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CREATIVE TOURISM AS BOOSTING TOOL FOR PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES IN PERIPHERAL AREAS: INSIGHTS FROM PORTUGAL

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Abstract

Creative tourism is starting in Portugal as a labelled and structured alternative aiming to produce a boosting effect in peripheral areas. By linking places, host communities and tourists in the co-creation of differentiated experiences, this tourism offer challenges destinations and communities to be creative and reinvent themselves as placemaking agents in the co-production of territorial amenities. As such, creative tourism can be a useful tool to complement placemaking strategies in peripheral areas, once it has the ability to engage local communities and generate territorial benefits. This hypothesis is explored through a case study and preliminary findings, obtained through focus group, in-depth interviews and content analysis, show the advantages of planned placemaking strategies for the territorial promotion. The comparisons in terms of intervention focus by types of entities and placemaking strategies confirm the complexity of these dynamics, pointing relevant factors used to mobilise local tangible and intangible resources.

Keywords: Creative tourism, placemaking strategies, peripheral areas, Portugal, sustainability, case study.

Introduction

Creative tourism initiatives are seen as a new model of cultural tourism able to leverage some economic, social and cultural dynamism in territories that attract specific market niches, either because they are further away from the main tourist circuits, or due the specificity of the tourism experiences and products they offer (Richards, 2011, 2016; Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2007). Creative tourism is based on a strong bond with the place and the host community, supported by the human dimension both in terms of supply and demand sides (UNESCO, 2006). Its main distinguishing feature is the degree of involvement and participation of tourists with place destinations, and its endogenous resources, through

experiences of immersion or contact with new realities, aiming to promote their creativity and learning (OECD, 2014). Given the focus on the place as a source of inspiration, contact and knowledge conducive to tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage, creative tourism is understood as relevant tool to rethink the promotion and development of sustainable tourism in peripheral areas (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011; Duxbury & Richards, 2019).

Implying a relational and geographical distance towards central territories (like metropolitan and urban areas), peripheral areas are usually characterized by low population densities, villages and small towns marked by aging and loss of population or by a predominantly rural structure and economically less competitive territories. A reduced technological transfer, small companies and low-skilled human resources also contribute to a poor competitiveness and weak ability to attract investment and inhabitants (Wanhill, 1997). In addition, peripherality can be apprehended as territorially distant, based on the difficulties one can find accessing certain areas, both in physical, economic, infrastructural and mobility terms (Hall, Harrison, Weaver, & Wall, 2013; Pezzi & Urso, 2016). Notwithstanding these factors, peripheral areas can also be highly valued for the uniqueness of their tangible and intangible endogenous resources (Barbini & Presutti, 2014; Russo & Richards, 2016).

Underpin peripheral areas through tourism represents a promising pathway, whose advantages are always conditioned by internal and external obstacles to overcome (Fonseca & Ramos, 2012). Such obstacles can range from the attraction of external investment to the training and qualification of human resources, construction of infrastructures, through territorial marketing and the involvement of local stakeholders and communities, among others. A bottom-up approach able to involve local populations in differentiated tourism experiences can be a good option to contribute to some socio-economic and cultural dynamism in peripheral areas and, in a certain way, to enhance the quality of life and self-esteem of their population.

The potentialities advocated by the creative tourism in articulation with placemaking strategies (Bosman & Dredge, 2011; Friedmann, 2016; Lew, 2017; Richards & Duif, 2019; Wyckoff, 2014; Wyckoff, Neumann, Pape, & Schindler, 2015) emerge as a theoretical proposal to reflect on the fruitful and mutual

contributions to the enhancement of peripheral areas through the production of meanings, values, and other benefits for regions and local communities.

The analysis carried out on a case study based on the setting up of creative tourism offers in peripheral areas of Portugal can bring some insights into this reflection, and demonstrate the potential of these differentiated experiences to foster innovative touristic activities, and to analyse in what extent they can be associated with more sustainable and integrative touristic placemaking strategies. Pioneering in Portugal, these tourism offers are being implemented as pilot-projects, by different types of entities, with different degrees of commitment to the territories, since 2017 onwards. Notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the short implementation time, it is already possible to proceed with some regional comparisons in terms of intervention focus and placemaking strategies by types of entities, which is an innovative contribution of this article, either by the case under review, or by the conceptual framework, whose literature review is presented below. The article proceeds with the presentation of the case study, which includes the methodology and discussion of the main results, followed by the conclusion.

CREATIVE TOURISM AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR PERIPHERAL AREAS

Creative tourism highlights the involvement of tourists in the destinations they visit through learning experiences related to their endogenous characteristics (Richards, 2011, 2016; Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2006; UNESCO, 2006). This ability to access the cultural dimensions and intangible resources of places through creative activities and experiences is a key element to distinguish creative from cultural tourism, but also to challenge destinations and host communities to reinvent themselves as agents in the co-production of change (OECD, 2014).

The emphasis on creativity arises from a broader orientation within a ‘creative turn’ (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), combining a symbolic economy (Lash & Urry, 1994) and creative classes (Florida, 2005), living in creative cities (Hannigan, 1998, 2007; Landry, 2000), and developing creative industries (Caves, 2002; Hartley, 2005; O’Connor, 2010). Notwithstanding some controversies around this ‘creative turn’ (Flew & Cunningham, 2010; Glaeser, 2005; Peck, 2005; Allen John Scott, 2006) and the polarized analysis of creative dynamics on agglomeration effects and core urban areas (Costa, Vasconcelos, & Sugahara, 2011; Costa, 2008; Markusen, 2007; Scott, 2000), interesting research has been done on the relevance of these

dynamics to peripheral and low density areas (Bell & Jayne, 2010; Duxbury, 2011; Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Jayne, Gibson, Waitt, & Bell, 2010; van Heur, 2010). This link between creativity and tourism has also been strengthened by cultural and tourism policy makers (e.g. OECD, 2014; UNCTAD, 2017; UNESCO/UNWTO, 2015). Simultaneously, a growing social awareness is being reinforced under the principles of collaboration and sustainability with extensive effects also on the tourism industry (Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2004; Korez-Vide, 2013).

In a broad sense, sustainable tourism is committed to an optimised use of environmental and economic resources and respect for the sociocultural values of local communities, without neglecting the need to offer high levels of satisfaction and meaningful experiences to tourists (Korez-Vide, 2013). The mitigation of social problems by implementing sustainable tourism solutions runs in parallel to environmental issues and responsible and ethical values (Goodwin & Francis, 2003; Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011; Richards & Hall, 2000), that are also shared by creative tourism strategies. Notwithstanding the relevance of these factors, the economical sustainability still dominates the equation, both from the point of view of promoters, stakeholders and local communities (Boley, Strzelecka, & Woosnam, 2018; Qiu, Fan, Lyu, Lin, & Jenkins, 2019).

Despite several literature produced on tourism sustainability issues (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Logar, 2010; Shen, Luo, & Zhao, 2017), assessments are never easy to accomplish due to the diversity of territorial contexts, stakeholders, indicators and temporal consistencies of results. If this is true for mass tourism destinations, in niche offers such as creative tourism the processes of sustainability assessment require an even longer time scale and indicators adapted to the local realities. The example based on creative tourism initiatives in Thailand emphasizes the need to use micro-approaches and a bottom-up perspective, not only to gather information for local decision-making and policymaking, but also to empower and develop locally understandings of the community's own well-being and its measurement (Wisansing & Vongvisitsin, 2019, p. 122). Similar examples in Cambodia and Bali also illustrates the value of community-based tourism for sustainable local development, stressing the relevance of the economic dimension and the time needed to assess such projects (Blapp & Mitas, 2018; Pawson, D'Arcy, & Richardson, 2017). These collaborative strategies emphasize not only the role played by host communities in the co-construction/co-creation of their

places, but also the utility of having placemaking strategies geared toward making places with quality, whether to visit or to live in.

According to Richards (2016, 2018), the first creative tourism programme started in 2003 in New Zealand and inspired many other countries to invest in this differentiating tourist offer, such as Austria, Spain, Iceland or Germany, among others. Multiple destinations and experiences that would be gathered in an international organism formed in 2010 (Creative Tourism Network) for the creative tourism development worldwide. In Portugal, the creative tourism offers are taking their first steps as labelled products, either on the production and demand side. As a research and incubation project, CREATOUR has given a significant contribution to frame and strengthen creative tourism experiences throughout the peripheral areas of the country and fostering a national network that can connect to the international network of creative tourism in the near future.

MAKING CREATIVE PLACES FOR TOURISM THROUGH PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a word-concept of wide application despite some difficulties related to the different forms of spelling it and the different interpretations that are associated with it. As a concept, its origin dates back to the 1970s and it is mostly associated with architects, geographers, urban planners, and designers and their concerns to cope with the urban problems of late capitalism (Aravot, 2002; Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2003; Friedmann, 2016). In a broader sense, placemaking can be interpreted as a process of change aiming to improve the quality of places and the quality of the life of the people that live, work, have fun, and learn in those places (Wyckoff, 2014; Wyckoff et al., 2015). The identification of influential forces, agents, and interests involved in this process generates different needs, opportunities, and amenities (Arefi, 2014), and consequently different approaches, or even specialised forms of placemaking – e.g. standard placemaking, strategic placemaking, tactical placemaking or creative placemaking (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Wyckoff, 2014; Wyckoff et al., 2015). While the common goal of these approaches is to improve the liveability conditions of the places and the quality of life of the people who inhabit them, they differ slightly in terms of strategies, core-projects, choices, and main target groups. In practical terms, this means that all forms of placemaking depend on a wide engagement and empowerment of the stakeholders to participate in the process. However, this participation is not immune to the influential forces and contradictions that guide the

different theoretical approaches (Arefi, 2014).

One can say that placemaking is embedded in theoretical and practical dimensions that are far from being consensual or lacking some criticism. The usage of placemaking as a means, rather than an end in itself, generated disillusion and somehow discredited the concept, which has been aggravated by the commodification of places and the spatial manipulation exerted by public policies and social groups (Aravot, 2002; Bosman & Dredge, 2011; Richards & Duif, 2019). This criticism of certain operational forms of placemaking is in line with broader debates focusing on contemporary processes of spatial production and place creation, their consumerist logics and ensuing manipulation forms through material and symbolic codes (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002; Jayne, 2006; Miles, 2010; Soja, 1989, 2000; Zukin, 1995, 2010), but they do little to clarify the concept itself or to foster its operability.

In line with the two-dimensional and inextricable diversity that underlies this word-concept, Lew's work (Lew, 2017) constitutes a reference for the conceptual clarification of placemaking as a process developed between people and their places. Furthermore, it can also be considered a useful tool to support the empirical analysis of policies, actions, behaviours and other forms of living, intervening, creating, and transforming places. Taking advantage of this conceptual interpretation, one of the key issues is distinguishing the broad definitions of an ongoing process, marked out by two distinct forms of relation and intervention in terms of space and related stakeholders: i) organic place-making led by individuals or community groups via bottom-up initiatives; ii) planned placemaking from a top-down perspective, reflecting what professionals and key stakeholders understand to be good policies and practices in terms of spatial production, design, and management. In between there is still a third form – place making – that gathers the remaining meanings and definitions that are not clearly included in either of the two extreme forms (Lew, 2017).

Featuring an identical interpretation, Richards and Duif (2019) also frame placemaking as a social practice that combines three essential elements: resources (tangible and intangible resources available to the territories); meanings (emotions, engagements and meanings linking people and stakeholders with the places they use and live in); creativity (to make creative and innovative use of resources and meanings to capture the attention of publics for coherent narratives and stories). According to the authors, placemaking only

works effectively if all these three elements are present and if all the different groups using the territory are equally engaged and committed to the strategy. Seen as a process particularly oriented towards the self-promotion and competitive transformation of small towns, placemaking involves a synergy between top-down and bottom-up processes which will only work with a considerable investment of resources, effort and time (Richards & Duif, 2019, p. 15). Notwithstanding the risks of simplifying processes that are complex in their essence, this conceptual interpretation is particularly useful to analyse the intrinsic coordination between organic place-making and planned forms of placemaking in peripheral areas.

Literature produced on the attitude of residents towards tourism corroborates a support directly proportional to the perception of positive impacts (Boley et al., 2018; Jayne, 2006; Qiu et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh, Ringle, Jaafar, & Ramayah, 2017; Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Ribeiro, 2013). Although economic impacts are the most easily understood and measurable, they are part of a wider package of a desirable added value, both for residents and for their territories (Delisle & Jolin, 2008; Duxbury & Richards, 2019). In other words, this added value corresponds to the “soft” benefits (e.g. social cohesion and local pride) designated by Richards and Duif (2019) as a reference to the most significant benefits that small cities can draw from good placemaking strategies.

Regarding the creative tourism grassroots, one can say that collaborative and relational forms of knowledge and understanding local values, identities and everyday life realities seem to overlap with the economic development objectives that are intrinsic to tourism in a wider sense. As such, creative tourism can be considered as a privileged tool aimed at connecting people, places, and resources through placemaking strategies oriented to produce and promote peripheral areas.

A PIONEERING EXPERIENCE OF CREATIVE TOURISM IN PORTUGAL

Methodology

The following case study intends to shed light on this relation in order to understand how do Portuguese promoters position themselves in terms of objectives and local engagement, and how they mobilize (or not) the resources involved in creative tourism to undertake placemaking strategies.

The data that inform the case study analysis was collected within the scope of the project CREATOUR - Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areasⁱ - an ongoing nationwide

research-action project aimed at incubate and analyse creative tourism activities in small cities and rural areas of inland Portugal. This means that only the two major metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto cannot be included in the creative tourism pilot initiatives covering the inland territory of the country, through four NUTS II regions (Norte, Centro, Alentejo, and Algarve) (figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of the 20 Creative Tourism Pilot Initiatives by NUTS II Region



Source: Own elaboration

Currently 40 creative tourism pilot initiatives are being implemented - 10 in each of the four NUTS II regions referred – and by the beginning of 2020 it is expected that they start to formalise a network that can be sustainable and expanded beyond the research project, and connected to the international network in the near future.

Due to data consistency, only the first 20 creative tourism pilot initiatives were considered on the analysis developed in this article. The 20 pilot initiatives (5 by each region) have been periodically monitored since 2017 through regional (4 by each region so far) and national (2 carried out so far) focus groups and semi-structured interviews to their promoters. Each promoter of these initiatives was individually interviewed and the contents were subject of a content analysis (carried out using a grid), allowing to understand and compare their strategies in terms of the dominant focus of intervention, the local engagement

type, and the main obstacles they faced to achieve their own goals according to the typologies of promoters (see figure 2 and 3 ahead). Data collected on the promoters and observed initiatives also allowed an evaluation framed with placemaking strategies.

Main findings

a) Placemaking strategies by types of entities

Creative tourism is not expected to bring about major changes to the territory, due its guiding principles and short scale of intervention. However, it can help to boost the attractiveness of a territory through the valuation of its endogenous resources (cultural, social, economic, environmental, and symbolic); it can increase the self-esteem of local communities and help them find new opportunities to settle in peripheral locations; and it can foster the empowerment, creativity and civic participation of locals in their collective life opportunities (Delisle & Jolin, 2008; Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Richards, 2016; Richards & Raymond, 2000). In a roughly way, these are the three elements pointed out by Richards and Duif as essentials for placemaking strategies to succeed in pursuing their goals of improving the quality of a place for all (2019, p. 17). Still according to the same authors, good placemaking strategies take time (plus perseverance and money). Understandably, this needed time is not compatible only with the two years of creative tourism implementation initiatives under observation here. Nevertheless, small positive effects in terms of local actor's involvement are already perceptible.

Regarding the challenges faced by the promoters to implement and develop their pilot initiatives, it is found that the main challenges of all entities lies in the territory itself (as shown in figure 2), and in a wider sense the CREATOUR project legitimises their acting dimensions within this same framework. However, and regarding the intentions that motivated them to develop creative tourism offers, there are some variations intersecting with the entity type and with the tools employed, with direct effects also on the placemaking strategies.

Figure 2. Main Challenges Faced by the Creative Tourism Pilot Initiatives

Type of Entity	Main Challenges	Predominant Placemaking Strategy
Municipalities or Other Public Entities	Attractiveness/potential of the region/project Renovation/valuation of heritage Revitalisation/transmission of local traditional knowledge/updated know-how/increased self-esteem Economic valuation/boosting the region/project Credibility/reputation/institutional recognition/academy	Top-down initiatives based in centralized actions regarding place branding objectives Top-down initiatives to foster local stakeholder dynamics and creative network effects
Non-profit Associations	Territorial identity/territorial cohesion Building/consolidating/enlarging partnership networks Local partnerships Dissemination of the project/digital agenda Innovating/changing image	Bottom-up initiatives with different goals to achieve and different degrees of involvement with local communities
Private Sector (Companies)	Attractiveness/potential of the region/project Local partnerships Population empowerment and increased participation	Bottom-up and top-down initiatives

Source: Own elaboration

For **municipalities and other public entities** (e.g. museums), the physical facilities (as spaces for welcoming tourists and offering creative experiences) and the privileged access to institutional networks and other external communication channels constitute significant advantages in terms of the scale of the intervention. Nevertheless, the dominant focus lies on intangible resources – such as cultural heritage valuation and reputational-building mechanisms – to enhance local/regional attractiveness and to anchor population, investment and knowledge.

Strategically, some municipalities assumed the leading role in the promotion and development of creative tourism initiatives (e.g. municipality of São João da Madeira, municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz, municipality of Loulé), while others took advantage of the initiative to set up creative tourism offers that could be led and expanded by other local entities, in order to strengthen the economic, cultural, and social capitals in their territories (e.g. municipality of Amares, municipality of Mértola, municipality of Beja). By taking a more direct intervention or by working more in the rear, the municipalities involved are looking for a way to attract external attention and evolve for some sort of place branding (Barbini & Presutti, 2014), in which creative tourism initiatives will only be part of a broader strategy.

In the Norte region, the municipality of São João da Madeira is already a reference due to industrial tourism. However, and in terms of a planned placemaking strategy, the new articulation with creative tourism reinforces the label of innovation and creativity that the municipality has been developing as a brand image. In the Algarve region, the municipality of Loulé has already a pioneering position in this type of

tourism offer, which is now more reinforced and legitimized, both in view of the creative strategy of the municipality and the national network of partners that is being formed.

In relation to municipalities and considering the three elements pointed by Richards and Duif (2019), we can say that the stakeholders and local community engagement needs to be improved, which may not be easy given the top-down strategies and the volatility of policies and governance cycles. In a way, the municipalities that most deviate from this pattern are Amares (in the Norte region) and Mértola (in the Alentejo region). While sponsoring creative tourism initiatives, the partnerships they seek to develop decentralize their leading role in terms of governance strategies and enable a more sustainable and inclusive engagement with local communities.

Regarding the strategies employed by **non-profit associations** in terms of creative tourism initiatives, only two of them focus mostly on the territory itself and their strategies are the most tailored to an organic placemaking orientation, as defined by Lew (2017). Located in opposite points of the country – ADERE Peneda Gerêz (in the Norte region) and Odiana (in the Algarve region) associations have been developing a very committed work towards the social and economic sustainability of (ultra)peripheral places, betting either on the production of distinctive and valued endogenous goods or on the promotion of craft knowledge and local culture. For both associations, creative tourism emerge as a new challenge to contribute to the pursuit of objectives that meet local communities in a bottom-up perspective. This means a closer focus on their priorities in detriment of a more holistic and institutionally directed territorial promotion, although these are not community-based tourism examples, as described in Thailand, Bali or Cambodia (Blapp & Mitas, 2018; Pawson et al., 2017; Wisansing & Vongvisitsin, 2019).

The remaining five non-profit associations seek to establish a compromise between culture and tourism with benefits extended to local communities that may not always be obvious, even though these are based on intangible resources, such as festivals, art events, traditional and technical handicrafts, local knowledge, etc. (e.g. ADXTUR, Luzlinar, Domínio Vale Mondego, CECHAP, Tertúlia Algarvia). Somehow, creative tourism managed to embody some pre-existing initiatives that now seek to benefit from the advantages of sharing a potential national cultural and tourism network with ambitions to extend abroad. If the anchoring of these entities in the territory does not have an obvious sustainability focus, the placemaking

strategy also seems weakened in the articulation between all the elements, as stressed by Richards and Duif (2019). In a generalized way, the consistency of the work developed by these associations boosted through the initiatives of creative tourism will benefit from a network effect that can take advantage of a local collaborative economy. This can be a relevant element to strengthen the contribution of non-profit associations in terms of placemaking strategies in their territorial areas of activity.

The promoters from the **private sector** (mostly small firms) are in an intermediate position in terms of placemaking strategies and tools. In spite of the exogenous engagement and the business activity underpinning their tourism offers, the degree of involvement with local communities is, in some cases, deeper than that found in some non-profit associations, particularly if the territory is the main focus of intervention (e.g. VERDENOV). In these cases, the cultural empowerment and increased participation of local communities in new territorial dynamics benefit from better-oriented tools to achieve gains for both parties. However, if companies show an exogenous engagement combined with a major focus on tourism and in tangible resources, the orientation may result unbalanced for the territory and its communities (e.g. LRB, PROACTIVETUR) which may undermine a planned placemaking strategy.

It is clear that tourism is recognised as an activity of strategic importance for territories, considering the multiplicity of impacts that it generates and the intensity of networks and dynamics that can be leveraged by its related activities. Although the perception of these impacts and dynamics is still closely tied to their resulting economic benefits (Boley et al., 2018; Qiu et al., 2019), there is a broad tendency to consider many other gains (e.g. cultural, social, environmental, institutional, relational, and symbolic), and to enhance the involvement of local communities. Their perception and attitudes are so important as some ethical issues (Delisle & Jolin, 2008), especially when private firms are sponsoring sustainable, supportive and inclusive forms of tourism.

b) Placemaking strategies by region

Although all the pilot initiatives have a more encompassing creative tourism focus - and we were able to trace a local engagement from an endogenous perspective in the majority of them - data analysis also allowed us to identify different regional profiles in terms of the dominant focus of intervention, not being clear a regional strategy of placemaking (figure 3).

Figure 3. Overall Characterisation of the 20 Creative Tourism Pilot Initiatives by NUTS II Region

Region (NUTSII)	Pilot Initiatives	Type of Entity			Dominant Focus of Intervention			Local Engagement Type	
		Municipality or Other Public Entity	Private Sector (Company)	Non-profit Association	Culture	Tourism	Territory	Predominantly Endogenous	Predominantly Exogenous
Norte	VERde NOVO		●						●
	CM São João da Madeira	●						●	
	LRB		●						●
	CM Amares and ENcontrARTE	●						●	
	ADERE PG – Peneda Gerês			●				●	
Centro	ADXTUR			●				●	●
	Quico -Turismo		●					●	
	Museu Conímbriga	●						●	
	Luzlinar			●				●	●
	Domínio Vale Mondego		●	●					●
Alentejo	Loom New Tradition		●						●
	CM Mértola	●						●	
	CM Beja	●						●	
	CECHAP			●					●
	CM Reguengos Monsaraz	●						●	
Algarve	Tertúlia Algarvia		●	●				●	
	PROACTIVETUR		●						●
	Odiana			●				●	
	CM Loulé	●						●	
	Barroca		●					●	

Legend: ■ First Focus of Intervention; ■ Second Focus of Intervention; ■ Third Focus of Intervention

Source: Own elaboration

In the Norte region, the initiatives are strongly based on the territory as dominant focus of intervention, paying more attention to community engagement strategies through their involvement in the initiatives, and through the mobilization of the collective memory, tradition, and territorial specific resources and characteristics (e.g. creative experiences linked to endogenous products cycles; immersion in natural landscapes and local resources through various sensory experiences; recovery and re-creation of industrial and craft heritage; application of augmented reality in the valuation and promotion of intangible assets).

In the Centro region, pilot initiatives are more concerned with the cultural value of their experiences and how to link them to the tourism dimension. Their dispersion across the territory (also very extensive) is great and all of them seek to captivate more tourists through differentiating cultural experiences that could

add more dynamism to their places of action (e.g. artistic festivals, cultural events and other initiatives planned to promote more peripheral places and attract different types of public and, in some cases, mitigate the effects of seasonality and tourist labels already established, such as Nazaré and its "Giant wave").

In the Alentejo region, we also identified a mixed vision with the main focus of intervention on the territorial dimension, without ever losing sight of tourism intervention. The experiences of creative tourism aim to retain tourists for a longer stay in this region, which still works very much as a way of passing between the urban tourism of the metropolitan region of Lisbon and the “sun and sand” tourism of the Algarve. To this end, the offers are based not only on the regional tangible and intangible heritage, but also on the innovative re-creation of their diversity, in order to satisfy more diverse publics (e.g. experiences related to “cante alentejano” - UNESCO intangible heritage; traditional potteries with several links to gastronomy and wines; the marbles and their artistic development; weaving with traditional techniques and new recreations and designs).

Pilot initiatives in the Algarve region are highly focused on tourism intervention, which is clearly related to the regional economic specialisation on tourism. However, they are trying to shift from the mass tourism tradition, that still prevails in that region (mainly based on the ‘sun and sand’ product), to a more creative and cultural approach based on the territory’s endogenous resources, amenities, and traditional culture (e.g. traditional cuisine and gastronomic regional specialities; safeguarding of artisanal techniques and raw materials; adaptation of natural resources to new uses and diversity of markets such as the experience of saline spas in the salt flats of Castro Marim).

Notwithstanding the variety of creative tourism experiences derived from the great diversity of tangible and intangible resources intrinsic to each region, with the exception of the Algarve for the stated reasons, the region seems not to be a determining factor in terms of dominant focus of intervention and placemaking strategies. The leverage of local resources, place branding and reputational effects, the dynamism and embeddedness of stakeholders and networks already operating on the ground, or the opportunity to implement new challenges that make sense at the local level are the main drivers of these 20 pilot initiatives. Corroborating the arguments of Richards and Duif (2019), the articulation between top-down and bottom-up placemaking strategies confirms itself as an important condition for these creative

tourism experiences to evolve in a robust and sustainable way. Here we talk mainly about economic sustainability for the promoters and chain of partners involved in the experiences, since the other dimensions of sustainability are intrinsic to the concept of creative tourism.

While continuing to be a niche product, the positive evolution of the results achieved by these creative tourism pilot initiatives will be able to catalyse more inclusive and participatory local partnerships, with extensible effects on communities. Given the slow pace of these placemaking processes, the short implementation time here does not allow us to extract objective data on the impacts of these 20 pilot tourism initiatives, which is one of the main limitations of this article. A gap that is already being considered by ongoing complementary analyses and whose results will be presented in future works.

Conclusions

The main goal of this article was to contribute to understanding the potential of creative tourism experiences to foster peripheral areas of Portugal, and how these differentiated experiences can be mobilised by placemaking strategies, regarding an inclusive and sustainable process for the benefit of communities and territories. This was illustrated through an empirical case study under development in Portugal, based on 20 creative tourism pilot initiatives that have been set up, and implemented in the context of an-ongoing action-based research project by different types of promoters in four Portuguese regions.

The departure point was to present creative tourism experiences as an opportunity to enable actual territorially embedded strategies in such peripheral areas, in order to strengthen sustainable development processes. The main aspects under scrutiny in these relational collaborative and creative forms of tourism relate to the way these strategies emphasise the role of the host communities in the co-construction/co-creation of their places, and simultaneously enable a repositioning of tourism practices more in line with a bottom-up organic process. However, an articulation with a top-down placemaking strategy is also fundamental to put in practice resources and meanings in a creative way and in order to promote network effects.

The creative tourism pilot initiatives case study analysis under the placemaking framework suggests that, more than a simple dichotomy that confronts more planned and more organic realities based on a 'black and white' caricature, there is a more complex and wider palette of grey shades in between these poles,

which is much richer and appropriate to understand reality. In fact, even considering the wider project that encompasses all these cases (the CREATOUR project) as a structurally top-down approach to the problem, with a pre-defined set of approaches to the territories (which is freely appropriated by the particular initiative of each pilot), it is possible to perceive a diversity of behaviours and strategies in the specific work of each pilot in their particular project, representing distinct approaches in terms of placemaking strategies.

While some of them (even in predominantly territorial exogenous engagement) actively try to mobilize and involve the community in their strategies through the (re)living of cultural heritage and local intangible assets, setting up new identity features and mechanisms, others have a more top-down and quite 'external' perspective, neglecting many aspects that are more closely related with the organic dimensions of the local identity and the functioning of social systems. The diversity of situations found point to a set of relevant factors with the capacity to explain the differences between placemaking strategies that are used to mobilise local intangible resources (e.g. the type of promoter and their goals, the dominant field in terms of focus of intervention, and the kind of local engagement).

In a broader sense, our observations point to the assumption that in the case of peripheral areas, planned tourism placemaking often occurs as part of a deliberate approach to sustainable development and community resilience, driven by pressing needs for economic development, livelihood diversification, and control over future outcomes. These objectives are usually grounded in the critical ecosystem services in which peripheral areas are closely aligned. Although this case underlines that the specific strategies implemented by each of the creative tourism promoters are very different, it also reflects their own institutional and territorial characteristics, as well as the wide diversity of motivations that underlie their agency in a collective effort to promote sustainable development trajectories in those territories through placemaking strategies.

This article focus on a specific empirical context to reflect on a theoretical discussion that can be fruitful for the development of future strategies to promote these territories. However, it is far from being conclusive, since these processes require a long implementation time to be evaluated and scientifically analysed. If the short monitoring time can be seen as the main limitation of this article, the theoretical

discussion developed and the results already achieved allow us to move towards an impact evaluation study with greater precision and robustness in the near future.

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ⁱ For specific information about CREATOUR project and pilot initiatives please visit link <http://creatour.pt>