



## ADVENTURES IN SMALL TOURISM: STUDIES AND STORIES

Edited and with an Introduction by Kathleen Scherf

ISBN 978-1-77385-477-9

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## CONCLUSION

# Situating Small: Orienting Trajectories, Generative Journeys

*Nancy Duxbury*

Small tourism focuses on local experiences intentionally designed for a limited number of participants at a time, or for niche groups, and is offered by a micro-enterprise—ideally based in and supported by the community. This approach provides inspiration for touristic products in small places as well as those generated by neighbourhoods in larger cities. Organizers of small tourism experiences serve as a meeting point for artists and artisans, highlight diverse professions and living cultures, provide spaces for sharing cultural expressions and practices, and create collaborative social networks among individuals and community-based organizations. Through a small tourism lens, can we reimagine what the future could be? Is it possible that small tourism can be a part of a sustainable future, where the interests of travellers and destination communities can merge?

In the introduction to this book, Kathleen Scherf discusses various dimensions of thinking about small tourism today, from highlighting outside-the-mainstream approaches fuelled by motivations connected to altruism, education, experimentation, and immersion; to reconsidering and engaging with the significance of specific places (from neighbourhoods within urban centres to communities located in remote peripheries) and tapping into the life forces and dynamics that drive “everyday” cultures and communities. Rooted in very different contexts, the threads she traces relate to common ideas, concerns, and inspirational ideas across the case studies and stories presented in this book. She emphasizes the ways in which small tourism can enable deeper connections between the people engaged and facilitate connections between resident, visitor, and place. Ultimately, as she notes, when

small tourism experiences are embedded in a community's desire to engage in tourism, and are rooted in local nature and culture, the participation of locals in crafting these intimate local tourism experiences creates social dynamics that, over time, serve to "strengthen, not deplete, the community's sense of place" (page 10). All in all, small tourism seems to be a win-win-win situation.

I share this interest in highlighting and (ultimately) strengthening alternative tourism approaches that can inspire and propel more sustainable and regenerative approaches to interlinking local cultures and tourism for local benefit and development (Duxbury et al. 2020, 2021). These imperatives are reinforced in the wake of well-known examples of damaging mass- and over-tourism situations; a return to emphasizing local well-being and community resiliency that was heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic; and the changing motivations and aspirations of travellers. As Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie elaborate, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to "a new landscape" that is reconfiguring our socio-economic contexts and redirecting our personal aspirations—influencing both the pathways for tourism going forward and the ways in which travel experiences will develop within more-than-tourism-sector mindsets.

In this context, I see resonating synergies between the inspiring initiatives presented in this book and my recent work (Duxbury 2021) examining a variety of tourism-influenced situations with a particular eye to enabling and strengthening cultural vitality and cultural sustainability through a strategic attention to tourism flows. In that work, four overarching, interconnected dimensions emerged as centrally important in what I now recognize as culture-centred small tourism:

1. *Caring for culture*—fostering cultural stewardship and sustainability while enabling cultural adaptations and new approaches to traditional and emergent resources.
2. *Enabling culturally sensitive modes of tourism*—encouraging locally beneficial modes of tourism which reshape relations between visitors and local residents and highlight the specificities of a place.
3. *Empowering community*—strengthening local community agency and designing inclusive and participative governance

frameworks and mechanisms to better understand and act upon dynamics and issues concerning tourism, local cultural vitality, and social well-being.

4. *Improving place*—leveraging the interactions between tourism and culture to engender positive placemaking dynamics that improve the cultural vitality, quality of life, and experience of place for both residents and visitors and thus contribute to sustainable development trajectories. (198)

Now, as I approach the design and writing of this concluding chapter, many possible directions and approaches swirl around me as I wonder how best to interweave the rich insights, perspectives, and distinct voices of the contributions in this book in ways that can inform and pull forward these streams of thinking and action. Three sets of questions have emerged top of mind:

- First, how are these small tourism initiatives rooted and fuelled by local specificities, both tangible and intangible? How do they engage with local culture, nature, and sense of place? How are these localized cultural assets and specificities of place taken up and “vitalized” in these initiatives?
- Second, how does the community benefit? What is fostered and nurtured by these initiatives? How can small tourism and similar localized initiatives provide generative dynamics toward the sustainable development of smaller communities?
- And, third, how can we address the fragility and vulnerabilities of small and micro-enterprises that comprise the core force designing and offering these small tourism experiences? What strategies and structures for resilience and ongoing sustainability might be found within the entrepreneurial ingenuity and practices of these initiatives?

With these wide-ranging questions in mind, I reviewed the chapters in this collection, aiming to identify insights and other “keys” that could help me understand these dimensions more deeply. As I did so, it became increasingly clear that these concerns were tightly interconnected, and it is the integrated-ness of these dimensions that can support and propel small tourism initiatives. In this concluding chapter, I aim to uncover some themes

and trajectories that may illuminate strategic approaches to developing small tourism initiatives. While attempting to organize these points within the three areas identified above, I acknowledge that they are tightly interwoven—small tourism initiatives such as those presented in this book emerge from, embody, and enliven their locales in close and dynamic ways.

## Rooted in Place, Engaging with Local Culture and Other Specificities

The diversity of initiatives presented in this volume present an array of approaches to how small tourism initiatives are rooted in and fuelled by tangible and intangible local specificities. The initiatives demonstrate an attentiveness and sensitivity to micro-cultures and the dynamics of communities and specific public sites. They offer strategic approaches to *integration*—of sites, activities, themes, stories, rituals/practices, and the knowledges and perspectives of local guides—in ways that, cumulatively, enable rich and meaningful experiences and exchanges, and enable visitors to temporarily tap into the socio-cultural and other dynamics of a specific place. It is in the intertwining of personal contacts, visitor perspectives, and mutual curiosities through such varied platforms that authentic cultural heritages, lifestyles, and meanings of place are revealed, shared, and—possibly—dynamized for local well-being and development.

## Intangible Cultural Heritage, Realized through Personal Contact

It is in these integrative dynamics that the intangible cultural heritage of a place is revealed. As Diana Guerra Amaya and Diana Marcela Zuluaga Guerra observe in chapter 6, the intangible heritage of a place is “synonymous with the ordinary” and is found in “everyday life, in local people, in their routine and cultural practices, in the flavours, the colours, the crafts, the architecture, and the passersby” (page 156). In the case of Casa Bô in Porto (chapter 5), community-driven interactions and local cultural activity *is* the foundation and organizer of the small tourism experiences. In the southwestern Australia cases, the site and substance of the small tourism experience is caring and personally (re)connecting with the *Boodja* itself, “the biodiverse land biome with its entwined Noongar spirituality in all its realms” (page 113). The small, relational tourism experiences entail “a journey of landscape and cultural

reconnection that focuses on tourists' brief immersion with land restorers at the site of recreation" (page 112) through which the entwined nature of ecological, cultural, and social values is encountered.

Throughout the small tourism examples, the focus is on people—individuals in “their” place, sharing their perspectives and knowledges of it with visitors. In southwestern Australia, the local residents and restorers are the “tourism providers”: “they present their first-hand perspectives, offering authenticity in their ecotourism product” (page 114). In Maribor, the “walkers” are local residents who know the city’s stories, who enable visitors to “feel, smell, taste, hear, and touch the cultural heritage in real time and space” (page 71). If the walkers are heritage bearers themselves, they become “active heritage interpreters” as well (page 74). At an individual level, small tourism organizers must be sensitive to and respect the desired involvement of locals, a point emphasized by Guerra Amaya and Zuluaga Guerra in chapter 6.

At the same time, the agency of the travellers themselves, and their own desire to obtain “a more nuanced understanding of the local area,” is also important to keep in mind, possibly initiating local contacts through on-line communication conduits, as we see in Spencer Toth, Josie Vayro, and Courtney Mason’s chapter (page 43). Local residents (however contacted) are the mediators between visitor uncertainties and local realities, which is a significant role. For example, as Moira A. L. Maley and her co-authors point out in chapter 4, “The comfort and familiarity shown by restorers when in their landscape is a stabilizing factor for the visitors, most of whom will be out of their comfort zone to some extent, at least initially” (page 123).

## Towards a Paradigm of Sharing and Connection

Altogether, the overriding perspective of carefully designed small tourism experiences is of *sharing*, rather than of *representing*. This focus on the sharing of *our* experiences means that small tourism is a carefully designed extension of ongoing activities, not a separate realm of enterprise. For example, the essence of 5Bogota’s market visit and book-making activity is the sharing of “usual” practices—the workshop is an *extension*, not something new for tourists to do that locals do not do. The dynamics of crafting and implementing visitor experiences based on the traditional and everyday occurrences of local hosts and their cultural heritage can revitalize and stimulate “the recognition of their own cultural wealth, playing a central role in preserving intangible urban heritage assets” in Bogota (page 172).

Maintaining active social connections and creating long-term commitment and trust within the broader communities where small tourism activities are sited is imperative. Knowledge and social connections are maintained through ongoing active relationships: in the southwestern Australia cases (chapter 4), this means the “informal relationship building between restorers and traditional owners, as well as direct Noongar interpretation for visitors” (page 124), is both a context for and an integral core of the eco-tourism experiences. It is also notable how these relationships have fostered cultural mapping and artworks capturing knowledges to become (again) part of the public knowledge base.

In an urban context, as chapter 6 points out, visits should occur regularly, without visitors, so that “the locals recognize you and allow you to become part of the community; only then will you be part of its daily life, able to share it with future guests” (page 158). In a festival context, Panyik and Komlós (chapter 7) note that while “events are held in central places in the villages to promote interaction with the local communities” (page 188), in addition, local cultural/community groups directly participate through cultural performances as well as in the organization of public forums within the festival to “draw attention to social problems such as segregation and discrimination” facing the local Roma community (page 187). Trust between hosts, residents, and guests is a necessary condition for small tourism.

## Contextualizing and Grounding Local Experiences

Visitors are part of a broader context, beyond “tourism.” For Casa Bô, visitor-welcoming activities are part of a constellation of already-occurring activities. For potential gay travellers to rural British Columbia, as chapter 1 points out, recognition that a place is “outwardly supportive” of the LGBTQ2+ community, indicating openness to inclusion, provides a welcoming message; in this context, symbolic gestures and concrete actions are both significant.

Donald Lawrence’s experiences participating in arts festivals in small places has led him to stress the importance of ensuring the cultural activity is “true to the place,” recognizing the close-knit identity and local traditions of smaller communities, being careful to enable “a meaningful encounter,” and not misrepresenting a region and its cultural traditions. For visiting artist-participants, immersion into the local arts scene is part of the attraction: “the opportunity to be welcomed into the small cultural communities that congregate around places like Eastern Edge” (page 205). But he also notes that

the organizers must also be careful not to stay “too insular” so as to appeal to and engage a broader audience (page 202).

Immersion and the direct experience of these broader scenes and dynamics is key for small tourism. For student-tourists living in a small village in Montespertoli, Tuscany, on-site insertion (temporarily) in a small community enables direct interaction with local producers and residents of the community, “not only to observe the circular socio-economy, but also to interact and participate in it” (page 97). With an emphasis on tradition, craftsmanship, and direct experiences, these “cultural creatives” seek meaningful experiences involving connections that demonstrate, for instance, the traditional art of producing food and directly participating in the process themselves.

The importance of direct “felt experience” is also mentioned in relation to the southwestern Australia ecotourism experiences: “The biodiversity needs to be felt through contact and actions before meaning can be made” (page 123). These examples pointed to the importance of centralizing learning and meaning making in the design of encounters and experiences. They also, for me, highlighted the value of rituals of visitation and learning, involving in this case “first, a journey into country; second, an orientation and intimate interaction inside country; and third, a journey back out from country” (page 122). In other cases, these journeys might be more symbolic and narrative-based than geographical, but this important aspect of transition is a valuable structure, providing time and space to build a relationship with a place, and returning, potentially transformed, into one’s ongoing life trajectories. Integration of past, present, and future; of visitor, resident, and place; of cultures, perspectives, and voices; and of networks, nature, and community—all these syntheses are part of small tourism.

## Fostering Community Benefits and Generative Dynamics

As repeatedly shown in the chapters in this book, in small tourism, localized initiatives can become the start-up engines for wider generative dynamics toward the sustainable development of smaller communities. These dynamics can realize a diversity of activities, such as youth training and talent development, incubation of emerging initiatives, and new cultural production. More widely, small tourism initiatives that are intentionally fostered with



close attention to the particularities, needs, and resources of the community in which they are developed can contribute to greater community-level resilience, distribute benefits from tourism flows more widely and inclusively, provide pathways to preserve and sustain local cultures, encourage public dialogue, expand collective knowledge and know-how, enhance and diversify networks, and provide platforms for local change makers.

## Training, Incubation, and New Cultural Production

From a cultural and economic development perspective, small tourism initiatives can become a training and incubation hub and an outlet for new cultural production. Beyond selling locally crafted products, Rajzefiber, for example, helps young people to create an idea, develop a product, and place the final product in their sales program, as we learn in chapter 2. And as Donald Lawrence observes, small-scale arts festivals, based in collaboration among locally engaged individuals and often with an eye to involving youth in planning and workshops, include a range of different types of activities in which people may engage. These events tend to attract “highly engaged visitors” to the host communities, who directly contribute to the local economy during the time of the festival but who are also “intent on building important linkages between small places, networks comprising members of an extended cultural community” (page 192).

## Community-Level Resilience

Meng Qu and Simona Zollet (chapter 9) observe that the individual resilience of Mitarai’s in-migrant-run tourism micro-businesses translates into community-level resilience. They explain how these small businesses play a multi-faceted role in their community: creating economic value that enables the in-migrant to continue to live in the community; increasing Mitarai’s attractiveness as a tourism destination with businesses and creative activities; contributing to improving local residents’ quality of life through, in part, providing new services and community spaces; and attracting, through their presence, other urban-rural in-migrants. As the authors note, “this process, if sustained, has the potential to help stabilize the population and restore a sense of socio-economic vitality in the community” (page 237).

## More Inclusive Tourism Benefits

An important potential of small tourism initiatives is to strategically create new pathways of action that can diversify to whom and where benefits from tourism flow. The urban tourism initiatives of 5Bogota (chapter 6) create “thematic links between the outskirts and the inner city” and include “under-recognized locations as tourism territories” (page 166, 172). Through doing this, the company’s initiatives foster both economic and social inclusion by “bringing wealth created by tourism to communities usually overlooked by the industry” (page 166). At a local level, the small tourism initiatives also create social capital through “integrating local communities as hosts” (page 172) and distributing earnings from these services into communities that would not otherwise receive them. Thinking beyond economics, small tourism initiatives like this are designed as “a bonding space for people” (page 172), which serves to reclaim “the dignity of the daily life of locals while at the same time impacting the lives of visitors in profound and moving ways” (page 172). Andre Luis Quintino Principe (chapter 5) also writes about how engagement between visitors and residents produced “mutual benefits, thereby promoting social cohesion and inclusion” (page 133).

As Panyik and Komlós discuss (chapter 7), within the organization of the Devil’s Nest Festival, tasks are allocated to non-governmental organizations “to redistribute the profit generated during the festival for local development” (page 186). In addition, direct income for residents is generated through local accommodations and “tenting space” in backyards, sales of local products (e.g., food and souvenirs), expansion of basic foodstuffs in grocery stores, and second-hand clothes merchandized to cool festival visitors. More generally, the festival has created new tourism products, diversifying the tourism offer of the region, and elevated the profile of the small festival villages.

## Cultural Sustainability and Public Dialogue

From a cultural perspective, the Devil’s Nest Festival plays multiple roles, contributing to *cultural preservation*, through promoting “living ethnography” and almost-extinct cultural practices and incorporating local legends, myths, and oral traditions through new theatre pieces (sometimes supported by a cultural funding program); *new cultural production*, including new activities that are developed such as artistic workshops and new ideas and projects created in-process, from on-site sculptures to an “analogue Facebook” wall;

and enabling *attendance*, providing low-cost or free access for local residents to attend events and fundraising to support the participation of children from the poorest villages in the region.

Small tourism initiatives generate spaces and opportunities to voice and share personal stories of the place, allowing both visitors and locals to get to know their locale better, developing a collaborative sense of place. These initiatives can also generate a space for local public discussion. For example, the Festival of Walks in Maribor (chapter 2) “offers space and time to bring together stakeholders to discuss current issues and trends” on topics related to tourism, especially cultural and creative tourism, and culture in general (page 73). As mentioned previously, the Devil’s Nest Festival in Hungary also incorporates a public forum dimension for this role.

## Collective Knowledge and Know-How

Many of the entrepreneurs in small tourism serve to expand collective knowledge and know-how through regional networking and co-learning. In Tuscany (chapter 3), the emphasis on “local foodways” that provide regional distinctiveness, which encourages slower, smaller, and more interconnected food systems, simultaneously reinforces support for the local economy and the socio-cultural dimensions of these local ways of life. In Maribor, Rajzefiber established Potujočo Akademijo Kreativnega Turizma (PAKT) to enhance the development of regional creative tourism products; the initiative offers training through the sharing of experiences, peer learning, and discussions of theories and trends in small tourism. PAKT is “steadily growing to be the first regional, bottom-up educational platform for small tourist providers who live and work in the rural outskirts” (page 76).

## Platforms for Change Makers

Small tourism can develop as an extension of local agents’ personal mission as change makers. In the southwestern Australia cases (chapter 4), sharing the outcomes of restoration processes comprises an important dimension of the work during which “the restorers spread the word and mature their own wisdom” (page 125). The restorers’ local actions aim to intentionally generate dynamics that flow from the community, directed outward, inviting visitors “to create their own [experiences] and to take with them into the future a new relationship with nature and biodiversity” (page 125). Their commitment to interweaving ancient knowledge with modern landscape assessment also

influences residents in the region, with a generational change in mindset becoming evident: “The wider community now embraces First Nation People’s cultural knowledge, ecological science, and lore related to land management. Emerging generations increasingly recognize and demand cultural connection and its integration into future restoration projects” (page 126). All chapters in this book attest to the cultural benefits offered by small tourism.

## Strategies and Structures for Resiliency and Ongoing Sustainability

But how are such valuable encounters, activities, and experiences reliably sustained? While some of the cases presented in this book present successful year-on-year growing initiatives, the COVID-19 pandemic paused tourism-related activities internationally and introduced new dimensions of vulnerability that were not contemplated previously. This heightened sense of fragility continues to permeate a context of uncertainty, experimentation, and rethinking social foundations, and reconstructing networks of support. The situation has also provided insights into the structures and configurations that may be more resilient as careful steps forward are taken.

## Organizational Resilience

The organizational contexts for small tourism initiatives in this book are varied, with Andre Luis Quintino Principe (chapter 5) elaborating how a not-for-profit cultural association can be a location of “emergent creativity” that can develop open and accessible approaches to welcoming local residents and visitors. Such an organization can operate in a flexible and autonomous manner, and in the case of Casa Bô in Porto, with low fixed expenses and a high number of volunteers. Nonetheless, economic sustainability was strained by the pandemic restrictions, and new approaches to sustaining the organization were adopted, such as using its space for artistic residencies.

An important aspect of the operations and sustainability of small tourism providers, Casa Bô or the creative tourism entrepreneurs in the CREATOUR project in Portugal, is the constellation of associated or complementary activities that align with their small, creative tourism initiatives (see Duxbury et al. 2020). Small tourism and creative tourism providers, such as Rajzefiber in Maribor (chapter 2), find themselves working across both culture and tourism, with different regulations in each field and limited experiences in

cross-sector collaborative working practices. It is important to recognize how such systemic challenges can be substantial hurdles to innovating sustainable initiatives. The “boundary spanners” in this volume are reworking approaches in practice, and demonstrating new collaborative arrangements that may, over time, contribute to changing these broader regulatory contexts.

Qu and Zollet (chapter 9) highlight three keys to the resiliency of the micro-entrepreneurs they interviewed: “multifunctionality, flexibility, and frugality.” They note the pragmatic importance of adopting multi-faceted functions and creating flexible and frugal organizational approaches with small overheads. At the same time, they point to the importance of “advancing strategies for balancing both community and tourism needs” (page 220), and it is this embeddedness in and responsibility to the community that characterizes these small tourism entrepreneurs. It is also this orientation that enables competition among micro-entrepreneurs to exist alongside collaborative networks with broader issues in mind. These insights resonate through many of the chapters in this collection.

The nature of the activities that locals and visitors share may enhance the resilience of their relationships. Chapters 3 and 6 highlight how gastro-nomic experiences, potentially embracing circular economy principles and “de-marketed or de-commodified tourist practices” (page 89), address an area of growing interest among contemporary travellers. Such experiences are crafted with local collaborators, enabling visitors to engage with the everyday life of a destination on a personal, experiential basis. Moreover, as John S. Hull, Donna Senese, and Darcen Esau point out, the close nature of host-guest relationships and the sense of place that is engendered can motivate and spread altruistic behaviours that may support the sustainability of small-scale tourism programs, creating ripples in the broader host community. This theme also resonates through the examples from southwestern Australia.

For small arts festivals such as those presented by Donald Lawrence (chapter 8), maintaining a balance among local and visiting participating artists serves to keep such events “rooted in the community, while at the same time enjoying a national profile and significance” (page 202). He notes that such festivals attract dedicated members of the arts community as well as “visitors who come upon such projects unexpectedly” (page 204). The character of such events “welcome and encourage visitors to engage in the experience at hand in different ways, to not stand back as passive observers” (page 201)—a memorable and desired-to-be-repeated role. Regularly

scheduled arts festivals enable their visibility, programming, and a “dedicated” audience to be built and augmented over time. These are ways to encourage organizational resilience.

## Networks of Collaborators and Supporters

The authors in this book, like those in its companion volume, *Creative Tourism in Smaller Communities*, note the significance of local clusters in sustaining small tourism. Repeatedly, the chapters attest to the vital importance of collaborative networks in organizing small tourism initiatives, sometimes coupled with external support. For example, Donald Lawrence (chapter 8) notes how small-scale arts festivals are typically “organized by a small collaborative network in a local community, including artists, and perhaps some artists from other places” (page 192), and externally supported (e.g., by an arts council) through a well-networked organizational partner. Rajzefiber (chapter 2) relies on a small core team and a strong system of volunteers who help it implement its events, with organizational support obtained from public funding agencies. It is interesting to note here Toth, Vayro, and Mason’s observation in chapter 1 that a better-organized approach would aid in the promotion of rural British Columbia to gay travellers.

Castello Sonnino/SIEC (chapter 3) began with the cultivation of a network of university educators, researchers, and students with interests in preserving the natural environment and the cultural heritage of place for future generations. Over time, in addition to this network of scholars, local practitioners, entrepreneurs, and leaders from the local community have come to use the site—“a preserved but functioning family-run agricultural and viticultural operation” (page 93)—for educational initiatives and to support the local community. Here we see a successful example of networking. The importance of “early-in” local municipal support of these small initiatives appears in a number of stories. For instance, in Rajzefiber’s initial five years, the municipality provided a rent-free space in the city centre, and the initiative received funding from the national employment agency to hire unemployed people. Panyik and Komlós note how the Devil’s Nest Festival in Hungary has had ongoing municipal support in pragmatic infrastructure logistics and space needs, with close collaboration among various entities: “local wine cellars and municipalities are part of the organization as they do not only provide venues but accommodation as well” (page 188).

Wide and varied collaborative networks are also part of these initiatives, marked by the proactive role of small tourism organizers. Rajzefiber intentionally connects across culture, cultural heritage, creative industries, and tourism, although intersectoral work continues to be a core challenge. The organization has worked closely with a wide range of public and private organizations, agencies, and public bodies, and has built networks between stakeholders in the town with those in their region. Rajzefiber's success is attributed to this "strategic and systematic methodology of collaboration and co-creation" (page 70). For the Devil's Nest Festival, both organizational and geographic connectedness appear as priorities: "each of the villages [nearby the central festival site] became a festival location linked by a free festival bus" (page 174). The sense of collaboration around the festival also extends to its programming, which draws on local values and resources and "grows spontaneously in accordance with the interests, ideas, and feedback of the visitors, residents, and organizers alike" (page 174).

These networks connect outward, as mentioned by Donald Lawrence (chapter 8) and emphasized by Meng Qu and Simona Zollet (chapter 9), who discuss how "the involvement of Mitarai's tourism micro-entrepreneurs in a variety of social networks also determines the types of community- and extra-community-level resource exchanges and integrations that will be present" (page 232). However, it is also important to note how downscaling of activities can deepen local re-engagement: as Qu and Zollet explain, in 2020, "Although the festival was still open to tourists, the choice to reduce its scale and re-localize participation and content criteria increased the community's sense of ownership over the festival-creation process, and encouraged the initiation of more locally embedded partnerships between in-migrants and residents" (pages 235–36). Clusters and networks are an important factor in sustaining community-based small tourism.

## Marketing and Profile

The challenges of marketing small tourism initiatives are well recounted by Katja Beck Kos, Mateja Meh, and Vid Kmetič (chapter 2), including a more widespread lack of marketing infrastructure that establishes channels to foreign markets for the diverse array of small tourism providers, including appropriate digital channels of sale and promotion. Although the support of local destination marketing organizations is a piece of this picture, their resources are limited and their scope is geographically and thematically

focused, as Toth, Vayro, and Mason vividly demonstrate in chapter 1. This marketing issue is becoming more pronounced as a growing number of small producers are emerging and as travellers increasingly search for “authentic,” embedded, and even transformative experiences through travel. It would seem that there is an opportunity for creating a co-operative international network that is open to and supportive of diverse small tourism initiatives without it becoming a branch of a multinational corporation already in the travel-booking market. Put another way: Can small tourism become a bigger presence in tourism while maintaining an approach that is also small and collaborative in nature?

## In Closing: A Butterfly Effect?

The butterfly effect refers to the fact that small, barely perceptible changes can have a big, non-linear impact on a complex system. In other words, small matters can generate significant impact.

At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced four aspects of small, culture-based community tourism: caring for culture, enabling culturally sensitive modes of tourism, empowering community, and improving place. It is clear that the small tourism initiatives presented in this volume all mirror these themes. They demonstrate an ethics of care for people and a stewardship of places, embracing both traditional and emergent resources. The initiatives are intentionally engaging in locally sensitive and locally beneficial modes of tourism that are reshaping relations between visitors and local residents, as well as highlighting the specificities of a place. We see how they are empowering community, strengthening local economies and agency, and leveraging the interactions within tourism to engender positive dynamics in the broader community/place in ways that improve the cultural vitality, quality of life, and experience of place for both residents and visitors and thus contribute to sustainable development trajectories.

However, the volume also speaks to some of the issues that small tourism stakeholders must address. Specifically, the chapters reveal three concerns that are underdeveloped at this point. First, as I mentioned earlier, we might look to a (co-operative?) marketing “infrastructure” that establishes channels for marketing the diverse array of small tourism providers internationally. These channels should leverage the emerging roles of “disruptive” technologies and social media to engage new generations of young, “connected” travellers, who can enhance the takeoff and propel this type of “alternate”



infrastructure. Even doing this regionally, and then perhaps nationally, would be a start. Second, there is a need for closer attention to how to manage the growth of successful small tourism, which may become much larger over time, and to envision various prospects and strategies for small-scale tourism in the context of the continued growth of travel and tourism internationally. Third, there seems to be room for discussing the development of inclusive and participative governance frameworks and mechanisms that can appropriately nurture and support these small tourism initiatives, facilitate cross-sectoral connections and innovations, and enable communities to better understand and act upon the dynamics of tourism to foster and improve local vitality, socio-economic well-being, and generate other local and regional benefits.

Collections like this book serve a valuable role in highlighting how small, seemingly isolated actions may be collectively contributing to wider changes—for tourism and for local communities and places. Those of us interested in small tourism require a greater awareness of how other small tourism sites are experiencing their situation, what issues they are facing, and what actions they are taking. We require more sustainable platforms to learn from each other, and we must participate in intentional, international connections; these seeds will generate the garden in which small tourism and its potential local community benefits could flourish.

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