

CREATOUR: Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas

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Objectives | This presentation provides an overview of initial work and plans in the project CREATOUR: Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas (Desenvolver Destinos de Turismo Criativo em Cidades de Pequena Dimensão e Áreas Rurais). CREATOUR is a national three-year project (2016-2019) funded under the Joint Activities Programme of PORTUGAL 2020, by COMPETE2020, POR Lisboa, POR Algarve and Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia. CREATOUR aims to develop and pilot an integrated approach and research agenda for creative tourism in small cities and rural areas in the Norte, Centro, Alentejo and Algarve regions of Portugal, developing strong links within and amongst regions. The research and application project aims to develop a sustainable creative tourism network linking an array of small cities and rural areas and to contribute meaningfully to local cultural vibrancy and holistic development in pilot communities.

Methodology | CREATOUR is informed by theoretical and methodological approaches from cultural/creative sector development, tourism, and regional development. It also builds on international experiences and research on creative tourism initiatives since the early 2000s, when creative tourism emerged as a reaction against “mass cultural tourism” approaches as consumers sought more authentic and engaging experiences and desired to cultivate their own creativity through tourism. The project is organized using the key dimensions of support to enhance value for creative sector development as a framework: 1) build knowledge and capacity, 2) support content development and link creativity to place, and 3) strengthen network and cluster formation (OECD 2014). Three interlinking dimensions are core to the CREATOUR’s incubator/demonstration dimension: IdeaLabs, Pilot Initiatives, and Strengthening Network/Cluster Formation. These dimensions are informed and guided by multidisciplinary research activities, annual conferences, and the development of a range of publications and other outputs.

The research dimensions of the project are based in five main areas: creative tourism, cultural/creative organizations in small cities and rural areas, creative process incubation, cultural mapping methodologies, and impact evaluation. CREATOUR develops a system for monitoring and creating a baseline of knowledge to track macro-changes during the project and place project activities and findings in wider contexts, which includes international best practices and issues in creative tourism projects and networks, as well as visitor/tourism profiles and cultural/creative sector characteristics in non-metropolitan areas

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of Portugal. The IdeaLab development processes and the creative tourism pilots will be evaluated throughout the project, gathering insights from the organizations producing the pilots, the visitor-participants, and researchers' observations and reflections.

Main Results and Contributions | CREATOUR promotes the potential for the development of human-scaled, interactive, creative tourism featuring creativity- and culture-based experiential tourism experiences. Focusing on smaller cities and rural areas in which active cultural organizations and creative enterprises currently operate, the project aims to foster new or enhanced tourism offers building from local strengths, knowledge, skills, and traditions. The project aims to develop a sustainable creative tourism that is socially, culturally, environmentally, and economically rooted in specific places and is sensitive to these dimensions. It aims to give added value to cultural and creative traditions, skills, and knowledge as well as to emerging creative practices and pathways.

Limitations | The highest-profile creative tourism platforms are in cities well known as creative centres (e.g., Paris, Barcelona, Santa Fe) or linked with popular films and music (e.g., Lord of the Rings and Wellington, New Zealand; Korean new wave cinema and music, with various sites). However, other initiatives, for example, in Canada and Japan, have been developed from regional or small-town contexts. The research will explore the applicability and limitations of these international experiences, models, and lessons – especially the ones established in non-metropolitan areas – to the contemporary Portuguese context.

Conclusions | The project's first wave of creative tourism pilots will be launched in Summer 2017. The experiences will be evaluated, gathering insights from the organizations producing the pilots, the visitor-participants, and researchers' observations and reflections. The findings from each pilot will be compiled, compared, and assessed and the results discussed with the pilot organizations in the fall of 2017 to obtain experiential insights on the findings, verify the assessments and interpretations, and inform future adjustments and new developments among the creative tourism activities and the research-evaluation approaches.

References |

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