initiatives in small cities and rural areas throughout the Norte, Centro, Alentejo, and Algarve regions of mainland Portugal (see Figure 1). This paper outlines some main features of this research-and-application project, the criteria through which the pilots were selected, and the nature of the pilots. It then discusses six approaches to organizing creative tourism offers that the pilots have developed. In closing, some ongoing tensions and challenges faced by the pilots are presented, and some of the lesson learned to date.

Figure 1: *Map of mainland Portugal showing CREATOUR pilots and research centres*
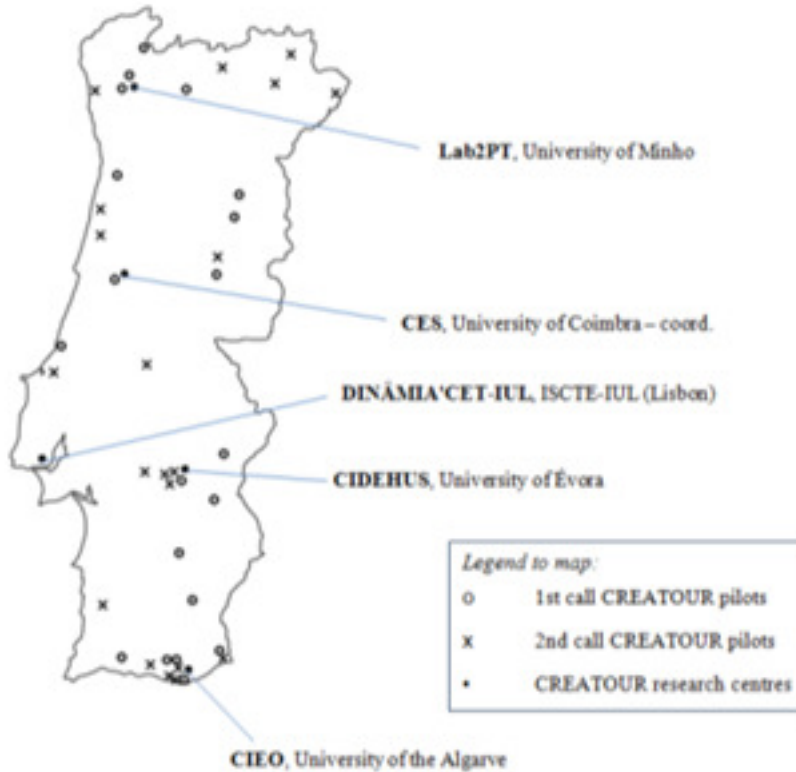
Source: *CREATOUR*

CREATOUR

CREATOUR: Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas is an incubator/demonstration and multidisciplinary research initiative that promotes collaborative research processes. The three-year research-and-application project (2016-2019) aims to connect the cultural/creative and tourism sectors through the development of an integrated research and application approach to catalyzing creative tourism in small cities and rural areas throughout Portugal. On the research side, the project aims to examine and reflect on the creative tourism activities, including development dynamics and patterns, reception experiences, and community impacts, using methodologies and theoretical perspectives from the fields of tourism, cultural development, and local/regional development. On the practice side, it aims to catalyze creative tourism offers in small cities and rural areas in Portugal, inform

and learn from their development, and link them with each other through the development of a national network (Duxbury, 2019). Ultimately, the project aims to catalyze and to develop a sustainable creative tourism sector to boost tourism in small cities and rural areas as well as to contribute meaningfully to local cultural vibrancy and holistic development in pilot communities.

The project involves the collaboration of teams in five research centres: Centre of Social Studies (*Centro de Estudos Sociais*, CES) at the University of Coimbra, the overall project coordinator and the in-region research centre for the Centro region; the Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies (*Centro de Estudos sobre a Mudança Socioeconómica e o Território*, DINÂMIA'CET) at ISCTE – Lisbon University Institute, which coordinates the national Calls for Pilots, the regional and national IdeaLabs, and the local impacts of the pilot initiatives; the Laboratory of Landscapes, Heritage and Territory (*Laboratório de Paisagens, Património e Território*, Lab2PT) at the University of Minho, the in-region research centre for the Norte region; the Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics (*Centro de investigação sobre espaço e organizações*, CIEO) at the University of the Algarve, the in-region research centre for the Algarve region; the Interdisciplinary Centre for History, Cultures and Societies (*Centro Interdisciplinar de História, Culturas e Sociedades*, CIDEHUS) at the University of Évora, the in-region research centre for the Alentejo region.

The CREATOUR project takes a cultural development approach, fostering a diversity of "bottom-up" ideas and experimentation rather than setting out pre-defined thematic lines and routes, as is more common in tourism projects. This diversity of orientation and practice is coupled with knowledge-sharing and capacity-building through networking at regional, national, and (to some degree) international scales. Although some existing (isolated) creative tourism activities existed in Portugal prior to CREATOUR, they worked in isolation from each other. While some of these proponents are now pilots within the project, most pilot projects are new initiatives launched in response to the emergence of CREATOUR. Overall, the project is organized using the key dimensions of support to enhance value for creative sector development as a framework: build knowledge and capacity, support content development, link creativity to place, and strengthen network and cluster formation (OECD, 2014).

The development of a network of creative tourism pilots is central to CREATOUR, where pilots play a leading role. By implementing a series of creative tourism offers, these entities are co-researchers at CREATOUR, actively contributing to the knowledge generation processes and overall success of this project. CREATOUR's pilots were selected through two national open calls (with deadlines in January and November of 2017), with five organizations selected during each call in each region: Norte, Centro, Alentejo, and Algarve. Applications were reviewed according to an array of criteria: a) cultural value of the activities proposed; b) the creative nature of the activities proposed; c) capacity for tourism attractiveness; d) impact of the project in terms of community development; e) diversity of focus of the proposals; and f) capacity and commitment to work with the research team during the project. The 40 pilots within CREATOUR develop and implement creative tourism activities and provide 'front-lines' knowledge and insights as co-researchers in the project. Ten pilots are located in each of the four regions of the project, situated diversely within each region (see Figure 1).

In each year, the selection of the pilots occurred in a two-phase process: first, the in-region research centre reviewed applications from their region and pre-elected approximately seven candidates. Then the five research centres met to learn about and review the pre-selected candidates, and to reflect on and discuss the national picture that resulted. Shortly following this meeting, each in-region team finalized their selection of five pilots, and the full set of 20 pilots was announced. Overall, the range of pilots selected aimed to include a wide diversity of approaches, activities, organizational types, and geographic coverage. In the second call, pilot-applicants were also assessed in terms of how they complemented the range of pilots selected in the first call and strengthened the overall network.

The pilot organizations that were selected include not-for-profit art and cultural associations, small entrepreneurial businesses, municipalities, regional development associations, and a few inter-organizational partnerships developed for the call. Individual proponents within these different types of organizations have demonstrated entrepreneurial intentions and desire to be part of developing something new. From a cultural/content perspective, some examples of the pilot activities are:
  - craft workshops, involving textile, pottery, ceramics, leather, metal, and wood

- fine arts workshops, including painting, sculpture, drawing, and illustration
- photography, video, and digital arts workshops
- performing arts workshops and community-engaged, participatory artistic residencies
- storytelling sessions and workshops
- gastronomy-focused workshops in which one learns food-related cultures of a place as well as culinary techniques to take home
- creative and interpretative "Walks & Visits" involving creation activities
- ancestral traditions workshops and active participation activities
- raw materials production and work cycles for making, for example, salt, linen, wool, clay, marble, wicker, and so forth.

All pilot projects offer creative tourism activities that "embody local traditions or expertise, local history, and ways of life blended with other specifics of the cultural and local landscape of the locations where activities are organized, whether in a small city or a rural area. This place-sensitive development process served to connect creativity to place and create genuine, immersive, and creative experiences" (Duxbury, Silva, and Castro, 2019).

Creative Tourism in Extra-metropolitan Areas: Emerging Models

Many of the prominent promoters of creative tourism in its earlier years were large cities. While creative tourism initiatives can increasingly be found in smaller places and rural areas, it appears that an implicit "urban context" may have influenced the way in which the field is understood. For example, in a large urban context like Barcelona or Paris a painter can offer a simple painting workshop on a weekend, and this is the common image of creative tourism that comes to mind. The presentation and marketing of creative tourism activities as discrete offers tends to disguise any broader business planning framework that may guide the development of these offers. There are gaps in our knowledge of the business aspects of these activities, including sustainable operational models and strategies (Duxbury and Richards, 2019a).

Through CREATOUR we have become highly cognizant that in more remote, smaller places significant attention must be directed to niche marketing and attraction, the scale of activities to warrant the travel

distance, the specificities of a "place" that provide distinctiveness to the creative tourism offers, issues related to developing an enterprise to sustain the activities (and to balance with other initiatives), and even pragmatic issues of transport (Duxbury, forthcoming). The extent of support and mentoring that might be needed in regards to such business start-up issues was not fully realized in the initial design of CREATOUR, and is an explicit point of attention in plans for future continuation.

CREATOUR's 40 pilot projects are independently designed, implemented, and managed across the four regions the project currently covers. In the context of limited knowledge of creative tourism models in small communities and rural areas, the creative tourism development approaches taken by the pilots – the strategies they have chosen to pursue in these extra-metropolitan areas – are providing important insights into entrepreneurial decision-making, capacities, and the challenges they are facing. Given the nature of the learning-by-experimenting nature of the project, the implementation of the offers is conducted in a manner in which feasible business models, often mixing creative tourism with other activities, are being developed through the practice itself. In a scan of the approaches the pilots are pursuing, six general patterns or models can be observed:

1. Stand-alone offers, repeated

The first, most basic approach has been to develop a small set of workshops or activities, and to offer the same workshop over time. This is appropriate to a start-up situation focusing on a few distinctive offers, and improving their quality through repeat implementation. It also provides a consistency in which a particular location becomes known for these offers, based on cultural or natural features that are central to a locale. For example, the pottery workshops offered at the "Casa do Barro" operated by the local municipality, Reguengos de Monsaraz, provide a do-it-yourself activity and active dimension to augment the interpretation and historical information presented at the venue. Variations in activities regarding pottery-making and decorating clay pottery in the Alentejo style are offered, but always with these activities central. Similarly, the traditional salt-making/collecting workshops developed by Odiana, a regional development association, in Castro Marim (Algarve region) bring a new dimension to a traditional (and still active) activity in the area, offering visitors opportunities to participate in the artisanal collection of *flor de sal* and in a saline spa and reinforcing these traditions and activities with this place.

A variation on this approach has been the development of kits, developed for families to take on self-guided creative adventures in a certain locale. For example, Vagar Walking Tours has developed the creative travel initiative "Play Évora," which features a kit for the whole family to discover Évora (Alentejo region) from a playful and artistic point of view (e.g., through games, drawing and creative writing with interaction with locals). In the Algarve region, the Centro Ciência Viva do Algarve (public agency for bringing science to the public) and the Association of Teachers of Mathematics have teamed up to develop the "Trails that Count" project, featuring a kit that guides children and youth (visiting with their families) through walking trails designed for families to explore the city of Faro in a relaxed way, observing and interacting with details that hint at the most varied areas of knowledge (science, art, history, etc.) and stimulating creativity at the same time. The walking routes draw renewed attention to the city as a place of learning and a place of discovery through challenges that combine science and culture. Both projects promote family interaction and creative informal learning to build knowledge and produce *in situ* memories.

2. *Series of related events and workshops*

In some cases, pilots have focused on traditional processes relating to a particular material like linen or wool, and have developed a series of related events and workshops that highlight different dimensions in the processing of these materials as they are related to a particular locale. This approach enables a variety of related activities to be branded, enabling a wider recognition of an initiative, while avoid repetition of the same activity too often. Cyclical activities can be coordinated with the seasons, while others can be offered in other temporal arrangements. This approach has been observed with individual entrepreneurs establishing their identity and scope of interest and work. For example, LOOM New.Tradition developed a series of workshops relating to sustainable dying and cloth-making, including traditional loom-weaving in the Alentejo, within an interest in promoting slow fashion and the knowledge of how clothes are made. VERde NOVO's focus on the linen Craft of Cerva and Limões, in the Norte region, has developed workshops on learning to weave linen, organized participatory gatherings to sow linen in the field and share outdoor meals, and created an exhibition and illustrated book about the linen traditions and the women who keep it alive. Due to the need for different skills to be incorporated within these different activities, these series are often related to the development of localized networks.

3. *Localized networks*

Most frequently observed among municipalities and regional development associations, but also among some independent entrepreneurs, the pilot initiative is explicitly the development and fostering of a localized network of artisans, artists, traditional gastronomic practitioners, and other creators to offer a range of different types of workshops and creative activities, all rooted in the locality in some way. This approach places the organizer in a facilitator, catalyst, and promoter role, while the workshops themselves are delivered by members of the local network. As an example, the municipality of Loulé has established a vibrant network related to traditional techniques and crafts, branded within the municipal initiative "Loulé Criativo." For CREATOUR, localized networks were also catalyzed by the municipality of Beja ("Beja Criarte") and by a number of "artisan entrepreneur–mediators," a role in which an independent entrepreneur establishes a network of traditional artisans in their area and to organize and mediate their involvement in creative tourism, offering organizational, promotional, and logistical assistance while the artisans bring the skills and cultural knowledge. An analysis of the nuances of the operations of these artisan entrepreneur–mediators suggests that high levels of social embeddedness within the local rural communities are important in order for these neo-rural entrepreneurs to attain their goals (Bakas, Duxbury, and Castro, 2018).

4. *Small-scale festivals*

A key issue for creative tourism activities organized in rural areas is visibility, and the development of distinct small-scale festivals that prioritize participatory, creative activity and immersive experiences seems to provide a way to gain this profile. These small-scale, locally rooted festivals offer creative travelers a critical mass of attractive creative activities, with marketing visibility and a predictable repeatability that can foster annual repeat participants. For example, Encontrarte Amares is a biannual festival held in and around the town of Amares (Norte region) co-organized by the municipality of Amares in partnership with ARA – Artistic Residencies Amares. The multidimensional festival aims to connect contemporary art expression with the traditional heritage of the region of Minho. Promoting an environment of experimentation, participation, gathering, active contemplation, and freedom of thought, the four-day event visual arts activities and exhibitions, animated cinema, performing arts, radio, a series of discussions and theoretical reflection, artistic residencies, competitions, and educational activities. In the Centro

region, 180 Creative Camp, jointly organized by the municipality of Abrantes and Canal 180, develops a week-long programme where international young creators come together for a program of workshops, concerts, conferences, urban interventions, and discovery of the small-city and surrounding rural territory. In the remote northeast of the country, two cultural heritage foundations – the Mirandese donkey and the Mirandese bagpipe – propel the itinerant "L Burro i L Gueiteiro" Festival, organized by Galandum Galundaina. During the afternoons of this five-day festival, there are workshops on themes as diverse as the Mirandese language, the construction of traditional instruments, bagpipe and pastoral flute, workshops with the theme of the Asinine breed, the traditional dance – "Pauliteiros," as well as traditional percussion.

5. Accommodations+

In some cases, the CREATOUR pilot organization manages a site that offers accommodations to travelers, and in this setting has developed a variety of workshops (and one small-scale festival) in which participants stay at the site. Although this has led to hotel-specific creative tourism weekend packages in other countries (e.g., Austria), the way in which this complementarity is evident among the CREATOUR pilots derives more from a culture-led vision featuring artistic residencies. For example, situated on a biodynamic farm offering cabins for visitors, the association Domínio Vale do Mondego has launched the initiative Mondego Art Valley (Centro region) to initiate, organize, develop, and implement activities and projects in the area of art and culture, biodynamic agriculture, education and training, and nature and ecology – including artistic residencies and workshops and the annual mid-summer Estival creative festival. VIC – Aveiro Arts House, located in the center of Aveiro (Centro region), is a five-story building that was the residence of the artist Vasco Branco (1919-2014) and is filled with works of art and period furniture. Today it contains: a local themed lodging space, dedicated to the arts; an artistic residence and co-work space; a cultural space with a small auditorium and a gallery, where cultural events and training events take place. Quickly becoming a cultural hub of the city, the synergy between travellers seeking alternative accommodations in this building, invited artists in residencies, and the various contemporary artistic workshops offered by these artists (and others in the community) is being fostered as the business model evolves.

6. Framework for inclusive community development

A variation of building localized networks inspired by community-based tourism initiatives, we also witness the development of a multifaceted creative tourism initiative in while a major focus of attention is on the community itself. In various ways we see echoes of these approaches among many of the pilots, which have been encouraged by the project, but it is most clearly and centrally expressed in MosaicoLab.pt. Guided by values of inclusion and diverse partnerships, MosaicoLab.pt is using creative tourism as a catalyst for deepening local knowledge and appreciation of the rich Roman mosaic intact heritage found in the region of Conímbriga e Sicó (Centro region), aiming to propel informed holistic development in which the cultural heritage resources of the place provide an inspiration and foundation for diverse future activities. Particular attention has been focused on conveying this knowledge to local children and youth so that they may become the future stewards and interpreters of these resources for future visitors, and perhaps develop other initiatives.

Beyond these six approaches, a number of other initiatives are taking root currently, characterized so far by vibrant experimentation and the invention of new hybrid approaches to creative travel and learning about (and with) the people and place visited. For example, some pilots are mixing heritage tours with creative regional gastronomy lessons (Eating Algarve Food Tours), fostering knowledge and appreciation of nature through independent exploration and creative activities for families and children (Espírito da Terra & Co.), and combining traditional craft and environmental concerns (MARCA – ADL's workshop on ceramics for plant propagation).

The approaches and the experimentation underway among the CREATOUR pilots have demonstrated the importance of contextualizing creative tourism offers within a broader "constellation" of activities, interests, and passions. These affiliated activities are diverse, creatively arranged, and often develop organically over time. The community-rootedness of the initiatives is stressed, helping to ensure the activities are developed in close connection with the interests of local residents, providing a local authenticity and meaningfulness that is increasingly sought out by creative travellers. As mentioned earlier, CREATOUR envisions creative tourism as an experience and meeting point featuring active participation, creative self-expression, learning, and meaningful connection between local residents and visitors. While there is a quality of production that can be planned and developed, the essence of the offer

and the experience is in the live exchanges that occur within these activities.

Beyond a tourism perspective, however, creative tourism activities also provide for the development of a variety of opportunities to be inspired by and to articulate the specificities of a place through creative and innovative methods. It presents a means for activating cultural heritage(s) in diverse manners, bringing life and catalyzing new inspirations from tangible and intangible resources of a place. From this more expansive viewpoint, creative tourism can be viewed as a hybrid meeting place between a variety of means of cultural production and options for providing an "active and creative" tourism experience. In this duality, the entrepreneurial potential of creative tourism can bridge the culture and tourism domains and offer new insights as well as innovative integrated and hybrid approaches to catalyzing the cultural resources of a place and embracing travel as meaningful exchange and interaction. Bringing together local knowledge, skills, and understanding with visitors' outside perspectives and other capacities has the potential to spark new ideas and ways of thinking that can enrich the participants in an activity and be fed into consequential activities and actions.

Lessons Learned and Pathways Forward

The CREATOUR project embodies an open approach to locally important ideas, inspirations, and collaborative explorations. We contend that this is an appropriate guiding strategy in the context of a creative experiment and the desire to foster new and different, to diversify current offers, to surprise, and to be flexible and innovative in development trajectories. However, it also carries the risk of any production-led (or supply-led) model. As Raymond (2007) has discussed, this risk concerns the degree of "take up" of the offers: "Will anyone be interested in what we want to offer?" We are also reminded of the ongoing threat of "serial reproduction" in cultural tourism (Richards and Wilson, 2006) and the competitive need to offer distinctiveness within a very crowded global marketplace. For example, how can one watercolour painting course distinguish itself from other similar courses?

As a result of such questions, it increasingly appears that the *place* in which the activities are set, from which they are derived or inspired, and which surrounds and contextualizes the experiences is a key distinguishing factor – and this is especially important in smaller

communities and rural areas. Many of the locations where the pilots are found are not typically on a "tourist route”; however, in the face of ever-more-crowded urban centres and a desire for some travelers to seek out "lesser known” and "less crowded” locations – coupled with the capacity for distinctive and unique experiences to draw these potential visitors – this can be an advantage. However, this brings extra pressure to be visible and engage these potential visitors, and thus to enhance marketing and communications knowledge and capacities. It also emphasizes the necessity of fully enrooting the activity in the essence and the distinctive elements of the place.

Consequently, for creative tourism development projects based in smaller cities and rural areas, CREATOUR recommends the following:
 - *Know who you are.* Define your own uniqueness, enrooted in a particular place. From this base, define with precision what you have to offer. Remember the importance of the social experiences and milieu on site within the creative tourism activity.
 - *Envision your participants.* Identify your niche interest groups, with precision, and carefully develop a communication strategy for each group.
 - *Know your territory.* Scan/map the resources and benchmark the activities offered in your surrounding area. What is offered for local residents? And for visitors? How are they provided? Look at both cultural and creative tourism offers as well as nature, well-being, and gastronomic resources that could align with your offers.
 - *Create your own collaboration network.* Unite with others and combine diverse skills and competences. Create spaces for informal communications and networking. Share information—foster idea generation, discussion, knowledge-building, and joint activities.
 - *Learn from others' experiences.* You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Look at interesting initiatives internationally and adapt great ideas that may be appropriate to your place. Look also at unsuccessful projects and the lessons learned from these experiences. (Duxbury, Silva, & Castro, forthcoming in 2019)

An important dimension of CREATOUR is ongoing communication among researchers and pilots, and a desire to incorporate the experience-based knowledge and learning that occurs "on the front lines” within the research process. At twice-annual regional IdeaLabs, the pilots and in-region researchers gather together to discuss the pilot projects' progression and issues and to discuss avenues for addressing these

challenges and moving forward. In these meetings, the pilots have shared their processes and product designs, recounted their successes and surprises, and articulated the main problems they are facing and the areas in which more support and attention is needed. As a synthesis of one of the exercises carried out with the pilots in the spring of 2018, an overview of some of the topics that have been top-of-mind for the pilots is presented in Figure 2.

In many ways, the topics listed are similar to the subjects of any entrepreneurial start-up initiative. However, in the case of creative tourism, little of these topics have been documented to date. Furthermore, if they exist they are scattered and challenging to find, or not in accessible formats. We have organized annual international conferences to bring together international practitioners and researchers, including members of our international advisory board, and have aimed to programme sessions with useful topics for the pilots. However, we have learned that this is only part of the answer and more dedicated resources are also required to inform this work.

Figure 2: *Key topics that were of top-of-mind among CREATOUR pilots, May 2018*
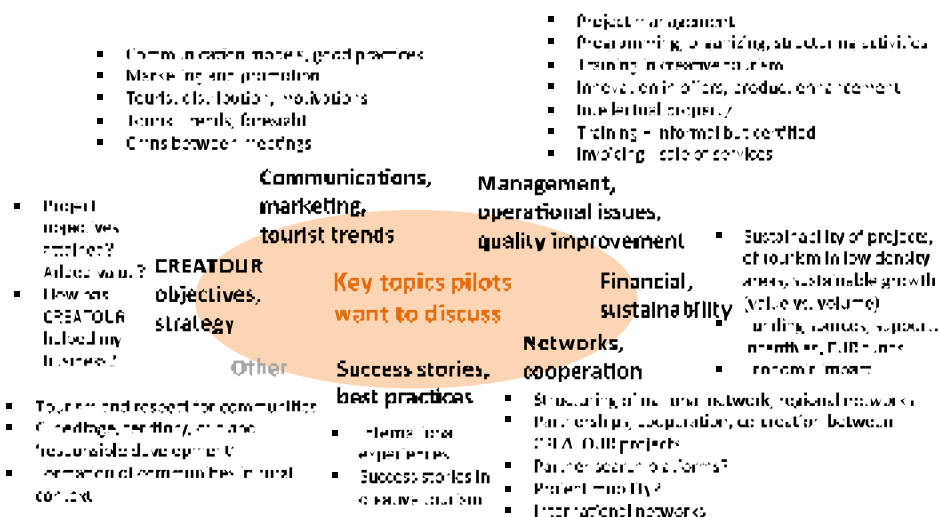
Source: *Author*

Overall, the pilots' top concerns have been related to communication and promotion, as well as longer-term sustainable operating/business models. As a new and "side" activity for the pilot organizations, the amount of

time and energy they are able to dedicate to these new initiatives varies among the pilots. The time and effort they are able to dedicate to background market research, development and design, and planning efforts is limited. This overarching condition constrains the rate of development of the pilots, hinders the degree to which they can plan and schedule ahead, and limits the pace at which initiatives can be offered and diversified. Uncertainty tends to inhibit these processes further. While guidance is offered through the IdeaLabs, we have realized that further project mentoring and business planning support, integrated within the project, would be an asset for the future.

Who is the creative tourist? The issue of how to attract visitor-participants is linked closely with effectively defining, reaching, and engaging the envisioned creative travellers. Anecdotally, there is a wide range of types of creative travellers, although this is a significant gap in the research literature (Duxbury and Richards, 2019b) and not a part of standard tourism surveys and typologies. This information did not previously exist and a key aspect of the CREATOUR project is the implementation of participant questionnaires in all pilot activities. However, the compilation, data input, checking, and analysis processes for this data take time. But this is only one dimension of addressing the knowledge gap. Significant attention to possible visitor-types and markets, and how to contact them, is imperative. This plays out at multiple levels: The distinctiveness of each offer requires that research and marketing is conducted at the level of each initiative and tailored to niche interest groups as well as tourism agents, which must be supported by research and centralized communications by the broader network/project.

At the same time, in examining the development of the pilots and the ways in which they are enrooted in their place, we are reminded that small places can only accommodate limited numbers of visitors and developments should be incremental with all dimensions and impacts considered. Pragmatic questions about the operational capacity of each pilot and the carrying capacity of the small communities in which they are embedded must be top of mind. Sustainable change typically must be slowly enrooted into an environment. Small-scale, limited numbers of initiatives may be most appropriate in particular contexts.

As a result of these discussions with our pilots, and the realization that a broader array of competences must be brought together to meaningfully assist such initiatives, we are in the process of developing an international

book, directed towards practitioners and local agencies who may be interested in fostering creative tourism, that can bring together international expertise – academic and practitioners – to help inform the next generation of initiatives. Some of the CREATOUR pilots will be asked to contribute their experiences and insights as part of this, along with other practitioner-colleagues located internationally. Coupled with this, we will be launching a "CREATOUR International" network to encourage awareness and knowledge exchange among small-scale creative tourism developers and interested researchers and to provide a framework for future conferences and other online learning and knowledge-sharing initiatives. We encourage anyone who is interested in participating in this network to contact us at creatour@ces.uc.pt.

Conclusion

At its core, creative tourism involves active learning experiences enabling creative self-expression and skill development. An essential feature in this process is the firm link of creativity to place and its embeddedness in the local milieu, enabling visitors to immerse themselves within the local culture, meaningfully interact, and actively create with local trainers/guides and other local residents.

With the variety of creative tourism activities that can be developed, and broader packages designed around them, a diverse array of entrepreneurial opportunities can be linked to creative tourism. Beyond individual business initiatives however, creative tourism promises the possibility of generating economic and social added value to a region, inclusive modes of development, and a new perspective from which to re-envision ways to induce and augment the vitality of local cultural (and other) resources, both tangible and intangible.

CREATOUR is an experiment to integrate research and application to catalyze a network of creative tourism initiatives located in small cities and rural areas across four regions of mainland Portugal. As a first step, the project is finding that creative tourism appears to be feasible in these regions, and can help bridge the cultural and tourism sectors for local and regional benefit. We remain confident in the CREATOUR vision of creative tourism centred on active creative activity encouraging personal self-expression and interaction between visitors and local residents, inspired by local endogenous resources (place and people), and designed and implemented by local residents for community benefit. It is a solid

base from which to build alternate, diversified tourism offers and to accentuate and activate local cultural resources and distinctiveness for future development. The enrootedness of the creative tourism activities, the ways in which they based in and pull from the talents and cultures of residents, and their relations with the place in which they live are key strategic assets.

However, there are also important challenges that must be addressed, linked to the start-up nature of the initiatives, a limited knowledge-base to support the field, issues of distance and remoteness, and the small-scale and niche nature of the offers which produces challenges for designing sustainable business models and requires significant marketing and communication attention. The challenges of start-up enterprises – especially those located in smaller communities and rural areas – are crucial to acknowledge and address. Enabling capacity building processes for start-up activities and catalyzing networking dynamics for knowledge sharing and partnerships is foundational, especially for geographically dispersed initiatives. It is also essential to plan for the time necessary for start-up activities to be designed, planned, and implemented – a process that is lengthened when the development process includes the participative involvement of local community organizations and actors. Network development – locally, regionally, or nationally – also requires time for meeting, interacting, learning together, trust-building, and then collectively taking action(s).

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