

Transformative roles in tourism: adopting living systems' thinking for regenerative futures

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Abstract

Purpose – The “tourism living systems” (Tourism Living System – TLS) concept is underdeveloped, with limited relevant theoretical analysis to understand how it can support the transformations of tourism systems towards healthy communities and places. This paper aims to conceptualise TLSs and key stakeholder roles for enacting regenerative tourism using a living systems perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – Knowledge synthesis and co-production were used to identify the conceptual framework and its applications. Knowledge synthesis was undertaken through a scoping review of the regenerative tourism literature and supplemented by a consultation exercise with leading regenerative tourism practitioners. Co-production of knowledge involved case study research to assess the conceptual framework's practical applications and revise it with regenerative tourism practitioners.

Findings – The study revealed that regenerative tourism is informed by living systems' thinking. The authors identify five diverse, interdependent and interconnected stakeholder roles from the case studies and scoping review. All stakeholder roles are vital for constituting tourism systems that contribute to the healthy evolution of social-ecological systems.

Practical implications – Real-world case study applications of the TLS framework will guide tourism stakeholders who seek to adopt regenerative tourism approaches.

Originality/value – The study contributes to developing new frontiers in tourism stakeholder roles and paradigms with implications for regenerative tourism futures. The TLS framework challenges industrial conceptions of tourism by proposing a shift in stakeholder roles from extraction to generating new life to survive, thrive and evolve.

Keywords Tourism living systems, Regenerative tourism, Regenerative development, Tourism systems, Tourism stakeholders, Tourism roles, Transformation

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1. Introduction

The industrial tourism system and supply–demand models dominate contemporary tourism frameworks (Butler, 2015; Gunesch, 2017; Leiper, 1979; Sharpley, 2020). Leiper's (1979) highly influential tourism system framework nominates five elements: tourists, generating region, transit route, destination region and tourism industry, with spatial and functional connections emphasised. Leiper's framework of tourism, which has informed tourism management scholarship, has been co-opted to serve the interests of the dominant growth agenda (Cheer et al., 2019; Dwyer, 2018; Hall, 2019; Sharpley, 2020). The industrialisation of travel practices is based on profit generation orientated towards the wants and needs of tourists (Leiper, 1979). Conceptions of tourism as an extractive profit-making industry have universalised and reduced tourism roles to suppliers, distributors and consumers (Dwyer, 2018; Gunesch, 2017). However,

Leiper (1979) recognised that a significant proportion of the resources that support tourism exist beyond the purpose of serving tourist needs. Furthermore, “the partially industrialized characteristic is the root of many problems facing management in the industry, government, host communities concerned with the tourism impact, and individual tourists. Paradoxically the solution to these problems does not and cannot be found in more industrialization” (Leiper, 1979, p. 403).

The industrial operating model of tourism has come into question due to the growing degenerative effects of extractive approaches such as ecological destruction, economic failure and social inequalities (Dwyer, 2018; Hall, 2019). Regenerative tourism proponents such as Becken and Kaur (2021), Cave and Dredge (2020), Pollock (2012b) challenge tourism’s industrial growth serving orientation and advocate for alternative approaches to tourism. The exclusion of community and place as active tourism development stakeholders is also contested (Duxbury *et al.*, 2021; Matunga *et al.*, 2020; Pollock, 2019; Teruel, 2018).

Conceptualisations that do not “recognize tourism as an interrelated system within the larger ecological living system” (Jamrozy, 2007, p. 125) are increasingly questioned by tourism scholars. Meanwhile, living systems thinking has been applied to tourism by regenerative development practitioners for more than 15 years (Bellato *et al.*, 2022). Regenerative tourism applies the regenerative development approach to tourism contexts, drawing from Western science and Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems (Bellato and Cheer, 2021; Bellato *et al.*, 2022). It is “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 ecosystems” (Bellato *et al.*, 2022, p. 9).

New regenerative tourism frameworks attempt to describe how tourism systems and the roles of their key stakeholders can contribute towards sustaining and regenerating social-ecological systems (Becken and Kaur, 2021; Bellato and Cheer, 2021; Bellato *et al.*, 2022; Visit Flanders, 2019). Recently, Bellato *et al.* (2022) have developed a regenerative tourism conceptual framework proposing seven principles and a design framework offering practical guidance for tourism stakeholders. The approach seeks to transform tourism into “Tourism living systems that facilitate encounters, create connections and develop reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships through travel practices and experiences, uniquely reflecting tourism places. Regeneration occurs mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, socially, environmentally, and economically” (Bellato *et al.*, 2022, p. 17).

Some attempts to reconceptualise tourism have used living systems thinking. Jamrozy (2007) and McKercher (1999) draw on complexity theory; Bellato and Frantzeskaki (2021) draw from regenerative development literature such as Mang and Reed (2012) and tourism practitioner literature such as Pollock (2012a). The emergence of the regenerative tourism approach that embraces living systems thinking provides an opportunity to explore how tourism living system (TLS) can contribute to transforming tourism systems theory and practice by unpacking the roles adopted by tourism actors and evolving tourism systems towards regeneration. Becken and Kaur (2021) use a typology to differentiate regenerative tourism from dominant tourism approaches. By analysing the systemic perspectives and organisation principles of varying tourism classifications, they categorise traditional tourism as compartmentalised, seeing individual parts of a system seeking to maximise benefits for humans; sustainable tourism as industry-focused understanding tourism as part of a sector seeking to create efficiencies; and regenerative tourism as holistic, seeing tourism as a subsystem of a larger system where collaboration with nature is central.

Despite past attempts to incorporate living systems thinking in tourism, tourism scholarship continues to be dominated by conceptions that see it as a machine-like industry. Consequently, TLSs have not been researched as a concept. The concept of “tourism living systems” is consequently not well understood. Hence, relevant theoretical analysis to understand how living systems’ thinking may contribute to transformations of tourism systems that promote healthy communities and places. Whilst promising initiatives are emerging from practice,

the configurations of roles and capabilities of TLSs thinking that could support transitions towards regenerative tourism remain scientifically uncharted.

To address this knowledge gap, we undertook a scoping review, supplemented by leading practitioner interviews and focus groups to develop the TLS conceptual framework, including its corresponding stakeholder roles. This paper is co-produced and written from the perspectives of non-Indigenous and Indigenous practitioners and researchers drawing upon the knowledges and practices of Western science, regenerative tourism practitioners and learnings from Indigenous communities around the world. This paper is structured as follows: [Section 2](#) summarises living systems' thinking and its relevance to regenerative tourism. [Section 3](#) describes the methods employed and introduces two real-world regenerative tourism case studies. [Section 4](#) introduces a living systems framework for tourism that emphasises the key stakeholder roles essential to an overarching life serving the purpose to regenerate places and communities. In [Section 5](#), key stakeholder roles are articulated and applied to the case studies. Finally, in [Section 6](#), we conclude by demonstrating the concept's contributions to knowledge and practice, its implications of living systems' thinking and corresponding roles concerning regeneration for the future of tourism.

2. Living systems and stakeholder roles in regenerative development

To conceptualise roles in a tourism system, we consider the human actors of tourism and the role of human beings on Earth as our starting point. Living systems' thinking sees humans as part of nature, rather than the anthropocentric view that regards humans as separate and dominating the rest of nature. Aboriginal Australian knowledge holders, a Murruwarri Elder and Bama researcher assert that the core role of humans is to undertake an ethical custodial role on Earth.

There is a pattern to life and we have to see it, know it, live it, be it, increase it, correct damage done to it. But we do more than simply maintaining creation – we also have an obligation to increase complexity and connectedness ([Martin, 2008](#)). We have been given a unique spiritual makeup to help us fulfil this role ([Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth, 2020](#), p. 5).

According to a regenerative business pioneer, “Humans have an inescapable responsibility to ensure that the planet receives an appropriate return for the investment it has made in us. It is actually the business of business to fulfil this aspiration on the part of the planet” ([Sanford, 2011](#), p. 34). According to [Araneda \(2019\)](#), [Bellato et al. \(2022\)](#), [Pollock \(2019\)](#) and [Becken and Kaur \(2021\)](#), the purpose of tourism from a regenerative tourism perspective is to create positive returns and build the capacity of social, economic and ecological systems to flourish. From these perspectives, the core purpose of humans and businesses is to serve the healthy evolution of life through sustaining and regenerating systems, and the role of tourism and its stakeholders is to steward these processes. We have used living systems' thinking to frame the roles of tourism stakeholders whilst drawing from the broader regenerative development and tourism literature.

2.1 Living systems' thinking

Drawing from the living systems work of Charles Krone, regenerative development approaches tap into the evolutionary potential of human and non-human systems and improve the capacity of systems to regenerate ([Dias, 2018](#); [Mang and Reed, 2012](#); [Sanford, 2019](#)). Living systems' thinking,

looks at the web or larger context of reciprocal relationships within which it is embedded, since all systems are comprised of smaller systems and are part of larger systems . . . This constant reaching toward being more whole, being more 'alive', is seen as the fuel for regeneration ([Mang and Reed, 2012](#), p. 30).

Living systems operate at multiple scales, including all entities related to tourism ([Araneda, 2019](#); [Mang and Reed, 2012](#); [Pollock, 2019](#)).

Living systems thinking has been applied to understand tourism as self-organising and interconnected entities that form symbiotic relationships with the communities and places they operate ([Major and Clarke, 2021](#)). [Kato \(2019\)](#) calls for the inclusion of multiple knowledge systems

to fulfil tourism's potential to contribute to humans acting as part of a larger living system and subject to the laws of nature. [Jamrozy \(2007\)](#) proposed a paradigm shift towards seeing tourism as an interrelated system within a larger living system rather than an economic activity. To add to this, the notion of Buen Vivir described by [Chassagne and Everingham \(2019\)](#) underpins the reciprocal interdependence and interconnectedness of human and non-human stakeholders within tourism systems. Tourism experiences could consequently become experiences that improve the quality of life for all stakeholders in TLSs. The shift of tourism towards regeneration that adheres to living systems' thinking requires a new understanding and conceptualisation of the stakeholder role configurations constituting the tourism system. Applying this thinking, tourism becomes a complex set of evolving practices and stakeholder relationships interconnected with broader systems within which multiple actors collaborate and support the system to thrive.

2.2 Stakeholder roles in regenerative development

For regenerative development projects to succeed, a combination of an ethic of care and respect, will and energy to drive the project, tacit knowledge, professional expertise and scientific knowledge are required ([Mang and Reed, 2012](#)). Stakeholder roles move away from serving industrial tourism models such as consumer and producer towards contributing to the health and wellbeing of social-ecological systems. Multiple and diverse actors are essential to developing, implementing, maintaining and adapting the systems improvements over the long term ([Mang and Haggard, 2016](#)). Multidirectional complex networks of diverse stakeholders are inter-related and mutually benefit from collaborating and investing in the well-being and prosperity of the whole system ([Sanford, 2011](#)).

3. Methods

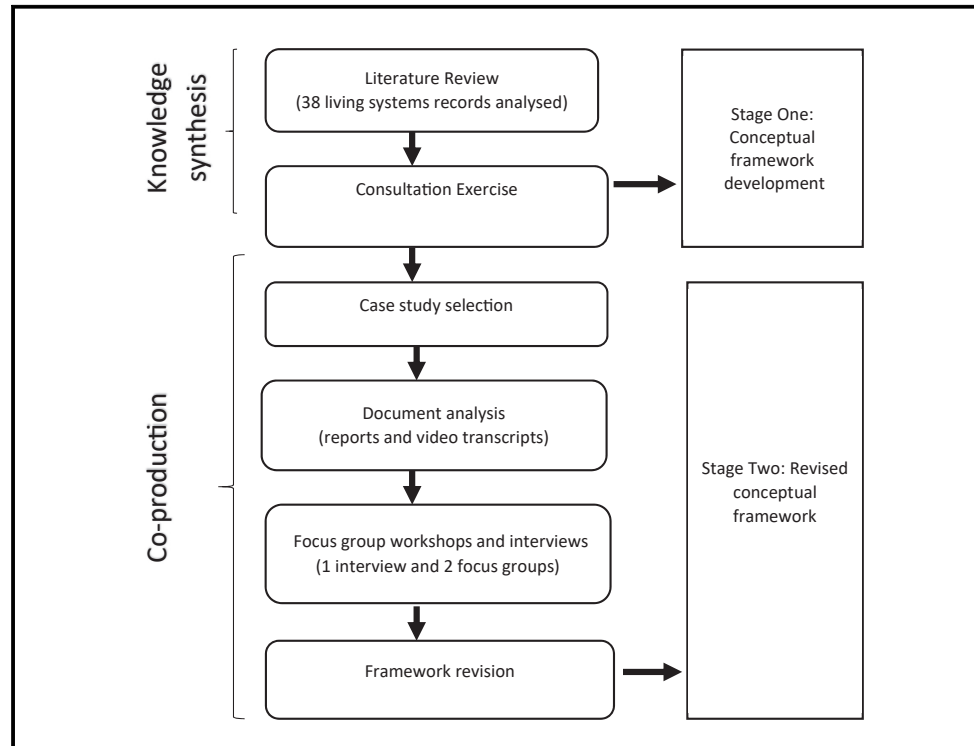
The study employed a knowledge synthesis and co-production approach to identify the conceptual framework and its application in tourism contexts. A range of research methods was adopted over two main stages of the research. The first knowledge synthesis stage involved a scoping review, supplemented by two consultation exercise phases (interviews and focus groups) with leading practitioners to synthesise the findings and develop the initial conceptual framework. The second co-production stage involved key informant interviews and focus groups with case study participants and document analysis for the two case studies to determine how the transformative roles were applied. Co-production of knowledge with practitioners is a valuable methodology for exploring phenomena that explore real-world practices ([Bertella and Rinaldi, 2020](#)). Therefore, including practitioners in knowledge co-production of a TLS framework is crucial to this study to learn from the knowledge and experiences of those who have developed and applied living systems thinking to tourism.

To align with the practice-led nature of regenerative tourism and its corresponding adoption of living systems' thinking, we included the knowledge and values of non-scientist co-authors as integral to the process of scientific knowledge production ([Bremer and Meisch, 2017](#)) and co-learning ([Bertella and Rinaldi, 2020](#)). We adopted a research approach beyond integrating scientists across various disciplines (interdisciplinarity) to integrate knowledge held by scientists and practitioners. [Figure 1](#) outlines the research design steps.

3.1 Stage 1: conceptual framework development

A scoping review was undertaken to investigate what is known about regenerative tourism ([Bellato et al., 2022](#)). The review included synthesis and analysis of 59 journal papers and 116 grey literature records and a consultation exercise with leading practitioners. Of these, four peer-reviewed and 34 grey literature publications (blogs, book chapters and industry reports) discussed living systems. The living systems data were synthesised and themed using NVivo.

Figure 1 Summary of methods



Each consultation exercise phase was conducted to: review and validate the draft findings; identify synthesis gaps and future regenerative tourism research priorities. Following [Levac et al. \(2010\)](#), Round 1 involved individual consultations where initial literature review findings were presented and discussed. Round 2 involved focus group sessions with the practitioners to revise proposed frameworks and identify research priorities. Practitioners recognised as experts in regenerative tourism or applying regenerative approaches to tourism were identified from the literature review, and nine participated in the first consultation exercise (see acknowledgements for participants). The consultation exercise was repeated with leading practitioners with expertise in tourism, traditional healing and regenerative development who identify as Indigenous or are recognised as cultural knowledge holders in their respective communities. Their contributions strengthened the cultural validity of our findings. Four identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders from Australia, one Māori practitioner was from Aotearoa New Zealand and one non-Indigenous person has been taught and given permission to share Māori cultural knowledge by Elders (see acknowledgements for participants). The conceptual framework outlining the transformative roles in regenerative tourism was devised from the analysis of the findings.

3.2 Stage 2: revised conceptual framework

Drawing from the methodology of [Bertella and Rinaldi \(2020\)](#), the research team collaborated with four of the exercise consultation participants recognised as world-leading regenerative tourism pioneers and practitioners, co-authors in this paper, to assess the applicability of the conceptual framework. The practitioner co-authors are familiar with these cases, three having worked directly with the chosen case studies. Playa Viva and Visit Flanders were chosen as case studies based on their demonstrated track record of advancements in regenerative tourism approaches and adoption of living systems' thinking. One key informant from the Playa Viva case study was interviewed, and video transcripts containing interviews with stakeholders from the Visit Flanders case study were used to examine their applications of living systems' thinking and stakeholder

roles. Document analysis was undertaken to review the selected case studies, and key informant interviews explored the roles adopted as part of a TLS. Documents included Visit Flanders video transcripts ([Visit Flanders, 2021](#)) and reports. In addition, the researchers facilitated two focus groups with four practitioner co-authors to clarify any knowledge gaps about each case and further refine the conceptual framework based on the case study analysis. Case studies were verified for accuracy with key informants, and all authors participated in the editing process.

4. Case studies

4.1 *Visit Flanders*

Flanders is in the northern part of Belgium and home to a fast-growing population of 6.6 million people ([Vlaanderen, 2020](#)). In 2018, Flanders hosted 3.2 million international visitors ([OECD, 2020](#), p. 135). Flanders markets itself as a destination of fine arts, art, fashion, design, history and gastronomy and enjoys attractive natural landscapes making cycling a key attraction ([Flanders, 2014](#)). Most visitors come from The Netherlands, France, the UK and Germany and domestically from Belgium ([OECD, 2020](#), p. 135). Flanders enjoys the economic benefits of tourism, including contributions towards maintaining cultural heritage, and a shift from coal mining to a service economy, including, but not limited to, tourism.

Visit Flanders is a well-resourced government-run destination management organisation responsible for developing and implementing tourism development plans with and for Flanders. Growing concerns about future threats caused by Europe's fast-growing tourism economy prompted Visit Flanders to act against anticipated negative future impacts such as overtourism and resident dissatisfaction. In 2018, Visit Flanders embarked on the "Travel to Tomorrow project" to develop a new vision for tourism. This process entailed collaborating, listening to real-life stories using an appreciative inquiry method and discussions with multiple stakeholders in Flanders to discover the essence of the place and how tourism can contribute towards a flourishing place and community. During the consultation process, a resident used the metaphor of the linden tree, commonly found in Flanders, to express how a flourishing tourism system could operate in Flanders. As a result, the tree was adopted to represent a flourishing Flanders TLS, and a regenerative approach was embraced ([Visit Flanders, 2019](#)).

4.2 *Playa Viva*

Playa Viva is a 200-acre boutique hotel near a village named Juluchuca in the state of Guerrero on the Pacific coast of Mexico. The hotel has a capacity of around 60 guests. When the current owner, with a background in sustainability entrepreneurship, bought the property, the land was severely degraded, the agricultural base collapsed and young people migrated to larger cities ([Dias, 2018](#)). In 2006, when Playa Viva was established, the Juluchuca population had decreased from 641 persons in 2000 to 528 persons ([Brinkoff, 2021](#)). The 2020 census showed an increased population of 691 persons ([Brinkoff, 2021](#)). The key livelihoods for the town include agriculture, subsistence fishing, small food processing ([Fugate, 2020](#)). From the earliest stages of planning using a regenerative development approach, the owners partnered with local villagers to ensure the hotel would contribute to the wellbeing of Juluchuca. Since its inception, the hotel has evolved in alignment with the place. Restoration of the ecosystem's watershed, forests and turtle population, and social and economic empowerment, are integrated in the hotel's regenerative and inspirational experiences for guests ([Fugate, 2020](#)).

5. Tourism living system conceptual framework

The regenerative tourism literature and consultation participants identified that tourism's key purpose is not to sustain tourism or serve economic growth, but to contribute towards sustaining and regenerating life. This purpose posits tourism as a contributing system to and in relationship with other social-ecological systems. "A destination is a living system in the same way that a forest

is a living system” (Toerisme Vlaanderen, 2019, p. 4). According to the consultation exercise participants, applying living systems thinking to tourism aligns well with care ethics and creates complex stakeholder connections.

We adapted the tourism systems framework constructed by Rodriguez-Giron and Vanneste (2019), to conceptualise the TLS framework. Rodriguez-Giron and Vanneste (2019) use systems thinking to embed the complexity of tourism into their framework dimensions of components, structure and properties to overcome industrial notions of tourism. Whilst we have adopted the arrangement of these three dimensions, we have renamed two dimensions (components – guilds; structure – places) and redesigned their aspects to align with living systems’ thinking and to embrace wholeness, the centrality of place and the ecological worldview. The fourth dimension of stakeholder roles was added to emphasise the importance of role configurations in a TLS and to advance their conceptualisation beyond function. Figure 2 summarises the dimensions and aspects within the whole TLS framework. Working from the premise that tourism aims to support life systems, the TLS must continually evolve and adapt its capability to flourish. The following sections outline our findings and provide a regenerative tourism perspective of tourism systems.

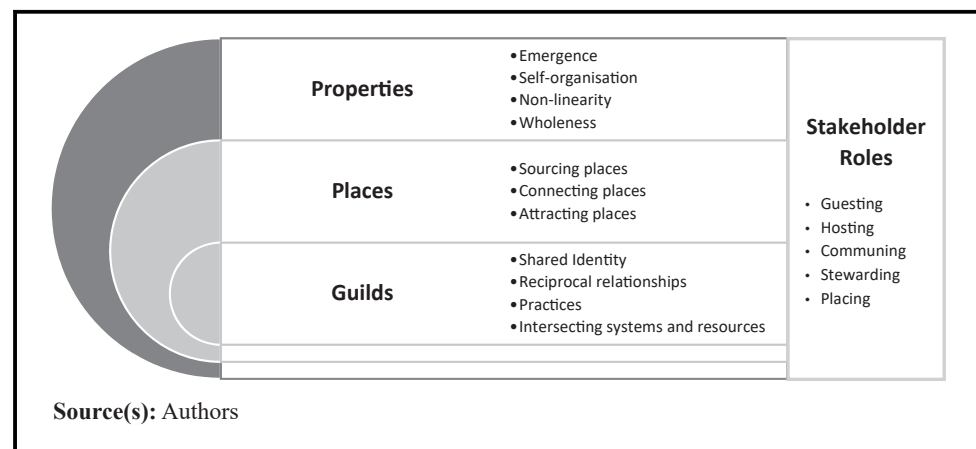
5.1 Properties

The properties proposed by Rodriguez-Giron and Vanneste (2019) align with the ecological worldview that sees the world as a whole, relational, impermanent and self-organising (Mang and Reed, 2019; Plaut et al., 2016). The ecological worldview is derived from scientific thought and is influenced by Indigenous knowledge systems and ethics (Hes and Du Plessis, 2015; Pollock, 2015). The ecological worldview sees the world as one complex, interconnected whole and departs from focusing on competition and individual wealth to embrace self-organised, collaborative nested systems. This view sees systems and all their interrelated elements as constantly changing. Humans’ health depends on mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships with all elements. Due to their alignment with the ecological worldview, we have adopted the properties outlined by Rodriguez-Giron and Vanneste (2019): emergence, self-organisation and non-linearity. In addition, we have added wholeness to emphasise living systems’ and regenerative thinking.

5.2 Places

Places emphasise the centrality of place and describe the overall structural dimension of TLSs. Leiper’s (1979) tourism system model represents the geographical elements of the system as a

Figure 2 TLS framework



linear process defined by the activities of the tourist without recognising place as an active agent in the system. In regenerative development, place is considered a central organising concept from which all initiatives are designed to achieve maximum systemic effects. The capacities of stakeholders are integrated with human and non-human development processes within the context of place (Mang and Reed, 2019). Place becomes a central organising element structuring the entire TLS. Three interdependent active place agents include sourcing places, connecting places and attracting places. Each place has its own place-based guild.

In contrast to Leiper (1979), the role and function of sourcing places is not just to supply tourists; instead, sourcing places generate guests, food and other supplies, knowledge, infrastructure, human resources, legislation and policies to the connecting and attracting places. The connecting places primary roles are to facilitate and support the flows of resources and people between places. The attracting places primary roles are to host the guests and supply resources to support hosting. Any place can be simultaneously a sourcing, connecting or attracting place in the TLS. Direct relationships between attracting and sourcing places are enacted through practices outside guests' movements. Learning exchanges, for example, can occur directly between actors undertaking hosting roles. In addition, travellers may visit multiple places before returning to the original sourcing place. Rather than seeing geographical elements as part of a linear industrial process, regenerative tourism considers these elements as unique places within their own right.

5.3 Guilds

We use the term guild to denote the concept of "stakeholder guilds", originating from Australian Indigenous knowledges, which describes bringing together human and non-human stakeholders with a shared interest in growing the potential and cultivating the health of places (Mang and Haggard, 2016). This description differs from the Western understanding of guild as an association of craftsmen and merchants promoting economic interests. The core elements of a TLS guild are adapted to the stakeholder guilds notion (Mang and Haggard, 2016) through using the dimensions of the human being elements (Briceño Fiebig and Aranedá, 2021). At the smallest scale of a TLS, the following elements co-exist to form a guild:

1. The unique essence of each place informs the *shared identity* of the guild and determines all that falls within it.
2. Various dynamic and *reciprocal relationships* exist between the guild actors and intersecting ecosystems outside the TLS.
3. The *practices* developed and evolving include all the processes enabling the elements and stakeholders to support a flourishing system.
4. The fluid, interconnected and interdependent tourism *systems* provide needed *resources* such as land, transport and other infrastructure to support and mutually benefit from the tourism system.

5.4 (Transformative) stakeholder roles

Tourism stakeholders are individuals or groups affected by or can affect tourism development (Byrd, 2007). To shift towards regenerative approaches, stakeholders need to reimagine and reshape their roles and related practices from extraction to generating new life. In this framework, we consider stakeholders as individuals or groups of human and non-humans who perform key contributing roles to TLSs. Each place has different stakeholders and may include government planners, tourists and other travellers, tourism operators, residents, researchers, animals, waterways, weather and others that co-create a tourism place.

To describe the stakeholder roles, we draw from the scoping review, primarily from the work of Pollock (2012a), Boncquet and Verschate (2021), Visit Flanders (2019), supplemented by regenerative development roles (Mang and Haggard, 2016), stakeholders as systemic

collaborators (Sanford, 2011) and build from the conceptualisation of actor roles in transition (Wittmayer et al., 2017). In regenerative development, “an entity’s function has to do with what it does. Its role, on the other hand, is what it needs to be in order to bring more life into a system. Every entity secures its place by finding a role that is distinctive and necessary for a system to thrive” (Mang and Haggard, 2016, p. 137). Regenerative roles are directed by a shared purpose and focussed on the processes, dynamics and systemic relationships (Mang and Haggard, 2016). In practice, when the varying interests of stakeholder interests are identified and integrated within a shared purpose, all can access the guild’s full potential (Sanford, 2011). Wittmayer et al. (2017) drew from role theory to understand sustainability transition roles as recognisable activities (functionalist perspective), ways to construct self and access cultural, social and material resources (resource perspective) and roles as boundary objects contributing to understandings of social role construction. From our analysis, we constructed five TLS stakeholder roles combining these perspectives as documented in Figure 3.

The key TLS stakeholder roles are configured as interrelated and interconnected (Araneda, 2019; Pollock, 2015). An absence of any stakeholder role would result in the degeneration of the TLS. Figure 3 depicts how enabling key stakeholders relate to one another with permeable boundaries that enable continual emergence and evolution. Place is the container from which everything else exists. Stewarding stakeholders are at the centre, working towards serving the life of the community and place and supporting the tourism stakeholders to reciprocate with place and each other.

5.4.1 Stewarding. Stewarding involves protecting, restoring and regenerating the place and community and is undertaken by stakeholders who feel connected to a place, manage and undertake actions that promote its life, health and vitality (Boncquet and Verschate, 2021; Pollock, 2015). Stakeholders include residents, businesses, community organisations and government bodies connected to the place and may or may not play a role in tourism (Visit Flanders, 2019). Stewarding roles may be simultaneously enacted by those undertaking communing, hosting or guesting roles implying that are not exclusive but rather often interconnected.

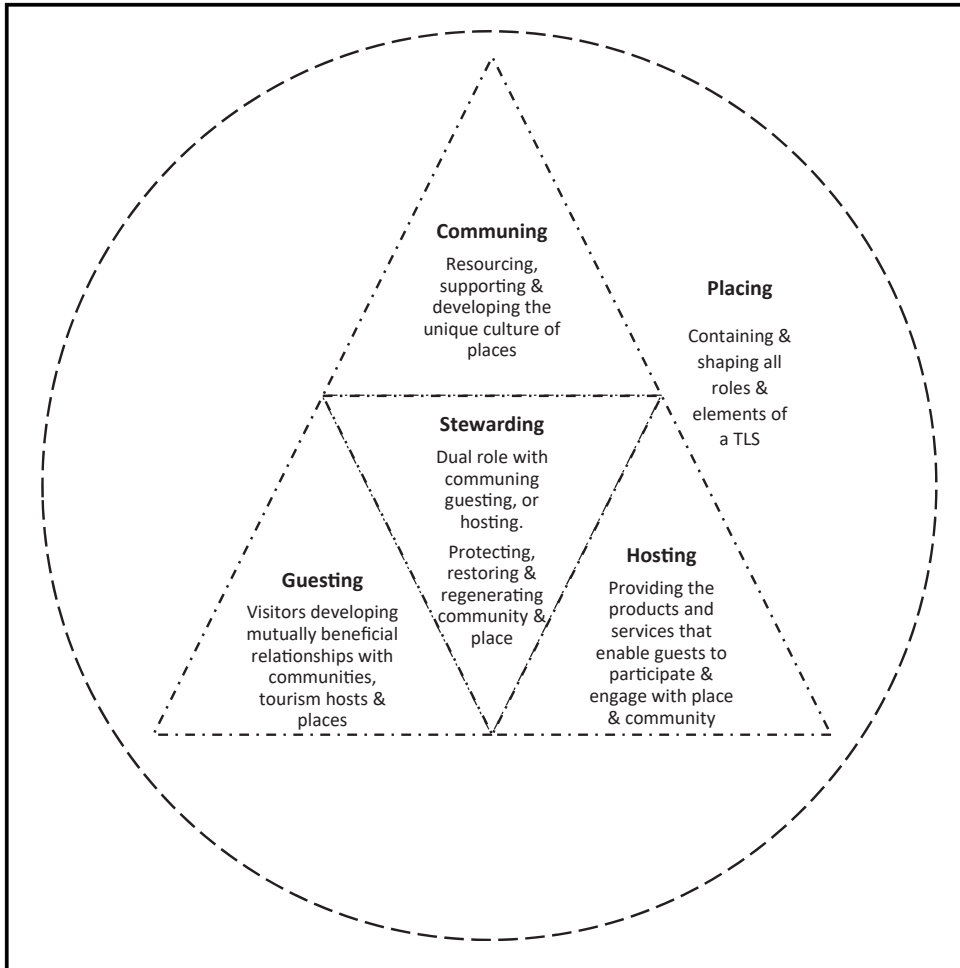
5.4.2 Hosting. Hosting involves directly providing the services that enable guests to participate in the TLS, for example, hospitality, transport and tour services. Tourism hosting is primarily orientated towards servicing the needs and wants of guests in alignment with the values and priorities of the place and community (Pollock, 2015; Visit Flanders, 2019). The hosting role is well placed to lead regenerative development efforts (Pollock, 2015; Visit Flanders, 2019).

5.4.3 Guesting. Guesting involves engaging with other communities and generating different relations to place. Guesting stakeholders visit places and communities intending to develop deeper connections with themselves, communities and places (Araneda, 2020; Pollock, 2012a). Guesting includes bringing and taking perspectives and lessons to other places and communities and restoring well-being (Araneda, 2019). Guesting encompasses paying for the cost of the services received, thus bringing resources to support other communities and places sustaining and developing themselves (Pollock, 2015). The guesting role is undertaken by actors travelling from sourcing places, through connecting places to visit attracting places.

5.4.4 Communing. Communing involves resourcing visitors and non-visitors as well as developing the unique cultures of places and supporting the relationships and networks within them. This role can also entail acting as key regenerative change agents (Pollock, 2015). It is generally undertaken by community members such as non-tourism businesses, government, civil society, residents, legislation and policy systems and processes. In addition, guests are hosted indirectly by providing the support systems for tourism, e.g. food production and supply, transport, broader governance, general retail and informal connections (Pollock, 2012a).

5.4.5 Placing. Placing provides the conditions for tourism to occur, for life to thrive (Pollock, 2015) and for shaping the identity of the place (Araneda, 2019). In regenerative development, place

Figure 3 Transformative role configurations of TLSs



encompasses the land, waterways and other parts of the natural environment, including all humans and other animals and their attachments to one another (Mang and Haggard, 2016).

6. Applications of the tourism living systems' stakeholder roles

Applications of the conceptual framework highlight the fluidity of roles amongst place (attracting, connecting and sourcing) and stakeholder roles (hosting, guesting, placing, stewarding and communing), with actors undertaking multiple and varying stakeholder roles. The case studies provide examples of the interrelatedness of stakeholders and snapshots of how the TLS roles are being developed in their unique places.

6.1 Visit Flanders

The following section shows how a TLS can manifest at a regional level and includes quotes from the Visit Flanders video series interviewees (Visit Flanders, 2021). Visit Flanders is comprised of many places, each interrelating across the region of Flanders. Each place plays multiple roles. For example, Bruges is an attracting place whose residents are a source for other attracting places and a connecting place that people move through as part of their journeys. Various guilds operate in Flanders. Bruges, for example, identifies and promotes itself as a cultural heritage city with museums and other cultural centres such as its Catholic convents that have developed reciprocal

relationships with tourism and hospitality operators to host tours and education for visitors. These cultural centres provide buildings and gardens to visit whilst tour operators provide bookings and logistics services, support tour guiding and partner with accommodation, food and transport providers. Stakeholders involved in these guilds are supported to adopt the following roles.

6.1.1 Stewarding. Visit Flanders plays a stewarding (they use the term placekeeper) role to lead the co-creative emergent process of reorientating the Flanders tourism vision towards becoming a flourishing tourism place. By leading the Travel to Tomorrow regional strategy, Visit Flanders facilitates the development of mutually beneficial tourism encounters amongst stakeholders. Sven Verhaeghe from SoilMates, states, “you can find elements of the Travel to Tomorrow vision, where you see that collaboration between site stewards, visitors, entrepreneurs and residents leads to a whole that is stronger than the sum of its parts. A place that flourishes” (Visit Flanders, 2021) (culinary). In addition to Visit Flanders, some tourism operators and community activists have taken on stewarding by raising awareness about or adopting practices that build sustainable food systems (Visit Flanders, 2021) (culinary). Furthermore, SoilMates work with locals and artists to host arts-based advocacy events that “give the living soil a voice” (Visit Flanders, 2021) (culinary).

6.1.2 Hosting. Visit Flanders coordinates the hosting of guests by providing guidance and support to tourism operators in developing products and services aligning with the Travel to Tomorrow vision. Numerous tourism operators and local organisations are engaging with this vision to contribute towards a flourishing place. For example, Bruges, known for its rich religious heritage, has seen two occupied convents providing guided tours for visitors who are seeking spiritual connection and insights into convent life. Also, the Lamot Congress and Heritage Center operates as a combined conference and heritage centre (Visit Flanders, 2021) (heritage).

6.1.3 Guesting. International and domestic visitors engage in inspiring and enjoyable experiences whilst honouring Flanders’ heritage. Previous visitor Koen was inspired to resume his passion for painting after visiting the Groeninge Museum (Visit Flanders, 2021) (heritage). Dries Delanote from SoilMates described the inspiring food experiences of visitors as, “Everyone instinctively feels a bit like a child again” (Visit Flanders, 2021) (culinary). Geoffrey Van Hulle of a DMC in Bruges highlighted the importance of guest encounters with local people to promote and preserve cultural heritage (Visit Flanders, 2021) (heritage).

6.1.4 Communing. The community supports Flanders residents’ and other inhabitants’ ways of life and preserving cultural heritage. According to Doenja Van Belleghem of Sacred Books – Secret Stories, through opening two of their convents to international visitors, their existing vibrant community is opening out to embrace an extended “community of staff, volunteers, tour guides, and many Bruges locals” (Visit Flanders, 2021) (heritage). The participation of all residents in tourism experiences is considered a key contributor to well-being. The “Everyone Deserves a Vacation” initiative is a network of tourism and community organisations aiming to increase access to vacations for residents on low incomes and other access barriers (Visit Flanders, 2021) (Everyone Deserves a Holiday).

6.1.5 Placing. The places of the Flanders region attract visitors with their natural resources and culture, thereby supporting unique tourism experiences whilst benefitting from tourism practices that promote healthier ecosystems. The annual iconic Ronde van Vlaanderen event is inextricably shaped by the cultural and natural landscapes of the Flanders region. The cobblestones and meadow views in collaboration with tourism operators, residents and visiting cyclists engage people in this popular event (Visit Flanders, 2021) (cycling). The SoilMates network promotes healthy soils, thus enabling local tourism operators to procure locally grown healthy food (Visit Flanders, 2021) (culinary).

6.2 Playa Viva

The following depicts a snapshot of how the TLS can manifest at an enterprise hotel level and includes quotes from the owner of Playa Viva, David Leventhal. Playa Viva considers itself to be part

of the neighbouring village of Juluchuca. The road going from the airport to the Playa Viva hotel was purposely built to pass via Juluchuca so that it could become a connecting place, bringing social-economic benefits for the community. The local community and the natural elements of the environment are central to Playa Viva's identity. The hotel for the village aspires to be healthy, educated and economically viable. Playa Viva has immersed itself into the life of the village and actively contributes towards and benefits from its place and community. The TLS guild is enacted through the following roles.

6.2.1 Stewarding. Playa Viva has adopted a stewarding role through immersing itself in the life of the local community and place. Designing beyond the perimeters of the hotel property, they aspire to transform the degraded land, waterways and community into a healthy, interconnected ecosystem. Key initiatives include the regeneration of the watershed and landscape, increasing fish numbers and providing livelihoods for local young people. In addition, through working at or engaging with Playa Viva, local community members have learned about healthier food growing and consumption and pesticide-free land management practices.

6.2.2 Hosting. Playa Viva focuses its hosting role on ensuring guests honour, connect and reciprocate with its place and community. David asserted, "these people are coming in from the outside, to engage in our community . . . it is our role as hosts, to integrate people into the essence of place, and have them expand ever outward, and explore more and more and be connected more and more to what is of place". Staff are encouraged to befriend the guests. Playa Viva encourages guests to participate in Playa Viva's habitat regeneration programs and community events to interact with the local community and learn more about the local culture (Fugate, 2020).

6.2.3 Guesting. Guests' transformational experiences are catalysed by immersion and connection with local villagers, Playa Viva farm, turtle sanctuary, ocean and disconnection from technological distractions. David highlighted the importance of bonds created with staff, "the guests that I love the most are when I'm sitting there, and they're leaving, and I see them hug our staff before they leave, there is an emotional connection between hosts and guests".

6.2.4 Communing. Playa Viva sees itself as an inextricable part of the community and is manifested by employing staff from the local area, participating in village events and actively contributing towards its health, education and habitat restoration. David explained that staff who are not employed from the local village "are becoming of place, they live in Juluchuca, they don't live in the hotel, they're not apart from, they're part of the community". Local fishermen supply seafood to the hotel. Local stories and ways of the community influence the culture of Playa Viva.

6.2.5 Placing. Playa Viva defines placing as providing "a socket for people to connect to" and considers place as the container for all stakeholders. The hotel, local village and surrounding areas provide an attractive environment for guest enjoyment, relaxation and restoration. The soundscapes of the ocean enhance the peaceful, restorative experience for guests and staff. Playa Viva reciprocates with place through its various initiatives to improve ecosystem capability to flourish in return for providing an attractive place to visit.

6.3 Summary of role configurations in the case studies and their transformative potential

The following table summarises the key actors involved in enacting stakeholder roles and their applications in each case study (Table 1).

Each case study demonstrates observable shifts in thinking and practices by enacting TLS roles for transformations in the making. In the case of Visit Flanders, the DMO has transformed itself from planning, marketing and management to enabling and facilitating mutually beneficial encounters amongst stakeholders. This shift has occurred through Visit Flanders and its partners changing its mindset away from tourism that pursues profit towards tourism that contributes to a flourishing

Table 1 Case study application summary

	<i>Visit Flanders</i>	<i>Playa Viva</i>
Stewarding	Visit Flanders leads a new way of thinking, planning and measuring desired tourism futures in the Flanders region, which is orientated around flourishing. Community activists and residents, including members of the tourism sector, have formed coalitions to address sustainability issues and raise awareness	Playa Viva hotel has taken responsibility to regenerate the land, waterways and community as part of its core contribution to the place. Examples include expanding and evolving livelihoods programmes turtle and watershed regeneration
Hosting	Visit Flanders and tourism operators are playing primary roles in providing products and services for visitors to connect with place and community through experiences such as cycling events	Playa Viva is focused on providing hospitality services and guest experiences that facilitate reciprocal and honourable relationships between the guests, place and community. Staff actively engage with guests
Guesting	International and domestic visitors participate in tourism experiences in Flanders to connect with themselves, the place and the community	Visitors to Playa Viva participate in the hotel experience and restore their well-being. For example, guests engage with the turtle sanctuary programme as one way to connect with nature
Communing	Flanders residents are focused on supporting and resourcing their local communities whilst providing necessary support for hosting guests	Local people living in the area hold stories and enliven the place. Staff employed at Playa Viva who are not from the local village, become active members of the community
Placing	Flanders as a place provides a container that enables all other stakeholders to offer its unique tourism products and experiences such as beautiful landscapes enabling cultural heritage events and engagement with history by visitors	The local village and surrounding areas provide an attractive, relaxing and restorative environment. The soundscapes of the ocean, for example, promote peace and restoration

system. This shift has required the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) to renegotiate its relationships and redefine its measures of success away from financial and visitation measures towards well-being. Visit Flanders, who are at the start of their regenerative journey, aspire to create a flourishing place where all stakeholders take responsibility, benefit and create added value for the Flanders region and thus avert the near threats and negative impacts of overtourism (Boncquet and Verschate, 2021). Playa Viva has been on the regenerative journey for almost 20 years during which time the stakeholders have made several significant shifts in practising regeneration. From their initial embracing of the local community and seeing themselves as part of it, Playa Viva has continually evolved with the ongoing changes of the place. The core principle of reciprocity has shaped all relationships with the five TLS stakeholders and has underpinned encounters that have had beneficial and transformational effects for all. Since its inception, Playa Viva has transformed a degraded plot of land into a thriving hotel that supports the well-being of the local village, watershed, turtle population and is continuing to evolve.

7. Transforming tourism stakeholder roles towards creating regenerative futures

To transform tourism stakeholder roles towards regenerative futures, shifts in thinking and practice from separate and linear to complex wholes is required (Dwyer, 2018; Matunga *et al.*, 2020; McKercher, 1999). Leiper's (1979) tourism system framework separates key stakeholders undertaking roles to meet different purposes and overlooks the agency of place and hosts. The TLS configures active agents taking on stakeholder roles to form an inter-related and mutually beneficial complex of living entities within and across places. Roles emulate core regeneration principles of reciprocity and evolution such as: guesting ensures biodiversity and mobility, stewarding enables caretaking of all beings within the system, hosting provides the dedicated resources for tourism practices, communing offers a welcoming and supportive place to live and visit, and placing resources, contains and shapes the nested systems.

The scoping review, leading practitioner consultations and interviews revealed that roles and their associated practices are pluriform and interdependent with each other and place. Whilst some practices more closely relate to specific stakeholder roles more than others, essentially, all practices can be performed by all stakeholder groups. Stewardship, recognised as an essential practice of regenerative tourism approaches, builds on scientific knowledge and the practices of Indigenous and other communities in a reciprocal relationship with land (Jamal and Stronza, 2009). This approach conforms with calls by Kato (2019) and Jamrozy (2007) for tourism to contribute towards healthy living systems. From a regenerative development perspective, stewarding requires deep connections and the development of reciprocal partnerships with the land, waterways and all beings in a place (Mang and Haggard, 2016). Dwyer (2018) advocates for prioritising stewardship over growth. Stewarding practices in this paper included: empowering agency, change catalysing, healing selves, sustaining, identity shaping, containing and co-creating. Each place will apply these practices and others as relevant to their local contexts.

8. Conclusions

The TLS is introduced as a promising concept to understand the various interrelated relationships between stakeholders and develop future regenerative tourism roles. TLSs require a shift in roles from extraction to generating new life to survive, thrive and evolve towards higher levels of complexity and order. To re-orientate tourism towards a focus on manifesting the health and unique potential of each place, game-changing shifts in tourism roles and related practices are required. Two case studies showcased TLS guilds with a shared purpose to serve healthy ecosystems to develop flourishing places and communities. The uniqueness of each place was determined by their identities as articulated in the framework. Role and relationship configurations of each TLS were determined by the place types and unique guild elements. The TLS framework can support the design of place-specific regenerative tourism approaches and guide the application of transformative stakeholder role configurations to form guilds. Further investigation of TLS transformative roles would support practical regeneration applications to tourism contexts.

Further investigation of how framings of these roles, patterns and their potential for creating sustainable destinations is needed to implement transitions using regenerative tourism approaches. Applications of these roles to the operationalisation of regenerative tourism would clarify their contributions towards such transitions (Wittmayer *et al.*, 2017). Including practitioner perspectives, case studies and co-production approaches is essential to this endeavour. Finally, the TLS should be interrogated with existing conceptualisations within tourism scholarship to inform the future development of tourism systems and critical concepts such as place or wellness.

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