

Guest editorial: Transformation and the regenerative future of tourism

Irena Ateljevic and Pauline J. Sheldon

Irena Ateljevic is based at the Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, Croatia and Aspira University College, Split, Croatia.

Pauline J. Sheldon is based at the School of Travel Industry Management, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Tourism is ripe for transformation. The pre-Covid pressures of overtourism, the pandemic, climate change and so many other socioeconomic crises have thrust tourism professionals and scholars into a search for different models, different paradigms and new solutions. While sustainable tourism has generated some progress, it has fallen short in providing the radical shift in values and mindsets needed for all stakeholders. Merely, sustaining the status quo on earth is not a morally sound basis for a future tourism policy at this point in the earth's history. Instead, tourism must step up to the plate and become a force for the greater good, mobilizing its potential to positively contribute to destination communities. As Daniel Wahl (2019), an expert on designing regenerative cultures, draws parallels between the future of tourism and of humanity to explore how they interrelate. In doing so, he calls upon the urgent transformation of tourism to become a catalyst for regeneration. In the face of ecosystem destruction and climate change that is creating havoc on our planet, he goes as far to claim: *"it seems that possibly the only industry with enough global reach and local trans-sectoral impact and power of influence to effect such an immense transition in a catalytic way is tourism."*

In this context, our special issue presents the thoughts and research of almost 20 authors from 10 countries (Thailand, India, UK, New Zealand, Canada, Spain, Australia, Netherlands, Norway and Portugal) who have written on how the paradigm shift towards regenerative tourism can be accomplished. Some papers are conceptual and some empirical, some are case studies and some are viewpoints. We hope that the special issue provides a rich medley of papers to stimulate your thinking and further deepen the research in this nascent field. Researchers and practitioners alike will find valuable knowledge in this volume. There are six full research papers, four viewpoints and three case studies. Each contributes to our understanding of how regenerative principles can awaken and transform tourism and all its stakeholders to a new reality. The papers are divided into four sub-themes: foundations of regeneration and transformation, alignment with living, natural and cultural systems, entrepreneurship as stimulus for regeneration (this section also covers gender issues) and transformational visitor experiences. Each of these sections and the papers in them are outlined below.

Foundations of regeneration and transformation. The first three papers lay the groundwork for the rest of the issue. Two explore the conceptual framework to deepen the understanding of regenerative tourism, and the third presents the literature to date. The first paper by Dredge thoughtfully unpacks the paradigm shift that is needed for a destination to become regenerative. She suggests three key elements to transforming tourism: systems change, mindset change and practice. Her reflections on new directions for regenerative tourism are relevant to researchers and practitioners alike. She sets a road map and framework for the special issue. Following this,

© Irena Ateljevic and Pauline J. Sheldon. Published in *Journal of Tourism Futures*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Coca-Stefaniak summarizes and systematically classifies the literature to date on the topic of transformational tourism. He itemizes 194 publications in transformational tourism from 1997–2020 noting that there has been a significant growth in the last two years from 2018–2020. It is a useful piece for those wanting to locate RT research and to assess the body of knowledge to date. The paper ends with a suggested future research agenda highlighting the need for a system-based approach and a long-term future approach to create more meaningful tourism experiences. Cave *et al.* in their viewpoint paper on Regenerative Tourism by Design address the critical issue of literacy about regenerative tourism. They suggest learning as a strategy for destination resilience and use design thinking to analyze the mindsets keeping tourism professionals stuck in old thinking patterns.

Alignment with living, natural and cultural systems. The next four papers explore the link between regenerative tourism and the living world of nature and culture. Bellato *et al.*'s paper "Transformative roles in tourism: adopting living systems thinking for regenerative futures" shows how living systems offer a promising model to understand the relationships underlying regenerative tourism. The paper builds on Dredge's call for a paradigm shift, by expressing that shift as moving from "extraction to generating new life to survive, thrive and evolve towards higher levels of complexity and order". Soreng and Line in their paper on "The reciprocity of soil, soul and society" examines the regenerative relationships that occur when the link between soil (nature) and the society are central to a destination. They show that a value-based "soul" is a critical component of an enterprise that will be part of an alternative economy to the capital centric system. Next is a conceptual paper by Tomassini and Cavnaro focusing on growth, placemaking and the circular economy. They argue that letting go of the attachment to growth and embracing the careful and circular use of resources contribute to the transformation to regenerative tourism. Fuste-Forme and Hussein (CS) in their case study of regenerative tourism futures in New Zealand show how the integration of indigenous cultural values of the Maori people has been fundamental to developing a regenerative platform for tourism.

Entrepreneurship as a stimulus to regeneration. A vibrant entrepreneurial sector harnessing the creativity and passion of locals can contribute to a regenerative destination. The next three papers focus on this topic. Boluk and Panse in their study "Exploring roles of Canadian women social entrepreneurs in regenerative tourism futures" suggest that the feminist ethic of caring provides a strong foundation for regenerative impacts. Their study of Canadian women tourism entrepreneurs concludes that their caring and altruistic mindset enhances the well-being of destination communities and contributes to their long-term thriving in the future. The issue of gender is also addressed by Nitsch who examines the importance of gender equality for regenerative tourism. This study, based in small communities in Thailand, shows how Karenni women have been empowered by being engaged in weaving, jewelry and other crafts. The third paper by Lupton and Samy puts forward a model for harmony through entrepreneurship in tourism (HET) to encourage harmony restoration. They provide seven HET principles for developing entrepreneurial tourism that can enhance the sustainability of the industry as well as acting as a platform to educate those that engage with it.

Transformational visitor experiences. For tourism to transform and be regenerative, the nature and type of visitors and their experiences must be considered. The next three papers address this. Bhalla and Chowdray's paper entitled "Green workers in Himalayas: evidence of transformation induced regeneration" draws together the concepts of transformation and regeneration and how they are connected. The study focusses on travelers to the Himalayas working in environmental settings. The study concludes that a desire for their own personal transformation leads tourists to participate in regenerative activities. The second paper is a case study from Galicia, Spain, in which Moron-Corujeira & Fuste-forme examine how a *furancho* can drive tourism transformation through food. They explain how culinary cultures can be preserved and sustainable food sources, practices and local lifestyles can be nurtured to support regenerative tourism. The last paper in this section by Martins and Santos adds a new dimension to the topic by exploring transformational marketing. They suggest that the implementation of marketing-based strategies to encourage transformative experiences for tourists can be catalytic for the destination's environmental, social, cultural and economic regeneration.

Summary

In these times when we realize we “cannot go back to normal” (Ateljevic, 2020), this special issue of the *Journal of Tourism Futures (JTF)* aims to point our gaze towards a positive and regenerative future of tourism. In the plethora of pessimistic visions for our future as humanity, we aspire to promote views of the promising regeneration renaissance (Tickell, 2021). Just as the humanist renaissance movement offered new moral, cultural and civic values some 600 years ago, the current regenerative renaissance is asking us to rethink systems, reimagine production and consumption, supply chains, reevaluate how we do business and how we live. For John Elkington, an authority on sustainable development who coined the term “triple bottom line”, the goal of sustainability will be to “regenerate economies, societies and the biosphere” (Innovation Group, 2018).

As part of this broader movement, the notion of regenerative tourism aims to align the whole sector towards serving life and sustaining the planet so that all beings can flourish. Regenerative tourism’s purpose, then, is to act in service of the wider systems in which it operates. Unfortunately, many sustainable tourism initiatives tend to serve the tourism industry rather than its host communities and places. Tourism is regenerative when it regenerates more than just itself. In other words, regenerative tourism is about giving back more than we take. It is about understanding that soil, water and all living beings are a part of us and therefore our well-being. The regenerative paradigm brings nature and communities at the decision-making table as equal partners to create a flourishing local economy.

References

- Ateljevic, I. (2020), “Transforming the (tourism) world for good and (re)generating the potential ‘new normal’”, *Tourism Geographies*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 467-475, doi: [10.1080/14616688.2020.1759134](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1759134).
- Innovation Group (2018), “The new sustainability: regeneration”, *Innovation Group: New Trend Report*, available at: <https://intelligence.wundermanthompson.com/2018/09/new-trend-report-the-new-sustainability-regeneration/>.
- Tickell, P. (2021), “Tools for the regeneration renaissance”, *Medium*, available at: <https://medium.com/tools-for-the-regenerative-renaissance/tools-for-the-regenerative-renaissance-de8784a168ca>
- Wahl, D.C. (2019), “Travel to tomorrow 1: how we travel will affect where we arrive”, *Medium*, available at: <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/travel-to-tomorrow-i-how-we-travel-will-affect-where-we-arrive-a214efc8099>

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website: www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com