



Report

Nordic Regenerative Tourism NorReg 2022 - A Pilot Project

March 2023



NorReg

Nordic Regenerative Tourism

Report: Nordic Regenerative Tourism NorReg 2022 - A Pilot Project

March 2023

Authors: Ólöf Ýrr Atladóttir, Jessica Aquino, Milena Nikolova, Magdalena Falter
Layout: Daniel Bystöm

Acknowledgement

This project is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs, where it has been supported by Sunna Þórðardóttir, Senior Advisor of the Department of Business Affairs and Tourism. The project is led and administered by Ásta Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir, Managing Director of the Icelandic Tourism Cluster on behalf of the ministry.

Copyright

The Icelandic Tourism Cluster owns the copyrights to the content in this document.
Nordic Regenerative Tourism: A Pilot Project (Online ed.)
ISBN: 978-9935-25-371-2
DOI: 10.33112/Nrt105jks

© Icelandic Tourism Cluster

Contact detail
Ólöf Ýrr Atladóttir: olofyrr@icelandtourism.is

Recommended citation

Atladóttir, Ó. Ý., Aquino, J., Nikolova, M., and Falter, M. (2023) Nordic Regenerative Tourism: A Pilot Project. Reykjavik, Iceland: Icelandic Tourism Cluster

Cover photo: Klövahallar Söderasen National Park, Apelöga, Visit Skåne



Nordic Council
of Ministers



Government of Iceland
Ministry of Culture
and Business Affairs



ÍSLENSKI
FERÐAKLASINN
Iceland Tourism Cluster



NorReg

Nordic Regenerative Tourism

Contents

5	Executive summary
10	Regenerative tourism – a paradigm shift or natural evolution?
11	The definition of sustainable tourism
11	The rise of responsible tourism
12	The holistic approach and call for regeneration
16	Rural regions, SMEs and Nordic Policy
19	Nordic Regenerative Tourism – paving the path towards the future
24	Participants and structure
29	Nordic Regenerative Tourism – our vision and priorities
29	Objective
29	Approach
30	Deliverables
33	Measuring and evaluation of regenerative tourism initiatives
33	Objective
33	Approach
34	Deliverables
36	The First Mile – A Smart Start of the Regenerative Journey in the Nordics
36	Objective
36	Approach
39	Deliverables
40	Key insights
42	Citizen science for visitors – deepening the interactions between visitors and host destinations
42	Objective
42	Approach
44	Deliverables
45	Outreach and Communication
45	Website
45	Facebook group
47	Zoom meetings, Jam Boards, and Google Drive
47	NorReg workshops in Malmö, Sweden
48	Event participation
53	Conclusions and further work
55	Appendix
55	First Mile Resource Centre Snapshots
57	Snapshots Citizen Science Workshop Material (autumn 2022)



*Curiosity creates
knowledge and
innovation is the
driving force for
change*

Executive summary

This report summarizes the results of the work of the project ***Nordic Regenerative Tourism – a pilot project (NorReg 2022)***, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and aimed at developing a framework for collaboration among small and micro-sized enterprises (SM_iEs) and regional tourism organizations based on regenerative tourism approaches and solutions.

Previous work

The Nordic Council has defined a vision for 2030 framed by the statement: "*The Nordic Region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world*". Three priorities are identified within the vision¹:

- **A green Nordic Region** - Together, we will promote a green transition of our societies and work towards carbon neutrality and a sustainable, circular, and bio-based economy.
- **A socially sustainable Nordic Region** - Together, we will promote an inclusive, equal, and interconnected region with shared values and strengthened cultural exchanges and welfare.
- **A competitive Nordic Region** - Together, we will promote green growth in the Nordic Region based on knowledge, innovation, mobility, and digital integration.

The Nordic vision is closely linked to the 17 UN Sustainable Development goals, and indicators have been developed to monitor the progress of the vision².

In alignment with the Nordic Vision 2030, the Nordic Council of Ministers funded an analytical report, "*Monitoring sustainability of Tourism in the Nordics*"³, within which six recommendations were put forth that outline ideas and projects that will lead to stronger Nordic co-operation, more effective policy development and practical initiatives that will make a real contribution to a more sustainable and regenerative tourism industry in the Nordics. These are:

1. Stronger Nordic Collaboration
2. Regenerative Tourism: A shared responsibility
3. A Nordic Network for sustainable and regenerative tourism
4. A Meaningful Metrics Monitor
5. Platform for sharing Best Practices
6. New disruptive technologies and business models for sustainability

NorReg 2022 is aligned with and contributes to the aims of all the recommendations defined.

1 <https://www.norden.org/en/declaration/our-vision-2030>

2 <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1577991/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

3 <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1557946/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Regenerative Tourism

The disruptions to tourism brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the inherent vulnerability of the industry and its intrinsic connection with community, the environment, and tourism's dependence upon favourable external factors. The call for a paradigm change within the tourism industry gained voice, within which tourism would stake its claim as a contributor and participant in the interwoven web that is human society and our natural environment. Even though that voice seems to have lost some of its resonance as the industry forges ahead post-pandemic, a growing number of tourism stakeholders have come to realize the necessity of a new approach to developing the tourism sector – and to search for new, holistically focused indicators from which to evaluate its success.

"I feel we are part of something big and important for future tourism development in the North Atlantic. Developing tools for regenerative tourism is very important, and to be able to involve local community and test the tools, we need more time, at least 2-3 years."

Business owner I, Faroe Islands

The concept of Regenerative Tourism has become more and more prevalent within this discourse and provides opportunities for meaningful tourism development and dialogue. It is community focused, calls for self-empowerment of industry actors and stakeholders, while adopting a holistic world view, where stakeholders all play a role and affect outcomes.

Within the regenerative tourism movement there is a clear understanding of the importance of place-based approaches and solutions. The "one-size-fits-all" assumption is rejected and each region, even each small company within the region, adopts solutions that fit them individually, while at the same time keeping up a dialogue with other regenerative stakeholders from which to learn. Within regenerative tourism, universal solutions, tools, and operational structures are not the norm, while at the same time there is an understanding of the need to contribute within the group towards knowledge, toolboxes, and experience, thereby strengthening each companies' contribution to community and nature.

Nordic Regenerative Tourism

The Nordic community is an exciting platform for regenerative tourism as an approach for tourism development. Sparsely populated regions and the prevalence of micro-sized enterprises among regional tourism stakeholders call for an understanding and adoption to specific needs, challenges, and relevant approaches towards sustainable, responsible, and regenerative practices.

This pilot project, **NorReg 2022**, was derived from an original three year project plan, in which the aim is to: develop and test tools relevant for **SMEs in the Nordic countries**; empower regional organizations by providing vision, training and realistic, applicable place-based initiatives aimed at local tourism's contributing to the regeneration of places, nature and communities; and build a community of tourism stakeholders in the north, committed to regenerative tourism, self-empowerment and nurturing.

The project provided a **platform** for developing **a common vision and understanding** about regenerative tourism in the Nordic context, and a testing field for **first ideas and initiatives** for the SMEs, who are the main beneficiaries of the project. The project also brought together a group of Nordic academics dedicated to the exploration of the concept of regenerative tourism, its context, and possible ways to **evaluate** its impact on the **wellbeing** of communities and our **harmony** with nature.

"Make awareness about regenerative tourism so that we all know the importance of our choices. We need tools so we can make incoming agents, suppliers, and customers, aware of the option to choose a product that involves regenerative tourism."

Business owner II, Faroe Islands

NorReg 2022 was funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and Business Affairs. The Icelandic Tourism Cluster led and administered the project on behalf of the ministry.

Five regions within as many Nordic Countries partnered within the project. Each regional organization recruited up to three **SMEs** as active participants. The discussions and work within the project were conducted mainly through **virtual meetings and workshops**, focusing on different deliverables and aims. Common **platforms** were activated (Facebook and Google) and an introductory website designed. In November, workshops were held in Malmö, Sweden in connection to the open *NorReg* seminar, during which many of the participants met for the first time face-to-face.

The **NorReg seminar** in November brought together 100 participants from all Nordic Countries, as well as 300 who participated virtually. Among presenters were three global authorities on Regenerative Tourism, Anna Pollock founder of Conscious Travel, Dr. Dianne Dredge, director of the Tourism CoLab, and Elke Dens, Global director of programs at the Travel Foundation.

Among the main findings of NorReg 2022 – a pilot project are:

- A common **vision** for Nordic Regenerative Tourism has been defined along with three main **principles**, through analysis, discussions, and workshops. The vision will be regularly revisited to adapt to new realities, knowledge and experience gained.
- Desktop research has revealed the complexity of defining **metrics** and **evaluation methods** that veer from the commonly accepted numerical measurements that govern the tourism discourse. An academic group has been established, focusing in the first instance mainly on exploring methods to evaluate **community wellbeing** and tourism to it. Future work should focus on defining and exploring the concepts of flourishing and thriving communities as a basis for evaluation, as well as defining and/or adapting methods for evaluation of **environmental harmony**.
- The **First Mile** methodology for SM_iEs was adopted as support for implementing regenerative initiatives among participating companies. Main themes were defined within workshops and individual companies supported in taking first steps of their choosing. Results show a need to adapt support measures to the realistic time factors that governs SM_iE operations.
- **Citizen Science** product development for visitors was explored within two workshops to introduce the concept to SM_iE participants and initiate work on the development of cooperative project within each region. Work is ongoing, with NorReg participants actively exploring their community and natural surroundings, researching ongoing scientific projects in the region, and formulating research questions that can be turned into Citizen Science projects.
- Lessons learned for future project design include **complex stakeholder engagement** issues, calling for innovative design thinking approaches.

The next phase of the project addresses the challenges encountered in this pilot phase, among them:

- Activation of participants – approaches and inclusive methods
 - The challenge of mindset changing
 - Reconciling challenges as perceived by participants to the mindset of self-empowerment
- Timeline
 - Setting realistic goals and adapting to the realities and bandwidth of SM_iEs
- Sectoral collaboration (“Experts”, locals, regional/national organizations)
 - Encouraging formal and informal networks and matrices
- Measuring and evaluation
 - Defining holistic aims and objectives within a community framework
 - Defining meaningful, adaptable evaluation criteria for regenerative tourism initiatives
- Citizen science projects – development and activation
- Place-based approaches through pan-Nordic collaboration

Participants in NorReg 2022 are enthusiastic about continuing to the next phase of Nordic Regenerative Tourism in 2023. Knowledge gained so far has highlighted the tremendous potential of the regenerative approach for destinations and SM_iEs within the Nordic Region.

“This is great! I just presented regenerative tourism and discussed the pilot project with my tourism students yesterday. Happy to see it continue.”

Business owner I, Faroe Islands

Regenerative tourism – a paradigm shift or natural evolvement?

Sustainable tourism is a clear priority within the context of Nordic Tourism. However, the concept of sustainability has developed considerably since its inception in the 1990s, not least within tourism. Experience has shaped it, as have new generations, expectations, and trends.

When looking at the historical evolution of concepts, it can be helpful to view them along two axes: moving from common to individual responsibility; and from a reactive focus on doing no further harm, to a proactive demand for giving back and regenerating depleted or tarnished resources.

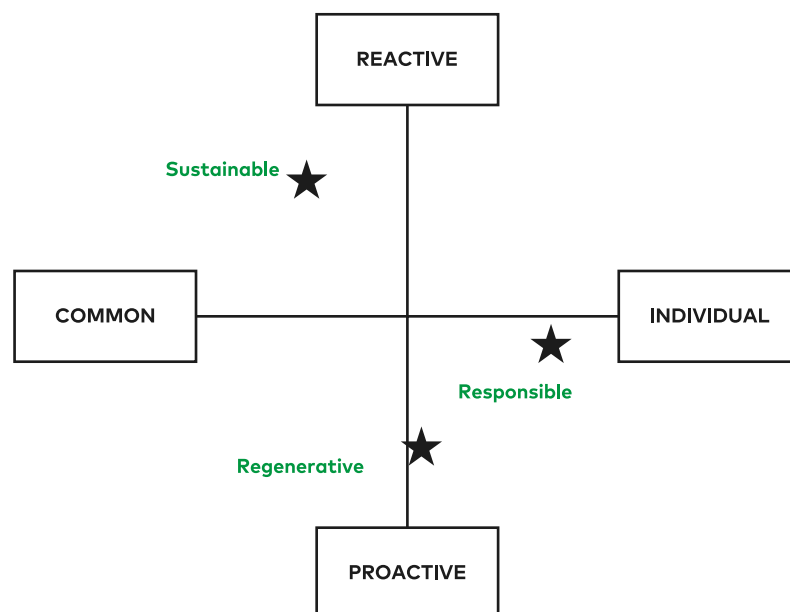


Figure 1: Sustainable, responsible, and regenerative tourism

When looking at the historical evolution of concepts, it can be helpful to view them along two axes: moving from common to individual responsibility; and from a reactive focus on doing no further harm, to a proactive demand for giving back and regenerating depleted or tarnished resources.

The definition of sustainable tourism

"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of **present tourists** and **host regions** while protecting and enhancing **opportunities for the future**. It is envisaged as leading to **management of all resources** in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems."
(UNWTO, 2012)

Since the concept of sustainability was developed in the late 20th century, and as it has been mainstreamed into most discourse concerning human endeavour, it has given rise to numerous criticisms and suggestions for improvement.

The concept of sustainable tourism, first defined by the WTO (now UNWTO) in 1999 laid the groundwork for a focus on the effects that tourism has on its surroundings, both environmental and societal. Originally, the definition focused on the conceptualisation itself, without allotting roles or responsibilities within the tourism ecosystem. Hence, the concept came under fire for lacking delivery.

"Group decision making is another common bureaucratic practice that enables otherwise considerate people to behave inhumanely, because no single individual feels responsible for policies arrived at collectively. Where everyone is responsible, no one is really responsible."⁴

The rise of responsible tourism

We call upon **tourism enterprises** and **trade associations** in originating markets and in destinations to adopt a responsible approach, to **commit to specific responsible practises**, and to report progress in a transparent and auditable way, and where appropriate to use this for **market advantage**. **Corporate businesses** can assist by providing markets, capacity building, mentoring and micro-financing support for small, medium and micro enterprises. [...]
We all have a responsibility to make a difference by the way we act."

(Cape Town declaration on Responsible Tourism 2002)

This was the background to a shift in perceptions and an increased demand that responsibility for actions be allotted to the various stakeholders within the wide-spread tourism sector. The focus in the first years of the 21st century was on individual responsibility, steering away from the actions of the public sector or politics to the stakeholders and tourism benefactors themselves; the industry – and the visitors.

Indeed, the re-definition of the UNWTO concept of sustainable tourism was influenced by responsible tourism and its perspectives, addressing the various needs of those affected by tourism as an enterprise:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"

(Current definition, UNWTO)

Responsible tourism gained recognition in the years before the global economic recession of 2008. The approach has been criticised as having a market-focused, neoliberal perspective, drawing upon the *"de-politication"* of actions and operations within the tourism sector, and thus towards deregulation and an appeal to individual

⁴ Bandura, A.: Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement, in W. Reich (Ed.), *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (pp. 161-191), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

stakeholders own sense of responsibility⁵. What had been solely perceived as common, should now be defined as individual.

The holistic approach and call for regeneration

It was becoming increasingly obvious that the complexity of what could be called the “*tourism ecosystem*” called for complex approaches, and that a realistic approach to solving the challenges tourism faced as the industry boomed might be to acknowledge that neither markets nor regulations alone could lead the tourism industry towards a path of greater sustainable development. While the original concept of sustainable tourism could justly be criticised for being too passive, the concept of responsible tourism had come under fire for being too individualistic.

“The tourism sector is so integrated into the peoples’ lives, so we really want to build on the permises of the people who live there. And that is not always easy but that is the way to go. For our guests and for our region.”

Representative of a DMO, Iceland

The concept of regeneration is biological, referring to the process of renewal, restoration, and tissue growth that makes organisms and ecosystems resilient to natural fluctuations or events that cause disturbance or damage. Biological research has increasingly focussed on the importance of ecosystems, biodiversity and the processes that shape them, and understanding has been growing about the true interconnectedness of all living things. Within agriculture, regeneration address the threat posed by the loss of the worlds fertile soil and biodiversity, along with the loss of indigenous seeds and knowledge⁶.

The concept has also gained notice within the sectors of design and architecture, and had started gaining weight in tourism discourse when the Covid pandemic hit. This was not least due to increasingly negative effects from tourism on communities, and as a response to increasing pressure on travel due to the impending climate crisis. As one website puts it: *“Regeneration puts life at the centre of every action and decision. It applies to all of life—grasslands, farms, insects, forests, fish, wetlands, coastlands, and oceans—and it applies equally to family, communities, cities, schools, religion, commerce, and governments. And most spectacularly to climate.”*⁷

5 Tremblay-Huet,S.; Lapointe, D. The New Responsible Tourism Paradigm: The UNWTO’s Discourse Following the Spread of COVID-19. *Tour. Hosp.* 2021, 2, 248–260. <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp2020015>

6 <https://regenerationinternational.org/why-regenerative-agriculture/>

7 <https://regeneration.org/solutions>

During COVID-19, there was a prevalent discourse on how tourism might re-invent itself in the wake of the pandemic, not least based upon the call to arms by Anna Pollock, who in her essay about regenerative tourism as the natural maturation of sustainability described how regeneration might be incorporated into strategic thinking about tourism⁸:

"At its simplest, regeneration is about creating the fertile conditions conducive for life to thrive based on the knowledge that life and living systems, unlike machines, self-organise, and are not static but, through living, are constantly adapting, changing, evolving."⁹

(Pollock, 2019)

Regenerative tourism is thus a holistic approach to tourism development; and the regenerative tourism economy aims at developing an operating model within destinations that optimises benefits to all stakeholders, rather than focussing on maximising profits for few shareholders. Thus, the needs of individuals, businesses, and communities must be addressed within a design that is in balance with the natural environment.

This calls for implementing new methods of evaluation, moving away from focussing solely on measuring economic growth, spending, and GDP contributions. As widely acknowledged, there are few, or no, measurement systems in place to look at the potential for increasing the *wellbeing* of the people and businesses in a destination, or defining and evaluating what makes a destination thrive. Within regenerative tourism, "growth" needs to be re-defined. As Anna Pollock has stated: *"Regenerative tourism is not anti-growth; it simply asks that we grow the things that matter most to us in ways that benefit the entire system and never at the expense of others. There can be no such thing as a sustainable business within an unsustainable system."*¹⁰

Regenerative tourism can be viewed from different perspectives:

- Regeneration as a step towards sustainability
- Regeneration as an extension of sustainability
- Regeneration as separate or distinct from sustainability

These perspectives all view regenerative tourism as contributing to the restoration and healing of living systems, where we as humans are participants and intertwined in a complex web of interdependence with all other living things. So, while regeneration is certainly connected to sustainability, it differs from the traditional views of tourism in several ways, as Tina O'Dwyer has described¹¹:

⁸ <https://medium.com/activate-the-future/regenerative-tourism-the-natural-maturation-of-sustainability-26e6507d0fcb>

⁹ Anna Pollock 2019: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/regenerative-tourism-natural-maturation-anna-pollock>

¹⁰ <https://medium.com/activate-the-future/regenerative-tourism-the-natural-maturation-of-sustainability-26e6507d0fcb>

¹¹ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/5-opportunities-challenges-regenerative-tourism-tina-o-dwyer/>

Most importantly for Nordic destinations, host tourism operators are regarded as crucial catalysts of change and stewards of regenerative tourism systems. Regenerative practices must therefore be aligned with cultural and natural patterns and integrated into local developmental policies and approaches. In that way, regenerative tourism can be a transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems¹².

	Traditional View (for want of a better term)	Regenerative View
Purpose of tourism	Generate economic wealth for a destination through job creation	Creative conditions for people and places to thrive
Nature of tourism	Extractive – takes from the place for the benefit of some	Regenerative- gives to the place for the benefit of all
Focus of tourism	Visitor is at centre	Host (community and place) are at centre.
Definition of tourism	Focus on demand	Focus on supply.
Measurement of tourism	Tourism is a stand-alone economic value	Tourism is a dynamic that is part of a wider ecosystem.
success	Visitor-numbers, visitor revenue and visitor satisfaction	Wellbeing of people, communities, and places.
Worldview	Capitalist and growth driven.	Return to the knowing and wisdom of indigenous communities

Table 1. How regenerative tourism differs from traditional views.

¹² See e.g. L. Bellato et al. (2022): <https://bendigomarketplace.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2022/03/14616688.2022.pdf>



Photo: H. Kolltveit/Destination Lofoten

Rural regions, SM_iEs and Nordic Policy

The OECD has estimated that SMEs (Small and Medium Sized Enterprises) comprise around 85% of all tourism operations within member states. Indeed, according to OECD statistics¹³, there are strong indicators pointing towards the importance of small and **micro-sized** enterprises (SM_iEs) in the tourism economies in each of the Nordic countries. From the reported statistics on employees and establishments within each country, it is possible to estimate the mean number of employees within tourism enterprises as a simplified indicator of the prevalence of micro-sized enterprises in each country¹⁴:

Country	Employees
Denmark (employees 2019/establishments 2020)	11,49
Finland (employees 2019/establishments 2020)	3,94
Iceland (employees 2019/establishments 2021)	13,4
Norway (employees 2019/establishments 2020)	6,95

Table 2. Mean numbers of employees per business, OECD numbers 2022

Comparable statistics are unavailable for Greenland and the Faroe Islands; and were not available for Sweden in the 2022 OECD report. However, we assume that the inclusion of these countries would not significantly change the picture painted here.

It may fairly safely be assumed from these numbers, **that a vast majority of tourism companies in the Nordic falls under the EU definition of SM_iEs**, with small companies defined as companies with 50 employees or less, and micro-sized companies as having 10 employees or fewer¹⁵. As such, SM_iEs are major stakeholders within each country's tourism portfolio.

¹³ OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2022, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/a8dd3019-en/1/3/4/9/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/a8dd3019-en&csp_=dd10a6327bf40b05da33e7fa1f979e3e&itemGO=oecd&itemContentType=book, visited 160123

¹⁴ Note: employee numbers are sourced from 2019 (before Covid19) as far as possible, while establishment numbers are based on available numbers in the 2022 report

¹⁵ European Commission – SME definition: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en, read 160123

The specific challenges and needs of SMEs have been the focal points of various priority areas defined within Nordic Tourism Collaboration, as discussed e.g. in an analysis of Nordic Tourism Policies (chapters on Digitalisation and Smart Nordic Destinations; Seasonality, Destination and Competitiveness)¹⁶. Somewhat surprisingly, no reference was made to the specific challenges of SMEs in the context of sustainable operations in that report.

The NorReg project is developed from the conclusions put forward in the report *Monitoring Sustainability in Nordic Tourism*, published by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021¹⁷. One of the recommendations put forth in the report addresses regenerative tourism, thereby acknowledging our shared responsibility and the need to focus on challenges and opportunities of tourism in a holistic fashion.

***"In some parts, NorReg opened my mind about changes.
It's not that we have a chance: we have to change."***

Business owner, Iceland

¹⁶ Ragnheiður Elín Árnadóttir – Nordic Tourism Policy Analysis: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1299201/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, read 160123.

¹⁷ <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1557946/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, read 160123



Photo: Alex Conu/Visit Norway

Nordic Regenerative Tourism – paving the path towards the future

Tourism has proven to be a driver for the revitalization of small and dispersed communities in the North.

While these communities have benefited from new trends in travel and tourism, they are by nature fragile and sensitive towards disruption and often lack resilience and organizational strength to address sudden challenges. In addition, strategic approaches on national scales are often high-level and not tuned to the realities of smaller regions and even less so towards SMEs.

"We also need to make sure that tourism adds an extra value to the community. We ARE a part of the local community: my house, my life, all that takes place in the same area".

Business owner, Lofoten

Since COVID-19 struck the world, the global tourism industry has suffered an unprecedented existential crisis. The demand for a re-imagining and re-setting of unsustainable and irresponsible practices has gained a strong voice, giving rise to regenerative tourism. Regenerative tourism is founded in the belief that it is not enough to "do no harm" with tourism activities - that it is necessary to also contribute to the regeneration of the resources that tourism utilises.

Such regenerative processes can and will affect all aspects of tourism operations, but they are also an opportunity for developing better, more competitive, sustainable business models. No less, the regenerative approach to tourism development is an opportunity for product development and visitor involvement, e.g., through citizen science programs¹⁸ aimed at enhancing visitor experiences through participation.

¹⁸ See e.g. <https://integotravel.com/citizen-science-travel-guide/>, <https://www.newsweek.com/2021/08/13/forget-space-tourism-these-citizen-science-trips-make-impact-right-earth-1615508.html> and <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2021.584644/full>

The NorReg project is founded on the belief that the Nordic Community has an opportunity to lead this paradigm change and define a Nordic regenerative tourism model. The ultimate goal for Nordic tourism should be that it is a regenerative force for communities and the natural and cultural resources it bases its offered experiences upon.

The aim of the NorReg project is to create relevant tools for the development of truly sustainable and regenerative tourism practices in regional destinations in the Nordic countries, based on the adoption of responsible tourism operations by local SME tourism providers.



Photo: H. Kolltveit/Destination Lofoten

The main focus of NorReg is on tourism operations in destinations that base their service on nature and adventure tourism. The work aims towards a realistic model for empowering, training and developing tourism SMEs in the Nordic countries, with the participation of regional destination management offices (DMOs) and/or clusters.

Relevant metrics for measuring regenerative effects, specifically on the environment and communities, are discussed and referenced with regards to their relevance to local sustainable destination programs. The aim is to provide input to developing methods for evaluating the impact of local endeavours to local environment and communities.

Milestones include:

- Establishment of relevant networks of DMOs, tourism operators and data specialists
- Development of participatory programs, tools, and training materials for regenerative tourism development
- Development of meaningful metrics for the monitoring of regenerative tourism impacts
- Conclusion and evaluation of pilot programs

The project focuses on destinations and SMEs, shifting the focus from policy papers to practices.

"People think too traditional. When they travel, they usually travel to the sites by car. But they are not aware that there are several other options to get to these sites."

Business owner II, Faroe Islands

The ambitions of the project call for an emphasis on the deliverables being both relevant and realistic, that is, setting the stage for the true development and evaluation of sustainable, regenerative tourism, while acknowledging that the ambitions embedded therein call for constant evaluation and evolution of the initiatives scope and ambitions in years to come.

The ultimate goal is to develop and test a model for ensuring regenerative tourism in the Nordic community, increasing resilience, long-term planning, and knowledge-based operations.

Within the original three-year project description, three work packages were defined:

WP 1: Regenerative tourism: a shared Nordic ambition in a post-COVID era

WP 2: Meaningful metrics: Providing relevant analytical and supportive tools for long term regenerative tourism planning in the Nordic Countries.

WP 3: Project management

In the pilot project defined for the first-year phase of the project the deliverables were based on the long-term project, with realistic goals set for the initial work:

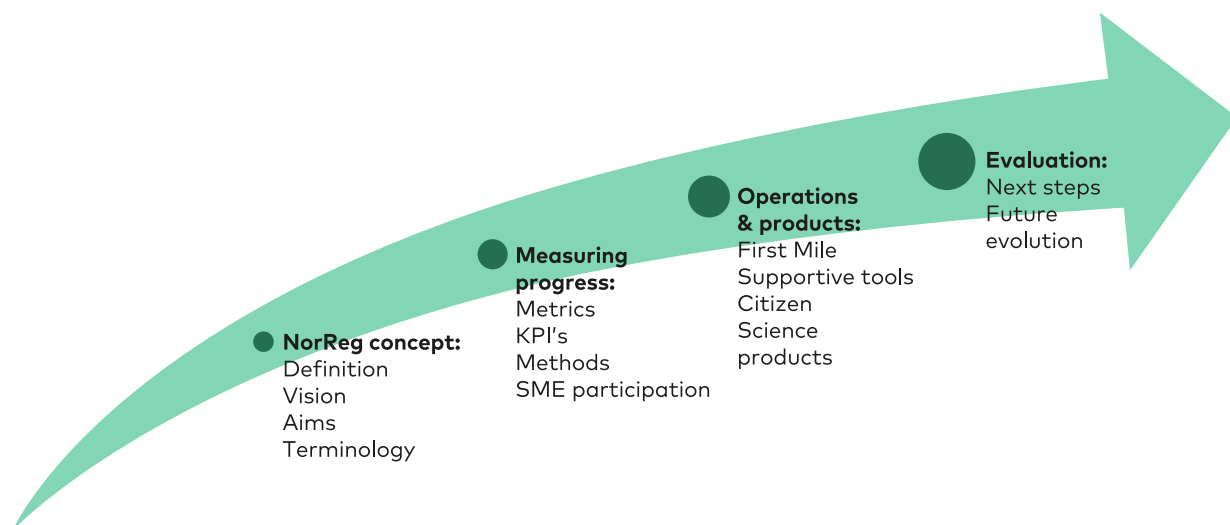


Figure 2: NorReg pilot project, goals, and milestones



Photo: Sveibjörgurinn Snæfellsnes

Participants & structure

Magdalena Falter, University of Iceland

NorReg's focus is on bottom-up approaches with SMEs playing a central role. Other beneficiaries are the DMO and/or cluster partners representing the participating regions, as well as representatives of academia.

The original outreach by the Project leaders of NorReg was to the regional partners, who then recruited businesses within their region.






Institution / country	Logo	Description
Visit Lofoten local DMO Norway		Leading in sustainable destination development. Supplier of prioritized services in Lofoten (within development, management, marketing, hospitality etc.)
Innovative Opplevelser Cluster Norway		Tourism innovation Cluster in Northern Norway. Network-based innovation projects since 2009. Members consists both of tourism businesses, DMO's, cultural- and R&D institutions.
Visit Skåne Sweden		DMO for the Southernmost part of Sweden. Strive for sustainable destination growth. Make a better tomorrow for both locals and visitors.
Visit Faroe Island Faroe Island		Public limited company under the Faroese government. Responsible for promotion, coordination, and development of the tourism sector in the Faroe Islands.
Snæfellsnes Svæðisgarður Iceland		The community of Snæfellsnes focuses on sustainable development in all areas of society. The municipalities have jointly formed the Snæfellsnes Regional Park – a complex landscape and cultural whole.

Table 3. Regional DMO and cluster partners









Institution / country	Logo	Description
Go Local Oda Andreassen Faroe Islands		Small tours with only few guests. The company's vision is to foster responsible and sustainable traveling.
Rent a bike Bartal í Gongini/ Berit Unn Petersen Faroe Islands		Bike rental and guided tours. Bike repair workshop and a shop with bikes and equipment.
Holmen Lofoten Ingunn Rasmussen Norway		
XXLofoten Trygve Steen Norway		Year-round activities for individual travellers. Extensive experience as a local DMC and tailor program for the corporate market.
Lofoten Planet Agata Gasior Norway		Mindful experiences and adventures. Transformational Coaching Retreats. Personal development, connection with nature and like-minded people.
Hótel Snæfellsness Þór Gunnarsson Iceland		Hotel, restaurant and coffeehouse. Located at the Snæfellsnes peninsula.
Sagnaseiður Dagbjört Dúna Rúnarsdóttir Iceland		Gathering, preserving, and telling stories. Talking about folklore, culture, life and history of local people and nature in Snæfellsnes
Sjávarpakkhúsið Sara Hjörleifsdóttir Iceland		Restaurant specialized in expertly made, locally sourced and seasonal food. Certified with the Nordic Swan ecolabel.
Robusta Camilla Jönsson Sweden		Creating different outdoor experiences in the southernmost part of Sweden.

Table 4. Small and Micro-sized business participants in NorReg 2022

Title/Name	Logo	University
Jessica Faustini Aquino Assistant Professor		Hólar University Department of Rural Tourism, Iceland
Carina Ren Associate Professor		Aalborg University Department of Culture and Learning, Denmark
Dorthe Eide Professor		Nord University, Norway
Magdalena Falter PhD Student		University of Iceland Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences, Iceland
Marije Eileen Poort PhD Student		University Graduate School in Sustainability Studies (GRASS) Department of Civil and Industrial Engineering, Sweden
Ulrika Persson-Fischier Professor		University Graduate School in Sustainability Studies (GRASS Department of Civil and Industrial Engineering, Sweden
Matthias Kokorsch Academic Director of Coastal Communities and Regional Development		University Centre of the Westfjords, Iceland
Francesc Fusté Forné Professor		University of Girona Affiliate Aalborg University Copenhagen, Denmark

Table 5. Academic participants in NorReg 2022

Academic partners were contacted both through regional partners and Dr. Jessica Aquino, the Academic Group Leader from Hólar University.

In the initial phase of establishing an academic work group, many academics with research focus on Nordic tourism showed interest. As is very common in academia the initial constellation of the group changed with time, and other interested researchers were approached.

Action partner

Behaviour Smart – The First Mile – Milena Nikolova



Nordic Regenerative Tourism – our vision and priorities

Magdalena Falter, University of Iceland

To start the initial pathway to understanding the concept of regenerative tourism, and gaining a common vision of its meaning for participants and how we might benefit from its adaption into our practices, the NorReg group of participants spent time and effort towards defining a common vision and priorities.

Objective

Regenerative Tourism is a new and emerging concept within tourism development, focusing on holistic, place-based planning for destinations, and as such it defies the emphasis on general approaches and solutions central to the premise of sustainable tourism. However, NorReg acknowledges the need for a common understanding of concepts, a shared vision, and principles within collaborative efforts. Indeed, it is a frequent fallacy in strategic planning to assume a common understanding of concepts, leading to a halt in dialogue when the opposite turns out to be the case.

A common understanding and vision were determined to be very important first deliverables within the project and designed collaboratively through workshops and dialogues. Furthermore, it was determined that the vision needs periodic revisiting and review, as our understanding and experience deepens.

Approach

The NorReg project adopted participatory, bottom-up approaches to ensure the involvement of its main beneficiaries, the regional business participants.

To gain understanding and define the project vision and basic objectives, three workshops with the SMEs and DMOs were conducted (one kick-off event, two definition workshops). The role of the project management team was to give short thematic content input and guidance through the workshops.

The participants were grouped into virtual break-out rooms and were given semi-structured and open questions for discussion. The meetings were recorded with the participants approval and by using Google platforms we could document the outcome of each group for further analysis:

- Workshop I, in the beginning of the project term, was a kick-off event. The goal was to get to know each other and inform the participants about planned approaches and methodology. This workshop provided insights into the participants' expectations towards the project.
- Workshop II was the first of the two co-creation definition workshops. The aim of this workshop was to direct the participants' focus on regional strengths and challenges regarding local communities and environment. We put particular emphasis on nudging the participants to think solution-oriented instead of discussing difficulties they face in their daily business life. This workshop gave us insights into the topics that were most meaningful for the group.
- In workshop III, we could further develop these main focus points and draft a vision statement and project priorities.

Deliverables

In the initial phase of the definition process, the participants basic understanding of the concept of regenerative tourism was identified, as shown in the word cloud in figure 3, visualizing the main keywords the participants ascribed to regenerative tourism in the first workshop.

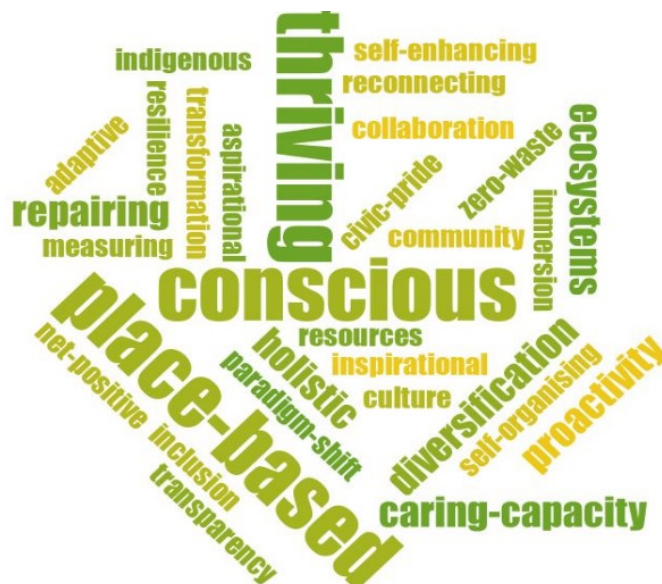


Figure 3. Initial understanding of the concept of regenerative tourism among NorReg participants 2022

The following vision statement and defined project priorities are based on the outcome of the workshop series.

These definitions are not final, but rather working definitions that will be revisited and adapted according to further experience and knowledge in the further course of the project.

After further discussions and iterations of the concept, the Vision for Nordic Regenerative Tourism within NorReg 2022 was defined as:

Nordic Regenerative Tourism invigorates **communities** and fosters **landscapes** by ensuring that locals and visitors gain satisfaction from its success.

We contribute to the **revitalisation, re-energising** and **wellbeing** of our environment, our neighbours and ourselves.

Through principles of regenerative tourism we are **empowered** to work with our communities and natural environment, in **balance** with the **unique** and **wonderful** characteristics of our home region

Within the vision, three priorities were defined, *people, environment, and business*. The priorities provide further depth to the focus of the effort within the NorReg project. These priorities are illustrated in figure 4 where the interconnectivity of all three priorities is also highlighted.

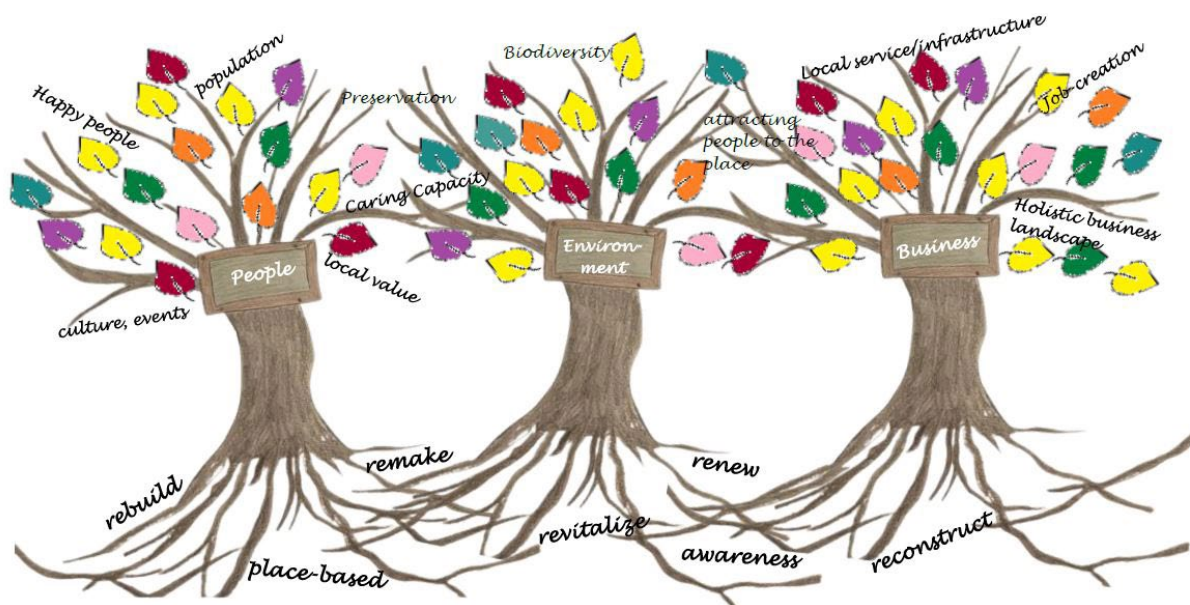


Figure 4. Priorities embedded in the vision for Nordic Regenerative Tourism

In a nutshell, the priority “people” focuses on fostering and shedding light on creating local value in communities. It further addresses the demographic diversity in local communities and the imperative to provide access for both locals and visitors to participate actively in community development processes.

The priority “environment” is about establishing harmony in ecosystems and addresses regeneration in terms of reclaiming biodiversity. The aim is to contribute hereby to revitalizing natural attractions, landscapes, and ecosystems through targeted, knowledge- and place-based citizen science projects.

Business focuses on how regenerative tourism can contribute to establishing a holistic business ecosystem, where businesses support each other locally. We especially focus on the development of local services and infrastructure from which both locals and tourists benefit. A special emphasis is hereby put on communicating the value and awakening the awareness of local value to both the local community and visitors in a creative way.

“I like that in this project we work with the SMiEs side by side from the start. Not like sometimes that when we are finishing we give the tools to them. Here, they have been by our side all the way.”

Representative of a DMO, Iceland

Measuring & evaluation of regenerative tourism initiatives

Dr. Jessica Aquino, Hólar University

The project aimed to explore community wellbeing indicators as possible measurements for positive benefits of regenerative tourism.

Objective

Pushing beyond the sustainability model a new concept of regenerative has emerged with focus on 'giving back' and contributing to regeneration of communities in balance with cultural and natural ways of being in the world aimed at creating positive outcomes, not just 'doing less damage'. The main objective of this activity was to investigate potential indicators within a Nordic regenerative context.

A community development approach was explored as a good fit within the regenerative context. Next, community wellbeing indicators were then explored as possible measurements for positive benefits of regenerative tourism.

Approach

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. Community development is described as both a process (developing the ability to act collectively); and an outcome where the collective action leads to improvement in a community—for example, the physical, environmental, cultural, social, political, and economic¹⁹. It is through this process of mobilizing and acting collectively that the outcomes lead to a better functioning and resilient community.²⁰

Regenerative tourism is described as "not a thing but a new system based on fundamentally different and new way of understanding how life works and why we are here"²¹

19 Phillips, R., & Pittman, R. H. (2015). Measuring Progress. In R. Phillips & R. H. Pittman (Eds.), *An Introduction to Community Development* (2nd ed., pp. 343–360). Routledge.

20 Cavaye, J., & Ross, H. (2019). Community resilience and community development: What mutual opportunities arise from interactions between the two concepts? *Community Development*, 50(2), 181–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2019.1572634>

21 Pollock, A. (n.d.). *Regenerative Tourism is a buzzword - but only if you make it so*. Retrieved January 26, 2023, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/regenerative-tourism-buzzword-only-you-make-so-anna-pollock>

There is a call to change our relationship with capitalism and the 'status-quo' towards ways that enhance resilient communities and regenerative practices.²² "Regenerative tourism aims to mimic nature more closely by becoming symbiotic; when one benefits others benefit, creating a win-win situation".²³ Regenerative tourism calls for a system change. To mobilize communities for this system change, an understanding of how to share capacity for improvements while—at the same time—action leads to improvement in a community.

Deliverable

During the NorReg project year in 2022 academics met to discuss the concept of regenerative tourism and what could be possible indicators to measure positive benefits of this type of tourism on Nordic communities. It was decided to explore community wellbeing indicators as a potential measurement for regenerative tourism. Individual wellbeing is measured by the quality of life and happiness a person's life has. Musikanski et al. define community wellbeing as a "place that is connected and moving forward with ideas and actions that enable it to be attractive, supportive, and enabling"²⁴. Community wellbeing is an umbrella term that looks at four major community domains and encompasses terms such as community development, quality of life, individual wellbeing, and happiness.²⁵

Community indicators help to gauge the level of wellbeing and resilience a community has; and are focused on social inclusion and community participation. This helps develop cooperative governance and social capacity. Developing indicators for gathering wellbeing data within the context of regenerative tourism may aid in the successful achievement of both improving community wellbeing and community development and can serve as a tool for guiding analysis and subsequent action. A better understanding of measuring and evaluation of what regenerative tourism is and how it impacts communities is needed.

Much focus in 2022 was on how tourism impacts community well-being, however, a more biocentric focus was lacking. It is hoped that during the 2023 project year that we can work with SMEs and DMOs within the NorReg project network to outline potential indicators that look at both community and environmental wellbeing.

22 Cave, J., & Dredge, D. (2020). Regenerative tourism needs diverse economic practices. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 503–513. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1768434>

23 Hussain, A., & Haley, M. (2022). Regenerative Tourism Model: Challenges of Adapting Concepts from Natural Science to Tourism Industry. *Journal of Sustainability and Resilience*, 2(1), 1–14.

24 Musikanski, L., Phillips, R., & Crowder, J. (2019). *The happiness policy handbook: How to make happiness and well-being the purpose of your government*. New Society Publishers.

25 Sung, H., & Phillips, R. (2016). *Conceptualizing a Community Well-Being and Theory Construct* (pp. 1–12). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29942-6_1



The First Mile – A Smart Start of the Regenerative Journey in the Nordics

Milena Nikolova, Smart Behaviour

The insights and knowledge gained throughout the project period were practically applied in the "First Mile" approach – a tool to kickstart complex processes for businesses.

Objectives

The main objective of the First Mile component of the program was to serve as a smart start of the regenerative journey for businesses. It focuses on breaking the complex and long journey towards regenerative goals into small, actionable steps that are realistic and achievable for small businesses.

Pilot businesses in the project took part in the identification of priority actions linked to regenerative practices and supported the development of a digital resource centre with tools that are tested and available for rollout with larger clusters of businesses across the Nordics.

Approach

The First Mile is an activation program that is designed to accelerate the regenerative journey of tourism across the Nordics through low-investment, easy-to-adopt and impactful tactics based on behavioural change. The approach is especially relevant for businesses, business clusters and destinations that seek to embark on journeys that require long-term, complex efforts. Such endeavours are often overwhelming for stakeholders and in many cases, this blocks action. The First Mile approach draws the attention of the companies on the immediate, easy, and low-investment changes that can move the needle by changing how travellers make choices and behave.

There are two important characteristics of the First Mile approach:

1) Focus on Now vs. Some Time in the Future

The full regenerative journey of any destination will require long-term transformations and shifts in operational models. These feel daunting and extended into the distant future for small business owners who often believe in regenerative tourism on a value level but who find it difficult to make the first steps. And while long-term thinking is inevitable, immediate activation is possible by focusing on doable and small changes as an immediate start. The First Mile is designed to activate action in the short term so that companies, clusters, and destinations can start making progress right away and begin seeing results now rather than in the future.

2) Small, Easy and Realistic

The First Mile is a program powered by knowledge about how people really think and choose when it comes to travel and sustainability. Based on this it involves scanning the supply chains of businesses to map the areas where disruption-free adjustments of decision journeys, choice sets and service design can produce immediate effects.

First Mile tactics include a variety of behaviour-smart adjustments that can be applied to accommodation, food service providers, transportation companies, attractions, and all other segments within the travel sector. They can relate to simple things such as how information is presented, what options are set as default, how choices are structured, what incentives come with choices, etc.

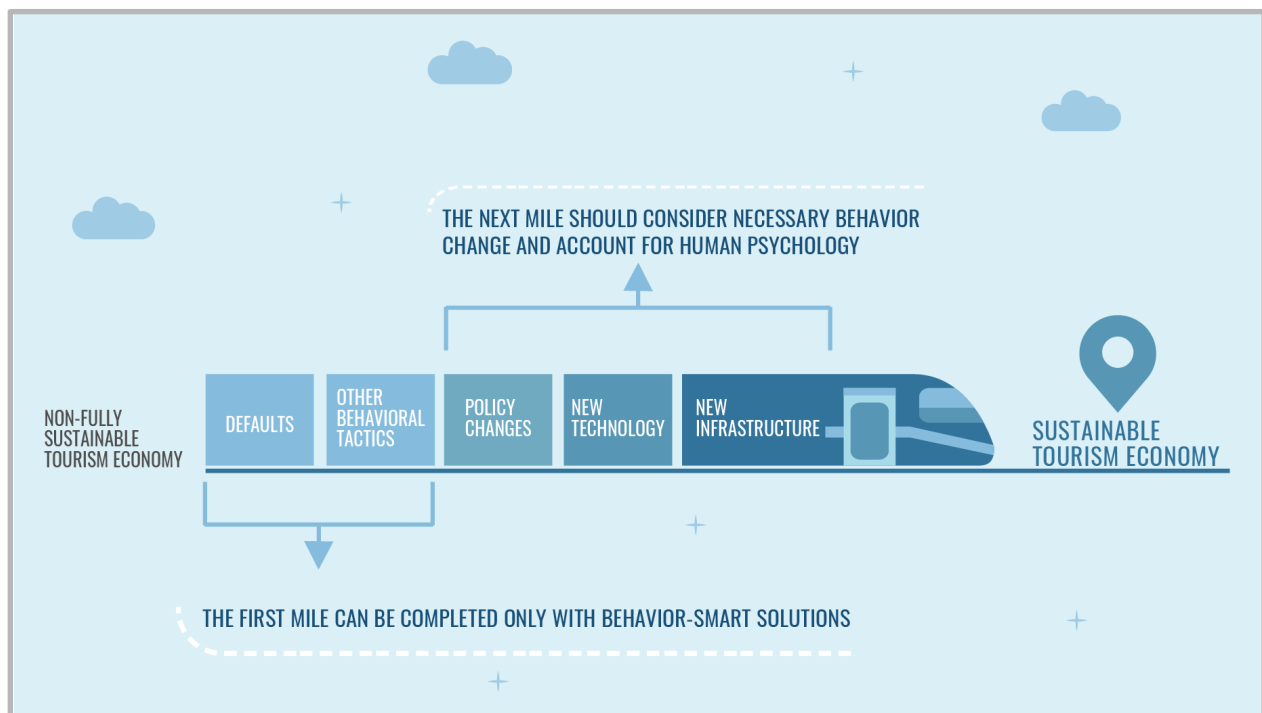


Figure 5. The First Mile Approach

In the context of the NorReg project the First Mile component followed the following process:

STEP	ACTIONS
KICK-OFF & MAPPING	Over two virtual labs participating businesses were introduced to the First Mile approach and were engaged in identifying priority areas in which they wanted to make improvements towards regenerative goals. The labs included interactive and hands-on sessions that engaged businesses in collaborative identification of First Mile tactics and prepared them for try-out.
CAPTURE CONTEXT & SPECIFICS	As follow up to the labs companies were asked to provide more specific information to inform the development of the First Mile tactics and the guidelines that were developed to support their application.
DEVELOPMENT OF A DIGITAL RESOURCE CENTER	Based on the mapping activities and additional information provided by pilot businesses the First Mile team developed an online resource centre with a pilot set of regenerative tactics. The digital resource centre was created to enable businesses to access and test these tactics on their own time in a flexible manner based on seasonal dynamics and availability.
PRESENTATION AND CLOSING INSIGHTS	The resource centre was presented to the pilot businesses who explored it and provided feedback confirming its feasibility and relevance. A closing workshop during the closing event presented concluding insights about the First Mile approach and how First Mile techniques can be rolled out at larger scale to support the regenerative transition of destinations across the Nordics.

Table 6. The First Mile Approach

Deliverable

The First Mile component of the NorReg project produced the following deliverables:

- A First Mile kick-off webinar: this kick-off webinar introduced participants to the First Mile approach and provided examples and illustrations of how it can be applied to the NorReg context.

Deliverables: webinar slides presentation, video recording of webinar

- A First Mile mapping webinar: this follow up webinar engaged participants in identifying First Mile tactics that are relevant to the developed by the NorReg project definition of regenerative tourism.

Deliverables: webinar slides presentation, Jam boards from mapping activity, video recording of webinar

- First Mile digital resource centre: a digital resource centre was developed with tools supporting the execution of First Mile tactics in three areas:

- Supporting Local Buying
- Offering Low-Footprint Experiences
- Leaving No Trace Behind

Deliverables: web-based resource centre with checklists, examples and templates supporting the execution of First Mile tactics in the three areas

- Closing workshop: this concluding activity engaged participants in reflection and insights on the First Mile approach, and the opportunities associated with scaling the efforts to the entire Nordic region.

Deliverables: webinar slides presentation

Key insights

The execution of the First Mile component of the NorReg project produced several interesting insights about the regenerative transition of Nordic destinations and the use of behaviour-smart techniques in activating it:

- The intention-action gap
As expected, working with pilot companies confirmed that many businesses in the Nordics are aware of the sustainability crisis in the sector and believe that it should be addressed now. On a value system level entrepreneurs embrace regenerative values, but they find it difficult to act on that. Among the reasons behind that are the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, the need to balance business management efforts with sustainability/ regenerative actions, limited time and human resources, especially during the active season.
- The power of small steps
After the introduction of the First Mile approach and its emphasis on small, non-disruptive actions was welcomed by participating pilot businesses. They were eager to explore and execute them, and appreciated the fact that they were low-investment and relatively low-effort. The ease of the steps was a factor in ensuring that companies stayed engaged and expressed readiness in taking action.
- Granular support and facilitation
Despite the ease of most of the First Mile steps companies still need ongoing support and facilitation. The project took the approach of breaking steps into granular steps and confirmed that providing tools such as examples, templates and step-by-step instructions increases the likelihood that companies will make desired changes.
- Resource constraints
With all the available support and commitment, the engagement of pilot companies varied and was heavily influenced by seasonal demands. Especially small and micro enterprises have limited time and human resources and when they are strained, priority is always placed on day-to-day business management.

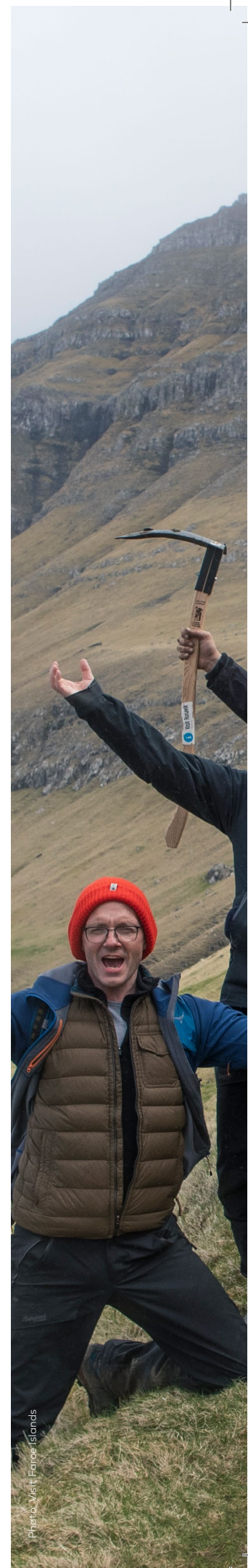


Photo: Visit Faroe Islands



CLOSED
FOR
MAINTENANCE

Citizen science for visitors – deepening the interactions between visitors and host destinations

Citizen Science projects have been gaining popularity within science; and have served as an excellent way for scientists to engage with the public in their quest for new knowledge.

Objectives

In recent years, and not least in the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic, travellers have been expressing a will to engage more with their host destinations. This cuts across many visitor types, be they defined as luxury, adventure, or culture. Surveys imply that there is an increased desire among travellers to be more involved in the destiny of their host destination; to give back and depart with a sense of having contributed positively to their place of visit and nurturing the resources that were the foundation of their experience. The affinity between citizen science and tourism is nowhere clearer than within the context of regenerative tourism.

Within NorReg 2022, exploring the opportunities for incorporating citizen science participation into the visitor experience is a central initiative, as it facilitates the active contribution of the visitor towards the regeneration of the destination. In this pilot phase, the emphasis was on learning about Citizen Science, conceptually adapting the ideology to the realities of operations, as well as mapping, exploring, and defining future opportunities for project development.

Methodology

In recent years a shift has been taking place within science. At the same time as questions about our environment and our interactions with it become more pressing, a new generation, raised with having the worlds information and knowledge at their fingertips, sees science increasingly as of a participatory, contributory, and even

reciprocal enterprise, in which scientists seek input from other fellow citizens, not only in the gathering of data, but also in the formulating of research questions and interpreting results.

Citizens are no longer passive consumers, subjects, or recipients of scientific endeavours. They can shape research agendas and objectives with real community priorities, in collaboration with professional scientists or alone²⁶.

As new technologies have opened pathways for gathering information on a large scale from the public, many scientists seeking to work with large-scale data gathering are excited about connecting non-experts, who are curious about the world, with their research projects. Citizen science can be a powerful tool for many scientific disciplines.

One obvious way of making such a contribution is by participating in a scientific endeavour, a research project or monitoring initiative. There is a growing number of tasks that are designed into an offered tourism activity or experience, as well as clear participatory activities, where travellers contribute in a meaningful and relevant way to local science projects.

Visitors are encouraged to gain a deeper understanding and awareness about their environment and surroundings, about the communities they visit and the natural wonders they experience. These activities bring with them several benefits²⁷:

First, **citizen science helps drive practices of knowledge creation that are not locked away from the public.**

Second, **citizen science increases society's support, attitudes and behaviours towards research and conservation.**

Third, **citizen science helps improve the visibility and acceptability of conservation science research findings.**

Fourth, **citizen science improves society's scientific literacy.**

Fifth, **citizen science contributes to research and governmental policy changes, as well as community change.**

Citizen Science shares many qualities with the ideology of regenerative tourism and there is a natural affinity between the two. With its holistic approach to tourism

²⁶ See e.g. discussed by Diana Wildschut, The need for citizen science in the transition to a sustainable peer-to-peer-society, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2016.11.010>

²⁷ <https://integotravel.com/citizen-science-travel-guide/>

development, community, and nature, it mirrors the growing focus on biodiversity and ecosystem research within the biological sciences. For social sciences, the emphasis of place-based and participatory approaches for tourism development can serve as a field of interesting study and the focus on thriving and flourishing communities – and the quest for understanding what that means – can become a framework for researching new metrics to measure industry success against.

Within NorReg 2022, an introductory workshop was conducted in April, before the summer season, and results from First Mile workshops used as a basis for exploratory Citizen Science projects for the participating SMEs. The Citizen Science methodology was revisited, the summer project evaluated and participants within each region asked to explore possible existing or new projects within their own region. The results will form a baseline for developing place-based projects within each participating region in 2023.

Deliverables

- Information package for Citizen Science project development (see Workshop Material in Appendix) – will form the basis for Citizen Science project development in 2023.
- NorReg participants are both initiating work towards developing a visitor offer that provides data for an ongoing monitoring project and looking into possibilities of participating and contributing to international Citizen Science projects.

"I think we have a unique chance now. Because during this year we have built relationships and we are eager to continue. And we know that we can take big steps."

Business owner, Lofoten

Outreach & Communication

Communication was an important factor within the first phase of the NorReg project. As most workshops and meetings were virtual, an effort was made to provide platforms for informal communication, most importantly a closed Facebook group within which information and news could be shared. The main initiatives were website, Facebook group, Zoom meetings, Jam Boards, and Google Drive.

Website

The NorReg project website²⁸ was created and embedded in the domain of the Icelandic Tourism Cluster. With the launch of the website, the NorReg project was made visible to the public for the first time and first results – the vision statement and the defined project priorities – were published. In the second phase of the project, the website will be updated to allow for more engagement and information dissemination.

Facebook group

A private Facebook group exclusively for NorReg participants was created. Its main purpose was to encourage informal communication between project participants, and to provide the participants with a platform to exchange and get to know to each other and to share insights, comments, and information. The platform was also used for content such as announcements, appointment reminders and opinion surveys.

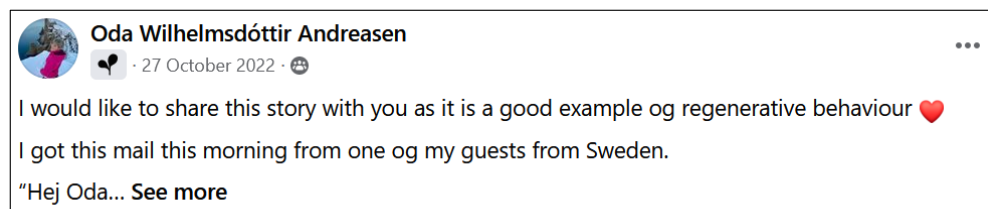


Figure 6. Facebook comment, NorReg participant

28 <https://www.icelandtourism.is/en/nordic-regenerative-tourism/>



Photo: Alessio Mesiano

Zoom meetings, Jam Boards, and Google Drive

Most virtual meetings were on the Zoom platform, utilising breakout rooms and jam boards. A GoogleDocs folder was set up to share and ensure access to working documents and relevant literature.

NorReg workshops in Malmö, Sweden

The final milestone of the pilot project year was the first on site meeting of the entire group. All NorReg participants were invited to a two-day workshop session in Malmö, Sweden; followed by the conference *"Nordic Regenerative Tourism – For A Better Tomorrow"*. The aim of this meeting was 1): To provide the participants with an opportunity to get to know to each other in person after nine months of digital collaboration, and 2): To reflect upon the project progression, re-think strategies and re-define future goals and objectives.

The representatives of the DMOs pointed out how they face similar challenges despite the regional differences between the participating countries. They stated how NorReg provided them with a valuable chance to exchange experiences and best-practice examples and learn from each other.

"But the different ways are totally individual. We exchange experiences and results. And then take that result into the networking package. We can find our own ways to reach the overall goals of the work package."

Representative of a DMO, Sweden

Also, the participants ranked the collaboration with the academic group from the very beginning as a positive strength and contribution to the project. To achieve change in the tourism industry, the focus must shift from management level to the tourism businesses themselves and from top-down to bottom-up approaches. The representative of the DMOs recommended an even stronger focus on the tourism businesses and the inclusion of further SMiEs in the future course of the project:

"We need more local SMiEs! A group of people working together. More SMiEs are important to get this local ownership."

Representative of a DMO, Lofoten

About half of the collaborating SMEs participated at the seminar in Malmö. They emphasized how the milestones set in the NorReg project mirror their own business goals. The business owners stressed the value they see in NorReg, through gaining knowledge about regenerative practices, and testing theories in practice.

"I have been working on sustainable tourism for 25 years now; so I was really happy when I was told about the idea of what NorReg was and that they wanted the small companies to take part because I really think we need that development."

Business owner I, Faroe Islands

All in all, the partners - DMOs, academics and tourism businesses - agreed on the necessity of addressing and researching regenerative tourism practices in the Nordic. They pointed out that to increase understanding, define tools, methodology and metrics to be able to implement these practices, they require an extension of this successful pilot project.

Event participation

The NorReg 2022 seminar, Malmö

The conference "Nordic Regenerative Tourism – For A Better Tomorrow" took place on the 29th of November in Malmö in connection with the workshop session described above.

The aim of the conference was to introduce the concept of regenerative tourism to the Nordic Tourism Sector. The event was promoted through the networks of the Icelandic Tourism Cluster and the participating DMOs from Sweden, Norway, Lofoten and Faroe Islands.

In total, nine speakers, both academics and practitioners, shared their insights, thoughts and experiences on how regenerative tourism can contribute to a places or destinations positive development, in harmony with local nature and communities.



Figure 6 : Graphic demonstration of speakers and their notes at the Malmö conference

The following table gives a short overview over the speakers, their backgrounds, and the topic of their presentation.

Speaker	Country/association	Topic
Ásta Kristín Sigurjónsdóttir	Iceland CEO, Icelandic Tourism Cluster	<i>What is NorReg?</i>
Anna Pollock	United Kingdom Founder, Conscious Travel	<i>Keynote: Regenerative Tourism - what makes it special and why is it important in the context of Nordic Tourism?</i>
Dr. Dianne Dredge	Australia Ph.D., Director of the Tourism Collab	<i>Regenerative design and product development for tourism operators</i>
Fredrik Albihn	Sweden Concept manager, Tourism in Skåne	<i>Swedish initiatives for sustainable and regenerative tourism</i>
Elke Dens	Belgium Global director of programs, Travel Foundation	<i>Place-based approaches to developing regenerative tourism experiences</i>
Dr. Jessica Aquino	Iceland Academic Group Leader, NorReg Assistant professor, Hólar University	<i>Measuring Social Regenerative practices and community well being</i>
Halla Helgadóttir	Iceland Iceland design and Architecture	<i>Design in Nordic Nature- – can we design our relationship with nature?</i>
Francesc Fusté-Forné	Spain University of Girona	<i>Paradoxes for regenerative food in tourism management and marketing</i>
Bård Jervan	Norway Senior Partner at Mimir	<i>Regenerative Tourism in Northern Norway</i>
Ólöf Ýrr Atladóttir	Iceland Project leader, NorReg	<i>The future of NorReg – what can we learn from today?</i>

Table 7. Keynote speakers, Malmö

Around 100 people attended the conference and an additional 300 logged on to the event virtually. The speakers gave valuable insights into various approaches of how regenerative tourism manifests in practice and stressed the urgent need to rethink current tourism development towards regeneration.

Other event participation

- In March 2022 the NorReg project leader participated in an online conference, *"Time for a wake-up call: Innovative solutions for the development of Regenerative Tourism"*, hosted by the Munster Technological University in Ireland. In the presentation, the concept of regenerative tourism was reviewed and the NorReg project introduced.
- In August 2022 the project leader and director of the Iceland Tourism Cluster together introduced NorReg at the Nordic Tourism Seminar in Helsinki. The project was introduced in a short presentation, after a presentation to the Nordic Tourism Working Group the day before.
- In November 2022, the project leader presented the NorReg project at the conference *"Creative Tourism, Regenerative Development and Destination Resilience"* in the Azores Islands, hosted by the CREATOUR Azores project.
- In December 2022 the project leader presented the NorReg project and preliminary results at the *Responsible Tourism Day* in Reykjavík, Iceland, hosted by the Icelandic Tourism Cluster.



Conclusions & further work

This first year of the NorReg project revealed the tremendous potential of the approach for rural and urban communities in the Nordic countries and the close relationship between the approach and the Nordic Vision for 2030.

The focus on small and micro-sized enterprises was welcomed by participants and revealed the need for adopting holistic approaches, to include these important tourism stakeholders in any tourism development initiative. A reapplication for the second phase of the project has been approved for funding by the Nordic Council of Ministers, in which challenges experienced within the first phase will be addressed:

- Desktop research has revealed the complexity of defining metrics and evaluation methods that veer from the commonly accepted numerical measurements that govern the tourism discourse. Future work will focus on defining and exploring the concepts of flourishing and thriving communities as a basis for evaluation, as well as defining and adapting methods for evaluation of environmental harmony.
- The First Mile methodology for SM_iEs was adopted as support for implementing regenerative initiatives among participating companies. Results show a strong willingness of SM_iEs to embark upon regenerative initiatives, albeit coupled with a need to adapt support measures to the realistic time factors that governs SM_iE operations.
- Citizen Science product development is ongoing, with NorReg participants actively exploring their community and natural surroundings, researching ongoing scientific projects in the region, and formulating research questions that can be turned into Citizen Science projects.
- Lessons learned for future project design include complex stakeholder engagement issues calling for innovative design thinking approaches aimed at activation of participants through inclusive methods; the challenge of mindset changing; and reconciling challenges as perceived by participants to the mindset of self-empowerment.

"The resources are not rising in the same amount [as tourism]. So we have to use them over and over and over again. That is basically the only solution that we have."

Business owner, Lofoten

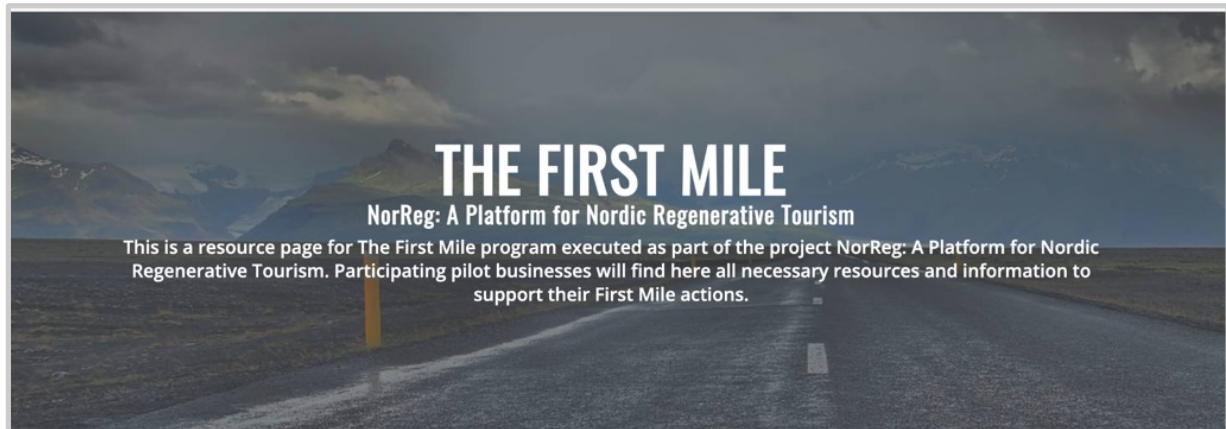
The activities defined for the next phase of the project fall under the following categories:

- The methodology and approach underlying the projects ambitions will be explored and refined through design thinking, building upon the results of NorReg 2022, with an emphasis placed upon the strengthening of local support structures within international collaboration.
- Continued collaboration between academia, SM_iEs and regional organisations will focus on exploring metrics and evaluation methods for regenerative practices. The focus is on the definition and evaluation of community wellbeing and tourism's impact upon it. In addition, realistic and measurable environmental efforts of SM_iEs will be a continued focus, especially with reference to the framework of existing local and regional policies, strategies, and objectives.
- The First Mile supportive tools introduced in the pilot will be further developed and activated by participants through regional structures. The objective will be to provide tools for facilitating the positive social and environmental impact of tourism operations within their communities.
- Citizen Science visitor products, studied and introduced in the pilot, will be developed within each participating region. The objective is to provide opportunities for visitors and locals connecting through participatory activities that contribute to knowledge and facilitate future decision making for the wellness and flourishing of human communities and natural ecosystems.
- Regional efforts for introducing Regenerative Tourism approaches will be defined and implemented, with the aim of providing input into policy discussion and strategy development. These will include intra-regional meetings and a central NorReg seminar.

Outreach and promotion will be an important task within the project. The first website of the project will be reviewed and edited, so that it may be utilised more strategically for communication. Inner communication will continue through social media groups. Online events will be planned, as well as the second autumn NorReg seminar, centrally in the Nordic region.

Appendix

First Mile Resource Centre Snapshots



General Resources

[The First Mile kick-off webinar](#) – this is a recording of the webinar that presents The First Mile methodology and offers an overview of the process that is proposed for pilot businesses participating in the project.

[Introduction to this resource page](#) – this is a short video introducing the activation set, the topics that it covers and a how-to-use guide.

First Mile Topics and Tactics

The actionable set of First Mile steps towards regenerative tourism presented here covers three themes:

- [Low Footprint Experiences](#)
- [Local Buying](#)
- [No trace behind](#)

The First Mile Projects for Pilot Businesses

Low Footprint Experiences

Influencing guest choices towards options that align with regenerative principles.

[Your Learning Minute: how traveler choose?](#) – This is a short video overview synthesizing what you need to know about traveler decision making when it comes to choices.

[Your How To Guide: influencing traveler choices](#) – This is a short video that presents three tactics that can influence traveler choices and shift demand towards low-footprint experiences and offerings.



Tactic 1:
Frame as
better



Tactic 2:
Show benefits



Tactic 3:
Add extra
effort

Tactic 1: Frame as better

- Checklist
- Example
- Template

Have a question or need to schedule a quick coaching session? Let us know here and we will get back to you.

YES, I NEED HELP

Local Buying

Increasing demand for local products (food, souvenirs, local attractions/museums) to enhance desired footprint on local community and economy.

Your Learning Minute: what influences traveler spending? – This is a short video overview synthesizing what you need to know about how traveler choose whether to spend locally and on what.

Your How To Guide: influencing traveler choices – This is a short video that presents three tactics that can influence traveler choices and increase spending on local products.



Tactic 1:
Signal at
decision point



Tactic 2:
Add appeal



Tactic 3:
Add incentive

Leave No Trace

Making "leave no trace behind" part of the design of traveler experiences.

Your Learning Minute: why influences leave traces? – This is a short video overview synthesizing what you need to know about traveler behavior and the factors that explain why they litter and act in ways that are damaging to the place.

Your How To Guide: influencing traveler footprint – This is a short video that presents two tactics that can lead travelers to be more conscious about impact and eliminate undesired footprint from their stay.



Tactic 1:
Introduce as
social norm



Tactic 2:
Enable and
facilitate



Tactic 3:
Add incentive

Snapshots Citizen Science Workshop Material (autumn 2022)



Citizen are no longer passive consumers, subjects or recipients of scientific endeavors



New technologies have opened pathways for gathering information on a large scale from the general public



Connecting non-experts, who are curious about the world, with research projects is an extremely powerful instrument



Citizens can shape research agendas and objectives with real community priorities, in collaboration with professional scientists or alone



Citizen science can be a powerful tool for many scientific disciplines

Citizen Science connects academia to curiosity and quest for understanding



The is a natural affinity between citizen science and tourism

- “We define citizen science travel as those activities and tasks you engage with while travelling which fall under the umbrella of citizen science.”

<https://integotravel.com/citizen-science-travel-guide/>

- The natural intersection of citizen science and tourism is obvious: If **travelers** are already participating in these activities, why not encourage deeper understanding and awareness about the natural world while also advancing scientific research?

<https://sustainablebrands.com/read/product-service-design-innovation/citizen-science-engages-travelers-contributes-to-conservation-efforts>

Citizen science in tourism can provide benefits for all

- ♦ First, **citizen science helps drive practices of knowledge creation that are not locked away from the public**
- ♦ Second, **citizen science increases society's support, attitudes and behaviours towards research and conservation.**
- ♦ Third, **citizen science helps improve the visibility and acceptability of conservation science research findings**
- ♦ Fourth, **citizen science improves society's scientific literacy**
- ♦ Fifth, **citizen science contributes to research and governmental policy changes, as well as community change.**



Citizen Science shares many qualities with the foundations of regenerative tourism

- Place based
- Participatory
- Co-created
- Giving back

Citizen science can also contribute in a significant way to the discourse on metrics and evaluating thriving and flourishing communities and nature

Scistarter – joining international efforts

<https://scistarter.org>
<https://blog.scistarter.org/2021/12/the-top-21-citizen-science-projects-of-2021/>

A good source for exploring available international projects



Types of Citizen Science – Ownership and structure

- **Contractual projects**, where communities ask professional researchers to conduct a specific scientific investigation and report on the results.
- **Contributory projects**, which are generally designed by scientists and for which members of the public primarily contribute data.
- **Collaborative projects**, which are generally designed by scientists and for which members of the public contribute data but also help to refine project design, analyse data, and/or disseminate findings.
- **Co-Created projects**, which are designed by scientists and members of the public working together and for which at least some of the public participants are actively involved in most or all aspects of the research process; and
- **Collegial contributions**, where non-credentialed individuals conduct research independently with varying degrees of expected recognition by institutionalised science and/or professionals.

Types of Citizen Science – Focus areas

• See: <https://integotravel.com/citizen-science-travel-guide/>

Community of knowledge

A collaboration between amateur volunteers and professional scientists or experts. The volunteers are willing and able to learn about the project and join in the collaboration to support the expert in the topic being researched. For example, birdwatchers frequently help with conducting bird census.

State, science and citizen

A collaboration between citizens, the state and science to research a particular topic. For example, some government space agencies may request help with satellite counting or other astronomy-related projects.

Justice and democracy

When citizen scientists advocate for public participation in science or other science-related matters. Since the public has a stake in what scientists do, we have the right to take part in scientific decisions. An example of this would be the volunteers that got involved after the Fukushima disaster to track radiation levels.

Conservation

Conservation citizen science relates to both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including our oceans. Citizen scientists can help measure species population, reef health, environmental impacts, etc.

Sustainable cities and communities

A collaboration between community members, scientists, partner organisations or even local municipalities. Generally, citizen scientists are engaged in collecting essential data relating to important components such as water and air quality, urban forests, infrastructure, etc.

Types of Citizen Science – Examples

- A research project at the Southern Cross University and the University of Newcastle in Australia collects photographs of the undersurface of whale tails as the whales plunge downwards, often taken by passengers on whale-watching tours (<https://www.scu.edu.au/marine-ecology-research-centre/whales-and-dolphins/whale-and-dolphin-research/east-coast-whale-watch-catalogue/>).
- The same applies to various research projects requiring tourists and other visitors to place their cameras or smartphones on special posts called "Fluker posts" (named after their inventor), take photos and send them to a central repository where they may be used to study for instance the progression of a habitat restoration site or the recovery of a coral reef following a cyclone (<https://www.flukerpost.com>).
- Bowra Wildlife Sanctuary, previously known as Bowra Station, a large former cattle station in outback Australia long known as a birding "hotspot" and now owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, principally exists as a conservation area but is also involved in visitor management and visitor education in that individuals, study groups or small tourism groups can pay either for day visit or overnight camping to explore the varied habitats and observe birds and other wildlife. Each evening the camp hosts, staff and visitors gather to construct a list of birds seen that day, the estimated numbers and what part of the property they were seen in.
- [SeaTrek Sailing Adventures](#) recently launched a new citizen science initiative in collaboration with [Indigo V Expeditions](#), where guests can help to collect, test and eliminate microplastics as they sail.



Scoping and defining CS projects

The ECSA has defined attributes for Citizen Science projects

To be true citizen science, according to the European Citizen Science Association a project should have the following attributes (summarised from <https://ecsa.citizen-science.net/>):

- involve citizens in scientific endeavour that generates new knowledge or understanding.
 - have a genuine science outcome.
 - provide benefits to both science and society.
 - citizen scientists participating in any of various stages of the scientific process, including development of research questions, design of methods, gathering and analysing of data, and communication of results.
 - citizen scientists receiving feedback from the project.
 - limitations and biases being considered and controlled for.
 - where possible and suitable, project data being made publicly available.
 - citizen scientists being suitably acknowledged.
 - a range of benefits and outcomes being acknowledged and considered in project evaluation.
 - the leaders of citizen science projects taking into consideration legal and ethical considerations of the project.
- <https://johat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2-green.pdf>

Participation to co-creation?

Co-creation implies that not just the generation of research data, but of research questions, and research design, can be carried out in a collaborative manner between interested non-professional researchers and their professional counterparts. As such, this is one of the most challenging – and potentially rewarding – of CS models to deliver on.

Scoping and designing a CS project



Reading list – for reference and inspiration

We compiled a short list, just for your browsing:

[Citizen Science references.xlsx](#)

Next steps

- Regional meetings
- Meet within the region to discuss:
- Are there any ongoing projects (e.g. environmental monitoring, social and community studies) within your region you could start collaborating within?
 - Can you as a group define study questions you would like to study in collaboration with local academia?
 - How would you go about approaching this within your region?
 - Would you like to connect to ongoing international citizen science efforts?
- Workshop in Malmö:
 - Regional introductions and discussions of suggested local projects
 - Suggestion for future steps



NorReg

Nordic Regenerative Tourism



Nordic Council
of Ministers



Government of Iceland
Ministry of Culture
and Business Affairs



ÍSLENSKI
FERÐAKLASINN
Iceland Tourism Cluster

2023