

A community development approach for regenerative tourism in the Nordics: lifestyle entrepreneurs towards a placed-based research agenda

Jessica Aquino, Magdalena Falter and Francesc Fusté-Forné

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the potential of regenerative tourism practices and their influence on destinations and their stakeholders from a community development approach focusing on Nordic lifestyle entrepreneurs. We focus on small and micro-sized enterprises (SMiEs) that conform to the realities of tourism systems in Nordic regions.*

Design/methodology/approach – *We explore how community development can be used as an approach for regenerative tourism and vice versa. Our conceptual paper builds from recent work of the Nordic Regenerative Tourism project, which aims to develop place-based practices for SMiEs that contribute to the regeneration of natural and cultural resources.*

Findings – *Regenerative tourism research should focus on developing tools that aid in capacity sharing and equitable partnerships through a community development approach. However, there is a lack of understanding of the processes of how to implement this in real world practice. More research is needed in developing tools to mobilize Nordic communities, particularly within the countryside to help transform tourism towards a regenerative model. It was found that much of these efforts comes from MSMEs. Therefore, more case studies are needed to understand how and why lifestyle entrepreneurs play in community revitalization efforts and the potential linkages with regenerative tourism management and marketing.*

Originality/value – *This conceptual paper contributes to the discussion of regenerative tourism and focus on smaller countryside communities within the Nordics. We argue that community development is linked with the concept of regenerative tourism through lifestyle entrepreneurs.*

Keywords Community development, Lifestyle entrepreneurs, Nordic communities, Placed-based research, Sustainability, Regenerative tourism

Paper type Research paper

Jessica Aquino is based at the Hólar University, Sauðárkrúkur, Iceland. Magdalena Falter is based at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland. Francesc Fusté-Forné is based at the Universitat de Girona, Girona, Spain; Centre for Innovation and Research in Culture and Living in the Arctic (CIRCLA), Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark and Sustainability and Resilience Institute New Zealand, Christchurch, New Zealand.

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Introduction and background

The concept of regenerative tourism has recently gained momentum. It is described as a community-focused approach to develop a form of tourism that benefits both locals, tourists and places – and addresses environmental, social and business-oriented challenges (Atladóttir *et al.*, 2023; Fusté-Forné and Hussain, 2023). Regenerative tourism differs from traditional sustainable tourism because it actively aims to restore destinations, rather than just minimizing negative impacts (Pollock, 2019). Regenerative tourism goes beyond sustainability through projects like habitat restoration and cultural revitalization. In this sense, it is based on a holistic philosophy, which places emphasis on collaboration with local communities and focus on proactive regeneration initiatives (see, for example, Coll-Barneto and Fusté-Forné, 2023). Regeneration is

also focused on the relationships between people, places and practices embedded in indigenous values (see [Sheldon, 2020](#)), as we explore below.

We build our conceptual discussion from the authors' recent experience of working on a pilot project, Nordic Regenerative Tourism (NorReg) conducted in 2022, which aimed to develop place-based practices for small and micro-sized tourism operators that contribute to the regeneration of natural and cultural resources. We focus on the theoretical conceptualizations that emerged from this project as an example for our analysis. The authors' aim, with this paper, is to explore the potential of regenerative tourism practices; and their influence on destinations and their stakeholders from a community development approach focusing on Nordic lifestyle entrepreneurs. We focus on small and micro-sized enterprises (SMiEs) that conform the realities of tourism systems in Nordic regions. The main aim of our conceptual paper is to guide tourism and community developers to better advance regenerative tourism. Regenerative tourism departs from tourism in its current form to include equity for both nature and humans. Although habitat restoration and cultural revitalization are both activities that have been discussed within the framework of sustainability – however, the SDGs are dualistic either focusing on nature or sociality, while none focus specifically on improving the relationships between humans and the natural world ([Richardson, 2023](#)). Furthermore, regenerative goes beyond sustainable development by developing the capacities of communities, places and visitors to operate in harmony ([Bellato et al., 2023](#)) through social values related to local empowerment and land-based practices ([Becken and Kaur, 2022](#)). “Therefore, regenerative tourism aligns with the regenerative development paradigm despite resembling sustainable development approaches” ([Bellato et al., 2023](#), p. 1027).

We define a community development approach as a participatory, community-oriented process and practice that includes learning, networks and mobilizations that leads towards a social movement ([Mair and Reid, 2007](#)). We argue that using a community development approach may lead to redirecting tourism development towards social change, environmental protection and community empowerment. Furthermore, the need for sustainable tourism development to acknowledge the relationality of people and nature is important in addressing environmental problems and the negative effects of mass tourism. The practice of community development focuses on social movements and has several core principles such as participative democracy, social justice, sustainable development, economic opportunity and equality ([IACD, 2016](#)). Both community development and regenerative concept look at place-based solutions that acknowledge the value and needs of a place and of the land.

Nordic tourism often takes place in smaller countryside communities with large geographic areas and smaller dispersed populations, and in environmental, economic and social sensitive areas where climate change has impacted winter-oriented tourism businesses ([Hall and Saarinen, 2021](#)). Rural areas in Nordic countries continue to experience significant decline in population. In general, the Nordic Region in 2020 had the smallest population growth in 16 years while immigration continues to be the main source of population increase with an increasing older population age structure ([Norlén et al., 2022](#)). Rural-to-urban migration attributed to decline in rural populations while out-migration of young people is caused by lack of accessible education and employment opportunities which also leads to diminishing access to services in shrinking rural areas ([Lundgren et al., 2020](#)) making urban areas appear more attractive ([Richards and Duif, 2018](#)). The outmigration of youth increases the loss of human capital and an increase of an older population ([Lundgren et al., 2020](#)).

Smaller communities in Nordic regions have experienced an economic restructuring, moving away from fishing industries to that of tourism ([Aquino and Burns, 2021](#)). Tourism has been used as a form of community revitalization efforts or diversification for economic resiliency ([Aquino and Kloes, 2020](#); [Burns, 2018](#)). Tourism entrepreneurs in the Nordic also tend to be SMEs or SMiEs ([OECD Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2022](#)). Although it is known that tourism has both positive and negative effects on local communities, much of the tourism management plans come from local efforts. In the light of increasing global warming and

environmental damage, the discussion about regenerative tourism is gaining attention (Gibbons, 2020), with a focus on the future of sustainability in Nordic regions (Raheem *et al.*, 2022). However, previous accounts to analyze Nordic regenerative tourism are limited and this paper expands recent conversations that bridges entrepreneurs and regenerative tourism practices in the Arctic (see Mathisen *et al.*, 2022). Our conceptual paper contributes to the understanding of Nordic regenerative tourism by drawing on the potential of place-based local practices that can effectively inform future regenerative tourism management and marketing in Nordic regions.

In a Nordic context much of the movement towards regenerative tourism comes from grassroots efforts and SMEs and SMiEs. Since COVID-19 there has been more reflection on the way we think of tourism to “(re)establish nature connectedness” and restoration (Becken and Kaur, 2022). Many argue that regenerative tourism evolved because of the inadequacies of the concept of sustainable tourism to minimize the negative impacts of tourism (Bellato *et al.*, 2023; Mathisen *et al.*, 2022; Villa and Šulc, 2021). This Nordic regenerative tourism concept looks at “the revitalisation, re-energising and wellbeing of our environment, our neighbours and ourselves” (Atladóttir *et al.*, 2023, p. 23). Therefore, there is a need for a place-based research agenda that acknowledges this desire for tourism development in balance with communities and natural environment.

This conceptual paper focuses on the discussion of regenerative tourism in three main areas which are community development, the Nordic context and lifestyle entrepreneurs to outline the process of how regenerative tourism may take place. In the next section we outline the definition of community development and how it can be used as an approach (both process and practice) towards regenerative tourism. Using NorReg as a jumping-off point, we link the discussion to tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs who may play a role in implementing key priorities of regenerative tourism. We also describe what regenerative tourism may look like in a Nordic context and propose a research agenda for the future.

Building regenerative tourism from the community: the value of (natural) landscapes and (cultural) lifestyles

Community development

As a practice and as a profession the concept of community development has a strong emphasis on equality with a focus on building and sharing capacity for improvements in a community. Although there are many definitions of the term community development, Phillips and Pittman (2015a) attempt to combine definitions based on a review of literature conducted by Mattessich and Monseley (2004) and describe community development as both a process (developing the ability to act collectively); and a practice where the collective action leads to improvement in a community. For example, the physical, environmental, cultural, social, political and economic (Phillips and Pittman, 2015b). It is through this process of mobilizing and the practice of acting collectively that the outcomes lead to a better functioning and resilient community (Cavaye and Ross, 2019). The ability to mobilize is often described as social capacity (Mattessich and Monseley, 2004). Social capacity is a collection of skills of which members of a community can work together effectively – such as networks, knowledge, resources, organization and governance (Robinson and Green, 2011).

Community well-being, which is an umbrella term that looks at four domains (human, economic, social and environmental) in balance and focuses on gauging what is currently being experienced at the community level; while community development is about taking action to work collectively in public, private and social sectors to achieve desirable goals (Sung and Phillips, 2016) and is often based on the level of community well-being. Community development is built on the “principles of social and environmental justice” (Ledwith, 2020, p. 2) which – based on the holistic understanding of the human, economic, social and environmental factors – must inform the role of regenerative tourism. Atladóttir *et al.* (2023) argue that regenerative tourism should include the protection of local communities and landscapes through the revitalization and well-being of the environment and our community.

Equitable partnerships can contribute to capacity sharing of local people and may lead to empowerment and trust in the process of community development. The concept of community development has a strong emphasis on equality through the practice of capacity sharing for improvements in a community. We argue that this will lead towards the building of a solid foundation for regenerative tourism practices that have people and the environment at the center of tourism planning and development.

Regenerative tourism in a Nordic context

The concept of regenerative tourism is influenced from regenerative agriculture (Becken and Kaur, 2022), regenerative design (Lyle, 1994; Owen, 2007), regenerative development (Bellato *et al.*, 2023) and regenerative economies (Andreucci *et al.*, 2021; Pollock, 2015) along with indigenous approaches to well-being and worldviews (Escobar, 2021; Fusté-Forné and Hussain, 2022; McEnhill *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, regenerative thinking (see Gibbons, 2020; Pollock, 2019), advocates for a holistic approach in tourism planning and development through the connectedness of all the elements that inform a tourism system. While these accounts demonstrate the complexity of the notion of regenerative tourism, previous research shows that a regenerative approach must depart from the deep understanding of the close interconnection of humans and nature. Tourism systems are, therefore, inseparable from nature (Bellato *et al.*, 2023). In this context, Hussain (2021, p. 5) states that:

Regenerative tourism understands that visitors and destinations are part of a living system embedded in the natural environment, and operate under nature's rules and principles. The concept acknowledges the interconnectedness of various natural and social environments and is designed to give back to the land and the people.

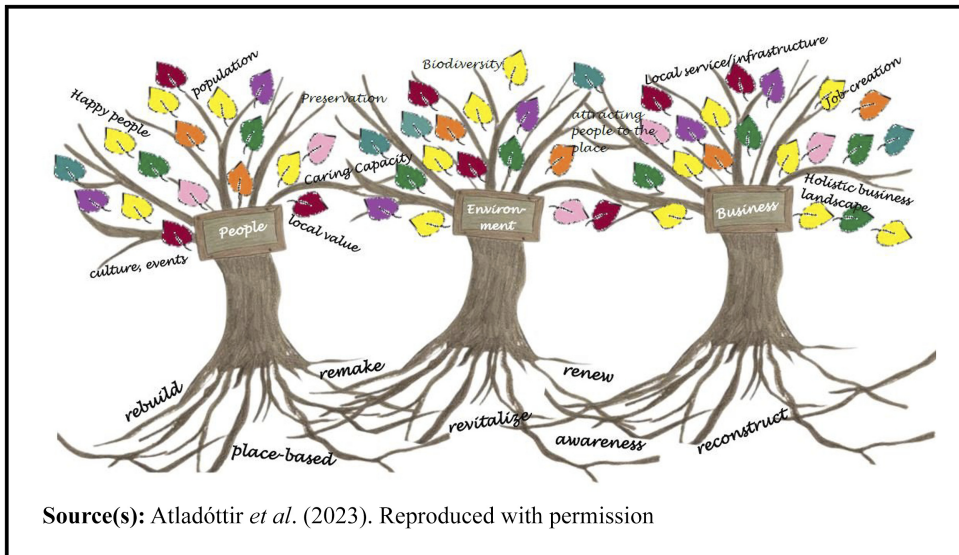
Saarinen (2021) describes regenerative tourism as the answer for a call of a “new kind of economic system that would be based on a degrowth, resetting the current market economy or creating post-capitalism economies that focus beyond growth and profit” (p. 4).

Hence, regenerative tourism transcend the single goal of maximizing economic growth (McEnhill *et al.*, 2020); and can be seen as a potential way to counteract current capitalism. The shift of values towards “enoughness” (Sharpley, 2022, p. 2) and “inner sustainability” (Mathisen *et al.*, 2022) that regenerative tourism practises are aiming towards, fights current exploitation caused by overconsumption (Urry, 2010).

As an example, we can draw from the work of NorReg, which is a project aimed at understanding the Nordic concept of regenerative tourism; and how to develop regenerative tourism practices in Nordic countries (Aquino *et al.*, 2024). The key principles of regenerative tourism defined within the NorReg project focus on social, environmental and business in balance within a regenerative economy (Atladóttir *et al.*, 2023). Here regenerative economy is envisioned as a long-term, systems thinking approach which seeks to engage community in decision-making and that acknowledges tourism as part of the community (Sheldon, 2021). NorReg views social values as strongly related to local empowerment, but also the capacity for local communities to be easily accessed and open for participation. Environmental values reflect the necessity to regenerate biodiversity by collaborating with experts, such as contributing to reestablishing balance within the ecosystem which tourism is part of. On a business level, NorReg identified that becoming entrepreneurially active should be easily accessible to everybody no matter the scale, for example, small-scaled start-ups to that have a bigger holistic and revitalizing impact within the community.

Hussain's (2021) description of regenerative tourism aligned with the vision statement of NorReg (see Figure 1), which shows the strong interconnection between people and the environment, while places local business at the center of a regenerative economy (Atladóttir *et al.*, 2023). In other contexts, this is also seen in non-capitalist businesses such as the Spanish *furanchos* (Morón-Corujeira and Fusté-Forné, 2022), which reveal that land-based knowledge through agricultural practices is a source of authenticity in tourism experiences. Where local people are the guardians of

Figure 1 The vision statement of the Nordic Regenerative Tourism project



land-based practices transmitted from generation to generation with indigenous knowledge being a crucial driver (Sheldon, 2021).

Nordic destinations are featured by a sense of “culture in nature” (Fusté-Forné, 2022) which acknowledges the role of human-nature relationships. These relationships do not only drive the daily lifestyles of residents, but also inform the tourism portfolio of Nordic regions. As previous studies show, tourism is part of natural systems (Hussain and Haley, 2022), and the meaningful roots we create with the environment are the basis for anchoring regenerative tourism as part of the industry values (Becken and Kaur, 2022). Regenerative tourism needs “a deeply engaged bottom-up approach that is place-based, community-centred and environment-focused” (Dredge, 2022, p. 269). Such an approach has been adopted by NorReg as illustrated in Figure 1.

Community development and Nordic regenerative tourism. What can we learn in their integration?

Table 1 places the key principles of community development and Nordic regenerative tourism side by side for comparison. As described above, community development is both a process and a practice. This community-oriented process includes learning, networks and mobilization. Both the process and practice of community development leads to social movements and transformations. Regenerative tourism has a holistic oriented process that acknowledges the interconnectedness of people, place and land. Reciprocity of nature and people have direct links to well-being (Becken and Kaur, 2022; Mathisen et al., 2022). We argue that both concepts (community development and regenerative tourism) can inform both the process and practice of tourism as social and environmental transformation. For example, a community development approach to tourism development focuses on social movements that lead to social transformation through learning, networks and mobilization. The practice of community development also focus on sustainable development working around ecological and biodiversity concerns (McConnell, 2022) and environmental justice (Clarke and Crickley, 2022). The integration of community development and regenerative tourism practices must include the interconnectedness of natural and social environments which have a direct influence on well-being (Sheldon, 2020).

Regenerative tourism aims to prioritize activities that work in balance with communities and the natural environment, to raise awareness of negative impacts of tourism. The element of placed-based when developing regenerative tourism is important as no two Nordic destinations are alike

Table 1 Side-by-side comparison of community development and Nordic regenerative tourism			
	Process	Practice	Principles
Community Development	Community oriented process that leads towards social movements	Acting collectively through capacity sharing: • Learning • Networks • Mobilizations	• Participative democracy • Social and environmental justice • Sustainable development • Economic opportunity • Equality
Nordic Regenerative Tourism	Holistic interconnectedness of people, place and land	• Reciprocity • Place-based	• Social values related to local empowerment • Environmental values through land-based practices • Business in balance with regenerative economy
Source(s): Own source			

and there are no universal solutions. Showcasing the Nordic unique characteristics – which draws on the people who live and work in these regions – helps to keep tourism local further shifting the power to the community. For example, [Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby \(2022\)](#) argue that labeling communities as tourism destinations de-localizes them and takes away that they are places of great value to locals. This is also observed in previous research focused on the case of the Trasti and Trine tourist firm, in Arctic Norway ([Mathisen et al., 2022](#)), which shows how the combination of the soul (human ingredient), the soil (nature ingredient) and the society direct regenerative tourism practices led by SMIEs.

Applied regenerative tourism: lifestyle entrepreneurs as potential agents of degrowth and regeneration

SMIEs are often referred to as lifestyle entrepreneurs ([Bredvold and Skálén, 2016](#); [Peters et al., 2009](#)). While discussions on tourism lifestyle entrepreneurship are controversial and would exceed the framework of this paper, the characteristics they have been ascribed to by various authors range from a high level of innovativeness and awareness for creative and sustainable solutions ([Dias et al., 2021](#)); to lacking business management skills and financial resources ([Skokic and Morrison, 2011](#); [Ioannides and Petersen, 2003](#)); and being restraint to new developments. This shows that lifestyle entrepreneurs are not a uniform group and cannot be classified as one specific type. We are aware that there are many entrepreneurs that could be defined as lifestyle entrepreneurs according to the ambiguous and controversial discussions, that do not pursue these values. These entrepreneurs, however, will not be considered in our work, where we focus on the type of entrepreneur that acts according to the values described in regenerative tourism. In the framework of this conceptual paper, we focus on the definitions of lifestyle entrepreneurs as the type of small tourism business owner, whose business operations positively affect their surrounding environment and local community by finding the right level of growth. This is referred to as “enoughness” ([Sharpley, 2020](#)). This interpretation aligns with [Andersson Cederholm and Hultman \(2010\)](#), who observed how the focus of lifestyle entrepreneurs on their personal motivations, values and ideology creates a certain authenticity that potentially leads to positive outcomes in both economic and social aspects. Entrepreneurs who emotionally and functionally care about a place tend to support local products and services while promoting nature protection and local value creation ([Wen et al., 2021](#)). We refer to tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs when we talk about MSMEs, recognizing that not all MSMEs fit the criteria of this type of lifestyle entrepreneur.

There are various hints in recent literature pointing to a potential key role of small-sized tourism business in the regenerative discourse ([Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000](#); [Margaryan et al., 2020](#)). We

see a link between a community development approach within small-sized tourism businesses and regenerative practices by shedding light on their values and attitudes in their daily business life. Despite the positive influence of small tourism providers on the degrowth paradigm, they have gotten little attention and are often not involved in conversations regarding rethinking the tourism industry (Margaryan *et al.*, 2020), even though their values and way of working with and for the local communities could positively contribute to this rethinking process towards a regenerative future.

Lifestyle entrepreneurs are often referred to as the counter piece of the growth-oriented entrepreneurs; and are said to play a leading role in the current re-thinking of tourism towards sustainable, responsible and regenerative practices (Margaryan *et al.*, 2020). In contrast to the capitalist-oriented business growth, lifestyle entrepreneurs prioritize the location and the community their business is embedded in higher compared to financial gains (Dias *et al.*, 2022) in line with the principles of community development outlined above. The ideological value base beyond sole economic growth often does not comply with economic growth intentions (Sørensen and Grindsted, 2021). Therefore, the role of social dimensions of entrepreneurship – where tourism businesses acknowledge the interconnection of humans and nature – should work towards social networks instead of financial resources to move towards regenerative practices that lead to transformative changes (Gerke *et al.*, 2023).

The NorReg project created a network of SMiEs, researchers and destination management organizations (DMOs) that provided sharing of skills and the development of practical tools to help build regenerative tourism within our own community. Community development, as a practice, promotes capacity sharing for the betterment of a community. We have seen through NorReg that SMiEs want to positively contribute to their communities by developing tourism that focuses on reciprocity, which was similarly seen in Becken and Kaur's (2022) study. There are clear links between place-attachment and entrepreneurs' action towards a place (Kibler *et al.*, 2015; Wen *et al.*, 2021) ranging from local value creation, e.g. through enhanced usage of local products, to active involvement into local environment protection (Cunha *et al.*, 2020; Morrison, 2006). Such a place-based form of local value creation could not only lead to positive socioeconomic effects but also potentially increase customer satisfaction (Peters *et al.*, 2009).

Lifestyle entrepreneurs often prefer business models that allow them to be closer to their guests and share their values with them. This provides them with a significant business advantage compared to large tourism operators that often serve mass tourism instead of providing individualized and authentic tourism experiences. Hence, tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs respond to the demands of slow and mindful traveling – a niche that has been gaining popularity in recent years (Chan, 2019; Ermann *et al.*, 2021); and which is a source of regenerative tourism (Dredge, 2022; Stankov *et al.*, 2020).

Reflections and future research

What can community development offer to regenerative tourism and vice versa?

Regenerative tourism intrinsically focuses on community, the natural environment and our interconnections to both the natural and social worlds. From a community development perspective, the process by which people work together help shape community well-being at the individual, social and ecological level (Larson *et al.*, 2023). Focusing on the process and practice of community development could help with social and environmental transformations leading to better well-being of a place. Unfortunately, much of the focus on tourism development is on creating destinations which leads to the displacement of communities as the focus (Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2022), and the loss of focus on what is needed for the development of community well-being. Therefore, focusing on the process and practice of community development helps to empower stakeholders to further mobilize transformation within their community. Especially in rural areas, network creations are crucial to foster innovation and hence the implementation of creative solutions for community well-being (Lyons, 2022). This can play a pivotal role in future tourism research based on the mechanisms through which local networks lead

to community well-being, including economic, environmental and social well-being. Furthermore, how this contributes to the development of best practices, product and (de)marketing strategies and policy recommendations that advance regenerative tourism. The growing discussion on the concept of regenerative tourism, both in academic and industry discourse, leads towards a more ethical framework from co-produced from multiple perspectives (Aquino *et al.*, 2021).

Regenerative tourism aims to reduce capitalist approaches through collectively established tourism management guidelines holistically with people, place and land. Local ownership in terms of tourism management and resources plays an essential role in regenerative tourism structures that show local embeddedness (Gerke *et al.*, 2023) which is crucial to community develop practices based on indigenous concepts (Sheldon, 2020). Our conceptual paper aims to situate the concept of regenerative tourism within a Nordic context without losing sight that regenerative tourism comes from indigenous world views. We want to acknowledge that there is a possibility for tourism to become reciprocal (care for nature and human) within the regenerative tourism concept; and this knowledge base should be transdisciplinary including multiple world views such as Western, indigenous and practical knowledge (Becken and Kaur, 2022). This helps to combat “simplistic and superficial” understandings of regenerative tourism that is currently dominating in published Western academia (Bellato and Pollock, 2023) and practice.

We believe that the concept of regenerative tourism could positively balance the interplay of touristic consumption and local supply. The global unevenness, as it manifests, e.g. in the gap of rich and poor and hence the privilege of mobility – mirrors current tourism development (Boluk *et al.*, 2020). Current tourism practices are characterized by neoliberal, colonial and capitalistic worldviews – where tourist destinations become places of production and consumption. The voices of local, often rural and remote communities are frequently not heard in this process (Boluk *et al.*, 2020). This conceptual paper has explored how lifestyle tourism entrepreneurs who operate their businesses in line with regenerative principles have an untapped potential in advancing how we understand regenerative tourism. By zooming into tourism lifestyle entrepreneurship, we put focus on the initiatives of these smaller actors that are often not yet acknowledged and yet do have a positive impact within their community. We argue that tourism lifestyle entrepreneurs have been neglected in tourism decision making processes and have not been sufficiently included within tourism policy making. Although these actors have a potential contribution; however, we acknowledge that they may not have the capacity to lead this process alone. Therefore, the process and practice of community development as an approach may underline how social movements lead to social transformations that may push regenerative tourism forward. We argue that the values according to which these business providers act, reflect the core of the degrowth paradigm. This is relevant to shed light on these actors and draw potential learnings from there. These insights can then be useful in tourism decision-making processes.

The future of Nordic regenerative tourism

Cave *et al.* (2022) stress how the future of regenerative tourism is interconnected with a learning process for the tourism “leaders of tomorrow” (p. 299). According to them, regenerative tourism mirrors the current process of a tourism shift that has been heavily pushed forward by the COVID-19 pandemic. To truly implement and develop regenerative tourism practices, Cave *et al.* (2022) see it as a mandatory condition that tourism stakeholders increase their awareness of looking at the world as an “evolving systems [...] that we must learn to live within the limits of that system” (p. 299). This approach aligns with Hall and Saarinen (2021), who claims that the challenges Nordic regions face is derived from climate change – a process initiated and driven by humanity. The discussions in the current body of tourism literature debating regenerative tourism practises often concludes that a comprehensive mindset change of tourism stakeholders is required for tourism to become reciprocal to local communities and places (Mathisen *et al.*, 2022), which can be achieved through specific cultural assets, such as food (Fusté-Forné and Leer, 2023), that allows to protect and promote the bridges between people, places and practices.

The future of Nordic regenerative tourism should focus on developing tools that aid in capacity sharing and equitable partnerships through a community development approach outlined in our conceptual paper. Similar to climate change actions, multiple actors are important to help find feasible, place-based solutions for regenerative tourism. We acknowledge that place-based is not a new concept and is often seen in community and regional development and other forms of tourism research. However, place-based is often left out in tourism planning and management which could lead to de-localizations of communities and a loss of focus on well-being (nature and society) (Higgins-Desbiolles and Bigby, 2022). Furthermore, there is a lack of understanding of the processes of how to mobilize communities to implement regenerative tourism in real world practice. Both community-based solutions and regenerative tourism are both embedded in place-based understanding and resources. McEnhill *et al.* (2020) argued that more place-based and collaborative approaches which focus on the understanding of living systems and their interrelated and interconnected parts is needed to transform tourism towards regenerative tourism models. Bellato and Pollack (2023) argue that foundation of regenerative paradigm is living systems thinking which acknowledges the capacity of humans to co-evolve with life's systems. Community development is about mobilizing people to make change within their communities through capacity sharing and the formation of networks. We acknowledge that what is lacking in our conceptual paper is a decolonizing perspective of collective well-being of humans and nature that will help to "lead societal transitions toward more sustainable futures" (Escobar, 2021, p. 211). More research is needed in developing tools of how to mobilize Nordic communities, particularly within the countryside. Furthermore, as was seen in the NorReg project, much of the efforts in transforming tourism towards a more regenerative model comes from SMEs. Therefore, more case studies are needed to understand the role that lifestyle entrepreneurs play in community revitalization transformation and the potential linkages with regenerative tourism efforts, and how a community development approach may lead to happier and healthier communities.

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About the authors

Dr Jessica Aquino is an Associate Professor at Hólar University and an Academic Fellow to the Teaching Academy of Public Universities, Iceland. Her research interests are in place-based pedagogies, community development and community youth development; sustainable tourism and responsible tourism practices. Jessica is the founding director of a non-profit youth nature organization, Húnaklúbburinn (www.hunaklub.org). She is the Academic Group leader for NorReg and the PI of the project Youth for Arctic Nature (www.arcticnature.org), a community science project that encourages youth groups who live in arctic and subarctic countries to monitor wildlife. Jessica Aquino is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: jessica@holar.is

Dr Magdalena Falter holds a PhD in tourism studies. Her research interests are regenerative tourism, digital innovation in tourism, rural tourism entrepreneurship and lifestyle entrepreneurship. Magdalena is involved in various tourism research projects such as the current pilot project about regenerative tourism (<https://www.icelandtourism.is/en/nordic-regenerative-tourism>) under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EXTOR project (<https://extor-project.eu/>). Magdalena further teaches tourism innovation at the University of Iceland in the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences.

Dr Francesc Fusté-Forné is Associate Professor Serra Húnter at the Department of Business, University of Girona. He is affiliated member at the 'Centre for Innovation and Research in Culture and Living in the Arctic (CIRCLA), Aalborg University, and associate researcher at the Sustainability and Resilience Institute New Zealand. His research is focused on food and rural marketing and tourism. Particularly, he has studied the connections between authenticity, food heritages and identities, landscapes and landscapers, regional development, rural activities, street food and tourist experiences. He conducts applied research on the role of gastronomy in relation to mass media and as a driver of social changes.

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