Idea Laboratories: Providing **Tools** for **Creative Tourism** Agents

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Abstract | In Portugal, the project CREATOUR - Creative Tourism Destination Development in Small Cities and Rural Areas – has been working with a range of cultural/creative organizations (pilots) that are implementing new creative tourism experiences in the Portuguese territory. To improve their offers, CREATOUR carried out, between April 2017 and May 2019, a series of Idea Laboratories as a means to support content development, readjust and discuss pilot initiatives, and exchange experience and knowledge. These IdeaLabs focused on collaborative processes that accompanied all stages of the development of a creative tourism activity, from ideation to prototyping.

One of the major needs was to establish a series of instruments to make a critical assessment of the laboratories' outcomes, to better understand if this type of collaborative process can be helpful in the designing of cultural tourism activities. This paper intends to disclosure the methodology used and the instruments created to evaluate the efficiency of the IdeaLabs and to present the results of such evaluation in a qualitative and comprehensive approach. By creating a methodology and a series of instruments, the evaluation process assessed the impacts of the IdeaLabs in the participants' ideas and strategies, and allowed us to better understand the creative and cultural organization's needs when implementing creative tourism experiences.

Keywords | CREATOUR project, research & incubation approach, idea laboratories, creative tourism experiences, creative tourism network

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1. Introduction

1.1. CREATOUR, a research and incubation project

CREATOUR is a Portuguese Project with an integrated approach and research agenda for creative tourism in small cities and rural areas in Portugal. It is an action-research project that aims to improve the level of knowledge and systematic analysis about creative tourism in small territories; to understand the processes (under different conditions and situations) through which creative tourism activities can be effectively developed, implemented and made sustainable; to understand how an integrated approach to creative tourism may provide feasible options to improve the stability of cultural/creative organizations of small cities and rural areas; and to assess the multidimensional impacts (economic, cultural, social, environmental) of creative tourism activities in small cities and rural areas on cultural/creative organizations, on tourism and local development in general[1].

The CREATOUR Project worked directly with its 'pilots', a group of 40 cultural and creative organizations from Portugal that offer creative tourism activities in small cities and rural areas. CREATOUR pilots are partners of the CREATOUR research and 'co-researchers', being actively involved in the research. They collaborate providing creative tourism experiences, gathering data and documenting each activity, and sharing their experience. The 40 pilots – 10 per region (Algarve, Alentejo, Centro and Norte) – were chosen in two calls made by the project. They were chosen for their cultural value, creative nature, diversity, ability to attract tourists, potential community impact, and their willingness to cooperate with the research team. It is expected that these creative tourism experiences can contribute to diversify the tourism offer, attract new visitors, attenuate tourism seasonality, bring tourists to small cities and rural areas, and establish the first creative tourism network in Portugal. Focusing on collaborative processes, the project and its partners developed a research plan focused on creative tourism in small towns and rural areas in Portugal, in which the implementation of real creative tourism experiences is a key exercise. CREATOUR's approach is, therefore, multidisciplinary[2], and has a theoretical-practical approach.

Content development and support of the activities' implementation are the main assets provided by the research team. Its partners, the pilots, provide information by developing real experiences. The project exchanges experience and knowledge with its pilots, creates synergies between academics and society and promotes stakeholders and local communities' engagement, working directly with the entities that are implementing creative tourism offers in the Portuguese territory. Thus, a sustained network can be founded, helping researchers to know who the creative tourists are and how to reach them and providing experiences that bring economic income to cultural and creative organizations and prosperity to regions.

1.2. Creative Tourism and Creative Tourism Experiences

The demanding of unique experiences in tourism is a major trend worldwide (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; ATTO, 2015; ECT, 2017; Turismo de Portugal, 2017). Some travellers want to be related to its destinations, developing emotional links with the places they visit and with the people that inhabit it (Gu & Ryan, 2008; Ilincic, 2013). They seek to participate in the communities' cultural life. One way of doing so is developing the travel-

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[1]CREATOUR's application to Portugal 2020 (*Programas de Atividades Conjuntas* - PAC) in 2015.
[2]CREATOUR is held by 5 research centres: the leader, CES (University of Coimbra), Lab2PT (University of Minho), DINÂMIA'CET-IUL (ISCTE-IUL, Lisbon), CIDEHUS (University of Évora) and CinTurs (University of Algarve).

ler's creativity through their active participation in experiences which are characteristic of their destination (Raymond & Richards, 2000). Creative tourism is, therefore, to "travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place", which "provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture" (UNESCO, 2006).

A new type of tourism emerged: Creative Tourism, a sustainable small-scale tourism that provides a genuine visitor experience by combining an immersion in local culture with a learning and creative process (Cabeça et. al., 2020). The creative tourism approach enables artistic and other creative activities to play a driving role in the broader socio-economic development. It is seen both as a type of cultural tourism and as a reaction to the massification of cultural tourism (Remoaldo et al., 2020). Coined in the turn of the century (Richards & Raymond, 2000), the concept has evolved over time and marks a shift from passive to active consumption (Duxbury & Richards, 2019). It occurs through shared experiences of immersion and appropriation/co-creation and is linked to place identity and to its local resources. Rather than seeing or gazing, visitors are invited to get involved in a destination's culture, and to engage in its ways of living. It bonds visitors and residents and people to places (Cabeça et. al., 2019a).

Therefore, creative tourism emphasizes culture, and presupposes an effective exchange of experiences, knowledge and skills between travellers and residents. It involves tourists in events that also involve the participation of the local communities, thus creating links between the participants. Creative tourism links people to places, promoting the immersion of tourists in the local culture (Cabeça et. al., 2019a). Active participation, creative self-expression, learning and community engagement (Cabeça et. al., 2019b) are key aspects of a creative tourism experience.

Creative tourism allows destinations to use cul-

tural, social, and human capital as driving forces. Strongly linked with its territory, and providing an immersion into local culture, this type of tourism is thought to enable artistic and creative activities that can have a key role in socio-economic development and in the development of a sustainable small-scale tourism, improving the quality of life and the ability of small and rural areas to survive over time (Duxbury and Campbell, 2009; Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010; Lazzeroni et. al., 2013). In fact, when the tourism products integrate local communities in their planning; economic, environmental, socio-cultural benefits can be achieved (Simpson, 2008).

Besides the academic research on creative tourism, CREATOUR also intended to stimulate the emergency of a network of creative tourism organizations that meets the traveller's expectations while providing immersive experiences that contribute to the region's welfare. Bearing this in mind, the project opened two calls (in 2016 and 2018) for proposals from all types of organizations, entities and professionals operating in Portugal (North, Centre, Alentejo and Algarve) that wanted to implement and develop creative tourism initiatives and collaborate with the project's research team. Forty pilot projects were selected (10 in each region), chosen for their cultural value, creative nature, diversity, ability to attract tourists and potential community impact.

The chosen pilot creative tourism initiatives aim to revitalize traditional arts, crafts, and knowledge, promote spaces and places, foster creativity (artistic residencies, festivals...), develop technologies, disclose the natural, historical, and cultural heritage of their regions, etc. It is expected that these offers may contribute to diversify the tourism offer, attract new visitors, attenuate tourism seasonality, bring tourists to small cities and rural areas, and establish the first creative tourism network in Portugal.

1.3. Collaborative Networks

In the present day, universities are often project's incubators and the role of the academy as stimulus for real entrepreneurship is an important aspect to create a relationship with the overall community. In CREATOUR Project, however, knowledge is transferred from academics to society through a different path: providing support to pre-existing entrepreneurships (pilots). The Project combines theoretical and practical knowledge in a flexible methodology that implies reciprocity, co-learning, and inter-knowledge, thus constituting an approach that is a disruptive innovation to the traditional research model and an alternative to a positivist paradigm of knowledge production.

The partnership between the CREATOUR research team and its pilots required the constitution of a collaborative space in which tourism products could be co-created, and creativity boosted. Innovation processes involving heterogeneous actors in collaborative spaces where creativity and entrepreneurship meets (Schmidt, 2019) are increasing, and communication platforms are a very well know phenomenon since the early 2000s (Castells, 2001). Innovation, creativity, and community building are boosted through new forms of organization and of knowledge transfer (Schmidt, 2019). These new meeting spaces can be generically called "Open Creative Labs" (Schmidt, 2019), "Open Innovation Labs" (Rochman et. al., 2017), "Collective Innovation Labs" (Janin & Pecqueur, 2017) or, simply, "Living Labs" (Schuurman et. al., 2015).

These labs are platforms of choices for integrating goals and methodologies for open innovation and user-centred innovation (Schuurman et. al., 2015). They consist in spaces that provide material and social settings for creativity, creative work, and entrepreneurship. According to Schmidt, "Labs generate value by providing spaces for creative processes, for the act of making, and for participating in practices and technological progress" (2019, p. 11).

Rather than just being places of information, new collaborative platforms are 'informational' spaces (Castells, 2001), once they require new forms of social organization and new methodologies, a transformation in the interactional practices. Building partnerships and ensuring knowledge transfer are key for the creative tourism offers' implementation. Therefore, creative spaces, where new tools are to be applied, must be created. A research and innovation ecosystem are needed.

The definition of innovation broadens to include social and institutional alongside scientific and technological innovation. Traditional innovation is a linear progression that starts with an idea that is then developed (Barata et. al., 2016). In a creative innovation process, however, bridging the gap between the research and the market through new strategies, is imperative (Barata et. al., 2016): a place-based view of creative innovation that comprises the different phases of ideation, development and implementation of the creative tourism offers, integrating the specific cultural features of a place, is needed. This emergent form of work shifts the emphasis from a single local project to a network that promotes trans-local value chains.

Within the CREATOUR scope, an inclusive approach, strongly linked to the territorial agents through cooperative processes, is the key to conduct a research addressing both the scientific objectives of the project and the knowledge that organizations need to evolve. Creative tourism is inseparable from the territories in which it takes place, linking creativity to places and providing unique cultural experiences, predicting active roles for communities, the use of local resources and an immersion into the culture of the destination. Territorial capitalization, by creating a network with local and regional organizations, addresses the theoretical research questions and enables the development of an agenda for creative tourism, intervening positively in the territory (Gonçalves et. al., 2020, p. 24).
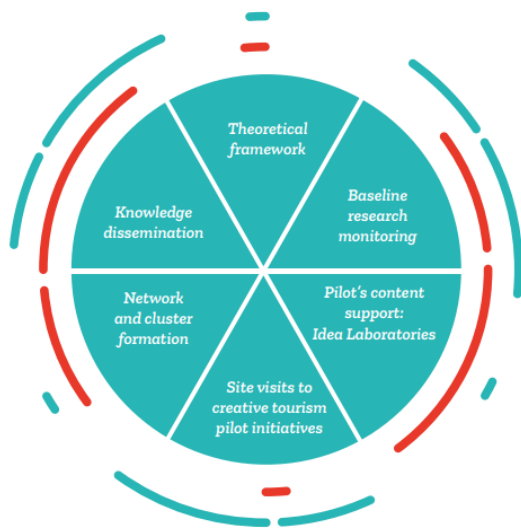
Figure 1 | CREATOUR Research Methodology
Source: Gonçalves et. al., 2020

2. Providing Tools for Creative Tourism Agents

2.1 Idea Laboratories' Approach and Methodology

The above research methodology, that has a collaborative approach, was the basis for the development of the CREATOUR Project 'Creative Idea Laboratories'. To link research centres / universities to the place where the practice develops, to the market, and to support those working in on the ground initiatives, is a complex task that requires specific strategies to generate involvement and commitment from both parties. In addition, it is necessary to provide, or give sustainability, to the projects that are taking this journey with the research team. In this sense, a space that can function as a meeting point for academics and promoters, for different ways of thinking and acting, was imperative. In the scope of the CREATOUR Project, these creative idea laboratories intended to support innovation and content development, readjust, and discuss new initiatives, exchange ex-

perience and knowledge. Triggering creativity and linking creativity to place is a way to improve tourism offers and the tourist's experience, but also an opportunity for sustainable development of tourism in small and rural communities.

To contribute to local development processes, these pilots' initiatives must focus on regional cultural resources and rely on community involvement. Before offers can became a reality, they must be creatively designed, and connected to the people and the places where they will be provided. Committed to support the development of specific content and skills that can help pilots to create and maintain a sustainable creative tourism offer, the CREATOUR team carried out a series of workshops with them: the *IdeaLabs*. *IdeaLabs*, short for "idea laboratories", were workshops – at regional, interregional, and national levels – designed by the researchers' team to help pilots implementing their initiatives by linking creativity to territories, placing the tourism projects in their communities; readjusting and discussing pilot initiatives; exchanging experience and knowledge; and creating synergies. They were also an opportunity to provide important analytical and technical tools, to obtain specialized training and specific skills, and to establish professional contacts.

CREATOUR *IdeaLabs* took place between April 2017 and May 2019. In the first two regional editions (1.0 & 2.0 and 3.0), only the pilots selected in the first call have participated. From edition 4.0 onwards, the pilots from the second call integrated the network and the laboratories. Each edition had specific goals, as we address below. National *IdeaLabs* had an "up to date" and meeting purposes rather than contend development. On the contrary, regional and interregional workshops were moments where the team's contribution to the final result was most decisive, once its success relied on the thematises and contends developed by the researchers.

During the *IdeaLabs*, different types of sessions were careful organized to address the main

goals of each session: involve all participants, cultural mapping, generate ideas, foster regional connections, develop communication plans, articulate strategies to link creativity to place, exchange of experiences, advanced training, build interregional connections... While it is impossible to provide a full accounting of all methodologies and approaches developed within the various sessions, we can highlight a few:

- **Friendship webs:** meeting the other participants through interactional dynamics.

- **Cultural mapping:** In creative tourism, to map emotions, and to capture a place's identity - "how special it is" and "how does it feels like" - is a key exercise. CREATOUR used objects to map, link, explain, and create narratives about the places where the creative tourism experiences were taking place.

- **Creative tourism prototyping:** some sessions were focused on creative and 'disruptive' thinking through brainstorming activities and the use of techniques such as fast prototype, fast testing, and role playing.

- **Business Model Canvas:** aimed to deepen the knowledge about the different steps and needs to implement creative tourism activities.

As Emmendoerfer et. al. (2020) points out, the CREATOUR *IdeaLabs* are an empirical approach to the *iLab* concept, a laboratory created to propose solutions in innovative ways, through partnership network, co-creation, and experimentation processes, and making use of new platforms (Selloni et. al., 2013). By creating connections and networks between the academic and organizational world, the CREATOUR *IdeaLabs* serve as "an idea acceleration programme" for its pilots, going from ideation to the prototyping stage, and involving both idea development and experimentation (Emmendoerfer et. al., 2020).

2.2. IdeaLab's development

In the CREATOUR Idea Laboratories, the research team worked with the cultural/creative organizations implementing creative tourism offers throughout the country. In a regional approach, each edition had four sessions: Norte, Centro, Alentejo and Algarve. The last edition, as stated before, was interregional, with all pilots attending. Beside the research team and the pilot organizations, other external elements/guests were present in some *IdeaLabs*, developing activities, supporting sessions, observing, or sharing experiences.

All editions were different, and their programmes were always defined considering the specific objective of each moment. In fact, there was a clear correspondence between the objectives of each edition with their programme contents.

- In *IdeaLab* 1.0&2.0, the main goal was to trigger the creativity of the pilots designing the creative tourism experiences. The first *IdeaLabs* supported the content development to readjust, present and discuss pilot initiatives and create conditions for its implementation. To link creative tourism offers to the places where they take place; to generate ideas and develop concepts; and to present a business model were the main subjects. Presentation, discussion and brainstorming were fundamental.

- *IdeaLabs* 3.0 aimed to follow up on the work previously done (some experiences were already happening). Pilots reflected and presented to each other the activities they were developing, shared their experience and lessons learned. Each pilot presented a short video addressing their experience and the research team disclosed the results of the first field observations.

- 4.0 edition of the *IdeaLab* welcomed new pilots and focused on the implementation of

creative tourism initiatives, this time with the second call pilots. It was the first time that all regional partners (first and second calls) met each other. Once again, a link between the offers and their territory was made (cultural mapping) and a business model was developed. Based on previous evaluation, the research team had learned that pilots were more interested in improving their ideas rather than generating new ones. So, in this edition with new pilots, the *IdeaLabs* focused more on the key ideas that each project had.

- For the first time, all regional pilot projects were asked to attend for the entire programme of the event. In *IdeaLabs* 5.0. all pilots presented activities developed so far, shared experiences and reflected about their struggles and needs. The team sought to provide their partners with a space for reflection and cooperation, which are important steps to build a real and long-lasting network.

- Towards CREATOUR 2.0, the Interregional *IdeaLab* intended to be a privileged space for meeting, knowledge, and networking. The constitution of a future national creative

tourism network was the goal. To establish such network, researchers shared their findings about the work done with the pilots: unforeseen events, difficulties, challenges, and gaps. Pilots learned the different types of network models (as well as best practices, success factors...) and how to create a network by prototyping and testing.

3. Creating a methodology for IdeaLab's evaluation

Are *IdeaLabs* an appropriate approach and a fundamental step towards the establishment of creative tourism activities? To assess the importance of such actions in the process of designing creative tourism activities, it was necessary to create a data analysis model that would allow the research team of the CinTurs to evaluate the *IdeaLab's* development. Such evaluation would also be useful to adjust *IdeaLab's* contends to the participant's needs and to improve future initiatives. The evaluation of the regional and interregional IdeaLabs was, therefore, a key element in between sessions, and at the end of its implementation.

Table 1 | Evaluation of the IdeaLabs: methodology

Evaluation aims	Tool / outcome	Applied / developed by
Monitor the implementation of *IdeaLabs*.	Questionnaire	All pilots attending the session (one per person)
Evaluate the development of *IdeaLabs*.	Instant Report	Local teams / CinTurs team
Adapt *IdeaLabs* to the participants' needs and expectations.	Observation chart and/or internal feedback (quest, reports...)	Local teams
Improve future initiatives.	Box with suggestions	All participants (researchers and pilots) attending the session
Stress key factors, successes, needs and expectations of the *IdeaLabs*.	Post-Lab debriefings with organizers/ facilitators	Research team
Make a critical analysis of the *IdeaLab's* development.	Regional Edition's Report	CinTurs team
Disclosure pilot's thoughts about the *IdeaLabs*.	Summative Report	
Establish guidelines and recommendations for future initiatives.	Final recommendations	Research team

Source: Author's elaboration

In an incubation-implementation-evaluation-refinement approach, and to monitor and assess product development and implementation processes of the *IdeaLabs* and make a critical assessment, several analytical tools were created, whose results have been poured into reports. Researchers observed the *IdeaLabs*, took photographs, video, and field notes, applied a questionnaire to the participants, and made Instant Reports. A post-Lab debrief with organizers/facilitators was held after each event as well. Evaluation outcomes were presented in five reports (one for each edition). Bringing together these evaluations, it was possible to conduct a multidimensional comparative analysis of the development and implementation processes and impacts, disclosed in a summative report and in a recommendation report.

IdeaLabs' evaluation was a key exercise to adapt contends to the participants' needs and expectations, improve the workshops to come, identify key factors of the idea laboratories, better understand pilot's needs and present suggestions for future initiatives.

It is worth noting that the team also used the methodology of producing 'Instant Reports' in the evaluation process. Highly visual, an instant report is a combination of images and text reporting what happened during each session. Through its projection at the end of each session, participants were left with an overview of the event's highlights. Instant reporting allowed the research team to gather information as the event occurred and to give the participants some insights immediately.

The questionnaires applied to the pilots in each *IdeaLab* were a primary source of information. In each session, the participants were asked about their experiences in the IdeaLabs: important thematising, what went better or worse, key elements of the sessions, lessons learned, sessions that were more and less important, etc. Each question addressed a particular goal of the evaluation.

The design of the questionnaire was determined taking into account each question and the goals associated with it: multiple choice questions allowed respondents to choose the items in evaluation that were suitable (which could be more than one or none); three to four-point scale questions with rating guides checked respondent's opinion, agreement, satisfaction, etc.; multiple response asked respondents to choose only the suitable items; and closed questions such as yes or no allowed asking simple questions (Burgess, 2001).

Some of the questions were removed from one survey to another, once they only had meaning in a particular context; others were included in all editions, which allowed a comparison between results. The plasticity of this model, adapted and being created in a collaborative way between the centres and the pilots, was an essential aspect to achieve the desired results.

It should be noted that, during the first editions, a questionnaire was also applied to the research team, that was then replaced by observation notes, reports, and briefings. Nevertheless, in this paper, we address particularly the pilots' perception and the *IdeaLab's* role as a tool for creative organizations to improve their activities. Was the *IdeaLab* an innovative approach that contributed to a successful implementation of creative tourism experiences?

Table 2 | Issues of the Questionnaires applied in the IdeaLabs

Issue / question	Items under evaluation	Question's design
Why did you submit a proposal to the CREATOUR Project? *	To develop/ put into practice an idea Knowledge about creative tourism Meet other projects and partners Be part of an innovative project Financial stimulus Explore new activities...	Multiple choice (choose those that apply to the respondent's understanding) + other option (name)
Evaluation of the organization **	Preparation, location, support materials and documentation, technological resources, session's coordination, accommodation.	Scale: weak, medium, good, very good
Evaluation of the general programming **	Reception, objectives, thematic, dynamics and interaction, practical results, duration	Scale: weak, medium, good, very good
Importance / utility of the IdeaLab	List of statements addressing the outcomes expected to achieve at the end of the editions (ex: to be better informed, to have new ideas, to develop partnerships, to discuss...)	Scale: totally disagree, disagree, agree, absolutely agree
Relevance of each session	List of all the contents / matters developed at the event (ex: presentation, debate, practical exercise...)	Scale: expendable, unimportant, important, indispensable
Which were the most and least positive aspects of the event?	Organization and duration of sessions, materials and resources, information provided, sharing experiences, and working in partnership, interaction between the elements of the CREATOUR project and the participants, knowledge transfer, development of the activities, result of the activities	Multiple Response possible (choose only those that apply to the respondent's understanding): more positive / less positive
Which were the aspects that had too much or too little time?	Information provided, discussion of results, group dynamics, working time for each session, programme content, pauses, duration	Rated response for each item: insufficient, sufficient, excessive
Was the IdeaLab useful?	General evaluation	Yes / No
Developed / is ready to develop creative experiences ***	Yes or no?	Yes / No
Overall evaluation of the IdeaLab	General evaluation	Scale: weak, medium, good, very good
Comments and suggestions	Free writing	Open field

* applied only in *IdeaLabs* 1.0 & 2.0 and *IdeaLabs* 4.0, when new pilots entered the network.
** applied only in the first two editions, when the goal was to understand whether the organization was adapted to circumstances or not. In any case, key aspects addressed in these questions, such as thematic and duration, can also be found in other questions.
*** applied only in the first editions, when there were no - or few − experiences being carried out.

Source: Author's elaboration

4. Results of the IdeaLabs' evaluation

In this section we present the results of the evaluation. Both content analysis (Bardin, 2016), as well as statistical analysis were carried out. To provide a more comprehensive insight of the results, we chose to present the results in a qualitative approach, making a qualitative analysis of the statical data that was gathered in each evaluation stage (one for each *IdeaLab*).

4.1. Major Findings

According to the results of the evaluations, all *IdeaLabs* were well achieved (particularly the first and the last) and respondents rarely used "poor" (once in the 3.0 edition) and "medium" (3.0 and 5.0) to describe their experiences in the events. *IdeaLabs* 1.0 & 2.0 and *IdeaLabs* 4.0 were dedi-

cated to the development and implementation of action-oriented ideas and experiences, while the Interregional *IdeaLab* was oriented towards the future. This action emphasis may have been a satisfaction factor, a hypothesis that is reinforced by the fact that action-oriented sessions were also the most valued ones.

In all *IdeaLabs*, "dispensable"and "unimportant"were residual choices when assessing each session's importance. Most respondents thought that all moments were "important" or "indispensable". Taking these results into account, each *IdeaLab* had a strong point (i.e., an activity with a larger percentage of "indispensable" answers):

- *IdeaLabs* 1.0&2.0: Meet others and share knowledge.

- *IdeaLabs* 3.0: Share and discuss the experiences taking place.

- *IdeaLabs* 4.0: Centre the Pilot Projects in

Creative Tourism.

- *IdeaLabs* 5.0: Make a reflection about the CREATOUR experience so far.

- Interregional *IdeaLab*: Network's knowledge.

It is worth noting that these best achieved moments in each event are in line with the objectives and the programme of the editions: share, improve, be creative, reflect and look to the future.

Pilots valued the interaction between the participants during the *IdeaLabs*. They also felt the need for further information about creative tourism initiatives and about the tourist's profiles. *IdeaLabs*' duration was often considered excessive. At the Interregional *IdeaLab*, however, the duration was considered insufficient. After four editions in which only the regional partners met, and despite the desire expressed by some pilot projects to extend the event to a national scale, the meeting of all network partners in the same *IdeaLab* was not welcomed by all in a positive way, an evidence that leads us to consider the need for greater rapprochement at a national level. Table 3 shows the more and the less positive and the excessive and insufficient aspects in each IdeaLab (assessed through a previous statistical analysis).

Table 3 | More and less positive and excessive and insufficient aspects in each edition

	IdeaLab 1.0&2.0	*IdeaLab* 3.0	*IdeaLab* 4.0	*IdeaLab* 5.0	**Interregional** *IdeaLab*
Positive aspects	Sharing experiences and working in partnership. Interaction between the CREATOUR team and other participants.	Interaction between the CREATOUR team and other participants.	Interaction between the CREATOUR team and other participants.	Interaction between the CREATOUR team and other participants. Session's organization.	Sessions' organization and duration. Sharing experiences and working in partnership. Activities' development.
Less Positive Aspects	Sessions' organization and duration.	Information provided.	Sessions' organization and duration.	Sessions' duration.	Meeting of all network partners in the same *IdeaLab*. Materials and resources made available.
Scarce aspects	Information about other creative tourism initiatives.	Information about the creative tourist's profile.	Information about creative tourism. Discussion of results. Working time for each session.	Discussion of results. Group dynamics.	Discussion of results. Working time for each session. *IdeaLab* duration.
Excessive aspects	*IdeaLab* duration.	*IdeaLab* duration.	Working time for each session.	*IdeaLab* duration.	Group dynamics.

Source: Author's elaboration

From the analysis of the impacts of *IdeaLabs*, it is understood how some of the main results of the sessions are closely linked to the most valued moments in each edition: in the first edition (1.0 & 2.0), *knowledge* was a key success factor and impact; and in the second (3.0) and fourth (5.0) editions, *reflection* was the most valued aspect. In the third edition (4.0), which guided projects towards creative tourism, the participants had *new ideas*. These are the main sentences with which the participants, invited to comment on the final perception about the event, totally agreed upon. The question (see table 2) was formulated with a list of statements addressing the outcomes expec-

ted to be achieved at the end of the session, and participants had to express their disagreement / agreement about each statement.

- *IdeaLabs* 1.0&2.0: "It allowed me to meet and to communicate with the other participants".

- *IdeaLabs* 3.0: "I've clarified my doubts and reflected on the activities I develop".

- *IdeaLabs* 4.0: "It allowed me to meet and to communicate with other participants and triggered new ideas".

- *IdeaLabs* 5.0: "I reflected on the activities I

develop, and I got to know better my partner's activities".

- Interregional *IdeaLab*: "I´ve reflected on the future of the creative tourism network and I want to participate actively in it".

Considering that the programme of the Idea-Labs was in line with the key moments and impacts of each one, the event's objectives seem to have been achieved. Evaluation also provided an outlook of the main success factors and the aspects that need to be improved.

Table 4 | Success factors and aspects to improve

IdeaLab	Success factors	To improve
1.0 & 2.0	Linking tourism offers to its territory. Sharing experiences and interaction between participants.	Information available on creative tourism. Work on the ideas already conceived (and not generating new ones).
3.0	Reflection about the first activities developed. Presentation of the results of the field observations and the surveys applied to tourists.	Information about other creative tourism experiences. Clarify the role of the pilot projects as "co-researchers".
4.0	Linking tourism offers to its territory. Centre the projects on creative tourism. Define the key ideas for each project.	Connection between all projects (first and second call). Spend more time discussing the results.
5.0	Reflection about the activities developed. Greater knowledge of the activities carried out by the other partners.	Promote synergies and define common strategies and commitments. Work the future of the network.
Interregional	More knowledge about network models: framing, best practices, success factors.	Better ways of carrying out a meeting with all the CREATOUR network partners.

Source: Author's elaboration

4.2. Main Considerations

CREATOUR *IdeaLabs* aimed, at first, to trigger the creativity of the organizations willing to conceive new creative tourism experiences; support content development; readjust, present, and discuss pilot initiatives; create conditions for the implementation of the experiments; establish a link between creative activities and the place where they take place. *IdeaLabs* intended to provide new tools for creative tourism agents, accompanying the activities' implementation, expanding partners' knowledge, and establishing a network. *IdeaLabs* allowed innovation, the exchange of experiences, the creation of synergies and a ground for a future creative tourism network.

Much of its goals have been achieved, although the future of the network has not been determined yet. Nevertheless, the alignment of *IdeaLabs'* objectives with the pilots' expectations was not fully achieved. The main reason for some mismatch between pilots' needs and CREATOUR contend development, has its roots in the objectives of the *IdeaLabs*: pilot's needs went beyond the scope of

the CREATOUR planned action and required complementary interventions. In fact, pilots expressed the following further needs. (Some are yet impossible to meet: further information about the profile of the creative tourist in Portugal - a major outcome of the project – is yet be disclosed). Whenever possible, CREATOUR tried to fill these gaps, developing specialized training, and conducting information sessions with specialists.)

- Information: What is creative tourism? Who is the creative tourist? Is creative tourism really implemented in Portugal? Is there a defined strategy for creative tourism in Portugal?

- Mentoring: Being accompanied before, during and after the implementation of tourism offers. Reinforce information and knowledge sharing.

- Training: Acquire new skills in marketing, promotion, communication, and distribution of creative tourism offers. How are tourism products created? How is the product sold and to whom is it addressed?

- Network: Contact with experts in the area. Learn with successful entrepreneurs and organizations. What other creative tourism initiatives are out there?

Sometimes, pilots seem to have wished to discuss less and listen to more external opinions; focused more on lessons to learn rather than in new ideas. In this sense, the suggestions presented, and the results of the evaluations carried out in each edition, contributed positively to the alignment between the programmatic contents of the events and the expectations. An assessment of the aspects that went well, and the ones that were less well succeeded during the *IdeaLabs* allow us to draw some guidelines for future interventions, stressing the key points that must be included in idea laboratories programmes carried out with creative tourism organizations. The goal is to create more robust and appropriate tools for creative tourism agents. Interaction between participants, cultural mapping, knowledge sharing, refection about the experiences and partnerships were the most successful aspects of the *IdeaLabs*. The absence of specialized training, the non-definition of a common strategy, the information made available and the predominance of academia over society (events were thought to be "too academic"sometimes) are aspects to be considered and improved.

5. Conclusions

IdeaLabs proved to be more effective when working with pre-existing ideas than generating new ones. Given the lack of evolution in the maturation of initiatives during IdeaLabs, the latter should be more focused on the definition of action plans. To optimize the use of ideas and develop structured action plans, the contents of *IdeaLabs* must be directed to pilot initiatives, focusing specifically on each idea to be implemented. More than ideas,

CREATOUR's pilots sought to obtain more technical information, benefit from the direct monitoring by the team and have access to tools that allow them to implement their specific initiatives. In this sense, specific training that allows pilots to acquire or increase skills to be more independent and more efficient in planning and managing their initiatives, is essential.

By joining CREATOUR, pilots aimed to gain greater knowledge about creative tourism and more information on cases of successful creative tourism initiatives, the profile of the tourists, the cultural and creative sector, the existing offer, and the characteristics of the market. As this is a practical research field taking its first steps, much of that information was not yet available (CREATOUR is an answer to this gap). Future workshops can now benefit from the knowledge acquired in the meantime.

In collaborative processes, such as those developed at the *IdeaLabs*, it is essential to reinforce the sharing of information and to communicate the results in accessible ways on a regular basis. Strategies must also be found to increase the interaction between the parties involved. Besides *IdeaLabs*, that are privileged spaces for exchanging experiences and knowledge and for the creation of synergies, it would be important to create - in partnership with the pilots - other events, on a regular basis, that address the same needs at a local, regional, and national scale. This type of collaboration would increase the interaction between the parties involved and allow them to contact with potential public and specialists in the areas of tourism promotion and management and meet some good practices in creative tourism.

It has also become evident that, in a project like CREATOUR, it is essential to include a strong training component that meets the needs of the pilots. Thus, as identified, specialized training courses in Communication and Marketing or Project Management, among others, would have made a difference.

It is important to highlight sharing as a success factor for *IdeaLabs*. Interaction and sharing have always been valued. Establishing the link between creative activities and the territories where they occur has proved to be fundamental as well. After all, it is this connection – between hosts and guests, and among creative suppliers – that distinguishes creative tourism from other types of tourism and that can constitute a path towards sustainable tourism offers.

An *IdeaLab* is a sharing space that can be characterized as Living Lab (Schuurman et al., 2015) or an Open Creative Lab (Schmid, 2019), a collaborative space with user-driven creativity that fosters experimentation, enhances entrepreneurship, and engages participants in collective work, constituting a broader community of knowledgeable users. The CREATOUR *Idealabs* methodology is an excellent tool to promote the meeting between academia and the market, due to its plasticity and dialogism, and, hopefully, it has fulfilled its function, now leaving to the pilots the task of maintaining the network that was established throughout this process. At the Interregional *IdeaLab*, 80% of the participants expressed their willingness to participate in a future creative tourism network in Portugal.

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