The Creative Tourist

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The Creative Tourist: A Eudaimonic Perspective

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Natalie, a 32-year-old Canadian woman from Alberta, has come to Spain to partake in flamenco dance classes. She wears flip-flops – the ubiquitous rubber beachwear – but her left foot is covered with band-aids. During the course of our conversation, Natalie provides a crisp summary of her creative tourist experience; she discloses that her experience has been

> Enlightening. Productive … because it's not like it's been a regular vacation where you go just to see stuff, it's like I'm actually taking courses, I'm living it. Um … Difficult [laugh] and occasionally painful [chuckles]. It's because my left foot hurts.

The words articulated by Natalie clearly reveal that her trip has not only been smooth and pleasurable as one may expect a summer holiday in Spain to be. Natalie's creative tourist experience in the cramped spaces of her flamenco dance school in Seville stands in sharp contrast to the daily white sandy *playa* experience of other tourists in Marbella or Tarifa. Learning, discovering, sharing, bonding, feeling, performing, resisting, creating, flourishing and becoming count among the key experiential modalities that punctuate the chapters of this book about the creative tourist. These experiential modalities set the tone for what lies beneath the surface of the creative tourist experience.

Much has been written about the nexus between creativity and tourism, yet little is known about the central protagonist in what is now commonly known as *creative tourism*. With this book, we therefore hope to offer a nuanced understanding of the creative tourist experience. Creative tourism can be linked to different activities and contexts. Furthermore, creative tourism has been narrowly and broadly defined based on different levels of tourist involvement within a variety of contexts (Duxbury & Richards, 2019; Richards, 2011). Here, we understand creative tourism as a subset of cultural tourism, whereby tourists interact with inspirational locals and engage with place-specific endogenous resources for self-fulfilment purposes. Our understanding of creative tourism, therefore, resonates with Richards and Raymond's (2000) early definition of this concept and

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with de Bruin and Jelinčić's (2016) notion of participatory experience tourism, which both emphasise learning and greater intensity of involvement. Likewise, we relate to the four dimensions of creative tourism, as suggested by Bakas, Duxbury and Castro (2018), which are: active participation, a learning process, opportunities for self-expression and community engagement. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006) advocated that creative tourism should include more access to culture and history, authentic engagement in the real and unique cultural life of a place, as well as more interaction with living culture and the people who live there. The creative tourist, for example, might be blowing glass in the picturesque village of Biot in the Provence region, kneading sourdough bread in Saint-Jean-Port-Joli in the province of Québec or practicing flamenco in Seville, the bustling and colourful Andalusian capital. As Natalie's words above suggest, *doing* rather than *being there* lies at the core of creative tourism.

As a participatory form of cultural tourism, creative tourism is primarily based on the intangible heritage and the traditional practices of indigenous communities (Smith, 2016) and it is driven by the desire to learn, to share and to create. If creative tourists want to have fun like other tourists, they seem to be more concerned with authentic cultural encounters, self-exploration and the construction of their identities (Argod, 2014). In other words, creative tourists aspire to live their life well; this means living a meaningful life, or a life that reflects their core values. A life well-lived is what Greek philosopher Aristotle called *eudaimonia* in Nicomachean Ethics. Since the creative tourist is driven by a quest for meaning and a search for happiness (Matteucci, 2018), in this book, we portray the creative tourist experience as eudaimonic.

Why do we need a book on the creative tourist? Firstly, creative tourism has been presented as a more ethical and sustainable form of travel (e.g. Matteucci, Nawijn, & von Zumbusch, 2022; Scherf, 2021). Creative tourists tend to stay longer at the same destination than other tourists and because their consumption pattern resembles that of residents, the money spent by creative tourists contributes to the wider community. Richards (2021a) and Scherf (2021) note that resident-tourist relationships based on culture and creativity can enhance residents' quality of life and more generally improve the sustainability of destinations. In addition, because residents tend to be on an equal footing with tourists who seek out their creativity and expertise (Richards, 2021b), the tourist-host encounter is considered to be more egalitarian (Duxbury & Bakas, 2021). The creative tourist-host encounter is beneficial to both protagonists for a host of other reasons. For instance, their relational encounters foster local knowledge production (Braidotti, 2019), stimulate creativity (Bryden & Gezelius, 2017) and promote care and preservation of heritage as well as stewardship (Sterling, 2020). Benefits might also include cultural revival, reinforcing local pride and identity. In light of the many issues arising from overtourism, any tourism activity that has the potential to provide communities with significant benefits is worth some attention.

Secondly, creative tourism has been praised for its transformative potential. For instance, Duxbury and Bakas (2021) argue that creative tourism promotes human

well-being, positive emotions, mindfulness and self-knowledge. Self-transformation is facilitated through meaningful interactions between locals and tourists who feel connected by co-learning practices. Duxbury and Bakas (2021) also suggest that as a result of their interaction, both visitors and locals are able to build their social capital. Previous definitions of creative tourism have emphasised the educational and skills development dimension (Richards & Raymond, 2000; UNESCO, 2006) or the exploration and expression of one's creative potential (Smith, 2016). However, literature on transformational tourism increasingly refers to deeper, more eudaimonic and spiritual dimensions which have the potential to change lives (Knobloch, Robertson, & Aitken, 2017; Matteucci, 2013; Reisinger, 2013; Sheldon, 2020). Enhancing one's creative skills and potential arguably forms part of meaningful and authentic life theories which encourage self-development and transformation (e.g. Seligman, 2002). Many retreat centres offer creative activities alongside more mindful and spiritual practices (Kelly & Smith, 2017).

Thirdly, Duxbury and Richards (2019) remark that in the last decade, young people's interest in developing their creative potential has kept on increasing, from 18% in 2012 to about 30% in 2017 (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018). Since young people today will make up most of tomorrow's travellers, like Duxbury and Richards, we anticipate that the demand for creative tourism experiences is likely to grow in the future.

1.1 Contextualising the Demand for Creative Tourism Experiences

Creative tourism experiences do not take place in a vacuum. However, the social and physical contexts within which creative experiences are performed have remained largely underexplored. Examples might include slow cities in Italy, remote retreat destinations or even UNESCO creative cities. Throughout this book, we will seek to shed some light on the contextual forces that shape the creative tourist experience and on what it means and feels like to be a creative tourist within our modern world. The need to escape to slower, restorative, natural environments tends to encourage creative tourism, which also enables tourists to re-gain connection with themselves and their hidden or potential creativity. The modern world in which we live is marked by busy life-styles, fast transactions, great flows of people and things and boosted consumerism. These manifestations of the modern world have been linked to globalisation processes. Globalisation is a diffuse concept that is characterised by the removal of trade barriers (Stiglitz, 2002) and the fast movements of people, goods and capital, which are facilitated by technologies and have resulted in the emergence of a single world market dominated by multinational corporations. This fast-moving global market is driven by the economy, which shapes all spheres of human activities (Held, 1995), including tourism.

As the world becomes increasingly globalised, myriad cultural forms have become accessible to millions of tourists worldwide. Additionally, with the rise of mobility and easier access to information technologies, a multitude of previously silent voices are now being heard, new cultural expressions have emerged

and old manifestations have been reshaped or simply revived. Not only do tourists travel to consume cultural resources, but also those resources themselves are becoming increasingly mobile, such as art exhibitions or music festivals. This has important implications for 'authenticity' of culture and context. De-contextualised (e.g. diasporic) or hybridised cultures may afford new opportunities. Along with the growing interest in culture, the resources associated with cultural tourism have expanded from the largely fixed, tangible heritage of the past towards the mobile, intangible products of contemporary culture (Richards, 2018). Therefore, within many cities, one can find as much cultural diversion at home as by going on holiday. This is beneficial for residents who can enjoy a diversity of cultural experiences on their doorstep, especially in large cities, but is less appealing for tourists seeking a sense of place and local cultural experiences. As a result of globalisation, tourism destinations have undergone a process of homogenisation (Ritzer, 2004), which occurs through standardisation and the reproduction of successful cultural attractions (e.g. Christmas markets, festivals and branded museums).

As a component of globalisation, tourism has grown to become an important contributor to the emergence of a global society (Munar, 2007), in which 'tourists are consumers, not anthropologists' (McKercher, 1993, p. 7). This portrayal of tourists as global consumers, rather than anthropologists, reveals tourism activities to be frivolous and tourism resources to be increasingly commodified. Indeed, the commodification of local cultures has been linked to the mass popularity gained by many destinations. Richards (2018) notes that, ironically, tourists often destroy the cultures that they seek to experience through travel. While the democratisation of heritage consumption and travel has arguably contributed to the commodification of cultures, four decades of neoliberal policies and poor tourism planning have also certainly left their mark on this issue (Matteucci et al., 2022). The failures of market neoliberalism, according to Monbiot (2016), are attributed to weaker government interventions, marketisation and privatisation of public space and services, tax breaks for the very rich, looser regulations, delocalisation of wealth and power and excessive individualism. Beyond governance issues, the last two decades have witnessed a shift in tourists' consumption of culture. On the one hand, tourists are now looking for to experience authenticity in the contemporary way of life of the places they visit (Frisch, Sommer, Stoltenberg, & Stors, 2019; Richards, 2011). On the other hand, many tourists are also 'actively and knowingly seeking the inauthentic as the basis of their experience' (Ravenscroft & Matteucci, 2003, p. 2). Smith (2016) describes these individuals as 'new leisure tourists'. A further complication may be their inability to distinguish what is authentic in a dynamic, globalising and hybridising world.

While some commentators (e.g. Franklin, 2003; Stebbins, 2006) have questioned the distinction between the activities carried out at home and those performed in tourism contexts, many scholars still see tourism activities as extraordinary either in terms of an escape from everyday life (Dann, 1977; Graburn, 1983; Wearing & Wearing, 1996) or as an opportunity to enact new roles (MacCannell, 2013) and adopt new identities (Desforges, 2000). In the context of the *escape* narrative, in need of relaxation, thrill and entertainment,

many Western tourists find in tourism a space where they can 'let off steam' or abandon the restraints of their everyday environments (Fennell, 2000). In other words, the pressures experienced in modern societies oftentimes compel individuals to seek out new cultures and environments, new sensations, freedom and excitement that the monotony of their workaday life does not provide. Some tourists may even 'bypass' culture altogether as witnessed in the overtourism phenomenon in cultural cities, which is often connected to the night-time economy or party tourism. Increasingly, however (especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic) tourists also crave a natural slow, quiet landscape in which they can recuperate away from the busyness of modern cities. Yet, it would be naive to believe that only jaded tourists travel to places. In recent years, the demand for more engaging, creative and meaningful experiences has been gaining momentum.

This trend may be explained by at least three main factors. Firstly, creative tourists have been associated with the values of the gentrifying new middle class who is attracted to destinations that are culturally diverse, boast modern or avant-garde amenities and offer culturally enriching experiences (Gretzel & Jamal, 2009; Ley, 1994). Secondly, as mobility has become ubiquitous and new technologies have become widely accessible, a new 'Creative Class' has emerged (Florida, 2002). Members of the Creative Class, Florida argues, include musicians, artists, teachers and scientists, and entrepreneurs from the creative industries (e.g. advertising, architecture, design and publishing). The Creative Class is, according to Florida, highly mobile and seeks out experiences that are aesthetically pleasurable, playful, active, intense and meaningful. Gretzel and Jamal (2009) suggest that the Creative Class is instilled with post-materialistic values, which drive them to pursue 'creative exploration of people, places, activities and things' (p. 476). Those creatives are cosmopolitans in that they are 'modern-day *flaneurs* who are comfortable walking the capitals' boulevards and flying short- and long haul-flights' (Skinner, 2007, p. 496). Like the descriptions of the Creative Class, cosmopolitans, according to Hannerz (1992), are skilled entrepreneurs and artisans with cultural know-how and 'a willingness to engage with the Other' (p. 252). Thirdly, the trend for creative tourism experiences is also explained by a rejection of mass tourism where experiences tend to be overly passive, superficial, standardised and commodified. Instead, tourists are increasingly concerned with creating their own experiences driven by 'learning by doing' and 'living like a local' (Richards, 2018). Richards (2021a) analyses the various 'turns' that have influenced cultural tourism from using culture as an economic and symbolic force to its performative and creative role. He argues that creative tourism could even be defined as a reaction to unengaging cultural tourism experiences in the context of globalisation, standardisation and serial reproduction. The performative and creative turn in cultural tourism connects to embodied and collaborative experiences, including rituals (Russo & Richards, 2016).

Our review of literature in creative tourism studies reveals that most discourses on creativity seem to uncritically present it as a valuable asset for residents and tourists alike. However, some disruptive voices, such as Korstanje et al. (2016), argue that creativity is another marketing trick deployed by capitalistic enterprises to lure alienated Western tourists into new forms of consumption, hence

'to boost marginal profits at lower costs' (p. 44). Exploring the hidden agendas of the tourism and cultural industries goes beyond the scope of this book; nevertheless, attending to issues of power relations and ethnocentrism behind the promise of creativity deserves scrutiny. In short, while the emphasis on creativity is on the rise in many spheres of social life, it remains unclear as to what creativity actually means?

1.2 Creativity

A cornerstone of creative tourism is creativity. Creativity is a fuzzy and contested concept. While creativity is something that many of us are looking for or experiencing in our daily life, it also sometimes means that some people have great ideas, which may result in the development of novel and useful products. In fact, creativity pervades all spheres of our everyday life from school assignments that require some creativity to compelling books that we read, fascinating films that we watch, and a wide range of innovative products and technologies that we enjoy using. However, most of the time, creativity may be experienced in more subtle and quiet ways. In his review of the work on creativity around the world, Sternberg (2006) shows that creativity is a multifaceted concept that is understood in variegated ways across cultures. For instance, in Scandinavian countries, creativity is construed as an attitude towards life and a way to cope with challenging situations. In the Chinese culture, creativity is associated with giftedness whereas in many Western countries, it is tied to sense of humour and aesthetic taste. Furthermore, Sternberg notes that, in French-speaking countries, creativity has been linked to imagination, while German speakers approach creativity as a solution to a problem. By way of further illustration, in African countries, creativity has been associated with adaptive social behaviour while in Turkey creativity is thought to stem from fantasy. This diversity of interpretations has led to many different approaches to studying creativity.

Scholars who have studied creativity agree on some general characteristics such as to make a creative contribution, the development of new knowledge and skills is necessary (Sternberg, 2006). In addition, creativity is commonly seen as a desirable quality, perhaps because creative individuals tend to enjoy above-average IQs (Baer & Kaufman, 2006) or because creativity has been associated with emotional well-being and self-actualisation (Simonton, 2000). The extensive work of Simonton (1988, 2000) on creativity indicates that creativity can be developed over the life-course and that some particular social environments and circumstances are fertile ground for its development. Since creativity can be developed – at least to some extent – researchers have been interested in understanding the factors that may stimulate its emergence. Among the many factors, which influence creativity, Sternberg includes personality traits, motivation, the social environment, relaxation, imagination, specific knowledge, expertise, cognitive styles and personal interest. With respect to personality, Baer and Kaufman (2006) report that a number of traits have been linked to creativity such as independence of judgement, self-confidence, attraction to complexity, aesthetic orientation, tolerance for ambiguity, openness to experience, risk taking and self-efficacy.

The literature on creativity underscores the complex set of factors that contribute to enhance someone's creative potential. Amongst others, Csikszentmihalyi (2014) has highlighted the need to pay attention to the intricate ways in which individuals interact within various contexts and society. To account for the emergence of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi suggests a system model, which consists of three main elements. The first of these three elements is the *domain* within which one operates. Each domain includes a set of conventions and procedures for action. The domain of art, for example, is made up of a plethora of artistic styles and movements, which can be considered sub-domains. The *field* is the second element, which includes 'all the individuals who act as gatekeepers to the domain' (p. 229). These gatekeepers are the experts who collectively decide what idea or product is worth adding to the domain. In the domain of art, Csikszentmihalyi notes, the field encompasses art critics, art historians, art collectors and artists themselves, among others. The third element is the *individual*. In the system model, Csikszentmihalyi argues that 'creativity occurs when a person makes a change in the information contained in a domain, a change that will be selected by the field for inclusion in the domain' (p. 229). The system model indicates that even though personality traits may promote creativity in one individual, it is only by attending to the other two elements that one may fathom the emergence of creativity. In this respect, Simonton (2006) remarks that although creativity clearly stems from social interactions, the social context within which creativity takes place has received little attention. Although psychologists are increasingly aware of the importance of social interactions in fostering creativity, they have tended to focus on the cognitive processes that lead to creative thought, thus neglecting the role of the body in creativity. Given the emphasis on *doing* in creative tourism, it would seem natural to attend to embodied ways of experiencing creativity. In fact, Creely, Henriksen, and Henderson (2020) remark that *embodied creativity* is a valuable concept for researching creativity in such fields as the performing arts and music where the sensuous body is fully engaged in the material world. The dynamic, embodied, relational character of creativity is encapsulated in Glăveanu's (2013) description of creativity as being 'concerned with the *action* of an *actor* or group of *actors*, in its constant interaction with multiple *audiences* and the *affordances* of the material world, leading to the generation of new and useful *artefacts*' (p. 76). By artefacts, Glăveanu means any visible expression in the form of objects, actions and performances; all of which are endowed with cultural meanings. For instance, in a dance improvisation workshop, Lucznik, May, and Redding (2021) have explored the influence of the socio-cultural environment on the development of movement creativity. These authors report that dancers were best able to unleash their creative potential in an environment promoting trust, in which they felt safe and accepted.

Joy Paul Guilford (1897–1987), an American psychologist, who has pioneered creativity research, asserts that everyone can show remarkable signs of creativity (and intelligence) in various contexts. Because a creative act is considered an instance of learning (Guilford, 1950) and because one can learn in multiple ways and contexts, creativity takes different shapes and forms such as everyday creativity, artistic creativity and intellectual creativity (Ivcevic & Mayer, 2009). Likewise,

creativity manifests itself in a wide range of situations, from daily problem-solving at work and leisure to creative breakthroughs that may change the course of a particular domain. While creativity, mostly expressed in the form of learning and the acquisition of skills, is often developed during formal education, it can also be promoted informally during activities performed during leisure time (e.g. through craft-making).

Outside our everyday environment, tourism has become a vibrant venue for the stimulation of creativity through the development of skills, insights and performances (Richards, 2011). Richards and Wilson (2006) have reflected on the trends in the field of consumption in order to explain the growing demand for creativity in tourism. These commentators remark that individuals are not only increasingly dissatisfied with superficial modes of consumption, but creativity has also become attractive as a form of expression and for the construction of identities. The tourists' need for some creativity during a holiday may also be partly explained by the fact that people feel the intrinsic need to adjust to their ever-changing environment (Misra et al., 2006). The rigidity of routines and systems to which people feel obliged to conform stifle their daily creativity allowing few outlets for individual expression. Compounding this are political regimes that increasingly focus on compliance and surveillance, which further restrict peoples' freedom and silence their voices. Technology may also play a role in simultaneously enhancing and suppressing creativity. On the one hand, it enables interactivity and co-creation, on the other hand, it erodes precious time spent on passive pursuits that may be otherwise used for stimulating creativity. In addition, the rising interest in creative experience may be explained by the fact that creative and artistic activities are a conduit through which humans can thrive (Wright & Pascoe, 2015), understand themselves better (Berman, 1998) and improve their health (Clift & Camic, 2016).

Our cursory review of the literature on creativity has been largely influenced by studies within the field of psychology. Although psychology is primarily concerned with mental states and processes, the seminal and influential work of psychologists such as Guilford, Csikszentmihalyi, Sternberg and Simonton unambiguously points to the essential role of the social environment in fostering creativity in individuals. This observation calls for research practices that challenge the disciplinary silos and research traditions prevalent in tourist studies. We now turn to our philosophical position as researchers interested in understanding creative tourist experiences.

1.3 Our Philosophical Approach

Scholars writing about tourism draw inspiration from other scholars coming from a wide range of disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, cultural studies, management and marketing. This variety demonstrates the many facets of tourism scholarship and the many perspectives from which one can examine tourism phenomena. When tourism researchers draw from scholarly disciplines, they rely on conventions that are deeply rooted within these disciplines (Tribe, 2006). Conventions are value-laden and this implies that tourism