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Exploring Creative Tourism: Editors Introduction

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the contributions to special issue of the Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice entitled 'Exploring Creative Tourism'. Creative tourism has grown rapidly in the past decade, reflecting the growing desire of consumers to develop their own creative potential and to attach themselves to creative networks, as well as the need for creative producers, cities and regions to profile themselves in an increasingly crowded global market. The case studies in the special issue examine creative tourism in a range of different contexts and present a range of models of creative tourism development in fields such as music, art, heritage and crafts. Creative tourism can therefore be viewed as a form of networked tourism, which depends on the ability of producers and consumers to relate to each other and to generate value from their encounters.

Keywords: creativity, creative tourism, cultural tourism, creative experiences, network society

Introduction

Creativity appears to have become positioned as a panacea for a wide range of problems. The development of creative cities (Landry, 2000), creative clusters (Mommaas, 2009), creative industries (O'Connor, 2010) and the creative field (Scott, 2010) can serve to attract the creative class (Florida, 2002) and hopefully rescue the economy, as well as knitting communities together and revitalising local culture.

However, there is also a sceptical tone emerging in many recent studies of creativity (e.g. Peck, 2005), which is now also being repeated in the field of tourism (Long and Morpeth, forthcoming). The rapid rise, dissemination and subsequent critique of creative development strategies mirror the development of cultural tourism in the 1980s and 1990s (Richards, 1996, 2001). In fact 'creative tourism' is often seen as a form of, or an extension of cultural tourism.

This special issue of the *Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice* considers many different facets of the creative tourism phenomenon, and examines the ways in which it has been developed in a range of places, ranging from the frozen north of Canada to the searing heat of Mali. The papers that compose this special issue identify trends and challenges in creative tourism development and, despite the emergent critical thoughts on the subject, they tend to emphasise the positive aspects. Does this suggest that creative tourism is just one more aspect of the creativity hype, or can creative experiences act as an effective

alternative to more "traditional" tourism development strategies? In this sense, it is important to understand the concept of creative tourism better in order to provide an effective assessment of its theoretical position and practical importance.

Background to the creative tourism concept

The term 'creative tourism' was coined by Richards and Raymond (2000). The idea for more creative forms of tourism originated in a European project – EUROTEX – which aimed to stimulate craft production through tourism (Richards, 2005).

Although the idea of developing creative experiences was not in itself new, creative tourism was quickly taken up and made more concrete through the development of courses and workshops (e.g. Creative Tourism New Zealand), conferences and seminars (Barcelona 2005, 2010, Santa Fe, 2008) and a range of publications (Richards and Wilson 2006,2007; Wurzburger et al. 2008; Richards, 2011).

The creative tourism idea seemed to catch on not only because of the evolution of tourist demand but also because it fitted a range of contemporary policy agendas. Creativity has indeed been broadly applied in several fields, most notably in the creative and cultural industries. The *Green Paper on Cultural and Creative industries* (European Commission, 2010) was a major source of legitimation of demands for more studies of and intervention in the creative field.

In recent years the recognition of the economic potential of culture (e.g. KEA, 2006) as well as creativity (e.g. UN, 2008; 2010) seemed to position creativity as a development tool and as a potential solution to a range of economic and social problems (the need for innovation, new approaches to learning, developing social capital and community cohesion, etc.). With the advent of the global financial crisis, the need for creativity seems have climbed even higher up many political agendas. This is also clear in the field of tourism, with the recent renaming of the Indonesian Ministry for Culture and Tourism as the Ministry for Tourism and Creative Economy and the development of creative tourism networks in places as far afield as Barcelona, Santa Fe and Thailand (see below).

Creative tourism appears therefore as a key development option for various reasons and can serve distinctive objectives. Firstly, it responds to the need for tourism to re-invent itself as well as to the need for destinations to do something different in a saturated market. It can also meet the desire of tourists for more fulfilling and meaningful experiences (see also the concept of 'experiential tourism' – Prentice, 2001: 2005; Smith 2006). On another level, there

is a growing raft of small creative enterprises, looking for new markets to develop. Creativity is becoming an increasingly popular career option (McRobbie, 2010) and the new creatives need markets to target. The popularity of creative practices such as music, dance and photography is also increasing (e.g. Cultural Alliance, 2010). Altogether, these trends explain and to a certain extent legitimate the popularity of creative development strategies among policy makers.

At the same time, many cities are struggling to become more creative, and to present themselves as creative destinations – not only as places where co-creation is possible, but also for attracting creative and educated people (the 'creative class", Florida, 2002). Attracting the creative class as visitors may eventually also persuade them to live in these cities, which in turn will contribute to their creative atmosphere, adding in turn to creative production and tourism attractiveness. The end result has been more than a decade of expanding creative tourism production and consumption, to the point where it has become an established niche in the global tourism market.

Some of the most developed examples of creative tourism activities are provided by creative networks aimed at linking tourists and locals. As well as the Creative Tourism Barcelona programme (which is described in more detail in the current issue by Caroline Couret), Creative Paris (http://www.creativeparis.info/en/) has recently been established, offering a range of creative experiences for visitors including visual, performing and culinary arts, fashion and design, writing and philosophy and gardening. In Austria, a range of creative experiences throughout the country have been brought together by Creative Tourism Austria (http://www.kreativreisen.at/en/home.html), which provides links to various 'creative hotspots' around the country. Creative Tourism Austria also has a model based more on developing relationships with commercial partners, including hotels and spas.

Creative Tourist.com has been established by the Manchester Museums Consortium, and acts more as an information board for people wanting to experience the creative scene in Manchester (http://www.creativetourist.com). As the website itself explains, it is: 'A Manchester Facebooky, Twittery, Guardian-ish, Book-marky, Arts-cum-Culture-cum-Shopping & Foodie Guide Type Thing'. These developments underline the increasing intertwining of creativity, tourism, new media and networks in the contemporary network society (Castells, 1996).

The growing diversity of creative tourism

What is clear from the foregoing review is that as creative tourism has grown, so the meanings and activities attached to it have also expanded well beyond the narrow range of 'learning' experiences primarily envisaged by Richards and Raymond (2001). It now includes a wide range of creative experiences in which the 'creative' content can be foregrounded or used as a 'creative backdrop', and in which the level of tourist and 'local' involvement in the production of the experience can be high or low.

A number of the different roles and forms of creative tourism are reflected in the current collection of papers. Creative tourism can be seen in numerous situations where visitors, service providers and the local community exchange ideas and skills and influence each other in a synergetic way. In this sense, creative tourism can be:

- A means of involving tourists in the creative life of the destination
- A creative means of using existing resources
- A means of strengthening identity and distinctiveness
- A form of self expression/discovery
- A form of edutainment – education a self-realisation and education
- A source of 'atmosphere' for places
- A source for recreating and reviving places

Fig. 1: Forms of creative tourism
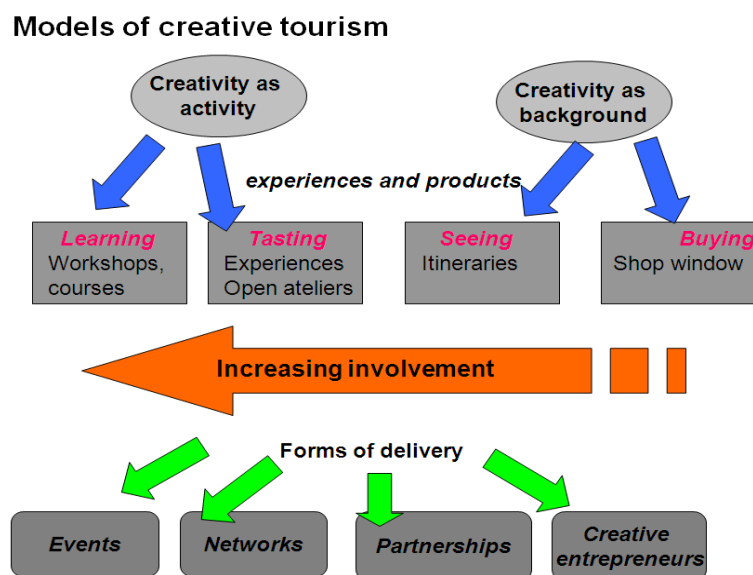
Source: Richards (2011)

At the same time, the range of creative forms involved in creative tourism has expanded, a trend that is also reflected in the current volume, with case studies covering the fields of music, festivals, cultural routes, museums and local cultural associations.

The growing scope of creative tourism and the increasing diversity of the experiences offered can arguably be linked to the growth of the contemporary network society (Castells, 1996). As traditional social structures are replaced by looser and more flexible relationships, so the construction of networks and the flows of information, knowledge and skills within those networks become more important. Networks are the conduits for exchange of different types of capital between groups and individuals, including economic, cultural, social and relational capital. Creative tourism, because of the bilateral relationship it poses between producer and consumer, is a means of increasing social and relational capital, both for tourists and (local) providers. Creative tourism can also be a way of developing very specific relational links related to the interests of the individuals involved. This is also interesting because it often represents a physical manifestation of virtual networks – people travel to meet people who they encounter in online communities, and come together because the embedded skills and practices in many creative activities cannot be exchanged without physical co-presence.

One might therefore argue that creative tourism is also a development of cultural tourism that is more suited to contemporary social and economic structures than traditional forms of cultural tourism. Whereas cultural tourism was largely based on the exchange of cultural and economic capital related to the rise of the symbolic economy, creative tourism is linked to even more flexible forms of exchange of social, relational and intellectual capital within networks.

Emerging critique

As with anything that grows and attracts attention, creative tourism is also beginning to attract criticism. Some of this critique is simply a reflection of the wider reaction to creative development strategies in general, such as the growing critique of 'creative class' and 'creative city' concepts (e.g. Peck, 2005).

According to Long and Morpeth (forthcoming, unpaginated) creativity has become a mantra for policymakers and academics alike, while the use of the term 'creativity' has been fairly uncritical. There is a lack of clarity in definitions of creativity, which is generally linked to specific western contexts. They also point out that the conjunction of the terms 'creative' and 'industry' is problematic, as this tends to imply an instrumentalisation of culture and creativity,

and the substitution of economic for cultural values. The creative industries become an instrument of public policy designed to tackle a range of problems, yet:

> Ironically within a period of economic recession and austerity measures funding for the creative industries and tourism have diminished yet there is an expectation that the creative industries will continue to be a key driver of economic prosperity.

As Richards and Wilson have pointed out, creative strategies also run the risk of generating 'serial reproduction', in which the search for uniqueness and distinctiveness is pursued via a similar set of policy strategies, which ultimately lead to less distinctiveness between places. Similarly, Richards (2011) signals the dangers of creative strategies acting as a conduit for the 'colonization' of everyday life and an extension of market processes into areas which have hitherto been relatively free of such pressures. These processes also stimulate resistance from the 'creatives' themselves, who often object to being labelled as part of the 'creative industries'.

In spite of these dangers, as Eliana Messineo points out in her paper in this volume, creativity today almost seems to be an obligation. If communities and laces feel obliged to be 'creative', there is certainly the danger that a form of 'creativity washing' will occur. The increasing attention given to culture and creativity, particularly from an economic perspective, has also some side-effects, as Daniela Jelincic critically notes in her paper in this volume. The abuse of the term of 'creativity' itself also entails diverse consequences, in particular generating a significant loss of meaning through more generalised use (creativity is everything, and therefore, creativity is nothing).

The structure of the special issue

The papers in this special issue introduce different perspectives on creative tourism and analyse case studies in different contexts and phases of development. Firstly, Márta Jusztin adapts the model of the JoHari window, a two-dimensional, flexible view of human communication, to the field of tourism. Creative tourism emerges in its most complete and interactive form in 'Window D', a space where supplier and tourist both have active roles in communication. In this sense, participation, co-creation and edutainment are therefore keywords in the understanding of creative tourism today. One example of this is given in the paper by Florencia Cueto Pedrotti which takes the Saint James Way as a potential space for combining co-creation and experiential learning. She outlines how creative tourism experiences can be developed along the cultural route, providing opportunities for tourism and hospitality students to learn interactively through creative engagement with local people. In fact, the connection to cultural itineraries, such as the Saint James Way or the Phoenician

Route, can be optimal contexts for innovatively promoting cultural heritage and also developing greater tourist involvement. In this sense, the project 'Voyage of Interculturality' , presented by Eliana Messineo, aims at further developing the Phoenician Route, established primarily for heritage conservation, by adding sensorial and emotional value to the visitor experience. Creativity can in this context become a tool for the regeneration and revitalization of culture resources as well as a means of developing more sustainable models of tourism.

Valery Gordin and Marina Matetskaya then examine the urban spaces of Saint Petersburg in order to identify new trends and approaches in the creative tourism sector. The city offers an interesting case study for analysing both practices and policies related to tourism and to creativity. From a demand perspective, tourists do not seem to be sufficiently engaged in the existing creative activities, and from a supply perspective, cultural organisations and policies provide little support for creative tourism initiatives. Similar challenges are also evident in other urban spaces, as Daniela Jelinčić and Ana Žuvela show in their analysis of creative tourism in Croatia. The cities of Dubrovnik and Zagreb present contrasting challenges for the development of creativity, the first being a cultural heritage destination and the latter being a hub for the creative industries. These contrasting case studies point to a general division between 'cultural heritage', seen as more traditional and 'creative' seen as more urban and contemporary. This divide is also embedded in different destination images and, consequently, places demand differentiated business and development models and policies in order to optimize the potential for tourism, creativity and more specifically creative tourism.

John Hull and Ulrike Sassenberg draw similar conclusions from their study of two islands (Newfoundland, in Canada, and Pašman, in Croatia). Deeply related to the revival of traditions and the feeling of authenticity, creative initiatives have been taken as a possible solution to the problems faced by local communities. Creative tourism has been developed through an innovative crafts programme and as a strategy for creating a network of traditional villages. The creation of meaningful experiences is regarded here as a win-win situation for tourists and locals. As the authors point out, the advantage of these new forms of tourism is the space provided for experimentation and the fact that tourist expectations are yet to be completely formed. This is also something Lénia Marques reflects on in her evaluation of the planning and development of creative tourism activities in developing countries. Taking one Malian village as a case study, she illustrates that the very lack of planning and clear policies for creative development leaves spaces that can be utilised for developing informal creative tourism initiatives.

The special issue is completed with three research notes that present different practical examples of creative tourism development. In the first, Teun den Dekker and Marcel Tabbers propose a three step model to creative tourism development, particularly focused on local networks in Venlo, in the Netherlands. Caroline Couret describes the Barcelona Creative Tourism platform, which is a model based largely on the development of artistic links between locals and visitors. The Barcelona experience was also inspirational in the founding of the international creative tourism network, which now includes Barcelona, Rome and Paris, among other members. Finally, Kristel Zegers offers a reflection on creative tourism experiences in the province of Noord-Brabant, in the Netherlands. Creative tourism routes and think tanks were two experiences promoted by the COLIN project, which aims to link creative organisations.

The contributions to this special issue of the *Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice* provide an interesting panorama of creative tourism in different environments, from rural communities to major urban centres. It is clear that creative tourism is developing rapidly, and that it does not conform to one single model or perspective, but is rather open and flexible in its adaptation to local contexts. The potential recognised in this recently-identified tourism sector is great, and the experiences and cases studied here are generally positive. However, there are also risks, as recent critical voices have been pointing out. Creative tourism is not a panacea, although it can be an effective strategy in strengthening destination attractiveness and competitiveness, particularly for contemporary tourists in search of self-development and relational capital.

In general, it is clear that creative tourism brings cultural tourism to another level in several ways. One important aspect is the focus on the process and the contexts more than on the final product; participation, involvement and engagement both from tourists and service providers are features of the co-creation process (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) where meaningful experiences are constructed. The local community is vital in this process. Without the involvement and participation of the local community, creative tourism would be difficult, if not impossible, since it emerges in the intermingled spaces of the encounter between tourists and locals. This also problematizes intervention strategies and makes it difficult to implement clear creative tourism policies to promote creative and sustainable tourism experiences. The increasing emergence of formal and informal networks can also be seen as a reaction to the lack of policies in the sector. But these networks also relate to the local character of creative tourism activities in a globalised world. The networks are important in the sense that they join together (glocal) partners with different interests, in this

case from the tourism field, the cultural and creative industries and government. For the time being, creative tourism policies seem to be largely reactive, rather than proactive.

The main drivers of creative tourism development therefore currently seem to be the cultural creatives in search of like-minded souls and economic support for their lifestyles, and tourists seeking creative entry points into local communities. As Couret stresses there is a need for re-humanizing the relationship between visitors and locals. In fact, this is linked to an evolving need of 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980), which corresponds to the human desire for transformation through action, in a process where the subject assumes no longer a passive role, but makes, plays and interprets their own role in society. It is a process related to the construction of identity and personal narrative. This co-creative act increasingly centres around the intangible and symbolic, and situates itself in the sphere of the emotional and spiritual, where the individual looks actively ways to follow a certain lifestyle in a specific creative atmosphere. Places become in this sense a result of co-creation, acquiring more and differentiated meanings, both for service providers, local communities and visitors. This is also why more and more everyday (*authentic*) life seems to affirm its necessary presence in creative tourism (Maitland, 2007, 2010; Richards, 2011).

Creative tourism implies more than the simple search for niche markets in the broader field of cultural tourism. It reflects a fundamental shift in the creation of value from production (the 'tourism industry') towards consumption (the 'tourist'), with the essential nexus between the two being provided by the encounter, the space/event node in the new social networks of tourism. In the network society, value is collectively created through relationships and the circulation of relational and other forms of capital through networks. Creative tourism is a form of networked tourism, which depends on the ability of producers and consumers to relate to each other and to generate value from their encounters. Creative tourists are 'cool hunters' in search of creative 'hot-spots' where their own creativity can feed and be fed by the creativity of those they visit.

Acknowledgement

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