Sustainable Tourism Future

The content of this course was developed by faculty from the following institutions:

Improving Tourism Destinations through Regenerative Tourism

Learning Outcomes

1. To understand what regenerative tourism is and could be, and how it may challenge contemporary unsustainable practices in tourism.
2. To appreciate and identify regenerative tourism practices and examples.
3. To identify how regenerative practices center indigenous and feminist ways of knowing and being enhancing tourism destinations and communities.

Pre-Module Readings

- Pollock, A. (2019). Regenerative Tourism: The Natural Maturation of Sustainability. *Activate the Future*. Accessed on 02 08 2021.

- Regenerative Travel (2020). Taking Regenerative Tourism to Scale-Everyone has a Role to Play

In preparation for this module, students should review the following content outlined in the accompanying course notes booklet. Reviewing this information before beginning this module will help set the context for the material that will be covered.

Concerns in Tourism

- Overtourism causing degradation & congestion

- Inflated rent prices in urban centers

- Emphasis on profit generation

- Precarious workforce, destruction of heritage & increased pollution.

Leading up to the global pandemic the term overtourism was commonly referred to in the scholarly literature, as well as popular culture reflecting concerns about too many travelers visiting the same place, at the same time causing degradation, congestion, and inflated rent prices (as a consequence of short-term rentals in urban spaces such as Airbnb). Overtourism challenges our understanding of carrying capacity expressed by O'Reily (1986). Carrying capacity is when the maximum population size may be sustained by the available resources.

What overtourism helps us understand is that the economic opportunities for tourism have received longstanding attention (by governments and businesses) (e.g., Messerli, 2011); however, the sector contributes many negative impacts, effecting peoples supporting a precarious workforce, communities with the destruction of heritage, and environments with increased pollution.

The unsettling realities of overtourism has led to an emphasis on cultivating tourism development models which promote sustainability. This has led to the support of a de-growth paradigm emphasizing a transition from overconsumption towards a more participatory and environmentally conscious society supporting equity and inclusion (Cosme, Santos & O'Neil, 2017). Regenerative practices and regenerative tourism operate from this de-growth paradigm.

How might tourism enhance the communities where it takes place?

We know the tourism literature is divided. There is a body of literature that refers to tourism as an _industry_ solely emphasizing opportunities for profit generation. There is also a body of critical tourism scholarship that refers to tourism as a sector and places emphasis on the social force of tourism.

Building on the later body of critical tourism scholarship this module will consider the role of regenerative practices in tourism and how such pathways may enhance communities where tourism takes place.

Regenerative Practices

Regenerative requires a shift from the current mind-set of conducting business to a new way of conducting business (Hutchins & Storm, 2019).

Regeneration has been well documented in agricultural practices emphasizing the need to move beyond mechanistic methods specifically, the use of pesticides and fertilizers in agriculture deterring soil health (e.g., Brown, 2018; LaCanne & Lundgren, 2018).

Regenerative agriculture is important starting point in our understanding of regeneration given that a majority of the world's population is directly or indirectly dependant on agriculture (Leu, 2021). Leu (2021) draws our attention to the greenwashing that has occurred particularly among multinational companies such as Monsanto who branded themselves as one of the largest sustainable agricultural companies in the world. This example of greenwashing served as the impetus for some agricultural producers to consider alternatives to "sustainable" practices (Leu, 2021). Additionally, understanding that human activity has led to contemporary crises in relation to the climate, food, health, wars, migration crises, extraction of resources etc. raises questions regarding if the state of the world is what we hope to sustain? The status quo is clearly not enough.

Adopting a regenerative approach supports a mindset shift pushing beyond linear thinking to adopting whole systems thinking approaches with an eye on creating value for entire ecosystems and stakeholders (Hutchins & Storm, 2019).

Regenerative Leadership stresses the importance of shifting from mechanistic approaches to

leading people (whereby a leader may take all the credit for the work carried out by their team) which may support separation to more reconnected ways of interacting and working together (requiring **authenticity** by sensing and responding compassionately to one's team).

Regenerative thinking and practices have infiltrated into the field of business and leadership (e.g., Hutchins & Storm, 2019) and more recently tourism stemming from the thought leadership of Anna Pollock (e.g. 2019).

Regenerative Tourism: Beyond Limiting Harm
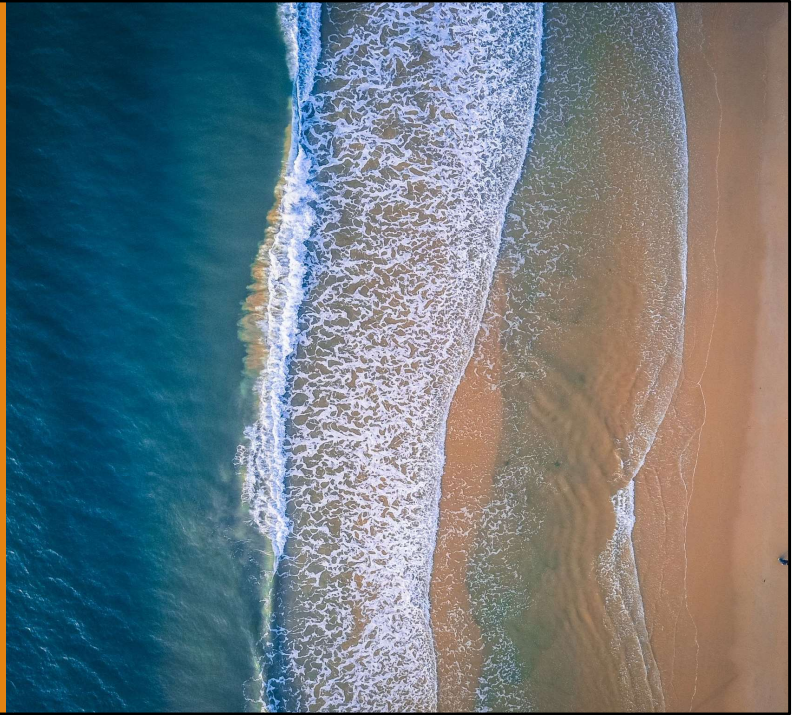
Stemming from the lessons learned via regenerative agriculture and regenerative leadership, some thought leaders in tourism have considered how regenerative tourism may bring some much needed benefits.

Regenerative tourism is a newer approach to understanding tourism and based on the concept that tourism should be more than sustainable. Sustainable tourism has been focused on doing no harm, to ensure we do not cause damage to ensure its available for future.

Regenerative tourism emphasizes deeper reflection beyond sustaining interests considering how tourism should seek to improve the places where it takes place. Importantly, regenerative travel seeks to leave ecosystems, communities, and economies better off than they were before the tourism encounter.

What are the characteristics of a healthy thriving community?

One of the important aspect of regenerative tourism is to change our former ways of thinking from mechanistic thinking (recall in regenerative agriculture the shift has been from using mechanistic ways of treating the soil and using pesticides causing harm to the soil and in tourism we have supported an "industry" that has welcomed overtourism (too many people attracted to the same place at the same time) creating irreputable harm to communities, environments, peoples etc.).

How might we shift from viewing destination communities as ways to earn profit and instead consider how we may enhance communities where tourism takes place considering them as living systems?

New Zealand Our Living Standards Framework

Our Individual & Collective Wellbeing → Our Institutions & Governance → The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand

New Zealand released "Our Living Standards Framework" (LSF) in 2021 in response to feedback from stakeholders to better reflect culture and children's wellbeing, including being more compatible with te ao Māori and Pacific cultures.

The LSF includes three levels:

•**Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing:** This level captures the resources and aspects of their lives that have been identified by research or public engagement as important for their wellbeing as individuals, families, and communities.

•**Our Institutions and Governance:** This level captures the role institutions and organizations play in facilitating the wellbeing of individuals and collectives, as well as safeguarding and building their national wealth.

•**The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand:** This captures how wealthy they are overall, including aspects of wealth not fully captured in the system of national accounts such as human capability and the natural environment.

The framework also includes analytical prompts that are the key lenses they use to analyze wellbeing across the three levels of the framework. The analytical prompts are: distribution, resilience, productivity and sustainability (The Treasury, 2021). With this work laying down a foundation, identifying the countries shared values it may be easier to determine how they may offer/provide tourism to ensure they align with their values and goals.

It seems like the goal of the framework is to support a community to thrive

What does the transition to Regenerative Tourism look like?

TAKING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Watch this interview with Anna Pollock and Michelle Holliday responding to this question from 6:50min-15:04min

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YE54zPI2pE

What does Regenerative Tourism Require?

- Eyes wide open
- A new mindset
- Engagement from all tourism stakeholders
- Inclusive community involvement
- Demonstrating respect for land, others and oneself

Some scholars advocate that cultivating regenerative travel is what is needed to guide the sector post-pandemic (e.g., Ateljevic, 2020), and counter irresponsible practices in the tourism sector aligning self-interest and profit orientations (Sheldon, 2021). Pursuing a regenerative approach in tourism requires a level of maturity and realism regarding the destructive pathway of tourism (Sheldon, 2021). Recently, Cave and Dredge (2020) offered a framework envisioning the co-presence of diverse economic methods (e.g., capitalist, alternative capitalist and non-capitalist practices) to support regenerative practices in tourism.

Tangible and positive impact.

Progress in our thinking
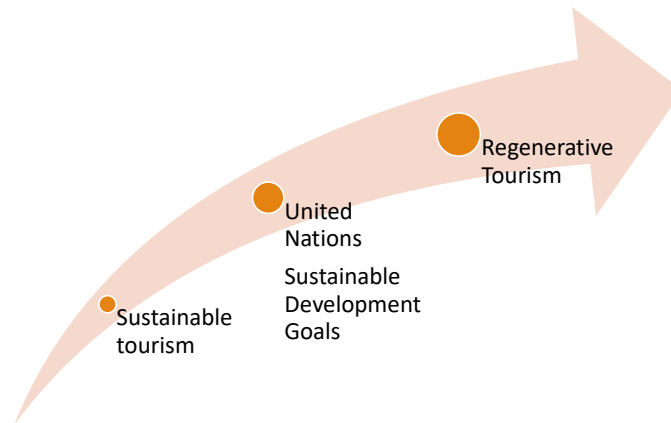
Regenerative tourism is a paradigm shift in the way we view sustainable travel.
Sustainable tourism gets us in the mindset of doing less harm.
The United Nations Sustainability Goals provides a global framework for reducing some global stage problems e.g., poverty, hunger, the ways we produce and consume products, the way we treat each other and women especially.
Regenerative tourism encourages us to make this better for entire communities and environments.

How might tourism deliver net benefits?

What may Regenerative Tourism look like?

Inclusive community involvement plays a crucial role in emphasizing and understanding the uniqueness of each place and articulating the narratives emerging from local history and community stories (Duxbury et al., 2021).

There is limited research on regenerative tourism, there are no books, and few published papers and case studies.
An important aspect is that regenerative tourism demands inclusive community involvement. As such, the community will play a crucial role in emphasizing and understanding the uniqueness of each place and articulating the narratives emerging from local history and community stories.

Regenerative Tourism

-Local food economy e.g., farmers markets, local restaurants and cafes

-Local guides & storytellers

-Engaging Indigenous and feminist voices

-Businesses trying to reduce their waste

-Innovative projects

It is important to recognize the various ways local communities may be engaging in RT e.g., farmers markets selling localized food, restaurants, cafes and bakeries selling whole food, with local/organic/fair trade/Indigenous ingredients/products and humanely treated local meat.

Storytelling plays a significant role in placemaking and identity, as such, sharing local indigenous stories and stories from a variety of perspectives across ages will likely present authentic learning opportunities for those visiting destination communities.

Regenerative tourism is going to require on-going learning. Businesses actively trying to reduce their ecological footprint are important by using solar power, reducing water consumption, considering ways to upcycle, and recycle products.

Key Takeaways

- Regenerative tourism needs to be different
- There is appetite for change
- We need to adapt our mindset, engage and be attentive to the voices of others.

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