



# AGORA

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## Module 3

### Community-led Regenerative Tourism Development

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

After you have completed the module, you will:

### Knowledge

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the principles of community-led development applied to regenerative tourism.
- Acquire knowledge about the role of the community in fostering regenerative tourism development.

### Skills

- Develop the ability to identify strategies for empowering and engaging communities in regenerative tourism planning and development.
- Learn how to align tourism offerings with regenerative principles and local needs.

### Competences

- Demonstrate the competence to recognise opportunities for collaboration and partnership among diverse stakeholders within a community.
- Cultivate the competence to develop and implement a long-term vision for community-led tourism that prioritises cultural authenticity, ecological integrity, and community well-being.



**Duration:** This module requires a commitment of approximately 20 hours of preparatory, implementation and follow-up work, including instructional time, hands-on activities, and project work.





## MODULE IN A NUTSHELL

In recent years, regenerative tourism has gained significant traction as a transformative approach to travel and community development. Regenerative tourism transcends the sustainability, circularity, and degrowth models. Deeply rooted in living systems principles, it seeks to foster a holistic and symbiotic relationship between the travellers, the hosts, and the place. At its core, it embodies a profound shift in mindset - one based on the regeneration of cultural, ecological, and social systems, while striving for a net positive impact on local environments and societies.

Within the regenerative approach lies a powerful force for positive change: **community-led tourism**. By fostering collaboration, partnership, and co-design among local stakeholders, community-led tourism serves as a catalyst for regeneration. It empowers communities to take ownership of their development, cultivates deeper connections between people and their surroundings, and enhances the well-being of both residents and visitors alike.

This module aims to explore the theoretical foundations and practical applications of community-led initiatives within the context of regenerative tourism. By delving into the key topics of community engagement, long-term visioning, and alignment with regenerative principles, this module will provide insights into how to harness the transformative power of the community to ensure holistic regenerative tourism development.





# INTRODUCTION

## **Regeneration**

Regeneration is a concept deeply rooted in the workings of living systems – that is, in the way in which the various parts and components of the living world co-exist and interact with each other and with their environment. A living system – a cell, a forest or any organisation – is sustained by flows of information, energy and matter. Regeneration is the capacity of these systems to renew themselves and recover after a period of decline or disturbance. It is therefore a complex process that requires a holistic approach to the world. In the tourism sector, a regenerative approach means considering all players (and associated flows) which co-exist in a place and contribute to making it a destination: travellers, residents, and their environment (urban AND natural).

Regeneration therefore entails the deliberate cultivation of tourism experiences and practices that contribute to the restoration and enhancement of cultural authenticity, ecological integrity, and social cohesion. Regenerative tourism seeks to go beyond the (over-used) concept of sustainability by actively replenishing and rejuvenating the resources and systems upon which tourism depends, thereby ensuring the long-term viability and resilience of destinations for future generations.

## **Community-led tourism and regenerative tourism**

Tourism can no longer be solely seen from the traveller's point of view. The local community must be fundamentally integrated into the tourism development process. This requires an inclusive co-creation



approach that involves the active participation of residents in decision-making, ensuring that the benefits of tourism (and not only financial benefits) are shared equitably across the destination and contribute to improving the well-being of the community as a whole.

Community-led tourism refers to this collaborative process. Fostering communication and partnership, it recognises the importance of engaging residents, businesses, government agencies, non-profit organisations, and other key actors in **collectively shaping the tourism experience** while preserving cultural authenticity, conserving natural resources, and enhancing the well-being of both residents and visitors.

Overall, community-led tourism seeks to create an offer that benefits the local community and the environment, while providing meaningful and authentic experiences for travellers. It can also be useful to note that certain certification schemes recognise the level of involvement of community agents within the tourism development of a destination as a criterion for sustainability or regeneration.

The following units will examine the importance of engaging and empowering the local community to shape a long-term vision for developing a tourism ecosystem which aligns with regenerative principles. Participants will learn ways to engage in these strategies and dive into case studies highlighting successful community-led experiences that will provide inspiration and practical guidance for implementing similar approaches in diverse contexts.





## 3.1 Empowering and Engaging Communities in Regenerative Tourism Planning and Development

### Community co-design and regenerative tourism development

Empowering and engaging communities in tourism planning and development is the first step towards a regenerative approach. For that, communities need to be given the opportunities, the space and the tools that will help them identify their needs, articulate their aspirations, and actively contribute to the planning and creation of tourism initiatives. Initiatives can be community-led, or they can be organised top-down and then carried down in a way that involves the whole community. Adopting these participatory approaches ensures that tourism development aligns with local priorities and values and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents towards the sustainability of their destination.

### Traditional Engagement vs Co-Design Approach

*“Community co-design shifts the focus away from designing for stakeholders to designing with stakeholders by bringing diverse groups of engaged citizens into the design process.”*

*Source: K. Bright, W. Elkhailifa, P. Seeb.*

Co-design involves active participation from community members, stakeholders, and experts in the design and development of tourism initiatives. This approach ensures that their input and perspectives are



integrated into the decision-making process from the outset. Co-design represents a departure from traditional top-down approaches, instead emphasising participatory approaches that foster a symbiotic relationship between tourists and the communities they visit. According to *K. Bright, W. Elkhailifa and P. Seeb*, here's how co-design differs from traditional methods:

| <b>Traditional Engagement</b>                                        | <b>Co-Design Approach</b>                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relies on pre-determined options                                     | Collaboratively identifies, develops, and implements efforts                         |
| Engages easily accessible community members as token representatives | Engages less accessible community members to represent under-represented experiences |
| Prioritises learned expertise                                        | Prioritises lived experiences                                                        |
| Decisions made on behalf of the community                            | Involves the community in decision-making at all phases of the design process        |
| Focuses on uncovering what people think                              | Focuses on uncovering what people feel                                               |
| Engagement is project-based and short-term                           | Invests in long-term relationship-building and trust                                 |
| Attempts to control for diversity of experiences and perspectives    | Leverages diversity as a prerequisite to creativity and innovation                   |
| Focuses on the number of engagements                                 | Focuses on the depth of engagements                                                  |

### **Different Approaches to Community Co-Design**

In practice, community co-design can take multiple shapes and formats. Each project is different, and every community is unique, so



**there are no set steps to implement a co-design project.** In his paper: *Destination Design: Identifying three key co-design strategies*, Bert Smith identifies three co-design strategies for destination design:

1. **Creative, Solution-Oriented Strategy:** This strategy focuses on the solution space, emphasising rapid prototyping and iterative improvement. Participants in this approach are already familiar with each other and the local tourism challenges. They bring their prior knowledge and experience to co-design processes. This strategy is particularly useful for developing operational or tactical solutions and is best suited for situations where immediate problem-solving is required.

2. **Knowledge-Based, Solution-Oriented Strategy:** This strategy also emphasises the solution space but is rooted in the existing knowledge of the participant group. Participants, who are representatives of key stakeholders in the local tourism system, co-design solutions based on shared interests and goals. This approach is commonly adopted by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and is useful for developing tactical solutions based on a collective understanding of tourism challenges and opportunities.

3. **Priority-Setting, Problem-Oriented Strategy:** This strategy emphasises continuous refinement of the problem definition through active engagement with diverse stakeholders. It focuses on clarifying the problem space, setting specific goals and requirements, and identifying development avenues for solutions. This approach is best suited for projects aiming to change, renew, or innovate complex product-service systems. It emphasises the importance of





understanding the broader system and strategic priorities before developing specific solutions.

## Implementing a community co-design process

*“Community co-design prioritises the involvement of populations most impacted by development projects, programmes or policies. This approach emphasises collaboration with historically excluded populations, brings diverse perspectives to design discussions, builds trust in the involved government and private sector entities and ultimately results in more inclusive and culturally relevant outcomes.”*

(Source: K. Bright, W. Elkhailifa and P. Seeb, [World Economic Forum](#), 2023)

### COMMUNITY BARRIERS

- > Power differentials in decision-making
- > Existing community networks
- > Over-valuation of learned experience
- > Lack of lived experience to inform policy, program and project design
- > Distrust of government, institutions and public processes



When first engaging in a community co-design process, there are a few barriers to address to make sure that the process is equitable and inclusive.





## PARTICIPATION BARRIERS

- > Lost wages
- > Language barriers
- > Meeting location
- > Speak for community / tokenism
- > Transportation availability and costs
- > Childcare availability and costs
- > Time of day



(Adapted from *COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN TOOLKIT*, 2020)

According to *K. Bright, W. Elkhailifa and P. Seeb*, the **primary principles of the co-design process** are the following:

***1. Meaningfully include diverse voices in the conceptual and design development process through paid positions where community members develop the project's key principles and measurements for its success***

> How does this work in practice?

- Identify key stakeholders and community members to be involved.
- Ensure representation from diverse demographic groups.
- Offer paid positions or compensation for community members' time and expertise.
- Provide training or support for active participation.





***2. Community members are selected because they or their community are most impacted by the project and have the least amount of access to influencing its development***

> How does this work in practice?

- Conduct a community demographics and community needs assessment with community agents.
- Prioritise inclusion of marginalised or underrepresented groups.
- Provide resources for equal participation opportunities.
- Collaborate with local organisations or leaders.
- Host meetings or workshops at accessible locations and times.
- Offer translation services and accessibility accommodations.

The recruitment phase for community co-design requires actively involving community members in the design and development of projects or policies, particularly those that affect their lives directly.

***3. The requests, conversations, and questions of communities acknowledge and utilise previous research and community input to scope the co-design effort***

> How does this work in practice?

- Review existing research and community input.
- Incorporate findings into the co-design process.
- Provide opportunities for community input and expertise.
- Facilitate discussions to identify gaps and areas for exploration.

***4. Co-design explorations are grounded in the lived experiences of the communities most impacted by the project's development***

> How does this work in practice?





- Conduct asset mapping exercises.
- Host storytelling workshops or story circles for community members to have the space to share their experiences.
- Incorporate storytelling and narrative-based approaches.

***5. Through a series of facilitated meetings and individual explorations, the co-designers and their communities inform a set of guiding principles that the design team can use to develop a more equitable and community-centric outcome***

> How does this work in practice?

- Facilitate regular meetings and workshops.
- Encourage individual reflections, explorations, and feedback.
- Seek consensus and co-ownership of guiding principles.
- Use facilitation guides, collaborative brainstorming tools, and decision-making frameworks.





## **Increasing impact on the decision** - Spectrum of Public Participation

(Adapted from *International Association for Public Participation*)

### **Key questions to ask when engaging in a co-design process:**

- How are those most impacted by disparities involved?
- How are community demographics reflected in the design process?
- How are community demographics reflected in the decision-making process?
- How is community participation being professionally compensated?
- How are community demographics reflected in how projects, programs, and/or policies are evaluated?





## **EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE**

### **Slow Food Travel Project: A Best Practice of Community Co-Design in Regenerative Tourism**

Find it on the [map](#)!

The Slow Food Travel project is an initiative by Slow Food aiming to promote the right to pleasure and to good, clean and fair food for all. Through this, the project has developed experiences connecting visitors with local producers, artisans, and chefs. In this way, the project showcases the cultural and gastronomic heritage of a region while supporting local communities and preserving their traditions and ecosystems.

This project is an example of how different producers can actively participate in rural resilience and give value to the wine and food tradition of one area. Specifically, the project calls for their participation in the process of Destination Management and the design of specific offers to market through the conventional tourism organisation or the Slow Food destination promotion system.

Rooted in the belief that tourism should be a collaborative effort between travellers and local communities, the project actively engages residents, businesses, government agencies, non-profit organisations, and other key stakeholders in shaping the tourism experience.





## 3.2 Developing and Implementing a Long-Term Vision for Community-Led Tourism

Every tourist destination is not just a place to visit but also a home for its local communities. Within each community lies a unique vision for its homeland, deeply rooted in its distinctive identity and shared aspirations. However, this vision may not always align with that of the regional or national tourism authority. Responding to this disparity, community-led tourism emerges as a vital strategy aiming to create an offer directly shaped by the community.

Community-led tourism emphasises the active involvement of community members in all aspects of tourism development, and most importantly in the planning, decision-making, and management of the tourism offer. It prioritises local control and ownership over tourism initiatives, intending to ensure that tourism benefits the community in terms of economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

As outlined in the previous unit, understanding how to gather various voices to map out the community's needs is crucial. However, the real challenge lies in synthesising these needs into a cohesive vision that encapsulates the desires of all stakeholders involved.

This second unit explains how to bridge the needs and wants of the community through the development of a common long-term vision. It will aim to answer the following questions:



- How can facilitators effectively lead discussions to foster community co-design?
- What strategies should be employed to structure discussions in a manner that prioritises and reflects the wants and needs of the community?
- In what ways can a joint local, bottom-up vision be implemented to garner acceptance from the wider community and instil a sense of ownership among its members?

Co-design facilitation is about creating a safe and inclusive environment to collaborate with and empower community co-designers to share their questions, insights, and feedback. Facilitators play a crucial role in guiding discussions by asking the right questions at the right times to capture the lived experiences of the community co-designers.

Traditional engagement methods often oversimplify complex challenges and solutions, if community members fully understand the issues and that solutions are straightforward. Co-design facilitation shifts the focus from predetermined solutions to creating and prioritising compelling design challenges. It aims to develop detailed guiding principles rooted in the lived experiences of those most affected by the issues.





## TIPS AND EXPECTATIONS OF CO-DESIGN FACILITATION



**GROUP NORMS:** Establish ground rules for communication of co-designers and listening. Make these expectations explicit at the outset of each design studio.



**HUMILITY:** Regardless of how passionate a facilitator might be about an issue, they cannot truly know an experience that is outside of their own.



**ASKING FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS:** The foundation to creativity is asking fundamental questions of the systems we have long taken for granted.



**SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING WITH CO-DESIGNERS:**

Do not under-estimate the importance of building rapport with co-designers. Spend time prior to and during the co-design process with each co-designer to learn more about them.



**BE CURIOUS AND NOT JUDGEMENTAL:** Instead of responding to experiences or ideas, better understand where they are coming from.



**CREATE INVITING AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS:**

Co-designers must feel safe in sharing lived experiences. create multiple opportunities (inside and outside of group meetings) for this to happen.



**PERFECTION IS A BARRIER TO GOOD:** Consensus is not the objective. The iterative format of the co-design process allows teams to "learn their way forward" and not become paralyzed by having to be right."



**KEEPING IT LIGHT (where applicable):** Try to not make the process feel like "work." Lend hope through honoring experiences and creating an optimistic and at times humorous environment.



**CREATE MULTIPLE WAYS FOR CO-DESIGNERS TO SHARE:**

Each co-designer will have different skill sets and levels of comfort with the work. Be sure to allow multiple ways for co-designers to share (for example, visual versus written).



**FOCUS ON WHY, NOT WHAT:** The main role for facilitators is to better understand the "why" behind community experiences and responses (for example, if a community member relies on their neighbor for health information you could ask, what do you find most valuable when you seek health information from your neighbor? Or have them describe a recent positive experience receiving health guidance from their neighbor in detail.)



**HOLDING AND NAVIGATING TENSIONS:** Tensions are where innovations live. Do not avoid tensions, instead explore them to better understand the challenge and possible solutions.



**BALANCED PARTICIPATION:** No one voice should dominate the co-design process. Ensure that all experiences and perspectives are honored.



**RECORDING AND TRACKING DISCUSSIONS:** Be sure to capture and illustrate each co-design session. Share the notes with co-designers to ensure that their priorities were captured accurately.



**INVOLVING DECISION-MAKERS/PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS:**

Be sure to involve those with decision-making power in the co-design process, but do so carefully. Decision-makers should be in attendance, but only to listen and ask questions of co-designers.



**RAPID FOLLOW-UP WITH CO-DESIGNERS:** After each co-design session, facilitators need to follow-up with next steps that are grounded on the previous discussion within 48 hours.

Adapted from : K. Bright, W. Elkhailifa and P. Seeb.

## Structuring community co-design discussions

A community co-design project is an evolving and unique process which varies according to the types of actors involved in it. Therefore, there is no standardised method or framework for co-design facilitation. The role of facilitators is to choose the right methods and tools tailored to each project's unique needs. However, various mapping techniques are commonly employed to visually represent collected data and insights from activities like interviews and observations. According to the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (OPSI), key methods and tools frequently used in co-design include:



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- Visualisations
- Storyboards
- Prototyping/mock-ups and testing
- Focus groups
- User research, stakeholder interviews, and observations
- Brainstorming and idea validation

It is essential to recognise that most toolkits offer generalised templates and require to be customised to align with the project's unique requirements. The goal is to seamlessly integrate these tools into the facilitation process and minimise the need for excessive guidance to avoid overshadowing participant contributions and potentially skewing outcomes.

The OPSI provides some examples of facilitation tools and frameworks that you can find [here](#).

### **Developing a joint vision for the place and the people and inspiring community ownership**

The objective of community co-design is developing a joint vision for a place and its people. As mentioned earlier in the module, it requires understanding, engagement, and collective commitment. Shared action starts with a clear, collective vision that encapsulates the desired state and needs of a community, serving as a guiding "north star." A robust vision statement is concise, inclusive of diverse perspectives, and inspiring, aiming to foster ownership rather than mere buy-in.

**Understanding Community Priorities:** By conducting listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews one can understand what

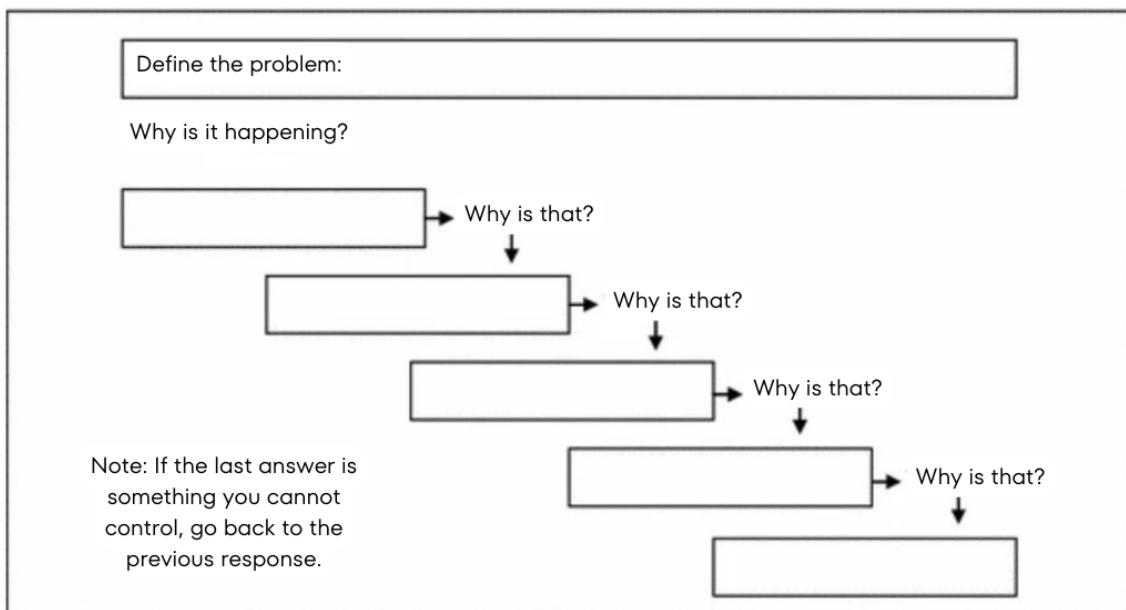


matters most to the community. Exploring questions such as: What is your dream for this place? What change would you like to see? What are the community's greatest assets and challenges?

**Crafting the Vision:** Identifying common themes and insights gathered from community engagement activities, and using these insights to draft a vision statement that reflects the community's shared aspirations, values, and identity.

**Seeking Feedback:** Propose the draft vision statement to the community for feedback and revisions. Evaluating its ability to inspire, unite, and guide action, and ensuring it resonates with diverse community members.

**Aligning and Refining:** Using techniques like the "Five Whys" to delve deeper into the core motivations and implications behind the vision.



**Figure 6 - The Five Whys Technique** (source: Knowledge Solutions)



By using the "Five Whys" technique, one can identify the root causes of the challenges faced by local stakeholders and develop a targeted solution that addresses these issues effectively. This approach ensures that the initiative is grounded in a deep understanding of the community's needs and aspirations, leading to a more impactful and sustainable outcome.

### **The Role of Storytelling in the Community Joint Vision**

Incorporating storytelling into the creation and implementation of the community joint vision allows us to shift the focus from generic marketing to a collaborative approach that celebrates the unique character and shared vision of the community. This fosters a sense of ownership and pride among community members, ensuring regenerative and meaningful development.

*> How to do this in practice:*

- Using storytelling to authentically showcase the place's culture, heritage, and experiences, providing visitors with a genuine sense of the destination.
- Creating engaging narratives that emotionally resonate with both locals and visitors, inspiring them to explore and connect with the community on a deeper level.
- Ensuring that storytelling efforts align with the community's shared vision, values, and aspirations.
- Empowering local voices, Providing a platform for community members to share their stories and perspectives, fostering a sense of ownership, pride, and empowerment.





In the end, working on developing this joint vision and inspiring community ownership creates a virtuous circle as it will attract like-minded visitors seeking authentic experiences, cultural immersion, and meaningful connections with the places they visit, and overall fostering a positive impact on the community.

## EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

### The 100% Valposchiavo Project

Find it on the [map](#)!

The 100% Valposchiavo Project is an innovative community-led initiative based in Valposchiavo, Switzerland, aiming to maximise the use of local products in the valley's gastronomy and culinary heritage. Here is an explanatory [video](#) of the project.



This award-winning initiative is connecting organic local producers, processors, and restaurants, allowing them to showcase dishes made entirely from local ingredients. This initiative strengthens the community's bond with its guests and offers them a unique culinary experience amidst the breathtaking natural beauty of Valposchiavo. Here is a fictional example of how the Five Whys Technique **could have been used** to implement the Valpashiago 100% Project:

**Problem Statement:** Local producers in Valposchiavo struggle to find consistent markets for their products, leading to economic challenges and the potential loss of traditional farming practices.





1. **Why** is there a struggle to find consistent markets for local products? > Because there is limited awareness and demand for locally produced goods among tourists and residents.

2. **Why** is there limited awareness and demand for locally produced goods? > Because the tourism sector primarily offers non-local or imported products, overshadowing the availability and benefits of local products.

3. **Why** does the tourism sector primarily offer non-local or imported products? > Because there is a lack of collaboration and communication between local producers, processors, and tourism stakeholders to promote and integrate local products into the tourism experience.

4. **Why** is there a lack of collaboration and communication between local stakeholders? > Because no structured platform or initiative encourages and facilitates collaboration, leading to fragmented efforts and missed opportunities.

5. **Why** is there no structured platform or initiative to encourage collaboration? > Because there has been a historical focus on traditional tourism models, overlooking the potential of community-led initiatives that prioritise local products and cultural heritage.

**Solution Derived:** Develop the 100% Valposchiavo Project to create a structured platform that encourages collaboration between local producers, processors, and tourism stakeholders!





### **3.3 Ensuring Alignment of Tourism Offers with Regenerative Principles**

This unit explores regenerative principles and how they can be applied at the local level to make sure that tourism offerings strive towards complying with these principles. The future of tourism requires shifting the focus from the economic growth of a destination to using tourism as a tool to foster environmental conservation, cultural exchange, and community well-being. By integrating regenerative principles into the design and management of tourism activities, we can create experiences that have a net positive impact on both the destination and its inhabitants.

#### **Understanding Regenerative Principles**

Before aligning with regenerative principles, it is essential to have a clear understanding of what they are, what they mean, and what they entail. At its core, regenerative tourism seeks to restore and enhance the vitality of systems, communities, and cultures. It recognises the intrinsic value of natural and cultural resources and acknowledges the intricate relationships between human societies and the environment as part of a global living system.

Regenerative tourism takes on this holistic approach considering the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic systems. It seeks to address the root causes of unsustainable practices by promoting integrated solutions that benefit locals, visitors, as well as the destination as a whole.



The regenerative tourism approach prioritises the empowerment of local communities and recognises their role as stewards of their destinies. By engaging communities in decision-making processes and providing them with opportunities for tourism development, regenerative tourism seeks to ensure that benefits are equitably distributed and that communities have a voice in shaping their futures.

### **Pillars for Guiding Regenerative Tourism Development**

By developing travel experiences centred around cultural exchanges, environmental awareness, preservation and promotion of traditions, and the personal development of travellers, stakeholders in the tourism system can contribute to creating a true symbiosis between travellers and the local environment in the broadest sense.

The Tourism Colab, one of the leading agencies in education and promotion of the regenerative approach, suggests 5 fundamental pillars to guide the development of this process applied to tourism:

1. **BALANCED.** "Focused on the place, centred on the environment, and led by the community."

The priority is not tourism: it's about centring the process around local individuals and their environment, with the conviction that a local economy focused on the well-being of the destination will thrive.

2. **MULTIDIMENSIONAL.** "Co-designed with and for all."

Co-designing with diversity and balancing community interests. Prioritising a long-term consultation approach, deeply committed to





the community and their vision for the destination, promoting local creativity and ingenuity.

3. **COLLABORATIVE.** "Collaborative, connected, and bold."

We cannot overcome current challenges using the same approaches that initially created these problems. To address these challenges, it is necessary to adopt collaborative and bold leadership, taking risks, questioning established norms, and choosing innovative and constructive approaches.

4. **RESPECTFUL.** "Respect for history, identity, and belonging."

The community is an extraordinary source of strength, resilience, and innovation indispensable to instil the desired change in a destination.

5. **HOLISTIC.** "A holistic approach to living systems."

We cannot consider tourism in isolation. It must be viewed as an integral part of a larger, interconnected system. In this context, communities and places are of particular importance and must be integrated holistically.

There is no one-size-fits-all model for regeneration, no checklist to tick off or boxes to fill – unlike sustainability (Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable certification schemes, etc.). Though they help us to make progress in the right direction, the idea is to move away from the traditional metric approach where success is measured in terms of indicators, KPIs, and achieved objectives. If well-integrated, the regenerative approach does not require indicators. No "tool" or "fixed model" will enable us to "achieve" regeneration. Regeneration is an



ongoing, long-term process measured in terms of progression. Sharing ideas and transferring best practices from one place to another is a great way to progress together; however, it's essential to keep in mind that such an approach will be different for each place, each community, and each traveller.

## **EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE**

### **The Islander Way, Regenerative Tourism in Flinders Island**

Find it on the [map](#)!

The Islander Way project is a standout example of a community-led regenerative tourism project. Its innovative approach, rooted in regenerative principles, involves the local community in co-designing the future of tourism.



Recognising the tourism ecosystem's complexity, it prioritises the values and identity of the community, fostering collaboration. The project's positive impacts on the environment, society, and economy make it an ideal case study for training materials. Its emphasis on adaptability and community-led initiatives highlights its replicability, offering valuable insights for creating sustainable relationships between tourism and local well-being. Using the Islander Way as a case study, we can explore how the project aligns with the five pillars of regenerative practice:



#### 1. BALANCED:

The Islander Way project emphasises a balanced approach to tourism, focusing on attracting "the right kind of visitors" who align with the island's values and aspirations. This ensures that tourism supports the Island's social, economic, and environmental resilience.

#### 2. MULTIDIMENSIONAL:

The project recognises the interconnectedness of various aspects of island life (history, culture, community, environment, and sense of place) and aims to integrate these dimensions into a holistic approach to tourism. It seeks to create a visitor economy that respects and celebrates the island's unique lifestyle, friendliness, and sense of community.

#### 3. COLLABORATIVE:

The Islander Way project promotes collaboration between various stakeholders, including businesses, government, and the community. It emphasises the importance of partnerships that prioritise community and environmental interests. The project advocates for a collaborative approach to decision-making, where community and environmental considerations are integral to tourism planning and implementation.

#### 4. RESPECTFUL:

Respect for the island's history, culture, and natural environment is central to the Islander Way project. It acknowledges the significance of the island's Aboriginal heritage and aims to honour and learn from this history. The project acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country and recognises their connections to the land, sea, and



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community. It respects and values the island's cultural heritage, ensuring that tourism activities are conducted in a manner that is sensitive to these aspects.

#### 5. HOLISTIC:

The Islander Way project adopts a holistic approach to tourism, considering the broader implications and interconnectedness of tourism activities on the island's social, economic, and environmental systems. In particular, the project aims to shift the goals of the tourism system beyond simply sustaining tourism to contributing to the health, well-being, and resilience of the island, its communities, and the environment.

In conclusion, the Islander Way project from Flinders Island serves as an exemplary model of how tourism offers can be aligned with regenerative principles. By prioritising balance, multidimensionality, collaboration, respect, and holism, the project aims to create a sustainable and flourishing visitor economy that benefits both the island and its inhabitants.





## GLOSSARY

**Circularity:** A model that aims to minimise waste and make the most of resources by creating a closed-loop system where products and materials are reused, recycled, or repurposed.

**Community Advisory Committees:** Groups composed of representatives from various sectors and community members who provide insights, guidance, and recommendations on local initiatives and projects.

**Community Engagement:** The process of involving community members in discussions, decision-making, and actions related to local issues and projects.

**Community Workshops:** Collaborative sessions where community members gather to discuss, brainstorm, and provide input on specific topics or projects.

**Community-Led Initiatives:** Projects or initiatives that are initiated, managed, and implemented by local communities to address specific needs or challenges.

**Co-Creation Workshops:** Collaborative sessions where stakeholders work together to develop ideas, solutions, or strategies for specific projects or challenges.

**Co-Design:** A collaborative approach to design and decision-making that involves active participation from community members, stakeholders, and experts in the development of initiatives and projects.





**Degrowth:** An economic theory advocating for reducing consumption and economic activity to achieve a sustainable future.

**Design Charrettes:** Intensive workshops or sessions where stakeholders collaborate on the design and planning of projects or developments.

**Empowerment:** The process of enabling individuals or communities to gain control over their lives, make informed decisions, and take action to achieve desired outcomes.

**Equitable Participation:** Ensuring that all community members have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and benefit from the outcomes.

**Focus Groups:** Small, diverse groups of people brought together to discuss specific topics, provide feedback, or test ideas.

**Inclusivity:** Ensuring the active participation and representation of all individuals and groups, particularly those who have been historically marginalised or excluded.

**Living Systems Principles:** Concepts derived from the study of natural ecosystems that emphasise interconnectedness, adaptability, and resilience.

**Long-term Visioning:** The process of developing a shared vision for the future that guides planning and decision-making to achieve desired outcomes over an extended period.

**Marginalised Groups:** Groups of people who are socially, economically, or politically disadvantaged or excluded from mainstream society.





**Participatory Planning Processes:** Planning approaches that involve the active participation of community members in decision-making, design, and implementation of projects and policies.

**Regeneration:** The capacity of living systems to renew themselves and recover after periods of decline or disturbance, requiring a holistic approach to restoration and renewal.

**Regenerative Principles:** Guiding principles focused on restoring and enhancing cultural authenticity, ecological integrity, and social cohesion in tourism practices and experiences.

**Regenerative Tourism:** A transformative approach to travel and community development that seeks to foster a holistic and symbiotic relationship between travellers, hosts, and the place, aiming for a net positive impact on local environments and societies.

**Symbiotic Relationship:** A mutually beneficial relationship between different entities, such as travellers, hosts, and the environment, where each party benefits from the other's existence.

Glossary Definitions Adapted from <https://www.dictionary.com/>



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Could you give an example of a community-led tourism experience you have participated in? What was the community's vision for the place? How was the community involved in the development of the tourism offer?
2. Now think about your community/neighbourhood. How is the community involved in shaping the place? Do you know of any community co-design projects? In which ways could the community be more involved to enhance the local experience?
3. How would you say that the 100% Valpaschiavo Project aligns with regenerative practices? What regenerative elements could you add to this practice?

## WORKSHEETS

### Scenario 1.

Using the Five Pillars of Regenerative Practice, how do you think the *Islander Way project* can be transferred and replicated in your local tourism ecosystem?

### Scenario 2.

Redesign and rethink your tourism experience/tourism activity taking into consideration primary principles of the co-design process.





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