

ADVENTURES IN SMALL TOURISM: STUDIES AND STORIES

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Cultural Festivals in Small Villages: Creativity and the Case of the Devil's Nest Festival in Hungary

Emese Panyik and Attila Komlós

Introduction

When visitor-resident interaction is seen as paramount in a tourism experience, it is often best facilitated in small groups in a place of manageable size. Creative tourists not only visit places, they also make them by actively engaging their skills and knowledge to enrich the local experience of a particular destination (Richards 2011). One of the main issues within creative tourism is the authenticity of the experience (Chhabra, Healy, and Sills 2003; Prentice 2001; Steiner and Reisinger 2006), which is strongly linked to the place it stems from. To put it simply, “one can learn to dance salsa from world-class dancers in many countries but only Cuba provides the atmosphere that attaches the symbol of authenticity to the salsa classes experience” (Ohridska-Olson and Ivanov 2010, 3). While cultural tourism is based on tangible cultural resources, creative tourism relies equally on tangible and intangible resources. Thus creative tourism is less place-bound than cultural tourism, because the creative experience is not staged but being produced “on the go” in collaboration with the visitors using intangible cultural resources, such as dances, singing, crafts, festivals, and painting (Prentice and Andersen 2003).

The main challenge of creative tourism is, therefore, not only to attract visitors to a place but also to involve them in the co-creation of the authentic experience based on tangible and intangible resources. Furthermore, authentic experiences are often segregated, hidden in isolated places far from urban

areas or popular tourist attractions or destinations. Larger tourism enterprises are typically ill-suited for small, creative tourism experiences.

This chapter presents a case study that aims to explore the challenges of small creative tourism. While festivals have been identified as a form of creative destination (Prentice and Andersen 2003), attention is focused principally on big cities such as Edinburgh (Prentice and Andersen 2003) or St. Petersburg (Gordin and Matetskaya 2012). Little is known about the potential of festivals to draw attention to underdeveloped, small, and isolated regions. We aim to address that research gap in this chapter.

The context for this case study is an iconic cultural festival in Hungary, Ördögkatlan Fesztivál (Devil's Nest Festival), organized since 2008 in a group of villages in one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country, South Baranya. The study offers a retrospective exploration of the long-term impacts of the event on local development. While large-scale music festivals are usually organized in remote, natural areas in order to isolate the visitors from the residents—that is, to maximize the visitor experience and minimize the impacts on the local population (e.g., Tomorrowland in Boom, Belgium; Ozora Festival in Dádpusztá, Hungary; Boom Festival in Idanha-a-Nova, Portugal, etc.)—Ördögkatlan was born in a remote limestone quarry located about twenty kilometres from the closest city, Pécs, as a small-scale arts festival, through the collaboration of four neighbouring villages and two wineries. The quarry functions as an open-air contemporary arts exhibition and statue park, and each of the villages became a festival location linked by a free festival bus. The growth of the festival has been exponential. From 5,000 visitors during three days in the first year, it has reached 85,000 visitors during five days in 2017. The objective of the organizers was to create a grassroots multicultural festival drawing on local values and resources, which grows spontaneously in accordance with the interests, ideas, and feedback of the visitors, residents, and organizers alike.

Within this context the chapter reflects the residents' perspective on the indirect impacts of the festival during and beyond the event. To this end, key-informant resident interviews were conducted in the low season, January through March 2018, in the principal festival location, the small village of Nagyharsány. The interviews highlight the level of resident-visitor interactions, and the involvement of residents and visitors in co-creating their experiences during the festival.

Festivals as Creative Destination

Today, festivals and special events are one of the fastest-growing types of tourism attraction worldwide (Crompton and McKay 1997; van Heerden 2003; Getz 1997; Thrane 2002 cited in Saayman and Saayman 2005). Festival tourism creates place attachment, and provides new paths of rejuvenation for destinations.

Previous research on festival consumption identified the sharing of company and socialization as the most frequent motivations for festival consumption (Prentice and Andersen 2003). Such factors may be independent from the place, and their recurrent importance may imply that the festival itself becomes the destination, rather than being merely one among (many) other attractions of a destination (Prentice and Andersen 2003). But this depends on whether the festival is defined by the place in which it occurs and therefore relies more on its tangible and intangible cultural resources, or is more global in its thematic orientation (Ling and Lew 2012). Furthermore, festival tourists may not all be mainstream festival goers. This is especially true for festival destinations that attract tourists year-round (Prentice and Andersen 2003).

The location of a festival is a significant factor in its economic impact. Previous studies on arts festivals highlighted that a particular festival attracts most of its visitors from its own and neighbouring regions (Saayman and Saayman 2005). Visitor expenditure is generally higher by visitors from higher-income regions, while locals spend less than visitors because they do not spend on accommodation. It is therefore suggested that regional governments foster the establishment of new events in small towns, since these contribute significantly to income generation in these towns. Preferably these towns should be easily accessible from high-income areas to attract high-spending individuals (Saayman and Saayman 2005).

South Baranya, Hungary

The festival is located in southern Hungary, in the southernmost segment of Baranya County, approximately 13 kilometres from the Croatian border. The festival villages and wineries, as well as the Statue Park, are all accessible by public roads, both from Hungary and neighbouring Croatia, and from the Pécs-Pogány International Airport, which is about 20 kilometres away (see figure 7.1). The closest cities are Pécs, the regional capital, located 36 kilometres from the festival, and Villány, which is on the route linking the festival



Figure 7.1: The festival location.

Source: Google Maps (fair use policy).

locations. The four villages of the festival are Kisharsány (population 351), Nagyharsány (1,500), Beremend (2,500), and Villánykövesd (227), and two wineries (Mokos Pincészet and Vylyan) also participate; these are linked by a 40-kilometres route by car or by bus (see figure 7.2). Beremend, where the limestone was processed in a factory drawn from the Sársomlyó hill, is located right at the Croatian-Hungarian border.

The economy of the region is based on three pillars. Wine production and related tourism and hospitality services are undoubtedly of decisive importance. The Villány Wine Region is one of Hungary's most famous wine regions, producing the highest-quality wines, acknowledged by various prizes won in national and international wine competitions. Hungary's first wine road was established in this area in 1994 (<https://villanyiborvidek.hu>).¹ Based on the local wine culture, many events are held in the region, with an ever-increasing service infrastructure. In addition to the cellars, there are also hotels, guest houses and local accommodation that provide high quality services for guests arriving individually or in groups. In addition to wine production and tourism, the Beremend Cement Factory and its associated limestone quarry of Nagyharsány are important employers of the region.

The most significant landscape in the area is the Szársomlyó hill, the highest elevation of the Villány Mountains (442 metres). The region has been

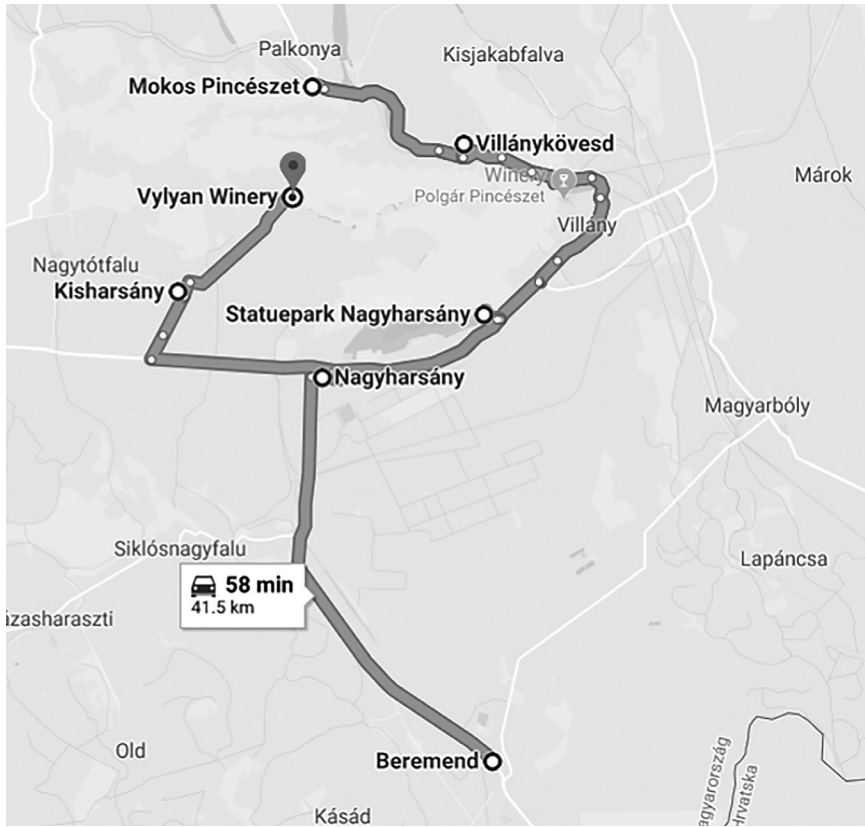


Figure 7.2: Map of the festival villages.

Source: Google Maps (fair use policy).

inhabited for more than two thousand years, and was part of the Pannonia Province of the Roman Empire. The history of the area’s peoples during the last two millennia has resulted in a rich archaeological and cultural heritage (wine cellars, Siklós medieval castle, Gothic church in Nagyarsány, Roman ruins at the top of, and next to, Szársomlyó, etc.). The shape of the mountain has for centuries moved the imagination of people living here, creating myths expressed in folk tales, folk songs, and poems. Among them, the legend of the “devil’s thorns” stands out, which served as a source for inspiration for the festival’s name. The hill has been a national nature reserve since 1944, and

as such is one of the oldest in Hungary. Since 1967, a creative arts camp has been functioning on the eastern side of the hill, where Hungarian and foreign sculptors from Japan and France have worked in the open sky for decades. The sculptures can be seen in the open-air sculpture park, which is called by the artists “the Devil’s Nest,” referring to the legend of the mountain and the extreme heat of the summer in the area.

The Devil’s Nest Festival

The origins of the festival can be traced back to 2001, when a small arts festival was born far from the current location (close to Lake Balaton), where it had been organized until 2007 with the collaboration of three villages. The festival ran under the name Bárka Harbor. In 2008, the ten-day festival, the schedule of which had already been finalized, was cancelled at the last minute due to financial problems. In order to provide an immediate solution for the problem, the main organizers had to find a new venue for the festival and the planned program. The new location was selected based on its natural beauty, remoteness, and the willingness of the small villages to collaborate and participate in the event.

The central location of the festival became the Statue Park in Nagyharsány, on the mountainside of Szársomlyó. This former limestone quarry now hosts the festival’s annual closing concert. The mountain is called the “Devil’s Mountain” by locals. According to the myth, the devil wanted to marry Nagyharsány’s most beautiful daughter, Harka. In order to get her, he had to remove the mountain by dawn. He failed to do so, and all that was left behind of his attempts is the quarry. The organizers also call the festival the “Barefoot Festival.” The experience that the organizers aim to create is based on what Prentice and Andersen (2003) calls gregariousness, or a carefree and spontaneous but immersive social-cultural interaction between visitors, artists, educators, locals, and organizers—very informal, and as such suitable for bare feet.

The concept and aims of the festival have remained essentially unchanged since the first edition in 2008:

- to expose the region’s cultural-artistic richness;
- to create an international, cross-cultural community in the small villages of Baranya during the festival, by inviting artists and hosting visitors;

- to provide economic, intellectual, and cultural assistance to the participating villages in one of the most underdeveloped areas of the country;
- to contribute to tourism development in the region; and
- to enhance the magnitude of the festival with the involvement of more settlements over the medium term, including Croatian Baranya, and to celebrate the multicultural values and common history through a Baranya Joint Arts Festival in the tourism market of Europe.

Methodology

Between January and March 2018, six key-informant resident interviews were conducted, three of them during a field trip to the main festival village, Nagyharsány. While the festival is currently organized in four neighbouring villages and two wineries, the central location with the highest number of programs, administrative tasks, and infrastructural contribution is Nagyharsány. Thus, the interview series started with the mayor of Nagyharsány. Then, a snowball method was used to identify key-informant residents in the small settlements who were actively involved in the festival. The mayor, two winery owners, one winery marketing director, and two main festival organizers were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured and followed an interview guide in which nine topics were identified (see below). They lasted on average one hour, and were recorded and transcribed. We performed a standard qualitative data analysis procedure, in which we organized segments of the six interviews under the nine interview topics. We used coding to identify patterns in each column. We then proceeded with the interpretation of data, in which we presented the issues that unfolded during the analysis and used citations from participants to illustrate/highlight those issues.

Key-Informant Interview Topics

1. The geographic, economic, and social position of the villages in the region.
2. The impact of the festival on the region's image during the past ten years.
3. The direct and indirect impacts of the festival on the development of the region.
4. The potential of the festival to highlight the region's social and economic problems.
5. The potential of the festival to improve the networking capacity of the villages.
6. Practices to involve residents and visitors in the creation of the festival experience using local tangible and intangible cultural resources.
7. Local participants (associations, wineries, service providers, businesses, voluntary groups, etc.) in the festival.
8. The challenges of resident involvement.
9. Logistical, infrastructural, or other problems during the festival.

Socio-economic Impacts of the Festival

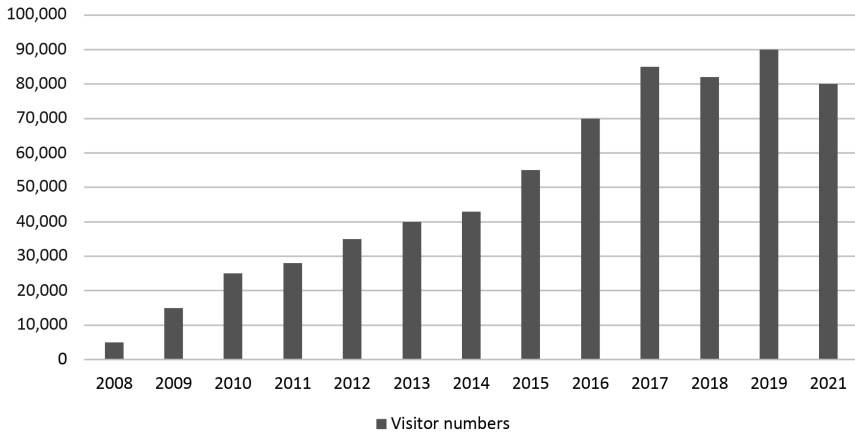
Discussion of the topics revealed three key issues regarding the socio-economic impacts of the festival: growth in visitor numbers; direct tourism-related infrastructural developments in the villages and their benefits for the local population; and the festival's contribution to the preservation and promotion of local heritage and culture. The interview responses raised a series of questions, such as: How can the festival transform local attractions into a tourism product? How can it change the image of the region? How does it influence the strategic position of the settlements?

Growth in Visitor Numbers

Considering the visitor numbers, the festival has demonstrated a stable and remarkable growth since 2008. As can be seen in table 7.1, from 5,000 visitors at the beginning, it crested at 90,000 attendees in 2019. This is in line with the growth in festival locations, which started at twelve and has reached twenty-seven locations in the five festival villages (table 7.1). The growth in visitor numbers have been accompanied by a growth in festival locations, and of course by the diversification of the festival program. In economic terms, new local accommodation options have been established. However, there is a need to further advance service provision in the villages. The number of supermarkets, ATMs, and scheduled transport between the larger cities and the festival is still lower than necessary. (There is, for example, only one ATM available among the festival locations.)

During the past years, all local accommodation facilities have been reserved months before the event, bringing the occupancy rate to 100 per cent. This is not surprising because there are no hotels in the festival villages, only a couple of guest houses, local accommodations that include wine cellars, private home rentals, and a large-scale, temporary festival camp at the local sports field in Nagyharsány. The local tax defined by the municipality is 200 HUF per person per night (about EUR 0.6), paid by the guest to the accommodation provider, who remits it to the municipality. According to the mayor of Nagyharsány, there are about 450 houses registered in Nagyharsány, 200 of which provide local accommodation during the festival. This is equal to 44.4 per cent of all houses in the village. One interviewee commented that there were 170 tents set up in one private backyard during the 2017 festival. This accommodation income for a local host is about 100,000–200,000 HUF (EUR 330–660), which corresponds to the average monthly income in Hungary, allowing local homeowners to buy firewood for the following winter, as well as consumer goods such as new furniture for their houses.

Table 7.1: Growth in visitor numbers (2008–21)



Source, authors, based on www.ordogkatlan.hu

Table 7.2: Changes in the number of festival locations

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Nagyharsány	4	6	7	7	8	7	8	8	12	12
Kisharsány	4	6	5	5	6	6	10	8	6	7
Palkonya	4	6	5	6	7	8	9	9	1	1
Kisjakabfalva	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Beremend	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	3
Villánykövesd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
ALL	12	18	17	18	22	23	29	28	24	27

Source: Authors

Direct Tourism-Related Infrastructure Developments

In order to meet the enormous demand during the festival, accommodation provision requires continuous improvement and expansion from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Service providers are often in a dilemma, wondering whether it is worth investing in infrastructure development for five days only when there are no festivals of such volume in the region for the other 360 days of the year. However, the nearby Villány-Siklós Wine Route organizes a number of weekly programs from April to October (Húsvét!, Rozé Maraton, Ha péntek akkor Villány, Palkonya Open Cellars, Red Wine Festival, etc.), so the increasing number of participants in these events will also use the accommodation of the surrounding settlements. Wine cellars therefore have begun to expand, such as Kovács Cellar in Nagyharsány, which in recent years has evolved from a winery to a local accommodation provider, operating three guest houses in the region.

Food services have also been impacted. Most overnight festival visitors are young, with lower discretionary income, and so choose simple, cheaper food options from the local grocery stores, rather than from restaurants. Day visitors typically choose the festival market and street food. Because there are no supermarkets in the villages, the stocks and income of the few local grocery stores multiply during the festival. This is not, regrettably, a year-round situation.

The Festival's Contribution to Local Heritage Sustainability and Promotion

The visitor numbers in local exhibitions and museums in the villages increase during the festival period; instead of a few visitors per day, these venues see hundreds on a daily basis. Most wineries sell local, handmade products such as jams, syrups, wine by-products, as well as pesto and honey, which are of great interest to tourists, thereby providing an additional income for local entrepreneurs. One interviewee, who is a wine producer and cellar owner, owns two buildings in the village. One is the family home and includes a small souvenir shop for local products and an ethnographic collection of woven fabrics in the back. Some of the antique fabrics preserved in this collection are the last ones of their kind and are unique pieces.

The other building is currently an empty house in poor condition. The interviewee plans to reconstruct it in the near future in order to create a

permanent space for the collection, with the intention of providing a workshop for small creative tourism activities such as local weaving practices.

Co-creation Practices

One of the festival's main values is interactivity, and various new creative forms of artistic expression have been developed during the past ten years in which local entrepreneurs, visitors, and residents participate. In addition to clothes painting, an analogue photography workshop—where visitors take pictures on glass or film negative, develop their photos, and show them in an exhibition room—and painting of old, unused wine barrels by artists that become part of the Vylyan wine cellar's decor, the following innovative activities are noteworthy. In all cases, these creative activities are carried out either by individuals or by small groups of visitors.

Land Art Workshops

Visitors have the opportunity to create their own art works at the Statue Park Land Art sessions in which objects found in nature, such as dried trees and stones, are painted and/or assembled. The pieces created by the visitors remain on the scene until the closing day of the festival, so an open-air artwork museum is created in real time, and subsequently expands daily. The different stages of work are captured in photographs and animated short films to show the creative process.

Living Ethnography

Living ethnography is a contemporary project that aims at preserving folk art on the edge of extinction. Today, there are fewer and fewer places in the world where folk traditions are not just brought out on holidays but are actually still an integral part of everyday life. At the turn of the twentieth century, various ethnographers became internationally recognized for researching such living folk art, such as Hungarians Béla Bartók (folk music) and Zoltán Kodály (folk music), Finn Elias Lönnrot (Kalevala), the Grimm brothers from Germany (folk tales), or the Pole Hugo Kołłątaj (folk culture). Nowadays, Hungarian Miklós Both is carrying out similar research in Ukraine, and he has brought small groups of singers from three small Csernyihiv villages in Ukraine, where this musical folk culture is an aspect of daily life, to perform at the festival. Their visit was supported by the Hungarian cultural organization Pro Progressione, the French Di Mini Teatro—Commedia Dell'Arte

contemporaine (contemporary art theatre), and the Ivan Honchar Museum in Russia as part of the Creative Europe Programme (2014–20).

Village Tourists: A Partly Improvised Open-Air Comedy

Village Tourists is one of the hallmark performances of the festival, offered numerous times a day as a result of the exceptionally high interest shown by audiences. Participation is limited for each session because this live experience and engagement by visitors requires small groups. Well-known artists from the National Theatre of Pécs organize a satirical tour in the villages for the participants, which they partly improvise to present village life, show the main attractions, and embody rural characters.

Local Legends Theatre

Similar to the living ethnography project, this initiative focuses on the preservation of local legends, myths, and oral traditions in the small, peripheral festival villages. In addition to Pécs, nearby Kaposvár is also famous for its arts culture, particularly theatre art. Kaposvár's experimental theatre company, K2, comprised of young artists, has been a permanent performer since 2014. That year, members of the company arrived weeks before the festival and carried out extensive research in the villages, engaging in conversations with the local people. They were especially interested in the elderly population and talked to various older residents about interesting stories that have been preserved throughout the generations by way of oral tradition. These stories and legends became the inspiration for new theatre pieces that were performed at the festival. The first piece, in 2014, was *The Bride of Nagyharsány*, followed by *The Groom of Kisharsány* in 2015, *The Bridesman of Villánykövesd* in 2016, and *The Beremend Wedding* in 2017, each of which was based on stories from one particular village. The pieces were performed at open-air locations using minimal design and accessories, usually in the gardens of private homes opened for the festival.

Analogue Facebook

Analogue Facebook is an offline, retro version of Facebook in which the organizers used a large wall in the central village for festival “residents” to message one another, draw, or just write anything they liked. The wall also

called attention to the fact that Internet access is usually limited at the festival locations, which is considered to be part of the experience.

Besence Open

In 2016 the festival organizers launched a fundraising call in order to support the participation of children from the poorest villages in the region. From the donations of festival visitors, 14 children from Besence, a small village of 126 mainly Roma residents, could spend their holidays at the festival. Besence has no school, kindergarten, community spaces, or job opportunities, but the village has become well-known in Hungary through its resilient mayor, who won a tennis court for the village on a national tender. The mayor then contracted an instructor to give tennis classes for the entire village. A documentary entitled *Besence Open* has been made based on the story, and the mayor was invited to a forum during the festival to talk about the challenges of fighting poverty in the village. Such is the emphasis on smallness that it becomes a topic at the festival. Here we can see true resident-visitor interaction.

Resident Participation

Reciprocally positive resident-visitor interaction is a defining feature of both small and creative tourism, and the Devil's Nest Festival is no exception. Nagyharsány, being the central festival village, has more tasks and responsibilities than the smaller villages, which host fewer activities. The municipality is responsible for street cleaning, waste removal, repairs, electricity supplies, portable toilets, and toilet paper stocks. Between 100 and 120 sacks of garbage are collected daily at the festival. According to the mayor, while the tourism tax growth during the festival provides a small municipal income, there is no positive financial benefit for the municipality's participation in the festival, but then neither is that the objective. As he says, "It has to ripen like an apple so that it can be harvested when the time comes." In addition to the municipality, the local Association for Nagyharsány is responsible for organizing the campground at the sports field in the village. The income the association derives from festival-related tasks is spent on community development, such as on toys for the local kindergarten in 2017.

Participation of the local population in the festival is very high, thanks to the favourable conditions provided for local residents. The regular 12,000 HUF full pass (EUR 40) costs residents only 2,000 HUF (EUR 7). In addition, the streets, roads, and squares, which are usually empty during the off-season,

become crowded with people from all over the country and abroad, and there are activities on almost every corner. Concerts and theatre pieces are included in festival passes, and resident attendance—with or without a pass—at these events is free of charge, again enhancing social inclusion. The mayor estimates that about 800 of the 1,500 residents visited at least one festival location during the 2017 event.

Most of the festival program includes national and international artists, but the local culture is also represented in various ways. Nagyharsány's local folk dance group has performed for three consecutive years; the Seniors Club organizes barbecues and group singing, and the local rock band was also included in the program for the first time in 2017. The minority associations of the Roma population organize concerts, forums, and games to draw attention to social problems such as segregation and discrimination.

The Festival and COVID-19

COVID-19 caused the cancellation of the thirteenth edition of the Devil's Nest Festival, scheduled for 2020. With the mitigation of the first wave of the pandemic in the summer of 2020, but still without permission to organize festivals, the organizers planned to replace Devil's Nest with a long weekend mini-festival called "Devil's Day," to run 20–22 October 2020. However, this practice could only occur when the vaccination rate reached at least 50 per cent. Similarly, large-scale festivals such as OZORA, for example, also organized "back-up events" resembling the original but with a considerably lower number of participants. The aim was, on the one hand, to provide an opportunity for artists who had lost their jobs and income during the pandemic, and, on the other, to reduce, at least partly, the loss of tourism income for the local communities. Although the preparations had begun, the second wave of the virus in the autumn eventually thwarted the organization of these initiatives.

In 2021, large-scale festivals were all still cancelled in Hungary, but the Devil's Nest Festival, being small, could be held on the usual dates in the first week of August. The motto of the 2021 edition was "Exceeding Ourselves," clearly referring the festival's resilience in the face of all the difficulties created by the pandemic. While the event was very similar to previous years, it was considerably less crowded, because most events could only be attended with the presentation of a COVID-19 immunity card. Children had to be accompanied by vaccinated adults even at the free children programs.

Conclusion

The Devil's Nest Festival (Ördögkatlan Fesztivál) is a cultural and music festival that has operated since 2008 in one of the most underdeveloped, rural areas of Hungary. It takes place over four small villages and with the participation of two wine cellars, with twenty-seven locations at the festival's height in 2017. The economy of the small villages traditionally relies on primary stone mining and cement production, grape production and winemaking, and wine tourism (based on the Villány-Siklós Wine Route). The festival has fundamentally changed this situation by creating new tourism products and thereby complementing the region's traditional wine tourism with cultural festival tourism. The festival has also elevated the profile of the small participating villages. It has shown an outstanding growth in visitor numbers, having started at 5,000 in 2008 and reaching 85,000 national and international visitors in 2018, proving that local cultural assets, both tangible and intangible, in small places can attract tourists. Unlike traditional summer music festival culture, Devil's Nest promotes a meaningful local experience based on authentic cultural values. Ördögkatlan events are held in central places in the villages to promote interaction with the local communities. The local wine cellars and municipalities are part of the organization as they do not only provide venues but accommodation as well. Tasks are allocated to non-governmental organizations to redistribute the profit generated during the festival for local development. For the only grocery shop and second-hand clothes shop in the main festival village, Nagyharsány, as well as for the private homes that register as local accommodation providers, the festival has become an important complementary source of income during the month of August.

The festival's name refers to a myth related to the symbol of the surrounding natural reserve, Szársomlyó hill, which highlights the organizers' view that in order to create an authentic experience, tourist events should reflect the origins of the place. As interactivity and community-led planning and participation are among the chief festival objectives, various new creative forms of artistic expression have been developed in which local entrepreneurs, visitors, and residents actively co-create, mostly by means of open-air performances, with minimal design and accessories, drawing on local resources. Furthermore, one exemplary festival fundraising initiative has successfully engaged both visitors and residents in a cultural sustainability initiative.

While the 2020 edition was cancelled due to the pandemic, a smaller 2021 edition was successfully held, despite all the organizational challenges related to health and safety measures. Tourism experiences in which the small local community is deeply engaged, and which are based on that community's own tangible and intangible cultural assets, can become sustainable such that, as in the case of the Devil's Nest Festival, not even COVID-19 can erode them.

NOTE

- 1 <https://villanyiborvidek.hu>.

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