

# AGORA

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**A GUIDE TO REGENERATIVE  
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

## EDITORIAL

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## About the Agora Project

### Welcome to AGORA.

**We are aiming to contribute to transforming local/rural tourism ecosystems through learning and by improving stakeholder cooperation. To achieve this, we are applying different participatory approaches and co-design methods to develop regenerative food tourism experiences.**

AGORA is a KA2 cooperation project funded by Erasmus+ in the field of adult education and training. However, we are working with communities, and they are made up of a broad range of stakeholders whom we will be involving ensuring that our activities are inclusive and relevant for all individuals wishing to participate. Overall, the project is committed to making a positive impact in a few key areas:

**1. Protecting our environment:** working to make tourism more environmentally friendly - This means aligning tourism experiences with the values of people who care about sustainability and our planet but also raising the awareness of new audiences by showcasing sustainable and regenerative practices.

**2. Promoting collaborative learning environments:** bringing together members of the community to collaborate, co-design and learn as a community. These communities are composed of adults with many talents, different backgrounds, including different professionals who in one way or another are connected to the world of tourism. By doing this, we can create better places for learning and growing in communities and improve the wellbeing of residents. We can also support the role of communities in tourism development and connect them with tourism stakeholders in their communities.

**3. Making learning more accessible:** We believe that everyone (no matter their age, socioeconomic constraints, mobility limitations, geographic accessibility, cultural and linguistic differences, or technological limitations) should have access to high-quality learning opportunities. That is why we are working on making learning more flexible and available for adults. With this project we would like to empower adults to get involved in shaping local tourism ecosystems, enhance the benefits of tourism for their communities but also gain the necessary awareness to steer activities and tourism into a sustainable direction.



## What is in it for you?

Our project aims to help local communities thrive. We are connecting members and representatives of local communities, local businesses, producers, and tourism experts to create innovative, sustainable tourism experiences that are unique, memorable, immersive, and authentic. We call this "regenerative tourism." Our goal is to provide the right tools and knowledge to local community members involved in tourism activities, or those who would like to get involved and be part of it. We are also working on making tourism eco-friendlier and more digital and in this way contributing to more sustainable and circular local economies. Please get in touch with us if you are interested in collaborating, no matter where you are based.

## Our Objectives:

- **Teamwork:** We are bringing together different community members and partners, local producers, tourism experts, and educators to improve collaboration and constructive exchanges.
- **Amazing experiences:** We are all about creating immersive and exciting tourism experiences that visitors will remember for a long time after their visit but that also have a positive impact on local communities.

- **Learning for life:** We want to make sure that adults have access to learning opportunities throughout their lives. Throughout our project we help community agents, educators and trainers, tourism professionals and policymakers develop essential knowledge and skills and customise learning experiences for them.
- **Sustainability and regeneration:** We promote eco-friendly tourism practices, to increase the uptake of sustainability and circularity within communities, by inspiring project participants to find the right elements to be adapted to and implemented in their own local context.
- **Engaging our community:** We are here to support local learning environments and get everyone in the community excited about learning opportunities that last a lifetime and that can have a genuine positive impact on local community development.

Next to the collection of best practices linked to existing tourism experiences that involve food producers, communities and virtual settings, the project will develop innovative learning materials and a blended course accessible on the AGORA online platform. The practical application of the learning resources will be ensured through workshops organised in the different partner countries which will lead to the development of regenerative

community experiences. The project also includes an awareness-raising campaign, and recommendations for educators, producers, tourism professionals and community partners. The project culminates with the organisation of a virtual exhibition that highlights the tourism experiences that have been

developed and conferences organised in each partner country.

AGORA works towards making the world of tourism more sustainable, accessible, and exciting for everyone. We are thrilled to have you with us on this journey!

## What is Regeneration?

**Regeneration:** Regeneration refers to the process of renewal, restoration, and growth that follows a period of decline or damage. In various contexts, regeneration involves the restoration of a system, entity, or environment to a healthier, more functional, or more sustainable state. It often implies the enhancement or renewal of vitality, strength, and overall well-being.

**Regenerative experience:** A regenerative experience is one that goes beyond traditional notions of enjoyment or consumption, actively contributing to the renewal, sustainability, and well-being of both the individual and the environment. It involves immersive and intentional activities that foster personal growth, cultural understanding, and environmental stewardship. A regenerative experience leaves a positive impact, promoting the restoration of ecosystems, supporting local communities, and cultivating a sense of interconnectedness between the participant and the broader world.

**Regenerative tourism experience:** A regenerative tourism experience is a transformative and sustainable journey that not only enriches the traveller but actively contributes to the restoration and well-being of the visited destination. It involves immersive, responsible, and culturally respectful activities that aim to leave a positive impact on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage. A regenerative tourism experience seeks to go beyond conventional tourism by fostering environmental stewardship, supporting local economies, and promoting a deep sense of connection and respect between travellers and the places they explore.



## Introduction to the Guide

This guide serves as a comprehensive resource designed to provide valuable insights and guidance for individuals, communities, and professionals involved in the field of rural tourism. It places a strong emphasis on the development of regenerative and sustainable experiences that yield a positive impact on both the local community and the environment. Readers will find a wealth of information, including country profiles from the project partner countries, an exploration of the benefits derived from collaborative co-design and community collaboration, an examination of prevalent challenges and barriers, and a collection of viable solutions. Whether one is an established expert or a novice in this field, this guide equips individuals to actively contribute to the establishment of a more sustainable (environmentally, financially and socially), circular, and rewarding tourism system. It encourages lifelong learning and fosters community engagement, promoting a greener and more responsible approach to tourism that contributes to the well-being of local communities.

## Objectives

The guide is linked to the broader project objectives. It aims to foster higher engagement among community agents involved in the tourism ecosystem or those wishing to actively participate in shaping destinations. The guide aims to empower these stakeholders to overcome challenges that are

frequently encountered in their pursuit of developing regenerative and sustainable tourism experiences or those who feel intimidated by the idea or do not know where to start. The guide is based on the principle that ongoing conversations, and small-scale actions, when planned and undertaken collectively by the entire community, can lead to the establishment of more prosperous, healthy and circular economies within tourism ecosystems.

Furthermore, this guide, along with the collection of best practices undertaken during the first project phase, plays a vital role in expediting the green and digital transition of tourism ecosystems toward sustainability and circularity while also increasing the overall efficiency of tourism activities. The guide facilitates the transfer and replication of sustainable and regenerative elements. As the guide unfolds, its ambition for long-term impact becomes evident – **aligning the provision of tourism offers with the evolving expectations of sustainability-conscious travellers.** These tourists do not only seek to mitigate the negative repercussions

of tourism but also aspire to actively generate a direct positive impact and contribute to the development of more environmentally responsible and sustainable tourism ecosystems. At the same time, the guide highlights the undeniable benefits for communities that work towards a more sustainable destination overall



and engage in sustainable tourism development.

Within the context of the AGORA project, the Guide assumes a central role in knowledge transfer and exchange, showcasing exemplary practices among partner communities and at the European Union and international level. Its multifaceted objectives encompass encouraging greater participation by all community agents within their respective tourism ecosystems, emphasising best practices for different types of experiences, and facilitating the transition toward regenerative tourism experiences within local communities.

Moreover, the guide conducts an in-depth exploration of the prevalent challenges and barriers impeding on the development of such experiences.

It lays the groundwork for innovative solutions and gives ideas for effective working strategies to overcome these obstacles effectively. Furthermore, when thinking about regenerative tourism, we have the objective of connecting hosts/communities with tourists. Both have equal responsibility regarding their impact, intentions and positive changes. We also aim to draw more community agents into local tourism ecosystems, thereby accelerating the realisation of circular economies and regenerative tourism assets.

In summary, the AGORA Guide serves as an indispensable tool for driving the overall project vision of promoting sustainable, regenerative, and transformative tourism experiences, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable future for all.



## 🔥 Who is this Guide for?

The AGORA Guide is a comprehensive resource tailored to the needs of various stakeholders within the tourism ecosystem. It serves as a valuable reference for:

### - **Community agents and partners:**

The guide is primarily designed to empower community agents involved in the tourism ecosystem. It encourages them to take small-scale action, which, when collectively embraced by the entire community, leads to the establishment of more flourishing and circular economies in tourism ecosystems. The guide is a valuable asset for local communities aiming to create resilient and sustainable tourism destinations. It promotes inclusive, green, and accessible digital education, enabling communities to generate quality experiences for tourists, visitors, and locals while ensuring a positive environmental impact and local well-being.

- **Educators and trainers:** Educators and trainers in the field of adult education and training will find this guide invaluable. The guide complements the training course developed within the AGORA project, offering them a structured resource to enhance learning outcomes.

- **Tourism professionals:** Tourism agents, including local producers, community partners, and marketing professionals, will benefit from the insights and best practices shared in this guide. It helps them understand the principles of regenerative tourism and offers guidance on how to co-design experiences that have a positive impact on both the community and the environment.

### - **Stakeholders and policymakers:**

Stakeholders and policymakers involved in tourism and sustainability initiatives can gain insights from this guide to drive change in their immediate local and regional contexts. It showcases best practices, highlights challenges, and offers solutions, contributing to the promotion of authentic regenerative practices and the transition to more circular tourism systems by ensuring collaborations between all stakeholders in line with a common vision and strategy.

In summary, the AGORA Guide caters to diverse audiences, ranging from community agents and educators to tourism professionals and local communities. It aims to foster knowledge exchange, inspire positive actions, and accelerate the shift towards regenerative, sustainable, and circular tourism ecosystems by encouraging collaboration and co-design.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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## Methodology for the Collection of Good Practices

The methodology for collecting good practices within the project involved a structured approach to ensure the identification, evaluation, and categorisation of regenerative tourism experiences. Here is an overview of the methodology:

### Framework and Objectives

The overall aim was to share knowledge, exchange good practices, elaborate a Guide, and design an Open Educational Resource (OER) incorporating all project materials. With the good practices collection partners are aiming to

Encourage stakeholder involvement in tourism ecosystems;

Showcase transferable best practices for regenerative tourism;

Identify challenges and propose solutions for regenerative tourism development;

Ensure the reach and accessibility of project products through an OER.

### Results

The results from this activity include an online collection of good practices available for download which can be viewed on an interactive map, filtered and searched with the help of keywords. The practices are highlighted within the free online training course available on the project platform.

### Indicators

The good practices were collected based on predefined criteria and indicators. The partnership aimed at collecting a total of 135 practices.

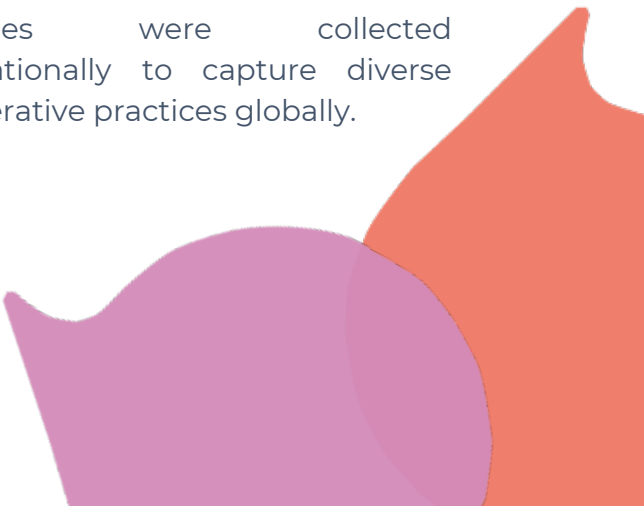
#### Quantitative Indicators

- Collection of practices involving local producers (5 per partner);
- Collaboration between community agents for local community promotion (5 per partner);
- Virtual experiences for promoting local products (5 per partner);
- Number of tourism ecosystem agents accessing the collection (minimum 150).

#### Qualitative Indicators

- Enhanced organisational capacity and staff skills;
- Strengthened cooperation among tourism ecosystem agents;
- Improved skills and knowledge of community agents in regenerative tourism;
- Positive responsiveness and feedback from users.

Practices were collected internationally to capture diverse regenerative practices globally.





### Steps for Good Practice Collection

- Confirmation of the framework by project partners;
- Identification of practices by partners;
- Feedback meetings to address challenges;
- Screening of practices for relevance by project partners
- Full information filled by partners using best practice templates;
- Translation of best practices;
- Availability of best practices on the project website.

### Criteria for Selection of Good Practices

The partnership had in-depth discussions about the selection criteria of the practices. The understanding and interpretation of the term “regenerative” varied within the partnership and the partnership also concluded that it was very difficult to identify truly regenerative practices. For this reason, partners decided to select practices based on three main criteria and include

information about the regenerative elements of each practice and also which aspects could be enhanced to make the experience in question more regenerative.

The three criteria for the selection of the best practices are Authentic Experience, Environmentally Regenerative and External Collaborations. Other optional criteria are recognition or certification efforts and recommendations for improvement.

In the self-evaluation phase from April 6 to April 18, practices were assessed with colour codes: Green for practices considered truly regenerative, Orange for those meeting mandatory criteria but needing improvement, Red for practices not meeting mandatory criteria, and Blue if the author had doubts and sought discussion. Moving to the peer review phase from April 18 to May 5, partners voted on practices using Green, Orange, or Red. For practices receiving Orange or Red votes, partners provided comments and suggestions for improvement. The final step involved systematising these practices on the AGORA Online Platform, categorising them into three groups and assigning distinct icons for easy visual identification.

### Conclusion:

The methodology aims to ensure a comprehensive and diverse collection of sustainable tourism practices while highlighting regenerative elements or suggestions for improvement. The collection further aims at facilitating knowledge exchange and contributing to the overarching goals of AGORA project objectives.

## Methodology for Desk Research and Interviews

### **Framework and Objectives**

The subsequent activity after the collection of practices includes desk and field research of case studies conducted by partners within their national context (i.e., France, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Belgium, Greece, Bulgaria, and Finland). The research aimed at the collection of case studies about the various challenges and barriers which may be encountered by the project target groups during and post-development of sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences, by conducting in-depth interviews with representatives from the three categories of good practices.

The objective of the initial desk research was first to gain general insight into the regenerative tourism landscape of the country in question and get an understanding of the different key thematic areas covered by this guide and featured in the country profiles which are: Co-design of Tourism Experiences, Community Tourism, Collaboration and Partnerships in Tourism, Marketing and Promotion of Tourism Experiences, Community and Collaborative Learning.

In parallel, partners have through personal interviews collected valuable information about various challenges and barriers and/or possible solutions that may be encountered before, during and after the development of sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences. The project partner P-consulting prepared guidelines for the interview process as well as

templates with questions tailored to interviewees from each category of practices that had been collected.

### **The interviewees were:**

- local producers of food and drinks that are actively involved or participate in the development and/or implementation of such a sustainable or regenerative tourism experience;
- individuals and/or representatives of organisations/local authorities/communities/agents, that promote community regenerative tourism experiences;
- individuals and/or representatives of organisations that implement virtual experiences in the gastronomy sector.

### **Interview procedure**

The interviews comprised a set of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to share their knowledge, experiences and suggestions. There is a generalised set of questions which apply to all respondents and a set of questions tailored to the specific challenges and barriers identified in the context of regenerative tourism experiences involving participants/interviewees. However, researchers from partners' organisations conducting the interviews, could add questions, if they considered them to be relevant for finding out more about specific situations.

### **Results**



The results of the research have been used for the present Guide in the form of Country profiles (see pages/ANNEX XXXX). The results of the desk research will also be used to ensure the relevance of the online training course but also for all subsequent project activities such as the workshops, practical development of tourism experiences and policy recommendations. The partnership will continue to look out for relevant information and continue discussions with stakeholders to provide project participants with relevant content throughout the implementation phase.

### **Use and accessibility of results**

The final, written, text of the interview and/or the digital recording of the interview will be published online and will be available through the project's dissemination channels, such as:

- The project's website (<https://agoraproject.eu/>)
- The relevant social media channels of the project and its consortium.

### **Limitations**

The research into challenges and barriers faced by SMEs in developing regenerative tourism experiences encountered several limitations. One significant constraint is the relatively small sample size, with only three interviews conducted in each partner country across Europe. This limited number may not fully capture the diverse array of challenges experienced by SMEs in different regions.

Additionally, the scope of the research could be restricted by the willingness of business owners to participate in interviews. The potential reluctance of some stakeholders to engage in discussions may result in a lack of comprehensive insight into the intricacies of the challenges faced.

Moreover, the specific context of each partner country could introduce variations in challenges that might not be adequately represented in the limited interview pool. These limitations underscore the need for a cautious interpretation of findings and suggest that further research with a larger and more diverse sample may be beneficial for a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and barriers in the development of regenerative tourism experiences for SMEs.



## 🔥 What happens next?

After the completion of the desk research, the subsequent steps of the AGORA project involve the creation of educational materials accessible to a wide range of stakeholders, from tourism professionals to policymakers and educators. These materials aim to inspire and help train individuals in sustainable tourism concepts and regenerative practices. The project will also develop immersive experiences involving local communities. These project results will be available in all partner languages to ensure broad dissemination.

Ultimately, AGORA is pioneering a tourism model that benefits local communities, regenerates ecosystems and addresses environmental challenges. It promotes collaboration, learning, and a commitment to sustainable values, serving as an example of how tourism can contribute to a better future.

### **Limitations to the overall research phase**

The AGORA project has faced some practical limitations in its research efforts.

While the project aims to cover a broad range of regenerative tourism practices, it is essential to recognise that the collected practices do not represent the entirety of the field due to its vast and varied nature and is often limited to practices for which information could be found as part of online research.

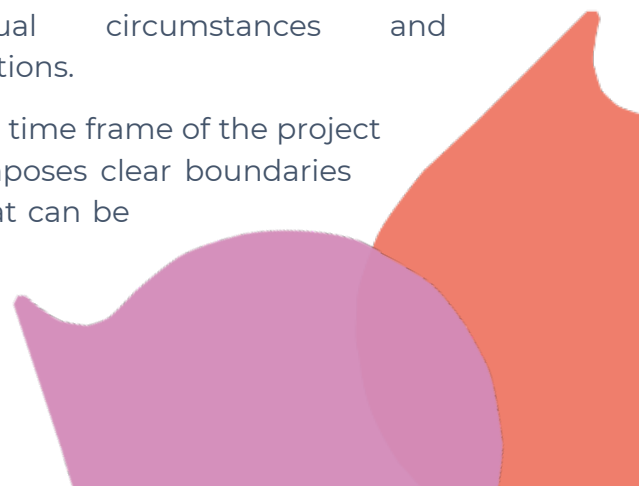
Geographical constraints are a significant factor, as the availability of resources, locations, and practitioners can vary widely across regions, limiting the scope of our research. The level of information available online is also more limited in some parts of Europe and the world.

Language barriers present another challenge. The diversity of languages spoken within the consortium and among stakeholders can make communication and information sharing more complex. Translation and interpretation efforts can be time-consuming and may impact the depth of our research. Practices could only be researched and found in countries where partners had sufficient knowledge of the local language(s).

Online desk research is another area of limitation. Not every relevant article or resource is available online, which may result in gaps in our knowledge and understanding. We must rely on what is accessible through digital sources, which may not provide a complete or sufficiently comprehensive view of the topic.

Furthermore, the success of the project hinges on the willingness of stakeholders to participate in interviews and collaborative activities, and this can vary depending on individual circumstances and motivations.

The set time frame of the project also imposes clear boundaries on what can be





realistically achieved, which may lead to constraints in terms of the depth and breadth of our research and compromises have to be reached to ensure the timely completion of the tasks.

Moreover, finding suitable partners or generating widespread interest in the topic of regeneration within the tourism sector can be a challenging endeavour, further impacting the scope of our project. However, the partnership is convinced that even

somewhat limited activities as part of this project can make a valuable contribution to the overall game to advance sustainable and regenerative tourism development in communities and destinations.

Managing expectations regarding these limitations is crucial for realistic project outcomes and to give indications about how subsequent further research could be implemented.



### 3. CHALLENGES, BARRIERS, AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGENERATIVE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

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*The challenges and barriers explained in this section are not from any specific country but a summary of possible constraints identified by project partners.*

## Local producers

As previously indicated, various challenges and barriers may be encountered during and after the development of regenerative tourism experiences involving local producers. The partners' relevant desk research for the collection of good national and international practices on existing regenerative tourism experiences involving local producers, has identified challenges and possible barriers that can be encountered during the development of such experiences. A comprehensive overview of these challenges and barriers is presented below:

### **Energy consumption, waste, and environmental impacts:**

Activities carried out as part of tourism experiences, such as workshops and production processes, can generate significant energy consumption and waste.

**Possible solutions:** Managing and minimising these impacts is essential as part of regenerative tourism development but constitutes important challenges. It is crucial to implement energy-efficient technologies and practices to reduce energy consumption. Additionally, adopting a zero waste policy or waste reduction and recycling measures can help minimise the waste generated. Promoting sustainable production processes, experiences, events and workshops that prioritise eco-friendly practices, such as using renewable energy sources and sustainable materials,

can also address these challenges and minimise any negative environmental impact.

### **Water availability and scarcity:**

Water is a critical resource in tourism destinations, for tourism activities and various experiences. It is also essential for agriculture and for example, grape production, and hotels and vineyards may face water shortages or restrictions due to droughts or other factors such as too many tourists during peak summer months without precipitation. Ensuring water availability and addressing water scarcity is essential for sustainable and regenerative tourism.

**Possible solutions:** Investing in water-efficient irrigation systems that utilise technologies like drip irrigation or precision irrigation can help optimise water usage and mitigate the risk of water shortages. Implementing rainwater harvesting techniques, such as capturing and storing rainwater for irrigation purposes, can also contribute to water conservation and address water scarcity challenges. It is also recommended to build partnerships and collaborations to raise awareness about water scarcity and encourage locals and visitors to limit water consumption.

### **Lack of local connections, expertise, and limited skills:**

Small and micro businesses involved in sustainable and regenerative tourism may face challenges in

establishing connections with local associations, authorities, and infrastructure. This lack of local connections and expertise can hinder their ability to collaborate effectively and access necessary resources.

**Possible solutions:** Building strong local networks and partnerships can help overcome these barriers. Facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity-building programmes, such as training workshops and mentorship opportunities, can enhance the skills and knowledge of local producers. Additionally, fostering collaboration with local associations, any other relevant stakeholders within the tourism ecosystem and authorities can provide access to valuable support and resources.

### **Local community support, engagement, and resistance to change:**

The success of regenerative tourism experiences depends on the support and engagement of the local community. If the community feels excluded or does not see the benefits of sustainable or regenerative, there may be resistance which entails a negative impact on social and cultural aspects. Building strong relationships with the local community is crucial.

**Possible solutions:** Communicating the benefits of regenerative tourism and involving the community in decision-making processes can help address resistance to change. Furthermore, showcasing positive impact and engaging the community

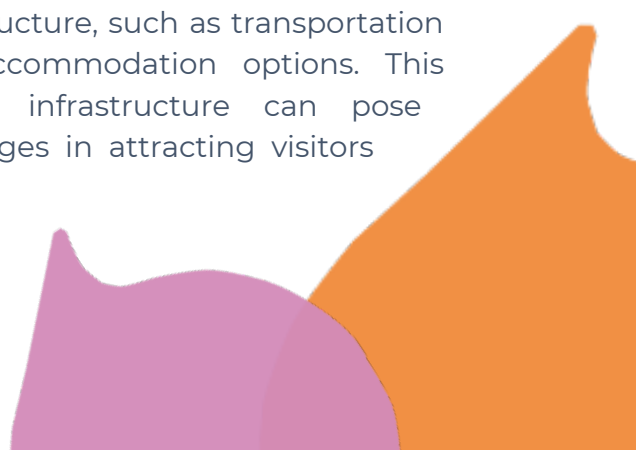
through cultural events, local participation, and educational initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and pride, ensuring long-term community support for regenerative tourism development.

### **Regulatory compliance and financial barriers:**

Hotels, producers, farmers and vineyards involved in regenerative tourism must comply with a range of regulations related to land use, environmental protection, and food safety. These regulations can be complex and may vary depending on the location. Ensuring regulatory compliance requires significant time and resources. Staying updated with regulations and seeking professional guidance can help address this challenge. Moreover, accessing funding and financial resources can be a barrier for small and micro businesses. Exploring alternative financing models, such as crowdfunding or partnerships, and advocating for supportive policies and access to government support can help overcome financial barriers.

### **Limited infrastructure and seasonality:**

Rural areas, where regenerative tourism experiences are often organised, may have limited infrastructure, such as transportation and accommodation options. This limited infrastructure can pose challenges in attracting visitors



and providing a comfortable stay.

**Possible solutions:** Investing in infrastructure development and improvement, such as upgrading transportation networks and expanding accommodation options, can help overcome this barrier. Additionally, diversifying tourism offerings beyond seasonal activities, such as developing indoor workshops or cultural events, can mitigate the impact of seasonality and attract visitors throughout the year. Promoting and facilitating soft mobility options and promoting bicycle itineraries can also attract visitors to rural locations.

### **Subsistence and economic challenges:**

High competitiveness in the market, production costs, and economic viability pose significant challenges for local producers and businesses involved in (regenerative) tourism. Regenerative tourism may be a niche market, and some tourists may not be willing to pay a premium price for sustainable accommodations and exclusive activities.

**Possible solutions:** Differentiating products and services to target niche markets and seeking market diversification can help address these challenges. Additionally, fostering collaboration and partnerships among local producers can enhance

economies of scale and reduce production costs. Access to funding and support, such as government grants or incentives, can also alleviate subsistence and economic challenges.

### **Labour shortages and visitor education:**

The tourism industry, including hotels, various types of agricultural activity and vineyards, has been impacted by labour shortages due to COVID-19 restrictions and changing migration patterns.

**Possible solutions:** To ensure a stable workforce, the aforementioned businesses may need to invest in training and development programmes to attract and retain skilled workers. Additionally, educating visitors on proper behaviour, such as picking fruits and vegetables responsibly, maintaining cleanliness, and implementing sustainable practices, is crucial for the long-term success of the regenerative tourism experience. Providing visitor education through guided tours, information sessions and materials, and interactive workshops can help foster responsible visitor behaviour and mitigate potential negative impacts.



## Local communities

Various challenges and barriers may be encountered during and probably after the development of regenerative tourism experiences when promoting collaboration between community agents and other stakeholders that support and implement regenerative tourism experiences involving local communities. The partners' relevant desk research for the collection of good national and international practices on existing regenerative tourism experiences, has identified challenges and possible barriers that can be encountered during the development of such experiences. Below is provided a summative comprehensive list of challenges and barriers to promoting collaboration between community agents and other stakeholders that support and implement regenerative tourism experiences involving local communities:

### Inability to match tasks with volunteers:

Difficulty in finding and matching volunteers with suitable tasks, leading to coordination issues and potential injuries during activities.

**Possible solutions:** Consider implementing a centralised task-matching platform, leveraging technology to streamline volunteer coordination and minimise coordination issues. Another option would be to find a volunteer coordinator who can take on a lead role and coordinate the work and activity of other volunteers.

### Lack of technology:

Insufficient access to technology or lack of digital skills can hinder efficient coordination and communication among community agents and stakeholders.

**Possible solutions:** Address this issue by researching existing or establishing technology training programmes and providing access to communication tools, facilitating efficient collaboration among community agents and stakeholders.

### Visiting practices that disturb animals and damage environments:

Challenges in promoting sustainable practices during visits and ensuring that activities do not harm local ecosystems or disturb wildlife.

**Possible solutions:** To address this, development, and enforcement of sustainable tourism guidelines, conducting educational programmes, and using monitoring systems could ensure responsible visitor behaviour. Guidelines should usually be developed at the destination level for sensitive sites and any damage should be monitored and reported. Adequate signage and information need to be prepared for visitors and tourists.

### Matching producers with buyers and creating a network:

Difficulty in connecting local producers with potential intermediary buyers and establishing a network

for collaboration and economic exchange.

**Possible solutions:** A suggestion would be to explore creating an online platform or network that directly connects local producers with buyers, fostering collaboration and economic exchange within the community. Various examples of such platforms and networks with different business models already exist across Europe and can be researched online.

### **Lack of organisational skills for managing visits:**

Inadequate organisational skills to effectively plan and manage visitor experiences, resulting in potential dissatisfaction.

**Possible solutions:** Ensuring effective planning and management of visitor experiences would require improving organisational skills among community agents through capacity-building workshops and training sessions. Another option would be to bring in a trainee or volunteer with the necessary background or practical experience to plan and develop the activity before it is launched.

### **High level of competitiveness in the tourism industry:**

Intense competition within the tourism industry makes it challenging for community-led initiatives to stand out and attract visitors.

**Possible solutions:** Standing out in a competitive landscape through unique regenerative experiences is possible but requires developing a unique branding strategy, focusing on community-driven narratives, storytelling and leveraging digital marketing.

### **Climate change and weather conditions:**

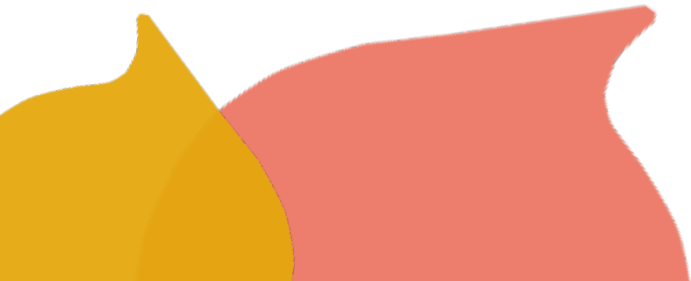
Adverse weather conditions and climate change impacts can disrupt sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences, affecting the availability of certain flora and wildlife, the organisation of satisfactory experiences, and can limit accessibility.

**Possible solutions:** To ensure continuity despite adverse weather conditions would mean, implementing climate-resilient practices, diversifying experiences, and providing alternative activities. Each location is unique and exposed to different challenges that would need to be considered in order to develop adequate solutions.

### **Developing routes and political buy-in:**

Challenges in developing comprehensive routes and obtaining political support and local stakeholder engagement, which require considerable time, planning, financial resources, and support.

**Possible solutions:** To secure political support and local stakeholder engagement, communities can focus



on comprehensive stakeholder consultations, advocacy efforts, and strategic partnerships for route development.

### **Time investments and long-term commitment:**

Demands significant time investments and sustained engagement from stakeholders, including the organisation of meetings, workshops, and ensuring long-term commitment to the regenerative tourism model.

**Possible solutions:** An option to overcome this challenge would be to establish a collaborative framework with realistic timelines, incentivise stakeholder engagement, and develop a long-term commitment strategy through regular communication. Local regenerative tourism development needs strong leadership and to be driven by passionate individuals who can motivate and empower others to actively contribute to local tourism planning and development.

### **Compliance with criteria and limited space:**

Meeting specific criteria for joining networks or initiatives can be a challenge for smaller establishments. For example, regenerative experiences are mostly not designed to accommodate large groups of tourists or visitors since this would not allow for maintaining an authentic experience.

**Possible solutions:** Consider advocating for flexible criteria for smaller establishments and implement creative solutions for your experience to make it unique and authentic. This makes your experience more exclusive and tailored for a smaller number of visitors who will not require a large space.

### **Collaboration and partnerships with local institutions and communities:**

Difficulties in establishing effective collaboration and partnerships with local institutions and communities, which may be resistant to change or not see the value in transitioning to regenerative tourism. Challenges in building trust, collaboration, and partnerships between community members, local producers, and other stakeholders involved in regenerative tourism initiatives.

**Possible solutions:** Conducting awareness-raising campaigns, involving communities in decision-making processes, and emphasising the socio-economic benefits, could help foster collaboration. Starting with a small group of passionate people to develop local solutions is a start before enlarging the group or developing sub-groups once the benefits have been recognised by others.





### Limited funding and resources:

Insufficient financial resources and limited access to funding for implementing regenerative tourism initiatives, including infrastructure development and marketing efforts.

**Possible solutions:** Seek diverse funding sources, prioritise resource allocation based on strategic goals, and explore cost-effective solutions for infrastructure development. In addition, explore innovative business models or the possibility of gradually developing and expanding your experience. Look out for collaborations and partnerships to improve the visibility of the experience, for example by participating in local events and discussing options with the local tourist office.

### Limited awareness and education:

Lack of awareness and education among both visitors and locals about the benefits and importance of promoting collaboration, sustainable practices and regenerative tourism.

**Possible solutions:** Highlighting the benefits of regenerative tourism and fostering understanding for sustainable practices, could be achieved through launching educational campaigns both for visitors and locals. However, local sustainability or tourism stakeholders can also get together to jointly plan initiatives and events for SMEs and micro businesses as well as residents to raise their awareness and support

them in implementing sustainable and regenerative practices.

### Regulatory and policy challenges:

Existing regulations, zoning laws, permits, and licensing requirements may hinder the development and implementation of regenerative tourism practices or experiences.

**Possible solutions:** Such challenges could be addressed by collaborating with policymakers to address regulatory hurdles, advocating for supportive policies, and actively engaging in shaping a regulatory environment, conducive to regenerative tourism.

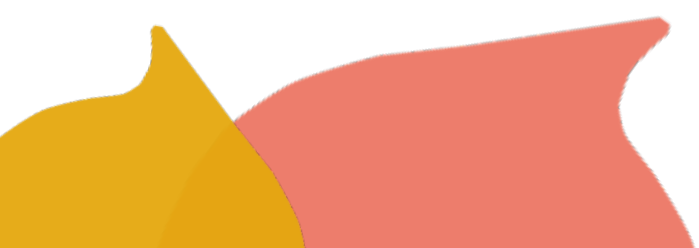
### Limited infrastructure and transportation:

Inadequate infrastructure and limited transportation options in rural areas, make it difficult for visitors to access regenerative tourism experiences.

**Possible solutions:** Addressing this would require investing in improving local infrastructure, exploring sustainable transportation options, and collaborating with local authorities. Promotion of soft mobility such as bicycle rental or the expansion of existing bicycle routes can attract sustainability-conscious travellers and support overall sustainable tourism development at the destination.

### Resistance to change:

Challenges in changing established mindsets, behaviours, and traditional economic models, particularly in



adopting new technologies and sustainable or regenerative tourism practices.

**Possible solutions:** Address resistance through targeted awareness-raising programmes, involving communities in decision-making, and showcasing successful case studies or practices to shift mindsets towards sustainable tourism practices. Work on developing a first local success story that can be used to demonstrate the benefits for the local community. This example can then be replicated, expanded on or other similar practices can be developed to slowly increase interest and build momentum.

### **Seasonality and limited market access:**

Seasonal nature of tourism activities, limited access to markets for eco-tourism products and services, and competition with established tourism destinations in the region.

**Possible solutions:** Extending the tourism season would mean off-season offerings which can have a positive impact on destinations suffering from having too many tourists at their destination. Off-season tourism also means the possible diversification of products, and engagement in strategic marketing to explore new market channels. However, in some cases, agricultural products are mainly available or harvested during the off-season which allows for the creation of interesting experiences that can

attract visitors looking for something new and/or different while travelling.

### **Sustainability and environmental concerns:**

Balancing the development of regenerative tourism with environmental sustainability, promoting conservation and protection, managing natural resources responsibly, and minimising negative environmental impacts.

**Possible solutions:** Working towards this end requires the firm integration of sustainable practices into regenerative tourism initiatives, regular monitoring of activities and impacts on the environment, conducting regular environmental impact assessments, and implementation of measures to minimise negative environmental impact.



These challenges and barriers highlight the complexity and multi-faceted nature of promoting collaboration and implementing regenerative tourism experiences. Overcoming these challenges

## 🍷 Virtual Experiences

Various challenges and barriers may be encountered during and probably after the development of regenerative tourism experiences, as emerged during the collection of virtual experiences for the promotion of local products, tourist routes, museums, exhibitions, etc. The partners' relevant desk research for the collection of best national and international practices on existing regenerative tourism experiences, has identified challenges and possible barriers that can be encountered during the development of such experiences. We would like to mention that the partnership sees important limitations to virtual experiences being regenerative, they could, however, be sustainable. Virtual experiences do not allow for an immersive and authentic connection that stimulates the five senses. Based on the information provided, find below a comprehensive list of challenges and barriers related to virtual experiences for promoting local products:

### **Outdated technology and unprepared professionals:**

Some stakeholders may lack the necessary technical skills and expertise to adapt to virtual

requires raising awareness, education, building partnerships, addressing infrastructure needs, advocating for supportive policies, and ensuring long-term commitment from stakeholders.

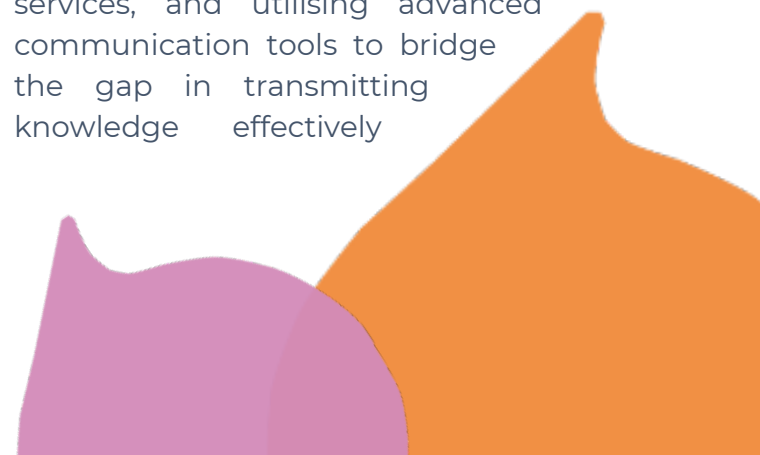
experiences, hindering the successful implementation of virtual promotions.

**Possible solutions:** Implementing comprehensive training programmes to upskill stakeholders, providing them with the technical knowledge required for virtual experiences, and offering ongoing support can help to address this challenge. Involving a volunteer or trainee in developing such an experience can improve the capacity of other staff members to subsequently successfully carry out the activity.

### **Logistics and distance challenges:**

Delivery of products, such as wine, cheese, and other projects, can be complex and may result in delays or difficulties. Additionally, transmitting knowledge effectively over a distance can be challenging, potentially impacting the educational aspect of the virtual experience.

**Possible solutions:** Developing a robust logistics strategy, including partnerships with reliable delivery services, and utilising advanced communication tools to bridge the gap in transmitting knowledge effectively



over distances, could help ensure a seamless virtual experience.

### **Inaccurate information and historical reconstructions:**

Virtual experiences that involve historical or cultural elements must ensure accurate information and realistic reconstructions to maintain engagement and authenticity.

**Possible solutions:** To ensure the accuracy of information and realistic historical reconstructions, enhancing the educational and authentic value of the virtual experience, consider collaborating with historians, and cultural experts, and employ fact-checking mechanisms. It is also essential to research and use adequate storytelling techniques to successfully convey the content of the experience engagingly.

### **Limited sensory experience:**

Virtual experiences may not replicate the sensory aspects of in-person experiences, such as the ambience, interaction with the environment, or product tasting. This limitation can reduce the appeal for some participants.

**Possible solutions:** An option could be to enhance virtual experiences by incorporating immersive technologies like virtual reality or augmented reality to simulate sensory elements, fostering a more engaging and appealing environment for participants. Participants could be encouraged to come and have the extended and fully immersive experience on-site on

another occasion in the future, for instance by receiving a discount. A virtual experience could be used as a marketing tool for a more exclusive and regenerative on-site experience.

### **Accessibility problems:**

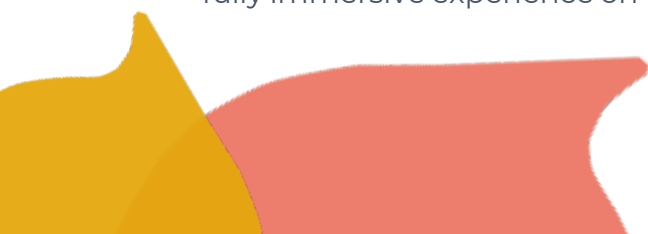
Some participants may face barriers to accessing the necessary technology or high-speed internet connection to fully engage in virtual experiences. This limitation can result in exclusion or reduced participation.

**Possible solutions:** Providing alternative formats, such as transcripts and subtitles, and considering low-bandwidth options to accommodate participants with varying levels of technology access, would ensure inclusivity and broader participation. In any case, it is essential to provide detailed guidelines to participants about any requirements to fully enjoy the virtual experience so that they can plan their participation accordingly.

### **Legal and regulatory requirements:**

Depending on the country or region, there may be legal requirements and regulations surrounding the sale and distribution of products like alcohol. Adhering to these requirements can be challenging and time-consuming.

**Possible solutions:** An option would be to conduct thorough legal research and establish clear compliance protocols, potentially partnering with legal experts to navigate and adhere to



specific regulations related to the sale and distribution of products in different regions.

### **Language and cultural barriers:**

Language availability and cultural considerations should be considered to ensure broader accessibility and inclusivity of virtual experiences.

**Possible solutions:** Offering multilingual support, translation services, and culturally tailored content could help overcome language and cultural barriers, promoting a more inclusive and diverse audience engagement. However, this could be costly. Another option can be to involve language-competent volunteers, enthusiastic locals who wish to practice their language skills or foreign language students in the activity.

### **Time zone differences:**

Scheduling virtual experiences across different time zones can be challenging, as it may not be convenient for all participants. This limitation can restrict participation from different regions of the world.

**Possible solutions:** Implementing flexible scheduling options, considering recording sessions for on-demand viewing, and strategically planning virtual experiences to accommodate participants across various time zones, could probably optimise global participation.

### **Lack of personal touch:**

Virtual experiences may lack the personal connection and interaction found in in-person experiences. Establishing a strong emotional connection and building customer loyalty can be more challenging in a virtual setting.

**Possible solutions:** Integrating interactive features, live Q&A sessions, and personalised elements within virtual experiences would enhance the emotional connection, fostering customer loyalty and a sense of personalisation.

### **Competition and market saturation:**

As more businesses adopt virtual experiences, the market can become crowded, making it difficult to differentiate and attract customers. Standing out among competitors is a significant challenge.

**Possible solutions:** A solution to this would be the development of a unique selling proposition, innovative elements, and leverage of creative marketing strategies to differentiate the virtual experiences, creating a distinctive brand presence in the competitive market.



### Cost and availability of technology:

Implementing virtual experiences requires investment in technology infrastructure and equipment. Limited resources and the cost of producing high-quality content can be a barrier, especially in areas with limited access to high-speed internet or other resources.

**Possible solutions:** Exploring cost-effective technology solutions, collaborating with local tech providers, and seeking funding opportunities to address financial constraints.

### Dependence on tourism and external factors:

Virtual experiences promoting local products can also be affected by fluctuations in tourism, economic factors, climate change, and natural disasters because of their dependency on the product. Ensuring the long-term sustainability and resilience of the local industry is crucial for success. However, virtual, or remote experiences can also be an opportunity for the sector if external factors prevent the destination from attracting tourists or visitors.

**Possible solutions:** Diversification of target markets, establishment of resilient business models, and incorporation of sustainability practices to mitigate the impact of external factors, could foster long-term success and adaptability in the face of uncertainties.

### Limited awareness and understanding:

Some virtual experiences may face challenges in raising awareness and educating potential customers about the unique qualities and value of the promoted products. Overcoming consumer misconceptions and building market recognition can be a barrier.

**Possible solutions:** An option for overcoming such a barrier would be to implement robust marketing and educational campaigns, leverage social media platforms, and collaborate with influencers to increase awareness and educate consumers about the unique qualities and value of the promoted products. Participants could also receive additional relevant information or challenges to solve about the destination beforehand to build some initial knowledge about the local context of the experience.

### Maintenance and updates:

Virtual experiences require regular updates and maintenance to remain relevant and accessible to visitors. Staying up to date with evolving technologies and ensuring the quality of the experience over time can be challenging.

**Possible solutions:** To ensure virtual experiences remain current, relevant, and of high quality over time, you may consider establishing a regular maintenance schedule, investing in a content management system, and staying informed about emerging technologies.

### **Infrastructure and access:**

Providing the necessary infrastructure and access to remote or natural areas for outdoor virtual experiences can be difficult. Limited facilities, internet connectivity, and access routes can hinder the development and success of such experiences.

**Possible solutions:** Collaborate with local authorities to improve infrastructure, invest in technology that can operate in low-connectivity environments, and explore alternative methods, such as offline modes, to ensure accessibility in remote or challenging areas for outdoor virtual experiences.



## 4. KEY ASPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERIENCES

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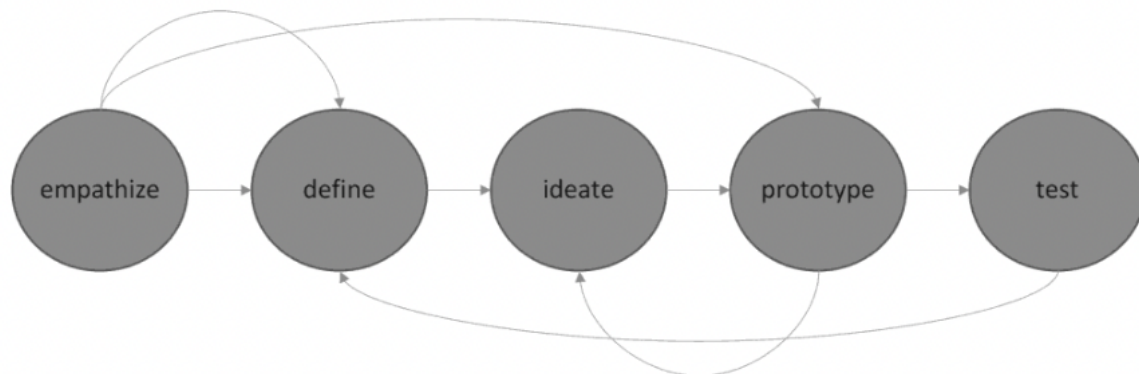


## 🔥 Co-design of tourism experiences and community tourism

The idea of working together to plan tourism experiences and involve local communities in the process of their development is a positive way to make sure both visitors and locals benefit from them. Instead of a few stakeholders making all the decisions, this approach, known as co-design, focuses on a participatory approach, fostering a symbiotic relationship between tourists and the communities they visit. The model is not at all new since in many places around the world this was the original model of decision-making, or has been successfully adopted over time. Many indigenous communities stand out as successful examples of community-based tourism. However, the involvement of communities in Europe has often become very limited

when it comes to developing their destinations. Residents feel removed from the decision-making process and often only learn about the decisions that have been taken, without having had any opportunity to express their concerns or constructively contribute with their ideas based on local knowledge but also needs.

Community tourism, as an integral part of this approach, shifts the focus to putting local communities at the centre. It seeks to empower these communities economically, socially, civically and culturally, ensuring that tourism becomes a catalyst for positive change rather than a potential source of exploitation.



**Figure 1 - Example of a descriptive design model**

Adapted from (Interaction Design Foundation 2018)

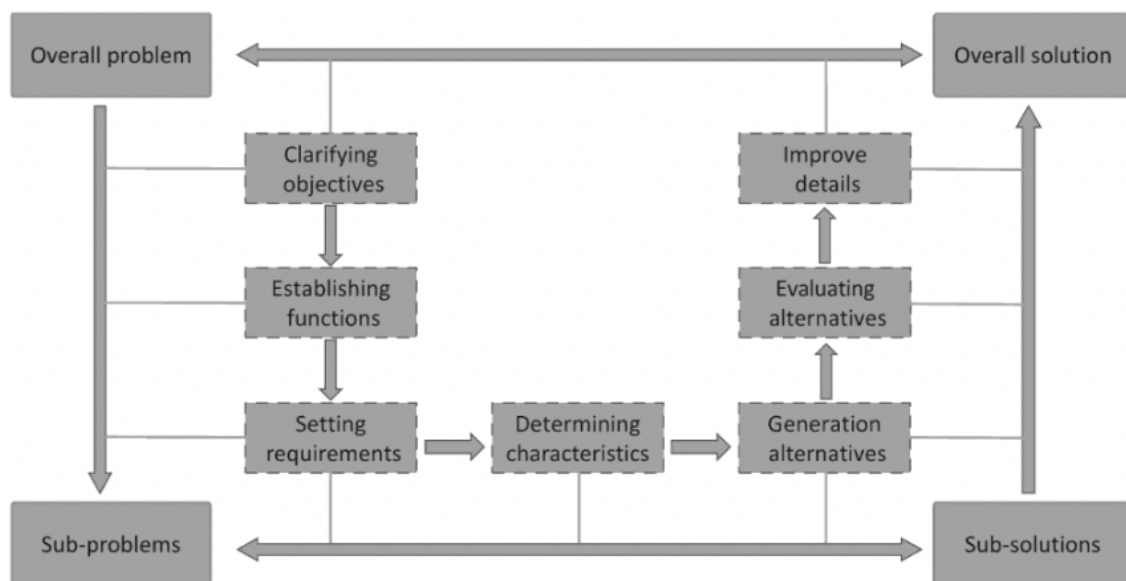
The descriptive design model for tourism experiences is a dynamic and iterative process that involves five key steps: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, and test. In the empathise phase, designers immerse themselves in the perspective of

tourists and host communities, seeking to understand their needs, desires, and challenges. This understanding forms the basis for the define phase, where specific problem areas and opportunities are identified. Subsequently, the ideate phase

encourages creative brainstorming to generate a wide range of potential solutions. These ideas are then transformed into tangible representations during the prototype phase, allowing designers to visually and conceptually explore their concepts. The final step, test, involves presenting these prototypes to target audiences, receiving feedback, and refining the experiences based on real-world responses. This iterative model ensures that tourism experiences are not only innovative and engaging but also responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of both visitors and hosts.

When we talk about designing tourism experiences, it means creating experiences that are not just enjoyable but also have a positive impact. There are different ways to do this, like focusing on aesthetics, finding innovative solutions, and planning all the different points where tourists and services connect. Involving the local community from the beginning to the end of this process is essential to success. This section focuses on the steps to develop a regenerative tourism experience, as well as how and when to involve the local community in the process.

### Step-by-Step: The Community and Regenerative Tourism Experience Design Process



**Figure 2 - A generic model of the design process**

Adapted from (Cross 1994)

## 1. Clarifying Objectives

- Define the purpose of the tourism experience to be designed.
- Identify and capture customer objectives by creating personas representing the target audience, host organisation, destination, and other stakeholders.
- Formulate objectives in terms of feelings, memories, and enthusiasm for each persona.
- Ensure a common understanding of objectives among various stakeholders.

### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Engage the local community from the start in defining the purpose of the tourism experience.

**How?** Conduct community workshops, interviews, or surveys to understand local perspectives and values. Incorporate community input into the formulation of objectives related to feelings, memories, and enthusiasm.

## 2. Establishing Functions

- Focus on what the design should accomplish in terms of customer touchpoints or journeys.
- Identify process elements customers go through during experiences.
- Relate functions to specific moments or overall functions of the experience.
- Consider transformational or peak experiences and their unique functions.

### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Involve the local community in identifying and defining the functions of the tourism experience. Involving the local community can also be about developing relevant partnerships or seeking out specialist knowledge needed for the implementation of various aspects of the experience.

**How?** Collaborate with community members to understand key elements and processes. Ensure that functions align with the community's cultural practices and values, especially for transformational or peak experiences.

## 3. Setting Requirements

- Determine performance specifications for the design.
- Define acceptable solutions based on criteria related to customer personas, and operational, technical, spatial, financial, and legal specifications.
- Differentiate requirements from objectives and functions; set limits for possible solutions.

### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Include the local community in determining performance specifications and acceptable solutions.

**How?** Gather input on criteria related to community well-being, cultural preservation, and economic benefits.

Ensure that requirements consider the community's needs and concerns, differentiating them from objectives.

#### 4. Determining Characteristics of the End Product

- Link persona objectives to engineering characteristics such as sound, smell, spatial design, and more.
- Identify elements that can be manipulated to achieve design objectives.
- Connect persona objectives to tangible design elements.

##### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Connect with the local community to link objectives to engineering characteristics.

**How?** Seek input on how characteristics (e.g., design elements) should reflect and respect the local culture. Identify elements that matter to the community and that designers can manipulate to achieve objectives.

#### 5. Generating Alternatives

- Focus on creating design alternatives that fulfil needs, meet objectives, and perform required functions.
- Combine specific sub-solutions for each function into overall solutions.
- Use creativity and inspiration to generate alternatives, considering both new and existing solutions.
- List possible sub-solutions (touchpoints) to identify successful combinations.

##### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Actively involve the local community in brainstorming and creating design alternatives.

**How?** Conduct design workshops or collaborative sessions where community members can contribute ideas. Consider their insights on how to make the experience culturally enriching and sustainable.

#### 6. Evaluating Alternatives

- Identify the best combination of alternatives based on specific criteria derived from objectives and requirements.
- Review the design process and potentially refine decisions.
- Reflect on decisions with relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure design alternatives meet criteria consistently.

##### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Include community representatives in the evaluation of design alternatives.

**How?** Seek feedback from the community on how well each alternative aligns with their values and expectations. Consider the social, cultural, and economic impact on the community. Review the design process, reflecting on decisions with stakeholders.



## 7. Improve Details

- Focus on effective and efficient implementation.
- Address details related to materials, technologies, staff selection, and training.
- Incorporate improvements based on customer and staff feedback after the experience is staged.
- Recognise the crucial role of step 7 in ensuring successful staging and management of the experience.

### Engaging the local community:

**When?** Maintain ongoing communication with the local community during the implementation phase.

**How?** Regularly update the community on progress, address concerns, and incorporate feedback into the finer details of the implementation. This ensures the continued alignment of the experience with community interests.

## Conclusion

This part shows the advantages of using a design process and design science methods in creating tourism and hospitality experiences that have a consistent impact on consumers. The focus is not on controlling individual reactions to sensory experiences but rather on achieving a shared positive outcome. The mentioned best practices in this chapter highlight how this results-oriented approach benefits businesses. Additionally, the chapter has outlined both the opportunities and risks associated with specific methods. It emphasises that when applied consistently, these methods aid in developing effective solutions for the right problems, even after the design has been implemented.



## ● Collaboration and partnerships for the development of tourism experiences

In the intricate web of the tourism ecosystem, collaboration emerges as a linchpin for the development of regenerative tourism experiences. As the global travel landscape evolves, acknowledging and addressing environmental challenges becomes paramount for the sustainability of popular tourist destinations. Collaborative efforts, particularly in the context of regenerative tourism, serve as a powerful catalyst in navigating these challenges. Collaboration towards a joint vision of a destination is the main way to generate the basis for a sustainable and regenerative tourism offer that can benefit local communities and have a positive overall impact on the destination.

### **Regenerative Tourism Through Collaboration**

In the pursuit of regenerative tourism, collaboration extends beyond traditional boundaries. Travelers, instead of being passive spectators, are invited to actively engage with local conservation organisations. This collaboration takes tangible form in initiatives such as reforestation, wildlife habitat restoration, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture. By immersing themselves in these hands-on experiences, tourists not only contribute to the preservation of natural ecosystems but also gain a profound understanding of the delicate balance required for their sustained health and resilience. The essence of regenerative tourism lies in fostering a cooperative spirit, where

travellers metamorphose into guardians of the environment. Local organisations, in turn, assume roles as facilitators and experts in conservation endeavours. This synergy amplifies the impact of individual efforts, creating a collective force for positive change. However, regenerative tourism goes beyond just focusing on the environmental aspects mentioned above. It takes on a holistic approach to encompass culture and tangible/intangible heritage, traditions, the way of life, the practical management of infrastructure and resources etc. Cross-sectoral collaboration and navigation of the complex web of the tourism ecosystem are at the heart of bringing out the best of all stakeholders in the process and contributing to jointly developing a destination that all stakeholders can identify with.

### **Community Tourism and Collaboration**

Community tourism, an integral facet of regenerative travel, thrives on partnerships between tourists and local communities. Going beyond the transactional nature of tourism, these collaborations pave the way for deeper connections and mutual (cultural) understanding.



In these partnerships, travellers become cultural ambassadors, gaining insights into local customs, traditions, and ways of life. Simultaneously, residents of the community reap the benefits of increased economic opportunities and cultural exchange. This symbiotic relationship transforms the travel experience, where visitors are not merely tourists but esteemed guests, welcomed into the fabric of community life.

Built on pillars of trust, respect, and a shared vision of sustainable development, collaborations in community tourism aim to ensure equitable distribution of social and economic benefits. The result is an authentic and enriching travel encounter that goes beyond surface-level exploration, fostering a sense of interconnectedness between visitors and the communities they traverse.

### **The Comprehensive Collaboration Landscape**

In the broader context of the tourism ecosystem, these collaborations

represent integral threads in a comprehensive tapestry. By actively involving tourists, local organisations, and communities, regenerative tourism contributes to the creation of sustainable and inclusive travel experiences. The interplay between these elements not only leaves a positive footprint but also cultivates a more profound impact—a harmonious relationship where the well-being of both travellers and visited communities is intertwined.

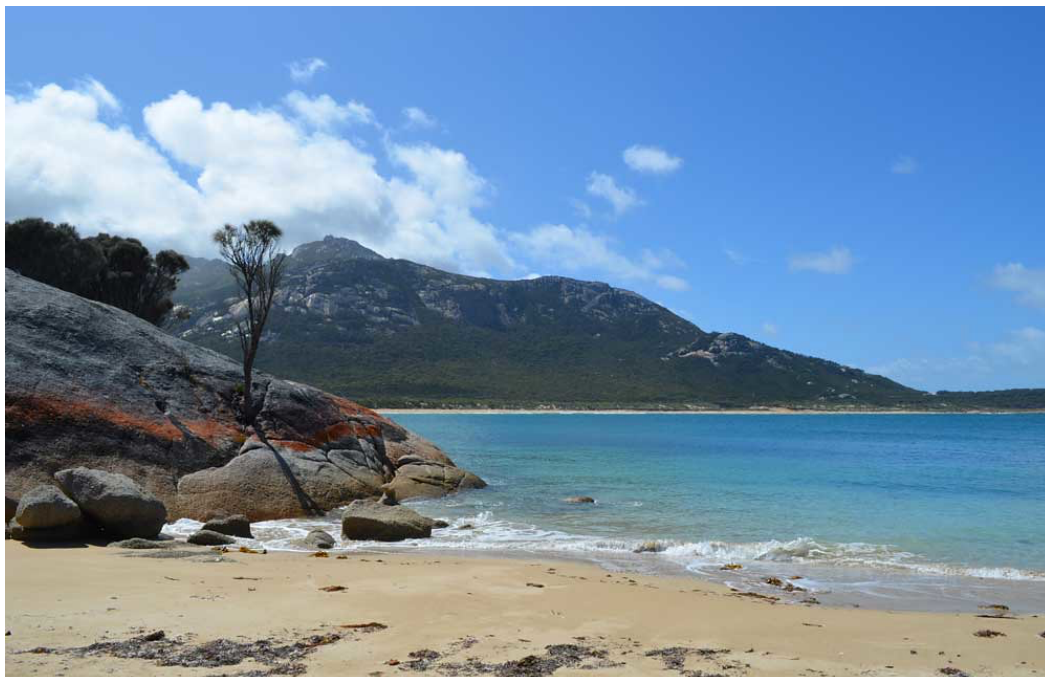
These collaborative efforts form a promising path towards a future where the tourism industry acts as a force for positive change. As the threads of collaboration weave through the fabric of regenerative tourism, they not only strengthen the resilience of destinations but also shape a narrative of responsible exploration and collective stewardship. The tourism ecosystem, when nurtured through collaboration, becomes a thriving landscape where the beauty of travel is mirrored in the sustainability and vitality of the destinations it touches.

### **BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE - FLINDERS ISLANDS**

The Islander Way is a 2-year project, which began in September 2021. The project aims to co-design the future of tourism with and for the community using regenerative tourism principles. The project will chart a pathway for tourism that respects the community's values, contributes to a resilient economy, and takes responsibility for the impacts of tourism on the natural environment. It will build on The Flinders Island brand story, The Islander Way, co-created by the local community with Brand Tasmania. The project adopts an innovative, emergent, community-led approach. Instead of adopting a traditional approach where the outcomes are predetermined, this project is a journey where the outcomes will be co-designed with the community. That means we need the community's

ideas, genius, and participation! Broadly, the outcomes of the project are to provide evidence-based guidance for managing tourism on Flinders Island. This guidance has various forms, including community capacity-building activities, community and business projects that embed regenerative principles, and advocacy. They discuss these evolving outcomes regularly with the governance group as the project strengthens and extends its reach. The approach differs from the usual approach where outcomes are firmly established according to fixed expectations based on policymakers' experience. By looking back, not forward, this traditional approach and mindset limit creativity and innovation. Ultimately, it reinforces the existing system and current challenges. Instead, we believe that, because regenerative tourism seeks to shift mindsets and create space for innovation, outcomes reflecting old ways of working, that are rapidly becoming outdated, don't make much sense. The approach is called 'working in emergence'. Emergence involves actively evolving and adjusting the project's desired outcomes while responding to emerging issues and challenges. Yes, it is incremental but shaped by a coherent overarching set of regenerative principles, values and aspirations defined through deep community engagement.

Flinders Island is leaning in and creating a pathway towards the future by exploring how tourism can regenerate local environments, people, and communities. The project relies on a whole systems approach seeking to understand complexity, where tourism is part of a more complex, dynamic, and ever-evolving system, where the objective is to protect and enhance the capacity of individuals, communities, places and nature to regenerate. The future well-being of Flinders Island rests on individuals working collectively to shift the system from one that takes from the island and nature to one that gives back.





## 🍯 Marketing and Promotion of Tourism Experiences

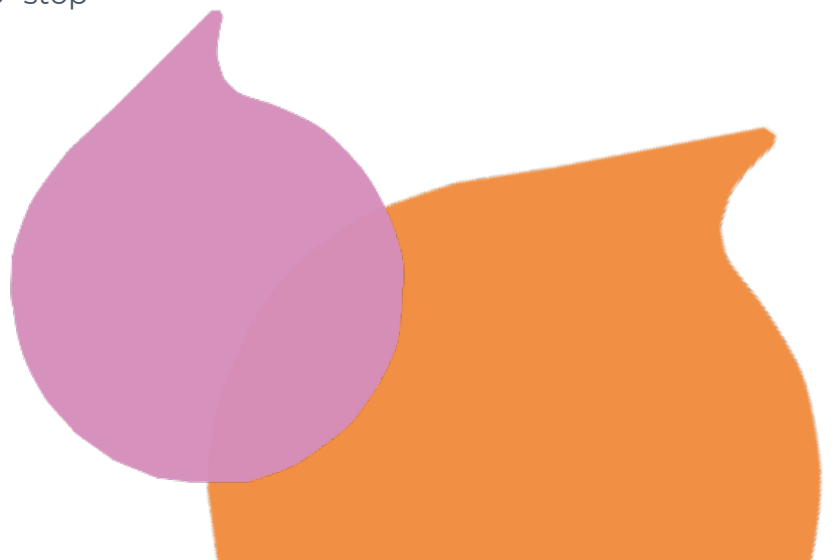
Marketing, in the realm of tourism, serves as the compass guiding destinations towards sustainable practices and responsible experiences. At its core, marketing is the art and science of connecting with people, understanding their needs, and creating meaningful engagements. In the context of regenerative tourism, it becomes a powerful tool for not just attracting visitors but also fostering positive impacts on the environment and local communities. The role of marketing in tourism has also changed over time. It is true that many destinations around the world still use traditional methods to attract tourists, but the landscape is changing quickly. The term DMO, which previously predominantly stood for “Destination Marketing Organisation” is now more often used as “Destination Management Organisation”. In other words, destinations are no longer purely promoting the destination or tourism offered to visitors and tourists but are more actively engaged in managing all aspects of a destination and to various degrees developing local solutions that benefit local stakeholders, and residents. Many destinations that have taken action based on the negative impacts of tourism have also decided to stop

marketing altogether or to *demarket* their destination. However, quite clearly, in the context of individual tourism experiences, marketing remains an essential element in attracting (the right) visitors and differentiating oneself as offering an attractive experience.

### **What is a Marketing Plan?**

Imagine planning a journey—considering every detail, from the destinations you'll explore to the experiences you'll have. Similarly, a marketing plan is a roadmap for organisations, outlining the actions and steps they will take to reach their goal: sustainable and regenerative tourism. It's like a blueprint, carefully crafted to ensure that every move aligns with the values of responsible travel.

A marketing plan for regenerative tourism is more than just a document; it's a commitment to leaving a positive mark on the world. It encompasses detailed strategies, financial considerations, and specific actions aimed at creating not just memorable experiences for travellers but also ensuring that those experiences contribute positively to the places visited.



## Step-by-Step Guide to Crafting a Regenerative Tourism Marketing Plan:

### 1. Understand the Landscape:

Begin by assessing the current state of your destination. What are the environmental, cultural, and social dynamics? Identify your competitors and understand the unique strengths and challenges your destination faces.

### 2. Define Your Values and Objectives:

Clarify the values that will guide your regenerative efforts. What positive impacts do you want to create? Set clear and measurable objectives, outlining what success looks like for your destination in terms of sustainability and community engagement.

### 3. Know Your Audience:

Just as every traveller has unique preferences, understand your target market. What kind of travellers are you trying to attract? Tailor your regenerative initiatives to align with their values and preferences.

### 4. Craft Your Unique Regenerative Story:

Your destination or tourist experience has a story to tell—one of regeneration, sustainability, and positive impact. Craft a compelling narrative that communicates your commitment to responsible tourism.

### 5. Develop Sustainable Products and Services:

Your offerings should reflect your commitment to regeneration. From eco-friendly accommodations to community-based excursions, ensure that every product and service contributes positively to the destination.

### 6. Price Responsibly:

Consider a pricing strategy that reflects the value of sustainable practices. Communicate to travellers that their investment contributes to the well-being of the destination.

### 7. Choose the Right Channels for Promotion:

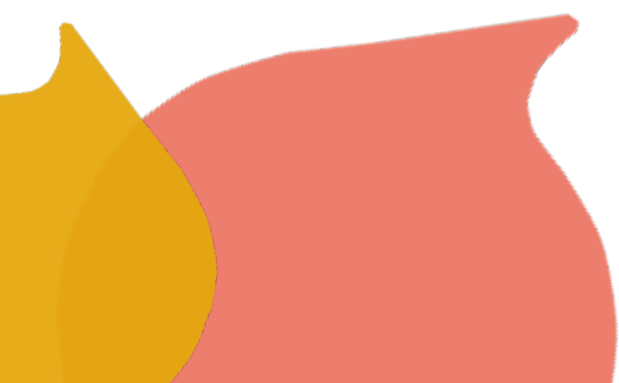
Utilise diverse channels to spread the word about your regenerative initiatives. Leverage social media, and sustainable travel platforms, and collaborate with influencers who align with your values.

### 8. Build Partnerships:

Engage with local communities, NGOs, and businesses that share your commitment to regeneration. Collaborate to amplify your positive impact and create a network of like-minded stakeholders.

### 9. Train Your Team:

Your team is instrumental in delivering the regenerative experience. Train them to understand the values and practices that define your destination's commitment to sustainability.



## 10. Monitor, Adapt, and Celebrate:

Regularly monitor the impact of your regenerative initiatives. Be adaptable, and ready to adjust strategies based on feedback and changing conditions. Celebrate milestones and positive impacts to inspire both your team and travellers.

Regenerative tourism is not a one-time campaign but an ongoing

commitment that needs to be regularly reviewed. A well-crafted marketing plan ensures that every step contributes to a sustainable and positive future one where travellers and destinations thrive together in harmony. As you embark on this journey, the destination is not just a place on the map; it's a promise of responsible exploration and regeneration.

## Community and Collaborative Learning

The AGORA project is rooted in a dedication to community and collaborative learning, understanding the impactful role collective knowledge and joint efforts play in nurturing sustainable tourism experiences. Community and collaborative learning are educational strategies that prioritise interaction, shared knowledge, and cooperative efforts among individuals within a community or group. These approaches underscore the importance of learning through social engagement and mutual support.

In the context of the AGORA project, these principles are fundamental, as they enable diverse stakeholders to come together, share their expertise, and collaboratively shape regenerative tourism experiences. This inclusive and participatory approach not only enhances the learning process but also ensures that the project initiatives are relevant, sustainable, and beneficial to all involved parties.

This part of the guide focuses on the characteristics of community and

collaborative learning, and the way they can be implemented in regenerative tourism experiences.

### Community Learning

Definition: Community-based learning refers to a wide variety of instructional methods and programs that educators use to connect what is being taught in schools to their surrounding communities, including local institutions, history, literature, cultural heritage, and natural environments. Community-based learning is also motivated by the belief that all communities have intrinsic educational assets and resources that educators can use to enhance learning experiences for students.

[\(https://www.edglossary.org/community-based-learning/\)](https://www.edglossary.org/community-based-learning/)



### Characteristics:

- Shared Environment: Participants learn in a communal setting, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose.
- Local Relevance: Learning often addresses issues and challenges specific to the community, making the education contextually meaningful.
- Diverse Perspectives: Participants bring diverse experiences and backgrounds, enriching the learning process with varied viewpoints.

### Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning (CL) is an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. The term CL refers to an instruction method in which learners at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. Five fundamental elements involved in CL, are: Positive interdependence, Individual and group accountability, Interpersonal and small group skills, Face to face promotive interaction, and Group processing. (*Collaborative learning: What is it?. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*)

### Characteristics:

- Interdependence: Participants rely on one another to achieve the learning objectives, promoting a sense of collective responsibility.
- Interaction: There is active engagement and interaction among group members, encouraging the exchange of ideas and perspectives.
- Skill Development: Collaboration enhances interpersonal skills, communication, and problem-solving abilities.

### Community and Collaborative Learning Together

In many educational settings, community and collaborative learning work together to create a richer educational experience. Community learning sets the stage by highlighting the importance of learning within a social or local group. Collaborative learning then steps in as a specific method within this community set up, where people team up to reach common learning goals. This way of learning understands that learning isn't just something you do on your own; it's a social thing that gets better when everyone works together and shares their experiences.

When we talk about regenerative tourism experiences, we can use community and collaborative learning to make them even more special. It means bringing people together, like tourists and locals, to work as a team in shaping these

experiences. By doing this, we make sure that everyone involved contributes and learns from each other and helps create tourism experiences that benefit everyone and the environment. This approach can be applied not only in traditional classrooms but also in community projects and online learning, making it versatile and effective in various settings.

**Let's take an example:**

In the world of regenerative tourism experiences, community and collaborative learning play a vital role. Imagine a local community nestled in a beautiful countryside eager to enhance its tourism offerings sustainably. Here, community learning involves understanding the unique cultural and environmental aspects that make their region special. Collaborative learning then

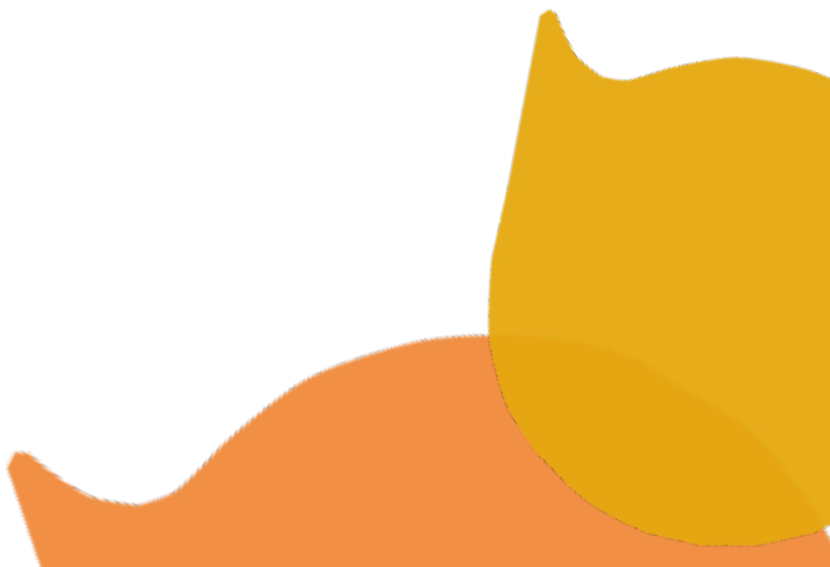
becomes a hands-on method within this community, where locals, tourists, and experts join forces.

For instance, the community might organise workshops where locals share traditional farming practices or cooking techniques with tourists. This collaborative learning experience benefits everyone involved – tourists gain insight into the local culture, while community members learn about the interests and preferences of their visitors. Together, they co-create an immersive and sustainable tourism experience that respects local traditions and contributes positively to the community's well-being. This example illustrates how community and collaborative learning can be seamlessly integrated into the fabric of regenerative tourism, fostering meaningful connections and shared knowledge.



## 5. COUNTRY PROFILES

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## Belgium (prepared by CBE)

### Understanding Regenerative Tourism

In Belgium, regenerative tourism focuses on various initiatives and practices that promote sustainability, well-being, and enhancement of local culture, through wise use of renewable energy, responsible waste management and nature conservation.

Regenerative tourism initiatives in Belgium can vary from region to region, and many organisations and local authorities work to promote this form of responsible tourism.

For example, VISITFLANDERS is committed to promoting a positive and sustainable tourism model, targeting visitors who consciously choose Flanders as a destination to satisfy and nurture their passions.

Highlights in 2023 include the James Ensor celebrations in Ostend and Antwerp, the Dieric Bouts exhibitions in Leuven and the Hans Memling collection in Bruges. The art cities serve as starting points for outdoor experiences, cycling routes, and the discovery of castles and gardens in Flanders, such as the Scheldt Castle route connecting Ghent and Antwerp. At the core of the promotional strategy of the organisation are not tourist products but rather the connections between people, places, and experiences. For these reasons, tourism holds a positive power, which envisages the enhancement of the region's different identities and their connection with visitors in a virtuous and regenerative cycle.

Switching to Wallonia, another important Belgian region, there are many possibilities structurally related to regenerative and sustainable tourism.

Tourists travelling to Wallonia are attracted by walking and cycling, excursions to towns and rural villages and gastronomy, all defined as slow tourism. A feature of Wallonia's identity is its environmental sustainability. In this regard, the priorities of the Walloon General Secretariat for Tourism include improving the quality of tourism services, including environmental management, rural tourism, and cycling.

The latter is gradually developing thanks to the opening of new routes that attract foreign tourists. These are either routes on the territory of Wallonia itself, whose total length reaches 350 km<sup>2</sup> and whose development takes one to two days, and Euro Velo routes that cross the territory of several European states.

Another priority of the Walloon authorities is the conservation of forests with the support of European Union programs, as forests cover 30% of Wallonia, including 10 nature parks and several hundred nature reserves.

## Community Tourism and Co-design

Community tourism and co-design are approaches that involve local communities in the development and management of Belgian tourism activities and experiences.

These approaches aim to ensure that tourism benefits local residents, respects the environment, and offers authentic, culturally immersive experiences for visitors.

In Belgium, community tourism is implemented in two main ways, Eco-villages and Local cuisine. About the first one, local communities in some rural areas of Flanders and Wallonia could develop small sustainable eco-villages to accommodate visitors. These projects actively involve local communities in the construction and management of accommodations, promoting local hospitality and culture.

When selecting accommodations, you can count on a key, green-certified facility to provide an eco-friendly night's sleep. The international eco-label identifies hotels, hostels, bed-and-breakfast establishments and campgrounds, which implement sound environmental management.

Green strands can be found in urban and rural settings and include the fun and trendy e. g. the Aloft Brussels Schuman hotel and the lovely Ychippe Barn in Wallonia, near the paddling waters of the Ourthe and Lesse rivers.

About Local cuisine, Restaurants and farmhouses can partner with local communities to offer authentic culinary experiences. Chefs can work with local farmers and small producers to create menus based on local ingredients and regional culinary traditions.

Two instances of regenerative tourism experiences that engage visitors sustainably can be found within Brussels. These examples include the Groot Eiland restaurant and the aquaponic farm known as BIGH. Both initiatives share the common goal of urban regeneration, not only at an environmental and experiential level but also, in the case of Groot Eiland Restaurant, by offering employment opportunities to marginalised individuals. Consequently, when encountered in an urban setting, such activities can trigger beneficial ripple effects that positively impact the local residents.

Moreover, co-design is implemented in two main ways, Bike Routes and Cultural events. About the first one, in collaboration with local communities, tourism authorities can develop bike routes that connect different cultural and historic locations. Visitors and residents can help identify points of interest and attractions along the route.

There are marked trails covering more than 745 miles of paths and towpaths that can accommodate all forms of non-motorised activity. For example, the Coastal District, which crosses the North Sea in northwest Belgium, connects hikers to the dunes, waterways, and hills of the Ardennes Mountain Range.



About cultural events, Cities can involve local artists, cultural organisations, and residents in planning cultural events, such as festivals, art exhibitions, or theatre performances. Co-design can help create unique and engaging cultural experiences.

The goal of community tourism and co-design in Belgium is to create a collaborative and sustainable tourism model that enriches the lives of locals, enhances the visitor experience, and protects the environment.

By involving the community in decision-making processes and emphasising cultural and environmental preservation, these approaches contribute to a more responsible and regenerative form of tourism.

### **Communication and Promotion**

Effective communication and promotion are integral components of Belgium's tourism industry. These strategies are designed to entice visitors and showcase the country's rich cultural heritage, natural attractions, and gastronomic delights.

Belgium employs multichannel marketing, emphasises the cultural and natural aspects of its destinations, highlights vibrant events and festivals, and promotes sustainability and responsible tourism.

Collaboration with local communities and businesses ensures a personalised approach, and a strong online presence allows for real-time engagement with travellers. Participation in international tourism events further broadens the reach, and visitor information centres offer in-person assistance. Recognising the diverse visitor base, materials are available in multiple languages.

Belgium's communication and promotion efforts aim to create an engaging and informed visitor experience while contributing to the growth and sustainability of its tourism sector.

A clear example of this applied to the communication and promotion in the Belgian capital is "visit.brussels", a public interest organisation funded by the Brussels-Capital Region.

It is the Brussels-Capital Region's tourism promotion and communication agency, involved in the promotion of tourism, culture, and events in the Brussels-Capital Region, the creation of experiences that highlight its many assets and at the end, the quality of reception for its visitors, whether leisure and business tourists or international associations.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

In Belgium, travellers have the opportunity to engage in various experiences involving producers, providing them with a closer look at the country's rich cultural heritage and craftsmanship.

These experiences include Chocolate Workshops, Brewery Tours, and Cheese Tasting.

Regarding the chocolate workshop, visitors can learn about the art of chocolate making and create your own chocolates while tasting an array of Belgian chocolates. One of the most famous chocolate-related tastings in Brussels is the so-called "Brussels Chocolate Workshop" where you will learn how to make your own gourmet cocoa delights. Starting from scratch and with the help of a professional instructor, you will make the two most typical types of Belgian chocolate, pralines and mendiants, and learn some easy and authentic methods that you can imitate to create more than 30 dark chocolate treats.

About Brewery Tours, visitors can explore Belgium's renowned beer culture, where you can witness the brewing process, sample various beers, and delve into the history and traditions of Belgian brewing.

For example Brussels is home to the iconic Brasserie Cantillon, a true historical brewing gem, but today, a dozen or so young breweries are revisiting the great classics. Brussels' brewers are creating, testing, and modernising: they do not simply want to stick to tradition but want to bring a modern approach to Brussels' brewing heritage.

Most of them are located along the banks of the canal and in the neighbourhood around Tour & Taxis, as well as in Saint-Gilles and Anderlecht.

Moreover, about Cheese Tasting travellers could try the experience of "Fromenade" in the Stoumont region. This is the unexpected combination of a 'promenade', French for 'walk' and 'fromage', French for 'cheese'.

Local cheeses with character, just like the region that you'll discover along the trails suggested.

These experiences allow travellers to connect with Belgium's cultural and artisanal heritage, supporting local producers and gaining a deeper appreciation for the country's unique products and traditions. Whether immersing oneself in the world of Belgian chocolate, or exploring the diverse offerings of beer or cheese, these experiences provide an enriching and engaging cultural journey in Belgium.

### **Experiences on Community Networking**

Community networking experiences in Belgium offer travellers the chance to engage with local culture and communities.

These experiences include attending local festivals, participating in cultural workshops, guided village tours, homestays, language exchanges, exploring local markets, volunteering, artisanal experiences, cooking classes, and engaging with community-based tourism initiatives.

These experiences in community networking emphasise the importance of genuine connections, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. They provide an

authentic and immersive travel experience while fostering connections with Belgian communities and supporting local traditions.

They facilitate cross-cultural understanding, create meaningful connections, and provide an authentic and enriching travel experience that benefits both tourists and local communities.

Travelers have the opportunity to create lasting bonds and gain a profound understanding of the local way of life. By engaging with the community, tourists can enjoy a more authentic and enriching travel experience while contributing positively to the destinations they visit.

### **Virtual Experiences**

Virtual experiences in Belgium provide opportunities for travellers to explore the country's culture, history, and culinary traditions from their own homes.

These experiences include virtual museum tours, online city “walking tours”, culinary workshops, live streaming of festivals, live cam views of iconic sites, online language courses, virtual escape rooms, and documentary viewing.

They offer an immersive and educational way to engage with Belgian culture, making it accessible to a global audience. These virtual experiences offer a window into Belgium's diverse cultural and culinary heritage, allowing interested people and possibly future visitors, to explore the country's art, cuisine, and history from anywhere in the world.

This is the example of Imagine Belgium, a new virtual reality experience in the heart of Brussels to try with your family and friends. Starting from Imagine Belgium's headquarter, you will be seated on a zip-line and teleported all around Belgium. Fly over the busy city of Antwerp, discover the Bueren stairs in Liège, sail on the canals of Bruges or take part in a bike race in Flanders.

These opportunities could be a convenient and informative way to stay connected to Belgian culture and plan future trips.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Regenerative tourism in Belgium represents a forward-thinking approach to sustainable and responsible travel. It is based on the principles of creating positive impacts on the environment, local communities, and the well-being of travellers.

To achieve this, it's essential to promote authentic and sustainable tourism experiences, prioritise community involvement, and engage in effective communication and promotion.

Co-design with local communities and producers, community networking, and virtual experiences also playing a significant role in enhancing the overall tourism experience in Belgium. These strategies aim to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among all stakeholders.

The recommendations for regenerative tourism in Belgium include promoting authentic and sustainable experiences that connect visitors with local culture and nature. They suggest fostering partnerships with local communities, emphasising sustainable practices, encouraging community involvement, and ongoing impact assessment. These recommendations aim to benefit communities and the environment while offering meaningful experiences to visitors.

In conclusion, Belgium's commitment to regenerative tourism is a positive step towards creating a sustainable and responsible tourism sector. By preserving culture, engaging communities, and promoting responsible practices, Belgium can continue to attract travellers seeking authentic, regenerative travel experiences.

## Bulgaria (prepared by BAWP)

### **Understanding Regenerative Tourism**

There is a growing awareness and interest in regenerative tourism in Bulgaria, particularly among small wine producers and local communities. The interviewees see regenerative tourism as a holistic approach that goes beyond sustainability to actively improve the environment, economy, and social fabric of local communities. They believe that small, incremental changes can lead to significant long-term impacts. However, they also highlight several challenges, including a lack of awareness and education about regenerative tourism, the need for supportive legal frameworks, and various operational challenges such as demographic issues and financial constraints.

The role of local organisations and authorities is considered crucial in disseminating information and fostering collaborations. There is a call for more seminars, presentations, and training programs to educate both the industry stakeholders and the general public. Despite the challenges, there is a sense of optimism and a number of innovative initiatives are already underway, such as volunteer programs in wineries and eco-friendly tours.

Desk research indicates that the concept of regenerative tourism is still emerging in Bulgaria, but there is a growing interest in sustainable travel and eco-tourism, especially among younger generations. The country's rich natural and cultural heritage offers a fertile ground for the development of regenerative tourism initiatives. However, there is a need for more coordinated efforts, possibly led by the government, to fully realise the potential of regenerative tourism in Bulgaria. Overall, the interviews and additional research suggest that while there are challenges to be overcome, there is significant potential for regenerative tourism to become a key part of Bulgaria's tourism industry.

## Community Tourism and Co-design

Community tourism in Bulgaria is an evolving concept that is gaining traction, particularly in rural areas and among small-scale producers like wineries. The focus is increasingly on creating experiences that are not just beneficial for tourists but also for local communities and the environment. Co-design plays a significant role in this, involving multiple stakeholders - local producers, tour operators, and even tourists - in the planning and execution of tourism experiences.

One example of co-design mentioned in the interviews is a collaborative wine tour along the Danube River, involving local wineries, a kayak club, and municipal authorities. This initiative aims to offer a holistic experience that educates tourists about both the natural features of the river and the local wine culture. Another example is the involvement of tourists in grape harvesting and traditional wine production methods, which not only offers an authentic experience but also educates visitors about sustainable agricultural practices.

Desk research reveals other examples of community tourism and co-design in Bulgaria, such as the South Sakar' eco-tourism initiatives, where local communities are involved in both the design and execution of tourist activities. These often include educational components about local flora and fauna, as well as cultural traditions, thus enriching the tourist experience while providing economic benefits to the community.

Overall, community tourism in Bulgaria is characterised by a collaborative approach that seeks to balance the interests of various stakeholders while promoting sustainability and local culture. However, for these initiatives to scale and become more impactful, there is a need for greater support from local and national authorities, as well as more extensive public awareness campaigns.

## Communication and Promotion

In the Bulgarian context, the three types of tourism practices focused on by the AGORA project seem to be promoted through a multifaceted approach.

1. Local Producers: The case of the City Wine Map of Sofia indicates an innovative way to promote local wines by navigating tourists to urban places. It combines digital and traditional means, like physical maps, apps, and social media, to spotlight small wine producers. The aim is not just to expose the tourists to local products but also to connect them to the cultural fabric of Bulgaria.

2. Communities: The initiatives like Lyutibrod – The Gateway to the North-West show that community-based tourism is promoted through narratives that focus on cultural heritage and biodiversity. Community fairs, workshops, and local tours are likely common methods. The goal is to offer an authentic experience, involving locals in the tourism product development and thereby ensuring socio-economic benefits for the community.

3. Virtual Experiences: With examples like Bratanov Winery and BM Vision VR Experience, it's evident that virtual reality and augmented reality are being used to create immersive experiences. These technologies allow tourists to explore places and experiences virtually before deciding to visit, thus creating a buzz and generating interest.

In terms of general trends, digital storytelling appears to be a powerful tool across all categories. This involves leveraging social media platforms, influencer marketing, and even augmented reality to narrate compelling stories that resonate with the targeted audience.

Partnerships play a pivotal role in the Bulgarian context, as they do globally, in achieving a more regenerative and sustainable form of tourism. This is especially true for initiatives that require multi-stakeholder engagement, such as the promotion of local wine routes or community-based experiences. Collaborations between governmental bodies, local communities, NGOs, and private businesses can bring in diverse expertise and resources. This not only helps in delivering a more complete and enriching experience to the tourists but also ensures that the tourism practices have a positive impact on the local environment and community.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

The interviews revealed that experiences involving producers, particularly in the wine industry, are central to the concept of regenerative tourism in Bulgaria. These experiences range from traditional wine tours and tastings to more immersive activities like grape harvesting, grape picking, and hands-on involvement in various stages of wine production. Some producers even offer unique initiatives like planting a vine of a unique local grape variety, which tourists can then take care of in their own gardens, thereby promoting the spread of indigenous grape varieties.

### **Challenges and Barriers:**

1. Lack of Awareness: Regenerative tourism is still a relatively new concept, and one of the main challenges is educating all stakeholders, including tourists and local communities, about its benefits.

2. Regulatory Hurdles: There are legal frameworks and rules that need to be clarified to support producers who are already applying successful regenerative practices.

3. Financial Constraints: Implementing regenerative practices often requires significant financial investment, which can be a barrier for small producers.

4. Manpower: The demographic crisis in Bulgaria makes it challenging to find qualified and motivated personnel to implement and manage these experiences.

5. Infrastructure: Poorly developed roads to wineries and villages can be a deterrent for tourists.

The types of experiences offered are directly impacted by the challenges and barriers encountered. For example, the lack of well-developed roads can limit the types of experiences that can be offered or make them less accessible. Regulatory hurdles can stifle innovation in creating new types of experiences. Financial constraints may mean that producers opt for less resource-intensive experiences, which might not be as impactful in terms of regeneration.

Despite these challenges, producers are finding innovative ways to offer meaningful experiences. Volunteer programs, partnerships with other local businesses like kayak clubs, and collaborations with local authorities are some of the strategies being employed to overcome these barriers. However, for these experiences to be sustainable in the long term, there needs to be a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including governmental support for infrastructure development and regulatory reform.

### **Experiences on Community Networking**

The community networking plays a pivotal role in the advancement of regenerative tourism in Bulgaria. Types of experiences in this context include community-led seminars, presentations, and training sessions related to regenerative tourism. These are designed to raise awareness and engage the community in practice. Furthermore, there are volunteer programs aimed at both tourists and locals to participate in various regenerative activities, such as grape harvesting or traditional production methods at wineries. Some producers are even collaborating with local kayak clubs and museums to offer multi-faceted experiences that educate participants about the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

#### **Challenges and Barriers:**

1. **Time Constraints:** Many organisations are small and new, and they face the challenge of balancing business growth with the time-intensive nature of community networking activities.
2. **Lack of Information:** There's a need for more comprehensive training and information dissemination to get the community on board.
3. **Financial and Resource Limitations:** Implementing community networking initiatives often requires financial resources that may not be readily available.
4. **Regulatory Issues:** Unclear or restrictive regulations can hinder the ability to involve the community effectively.
5. **Collaboration Hurdles:** While there is a general willingness to collaborate, administrative and financial challenges often prevent effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The challenges directly influence the scope and effectiveness of community networking experiences. For instance, time constraints may limit the frequency

and depth of community-led seminars or training sessions. Financial and resource limitations can restrict the scale of volunteer programs or other community engagement initiatives. Regulatory issues can create barriers to effective collaboration between different stakeholders, thereby limiting the potential impact of community networking efforts.

Despite these challenges, there is a strong sense of purpose and willingness to engage in community networking to promote regenerative tourism. Strategies like building relationships with other community members, initiating discussions, and sharing ideas are being employed to overcome these barriers. However, for these efforts to be sustainable and impactful, there needs to be strategic planning and support from local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

### **Virtual Experiences**

Virtual experiences in the context of regenerative tourism in Bulgaria encompass a range of activities. These include virtual wine tastings, online tours of vineyards, and interactive webinars that educate participants about sustainable and regenerative practices in wine production. Some platforms, like Winetours.bg, even offer vouchers for wine tourism, including events, accommodations, gift cards, tastings, souvenirs, and wine accessories.

#### **Challenges and Barriers:**

1. **Technology Limitations:** Outdated technology can severely hamper the quality and reach of virtual experiences.
2. **Logistics:** Issues related to wine delivery or product shipment can affect the overall experience and its success.
3. **Accessibility:** Not all potential participants may have the necessary technology or internet access to partake in virtual experiences.

The challenges directly affect the types and quality of virtual experiences offered. For example, outdated technology can make virtual wine tastings less interactive and engaging, thereby affecting customer satisfaction and repeat engagement. Logistics can be a make-or-break factor, especially for experiences that involve the delivery of physical products like wine. If the delivery process is not smooth, it can detract from the overall experience. Accessibility issues mean that a segment of the potential audience is automatically excluded, which not only limits market reach but also can be a missed opportunity for educating a broader audience about regenerative practices.

Despite these challenges, there are strategies to improve the sustainability and reach of virtual experiences. These include upgrading technology, improving logistics through better partnerships, and creating more accessible content. There's also a need for feedback loops to understand the environmental and social impact of these virtual experiences better. Overall, while virtual experiences offer a promising avenue to promote local products and educate people about



regenerative tourism, they come with their own set of challenges that need to be thoughtfully addressed.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Regenerative tourism in Bulgaria is at an emerging but promising stage, with small wine producers and community-driven initiatives leading the way. The virtual experiences offer a unique opportunity to expand the reach of these sustainable practices. Technological limitations, logistical issues, and political instability are some of the barriers that need to be overcome to fully realise the potential of regenerative tourism in the country.

For recommendations, a multi-stakeholder approach involving local producers, authorities, and technology partners could be beneficial. Given the political instability in Bulgaria, a streamlined and simplified regulatory framework could go a long way in encouraging more producers to adopt sustainable practices. Investment in infrastructure, particularly in rural areas with poor road connectivity, could significantly boost tourism and, by extension, the local economy. Finally, public awareness campaigns and educational programs could be instrumental in driving home the importance of sustainability and regeneration, not just as buzzwords but as essential practices for the long-term well-being of the community and the environment.

## Cyprus (prepared by Eurosuccess)

### Understanding Regenerative Tourism

A paradigm shift in the tourism sector is represented by regenerative tourism. It's important to actively contribute to the health of regional communities, the environment, and culture in addition to minimising adverse effects. Adopting regenerative tourism practices is crucial in the case of Cyprus, a well-known Mediterranean tourist destination, in order to preserve its distinctive heritage, natural beauty, and promote sustainable growth. Let's explore this idea in detail using the following examples:

**Preserving Cultural Heritage:** The ancient city of Kourion and the Tombs of the Kings are just two of Cyprus's famed archaeological sites. Regenerative tourism entails promoting these locations through ethical travel. Visitors can learn about these locations' historical significance, which promotes preservation and respect. The money raised can go toward site upkeep and expanding archaeological research.

**Protecting Biodiversity:** Cyprus is home to a variety of ecosystems, including the special flora and fauna of the Akamas Peninsula. Regenerative tourism strategies would advocate for guided ecotours that let visitors experience these natural

wonders while being led by local experts. The money made from these tours could be used to fund initiatives to conserve wildlife and restore habitat.

**Sustainable Agriculture and Gastronomy:** Halloumi cheese and regional wines are among the delicacies of Cyprus' extensive culinary heritage. Regenerative tourism encourages agrotourism activities like visits to olive groves and vineyards. This promotes sustainable agricultural methods and helps local farmers. Traditional cooking classes are available to visitors, fostering a closer relationship with the island's culture.

**Supporting Local Communities:** Boutique hotels and family-run guesthouses are examples of small, regionally owned lodgings that can offer a genuine experience. Giving local communities training in hospitality, tour-guiding, or artisanal skills is a key component of regenerative tourism. Tourism service providers and regional artisans can work together to promote traditional arts and crafts and develop sustainable livelihoods.

**Nature-Based Experiences:** Cyprus provides a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking trails and programs to protect sea turtles. Tourists are encouraged to take an active role in these conservation efforts through regenerative tourism. They can participate in guided nature walks led by local naturalists or spend a day volunteering in turtle hatcheries to help preserve the island's biodiversity.

### Community Tourism and Co-design

In Cyprus, community tourism centres on the active participation of local communities in the tourism industry, where locals are heavily involved in decision-making, cultural preservation, and economic gains. Co-design, in this context, refers to the inclusive and collaborative process whereby tourists and locals collaborate to produce authentic and meaningful travel experiences. In Cyprus, community tourism and co-design take the following forms, with examples:

**Cultural Preservation and Experience Sharing:** Local communities in Cyprus actively contribute to the preservation of their cultural heritage by educating tourists about their customs, folklore, and handicrafts. Example: Local craftspeople in the village of Lefkara, known for its tradition of making lace, offer workshops to visitors so they can learn the trade and appreciate its historical significance.

**Sustainable Agriculture and Culinary Experiences:** Cyprus has a long history of agriculture. Visits to nearby farms, participation in harvests, and farm-to-table dining are all examples of community tourism. Example: During the harvest season, the village of Anogyra offers olive-picking excursions that let visitors interact with farmers, discover how olive oil is made, and partake in traditional Cypriot fare.

**Homestays and Local Accommodations:** Homestays and other modest lodgings operated by local families are encouraged by community tourism. Tourists get an authentic experience thanks to this, and the neighbourhood also gains. As an

illustration, several villages in the Troodos Mountains offer old-fashioned guesthouses where guests can stay with local families and enjoy the friendly Cypriot hospitality and cultural immersion.

**Ecotourism and Nature Conservation:** Cyprus is renowned for having a variety of natural scenery. Community-led conservation efforts and eco-friendly activities are the main focuses of community tourism programs. An illustration is the guided nature walks offered by the Akamas Peninsula in Cyprus, a protected area. The guides are locals who are knowledgeable about the area's flora, fauna, and conservation efforts.

**Cultural Festivals and Events:** Local festivals and events are essential to community tourism because they give visitors the chance to take part in customary festivities. Example: The Limassol Wine Festival invites guests to indulge in Cypriot wines, traditional music, and dance, creating a vibrant cultural experience. It is organised by the municipality and local winemakers.

**Community-Guided Tours:** Locals frequently lead guided tours, providing tourists with an authentic and tailored experience by sharing their knowledge of historical sites, regional legends, and hidden gems. As an illustration, locals in the village of Omodos lead visitors through its narrow streets, historic wine presses, and Monastery of the Holy Cross while imparting fascinating historical and cultural knowledge.

**Artisanal Crafts and Workshops:** Local tourism promotes the resurgence of traditional crafts. Visitors can take part in workshops and buy crafts made locally, helping the local economy. As an illustration, the village of Lefkara offers workshops for visitors to learn from experienced craftspeople and make their own pottery and baskets.

## Communication and Promotion

For a destination like Cyprus, with its rich cultural heritage, breath-taking landscapes, and variety of experiences, effective communication and promotion are essential. Here are some examples of how communication and promotion tactics are used in Cyprus:

**Digital Marketing and social media:** Cyprus use social media platforms and digital platforms to communicate with a global audience. The island's attractions and events are highlighted on vibrant websites, captivating social media posts, and visually appealing content. For instance, the official Visit Cyprus website provides in-depth details on attractions, lodgings, and activities. To generate buzz and engagement, social media platforms share eye-catching photos, travel advice, and user-generated content.

**Cultural and Heritage Promotion:** Cyprus uses occasions, festivals, and museums to promote its extensive cultural heritage. To draw in cultural enthusiasts, communication strategies emphasise highlighting historical sites, customs, and

folklore. As an illustration, the yearly Pafos Aphrodite Festival, which takes place in the charming Pafos Castle and promotes ancient Greek drama, draws both locals and tourists from around the world.

**Adventure and Nature Tourism:** Cyprus emphasises the variety of its natural landscapes, which include hiking trails, mountains, and beaches. Adventure sports, ecotourism, and outdoor adventures are the main topics of communication efforts. Examples include detailed trail maps, online guides, and social media campaigns that highlight the natural beauty of the Troodos Mountains region as a hiking destination.

**Culinary Tourism:** Cyprus emphasises regional foods, wines, and food festivals in order to highlight its culinary traditions. The emphasis of communication strategies is on farm-to-table dining and gastronomic experiences. For instance, the Limassol Wine Festival, which promotes Cyprus's winemaking heritage through social media, online platforms, and neighbourhood partnerships, draws both locals and tourists.

**Destination Branding:** Cyprus uses destination branding strategies to forge a distinctive identity. The essence and unique selling points of the island are effectively communicated through logos, taglines, and marketing materials. For instance, the branding initiative "Cyprus in Your Heart" highlights the island's friendly hospitality, cultural diversity, and natural beauty to evoke an emotional response in potential tourists.

**Sustainable Tourism Promotion:** Cyprus encourages environmentally friendly behaviour and responsible travel. The emphasis of communication efforts is on environmental programs, eco-friendly lodging, and conservation initiatives. The "Green Cyprus" campaign, for instance, highlights the island's dedication to ecotourism by focusing on solar energy, waste reduction, and protected natural areas.

**Local Community Engagement:** Cyprus actively engages local communities in tourism promotion efforts. Communication strategies involve collaborating with local businesses, artisans, and residents to create authentic experiences. Example: Local craftspeople and artisans are featured in promotional materials, showcasing their products and skills. Community-led initiatives are promoted, encouraging tourists to interact with locals and experience traditional crafts.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

**Positive Impact:** Empowerment of the Community: Regenerative tourism frequently gives local communities a voice in decision-making processes, giving them the chance to actively engage in and profit from tourism-related activities. Increased economic empowerment, better infrastructure, and improved social well-being are possible outcomes of this.

Cultural Preservation: Honouring and promoting regional cultures is the goal of regenerative tourism. It supports cultural preservation efforts and encourages genuine experiences, which aid communities in preserving their customs and sense of self. Visitors may have a more fulfilling and sustainable travel experience as a result.

**Key challenges:**

**Uncertainty Regarding Regenerative Practice Standards:**

Challenge: Businesses and producers may find it difficult to comply with the absence of widely recognised criteria or standards for regenerative tourism.

Solution: Work together with industry participants, authorities, and oversight organisations to create precise and uniform standards for regenerative activities. Promote optional certificates that meet these requirements.

**Land Use and Significance Regulations:**

Challenge: Certain regeneration activities or the implementation of sustainable practices on nearby farms may be prohibited by zoning rules and land use regulations.

One potential solution could be to actively campaign for zoning amendments that promote sustainable agriculture and regenerative tourism with the local authorities. Emphasise the beneficial effects of these activities on the environment and the economy.

**Experiences on Community Networking**

**Positive Impact:**

Economic Diversification: Relying solely on one sector of the economy, like tourism, might put a community at danger. Regenerative tourism promotes a variety of regional goods and services, which promotes economic diversification. As a result, the local economy may become more resilient and less dependent on changes in tourism.

Regenerative tourism places a strong emphasis on raising public knowledge of regional ecosystems, customs, and social issues. This can encourage a sense of responsibility and care towards the areas they visit by making them more knowledgeable and responsible travellers.

**Key challenges:**

**Costs of Certification and Compliance:**

Challenge: For small-scale local manufacturers in particular, the expense of getting certifications or adhering to rules might be a barrier.

Solution: Look at ways to help regional producers obtain and keep certifications through grants, subsidies, or tax breaks. Create efficient certification procedures and take into account tiering certifications according to the size of the business.

### **Conflicting Administrative Structures:**

Challenge: Various districts or nations might have conflicting administrative systems for regenerative the travel industry and agribusiness.

Solution: Advocate for harmonisation of guidelines across districts to establish a firmer and steadier climate for regenerative practices. Empower cross-line cooperation and data sharing.

## **Virtual Experiences**

### **Positive Impact:**

Work Creation: The development of regenerative the travel industry can prompt the production of different open positions, from directing and cordiality to distinctive and economical horticulture. This can work on the way of life in nearby networks and decrease reliance on low-wage, occasional business.

**Preservation of Natural Resources:** Through mindful the travel industry rehearses, regenerative the travel industry safeguards regular assets like water, air, and soil. This is essential for keeping up with the natural equilibrium of an objective and guaranteeing the supportability of the travel industry over the long term.

### **Key challenges:**

#### **Resistance to Change:**

Challenge: Organisations and neighbourhood networks might oppose embracing regenerative practices because of the apparent difficulties or disturbances they bring.

Solution: Direct effort projects to address concerns and grandstand the drawn-out advantages of regenerative the travel industry. Offer help and assets to assist organisations with changing to additional reasonable models.

#### **Cost of Implementation:**

Challenge: The underlying venture expected to progress to regenerative practices might be a hindrance for certain organisations, particularly limited scope neighbourhood makers.

Solution: Investigate subsidising choices, sponsorships, or awards to help organisations in executing regenerative practices. Show the drawn-out cost reserve funds and ecological advantages related with such drives.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Education and Awareness: Foster instructive projects to illuminate nearby makers and organisations about existing guidelines, best practices, and the advantages of regenerative the travel industry. Utilise available language and numerous correspondence channels.

Periodic Review and Adaptation: Routinely survey and update administrative structures to adjust to developing practices and difficulties in regenerative the travel industry and nearby farming. Request criticism from partners during this interaction.

Digital Platforms: Foster easy to understand computerised stages that unite administrative data, making it effectively open to neighbourhood makers and the travel industry organisations. These stages can incorporate intuitive aides, FAQs, and connections to important guidelines.

## France (prepared by CCIN and EURAKOM)

### Understanding Regenerative Tourism

Understanding Regenerative Tourism in France is still in the process of development and evolution. While there is a growing awareness of sustainable tourism practices, including the concept of regenerative tourism, its scope remains somewhat unclear to many, particularly from the perspective of tourists. The level of comprehension largely depends on individual concerns for sustainability and ecology.

With France's thriving tourism industry, being among the world's most popular and visited countries, an increasing number of stakeholders are beginning to consider the environmental and social impacts of tourism. Consequently, the idea of responsible and sustainable tourism, as alternatives to unsustainable options or mass tourism, is gaining popularity. These forms of tourism are being recognised as contributing to environmental preservation and the well-being of local populations.

Currently, there appears to be a lack of a clear distinction between sustainable and regenerative tourism, as they are often perceived as similar or even identical, with only minor conceptual differences. However, efforts are underway to promote both sustainable and regenerative tourism practices. These efforts include measures like restricting visitor numbers in natural areas, wildlife conservation, and educating tourists on responsible behaviour, emphasising the importance of nature in daily life. Additionally, there is an increased focus on preserving and transmitting cultural and natural heritage in the different French regions, adding value to the overall experience. Although far from mainstream, some destinations have set up mechanisms for community-stakeholder collaboration and are working closely across sectors in order to address the multiple challenges

destinations are facing today, especially when they are striving to become more sustainable overall.

The future is expected to see the growth of sustainable tourism practices, aligning with the broader trend of increasing importance placed on ecological and sustainability-related themes. Tackling the consequences of overtourism in many places, especially natural areas, is an ongoing debate. Nevertheless, there remain many challenges to successfully implement regenerative tourism practices in France. These are firstly linked to a lack of understanding about the concept, the need for political support for local reforms, a lack of partnerships and cross-sector collaborations which are needed to effectively implement changes at local level. However, issues related to investments, legislation, and policies that need to be addressed to fully embrace the principles of regenerative tourism also need to be considered.

### **Community Tourism and Co-design**

In several French regions, community-based tourism initiatives are growing. Especially in areas like Cote d'Azur, Lourdes, and Paris but also in Normandy and Brittany, places with considerable numbers of tourists, local communities are actively engaging in providing guests with unique experiences such as guided tours by residents, homestays, and cultural exchanges. These programmes help travellers have a more engaging and meaningful experience while also generating revenue for local communities. Furthermore, co-design approaches are increasingly being used in the creation of tourism experiences. In the Toulouse area that is known for having a strong focus on sustainable tourism, local associations, businesses, and authorities collaborate to foster sustainable tourism practices. When planning tourism services, this method guarantees that the interests and opinions of all stakeholders, including those who promote regenerative tourism, are considered. Co-design promotes creativity and aids in the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism offers and services. While collaboration and co-design are increasingly used in tourism development, they do not imply that experiences are regenerative since fully regenerative experiences would imply a profound change of mind-set of tourism professionals/hosts as well as guests and also the alignment with nature and well-being when it comes to defining local tourism policies and services.

### **Communication and Promotion**

Sustainability has taken centre stage when it comes to tourism promotion and French regions are competing with each other by showcasing their sustainable practices. The focus is on nature-based tourism, beautiful sceneries and unspoilt environments that offer the opportunities for a wide range of outdoor activities.

In 2021 the French President Emmanuel Macron announced that he wanted to make France the world's number 1 sustainable destination by 2030. In line with this



target, sustainability has become a key factor for tourism development across the country. Tourism often relies on the power of positive recommendations and word-of-mouth. Many travellers are drawn to destinations based on suggestions from friends, family, or acquaintances, and local communities often serve as valuable sources of recommendations. While terms like "regenerative" or "sustainable" might not be universally understood, the emphasis in advertising is on simplicity and accessibility to ensure that the message can be easily conveyed to a diverse audience. This approach aims to introduce a new kind of tourist experience that appeals to a broad range of travellers. Collaboration has proven to be a valuable strategy for French tourism businesses. Not only does it expand their customer base, but it also fosters information sharing and the integration of fresh ideas into their offerings. In today's digital age, French tourism activities recognise the importance of leveraging social media as a crucial part of their communication strategy. They acknowledge the extensive reach of these platforms and employ various techniques, including storytelling and knowledge dissemination through the assistance of influencers, to effectively engage with their audience. This multifaceted approach ensures that the message of regenerative and sustainable tourism experiences in France reaches and resonates with a wide and diverse audience.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

Food producers play a crucial role in the development of regenerative tourism experiences, and while many of them may not yet be fully equipped to promote such experiences, there are noteworthy examples in France. One such example is "Domaine de la Source," which demonstrates a strong commitment to spreading awareness about a different kind of tourism and actively offers regenerative tourism experiences, particularly in the rural context. These experiences enable visitors to establish a genuine connection with nature, the local territory, and the culture.

France is world renowned for its food culture and the country boasts an incredible wealth of local and regional food products, food related heritage and traditions that could be discovered in the form of tourism experiences. However, while there are an impressive number of experiences available that include guided tours of facilities, tastings etc., experiences often lack innovation or personalisation. While some experiences highlight sustainable processes, regenerative agriculture or showcase local cultural or culinary heritage, fully regenerative experiences still remain the exception.

However, it's worth noting that not all producers are well-connected within a network that could help address common challenges. This lack of a strong network can make it difficult for producers to overcome issues like water scarcity and regulatory obstacles, which are critical factors in pursuing ambitious goals in regenerative tourism. Collaborative initiatives and partnerships are essential to

support and unite producers in their efforts to contribute positively to the regenerative tourism landscape in France.

### **Experiences on Community Networking**

In France, there are several associations and businesses that are actively engaged in regenerative tourism experiences, however sometimes without being fully aware that what they do is regenerative. These initiatives, driven by strong community support, predominantly focus on preserving the rich cultural heritage and natural beauty of the country. In regions such as the Cote d'Azur, or Hauts-de-France, numerous initiatives encompass a diverse range of tourist activities, intertwining gastronomic and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, French public institutions play a vital role in promoting the unique offerings of individual regions, particularly those with significant tourism potential. However, as highlighted in the interview with "Réserve des Monts d'Azur," there are numerous realities within the regenerative tourism landscape that may not receive sufficient support from local institutions.

Moreover, the interview with Jackie Masse, chef from Hauts-de-France, highlights that taking projects further requires coordination and a common vision that is lacking in the current tourism ecosystem. Establishing a constant dialogue between stakeholders is suggested for a more harmonised approach.

These lacks can stem from either a lack of awareness or a reluctance to engage in collaborative efforts, as highlighted in the interviews' discussions about the challenges in finding the right collaborators and decision-makers. This underscores the importance of enhancing communication and collaboration between community-based tourism initiatives and local institutions to fully harness the potential of regenerative tourism in France.

### **Virtual Experiences**

Virtual experiences have grown in popularity in France in recent years, particularly in response to global events that have hampered real travel. Individuals can use these virtual experiences to discover France's rich cultural legacy, historical places, and natural wonders from the comfort of their own homes.

Virtual tours and displays have been used by museums, art galleries, and historical locations across the country. People can virtually walk through museums thanks to these immersive digital experiences. Such initiatives not only make French cultural treasures available to a global audience, but also serve as a substitute for physical trips.

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies are also being used to develop interactive and compelling virtual tourism experiences. Tourists can use

virtual reality headsets and enjoy guided tours of iconic landmarks or explore virtual recreations of historical events.

The tourism business in France is embracing the digital age, realising the potential of virtual experiences to supplement traditional travel and to address the challenges of regenerative tourism. These developments not only make French culture and legacy more available to a wider audience, but they also act as vital educational and cultural preservation instruments.

Additionally, the interviews highlight the challenges of promoting local products through virtual experiences, such as shipping regulations and time zone differences. Despite these challenges, the virtual experiences offer a unique perspective on local gastronomy, helping travellers prepare for in-person visits and supporting the sustainability and regenerative tourism efforts in France. It is evident that virtual experiences in France are not only a response to global events but also a means to bridge the gap between tourism and regenerative practices, enhancing the accessibility and understanding of the country's rich cultural heritage.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Regenerative tourism in France is anticipated to gain popularity among tourists and stakeholders as all parties slowly discover the meaning behind the concept and also the difference between sustainable and regenerative tourism. Businesses that integrate regenerative experiences can play a crucial role in promoting responsible land and resource management, contributing positively to community engagement - a key factor in supporting responsible tourism and sustainability in the region. Those already participating in and promoting regenerative tourism experiences are key players in advancing the overall understanding of the benefits of regenerative tourism.

Producers, including artisans, farmers, and winemakers, are integral to enhancing the authenticity and sustainability of regenerative tourism experiences. Their promotion of local products and practices not only enriches the visitor experience but also stimulates the local economy. Establishing stable partnerships within the tourism industry is essential for mutual benefits and encouraging repeat visits, creating a supportive network for regenerative initiatives.

Building effective communication and promotion strategies, such as leveraging word of mouth and social media, becomes crucial in spreading awareness about regenerative tourism practices. Through these channels, the message of responsible and sustainable tourism can reach a broader audience, further contributing to the success of regenerative initiatives in France.

Beyond economic profit, the encouragement of responsible behaviour is vital for preserving France's cultural, natural, and historical heritage for future generations.

Regenerative tourism not only thrives but also safeguards the beauty and authenticity of France's landscapes and cultural offerings in the long term. In conclusion, as the regenerative tourism movement gains momentum in France, it holds the potential to create a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry, benefiting both the local community and the environment.

To support and expand these efforts, it is recommended that stakeholders continue to foster collaboration, invest in sustainable practices, and promote the regenerative tourism message through effective communication and marketing. This will ensure that France remains a sought-after destination for travellers seeking authentic, responsible, and regenerative tourism experiences. The insights from the interviews align with these recommendations, emphasising the importance of collaboration, sustainability, and community engagement in the success of regenerative tourism initiatives.

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## Finland (prepared by GreenEscape Oy)

### Understanding Regenerative Tourism

Finland with its bountiful natural resources and stunning landscapes, including lakes, forests, and the Northern Lights, has been at the forefront when it comes to its commitment to sustainability. Finns take high pride in their pristine Arctic environment and have a strong environmental ethos deeply ingrained in its society and way of life, demonstrated through various concepts such as “Jokaisenoikeudet” or The Everyman's Rights. This grants the universal right to everyone to responsibly use Finnish forests for NWFP harvesting such as foraging berries and mushrooms, fish with a line and rod, and respectfully enjoy the

recreational use of natural areas as far as they do not create damages or disturbances to landowner or land.

In Finland, regenerative tourism is often perceived as a natural progression towards a more holistic and sustainable model of tourism, striking a balance between increasing reliance on nature tourism and ensuring longevity when it comes to preserving its unspoiled environment concurrently offering unique and authentic top visitor experiences.

The Finnish Government and tourism bodies have been highly proactive in promoting sustainability and responsible tourism initiatives and certifications that comply with international sustainability standards. One of such initiatives worth mentioning is the Visit Finland tourism board's own highly popular "Sustainable Travel Finland or STF", created for the tourism industry as a tool for achieving the sustainable development goals and climate goals. It's a 7-step sustainable tourism development programme which is offered to empower companies and tourism destinations. Visit Finland along with 60 other Finnish tourism companies and regions have also signed the Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism in June 2022 and has the ambitious plan to be carbon-neutral by 2035 and be the first fossil-free welfare state. This requires strengthening carbon sinks and accelerated emission reductions in all sectors including hospitality. Regenerative tourism aligns well with the country's sustainability ethos and tourism goals, encouraging responsible and low-impact tourism.

Although there are several initiatives and tools implementing sustainable tourism, the regenerative tourism modules are still on the developmental stage and still a long way to go in terms of design, development and promotion. Finland's tourism strategy which often revolves around providing authentic, seasonal experiences such as experiencing the Northern Lights, participating in traditional Sauna rituals, enjoying winter activities, and picking berries and mushrooms, regenerative tourism ensures that these experiences are sustainable and respectful of the local environment and culture.

### **Community Tourism and Co-design**

At the heart of the rising regenerative tourism concept in Finland is the idea that the communities and local stakeholders are given more voice to define the form and content they want to develop for their own place and seek long-term organic solutions on how to produce well-being services and how to help nature to regenerate. It emphasises the idea that services should not be just developed for the sake of production, but to promote the common good and holistic well-being and regeneration of the local communities.

For a country such as Finland, where tourism is a relatively a young concept, balancing the tasks of designing meaningful and sustainable experiences centred around increasingly empowered customers, staying relevant, and differentiating from others are quite challenging for small businesses. Community tourism and co-design work hand-in-hand as a collaborative approach as it create visitor

experiences that are rooted in the values and aspirations of local communities making positive reinforcements between the tourists and the communities they visit.

In Finland, in addition to the highly proactive Visit Finland national tourism organisation, local tourism leaderships in each district such as DMOs such as Visit Saimaa, Visit Savo, Visit Karelia, Visit Inari-Saariselkä, etc play a predominant role in coordinating the local tourism partners helping in vertical integration, co-creation, testing, and promotional and educational campaigns aimed at both customers and tourism entrepreneurs. Such co-design frameworks will increase the competence of entrepreneurs and will lead to developing thematic tourism experiences co-created together with customers, researchers, local community and entrepreneurs, tourism firms promoting the destination in a holistic and organic manner.

### **Communication and Promotion**

For sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences where, socio-cultural aspect plays a significant role, the story-telling narrative plays a crucial role in promoting and embodying the underlying principles and how these experiences become opportunities that contribute positively to the local economy and ecosystems.

By weaving narratives that highlight sustainability, community engagement, and environmental stewardship, the producers can create compelling content that can inspire travellers, even with rudimentary knowledge about sustainability principles, to make conscious choices that contribute to the well-being of both the destination and its inhabitants.

Our Interview respondents had the common consensus that communication and promotion of the destination and experiences is a joint and collaborative work with other tourism stakeholders such as local Destination Management Organisations (DMO), local tour operators and other tourism-hospitality stakeholders in the locality.

Strategic PR campaigns and promotional events such as domestic and international Trade shows from the National tourist board, clearly defined tour packages and itineraries highlighting the experiences is critical especially when it comes to international marketing.

The respondents also collectively agreed on the effectiveness of interactive communication and online platforms showcasing positive reviews and testimonials from previous visitors, positive word-of-mouth and real-life stories that can build trust and credibility of the service and goes a long way when it comes to promoting the uniqueness and authenticity of the experience. Consistent social media engagement illustrating compelling and informative content also creates a powerful connection with potential visitors and goes a long way when it comes to the promotion of the experience.

Cross-marketing, collaborating with other tourism entrepreneurs or entities was noted as a significant strategy that can help to value add, increase visibility, expand reach, and develop more comprehensive, wholesome, and immersive experiences to the visitors. Concurrently, the challenges of finding partnerships which align with the sustainability values and interests of the target audience and clear communication and coordination between collaborating businesses have been also discussed as major challenges.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

In Finland, several producers feel that regenerative tourism is the natural next for Finland's expanding gastrotourism ecosystem, placing an even stronger emphasis on empowering local communities during the development of the tourism experiences.

Traditionally not known as a culinary destination, the past few years in Finland have seen revolutionary changes with the increasing popularity of Nordic gastronomy, both locally and internationally, which emphasises on local and seasonal ingredients, simplicity, and a focus on preserving the local culinary heritage of the region. The kitchens started prioritising locally sourced and seasonal ingredients fostering a strong connection with local producers.

With the short growing season compensated by Midnight sun light, the pristine Finnish forests get laden natural treasures such as bilberries, lingonberries and mushrooms. Approximately 500 million kilograms of berries and a staggering two billion kilograms of mushrooms are estimated to grow in Finland's forests every year. Foraged ingredients such as wild herbs, berries and mushrooms have been increasingly incorporated to main menus complimented by traditional preservation techniques such as smoking, pickling, and fermenting which allows for the utilisation of local ingredients year-round.

Encouraged by the New Nordic cuisine movement, the country's chefs and local producers have started an increasingly avant-garde approach to Nordic ingredients pushing culinary boundaries.

One great example is that despite not being traditionally a wine-producing country with climate not suitable for grape cultivation, Finland is gaining popularity for wines and liquors made from foraged ingredients, with the local producers making award-winning high-quality products from seasonal and locally adapted ingredients.

The field research also revealed a lack of clarity when it comes to demarcations between sustainable and regenerative aspects while designing and promotion of tourism experience which highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the principles, strategies, and best practices encompassing regenerative tourism and regenerative destination management.

## **Experiences on Community Networking**

The field research emphasised the importance of community-centric tourism framework at the heart of accessible and regenerative tourism experiences. Building networks and clusters leads to value-added vertically integrated novel thematic tourism experiences, and development of guidebooks and courses laying down guidelines for entrepreneurs, etc enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism firms bringing wider benefits to the whole destination.

The respondents were affirmative that community-based gastronomy tourism initiatives such as food festivals and events showcase local foods, chefs, and culinary traditions and were much more effective in enhancing the sustainability, visibility and attracting international visitors.

The field research also identified the gaps in information and knowledge when it comes to regenerative tourism designs and how the existing tourism designs can be adapted to fit the regenerative tourism principles. This should be tackled more effectively with community tourism leaderships.

## **Virtual Experiences**

There has been a considerable increase in the Virtual tourism experiences in Finland during the Covid-19 pandemic. The advent of technology and contemporary needs also aided in the increasing recognition of virtual tourism experiences. Due to its low-impact on resources and reduced carbon footprint, virtual experiences have the potential to become one of the main instruments when it comes to sustainable regenerative tourism strategy.

However, in Finland gastrotourism field, virtual experience realm is still an emerging sector and one of the major hurdles standing in the way of its popular adoption is the technology infrastructure and high-cost input. The gastrotourism sector often requires more interactive and immersive virtual reality (VR) experiences. And developing applications or platforms for VR experiences, for example, may involve considerably higher development costs compared to simple virtual tours which uses 360-degree videos and image.

The field research pointed out that a hybrid approach which leverages the benefits of virtual tours with physical interaction offers a more versatile and engaging solution when it comes to gastrotourism.

A good example is a virtual wine tasting tour where the participants can purchase a customised wine-tasting kit before the scheduled event combined with the online guidance of a wine expert or sommelier. Another great example, is a VR-facilitated dinner experience in Lakeland providing a novel experience for all our senses where each course leads us on a foraging hunt wandering in the woods for berries, roaming the bogs for mushrooms, or farmyards for seasonal harvest.

As technology will continue to advance, the potential for innovative and engaging hybrid virtual tours is likely to expand in both culinary aspects as well as promotion of local products and services.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

With Finland's commitment to sustainable tourism coupled with its pristine natural landscapes and inclination towards eco-conscious nature-based tourism, makes regenerative tourism as the next natural progressive direction. By integrating regenerative tourism principles into the tourism model in Finland can ensure a more holistic and community-based approach, fostering positive relationship between the local communities, tourists, and the environment actively contributing to the regeneration and resilience of natural and cultural ecosystems.

Regenerative tourism can be a transformational approach that aims to promote destinations creating net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of communities and ecosystems. At the same time, it will also address the needs of micro and SMEs within tourism ecosystem who are struggling with challenges such as financial constraints, competitive products, identifying sale channels, low visibility, etc.

Nordic countries such as Finland, where the tourism is highly seasonal, the adoption of regenerative tourism practices will lead to the promotion of low-impact “off-peak” and “shoulder-season” tourism developing visitor experiences that align with the natural cycles of the environment.

Vertical integration between local producers and other tourism-stakeholders in the community, striking a balance between economic interests, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility will help create visitor experiences which extends beyond the traditional business goals of efficiency and competitiveness to incorporate environmental, social, and economic considerations.

The tourism leaderships should focus on education and promotional campaigns targeting both tourists and producers encouraging sustainable choices and building a collective understanding of the importance and impacts of regenerative tourism. The development and adoption of regenerative tourism certifications and frameworks can provide clear guidelines for businesses and destinations committed to regenerative practices.

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## **Understanding Regenerative Tourism**

In Greece, regenerative tourism is perceived more or less as a holistic approach promoting collaboration between hosts and visitors to ensure sustainable destinations. It focuses on leaving places better than before visitors arrived.

Regenerative tourism activities are seen as mature, emphasising profitable and sustainable growth over uncontrolled expansion. Sustainability and regeneration are essential to address long-term environmental, social, and economic impacts, particularly in areas facing over-tourism issues.

Local associations, authorities, and infrastructure shape tourism services, requiring collaboration among various stakeholders.

Implementing regenerative tourism faces challenges due to conflicting interests in immediate profits and long-term investment. Solutions include community education programs and unified communication strategies.

Managing visitor numbers based on site capacity is crucial to prevent overcrowding and environmental harm. Engaging locals in regenerative initiatives may encounter resistance.

Educating visitors about sustainability is best achieved through positive examples and clean environments, encouraging sustainable choices.

In conclusion, Greece's approach to regenerative tourism emphasises collaboration, sustainability, and long-term thinking to create a lasting, positive impact involving hosts, visitors, and local communities in shaping the future of tourism.

## **Community Tourism and Co-design**

Regenerative tourism in Greece's North Peloponnese region revolves around residents and hosts championing sustainable practices. This approach, driven by ecological, economic, and environmental considerations, is viewed as essential for addressing long-term environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Local stakeholders, including associations and authorities, play a vital role in shaping and supporting regenerative tourism experiences, contributing to the preservation of local identity amid tourism-related changes.

Challenges include the tendency to prioritise short-term profits over long-term investment, while solutions involve educational programs and unified communication strategies at the regional level. Collaboration among stakeholders, particularly between professionals and local government, is fundamental to progress.

To mitigate environmental impact, managing visitor numbers based on site capacity is key, as overcrowding can harm both the environment and services. Engaging the local population in regenerative tourism initiatives may encounter resistance but is crucial.

Educating visitors about sustainability is achieved through leading by example, maintaining well-kept structures, and promoting a clean environment, encouraging sustainable choices. In conclusion, regenerative tourism emphasises collaboration, sustainability, and long-term thinking, involving hosts, visitors, and local communities in shaping the region's tourism future, requiring awareness, collaboration, and financial support to further develop.

In the community landscape of Greece's North Peloponnese, Oenoxenia Festival stands as a prime example. This event epitomises collaboration and sustainability, showcasing local culture, products, and landscapes. Through initiatives like Oenoxenia, the region fosters community-driven tourism experiences that leave a lasting, positive impact on both hosts and visitors.

### **Communication and Promotion**

In Greece, the three types of tourism practices AGORA project has focused on, are actively promoted, and communicated through various channels in local, regional, and national contexts. While each category employs specific strategies, some common trends, and the significance of partnerships in their development and promotion emerge:

Common Trends in all three types of Tourism Experience Promotion are:

**Digital Presence:** Across all categories, maintaining a strong online presence through websites and social media is fundamental for reaching a broader audience.

**Storytelling:** Effective storytelling, whether through multimedia content or direct engagement, is a common thread in promoting the unique aspects of each experience.

**Word of Mouth:** Positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations continue to play a significant role in attracting visitors.

**Partnerships:** Collaborations with travel agencies, local businesses, and tourism authorities are essential for expanding reach, accessing resources, and aligning with regional strategies.

**Role of Partnerships:**

Partnerships are integral to the development and promotion of regenerative tourism experiences in Greece. They provide several advantages, including

increased visibility, access to funding, alignment with regional strategies, and shared knowledge and resources. Collaborations with travel agencies, local businesses, tourism authorities, and cultural organisations create a network of support, helping these experiences thrive and contribute positively to the local economy and sustainability efforts.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

The local producers that are involved with regenerative tourism experiences, in Greece, emphasise several key points encountered during their implementation activities:

**Regenerative Tourism Principles:** They underscore the importance of defining clear limits and protocols for regenerative tourism to ensure that the region and its resources are not exploited. This highlights the significance of mutual obligations between businesses and visitors.

**Water Management Challenges:** Water scarcity challenges are attributed to inadequate maintenance of the water supply network. This suggests the need for improved infrastructure and sustainable water management practices to address this issue effectively.

**Engaging the Local Community:** The interviewee reported that engaging the local community requires organised efforts through a local association with a deep understanding of tourism's impact. A well-informed local community can propose and implement regenerative tourism protocols.

**Community Benefits and Concerns:** The community benefits from preserving the environment with unaltered local characteristics to serve both residents and visitors in the long term. Concerns revolve around potential economic impacts and the balance between economic benefits and preserving the local way of life.

**Regulatory Challenges:** Key regulatory challenges involve coordinating proposals and requirements from various stakeholders and establishing a commonly accepted legislative framework for regenerative tourism. This requires overcoming differences in perspectives and ensuring compliance through information and control.

**Infrastructure Limitations:** Infrastructure limitations stem from the recent awareness of the need for regenerative tourism due to the consequences of over-tourism. Developing a regenerative plan takes time to mature, highlighting the need for infrastructure improvements.

**Extending the Tourist Season:** Extending the tourist season beyond the traditional April-October period is challenging due to weather dependence. Instead, the focus should be on developing secondary categories of tourism, such as medical, sports, wine, and artistic tourism, to increase market share.

**Economic Challenges:** Rising raw material and energy prices pose economic challenges for businesses. These challenges affect pricing and require innovative solutions to maintain economic viability.

**Visitor Education:** Educating visitors about sustainable practices and responsible behavior begins with travel agencies and businesses. Additionally, the national administration should incorporate regenerative tourism elements into its annual campaigns to promote sustainable practices.

In conclusion, the need for clear protocols in regenerative tourism, sustainable water management, community engagement, regulatory coordination, and infrastructure development are emphasised. These elements, when addressed effectively, contribute to economic viability while preserving the local environment and culture. Additionally, education and awareness play a crucial role in promoting responsible behavior among visitors.

### **Experiences on Community Networking**

The field research, regarding the experiences on community networking provide valuable insights into various aspects of sustainability and regeneration in Greece:

**Sustainability Challenges and Barriers:** Challenges similar to those faced in the general context, including idleness and provincialism among residents, is mentioned, along with highlighting that resistance to sustainable initiatives often stems from cultural and personality issues rather than external factors.

**Successful Sustainable Initiatives:** Successful initiatives are cited from the "Oenoxenia" events, such as the "Musical Stairs" and "Pausanias' Vineyard", which aim to highlight and promote local landscapes and practices. These initiatives have been well-received and have contributed to the popularity of the events.

**Motivators for Embracing Sustainability:** The primary motivator for the organisation and community is the recognition of the region's comparative advantages, including quality products, landscapes, and authenticity. These advantages drive efforts to develop and promote sustainability.

**Obstacles to Implementation:** Obstacles mentioned include idleness, provincialism, and micro-level conflicts within the community. The importance of overcoming these internal challenges for effective sustainability initiatives are also mentioned.

**Regulatory and Policy Support:** Acknowledgement of the support provided by organisations like the Prefectural Development Companies and European policies that promote multi-functionality in agriculture and rural development.

**Measuring Impact:** Key metrics for assessing the impact of sustainability initiatives include the percentage of visitors participating in actions, the extent of information dissemination, and public appreciation through social media and the press.

**Emerging Technologies:** The potential of emerging technologies in making regions known and facilitating communication and collaboration among stakeholders, thereby enhancing sustainable tourism is widely recognised.

**Collaboration Between Stakeholders:** Collaboration among different stakeholders is deemed essential for sustainability efforts to succeed. It is emphasised that coordination and cooperation are crucial for realising sustainability goals.

**Preventing Collaboration Efforts:** Resistance to collaboration efforts can arise from internal conflicts, cultural barriers, or external factors that transcend local levels.

**Co-Designing Experiences:** Representatives of community initiatives express interest in co-designing experiences and involving various parties. Examples include further developing the "Of Wine and Eros" event and making the "vineyard of Pausanias" a point of reference for the Peloponnesian vineyard.

**Engaging and Educating the Community:** While organisations undertake some educational meetings and collaborations, there is recognition of the need to involve a larger part of the professional community in sustainability efforts.

**Financial Constraints:** Financial constraints have been a significant challenge, particularly during times of the economic crisis, in Greece. The importance of financial support from local government and sponsorships is further highlighted.

**Support Needed:** The need for both direct financial assistance and participation in development initiatives, education, and infrastructure projects to overcome sustainability challenges is reported emphatically.

The message conveyed is the importance of recognising and building upon the unique strengths of the region, fostering collaboration, and addressing internal challenges to promote sustainable tourism and regeneration. The success of initiatives like the "Oenoxenia" events in Northwestern Peloponnesian, demonstrates the positive impact that such efforts can have on the region's development and identity.

## **Virtual Experiences**

The field research findings on Promoting Local Products Through Virtual Experiences in Greece are as follows:

**Role in Promoting Local Products:** The field research uncovered that efforts to promote local products, particularly in the context of wine, involve a blend of physical and virtual experiences. A key aspect is the creation of symbols and brands

for different regions and the development of systems to convey wine's taste and characteristics to individuals who may lack familiarity with wine production.

**Challenges and Barriers:** Findings indicate that challenges primarily revolve around established networks in the market, including government and independent entities. Competition is intense, often driven by financial factors rather than product quality. Entry into certain markets can be hindered by the presence of dominant players.

**Outdated Technology:** Research did not identify significant issues related to outdated technology. Instead, it highlighted the abundance of technological solutions available for effective information communication.

**Impact of Logistics:** The study found that logistics, such as wine delivery and product shipment, faced disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in challenges and increased costs, particularly concerning virtual wine-tasting experiences. Achieving cost-effective transportation was a notable hurdle, given the need for economies of scale in a relatively small market.

**Accessibility Issues:** The research did not uncover accessibility problems or imitations experienced by participants during virtual experiences.

**Positive Environmental Impact:** While enthusiastic feedback was received from users, the research did not provide a clear picture of the environmental impact of virtual experiences. The primary aim is to foster a sense of unity between culture and product, with hopes of positively influencing people's perceptions.

**Enhancing Regenerative Experiences:** Some professionals were observed to connect more deeply with the product and its information, resulting in regenerative experiences. However, it was noted that professionals in the wine industry might resist shifting their established perspectives.

**Strategies for Sustainability:** Findings suggest that sustainability in virtual experiences hinges on originality and truthful communication. Maintaining a direct connection to the products, places, and concepts being communicated was emphasised as crucial.

**Successful Approaches or Collaborations:** The research did not identify specific successful approaches or collaborations that have effectively overcome challenges in virtual experiences. The field is still evolving, and case studies are limited.

In summary, the field research highlights the development of a visual and aesthetic language to enhance the accessibility and appeal of wine and local products to a broader audience. Authenticity, transparency, and direct connections emerged as central elements in promotional efforts.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Greece's emphasis on regenerative tourism as a holistic approach aligns with the global shift towards sustainable practices. Encouraging collaboration between hosts and visitors to leave destinations better than before is key for long-term success.

**Addressing Over-Tourism Issues:** Regenerative tourism is crucial in addressing the environmental, social, and economic impacts of over-tourism. Prioritising sustainability and regeneration can help mitigate these challenges.

**Role of Local Stakeholders:** Local associations, authorities, and infrastructure are central in shaping regenerative tourism. Collaborations among stakeholders are essential to harness the full potential of sustainable tourism.

**Challenges and Solutions:** Overcoming challenges, including the temptation of short-term profits and resistance to change, requires education programs and unified communication strategies. Prioritising sustainability over immediate gains is essential.

**Environmental Management:** Managing visitor numbers based on site capacity is crucial to prevent overcrowding and environmental harm. Engaging the local population in regenerative initiatives, despite potential resistance, is necessary.

**Visitor Education:** Educating visitors about sustainability through positive examples, well-kept structures, and clean environments is an effective strategy to encourage responsible behavior.

**Promotion through Partnerships:** The success of regenerative tourism experiences in Greece relies on partnerships with travel agencies, local businesses, and tourism authorities. These collaborations increase visibility, access to funding, and alignment with regional strategies.

**Unique Regional Strengths:** Recognising and building upon the unique strengths of each region, fostering collaboration, and addressing internal challenges are vital for promoting sustainable tourism and regeneration.

**Sustainability in Virtual Experiences:** In the context of virtual experiences promoting local products, maintaining authenticity and transparency while fostering direct connections between products, places, and consumers is crucial for sustainability and success.

**Continued Innovation:** Given the evolving nature of virtual experiences, continued innovation and case studies can help identify successful approaches to overcome challenges and barriers in this field.



Regional and National Impact: The collaborative efforts and strategies discussed in the text have the potential to positively impact both regional development and the overall sustainability of Greece's tourism industry.

Recommendations for next steps could be:

- Implementation of educational programs and unified communication strategies.
- Fostering collaboration among stakeholders at local and national level.
- Continuously assess and adapt virtual experiences to improve sustainability.
- Encourage innovative approaches and research in virtual product promotion.
- Promote and support regenerative tourism initiatives that align with sustainable growth and collaboration.

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All of the above are based on data from best practices collected on national context and the input from the interviews conducted with representatives of the three types of experiences.

## Italy (prepared by Taste Roots)

### Understanding Regenerative Tourism

There is not a full understanding of regenerative tourism in Italy. Regenerative tourism is mainly perceived and associated with sustainable tourism (as mentioned by the interviewees), which has emerged as a global imperative. The sustainable approach to travel still foresees the preservation and promotion of local natural, cultural, and gastronomic resources, and Italy (as well as Italian tourists) is more and more embracing this philosophy. For Italian tourists, sustainability and sustainable/regenerative tourism are ideally linked directly to gastronomic tourism and, more generally to local productions. Gastronomy, wine, and gastronomy tourism are a strategic lever for sustainability, and they contribute to the attractiveness of the destination. The focus on gastronomy sustains the preservation of gastronomic heritage, and communities still sticking to traditional productions/way of living and contributing to the livelihood of small communities and rural areas.

Rural areas in Italy, where a significant portion of agri-food and wine excellences are located and produced are the focal point of this sustainable experience and sustainable/regenerative tourism activities. Those areas enable a shift of attention to less crowded areas and towards sustainable experiences. There are many initiatives in place across the country responding to both the need to implement sustainable itineraries to meet the changing needs and the behaviour of tourists and the need to differentiate the economies in rural areas to enable the local

community to fulfil their needs and to preserve local material and immaterial heritage. Sustainability has become not only a desired but an essential element for the contemporary traveller, and Italy has been taking significant measures to respond to this growing demand for ethical, responsible, and regenerative tourism experiences.

### **Community Tourism and Co-design**

In Italy and the area where the interviews were carried out, community tourism is not yet frequent. However, various case studies represent successful/interesting cases or exceptions. As in the best practice detected (Pollica 2050) or in many small-scale initiatives, the mix of knowledge, creativity, and the will to support not only the individual livelihood have turned into experiences/options for tourists to enjoy. One could mention various Sports clubs and associations focused on the field of outdoor activities delivering/offering workshops and outdoor activities often embedded into wider travel experiences.

What is more, interviewees have been highlighting the importance of collaboration and the integration of knowledge. As mentioned, various stakeholders would love to be part/are encouraging or are already part of a cooperative network aimed at fostering the co-design of sustainable experiences and/or strategies for rural development. To most of the interviewees, and as it has emerged in various studies (e.g. Garibaldi, 2023), collaboration is the foundation for strong projects and initiatives in the field of tourism and local development.

### **Communication and Promotion**

In Italy, travellers have shown the need for clear information about sustainability in general and the sustainability of the experience or destination. In fact, they want to ensure that the company (TO, experience provider, hospitality industry and catering company) and what it offers - in terms of products, services, and experiences - are genuinely sustainable.

This holds during the experience as well: 6 out of 10 Italians would like to have detailed information about the techniques used to minimise environmental impacts, as well as projects and initiatives for the well-being of the staff and the company. When it comes to considering the communication of destinations it needs to be transparent and immediate, these are values tourists consider as important in the decision-making process. The transparency, which is mostly based on the evidence supporting the “sustainability” attributes declared, builds trust. The value of transparency and immediateness has also emerged as necessary to support the transfer to tourists of the ongoing initiatives and activities.

Sustainability has been facing growing distrust; hence, it is crucial to implement meaningful communication to increase attention, engage, and ultimately stimulate tourists. To support this statement, 64% of travellers in Italy have declared to consider highlighted communication about “what is done for people and the planet, not just for profit” (Garibaldi, 2023). Those messages must be spread with a cross-media approach. The narrative as well has to cover different elements

and tell consumers more about the techniques used to minimise the impact. Following this path surely will improve the confidence of consumers/tourists worldwide to choose the Italian destination, which currently floats among the position 17th (June 2023) and the 20th (November 2023) of the Consumers trust ranking investigated and developed by IPSOA.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

The interest in experiences involving producers is growing in Italy. In fact, in the last 3 years, 74% of Italian tourists have visited production sites during their travels. Wineries are among the most visited ones (34%), followed by dairies and farms (28%). The experiences in all production locations are the most wanted by tourists looking for a sustainable and authentic experience. Despite the 55% of tourists believe that wineries offer very similar visiting experiences to each other those are the most visited productions in the country followed by cheese-making ones. 61% of Italian tourists is expecting a fully immersive experience in those sites.

Food service market operators and producers are adjusting their value proposition by striving for premium services and targeting sustainability, leveraging digital to enhance customer experience, have better access to data, and boost communication. Food services, and specifically gastronomic tourism operators, have to choose the right products, manage the menu to avoid waste, select sustainable suppliers, possibly use renewable energy sources, adopt appropriate materials and detergents and manage food logistics while reducing CO2 emissions.

### **Experiences in Community Networking**

In Italy community networks are mainly related to preservation of the historical heritage and immaterial heritage. Those networks involve associations of citizens designing and implementing experiences as well as contributing to the conservation of sites and heritage. For instance, association like the FAI (Fondo Ambiente Italia) operates as a community-based network, gathering people with similar interests and backgrounds to contribute to the safeguarding and fundraising of sites.

### **Virtual Experiences**

“In an ideal world, technology would be harnessed and controlled in the pursuit of a better quality of life, where societal challenges are properly addressed. Advanced technologies would be designed with a life-centric approach, aiming to enhance individual experiences, improve connectivity, and create sustainable solutions. People would have easy access to information, allowing them to stay informed, make educated choices, and participate actively in shaping their own lives and society.” (Accenture Life Trends 2024, Accenture).

Virtual experiences in Italy exemplify the statement above. While the current examples are not yet aligned with a more regenerative touristic philosophy, they embody a self-centered experience that allows customers to engage with knowledge, culture, and taste in a unique and non-conventional manner. In Italy,

as in the rest of the world, travelers are increasingly utilising new technological devices such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), which substitute real-life experiences with virtual ones (Beck et al., 2019).

Technologies have the potential to enhance the overall tourist experience. They are already widely applied in cultural tourism activities, particularly in visits to archaeological sites, providing an immersive and deeper experience. However, in gastronomic tourism, technologies play a more limited role, serving primarily as a tool to communicate the experience rather than constituting the experience itself. Although digital technologies in wine tasting and gastronomy gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, their role has since been marginalised, and tourists are now seeking the authentic, in-person experience.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In Italy, there exists a prevalent misconception about regenerative tourism, often confused with sustainable tourism. While the sustainable approach is gaining traction, especially in gastronomic tourism, a comprehensive understanding of regenerative tourism remains elusive. Gastronomy and wine play pivotal roles, serving as strategic levers for sustainability and the preservation of cultural and gastronomic heritage.

Rural areas, abundant in agri-food and wine excellence, are crucial in sustainable/regenerative tourism, providing a shift away from crowded destinations and fostering sustainable experiences. Numerous initiatives across Italy respond to changing tourist behaviors, offering sustainable itineraries while sustaining local economies.

Sustainability is not merely a desire but an essential element for contemporary travellers. Italy actively responds to the increasing demand for ethical, responsible, and regenerative tourism experiences.

Community tourism in Italy is not widespread but showcases notable exceptions. Successful case studies, such as Pollica 2050, highlight the transformative power of knowledge, creativity, and community support. Stakeholders emphasise the importance of collaboration, fostering cooperative networks to co-design sustainable experiences and strategies for rural development.

Italian travellers demand clear information about sustainability throughout their decision-making process. Transparent and immediate communication is crucial, influencing the trust-building process. The cross-media approach to spreading sustainability messages enhances consumer confidence. Italy aims to improve its global trust ranking through meaningful communication.

Interest in experiences involving producers is on the rise, with 74% of Italian tourists visiting production sites in the last three years. Wineries top the list (34%), followed by dairies and farms (28%). While some perceive winery experiences as similar, tourists expect fully immersive encounters in these locations.

Food service operators are adapting to consumer demands by offering premium services and emphasising sustainability. Practices include waste reduction, selecting sustainable suppliers, and minimising CO2 emissions in logistics.

Community networks in Italy primarily focus on preserving historical and immaterial heritage. Associations like the FAI operate as community-based networks, gathering people with shared interests to contribute to site preservation and fundraising.

Virtual experiences in Italy, while not directly tied to regenerative tourism, embody a self-centred approach. The use of technology, such as augmented and virtual reality, is growing, particularly in cultural tourism. In gastronomic tourism, technology plays a supplementary role rather than being the focal point.

Italy is navigating the complexities of sustainable and regenerative tourism, emphasising the importance of community engagement, transparent communication, and innovative experiences involving producers and virtual elements. The country's commitment to sustainability is evident, and continuous efforts will contribute to its position as a leading destination for responsible tourism.

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## Spain (prepared by Domspain)

### **Understanding Regenerative Tourism**

In Spain, the term "regenerative tourism" is becoming increasingly popular and various tourism operators are taking up this new concept. Some of them are already offering such experiences. Small businesses are starting to act because it's important for them to take care of the places where they live.

Those that offer and promote regenerative tourism experiences put a lot of emphasis on the connection between people and the destination. They believe that tourism can have a positive impact on the destination and the local communities. By showing how to take care of the land, they want to pass on this feeling to tourists visiting the area.

They expect tourism to continue to grow in popularity in the future, but economic constraints could be a barrier to this growth. The pandemic COVID-19 has had a major impact on the industry. It has been a cause for all those working in the sector to pause and reflect on how they can improve their services.

Essentially, for the interviewed the term is about taking a holistic perspective, because improving one aspect in tourism can lead to changes in the whole system. Spain and the tourism operators will continue to attract tourists and tourism stakeholders are showing a growing interest in offering regenerative experiences. The creation of platforms that explore the concept of slow tourism, which encourages less frequent but longer visits to ensure that tourists have deeper, more authentic and richer cultural experiences.

### **Community Tourism and Co-design**

It is well known that Spain receives a large number of tourists every year, and many people work and live off the money generated by the tourist sector. The various stakeholders agree that the community and local people play a crucial role in supporting each other. Many small local businesses work together to promote their businesses and ensure their sustainability. However, it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to comply with regulations, although they are essential for responsible tourism to thrive. The development of regenerative tourism needs to be embraced by the community, but should also be gradual and responsible.

The Catalan coastline stretches for 700 kilometres, and this study focuses on assessing the importance of local society within a 340-kilometre stretch. During the summer months, Catalonia experiences a surge in mass tourism, which highlights the need for a more responsible and regenerative approach to tourism. Responsible tourism plays a central role in Catalonia's efforts to preserve the social and cultural values of its communities. The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life of residents while providing visitors with an exceptional experience. An effective strategy to achieve this goal is to promote best practises and award

official seals of approval that promise an authentic, regenerative experience to other visitors.

### **Communication and Promotion**

After conducting the interviews, it is clear that one of the most effective advertising methods is word of mouth. This strategy relies on individuals speaking positively about products or services. A significant number of visitors are attracted to a place because someone they know has spoken well about it. Some even mentioned that tourists came to the area because people from the neighbouring places had recommended it to them.

It has also been shown that it is necessary to advertise in a way that is easy for people to understand, including explaining concepts that are clear to us but not to others. When we use terms like "regenerative" or "sustainable," some people and tourists may not fully understand the meaning of these terms. It is therefore important to ensure that all content is as accessible as possible to a wide audience.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most effective ways for businesses to advertise is through collaboration. This approach allows them to attract new customers through joint advertising efforts. Collaboration not only makes it easier for the expansion of the customer base, but also provides the opportunity to gain new knowledge and bring innovative ideas to their services.

Currently, companies are using the power of social media for their communication. Companies are increasingly aware of the reach that social media can have. Some ways to get to people is by organising special events, partnering with larger companies in their industry, producing merchandise and telling the story of their business and personal growth journey. Above all, storytelling is a great way to create a positive connection with visitors through effective communication on social media platforms.

### **Experiences involving Producers**

Producer involvement has proved to be a key element, according to the interviewees, as it has enabled their organisations to persevere. Many larger organisations have the authority to make decisions and support such experiences. There is a need for cross-sectoral cooperation because change cannot happen without community involvement. There is an urgent need for public funding that supports this projects while taking into account the suggestions of the public.

All of the interviewees actively collaborated with many producers and were looking for ways to expand this network, as it offers benefits not only financially but also in terms of sustainability. For example, Nulles felt that the community was very valuable because they could pass on certain products that they did not sell or use to other companies, thus preventing waste.

Unlike other industries, tourism relies on tourists consuming different services and goods. Therefore, it is important to build stable partnerships to remain competitive in the market. While there is rivalry, the emphasis is on mutually beneficial arrangements that balance the two. In addition, the use of technology is becoming increasingly important to engage more tourism stakeholders. It can help them gain a foothold in the competitive landscape and improve their presence in the market.

In summary, these findings show that this sector in Spain continues to thrive through partnerships. By offering authentic experiences and involving producers, visitors can be given a real connection to the local culture, community and way of life. This enriches the travel experience and gives it more meaning and memorability, ultimately leading to repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

### **Experiences on Community Networking**

Community support and cooperation is essential in Spain for smaller businesses offering regenerative experiences. Many tourism-oriented businesses rely on mutual support to generate a stable income.

The promotion carried out by larger organisations can greatly benefit smaller businesses that lack a strong presence. As shown in the interview with Nulles, the government of Catalonia actively promotes its cultural heritage. Experiences like this can have a positive impact on the region and the country as a whole. In this case, for example, it shows that it offers visitors a unique vision on the value of agriculture and its way of life.

"Echoes of the Journey" actively promotes through its Facebook and other social media channels. As more and more people are looking for unique experiences online, they are also getting support from partners to help with their promotion. It has opened a wider range of tourism offering.

In general, there are different ways to support businesses, and one effective method is advertising, which many businesses in Spain are now using. You can easily find dedicated websites that showcase the best products made in Spain, and many city councils also promote these types of products to a wider audience. A great example is Apicola Sierra Madrona, which you can find on the official website of the municipality.

### **Virtual Experiences**

Virtual experiences are still relatively new in Spain and there are only a limited number of companies offering this type of service. It's an emerging service offering that still needs time to be fully integrated, but there are early signs that it's being adopted, especially in some wineries. Businesses are recognising the potential in



offering their own services online, as it allows them to make a unique connection with people who may not have the opportunity to visit their location in person.

For years, tourism in Spain was concentrated in the months of April to October, as it is a typical Mediterranean country with beaches, a good climate and good gastronomy. The pandemic created a breaking point that caused a rethink and gave rise to the idea that it could be beneficial to create virtual experiences as well. Be that as it may, the tourism sector is still working on the shift to mixed modalities to offer high quality tourism experiences both in person and virtually.

Creating a unique virtual experience can be challenging because you are not only competing with local businesses, but also with countless online businesses that are accessible to a global audience.

One of the virtual experiences that is gaining national prominence is the creation of virtual museum tours. These tours allow people who do not have the opportunity to physically visit museums, or who lack the opportunity to visit in person, to enrich themselves in culture. This innovative tool serves not only as a form of institutional promotion, but also as a means of disseminating cultural heritage.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In Spain, the concept of "regenerative tourism" will continue to gain popularity among tourism stakeholders. This approach emphasises the connection between people and the destination and aims to have a positive impact on the region by raising awareness of the visitors on how to take care of the land. Those businesses that have already introduced some kind of regenerative experience are seeing positive impacts. Community involvement has been shown to be crucial in supporting responsible tourism and sustainability, with small local businesses working together to promote their services while remaining compliant.

Producers play a crucial role in the success of organisations in the Spanish tourism sector by promoting authentic experiences and sustainability. Collaboration and public funding are essential for their growth. Tourism agents value stable partnership to promote mutual benefits. This approach benefits the travel experience and encourages repeat visits and positive recommendations.

Effective communication and promotion strategies include word of mouth, clear and understandable messages and collaboration between various enterprises and territorial realities. Social media plays an important role in reaching a wider audience and making positive connections with visitors.

Many tourism-focused businesses in Spain concentrate solely on the economic aspect and often neglect responsible behaviour. Community support and promotional efforts by larger organisations can benefit smaller businesses by highlighting the unique and authentic aspects of their offer.

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## 6. GLOSSARY

### **Adult Education and Training**

Educational activities and programs designed for adults, emphasising lifelong learning and skill development.

### **Branding Strategy**

A unique approach to creating a brand identity that stands out in a competitive tourism landscape, emphasising community-driven narratives, storytelling, and digital marketing.

### **Circular Economies**

Economic systems designed to eliminate waste and continually reuse resources, contributing to sustainability and reduced environmental impact.

### **Circular Tourism Systems**

Tourism practices designed to create a closed-loop system, minimising waste and maximising sustainability.

### **Climate-Resilient Practices**

Strategies and actions to address adverse weather conditions and climate change impacts, ensuring the continuity of sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences.

### **Co-design**

A collaborative approach to planning tourism experiences that involves active participation from both visitors and local communities in the decision-making process.

### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

Establishing effective working relationships and partnerships with local institutions, communities, and other stakeholders involved in regenerative tourism initiatives.

## **Collaborative Co-Design**

Collaborative processes involving various stakeholders to design and create tourism experiences collectively.

## **Community Agents**

Individuals actively involved in local communities who play a role in shaping and contributing to the development of tourism destinations.

## **Community Engagement**

Involving and encouraging active participation and collaboration within local communities.

## **Community Tourism**

A form of tourism that focuses on empowering local communities economically, socially, and culturally, ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the community's well-being.

## **Community Engagement**

Involvement of the local community in decision-making processes, cultural events, and educational initiatives to foster support for regenerative tourism.

## **Country Profiles**

Comprehensive information about the tourism landscape, practices, and challenges in specific countries.

## **Customer Touchpoints**

Moments of interaction between customers and tourism services during their experiences.

## **Design Process**

A systematic approach to creating tourism experiences that considers various steps from clarifying objectives to implementing and improving details.

## **Design Thinking**

An approach that involves understanding the needs and perspectives of users (tourists and the local community) to create solutions that meet their requirements effectively.

## **Destination** (main destination of a trip)

The main destination of a tourism trip is defined as the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip. See also purpose of a tourism trip (IRTS 2008, 2.31).

## **Destination management / marketing organisation (DMO)**

A destination management/marketing organisation (DMO) is the leading organisational entity which may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals and facilitates tourism sector partnerships towards a collective destination vision.

## **Digital Transition**

The integration and adoption of digital technologies to enhance and transform traditional tourism practices.

## **Eco-Friendly Tourism Practices**

Tourism activities and initiatives designed to minimise environmental impact and promote sustainability.

## **Oenotourism**

Oenotourism, also known as wine tourism, is a form of tourism that involves visiting wineries, vineyards, and wine regions to experience and learn about the production of wine. It encompasses a range of activities, including wine tastings, vineyard tours, and interactions with winemakers. Oenotourism allows enthusiasts and tourists to explore the cultural and historical aspects of winemaking in a particular region.

## **Vinitourism**

Vinitourism is a term that is often used interchangeably with oenotourism. It refers to tourism activities specifically focused on wine-related experiences, such as wine tastings, vineyard visits, and events related to wine production. Like oenotourism, vinitourism aims to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of the winemaking process, the unique characteristics of different wine varieties, and the cultural significance of wine in a particular area.

## **Gastronomy tourism**

Gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism activity which is characterised by the visitor's experience linked with food and related products and activities while travelling.

## **Green and Digital Transition**

The combined shift towards more environmentally sustainable practices and the integration of digital technologies in tourism.

## **Immersive Tourism Experiences**

Engaging and deeply interactive travel experiences that leave a lasting impression on visitors.

## **Immersive Technologies**

Technologies such as virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) used to enhance virtual experiences by simulating sensory elements and creating a more engaging environment.

## **Inclusive Learning**

Learning opportunities designed to be accessible to individuals of all ages and backgrounds.

## **Inclusivity and Accessibility**

Ensuring that experiences are accessible to participants with varying levels of skills, and abilities, including providing alternative formats.

## **Infrastructure Development**

Investment in the improvement and expansion of transportation networks, accommodation options, and other facilities in rural areas.

## **Knowledge Transfer**

The sharing and dissemination of information, expertise, and insights within the tourism community.

### **Local Networks and Partnerships**

Collaborative relationships established among local businesses, associations, authorities, and infrastructure to support sustainable tourism.

### **Local Well-being**

The enhancement of the overall quality of life and prosperity within local communities.

### **Organisational Skills for Visitor Experiences**

The ability to plan and manage visitor experiences effectively, addressing potential issues and ensuring visitor satisfaction during regenerative tourism activities.

### **Participatory Approaches**

Involving the active participation and input of various stakeholders in decision-making processes and project development.

### **Positive Environmental Impact**

Actions and initiatives that contribute to the well-being and preservation of the environment.

### **Positive Impact**

Beneficial effects and contributions towards the well-being of the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage.

### **Regeneration**

The process of renewal, restoration, and growth that follows a period of decline or damage. In various contexts, regeneration involves the restoration of a system, entity, or environment to a healthier, more functional, or more sustainable state.

### **Regenerative Experience**

An experience that goes beyond traditional notions of enjoyment or consumption, actively contributing to the renewal, sustainability, and well-being of both the

individual and the environment. It involves immersive and intentional activities fostering personal growth, cultural understanding, and environmental stewardship.

### **Regenerative Tourism**

A transformative and sustainable journey that actively contributes to the restoration and well-being of the visited destination. It involves immersive, responsible, and culturally respectful activities, seeking to leave a positive impact on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage.

### **Regenerative Tourism Experience**

A transformative and sustainable journey that not only enriches the traveler but actively contributes to the restoration and well-being of the visited destination. It involves immersive, responsible, and culturally respectful activities aiming to leave a positive impact on the environment, local communities, and cultural heritage.

### **Regenerative Experience**

An experience that goes beyond traditional notions of enjoyment or consumption, actively contributing to the renewal, sustainability, and well-being of both the individual and the environment. It involves immersive and intentional activities fostering personal growth, cultural understanding, and environmental stewardship.

### **Regeneration**

The process of renewal, restoration, and growth that follows a period of decline or damage. In various contexts, regeneration involves the restoration of a system, entity, or environment to a healthier, more functional, or more sustainable state.

### **Residents/non-residents**

The residents of a country are individuals whose centre of predominant economic interest is located in its economic territory. For a country, the non-residents are individuals whose centre of predominant economic interest is located outside its economic territory.



## **Rural tourism**

Rural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing. Rural tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics: Low population density; Landscape and land-use dominated by agriculture and forestry; Traditional social structure and lifestyle.

## **Seasonality**

The fluctuation in tourism demand based on specific seasons, addressed by diversifying offerings and promoting year-round activities.

## **Soft Mobility**

"Soft mobility" includes all forms of non-motorised transport that use only the "human energy" (Human Powered Mobility). Sustainable and eco-friendly transportation options, such as bicycle rental or the expansion of existing bicycle routes, to enhance accessibility to regenerative tourism experiences.

## **Sustainable Tourism**

Tourism managed in a way which can be sustained in the long term and which preserves the integrity of the environment.

## **Tourism destination**

A tourism destination is a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness.

## **Tourism Ecosystem**

The interconnected network of stakeholders, including community members, businesses, producers, and tourists, contributing to the tourism industry.

## **Tourism product**

A tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle.

## **Tourism sector**

The tourism sector, as contemplated in the TSA, is the cluster of production units in different industries that provide consumption goods and services demanded by visitors. Such industries are called tourism industries because visitor acquisition represents such a significant share of their supply that, in the absence of visitors, their production of these would cease to exist in meaningful quantities.

## **Tourist** (or overnight visitor)

A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise (IRTS 2008, 2.13).

## **Transformative Experiences**

Authors define transformative experiences as “those special extraordinary events that do not only trigger highly emotional responses but also lead to self-exploration, serve as a vehicle for profound intra-personal changes, and are conducive to optimal human functioning”. A transformative tourism experience is “therefore one that results in enhanced existential authenticity, sustained even after a trip.”

## **Virtual Exhibition**

An online display showcasing tourism experiences and outcomes developed within the project.

## **Virtual Experiences**

Tourism activities that take place in a digital or virtual environment, providing participants with an immersive and interactive experience without physically being present.

## 7. REFERENCES

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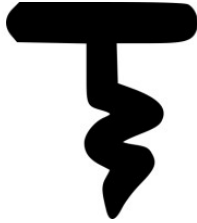
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- Figure 1: Example of a descriptive design model (Adapted from Interaction Design Foundation 2018)
- Figure 2: A generic model of the design process (Adapted from Cross 1994).

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