

Article

Creative Tourism Development Models towards Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism

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Abstract: Creative tourism is a relatively new field of research with most attention directed to creative tourism activities in large cities. Little research has been conducted on creative tourism development strategies in extra-metropolitan contexts. The CREATOUR project aimed to improve understanding of the processes (under different conditions and situations) through which creative tourism activities can be developed, implemented, and made sustainable. This article reports on a national analysis of approaches developed by the project's participating organizations to offer creative tourism initiatives. At an organizational level, we found five main models: Stand-alone offers, repeated; series of creative activities and other initiatives under a common theme; localized networks for creative tourism; small-scale festivals that include creative tourism activities; and creative accommodations. At a broader community level, creative tourism initiatives can inspire new ideas and avenues of activity and contribute to cultural vitality and potential regeneration dynamics through reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity, instigating flows and connections between the locale and the external, and serving as platforms for local collaboration, exchange, and development. In the time of COVID-19, enhancing connections with other organizations locally and regionally can contribute to wider initiatives and the development of community-based regeneration strategies.

Keywords: creative tourism; local/regional development; Portugal; sustainable tourism; cultural heritage; regenerative tourism



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1. Introduction

Creative tourism can be described as a reaction to a growing “mass cultural tourism” mixed with the growing desire of travelers 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 [1], an original definition by Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond in 2000 [2] continues to be a touchstone for the field: “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 centered on 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 on and pull from the talents and cultures of residents and their relations with the place in which they live.

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 brought together teams in five research centers and 40 participating organizations (“pilots”) 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). Each of the 40 pilot initiatives was conceived, designed, implemented, and managed locally, inspired by and embedded within its local context, while also being networked nationally. This article reports on a national analysis of the approaches developed by the project’s participant organizations to offer creative tourism initiatives.

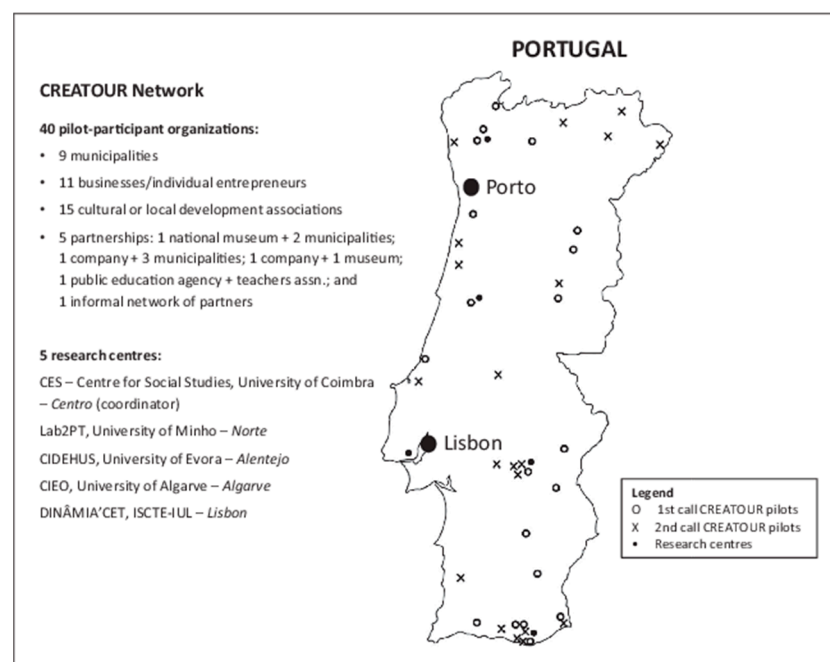


Figure 1. Locations of CREATOUR pilots and research centers in mainland Portugal.

We observed that the development approaches, research findings, and insights that were generated within the CREATOUR project align with contemporary “alternative tourism” approaches in the context of community-driven tourism and local sustainable development. With this broader framework in mind, this article reports on the creative tourism models that were developed within the CREATOUR project and considers how creative tourism can be a tool for regenerative tourism in small cities and rural areas.

This article begins by discussing the transition from (un)sustainable to regenerative tourism, which contextualizes our analysis of creative tourism models. It then provides an overview of the CREATOUR project, and presents the five organizing models that emerged through practice, showing how creative tourism initiatives are intertwined with other activities. From this analysis, we consider the key roles and dynamics of each creative tourism model in terms of how each links to the broader community in which it is situated. We then discuss how creative tourism can contribute to local community vitality and potential regeneration dynamics.

2. (Un)sustainable to Regenerative Tourism

As efforts are being made to promote more sustainable tourism development models worldwide, the concept of following a de-growth paradigm [3] is considered beneficial

in reducing tourism impacts. In this context, creative tourism can be a pathway for developing small-scale and more beneficial tourism paradigms in which the specificities of place, cultural sustainability, social inclusion, and improving local quality of life through “alternate” tourism trajectories are highlighted [4]. This approach aligns with several of the Sustainable Development Goals [5], such as to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (no. 11) and to “ensure sustainable consumption and production” (no. 12), within which an explicit target on tourism (12.b) focuses on monitoring the sustainable development impacts in regard to “sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products” (emphasis added).

Creative tourism as defined in the CREATOUR project also aligns with the definition of sustainable cultural tourism written by the Sustainable Cultural Tourism Open Method of Coordination (OMC) working group for the European Union. The OMC defined sustainable cultural tourism as “the integrated management of cultural heritage and tourism activities in conjunction with the local community, creating social, environmental and economic benefits for all stakeholders in order to achieve tangible and intangible cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development” [6] (p. 8). The OMC notes that if tourism is to contribute to sustainable development, it must be “economically viable, environmentally sensitive and culturally appropriate” [6] (p. 23). In the process of achieving sustainable cultural tourism, cultural heritage and communities are placed at the center of decision-making processes regarding the management of intangible and tangible cultural heritage with tourism activity, which necessitates involving stakeholders and local communities to ensure “benefits accrue to both the cultural heritage asset and the people” [6] (p. 7). The overall focus is managing assets responsibly for tourism purposes, with the objective to ensure “good conservation practice along with authentic interpretation, while at the same time supporting the local economy” [6] (p. 7). Within this context, the EU working group advises new sustainable cultural tourism offers to emphasize concepts such as “slow” tourism, “authenticity”, “storytelling”, “well-being”, and “contact with locals”.

In 2020, the extreme downturn of travel and tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a time to pause and reflect, and has reinforced the need to think about new models and approaches when tourism re-emerges. For example, a UNESCO-organized debate in late September 2020 discussed how this downturn “can be used to develop new models and approaches for a resilient and sustainable tourism recovery that supports communities, creates jobs, promotes culture, and protects heritage and its transmission” with experts calling for “inclusive and regenerative tourism” as countries re-build and strengthen their tourism efforts post-COVID-19 [7].

This highlights how, among the new avenues of research and practice towards sustainability in tourism, a new concept has emerged: Regenerative tourism. From this perspective, the focus is not on the sustainability of tourism *per se* but on the ways in which tourism can be a tool for local well-being, revitalization, and sustainability. It aligns with integrated local development approaches while focusing on micro-scale regeneration initiatives rather than “large-scale” regeneration plans.

Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainable tourism to focus on “giving back” and contributing to the proactive regeneration of communities, cultures, heritage, places, landscapes, and so forth. Regenerative tourism approaches aim to push beyond traditional sustainable approaches: “The old ways are still focused on reducing the negative impact of human activity on the planet. Regenerative approaches that are systems based and align cultural and natural patterns are viewed as providing a way forward and are aimed at creating positive outcomes, not just ‘doing less damage’” [8] (p. 66), cf. [9–11].

Operationally, regenerative approaches acknowledge the existence of new alternative or post-capitalism economies/markets that focus beyond growth and profit. Viewing tourism activities as more than tourism “business as usual”, regenerative tourism approaches may “deconstruct economic practices in tourism” [12] (p. 507) and opt for holistic development over economic growth: “Faced with an uncertain future, destinations that appear to be in a less disadvantaged, more resilient, position are those that have a more

diversified offer, are less dependent on a particular market and have opted for qualitative rather than quantitative criteria (i.e., development instead of growth)" [13] (p. 692).

In this context, inclusive community involvement plays a crucial role in emphasizing and understanding the uniqueness of each place and articulating the narratives emerging from local history and community stories. Multi-sectoral community engagement encourages deep sharing of values and aspirations, facilitates dialogue between different actors and sectors, and contributes to fostering a higher sense of community, ownership, and community empowerment that will prevail over time. As Sisa Ntshona, the CEO of South African Tourism, has stated, "When people are excluded, they destroy. When they are included, they protect" [7]. As the project becomes the community's plan, "the community is invested in its ongoing success" [8] (p. 67). In this process, the community's well-being becomes highlighted and can encourage strategies akin to co-competition, the practices of social economy actors, and the development of local collaborative networks.

From this perspective, we see two key contexts in which regenerative tourism can be of high value: (1) the regeneration of touristic destinations which have suffered from mass tourism (and tackling the negative impacts of it), and (2) tourism as a way to regenerate a marginalized landscape, community, or place that is not necessarily a tourist destination but has the potential for to become one. However, we believe that generative or regenerative approaches can be valuable additions to other tourism development contexts. In all cases, these approaches do not work without a full commitment of decision-makers and local agents regarding a local development strategy which prevents the growth of tourism to unsustainable levels, and explicitly considers the well-being of the local community. Next, we describe the methods used to investigate the creative tourism development models and how they link to local communities.

3. Methods

This article presents the results of a national-scale macro-analysis of the general approaches and organizing models adopted among the participating organizations developing 40 pilot projects within the research-and-application project CREATOUR (described in the next section) and a reflexive analysis of these models' community impacts in the context of regenerative tourism. The models emerged from the decisions and strategies of the practitioners within the project. Thus, the study's main informants were the participating organizations, using researchers' perspectives to interpret the data provided by representatives of the participating organizations. While we acknowledge that in any process of knowledge co-creation, there exists a certain amount of interpretative error, in this analysis we have aimed to accurately understand and represent the participant organizations' voices and intentions. Dialogues among the researchers during the production of this article assisted in triangulating perspectives and understandings of each pilot project's intent, trajectory, and categorization.

The sources of data used to examine and profile these approaches include the original proposals submitted to CREATOUR in order to be considered and selected as participants in the CREATOUR project, materials developed by the participating organizations to promote their creative tourism initiatives (e.g., posters, brochures, and related items), observational field notes from researchers' site-visits to the participating organizations' pilot projects (on-site visits to creative tourism pilot-projects offered moments for participant observation, documentation, and in situ interviews with the organizers), and interviews and other discussions with representatives of the participating organizations, individually and as part of collective discussions within IdeaLab meetings that occurred three times each year. The initial applications provided an initial basis for the classification of the creative tourism organizing models presented in this article, informed as well by the iterative processes of implementation and reflection that unfolded within the project. At twice-annual regional IdeaLabs, the pilots and in-region researchers gathered 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 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 was needed. An annual national IdeaLab brought all participating organizations together to build connections, assess developments with the pilot projects, and learn from each other's experiences.

The analysis of this data occurred in three phases. In a first phase, this data was brought together and considered in a joint reflexive exercise conducted by the authors of this article (who had participated as full-time researchers in the project's national coordinating research team) to identify patterns of activity development and organization among the diverse array of pilot projects designed and implemented within CREATOUR. Understanding reflexivity as an interpersonal process through which a person considers the relational and inter-subjective processes they are involved in, gives new meaning to the processes, and recognizes the active role they assumed in guiding events [14,15], the authors focused on the situated and negotiated nature of the meanings and trajectories of action created by CREATOUR's participating organizations as they moved from the inception of their ideas for creative tourism activities; to planning, testing, and implementation; and then to reflecting on the implementation experiences. From this exercise, five main models emerged, and each of the pilot projects was organized into these categories.

In a second phase of analysis, we outlined the key dimensions and consequent implications of each model for the wider community in which it is embedded. This analysis was conducted through individually identifying and thinking through the main features of each model in terms of their potential wider effects and then engaging in a collaborative reflexive process of discussion that spanned six online co-writing sessions. Finally, in a third phase of analysis, these creative tourism approaches and the main lines of community impact were considered within conceptual frameworks regarding sustainable cultural tourism and regenerative tourism, which were used to further reflect upon these models and their wider implications.

4. CREATOUR

Bridging culture/heritage, tourism, and local development, CREATOUR: Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas was a 44-month (2016–2020) research-and-application project that developed an integrated approach to creative tourism development in small cities and rural areas across Portugal. The project involved five research centers (Centre of Social Studies [CES] at the University of Coimbra, the overall project coordinator; the Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies [DINÂMIA'CET] at ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de Lisboa; the Laboratory of Landscapes, Heritage and Territory [Lab2PT] at the University of Minho; the Research Centre for Spatial and Organizational Dynamics [CIEO] at the University of the Algarve; and the Interdisciplinary Centre for History, Cultures and Societies [CIDEHUS] at the University of Évora) and 40 pilot projects that were independently designed, implemented, and managed by participating organizations across four regions. It was 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 [16].

In the context of limited knowledge of creative tourism models in small communities and rural areas, these participating organizations collaborated as co-researchers of creative tourism development approaches and challenges in extra-metropolitan areas, providing "front-line" knowledge and insights. The project's research examined and reflected 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, CREATOUR nurtured creative tourism offers in small cities and rural areas in Portugal, informed and learned from their development, and linked the participating organizations with each other through the development of a national network. Ultimately,

the project aimed 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 participating communities.

The CREATOUR project took 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 was 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.

The pilots were selected through two national open calls, with ten pilot projects selected in each region: Norte, Centro, Alentejo, and Algarve. Overall, the range of pilot projects selected aimed to include a wide diversity of approaches, activities, organizational types, and geographic coverage. The organizations 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 (see Figure 1).

The pilot projects were inspired by features of their place, including nature, the history of the place, local heritage, and landscape, as well as forms of expression such as traditional crafts, music, contemporary art forms, and local/regional gastronomy. The creative tourism activities offered aimed to 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 . . . This place-sensitive development process served to connect creativity to place and create genuine, immersive, and creative experiences” [17] (p. 297).

5. Creative Tourism in Extra-Metropolitan Areas: Emergent Models

Many of the prominent promoters of creative tourism in its earlier years were large cities, with some researchers (e.g., [18]) arguing that only larger cities can benefit from the concept. Nevertheless, creative tourism initiatives can increasingly be found in smaller places and rural areas. 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.

While over the past decade, the scope of activities incorporated within the concept of creative tourism has expanded. Internationally, creative tourism projects have been developed by public agencies and municipalities, private companies, non-governmental organizations, destination marketing organizations, and public–private partnerships [19,20]. This diversity of initiatives complicates our understanding of how these projects are operated, and the presentation and marketing of creative tourism as discrete activities tends to invisibilize broader business planning frameworks that may be necessary to guide the development of these offers.

There are continuing gaps in our knowledge of the business aspects of these activities, including sustainable operational models and strategies [1]. Greater knowledge is needed about creative tourism operational models to guide the development of effective creative tourism projects in local communities [21] and what elements favor the collective work of stakeholders in the development of creative tourism [22]. Within the various development models, the intermediation role of creative suppliers and cooperation networks seems to be increasingly important, such as artisan entrepreneur-mediators who connect artisans to creative tourism [23] and small businesses associations and collaboration networks among diverse stakeholders [24].

CREATOUR's pilot projects were independently and locally designed, implemented, and managed across the four regions the project covered. The creative tourism development approaches taken by these organizations in their extra-metropolitan contexts provided important insights into their in situ ingenuity, capacities, resources, and the challenges they face. Given the nature of the learning-by-experimenting character of the CREATOUR project, the implementation of the offers was conducted in a manner in which feasible business models were developed through the practice itself, often by mixing creative tourism with other activities.

Among the 40 CREATOUR pilot projects, we recognized five main models in the field which represent the ways the participating organizations chose to structure their creative tourism projects (see Table 1). While we have categorized the models of the design of the activities offered, they may overlap and can evolve over time.

Table 1. CREATOUR pilot projects by type of development model.

Development Models	Pilot Entities (Participating Organizations)	Pilot Projects	Region
Stand-alone offers, repeated	Associação de Desenvolvimento da Região do Alto Tâmega (ADRAT)	Revitalizing Vilar de Nantes Black Pottery	Norte
	Associação Ruralidades e Memórias	Tourism 3B	Centro
	Centro Ciência Viva do Algarve/Núcleo do Algarve da Associação de Professores de Matemática	Routes that count	Algarve
	Municipality of Bragança	“Cá se fazem cuscos”: Homemade couscous workshop	Norte
	Municipality of Mértola	Creative Walks	Alentejo
	Municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz	Casa do Barro [House of Clay]	Alentejo
	VAGAR Walking Tours, Lda	Play Évora	Alentejo
Series of creative activities and other initiatives under the same theme	Associação Back Up	AlGharb.Come-from the sea to the heritage	Algarve
	Associação Luzlinar	Campus Jardim Das Pedras	Centro
	Associação MosaicoLab.pt	Mosaico—Conímbriga e Sicó	Centro
	Atelier João Cutileiro	Pedra+	Alentejo
	Centro de Estudos de Cultura, História, Artes e Patrimónios (CECHAP)	Marble Route of the Estremoz Anticlinal	Alentejo
	Desteque—Associação de Desenvolvimento da Terra Quente Transmontana	Unmasking the Careto through the thread of the costume: Weaving and tinwork workshops	Norte
	Destino Caldas	Caldas Creative Tourism	Centro
	Eating Algarve Food Tours	Food and Cultural Tour	Algarve
	Espírito da Terra & Co	3Cs—Colher, Caminhar, Criar [Harvest, Walk, Create]	Algarve
	LRB—Investimentos e Consultoria, Lda/Municipalities of Boticas, Guimarães and Montalegre	Creative Tourism in Augmented Reality	Norte
	Municipality of Esposende	The Art of Reed	Norte
	Nova Tradição	New Tradition: Craft-based textile workshops	Alentejo
	Tecitex (New Hand Lab)/Museu de Lanifícios da Universidade da Beira Interior	Coolwool: Creative Weekend at Covilhã	Centro

Table 1. Cont.

Development Models	Pilot Entities (Participating Organizations)	Pilot Projects	Region
Localized networks for creative tourism	Tertúlia Algarvia	Algarve Cooking Vacations	Algarve
	VERde NOVO	“Linho de Cerva e Limões”: Weaving the future	Norte
	Associação de Desenvolvimento das Regiões do Parque Nacional da Peneda-Gerês (ADERE-PG)	Creative Experiences with Sense(s)	Norte
	Associação In loco	MEDSouth	Algarve
	Barroca, produtos culturais e turísticos	Tempero	Algarve
	CACO Associação de Artesãos do Concelho de Odemira	Mãos De Cá	Alentejo
	Genuino Alentejo	Portugal’s Remarkable Tourist Experiences	Alentejo
	MARCA Associação de Desenvolvimento Local	Saídas de Mestre	Alentejo
	Municipality of Beja	Beja Experience	Alentejo
	Municipality of Loulé	Loulé Criativo	Algarve
	Municipality of São João da Madeira	Creative Industrial Tourism	Norte
	Odiana—Associação para o Desenvolvimento do Baixo Guadiana	Traditional Knowledge Workshops	Algarve
	PROACTIVETUR	Creative Experiences Program	Algarve
	Quico—Turismo, Lda.	Nazaré Criativa	Centro
	Small-scale festivals that include creative tourism activities	Associação Dominio Vale do Mondego	Mondego Art Valley (Estival Festival)
Galandum Galundaina Associação Cultural		“L Burro i L Gueiteiro” Festival	Norte
Municipality of Abrantes		180 Creative Camp Abrantes	Centro
Municipality of Amares		ARA—Artistic Residencies Amares: Co-creation Project (held within the Encontrarte festival)	Norte
Creative accommodations	ADXTUR—Agência para o Desenvolvimento Turístico das Aldeias do Xisto	Schist Villages	Centro
	Associação Dominio Vale do Mondego	Mondego Art Valley	Centro
	VIC//Aveiro Arts House	Ossos do ofício	Centro

Note: Further information on each of these pilot projects is available in a CREATOUR overview booklet [25].

5.1. 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 municipality of 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.

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 “Routes 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.

5.2. Series of Creative Activities and Other Initiatives under a Common Theme

In some cases, organizations 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, Nova Tradição (New Tradition) developed a series of workshops relating to sustainable dyeing 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 flax in the field (and later to harvest the flax) accompanied by shared 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.

5.3. Localized Networks for Creative Tourism

Most frequently observed among municipalities and regional development associations, but also among some independent entrepreneurs, is 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 Experience”) 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 [23].

The regional network of traditional workshops developed by Odiana, a regional development association for the Baixo Guadiana subregion (Algarve region), brings a new dimension to traditional (and still active) activity in the area, offering visitors opportunities to participate in the artisanal collection of *flor de sal*, to accompany a goat shepherd in an on-the-land working experience, and to learn basketry and palm-weaving techniques.

The region's isolation and aging population has led to the disappearance of many secular trades and traditions and it is essential that actions are developed to minimize this decline. The creative tourism activities, developed with a network of local traditional knowers, contribute to the revitalization and promotion of these traditions and ancestral know-how in a dynamic and interactive way.

5.4. Small-Scale Festivals That Include Creative Tourism Activities

A key issue for creative tourism activities organized in small cities and 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, Artistic Residencies Amares (ARA) is a creative tourism initiative within Encontrarte Amares, a biennale festival held in and around the town of Amares (Norte region) organized by the municipality of 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 program 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 (a cultural association). 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.

5.5. Creative 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 some countries, the way in which this complementarity is evident among the CREATOUR pilots derives more from a culture-led vision featuring artistic residencies. Creative tourism workshops are an integrated and complementary dimension of the accommodation service, providing optional activities for visitors as well as contributing to the creative atmosphere of the place. 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 Festival. (This example illustrates the potential interconnections among these approaches.) 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 travelers 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.

Mixing such related initiatives within an organization's portfolio of activities can provide both flexibility and greater stability for the organization.

Overall, the approaches and the experimentation underway among the CREATOUR pilots demonstrated the importance of contextualizing creative tourism offers within a broader "constellation" of activities, interests, and passions. These affiliated activities were diverse, creatively arranged, and often develop organically over time. The community-rootedness of the initiatives was also 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 travelers. As mentioned in the introduction, 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.

6. Creative Tourism Embedded in Extra-Metropolitan Areas: Linking to Community

In this section, we examine and reflect on the key dimensions of each model identified and the consequent implications of each approach for the wider community in which the initiative is embedded. Table 2 summarizes the primary community dynamics/impacts to which each model most directly contributes. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of possible outcomes, but an illustrative list of the main roles the different creative tourism models may play in a wider community development perspective.

Table 2. Summary of main community dynamics/impacts of each creative tourism model.

Creative Tourism Model	Main Community Dynamics/Impact
Stand alone, repeated	Reinforces distinctive element of local identity; Revitalization and expansion of the activity-field
Series of creative activities and other initiatives under a common theme	Reinforces distinctive element of local identity; Revitalization and expansion of the activity-field; Can serve as umbrella for collaborations, associated activities → brand; Cyclical, enables internal variety; Promotes off-season tourism activities
Localized networks for creative tourism	Umbrella for collaborations, associated activities → brand; Cooperation and collaboration among variety of actors is central; Enables even more diversity
Small-scale festivals that include creative tourism activities	Builds visibility/profile for the locale → can become part of its identity; (Periodic) Instigator of flows, connections between locale and external, generating: (a) New influences, perspectives on local culture(s); (b) Expose to "other" approaches; (c) Space of freedom to explore, express, articulate; Can contribute to cultural (re)vitalization
Creative accommodations	Platforms/site for activities, learning, exchanges; (Year-round) Instigator of flows, connections between locales and external; Basic infrastructure to support tourism → point of creation and "vitalization"

Source: Elaborated by authors.

The first two models, "Stand alone, repeated" and "Series of creative activities and other initiatives under a common theme", both have the potential to reinforce distinctive elements of the local identity, and possibly contribute to the recovery and revitalization and of the selected activity-field, helping to save a specific art/craft/tradition from disappearing. These strategies of preserving local tangible and intangible heritage, commonly reinforced

by storytelling, can generate wider socio-cultural and economic impacts in the local community (e.g., fortifying local identity, enhancing a sense of belonging, and diversifying local business). Furthermore, the “Series” model can serve as an umbrella for cooperation and collaboration among different organizations with associated activities, and thus, can function as a brand for the collection of activities, contributing to the development of a web of small-scale related artisanal and other enterprises. With a possible internal organization into cycles, it also allows for internal variety throughout the year and helps to address tourism seasonality.

The third model, “Localized networks for creative tourism”, focuses primarily on its role as an umbrella for cooperation and collaborations, offering an array of activities under an overall brand. In this model, collaboration among variety of actors is central. Compared to the “Series” model, there are no thematic restrictions, so it enables even more diversity among the offers. While most initiatives involve partnerships and collaborations, in this model the development of the umbrella network is primary, with the development of a diversity of individual workshops decentralized in nature. Operationalizing this model typically involves an open (and ongoing) invitation to a wide variety of community actors to participate. What distinguishes this model from the others is the fact that one organization leads the mediation process between the other partners and works as an intermediary among them, encouraging overall development and growth.

The fourth model, “Small-scale festivals that include creative tourism activities”, can heighten visibility and build a profile for the locale in which the festival is situated, and thus (like models one and two), can emerge from a key aspect of its identity or, over time, become a part of its identity. In this way, it may function as a signature event (“*evento âncora*”) that supports and promotes a broader program throughout the year, rooted in active creative participation opportunities. However, its primary influence or community role derives from its function as an instigator of flows and connections between the locale and the external world. As a time-specific event, this role is concentrated or periodic, but may have a year-round influence. As an instigator or proactive agent, such festivals can bring new influences and perspectives on local culture(s), expose local residents to “other” approaches, and create a space of freedom to explore, express, and articulate one’s self-identity as well as generate collective expressions and forms that emerge within the event’s milieu. Attention to conceptual, inspirational, and inter-personal socio-cultural connections with the place in which these events occur can contribute to cultural (re)vitalization.

The fifth model, “Creative accommodations”, provide intentional platforms or sites for activities, learning, and exchanges. As with the fourth model, its primary influence or community role derives from its function as an instigator of flows and connections between the locale and the external world. However, as an ongoing, more permanent site, it can have a stronger year-round influence. This model intentionally re-envisioned and activates what is often viewed as a basic infrastructure to support tourism, accommodations, and develops it into a point of imagination, creation, and “vitalization”.

Among the five creative tourism models identified, their influences on wider community dynamics and development coalesce to highlight three key themes that resonate across them: (1) reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity, (2) instigating flows and connections between the locale and the external, and (3) serving as platforms for local collaboration, exchange, and development (see Table 2). Altogether these dynamics can contribute to the development of a sustainable and regenerative tourism that places high attention on community well-being, holistic development, and cultural vitality and sustainability.

7. Discussion: Creative Tourism as a Regenerative Element

Drawing on the analysis of how creative tourism activities are strategically organized in small city and rural area contexts and the subsequent influence of these models on the communities in which they are attached, this section explores the ways in which creative tourism activities align with and strive towards regeneration. Contextualized by the

concepts of sustainable cultural tourism and regenerative tourism, it examines the potential of creative tourism as a regenerative element in community development processes.

Greg Richards' analysis of case studies of creative tourism and placemaking at different population/geographic scales [26] confirmed that "creative development strategies are . . . heavily influenced by the spatial, economic and cultural context" in which they occur (p. 7). In rural areas and villages, for example, the focus is on "embedded creative resources and networks", with an emphasis on "creative skills" and "local forms of creativity" (p. 7). This aligns with our observations that in extra-metropolitan areas, creative tourism initiatives tend to focus on emphasizing local cultural specificities and identities, distinctive characteristics of place [27], and providing an impulse towards enhancing local cultural vitality and contributing to cultural sustainability [28]. Creative tourism initiatives can inspire new ideas and avenues of activity and contribute to local community vitality and potential regeneration dynamics. They can provide an extension to related initiatives, providing additional ideas and added value for the enterprise as well as the community in which it is embedded.

In the wake of over-extended copying of "creative strategies" and wide-spread economic forces of homogeneity, growing numbers of scholars (e.g., [26,29]) are looking to grassroots, endogenous processes to stimulate sustainable and creative local development. A general shift can be observed towards greater local embedding of development models and more contextualized forms of development (placemaking), including more bottom-up approaches towards co-creating experiences [26,30,31]. Such approaches require "a more relational view of tourism, seeking actors as part of wider networks, and destinations as places" [26] (p. 3) cf. [32]. Among the five creative tourism models identified in this article, three key themes resonate regarding their influence on wider community and development dynamics: (1) reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity, (2) instigating flows and connections between the locale and the external, and (3) serving as platforms for local collaboration, exchange, and development.

Reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity. A key aspect of creative tourism is its connection to the place in which it occurs. Local identity and place distinctiveness are intertwined with the tangible and intangible heritage, local cultures and traditions, narratives and history, landscape, and communities of the locale. In creative tourism, place as a "geographical space that is defined by meanings, sentiments and stories rather than by a set of coordinates" [33] (p. 4) is used as a source of inspiration to develop activities that "infuse the landscape with profoundly personal and localized meanings" [34] (p. 6). Creative tourism embedded in local specificities represents a strategic differentiating factor to provide distinctive and unique offers connected to vulnerable local heritage such as local traditions, cycles of crafts, and so forth [17,27]. The uniqueness and distinctive elements of a place draw visitors to a destination. Investing in culture- and community-based small-scale creative tourism can provide regenerative options for local traditions and local care [35].

Maintaining a community's vitality and local identity over time is linked closely with intentional actions: "Cultures depend on forms of transmission through recovering, reworking, revaluing, reanimating and restructuring the collected and collective heritage of the group. However, this also means that the future of cultural memory and heritage is always precarious. It relies on renewed acts of attention, interest, remembering, preservation, transmission and discussion" [36] (pp. 27,28). These acts rely on individual, organizational, and systemic attention to the vitality and continuance of local cultures and other specificities. Among the operational approaches identified in CREATOUR, the first two models, "Stand alone, repeated" and "Series of creative activities and other initiatives under a common theme", are particularly associated with reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity, with the fourth model, "Small-scale festivals that include creative tourism activities", also potentially contributing to this end.

Instigating flows and connections between the locale and the external. In its broadest sense, tourism is a reciprocal exchange between local residents and visitors. Aligned with this,

creative tourism initiatives can serve as a pivotal point for intercultural knowledge-sharing, exchange, and dialogue. Creative activities stimulate sharing processes that can “articulate a number of aspects relating to one’s attachment to a place and to trigger the sharing of memories of visitors and local residents” [37] (p. 6). Fostering exchanges and meaningful interactions between tourists and locals within creative tourism activities can generate new influences and perspectives on both local and external culture(s), expose participants to “other” approaches, and generate collective expressions and forms that emerge within the activity or milieu.

Inflows of people into a local environment can increase the diversity of ideas within the local knowledge base and, in turn, potentially lead to richer innovation dynamics [38,39]. Local networks and specific forms of embedding play key roles in how these knowledge flows are taken up locally [38]. The creative tourism development models linked to (or embedded within) small-scale festivals and aligned with creative accommodation can play significant roles in strategically positioning the locale internationally and proactively generating these flows.

Serving as platforms for local collaboration, exchange, and development. Creative tourism’s inherent diversity and interdisciplinarity can lead to a participatory and collaborative approach to join forces, build resources, and share know-how among its developers and other local community members. In this way, a creative tourism strategy can be intentionally designed and developed to collectively build community capacity through fostering the exchange of local knowledge and experience and building critical mass. This approach may be crucial in smaller communities and remote places where there is an absence of a solid and strong critical mass like in metropolitan areas. Such creative tourism initiatives can provide an effective management and usage of local resources, and contribute to a lower ecological footprint and a fair and proportional distribution of profits within a community. The participatory engagement of local agents such as artisans, artists, farmers, accommodation, restaurants, and transportation services allow for the establishment of local collaborative networks based on a co-competition approach [40] which can connect to circular and green economy approaches.

The third creative tourism development model, “Localized networks for creative tourism”, can play a significant role defining and structuring a local/regional network of culture and tourism actors that can be linked to various creative tourism initiatives and activities. Promoted and nurtured by a leading entity, such localized networks serve as an umbrella for cooperation and collaborations, providing a set of resources, fostering collective capacity, and building critical mass and visibility. As discussed earlier, a key dimension in fostering local sustainability is collective buy-in and ownership for regenerative approaches. The community must be invested in these approaches and this collective model may be particularly suitable in this context.

All five creative tourism development models, although they may differ in terms of scale, resources, objectives, type of promoting organization, and local/regional context, can generate economic and social added value to a locale, inclusive modes of development, and new perspectives from which to re-envision ways to induce and augment the vitality of local cultural (and other) resources. However, there are also important challenges that must be addressed, linked to the small-scale nature of the initiatives, a limited knowledge-base to support the field, issues of distance and remoteness, and the niche nature of the offers which requires significant marketing attention. In addition, 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 and catalyzing networking for knowledge sharing and partnerships is foundational, especially for geographically dispersed initiatives.

8. Closing Remarks

Internationally, the pandemic context has accelerated a widespread rethinking and re-envisioning of the foundations and intentions of tourism, and the need to reorient its

course—perceived and promoted as a shift from “the mass tourist era” to “the new local-first era” [41]. During the summer of 2020, we observed the blossoming of rural and remote tourism, largely influenced by new motivations related to safety, small-group socializing, social distancing, and escaping from urban areas with COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdown measures. Altogether, as the paradigms of travel change, a steadier flux of tourism into the countryside creates opportunities to rethink how tourism can be proactively used to promote local sustainability and regeneration in smaller communities.

The CREATOUR vision of creative tourism is centered 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. CREATOUR’s pilot project developers demonstrated a deep conviction that distinctive elements and cultural specificities of their locales were the key components from which to build a creative and sustainable tourism for wider community benefit that would safeguard local culture and heritage. This approach aligns with a shift of attention towards grassroots, endogenous processes, bottom-up approaches, and locally-embedded and contextualized development models to stimulate sustainable and creative local development.

The analysis and insights presented in this article aim to inform and feed a wider discussion about the ways in which creative tourism can be developed, operationalized, and contribute to fostering regenerative approaches in extra-metropolitan communities. Understanding the pathways of how this occurs is facilitated by identifying patterns that defined five creative tourism development models used by CREATOUR’s participating organizations, investigating the ways in which these models develop links between creative tourism and the broader local community, and analyzing how these dynamics align with sustainable and regenerative tourism. Across the five models, three key themes resonated: (1) reinforcing distinctive elements of local identity, (2) instigating flows and connections between the locale and the external, and (3) serving as platforms for local collaboration, exchange, and development. These three transversal themes create the foundation for future research to be conducted on how creative tourism can create positive change within small cities and rural area communities.

We consider that the research presented in this article has implications for other territories that are initiating processes of culture-based creative tourism, providing strategic directions to guide creative tourism development and models of implementation. It also presents insights for broader plans and strategies to regenerate community livelihoods and tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the importance of enabling grassroots, endogenous processes to stimulate sustainable and creative local development, and the multifaceted implications of five creative tourism models for the broader community in which the initiatives are embedded. Furthermore, the article informs the new concept of regenerative tourism by moving beyond general concepts and aspirational visions to offer strategic actions, models, and operational realities that may support and propel such a trajectory. In enacting a regenerative approach, it also emphasizes the importance of the community being included and invested in its ongoing success, and the commitment of decision-makers and local agents in the development of a strategy that explicitly considers and prioritizes the holistic sustainability and well-being of the local community.

A regenerative approach views tourism activities as more than “business as usual” and creative tourism can be perceived as a regenerative element when it advocates tourism as a tool for local well-being, revitalization, and sustainability. In many cases, creative tourism activities also contribute to preserving local cultural heritage and revitalizing disappearing arts, crafts, and traditions. In developing such initiatives, communities should be actively engaged and placed at the center of strategic planning and decision-making regarding the use of tourism for local development, heritage preservation, and fostering cultural vitality.

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