

Resilient and regenerative Rural Tourism: the case of Travancinha Village, Portugal

Turismo rural regenerativo e resiliente: o caso da Aldeia de Travancinha, Portugal

Elisabeth Kastenholtz

Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies Research Unit (GOVCOPP),
Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism (DEGEIT), University of Aveiro (UA)
elisabethk@ua.pt
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4700-0326>

Manuel António Brites Salgado

Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies Research Unit (GOVCOPP),
School of Tourism and Hospitality,
Polytechnic Institute of Guarda (IPG)
manuelsgado@ipg.pt
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5218-5348>

Rafaela Silva

Polytechnic University of Guarda (Portugal)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4555-888X>

Artigo recebido a 16 de agosto de 2023 e aprovado a 15 de novembro de 2023

Abstract

In the recent past, Portugal has suffered from devastating rural fires, particularly in its hinterland regions, with current data on climate change suggesting an increasing risk. This risk jeopardizes these regions' living conditions, while simultaneously deterring visitors. Still, particularly small-scale, locally embedded rural tourism projects may also help introduce changes in regional landscape management and enhance community resilience. The main goal of this study is to a) analyze the importance of prevention in addressing the challenges imposed by climate change in low-density territories, specifically associated to rural fires in the inland of Portugal, and b) explore how rural tourism can contribute to the resilience and regeneration of the destination after fire-incidents. Based on a qualitative study using a constructive-interpretive case study, namely that of Travancinha village (Municipality of Seia, in Portugal's Central Region), semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with local tourism agents, local authorities, and tourism development agents and subjected to content-analysis. Also, documents and secondary data were analysed, namely statistics and policy documents regarding measures of climate change risk prevention, combat, and mitigation. Based on this, an analysis was performed regarding the pre- and post-fire periods of 2017 and 2022. The results reveal the importance of community collaboration in rural and low-density territories, in the analyzed case, and a model of regenerative tourism, based on community resilience, is proposed. Some conditioning factors for the success of this model are also identified.

Keywords: rural tourism, regenerative tourism, community resilience, rural fires, climate change.

Resumo

Num passado recente, Portugal sofreu os efeitos devastadores dos fogos rurais, particularmente nas zonas do interior do país o que, de acordo com os dados sobre alterações climáticas, sugere um risco acrescido para as zonas fustigadas. Os fatores de risco comprometem as condições de vida destas regiões e afastam os visitantes. De qualquer forma, embora em pequena escala, os projetos de turismo rural podem contribuir para mudar a gestão da paisagem regional e potenciar a resiliência comunitária.

O objetivo principal deste estudo é: a) analisar a importância da prevenção na resposta aos desafios impostos pelas alterações climáticas em territórios de baixa densidade, especificamente associados aos incêndios rurais no interior de Portugal; e b) explorar de que forma o turismo rural pode contribuir para a resiliência e regeneração do destino em situações pós-incêndio. Com base num estudo qualitativo construtivo-interpretativo, a partir do caso da aldeia de Travancinha, foram realizadas dez entrevistas semiestruturadas em profundidade

a agentes de locais de turismo, autoridades locais e agentes de desenvolvimento turístico. Foram também analisados documentos e dados secundários, nomeadamente estatísticas do turismo e documentos políticos relativos a medidas de prevenção, combate e mitigação dos riscos das alterações climáticas. Com base nesses dados, foi realizada uma análise comparativa entre os períodos pré- e pós-incêndio de 2017 e 2022 e foi feita a respetiva análise de conteúdo. Os resultados revelam a importância da resiliência comunitária em territórios rurais e de baixa densidade, no caso analisado, e propõe-se um modelo de turismo regenerativo, baseado na resiliência comunitária. São também identificadas algumas condicionantes do sucesso deste modelo.

Palavras-chave: turismo rural, turismo regenerativo, resiliência, incêndios rurais, sustentabilidade.

1. Introduction

The tourism activity has been identified as both a potential driver of economic development, if well planned and integrated in local economies and, ideally collaborative, communities (Lane, 1994; Saarinen & Lenao, 2014) and as a highly dynamic sector, affected by many external, uncontrollable factors and risks (Ritchie, 2004), highlighting both its opportunities and challenges. Focusing on the sector's challenges, Almeida (2017, p. 105) affirms that "tourism can be affected by various disruptions, the consequences of which could manifest themselves in various dimensions (economic, environmental, social, etc.) and have repercussions on the entire value chain". Although tourism has proven to be a relatively resilient sector in face of successive crises and disasters over the years, the effects of climate change in the medium and long term could jeopardise the survival of some destinations that depend on certain tourism products related to the environment, such as nature tourism, rural tourism, sun and beach tourism or snow tourism (Gössling et al., 2020; Kutzner, 2019; Schirpke et al., 2013; Schweinsberg et al., 2020). Even assuming risk perception to be subjective in nature, depending on each visitor's individual sensitivity, personal and cultural background (Kozak et al., 2007; Seabra et al., 2013; Walters et al., 2015), specific destination attributes should not be neglected, making some areas more risk-prone to general markets (Karl & Schmude, 2017), as is the case of rural areas, with natural forests, in many countries facing the effects of global heating more severely (Almeida, 2014; Estevão et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2023; Schweinsberg et al., 2020).

These challenges may be even greater in peripheral hinterland territories with low population density, mostly small-scale family businesses and lack of resources (Almeida, 2017; Figueiredo et al., 2014; Kastenholz et al., 2015), especially because of the

imminent threat of rural fires, which is already a reality for many villages in the Portuguese hinterland (Paiva & Santos, 2020), as is the case of Travancinha. The risk of rural fires has been identified as a major threat to the tourism attractiveness of many regions, implying not only risk to existing houses and infrastructures but also to a relevant economic sector depending on visitors (Kim & Jakus, 2019). However, this understanding can also represent an incentive for the industry and government at local and regional level, to invest in preventive planning, training of and multi-fold support to local communities and enterprises (Almeida, 2017; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Jiricka-Pürner et al., 2020; Kastenholz & Lane, 2015), aiming at a strategic, pro-active, ideally cooperative and ongoing approach to crisis management and resilience building (Kastenholz et al., 2022; Ritchie, 2004).

Rural tourism is becoming an important element in the global development of tourism as it has led the way in the creation of new forms of tourism, while also being the "cornerstone in the growth of sustainable tourism and now plays a vital role in regional regeneration schemes in many countries and in many situations" (Lane et al., 2022, p.1).

In this sense, the concept of regenerative tourism has emerged as a new paradigm that goes beyond the concept of sustainability, aiming to restore and revitalize ecosystems and communities, while providing memorable and authentic experiences for tourists and economic benefits to local communities (Müller, 2016). It presents a holistic approach to environmental conservation, socio-cultural preservation, and economic prosperity. It emphasizes the need for collaboration, community engagement, and long-term planning to achieve regenerative outcomes (Müller, 2016; Mathisen et al., 2022; Lupton & Samy, 2022) there has been an appalling crisis developing – that of the state of our planet. Humanity has become disconnected from nature, with devastating

consequences. We are in an emergency state: a crisis of perception (HRH et al., 2010, p. 6, which is also the aim of prevention. It is therefore important to analyse if its implementation can contribute to the resilience of the place and its community, in particular, when aiming at mitigating negative climate change effects. Walters et al. (2015), studying tourists' response to the 2011 Queensland floods, found evidence for some tourists' interest in assisting the State's recovery efforts, particularly observable amongst females, older travellers and those with place attachment. Consequently, the above-mentioned community efforts and strategies should also understand the value of specific tourist segments when aiming at developing a more resilient and regenerative tourism system at the destination.

Given the importance of tourism for some rural areas and the increasing risk of forest fires, as a result of climate change, it seems urgent to learn from community stakeholders' reaction to recent catastrophic fire occurrences, to assess a destination's capacity of crisis management and its community's resilience, as well as to identify critical factors from within the community and the local tourism system that could make these territories and communities more resilient, capable to recover from crises and even achieve regeneration for a better future.

The main objective of this research is, in this line of thought, to a) analyze the importance of prevention in addressing the increasing challenges of rural fire incidents, in times of global heating, and b) to explore how rural tourism can contribute to the resilience and regeneration of the respective destination.

To the best of our knowledge, this study's focus on exploring the integration of combat of climate change risks and regenerative rural tourism is relatively new. By examining the potential synergies and interdependencies between these two areas, the research contributes to the advancement of knowledge in both the fire prevention and the tourism literature, specifically in the field of resilient and regenerative tourism. The analysis of these two areas will also allow to contribute to the broader discussions on sustainable development, community empowerment, and environmental management in rural areas. It sheds light on the opportunities to leverage tourism as a driver of economic, social, and environmental sustainability in fire-prone rural areas.

This article is structured in four parts: the first part consists of the theoretical framework that supports the study, specifically regarding resilience to climate change effects and the emergence of 'regenerative tourism', followed by the methodology, presentation and discussion of the case-focused qualitative results, and finally the conclusions and implications of the study for rural tourism and development agents.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Resilience to Climate Change Effects

The threats that humanity faces today may be referred to as disasters or crises, and are events that may result from natural or anthropic causes, whose effects may be sudden or progressive, requiring the design of exceptional, planned and structured responses in order to rapidly mitigate these effects (Almeida, 2017; Estevão & Costa, 2020; Gössling et al., 2020; Jiricka-Pürner et al., 2020).

Some of these crises or disasters can be extreme natural phenomena, environmental disasters, public health issues, political, economic or financial crises and terrorism. However, those presenting the greatest impact on territories and their communities are extreme natural phenomena or climate change effects (heat waves, fires, hurricanes, floods, landslides, insect plagues, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tsunamis and droughts) and human intervention, while in many cases, disasters result from a combination of human action and natural risks (Briere & Eliot, 2000; Brown, 1989; Estevão & Costa, 2020).

Some consider that we are currently living in the "Age of Chameleons" due to the constant necessity to adapt, prevent and act to all kinds of challenges (Németh et al., 2022). This is also true for tourism, despite this sector's apparent resilience to crises, particularly when considering certain climate-dependent tourism products and activities challenged by climate change (Almeida, 2017; Butler, 2017; Gössling et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2017; Kutzner, 2019; Leal Filho, 2022; Németh et al., 2022; Schirpke et al., 2013). This situation could be even worse at the regional and local level, where competences to face certain events may be weaker, while impacts are most often greater to small communities in low

density territories (Almeida, 2017; Estevão et al., 2020; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; Rodrigues et al., 2023) requiring the adoption of appropriate systems for land and tourism planning and management, involving the community and all economic actors to ensure rapid response and adaptive capacity (Almeida, 2017; Estevão & Costa, 2020; Hall et al., 2017; Paiva & Santos, 2020; Ritchie, 2004; Salgado et al., 2022).

According to Almeida (2017, p.119), resilience “depends on the intrinsic characteristics of the systems but also on the capacity of societies and actors to act, in order to reduce risks and increase the capacity to respond to undesired events or disturbances”, thus demanding planning for sustainable development.

At the global level there are already commitments and targets for disaster risk reduction, such as the Sendai Declaration and Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, approved by 187 UN Member States, to implementing seven targets set out in four priorities, guided by a set of established principles, which focus on people, health, and livelihoods. The Sendai Framework 2015-2030 stresses that local and indigenous communities have used traditional methods to prepare for and respond to disasters and build resilience for decades. This natural and traditional knowledge is site specific, and its value should be recognised, especially in risk zones, as a means of preparing for and mitigating future disasters (UNISDR, 2015).

Also, the EU developed a series of support instruments for the implementation of prevention and post-recovery plans, elaboration of disaster risk assessments, public awareness campaigns, capacity building for firefighting personnel and local communities, promotion of cooperation among stakeholders and communities’ engagement. In the case of Portugal, there are also national and regional strategies and guidelines regarding prevention, preparation, response and recovery from catastrophe, amongst which the Serra da Estrela Natural Park Revitalisation Programme (2023) is relevant for the later discussed case (Comunidade Intermunicipal das Beiras e Serra da Estrela, 2023).

Finally, apart from these important preventive interventions on site in rural areas, also the destination’s connection to its markets, who may perceive increased risk (Karl & Schmude, 2017; Kozak et al., 2007; Seabra et al., 2013) and tend to avoid the areas devastated by rural fires in the future, requires action,

as such market reactions jeopardize these destinations’ economic sustainability. These negative market impacts may be addressed through trustworthy media communication (Schweinsberg et al., 2020; Walters et al., 2015) and, if possible, with the help of tourist segments that have developed a particular place attachment – a most valuable asset rural destinations need to cherish and develop (Walters et al., 2015).

2.2. Regenerative Tourism

It could be not sustainable in the medium to long term that the tourism activity maintains the current economic growth model. Agreeing to Charles Einstein (2011) it is necessary to shift from ego-economics to eco-economics, because “the monetary system contributed to alienation, competition and scarcity, destroyed community and demanded endless growth” (*apud* Sheldon, 2022, p. 201).

We are dealing with a time where as a community we must ensure the planet regeneration by being more conscious about the limitation of nature resources, to think collective and globally, be more conscious and also in Tourism industry ensuring that is part of the community and responds to its needs (Rojas & Guerrero, 2021). The regenerative tourism paradigm stresses the urge to restore the health of all life systems, i.e. the ecological and societal systems, in large part through aligning our values and lifestyles, including leisure and tourism behaviors, with nature (e.g. Becken & Kaur, 2022; Becken & Coghlan, 2022).

This transformation presupposes a shift towards a regenerative tourism system based on equality, sustainability (environmental, cultural and social) and well-being, specifically the reciprocal relationship between nature and humans, based on a bottom-up approach, with the purpose of giving back to local communities and nature (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Mathisen et al., 2022; Sheldon, 2022).

Some authors agree that regenerative tourism is the evolution of sustainable tourism, based on a holistically and dynamic development and approach, between the six pillars (economic, social, cultural, spiritual, political and ecological) that comprise it, enabling co-evolution by a participative and active process with the community, their local knowledge and creative management, in order to guarantee a peaceful and fair local development (Müller, 2016;

Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Mathisen et al., 2022; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Lupton & Samy, 2022). Hussain & Haley (2022) highlight for the need to embrace regenerative development, by adopting behaviours that fosters soil, forest, watercourses and atmosphere regeneration, as sustainability cannot be sustainable without as sustainability and regeneration are intrinsic.

In summary, the majority of the authors (Müller, 2016; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Mathisen et al., 2022; Lupton & Samy, 2022; Sheldon, 2022) agree that regenerative tourism should embrace the local, recognizes the value of ecosystems and their services, promotes sustainable land management practices, respect and preserve local cultures, traditions, and heritage, while promoting intercultural understanding and appreciation. Becken & Coghlan (2022, p. 9) call for a new “Regenerative Literacy extend[ing] our concept of community beyond one that focusses on humans to one that encompasses all beings (Scull, 2017)”, thereby demanding a move from the overly anthropocentric to a more ecocentric view, reconnecting people with nature, while particularly local actors play a key role in generating this change. Thus, community engagement is crucial to this process, and its involvement in tourist activities as guardians, co-creators and ‘cultural brokers’, will allow to help provide more authentic and meaningful experiences, as well as foster a sense of ownership and pride shared by both residents and visitors (Carvalho et al., 2016; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022). Tourism should ideally contribute to economic benefits for local communities, support local businesses and entrepreneurs and enhance local heritage, landscapes and resources, empower local communities, contribute to a sustainable workforce and quality of life within a healthy natural environment, thus strengthening community well-being and resilience, which is even more relevant in rural areas, where actors need to make the best of scarce and fragile endogenous resources in a context of fragmented supply and limited opportunities (Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; Pato & Kastenholz, 2017; Saxena et al., 2007; Sharpley, 2014).

Several authors (Hussain & Haley, 2022; Kastenholz et al., 2023) underline the importance of carefully assessing and monitorizing all tourism impacts in an attempt to minimize the negative and maximize the positive, to create a ‘host community buy-in’ and enhance social, economic, cultural and

environmental life dimensions, enhancing well-being and resilience (Hussain & Haley, 2022) of all life systems (Becken & Coghlan, 2020).

In this sense, and considering the scarcity of research in the field of regenerative tourism, Hussain & Haley (2022, pp. 8-10) propose a ‘regenerative tourism model’, establishing as key-elements: a) access to and availability of capitals (physical, institutional, human, financial, social, natural and location capital) and b) experiments and innovation (within adaptative cycles) that allow for an analysis of vulnerability within the resilience context, as well as the testing of innovation expressed in terms of potential. They propose that regenerative tourism needs to create conditions to continuously renew tourism systems, transcend new forms of tourism, flourish in ever-changing trends, guarantee economic stability, minimum impact on the environment, produce “pure tourism products”.

3. Methodology

This research is characterized as a qualitative study of descriptive-explanatory nature, since its objective is to describe the impacts caused by rural fires in the village of Travancinha and explore the role of regenerative tourism in promoting resilience to avoid or minimize this risk. The preparation of this research, specifically the questions posed in the interviews was based on a comprehensive, selective, and analytical literature review, focusing on the topics forest fires in rural areas, crisis management and resilience in rural tourism and regenerative tourism (Almeida, 2017; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Kastenholz et al., 2022; Paiva & Santos, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were prepared accordingly, with questions divided in 3 parts: the event and immediate impacts – fires of 2017 and 2022; the response – immediate post-event initiatives/ crisis management; the future: resilience and regenerative tourism, and were conducted with local tourism agents (accommodation unit and restaurant managers/ owners; an incoming tour operator and guide), local authorities, and the regional tourism authority. Respondents were selected purposefully based on their location (Travancinha village), their knowledge about the village and the event, and their involvement with the tourism activity in the village. A total of nine interviews were carried out, addressing actors

from respectively, five tourist accommodation units, one restaurant, one local tourism agency, one local authority and one incoming tour operator/ guide (for details see table 1), both through virtual online meetings and, due to time constraints, via phone call, in May and June 2023, with all interviews being recorded, with participants' consent.

The interviews lasted approximately 1:30 hours, were transcribed and categorized into key themes what allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and practices related to rural fires, resilience, and regenerative tourism. Data triangulation helped ensure the quality and credibility of the research and produce valid and high-quality results, using the following sources of evidence: a) indirect observation; b) document analysis: UE strategic plans from risk reduction, statistical data on tourism flows before and after fire, fire data from Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests (ICNF) about burning area, websites of the accommodations and local authorities to analyse the existence of risk reduction and prevention guidelines at local level; c) semi-structured interviews. In addition to increased credibility, this method is particularly adequate for case-study research, analysing multiple realities and perspectives.

Finally, the information was processed based on all the information gathered from the various sources of evidence, with results being systematized in the following categories identified via content

analysis: 1) the impact of fires (2017-2022) in the village and community; 2) immediate post-fire response/ crisis management, in terms of national and local measures and incentives created; 3) resilience and regeneration through tourism, specifically in terms of what Travancinha community is already implementing and what is their perspectives regarding regeneration through tourism.

3.1. Case Study Characterization

Considering the micro-scale reality of the village of Travancinha, it is important to characterize it and contextualize the two major disasters that struck this territory, before moving on to the perspectives and details collected by the interviews. The village of Travancinha, with a total area of 12.66 km², is located in the municipality of Seia, integrated in the 'Beiras and Serra da Estrela' Intermunicipal Community, within the Central region of Portugal (see figure 1).

According to the 2021 CENSUS, the village has 387 inhabitants, with a population density of 30.6 inhabitants/km², being considered a territory of low population density. It is worthwhile observing the data on the evolution of population in the parish since 1950, with the continuous decrease of resident numbers clearly visible in figure 2. Specifically, in 2021 the population is little more than one third

Table 1
Profile and code of interviewees

Type	Description	Gender and role	Code
Tourist Accommodation	Rural Tourism – Country House capacity for 18 guests	Female Owner	TA1
Tourist Accommodation	Rural tourism – Country House capacity for 20 guests	Female Owner	TA2
Tourist Accommodation	Local Accommodation capacity for 6 guests	Male and Female Owners	TA3
Tourist Accommodation	Local Accommodation Capacity for 6 guests	Female Owner	TA4
Tourist Accommodation	Local Accommodation capacity for 4 guests	Female Owner	TA5
Local Authority	Travancinha Parish	Male President	LA
Regional Tourism Entity Centre of Portugal	Investors' Support Centre	Male Head of agency	RTE
Restaurant	Regional restaurant capacity for 50 guests	Female Owner	R
Tour Operator (incoming) and Guide	Local Guide/ incoming tour operator	Male Owner	TO

As local/ regional tourist attraction points one may refer to the astronomical observatory, pedestrian trails (route of Tapado and walkways of the Sena River), the village swing, the local church and the traditional events that take place throughout the year, while its location within the Natural Park of Serra da Estrela makes it an appealing point of departure for exploring the wider region. As a matter of fact, one tourism accommodation unit, namely Chão do Rio, which has been developed in a unique manner, with several attraction points within the establishment such as the biological poll, the regenerative forest, the ecological farm and all the activities within the nature (collecting eggs, making traditional bread, etc) may serve as an attraction point by itself making tourists choose this village for a stay. It should be noted that according to the interviewees (TA1, TA2, LA), several of these tourism assets were developed after the year 2017 as a way to return attractiveness and generate visitor flow to the village.

The existence of a community of foreign residents, who live isolated from the original community, but on their own properties (camping), is noteworthy, also engaging in an association (Unifant) and developing tourism animation activities and events such as the summer solstice, a handicraft festival and horse-riding activities. This will in the perspective of one interviewee (TA2), "(...) reinforce the living conditions [in the territory], [through] the fact that there are people occupying the territory, taking care

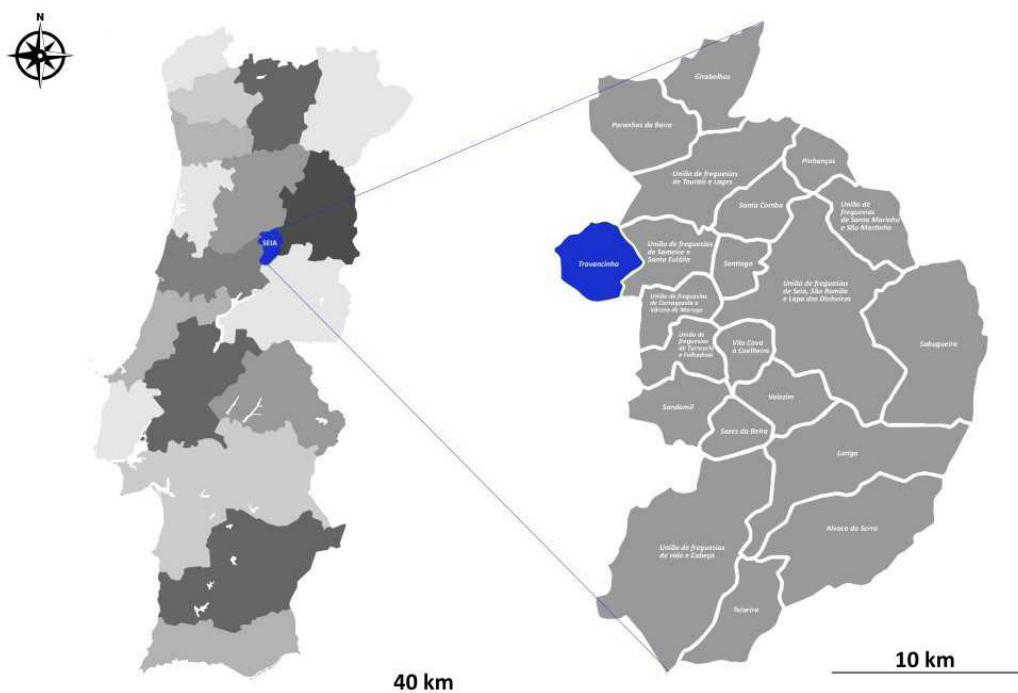


Figure 1
Location of the parish of Travancinha in the Country of Seia (own elaboration).

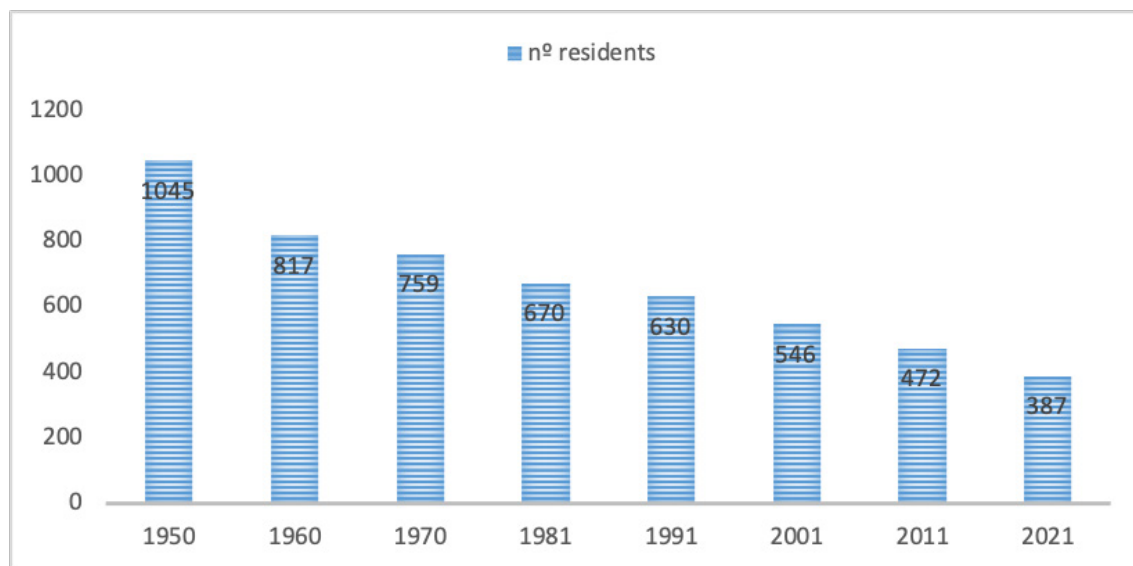


Figure 2

Evolution of the number of Travancinha residents since 1950 (own elaboration, based on INE, Censos – Recenseamento Geral da População no Continente e Ilhas adjacentes 1950-2021).

of the territory and that is the most important thing, we have people (!), that is the basis [for any kind of development]" (...).

According to the Provisional Report on Forest Fires (2017) and Rural Fires (2022) prepared by the ICNF, in 2017 there was a total of 7600 hectares of burnt area in Travancinha and of 1392 hectares in 2022. The main causes detected for these fires are related to arson (28%) and burning of forest or agricultural surplus (19%), while the increasing temperatures and intensive drought periods associated to climate change must be recognized as the 'new normal' facilitating and intensifying the development of forest fires in the country's rural and nature areas (Rodrigues et al., 2023).

4. Results

Moving to the content analysis, discourses about the impacts of the fires (2017 and 2022) on the territory, highlight the landscape, structural, emotional and social impacts with regard to the loss of people and local businesses, as well as the falling tourism demand and tourism revenue.

The description of the experience of these fires reveals the community's resilience, as the interviewees (TA1, TA2, TA3, TA4, TA5, LA) refer to immediate reaction of the community. They mention that contexts conditions making fire combat difficult

to agents of fire combat, justifying by the lack of sufficient means, the existence of other occurrences in the territory and the lack of an efficient territorial strategy. The local authority representative also highlights the fact that some of the agents sent did not know the territory and therefore had difficulty acting and controlling the fire.

The interviewees from the accommodation sector (TA1, TA3, TA4, TA5) reported having neither the knowledge nor the training to act in the face of these events, as well as having no means of combat or protection, revealing a certain degree of helplessness and poor preparation, with only one interviewee (TA2) revealing that she had acquired some individual protection material in 2016, which proved to be a help (however insufficient) in the fires of 2017 and 2022. Most interviewees also highlight the help provided by neighbours, the community and friends with technical skills in firefighting. The main strategies adopted in the fight result from local/traditional knowledge: watering of the entire area around the dwellings, cutting of combustible vegetation and direct flame fighting using hoses and water tanks. Interviewee (TA1) stresses the fact that Travancinha has reduced water pressure, due to old pipes, which is an added difficulty in these moments. The interviewee from the local authority (LA) refers that he has no training nor technical knowledge neither, but the experience helped him establish a strategy within a group of residents that in these cases rescue and

help the population, through the 4x4 fire kit of the local municipality, composed of a 500L tank with motors and two nozzles and water tanks and tractors of the community itself. This performance of the community facing extreme events such as rural fires corroborates Almeida's (2017) observation that resilience depends on the characteristics of the place and the ability of communities to act, as well as on their traditional knowledge to mitigate disasters and reduce risks, as also suggested by the before-mentioned Sendai Framework.

Regarding planning and prevention of risks and disasters, the interviewees reveal a lack of knowledge about the existence of guidelines or action plans for prevention, action and recovery from disasters and communication with the population. They also indicate that there was no evolution in terms of preparation from 2017 to 2022, stating that these events derive from this lack of planning, lack of forest surveillance, negligence of landowners in cleaning the land and disorderly forest management, i.e. understanding and even stressing the disappointing lack of corrective action due to 'lessons learned'. Interviewee (TA2) points out that investing in native forests and the sustainable use of soils through the application of the mosaic technique would be a way to increase the territory's resilience. The interviewee from the regional Tourism Authority, stresses that "(...) the scientific knowledge already exists, there is probably a lack of will to make it a priority".

Specifically, as for the fall in tourism demand and decreased attractiveness of the territory, interviewees tend to agree that these events heavily damage the image of the destination, highlighting an increased concern with the role of the media and with the spreading of the tragedy through national population without an accurate diagnosis on the state of the destination, as also found for Australian floods by Walters et al. (2015). According to some interviewees from the accommodation sector (TA1, TA3, TA4, TA5) this 'catastrophe effect', along with the fire alerts and the dissemination of messages of risk, transmits insecurity to (domestic) visitors which makes them restrain from visiting the territory in times of greater affluence, but also of greater risk. Interviewee (TA2) reports cancellations whenever there is an alert of disaster risk or when there are outbreaks of fire, even if of small dimension, near the destination. She states that she cannot say that

there is no reason to be afraid and as such, prefers that guests do not come as she cannot guarantee their maximum safety. The interviewee from the regional Tourism Entity (RTE) notes that there was a demand for additional information regarding the disaster risk from both the internal and external market, revealing that there is an **immediate impact** after these events, triggering insecurity and concern amongst visitors, but that it also passes very quickly, as 'people forget quickly'.

In general, interviewees revealed an emotional tone of sadness, anguish, revolt and in some cases guilt, when recalling these events.

With regard to the post-fire response, interviewees present a multiplicity of perspectives and opinions.

Interviewee (TA1) stated that the government response was efficient and well organised during the 2017 fires, "(...) as it was such a massive impact, I say that the state response was fantastic and also at the municipal level", commenting on the creation of financial support mechanisms, credit lines and guidance meetings for those affected. However, this stakeholder also mentioned that in 2022 this was not the case, highlighting the lack of follow-up provided to the affected people, noting that a 'Revitalisation Plan for Serra da Estrela' was created in a participatory format, which has not yet produced any fruitful results.

The interviewees (TA1, TA3, TA4, TA5) refer that they do not know the governmental response, recognizing only the existence of municipal initiatives and of local companies themselves trying to regenerate conditions in the territory. According to interviewee (TA2), this perception may result from the fact that measures and support had not been properly communicated and disseminated at local level, while micro-enterprises have fewer resources and greater difficulty in accessing information, with these processes being complex, making some drop out. These mechanisms need to be easily accessible, simple, unbureaucratic and intuitive.

The parish president (LA) refers that there have been no responses or support beyond the funds granted for the recovery of housing or properties that have been affected. He points out that promises were made at the government level that were not translated into practice, while there was a lack of capital at the municipal level to do better. This

respondent stressed that everything that had been done was so thanks to the community and its ability to reinvent itself.

Interviewee (RTE) considered that the response worked well, with room for improvement, but he highlighted positively the establishment in 2017 of a coordination committee for the Central Region, of which the national tourism board Turismo de Portugal was a member, aiming at resolving urgent problems and supporting those affected, for example through incentive systems that were created to address the problems arising from the fires. He notes that some plans were developed by Turismo de Portugal, the Secretary of State for Tourism and the Regional Tourism Entities, specific to the territories affected by the fires. This respondent from Regional Entity of the Center of Portugal also refers to the creation of the Inland Tourism Plan after the fires of 2022, with specific measures defined for Serra da Estrela, including financing lines. This respondent also highlights the realization of public sessions, open to all and participatory in nature, for clarification about the development of specific measures for the territory, including a session organized with foreign entrepreneurs who reside and have businesses in the territory.

As far as the main activities carried out in the territory in favour of its recuperation are concerned, the reforestation actions promoted by local authorities stand out, which took place twice, through the planting of autochthonous trees. Interviewee (TA3) stresses the planting of native forest is a positive measure, resulting from European funding to increase the sustainability and resilience of soils. Interviewees also highlight the cleaning of land and forest by the community and the donation of the surplus and the interviewees (TA1, TA2) highlight the action of the community of foreign residents who seek to participate in reforestation actions and clean the land of older people and of those without resources to perform this cleaning. The prevention drill constructed by interviewee TA2 in partnership with the Seia Volunteer Fire Corporate is also noteworthy.

The collaborative and cooperative dynamics at a local scale, between the resident community, the foreign community, the local municipality, visitors and other territorial agents is also emphasized. Here, initiatives carried out in local networks, supported by online forums, such as a global network group promoted by the community of foreign residents, to

share information about solutions and equipment to increase the individual resilience of the territory, stand out.

Finally, regarding the future path through tourism regeneration, several interviewees from different fields of action (TA1, TA2, LA, RTE, R, TO) believe that every crisis can be a window of opportunity for disruption, something new and better.

Regarding tourism, interviewees commonly accept that Travancinha already meets the conditions necessary to guarantee attractiveness and generate tourist flow. As interviewee (TA2) points out, Travancinha stands for “(...) a time out of time, a time when people can switch off”, while all interviewees refer to the community as the main asset and factor of attraction to the village, its experiences, its culture, its daily life and its traditional knowledge, giving Travancinha’s tourist experience a unique, inimitable character. Interviewees also share the idea that Travancinha is one big family, and the visitors themselves recognise this feeling, as when they return, they tend to revisit certain businesses and/or people from the village, thus revealing high levels of place attachment.

The typology of tourism present in Travancinha, according to the interviewees, may be summarized as slow tourism, nature tourism, regenerative tourism, rural tourism and creative tourism. The village seeks to adopt a tourism approach based on awareness, on harmonious coexistence between the community, the visitor and the environment, on the connection to traditions, customs and local knowledge, on integration and collaboration with the community, on the contribution of (loyal) visitors to the subsistence and continuity of the destination. Interviewee (TA2) underlines that “this is the tourism that interests territories of this nature”, and may be understood as meeting the principles of regenerative tourism.

Most of the ‘accommodation units conform to the principles of sustainability and regeneration. Interviewee (TA2) refers, in addition to the usual sustainability-concerned day-to-day practices of the unit (such as use of local products, reduction of chemicals in cleaning, etc), the implementation of sponsorship certificates, in which the visitor can purchase and contribute to the planting of a tree, pointing out that “(...) we are regenerating the four hectares thanks to tourism, because if we didn’t have funds we wouldn’t be able to do it, taking care

Table 2

Destination resilience and regeneration factors

Issues regarding Prevention/Preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of action plans; • Lack of prevention measures or preparation to act in case of risk; • Lack of training; • Lack of individual protection means; • Lack of control and surveillance of the land and forest; • Ineffective communication; • Survival instinct. 	Challenges and opportunities of Cooperation/collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and united community; • Cooperation between the population, the local authority and tourism agents; • Relations between original and foreign resident community; • Volunteerism; • Active participation of locals in the village activities; • Professional involvement of locals with the tourist activity; • Developing collaborative territorial networks, even supported through internet forums.
Challenges and need for Sustainable land management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of forest surveillance; • Need to develop an autochthonous forest; • Developing nature-based solutions: ecosystem restoration and recovery; • Implementing fire-cutting strategies: landscape mosaics; • Returning consumed resources to nature (circular economy initiatives). 	Opportunities regarding destination resilience/regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and mutual aid between actors/ communities; • Awareness raising and sensitisation; • Involvement of communities in risk; .Mitigation and prevention processes; • Developing memorable and unique tourism experiences; • Developing connection with the place/ Place attachment; • Preservation of local traditions and culture; • Ensuring the well-being and happiness of the community.

Source: Own elaboration, based on interviews.

and regenerating the space and recreating biodiversity, we are the living example of what a regenerative tourism unit is”.

Interviewee (TA1) refers that there is a great involvement of the local community in tourism activities, for example, in the participation of visitors in local activities such as harvesting and olive picking. Interviewee (LA) also corroborates this view, underlining that locals hold professional positions in small local tourism businesses. In addition, this respondent highlights the kindness, sharing and unity among the community, stating that they actively participate in all village activities, whether in the leisure context (village Migas, S. João marches, walks, etc.) or participating in the development of new points of interest, through volunteerism, as happened with the elaboration of the swing, the astronomical observatory and the hiking trails, where tourist accommodation agents played a key role. Interviewee (RTE) emphasises local habits and traditions as a factor in differentiation and community satisfaction, which is also relevant for the tourism activity.

The importance of foreign resident communities is also mentioned, which according to interviewees (TA2 and RTE) “(...) come to take care of land that was abandoned, come to raise animals, live in a sustainable logic and somehow contribute to the economic and social dynamics of the village”, being an asset for their experience in harmony with nature and the new ideas that they bring to the village, which are apparently well in line with the most demanding principles of regenerative tourism (Becken & Coghlan, 2022).

In general, the interviewees refer that for the village to become more resilient it should, on the one hand, seek to meet the needs of people, create dynamics that generate flow of people and visitors so that there is greater attractiveness of the village, also to fix new residents, because tourism is only part of the process, being people the primary element and, on the other hand, engage in prevention and anticipation through the active involvement of the community and the sharing of good risk management practices and communication between all stakeholders. They also refer to the need to raise community awareness of sustainability, transversal involvement in all processes and the establishment of effective, integrated, comprehensive and homogeneous territorial collaboration networks in the territory, in favour of a common goal.

Given these reflections and opinions presented by local stakeholders, key variables are identified in the process of developing resilience and regeneration of the destination: improve prevention/ preparedness; engage in cooperation/collaboration and sustainable land management, while opportunities for destination resilience and regeneration should also enhance the tourist experience quality based on local heritage and resources, ideally enhancing place attachment amongst tourists. Table 2 presents a summary of corresponding issues and strategies to develop destination resilience and regeneration that contribute to overcome crises and face future risks.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The first major conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the fact that there is a set of instruments, mechanisms and strategies, both at international and national level, but in practice and at a micro scale there is little knowledge nor competences or relevant efforts visible for implementing these mechanisms and strategies, making the impact and management of disasters at the local level more complex and challenging, corroborating authors like Almeida (2017) or Estevão et al. (2020). There are limitations imposed by political issues (different political factions, limited financial and physical resources, policies applied to the local context, little collaboration between municipalities) and by bureaucratic issues (mostly disparities by rural-urban territory, fragmentation of land ownership).

In fact, it is necessary to develop effective and efficient strategies for rural fire prevention, sustainable land management and post-fire recovery in the Portuguese national context, being urgent a greater communication and articulation between the governmental hierarchies, also requiring the involvement of the community as an active part in this process, since they are the main affected as well as clearly able to mobilize important traditional knowledge often essential to achieve central fire prevention and combat goals, as already suggested within the Sendai Framework.

The second major conclusion is, thus, that regenerative tourism may help destinations build resilience and recovery from disasters, through reinforced cooperation, collaboration, conserving natural resources, traditional knowledge, preserving socio-cultural heritage and adopting adaptive management practices, which corroborates the arguments presented by Fusté-Forné & Hussain, (2022), Müller (2016), Mathisen et al. (2022) e Lupton & Samy (2022). Here, local communities play a key role, adding value to the visitor experience through positive host-guest interaction and their potential as ‘cultural brokers’ to the rural reality and way of life (Almeida, 2017; Carvalho et al., 2021; Estevão et al., 2020; Idziak et al., 2015; Paiva & Santos, 2020; Salgado et al., 2022). It is also important to adapt the actions of the strategic guidelines to the individual context of each region and increase ‘regenerative literature’, as suggested by Becken and Coghlan (2022).

It seems that in face of risk and disaster, local stakeholders are more aware, willing and eager to collaborate to build more resilient communities, as was also visible in the context of the COVID pandemic in rural wine tourism destinations (Kastenholz et al., 2022).

However, the fact that there is not yet a guiding model, particularly adapted to specific low-density and ageing rural territories, threatened by increasing rural fires due to climate change, that allows a more systematic application of these concepts, poses challenges and some uncertainties. The need for long-term planning and collaboration is clear, as well as the need for monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the long-term impacts of regenerative tourism and measure progress towards stated goals.

Based on both the interview results and the literature review, a model for guiding tourism resilience and regeneration efforts in such a context is therefore proposed in figure 2, which includes as key elements the destination, the community, and its visitors. For the destination a specific, context-based plan of identification and monitoring of risks, as well as an action plan that addresses prevention, adaptation, and response is needed (Almeida, 2017; Ritchie, 2004; Sendai Framework, 2015). It will be also crucial for a quick and efficient recovery, to consider the elaboration of a post-disaster recovery plan, to minimize the impact on the destination’s reputation, considering the centrality of media communication (Schweinsberg et al., 2022; Walters et al., 2015). Still at the destination level, it is crucial to develop solutions based on nature, on the strengthening of ecosystems, landscape restoration and respective management, possibly assisted by nature conservation specialists (Becken & Coghlan, 2022; Kutzner, 2019; Rodrigues et al., 2023) and specialist in fire prevention, as referred to in this case. Another fundamental aspect in this process is communication between distinct governmental layers and a bottom-up approach, involving local populations and stakeholders (Kastenholz et al., 2022; Lane & Kastenholz, 2015; Lew, 2014; Müller, 2016; Mathisen et al., 2022; Lupton & Samy, 2022), as well as funding for prevention, adaptation and permanent forest surveillance (Almeida, 2017; Estevão et al., 2020), as already started after the 2017 firestorm, but eventually needed on a more ongoing basis.

As observable here, when local authority, tourism agents and local residents engage together in reforestation after the fire as well as collective forest cleaning or getting involved in fire-prevention workshops given by specialists, the community may assume the role of guardians of the destination, in a participative and integrative logic. In this sense, it is important that they develop competencies and skills to respond to and avoid man-caused disasters, in part through the constitution of volunteer groups who want to be an active part in the process. Another fundamental aspect, without which such competencies cannot be achieved, is the training and capacity building of the destination's local communities and stakeholders in the area of risk management and response. This whole process should occur based on a co-creative approach, where all stakeholders of the destination are invited to participate and share, in a perspective of exchange of experiences for the reduction of disasters and risk.

Finally, without visitors there is no destination, but they should respect the place, its communities and rules (Peñafiel, et al., 2022). Through market communication and choosing most responsible visitor segments (Kastenholz et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2007) or those with higher levels of place attachment (Kastenholz et al., 2020; Walters et al., 2015), but also through appealing and engaging visitor experiences at the destination and meaningful host-guest interaction, travellers may be sensitized to live in harmony with the community, participate in local activities, learn about and cherish its culture (Carvalho et al., 2016; Peñafiel et al., 2022) and also contribute to the economic, social and ecological strengthening of the destination (Wang et al., 2018) and its communities. All this may result in more engaging, meaningful and authentic experiences (Souza & Kastenholz, 2022), possibly leading to increased loyalty and place attachment (Chen et al., 2016; Kastenholz et al., 2020; Walters et al., 2015) as well as to highly valued sharing experiences embedded in local culture, appreciated by both visitors and local residents (Carvalho et al., 2016, 2021; Kastenholz et al., 2013).

Rural tourism may thus be central to involve and unite community actors in order to not only develop a more dynamic, appealing, healthy and positively shared living context, but also to come together to make the community more resilient to crises (Almeida, 2017; Kastenholz et al., 2022; Lew,

2014). Collective action, also in preventive initiatives, may help avoid future fires, which, in addition to the immediate danger to residents' lives, mean the risk of losing an economic activity that is sometimes central to the community's survival (Lane et al., 2022; Saarinen & Lenao, 2014), as well as to their social fabric and dynamics, also through important connections with other, external actors (Figueiredo et al., 2014; Kastenholz et al., 2013; Kastenholz et al., 2020), who may, in case of crises even assist in the destination's recovery efforts (Walters et al., 2015). In the present case, local authorities have encouraged collective reforestation using native plants, involving residents and occasional tourists, together even developing new tourist attractions such as the village swing and a walking trail. These collective and solidary initiatives ultimately contributed to the regeneration of the landscape and the community itself, through enlarged resilience-enhancing collaborative networks, involving the community, regional governance agents as well as engaged loyal visitors, yielding the maintenance not only of the existing tourism destination but also its recovery to a place with higher quality of life, suggesting an avenue to truly regenerative rural tourism, in line with the ambitions presented by Hussain and Haley (2022), Becken and Coghlan (2020) or Lupton and Samy (2022). Some of the discourses from the present study point into this direction, while much still needs to be better understood and done to fully embrace and implement this new challenging paradigm, in part due to several constraints often found in rural areas in Portugal and elsewhere.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field of regenerative tourism and territorial resilience, specifically adding to the understanding of regenerative tourism by exploring its manifestations and dimensions as well as the role it may play in territorial development, revealing collaborative practices and inspired perspectives of both tourism and territorial development agents. Results highlight the importance of community involvement and empowerment in regenerative tourism, while also stressing the potential to involve even place-attached tourists. Additionally, the research-based proposal of a resilience-enhancing regenerative

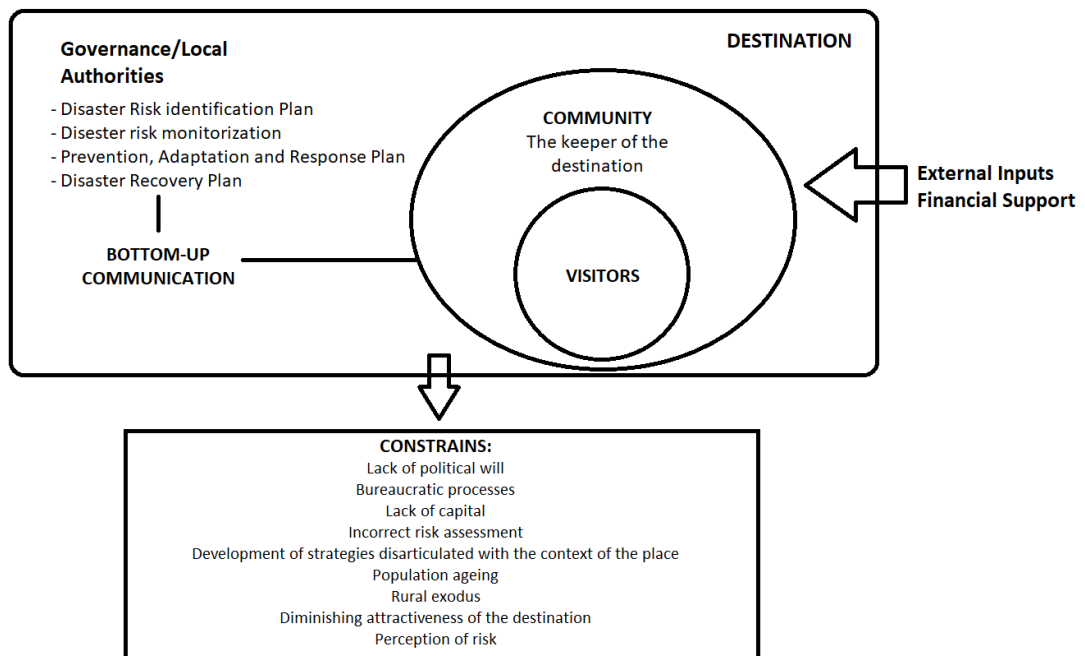


Figure 3
Resilience-enhancing Regenerative Rural Tourism Model.
Source: Own Elaboration.

tourism model contributes to the debate of resilience and regeneration in the context of rural tourism destinations.

5.2. Managerial implications

This study can provide valuable insights for managers of tourism organizations seeking to foster a more sustainable business and resilient rural destinations. It showcases the experiences and practices of agents involved in the ambition of regenerative tourism and also presents a model to foster resilience and regeneration through tourism in a wider destination context, which may serve as inspiration.

Additionally, to those responsible for destination planning and management, this study reveals a set of issues, challenges and concerns of local businesses and communities, but also opportunities, that should be considered when developing strategies and plans to prevent, adapt to and recover from disaster and risk (Ritchie, 2004), particularly related to rural fires in low-density rural areas. The dramatic rural fires that devastated several rural territories in Portugal in 2017 and 2022, as well as the responses to them and even the initiatives of regenerative tourism reported here, may serve as lessons to inspire improved action in the future, in which all actors

need to collaborate to develop a more resilient destination system, well integrated in healthy and sustainable ecological, social and cultural systems. One interesting result is the opportunity to involve foreign newcomers to the village, willing to engage in the original community's recovery initiatives, also showing some 'regenerative literacy' and bringing new perspectives to the community. As also found by Walters et al. (2015), even tourists, specifically those more attached to the destination, may be invited to get engaged into this regenerative systemic tourism concept, leading to higher value tourism and quality of life opportunities for all involved.

5.3. Limitations and further research

This study acknowledges the limitation of focusing on a specific, small-scale case study, with a limited number of participants, although the limited size of the tourism system suggests a very sound representation of Travancinha's main destination players. Further investigation should include other stakeholders (residents not involved in tourism, non-tourism related small businesses, tourists, both national and international, etc.) and a multiple case-studies approach would help consolidate and contrast the here presented findings. Last but not

least, through a broader sample, also a questionnaire-based approach would be possible, requiring the operationalization of the most important constructs, but permitting a closer analysis of the relationship between certain perceptions, behaviors and willingness to engage in regenerative tourism and to thus contribute to a more resilient rural tourism destination. Additionally, the possible effect of moderating factors, such as the belonging to certain groups within the system – distinct supply agents, original and new-coming residents, visitors, etc. – level of place attachment, age, gender or other variables may thereby be assessed.

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