

## Facing the Challenge? Creative Tourism in Croatia

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### Abstract:

In the last decade, creativity has become a buzz word in developmental context, from creative industries, creative classes, creative economy, creative cities, creative business, creative governance to creative tourism. Creative industries have often been used in the context of creative cities' development creating their image internationally especially through tourism. In order to attract visitors, a new type of tourism has been developed: creative tourism. The article questions its definition as it also questions the need of cities to be re-branded through creative tourism. Two Croatian case studies are featured as to re-think the position of creative tourism in local development: the city of Dubrovnik which relies on heritage as its main resource and the city of Zagreb which still needs to define its main tourism resource but has a lot of potential in cultural/creative industries. The article argues that creativity does not always mean introducing new types of trendy developments in the destination but rather knowing how to develop new development models which suit the local context.

**Keywords:** creativity, cultural/creative industries, cultural product, tourism, cultural/creative tourism, Dubrovnik, Zagreb

### The creative buzz

'Tapping and stoking the creative furnace inside every human being is the great challenge of our time' (*Florida 2005: 4*).

The word 'creative' has now enjoyed a full decade of increasing popularity, in which time everything and anything attained the creative prefix; from the creative industries, creative classes, creative economy, creative cities, creative business, creative governance to creative tourism. To paraphrase McGuigan, 'everything is creative, so we are told' (2004:9). Following the path of over-exploited term 'culture', the use of the term 'creative' has proliferated to such an extent that it has become virtually meaningless (*Ibid*). The notion of creativity as a limitless resource is central to the omnipresent popularity of creativity-led economic development and enterprise strategies (Foord, 2008) and '...creativity has emerged as a key concept in linking the production of cultural content in creative good and services with expanding market opportunities for all sorts of cultural product' (Thorsby, 2010:89).

As 'creativity' and 'creative' became cardinal terms, economic rationale and value were instantly assigned to them, and a whole array of studies were published, illustrating, or rather, anticipating positive impacts of new global and European creative economy<sup>i</sup> while whole regions, and even countries were branding themselves as global creative hubs<sup>ii</sup>. The role of

creativity in the development of a city, nation, or organization is not entirely a novel phenomenon, but with the decline of physical constraints on cities and communities in recent decades, creativity has become *the* principal driving force in the growth and development of cities, regions and nations (Florida, 2005:1).

The works of the creative imagination have been often utilized for a public purpose; cultural heritage has served as a long standing generator of economic growth and local prosperity (Smith, 2000). Moreover, cultural heritage has provided the basis for the evolution of cultural tourism (Millar, 1986; Teo and Yeoh, 1996; Simonicca, 1997; McKercher and DuCros, 2002; Timothy and Boyd, 2003). The latest contemporary developments have brought new directions for the utilization of the creative work; from urban regeneration led by creative industries (Creative Economy Report, 2008: 5) to the emergence of creative tourism as a yet another niche in the tourism industry, a re-conception of cultural tourism.

The aim of this article is to provide a descriptive insight into trends and developments in cultural tourism, mass tourism and creative tourism. Furthermore, it attempts to contextualize creative tourism and its development in a post-transitional environment heavily saturated with different forms of tourism, such as mass, heritage and cultural tourism. Due to the lack of theoretical sources that would support the proposed argument, the article builds on the analysis of case studies of two Croatian cities: Zagreb and Dubrovnik. The first case presents research findings of recent study of Zagreb as a cultural product, which examined the potential of the cultural and creative industries in Zagreb in defining contemporary cultural identity of the nation's capital and their possible contributions to the local economy<sup>iii</sup>. In addition, another Croatian city, Dubrovnik is presented as an illustration of a cultural and mass tourism destination with limited incentives for creative tourism. The analysis of both cases adds to the discourse on the conjecture of creative tourism in practice; being intrinsically intertwined with the cultural and creative traits of the place, creative tourism should be a natural progression from cultural tourism – a form of interactive cultural tourism.

The approach taken here derives from the perspective of cultural analysis rather than from pragmatic tourism experience. Therefore, the intention of this paper is to question the necessity and appropriateness of introducing creative tourism in destinations that base their tourism activities on heritage. In that sense, a critical concern is raised regarding the core outline and prospects of creative tourism as such.

### **Invoking creativity in tourism – from Cultural to Creative Tourism**

‘Creative-minded people enjoy a mix of influences. They want to hear different kinds of music and try different kinds of food. They want to meet and socialize with people unlike themselves, trade views and spar over issues’ (Florida 2002: 227).

Due to changes in production paralleled with new technological developments, increased income and more free time, a new type of traveller emerged in the 1980s: the *postmodern traveller* (Nahrstedt, 1998: 416). Experience, new interests, activity and education are the main characteristics of the travel style of this new type of tourist, and this new demand results in the continuous splintering of the tourist market as well as in new specialized forms of tourism (sports, religious, rural, congress, health, adventure, cultural tourism, etc.). Postmodern tourists start their travel with the exact vision on what form of local community life they want to participate in; they have special interests which determine their choice of destination in advance; once in the destination, they do not expect a passive holiday but active development of their own interests complemented with local diversities, which enrich their existing knowledge. The postmodern characteristics of all these types of tourists are pretty much the same no matter if their interests are in adventure, rural, cultural or some other form of tourism (Jelinčić 2009: 260). It became clear to producers that tourist supply requires re-shaping according to the specialized tourism forms. At the same time, and opposed to the mass tourism market, the splintering of tourism into various forms has also resulted in narrow specialized markets called niches.

Cultural tourism has long been considered as a niche market. The concept of cultural tourism is generally applied to travel towards cultural resources regardless of the traveller’s initial motivation (Hughes, 1996:707). Numbers also show a continuous growth in cultural tourism and it can be said that cultural tourism has become mass tourism activity. Many destinations have developed tourism based solely on cultural offer. Since the tourism market has continuously been splintering, the concept of a niche also changed. As Jenkins and Jones claim, ‘the niche sells the location, not the other way around’ (Jenkins and Jones 2002: 81).

So what does creativity have to do with this? Due to the changes already mentioned, it is obvious that one has to be creative in various ways: firstly by linking culture with tourism in order to find additional sources of financing because of the growing cuts in public expenditure for culture; secondly, by generating tourism income in a rather narrow specialized market of cultural tourists; and thirdly, by enhancing the experience for postmodern tourists, which is one of their main requirements while travelling. It can be

argued that the most creative tourism develops out of the need to enhance the experience for travellers by creating a participatory form of cultural tourism.

Raymond (2003) defines creative tourism as a development from cultural tourism, which involves learning a skill on holiday that is part of the culture of the country or community being visited. The link of creative to cultural tourism is visible from definition of cultural tourism by Richards which covers the very activities underlined in the creative tourism definition, for Richards, cultural tourism is 'not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the way of life of a people or a region' (Richards 2001:7).

Creative tourism is, according to the definitions, and as the existing theoretical framework and practical examples show, all about participatory experience of a destination; it steps beyond the usual connotations of tourism where a person comes to another place to be a spectator, visitor, basically a consumer:

Creative tourism is travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture (UNESCO: Creative Cities Network, 2006:3).

It involves 'more interaction, in which the visitor has an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there' (Ibid). Creative tourists develop their creative potential, and get closer to people, by actively participating in workshops and learning experiences that draw on the culture of their holiday destinations (Raymond, 2003:1). It should, therefore, be an even more refined, specialized market sub-niche within cultural tourism, which corresponds with the postmodern concept of tourism since it promotes experience activities.

From the tourist perspective, it certainly adds to one's experience if one is directly involved in the destination's cultural activities. Still, how far can the development of creative tourism go? Experience shows many local traditions have been changed to meet the visitors' expectations and this has led to the invention of tradition or fabrication of authenticity (Jelinčić, 2010:47-48); besides, modern experiences of tourism development show animosities of locals towards tourists, since they practically intrude in their everyday lives. Hence, should tourist participatory activities be avoided or even banned if they change or intrude in the local culture? Or would it mean violating Article 8 of the World Trade Organization's Global Code for Ethics in Tourism Principles which stands for the liberty of

tourist movement (2001)? Excluding the possibility of tourists' participation in local cultural activities could be treated as such although it enables a perfect tourist experience. So where is the limit?

### **Croatia – the Mediterranean as it once was**

‘...tourism is the biggest game these days’(McGuigan, 2004:104).

Croatia is now a well-recognized tourist country, or as Croatian national brand doctors would say, ‘the Mediterranean as it once was’. The tourism industry in Croatia has a long history that reaches far into the previous century. The main characteristics that have made Croatia known as a tourist destination are extraordinary natural landscapes and significant cultural heritage resources. To be more precise, a country of just over 4 million inhabitants encompasses both Mediterranean and Central European culture and climate, 2000 km of coastline, 1,246 islands, 6 cultural properties inscribed on the UNESCO heritage list, one natural property, and 10 cultural traditions and practices listed as the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Moreover, there are numerous arts festivals as well as cultural infrastructure which are great tourism attractions. The economic importance of tourism in Croatia is best illustrated through the 22% of GDP that this industry accounts for, with steady annual growth of 7.5%.

According to research by the Institute for Tourism, more than 50% of Croatian tourists visit cultural monuments and 10% of tourists travel to Croatia for purely cultural motives. This is a rather high index of cultural tourism, although coastal tourism remains the predominant type of Croatian tourism (Institute for Tourism, 2007). The profit from cultural tourism has never been calculated but it can easily be said that culture has a large share in Croatian tourism since mass tourists also participate in cultural experiences, although their primary motives for travel are not connected with culture.

### **Creative Tourism in Dubrovnik – why, who and what for?**

One of the highest European levels of cultural tourism is reached in Dubrovnik. Tourists that travel to Dubrovnik for cultural motives are far more numerous (26%) than the national average (10%) (Institute for Tourism, 2007). This small medieval town is best known for the exquisiteness of world cultural heritage that is showcased within the ancient city walls and which is still a living place. Saying that, Dubrovnik as a city is far less lively than it was a thirty years or just a decade ago, as it is slowly but surely being sold off to holiday home real-estate agents which inevitably leads to increased seasonality; it is overcrowded during the season and desolate during the winter months. Statistics show that the peak season

(starting from April through September) results in four times more visitors to cultural attractions than the rest of the year. Generally, 80% of tourists who visit Dubrovnik make their visit in the peak season (some 500,000 visitors) while 20% (125,000 visitors) visit the city during the off-season period.

The overall aims of local planning and development in Dubrovnik are targeted towards expanding facilities for the tourist industry. Turmoil in the tourist industry is widespread with most cultural and arts organizations having to consider themselves as a tourist consumer product (Žuvela, 2007). This over-prioritizing of the tourism industry has been known to have a negative impact on local development as privileging tourist attractions can disadvantage people who live, work, pay taxes and remain in an area; 'paradise ceases to be paradise when flooded with vulgar tourists' (McGuigan, 2004:105). Overwhelming commercial imperatives that have shifted the focus from the host to the guest have resulted in increased congestion and pollution of the historic city center during the season and complete desolation during the off-season periods. As a result, Dubrovnik has been transforming from the city, a living urban organism, into a destination. In these circumstances, it is hard to differentiate between mass or cultural or creative tourism as it is becoming harder to detect traces of the authentic, local culture. As with many of the complex issues surrounding tourism, the problem of the staged authenticity and resisting the corruption of the genuine cultural practices is not a novelty as Nicholson-Lord states:

Perhaps most offensive for those on the receiving end, tourism is a powerful cultural solvent; it takes customs and beliefs that are locally rooted and distinctive, puts them into global blending machine and turns them into the liquefied gunk to which a mass market has been primed to respond. One consequence is the phenomenon known as 'staged authenticity', in which a cultural tradition, once celebrated for its own sake and out of a belief in its intrinsic value, turns into a tourist spectacle and thus, insidiously, into a performance (2002:24 cited in McGuigan, 2004:108).

In such contexts, creative tourism is a quest for the odd few. The fact that, out of 100 travel agencies (registered for tourism activities only) that operate in Dubrovnik, only one offers creative tourism programmes, goes to support that claim. That single agency organizes a course on local embroidery, weaving, folk singing and dancing, fishing trips and expeditions. The limited number of creative tourism programmes that do exist are on offer by demand only and are mostly used by specialized groups of tourist i.e. politicians, scientists, cultural workers, conference participants etc. Individual tourists have very limited or no access to organized forms of 'authentic' experiences. The lack of creative tourism experiences on offer is expected as the average time that visitors spend in Dubrovnik is 3.7 days and the volume

of heritage objects and sites to be seen is sufficient to consume that time. In addition, the dominant form of tourism, mass tourism combined with cultural tourism (or mass cultural tourism), gives ample opportunity for the tourist professionals to earn substantial income without devising creative tourism experiences.

The case of Dubrovnik is presented in order to raise questions whether one form of tourism excludes another, whether it is possible to introduce new shapes of tourist experience in places that have been defined by a destination profile? Does creative tourism have developmental prospects in an environment that is already encumbered by thick layers of mass, heritage and/or cultural tourism practices?

### **The case of Zagreb**

While Dubrovnik is struggling with heavy tourism pressure partly owing it to its strong cultural identity expressed in rich cultural heritage, Zagreb, on the other hand is striving to find its own contemporary identity. In a tourist sense, Zagreb is Croatia's most visited continental destination. Still, it cannot be said that Zagreb tourists are predominantly interested in cultural experiences: 24% of them are motivated by new experiences and events, 17% by cultural monuments and 14% of them by entertainment. Although the share of cultural consumption is visible, it is clear that every sixth hotel guest is not interested in visiting museums (Institute for Tourism, 2008b).

Comparing this with the situation in some other European cities, the differences become even more evident. In Vienna, for example, in 2006 tourists spent around €540 million on culture, which accounts for 6.4% of total tourism consumption. In 2008, the share was even higher (8.8%). An additional 8.2% was spent on entertainment which often includes culture. 75% of tourists come to Vienna for sightseeing and 71% for 'culture and arts' (RTSA, 2006).

These data represent cultural tourism, while data on creative tourism, as a new generation of the cultural tourism are difficult to obtain. Practically no research has been done so far on this type of tourism in Zagreb (or Croatia) although there are a few tourism agencies which claim to organize creative tourism packages or tours. Still, they are not in line with the so far accepted and used definition of creative tourism by Raymond and Richards. They either offer tailor-made packages according to the tourists' interests or they organize distinctive, on-off sightseeing tours. Additionally, there are marketing agencies (not tourism agencies) which organize tourism tours so as to broaden their target market through creative and innovative ways of doing business.

The only research that included attitudes of cultural tourists towards creative tourism shows that 61% of Croatian cultural tourists have an interest in participating in creative activities. Those that have such an interest are mostly interested in gastronomy workshops (24%), picking fruits/olives/herbs (23%) and archaeology (21%). A smaller number of tourists is interested in traditional dances/songs (17%) and traditional crafts (17%), arts workshops (13%) and Croatian language classes (11%) (Institute for Tourism, 2008a:4-5). Still, no further research on this topic has been made.

The fact that no further research on creative tourism has been done and that no public policy considers it important is even more striking knowing that this city, out of the all Croatian cities, has the optimal preconditions for its development: it is the center of Croatian cultural/creative industries (it is estimated that some 98% of film, music and advertising industry is concentrated in the capital) and there are no predominant forms of tourism that define it as a destination.

The recent research project 'Zagreb as a cultural product' had the aim of detecting those cultural/creative industries which had the greatest potential in profit making as well as those with the potential of creating the city's contemporary identity which could eventually have great effects on tourism development. Although the majority of Croatian cultural/creative industries are concentrated in Zagreb, the effects of their creative work is not used as a vehicle for identification and wider recognition of the city's character. The results of our research show that in the context of both branding as well as profit making, the most relevant cultural/creative industries or those with the greatest development potential are music, film, architecture, theatre, design and dance. Some of them (especially architecture and design) have been internationally recognized with prestigious awards but they lack real industrial production. Again, what happened with the creativity in making and presenting the creative side of creative work?

Some results of the research indicate the problems of developing creativity as follows:

- The development of cultural/creative industries in Zagreb is disorganized, dispersive, fragmentary and without any coordination with local government;
- The city does not invest in the systematic production of contemporary (local) cultural/creative products nor in the promotion and export of the existing cultural products;
- The cultural sector is treated as a cost to the local public budget;
- The cultural identity of the city is not systematically designed but is linked by default to different forms of cultural tradition, heritage and ethno products;



- The cultural sector lacks knowledge and awareness of its own potential and strength;
- A lack of understanding of the concept of cultural/creative industries is visible on several levels: from local government, professional cultural associations, cultural creators to key stakeholders for development and promotion of cultural/creative industries.

According to the research findings, in spite of the existing potential, there is a lack of political understanding as well as professional determination to organize and direct the development of the cultural/creative industries. A top-down approach could be appropriate as public policy has the required means for systematic development of the sector: from gathering data to public measures which can facilitate the private sector in developing local culture and socio-economic capital. Hence, cultural policy should respond to new trends in cultural creativity and must adapt to new and emerging situations in the cultural domain. Targeting resources and using them in the creation of the city's brand should be the aim of such public policy. In a wider context, this could be an interesting reversal: the notion of 'creative industries', frequently connected with the 'commercial' side of cultural production, could in this case actually help preserve 'authenticity' and promote cultural and creative production specific to the location (Tomić-Koludrović and Petrić 2007: 147).

This, however, is not enough. Having a distinctive creative product is not an end itself. Firstly, the product needs to be extracted from the environment of the cultural sector and matched with economic sectors. Secondly, the product will not be recognized nationwide or even internationally if not properly marketed. As already said, Zagreb has had a few very interesting products which have not succeeded in branding the city or in earning great profits. And this is where creativity strikes again as a buzz-word. It is not only about developing a tourism or cultural product using a creative capital. Accordingly, creative tourism can not only include 'learning a skill on holiday that is part of the culture of the country or community being visited'. It is much more than that. Having culture as the main component of tourism industry already impacts on creativity, and eventually also the competitiveness. From the aspect of the tourist, creative tourism may mean such an activity which includes learning a skill on holiday that is part of the culture of the country or community being visited. But from the aspect of those who offer a tourism product, it may mean the creation of totally different and new business models which are based on creative production, management, marketing or sales. Is this a creative way to re-think the basis of creative tourism?

## **Conclusion**

Dubrovnik is a city which heavily relies on heritage tourism that has over time reached massive proportions in relation to the actual size and the number of inhabitants in the city. On the other hand, in Zagreb the situation is completely different: as a nation's capital, it is a modern urban city, the biggest Croatian cultural centre as well as the biggest Croatian continental tourism destination, but still lagging behind European cities in terms of cultural/creative industries development. Both cities have the grounds for the development of creative tourism; one is overly developed tourism-wise, the other under developed. One has a dominant, world-renowned identification as a tourist destination, while the other is still in the progress of finding its firm identity.

Creative tourism as a practice or even a concept is not really detectable in either case. In Dubrovnik, the very few creative tourism initiatives slowly emerge underneath dominant forms of mass tourism, including cultural and heritage tourism. Dubrovnik is a well-known tourist destination and as such local economic development and overall urban development rely on income from tourism industry. This has caused a widespread exploitation of cultural and natural resources which has been known to have a negative impact on local development. Consequently, Dubrovnik, as an environment is not receptive to new forms of tourism.

In Zagreb, the role of cultural heritage is not as widely proclaimed or capitalized on. Rather, the main cultural resources of Zagreb are cultural/creative industries. Still, they are not utilized for attracting or offering unique experiences to visitors, not because of their low potential but due to low levels of awareness on the role, possibilities, position and proven strength cultural/creative industries have in developing cultural brands of a city. When talking about the cultural industries, globalization has certainly given them great importance, which has influenced cultural planning in many countries/cities. Additionally, developments in science and technology helped in the dissemination of the content that the cultural industries carry. This has broadened the concept of innovation and creativity and consequently it should expand the scope of consumer niches it encompasses.

In this sense, creative tourism comes to light as a solution for both cities: a remedy for over-developed and under-developed forms of tourism as presented in the case studies. When doing business with culture, which besides economic potential always carries a certain value, strategic orientation towards the visitor experience, entails particular challenges. Economic ideology must not always be the major driver since culture requires extremely subtle management models. Creative tourism should provide a valuable experience for tourists and

transfer unique values promoting local identities. Moreover, it can be asserted that creative tourism is a projection of new type of tourism in which natural, cultural and personal resources are not manipulated and exploited but valued and enriched. Zagreb is a city that is on the rise: currently a capital of a Southeast European country, it faces the future as a European capital. Its identity vehicle as well as recognizable brand will be those cultural resources that are valued and shared by a wider community.

The potential of the cultural/creative industries can both identify the city and offer much needed visitor experiences. In this sense, Zagreb and Dubrovnik are on opposite ends of the spectrum; while Zagreb is yet to be defined by forms of cultural resources and accompanying types of tourism, Dubrovnik has to reconsider its mass cultural tourism identity. As such, creative tourism can become a major development driver for both cases: in the dominant and the ever growing trend of splintering of tourism forms. Still, it is debatable if most destinations should struggle to create new types of tourism so as to be more competitive if they are recognizable or even branded for certain 'old' qualities, like illustrated with the case of Dubrovnik. Being creative does not always mean introducing new types of trendy developments in the destination but rather knowing how to generate new development models that will underline the best a destination has to offer both for tourists as well as for the hosts.

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