Creative cities and sustainable development: mural-based tourism as a local public strategy
Ciudades creativas y desarrollo sostenible: turismo basado en el arte mural como estrategia pública local

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Abstract: Creative locations become a key element of public regeneration strategies and develop innovative services based on intellectual property. Some communities that have chosen to develop their tourism potential through the use of murals have improved their local development in a sustainable way, thus meeting a need expressed by tourists to create a more active experience with an opportunity for the destination to embed experiences in the locality. In this study, which was carried out as part of an international cooperation research project with Uruguay, we have explored whether Uruguayan mural art may be a way for Uruguayan towns to develop sustainable, creative, mural-based tourism. We used a qualitative content analysis, through in-person interviews, and found that its potential has not been exploited due to the lack of an organized public strategy.

Keywords: creative cities, mural art, local sustainable development, mural-based tourism.

Resumen: Las localidades creativas son un elemento clave para el impulso de estrategias de regeneración pública y de creación de servicios innovadores basados en la propiedad intelectual. Algunas comunidades que han optado por desarrollar su potencial turístico a través del arte mural han mejorado su desarrollo local de manera sostenible, uniendo la necesidad de los turistas de vivir una experiencia más activa con la oportunidad de incluir en esas experiencias a la localidad. En este estudio, llevado a cabo en el marco de un proyecto de investigación de cooperación internacional con Uruguay, analizamos si el arte muralista uruguayo podría ser una vía para las localidades uruguayas de desarrollar un turismo sostenible y creativo. Para ello hemos realizado un análisis cualitativo del contenido de diversas entrevistas observando que dicho potencial no ha sido explotado debido a la falta de una estrategia pública organizada.

Palabras clave: ciudades creativas, arte mural, desarrollo local, turismo basado en el muralismo.

1. Introduction: Local cultural and economic sustainable development through creative industries and mural-based tourism

a) Introduction

The United Kingdom's Department of Culture, Media & Sports (DCMS, 2009) defined creative industries as, "those industries that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property". The DCMS definition (2009) included the following activities as creative industries: advertising, architecture, art and antiques markets, computer and video games, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio, although it excluded the heritage sector. However, other organizations, such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, consider heritage activities as creative (UNCTAD 2010).

With intelligence and willpower, any city, town or rural area can develop creative industries as part of its economic regeneration (O'Connor, 2007, 43-44). Local economic development (LED) can be initiated by a community but afterwards may be controlled by a local elite, i.e. a public strategy will be required.

Culture has a direct impact on the value of urban real estate and becomes a key element of culture-led urban regeneration strategies. This impact can come from major flagship developments – an art gallery, concert hall or museum – as well as from micro-activities associated with small-scale cultural entrepreneurs and urban activists. However, the urbanity of city life is also a crucial resource for all kinds of cul-

tural activities which move between the commercial and the non-commercial, the subsidized and the entrepreneurial with great fluidity (O'Connor, 2007, p. 35). This is the link between culture and creative industries.

Moreover, creative cities can establish two types of strategy (Smith and Warfield, 2008): culture-centric orientation or econo-centric orientation. The first one sees the creative city as a place with strong flourishing arts and culture, creative and diverse expressions, and inclusivity, artistry and imagination in which creativity is related to identity, rights, beliefs and social well-being. The second one sees the creative city as a place that is driven by strong, innovative, creative, competitive, cultural and creative industries, and economically sustainable artists and arts organizations. Creativity is a means to achieve the main goal of local economic development.

b) Objectives

To explore whether it was feasible to develop creative cities in Uruguay using mural-based tourism, i.e. the object of this research project, we firstly analyzed some related literature, although this was scarce (Table 1).

Table 1
Some literature related to creative cities and murals. Author's own

Authors	Country/objective
Koster, 2008	Canada (beautification, tourism)
Mohd Fabian et al., 2012	Malaysia (beautification)
Rolston, 2012	Northern Ireland (politic)
Coffey, 2012	Mexico (tourism)

Mural-based tourism, as a form of cultural or historic tourism, has the potential to combine the creative work of different professions including restoration experts, artists, heritage developers and architects. Moreover, it is conceived as sustainable tourism which, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, is tourism that achieves an effective balance between the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism to guarantee long-term benefits to communities (UNWTO, 2004). Murals can be broadly conceived of as a form

of art that is readily and freely accessible to the public at large (Figure 1). However, this tourism "business model" clearly requires a conscious effort to encourage it as it does not occur naturally (Koster, 2008, p. 156).
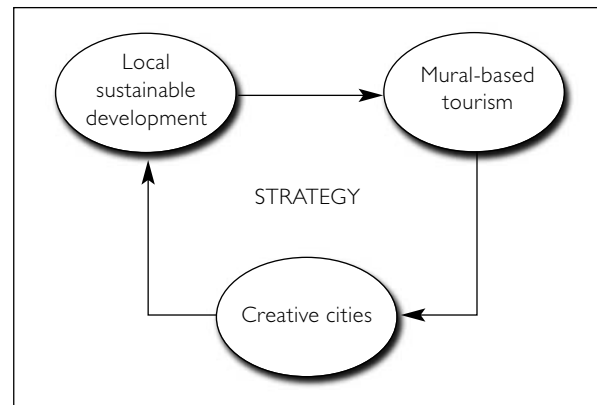

Figure 1
A mural-based tourism strategy. Author's own

Koster (2008, pp. 180-182) defined four categories of murals according to the functions they serve and the reasons they were developed: 1. Murals for public art include those painted on city walls for a variety of reasons unrelated to tourism. These include the development and promotion of art and business advertising. 2. Murals for youth development include the creation of a mural project to specifically address the needs of a particular age group. Participation in the program develops job skills training, a sense of community and an understanding of history. These murals tend to be eclectic in nature, but are often historically based. This category also includes murals developed as anti-graffiti projects. 3. Murals as community beautification are undertaken to beautify a building or neighborhood. Although there is no tourism motivation, tourism may result by default. The content of these murals varies from wildlife and community events to abstract images and historical occurrences. 4. Murals as a tourist attraction are developed and marketed to draw people into the community. The focus is on developing the murals to distinguish the community as a unique destination. These murals generally follow a heritage-based theme. These murals represent what a group within the local community believes to be local heritage alongside what they believe people want to see. As more communities choose mural development to pull in tourists, this leads to the question of how many more mural-

based attractions can exist, as these communities can develop an almost homogenous appearance, especially when one considers that the pool of professional mural artists is relatively small. Communities therefore need to carefully consider the extent to which particular strategies have been utilized elsewhere.

In the case of Uruguay, muralism has great potential. Uruguayan mural painting in the 20th century constitutes an unknown chapter in the history of art, in both national and international circles. During this period, which was the most prolific in terms of Uruguayan art, there were two completely different active trends: the constructivist trend, represented by Joaquín Torres García on one hand, and the artists attached to social realism, centered on Berdía and Seade as the major figures. There are many works about Torres García but literature on other Uruguayan mural artists is particularly scarce (Santiago and Santamarina, 2010).

The issues over the preservation and conservation of contemporary Uruguayan muralist production centre mainly on: 1. Some intervened works suffer chromatic reintegration processes covering the whole of the original surface; 2. For different reasons, restoration may be the only way some murals can survive (some works in school spaces have suffered the absence of a management plan and consequently damage by vandalism and neglect); 3. Twentieth century painting conservation used traditional techniques that have been replaced by the use of new products in the 21st century; 4. Instability of the murals due to the lack of updated technical knowledge on how to restore them.

Murals appear in several Uruguayan locations. The type of tourism available in the districts they belong to may influence the potential of mural art as a tourist attraction (Table 2).

At present, and with the exception of the towns of Rosario and San Gregorio Polanco which have a clear mural-based tourism strategy, the remaining locations do not take advantage of this opportunity.

2. Methodology: in-person interviews and content analysis

Our aim was to gain an appreciation of the potential of mural-based tourism strategies being carried out in Uruguay. To achieve this, we developed a qualitative analysis. In March and April 2011, a team conducted by Professor Santamarina conducted various in-depth, in-person interviews (42) as part of a project about the social implications of Uruguayan muralism, supported by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The sample consisted of interviewing people involved in the conservation of Uruguayan muralism in the city of Montevideo and the town of Colonia del Sacramento. All the interviews were conducted using the same scripted set of questions which included minor changes depending on the particular town and respondent and were based on a semistructured format. This format was chosen to allow respondents to express themselves freely and provide as much information as possible (Bernard, 2000).

Table 2

Uruguayan districts and the type of tourism they offer. Author's own

Districts (locations) with mural art	Type of tourism
Montevideo (Montevideo)	Cultural
Maldonado (Maldonado, Punta del Este, Pan de Azúcar, Punta Ballena)	Sun and sand
Colonia (Colonia del Sacramento, Rosario)	Cultural
Tacuarembó (San Gregorio Polanco)	Rural
Canelones	Rural
Salto	Rural
Lavalleja	Rural
Florida	Rural

From these interviews we only selected those which addressed people who were related to mural conservation and, for several reasons, those who were linked to local tourism in two of the major Uruguayan cities (Table 3): Montevideo (capital) and Colonia del Sacramento, both of which offer general cultural tourism. The selected interviews (20) were used to identify tourism opportunities through a content analysis (Weber, 1990; Sierra, 2001). The selected keywords were tourism, tourist, planning, enterprise, policy and business, as suggested by some of the selected literature (Koster, 2008; Cooke and Lazzeretti, 2008).

Table 3
Interviews selected for the content analysis. Author's own

Institution	Location	Interview date	Original code
Retired secondary school teacher	Colonia del Sacramento	19-4-2011	4
Retired solicitor	Colonia del Sacramento	20-4-2011	6
Honorary Board of Preservation Works and Reconstruction of old Colonia del Sacramento (Tourism Ministry)	Colonia del Sacramento	22-4-2011	10
Tourist guide	Colonia del Sacramento	23-4-2011	12
Deputy Director of the Department of Land Use Planning	Colonia del Sacramento	25-4-2011	13
Department Director of the Colonia Tourism Association	Colonia del Sacramento	25-4-2011	14
Deputy Director of the Colonia Tourism Association	Colonia del Sacramento	25-4-2011	15
Tourism Observatory	Colonia del Sacramento	26-4-2011	17
Cultural Department Director of the Colonia Tourism Association	Colonia del Sacramento	26-4-2011	18
Colonia Historians Association	Colonia del Sacramento	27-4-2011	23
Restoration Studio Director CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	23-3-2011	1
Mural restorer CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	24-3-2011	2
Photographer CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	24-3-2011	3
Painting restorer CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	25-3-2011	4
Archeological Area Director CPCN-MEC	Montevideo	25-3-2011	5
Painting restorer CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	29-3-2011	6
Sculptor Torre Antel Restoration Studio	Montevideo	30-3-2011	9
Artist and Professor F. Seade Restoration Studio	Montevideo	1-4-2011 2-4-2011	10
Ex Director of Restoration Studio CPCN-MEC*, Professor and Sculptor (disciple of Zorrilla Studio)	Montevideo	4-4-2011	11
Ex Director of Restoration Studio CPCN-MEC*	Montevideo	6-4-2011	15

* Comisión del Patrimonio Cultural de la Nación, Ministerio de Educación y Cultura (National Cultural Heritage Commission. Uruguayan Ministry of Education and Culture).

3. Results

a) Content analysis

The results of the content analysis of the 20 interviews were as follows (Table 4).

It should be noted that the most used keyword was tourism (243 times).

b) Interviews

The interviews also enabled us to analyze this content in greater depth by looking at the context of these keywords.

The town which is most oriented towards cultural tourism is Colonia del Sacramento since it was declared as a World Heritage site in 1995 by the United Na-

Table 4
Results of the content analysis. Author's own using MS Word Word Count & Frequency Statistics Software
(Sobolsoft). WI=words in interview

Keywords	Number of interviews (mean 7685.65 words)	Word count (153713 total)	Frequency (word count/WI*100)
Tourism/touristic	15 (WI 115284.75)	321	2.7853
Tourist/visitor	9 (WI 69170.85)	60	0.0867
plan/planning	19 (WI 146027.35)	220	0.1506
enterprise/business	9 (WI 69170.85)	171	0.2472
policy	15 (WI 115284.75)	21	0.0182

tions Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). The Old Town began to be restored in the 1970s and it attracts many visitors each year.

"*The revitalization of the city came about thanks to an Honorary Executive Council for the Preservation and Reconstruction of the historical Colonia del Sacramento District, which was comprised of a military gentleman who was not originally from Colonia but who was very enterprising, Miranda Artigas Ultra, and an architect Miguel Odriozola... Together with a historian from Montevideo, Fernando Assunçao, they began to give the town the importance it deserved…they beautified the businesses and housing, and prohibited inappropriate buildings. Thus, everyone realized the value of the quarter. Even we appreciated it…*".

The town has developed a hospitality industry which is mainly composed of restaurants and hotels. The major investments were made from the 1970s onwards by Argentinean businesses. While the first tourists were Argentines and Brazilians, the number of European tourists has grown in the last ten years. However, the comments about the restaurants were "*we do not have typical places to eat any more*". In addition, it was considered that the tourism strategy was poor, "*there is no tourism policy, unfortunately. Uruguay could become a tourist destination, but it has not been able to exploit its potential. To make matters worse, cultural and artistic attractions are not being developed as they should be*".

As we can see, the World Heritage designation has contributed to the promotion of tourism but there is still a long way to go. "*About fifteen years ago, after 1995, when the town was named as a World Heritage site, a series of guidelines were established. However, many of these have not been implemented. I think this is partly because the state has not enforced their im-*plementation. *We must remember that the state does a lot of work on some issues, but does nothing on others, and I think in these cases like this one, the state has not had a well-defined strategy in terms of urban planning and certain historical and cultural issues. Recently, they seem to be more focused on these points. However, in my opinion many things that were done before were done haphazardly and there was never a clear strategy...*". This lack of planning is also perceived in Montevideo. Thus, the lack of a defined strategy may be a threat for the sustainable development of these towns ("*We are immersed in the process of creating a plan and that is going to be very difficult. However, if it is successful it could give us tools to manage the city based on the idea of a more integrated landscape, where the environment is integrated, where all eras of our historical narrative are integrated*").

Thus, some participants think mural-based tourism is possible. "*I think there's an organizational problem, there is a definite lack of organization. I think there are isolated cases, e.g. here in San Gregorio Polanco [in Tacuarembó district], which are using murals as a tourist attraction and as a distinctive feature, which make the murals a place for people to go and visit*". However, this initiative has been promoted by a neighborhood committee, not by a public initiative. Another comment was "*in the nineties work was done to use walls as a form of expression. This sought to generate resort towns from the use of mural painting. That was in the nineties in San Gregorio Polanco. There was also another experience in Rosario, …, and another one in Pan de Azúcar, in Maldonado, which was based on a social standpoint, creating a tourist village from the mural as an element to attract people and generate tourism*".

In short, the participants identified clear options for Uruguay to develop mural-based tourism, although this would initially need the introduction of a plan to

restore all its muralism ("*I think if we improve the tourism on offer, we will improve the tourist profile. Personally I am not optimistic, we have no cultural tourism to offer. I think that what we have, if there is any at all, is very ... poor and small scale*").

4. Discussion and conclusions

Uruguay has great potential as a mural-based tourism destination but it needs a strategic plan to supervise the permanent restoration of its murals and also to involve the local community in this task ("*I speak of a deeper appreciation [of muralism], of how important it really has been for society ... I don't think this has been investigated*") ("*we are proud to have a city like this*"). In this sense, the study by Koster (2008) could be a good starting point. Moreover, it could be useful to define the type of mural each location wants to develop according to the four mural categories defined by the same author based on the functions they serve and the reasons they were developed (pp. 180-182).

It would also be necessary to combine the two types of strategy put forward by Smith and Warfield (2008), i.e. culture-centric orientation and an econo-centric orientation, supported by creative governance that connects different vertical levels of government and horizontal ministries, as well as public-private partnerships.

As a next step we would like to conduct in-depth interviews related to muralism and tourism with participants in the towns of Rosario, San Gregorio de Polanco and Pan de Azúcar, taking into account that at present these are the only Uruguayan locations that have taken a mural-based tourism strategy, which has been more or less successful and has had different focuses.

Acknowledgments

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