

CONTENTS

- Editors' Remarks
- Congratulatory Message
- Congratulatory Note
- Congratulatory Statement

ARTICLES

- The Creative Cities of 21st Century: From Japanese Case
- Conservation and Transmission of Local Wisdom Towards Creative City Initiation of Chiang Mai Province
- Trends of the Theory of Creative Cities and the Korean Situation
- The Rural Dimension of Spaces for Culture
- Promotion of Cultural Creative Industry Based on the Regeneration of Folk Arts: For Jinju, a City Full of Excitement, Enthusiasm and Liveliness

DISCUSSION

- Arts and Cultural Activities under the Pandemic: Problems and How to Solve Them

TRENDS IN CREATIVE TOURISM

- Creative Tourism, a Lever for Destinations' Ecosystem

NEWS & ACTIVITIES

- Barcelos (Portugal)
- Sukhothai (Thailand)
- Chiang Mai (Thailand)
- Paducah (USA)
- Sharjah (United Arab Emirates)
- Biella (Italy)

CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Jinju Sword Dance

TRENDS IN CREATIVE TOURISM

Creative Tourism, a Lever for Destinations' Ecosystem

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Recent disruptions highlighted how tourism is the mere reflect of social changes. In this sense, the “vacational tourism,” imposed by a standardized economic model during decades, has been giving way to “vocational tourism,” responding to infinity of new travel purposes. The switching from a top-down model to a bottom-up one is driven by the hyper-segmented demand of the new generation of travelers. They have been empowered by the new technologies that fostered the emergence of diverse economic and social models (namely the experience economy, the circular one, the creative economy—also known as “orange economy”—and the sharing economy) and the consequent change of values at global level.

Such a paradigm shift inevitably brought its share of challenges and opportunities. An overview of challenges we have to face will help us how to convert them into opportunities. The main challenge relies on the fact that, to meet this new and so specific demand, the tourism industry will have to modify its monographic model, to collaborate and hence to co-create with local stakeholders of all kind, who are not from this sector. Be they craftsmen, artists, cultural managers, cooks, farmers, and so on, let's call them “dream makers,” because they are the ones who will convert the travelers' activity into the experience of a lifetime and in some cases, make their dream come true.

However, in order for these experiences to be satisfying for the creative tourists, they not only have to be authentic and refer to local traditions and intangible heritage, but they also must fit with the tourism market rules. This implies a new challenge for the sector, as it is demonstrated worldwide that culture and tourism are not natural partners. Hence, there emerged new in-between, be they small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), or non-profit organizations and networks that have to help them in the design and marketing of such experiences. This leads to the creation of an ecosystem for the destination or territory, through which a cross-sectoral activity is developed, that widely benefits to the crafts sector and culture and creative industries (CCIs). This is how, instead of being a vector of negative externalities—namely over-tourism, gentrification, heritage loss, etc.—creative tourism is a lever for sustainable development, through the training, empowerment, inclusiveness, heritage recovery, to name a few.

Let's highlight these new opportunities through some practical cases of villages, cities, or regions of all kinds that are using creative tourism to (re)invent themselves by using their intangible heritage as a differential element.



Indeed, besides its adaptability to all kinds of destinations, including the most mature ones, this model is particularly benefiting the territories that, in some cases, did not even have necessarily a tourist vocation, but that perceive its relevance to revitalize the local economy while enhancing their intangible heritage and artistic know-how, among other qualitative benefits.

Let's explore such strategies through micro case-studies on destinations that have been certified "Creative Friendly," by the Creative Tourism Network®— Intangible heritage recovery:

1 Loulé is a municipality of about 71,000 inhabitants, located in the south of Portugal. Its aim was to increase overnight stays while the tourists who used to visit Loulé were "excursionists," that is to say, people who visited the city for half a day and overnighted in the coast. Another goal was to diversify the offer in order to attract tourists on the low season.

Loulé Creative tourism appeared as the best option since Loulé owns a very rich intangible heritage due to the coexistence of various cultures throughout its history. The municipality created a local network, gathering craftsmen, artists, festival organizers, CCIs, SMEs, hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs, as well as public bodies, under the brand "Loulé Criativo." They provided them with training mentored by the Creative Tourism Network®, through which they co-designed creative tourism experiences.

This wide array of experiences enabled to (re)create the city's DNA. Its immediate success was due to the participation of both locals and visitors, which guaranteed the authenticity of the content, preventing it from converting into a tourist product.

These achievements led to a second level, which aimed to consolidate the artistic and creative sectors through the creation of a design incubator and opened to international designers willing to co-create with local craftsmen. One of the outcomes is the recovery of old trades, and the new leadership of Loulé for European design.



- ①
- ②

← LEFT

- ① Creative Tourism Network_flower carpet
- ② Loulé Criativo_pottery workshop

- ①
- ②
- ③
- ④

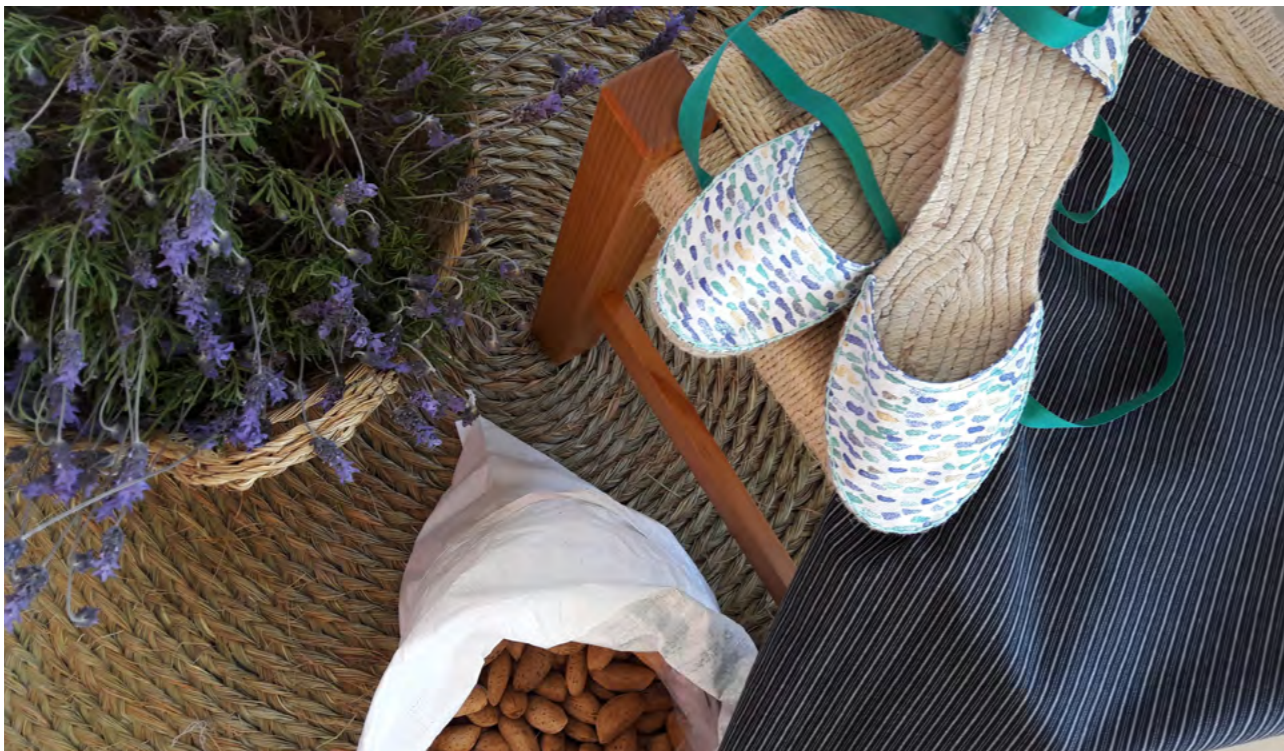
- ① Loulé Criativo_dried food workshop
- ② Loulé Criativo_basketry
- ③ Loulé Criativo_copper
- ④ Loulé Criativo_azulejos

Ibiza Island **2** **Ibiza Island** is another paradigmatic example of how creative tourism can convert intangible heritage into a tourist segment. The challenge was, for the Ibiza Island Council (regional government), to develop a sustainable tourism offer, in a mature destination internationally known for beach and party tourism. And yet, Ibiza's origins come from the Neolithic, and the Island preserved its heritage from Phoenician era, until today, through traditions that are still celebrated by the inhabitants. Besides this, Ibiza has been attracting creative people from around the world, which contributes to enrich its vibrant atmosphere. These are the (human) resources, the Island Council bet on, which allow to design a creative tourism program that is able to seduce different targets among the new segments of travelers (singles, seniors, sketchers, knitters, team building, etc.).

The local creative communities had the opportunity to train and co-create experiences that reflected the Island's DNA, merging crafts, folk art, photography, gastronomy, agriculture, to name a few. These local stakeholders also worked on the promotion of the whole destination, though workshops delivered by the Creative Tourism Network.

As a result, Ibiza has demonstrated that its tourism goes further than clubbing, and on the opposite, can be a referent for sustainable tourism, by attracting new valuable travelers, willing to enjoy its inspiring and peaceful atmosphere with local creators.

Creative Tourism Network_Ibiza Creative



Creative Tourism Network_Creative Gabrovo

Gabrovo (Bulgaria) **3** **Gabrovo (Bulgaria)** is located at the foot of the Balkan Mountains, in the valley of the Yantra River. In remote times, this particular location proved useful for producing knives, metal tools, turnery, textiles, and furriery, among other crafts, which contributed to the city's renown. Examples from the period of pre-industrial craftsmanship can still be experienced in nearby open-air ethnographic museum "Etar," where various types of water driven constructions are partly still used for crafts workshops.

Gabrovo was designated Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art by UNESCO in 2017, and Creative Friendly Destination by the Creative Tourism Network® in 2019.

The cultural offer of Gabrovo also relies on its numerous museums, festivals and traditional celebrations. The Festival of Humour, together with Carnival, have turned Gabrovo into the Capital of Humour, also characterized by Gabrovians' kindness and friendliness.

More generally, Gabrovo committed to develop and exchange innovative practices to promote creative industries, strengthen participation in cultural life, and integrate culture into sustainable urban development policies (<http://creativecity.gabrovo.bg/en/>).

For this reason, creative tourism appeared as a way to create a unified identity for the destination, by strengthening cross-sectoral linkage between local stakeholders, as well as positioning the city within the world tourism market.

In practice, the municipality, in partnership with diverse cultural bodies, coordinates the design of creative tourism that fits with the Good Practices disseminated by the Creative Tourism Network®.



Barcelos 4 **The Municipality of Barcelos (Portugal)** had a similar approach by building a strategy around traditions, crafts and folk arts that have been the core of its legacy throughout the centuries and today symbolize its differential value. The creativity of its local communities is well reflected in the craftsmanship work in various arts, such as clay, embroidery, weaving, wood, iron, leather, wicker as well as in the contemporary arts, which enabled the city to join the Creative City of UNESCO Network in 2017.

With CCIs on the core of its strategic development, Barcelos relies on creative tourism to generate economic growth by involving the society and enhancing this way, youth employment and inclusion.

A wide array of creative workshops and events are proposed in order to attract all kinds of tourist segments (even pilgrims) throughout the years.

Many other destinations worldwide are developing similar strategies, while adapting them to their context, specific issues and resources to use in order to create a value chain.

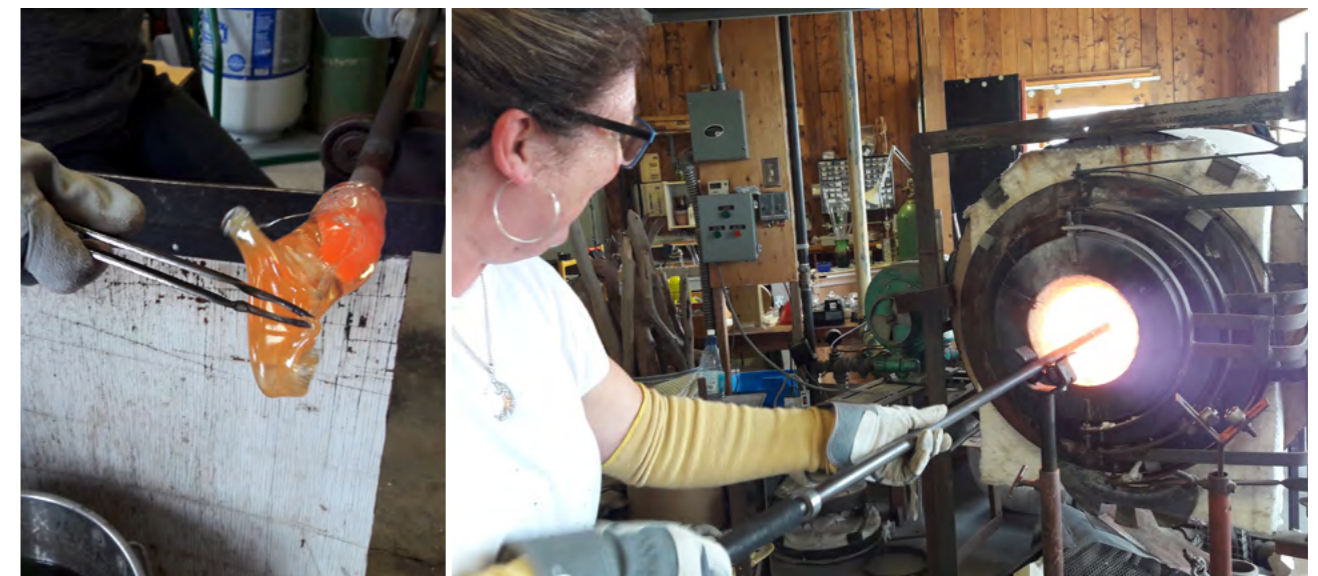
We could mention: Recife (Brazil) that turned Carnival celebration into a permanent creative tourism experience; Medellin (Colombia) where creative tourism is a tool to enhance social cohesion; The Magdalen Islands (Canada) that bet on creative tourism to maintain the tourism activity during the low season; Quito (Ecuador), where experiences are created to attract more specifically millennials in different districts; or Biot and Perpignan-Mediterranean (France) that find in creative tourism a way to foster staycation and especially more during the pandemic.

More generally, all of them pursue the same objectives, in order to:

- maintain the economic activity on the low season;
- stimulate SME's entrepreneurship through training, mentoring and international promotion;
- balance the tourist activity throughout the year and the territory;
- counterbalance the threats of overtourism;
- re-create linkage among the residents and between residents and visitors;
- preserve the intangible heritage;
- recreate their DNA, by involving a wide array of local stakeholders;
- position itself internationally with a differential tourism offer; and
- consolidate a CCIs hub, able to attract foreign creative entrepreneurs and SMEs.



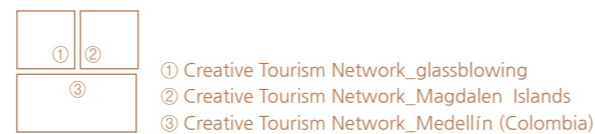
← LEFT
 ① Barcelos Municipality_rooster painting workshop
 ② ~ ③ Creative Tourism Network_lameduse_glassblowing_Magdalen Islands
 ① ~ ② Creative Tourism Network_lameduse_glassblowing_Magdalen Islands





In spite of their diversity, common good practices have been identified, that enable the destination to create value on their territory. They suggest to:

- be aware of the richness of their intangible heritage, from its minimal expression;
- focus on very local heritage (km 0), not to fall into a national tourist “cliché”;
- prioritize authenticity vs. sophistication when designing the creative experiences;
- always involve actively the tourists in the experience;
- segment the audience and customize the experiences in order to meet different



targets;

- have a cross-sectoral approach, co-creating with a wide array of local stakeholders (craftsmen, artists, cultural managers, farmers, tourist entrepreneurs, to mention just a few);
- (re)create the destination’s DNA and narrative with the whole local stakeholders instead of imposing an institutional; and
- network with other destinations instead of competing.

Such advices are even more relevant in the context of the current pandemic. Indeed, in a period during which international mobility is limited, lockdowns increased people’s interest for creative activities, DIY and human values, and creative tourism is considered as a suitable option to maintain the tourist activity through staycation. This also marks an inflection point in the global evolution of the tourism industry, toward a more sustainable one. Indeed, such an uncertain period is providing a testing ground for new forms of tourism management, more orientated to human values, and recovering the essence of the travel and the cultural exchanges. In this context, creative transmission of intangible heritages in crafts and folk arts is offering the best ways to promote creative industries for sustainable urban development—a virtuous model, of which Jinju is currently the best example.