



Tourism profiling and training methodology report

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Table of Contents

Tourists 3

- What do authentic experiences mean for people? 3
- Are roads and paths less travelled something that might attract a broader audience?
..... 9
- How can tourism be sustainable? 17

Creators 24

- How can bottom-up initiatives change the perspective where people live?..... 24
- What resources are needed to engage the local community? 31

Local businesses 40

- What are the opportunities for professionals in the Cultural and Creative industries
to create new products and services? 40

List of tourism experts in Europe 49

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Tourists

What do authentic experiences mean for people?

This section seeks to answer:

- What is meant by authenticity and how do people experience something as authentic?
- How does the pursuit of authenticity relate to city tours and cultural experiences?
- Why do visitors pursue authentic experiences?
- Where can these authentic experiences be found?

Authenticity is a matter of subjective experience – it's less a dictionary definition and more a feeling. What may feel like an authentic experience to you, may not be recognised as such by someone else.

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3

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Considering the subjective nature of the term 'authentic', people who are looking for authentic experiences use travelling and exploring as a way to connect with themselves and explore their inner worlds. This is why **authentic opportunities are an emerging trend with people who are searching for more meaningful interactions.**

With this in mind, when discussing authentic city tours or cultural experiences, we can single out a few characteristics:

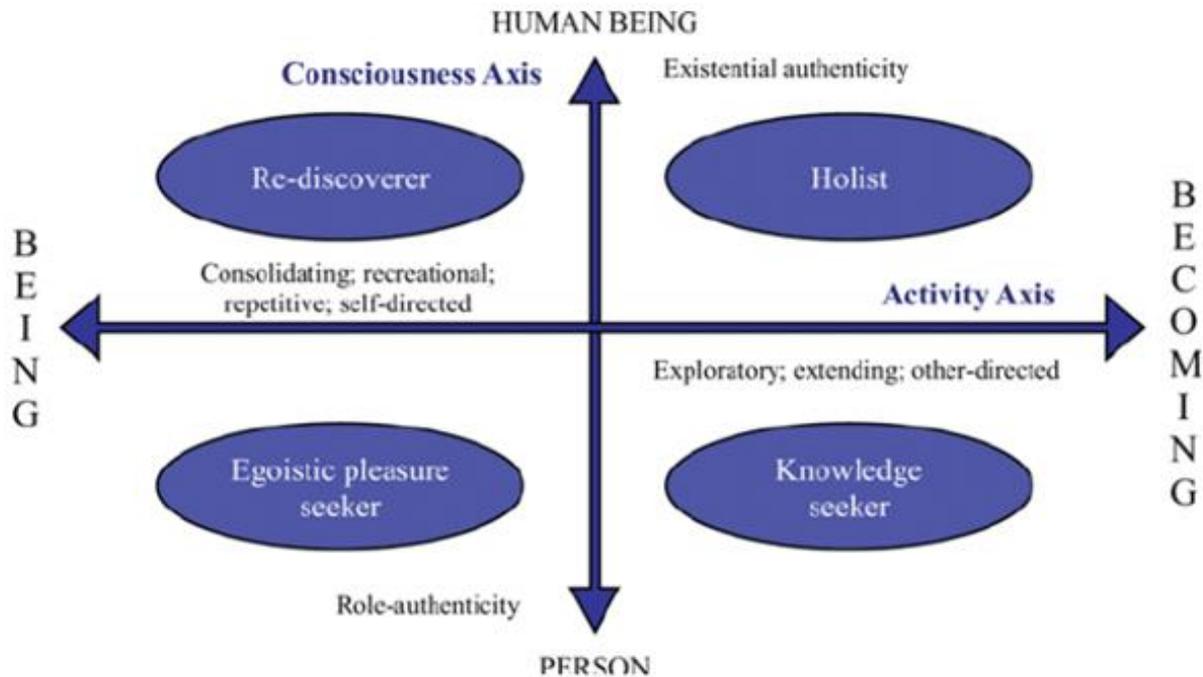
- Authentic experiences are not part of neatly-packaged tours, but rather allow you to **explore your version of a destination or cultural activity.**
- Authentic experiences are not inherently experiences that only cater to locals, but ones that **spark our curiosity, push us out of our comfort zone, and teach or show us something new.**
- Authentic experiences allow us **to experience the traditions of a place** or an activity that can only be done in a particular place with the **guidance of locals.**

Gnoth's (2012) Tourism Experience Model elaborates on how visitors perceive the authenticity of the places they visit or activities in which they take part.

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1) Experience as pure pleasure

These types of experiences are characterised by feelings of self-indulgence, nostalgia and sentimentality and take on the form of escapism from the stress of daily life (camping on a lake site, living on the beach, revisiting a favourite holiday spot). Here, visitors **look to find happiness and authenticity in simply 'being'**, usually through re-living past enjoyable travelling experiences.

2) Experience as re-discovery

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Instead of pleasure-seeking behaviour, these experiences require some more focus and effort on the part of the visitor. Here, authenticity still has an element of self-reflection as it is **sought through re-invention and re-creation of the self.**

3) Existentially authentic exploration

Experiencing here relates to a form of exploratory activity of the authentic self that is marked by an experience of ongoing self-change. **People become 'existential tourists' who believe that they would live happier and more meaningful lives elsewhere.** They desire to 'go native' and relocate, sometimes on a permanent basis, to other places, as they feel a sense of romance and nostalgia towards other cultures. For example: whereas for some tourists, dancing flamenco in Seville may be seen as a simple experience that can spur sensations of happiness and enjoyment, for existential tourists, the experience propels self-transformation and leads to adopting an alternative lifestyle.

4) The Knowledge-seeking Experience

This last category of the experience model relates to activities regarded as new and exploratory which are chosen for **pre-meditated outcomes and to fulfil needs such as esteem, authority, influence, or power.** The participant here envisions acquiring new knowledge, wealth, and/or the image of having unique experiences.

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6

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Wang (1999) developed **3 categories of authenticity in relation to travel and exploration:**

- 1) Objective authenticity recognises experiences as authentic **if the toured objects/activities are original**, thus there is an objective criterion to measure authenticity.
- 2) Constructive authenticity is not an objective, measurable notion, but a relative one. Things appear authentic **not because they are inherently authentic, but they are constructed as such** by beliefs, powers, perspectives, etc.
- 3) Existential authenticity refers to a state of Being that is activated by activities related to travel and exploration. The activities don't necessarily have to be regarded as authentic; but **people feel that they themselves are much more authentic by virtue of engaging in non-ordinary activities**, free from daily constraints.

However, when places or experiences are discovered by a large influx of visitors, they ultimately change by the demands of the people themselves and the economic opportunity this presents for tourism and, more broadly, the Cultural and Creative Industry (hereinafter, CCI). The influx of visitors can then expose local people and cultures to **manipulation** and **exploitation**.

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7

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Are roads and paths less travelled something that might attract a broader audience?

This section seeks to answer:

- Why might people (especially locals) steer away from popular tourist/cultural activities and mass tourism?
- What are alternative forms of discovering the city and why might they be an appealing option for visitors?
- What is the 'periphery' and what potential does it have for cultural and tourist activities?
- How can experience-based city tours and cultural activities attract new and local audiences?

Mass tourism is defined as an **extreme concentration of visitors in one place which can lead to its oversaturation, and therefore degradation and loss of attractiveness**. Mass tourism exists when the volume of visitors is higher compared to the local population density of a concerned territory. It is dependent on large groups of

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9

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people, fixed programs (i.e., predetermined packages) and led by tour operators and travel agencies.

Relatedly, **popular tourist and cultural activities tend to be less popular even among domestic visitors.** Instead, these visitors look for:

- destinations and activities that are less congested by others,
- varied offers of products and services unlike the ones promoted by popular agencies/organisations, and
- destinations and activities that are less geographically concentrated and better distributed throughout the national territory, in order to venture away from conventional tourist and cultural hubs.

Therefore, more and more people (local and foreign audiences) are opting out of pre-packaged, overcrowded, unsustainable, inauthentic and impersonal experiences and turning to alternatives. Potential visitors and consumers are looking to **avoid the beaten track and establish more genuine contact with the local population.** If travelling, they try to do without the tourist infrastructure and most use the same accommodation and transport facilities as the natives.

Alternative tourism and cultural initiatives offer a different type of experience to the benefit of new and local visitors, tourism and CCI professionals and the affected

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community as a whole. These initiatives came about due to criticism concerning the oversaturation of popular tourist/cultural activities and changing visitor preferences. Alternative forms of discovering the city are **small-scale tourism and cultural initiatives developed by local people and based on local nature and culture**. They are concerned with curating an authentic visitor experience. Not only do they have something new to offer people, they also **diversify the tourism and cultural portfolio of the community and create noticeable economic benefits** as these activities can take place all year round.

Many alternatives to popular tourist and cultural activities venture away from overcrowded tourist and cultural hubs and focus on offering a unique experience. Two types of initiatives encompass this direction in providing different and authentic experiences for visitors: (I) peripheral tourism and cultural practices and (II) experience-based tourism and cultural practices

- Peripheral tourism and cultural practices

These practices can be defined as visiting an area that is not a major destination and/or taking part in cultural/creative practices which do not traditionally appear in programs as spaces of cultural consumption or visitor attraction as they lack centrality. The existence of a core-periphery relationship reflects the flow of visitors from a

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developed core to a less developed periphery in search of novel experiences not available in the core. **The periphery can refer to a regional periphery (within a country) or peri-urban spaces (within the city limits).** Peri-urban belts especially are often seen as having a residential, commercial or industrial utility for the city.

As 'periphery' has been associated with marginality and disadvantage, it was the European Union's recommendation in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that creating experiences (tourism or otherwise) in such areas can play a role in reducing regional disparities. Accordingly, **the development of peripheral tourism and cultural practices can be an antidote to certain socio-economic issues.**

In order to tempt visitors away from the 'core', these peripheral areas seeking to build cultural or tourist experiences must first overcome impediments to visitor flows: distance, poor infrastructure and a comparative lack of innovation.

- Experience-based (experiential) tourism and cultural practices

These practices value the experience of visitors and consumers as an important new attribute. With visitors and consumers in mind, the experiential design of a tourist or cultural initiative prioritises giving 'life' and emotions to services and practices in the creative design process. Experience has always existed in destinations – however, it was considered a by-product instead of created and curated.

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12

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In an experience-based activity, **the visitors and consumers enter into a multifaceted interaction with the actors and a narrative** which is staged beforehand by the local community. Experience-based tourism and cultural practices seek to **use intangible assets** (such as habits, traditions, oral history, language) unlike popular, overproduced initiatives that exploit tangible, inflexible assets (such as the built environment and artefacts). Experiential tourism and cultural practices require **a degree of participation of target groups and the local community.**

- A sub-set of experience-based tourism is **Creative Tourism**

The OECD has stated that Creative Tourism can fulfil desires to 'live like locals' (OECD, Tourism and the Creative Economy, OECD studies on Tourism, 2014). Creative Tourism is considered to be a new generation of tourism, which **evolved from cultural tourism.**

Unlike cultural tourism, which puts the focus on passively enjoying cultural and historical sites, Creative Tourism allows visitors to have an emotional, social and educational interaction with a place and its people. Thus, visitors are awarded **an experience to feel like a citizen of the place.** It satisfies the higher-level need of self-actualisation with a primary focus on active skill development. This form of alternative tourism concentrates on the finding of **'new spots'**, away from traditional cultural heritage, thereby **forming new cultural narratives.**

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Even though cultural tourism embraces the use of technology to enhance the tourism experience – for ex. exploring cultural sites via an audio-guide or camcorder – Creative Tourism takes it a step further and utilises innovative digital tools, such as Augmented reality and Virtual reality. Creative tourism also has **a greater degree of commercial supply and participation**, whereas cultural tourism is mostly managed/funded by a country's public sector.



Creative initiatives in the CCIs in general can be harnessed for creating better visitor and consumer experiences by: revitalising existing products, valorising cultural and creative assets, providing economic benefits for creative development, using creative techniques to enhance the visitor experience, and creating buzz and atmosphere. **The OECD emphasizes the significant contribution of CCIs to economic growth and the necessity of policy makers to link CCIs to tourism.** The CCIs lead to economic growth by providing creative cultural/tourism experiences, supporting innovative approaches to the development of these industries, and recreating the image of destinations.

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How can tourism be sustainable?

This section seeks to answer:

- What are the detrimental effects of conventional (mass) tourism?
- How can alternative forms of tourism offer a more sustainable solution?
- How can alternative forms of tourism/city tours be more inclusive for diverse audiences (ie. locals)?
- How can these alternative tourism practices remain sustainable over time?

Like most commercial activities, tourism has produced both beneficial and detrimental impacts to communities, some of which may be irreversible. **The challenge of 21st**

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century tourism is balancing economic growth with the protection of the environment. Unfortunately, conventional (mass) tourism is interested in quick economic revenues; hence, it places little emphasis on the environmental and social impacts of its practices and on sustainable development. Such disregard affects the attractiveness of a given destination from a long-term perspective.

Contrary to this, **alternative tourism preaches slow sustainable growth and allows more sensitivity for local socio-economic needs**, providing a remedy to the negative environmental and societal impacts of mass tourism. Due to its aims, alternative tourism has been **equated to sustainable tourism**. Sustainable tourism increases awareness about the ecological consciousness within every tourism activity and, thus, it stresses the need for practices that enhance natural riches and contribute to the socio-economic progress of a destination area. In line with this, **alternative tourism incorporates small-scale experiences and integrates the destination's natural, social and community values**. Therefore, this form of tourism has fewer negative effects on destination areas, the environment and its resources, and local communities, without drastically diminishing the economic benefits that come with tourism.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), **sustainable tourism should:**

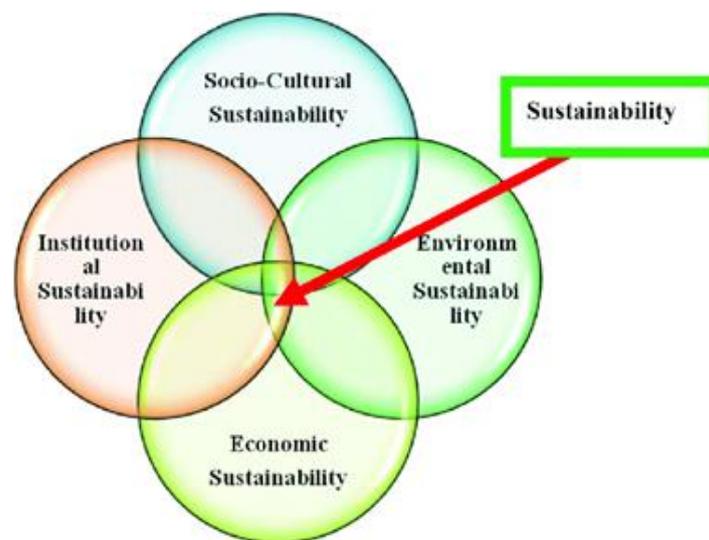
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1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders and contributing to poverty alleviation.



With the ever-prevalent issue of global warming and climate change, more and more destinations are prioritising sustainability in their tourism and cultural practices.

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They've turned to alternative tourism by promoting the attainment of 'experiences' in order to reach sustainability goals and have visitors curate and preserve the social, natural and historical assets of a destination rather than devastate them. **How do Creative tourism and Peripheral tourism promote greater sustainability?** For Creative tourism, the existence of built heritage is not a prerequisite as the expensive preservation and maintenance of ageing structures is not needed. Peripheral tourism turns the attention away from the oversaturated crowds and ensures better distribution of the visitor's dollar.

However, sustainability in the CCIs should include more than economic and ecological considerations, and make room for tackling issues such as social inclusion, social cohesion, and community development. Accordingly, **an initiative is sustainable if it can also create products and services that underscore a sense of local identity and enable the inclusion of diverse audiences** (known as socio-cultural sustainability). The aforementioned alternative forms of tourism which incorporate active participation of the local community are in line with this aspect of sustainability: in a study looking at the implementation of sustainable planning and design for tourism, **citizen participation was found to be one of the six dimensions of sustainability**. Therefore, involving local people and listening to their concerns plays a big role in sustainable development.

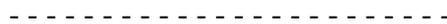
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Going beyond the inclusion of local audiences, **sustainable initiatives also take into account how accessible they are for all consumers and visitors.** ‘Inclusive tourism’, ‘accessible tourism’ or ‘tourism for all’ relates to enabling people with access requirements (mobility, vision, hearing and cognition) to function independently through the delivery of products, services and environments. This definition makes sure to include all people with temporarily disabilities, visitors with children in prams, and seniors. Therefore, inclusive or accessible tourism is not just about providing facilities to physically disabled tourists because many visitors have different degrees of mobility restrictions or have invisible impairments. Examples of how professionals in the CCI and tourism industries can provide an inclusive experience for all is by providing assistive listening devices for city tours, or sign language interpretation within certain activities.



Sustainable tourism should also raise the awareness of visitors about sustainability issues and how sustainable tourism practices can be nurtured. How can foreign and local audiences adopt sustainable practices and avoid overtourism? **Sustainable tourist practices are otherwise known as ‘responsible tourism’.** It is by definition the opposite of overtourism, which diminishes the quality of life for local residents and creates a negative experience for visitors.

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Being a responsible visitor is a matter of taking part in a tourism or cultural initiative in ways which maximise positive impacts and minimise the negative ones. **Two things to be mindful of are the place you are visiting and the time during which you're visiting.** In some instances – overtourism is extremely localised: in the case of Spain, the centre of Barcelona is crammed with visitors, but the semi-periphery and many of Spain's other beautiful cities are not at all overcrowded.

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23

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Creators

How can bottom-up initiatives change the perspective where people live?

This section seeks to answer:

- What are bottom-up initiatives in tourism and cultural initiatives?
- How can bottom-up initiatives showcase a neighbourhood in a different way as opposed to top-down approaches?
- What added value do bottom-up initiatives have for alternative cultural and tourism experiences (ie. city tours) in neighbourhoods?

A 'bottom-up' approach signifies that neighbourhoods set their own goals and make decisions about their resources in the future, including the preservation of their cultural assets, development of buildings, parks, open space and landscapes, and other conservation or development activities. Unlike top-down approaches which force

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24

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behaviour change through policy, bottom-up approaches attempt the opposite: to influence policy through behaviour.

The decision-making process in this approach takes the wishes of local groups into account, without deriving their ideas from local, regional, central or international government bodies. Relatedly, decision-making can be in the form of a partnership among various stakeholders through which the opinions of local people are articulated. **The initiatives taken in this process should be consistent with local values and experience.**

The degree to which local communities can participate in bottom-up initiatives varies and can be divided into three groups:

1) Coercive participation

The lowest level of participation in which residents have no power over the course of the tourism and cultural initiative and their involvement revolves around simply promoting the activities and they receive few economic benefits.

2) Induced participation

Local residents have a say in the development of initiatives, but they have no actual power or control over the decisions being made by those in positions of authority.

3) Spontaneous participation

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25

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Local residents have the power to make decisions and control the development process of the tourism or cultural initiative.

A top-down strategy is spearheaded by public institutions and usually covers an entire region, so as to give a common vision to smaller stakeholders on how to adhere to a larger plan. Here, specific neighbourhoods (in the periphery or otherwise) have less leeway to adapt the plan to their specific needs and the distribution of benefits may be less skewed in their favour. **What can occur in the lifespan of a top-down initiative is that they become hard to manage because the voices of the 'little' people can be disregarded in favour of political and economic agendas.** Unfortunately, this can lead to resentment against these initiatives by the neighbourhoods.

Bottom-up initiatives on the other hand are an attempt at giving a voice to neighbourhoods. The way in which the neighbourhood is showcased differs from top-down initiatives because they give the freedom and opportunity to radically rethink the tourism and cultural trajectory of the destination in question. Instead of imposed regulations and plans from above, these initiatives are oriented around the community and are strictly for their betterment. Therefore, **they are much smaller in scale and offer more autonomy to determine the direction of development.**

With this acquired independence also comes greater freedom for creativity and innovation. **The stories that are told as part of these bottom-up initiatives and the**

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activities that are undertaken provide more personal and authentic insight into the 'heart' of the neighbourhood. The destination is seen through a more meaningful lens by way of stories and experiences of the local population that focus on how to better preserve and reflect local values during these tourism or cultural activities. What results is **greater community empowerment and improved contacts between locals and target audiences.**

A good example of these bottom-up initiatives can be found in the form of **Community-based experiences**, as they are oriented towards local communities (both those who are directly involved and not involved in the tourism and CCI industries). They generate direct economic benefits for these communities and they are developed with specifically their needs in mind – as such, they prioritise sustainability and responsible tourism and cultural initiatives.



The existence of bottom-up approaches provides a lot of added value to the neighbourhoods in which the local community resides.

- Bottom-up approaches lead to more sustainable initiatives and more eco-friendly thinking.

Studies have surmised that the involvement of local communities is essential in order to anticipate the detrimental impact of tourism development (especially in areas

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outside the core and in the periphery). With the help of these initiatives, **stakeholders have a greater sense of the limits of growth, the responsibilities that fall upon everyone in the destination to protect its natural or cultural heritage, and also how to deliver benefits sustainably to local people.** In addition, the affected community will be more aware of the commercial and social value placed on their heritage, and this will foster better conservation of these resources.

- Bottom-up approaches allow for more equitable power redistribution

This enables local communities to better redistribute benefits to the ‘little’ people involved. The participation of local stakeholders ensures that decision-making is shared, avoiding the enforcement of detached decisions from above. Relatedly, this approach allows neighbourhoods to have direct access to planning, building and developing tourism and cultural initiatives. **With the socioeconomic betterment of the community being the focus, the feasibility and longevity of projects are given greater priority.**

- Bottom-up approaches are more in tune with the needs and issues of the local community.

As mentioned, alienation from tourism is possible with top-down approaches. This has led to backlash from locals, and has even resulted in them adopting more hostile

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28

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behaviour towards visitors in certain cities. No need to look any further than the “Tourists go home” graffiti which became infamous in the overcrowded tourist hub, Barcelona.



Photo by csbarcelona on [Ciudadanos | Ayuntamiento de Barcelona](#)

Therefore, **tourism and cultural initiatives should be created in harmony with the social climate of the neighbourhood.** This can be done by creating conditions in which residents will benefit from the project and not become its victims. Bottom-up

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approaches enable more quality job creation (coordinator, local guide, craftsmanship, sales, etc.) and generate economic development, ensuring that the local community has a voice.

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30

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What resources are needed to engage the local community?

This section seeks to answer:

- What does the engagement of local communities in cultural and tourist activities imply?
- Why is involving the local community important?
- Which factors influence the engagement of the local community (opportunities and barriers for involvement)?
- How can the involvement of local communities in alternative tourism and cultural initiatives be facilitated?

Local communities can be described as groups of people with a common identity and a strong relationship with the area culturally, socially, economically, and spiritually. The

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31

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participation of local communities in tourist and cultural activities means their **active involvement to contribute to these activities from decision-making, planning, implementation, monitoring to evaluation and problem-solving.**

Involvement of local communities can take on many forms, depending on the length of stay and activity:

- stand-alone experiences (couple of hours, up to an entire day)
- experiences with homestay (1-3 nights)
- a tour involving multiple experiences (7-14 nights)
- volunteering of the local community (any duration)

As touched upon, community participation in managing tourism and cultural initiatives can address conflicts between the economic and developmental interests of the community. **The local community's participation contributes towards an improved quality of life, economic development, and the sustainability of practices.** Community involvement can influence residents' sense of belonging, aid in the development of social networks with others, and improve residents' pride and understanding of the value of the area.

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In order to have the local community involved in city tour initiatives, there are certain factors that are integral for determining whether their engagement will take place. In line with this, according to the UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Online Toolkit, there are **3 main aspects needed for engaging the local community**:

1. Talk and listen to the host community and businesses

This entails **starting a dialogue with the existing community in order to listen to local people and businesses and discover the issues and challenges they face.**

Through these discussions, you will also be able to understand their most pressing concerns and aspirations for the future. Even though alternative tourism and cultural initiatives should focus on providing visitors with an 'experience', it's equally as important **not to forget about the importance of a place's liveability.**

This is why a key part of advancing dialogue with the local community is based on understanding their perceptions and motivations. **Perceived positive impacts encourage the community to participate in tourism and cultural activities and to support the development of these industries, whereas the existence of perceived negative effects would reduce their support.** For example, some initiatives can positively influence the lives of local residents, with increased income, employment opportunities, improved standards of living, improved public infrastructure, increased availability of recreational and entertainment facilities, and the promotion and preservation of local culture.

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33

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However, certain initiatives may also negatively impact local communities by increasing the cost of living, raising property prices, overcrowding and traffic congestion, and increasing the prevalence of crime and drugs. Therefore, **the engagement of the community first and foremost in a dialogue depends on the concerns, interests, and perceptions of residents regarding the impacts of the proposed initiatives.**

2. Identify and communicate sustainable, economic local opportunities

Look strategically at how the local community can secure greater benefit from the destination and its cultural/creative attractions. Consider carefully how any changes to the destination may affect local people and businesses. For example, if the use of sustainable transport is integral to carrying out an initiative, will there be any negative effects on certain local businesses (such as taxi operators)?

Engaging the local community in the process of creating initiatives will also build on the experience of visitors and consumers: as mentioned, people are interested in learning about, experiencing, and respecting the knowledge, values, stories, culture, and activities of local communities. **Who better to tell these stories than the citizens residing in them?**

The opportunity for engaging the community is also dependent on the 'barriers-to-entry' they may face in the marketplace for services, products and experiences. Even though some may be facing lack of capital, investments, education and business

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experience, others may just need to further develop the skills needed to become a guide or a good understanding of what visitors want out of their alternative tourism and cultural experience.

Practical participation may also be deterred because the power to obtain adequate resources is often held by governments or other stakeholders who do not regard local residents as equal partners. **This is why adopting bottom-up initiatives is an integral part of ensuring local communities can thrive.** A good understanding of the systems of law in place and good practices are also key. This is needed to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable groups through tourism and cultural activities – particularly children, adolescents, women and minorities.

3. Empower the host community by telling their story in the site.

When the local community is not part of the narrative of the initiative, they may be left ignored, disrespected, or pushed out of the way. **To ensure initiatives are both alternative and sustainable, the story of the host community and culture needs to be told.** People should understand the historic and contemporary realities of the place they are visiting and activities they are taking part in, as well as respect or engage with both of these narratives. It sends a signal to the host community that they matter.



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As already mentioned, there are both opportunities and barriers for engaging the local community in tourism and cultural initiatives. In light of those, certain **proposals and activities can be undertaken to facilitate the involvement of the community** in already-existing or planned initiatives.

- Providing adequate training

Several studies have identified a lack of knowledge among residents as an obstacle to their participation, particularly in destinations and cultural activities in the periphery. Since the ability of the local community to successfully participate in initiatives is contingent upon knowledge, skills, and financial resources, **ensuring that the community is well-prepared is needed for their proper participation.**

An example of a type of training that can come in handy for empowering and engaging the community is **mastering the use of storytelling as part of the tourism and cultural narrative.** Storytelling comes to life beyond conventional cultural destinations, such as museums and interpretation panels, and people in the local community are crucial to this process. Research has shown that visitors spend less than 10% of their time in museums or galleries – instead, the rest of the time is spent getting around the city and experiencing its day-to-day ambiance.

The local community can turn a good destination and/or activity into a memorable one by being given training, education, site visits, and support to

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36

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become adept at explaining the creativity and hidden potential that lies in the community. In-depth engagement of any kind of the local community requires training and proper preparation in order to ensure that visitors and the guides themselves are protected from untrained individuals undermining the initiative.

- Setting standards and raising aspirations

Citizens' perceptions and willingness to engage in tourism and cultural initiatives is also contingent upon having a clear idea of what is to come and what is expected of them.

Clear rules and regulations for their tasks should be developed. Having a tangible plan about how the initiative will create benefits for the community goes a long way.

Importantly, remember that engaging the local community in alternative tourism and cultural initiatives requires you to raise aspirations – involvement should not be equated with selling low-value souvenirs! **These initiatives need to think carefully about how the presence of visitors can deliver meaningful opportunities for local people.** This means working with the community to think about the skills, capital, and the new technologies they may need to adopt to deliver an authentic experience to people visiting and discovering their city.

Further reading

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38

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39

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Local businesses

What are the opportunities for professionals in the Cultural and Creative industries to create new products and services?

This section seeks to answer:

- How can adopting innovative practices breathe new life into cultural activities and tourism initiatives?
- What is the role of technology and interactivity (games or otherwise) in the creation of new products and services?
- What are 'playable cities' and 'smart cities' and how can they further innovate Creative/Peripheral tourism and cultural practices?

As noted by an April 2021 report by officials from the European Commission, CCIs are crucial for the European economy, but beyond the economic perspective, **the work of**

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40

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professionals in the CCIs is important in the promotion of Europe's diverse cultural identity and European values, such as sustainable development.

With what has already been said about the tourism and CCI industries of today, a few relevant issues can be pinpointed as areas where progress and change are needed: **overtourism, local community alienation, greater sustainability and the creation of more experience-based initiatives for visitors**. Therefore, local CCI and tourism professionals need to embrace the necessity of evolving their practices by recognising the creativity within their city as a resource and inspiration, and by providing new experiences to meet the shifting preferences of visitors. Seeing as how alternative initiatives have, by their nature, always countered the predictability and commercialisation of mass tourism and conventional cultural activities with the adoption of greater creativity and authenticity of initiatives, rising to meet today's challenges should be on the agenda.



According to research and experts in the CCI and tourism industries, **the use of modern technology and greater interactivity of activities is crucial to stay ahead of the curve and meet environmental and visitor needs**. Digitalisation is no longer merely a trend, but an everyday reality. There are several benefits to incorporating technology for the creation of new experiences in the CCIs:

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- Technology can offer greater personalisation of the visitor and consumer experience

With the possibility of giving people an experience that is more tailored to their desired level of interactivity and immersion as well as activities in which participants need to be involved more actively, **technology can offer more meaningful interactions between visitors and alternative places/cultural activities.**

- Technology opens up new experiences in the CCIs and tourism

This is because the use of technology in certain situations can **provide greater enablement and facilitation of experience** (for ex. the creation of vicarious experiences through virtual reality technology). This is defined as technology mediation, wherein technology is situated between users and artefacts/cultural elements and allows for more rich and varying experiences. Technology has also opened up new possibilities for the creators themselves: **digital tools have helped to reduce entry barriers for artistic innovation.** These tools are being used to aid non-professional creators to produce new products and services.

- Technology leads to greater creativity and sustainability in the CCIs and tourism

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42

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For the CCIs and tourism industry, using certain technologies to enhance and diversify initiatives has contributed to new destination configurations, inspired new business models, and opened up new roles for consumers and producers of experiences. Digital tools are being used as a way to **disseminate and safeguard intangible cultural heritage**, ensuring its sustainability and valorisation. Furthermore, technology is an optimal solution in the realm of peripheral tourism and cultural practices as it can **improve the connectivity of non-core destinations and help to redirect visitors to other less crowded paths**, further opening up lesser-known experiences and countering overtourism concerns. Technology is also suited for bottom-up initiatives as the adoption and management of these resources doesn't require government intervention.



For professionals operating in the CCIs and tourism industry of Europe today innovative practices are already being implemented which breathe new life into city tour initiatives. **Two initiatives which utilise technology and the idea of greater visitor interaction are smart city tourism and 'playable cities'**. Unlike mass tourism and popular cultural activities, these initiatives are more small-scale and individualised and, as such, they attract highly motivated visitors.

- Smart city tourism

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Smart tourism is focused on enhancing and facilitating the visitor experience by means of smart technologies (Augmented reality, Virtual reality, geolocation, etc.). With technology being embedded within the environment, smart cities can enrich the visitor experience by contextualising it to their needs and enhance a destination's competitiveness. **What makes a city 'smart' is the focus it places on the user perspective, ensuring that the use of technology is suitable to the situation and user-friendly.**

An example of smart technology that can enhance the visitor experience is **the application of Augmented Reality (AR)**. This technology allows users to see the real world and perceive an additional virtual world in the same field of view. Until recently, AR applications required custom designed equipment, which made it unfeasible in terms of size and cost. However, the development of mobile devices, along with location and visualisation technologies, has made it possible to integrate all the components needed by AR applications on smartphones at a low price for the purposes of their implementation in city tours.

The European Union has recognised the creative and social importance of smart cities by launching an initiative to reward smart tourism in European cities. **The European Capital of Smart Tourism recognises outstanding achievements in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity.** Since 2019, two cities have been annually awarded the title of

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44

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European Capital of Smart Tourism, and an additional four cities have received European Smart Tourism Awards for their outstanding achievements in the individual categories.

- Playable cities

Playable cities are sub-types of smart cities and they usually begin as bottom-up projects which strive to increase the levels of participation and engagement of target audiences with playfulness. As bottom-up initiatives, playable cities are adopted to the local context because they **identify local challenges and involve local stakeholders**, many of whom are employed in the CCIs.

This is a strategy being used to reinvent and reinvigorate largely unused areas of cities or the periphery. **Digital playfulness can bring life to faded or underutilised destinations and provide new interpretations of the city to local and foreign audiences.** Digitally enhancing an environment can help to make that environment more playful and more attractive. Playable cities thus use technology to create scenarios and activities with visitors and this connection to technology makes the link between tangible and intangible culture more interactive and playful. **Augmented reality and mixed reality technology can be used in the design and implementation of such scenarios and activities to make a city 'playful'.**

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45

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An example is an initiative which made San Sebastian in Spain ‘playable’ by providing a fun and interactive way to guide participants through different points of interest in the city. Participants have to search for unique QR codes to unlock clues and answer quiz questions, as well as to augment some cultural artefacts.

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46

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47

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48

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List of tourism experts in Europe

Marcello Gandolfi

Community Based Tourism Expert

Marcello Gandolfi is a Community Based Tourism Expert. This means that he specialises in developing tourism initiatives in close partnership with local communities and civil society organisations. Since 2013, he has worked as a Project Director of the CODESPA Foundation, facilitating the implementation of development initiatives in 11 Asian, African and Latin America Countries.

Key projects at CODESPA involved designing a method for integrating local communities into tourism value chains. Since 2017, he has also been teaching public officers of Latin America Ministries of Tourism on how to integrate their local communities with the larger tourism industry.

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49

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NGO Ecoclub Green Destinations

Eco-travel network

Ecoclub was established in 1999 with the aim of uniting and supporting interested visitors in the development of more ecological, democratic and socially just tourism. Their priority areas are reporting on and organising ecological (sustainable, responsible, green, ethical) travel, news, events, jobs and opportunities. They enjoy the support of more than a thousand active members worldwide. In addition, Ecoclub offers consultancy services on various tourism and hospitality topics, such as: creating sustainable city tours, making more user-friendly tourism websites, maximising the business side of a more sustainable city tour, and many more.

Contact details:

Contact form: <https://ecoclub.com/contact>

To learn more, please visit: <https://ecoclub.com/>

The Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA)

Non-profit Organisation

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50

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The Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA) was established in 2003 as a non-profit organisation based in Athens, Greece. Their professional objective is to prioritise the development of a harmonious relationship between Humankind and Nature for the wellbeing of all.

Even though they are based in the Mediterranean, through their work they aspire to work towards a more sustainable future beyond their region. The Institute is made up of a multidisciplinary team of experts in the fields of ecology, forestry, sustainable development, spatial planning, archaeology, social anthropology and others.

MedINA collaborates with diverse partners such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture, the Agricultural University of Athens and others.

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Jeppe Klockareson

Owner & Founder, Fair Travel

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51

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Jeppé Klockareson is an expert in sustainable tourism development, working in the field for over 15 years. He provides advisory, audit, training, marketing consultancy services.

He has run Fair Travel, a responsible travel consultancy in Stockholm, since 2010. Fair Travel works with companies around the world to make responsible tourism mainstream and successful.

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Association Euni Partners

Non-governmental organisation

Euni Partners is a non-governmental organisation, which aims to expand the cooperation between academia, businesses and educational organisations. The Association's priority areas are education and training, sustainable development and social integration of people with fewer opportunities. Association Euni Partners has over 80 members from different professional backgrounds, including academia; education and training; media and new technologies; business; NGOs, etc.

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52

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To learn more, please visit:

https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering/organisation/50291_de

GEN Europe

European network for ecovillages and sustainable communities

GEN Europe is part of the Global Ecovillage Network which connects thousands of communities and initiatives, thereby bridging cultures, countries, and continents. It also has an international youth branch by the name of NextGEN.

They have made it their professional ambition to promote the development of sustainable initiatives since 1996. Their ultimate aim is the empowerment of local communities in order to create a more equitable and enriching society for people and the environment.

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53

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