

## **The Road to Success: Tourism Social Entrepreneurs' Quest for Regenerative Tourism**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates tourism social enterprises' challenges, strategies, and opportunities for regenerative tourism. Social movement theory was used to analyze fifty-seven social entrepreneur interviews. Three stages were identified: Inspiration – factors driving the creation and innovation of these enterprises; Sustaining – obstacles and strategies for long-term success; Exploring and participating in regenerative tourism – obstacles and strategies for engagement. The Systems Thinking and Feedback Loop created by regenerative tourism was illuminated by the study participants. Theoretical implications include the first use of social movement theory, systems thinking, and feedback loop together as a framework named the Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model. Practical recommendations include strategies for selecting like-minded business partners and ways to educate tourists (both overt and covert) about the benefits of a regenerative mindset.

*Keywords:* Regenerative tourism, tourism social entrepreneurship, social movement theory, resource mobilization, systems thinking, feedback loop.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over-tourism, climate change, and emerging socio-economic-environmental problems at the destination level call for innovative, transformational solutions that require a fundamental paradigm shift by destination stakeholders. For some, this has meant a focus on sustainable tourism. However, others argue that because of the major climatic and social shifts already occurring, sustainability is inadequate. Some scholars have criticized the sustainable tourism development agenda as being co-opted by Big Business to serve continual economic growth, failing to question this fundamental emphasis that reinforces negative social and environmental impacts (Bellato et al., 2022a; Higin-Desbiolles, 2018). The destructive outcome of what many see as neoliberal capitalism growth strategies has led to increased interest in the degrowth agenda to focus on the rights of the local communities above the rights of tourists (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2019). This argument, in line with Harvey (2017), also emphasizes the importance of the right to the city that centers around democratization, social justice, and the creation of a place that reflects the desires and needs of the local community.

Concerning these issues, scholars propose the concept of regenerative tourism that moves beyond sustainable tourism, creating net positive effects by increasing the regenerative capacity of destinations, leaving them better than before (Bellato *et al.*, 2022a; Sheldon, 2022). If the goal of sustainable tourism is to minimize the harm at the destination, regenerative tourism seeks to replenish and revitalize the destination's resources so it can not only survive but indeed thrive (Sheldon, 2022). As with any innovation, we must understand the obstacles that challenge destinations from pursuing regenerative initiatives before practical solutions can be implemented.

Previous research has pointed toward tourism social entrepreneurs as potential catalysts for regenerative tourism (Ateljevic & Sheldon, 2022; Cave & Dredge, 2020). Social entrepreneurs act as

change agents in the social sector by introducing innovative solutions to some of society's most pressing issues, offering new ideas for systems-level change while still maintaining profit motive (Dees, 1998). Aquino et al. (2021) argue that tourism social enterprises have great potential to create social innovation while generating profit and creating a more inclusive tourism ecosystem. Despite the growing number of tourism social enterprises in practice, the literature on tourism social entrepreneurship and regenerative tourism is still in early development (Sheldon, 2021). Tourism social enterprises are a cornerstone of regenerative tourism, acting as a bridge between the old paradigm of conventional or mass tourism practices, with the primary goal being economic growth and profit maximization, with the new paradigm aiming not only to reduce harm but also to improve and revitalize the destination (Sheldon, 2022). Tourism social enterprises have great potential to build regenerative principles into their practices from the ground-up with their innovation and creativity and becoming catalysts for industry transformation (Cave & Dredge, 2020).

Since proponents of regenerative tourism call for transforming tourism practices fundamentally, this study uses social movement theory as a framework to investigate tourism social enterprises' obstacles and strategies to engagement in regenerative tourism. Social movement agency and resource mobilization are utilized in the framework, becoming catalysts for the three stages of social enterprises: inspiration, sustaining, and exploring and participating in regenerative tourism. Tourism scholars have used social movement theory to explain how an organized effort by a group of people can change a wide range of significant aspects of society (McGehee *et al.*, 2014; Dillette & Benjamin, 2022). Hence, the overall research question is: How and in what ways do tourism social entrepreneurs perceive obstacles to Regenerative Tourism and what are strategies used to overcome them? This study utilizes a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews of a purposeful global sampling of tourism social enterprise leaders.

This study brings distinct contributions to the regenerative tourism literature through the examination and illumination of the challenges and opportunities experienced by tourism social entrepreneurs through the lens of social movement theory and via the discovery of a systems thinking approach. This work will also identify and recommend ways in which tourism social entrepreneurs can overcome obstacles to engagement in regenerative tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Regenerative Tourism and Tourism Social Entrepreneurship*

The term 'regenerative tourism' has been gaining momentum because of the need to create transformational change to improve the environmental, social, and economic lot of the host community. While sustainable tourism has shown some progress in reducing damage caused by excessive resource use, scholars argue that it is failing to solve the problem; a more robust change in values and mindsets is needed (Ateljevic & Sheldon, 2022; Becken & Kaur, 2022). Sustainable tourism initiatives are often top-down from the private sector and government-led development (Chassagne & Everingham, 2019). Comparatively, the integral change agents in regenerative tourism tend to be the hosts and members of local communities (Bellato *et al.*, 2022a). While sustainable tourism focuses on minimizing the impact on support systems while generating economic prosperity (Hall, 2010), the purpose of regenerative tourism is to build the capacity of support systems for a net positive impact (Cave & Dredge, 2020). The concept of regenerative tourism aligns with the call for a degrowth agenda, which explores ways to develop economies that move away from an imperative for growth while still supporting human thriving, fairness, rights to the city, and justice within the community (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.* 2019; Harvey, 2017). As a foundation, Bellato *et al.* (2022a) developed a conceptual framework and proposed a working definition of regenerative tourism:

*“Regenerative tourism is a transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects by increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems. Derived from the ecological worldview, it weaves Indigenous and Western science perspectives and knowledges. Tourism systems are regarded as inseparable from nature”* (Bellato *et al.*, 2022a, p.9)

Regenerative tourism has the potential for greater transformation as the focus on tourism's role in transitioning to a regenerative economy. This movement also can drive the idea of “localizing tourism” to build local community capacities as one of the most promising paths for tourism to thrive (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2024). Adapted from Fullerton’s (2015) principles of a regenerative economy, Sheldon (2022) developed eight principles of regenerative tourism (Figure 1). We use these principles to guide our analysis, which was derived from the interview findings with the social entrepreneurs.

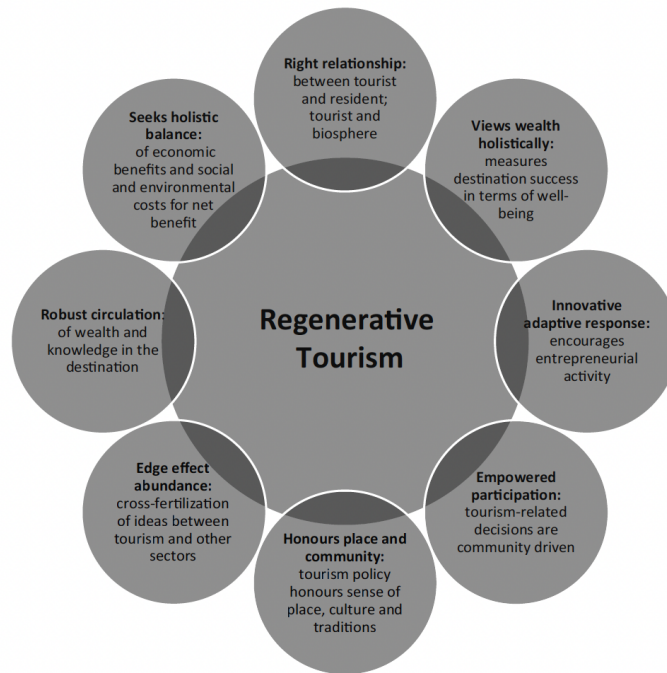


Figure 1. Eight principles of regenerative tourism. Source: Sheldon (2022)

However, as with any major paradigm shift, regenerative tourism has its challenges. It is not easy to achieve and requires a long-term commitment and stakeholder collaboration. Another challenge is the need to value the destination’s resources differently by measuring destination success in new ways beyond financial metrics (Sheldon, 2022). The movement requires us to create new economic models, value collaboration over competition, target community over self-interest, value culture over commodity, and seek well-being over financial profit, but to date, very little empirical work has been conducted to examine both the obstacles and strategies for success in achieving these goals.

Any new conceptualization of the tourism system will require a complementary infrastructure that shares common goals and values. This study hopes to explore the potential for social enterprises to fulfill that role. In a tourism context, scholars have argued for the potential for tourism social enterprises to drive change and have called for additional studies to deepen the understanding of the social entrepreneur’s experience and opportunities to engage with regenerative tourism (Ateljevic & Sheldon, 2022; Cave & Dredge, 2020). Sheldon *et al.* (2017) define tourism social entrepreneurship as:

*“A process that uses tourism to create innovative solutions to immediate social, environmental and economic problems in destinations by mobilizing ideas, capacities, resources and social agreements, from within or outside the destination, required for its sustainable social transformation” (Sheldon et al., 2017, p.7).*

Newey's (2018) well-received view of social entrepreneurship argues that it plays a vital role in changing the system through two types of distinct social entrepreneurship activities: compensatory and transformative. Compensatory social entrepreneurship attempts to work within the existing global capitalist system to overcome its issues. This type of social entrepreneurship operates within the boundaries of the existing system, seeking to alleviate specific social issues without challenging the economic and political structures. By contrast, transformative social entrepreneurship seeks to change the system of global capitalism and propose radical social change to existing economic-social-political structures. Newey (2018) provides examples such as the Alter-globalization movement and Transition towns.

While Newey's work is indeed important, it does suffer from somewhat of a false binary, as many social entrepreneurs may engage in both approaches. For example, Horgan and Dimitrijevic (2020) underscore the evolving role of architects as activists in fostering social innovation in the built environment. They operate within the boundaries of an existing system but also challenge that system. Aquino et al. (2021) also support the notion that tourism social entrepreneurship can be both compensatory and transformative. They mention that tourism social enterprises are positioned to combat the negative externalities of doing business in the destination, which are more likely to occur in traditional capitalist development models. However, these enterprises are also promoted as a tool to positively transform the destination and the way tourism is developed (Sheldon et al., 2017).

In this study, the tourism social enterprises that are engaged in regenerative tourism can be classified as primarily transformative because their main purpose is to transform tourism and shift paradigms, intertwining their business activities with social movement activism to advocate for regenerative practices. But they still must operate within the existing compensatory global systems and structures, walking a tightrope between the status quo and innovation. For instance, social enterprise hybrid organizations that pursue dual missions of financial sustainability and social purpose can create tensions and trade-offs of resources, prioritizing market-based solutions over addressing the root causes of social issues (Doherty et al. 2014). Thus, ensuring the value of collaboration over competition is critical for social enterprises when engaging in regenerative tourism in the destination.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### *Tourism Social Enterprises as Conveyors of Regenerative Tourism as a Social Movement*

Social movement organizations consist of individuals and their networks who form groups with common aspirations for transformation and social change through collective action (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social movements are collections of social movement organizations that form informal networks based on collective identity (Della Porta & Diani, 2020) to achieve a common goal. A Classic example of a social movement is the global feminist movement of the 1960s (Diani & Melucci, 1988). Recent examples of social movements include the Black Lives Matter movement, primarily located in the United States (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022), and the global Climate Change movement (McAdam, 2017). There are growing numbers of social movements operating within the tourism ecosystem that argue for the elimination of unnecessary consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. One example is Stay Grounded, a global network advocating for a fair and eco-friendly transportation system that has been actively campaigning to decrease air travel and prohibit the use of private jets (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2024). Other movements overlap with tourism, including rewilding as a type of restoration for ecologies, biodiversity, and human-nature relationships (Bekoff, 2014).

There is a large body of knowledge regarding "Old" versus "New" social movements, claiming that old movements are economic and class-based while new movements are identity and human rights-based (Scott, 2023). Interestingly, as with the conundrums within Newey's (2018) binary-leaning work on social entrepreneurship, regenerative tourism as a social movement represents a combination of both old and new. It includes economic and class aspects as it impacts the material well-being of groups of people and the economies in which they reside; it also includes non-economic impacts of tourism, such as human

rights and preservation of community. In addition, although social movement theory could potentially provide a robust framework for understanding regenerative tourism, most research on social movements has been based on non-profit organizations. The theory may be less equipped to analyze hybrid organizations like social enterprises, which aim not only to deliver social change but also to be financially sustainable. Thus, combining social movement theory with the social entrepreneurship literature helps to minimize the limitations of using social movement theory alone.

The advantage of using a social movement framework over one like Newey's (2018), for example, is that there is a rich history of its use to examine how social movement organizations face challenges, overcome obstacles, and seek opportunities through analysis of both individual actors and organizational systems (Della Porta & Diani, 2020). There is also breadth: New Social Movement researchers focusing on tourism have found three elements as most crucial to successful participation in social movements: self-efficacy, consciousness-raising, and the personal as political (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022; McGehee, 2012).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to reach their goals (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is an important component of social movements and has traditionally been examined extensively in women's participation (Hasso, 2001) and consumer psychology (Nardini *et al.*, 2021). Self-efficacy has been more modestly utilized in the tourism context, including the Black Travel Movement (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022), and volunteer travel (McGehee, 2002; Strzelecka *et al.*, 2018), where it also played an important role in social movement participation. Given the challenging nature of tourism social entrepreneurship that requires perseverance and tenacity, self-efficacy is arguably a vital trait for its participants but remains underexplored.

Consciousness-raising, the process of becoming aware of social conflicts and injustices (Mueller, 1992), can also be critical to social entrepreneurship and regenerative tourism. At its core, consciousness-raising involves putting the spotlight on inequities, injustices, and inequalities, exposing those being exploited and their allies to information that changes their view of an issue. Consciousness-raising is potentially important at numerous points of the tourism social entrepreneurship-regenerative tourism process. First, budding tourism social entrepreneurs need to recognize the issues and potential solutions, while stakeholders, including tourists and policymakers, must be informed to raise awareness.

Additionally, the personal as political occurs when individuals can make the connection between their personal circumstances and their power, then focus their consumer behavior in a way that reflects their political views (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Whittier, 2017). For example, climate-conscious individuals may engage in purchasing local products and limiting air travel. The purchase of regenerative tourism products or services by both tourists and tourism social entrepreneurs is another potential personal as political activity that has not been examined.

While self-efficacy, consciousness-raising, and personal as political are all phenomena that are crucial to social movement success and have potential contributions to the tourism social enterprise-regenerative tourism nexus, resource mobilization is also important. McGehee *et al.* (2014) define resource mobilization as "how and through what networks social movement organizations obtain economic, political, and human resources" (p.142). In alignment with this definition, Della Porta (2020) argues that available resources impact the strategic choices of social movements and the consequences of collective action for social change. Thus, understanding the "how" and the "what" to mobilize those resources is critical for tourism social enterprises, but they have not been explored as such.

Given the role of tourism social enterprises in addressing the economic, social, and environmental aspects of tourism, they have great potential as social movement organizations to be agents of change in regenerative tourism (Ateljevic & Sheldon, 2022; Cave & Dredge, 2022). These enterprises may serve as the conveyors of regenerative tourism as a social movement through their businesses. This work hopes to begin addressing this possibility, which has great practical application, by focusing on tourism social enterprises' obstacles to engaging in regenerative tourism, potential strategies to overcome them, and opportunities to consider. Theoretically, we hope to build a model for 'regenerative tourism social movement theory' from the perspective of tourism social enterprises (see Figure 2) utilizing a social movement theory framework:

1. What are the obstacles for tourism social entrepreneurs to engage in regenerative tourism?
2. What are the strategies that tourism social entrepreneurs use to minimize or overcome these obstacles?

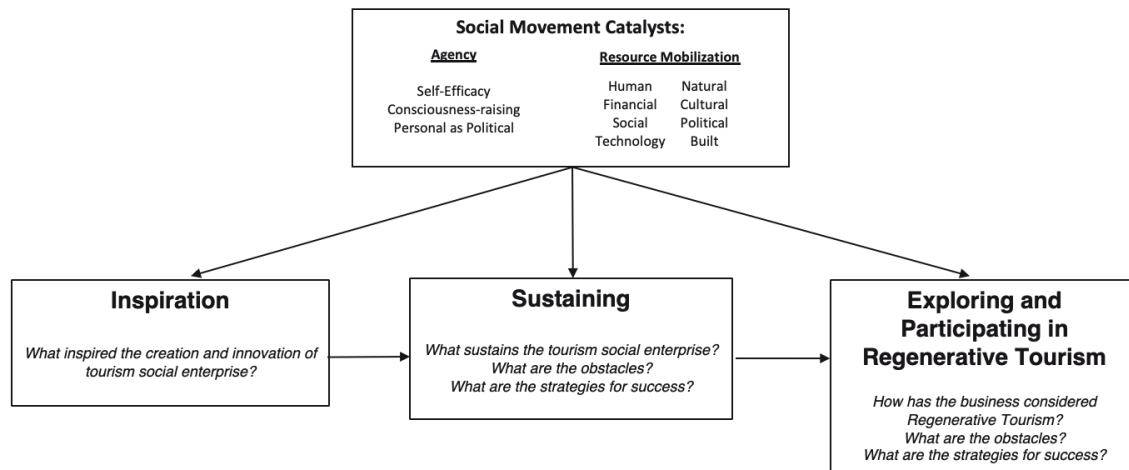


Figure 2. Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model. (Source: Author)

### *Emerging from the study: A Systems Thinking Approach*

While social movement theory served as the framework for this study, the entrepreneurs we interviewed illuminated an additional aspect: a systems thinking approach. Systems thinking is a complex field with roots tracing back to ancient Western and Eastern philosophies, with thinkers like Aristotle and Lao Tzu exploring interconnected views of the world (Cabrera et al. 2008). Many also credit Ludwig von Bertalanffy who proposed General Systems Theory in the 1940s which is often regarded as the formal beginning of systems thinking as a field (Cabrera et al. 2008).

Currently, systems thinking is increasingly influencing a diverse range of fields, such as education (Tamim, 2020), business management (Inghels, 2020), sociology, agriculture, and biology (Cabrera et al., 2008). There is growing research in tourism studies that applies systems thinking to improve tourism and hospitality research (Moscardo, 2021) and improving destination governance (Baggio et al., 2010). McCool (2019) describes systems thinking as a framework that focuses on the whole, seeking to identify patterns of change based on dynamic interrelationships. It focuses on the web of reciprocal relationships, recognizing them as part of larger systems. Systems thinking focuses on the connectedness of actors and their actions, and it has nonlinear causality that contributes to continuous change through a feedback loop (Moscardo, 2021).

This inherent dynamism of the systems thinking approach has also been identified as its limitation because when the attributes of systems keep on changing, it becomes harder for tourism practitioners to predict and plan for long-term development (Reddy et al., 2020). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the loop is not necessarily self-reinforcing and that its effect can decrease over time or even suddenly disappear (Roxas et al., 2020) when a community is facing a sudden crisis such as war or a natural disaster (Reddy et al., 2020). However, despite these limitations, the systems thinking approach is considered a valuable tool for successful regeneration, as it holistically addresses complex challenges and promotes transformative solutions (Mang & Reed, 2011; Bellato et al., 2022b). The proponents of regenerative tourism believe that embracing systems thinking provides an opportunity to explore how tourism can contribute to transforming tourism towards regeneration (Bellato et al., 2022b; Mang and Reed, 2012). Becken and Kaur (2021) argue that the systems thinking approach also differentiates regenerative tourism from dominant tourism approaches. They classify traditional tourism as

compartmentalized, focusing on individual components of a system to maximize benefits for humans. Sustainable tourism is characterized as industry-centric, perceiving tourism as part of a sector striving for efficiency.

In contrast, regenerative tourism is defined as holistic, considering tourism as a subsystem within a larger system where collaboration is central (Becken & Kaur, 2021). The regeneration process, an important aspect of systems thinking, can heal the system back and create a feedback loop to establish relational value for both people and destination (Becken & Kaur, 2022). Major and Clarke (2021) also utilized a systems thinking approach to comprehend tourism as self-organizing and interconnected units that establish mutually beneficial relationships with the communities and places in which they operate. As the findings of this study will show, our interview subjects led us to this approach, and as a result expanded our proposed framework (Figure 3) to the creation of the Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Paradigm*

An interpretive paradigm, grounded in the ontological belief of recognizing multiple realities, guides this research (Bailey, 2017). This paradigm values the social world as not an isolated entity but as temporally and historically situated, context-specific, and shaped by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It involves examining the complex behavior of tourism social entrepreneurs and the social phenomena that require understanding the subjective meanings, interpretations, and experiences of individuals within their socio-cultural contexts. The study employs a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) with founders, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), and managerial teams of tourism social enterprises. This method was selected to capture the full breadth of situations encountered by tourism social entrepreneurs, including obstacles and strategies to overcome them.

As qualitative researchers, we value positionality and reflexivity and find it important to understand the potential biases we may bring to the cultures being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The first author identified as Indonesian, female, and has a background as a social entrepreneur with recent involvement with a regenerative tourism network. The second author is White, female, and Appalachian, with advanced degrees in sociology and a passion for responsible, community-centered tourism development. The third author has past experiences conducting research in collaboration with tourism entrepreneurs that aim at understanding and improving the transformative aspects of tourism experiences. All the authors adhere to a constructivist paradigm that views reality as socially co-constructed, enmeshed in social-cultural contexts, and that knowledge is subjective and shaped by our experiences and interactions with others.

### *Participants*

The participants in this research were selected using a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling methods. To engage in the study, participants needed to hold a managerial position within tourism businesses that self-categorized as tourism social enterprises. We confirmed the status of tourism social enterprises by employing triangulation, reviewing websites, company reports, certifications from B Corporations, memberships in specific social entrepreneurship organizations, analysis of business models, and interactions with local communities.

The author utilized connections with two community platforms, tourism social enterprise award winners, and snowball sampling to identify tourism social enterprises focusing on the regenerative tourism movement. The first platform is the *B Tourism* community, a global network of certified B Corporations and other conscious travel companies that aims to be a 'resource for the regenerative travel movement and to help travelers enjoy a vacation experience that embodies interconnectedness' (B

Tourism, 2023). With permission from the B Tourism team leader, the author pitched the research at a June 2023 virtual meeting and invited tourism social enterprise leaders to participate in the research. Furthermore, we also received recommendations from the B Tourism organization regarding which of their member companies would be ideal participants for this research, specifically those engaged in regenerative tourism practices. With this mechanism, we tried to filter as much as possible to get participants who not only claim that they are doing regenerative tourism but also practice it in their organization.

The second platform is *Regenerative Travel* (Regenerative Travel, 2023), a community of independent hotels and travel agencies focused on regenerating people and places. Their platform assists travelers in finding hotels and agencies that envision transforming travel as a force for good. In addition to these networks, potential tourism social enterprises were identified through the list of winners from *UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals Global StartUp Competition* and the *Social Tourism Competition*. Finally, the snowball sampling technique (Saldaña, 2015) was employed by asking for recommendations from other tourism social enterprises at the end of each interview.

Since this study examines social movement agency, it is important to conduct interviews with the founders or leaders to understand their backgrounds and motivations for driving social change through their enterprises. The established parameters for selecting tourism social enterprise leaders included 1) they have been in operation for at least one year and 2) are actively involved in regenerative tourism initiatives through their businesses. Approximately 150 managers of companies were contacted through email invitations, resulting in successful interviews with 57 participants. Most of the final interviewees came from *B Tourism* community (22), followed by *UNWTO Sustainable Development Goals Global StartUp Competition* (13), *Regenerative Travel* platform (6), *Social Tourism Competition* (5), and snowball sampling (11). These interviews were conducted via Zoom video (54) or audio calls (3).

Types of tourism social enterprises included in the study encompassed various categories: tour operators and travel agents, accommodation providers (e.g., hotels, eco-lodges, and villas), marketplace or app-based companies, consultants, and tourism businesses offering innovative products. Descriptive information about the participants and enterprises is provided in Appendix A. Participants had the option to either use pseudonyms or their real names and enterprises for this study; interestingly, every participant chose the latter. Participants were located in 24 countries and 6 continents. All interviews were conducted in English. The recruitment of additional participants continued until data saturation was surpassed (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Our intention when recruiting global and purposeful sample participants was to access a broad range of challenges, opportunities, and strategies for success. While ultimately each community must make its own decisions regarding specific goals for regenerative tourism, having access to the options generated and analyzed in this study will help facilitate local decision-making in both initial efforts and throughout the process of creating regenerative tourism in their respective communities. Organizations can judge for themselves what strategies will work best for them depending on the specific nature of their enterprises.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

An inductive thematic approach is employed to analyze the data (Saldaña, 2015). To address trustworthiness in the data collection process, reduce the risk of systematic biases, generate rich data and a better understanding of the issues, an audit trail was maintained, member checks were performed, and data triangulation of interviews, website analysis, and company report were employed (DeCrop, 2004; Maxwell, 2005). The use of in-depth, semi-structured audio or video interviews for 45 to 60 minutes via Zoom was chosen because that approach allowed us to reach participants globally, probe for more questions, and clarify the complex phenomenon of interest when needed. Themes, stories, and details were repeated across participants until we reached theoretical sufficiency, in which we had categories that were well described along with the data presented, and we had an adequate depth of understanding from the data (Dey, 1999).

In agreement with our thematic approach (Saldaña, 2015), we utilize social movement theory as a starting point for our investigation of regenerative tourism participation. When developing our coding frame, we integrated the social movement theory to categorize broad topics, including self-efficacy, consciousness-raising, and the personal as political. Given the newness of the phenomenon, regenerative tourism practices and obstacles were organized based on open and focused coding conducted by the primary researcher and confirmed by the secondary researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Questions were designed to elicit insight on each topic while also allowing participants to express agency, resources, obstacles, strategies, and opinions on regenerative tourism.

An initial list of codes was developed based on raw quotes within the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Through the iterative process, the relationship between codes and how they connect with the overarching theme was examined. Finally, the findings were linked back to the theoretical lens and previous literature. Thematic analysis identifies three stages and one overall component: Inspiration, Sustaining, Exploring and Participating in Regenerative Tourism, and a Systems Thinking Feedback Loop created by regenerative tourism in tourism social enterprises. This model illuminates strategies for tourism social enterprises utilizing social movement catalysts to tackle obstacles in the engagement of regenerative tourism.

## **FINDINGS**

The interviews and supplemental data revealed three stages of tourism social enterprise's development and subsequent engagement with regenerative tourism, each interacting with social movement catalysts in unique ways. Perhaps the most important discovery through analysis of the interviews and materials was that a tourism social enterprise must be conceived of as possible before any opportunity and thought of engagement in regenerative tourism can occur. The Inspiration Stage details the factors sparking the creation and innovation of tourism social enterprises, which were surprisingly similar to the principles of regenerative tourism. The Sustaining Stage includes the challenges in maintaining the business as well as strategies for long-term success. The Exploring and Participating Stage focuses on understanding how regenerative tourism contributes to business success, acknowledging challenges, opportunities, and effective strategies. In addition to the three stages, there was consistent evidence of the importance of a systems thinking approach to problem-solving by the organizations, something unanticipated by the research team. This approach created a feedback loop that energizes the enterprise and provides fresh catalysts for agency and resource mobilization.

Participants shared that shifting the thinking from “me” to “we” to develop a collaborative action for systemic change is critical to successful regenerative tourism initiatives. This finding resonates with Dredge (2022) and Major and Clarke’s (2022) arguments on the importance of a long-term systems thinking approach to understand tourism as interconnected entities that form symbiotic relationships with the broader community; the participants agree. The findings also support Becken and Kaur (2022), who argue that the regeneration process can heal the system, improve the social movement catalysts used for tourism development, and create a feedback loop to establish relational value for both people and destination. Figure 3 illustrates the addition of a sense of purpose to the initial model presented in Figure 2 and places the systems thinking and the feedback loop as interconnected lines in the model, which we have named the Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model. It demonstrates how tourism social enterprises in this study integrate social movement catalysts, systems thinking, and the feedback loop for successful regenerative tourism participation.

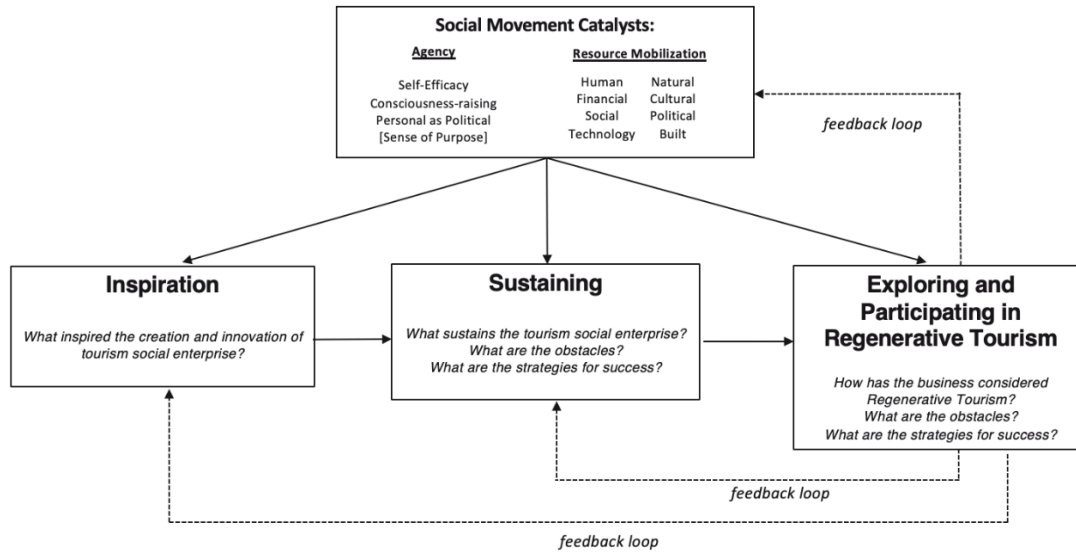


Figure 3. The Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model: Systems Thinking Approach

*Inspiration - factors driving the creation and innovation of tourism social enterprises*

At the inspiration stage, participants in this study experience an awakening driven by two catalysts of social movement agency and a new catalyst. Interestingly, participants minimized resource mobilization compared to aspects of agency that inspired them to begin the tourism social enterprise journey. Perhaps the most intriguing finding is the way in which participants emphasize a sense of purpose over self-efficacy as vital to overcoming obstacles. Participants recognize in the interview that they see opportunities to achieve their social mission through their purpose-driven social enterprise model. Many of the participants believe in their ability to overcome obstacles in their lives, but their strong sense of purpose to deliver social change far overshadows self-efficacy. It is almost as if they have no time or interest in worrying about whether they can do it, but more a matter of the fact that they must. This drive is exemplified by participants such as Iben:

*Our mission is to enable people to make better decision in their daily life and balance the way of living with nature. We see tourism experience is an entrance for people to learn more and aware about environmental issue. No matter how hard it is, since there is an intrinsic benefit that you feel and it's real for you, there is no way that you would like to neglect it [social mission]. If we can call it a calling, it will keep "calling" you, even "haunting you", this is the mission that you cannot escape from.*

Christian also expresses a strong sense of purpose, driven by his desire to support the indigenous community in Peru's Sacred Valley, where he was raised. Christian's motivation aligns with the empowered participation principle of regenerative tourism that underscores the importance of involving local communities, including indigenous groups, in decision-making processes:

*I have an authentic purpose that I do know all these people [indigenous community], there are people who trust my vision, it is not just the people who work with me. We are talking around 200 people in every one of these communities that we have already allied. There are a lot of people who trust and expect us, they hope that we can help them to change their fate.*

Consistent with previous social movement research, consciousness-raising is a key element leading to the inspiration stage for participants. They develop a heightened awareness of multifaceted social and ecological issues like over-tourism, climate change, and racial inequality. Consciousness-

raising helped to expose these “invisible obstacles” that could only be tackled by first being exposed. Participants reported consciousness-raising in two forms: incremental, where awareness builds gradually through life experiences, and immediate, marked by a pivotal moment leading to sudden awareness. Incremental examples were often in the form of childhood experiences, such as when Nadine recalls how her early years memories with nature influenced her ecological consciousness :

*We've always been outdoor kids in Germany, you are being raised about recycling and caring for the environment. When you are growing up in the environment you start caring and noticing the climate change and you want to protect that.*

Participants also shared instances of immediate consciousness-raising, including protests and community discussions. The issue of over-tourism and the resulting economic injustices for local communities serve as driving factors to establish social enterprises, as demonstrated by Emanuele:

*We see a lot of residents protesting as they write in the street: “tourist go home”, we should create a condition where we can both welcome people but also make travel enriching for both sides [resident and tourists], not just for middleman. So we create platform that is technologically advanced but at the same time embeds values about the sharing economy, regenerative economy.*

Just as with self-efficacy and consciousness-raising, unique aspects of the personal as political were revealed at the inspiration stage of tourism social enterprise development. Most participants expressed that a sense of the personal as political is what first inspired them to create their businesses and then subsequently strengthened over time. Eliza shared:

*I think I've always been that kind of person instinctively, but through my company, I've learned a lot more about how to put those good intentions into practice. I've always been sort of conscious about purchasing products and services but perhaps more so after running my social enterprise.*

Consciousness-raising is also visible when many participants described how they incorporated ways to educate tourists and other stakeholders on how to make the personal political. Several examples include partnering with a certified B Corporation, encouraging the use of public transportation to the office, and buying local products for daily consumption. Thus, the nurturing components of agency, which include the additional aspect of a sense of purpose, consciousness-raising, and a personal as political, create an incubator for inspiration.

### *Sustaining – obstacles and strategies for long-term success*

In the sustaining stage, agency is still present but is less of an emphasis; resource mobilization becomes the key catalyst. Among the resources extensively discussed during the interviews, human resources emerges as the most crucial asset for success. It also stands out as one of the most substantial challenges that demand careful nurturing within the company: procuring high-quality employees who are committed to long-term engagement can pose a serious obstacle. This challenge is compounded by the allure of competitive salaries and benefits provided by larger corporations and the inherent difficulties of tourism seasonality. For example, John from Frontiers North Adventure in Canada mentions:

*The local people do not want a 2 or 4-month job. They want a career. They want a job that they can go to and work at year-round. We're interested in creating full-time year-round careers and tourism in Churchill. The way we do that is that we grow and develop this winter northern light season so our community can provide more full-time year-round tours and jobs. This is part of our strategy, and we think the labor challenges that we're currently experiencing will be reduced. This is part of regenerating our community, right?*

Of course, resources do not exist in siloes. Human and financial resources are closely intertwined. This balance between financial success and assembling the right team is exemplified by Zachary's approach in his social enterprise, as stated on his website and company report. John and Zachary's efforts are evident applications of the robust circulation principle of regenerative tourism, which prioritizes the distribution of wealth and knowledge to local people in the destination. For example, Zachary emphasizes substantial investments in human resources management alongside financial resources:

*Although having financial capital is important, these are not capital-intensive businesses. I think language and cross-cultural skills are vital. A true passion for travel and how it can impact customers, suppliers, local communities is important. Finding great people is not easy. It's a constant challenge. We invested early on in human resource infrastructure management and we spent time and money. It takes a lot of time to think about how to make a good environment for them to grow. I think truly prioritizing our people and retaining a great team is the most important resource for our success.*

Tourism social enterprises report adopting various creative strategies to overcome financial challenges, including participation in UNWTO Startup Competition, and securing grants and investments from sources like the Reset Tourism Fund by UnTours Foundation. Many also employ a bootstrap approach, utilizing their internal resources.

Despite being less challenging than human and financial resources, participants also report facing social obstacles, such as unclear partnerships and time-intensive networking. Participants report that some of the best ways to cultivate social resources include involving the community from the outset for collective decision-making, joining a social enterprise business accelerator program, and engaging with other sectors by partnering with universities, scientists, and non-profits.

Social resources often serve as a bridge to cultivate reciprocal exchanges of other resources, playing a key role in overcoming obstacles. For example, tourism social entrepreneurs' involvement in natural and built community-driven initiatives like land regeneration and environmental projects keeps their priorities on the radar of other key community stakeholders. By doing so, tourism social entrepreneurs play a role as activists in fostering social innovation in the built environment with a regenerative tourism approach, aligning with Horgan & Dimitrijevic's (2020) emphasis on the importance of collaboration between stakeholder ecosystems that can coproduce frameworks for change (Horgan & Dimitrijevic, 2020). Participants also highlight the importance of political resources for long-term success. Achieving success in gaining government buy-in is neither easy nor quick. It requires engaging in numerous discussions with various government stakeholders to build trust and secure political support for the business. Fostering a strong relationship with the government resulting in partnership projects are initiatives shared by Reza (Atourin.com) and Aayusha (Community Homestay Network).

Participants identified technology resources, including software, online platforms, social media tools, applications, and innovative products, as crucial for success. Adam from Greenstep illustrates the adaptive response principle in regenerative tourism via his use of robust technology resources to enable the company to innovate during the challenging times of COVID-19:

*We saw growth during the pandemic. Part of that meant having the technology capital. We were available to do most of our work remotely, able to do a lot of communicating and scheduling but also facilitating meetings, strategy workshops, and brainstorming sessions around sustainability and regenerative strategy through digital platforms. Our own software tools were valuable as well.*

At the sustaining stage, the strong social movement agency that initially inspired participants to create their businesses as forces for good now guides them to incorporate social purposes into their strategies for mobilizing resources. Establishing an essential set of resources that can mutually benefit each other creates a strong foundation for social enterprise success when they aim to participate in regenerative tourism.

## *Exploring and participating in regenerative tourism – obstacles and strategies for engagement*

Given that regenerative tourism is an understudied area, we encouraged participants to take the lead in expressing their opinions. Emerging from their perspectives, five areas are identified as facing obstacles to their application: igniting agency, honoring the place and community, empowering participation, working collaboratively across sectors, and establishing measurement for regenerative tourism. For a more detailed list of obstacles and strategies employed by tourism social enterprises in their engagement with regenerative tourism, see Appendix B. The identified impending obstacles and the strategies participants apply to overcome them are further discussed below.

Participants mention that a key obstacle to igniting agency for regenerative tourism is that tourists and community stakeholders are unsure about what regenerative tourism means. While we recruited participants based on their involvement with regenerative practices, participants share diverse levels of involvement in regenerative tourism, from recent adopters to those using the concept to reimagine and clarify the manifestation of their core values. They consider exploring and participating in regenerative tourism because they see an opportunity to apply this approach in their social enterprise model to achieve social transformation. The differing perceptions of regenerative tourism present a challenge to its adoption and engagement. Some participants, like Jessica from Bumi Journey who, according to their website, social media, and company report, rebranded to 'Eco and Regenerative Travel,' feel the need to explicitly use regenerative tourism in their marketing to construct a clear narrative:

*Regenerative tourism to me is not just about 'not making any harm'. It's more about how we can make things better. It comes from my personal belief that I come to this planet earth not just to leave and die. We can contribute something. It's not enough to be sustainable. We must think about how as an individual and organization, we can contribute to make a positive impact in the ecosystem.*

Conversely, other participants practice regenerative principles without using the term, opting for labels like 'responsible travel' to reduce confusion, as shared by Travis and seen on his company website and report. They find such terminology more familiar and less overwhelming for tourists and stakeholders. Tom also avoids the term regenerative as he feels it can be misleading. Instead, the website and company report use the term 'good trips only.' Applying regenerative principles is more challenging in his high mobility tour operation compared to businesses like accommodation providers, which have a closer connection to the place and community:

*We don't use the term regenerative tourism. We have to be realistic that for tourism to be genuinely regenerative, the positive impacts have to outweigh all of the negative impacts. It's really challenging for a business like us (tour operator), because we still have huge amounts of carbon emissions. Yes, we offset them, but we still generate thousands of tons of carbon emissions every year and we know that we need to reduce that. In our marketing we talk to the journey that we are on, rather than the fact that we think we've solved anything.*

As part of the strategy to overcome obstacles in igniting agency, participants cultivate consciousness-raising experiences for clients and key stakeholders, including employees, business partners, and Destination Management Organizations. For example, The Centre for GOOD Travel in New Zealand created a Good Awaits podcast to build storytelling around regenerative tourism to a broader audience. Others, such as Hamanasi Adventure and Dive Resort in Belize, raise the consciousness of their employees, community, and guests through happy hour presentations at the bar:

*We educate our guests, employees, and community about why we need to take care of the resources. Our tours are very educational and our trained tour guides talk about the environmental stressors, what we do to take care of them. We partner with Non-Governmental Organizations, we educate the kids at school, we do community events. Every Tuesday, we have happy hour presentations at the bar where we talk about the work that we do, and here is where we bring up the concept of regeneration, why it is important and how is it different from sustainability.*

Another strategy shared by Nadine is to take on the role of consciousness-raiser by teaching courses about regenerative tourism and working in a tourism social enterprise.

*I love teaching the subject of regenerative tourism and regenerative way of life, going beyond sustainability. I like seeing the transformation process of the participants in the courses. They learn to see the world with different eyes because that's what we need to flip the whole system. I believe regenerative tourism and business is a solution to the crisis. From tour operator perspective, we can share this with our suppliers, local community, and guests. The snowball effect is what must happen to get the whole world to change.*

The degradation of natural resources in destinations is a significant obstacle for tourism social enterprises seeking to participate in regenerative tourism. Regenerating the land and natural environment requires considerable time, investment, and knowledge. Built and natural resources are closely tied together. Participants reported obstacles such as poor community infrastructure and the challenges of finding eco-friendly materials for architectural and construction needs, both critical elements of regenerative tourism. Several strategies are outlined in Appendix B, including the construction of eco-friendly architecture using locally sourced, renewable materials (e.g., earth-bag buildings), as exemplified by Mana Ubud in Bali.

Conflicts may also arise between tourism social enterprises and the local community. David argues that traditional tourism models are extractive, leading to issues like over-tourism and climate change, which aligns with the call for a degrowth agenda (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2019). Through his experience with Playa Viva Eco Resort in Mexico, overcoming this ideological conflict with the traditional model, David adopts a place-based approach in communities. This strategy involves local employment, educational support, and ecological projects like a turtle sanctuary, as well as exploring local resources and hiring local talent. This aligns with Horgan & Dimitrijevic's (2020) model for developing capacity building and resilience in placemaking by involving the local community from the beginning. David shared that the result is a "triple ripple effect" that contributes positively to the community. This resonates with Harvey's (2017) assertion that by granting the community the right to collaboratively design their space and favor the agency of local citizens, regenerative tourism could help a destination to flourish and thrive. This approach also supports the idea of "localizing tourism," which builds local community capacities, decision-making, and the local interrelationships between people, place, ecology, and all living things (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2024).

Participants identify a major obstacle in facilitating participation in regenerative tourism, stemming from a widespread lack of knowledge on how to effectively implement its principles. Without a clear understanding of the practices and benefits of regenerative tourism, involving community participation becomes challenging. Participants report various ways to empower participation for both their team members and the local community in Appendix B, including nurturing local talents with relevant knowledge and creating a regenerative hub as a learning center in the community. The role of education and thought leadership are also critical in all three stages of leading the regenerative tourism movement.

*Impacts of regenerative tourism on tourism social enterprises: the systems thinking and feedback loop it creates*

Regenerative tourism requires that stakeholders view the destination system as a whole rather than in isolation (Sheldon, 2022). Participants shared obstacles in finding and collaborating with different sectors that share similar values. Prior to applying the principles of regenerative tourism, tourism social enterprises need to build a network of like-minded enterprises and educate other businesses and government stakeholders to collectively adopt a regenerative approach. This effort is integral to accumulating the social and political resources essential for the sustaining stage.

Participants report that building on the need for connections and employing systems thinking is crucial for successful regenerative tourism initiatives. A practical challenge emerges in finding partners

capable of regenerative collaboration, as experienced by Jennifer, Kieron, and Mauricio. To overcome this obstacle, Emma aims to join a network of regenerative practitioners who regularly share best practices. This systems approach advances the regenerative tourism narrative, serving as a platform for educating and encouraging more businesses to adopt regenerative practices:

*Having a like-minded business community, like the B tourism group is very important, we're able to exchange best practices. We can overcome roadblocks if we run into our carbon offset partners who help us with calculating our carbon footprint and reducing our emissions. We're also a member of a lot of different business signs for climate pledges. They provide a lot of resources. Tapping into different external communities has been great for our community and environmental initiatives. It's a very supportive network.*

Regenerative tourism views wealth holistically, measuring destination success not solely by arrivals and expenditures but also by the long-term well-being of all stakeholders (Sheldon, 2022). Participants report challenges in the measurement of regenerative tourism success to redefine wealth, emphasizing the continuous development of their business model to balance profit and impact for the community. For instance, David and Travis shared their practice of sourcing local products directly from the community for business supply, contributing to circulating wealth locally through their business. Debbie, David, and Mike charge an additional fee to travel that is donated to community-based regenerative projects, referring to it as a responsible tourism fee or regenerative trust. This is also a typical example of how Newey's (2018) binary compensatory and transformative description of social entrepreneurs does not hold, as they fall under both categories.

An additional novel finding is the establishment of a feedback loop stemming from the success of tourism social enterprises' participation in regenerative tourism after overcoming obstacles, including ideological conflicts within their community and stakeholders. Participants shared the importance of cultivating a network of ideologically like-minded entrepreneurs and organizations that could help strengthen their businesses. It not only gives new inspiration for continuous innovation but also rejuvenates the social movement catalysts as they witness transformations in their communities and among tourists. Debbie's reflections on maintaining motivation and finding likeminded non-profits to work with her regenerative project, despite confronting numerous obstacles, through witnessing the positive change, offer an illustrative example:

*I know it's the responsible tourism fee that keeps me motivated. Seeing positive change and if everyone charged some kind of responsible tourism fee, gave it to organizations who mitigate the negative impacts of their business, that would be great. I'm so happy every day when I see an invoice paid that comes through email. That's more to the community. That's more positive impact. That's the part that I absolutely treasure.*

The feedback loop fuels agency by heightening self-efficacy, consciousness-raising, personal as political, and a sense of purpose. It also rejuvenates and strengthens resources, contributing to the principle of the resources. Examples include Adam from GreenStep, who creates a connection to his company's sense of place in Kelowna by adopting a stream his team cares for that is now better than it was before. Mauricio from La Mano Del Mono also emphasizes the well-being and transformation of the local community, involving them in every decision of the regenerative strategy. As a result, the company improves the natural, social, human, and financial resources of the community.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study sought to explore and analyze tourism social enterprises' challenges, strategies, and opportunities for regenerative tourism. Social movement theory was used for the first time to create a regenerative tourism model that includes three stages: Inspiration, Sustaining, and Exploring/Participation

(Figure 2). As a result of the analysis of social entrepreneur interviews, the model was expanded to include the systems thinking and feedback loop and named the Regenerative Tourism Social Movement Theory Model (Figure 3). While this is a primary theoretical contribution, at each stage there are both theoretical and practical implications.

At the inspiration stage, an overarching foundation of social movement agency among these participants is evident, introducing the importance of a sense of purpose over self-efficacy, and supporting the role of consciousness-raising experiences and personal-as-political commitment. The addition of a sense of purpose, as well as minimal reference to obstacles shared by our participants or a need for self-efficacy, complements and expands the existing theoretical literature on social movements (Dillette & Benjamin, 2022; Della Porta & Diani, 2020; McGehee, 2012). The social movement agency among the participants, as well as their strong sense of purpose, aligns with Newey's (2018) transformative social entrepreneurship, which seeks to challenge existing economic-social-political structures. Practically, regenerative tourism organizations interested in enticing and recruiting employees or communities may need to focus more on communicating the urgency of the problem rather than trying to boost self-efficacy.

In the sustaining stage, resource mobilization becomes the key catalyst. These findings extend the theoretical description of resource mobilization in the context of tourism social enterprises beyond economic, social, political, and human resources as defined by McGehee et al. (2014) by adding technology, natural, cultural, and built resources. The finding also aligns with Della Porta's (2020) theoretical stance, which emphasizes that the type of available resources explains the strategic choices of the movements. Interestingly, although gaining financial resources is an essential reality for participants, most are quick to emphasize that amassing financial resources is not their primary motivation. Instead, their greater mission is social transformation, aligning with previous literature that emphasizes innovative solutions to immediate social problems rather than profit (Dees, 1998).

The sustaining stage also answers the "how" and "what" in mobilizing those resources for their collective action for social change (Della Porta, 2020). Practically, participants emphasize essential resources needed, such as human, financial, social, natural, political, built, and technology resources, as well as identify obstacles and strategies to overcome them. Human resources consistently emerge as the most crucial asset for success, posing challenges that demand careful nurturing within the organization. One strategy employed by enterprises is to offer year-round tourism experiences to simultaneously navigate seasonality issues and mitigate labor challenges. Additionally, early-stage enterprises have fewer resources and thus naturally focus more on resource mobilization than enterprises that are already established (Appendix B).

The exploration and participation stage in regenerative tourism is perhaps the most robust. This is where support for systems thinking among tourism stakeholders was illuminated as pivotal for successful regenerative tourism, aligning with the theoretical perspectives of previous scholars (Major & Clarke, 2022; Bellato et al. 2022b) who advocate for a long-term, interconnected approach to understanding tourism. Five major obstacles and strategies outlined in Appendix B support Sheldon's (2022) theoretical principles and form the primary theoretical contribution of this stage. These include challenges related to igniting agency, honoring place and community, empowering participation, working collaboratively with different sectors, and creating a measurement for regenerative tourism through the redefinition of wealth. Practical implications for each were provided by the participants in this study.

Given that regenerative tourism is largely uncharted territory, varying perceptions among stakeholders pose a major obstacle to igniting agency and adopting the concept. Practical implications include the critical need to 1) select like-minded business and government partners and 2) develop ways to educate tourists (both overt and covert) about the benefits of a regenerative mindset. For the former, tourism social enterprises are advised to prioritize collaboration over competition with key stakeholders to foster regenerative tourism. Joining a network of regenerative tourism practitioners and regularly sharing best practices is highly recommended. It can be a platform for educating other businesses and organizations on adopting regenerative tourism, including involving local government agencies and providing them with concrete examples of how regenerative tourism can benefit the destination.

Strategies for the latter involve the use of storytelling, educating tourists through workshops, podcasts, and social media while fostering relationships with them.

The degradation of natural resources, challenges in built resources such as poor community infrastructure, and conflicts with cultural resources in the destination also become obstacles when trying to honor place and community. Participants shared creative strategies to overcome these obstacles, such as adopting a place-based approach by recognizing the unique geography, human history, culture, and local environment of the destination in their regenerative tourism practices. This involves exploring local resources and hiring local talent. These successful practices align with the regenerative tourism goal of leaving destinations better than before, enhancing the capacity of ecosystems and human societies for a net positive impact (Cave & Dredge, 2020; Bellato et al., 2022b), and enhancing tourism's role in transitioning to a regenerative economy (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2024).

Empowering human resources participation again emerges as a crucial strategy but also poses a challenge to addressing the knowledge gap in applying regenerative tourism. Active involvement of the local community in the decision-making process and the nurturing of local talents are essential. This approach again resonates with Higgins-Desbiolles's (2024) and Harvey's (2017) argument that building local community capacities and localizing tourism is the most promising path for regenerative tourism to thrive. Collaborating across different sectors can be challenging for social enterprises. Stakeholders recognize that they, as individuals as well as their organizations, are part of larger systems and a web of reciprocal relationships. Joining like-minded groups, finding support systems online, and sharing knowledge gained and best practices were important for many study participants. In fact, participants were adamant that we use their real names and organizations rather than pseudonyms as a way to make themselves available to share best practices and expand their networks.

Finally, the success of regenerative tourism not only rejuvenates destinations but reinforces social movement agency and mobilization of resources, catalyzing a resource feedback loop. This occurs as a result of their systems thinking approach in practicing regenerative tourism. Participants shared their efforts to create a measurement for regenerative tourism through the redistribution of wealth, ensuring that the revenue reaches the local community for regenerative practices. Findings indicate that tourism social enterprises should remain agile, refining their business models and striking a balance between financial success and social transformation. They recognize that they exist in a traditional neo-liberal system, which requires them to often operate as a compensatory social enterprise (Newey 2018). We hope this study will encourage tourism businesses and organizations to find ways to navigate both the compensatory and transformative realities of their business and find opportunities to engage in regenerative approaches.

As with any research, this study has its limitations and opportunities for future research. Regenerative tourism as a concept is in its early stages, so measurement and analysis are difficult. Definitive determination of what constitutes a regenerative tourism enterprise is improving but is still far from exact. Furthermore, to understand the overarching issue of regenerative tourism beyond tourism social enterprises, we need to include other stakeholders in the systems thinking web, including destination management organizations, tourists, residents, and mainstream tourism businesses. Understanding the different approaches that various stakeholders implement for regenerative tourism could be very interesting. This may include establishing government-run regenerative tourism fees, destination management organizations conducting volunteer activities at the destination, rewarding travelers who opted for environmentally friendly activities in the destination, or local attractions creating and managing a regenerative tourism living lab similar to the 'CoLaboratory' on Flinders Island, Tasmania (Tourism CoLab, 2022).

Additionally, social movement theory can benefit from partnering with other theories to fine-grain the economic models and entrepreneurial strategies specific to social enterprise. Examples of complimentary theoretical perspectives that are closely aligned with social enterprise and can provide valuable insight include Opportunity-Based Entrepreneurship Theory, Institutional Entrepreneurship, and Schumpeterian Theory of Innovation (Nteere, K. K., 2021; Mair & Marti, 2016). Merging these theories holds an exciting opportunity to analyze how social entrepreneurs can balance profit and impact. Future

studies dedicated to comprehending the motivations, obstacles, and best practices of other stakeholders in driving regenerative tourism are much needed. These multi-dimensional investigations can collectively contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and dynamics underpinning regenerative tourism.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A. Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Name	Gender Identity	Job Title	Enterprise' Headquarter Location	Company Name	Company Type	Years in Business
Aabiskar	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Explore Evenmore Tour & Travels and Sharing Seeds	Tour Operator	6 years
Aayusha	Female	CEO	Asia	Community Homestay Network	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	6 years
Adam	Male	Sustainability Specialist	North America	Greenstep	Consultant	15 years
Adi	Male	PR & Marketing Manager	Asia	Mana Ubud	Accommodation	4 years
AJ	Female	Founder & CEO	North America	Wandermaps	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	2 years
Alexander	Male	Founder & CEO	Europe	Socialbnb	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	4 years
Amalia	Female	Director	Oceania	Rubrik Solutions <i>(formerly known as Decorum)</i>	Consultant	6 years
Areli	Female	Sustainability Manager/ Regenerative Ambassador	Central America	Hanamasi	Accommodation	21 years
Asis	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Panauti Bike Station	Tour Operator	4 years
Bill	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Kizuna Travel	Tour Operator	5 years
Christian A	Male	Founder & CEO	South America	SmArt for Sustainability	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	4 years
Christian S	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Ngalung Kalla	Accommodation	20 years
David	Male	Founder & CEO	North America	Playa Viva	Accommodation	17 years
Debbie	Female	Founder & CEO	North America	The Coconut Traveler	Tour Operator (Onsite)	5 years
Eliza	Female	Co-Founder	Oceania	The Centre for GOOD Travel	Consultant	10 years
Elvies	Male	Founder & CEO	Africa	Merry & Memories Tours, Travels and Events	Tour Operator	4 years
Emanuele	Male	Founder & CEO	Europe	Fairbnb	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	4 years
Emma	Female	Social Purpose and Sustainability Manager	North America	Legacy Vacation Resorts	Accommodation	13 years
Evan	Male	Founder	North America	StayAltered	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	4 years
Gloria	Female	Co-Founder & CEO	Africa	GoPark Safaris	Tour Operator	8 years
I Made	Male	Co-Initiator with local community	Asia	JED Bali	Consultant	21 years
Suarnatha						
Iben	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Sebumi	Consultant	8 years

Table 1. Continued

Name	Gender Identity	Job Title	Enterprise' Headquarter Location	Company Name	Company Type	Years in Business
Indis	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Dego Dego Na Bira	Accommodation	4 years
Jenna	Female	Founder	North America	Camp Denali	Accommodation	48 years
Jennifer	Female	Founder & CEO	North America	Global Family Travels	Tour Operator	14 years
Jessica	Female	Founder & CEO	Asia	Bumi Journey	Tour Operator	4 years
John	Male	CEO	North America	Frontiers North Adventure	Tour Operator	36 years
Jonathan	Male	CEO	North America	UnTours	Tour Operator	47 years
Joy	Female	Founder	Oceania	Independent Volunteer	Consultant	25 years
Juan	Male	Head of Sustainability	South America	Explora	Tour Operator	30 years
Juliana	Female	Founder & CEO	South America	Impulse Travel	Tour Operator	5 years
Kieron	Male	Founder & CEO	North America	First Nature	Tour Operator	10 years
Krishna	Male	CEO	Asia	Serenity Bali	Accommodation	16 years
Marilyn	Female	Founder & CEO	South America	Nuevos Caminos Travel	Tour Operator	16 years
Marrien	Female	Sustainability Manager	Europe	Coastruction	Innovative Product in Tourism	2 years
Matt	Male	Founder & Chief Regeneration Officer	Oceania	Regeneration Projects	Consultant	3 years
Mauricio	Male	Co-Founder & CEO	North America	La Mano Del Mono	Consultant	15 years
Mike	Male	Co-Founder & CEO	Africa	Kasbah Du Toubkal	Accommodation	45 years
Nadine	Female	Regenerative Tourism Specialist	Oceania	Untamed Escapes	Tour Operator	25 years
Nora A	Female	Founder & CEO	Asia	Ibu Bumi Orangutan	Tour Operator	5 years
Nora L	Female	Co-Founder & CEO	North America	Animal Experience International	Tour Operator	12 years
Pablo Martinez	Male	Founder & CEO	Central America	Etnica	Tour Operator	7 years
Pablo Menendez	Male	Founder & CEO	South America	Komu Travel	Consultant	3 years
Paola Sota	Female	Founder & CEO	South America	Ancestral Teacher	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	1 year
Polyana	Female	Founder & CEO	South America	Viare	Tour Operator	7 years
Rachel	Female	Founder & Eco-preneur	Europe	New Forest Escapes	Accommodation	13 years

Table 1. Continued

Name	Gender Identity	Job Title	Enterprise' Headquarter Location	Company Name	Company Type	Years in Business
Raisa	Female	Founder & CEO	Africa	The African Thrillist	Tour Operator	5 years
Reza	Male	Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer	Asia	Atourin	Marketplace, Platform, Apps-based	4 years
Romy	Female	Co-Founder and Wellness Director	Africa	Future Found Sanctuary	Accommodation	3 years
Sajana	Female	Founder & CEO	Asia	Explore Hub Nepal	Tour Operator	5 years
Samantha	Female	Founder & CEO	North America	Roamwell	Consultant	4 years
Sandra	Female	Co-Founder & CEO	North America	Sea Salts of Hawaii	Innovative Product in Tourism	4 years
Sonal	Female	Founder & CEO	Asia	Astrostays	Tour Operator	4 years
Tim	Male	Founder & CEO	Asia	Astungkara Way	Tour Operator	3 years
Tom	Male	General Manager – North America	Oceania	Intrepid Travel	Tour Operator	34 years
Travis	Male	Co-Founder & CEO	Central America	Bodhi Surf Yoga	Accommodation	13 years
Zachary	Male	Co-Founder & CEO	North America	Journey Mexico	Tour Operator	20 years

\*All participants are preferred and approved use of their real name and company

\*Years in Business indicates the number of years the company has been operating as of the time we conducted the interview in 2023

Appendix B. Table 2: Tourism social enterprises' obstacles and strategies to regenerative tourism

Obstacles	Practices and Strategies	Alignment with principles of regenerative tourism (Figure 1 – Sheldon, 2022)
<b>Igniting Agency</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse perceptions of regenerative tourism and the adoption of the concept among stakeholders</li> <li>Challenges to engage tourists or clients with regenerative tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build narratives and a common vision, cultivating <i>consciousness-raising</i> experiences, through examples and best practices to educate all stakeholders (e.g., employees, tourists, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), local community, business partners, suppliers)</li> <li>Utilize a storytelling approach to strengthen relationships with stakeholders and share the company's <i>sense of purpose</i> through podcasts, social media, websites, webinars, and workshops</li> <li>Seek certifications (e.g., B Corporation, 1% for the planet) to establish trust and transparency with clients and stakeholders, leverage the <i>personal as political</i></li> <li>Ensure transparency in communication and set clear expectations for tourists about the experience (e.g., Develop guidelines for regenerative tourism practices)</li> <li>Encourage tourists to actively participate in the regenerative initiative by adding value during their travels (e.g., bringing reusable water bottles and bags, volunteering such as planting mangroves and coral reefs, or releasing baby sea turtles), as an example of <i>personal as political</i></li> <li>Offer intercultural learning experiences with the community to ignite consciousness and a connection to the sense of place, creating a <i>sense of purpose</i> with tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust circulation</li> <li>Honors place and community</li> <li>Right relationship</li> <li>Innovative, adaptive response</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Mobilization Honoring the place and community</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Natural resources:</i> Degradation of natural resources. Challenges to regenerate land and nature, and add value to the destination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work collaboratively to emphasize a net-positive approach, going beyond minimizing environmental impact, and add value to waste (e.g., upcycling, converting food waste into energy or biogas, rainwater harvesting for drinking water, utilizing wastewater from kitchen, showers, and toilets to nurture gardens with plants and trees)</li> <li>Contribute to reforestation, rewilding, and conservation efforts to restore forest ecosystem and preserve marine wildlife and habitats (e.g. mangrove planting and coral reef restoration)</li> <li>Shift to hybrid and electric vehicles for transportation</li> <li>Engage in direct air carbon removal programs in collaboration with organizations like Tomorrow's Air</li> <li>Provide plant-based meals and practice responsible fishing</li> <li>Promote a slow travel experience and offer travelers with low-emission transportation options</li> <li>Implement permaculture design principles for regenerative agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Honors place and community</li> <li>Right relationship</li> <li>Seek holistic balance</li> <li>Innovative adaptive response</li> </ul>

Table 2. Continued

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Built resources:</i> Poor community infrastructures (e.g. road, telecommunications, internet, water), challenges in finding eco-friendly materials for businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with other businesses or governments to invest in destination’s infrastructure</li> <li>• Construct eco-friendly architecture using locally sourced renewable materials, designed by local artisans to reflect the community’s culture (e.g. earth-bag buildings known for durability, ecological benefits, and slow heat transfer)</li> <li>• Implement eco toilet bowls and eco flush system to conserve water usage</li> <li>• Substitute materials on site that either do not generate waste or significantly reduce waste production (e.g., opt for local plastic-free eco-laundry from environment-friendly detergent)</li> <li>• Transition to off-grid systems, adopting solar power and renewable energy sources</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Cultural resources:</i> Conflict between businesses and the local community, the negative dynamics in the relationship between tourists and residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a place-based approach by acknowledging the unique geography, human history, authentic culture, and local environment</li> <li>• Foster a connection to the sense of place (e.g., adopt a stream and actively caring for it)</li> <li>• Educate tourists to be mindful and respectful of the local culture, designing meaningful experiences that deeply engage with the place and its culture</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>Empowering participation</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Human resources:</i> Lack of knowledge capacity to implement regenerative tourism, leadership capability issues, and community participation constraints</li> <li>• Involve the local community in the decision-making process, empower youth and marginalized community members for human resources regeneration and build capacity building for thought leadership</li> <li>• Employ local talents and nurture them through training, education, and empowerment initiatives (e.g., English classes, environmental education, financial literacy, soft-skill empowerment for women)</li> <li>• Work closely with and learn from the indigenous community</li> <li>• Establish a holistic health and nutrition program for community (e.g. healthy cooking classes, youth sports, ensuring access to water)</li> <li>• Foster entrepreneurial activity in the community with a regenerative approach</li> <li>• Mobilize resources through a ‘regenerative hub’ and learning center that focus on addressing issues related to regenerative tourism</li> <li>• Form a ‘green team’ of employees within the company to act as ambassadors for regenerative practices</li> <li>• Prioritize employee engagement, ethical employment practices and employee well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust circulation</li> <li>• Innovative adaptive response</li> <li>• Empowered participation</li> <li>• Views wealth holistically</li> </ul>

Table 2. Continued

***Working collaboratively with different sectors, view tourism not as a separate industry***

- *Social capital and systems thinking approach:* Lack of regenerative practices from businesses and stakeholders, limited availability of suppliers and business partners with the same value
  - Mobilize and/or join the community and network of socially conscious enterprises (e.g., B Tourism community, Tourism CoLab, Colectivo Muda, Regenerative Travel, Transformational Travel Council) to learn from best practices
  - Collaborate with different sectors (e.g., partner with non-profit, scientists, academia, and consultants) to engage in cross-fertilization of ideas for regenerative project
  - Apply systems thinking approach to the business, viewing tourism as interconnected entities and view the destination system holistically
  - Foster positive impact partnerships by identifying and collaborating with local suppliers who share similar values, actively seeking to support organizations that work to end social injustice in the community
- *Political resources:* Inadequate support and trust from government, lack of policy support for regenerative tourism
  - Actively engage in communication efforts to build relationship with government, participating in discussions and meetings with various stakeholders within the institution to gain trust and political support
  - Maintain strong relationships that lead to funded project in partnership with the government

***Redefining wealth, establishing measurement for regenerative tourism***

- *Financial resources:* Finding ways to balance profit and impact for community
  - Measure destination success differently in terms of community well-being, emphasize resources other than financial to transform local community (e.g. Measurement of social, natural, human, and cultural resources)
  - Implement responsible tourism fees or regenerative tourism fund for travelers and partner with local non-profit to work on regenerative project and track the impact
- Challenges to create business model for regenerative tourism success
  - Continuously refine and iterate the business model to ensure that the revenue directly benefits the local community for regenerative practices, create positive impact that generates a *feedback loop* for the regeneration of the agency (*sense of purpose, self-efficacy, personal as political, and consciousness-raising*) and resource use in the destination

- Edge effect abundance
- Seeks holistic balance
- Empowered participation
- Robust circulation
- Innovative adaptive response
- View wealth holistically
- Edge effect abundance