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Creative connections? Tourists, entrepreneurs and destination dynamics

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ABSTRACT

Creativity is one of the more recent ideas of a range of concepts put forward to capture how culture affects the dynamics of economic processes. In the case of tourism, creativity brings together three interrelated aspects of destination dynamics. Firstly, the intensification of the experience economy and commoditisation of the social; secondly, the individual's capacity and responsibility to innovate and respond to societal changes; and thirdly, the socio-spatial embeddedness of economic activities. We argue that it is crucial to deal with these issues as interrelated rather than separate entities, in order to better grasp destination dynamics. To accomplish this we approach creativity as a relational process. This paper explores tourism encounters and their creative capacities, focusing on the connections between tourists and tourism life-style entrepreneurs and what such relations may imply for tourism destination dynamics in rural areas. Its unifying thread is a story of a life-style entrepreneur in the Strandir region, Northwest Iceland. It is argued that while many of the activities of life-style entrepreneurs may be regarded as creative, this is not necessarily a key to commercial success.

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Introduction

The Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft is located in a small village, Hólmavík, in the Strandir region of Northwest Iceland. Even though this is a remote area, increasing numbers of tourists are visiting Hólmavík. Most of them stop by at the Museum building that also houses the regional tourist information office. There, the majority of the visitors meet Sigurður Atlason, or Siggí who is the Museum's Director, often referred to as Siggí "galdur" (i.e. sorcerer). Many also meet the Museum's cat, who is an extremely pleasant and easy-going creature. Its name is Mr Hippopotamus or just Hippo, which gives a hint about its bodily appearance! In 2012 Siggí and Hippo started to raise money to support a cat shelter in Reykjavík, Iceland. Siggí designed a postcard, featuring photographs of Hippo, that was sold at the Museum and people were free to donate more if they wished. This was quite a successful enterprise. Not only was Siggí able to collect more funds than he had ever anticipated but the project also attracted media attention providing the Museum with very positive coverage on national television (Figures 1 and 2).

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Figure 1. Map of Strandir region.

The role of tourists is of special significance in this instance; in addition to buying the postcards and donating money to the collection, the photographs featured on the postcards had been taken by foreign visitors to the Museum and sent to Siggí. This draws attention to what may seem to be mundane tourism encounters connecting guests and hosts, but can result in positive and creative effects. At the same time this anecdote also raises questions about what is involved in creativity and creative tourism, which increasingly is being seen as holding the promise of enhancing both economies and communities. While we agree that creativity is an important feature of life, we are critical of its use as a remedy for communities facing socio-economic strains. Here, we intend to explore the implications of thinking about tourism entrepreneurship in rural areas using the concept of creativity. Our focus will be on tourism encounters and their creative capacities and we will specifically examine the connections between tourists and tourism life-style



Figure 2. The postcard sold for the fundraising showing Siggi with his cat, Hippo.

entrepreneurs and what such relations may imply for tourism destination dynamics in rural areas. We will do so with reference to the work done by Siggi at the Icelandic Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft.

In the context of destination dynamics, creativity brings together three interrelated aspects of destination dynamics. Firstly, the intensification of the experience economy and commodification of the social; secondly, an individual's capacity and responsibility to innovate and respond to changing societal environments; and thirdly, the socio-spatial embeddedness of economic activities. We argue that it is crucial to deal with

these issues as entangled rather than as separate entities, in order to better understand destination dynamics. To accomplish this it is asserted that creativity should be understood relationally, that is, in connection to improvisation and thus its process rather than its end product, that is, the novelty of innovation (Ingold & Hallam, 2007; McLean, 2009). As such, creativity is integral to our daily activities and engagements with the world (Tanggaard, 2013). This emphasises that innovation is accomplished through relational work (Callon, 2004) and is guided by diverse rationalities. This, we argue, has a bearing on how the undertakings of life-style entrepreneurs can be understood and what meaning and implication creativity may have for their activities. It is argued that while much of their activities may count as creative, this is not necessarily a key to commercial success. In order to gain an insight into the role of creativity for tourism entrepreneurship it is necessary to trace the practices and relations the entrepreneurs engage in to run their businesses. This implies that the conventional use of the concept of creativity, defined by its end product, may be problematic in order to grasp the dynamics of entrepreneurial activities in practice.

The article starts with a conceptual discussion about creativity and its use in a discourse about economic development, including tourism. We then relate life-style entrepreneurs in tourism to the concept of creativity, before exploring creative encounters among Siggí, Hippo the cat and visitors to the Museum. The article concludes with reflections on the potential creativity may have for destination dynamics in rural areas.

Creative connections?

Over the last three decades, the role of culture has gained increasing significance in discussions among policy-makers and academics alike about competitiveness, innovation and economic development in general (Gregson, Simonsen, & Vaiou, 2001; Massey, 1984; Thrift & Olds, 1996). As du Gay and Pryke remarked (2002, p. 1), there is an emergent “belief that something called ‘culture’ is both somehow critical to understanding what is happening to, as well as to practically intervening in, contemporary economic and organizational life”.

A string of concepts has been produced to capture how culture affects the dynamics of economic processes. As one of these, creativity has in recent years become a popular notion in the policy rhetoric of economic development and innovation (Florida, 2004; Gibson, 2010; Gibson & Kong, 2005). This connection between creativity and economic development is further bolstered in the wake of improved understanding of market trends and consumer behaviour, characterised by demand for participation, co-creation and authentic experiences (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2010), as well as the rise of the sharing economy (Belk, 2007; Botsman & Rogers, 2010). On an optimistic note, Ateljevic (2009) refers to the group known as the “Cultural Creatives”, who through their practices may be affecting the socio-economic landscape of the world. This Group holds different values than the rest of society. It cares:

[...] about ecology and saving the planet, about relationships, peace, social justice, self-actuation, spirituality and self – expression [...] they reflect on themselves, actively travel and are looking for a spiritual dimension in life that goes beyond religious dogmas. (I. Ateljevic, 2009, p. 285)

In a similar vein, Heidi Mitchell describes the “Metrospirituals”, which are “Hybrid-driving, yoga-practicing baby-and echo-boomers for whom social responsibility and seeking out new adventures are a way of life” (2006, p. 14 in Rutherford, 2011, p. 95). They “eat local foods, support green organizations, and consume responsibly” (Rutherford, 2011, p. 95) in their effort to mark their distinctiveness and weave their life stories and identity. Changing value systems feed into changing consumer behaviour and demands, hence, marketing is currently approaching consumers more as whole human beings. The message is that companies that provide consumers with opportunities to participate in the creation of the product or experience, as well as engaging in some sort of community or social relations, will do better and have competitive advantage over others (see Jensen & Prebensen, 2015).

Creativity thereby seems to hold the promise of enhancing both economies and communities as Gibson (2010) aptly summarises:

Creativity is said to be the salient feature of contemporary post-industrial capitalism, fuelling innovation and investment and therefore responsible for urban economic fortunes, as well as being a somewhat intangible quality in places (“the buzz” in urban milieus) responsible for generating lifestyle-led in-migration. (p. 1)

From this approach, creativity brings together three interlinked aspects that affect destination dynamics. Firstly, the focus on creativity marks an increasing commodification of culture. In many ways then, the emphasis on creativity manifests an intensification of the experience economy. Not only is the symbolic content of products important, but also now the creation process of the product is opened up for participation and engagement, which means that the connections through which a given experience is created is at least partially commoditised (Richards, 2014). With reference to tourism, Veijola (2009) points to how much of working life is “increasingly based on producing experiences, images and affects” (p. 109) and how we have entered a stage where the boundaries between work and home have to a large extent, dissolved (see Cederholm & Hultman, 2010).

Secondly, creativity draws the attention to people and people’s capacities to deal with social change. As Tanggaard (2013) notes, the usual understanding of creativity links it to the individual subject and its “intellectual moment” (Tanggaard, 2013, p. 23). According to this view, the creative person is capable of re-arranging different kinds of materials to realise his/her (creative) vision, those being only passive props and a stage for the active subject to play on. Thereby creativity is reserved for some people more than others, for instance the creative class (Florida, 2004). It also follows that responsibility for societal well-being is, to a larger extent than before, placed on the shoulders of individual subjects rather than social structures or systems such as the welfare system.

The third topic is closely interrelated, as people relate to places. This is the socio-spatial embeddedness of economic activity such as entrepreneurship (Borch, Førde, Rønning, Vestrum, & Alsos, 2008; Førde, 2009, 2015; McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015). The creative class is, for example, more inclined to living in urban centres (Gibson, 2010; Mayes, 2010; Waitt & Gibson, 2009). However, recently more attention has been given to the creative capacities of people living in rural areas (Brouder, 2012; Cloke, 2007; Gunnarsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014), not least in relation to studies of life-style entrepreneurship. As Brouder (2012) notes, one reason for the usual focus on the urban may be that the creative

practices to be found in rural areas are more subtle and difficult to measure than in more densely populated areas. It is also debatable whether creativity can be measured at all, or at least, it may be questioned as to what kind of creativity lends itself to measurement.

Although listed here as separate issues, it is crucial to approach these three points as correlated and mutable as their relational configuration is contingent and performed through tourism practices. The relational complexity of creativity is further illustrated in debates on creative tourism.

Creative tourism

Creativity has become increasingly prominent in tourism, often framed as a development strategy in itself (Richards, 2011). First defined by Richards and Raymond (2000), the term “Creative Tourism” refers to a wide range of tourism experiences. At first the focus was on aspects of co-creation and the development of personal skills by the tourist, for instance when tourists participated in courses or workshops, but increasingly, creative tourism is used to refer to all kinds of tourism activities that provide access to local scenes and create connections between local people and visitors (Richards, 2014). However, participation, “authentic” experiences, developing skills and creative potential development are the common features in creative tourism agendas around the world (Richards, 2011; Tan, Kung, & Luh, 2013). This is a very broad description, but importantly recognises that creativity is usually all around us and we all possess some degree of creative potential that may be realised depending on circumstances. This does however, not change the fact that some places can be more inviting for creative consumption and tourism providers can be instrumental in establishing creative spaces, where “knowledge, skills, physical assets, social capital and ‘atmosphere’” (Richards, 2011, p. 1238) encourage creativity.

Richards (2014) has pointed to a notable change taking place in the development of creative tourism such that “‘creative’ forms of intangible culture more commonly found in ‘everyday life’” (p. 135), is increasing in prominence as an attraction in and by itself. Hence, destinations that promise or invite guests to interact with locals and experience the “backstage” dramas of the destination (MacCannell, 1976) may be carving out a distinctive image for themselves in an already saturated tourism market. In this version the encounters between hosts and guests, on an everyday basis, are more important than developing one’s creative skills or taking part in organised courses or learning processes. Richards (2014) terms this “relational tourism” as the focus moves away from the tourist and the host as individual subjects, towards their joint encounter and collective experience. This takes place through their interaction, which may improve or augment their relational capital respectively. Given the broad connotations of creative tourism Richards (2011) states:

[...] perhaps creative tourism is not a coherent “niche” at all, but rather a series of creative practices linking production, consumption and place. The creativity involved in creative tourism is also not limited to a single actor, such as the tourists themselves, but involves the creative interplay of producers, consumers, policy makers and landscapes to develop embedded creativity in tourism experiences. (pp. 1245–1246)

From this perspective, creativity can be seen more as a process than a product. Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam have criticised the usual understanding of creativity as being an end

product; something that hopefully marks a radical disjuncture as in the sense of novel and tangible innovation. Creativity can alternatively be read as a process of improvisation, that is, “[...] in terms of the movements that gave rise to [the results]” (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 3).

The concept of improvisation stresses the relational aspects of creative processes and the way in which people “construct culture as they go along and as they respond to life’s contingencies” (Bruner, 1993 in Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 2). This is a type of creativity that does not adhere to a “script”, detailed planning or managing procedures, but grasps how social orders are continuously maintained and/or disrupted through encounters and negotiations between tourists and hosts. In this sense, creativity emerges as a mundane and everyday phenomenon, differentiating it from the traditional understanding, which has focused on creative accomplishment of individual minds (Tanggaard, 2013). Approaching creative tourism with this understanding puts the focus on people, not as isolated subjects, but as actors situated in “a meshwork of entangled lines of life, growth and movement” (Ingold, 2011, p. 63). Creativity is thereby “an everyday phenomenon resulting in continual processes of ‘making the world’” (Tanggaard, 2013, p. 21). In studying creative tourism we are therefore following the encounters through which tourism experiences as well as destinations emerge.

Life-style entrepreneurship and creativity

If we accept that tourists are increasingly demanding “participative” and “authentic experiences” (Richards, 2011) the actors that may be in the best position to offer such authentic experiences are life-style entrepreneurs, who are often key actors in rural tourism economies. Entrepreneurship, in the general sense, includes the ability to recognise opportunities for change and the willingness to exploit them (J. Ateljevic & Li, 2009), and has as such often been framed as an individualised and economic pursuit. Here, we argue for a relational approach to entrepreneurship depicting it as a cultural practice that has to do with relational ordering (de Laet & Mol, 2000; Førde, 2009, 2015; Jóhannesson, 2012). Innovation is also understood as a relational effect accomplished through improvisational networking between a diverse set of actors. As such, entrepreneurial activities manifest efforts of “weaving the world” (Ingold, 2000) and refer to the process of “getting things done” (Schumpeter, 1991). The common description of the visionary entrepreneur who carries out his/her ideas through his/her skills, perception of opportunities and willingness to take risk is somewhat demystified by this perspective. Understood as a process of cultural improvisation entrepreneurship always takes place in the midst of things; the actor is always part and parcel of the processes s/he seeks to order.

Improvisation is evident in much of life-style entrepreneurship. A characteristic of life-style entrepreneurs in tourism is that they are not simply motivated by potential economic gain. Their presence may thereby hinder the growth of other entrepreneurs that adhere to a capitalistic growth paradigm (Ioannides & Petersen, 2003). Some reasons for that may be that life-style entrepreneurs often lag behind in marketing and quality management skills or show little interest in harnessing new techniques. They may also be reluctant to cooperate and their involvement with the formal side of the industry sector (such as tourism boards) may be limited (Peters, Frehse, & Buhalis, 2009).

However, it has also been demonstrated that life-style-orientated entrepreneurs are of great importance for tourism development, not least in rural areas. They may act as pioneers in introducing new services in areas where more market- and growth-driven entrepreneurs are reluctant to act (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Gunnarsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014). Life-style entrepreneurs are often well embedded with the local community, which may facilitate the entrepreneurial process (Jack & Anderson, 2002) by easing access to local resources and support. It is however important to note that embeddedness can also have adverse effects, limiting the potentials of entrepreneurship and often the view from the outside is important to identify market gaps and opportunities for innovation (Iversen & Jacobsen, 2016). Moreover, the positive aspects of embeddedness do not need to be limited to a geographical area or a specific territory. As Kalantaridis and Bika (2006) have shown, local embeddedness can also refer to network proximity, thus underlining the importance of a balance in the enactment of bonding and bridging social capital for innovation and entrepreneurship (Bærenholdt & Aarsæther, 2002; Borch et al., 2008; Jóhannesson, Skaftadóttir, & Benediktsson, 2003).

This is certainly the case with Sigurður Atlason, the manager of the Icelandic Museum of Witchcraft and Sorcery in the Strandir region, to whom we will now return and follow some of the ways in which he engages in creative tourism together with his other half – Hippo the cat.

Creative encounters

The following account is based on data collected through participant observation and interviews as well as from the Museum's Trip Advisor account. The latter has proved to be a very important channel for the Museum to create links to post- and prospective visitors not least as the Museum has been rewarded with a Certificate of Excellence for the last three years. Numerous fieldtrips were made throughout the years 2011–2012 and during the summer of 2014, as well as frequent correspondence with Siggí via Facebook, email and telephone. The Icelandic part of the project focused on how the Strandir region, as a sparsely populated and remote area, has gradually taken on a more touristic flavour in recent years (Lund, 2015; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2016). A key catalyst of tourism in the region has been the Icelandic Museum of Witchcraft and Sorcery, established in the year 2000 (Gunnarsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014).

In basic terms, the Museum is a gathering of historical facts about the period of witch hunts and burnings in the Country during the seventeenth century, coupled with a collection of Icelandic folklore. Since its establishment, the Museum has strengthened the image of Strandir as a region of magical atmosphere (Lund, 2015; Lund & Jóhannesson, 2016). The original idea, to create an attraction by using the cultural heritage of witchcraft and magic, originated in a report that the County Council commissioned in the mid-1990s (Jónsson, 1996). Siggí has been the Director of the Museum from the beginning. He was also one of a team of three entrepreneurs that implemented this idea. The others were Jón, a local ethnologist and the person who wrote the initial report and Magnús, a historian, who has been integral in gathering historical artefacts and narratives about the history of witchcraft. Both live in the region and are active, both directly and indirectly, in the overall activities of the Museum. Importantly, the local municipal authorities supported the establishment of the Museum, especially at its inception. The motive for this municipal

support was the need to diversify the regional economy, traditionally based on agriculture and fishing. According to the small group of Sigurður, Jón and Magnús, it was partly a coincidence that they started working with the heritage of magic and witchcraft, the main reason being simply that they found this period interesting and wanted to know more about it. Although the project was generally positively received by the local community it also created some controversy. Not everyone was happy to delve into this dark and violent period of the past. Even though almost four centuries have passed since the events took place, it remains a delicate topic for many. Siggi described the relief amongst guests at the grand opening of the Museum when they discovered that the historical accounts were treated with sensitivity and dignity throughout the exhibition.

Although the Museum has taken care in gathering facts about the period, including the many court cases involving witchcraft accusations and the events of witch-burning, the Museum's display is organised in such a way that it provides possibilities for play. Elsewhere we have described the Museum as a space of opportunities for playful encounters and creative connections, in which guests are invited to play with their imagination about the community in its past and present and the role of witchcraft and magic in society (Lund & Jóhannesson, 2016). The material and symbolic arrangement of the Museum presents itself in ways that invite the visitor to engage with different temporalities, partially constructing personal narratives about witchcraft and magic.

Furthermore, Siggi, dressed up in a sorcerer's garb, continues to regularly perform magic rituals for visitors. His performances could be taken as incidental jokes on his behalf, but they are in many ways strategic acts in order to use all available means to secure a source of income, by creating spending opportunities for tourists while visiting the Museum (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017). The Museum has gradually evolved and Siggi has improvised its direction. He manages an online shop, a restaurant and day tours as well as the regional tourist information office. Furthermore, he is very active on different kinds of social media through which he reaches out and offers connections to prospective, as well as past guests and to some extent mobilises the Museum as an attraction.

The expanding activities of the Museum create more opportunities to connect to guests that can lead in many directions. It can be said that the Museum itself has become a creative space where "knowledge, skills, physical assets, social capital and 'atmosphere'" (Richards, 2011, p. 1238) blend together and encourage creativity. An example of such connections is that Siggi often engages in extended communication with tourists, even after their visit, corresponding about magic rituals and particular objects on display, such as the legendary necropants as well as sending people an electronic copy of the guide to the display. Tourists also frequently share photographs with him, for instance of Hippo the cat, who has for some become part of the attraction as comments from visitors on Trip Advisor indicate: "This museum gave a very good tour through dark history of witchcraft in Iceland. Hippopotamus made the visit complete". Why Hippo made the visit so enjoyable is not indicated, but another comment, although it does not mention Hippo in particular, highlights the effect the cat brings about in relation to the Museum space:

This is not just a tourist stop for a giggle about sorcery and witchcraft! A comprehensive anthropological look at witchcraft and folklore in the amazing West Fjords region. Yes, it may scare the pants off a five year old (the "Tilberi" sent ours packing to the beautiful outside deck to pet the resident cat) but plenty to amaze and educate one sceptical Phd scientist (who didn't want to come in but was certainly glad he did) and his partner. Many many

thanks to the staff who listened to my daughter's stories about every cat she has ever known while we continued to soak in the exhibits. I repeat ... the staff at the museum are truly truly magical. Our daughter is much like a cat herself and doesn't often hang out with "strangers" except the special ones;) The stop at The Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft was surely one of the highlights of our stay in Iceland. Stop in, really well done!

In this instance, the presence of Hippo appears to have brought out elements of authenticity for contemporary tourists, who appreciate, like the "metrospiruals" described above, to be approached as whole human beings rather than being merely reduced to customers. Real encounters take place between real humans, as well as non-humans and in this instance it is Hippo who is the key figure in how connections are improvised. Siggí continued the improvisation when starting the collection for the cat shelter, a collection that lasted for a year and brought both Hippo and Siggí to the attention of a popular programme on national television. This endeavour can be seen as a conscious attempt, on Siggí's behalf, to connect the much loved cat and the plight of mistreated cats, to a wider audience, or to the "sensitive side" of Icelandic "metrospiruals" for whom being socially responsible is a "way of life" (Rutherford, 2011, p. 95). For some it might appear that Siggí is using Hippo to advertise the Museum and Siggí admits that to some extent this was a strategic act. He had realised how extremely popular Hippo was amongst the visitors, but advertising the Museum was not at the forefront of his mind but rather, as he told us, he wanted to use the opportunity to connect with people that care about animals. And as he points out, reflecting on the commoditisation of Hippo and the caring for animals: "it is complicated and I would never say that to Hippo", revealing the "metrospirual" side of himself.

The vital issue to examine in relation to how everyday tourism encounters are improvised is precisely that "it is complicated" as Siggí himself emphasises and the complications are not about selling a product but rather about being a performer in a complicated meshwork of ever expanding connections and networks of sharing and caring. A comment on Trip Advisor may help us to illuminate some of these complications.

"Fantastic Experience!"

We visited the museum and Holmavik in March 2013. There is very little else to see in the town itself, which was fine by us because it is truly an oasis of calm. The museum itself was atmospheric and very informative. It gives one a fantastic glimpse into Iceland's dark past. The owner of the museum was incredibly welcoming. You must try the mussels provided. They were excellent. Thank you Siggí and I hope you enjoyed sharing our Baileys! This was certainly one of our best experiences in the whole country. You really mustn't miss it.

The experience was fantastic and the comment reflects on the experience as whole, the town, the Museum, the food and, not least, on Siggí himself as a welcoming host, even sharing with them what they have to offer; their Baileys! As Veijola (2010, p. 110) points out, when the product of labour is a social relation or an experience of an affect, it becomes a "complex issue of organising the relations between life, labour and capital". Creative encounters meander across and beyond all "imagined" boundaries as carved out by the ideals of the capitalist regime of production and consumption, leaving working life and personal life in a constant entanglement. This is the key to providing authentic experiences, which Siggí, as a life-style entrepreneur is seeking to do. It is, however, complicated, because the tourism encounters are improvised as they go along, constantly

engaging and connecting, which can be exhausting. When improvising, the roles are not scripted, boundaries blur and the public role emerges alongside the private role leaving Siggí, as an amalgamated part of the Museum, himself as an attraction. Nevertheless, this simultaneously provides the business with an advantage over more directly ordered tourism firms, allowing for authentic co-created experiences.

Towards creative destination development?

In this paper, we have addressed some of the tenets of creative tourism and with an example from the Strandir region, illustrated how creative tourism may express itself in rural, sparsely populated and remote destinations through the business of a life-style entrepreneur. As consumers seem increasingly to be craving for participation, communion and co-creation, creativity in a broad sense features as a suitable response, and a way to develop an attractive product. Creativity brings together the aspects of intensifying commoditisation of culture and social relations, focusing on people and their capacity to cope with societal change and an emphasis on spatial embeddedness of economic relevant activities. In the context of rural areas, we have argued that life-style entrepreneurs are crucial actors when it comes to developing creative tourism. In many ways, the work done by tourism life-style entrepreneurs, manifests the interstices between the three aforementioned aspects. As such, they illustrate the dissolving boundaries between production and consumption and between work and everyday life, or to put it another way, they reveal that if there ever were boundaries between those spheres, they are made through relentless ordering work. As we saw in the example of Siggí, tourists have easy access to him as a person and to connect to and communicate with him, as he is available 24/7 for most of the year. Of course, the degree of communication between life-style entrepreneurs and tourists depends on the service in question, but the point is that small-scale life-style entrepreneurs, could potentially have a competitive advantage over larger companies in providing “authentic”, co-created experiences in rural and peripheral areas.

What implications therefore, does creativity have for rural tourism? If we think about the Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft as an example of creative tourism, it has surely had some economic impacts in the area of Strandir. Around 10,000 people visit the Museum every summer, the majority being foreign tourists. However, it is safe to say that the socio-cultural impacts are even more important. As Siggí states, the Museum has added a flavour to the community, enhancing the cultural landscape in the area and strengthening the regional identity. The Museum has received much positive attention that has spilled over into the whole region and as such it has provided a platform for interaction, both between locals but also between them or the community and visitors. As such, the creativity evident in the establishment of the Museum in the first place is indeed “in the service of community” (Mayes, 2010, p. 20).

Creativity, and its use in tourism development discourse, directs the attention to the encounters and connections between hosts and guests, consumers and producers and may eventually open up a dynamic space of critical engagement with future development. Although the way in which creative tourism, manifested in the Museum and in Siggí’s work, is indicative of efforts to move beyond the growth paradigm, it is hard to escape the feeling that both are fundamentally bound to the capitalist regime of production

and consumption. We are not stating that Siggí is strategically engaging in personal interactions only to make more money, although his hospitality is a large part of the service being bought by visitors. He is however enmeshed in the complex web of life, labour and capital (Veijola, 2009), shuffling between roles of companion, caring host and shrewd businessman (Jóhannesson & Lund, 2017). In engaging with creative tourism, we are thus involved in ever finer nuanced commodification of culture – to some extent and for some of the tourists, Siggí and Hippo the cat, are indeed an integral part of the Museum's experience.

Furthermore, creative tourism does not change the fact that tourism depends first and foremost on transportation, providing connections to the destination in question, concrete infrastructure and access to venture capital, as well as basic principles of hospitality. To ask life-style entrepreneurs to be creative will thereby not secure them commercial success. We should thus not be too quick in embracing a new paradigm of rural tourism development but rather engage in critical ways with the possibilities of creativity and how it may affect destination dynamics. We need to think about what demands creativity imposes for entrepreneurs, as well as the support system of the tourism industry. Should entrepreneurs constantly be available for fruitful conversation? Or is it a good idea to abolish the boundaries between work and home? It is doubtful that this is the case for many, if not most entrepreneurs. It is therefore imperative to open up the discourse on creativity and think about it in more modest terms as a potential tool for enhancing tourism businesses but not as a grand solution to the socio-economic strains of rural areas. Taken as an end product, a strategy in and of itself, it runs the risk of moving the focus of tourism policy away from the real needs of tourism entrepreneurs in rural areas. If we appreciate creativity as a process of improvisation – as a way to deal with life's contingencies – it draws our attention to the political aspects of every day ordering attempts, which are necessarily ontological. It has to do with making choices about which "realities to enact" (Law & Urry, 2004) and how to carve out viable routes into the future. We conclude with the words of Siggí when answering a question about the future of creative tourism in the Strandir region, further highlighting how ephemeral creativity can be for policy work: "Is this creativity? I don't know. I've never thought of me as especially creative. I've always been like that".

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