

Entrepreneurial Behaviour Series

Sustainable Business Models

Insights from the
Tourism, Cultural and
Creative Sectors

Edited by

Maria Della Lucia

Erica Santini

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SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS

ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOUR

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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ABOUT THE iNEST PROJECT

Under Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), funded by the NextGeneration EU program, Innovation Ecosystems are a national initiative designed to foster innovation, drive technology transfer, and support sustainable economic development across Italy. These ecosystems represent a cornerstone of Italy's broader strategy to build a resilient, green, and knowledge-based economy grounded in regional potential and inter-institutional collaboration. Each Innovation Ecosystem is a network of universities, public research institutions, territorial bodies, and companies strategically distributed throughout the country to leverage and enhance regional strengths. These networks focus on specific domains of excellence that reflect the unique economic, industrial, and research vocations of each region. The goal is to align innovation initiatives with regional needs and capabilities. To ensure strategic coherence and value creation while engaging diverse domains of excellence and stakeholders, each ecosystem follows a "hub-and-spoke" organizational model. A leading institution (the Hub) coordinates activities with a network of regional partners (the Spokes), ensuring both central guidance and localized action.

The iNEST Project – Interconnected Nord-Est Innovation Ecosystem is the ecosystem located in the North-East of Italy aimed at accelerating digital and ecological transitions across the northeastern regions of Italy, that is, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano. This area makes a significant contributor to the Italian economy, accounting for only 2% of the national population but producing 14% of Italy's GDP and 20% of its exports. It is marked by strong territorial identity and a diverse array of productive specializations reflected in the iNEST Project's nine domains of excellence (Spokes). These thematic networks bring together 24 partners, including 9 universities, 3 public research institutions, and 12 private entities under the coordination of the University of Padua, which serves as the Hub. Far beyond a funding mechanism, iNEST represents a strategic effort to drive regional transformation through innovation that is place-sensitive, socially embedded, and intersectorally collaborative.

Within this ecosystem, the Tourism, Culture, and Creative Industries network (Spoke 6) contributes both structurally and thematically to the overarching objectives of the iNEST project. Led by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, iNEST involves collaborative participation from the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, the University of Trento, and the University of Verona. Spoke 6 adopts a multidisciplinary approach that integrates management, economics, STEM disciplines, the arts, and the humanities to analyze tourism, culture, and the creative industries through an ecosystem lens. Its mission is to foster and strengthen the interconnections among these sectors, reduce fragmentation, and promote the development of a diversified, culturally rich, and sustainable innovation landscape.

To achieve these goals, Spoke 6 is organized into four coordinated research tracks and designed as an integrated learning and innovation system. Digital Technologies (RT1) integrate domain expertise in tourism, culture, and creative industries with advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, IoT, and Extended Reality. Data Analytics (RT2) analyze big data from heterogeneous sources to inform more sustainable public policies and destination marketing strategies. Sustainable Business Models (RT3) transform business models in the tourism, cultural, and creative sectors toward sustainability. Finally, narratives and communication strategies (RT4) develop new tools to challenge stereotypes and reframe tourism communication through inclusivity and sustainability.

This book concludes at a crucial moment in the NEST trajectory, documenting the main outcomes of the research track on Sustainable Business Models (RT3). It is edited by the leaders of the four key research lines within RT3, all of whom share the overarching goal of promoting the sustainable transformation of business models in the tourism, culture, and creative industries. This transformation covers a range of innovative approaches applied at different levels, including circular and inclusive business models, integrating sustainability and equality into the design of services, products, and experiences; art-based business models, leveraging the creative contributions of artists and cultural entrepreneurs to enhance authenticity and value; participatory business models, which create shared value by reconciling the needs and interests of businesses, communities, and visitors; and regenerative business models, reimagining the use of places and spaces by innovating their original functions and cultural heritage to improve living conditions, accessibility, inclusion, and user experience.

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RETHINKING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS IN TOURISM, CULTURAL, AND CREATIVE SECTORS

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ABSTRACT

This introductory chapter positions the edited volume at the forefront of current scholarly debates on sustainable business models (SBMs) in tourism, cultural, and creative industries. It critically examines the conceptual fragmentation and sector-specific challenges that have limited the effectiveness of existing SBM frameworks in these fields. In response, the chapter introduces the volume's multidimensional, context-sensitive, and participatory approach, which challenges conventional models that prioritize economic outcomes at the expense of social and environmental value. Building on recent advances in sustainability, innovation, and cultural entrepreneurship research, the chapter presents four interrelated thematic pillars – circular economy and inclusivity, art-based interventions and authenticity, participatory value creation, and regenerative place-making – that collectively inform a more nuanced, empirically grounded, and actionable understanding of SBMs. Ultimately, the chapter establishes the volume as a timely resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to

foster innovation, resilience, and inclusive development within tourism, cultural, and creative ecosystems.

Keywords: Sustainable business models; tourism; cultural and creative industries; circular and inclusive models; art-based models; participatory models; regenerative models

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, cultural, and creative industries (CCIs) face increasing pressures to reconcile economic viability with social inclusion, environmental stewardship, and cultural integrity. Global crises – including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and socio-political instability – have exposed the systemic vulnerabilities of these sectors, underscoring the urgency for new business models that transcend narrow, profit-driven logics (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022). As industries deeply rooted in place, identity, and social capital, tourism and CCIs offer fertile ground for reimagining SBMs that embed social, cultural, and ecological value at their core.

This chapter situates the volume within evolving scholarship on SBMs for tourism, cultural, and creative sectors, critically engaging with persistent conceptual fragmentation and myths that undermine progress. Drawing on advances in SBM theory and practice, the chapter responds to growing calls for context-sensitive, interdisciplinary, and participatory approaches to sustainability research (Bocken et al., 2014; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). It exposes the limitations of prevailing frameworks in capturing the dynamic, value-driven realities of cultural and tourism enterprises (Schiuma & Lerro, 2017) and demonstrates the need for models grounded in inclusivity, adaptability, and resilience (Budeanu et al., 2016; Coles et al., 2021).

The chapter introduces the book's four thematic pillars – circular economy and inclusivity, art-based interventions and authenticity, participatory value creation, and regenerative place-making – and explains how contributions within each pillar collectively foster a richer, empirically informed, and theoretically robust understanding of SBMs in these fields. By blending theoretical advancement with practical insights, the volume offers a timely resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers committed to fostering sustainable transformation in tourism, cultural, and creative ecosystems (Bastian & Caputo, 2024; Della Lucia & Pashkevich, 2023; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN SBMs

Despite increasing attention, SBM research remains fragmented, particularly within tourism, cultural, and creative domains. Many existing models, such as the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010) and archetypes for sustainable innovation (Bocken et al., 2014), often overlook the complex, relational, and place-based dynamics that characterize these sectors (Bellandi & Santini, 2019; Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Kirchherr, 2022). This misalignment fosters conceptual ambiguity and limits the relevance of SBM frameworks for practitioners operating in socially embedded, culturally diverse, and ecologically sensitive environments (Rosato et al., 2021), as tourism, CCIs.

Additionally, the literature often treats the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability as isolated goals rather than adopting an integrated, systemic perspective (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Much existing research is firm-centric, overlooking broader ecosystem dynamics, stakeholder co-creation processes, and the influence of informal economies, social capital, and cultural values. These limitations are especially problematic in tourism and CCIs, where sectoral heterogeneity, from micro-enterprises to public institutions, and the intangible, place-specific nature of value creation complicate standardized approaches (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022). This heterogeneity is mirrored in a scholarly landscape characterized by siloed perspectives. Scholars increasingly question whether conventional tools, including the Business Model Canvas, can adequately capture the fluid, hybrid, and adaptive characteristics of creative and cultural enterprises, particularly those operating in heritage and tourism contexts (Herman et al., 2023; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Schiuma & Lerro, 2017; Zott & Amit, 2010). These debates reflect a field in transition, moving toward more critical, context-sensitive, and collaborative approaches to SBM research, better suited to the complexity, fluidity, and place-specificity of sustainable value creation in tourism and CCIs ecosystems.

Furthermore, traditional business model frameworks often assume stable hierarchies, linear growth, and clearly defined organizational boundaries, neglecting the hybrid nature and the adaptive and improvisational strategies that characterize many cultural and creative enterprises which frequently prioritize artistic integrity and social mission over growth or scalability (Cacciatore & Panozzo, 2021; Foss & Saebi, 2018; Teece, 2010). Recent research highlights the role of “bricolage” – the creative recombination of limited resources – as a strategic response to uncertainty, resource constraints, and systemic instability (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Glasbeek, 2025). Rather

than viewing *bricolage* as an organizational weakness, scholars increasingly frame it as an essential capability for cultural entrepreneurs, particularly in knowledge-intensive, uncertain environments such as heritage cities or fragile tourism economies (Lumpkin et al., 2018). This perspective challenges dominant assumptions about stability, scalability, and formal organizational structures, calling instead for SBM frameworks that reflect the fluid, project-based, and relational nature of cultural production.

Addressing these conceptual and practical gaps requires more interdisciplinary, reflexive, and inclusive approaches to SBM research. These approaches can engage with complexity, embrace place-based innovation, and reconceptualize value creation beyond conventional, profit-driven paradigms (Bellandi & Santini, 2019; Buratti et al., 2022; Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Methodological pluralism, participatory research, and context sensitivity are critical for generating insights that reflect the intertwined social, cultural, and environmental goals of tourism and CCI enterprises (Courage et al., 2021; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024).

A further critical barrier lies in the persistence of binary thinking, which constrains both academic inquiry and practical innovation by reinforcing simplistic oppositions. Tourism and cultural enterprises are frequently framed through dichotomies such as mass tourism versus sustainability, economic growth versus community well-being, or market-driven models versus mission-led practices (Bastian & Zucchella, 2023; Budeanu, 2007). While these binaries may help clarify competing priorities, they risk oversimplifying the complex, negotiated realities faced by organizations operating at the intersection of tourism, culture, economy, and place (Schiuma & Lerro, 2017). In practice, many tourism and cultural organizations operate within hybrid spaces of integration, rather than opposition. As Schiuma and Lerro (2017) demonstrate, cultural organizations frequently embed social and cultural missions into their core operations, redefining value creation beyond purely economic metrics. This embeddedness enables them to act as platforms for community engagement, cultural expression, and inclusive development, while also maintaining economic viability.

Moving beyond binary thinking necessitates analytical frameworks that embrace plurality, contextual nuance, and relational interdependence (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Courage et al., 2021). It also requires rethinking sustainability not as a trade-off between competing goals but as a multidimensional, co-created process embedded in local realities. This paradigm shift reflects a transition from merely minimizing negative impacts to actively restoring and enhancing social-ecological systems. Regenerative approaches unfold through various culture-based and biodiversity-stewarding activities,

such as agriculture, handicrafts, hospitality, and education, by emphasizing co-evolutionary relationships among social, cultural, environmental, and economic forms of capital within bioregional development models grounded in mutual care (Bellato et al., 2022, 2023).

Emerging research on regenerative development highlights how places themselves can become active stakeholders in sustainable transformation, with communities and individuals serving as custodians of place-based knowledge and cultural heritage (Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024). In this sense, tourism, cultural, and creative enterprises can function as living laboratories for experimenting with integrative, place-based, and resilient business models that reflect the complexity of sustainable development and advance ecosystem regeneration.

RETHINKING SBMs

The edited volume *Sustainable Business Models: Managing Tourism, Cultural and Creative Enterprises, Organizations, and Ecosystems* seeks to advance scholarly and practical conversations on SBMs by addressing persistent fragmentation in research and challenging dominant frameworks that often prioritize economic outcomes at the expense of social, cultural, and environmental dimensions (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024). By critically interrogating conventional models, the volume moves beyond rigid binaries that frame tourism and cultural and creative enterprises as being in tension with sustainability and advocating for context-sensitive, place-based innovations that reflect the multidimensional nature of value creation (Budeanu et al., 2016). Tourism and CCIs represent ideal domains for rethinking how value is generated, distributed, and sustained. These sectors are inherently embedded within complex socio-ecological systems where economic imperatives intersect with cultural heritage, community well-being, and environmental stewardship (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Rocca & Zielinski, 2022). Furthermore, they reflect both bioregional and digital ecosystems characterized by high levels of fluidity, stakeholder diversity, and place-based identity (Gretzel et al., 2015; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

The volume responds to current challenges by promoting innovative, research-informed, and practice-oriented approaches to SBMs that can address sector vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, and empower communities (Lumpkin et al., 2018; Romolini et al., 2017). Specifically, the book introduces four interrelated thematic pillars designed to push business models beyond a narrow focus on profitability toward more inclusive, participatory, and regenerative frameworks for sustainable development.

PILLAR 1: CIRCULAR ECONOMY AND INCLUSIVITY

The first pillar explores how SBMs can be reimagined through the integration of *circular economy* principles and *inclusive practices* to promote both resource efficiency and social equity (Bocken et al., 2014; Kirchherr, 2022). Circular economy approaches prioritize the minimization of waste, the optimization of resource flows, and the design of services and products that generate educational, experiential, and environmental value (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Inclusive approaches – particularly addressing the needs of vulnerable or marginalized groups – meaningfully engage a broad range of stakeholders toward socially embedded innovation (de Assunção Mendes et al., 2024). By addressing the intersection of environmental responsibility, social equity, and participatory engagement, pillar demonstrates how responsible service and experience design can be leveraged as a strategic tool to create meaningful, low-impact encounters that are economically viable, socially inclusive, and environmentally regenerative. Through this lens, the book envisions business models that not only sustain but actively revitalize resources, ecosystems, fostering opportunities for full participation in cultural, social, and economic life.

PILLAR 2: ART-BASED BUSINESS MODELS AND PLACE AUTHENTICITY

The second pillar focuses on the potential of *art-based* business models to generate sustainable value by embedding the authenticity of place at the heart of organizational design (Schiuma & Lerro, 2017). These models leverage cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and artistic expression to create immersive, meaningful experiences that reflect the distinct identity and socio-cultural fabric of a place. Through active community participation and co-creation processes, art-based models foster creative ecosystems where artistic innovation is interwoven with inclusive, place-based development (De Luca et al., 2023). They promote social inclusion, equitable value distribution, and enhanced visitor–host relationships, particularly in areas beyond mainstream tourist circuits. Their focus on small-scale, context-sensitive projects also meets the growing demand for responsible, authentic travel. These models must navigate the delicate balance between cultural preservation and market exposure to avoid risks of over-commercialization or reducing artists to mere service providers (Herman et al., 2023). This pillar contributes to the book’s overarching vision by demonstrating how context-sensitive

and creativity-driven models can catalyze sustainable development that is grounded in cultural authenticity, community empowerment, and long-term environmental stewardship.

PILLAR 3: PARTICIPATORY BUSINESS MODELS AND SHARED VALUE CREATION

The third pillar highlights the critical role of participatory business models that prioritize collaboration, inclusive decision-making, and active stakeholder engagement to co-create shared value (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Such models recognize that sustainable development and shared value creation are most effective when rooted in community agency, collective ownership, and distributed leadership (Bastian & Zucchella, 2023). Community-based enterprises and social innovation networks exemplify how participatory approaches foster trust, resilience, and social cohesion, especially in vulnerable or transitional territories (Buratti et al., 2022; Lumpkin et al., 2018). These models are shown to strengthen organizational adaptability and local development by embedding social, environmental, and cultural objectives at their core (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022; Romolini et al., 2017). Special emphasis is placed on strategies that promote accessibility, inclusivity, and long-term community engagement as key mechanisms for building more equitable, collaborative, and resilient tourism and cultural ecosystems. Through this lens, the book advances SBMs as tools for building more just, resilient, and collaborative tourism ecosystems, where value is co-created and shared.

PILLAR 4: REGENERATIVE BUSINESS MODELS

The final pillar of the book explores *regenerative business models* as tools to revitalize places and spaces affected by marginalization, economic decline, or cultural erosion (Della Lucia & Pashkevich, 2023). These places include not only creative cities and urban environments, but also rural, peripheral, and transitional areas. These models transcend restoration or conservation by adopting a holistic approach to renewing the social, cultural, and ecological vitality of communities, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between institutional settings (Palthe, 2014), cultural regeneration processes (Della Lucia & Trunfio, 2018), and enabling factors (Della Lucia & Pashkevich, 2023). Regeneration is understood not as a return to a fixed past but as a dynamic, forward-looking process grounded in living cultural and natural

heritage (Lazic & Della Lucia, 2024). Drawing on bioregional and participatory approaches, these models promote inclusive and creative placemaking, reconciling tradition with innovation. Through inclusive and adaptive governance, regenerative models support both cultural resilience and foster vibrant cultural, tourist, and economic ecosystems (Bellato et al., 2022). Through this lens, the book positions SBMs as catalysts for ecosystem restoration, social empowerment, and the reimagining of places as vibrant, creative, and inclusive spaces.

SBMs PRACTICE IN NORTHEAST ITALY

This volume rethinks SBMs by applying four thematic perspectives across the tourism and CCI, cultural, and creative sectors, offering nuanced contributions that bridge multidisciplinary academic discourse with practical application, with a particular focus on Northeast Italy. Multidisciplinary brings together distinct disciplinary perspectives, while preserving their distinct epistemologies, methodologies, and conceptual boundaries. This broadens the analytical lens on sustainability challenges and solutions, fostering critical engagement with the complex socio-environmental dynamics these sectors face. Methodologically, practice-oriented approaches are central to the analysis, combining participatory action research with art-based inquiry (Cacciatore & Panozzo, 2024). This hybrid approach responds to Boons and Lüdeke-Freund's (2013) call for methodological diversity in the study of sustainable innovation, enabling both analytical rigor and contextual relevance. While participatory action research is iterative, inclusive, and geared toward real-world change, art-based research blends creative expression with qualitative inquiry to explore lived experiences, cultural narratives, and place-based identities. Together, these methods support the co-creation of knowledge, deepen researcher-community engagement, and offer innovative tools to understand and enhance the resilience, inclusivity, and competitiveness of local cultural, creative, and tourism ecosystems.

Chapter 1, "The Relevance of Debunking Sustainable Myths for Theory and Practice" by Bob Bastian, Andrea Caputo, and Maria Della Lucia, lays the theoretical foundation for rethinking business models through the four perspectives explored in this volume. It calls for a critical problematization of SBMs by exposing persistent myths that continue to shape sustainability research and practice. The authors advocate for myth-busting as an essential methodological approach to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions within SBM discourse and to foster a more reflective, critical stance toward

knowledge production. By highlighting the importance of embracing uncertainty and cultivating intellectual humility, the chapter positions ignorance as a generative space for innovation and more effective, context-sensitive sustainability solutions. In doing so, it introduces the core challenges and tensions in the field and sets the stage for addressing them through the lens of the volume's four thematic pillars.

Part I, "Business Models Incorporating the Principles of Circular Economy and Inclusivity," features two chapters united by a shared focus on advancing environmental responsibility and social inclusion within business models. Chapter 2, "Circular Economy in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector: the Case of Waste Cooking Oil" by Matteo Baldan, Muhammad Junaid Shahid Hasni, and Valentina Beghetto, illustrates how circular economy principles can repurpose food-processing by-products into valuable resources. It shows how recycling innovations can be integrated into hospitality operations, reducing environmental impact while creating new value streams and enhancing organizational sustainability. Chapter 3, "Inclusive Tourism Design: Bridging the Information Gap Faced by People with Disabilities" by Rossana Demurtas, Maria Menendez-Blanco, and Erica Santini, examines the digital accessibility barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in tourism experiences. The research identifies major shortcomings in information provision across tourism platforms, revealing how traditional business models often overlook the needs of diverse user groups. By addressing these gaps, the chapter underscores the importance of inclusive design in developing truly sustainable, accessible, and socially just business models. Together, these chapters reveal that embedding circular practices and inclusive design within business models is not merely an ethical imperative but a source of innovation, resilience, and value creation. By tackling overlooked resources and underserved populations, the chapters advocate for business models that are both regenerative and equitable.

Part II, "Art-based Business Models Incorporating the Authenticity of Places," explores how artistic interventions offer innovative frameworks for sustainable value creation grounded in cultural authenticity and place-based identity. Chapter 4, "Authenticity as Weaving Coherence Across Time and Place: Insights from Craft" by Camilla Ferri and Maria Lusiani, introduces the metaphor of "weaving coherence" to illustrate how authenticity is an evolving, socially constructed process embedded in craft practices. The authors identify six modes through which craft makers integrate temporal dimensions (the past, present, future) with place-based identities, revealing authenticity as an active, living practice rather than a fixed outcome. This perspective shifts the analytical focus from audience perceptions or market-driven narratives

of authenticity to the practices, skills, and embodied knowledge of makers themselves, linking their creative processes to cultural heritage, social relations, and environmental contexts. Chapter 5, “Rethinking Cultural Business Models Through Artistic Interventions in Tourism-related Contexts” by Margherita De Luca, Chiara Carolina Donelli, and Fabrizio Panozzo, examines how artistic interventions within tourism-driven urban settings can catalyze transformations in cultural business models toward sustainability. Drawing on case studies from Venice, the chapter identifies three interrelated dynamics: a pragmatic turn toward market orientation in response to tourism pressures, the predominance of fragmented, project-based organizational structures, and the strategic deployment of *bricolage* – the creative recombination of available resources – to sustain cultural initiatives. These dynamics challenge conventional business model assumptions by favoring flexibility, informality, and creative autonomy over linear growth and organizational stability. Together, these chapters reveal how authenticity and artistic interventions can anchor SBMs in cultural and creative contexts. They underscore the value of time- and place-based connections, collaborative and adaptive structures, and context-sensitive strategies. These insights provide valuable guidance for cultural producers and policymakers seeking to balance creative integrity with economic viability, while enriching the vitality of the communities, cultural ecosystems, and environments in which they operate.

Part III, “Participatory Business Models for Creating Shared Value,” explores how community-driven and network-based approaches can advance more sustainable, equitable business models by embedding social purpose at the core of organizational strategy. Chapter 6, “Community-based Enterprises as a Sustainable Business Model for Tourism Destination Regeneration” by Stefania Denise Escobar, Chiara Massacesi, Linda Osti, Paola Rovelli, and Federica Viganò, explores how community-based enterprises (CBEs) can foster sustainability and regeneration in tourism destinations facing depopulation, economic decline, and shrinking public services. Drawing on the case of the *Cooperativa di Comunità Valle del Vanoi* in Trentino-Alto Adige, the chapter shows how CBEs emerge as grassroots responses to complex socio-economic challenges in peripheral and marginal areas. Rather than prioritizing tourist demands, successful CBEs focus on the needs of local residents, positioning tourism as a complementary – rather than dominant – development strategy. This approach marks a significant departure from conventional tourism models by asserting that community well-being, social cohesion, and local livelihoods must take precedence over visitor-driven growth. Chapter 7, “Social Innovation and Networking in Tourism: Insights from Case Studies in Northeast Italy” by Maurizio Busacca, Silvia Sacchetti, and Olga Tzatzadaki,

investigates how social innovation and collaborative networks foster more resilient and inclusive tourism ecosystems. Through in-depth case studies from Northeast Italy, the chapter explores how participatory organizational forms and social innovation practices enable tourism stakeholders to navigate volatility, co-create value, and enhance benefits for local communities. These alternative organizational forms highlight the potential of tourism to strengthen both economic sustainability and social cohesion when embedded in participatory and collaborative frameworks. Together, these chapters offer compelling evidence that community-centered and networked business models offer viable alternatives to conventional structures that often separate commercial success from social impact. By embedding social objectives within their organizational design, these business models can become powerful levers for sustainability, particularly when they are locally grounded, responsive to community needs, and intentionally designed to distribute value equitably across diverse stakeholders.

Part IV, “Regenerative Business Models for Sustainable Place Development,” focuses on models that blend tradition with innovation to revitalize places affected by marginalization, socio-economic decline, or cultural commodification. Chapter 8, “Rethinking Cultural Heritage in Placemaking: From Preservation to Regenerative Development in Castel Campo” by Maria Della Lucia, Giulia Dore, Stefan Lazic, and Marina Clerici Rasini, presents the case of Castel Campo, a historic, family-run, and women-led estate in rural Trentino. The research traces the estate’s transformation from a traditional model of heritage preservation to a dynamic, multidimensional enterprise that integrates living heritage, regenerative agriculture, and community-based social care. Guided by female leadership and a deep respect for time, place, and community, the Rasini family’s management model demonstrates how cultural heritage can serve as both a bridge between historical continuity and contemporary innovation and as a catalyst for inclusive, regenerative placemaking. The case highlights that cultural heritage, when managed as a living force, can foster shared responsibility, democratic participation, and cross-sector collaboration. Chapter 9, “Craft-based Experiences to Revitalize Touristic Urban Centers: The Venetian Case Study” by Stefano Micelli and Sofia Mizzan, offers a complementary urban perspective. Through three case studies from Venice’s historic center, the chapter explores how traditional craftsmanship and artisanal practices can serve as catalysts for urban revitalization. Craft-based enterprises are portrayed not only as economic actors but also as cultural intermediaries capable of resisting the commodification of tourism by offering authentic, educational, and personalized experiences. These businesses create meaningful connections between

visitors and local culture while contributing to community well-being and urban regeneration. The chapter further underscores that the regenerative potential of such enterprises can be significantly enhanced through strategic management support, policy alignment, and integration within broader urban ecosystems and cultural networks. Together, these chapters underscore the versatility and transformative power of regenerative business models across rural and urban contexts.

Finally, in Chapter 10, “Sustaining Impact: Looking Ahead in Tourism, Cultural, and Creative Sectors,” the book editors synthesize the key patterns and insights emerging across the volume’s four thematic pillars. They trace the transformational journey of SBMs, highlighting how they evolve as context-sensitive, adaptive ecosystems. The concluding chapter outlines multi-level implications for advancing SBMs’ long-term impact and proposes future research directions to strengthen their role in fostering resilience, equity, and sustainability across tourism, cultural, and creative sectors.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The four perspectives for rethinking SBMs offer a comprehensive and flexible lens for designing, managing, and evolving SMBs in ways that address fragmentation, challenge conventional managerial thinking, and facilitate the integration of economic, social, and environmental objectives. By combining theoretical advancements with empirical insights drawn from diverse geographic and institutional contexts within Northeastern Italy, the contributions illustrate how enterprises and ecosystems in tourism, cultural, and creative sectors navigate uncertainty while prioritizing place-based specificity. In so doing, they provide a roadmap for scholars and practitioners seeking to balance scalability with authenticity, profit with purpose, and global trends with bio-regional contexts. This integrated approach advances the conceptualization of SBMs as dynamic, evolving ecosystems – responsive to external pressures, stakeholder needs, and the distinct social, cultural, and environmental characteristics of each place.

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