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Shared Value Creation, Creative Tourism and Local Communities Development: The Role of Cooperation as an Antecedent

Criação de Valor Compartilhado, Turismo Criativo e Desenvolvimento de Comunidades Locais: O Papel da Cooperação Como Antecedente

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Abstract/ Resumo

The link between local value creation through creative tourism and local development isn't completely understood in the literature. Specifically it is unclear how creative tourism is developed in the context of rural communities with few resources and without a clear view of the path to value creation.

This research analyses cooperation as an antecedent to value creation, in the context of creative tourism, based on five cases collected in five countries through in-depth interviews with local stakeholders. Results show that communities are able to recognize their potentialities and to cooperate to create value, however they are unable by themselves to overcome barriers to entrepreneurial behaviour. Results highlight the role of external entities: consensus facilitator, guidance and access to technical and financial resources.

Keywords: Shared Value; Creative Tourism; Cooperation; Value Creation; Rural.

O processo de criação de valor baseado no turismo criativo não está suficientemente aprofundado na literatura. Especificamente, não está clara a formação de destinos turísticos criativos no contexto das comunidades rurais, com poucos recursos e sem uma visão clara do caminho para a criação de valor.

Esta investigação analisa a cooperação como um antecedente da criação de valor, no contexto do turismo criativo, com base em cinco casos coletados em cinco países por meio de entrevistas em profundidade com *stakeholders* locais. Os resultados mostram que as comunidades são capazes de reconhecer suas potencialidades e cooperar para criar valor, porém sozinhas são incapazes de superar as barreiras ao comportamento empreendedor. Os resultados destacam o papel das entidades externas: facilitador de consenso, orientação e acesso a recursos técnicos e financeiros.

Palavras-chave: Valor Compartilhado; Turismo Criativo; Cooperação; Criação de valor; Rural.

1. INTRODUCTION

Value creation has several points of view: economic, firm value, business, accountancy, etc. (Gummerus, 2013). This research focuses on customer value creation, specifically on the tourism point of view.

Customer value creation is a concept related to customer perceptions and, as such it can be defined by the equation: customer perceived benefits minus customer perceived costs (Day, 1990; Lai, 1995). The higher the result of the equation, the higher the customer value perception. The way a customer perceives the benefits (and costs) is idiosyncratic, since those perceptions results from a complex mental equation, starting from the individual's own cultural and social evolution which occurs in unique contexts. Another factor is the consumer's knowledge or skills to evaluate what he or she is willing to buy (Lepak, Smith, & Taylor, 2007). On the other hand, the majority of the consumers aren't qualified to evaluate the products or services in all their dimensions, since they don't possess all the information and knowledge (Lai, 1995). For example, when tasting a local gastronomic product, a tourist tends to produce a very partial evaluation about its real quality and genuineness, based on different assumptions used by a local inhabitant.

However, in a creative tourism context, the tourist's direct participation on daily life experiences in rural context tends to diminish that disparity, since they act like and with local citizens (Richards, 2011, Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017). As such, value perception is increased, because the benefit part of the value equation expands, and most likely, the cost perception remains unchanged, or at least its growth is not proportional.

Creative tourism is an evolving concept that started as an evolution of cultural tourism (Richards & Raymond, 2000; Ali, Ryu & Hussain, 2016). The tourist changed from a passive observer of cultural attractions to an active co-creator of experiences (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). In its deepest approach, creative tourism is understood as 'relational tourism', where visitants are immersed in daily life of local communities (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Richards, 2014). In this context, creative

tourism can contribute to enhance value perception of rural communities' touristic offer.

In this vein, our research intends to contribute to existing literature by extending the knowledge about the dynamics of rural communities to create or add value through creative tourism. More specifically, it considers the fact that developing a local community as a tourism destination is a complex project, primarily because consensus must be reached among several local players, eventually with different perspectives. This research also includes understanding the role of cooperation on the development of a shared value creation on those communities, as a critical success factor.

The manuscript is structured as follows. In the next section, a literature review is conducted, discussing and linking key subjects such as value creation, shared value creation, creative tourism and cooperation. Section 3 details the methodology and presents the five cases. The following section itemizes the results and discussion. Finally, the conclusions and further research are presented in the last section.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Value creation

In this section we will briefly discuss the main elements around the concept of value creation. As said, value creation has several points of view. This research focuses on customer value creation. This approach to value creation has also different classifications. For example, Bowman and Ambrosini (2000) proposed: (1) value of use. Refers to the specific quality of a product or service perceived by users in relation to their needs. In other words, it is a perception on the part of the consumer of the degree of satisfaction of their needs provided by a product or service. (2) exchange value. Corresponds to the amount paid by the user to the seller for the value in use of a product or service. This amount corresponds to an effort that can be translated in money, time, distance, etc.

Customer perception is influenced by a set of factors that make each individual's responses unique. First, the cultural, social and family context of each individual influences individual beliefs and the way they develop in time.

Cultural factors can manifest themselves in different ways in two different individuals, since each one grew in unique family environments (Lay, 1995). As such, the client value creation perspective “concentrates on what customer does with services and products in his or her life sphere” (Gummerus, 2013: 6).

Second, in a closer circle to the individual, personal factors should also be considered and are directly related to each person’s needs, although conditioned by the personality of each individual (Oliver, 2014).

Third, consumption factors refer to subjective beliefs about the desired ways to achieve personal values, meaning that each individual reaches their goals differently (Lai, 1995; Oliver, 2015). For example, when traveling, an individual seeks to satisfy his/her fun and experience needs by acquiring a specific set of products and services (suitcases, food, insurance, etc.) that allows him to realize his cultural and personal goals (Richards, 2011).

In addition to the factors that influence how the consumer perceives the value of a product, there is evaluation (Cohen, Prayag & Moital 2014; Oliver, 2015). The product or service may have been manufactured with the best ingredients or components, but the customer may not recognize those valences. (1) Because he/she isn’t qualified to do so. The vast majority of people don’t have the technical knowledge to evaluate the quality of a product or service. Will a buyer be able to technically evaluate the quality of a car? Can he/she identify the genuine characteristics of a gastronomic product? Some do, but most don’t. (2) Because he/she don’t have all the information to make that evaluation. The producer decides to incorporate a particular ingredient into a product (or withdraw it to be healthier), but the customer may not recognize or identify that effort. Basically, it is not what the producer puts into the product, but rather what the customer recognizes.

Customer evaluation is also subjective and depends on the knowledge level of the buyer regarding the product/service and alternatives (Lepak, et al., 2007). Evaluation is also related to the perception that the consumer or client has of the degree of appropriation of the product in what regards to the satisfaction of his/her needs (Mustak, Jaakkola & Halinen, 2013). This means that the producer should seek to identify the degree of knowledge and the context in which the evaluation will take place.

In order to add value to the customer, Smith and Colgate (2007) proposed several value sources: (1) Information. Can be important in educating and helping customers or consumers to perceive and evaluate the performance of products and services and the expected results; (2) Product. The features, functions and resources of products and services are essential dimensions in consumer assessment, through which they perceive different levels of results; (3) The interaction between clients and organizations. Enhances the development of organizational skills and resources that provide a good relationship with customers and the organization. (4) The purchasing environment. Permits to offer a shopping experience, which is increasingly a decisive aspect of consumer decisions. (5) Transfer of property. The purchase, delivery and contracting processes are also an integral part of the consumer experience.

2.2. Shared value creation

This section discusses the problem of value creation in the context of communities, as opposed to decisions taken by a single entity. Value creation, in the constellation of interests of a local community, can’t be seen only as creating economic value for an association, company or cooperative created in a region to help leverage local community outputs (Coles, Jonathan, Owaygen & Shepherd, 2011; Mottiar, 2016). The initiative should also create value for the local community, seeking to meet their needs and contribute to solving their challenges (Sofield, Guia & Specht, 2017).

On the context of rural communities, the process of value creation is most likely to depend on the participation of several local (and external) actors (Wäsche, 2015; Czernek, 2017). Developing a process of value creation in a company, regardless of the difficulties arising from the context and technical complexity, there is a facilitating factor: decision making. Power and resources are in the hands of the organization's decision makers. This means that will be a manager or director or a very narrow group of decision makers, strategically aligned, who will decide, which makes the entire decision-making process quite consensual and fast. However, value creation in local communities is a much more complex reality (Timothy, 1998). The number of entities and persons involved in the cooperation process can be very

wide ranging, involving not only stakeholders in the value chain (Coles, et al., 2011) but also all organizations with local intervention, such as museums, hotels, restaurants, craftsmen, shops, travel agencies, communication, society in general, religious community, etc. (Trousdale, 2005).

Cooperation offers an opportunity to increase the competitiveness of local communities since: (1) traditional production methods are usually handmade, which leads to increased use of local labour. In turn, this increase in employment provides an increase in income and contributes to the establishment of the population; (2) there are benefits to other local services and products, especially tourism due to the increased reputation and improvement of the previously disadvantaged region (Lee, Wall & Kovacs, 2015); (3) it stimulates local entrepreneurs and brings an increase on new diversified business more focused on competitiveness. For example, small-scale life-style entrepreneurs could benefit from larger companies by providing co-created experiences in rural areas (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017).

This is the result of shared value creation (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Swanson, 2017), in which the local community is the centre of the project and not something peripheral (Dembek, Singh & Bhakoo, 2016; Michelinini & Fiorentino, 2012).

For Porter and Kramer (2011) the concept of shared value at the corporate level can be understood as the policies and practices that increase the competitiveness of a company and at the same time improve the economic and social conditions of the community in which it operates.

Due to the necessary cooperation the processes of creation of local shared value inevitably depends on the capacity to articulate several actors (Swanson, 2017), many of them with contrasting interests. A corollary of this cooperation will be the establishment of a shared vision, especially one that is capable of integrating the potential contained in the collective knowledge of a given community (Trousdale, 2005; Ackermann & Russo, 2011).

A vision represents a roadmap for an organization, be it a business or not (Humphreys, 2004). It generally seeks to go a little further in the definition of vision, seeking to be a description of the aspirations that a community would like to achieve in the future, in the medium or long term. The ambition of an ideal future, in

the face of the current reality, is creating tension to bridge the gap of local competitiveness (Ackermann & Russo, 2011).

2.3. Shared value creation and creative tourism

There are many challenges for rural communities to overcome, as they perceive it to be “increasingly difficult to sustain themselves in light of a decline in agricultural production (...) as such rural tourism has been identified as an opportunity for many” (Mottiar, 2016: 203). The benefits of mass tourism in the rural periphery have been studied in the literature. Their impacts can be divided into direct, indirect or dynamic (long-term effects on institutions, infrastructure and destination management) (Ashley & Mitchell, 2009), considering also the effect on the diversification of tourism centres by attracting some tourists to the peripheral regions (Gibson, 2009). In addition, the contribution to local communities takes into consideration ‘pro-poor tourism’ where the “net benefits to the poor are positive” (Ashley & Mitchell, 2009: 11).

The benefits of community tourism are also important to consider. It enable visitors to become aware of and learn about local communities and ways of life (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2017), adding value to the experience of residents and visitors (George et al., 2007) and contributing to improve residents' quality of life by optimizing local economic benefits, protecting the natural and built environment, and providing a high-quality visitor experience (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017; Kim et al., 2013).

However, there are risks to be considered. Blackstok (2005) pointed three tendencies that can result in weaknesses associated to community tourism, such as: (i) to adopt a functional approach to population involvement by not allowing the community to have the power to decide about tourism; (ii) to treat the host community as a homogeneous whole, when in reality there may be several voices within the community; (iii) to neglect regional or even national barriers. Without community involvement, in a bottom-up approach, the risk of conflicts of interest and social exclusion are imminent (Lindström & Larson, 2016).

Concerning big tourism centres, Biddulph (2015) recognized that “opening up an interface with tourists does not guarantee economic

benefits and certainly not broad-based ones” (p. 100). In particular cases, tourism development had led to an uncontrolled growth of activity, displacing native populations in decision-making and replacing traditional activities with new foreign practices (Gascón, Milano & de Consum Solidari, 2017). On this vein, the results of tourism in rural areas are not always positive. For example, Biddulph (2015) in a study in three small villages in Cambodia “found no significant livelihood benefits from either local production for the tourism market or from local enterprises engaging with tourists” (p. 109). Gascón et al. (2017) also found that agriculture has a dual role in the implementation of tourism in rural contexts, which may be the improvement or destabilization of rural populations.

Tosun (2000) points several barriers of community participation in tourism deployment processes, especially in developing countries. They can be divided in (i) operational level limitations centralization of public administration of tourism; lack of co-ordination and lack of information; (ii) structural limitations, including the bureaucratic attitude of governmental professionals, lack of expertise, elite domination, lack of appropriate legal system, lack of financial resources and lack of trained human resources; (iii) cultural factors including limited capacity of people to handle development effectively, apathy and low level of awareness in the local community.

Considering a tourism destination development in this context, an additional problem is governance (Lindström & Larson, 2016). There is generally not only a person or organization to decide, but a group of individuals, entities (public or private), collectivities and eventually the general community that should decide and must be aligned around a common vision (Timothy, 1998; Korkman, 2006; Ackermann & Russo, 2011; Czernek, 2017).

To structure this approach, Potts, Cunningham, Hartley and Ormerod (2008) propose the concept of social networks, which can be defined as “the set of agents in a market characterized by adoption of novel ideas within social networks for production and consumption” (p. 171). For them, a market based social network should comply with three central features: (i) agent cognition and learning; (ii) social networks; (iii) market-based enterprise, organizations and coordinating institutions. However, the development of a creative tourism destination by rural communities embraces several

problems such as lack of financial resources, unequal power relations between hosts and guests, and loss of cultural identity (Blapp & Mitas, 2017; Tosun, 2000). Another trap is related to risk of becoming an unattractive destination which can be the result of imitation of other communities or places proposal and of ‘fast policies’ (Richards, 2014).

On this vein, value creation in local communities through creative tourism should result from a cooperative process which permits to enhance social links, to increase knowledge and skills and to develop market orientation competences. According to Gummerus (2013) value creation can be considered in two perspectives: processes and practices. Both are important from the tourism point of view. The former considers that products and services create value because they are parts of daily life (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Grönroos, 2006) and contributes to personal ‘developing’ experiences (Richards, 2011). Practices are related with costumer interaction with the context (Korkman, 2006).

Both perspectives align with an interactional and experiential approach to value creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Vargo, 2008; Gummerus, 2013). This leads to a dimension where the costumer or the tourist plays an important role on the experiences themselves, acting proactively in destinations’ daily activities. This tourist involvement permits creating value through interaction, which is consistent with concept of co-creation, defined as “the joint, collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically” (Galvano & Dalli, 2014: 644). It is the domain of the ‘experience economy’ (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Co-creation in tourism is indelibly connected (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009) since consumption occurs in social contexts, “in which interactions and shared experiences with other tourists form a crucial part of the service experience” (Rihova, et al., 2015, p. 356). Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen (2007) proposed five stages in the co-creation of experience: (i) creativity and the innovative capacity in creating a vision on moments of contact; (ii) actual specification of meaningful-experience settings and market propositions to interested target groups; (iii) information technology that is necessary to enable and support the meaningful-experience settings; (iv) finding and training the people who need to do the work; (v) determining the economic perspective (the business model).

Despite the importance of co-creation to conceive unique self-development tourism experiences (Richards, 2011), the link between shared value creation and creative tourism in local communities is a developing area in tourism studies. For example, Sofield et al. (2017) recognize that “there is still little understanding of the role of place-making in tourism when place-making is the result of a community-led organic process” (p. 1). The challenge is to stimulate a lasting dialogue between the several actors in order to develop creative experiences for tourists seeking the region (Den Dekker & Tabbers, 2012).

According to this background, the vision formulation represents not only an opportunity for dialogue, learning and building stronger relationships among the various stakeholders (Ackermann & Russo, 2011), but also a basis to establish a differentiating value proposition that offers more engaging experiences for tourist personal development (Richards, 2014). Each region may have a set of potentialities arising from the sum of the competencies of local stakeholders (Brouder, 2012) which constitute an embedded collective knowledge that certainly can be an excellent basis for establishing a value proposition and for creating sustainable value.

This collective knowledge can be a tradition, a festival, a method of production, a history or a story, but it can also be a local heritage with tourist interest: nature, landscape, monuments, etc. It is the important phase of opportunities seeking (Den Dekker & Tabbers, 2012). They should be seen as having the potential to unleash a wave of local economic growth, prosperity and sustainable development (Ackermann & Russo, 2011).

Based on a clear definition of creative destinations’ value proposition, it’s possible to diminish the local problems previously mentioned through intangible heritage (to solve lack of financing), repositioning locals from servant to teacher (to address unequal power relations between hosts and guests), enhancing local interest in own culture (to reduce the loss of cultural identity) (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). Local community also benefits from creative tourism by “conserving and cultivating local uniqueness would help boost the area’s image of creative tourism and its appeal to visitors seeking a unique cultural and creative experience” (Ting, Lin & Hsu, 2015: 113).

2.4. Cooperation in creative tourism destination development

The role of cooperation in tourism has been object of discussion in the literature. The impact of cooperation is not always positive. For example, Czernek (2017) posit that the lack of cooperation results from the fact that potential partners are afraid of losing competitive advantage. They are also “reluctant to enter into cooperation or, when entering into it, they did not become involved in it as much as it was required.” (p. 13). Another barrier related with cooperation is the lack of time. Wäsche (2015) reported that the most frequent barrier to cooperation between firms in tourism destinations is time (68% of the respondents).

To other authors, the impact is positive. Mottiar (2016) noticed that rural tourism entrepreneurs are interested in cooperation for financial reasons, and equally motivated by the success of their local area. This is important to them as they will implement strategy on this basis. Scott (2010) found that the cooperation in creative activities “involves much interpersonal contact and communication, and most notably intense face-to-face interaction among workers in different firms” (p. 122).

Another benefit resulting from cooperation in tourism is networking. As such, the “understanding of the patterns of linkages among the components and the evaluation of the system’s structure are crucial issues” (Baggio, 2011: 184). Networking permits the development of new and useful contacts. This includes the cooperation between for-profit and non-profit organizations pursuing the same goal (Wäsche, 2015).

Cooperation permits stakeholders to capitalise on the existing local resources (Brouder, 2012) but it also permits the community to “influence decisions that affect their lives, vulnerability or resilience to shocks, access to services and assets, strength or disruption of social networks” (Ashley & Mitchell, 2009: 12). Over time, the links established among partners will increase the trust between them, which allows for more expressive steps in cooperation (Mottiar, 2016). As a consequence, a gradual shift towards tourism due to positive reinforcement of initial efforts (Brouder, 2012).

In rural communities it is highly probable to detect lack of financial and technical resources,

as well as organizational capabilities (Blapp & Mitas, 2017; Tosun, 2000). On this vein, the role of external entities in the cooperation process can be a critical success factor. The nature of agricultural production, the availability of other supporting cultural and tourism products, and proximity to markets are factors that influence the development and composition of tourism initiatives that can be taken by a rural community (Lee, et al., 2015). This implies the participation of several entities based outside the community.

One group of entities is linked to financial resources like banks, financing programmes or investors. However, to gain access to these resources and to convince private financial institutions, the development of a more formal organization is ultimately necessary to access external resources that may be available from higher levels of government (Lee, et al., 2015). The role of public institutions will also be essential to unlock processes that may be real barriers to project implementation. Often, creative tourism activities may not comply with legal regulations, which may make the initiative unfeasible. An intervention by public agencies to unlock this type of constraints will be essential to encourage community members to embark on the project. As such, integration of public sector actors is important to incorporate a high number of actors in the network (Wyss, Luthe & Abegg, 2015).

Thus, it is necessary a participatory process around a common, aggregating and guiding vision of the objectives and the path to reach them (Lundy, Ostertag & Best, 2002; Ackermann & Russo, 2011). This collective attitude requires that a constellation of actors work together towards 'reinventing' the tourism destination or giving it a new image, more appropriate to modern markets. A whole process of negotiation and strategic framework must be developed that seeks to integrate the different points of view and solutions to the local problems. It is precisely here that lays an important milestone of the entire process of value creation. The success of the cooperation will result in a network of partners, aligned around a common interest of local development through tourism, available to share knowledge and experiences that will certainly lead to better and more effective strategies (Mottiar, 2016).

Besides the financial resources and the participation of public entities, the acquisition of competences also implies the participation of

other entities. Knowledge transmission should probably include technical aspects for the production and certification area and legal support, marketing, organization, accounting, etc. (Czernek, 2017).

In addition to the catalytic role of external entities, we need to think about intervention on the ground. That is to say, the establishment of agreements of support or knowledge transmission aren't enough. It takes people to facilitate and promote the development of the whole process (Ackermann & Russo, 2011). Often, this role of facilitator is carried out by professionals who collaborate with the public or private institutions that intervene in the process.

The facilitator is especially essential in the embryonic stages of the cooperation process, as it should seek to balance and avoid exclusion and marginalization of groups or individuals in the community, which may be unintended due to the omission of information to one of the parties (Ackermann & Russo, 2011). Decisions at this stage will indelibly mark all future action, since initial discussions are usually made around the choice of opportunities and the reinvention of the product in the market context.

3. METHODOLOGY

Our methodology is based on a comparative analysis of five cases from five different countries. As such, data for this study derive from qualitative interviews with project directors or representatives of the municipality or region. This type of qualitative research permits to understand the contextual factors and decision-making processes (Biddulph, 2015). Fieldwork was carried out in those locations during the year of 2017. In total, nine informants were interviewed in person or via email using a semi-structured, in-depth interview approach.

3.1. Case selection

For comparative research five cases were selected. They were chosen because they demonstrated a clear contribution to local development based on value creation on local products and creative tourism. Case selection was also based on projects that stand out as examples of creative tourism in their respective countries, and simultaneously represented a diversity of:

- Approaches in the way determinants were combined to promote local value creation;

- Initial economic system (before projects started);
- Development of several entrepreneurial and creative tourism solutions;
- External entities participating;
- Dimensions.

As pointed out there is diversity among the five cases. Table 1 presents the selected cases, their countries of origin, product(s) or service(s) intervened for value creation, a brief account about each one and the impact on creative tourism activities.

3.2. Data acquisition

The interviews were previously prepared through a documental analysis about the different projects. Secondary data sources included

unpublished reports, journals, internet sources and local government policy documents.

Based on these elements, the interview script issues were prepared to obtain answers about: (1) the cooperation process between several local actors and how they were involved; (2) the role of external entities in the cooperation process and in the resources and competencies development of the local community; (3) the impact on creative tourism and on the attraction or retention of creative entrepreneurs for the region.

Those responsible for implementing or managing the projects were contacted in order to set the date for the interview. In cases where it was not possible to schedule a face-to-face meeting, respondent consent was obtained for sending the questions by email.

Table 1. List and brief case description

	Case	Country	Product (Value Creation)	Descriptive of Creative Tourism Activities That Benefited From the Project
1	Machetá	Colombia	Dairy Products	Management project in dairy producers. The project improved local reputation. The firm professionalization and population entrepreneurship capabilities improvement developed several private projects of ecotourism, agro tourism, aqua tourism and historical and cultural legacy tourism.
2	El Arenal, Hidalgo	Mexico	Aquaculture	Project based on the production of Tilapia and Trout species which have been accepted in regional and national markets due to their high quality. Through this activity, eco-tourism is also being developed offering immersive experiences like fishing, horseback riding quad biking or radical sports.
3	Vereda	Brazil	Agricultural products	The community modified its agricultural practices, adopting new production technics, and diversified revenue sources. Increased income opened new business opportunities, such as river excursions, scuba diving, community tourism, gastronomy with tourist participation.
4	Aldeias de Xisto	Portugal	Rural Tourism	Results from a process of cooperation between several city councils with the objective of promoting the region attractiveness, by improving the infrastructure and to boost accommodation offer and tourism activities. This project increased several creative activities such as tours, canoeing, trail running, climbing, gastronomy, arts, traditions and festivities.
5	Haku Wiñay/ Noa Jayatai	Peru	Diversify income of rural households.	Project intended to develop productive capacities and rural enterprises to achieve food security and increase and diversify the economic income of rural households. Included the promotion of small business initiatives that encourage the development of productive activities oriented towards the market. Large impact on small business of experiential hosting and tourism: for example: highlands rural hosting, chocolate making, etc.

4. DISCUSSION

Before proceeding with a discussion about the implications of two different projects, we will briefly discuss each one of the following paragraphs.

The population of *Machetá* was characterized by high poverty (according to UN (2010) definition, extremely poor people are those who live on less than the equivalent of one US dollar

per day), strong informality and low employment rates, in addition to low-skilled labour, low productivity and no innovation in productive processes, low training, minimal market knowledge and strong intermediation between the producer and the consumer, generating little competitiveness of local products.

A business management program was carried out, generating processes that brought academy and local government closer to the

community and the business sector, in this case to small producers and entrepreneurs. The initial intervention was on marketing processes and business organization, especially in potatoes cultivation and commercialization, and on the production, distribution of cheese and other dairy products.

As a result, the project improved local reputation. The firms increased market orientation and the improvement of inhabitant's entrepreneurship capabilities contributed to new projects of ecotourism, agro tourism, aqua tourism and historical and cultural legacy tourism.

The starting point for the project, *El Arenal*, is the fragile situation of the State of Hidalgo located in the Mexican Republic, with a population of 2.8 million inhabitants (2.4% of total population). The region has no maritime access, with 52% of the urban population and 48% of the rural population in extreme poverty. Needing to solve the lack of food, aquaculture has been an option for development within the community since 2013. The product reported excellent export quality. This fact increased household yield, as well their potential for entrepreneurship, especially eco-tourism and rural projects, which integrated perfectly of the 'fish farms' concept.

The *Vereda* community occupies a settlement area in the Preguiças River, implanted in a program of agrarian reform in the 1990s. Due to the state of abandonment, the community was never able to implement a production system that would provide any quality of life to its members. They survived by exploring subsistence agriculture, which used environmental aggressive practices and compromised the river's spring conservation. These practices involved irregular wood extraction, deforestation and the use of fires for the preparation of planting areas. As a result of the improvement project the community adopted new production technics, modified its agricultural practices and diversified income sources. Entrepreneurship soared in the tourism sector, which produced a wave of new business such as river excursions, scuba diving, community tourism, gastronomy with tourist participation.

The valorisation program of *Aldeias de Xisto* (Slate Villages in Portuguese) started in 2001. As a starting point, the region in the inner centre of Portugal is characterized by economic fragility, low population density and peripheral location, all scattered over a wide territory. The program involved 21 municipalities and 28

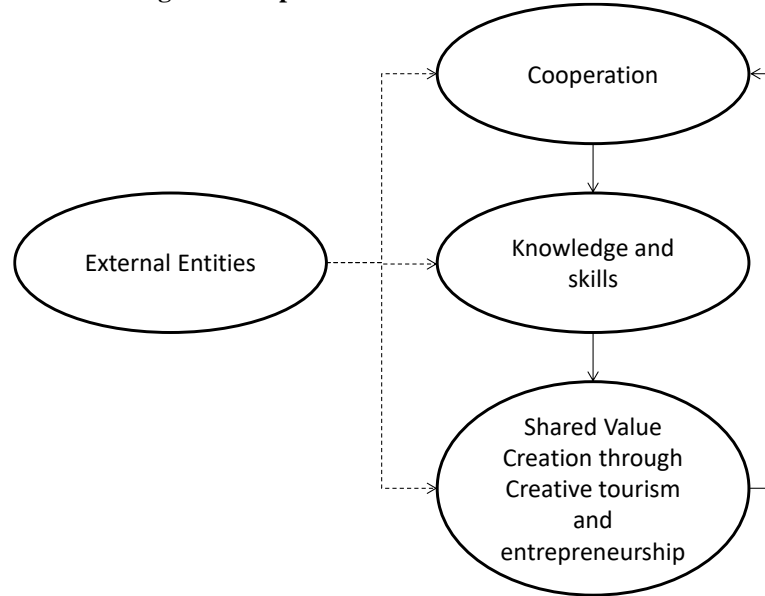
integrated villages, and had rural tourism as the starting point. However, the whole project is much vaster, encompassing the commercialization of gastronomic and handicraft products, events, etc.

The phrase *Haku Wiñay* in Quechua means "we are going to grow". As such, the purpose of this project was to develop productive capacities and rural enterprises to achieve food security and increase and diversify the economic income of rural households. In a first stage the coverage and quality of basic services of rural households improved. It then focuses on promoting access to business activities, improving skills and access to economic services. As a result, population diversified their income sources investing on small tourism businesses like experiential hosting and tourism.

To evaluate the results, a starting point can be analysing Potts, et al. (2008) social networks in the context of the studied cases. In different degrees, as discussed ahead, all the three central features exist in the five cases, namely: agent cognition and learning; social networks and market-based enterprise, organizations and coordinating institutions. However, the projects resulted off a community-led organic process as recognized by Sofield et al. (2017) where cooperation plays an important role. As such, according to figure 1, we also considered cooperation as an antecedent of shared local value process. As discussed ahead, cooperation unleashes a common understanding about local development within the community. However, alone, the studied communities didn't have the resources or the capabilities to address the change projects. As such, the role of the third parties was crucial in all the phases, especially in relation to knowledge and skills transfer, which permitted those communities not only to improve their products in order to reach more demanding markets but also to stimulate entrepreneurship and further value creation activities.

Cooperation All the projects emerged as a result of analysis within the communities. The local limitation awareness by locals and the identification of the development barriers was observed on the five cases. Tosun's (2000) barriers to community participation in tourism developing processes can be observed in different degrees: operational level limitations; structural limitations, and limitative cultural factors. As defended by Blapp and Mitas (2017) the barriers identified can be categorized into four groups, as discussed in the next topics.

Figure 1. Steps towards shared value creation



Financial. To a local community composed by a constellation of independent actors with different agendas, the access to capital is difficult without the support of external entities. For these communities, all based on rural regions, creative tourism solutions can contribute to local development, since, in these regions, “the opportunities for traditional cultural tourism are most limited” (Richards & Wilson, 2006: 1218).

Wyss et al., (2015) state that “the lacking integration of public sector actors and the relatively high number of actors in the periphery of the network” (p. 908) is a weakness. Local communities often don’t have their own resources to serve as a financial warranty for lenders. Besides, projects in embryonic stages present a high risk, diverting potential bank financing.

Knowledge. Technical, commercial and managerial skills are weak in all the cases, in earlier stages. The introduction of new proposals for the market is very sporadic and limited to a level of knowledge inherited from the predecessors. On the project Haku Wiñay the technologies and innovations applied in the communities are one of the project’s strengths since they are easy to replicate, with demonstrable benefits and based on the use of local resources.

Market orientation. Often these communities produce what they know and not what the market is looking for. Lack of knowledge about modern urban markets and limited distributors

channel integration limit the potential of these communities. On the case Machetá, market knowledge was a weakness in part due to the strong intermediation between the producer and the consumer.

Personal competences. In addition to the lack of knowledge and skills, the people within the community itself and their interpersonal relationships function as constraints at various levels: strategic vision, recognition of cooperation synergies, loss of identity, etc. All the communities studied evidenced high rates of emigration and rural exodus.

As said before, the assessment of the actual situation permitted to seek opportunities, as suggested by Den Dekker and Tabbers (2012), but also served as a warning that something must change. The next problem is how to change. On this field the will to change resulted internally in the case of Aldeias de Xisto, and externally in the other four other cases. Even in the Portuguese case, the project needed external entities participation. As such, the role of these organizations was determinant both for structuring and implementing the projects, contributing to increase bridging capital, as suggested in other studies (cf. Stone & Nyaupane, 2018).

Table 2 shows the participants contributing to the cooperation process. All the projects were operationalized through some kind of partnership among a small or large group of entities. In the case of Haku Wiñay the key participants were families, enhancing the role of women in

small entrepreneurial initiatives. The results were very interesting. Several examples emerged, like the women in the highlands of Cotahuasi; the chocolate producers “Flor de cacao”; and “Las Puyas de Lauripampa” living accommodation business that integrates four entrepreneurs, who conditioned a room with three beds in each of their homes to accommodate tourists who visit the Cotahuasi heights, to enjoy the landscapes, fauna and flora, geography, culture and local cuisine. All of them represent the leadership, effort and creativity of the Peruvian women in the field of creative tourism.

In the North of Brazil case of Vereda, the cooperation occurred in small village communities involving their leaders and small farmers. The results of the initial agricultural project produced confidence and some capital to diversify their basic activities. The diversification was particularly notorious in the tourism area. Most of the emergent tourism projects were small initiatives focused on immersive experiences like river excursions, scuba diving, community tourism, gastronomy with tourist participation.

In the Mexican case (El Arenal), cooperation is linked to distribution channels and good practices sharing on aquiculture. However, the fish ‘producing’ farms rapidly diversified their activity to ecotourism, offering fishing and cooking experiences to their visitors.

In the Aldeias de Xisto case, the cooperation occurred at a higher level, involving more than two dozen counties in the central region of Portugal. In order to promote their sparsely populated region they need to reach critical dimension to obtain financing from the European Union. This capital was invested in infrastructure, in developing the destination management organization (DMO) and in national and international promotion of several touristic attractions, most of them related to rural, nature and radical sports themes.

The cases evidence multiple players cooperating towards a common goal suggesting they are willing to invest in local development. The cohesion degree between them contributes to form a cultural cluster, where they are implicated in the process of learning, innovation and creativity (Scott, 2010).

Table 2. Level of cooperation in each key local group of entities

Cooperation	Machetá	El Arenal, Hidalgo	Vereda	Aldeias de Xisto	Haku Wiñay
Family level	+		+		++
Community level	+/-	+	++		+
Value chain level	+	+/-		+/-	
Organizational level (Public and private)	+/-	+	+	++	++

Legend: Level of cooperation ++ Very strong; + Strong; +/- Medium; - Low

External Entities. Table 3 evidences the involvement of external entities along the five cases. In all cases their importance is a critical success factor. Support is shaped through several roles, which are: to trigger the initiative, consensus meeting in the community, financing and technical support. According to George et al. (2007) it’s crucial for community tourism to ensure that the several local players understand the opportunities, threats and risks.

Among several entities, governmental agencies (central or local) assume the role of promo-

ting the whole initiative going far beyond Scott’s (2010) perspective of dealing with multiple market failures or negative spill over effects. For example, in the Aldeias de Xisto project, a group of 21 municipalities decided to cooperate to develop the region through tourism. The Mayor of the municipality of Machetá offered the land for the initiative and financed the equipment and training of the companies participating in the project. The project Haku Wiñay was planned and executed by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion of Peru.

These entities can be defined as experienced enough to overcome barriers of community participation (Tosun, 2000) working with and for local communities.

Other entities also play an important role

in all the projects. Access to knowledge and technology was achieved through universities (Machetá and El Arenal) or specialized companies and consultancy.

Table 3. Third parties involved in value creation projects

Third Parties	Machetá	El Arenal, Hidalgo	Vereda	Aldeias de Xisto	Haku Wiñay
Financing entities	State Government	State Government SAGARPA	State Government INAGRO PETROBRÁS	Central Government European Union	Central Government FONCODES
Local Government	√	√	√	√	√
Central Government	√	√		√	
Universities and research centers	√	√			
Consultancy					
Firms	√	√	√	√	√
Others	Distributors	Distributors	PETROBRÁS	Private firms in several sectors	

Skills and knowledge transfer. Once the role of third parties was discussed as well as the cooperation process, the focus is on skills and knowledge transfer (Table 4). The communities from which the projects resulted demonstrated a lack of resources (financial and technical) and skills to change their sources of income to a more sustainable way, which is an important barrier for the development of local communities (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). As such, initial interventions (except Aldeias de Xisto) were focused on productive technology, especially those related with agriculture and manufacture since they assume an important role on value creation.

Transversal to all projects is financing, since most of the projects are intensive in capital. The investment in infrastructure, equipment and knowledge is very demanding on budgeting.

The way projects were conducted allowed to reach critical success factors. As George et al. (2007) recognized, community tourism should

address several characteristics, such as the direct involvement of the community directly, meeting consumer expectations without undermining the interests of the community, meet government regulations, financial obligations, good working relationships and sound management systems in the conduct of business.

Managerial skills such as market orientation capabilities were central concerns in all projects. As such, the projects also aimed to transfer other skills and knowledge identified by George et al. (2007) as critical, specially focus on the market with high quality standards; entrepreneurship; and, environmental and sustainability awareness. Practices of business mentoring and educational opportunities contributed to local communities in increasing skill and knowledge (Aref, Sarjit & Aref, 2010).

However, since the projects were initially directed to value creation on local products (with the exception of Aldeias de Xisto), the impact on creative tourism activities described in table

1 was indirect. What makes these cases interesting is the positive effect on tourism of those projects, as well the resulting benefits on the community. A new wave of entrepreneurial initiative was observed, and by offering genuine experiences (Mathew & Sreejesh, 2017), local communities added value to residents and visitors (George et al., 2007) which permitted to attract tourists who become aware about their way of life (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2017).

Since local communities were involved in decision making, their heterogeneity was taken in consideration. Tourism and other activities development permitted to avoid social exclusion, since the resulting activities were of small scale, distributed by a large part of the community. As such, the risks pointed by Blackstok (2005) and Lindström and Larson (2016) were averted.

Table 4. Skills and knowledge transfer

Skills and knowledge transfer	Machetá	El Arenal, Hidalgo	Vereda	Aldeias de Xisto	Haku Wiñay
Resources				√	√
Capital	√	√	√	√	√
Equipment	√	√	√		
Technology	√	√	√		√
Market orientation capabilities	√	√	√	√	
Training	√	√	√		√

Shared Value Creation, Creative Tourism and Entrepreneurship. The provision of technical, managerial and market orientation knowledge had strong implications for local entrepreneurship, both by attracting new talent and by developing residents' skills. Besides, the "development of tourism in local communities is often an illustration of a community taking advantage of resources within community" (Aref, et al., 2010: 159). The projects offered locals and outsiders the opportunity to create or add value through a closer interaction between tourists and organizations or collectivities (Mommaas, 2004; Smith & Colgate, 2007). In the case Haku Wiñay, local cocoa farmers transformed the traditional chocolate production into a tourist attraction. El Arenal 'fish farms' diversified from their main aquaculture activity to attract tourists differentiating their rural tourism around the theme. Machetá dairy production and Vereda agricultural activity gave the

financial resources and the entrepreneurial skills to invest in new businesses that offered daily life and nature experiences to tourists, undoubtedly new approaches in their communities. All these cases are in line with Ting et al. (2015) differentiation strategies supported on unique cultural and experiential value proposition.

In the case Aldeias de Xisto the initial idea was tourism itself. The cooperation process and technical and infrastructure development produced a myriad of new businesses. Local residents and entrepreneurs from other regions and countries were attracted by the project potential, resulting in a wide range of experiences, restaurants, accommodations and other services, contributing to form a creative atmosphere that attracts more producers and consumers of creative products (Florida, 2005). In all the cases, local communities developed a culture of hospitality (Boswijk, et al., 2007) and offered daily life or

traditional immersive experiences, in a new wave of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000).

By offering creative experiences, a closer interaction between tourists and locals contributes to increase the value of local knowledge, seeing that the inhabitants of these regions are the source of expertise the tourists are seeking (Richards, 2011). As such, another implication of the project on local communities is the reinforcement of their identity. The quality of life improvement gave local inhabitants a reason to stay at their birth place. Additionally, entrepreneurs recognize the contribution to their region, as defended by Mottiar (2016).

The provision of 'external' knowledge, communities, firms, business and other stakeholders contributes to the aggregation of industrial and commercial capabilities. However, they can also benefit the preservation, re-discovery and deployment of local knowledge, traditions and memories (Scott, 2010).

As such, sustainability is an interesting part of these cases. They didn't become mass tourism destinations. Creative Tourism, for its attachment to individual and relational experience, reduces the risk of massive reproduction like other forms of tourism (Korstanje, 2015). Major concerns identified in the literature weren't observed such as divergent sentiments within the community (Mommas, 2004), peasant differentiation, social unrest, problems with local decision-making, lack of local tourism business knowledge and training (Gascón, 2013), or displacing native populations in decision-making and replacing traditional activities with new foreign practices (Gascón, et al., 2017).

Eventually, many of these problems verified in rural tourism are considered from the point of view of the peripheral regions of large tourist centres (cf. Biddulph, 2015), which is not the case, since the five studies portrayed are themselves an attraction, not a satellite region. The genuineness of these communities permitted to offer authentic and customized experiences. Simultaneously, with the exception of Aldeias de Xisto, the fact that the starting point was agriculture and not tourism permitted a long term perspective, more integrated. This, (let's call it) planning permitted a more balanced adaptation of the community (Gascón, 2013), avoiding the dangers of 'distrust' pointed out by Mommaas (2004).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed to understand the dynamics of rural communities as they create value through creative tourism. In particular it sought to bring evidence regarding the role of cooperation on shared value projects on local communities. To achieve these objectives, five cases were analyzed in three countries, perceiving the role of cooperation and of external entities in the creation of local value through creative tourism. The results of the analysis of the five cases allowed to identify several points. First, the role of cooperation in place-making in context of local communities is a step towards the comprehension of this phenomenon, a need underlined by Sofield et al., (2017). The lack of a DMO in the local community requires a prior work of consensus meeting. Cooperation allows the integration of several local actors and the community, which can overcome some of the problems associated with community tourism (as defended by George et al., 2007).

In initial stages, this need for cooperation stems from a shared vision of creating value in a particular local product (Ackermann & Russo, 2011), but quickly opens up new opportunities for economic development, especially concerning tourism. These opportunities result from the fact that there is a previous successful experience (the local product), which not only unleashes an entrepreneurial potential, but also establishes the need for a broader cooperation bases, founded on trust (Mottiar, 2016), to increase the attractiveness of the region or place as a tourism destination. In the literature, tourism destination competitiveness depends on a series of determinants (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003), specifically central attractions (culture, history, nature, events, etc.) which must be promoted through marketing and managerial activities. In local communities, the selection of attractions and promotion activities must contribute to integrated local development (Dembek et al., 2016; Micheline & Fiorentino, 2012).

Second, this research presented a framework that intends to explain how this cooperation appears. It enhances external entities' role on the process. On the one hand, they are important as a trigger to initiate dialogue between several local actors and to reach a minimum of consensus to start the project. On the other hand, they contribute with key resources and knowledge

which, in a first phase, empowers the community towards value creation on local products, and, in a second phase, stimulates local entrepreneurship and attracts other creative professionals to diversify activities from the core of the initial project. As observed in all five cases, a majority of these new activities integrate interaction and shared experiences (Rihova et al., 2015). These dimensions establish a basis for creative tourism deployment. In fact, cooperation allows not only strengthen local identity, as well as increasing the level of community trust: between themselves and towards the ability to create new business. This combination enables communities to offer genuine products, including tourist experiences.

Third, the impact on creative tourism of these developing communities is another interesting lesson from the studied cases. As seen, creating value on local products promotes communities to solve their problems (at least partially). However, the cases reveal that this development is sustainable, as they emerge from a local consensus. As discussed, the impact of tourism on local communities is not always positive. For them the risks includes loss of power, neglect of regional barriers (Blackstock, 2005), social exclusion (Lindström & Larson, 2016),

uncontrolled growth of activity and displacing native populations (Gascón et al., 2017).

By promoting local cooperation, these barriers could be overcome. As such, sustainability is also a result of creative tourism activities conducted by local entrepreneurs, based on nature experiences, local traditions and crafts and cultural identity, as defended by Blapp and Mitás (2017).

For further research, our findings contributed to a more integrated perspective of the antecedents of creative tourism on rural communities. It will be interesting to understand how they are developed. As such, this research opens a path to identify the processes of identification creative tourism opportunities by local communities. This aspect brings the discussion of creative tourism to the capacity of a place to attract, retain and train creative entrepreneurs and not just creative tourists. As such, our research can also be a starting point for future research about the point of attractiveness for creative entrepreneurs. In other words, when does a community become sufficiently attractive or retain to these people? They are the source of local knowledge and a potential differentiation factor for local tourism (Richards, 2011).

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