



**REGENERATIVE TOURISM AS A CONTEMPORARY
DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE
AND COMPETITIVENESS OF TOURIST DESTINATIONS**

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Abstract: Regenerative tourism represents a contemporary development concept that transcends the framework of traditional sustainability and is grounded in principles of active restoration and enhancement of natural, social, and cultural systems within tourist destinations. Drawing on an ecological worldview, the regenerative tourism approach seeks to strengthen the capacity of support systems to generate net-positive socio-ecological outcomes. As a rapidly evolving concept, regenerative tourism provides practical pathways through which destinations can incorporate the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, alongside varying levels of commitment and responsibility, in order to achieve desired outcomes. The aim of this paper is to identify the key elements and necessary conditions for shaping the most appropriate model for the future development of tourism in Serbia, based on regenerative principles, through an analysis of the theoretical foundations and core principles of regenerative tourism, as well as examples of good practice. The research findings indicate that regenerative tourism may serve as an important instrument for enhancing the resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations in Serbia. Of particular significance are the integration of local communities into decision-making processes, the revitalisation of natural resources, and the adoption of circular business models, all of which contribute to long-term sustainability and inclusive development.

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1. Introduction

Travel motivated primarily by tourism has, over the past few decades, evolved into one of the most significant economic sectors globally. Modern tourism faces serious sustainability challenges. However, this expansion has also generated considerable negative consequences. Tourism exerts substantial environmental pressures, including biodiversity loss, landscape degradation, waste generation, and water scarcity, as well as notable social impacts manifested through phenomena such as overtourism, gentrification, and social tensions.

Over recent decades, global tourism has witnessed remarkable growth, producing substantial economic gains alongside notable social and environmental consequences (Cave & Dredge, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic not only interrupted this expansion but also revealed the intrinsic vulnerabilities of the conventional demand-driven tourism model (Lew & Cheer, 2017). This situation has underscored the necessity of developing new approaches that go beyond the constraints of traditional sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has traditionally been regarded as the ideal framework for tourism development; however, its practical application has demonstrated significant limitations, as it frequently focuses predominantly on the mitigation of adverse impacts, rather than facilitating the genuine restoration and revitalization of ecological and social systems.

The notion of regeneration, understood as the process of renewal or restoration, is not a recent development. However, it is only in the past few years that this concept has gained significant attention across various sectors, including agriculture and architecture. Within the tourism industry, the idea of regeneration emerged as a prominent topic of discussion around 2019. Regenerative tourism, aligned with the principle of “building back better,” has increasingly emerged as a contemporary paradigm for reimagining travel. The COVID-19 pandemic, which further exposed the inherent vulnerabilities of the tourism sector, provided a critical opportunity to reconsider prevailing tourism models and to promote regenerative approaches aimed at fostering resilience, sustainability, and long-term systemic renewal.

Regenerative tourism is grounded in the principles of holistic development, the circular economy, and the profound interconnectedness between nature, human communities, and local culture. This approach seeks to generate a 'positive impact' within destinations, whereby each tourism activity contributes to the restoration of natural resources, the strengthening of local identity, and the enhancement of

community resilience. The significance of this paradigm is particularly pronounced in the context of global trends and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), which advocate for the integrated consideration of social, economic, and ecological dimensions in tourism development.

The subject of this research is regenerative tourism as a contemporary model for the development of tourist destinations, which encompasses the active restoration of natural, social, and cultural systems, with particular attention to its potential application in Serbia. The aim of this study is to identify, through the analysis of theoretical foundations and principles of regenerative tourism, as well as illustrative examples of best practices, the key elements and conditions for designing the most suitable model for the future development of tourism in Serbia based on regenerative principles.

2. Literature review

Tourism constitutes a highly complex and multifaceted domain that requires substantial internal self-regulation while simultaneously shaping and reflecting broader patterns of societal transformation. Its effective development therefore hinges on the adoption of dynamic models capable of accommodating uncertainty, adapting to rapidly shifting global trends and external shocks, and formulating policy frameworks that are both comprehensive and resilient to future disruptions. In recent decades, global tourism has undergone unprecedented expansion, yielding significant economic benefits but also generating notable social and environmental pressures. The COVID-19 pandemic not only interrupted this trajectory of growth but also exposed the structural vulnerabilities inherent in traditional, demand-driven tourism models, thereby underscoring the need for approaches that surpass the conceptual and operational boundaries of conventional sustainable tourism.

Specifically, the practical application of sustainable tourism has remained limited, in part because it continues to reinforce environmentally and socially detrimental practices (Bellato et al., 2023), while failing to foster genuine synergy among the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development (Liu, 2003). According to Rojas and Guerrero (2021), sustainable tourism often relies on a fragmented conceptual framework in which human interests are positioned above the broader socio-ecological system, thereby constraining its transformative potential. Nonetheless, sustainable tourism remains an essential foundation of regenerative tourism, which some authors conceptualize as an evolutionary progression that extends beyond the traditional boundaries of sustainability (Nitsch & Vogels, 2022). Regenerative tourism addresses the fundamental limitations of the concept of sustainability, as it is based on the principle of self-sustaining systems that actively promote the restoration and revitalization of cultural and natural resources through tourism activities (Zaman, et al., 2022).

Within this context, regenerative tourism—although increasingly invoked in contemporary discourse—remains a relatively emergent concept whose theoretical and practical implications are not yet fully consolidated. The concept of regenerative tourism emerged in the early 21st century as a response to the limitations of sustainable development and the growing need to shift from passive conservation toward the active restoration of natural and social systems. The notion of regeneration has its roots in fields such as regenerative agriculture, architecture, and ecology, where emphasis is placed on cyclic processes, self-sufficiency, and the harmonization of human activities with natural systems (Pollock, 2019). In the aftermath of the pandemic, which profoundly disrupted the tourism and hospitality sector and exposed the limitations of existing development paradigms, inclusive regenerative tourism has gained prominence as a potential pathway forward. As Atladóttir et al. (2023) argue, growing interest in regenerative approaches reflects a broader call for a holistic reconceptualisation of tourism and an evolutionary shift from established sustainability frameworks toward a more transformative, future-oriented model. In this sense, regenerative tourism aligns with the broader imperative for adaptive, resilient, and integrative development pathways capable of responding to the complex challenges facing contemporary tourism systems.

Expanding on this emerging paradigm, regenerative tourism represents a progressive approach that strives to do more than merely maintain existing conditions. It seeks to actively rejuvenate and restore the vitality of ecosystems, local communities, and cultural heritage. By pursuing this restorative orientation, regenerative tourism promotes positive socio-ecological transformation and aims to leave a net beneficial footprint through tourism activities, redefining the role of tourism as a proactive agent of sustainable development rather than merely a source of economic growth. More specifically, the fundamental aspiration of regeneration is that tourism should not merely minimize its negative impacts, but should instead enhance the destination, leaving it in a better condition than before the tourist activity took place (Makhisen et al, 2022). According to Becken and Kaur (2021), regenerative tourism emphasizes a balanced integration of cultural, social, and environmental dimensions, while empowering local communities to actively manage their resources and shape their own tourism narratives.

From an economic perspective, regenerative tourism can be defined as an approach that encompasses “alternative non-capitalist forms of ownership, non-monetary exchange, and community-based beneficial development” (Sheller, 2021, p.1438). In addition, urban regenerative tourism has been described as an approach that strengthens the capacity of communities to enhance their ecosystems, economies, and social structures. This approach is aligned with the active participation of all tourism stakeholders through mutual co-creation, developmental work, and system re-actualization, with the aim of emphasizing the community’s own capacity and responsibility for managing these systems (Bellato & Cheer, 2021). According to Dredge (2022), regenerative tourism represents “an aspiration

to ensure that travel and tourism reinvest in people, places, and nature, and support the long-term renewal and flourishing of our socio-ecological systems” (p. 227).

Regenerative tourism supports the development of community-based models in which shared governance of space and resources is regarded as a key mechanism for mitigating the impacts of climate change and preserving local heritage. This approach entails a departure from the traditional paradigm in which tourism demand dictates supply, and a shift toward a model in which local communities independently shape, manage, and sustainably utilize their own resources. In doing so, emphasis is placed on reorienting the focus from demand to supply, grounded in the autonomous decision-making of local residents and the long-term preservation of their natural and cultural assets.

Therefore, the principal objective of regenerative tourism is to transform the prevailing economic model and the way society is conceptualized, in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This transformation requires a shift away from the pursuit of “sustainable” quantitative growth toward a qualitative form of development that enhances human health and well-being through the improved health of ecosystems. Regenerative tourism offers a comprehensive set of approaches for rethinking and revitalizing the tourism industry by strengthening local economies, preserving cultural heritage and biodiversity, and providing memorable, authentic, and transformative visitor experiences, while enabling destinations to improve and thrive over time.

In line with this overarching objective, regenerative tourism introduces three fundamental and transformative shifts—systems change, mindset shift, and practice change—which collectively redefine how tourism development is conceptualized and implemented. These shifts require: (1) a profound evolution of socio-ecological consciousness, moving from an individualistic “me” orientation toward a collective “we” perspective grounded in empathy, compassion, and collaborative action; (2) a departure from conventional scientific management approaches, recognizing that tourism must be governed as a complex adaptive system rather than through reductionist, individualistic, and market-driven paradigms; and (3) the adoption of deeply participatory, bottom-up processes that are place-based, community-centered, and environmentally oriented. Taken together, these transformations provide the foundation for a regenerative tourism model capable of fostering long-term socio-ecological renewal and resilient destination development.

Based on the conceptual integration of a wide body of scientific articles, as synthesized in the study by Iddawala and Lee (2025), five core characteristics of regenerative tourism have been delineated, each of which is consistently highlighted across various definitions of the concept. The first is community-centrism, reflecting an orientation toward local communities as central actors and beneficiaries in all tourism activities. Second is an ecological worldview that understands tourism as a living system in which humans constitute only one

element within a broader socio-ecological whole, with the protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural and built environments standing as imperative objectives. Third is multi-stakeholder collaboration, encompassing both horizontal (local) cooperation and vertical (multidisciplinary) engagement, resulting in synergistic and complementary contributions to tourism development. Fourth is the creation of net-positive impacts, whereby the primary aim is to generate beneficial outcomes across the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of a destination. Finally, the fifth characteristic highlights a developmental progression beyond sustainability, positioning sustainability as merely the foundational layer rather than the ultimate objective of regenerative tourism.

It is evident that regenerative and sustainable tourism share several conceptual similarities and are frequently examined in parallel within tourism scholarship. To facilitate a clearer understanding and distinction between these two approaches, Table 1 presents a comparative overview of the principal characteristics of sustainable and regenerative tourism.

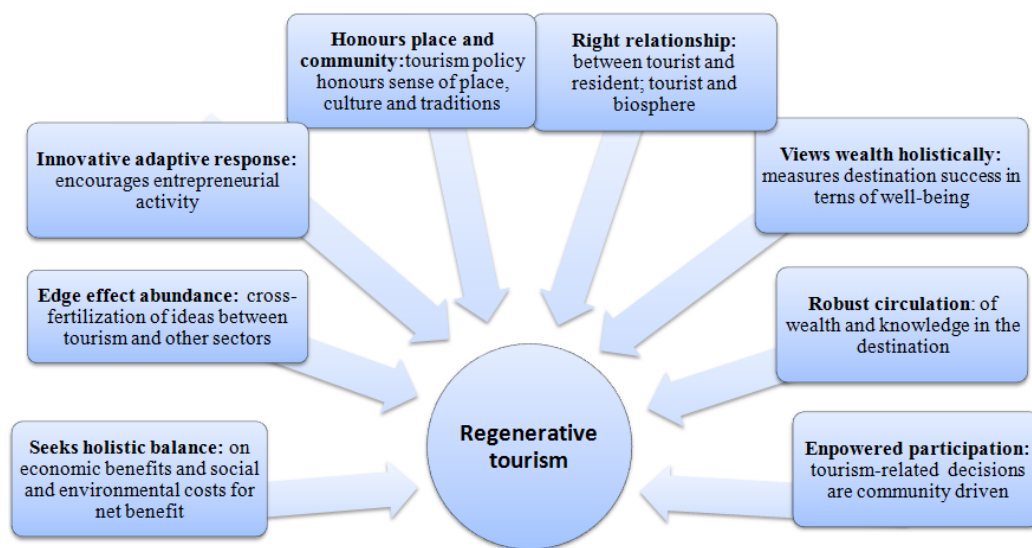
Table 1 Principal characteristics of regenerative tourism and sustainable tourism

Dimension	Regenerative tourism	Sustainable tourism
Paradigm / Worldview	Regenerative / ecological	Economic / mechanistic
Approach	Proactive	Reactive
Purpose	Enables communities and ecosystems to evolve, renew, and restore	Minimize the social and environmental impact of tourism while pursuing economic growth
Focus	Synergy and renewal through cooperation	Balance between benefit and conservation
Concept development	Regenerative development approach by practitioners	Sustainable development by academic and industry
Systems	Living systems thinking approach	System model approach
Measuring success	Net positive effects (ecological, social, cultural)	Reduction of harmful effects
Stakeholder relations	Humans and nature as interconnected and co-evolving	Humans as separate from nature, competitive relations
Participation and collaboration	Involvement of all interested parties with mutual cooperation focus on the local community	Diverse stakeholders participate and collaborate; focus on the tourism expert
Change agents	Domestic and local communities are co-designers of change / change from bottom to top	Government and private sector / change from top to bottom

Source: Author's presentation according to Al-sakkaf et al. (2024)

Regenerative tourism demonstrates a stronger capacity for transformative change, particularly as increasing attention is directed toward the sector’s role in facilitating the shift to a regenerative economy. Building upon Fullerton’s (2015) framework of regenerative economic principles, Sheldon (2022) articulates eight core principles tailored specifically to regenerative tourism (Figure 1). Although rooted in the foundations of conventional tourism, this conceptualization simultaneously introduces novel principles that extend and deepen its developmental orientation.

Figure 1. Core principles of regenerative tourism



Source: Author’s presentation according to Sheldon (2022)

Although regenerative tourism holds considerable transformative potential, its practical implementation is accompanied by numerous challenges. The tourism sector’s inherent complexity—and its strong dependence on stable natural systems—means that any significant alteration in environmental conditions can severely disrupt or fundamentally alter tourism operations. As noted by Kaján and Saarinen (2013), shifts in climatic stability may render certain forms of tourism nonviable or markedly different from their current forms. Activities that rely on encounters with native species or intact ecosystems must therefore be managed in ways that ensure long-term ecological resilience. Rapid, profound, and often irreversible ecological changes—driven by external pressures—can lead to declines in species and habitats (Román-Palacios & Wiens, 2020), ultimately diminishing visitor satisfaction and undermining the viability of tourism offerings.

Beyond environmental vulnerabilities, regenerative tourism also faces conceptual and operational challenges. It demands sustained, long-term commitment, as well as deep collaboration among a wide array of stakeholders. A further difficulty lies in reconceptualizing how destinations assess their own success—moving beyond traditional financial indicators toward metrics that capture socio-ecological well-being (Sheldon, 2022). Achieving this paradigm shift requires the development of new economic models that privilege cooperation over competition, community well-being over individual gain, cultural integrity over commodification, and holistic prosperity over purely monetary profit (Hajarrahmah et al., 2024). To date, however, such shifts remain difficult to realize in practice.

3. Critical analysis of global best practice models

As contemporary tourism systems face unprecedented environmental and socio-economic challenges, there is a consensus on the need to conceptualize tourism beyond traditional models of growth, visitor experience and market competitiveness. The transition to a new future of tourism therefore provides an opportunity to rethink not only the ways in which travel is produced and consumed, but also the extent to which tourism can actively contribute to improving ecological integrity, community well-being and global sustainability outcomes. Empirical evidence shows that the principles of regenerative tourism are already being operationalized in practice, with numerous destination management organizations and tourism businesses integrating regenerative approaches into their core business strategies and daily operations. The following examples illustrate successful initiatives that have embraced regenerative principles, highlighting both their practical application and socio-ecological implications. The selected cases come from diverse geographical and cultural contexts, highlighting the global spread of regenerative tourism practices and suggesting the potential for broader applicability and adaptation in different tourism systems.

In the case of *New Zealand*, the concept of environmental and cultural stewardship—referred to as *tiaki* and rooted in the Māori worldview—has been embedded within national tourism narratives and practices, where it is positioned as a cultural norm that aligns with emerging regenerative tourism principles. A central mechanism through which these values are operationalised is the Tiaki Promise, a voluntary initiative designed to encourage visitors to adopt environmentally and culturally responsible behaviours and publicly express these commitments, thereby fostering pro-environmental conduct and reinforcing collective responsibility for the socio-ecological well-being of the destination (Tourism of New Zealand, 2024).

From a regenerative perspective, the Tiaki Promise extends beyond conventional environmental responsibility campaigns by mobilising cultural values and social norms as instruments for shaping visitor behaviour and cultivating deeper connections with place. The regenerative dimension rests on the integration of *tiaki* into the identity and everyday practices of residents, tourism providers, and public institutions, thereby positioning visitor engagement and environmental stewardship as integral to destination governance. In this sense, regenerative tourism is conceived as a place-based cultural practice that seeks to enhance long-term socio-ecological vitality rather than merely mitigate negative impacts.

At the operational level, this governance model entails integrated resource management and the active inclusion of Indigenous rights-holders in decision-making processes, alongside the use of comprehensive indicators based on the “four capitals” framework (economic, social, cultural, and natural) to evaluate tourism’s contribution to broader systems. Accordingly, tourism in New Zealand is framed not only as an economic sector but as a mechanism for revitalising cultural practices, enhancing social cohesion, and conserving natural resources, reflecting a paradigmatic shift towards regenerative destination management.

Another illustrative case is provided by *Myanmar*, where the international tour operator Intrepid Travel has developed a range of community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives explicitly aimed at generating local socio-economic value and enhancing destination stewardship. A notable example is the CBT lodge in Myaing, established as a joint initiative between Intrepid Travel and the Myanmar non-profit organisation Action Aid. The project was designed to create alternative livelihood opportunities for residents of surrounding rural villages and to strengthen community cohesion, while simultaneously offering international visitors an authentic experience of rural life in Myanmar. In this sense, the initiative reflects a dual objective: enhancing local well-being through participatory economic development and promoting intercultural understanding through immersive tourism encounters.

In line with its broader sustainability agenda, Intrepid Travel has complemented its CBT programmes with ambitious climate-related commitments. In 2020, the company expanded its longstanding carbon-neutral policy by pledging to offset 125% of its CO₂ emissions, positioning its operations within a “net positive” paradigm that seeks to restore rather than merely neutralise environmental impacts (Intrepid Travel, 2025). This approach demonstrates a shift from conventional corporate responsibility frameworks towards regenerative business models that seek to produce measurable socio-ecological benefits for host destinations, aligning with emerging discourses on regenerative tourism and equitable development.

An illustrative example of regenerative tourism within the Latin American context is Lapa Ríos Lodge, located in the Osa Peninsula in southwestern *Costa Rica*—one of the country’s most biodiverse and ecologically sensitive regions. Situated within a 1,000-acre private rainforest reserve, the lodge operates as a conservation-oriented enterprise that integrates biodiversity protection with community development objectives. Its organisational model is designed to safeguard the surrounding ecosystem while simultaneously generating socio-economic benefits for local communities, thereby aligning closely with the foundational principles of regenerative tourism.

The lodge’s regenerative practices are operationalised through a range of interpretive and participatory activities that engage visitors directly in ecological restoration and environmental learning. Guided experiences—such as tours on traditional medicinal plants and the “Twigs, Pigs, and Garbage” sustainability programme—enhance visitor understanding of ecological processes, local resource management systems, and the human–nature relationships that underpin conservation work. The reforestation programme, which invites guests to plant native tree species, further provides hands-on opportunities for contributing to habitat restoration and gaining insight into the ecological significance of forest regeneration within the broader landscape. Through these initiatives, Lapa Ríos demonstrates a dual regenerative function: supporting the active restoration and long-term protection of tropical forest ecosystems while cultivating environmental literacy and place-based stewardship among visitors.

This enterprise-level model is reinforced by Costa Rica’s broader national policy framework, which positions the country as a global leader in ecosystem restoration and conservation finance. Costa Rica has pioneered the development of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanisms that channel revenues generated through conservation activities, ecotourism, and public–private partnerships into forest restoration, biodiversity protection, and community development programmes (Pagiola, 2008). By reinvesting tourism-related income into long-term ecosystem management and rural livelihoods, PES schemes institutionalise financial incentives for ecological stewardship. These mechanisms support forest conservation agreements, sustainable land-use practices, and biodiversity enhancement initiatives, thereby creating an enabling governance environment in which tourism operators—such as Lapa Ríos—can effectively align their activities with national restoration and development priorities. As a result, Costa Rica presents a coherent model of how regenerative tourism practices can be embedded within wider environmental policy architectures to enhance socio-ecological resilience and promote sustained ecological and social benefits at both local and national scales.

A more recent case of destination-level intervention is found in Venice, *Italy*, where municipal authorities have adopted regulatory measures to counteract the long-standing challenges of overtourism. Historically receiving approximately 30

million visitors annually, Venice has experienced significant socio-ecological pressures, including escalating levels of waste generated by the hospitality sector, the displacement of residents associated with the decline of the local housing market, and the erosion of cultural identity. The magnitude of these pressures has been internationally recognised, prompting initiatives such as the UNESCO workshop on the restoration of Venetian heritage convened in 2011 to address threats to the city's cultural fabric and built environment (Cecchi, 2021).

In response to these persistent challenges, Venice introduced an entry fee for day visitors (5-10 €), implemented in January 2022 (Venezia Unica, 2025). The policy—envisioned as a mechanism to regulate visitation flows and generate revenue—seeks to mitigate the negative environmental and cultural impacts of high-volume tourism while simultaneously supporting the economic sustainability of the destination. Although the measure does not constitute a regenerative approach in a strict sense, it reflects a strategic attempt to align tourism governance with principles of socio-ecological resilience by internalising some of the externalities associated with visitor pressure and reinvesting resources into urban management and heritage preservation. Within this context, the entry fee can be understood as part of a broader shift towards adaptive governance strategies that aim to balance economic objectives with the protection of cultural and environmental assets in highly vulnerable heritage destinations.

Slovenia is widely recognised as one of Europe's leading best-practice destinations in the field of regenerative tourism, owing to its integrated policy framework, institutional mechanisms, and locally grounded models that link environmental stewardship, community development, and transformative visitor experiences. Central to this approach is the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST), a national system for sustainable and regenerative destination management that aligns local planning with international standards (GSTC, ETIS) and operationalises principles of ecological restoration, circular economy, and community participation. Through this mechanism, regenerative principles are institutionally embedded within Slovenia's national tourism governance.

Regenerative practices are also prominently reflected in urban settings, particularly in Ljubljana, which has emerged as a European leader in sustainable and regenerative urban development. The pedestrianisation of the city centre, implementation of circular waste-management models, expansion of green infrastructure, revitalisation of river corridors, and promotion of local supply chains are integrated within a strategy that positions tourism as a vehicle for improving the urban ecosystem and resident well-being rather than as an end in itself. Tourism revenues have been partially reinvested into nature-protection programmes and urban ecological innovations, thereby establishing a model in which tourism contributes to the restoration and long-term resilience of the city (Nikšić, 2024). Taken together, Slovenia demonstrates how regenerative tourism can be operationalised through integrated governance structures, community

engagement, and sustained investment in ecosystem renewal, offering a model that surpasses conventional sustainability practices and fosters the long-term socio-ecological vitality of destinations.

The *Netherlands*, and particularly Amsterdam, has positioned itself as a leading example in advancing regenerative tourism through the adoption of the Doughnut Economics framework. Conceived as an alternative to growth-oriented economic paradigms, this model delineates a safe and just operating space for humanity by defining two boundaries: an inner social foundation representing minimum living standards for residents, and an outer ecological ceiling reflecting the planet's biophysical limits. The space between these boundaries—the “doughnut”—constitutes the zone in which economic activity should meet societal needs while remaining within ecological constraints (DEAL, 2020).

In April 2020, Amsterdam became the first city globally to employ this framework as a basis for strategic decision-making in tourism governance. In alignment with the Doughnut model, the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions (NBTC) reoriented its promotional strategy to redirect visitor flows toward destinations beyond Amsterdam, aiming to mitigate excessive tourist concentration and reduce pressure on the urban environment. This shift was reinforced by local residents, who formally petitioned the municipal government to introduce measures limiting visitor numbers, underscoring the city's long-standing struggle with overtourism. Through the integration of Doughnut Economics into tourism planning, Amsterdam seeks to reposition tourism not as an end in itself but as a mechanism for generating net-positive socio-ecological outcomes. This approach aspires to ensure that tourism contributes to urban well-being, strengthens community resilience, and supports long-term ecological integrity, thereby leaving the city in a more sustainable and regenerative state than before.

4. Guidelines for the development of regenerative tourism in Serbia

Building on the international best practices examined above, Serbia has the potential to articulate a comprehensive regenerative tourism agenda that moves beyond conventional sustainability frameworks and positions tourism as a driver of socio-ecological renewal. A foundational step in this direction would involve the institutionalisation of regenerative principles within national tourism policy. Establishing a governance framework analogous to Slovenia's Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST) would enable Serbia to align with international sustainability standards while simultaneously developing context-specific indicators to assess ecological restoration, cultural vitality, and community well-being. Such a framework would provide a coherent structure for long-term policy coordination, monitoring, and evaluation across multiple governance levels.

A second strategic direction concerns the strengthening of community-based tourism (CBT) and local value chains, drawing on insights from Myanmar's CBT model. By fostering tourism initiatives that generate direct socio-economic benefits for rural communities—particularly those situated within protected areas and peripheral regions—Serbia can enhance local livelihoods while promoting authentic, place-based visitor experiences. This approach would also support the diversification of rural economies and contribute to reducing regional disparities. Closely connected to this is the integration of cultural stewardship and local knowledge systems into tourism development. Following the example of New Zealand, Serbia could embed the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage into tourism narratives, interpretive programmes, and visitor education. Initiatives that emphasise traditional crafts, agricultural practices, and intangible cultural heritage would serve to reinforce cultural resilience and enhance the experiential quality of tourism offerings.

In parallel, aligning tourism with ecosystem restoration and conservation financing represents another critical avenue for regenerative development. Costa Rica's Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) mechanisms offer a transferable model through which Serbia could design financial instruments that channel tourism revenues into the restoration of forests, wetlands, and river systems, particularly in national parks and biosphere reserves. This would ensure that tourism contributes directly to the maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem services that underpin destination attractiveness.

Effective management of tourism pressures also requires the adoption of adaptive governance instruments, as evidenced by Venice's regulatory approach to overtourism. Serbia could implement visitor-management systems, differentiated pricing schemes, or restrictions in ecologically sensitive areas to mitigate environmental degradation and preserve cultural landscapes. Such tools would facilitate a more balanced distribution of tourism flows and protect vulnerable sites from excessive pressure. Furthermore, regenerative tourism in urban contexts can be advanced through strategies inspired by Ljubljana's model of sustainable and regenerative urban development. Serbian cities such as Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad could invest in green infrastructure, expand pedestrian zones, implement circular waste-management systems, and reinvest tourism revenues into ecological innovations. These measures would reposition urban tourism as a mechanism for improving environmental quality and enhancing the well-being of residents.

Finally, adopting transformative economic frameworks such as Doughnut Economics could provide Serbian cities with a holistic decision-making model for evaluating tourism's contribution to societal well-being and ecological integrity. By assessing tourism development within the boundaries of social foundations and environmental ceilings, policymakers could ensure that tourism growth remains consistent with long-term sustainability objectives. Taken together, these strategic directions offer a coherent pathway for Serbia to transition towards a regenerative

tourism paradigm. By embedding ecological restoration, community empowerment, cultural stewardship, and innovative governance mechanisms into the core of its tourism development model, Serbia can enhance the resilience and vitality of its destinations while aligning with the most progressive international trends in tourism policy and practice.

5. Conclusion

Regenerative tourism constitutes a transformative paradigm that moves beyond the limitations of conventional sustainable tourism by emphasizing the active restoration and enhancement of ecological, social, and cultural systems. Unlike traditional sustainability approaches that primarily focus on mitigating negative impacts, regenerative tourism seeks to create net-positive outcomes that enhance long-term resilience and socio-ecological well-being. International experiences from destinations such as New Zealand, Myanmar, Costa Rica, Slovenia, Italy, and the Netherlands underscore that the effective application of regenerative principles depends on integrated governance, community empowerment, participatory decision-making, and the alignment of tourism development with wider ecological and cultural objectives.

Across Europe, the transition from extractive, volume-driven tourism toward regenerative models has emerged as a structural imperative for preserving the quality and competitiveness of destinations. Achieving this transition requires coordinated policy frameworks at the EU level, innovative financing mechanisms, inclusive governance arrangements, and the incorporation of regenerative principles into education systems, business strategies, and institutional practices. Ultimately, regenerative tourism represents a shift in mindset, encouraging all actors—governments, businesses, and visitors—to act as stewards of the places they influence, thereby supporting the restoration of ecosystems, the strengthening of cultural identity, and the advancement of fair and resilient local economies.

For Serbia, adopting a regenerative tourism model offers substantial potential to enhance destination sustainability, diversify rural and urban economies, preserve cultural heritage, and increase community capacity. Key priorities include embedding regenerative principles within national tourism policy, promoting community-based tourism and localized value chains, developing conservation and ecosystem restoration financing tools, and implementing adaptive governance and visitor management systems. Additionally, frameworks such as Doughnut Economics provide valuable guidance for integrating social, ecological, and economic considerations into tourism planning. In sum, the transition toward regenerative tourism in Serbia requires a holistic and systemic approach that places the well-being of people, nature, and culture at the center of development processes. By integrating regenerative principles across policy, practice, and

governance structures, Serbia can strengthen the resilience and vitality of its destinations and position itself as a forward-looking contributor to the global shift toward a regenerative and sustainable future in tourism.

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REGENERATIVNI TURIZAM KAO SAVREMENI RAZVOJNI MODEL UNAPREĐENJA OTPORNOSTI I KONKURENTNOSTI TURISTIČKIH DESTINACIJA

Sažetak: Regenerativni turizam predstavlja savremeni razvojni koncept koji nadilazi okvire tradicionalne održivosti, te se zasniva na principima aktivne obnove i unapređenja prirodnih, društvenih i kulturnih sistema u turističkim destinacijama. Polazeći od ekološkog pogleda na svet, regenerativni turistički pristup nastoji da poveća kapacitet sistema podrške za ostvarivanje neto pozitivnih socio-ekoloških efekata. Kao brzo evoluirajući koncept, regenerativni turizam predstavlja praktične načine na koje destinacije mogu uključiti perspektive različitih zainteresovanih strana i nivoje posvećenosti i odgovornosti, kako bi se postigli željeni rezultati. Cilj ovog rada jeste da se kroz analizu teorijskih osnova i principa regenerativnog turizma, kao i primere dobre prakse, identifikuju ključni elementi i uslovi za oblikovanje najprihvatljivijeg modela budućeg razvoja turizma u Srbiji, zasnovanog na regenerativnim načelima. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da regenerativni turizam može predstavljati značajan instrument unapređenja otpornosti i konkurentnosti turističkih destinacija u Srbiji. Poseban značaj ima integracija lokalnih zajednica u procese odlučivanja, revitalizacija prirodnih resursa i primena cirkularnih poslovnih modela koji doprinose dugoročnoj održivosti i inkluzivnom razvoju.

Ključne reči: regenerativni turizam, održivost, životna sredina, transformativne promene, Srbija

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