Regenerative tourism: transforming mindsets, systems and practices

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the mindset shift, systems change and boundary spanning practices needed to transition to a regenerative approach in tourism. The paper seeks to deliver concrete ways to shift thinking and transition to a regenerative paradigm.

Design/methodology/approach – This viewpoint paper defines regenerative tourism, explores its principles and the levers for driving transformational change in tourism. It outlines what a conscious approach to regenerative tourism entails and outlines working principles for regenerative tourism. The paper concludes by identifying five key areas for reflection that seek to challenge established thinking and practice.

Findings – The reinvention of tourism requires work in three key areas: systems change, mindset shift and practice. Three findings are summarised as: (1) Regenerative tourism requires a shift in social-ecological consciousness and depends on our capacity to evolve our thinking from "me" to "we" and to develop compassion, empathy and collaborative action. (2) Scientific management is inconsistent with the transition to regeneration. Tourism must be managed as a complex adaptive system and overcome the challenges of individualism, reductionism, separation and marketisation associated with scientific thinking. (3) Regenerative tourism requires a deeply engaged bottom-up approach that is place-based, community-centred and environment-focused.

Originality/value – This paper shares the reflections, working principles and recommendations of The Tourism CoLab and is based on 30 years of experience as a consultant, policy analyst, educator, researcher, professor and now as founder of two tourism social enterprises. With the luxury of reflection and the distance from higher education that many do not have, the author shares her approach to shifting mindsets and driving transformative change.

Keywords Regenerative tourism, Paradigm change, Systems change, Human development, Mindset change, Transformation, Social-ecological consciousness, Tourism management, Innovation, Sustainability

Paper type Viewpoint

What does it take to become a conscious creator of the future of tourism?

We are currently undergoing a huge transformational shift in our social-ecological consciousness. To use a European analogy, this shift will be every bit as dramatic and transformational in size, scope and impact as the shift that took place between the European Dark Ages and the Enlightenment. It is a paradigmatic shift driven by a confluence of factors including the current pandemic, climate breakdown, a global decline in biodiversity, ecosystem destruction, concerns over food and water security, the accumulation of wealth, rising inequality, economic restructuring, workforce challenges, geopolitical shifts, access to health and education and challenges to democracy (Forum for the Future, 2020). Separately, these challenges are all wicked problems. Together, these forces are unleashing deep, fractal disruption and increased vulnerability as our current economic–social–ecological relations breakdown and a new paradigm emerge.

More respectful and caring relations between humans and nature, captured in the term "regeneration", are emerging as a core pillar in this next paradigm. But paradigmatic change is never easy. Friction, tension, resistance and fault lines continuously emerge as new social–

economic–environmental relations are made and remade. Not only do we have deeply embedded beliefs and values, but also our existing systems reinforce and scale these ideas into a dense system of organisations, routines and practices underpinned by assumptions that are rarely questioned (West *et al.*, 2015). Even if we could overcome these external barriers to change, psychologists, neuroscientists and complex systems researchers are also suggesting that individuals can be change-resistant for reasons they do not even realise or understand (Kegan and Lahey, 2001; Meadows, 1999; Shiller, 2000).

It is in this context that regenerative tourism is emerging as an ontological shift in the way we understand, approach and act with respect to travel and tourism. At its simplest, regenerative tourism seeks to ensure travel and tourism delivers a net positive benefit to people, places and nature, and that it supports the long-term renewal and flourishing of our social and ecological systems.

In this shift towards regenerative tourism, the single most important step to becoming a conscious co-creator of the future is to invest in our human development, both individually and collectively, to develop a deeper appreciation of the nature and complexity of the challenges (Kegan, 1982). We have been lulled into a false sense of security that scientific tools like sustainability criteria like the sustainable development goals will solve the challenges that confront us (Fehling *et al.*, 2013). However, simple tools are unlikely to solve complex dynamic challenges. The real challenge is rooted in our social-ecological consciousness and our capacity to evolve our thinking from "me" to "we" and to develop compassion, empathy and collaboration (Meadows, 1999; Pollock, 2015; Reed, 2007). In the spirit of moving this agenda forward, this paper shares The Tourism CoLab's thinking about the mindset and systems change as well as the practices needed to become conscious co-creators of the future.

The Tourism CoLab (www.thetourismcolab.com.au) is an Australian-based social enterprise established in 2019 when the founder and author of this paper left her position as a professor of tourism planning and policy. Drawing together her hands-on expertise in environmental planning, community engagement, policy research and analysis and design thinking practice. The Tourism CoLab has a mission to disrupt and innovate tourism by bringing to life regenerative tourism education, research and practice. The CoLab delivers innovative online tourism education and training and regenerative tourism journeys and is currently delivering an experimental regenerative tourism living lab on Flinders Island, Tasmania, Australia (www.islanderway.co). Our point of departure is that we are not consultants and believe that the model is outdated. We journey with places, communities and organisations to build the capacity for ground-up change. Our understanding is informed by 30 years of reflective practice working with and for communities in different cultural contexts, drawing insights from projects ranging from local to international levels, and we work with clients from public, private and not-for-profit sectors. We combine this expertise with professional development in the neuroscience of change, creative thinking and complex systems. Our point of departure is, therefore, quite distinct from traditional tourism and marketing consultants, and the value of our approach is illustrated from international to local levels.

What is a regenerative mindset?

At its simplest, to "re-generate" is to renew, reinvigorate or replenish. The regenerative mindset is underpinned by an ecological or living systems worldview, the goal of which is to create the conditions for all life to renew and restore itself (Reed, 2007; Mang and Reed, 2011). In this holistic view, humans and nature are not separate categories, but instead, they are connected and intertwined. This view can be traced back to rich historical threads of indigenous wisdom (Nelson and Shilling, 2021). It also exists in literature exploring the separation between nature and humans that has been propagated by scientific thinking and accelerated under capitalism. Put simply, this separation between humans and nature has empowered the current paradigm that humans dominate nature and that nature's role is to provide free resources for economic wealth creation. But the scale, size and depth of environmental crises currently unfolding across the planet suggest that nature is pushing back. A paradigm shift is underway.

Recent interest in regeneration has been led by regenerative practitioners in a range of areas including agriculture, architecture, landscape and urban design (e.g. Plaut *et al.*, 2012; Newton *et al.*, 2020; Reed, 2007). Regenerative agriculture, for example, focuses on the conservation and restoration of soils and ecosystem health. The overall effect of regenerating soils is that both productivity and ecosystem function are restored. Increased social resilience of the farming community and productivity gains are also benefits that come from treating ecological processes with respect. This approach is the opposite of conventional agriculture which exploits soils, depletes nutrients and reduces soil quality. Over time, manufactured fertilisers, extensive irrigation systems and other interventions are required that further disrupt bioregional regeneration processes. Continued ecological degradation is the consequence. Similarly, regenerative practice in urban development, such as the renaturing of urban water courses, has contributed to restoring ecological, social and economic function (du Plessis and Cole, 2011).

Tourism has much to learn from regenerative practices in these other fields. For example, the very act of composting, a natural process of recycling matter so that it nourishes and enriches the soil from which plants grow, helps to ensure future crops can flourish. It helps to close the system of resource flows, reduce waste and improve the richness of the soil from which plants grow. In contrast, we treat tourism as a linear system, i.e. resources in, waste out. The impacts of tourism often go unaddressed based on the assumption that there is an endless supply of resources, and when crises hit governments will step in. It is assumed that the economic, environmental and social impost of tourism on nature, local communities and future generations will be dealt with elsewhere.

But what might happen if we feed and nourish places, local communities and environments, returning the energy and resources that are taken from them? Taking it further, can tourism invest back more than it takes? Community conversations can be the composting process whereby creativity, ingenuity and confidence are nurtured and enriched by sharing (Bateson, 2022). How positive would it be if tourism had as its central goal not to extract economic wealth to be distributed elsewhere, but to nourish local places, their environments and communities so that they could flourish?

The paradigm shift to regeneration, the transition from scientific thinking to integrated intelligence, will transform tourism. It is already happening in many parts of the world in small, ground-up ways that are gradually connecting into a wave of change.

Regenerative tourism

Regenerative tourism, at its simplest, seeks to ensure travel and tourism reinvest in people, places and nature and that it supports the long-term renewal and flourishing of our social-ecological systems. Making the leap to a regenerative mindset in tourism has been difficult in part because of the field's deep attachment to scientific thinking and strategic management. It is only through the sustained hard work of thought leaders and practitioners that the term is only now starting to attract the attention of the research community and governments (see, for example, Pollock, 2015, 2019 and The Global Regenerative Tourism Initiative). Along with this regenerative shift, there is also growing awareness of the alignment and significance of indigenous knowledge and holistic ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge illustrates the value of other deeply embodied ways of knowing, acting and being in the world, and it will continue to challenge the dominant scientific paradigm (Kelly, 2016; Neale and Kelly, 2021).

This is the push and pull of paradigmatic change. In our current context, the scientific method is being challenged and must make space for what neuroscientists call integrated or animate intelligence (Blake, 2019). Integrated intelligence acknowledges there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding generated from the head, heart and brain, and that knowledge can also be socialised and intergenerational. Scientific thinking has, for centuries, diminished our capacity to think and to know in deeply integrated ways by diminishing the role of heart and instinct and has had flow-on effects on how we act. But neuroscience is now starting to reveal that knowing and understanding are much more than the product of scientific thinking.

Our Tourism CoLab practice, and our distinguishing feature, is founded on the interdisciplinary background of its founder and associates. Our formal disciplinary foundations include urban and environmental design, cultural studies, anthropology, community engagement, policy and education. This is blended with ground-up experience in public and private sector organisations, businesses and the education sector which grounds the adoption of our principles for regenerative tourism:

(1) *Holistic.* Holistic systems approach is multisectoral, multidisciplinary, multi-scalar and multi-facing. Tourism does not exist in a silo and should not be managed as one. It has a fractal structure that impacts, directly and indirectly, a range of other sectors and communities of interest.

(2) *Nature as our teacher.* Design principles can be drawn from nature including supporting diversity, resource optimisation, replenishment and circularity and recognition of the role of nature through form and function, e.g. nodes, edges, pathways, areas, diversity, specialisation, etc.

(3) *Care and respect.* Mutual respect and do no harm to others, humans and nature are the basis of all action. Instrumental and outsourced notions of responsibility should give way to a personalised ethic of care for all others.

(4) *Agency.* All actors have agency and unique talents, which should be supported and nourished. Expertise, ways of knowing and creativity are found in diversity.

(5) *Dynamic and evolutionary.* The tourism system is part of a more complex, dynamic and evolutionary system. Simple fixed solutions like best-practice templates, standards and criteria cannot solve complex dynamic context-dependent challenges.

(6) *Collaborative.* Genuine and trusting collaboration drives systemic change and innovation. Instrumental public–private partnerships that reflect the self-interest of the parties involved are often met with suspicion at community levels.

(7) *Continuous Learning.* Continuous reflection and learning are essential for evolution. Building capacity to evolve thinking is the key to innovation.

Creating the space to discuss and interpret these directions can create opportunities for the reinvention of tourism in three key areas: (1) systems change, (2) mindset shift and (3) practice.

Systems change: tourism as a complex adaptive system

During the shift from the European Dark Ages to the scientific revolution, there was a move away from blind faith in the Church and feudal relationships towards trust in science, democracy, capitalism and the role of government as protector of public interests. One of the most significant developments during this time was rational scientific thinking which, over the course of the last three centuries, led to four very significant effects:

(1) Individualism – the rise of the individual worldview where the focus on self-interest, competition and individual wealth-creation over collective public interests has flourished. Individualism assumes people act out of self-interest and personal gain.

(2) Reductionism – the practice of analysing, describing and diagnosing complex, dynamic challenges in terms of a single explanation, framework, fixed criteria or tools that are assumed to provide a best-fit solution. Reductionism assumes complex problems can be dealt with by reducing the problem into small manageable discreet parts, such as destination marketing, management and experience development.

(3) Separation – individuals were distanced from each other and from nature. This separation effectively distanced individuals from taking personal responsibility for their actions, relying instead on science and law to divest, outsource and off-set personal responsibility.

For example, responsibility can be externalised and passed off in the form of laws, regulations and voluntary sustainability criteria so that it is someone else's problem. This is how sustainability becomes everyone's challenge but no one's responsibility.

(4) Marketisation – individualism and separation made it possible for competition, consumerism and individual wealth accumulation to flourish. The collective public interest and caring for common resources gave way to the pursuit of private interests where, presumably, the invisible hand was thought to take care of negative impacts (West *et al.*, 2015).

Influenced by these four dimensions over the last century, the scientific mindset has evolved to embrace blind faith in strategic management and neoliberal economic ideologies as the main forces shaping our economic–social–environmental relations (see Dredge and Jenkins, 2007; Dredge, 2018 for a detailed discussion). This belief system has shaped our relationship with nature, with each other, with ourselves and what we perceive as success. In this view, nature is broken down into individual resources (e.g. water, air, minerals, forests, beaches, communities, workers, etc.), and the key task has been to extract maximum value from these resources to fuel economic production and consumption. In other words, these resources are there for the taking. Governments have largely seen their role as facilitators in opening these resources for exploitation, not their protectors. The capacity of these resources to replenish or regenerate has never been considered relevant to this tourism system. This scientific industrial view has oversimplified the system and obscured the unintended and unseen impacts that fall into the cracks between the management of these individual resources.

Centuries of reductionist scientific thinking and management have created deeply embedded ways of framing resource management, organisational structures and responsibilities (Dredge and Jenkins, 2007). It makes it difficult to intervene in the momentum of the system, which is propelled on multiple fronts by a complex layering of forces from capitalism to the personal competing commitments of individuals, network interests, organisations and the tourism system (Figure 1). As a result, the global tourism machine has no "off switch" and must rely on the evolution of human thought, our desire to change direction and our ability to see the necessity of regeneration for our long-term well-being.

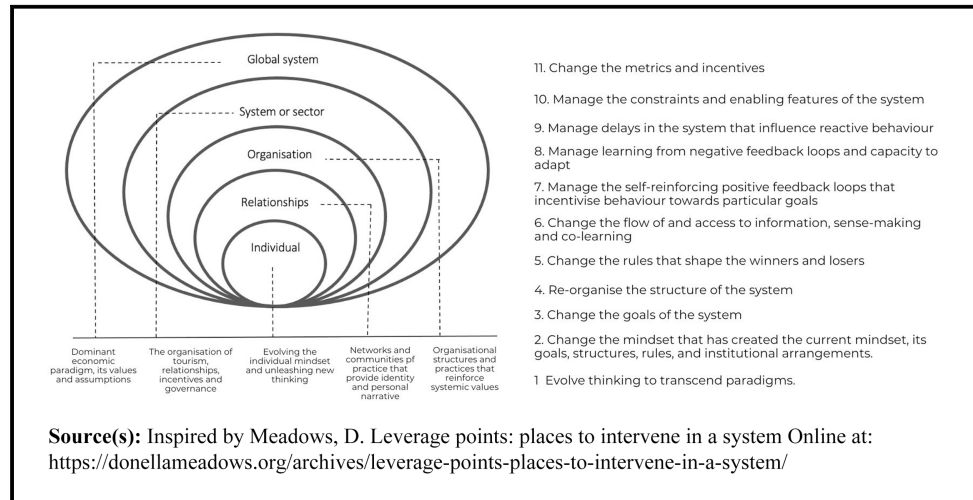### Our approach: boundary-spanning systems work

Based on the above reasoning, our approach in The Tourism CoLab is interdisciplinary, multisectoral and multi-scalar because we can no longer afford to stay inside the silo. Figure 1 (left side) elaborates a conceptual schema for the different levels at which we work to intervene and drive change, from the meta-narratives surrounding capitalism and neoliberalism to the very individual and personal practices and narratives that shape identity-driven networks, such as professional associations, social practices, policy and organisations. We supplement this with reflections drawn from Meadows's (1999) places of intervention (see Figure 1, right side). Meadows identify leverage points for change from the most effective (1) to the least effective (12) which we keep in mind as we work across these layers of the system to drive change.

This figure tells us that working at the individual level to shift the paradigm is the most effective lever for change. Changing global parameters, like introducing sustainable criteria, are the least effective in driving the change we need. That is why much of our work focused on creating learning opportunities, hosting conversations and community empowerment. Transformation of the individual will drive change in networks, organisations and in the system. The figure also suggests that trying to invoke change at a global level is the least effective, due largely to the inertia embedded in the complex system.

Working in this space, the following principles guide our advocacy:

(1) We work fluidly across scales from individual to global.

(2) We consider regeneration (and regenerative tourism) as a capacity-building journey, not an outcome, a plan or single output. Shifting individual understanding and mindsets provides the most powerful lever for change.

Global system
System or sector
Organisation
Relationships
Individual

11. Change the metrics and incentives

10. Manage the constraints and enabling features of the system

9. Manage delays in the system that influence reactive behaviour

8. Manage learning from negative feedback loops and capacity to adapt

7. Manage the self-reinforcing positive feedback loops that incentivise behaviour towards particular goals

6. Change the flow of and access to information, sense-making and co-learning

5. Change the rules that shape the winners and losers

4. Re-organise the structure of the system

3. Change the goals of the system

2. Change the mindset that has created the current mindset, its goals, structures, rules, and institutional arrangements.

1 Evolve thinking to transcend paradigms.

Dominant economic paradigm, its values and assumptions | The organisation of tourism, relationships, incentives and governance | Evolving the individual mindset and unleashing new thinking | Networks and communities pf practice that provide identity and personal narrative | Organisational structures and practices that reinforce systemic values

Source(s): Inspired by Meadows, D. Leverage points: places to intervene in a system Online at: https://donellameadows.org/archives/leverage-points-places-to-intervene-in-a-system/

(3) The most important and effective change is within the individual and from the ground up, where regeneration is place-based and inspired by context.

(4) Expertise is found in diverse thinking in the community of actors involved and not, as often assumed by outside consultants delivering generic top-down (reductionist) expertise.

(5) Identify local problems and work on these problems rather than be guided by fixed generic top-down goals that do reflect local passions, interests and belonging.

(6) Have the courage to learn and reach out to other agencies and actors outside the traditional destination network such as planners, environmental experts, cultural and community facilitators.

(7) Keep in mind the most effective to least effective leverage points for change. The energy to work at an individual, local level is less than the energy to transform an entire global system with all its embedded inertias. Contrary to the top-down strategic management narrative, local change can feed up to change the system.

Mindset change: evolving our thinking

In the journey towards a regenerative mindset, the capacity to move from ego to eco, and from an individual competitive mindset to a collective collaborative mindset is paramount. Kegan's (1994) theory of the five stages of consciousness is useful in explaining the evolution of consciousness. In Kegan's view, the evolution of this subject–object relationship helps to explain how people make sense of and operate in the world over time. While there are many theories of human development, Kegan's is useful because it also helps us understand the challenges of operating in a VUCA world (Ekskaret Foundation, 2020).

Kegan (1994) argues that over our lifespan we move through a number of holding environments and that these environments hold us and we merge with them. These environments then let go, we pass through a liminal moment when we are able to see things that we could see not before (see Dredge and Jenkins, 2011 for discussion of liminal learning among tourism professionals). Put simply, human development goes through different stages of merging and letting go, and these developmental stages are markers in our lifelong evolution of consciousness.

Kegan (1994) suggests that each stage is a new solution to the tension between the individual's yearning for connectedness, autonomy and independence. These five levels of human development are:

The *first order of consciousness* (The Impulsive Mind) The subject is defined by perceptions and impulses such as those of a young child.

The *second order of consciousness* (The Instrumental Mind) is awareness of the self as a singular point of view without understanding that others are also independent selves. The individual is, at this stage, very self-centred and regards others as obstacles or facilitators when it comes to the realisation of their own desires.

The *third order of consciousness* (The Socialised Mind) The stage where we become aware of both ourselves and others as independent beings. We develop self-consciousness and an awareness that others' may not share our viewpoint. Approximately, 15% of the adult population operates at this stage, and another 30–40% are located between this stage and the fourth stage.

The *fourth order of consciousness* (The Self-Authoring Mind) understands subjectivity and self-consciousness. The individual's concept of self and their identity are socially regulated and influenced by context. According to Kegan (1994), this stage reflects modernism. An estimated 35–40% of the adult population is in this fourth stage of consciousness, whereas another 5–7% are somewhere between this fourth stage and the fifth stage.

The *fifth order of consciousness* (The Self-Transforming Mind) has the capacity to hold paradoxes, ambiguity and contradictions at once. These in this sphere think in systems, connections and relationships and are aware of self-transformation not just of self, but several inner selves. They can de-centre themselves and appreciate dynamic fractal relations with others and with nature. Their purpose is larger, more connected and respectful of all sentient life forms. It is estimated that 1% of the population is at this developmental stage.

We use Kegan's stages of human development to broadly recognise levels of consciousness, shine a light on the journey ahead and help design and host conversations that matter in tourism.

Our approach: the learning journey

To shift towards regeneration, we need to first understand the limitations of our own thinking and encourage those we work with to also explore their limitations. Since the industrial revolution, western education systems have reinforced scientific methods. Neuroscience is only just starting to reveal what indigenous peoples have always known: there are different sources of intelligence beyond conceptual cognition, and the integration of these intelligence provides us with a deeper more holistic way of knowing, sensing and understanding. To be clear, we do not advocate for a departure from cognitive science, but to acknowledge in our sense making the importance of integrated intelligence (Fogel, 2009). In simple terms, the sources of this intelligence are the head, heart and gut, with each organ found to produce different kinds of conceptual and embodied knowledge. Scientific thinking has taught us to prioritise cognitive or conceptual intelligence (the brain), which tends to be the dominant way males think. It has also diminished the value of knowledge generated from the heart and gut, which tends to be more dominant in females (Soosalu *et al.*, 2019). Not surprisingly, scientific management has tended to favour head-dominant thinkers (leading to the male-dominated C-suite). Embodied knowledge such as empathy, compassion and creativity, generated from heart/gut, have been more readily dismissed (possibly contributing to the invisibility of women).

The challenge of evolving our thinking in tourism, and indeed in all the major challenges we currently face, is to expand the way we think, understand and problem-solve. Traditional approaches rush from problem to solution too quickly. Traditional approaches assume what the problem is (e.g. the problem is often assumed by tourism organisations to be "how do we grow tourism"), which in turn creates pressure to find solutions to produce an output such as a template destination

management plan all too quickly. It is quick, efficient and scalable, but in the process, the opportunity to sit in the mess, build empathy and understand lived experiences, engage our integrated intelligence and understand what is really going on is diminished.

Bateson (2022) argues that tending to these conversations, connecting and listening deeply to the experience of others is akin to composting. It enriches the "soil" by fueling new ideas, creativity and ground-up innovation. People do not like to be told what to do, they do not want plans that do not resonate with their challenges or lived experience. People need to connect, find ways to collaborate, find their own uniqueness, be creative and be nourished together. From this process, a future for tourism that is owned by communities, and that builds upon the unique qualities of place, can flourish. Conversations, learning and new pathways go hand in hand.

Our conceptual journey with a community or organisation, shown in Figure 2, starts with deep sustained engagement, listening, observing, identifying issues, but resisting diagnosis. In this process, we build empathy, care and responsibility, and a sense of trust emerges. Diagnosis is an emergent sense-making process of learning together. Understanding the issues and challenges is co-created with all actors and fed back into the process to reflect upon and refine understanding. Identifying the meaning of regeneration, the shared vision, values and aspirations with and for the different communities of actors, must be inclusive. Only then is it possible to determine the actions necessary to move towards that vision. This stands in contrast to strategic management approaches where the process, the vision and the actions are determined from the outside and often in a top-down way.

Figure 2 illustrates this process and is inspired by various sources including design thinking pedagogy (Stinkdorn et al., 2016), regenesis (Reed, 2007; Mang and Reed, 2011), the U:Lab (online) and theory of change. It is also informed by embedded experience in community engagement (see, e.g. Dredge and Hales, 2012; Dredge et al., 2013).

Changing practice: simple, complex and emergent

The capacity to understand the real challenges as experienced by nature, and those on the ground and in communities, will define the legacy that we leave for future generations. Forget technology and digital innovation. Forget tools like sustainability criteria and certification schemes that contribute little towards the evolution of our human development and shift towards a collective intelligence that we need to address our most pressing challenges. The real source of innovation is our human capacity to evolve towards a regenerative mindset and paradigm. According to Kegan above, only 1% of the adult population is at this developmental stage, so we all have considerable work to do!

Figure 2 The learning and sense-making journey
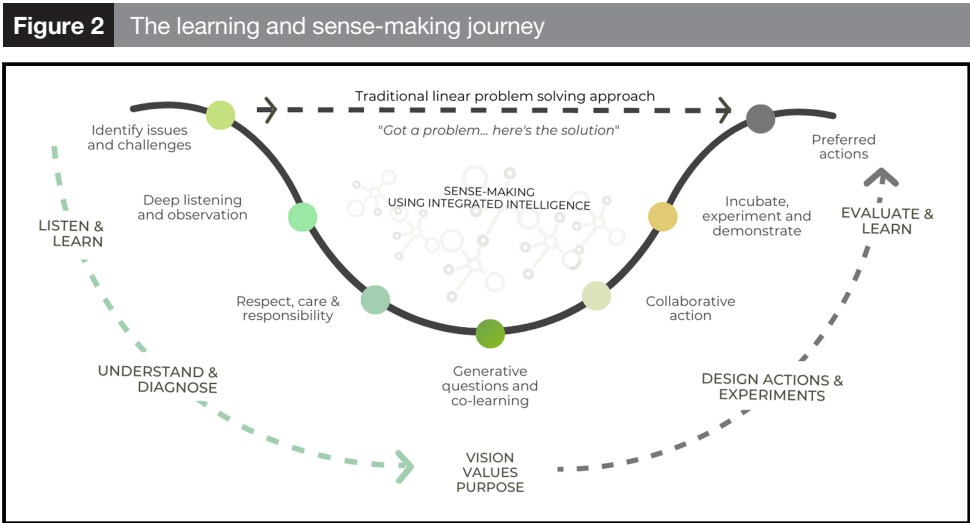
These directions suggest a significant departure from the strategic management approaches typical of the past 30 years. Our starting point is that regeneration has the potential to strengthen local communities, build stronger connections with agriculture and food supply systems, implement circular economy principles and contribute to human health and wellbeing. By making tourism regenerative, we can also care for our natural ecosystems, nourish diverse local economies and return balance to the system. In other words, regeneration is intensely pragmatic and dependent upon reconnecting with the source of life – nature, and fundamentally, makes good business sense.

Our approach: emergence

However, for tourism to shift towards a regenerative mindset, we must work through some challenging issues. Instead of presenting the issues below as criticisms, we usually work through these key ideas using activities that explore creative thinking, reversed assumptions, "what if" and "how might we" scenarios. The key issues include:

(1) *Consent and social licence.* The current economic system is extractive and assumes resources such as labour, community and nature can be taken and/or used often without consent. Tourism risks becoming a dirty sector in the future contributing to, for example, the climate crisis or modern slavery. The social licence of tourism hangs in the balance, so how might we gain consent and establish social licence to exist?

(2) *Value creation and distribution.* Tourism, as a sector and a set of actions and practices, currently prioritises economic profit over other kinds of value creation (e.g. social, cultural, ecological, political, etc.). The value produced is often not distributed evenly and contributes to the transfer of wealth away from communities and nature which accumulates offshore and out of sight. How can we develop a regenerative value proposition for tourism?

(3) *Map the flows to, within and out the system.* The boundaries drawn around tourism create an artificial sector and set of measures that incentivise, prioritise and promote a narrow set of goals and actions. Tourism is part of a much wider and more diverse set of activities and practices beyond the production, marketing and consumption of tourism products and experiences. How might we acknowledge the social, cultural, environmental and economic capital that contributes to tourism and support its regeneration?

(4) *Incremental but coherent.* Strategic management is reductionist. Simple template solutions, off the shelf solutions and strategies directed at achieving top-down goals and metrics do not solve the complex dynamic challenge in local places. We advocate a community-driven approach that balances an incremental and issues-based approach within an overarching regenerative vision.

(5) *Integrated intelligence.* We are keen advocates for adopting integrated intelligence. Taking actors on a learning journey into an integrated intelligence, we also build awareness and capacity among the communities we work with as to the need for our human development.

(6) *Hosting space with conversational intelligence.* There is an art to hosting good conversations, to nurturing the space for exchange, learning and transformation. Developing conversational intelligence and deep listening are important skills for the journey.

Final reflections from the author

The regenerative movement is taking off across the world and is part of the next paradigm. Like all major paradigmatic shifts, it starts with the unravelling of our assumptions and our beliefs about how the world works and what we value. Individuals and communities start to question the existing system, they start to push back, activate and demand change. For tourism to become regenerative, we must first acknowledge that we need systems to change, a mindset shift and

change the way we work in tourism. The following reflections provide pathways for individual and collective reflection.

Recognise the impact of social regulation on capacity to think

In December 2018, I left the academic environment to establish The Tourism CoLab, a social enterprise dedicated to transforming tourism education and practice in concrete and practical ways. The CoLab does this by delivering disruptive transformative education and learning opportunities that shift thinking and by implementing experimental projects on the ground that demonstrate change is possible. Having spent 18 years merged into the global higher education system and the last three outside, I have the luxury of reflection and the distance from higher education that many readers may not have. The global higher education environment is a highly socially regulated system whereby what we know and how we know it is tightly governed by managers, editors, reviewers and co-workers, along with the literature and seminal papers that must be cited. Take a moment to map the layers of social regulation that shape your teaching and research activities and consider how they align with your personal values.

Supressing ways of knowing and integrated intelligence

I came across this issue early in my career, when an esteemed editor, providing a comment on a manuscript asked, "How do you know this?" I struggled to explain that, after 10 years working in many destinations in different contexts and countries, I could see patterns, relationships and had an internal process of crystalising diverse sources of scientific evidence and sense-making. I had facilitated community meetings where I had experienced collaboration at a cognitive, social, emotional and instinctual level. I had accumulated a repertoire of skills and knowledge that had become so entwined with my being in each destination that I sometimes could not distinguish between all the different sense-making roles I had played as a researcher, a community member, a facilitator, an enabler, an expert and a lifelong learner (see Dredge *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, I had felt a deep kindred association with places and people that could not be easily communicated, much less reduced and simplified as scientific research requires. Thus began an 18-year higher education career in which I actively suppressed all the other ways I had come to know and understand tourism, people, places, communities and nature. It is important to take a moment to reflect on what knowledge and other ways of knowing that you are suppressing because you are part of the academic community. What are the risks and rewards of suppressing these alternative ways of thinking and knowing?

Breaking free of the individualism in academia

But there are other factors at play. In the academic workplace, there is a tendency towards homogenisation and co-opetition (i.e. competition under the guise of collaboration). One is not allowed to think too differently, explore different directions or create new pathways. To do so may make others feel vulnerable and may trigger competitive behaviours that seek to undermine and diminish the standing of the person who thinks differently. There are powerful forces of resistance to thinking differently, both individually and institutionally. It is important to take a moment to reflect on how your thinking is shaped by your setting, your job, your income and your identity. How might you release other kinds of knowledge that might be suppressed?

Our values shape our role so finding alignment is important

In the context of these reflections, and the enormity of the paradigm shift ahead, academic institutions and research communities have much work to do to support creative, alternative thinking. Paradigm shifts are characterised by a redefinition of our relationship with ourselves, with others and with the natural (and institutional) environment that sustains us. It is this redefinition that transforms how we think, what we value and how we behave. We choose a path depending on

whether we want to resist and undermine change agents, maintain the status quo or lean into the innovation and become change agents and edge-walkers. Take a moment to reflect on what role you would like to take. Perhaps you aspire to be a "community acupuncturist" identifying and nurturing windows of opportunity for change, "a broker of change" by creating meaningful connections, "a gardener" helping the new system to emerge or "a questioner" assisting in mindset change?

Identifying blind spots and overcoming barriers to evolving our thinking

In this paper, attention was also drawn to the stuck places of our current thinking, to prompt readers to think more deeply about how they know and to recognise the blind spots that enclose and limit thinking. For the past few centuries, the dominance of the scientific paradigm – individualism, reductive thinking, separation and marketisation – have profoundly affected the way we think, understand, value and act on the problems we observe. When we are born, we are gifted with ways of knowing, sensing, connecting and understanding, yet by the time, we get to school the scientific paradigm embedded in western education systems starts to suppress all but cognitive intelligence. Creativity, intuition, somatic and emotional knowledge, for instance, have not been valued, while technical-scientific knowledge has been rewarded. But neuroscientists are uncovering powerful complementarities in these different sources of information, something that indigenous peoples have known for millennia.

Indigenous leaders describe the sources of their knowing, their memory codes and their collective wisdom (e.g. Neale and Kelly, 2021). Accumulated over generations from experiments, observation, evidence gathering, deep listening, spiritual connection, stories, experience, co-learning and other forms of knowing, indigenous wisdom illustrates the power of integrated and collective intelligence. Indigenous cultures also have sophisticated ways of collecting, recording and communicating their knowledge. Yet, until recently, this knowledge has been invisible or not viewed as legitimate by western scientists who have been limited by the blind spots and barriers created by the scientific paradigm. Put simply, thinking outside the scientific infrastructure embedded in our brains is difficult when we cannot see or experience alternative ways of thinking.

This critique also applies to tourism scholarship and practice. In universities, many of those adopting what is often considered "higher order" thinking (e.g. critical theory, grounded and qualitative inquiry-based methods) continue to adopt scientific processes and thinking patterns. They remain socially regulated by the institutions and networks in which they work and publish, and knowledge creation is reinforced as a top-down elite activity, often separate from those they wish to influence (de Bernardi, 2018). Moreover, tourism scholars often embrace, or adopt by default, the key limitations of the scientific paradigm – individualism, reductivism, separation and marketisation. Not only does a deep ambiguity prevail, but this activity does little to nothing to advance the much needed integrated and collective human development outlined earlier in this paper.

Our work in the CoLab has unequivocally shown that working with and for communities in all their diversity reveals an extensive knowledge bank and alternative ways of understanding and working. Working with communities is like tending to the compost that fertilises and nurtures new shoots. For some in the communities we work, the concept of regeneration is deeply felt, it has an emotional and intuitive meaning although they may struggle with the cognitive (technical) definition and scholarly work. A key reflection for readers to consider then is how current scholarly activity reinforces separation, reduction and individualism that leads to blind spots in scientific thinking. What concrete actions can individual scholars undertake, to work differently and help evolve the collective and collaborative intelligence that we need to address a regenerative future?

Conclusion

This paper has examined the mindset shift, systems change and boundary spanning practices needed for regenerative tourism futures. While we are resistant to the reductive approach for the

reasons above, conclusions have a way of forcing deep productive conversations into talking points. If pushed, the points for this paper would be, firstly, regenerative tourism requires a shift in social-ecological consciousness and depends on our capacity to evolve our thinking from "me" to "we" and to develop compassion, empathy and collaborative action.

Secondly, traditional scientific management is inconsistent with the transition to regeneration. Tourism must be managed as a complex adaptive system and overcome the challenges of individualism, reductionism, separation and marketisation associated with scientific thinking. Working with emergence and uncertainty is necessary.

Thirdly, regenerative tourism requires a deeply engaged bottom-up approach that is place-based, community-centred and environment-focused. The practices and thinking underpinning The Tourism CoLab's work, and how we advocate for mindset and systems change, as well as the practices needed to become conscious co-creators of the future, have been shared in the hope of inspiring those who want to drive change in tourism to not be afraid of thinking differently and to support others who do. Courage is necessary. The greatest challenge for those in the higher education system is to unravel the journey back to being able to think, know, be and act again. The journey to regenerative tourism requires nothing less of us than to evolve our thinking, our systems and our way of being and relating to the world.

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