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# Regenerative Tourism

## Introduction

If you have been looking into sustainable tourism, or sustainability in general, you will probably have come across the term regenerative tourism at some point. It's a relatively recent player in the tourism space, although the concept itself has a much longer history in other sectors such as agriculture and architecture. The idea of regenerative is literally, as the word suggests, that it allows for the generation of life, all life. You might hear some people shrug it off and say that it is just sustainability rebadged to make it fresher and relevant again. I disagree. It's actually quite a different way of thinking.

First and foremost, regenerative approaches work with systems thinking; we are all part of a whole, and the whole receives the benefits of our actions. Regenerative fosters connections – or relationships, as we talked about in Chapter 1. It places people in an “ethics of care” (Chapter 4), able to identify and foster reinforcing positive feedback loops and/or reverse reinforcing negative feedback loops. And to do so, it asks us to use some of the higher order leverage points described by Meadows – particularly the changing paradigms one.

This chapter presents an overview of the regenerative approach, how and why it is different to sustainability, how it is applied in various sectors, its relationship to concepts such as biomimcry and finally what it looks like in tourism. And just as reminder we have already covered one example of regeneration in tourism – the living bridges presented in Chapter 2. For anyone thinking this is slightly Avatar-like, they would be somewhat correct!

### Key words and concepts

- Biomimcry
- Place-based, love of place
- Head/heart coherence
- Seven generations
- Levels of potentiality
- Self-generating, healing
- Restorative vs extractive
- Connection, relationality, belonging
- Flourish
- Degrowth

## 11.1 Basics of regeneration

*“Regenerative tourism is bolder and more inspiring. It aims not just to do less harm, but to go on and restore the harm that our system has already done to the natural world, and by using nature’s principles, to create the conditions of life to flourish. It views wholes and not parts, and is a very different way of looking at the world.”*

Anna Pollock, 2019.

I think one of the key points in talking about and understanding regenerative is that it requires letting go of a lot of the types of thinking that underpin the ways in which many of us live. Clock time would be one of them, competition is another, ‘lack’ mentality (that there is not enough for everyone so you must be worthy of receiving), the temptation to measure progress, and so on. It feels impossible at first, like the world might fall apart if we don’t all have a yardstick to prop us up, but once you get the hang of it, it is kind of freeing.

To remind myself of this way of living, I have hanging on my office door the Dalai Lama’s reminder that

*the Planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers and lovers of all kinds.*

Interestingly he doesn’t include experts and scientists in what the planet needs more of!

In writing about regenerative literacy, a colleague and I drew upon the head, heart and hands trio. Much of what we currently do in dominant world systems draws on head work – cognitive, thinking, knowledge, analysing, rationalising, etc. But as we saw in Chapter 3, cognitive approaches rarely achieve much in driving pro-environmental behaviours. Perhaps it’s time to try an approach based on hands and hearts.

If you think this sounds a little too ‘woo woo’ for you, and you would like some scientific evidence as an entry point to the regenerative world, take a few minutes to consider that we now know (as in, have emerging scientific evidence of) that our heart produces the strongest electric field in our body, as well as having the ability to process, learn, remember and have its own emotions.

It’s been dubbed the ‘little brain’ (and even more interesting things are being discovered about our guts!) and scientists are uncovering the importance of having a level of coherence between your actual brain (the head in the paragraph above) and your heart (hence the head, heart and brain approach) as it affects your moods, resilience, adaptability to change and regenerative process according to the article linked below.