

# Community Resourcefulness and Partnerships in Rural Tourism

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**NOTE: This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in  
the Journal of Sustainable Tourism on November 17, 2020, available online:**

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1849233>.

## Abstract

Small enterprises play a vital role in the drive toward sustainable tourism and in the sector more broadly, and their importance is accentuated in rural contexts. Beyond entrepreneurial spirit, what are the critical success factors that allow them to flourish? This study links tourism entrepreneurship, rural development and multi-stakeholder partnerships to situate community resourcefulness as a key plank in the sustainable tourism discourse. The focus of this study is six islands that play host to the Setouchi Triennale, a large art tourism initiative in rural Japan organized to revitalize declining regions. Highly divergent outcomes between communities emerged, directing attention toward community resourcefulness, where collective action leverages agency and capacity to effect change from within. Findings show the emergence of “art businesses”, local social enterprises that function as both tourism and community assets and model sustainable development outcomes. Islands supporting such ventures reaped substantial community benefits, while islands without them struggled, their nascent tourism economies benefiting only tourists and commuter entrepreneurs. This study reveals the potential and the limitations of large-scale, multi-stakeholder tourism development initiatives that promote entrepreneurship in resource-constrained areas and highlights that community resourcefulness is the determining factor behind the success or failure in otherwise comparable communities.

## Keywords

Rural Tourism, Community Resourcefulness, Multi-stakeholder Partnerships, Social Enterprise, Sustainable Islands, Art Festival

## Introduction

The function and behavior of entrepreneurs in community development is increasingly evident in a growing body of literature. While such studies describe the human, cultural, environmental, and financial resources that entrepreneurs draw from, repurpose, or learn to live without, they rarely address the role of communities themselves in leveraging resources to support tourism entrepreneurship. Particularly in rural or peripheral areas, collective agency and regional structuring are essential to the prevalence and success of local entrepreneurial activity (Müller, 2016). The archetype of the urban entrepreneur as a self-sufficient innovator does not readily transplant to the communal rural context. For critical tourism scholars, a deep understanding of resourcefulness from a

community perspective and its role in the tourism entrepreneurship process is needed to better describe sustainable tourism development outcomes in peripheral areas. This article situates community resourcefulness in the sustainable tourism discourse, foregrounding the agency-capacity nexus of whole communities as a major determinant for successful multi-stakeholder tourism development partnerships.

As a central research question, we sought to understand the extent to which a large cultural tourism initiative in a peripheral region might leverage partnerships with individual communities to encourage local small business development, considered a necessary factor in sustainable tourism development (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000). To this end, we conducted mixed-methods fieldwork among island communities within the Setouchi Triennale, the largest of several rural “art festivals” (*geijutsusai* in Japanese) introduced in response to severe depopulation and community collapse in rural Japan. While festivals are typically localized events (Gibson, Connell, Waitt, & Walmsley, 2011; Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018) organized at the grassroots level around longstanding community themes (Jepson & Clarke, 2015), a new class of regional art festivals (Kanaya, 2014; Mariani & Giorgio, 2017) packages multiple communities together into a single tourism experience. This approach evidently attracts a greater number of tourists than any one community could draw on its own, expanding the visitor base for tourism enterprises. However, significantly divergent outcomes were obvious between communities, leading to a second and subsequent research question: How are different small business development outcomes among partner islands linked to community resourcefulness?

An expansive review of scholarship on tourism entrepreneurship in peripheral settings was undertaken, which underlined the concept of resourcefulness as a necessary precursor to successful small business development in resource-constrained environments. This is particularly pressing in communities already facing decline as is evident across rural Japan, where municipalities seeking to mitigate critical population shrinkage have turned to creative initiatives, particularly centered on tourism, in an effort to attract new residents and locally based entrepreneurs. Such initiatives are reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals which recognize that, even among wealthy nations, human and financial capital are often poorly distributed, leading to critical development challenges (United Nations, 2015). Accordingly, the situation in Japan is appraised before introducing the Setouchi Triennale, one of the largest creative development initiatives in the country to date. An examination of the dynamic between small businesses, their communities, and festival organizers reveals how small businesses both draw from and contribute to community resources. A new business type found within the festival, the “art business,” is introduced. These art businesses link tourism entrepreneurship with social enterprise, embodying the festival’s public-

private hybrid structure at a micro-scale. However, such businesses were not in evidence on all partner islands, and where their absence was conspicuous, mixed or negative development outcomes related to the festival were observed.

While extant literature has been limited to the resourcing behavior of individual entrepreneurs or to non-tourism-based entrepreneurial networks, this study emphasizes the process of peripheral, resource-constrained communities utilizing resourcefulness to foster successful tourism entrepreneurship. This process is strengthened by the presence of community-facing small businesses (oriented not only to tourists, but also communities) that simultaneously draw from local capacity and function as vital resources themselves. Social enterprises have been the subject of considerable study in rural contexts and, as a further contribution to knowledge, we spotlight the unique role of regional tourism partnerships in influencing the development of social enterprise in declining peripheral communities. Evidently, factoring this potential into the planning of similar multi-stakeholder regional tourism initiatives can foster positive, sustainable outcomes for both tourists and peripheral communities.

## Theoretical Review and Background

### *Theoretical Framework*

This article posits that the resourcing behavior of communities is essential for the success of regional efforts to develop small tourism businesses in resource-constrained environments. In peripheral regions, qualities and behaviors typically assigned to individual entrepreneurs, including agency, innovation, and resourcefulness (Morris & Lewis, 1991; Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), are more usefully extended to entire communities. Foregrounding the resourcefulness of the local rural collective (Gaddefors, Korsgaard, & Ingstrup, 2020; MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013) allows for a more nuanced view of the role of peripheral communities in multi-stakeholder tourism development partnerships, a view that can describe not only net small business growth or individual small business success but also sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes (Aquino, Lück, & Schänzel, 2018; Barraket, Eversole, Luke, & Barth, 2019).

### *Tourism Entrepreneurship and Resourcefulness*

While entrepreneurs are generally characterized as innovators and risk-takers (Morris & Lewis, 1991), tourism entrepreneurs are viewed as more likely to copy than to innovate and are driven less by profit and more by lifestyle choices (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2016; Kodithuwakku & Rosa, 2002). These characteristics diverge even

more in peripheries such as islands and marginal rural areas where locals, rather than migrants, build their businesses around community considerations (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2016). While barriers between local and migrant tourism entrepreneurs, linked to differing socio-economic and cultural factors, can create discord, ongoing working relationships between these groups enhance the social environment and strengthen communities (Matarrita-Cascante & Suess, 2020). Urban in-migrants to rural communities bring new entrepreneurial ideas that diversify local potential (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012; Klien, 2016, 2019; Obikwelu, Ikegami, & Tsuruta, 2017; Zollet & Qu, 2019). This activity is complementary and does not generally displace local businesses (Akgün, Baycan-Levent, Nijkamp, & Poot, 2011; Kalantaridis, 2010).

Resourcefulness of entrepreneurs has received considerable attention in extant literature as an essential facet of successful business creation (Barraket et al., 2019; Michaelis, Carr, Scheaf, & Pollack, 2019), particularly in peripheral areas, where financial capital is generally outweighed by cultural or social capital (Akgün et al., 2011; Klien, 2020). In resource-constrained environments, community plays a make-or-break role in the entrepreneurial process, with success derived less by innovation than by social networks (Kodithuwakku & Rosa, 2002). Though this may seem to favor locals, migrants (and return migrants, who moved back to their hometowns after a period spent living in the city) contribute their own networks, and these outside linkages benefit both their own entrepreneurial ventures and the greater small business community (Akgün et al., 2011; Kalantaridis, 2010; Kenji, 2013; Matanle, Rausch, & Shrinking Regions Research Group, 2011).

To examine resourcing behavior among entrepreneurs, Baker & Nelson (2005) proposed applying the concept of bricolage, or making creative use of the resources at hand, to the entrepreneurial process. Entrepreneurial bricolage has been extended to studies of rural tourism micro-firms (Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), allowing for an assessment of the owners of such firms through their entrepreneurial behaviors rather than identities or motivations. In this context, “entrepreneurship is about promoting a desired change and when this desire incorporates the interests of both the entrepreneur and the local community, it leads us to associate spatial bricolage with sustainable development” (2020, p. 1018). The social embeddedness of entrepreneurial actors affirms the collective agency of communities as being a fixture of rural entrepreneurship (Gaddefors et al., 2020). Several studies have described “community entrepreneurship,” where networks of local actors create arenas for business innovation (Borch, Førde, & Lars Rønning, 2008; Johnstone & Lionais, 2004; McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015). Barraket et al.’s (2019) study of the resourcefulness of rural social enterprises considered not only the resourcing behavior of such businesses but also their role as community resources themselves. In tourism studies, “tourism social entrepreneurship” similarly

emphasizes the community-facing potential of tourism enterprise in sustainable tourism development (Aquino et al., 2018).

MacKinnon and Derickson (2013) propose a focus on resourcefulness in rural development, describing it as a process employed by communities to bring about change. In this sense, *community resourcefulness* can be considered a confluence of agency and capacity: activating a local agenda with local resources. Using this process, communities are able to not only act on their own priorities but also respond effectively to opportunities and threats from outside, including through events like art festivals (Mahon & Hyyryläinen, 2019). To frame these cultural activities, Gibson and Gordon (2018) have introduced “rural cultural resourcefulness,” which foregrounds daily lived experiences and responses over institutional priorities that may be incompatible with local life. While most studies on resourcefulness do not pertain directly to regional tourism development, they suggest a pathway for introducing community entrepreneurial resourcefulness to the sustainable tourism discourse, particularly in evaluating multi-stakeholder tourism initiatives in resource-constrained or peripheral environments.

### *Sustainable Peripheries and Partnerships*

The sites examined in this study comprise six islands in the Seto Inland Sea region, or *Setouchi*, in western Japan with shrinking, aging communities, which typify the community decline occurring across the country’s peripheral regions. The situation, in striking contrast to the futurist image of the Tokyo metropolis, is so acute that hundreds of villages have been abandoned in recent decades (Matanle et al., 2011). This predicament corresponds with a rise in neoliberal politics in Japan that has consolidated municipalities, defunded social programs, and generally left rural regions to fend for themselves (Matanle, 2017; Matanle et al., 2011; Rausch, 2016).

Japan’s islands have been especially affected by this process of peripheralization that saw many of them merged with large cities (Funck, 2020). Acknowledging that a return to population growth is unlikely, some communities have instead opted to restructure themselves in a smaller form, prioritizing the development and maintenance of a core group of young people who will ensure continued community vitality, a process described as “creative depopulation” (*sōzōteki kaso* in Japanese) (Sasaki, Kawai, & Hagiwara, 2014, p. 191). Such efforts typically involve developing new programs to attract in-migrants, including not only incentives like resettlement allowances and housing assistance, but also infrastructural perks to encourage novel business development by newcomers (Sasaki et al., 2014). Despite such incentives, Japanese in-migrants show patterns of sustained mobility, or a tendency to relocate repeatedly rather than permanently settle in a particular rural community (Klien,

2020). This cautions against an overreliance on increased in-migration to induce localized revitalization outcomes.

The neoliberal turn in Japan has also coincided with a surge in public-private partnerships at the regional level, bridging public social priorities and private sector leadership, implementation, and financial capital to create projects that have both social and economic benefits (Kanaya, 2014). Though community groups created for the purpose of local promotion have existed in Japan throughout the modern era (Onitsuka & Hoshino, 2018), large public-private partnerships only became prominent in the last 20 years (Kanaya, 2014). A notable example of this new model is the growth of rural art festivals, which have spread across Japan since the debut of the Echigo Tsumari Art Triennale in 2000 (Favell, 2016). While bearing some traits of the western art biennials that influenced them, these festivals differ markedly in their vast geographic scale, their combination of internationally renowned artists and rural locales, and their complex community relationships, including artwork installed within vacant houses and on private land (Favell, 2016; Kitagawa, 2015; Klien, 2010; Kumakura & Nagatsu, 2015).

The festivals are further notable for their emphasis on revitalizing critically depopulated rural communities through tourism and participatory or socially-engaged art (Favell, 2016; Klien, 2010; Kumakura & Nagatsu, 2015; Qu, 2020). In these ways, they more closely resemble western creative placemaking initiatives (Markusen & Gadwa Nicodemus, 2019) and large event tourism initiatives (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018), and have invited similar criticisms for the imposition of outside or discordant elements into disadvantaged communities (Kanaya, 2014; Klien, 2010; Qu, 2019, 2020). Festival stakeholders include not only prefectural governments and private or nonprofit entities but also individual participant communities, whose land, labor, and culture are substantially leveraged (Qu, 2019).

Partnerships between communities, governments, and the nonprofit and private sectors are increasingly leveraged in rural contexts to rectify challenges brought by globalization, pooling and competencies to overcome population shrinkage and reduced access to capital and services in remote areas (Moseley, 2003; Packer, Spence, & Beare, 2002). While multi-stakeholder partnerships are a tenet of UN Sustainable Development Goal 17 (United Nations, 2015), they have a potential for power imbalances and tensions stemming from differing agendas among stakeholders (Sagawa & Eli, 2000; Scheyvens, Banks, & Hughes, 2016) and disruptions to continuity caused by staff turnover or new governmental administrations (Packer et al., 2002). Studies of “business-community partnerships” (Loza, 2004; Sagawa & Eli, 2000) often equate communities with nonprofit organizations in those communities, but not all communities are represented by nonprofits. Particularly in rural areas, this lack of representation often corresponds with diminished agency for communities and lopsided outcomes favoring private-

sector “partners,” with only supplemental benefits to communities (Vermeulen, Nawir, & Mayers, 2008).

The idea of redefining and reinhabiting peripheral places is also fraught with symbolic and actual tensions. Place is dynamic and relational, born out of exchanges, practices, and histories (Heley & Jones, 2012; Massey, 2004; Woods, 2011). Islands are especially characterized by a “unique and fragile equilibrium” (Patrizia & Uysal, 2016, p. 3) that makes them contentious arenas for sustainable tourism development. Beyond questions of whether such places should undergo intentional change, this dynamism questions whether they can, particularly through broad, “place-based” development projects that assume common variables across multiple communities. The very notion of a peripheral place is suggestive of distance from a core and, for inhabitants of such “peripheries,” may seem nonsensical if not exclusionary: all peripheries are experienced as centers by their inhabitants, and all the more so in a time of enhanced virtual and physical mobility (Heley & Jones, 2012; Vodden, Baldacchino, & Gibson, 2015).

However, peripheries are also discrete places: islands and other marginal areas commonly facing such issues as limited accessibility, limited services, and limited employment; sites of agency balancing unique challenges against great potential (Baldacchino, 2015). “Critical to this understanding is a willingness to look beyond a discourse of peripheries as victims to explore how people at the edge articulate place for themselves and deploy it critically in shaping their own futures” (Vodden et al., 2015, p. 10). Ultimately, redefinitions and reinhabitations of place are the prerogative of the local agents who choose to stay (Gaini, 2019). When paired with outside investment, these initiatives at times “hover on the limits of legitimacy,” but at others prove crucial to the survival and prosperity of peripheral communities (Baldacchino, 2015, p. 44).

Among Japan’s large rural art “festivals,” the Setouchi Triennale, a large-scale art tourism initiative in the Seto Inland Sea region, is the best known and most visited (Favell, 2016). The Setouchi Triennale, or *Setouchi Kokusai Geijutsusai* (literally “Setouchi International Art Festival”) in Japanese, incorporates permanent museums as well as festival-specific artworks into what is essentially a multi-island art scavenger hunt, spanning 12 islands and two mainland ports in the eastern Seto Inland Sea. It takes place over roughly 100 days every third year, and attracts more than one million tourists (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee, 2017b). Festival organizers prepare, promote, and sell admission to art installations scattered across the participating islands, while relying on island villages to provide services such as lodging and dining amenities, or bicycle rentals. Beyond simply boosting tourism, the festival organizers seek to partner with islands to trigger an entrepreneurial boom that can lead to localized, community-facing revitalization outcomes (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee, 2015). The Setouchi Triennale is in many ways



reflective of the creative depopulation strategy, albeit on a much larger scale. While previous studies have investigated tourist and community responses to the Setouchi Triennale and museums and the continuum from tourists through volunteers to migrants (Funck & Chang, 2018; Kanaya, 2014; Qu, 2019; Qu, He, McCormick, & Funck, 2021), little attention has been paid to the numerous small tourism businesses operating within the festival, nor the festival's effect on them.

## Methods

Research was conducted in two stages, and based on two related research questions. In the first stage, we sought to understand the influence of the Setouchi Triennale on tourism business development in participating communities. Following a convergent design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously during field visits to six islands between December 2016 and June 2019.

Questionnaires in Japanese were distributed to small (fewer than 10 employees), tourist-facing businesses (hereafter "small tourism businesses") (n=214) and semi-structured interviews (n=22) were conducted with selected questionnaire respondents. This fieldwork took place during non-festival periods when small business respondents had the time and inclination to participate.

For the questionnaire, respondent businesses included obvious tourist amenities like bicycle rental shops and guesthouses, and also other businesses, such as grocery stores and gas stations, that were likely to be frequented by both locals and tourists. Respondents included business owners and, if owners were unavailable, members of staff. (Staff members often consulted with business owners or managers by phone when completing business-related portions of the questionnaire.) Respondents provided information about themselves, their businesses, and their opinions about the changes and opportunities brought by the festival. The questionnaire was completed by 80-100% of small tourism businesses that were open during the survey periods. The quantitative data were processed in SPSS, and the findings are described mainly by using cross tabulations (chi-square test).

Twenty-two semi-structured interviews were conducted with small business owners and a handful of other island stakeholders (see Table 1). Interview respondents were selected using purposive sampling (Creswell & Clark, 2017) to target different groups on all islands: long-term island residents, new urban-rural in-migrants (I-turn), return migrants (U-turn) and seasonal commuters. The interview questions covered topics related to why and how tourism entrepreneurs opened businesses on the islands, what prompted in-migrants to relocate to the islands, how businesses and communities interfaced, and whether they had made or observed any changes resulting from the festival. Interviews lasted an average of 40

minutes. Both axial coding by respondent and selective coding by island were employed to sort information from the interviewees and to classify their responses.

**Table 1. Interview participants**

No.	Respondent group	Interviewee description
01	Shodoshima respondents	Business owner (long-term resident)
02		ST artwork business (I-turn)
03		Shodoshima tourism association staff (I-turn)
04		ST artwork business (I-turn)
05	Teshima respondents	ST artwork business (U-turn)
06		Teshima tourism association staff (I-turn)
07		Business owner (I-turn)
08		Business owner (I-turn)
09		Business owner (I-turn)
10	Inujima respondents	Business owner (long-term resident)
11		Business owner (long-term resident)
12		Business staff member (commuter)
13	Megijima respondents	Business owner (commuter)
14		Business owner (commuter)
15		Business owner (commuter)
16	Ogijima respondents	Freelancer (I-turn)
17		IT worker (lived on Ogijima 2 year)
18		Business owner (long-term resident)
19		Residents' association leader/business owner (U-turn)
20	Naoshima respondents	Town office staff member (long-term resident)
21		Business owner (I-turn)
22		Business owner (long-term resident)

Analysis of first-phase data in 2019 revealed significant differences among communities, leading to the second and subsequent research question: Were such differences attributable to variations in community resourcefulness between islands? We then adopted an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), with results from the first phase of fieldwork informing additional qualitative fieldwork and a re-analysis of existing data. Follow-up interviews (n=18) were

conducted with previous interviewees, and sites were revisited where we engaged in participant observation during both festival and non-festival periods. Interviews were semi- or unstructured, and topics included community-level efforts to develop tourism businesses on each island, and whether local tourism development goals also focused on community revitalization objectives. Interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and data and notes from earlier field visits were re-coded using framework analysis to highlight emergent themes by island.

All interviews were conducted in Japanese, with the exception of one conducted in English with a foreign resident, and recorded with the interviewees' permission. They were transcribed, and all Japanese-language interviews were translated to English before being processed for use within this study. Translations were checked for accuracy by a native Japanese speaker. Particularly in qualitative fieldwork, researcher-respondent power dynamics were addressed through semi-structured interviews in which respondents were encouraged to steer the conversation toward issues they wanted to address, or stories they wanted told. For the interviews, researchers clearly identified themselves as international researchers from a Japanese university. This, along with careful explanation of the purpose of the research to ensure informed consent and guarantees of anonymity, mitigated imbalances to the greatest extent possible. Participants were also provided with contact information in case they had additional questions. Across both phases, the lead author conducted approximately 55 days of naturalistic observation as a visitor and 10 days of participant observation as a festival volunteer before, during and after the art festival periods. The second author, who resides on Naoshima, one of the region's key islands, contributed nine months of participant observation and informal interviews to this study, including four research visits to Ogijima and one each to Teshima and Inujima, all in 2019. This further highlights the ongoing and enduring nature of wider investigations.

Limitations primarily related to the size of the festival and the large number of businesses, which forced us to divide fieldwork over four years and two festival periods. Quantitative data also did not include businesses that were only open during peak periods. These limitations were partly—but not entirely—mitigated through subsequent field observations. Further complicating the data, many guesthouses were closed during daytime fieldwork, which skewed the respondent pool toward retail, dining, and mixed businesses.

## Research Context

The six islands investigated in this study, Inujima, Megijima, Naoshima, Ogijima, Shodoshima, and Teshima (see Figure 1 and Table 2), have formed the core of the Setouchi Triennale since its debut. Shodoshima is a large island with many villages

scattered across a scenic expanse of forested mountains. Naoshima and Teshima are a mid-sized category, with a few coastal villages each; they can be crossed on foot in less than an hour. Ogijima, Megijima, and especially Inujima are quite small, with single villages comprised of less than 150 residents each.



**Figure 1.** Map showing six Setouchi Triennale islands and nearby ports. Authors' illustration.

All the islands have linkages to tourism, with Shodoshima and Naoshima the most developed by far. Large-scale tourism is more recent on Ogijima, Megijima, and Teshima than on the other islands. Naoshima's tourist industry is the result of major museum developments that began in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and had drawn hundreds of thousands of annual visitors by the early 2000s (Funck & Chang, 2018). Along with its art museums, Naoshima has a copper smelting plant and related manufacturing businesses. Shodoshima supports fishing, agriculture, and manufacturing industries, with tourism driven by its diverse outdoor amenities and its olive agriculture. Teshima has agriculture and fishing industries and a stone mining operation in addition to its newer permanent art facilities, which debuted along with the Setouchi Triennale. An industrial waste dumping scandal tarnished the island's image for decades, but the island's art tourism has served as a rebranding (Qu, 2019). Prior to the debut of Setouchi Triennale, industry on Ogijima and Megijima was mostly limited to small-scale fishing and aquaculture. Inujima's few dozen typically elderly residents are mostly retired. Its museum, established in 2006, is a major tourist

attraction (Favell, 2016); but the museum (along with small industrial operations) is mainly staffed by commuters.

Table 2 shows a selection of attributes on each of the six islands. In general, smaller communities like Megijima and Inujima have a higher percentage of older residents and are less resource-dense, while larger communities like Naoshima, Teshima, and particularly Shodoshima are more likely to have schools.

**Table 2. Attributes of six Setouchi Triennale islands**

Island	Size (Sq. km) <sup>1</sup>	Population (2015) <sup>2</sup>	% Age 15-64 (2015) <sup>2</sup>	Triennale Artworks (2016) <sup>3</sup>	Triennale Visitors (2016) <sup>3</sup>	Small Tourism Businesses (2019 est.) <sup>4</sup>	NPOs <sup>5</sup>	Schools (Elem., Jr. High & High) <sup>6</sup>
Naoshima	14.22	3,015	55.8%	15	265,403	81	2	2
Inujima	0.54	48	22.7%	9	61,809	16	0	0
Teshima	14.50	867	45.2%	15	130,123	53	2	2
Shodoshima	153.26	27,927	51.4%	29	196,357	108	14	7
Megijima	2.68	136	23.5%	15	49,276	15	1	0
Ogijima	1.34	148	29.7%	15	54,232	17	4	2

1. (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee, 2017a) 2. (Statistics Bureau, 2017) 3. (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee, 2017b) 4. Author estimates based on observation and local tourism association materials. 5. (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2012) 6. (Gaccomm inc., 2020) and author observations. Combined elementary and/or junior high and/or high schools are counted separately.

## Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion are presented in the following sequence: First, quantitative and qualitative data from the first phase of research are described and discussed. Then, the second phase of fieldwork is described, which highlights community factors supporting or complicating entrepreneurship on festival partner islands. A particular type of tourism business, the “art business,” is then introduced as a novel form in the Setouchi Triennale that models community resourcefulness on some islands. The earlier findings are then considered through this framework to answer both research questions.

### *Phase One: Small Businesses in a Regional Art Festival*

The questionnaire distributed to small businesses on the six islands yielded data specific to small business development in the festival environment. The islands with the greatest share of in-migrants were Ogijima (42.9%), Naoshima (36.1%) and Shodoshima (36%). Returnees were less represented, with Teshima (14.3%) and Shodoshima (12.8%) having the most. On Inujima (57.1%) and Megijima (53.3%), most

respondents were commuters. The largest share of businesses (31.8%) were “mixed businesses,” where various business types—typically dining and accommodation—were combined, a common practice on small islands (Baldacchino, 2015). Restaurants and cafes (24.3%), and accommodation facilities (13.6%) were the second- and third-largest groups. Ninety-eight businesses (45.8%) had opened after the Triennale debut in 2010. Ogijima (92.9%) and Teshima (71.4%) had the largest share of businesses that opened after 2010.

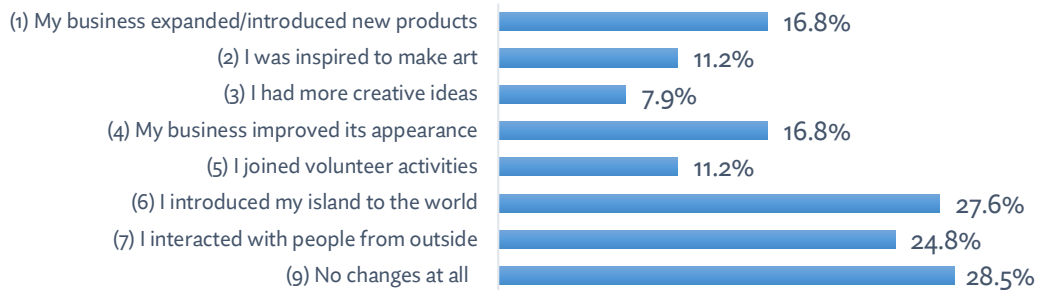
**Table 3. Characteristics of small business respondents (n=214)**

Respondent characteristic	Value	Frequency (n=214)	Percentage
Residential classification	Long-term local (10 years or more)	103	48.1
	In-migrant (“I-turn”)	66	30.8
	Return migrant (“U-turn”)	20	9.4
	Commuter (Living off island)	25	11.7
	No response	0	0.0
Location of respondent	Naoshima	36	16.8
	Inujima	15	6.5
	Teshima	49	22.9
	Shodoshima	86	40.3
	Megijima	15	7.0
	Ogijima	14	6.5
	No response	0	0.0

Among the 214 respondents (see Table 3), 92 were business owners, 28 were managers, 63 were other full-time staff members, and 31 were part-time workers. A cross tabulation with chi-square analysis comparing owner and island showed that a majority of respondents on Ogijima (64.3%), Naoshima (58.3%), and Teshima (53.1%) were business owners, while this was not the case on Shodoshima (33.7%), Megijima (26.7%), and Inujima (21.4%) ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Respondents were asked to indicate changes they or their businesses had made related to the festival (see Figure 2). Results of the chi-square cross tabulation between islands and types of residents showed that a significant share of respondents created or made improvements to their tourist-facing businesses, interacted with outsiders, and promoted their islands, which suggests an increase in innovation and exchange during the festival period ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). However, comparing responses by island revealed highly disparate outcomes. More respondents on Naoshima (36.4%), Ogijima (36.4%), and Teshima (25.0%) said their businesses had expanded because of the festival. On the other hand, 60.3% of Shodoshima respondents and 54.5% of Inujima respondents indicated that neither

their businesses nor they themselves had made any changes in response to the festival ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

### Changes brought by the Setouchi Triennale for small-business respondents (n=214, multiple answers)

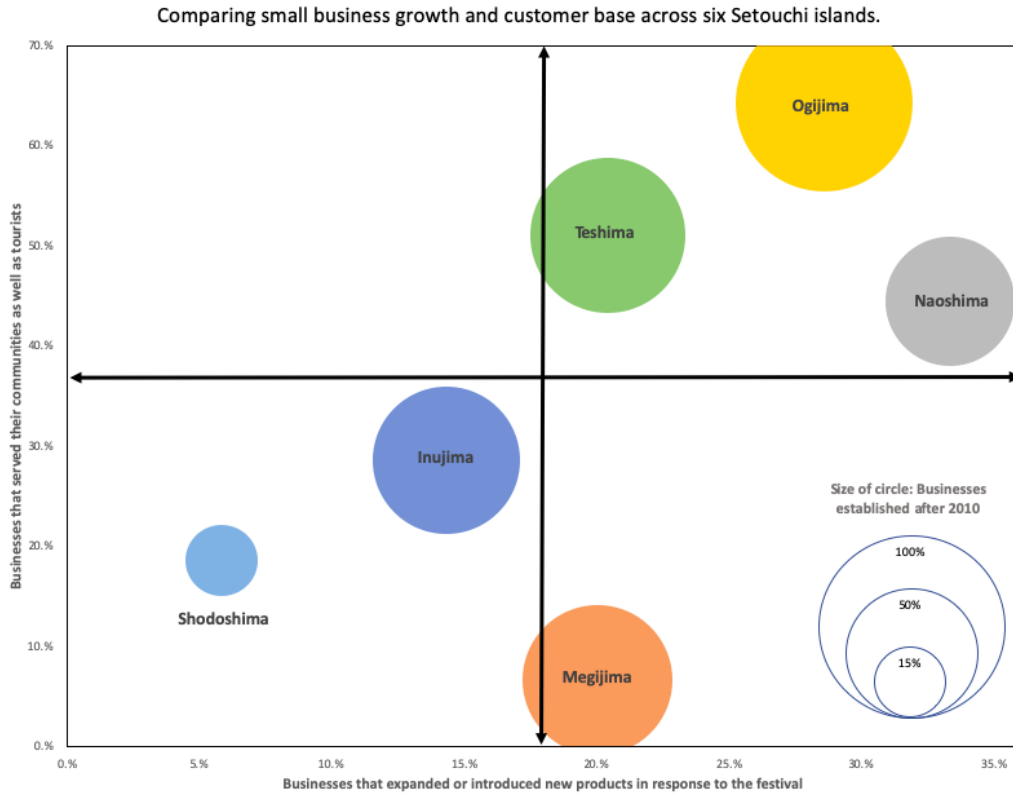


**Figure 2.** Changes brought by the Setouchi Triennale for small-business respondents. Authors' survey data and calculation.

Of all respondents surveyed, 33.2% said their businesses catered to tourists and locals alike. But among individual islands, Ogijima (64.3%), Teshima (51.0%), and Naoshima (44.4%) had the largest individual proportions of such businesses ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). On the other hand, Megijima (6.7%), Shodoshima (18.6%), and Inujima (28.6%) were notably skewed toward serving tourists over locals. Tellingly, the former three islands had a larger mix of locally desirable businesses such as grocery stores, transportation, restaurants and cafés, while the latter cases had an outsize share of tourist-facing guesthouses and souvenir shops. Figure 3 compares the share of respondents on each island who said their businesses had expanded in response to the festival, the percentage of businesses that served their communities in addition to tourists, and the percentage of businesses surveyed that were created during or after 2010.

In interviews, respondents described how the Setouchi Triennale brought a tremendous surge in tourists to most of the islands, and businesses sprouted up as a result. Long-term island residents were the early trailblazers—renting out bicycles and cars, opening cafes, converting homes into guesthouses—before they were joined by in-migrants. The in-migrants and U-turn migrants in turn brought more cosmopolitan ideas, like American diner-style hamburgers and espresso coffee, which added to a growing diversity of tourist amenities but did not generally push out local business owners. Naoshima and Teshima were the best examples of this synergy between locals and newcomers. The festival provided as many customers as local business owners could accommodate, which benefited those with the flexibility to temporarily expand capacity. The off season was starkly different, with businesses on non-museum islands particularly, likely to shutter for long stretches

during non-festival periods. This intermittency was seen as an especially limiting factor for the establishment of new businesses and the longevity of existing ones.



**Figure 3.** Comparing small business growth and customer base across six Setouchi islands. Authors' survey data and calculation.

Ogijima, despite its tiny size, had attracted nearly 50 in-migrants over the ten-year festival span (NPO Ogijima Life Research Institute, 2018). During this time, the arrival of families with children prompted the reopening of the island's school, which had been closed for several years (Qu et al., 2021). While locals on Ogijima sometimes expressed mixed feelings about the festival and gains remained tentative (the school had fewer than ten students), there was a great deal of optimism and hope for the future on the island.

Negative feedback for the art festival was especially pronounced on Megijima, which received hardly any in-migrants after four festival iterations (NPO Ogijima Life Research Institute, 2018). Here, tourist businesses were primarily run by commuters who lived in urban centers and were thus more inclined to close in the off season and during off years. Unfavorable comparisons of Megijima to nearby islands with permanent, high-profile art museums were common. Respondents described how the festival brought only short-term surges in customers, which made it hard to



sustain normal businesses on the island. On Inujima, which was the smallest, least resourced, and most difficult to access, entrepreneurship was limited, and the island's few tourism businesses were operated by commuters, or elderly locals who simply wished to engage with outside visitors. Locals interviewed praised the quality-of-life benefit of such interactions, but it was clear that no surge of in-migrant entrepreneurs was expected. Shodoshima already had a long-established and comparatively diverse tourism industry, with good transportation and other amenities favorable to tourism. Yet there had been minimal business development on the island in response to the festival. Business owners commented on the general lack of perceived impact on tourism during the festival compared to regular seasonal flows, while others complained that festival visitors were less likely to spend time at non-art-related amenities.

The findings from the initial phase of research revealed highly divergent outcomes for small business development, linked in large part to drastically different resources the island communities had at hand to exploit the opportunities presented by the festival. The emergence of healthy tourism economies on Naoshima and Teshima testifies to their persistence as independent and active communities with diverse resources at hand to attract in-migrant entrepreneurs (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012; Klien, 2016, 2019; Obikwelu et al., 2017; Zollet & Qu, 2019). Conversely, under-resourced Inujima had few new businesses and even fewer new residents. In a limited framework foregrounding individual resourcefulness, the development success of Ogijima, which had few resources prior to 2010, could be linked to the efforts of a few lone bricoleurs (Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), whose efforts at “making do” have carved out an exception to the resources-entrepreneurship link. But if that were the case, why has neighboring Megijima, which shares many of the same qualities as Ogijima and draws essentially the same number of tourists, experienced no change in circumstances? The picture is further muddied by Shodoshima; by far the most populous island, Shodoshima has a comparatively rich assortment of resources, but also lags in festival-related development outcomes. To address this discrepancy, we turned to a community resourcefulness framework, which is better suited to explain such divergent outcomes.

### *Phase Two: Community Resourcefulness and Social Enterprise*

Returning to the data and the islands to examine community resourcefulness, we sought out both formal and informal social structures that promoted small business entrepreneurship in the Setouchi Triennale. An example of the former, tourism associations created to promote island businesses were present on all six islands. However, their activities were usually very limited. One tourism association employee described frequent disagreements between the local government, the tourism association, and business owners over a range of issues that stifled

meaningful collaboration. Another islander described how their tourism association did not convene meetings with association members, offering member business owners little opportunity to network and coordinate initiatives. However, local businesses were observed to have created smaller but abundant informal networks. Businesses frequently recommended each other to visitors, such as rental bicycle vendors suggesting itineraries that included restaurants. Islands with a higher density of resident business owners, like Naoshima and Teshima, were more likely to show evidence of collaborations and partnerships between businesses. Island entrepreneurs often helped each other with projects and renovations, shared tools and information, and copied effective ideas. In this way, they became resources to each other.

Islands lacking this density did not support entrepreneurial networks, and business closures followed. On Megijima, an accommodation business that had participated in the earlier survey closed in spring 2019, citing the intermittent flows of tourists as an insurmountable challenge despite the next Triennale starting within weeks. On Inujima, one of this study's few resident informants closed their business at the conclusion of the 2019 festival, having decided to retire and leave the island. With each such departure, Inujima's identity as a museum island, rather than an island hosting a museum, became further cemented. Shodoshima hosted almost double the artworks of any other island in the study and had considerable resources at its disposal relative to the other islands, but there was no observable effort to capitalize upon the Setouchi Triennale within the community, which appeared largely indifferent to it. The similarities in outcomes between Inujima and Shodoshima, islands at opposite ends of the resource scale, attest to the complexity of community resourcefulness and the limitations of a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach.

Among the small businesses observed in this study, a small but notable group bridged social and entrepreneurial foci in more or less equal measure. This group, which we describe as "art businesses" due to their frequent connections with art, was comprised of sanctioned festival or museum-related "artworks" that operated as stand-alone businesses; grassroots ventures by local entrepreneurs that incorporated art and social objectives in novel and substantial ways; and businesses operated by local community groups or organizations that likewise had a significant connection to art. While not all of them claimed to *be art*, they all bore attributes of socially engaged art (Kumakura & Nagatsu, 2015), with art taking the form of an encounter between participants. However, despite this broadening of entrepreneurship to embrace the parameters of the festival, art businesses not directly sponsored by the Triennale or the corporate museum system were minimally represented in official festival promotions, if mentioned at all.

One example, Guesthouse Mamma on Teshima, was a mixed business combining lodging, a restaurant, and a public bath. The business occupied a disused orphanage that held historical importance for the community. After the facility closed in 2015, islanders worried about its future and viewed its second life as a business, as having saved it from decay and eventual demolition. Though Guesthouse Mamma was an independent business not affiliated with Setouchi Triennale, the project embodied a Triennale hallmark: the repurposing of abandoned public buildings into venues for intercultural exchange. Guesthouse Mamma’s website described the business as a place where “new relationships are created between the locals and the guests from all over the world,” a reflection of one of Setouchi Triennale’s core tenets. The business was popular with locals, something its in-migrant manager had nurtured carefully, offering a discount to locals and writing a letter to explain the business to elderly residents who were unable to read about it online. While a bathhouse on Naoshima, a facility with an eccentric redesign by a well-known artist that was operated by the main museum corporation, was advertised heavily, Guesthouse Mamma was simply listed in small print alongside other restaurants in the festival guidebook.



**Figure 4.** Onba Factory on Ogijima. Photo by A. D. McCormick.

In another comparison, two businesses on Ogijima, both conceived as community-facing projects, received distinctly different treatment by the festival. In the first, Onba Factory (Figure 4), which was an official Setouchi Triennale artwork that had operated continuously since 2010, the proprietor created small pushcarts, or *onba*,

for islanders. Such pushcarts are commonly used by elderly people in rural Japan to transport goods and to assist them with walking. Onba Factory's creations were highly imaginative, designed through detailed discussions with their future owners. Past *onba* included racecars and ladybugs, carts with light-up decorations and wild patterns, and others with practical features, like a cart made of stackable containers for transporting another business owner's boxed lunches to the port to sell. Additional *onba* were available for visitors to purchase. Onba Factory had been a fixture on the island since the Setouchi Triennale debuted and was featured regularly in official materials.

Nearby, the Ogijima Library (Figure 5) was another community-oriented creative project: an old house transformed into a library and gathering space for local residents; an amenity rarely found on an island so small. The large selection of books, acquired primarily through donations, was free for all to read. But more than a repository of knowledge, the library was presented as a space to create and share new knowledge from an island perspective, with regular events being held and a publication series bridging art and island life. The library earned revenue through its adjacent kitchen, which served meals to visitors. While Ogijima Library was a community landmark and received regular visitors, it nonetheless was not mentioned anywhere in the 2016 or 2019 Setouchi Triennale guidebooks.



**Figure 5.** The Ogijima Library. Photo by A. D. McCormick.

Though island residents expressed mixed views about the Triennale and the permanent museums as outside interventions, the small art businesses were almost

universally praised and regarded by islanders as local features. Grassroots businesses were the most warmly viewed, but even Naoshima's corporate museum-owned bathhouse was admired: a rare example of a museum business that regularly drew local customers.

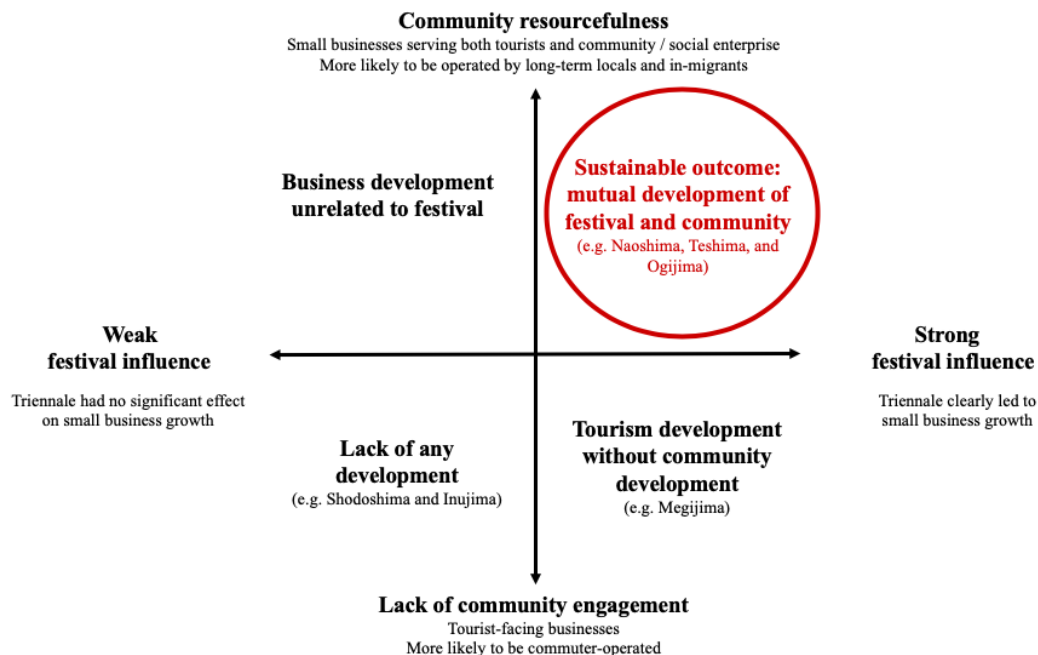
The second phase of fieldwork clarified the community factors that exacerbate resource disparities between islands and addressed divergent outcomes in superficially comparable communities. Despite minimal planning or leadership from local government or the tourism associations, some islands were able to muster strong entrepreneurial responses to the Setouchi Triennale. On Teshima, Naoshima, and Ogijima, critical masses of local entrepreneurs have become resources in themselves (Barraket et al., 2019; Borch et al., 2008; Johnstone & Lionais, 2004; McKeever et al., 2015), bolstered but not displaced by in-migrant actors (Akgün et al., 2011; Kalantaridis, 2010) who have generally enhanced the social environment (Matarrita-Cascante & Suess, 2020). This process has resulted in a balance between benefits to individual businesses, shared benefits via cross-promotion and division of labor (Bosworth & Atterton, 2012), and community-facing benefits via the new mix of local offerings not limited to narrow tourist-centered services and products. Such results are absent on the other islands, where community response did not coalesce in a significant way. The owners of small businesses on those islands are more likely to live off island, with many leaving daily operations to staff members who may themselves commute; all are, thus, disconnected from the social environment. On Megijima, which has much in common with Ogijima, the absence of a focused, coordinated response has left it unable to reap the same benefits as its neighbor. For Shodoshima and Inujima, their presence on either end of the size and resource spectrum reflects the limitations inherent in exogenous, one-size-fits-all approaches.

While the incursion of public-private development initiatives into rural Japan has raised concerns of incompatible cultures (Kanaya, 2014; Klien, 2010; Qu, 2019), there is little sign of cultural displacement linked to entrepreneurship within the Setouchi Triennale. Rather, through considerable outreach efforts by their owners or organizers, community-facing art projects like the "art businesses" have become part of daily life for many locals interested in having something new in town. These art businesses highlight the potential of the Setouchi Triennale to champion creative new ways of engaging tourists and locals by fostering social enterprises that generate jobs and income for owners and staff, while also offering services and other benefits to the communities (Aquino et al., 2018; Barraket et al., 2019).

Art businesses mirror the public-private, socially engaged art structure of the festival, but in a community-rooted and community-supported form that the overall festival has not yet achieved. The potential for this outcome, however, is greatly limited by the tendency of festival organizers to privilege official art businesses

while ignoring others, resulting in a lost opportunity. As the festival utilizes public funds, arbitrarily elevating some private enterprises over others is also ethically problematic. This affirms issues of differing stakeholder agendas in large-scale tourism initiatives (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018; Mahon & Hyyryläinen, 2019; Markusen & Gadwa Nicodemus, 2019; Reid, 2011) that often resolve in favor of the organizers. More urgently, the situation challenges the agency of individual communities to shape their futures by determining or validating local manifestations of exogenous development, thus reinforcing the victimhood of peripheral places while undermining beneficial effects (Baldacchino, 2015; Gibson & Gordon, 2018; Massey, 2004; Vodden et al., 2015).

#### Conceptual Framework for Community Resourcefulness in Regional Tourism Development



**Figure 6.** Conceptual framework for community resourcefulness in regional tourism development. Authors' illustration.

Islands supporting small businesses that serve not only tourists but also their own communities are more indicative of sustainable tourism development outcomes. These businesses are not only less likely to be affected by seasonal flows of tourists and thus have a better chance at long-term viability, but also function as valuable community resources. Adding a community resourcefulness framework to the quantitative results shown in Figure 3 demonstrates that Ogijima, Teshima, and Naoshima offer the most sustainable outcomes among islands in the study (see Figure 6). While festival organizers express the hope that the Triennale triggers local, community-facing entrepreneurship, they consider small tourism businesses as external to the festival, except for the few official art businesses. As long as this is

the case, festival partner communities hoping for in-migration and small business growth but lacking community resourcefulness will play minor roles in the initiative, gleaned minimal benefit from their participation.

## Conclusion

To help peripheral communities reach and attract bigger audiences, region-scaled rural arts initiatives create partnerships between small villages or islands and outside organizational entities. Representing such an initiative, the Setouchi Triennale was conceived to return vitality to a group of Japanese islands, with tourists both witnesses to and actors within the spectacle. Using the Triennale as a case study, this article examined whether regional cultural tourism initiatives in peripheral areas can foster local small business development, particularly in resource-constrained environments experiencing decline. The highly divergent outcomes among six partner islands prompted an additional phase of research to explore community resourcefulness as a factor contributing to the divergence. In three cases, the introduction of art tourism had a positive effect on local entrepreneurship in ways that benefited both visitors and locals, particularly demonstrated by the presence of popular social enterprises that bridged tourist services and local social priorities. Three other cases presented mixed neutral-to-negative outcomes.

With tourism entrepreneurs less likely to take risks, (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2016; Kodithuwakku & Rosa, 2002), it is up to communities to take the risks typically associated with entrepreneurial innovators (Morris & Lewis, 1991), particularly in those communities where tourism is a new industry. If an individualist view of entrepreneurial resourcefulness foregrounds the behavior of the entrepreneur over his or her identity or motivations (Yachin & Ioannides, 2020), a community resourcefulness perspective should do the same. As this study shows, variation in community resources is insufficient to predict the success of regional tourism initiatives: large, heavily resourced communities can see minimal changes, while tiny communities with few working-age people can experience dramatic benefits. Likewise, communities that seem similar can have markedly different outcomes. The reasons for this difference lie in the endogenous networks formed and leveraged to construct locally meaningful and sustainable responses to new conditions. In the best cases, the arrival of in-migrant entrepreneurs creates an add-on benefit that further strengthens existing networks, and the development of innovative social enterprises indicates genuinely sustainable development (Aquino et al., 2018).

Resourcefulness emerged as the determining factor behind the success or failure of development initiatives in otherwise comparable communities, making it a central concern for outside (regional, national, international) groups who seek to partner

with them. This research reveals a crucial need for organizers of region-scaled, rural tourism development initiatives to work with partner communities at the local level. Such an approach would focus on the potentials and limits of each community, prioritizing local concerns and aspirations, and encouraging small-scale entrepreneurial responses that are meaningful to and achievable by community members. If the agency of local stakeholders is deprioritized, such as through community-created responses becoming marginalized in favor of “official” projects, the legitimacy of the entire endeavor is threatened. Such a lesson is as relevant in underdeveloped regions of wealthy nations as it is in underdeveloped nations partnering with global sponsor-stakeholders: ultimately, each community decides whether and how it welcomes tourism development and how resources are leveraged (or invented) to create change from within.

Looking forward, researchers need to focus on how to identify community resourcefulness in possible partners and on the conditions creating it in resource-constrained environments. More comprehensive research is needed on stakeholder perceptions of peripheral revitalization, how those perceptions reflect local histories and priorities, and how they may be better aligned to boost sustainable outcomes in tourism development initiatives. Finally, additional case studies on such multi-community initiatives in island and non-island peripheries, focusing on attributes of both communities and individual entrepreneurs, can further clarify a growing phenomenon.

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