



# THRIC 2024

Dingle, Co. Kerry

## Abstracts

Room 1:

*Postgraduate  
Session*

Afternoon Session

**Title:** Closing the Circularity Gap in Tourism Through Policy Co-design

**Authors:** Ciara Taylor; Susann Power; Bronagh Magee; and Una McMahon Beattie

**Student Bio:** Ciara is a PhD researcher at Ulster University, focusing specifically on the circular economy and the Northern Ireland tourism industry. Ciara has a background in tourism and hospitality, having achieved a MSc International Tourism and Hospitality Management as well as a BSc (Hons) International Hospitality Management.

**Keywords:** circular economy, tourism, co-design

**Abstract:**

The tourism industry has proven to be a catalyst for economic growth, particularly within Northern Ireland (NI) with tourist spend exceeding £1 billion in 2019 and recording over 2.8 million tourists in 2021 (Tourism Northern Ireland, 2022). However, despite the tourism industry's success, Casagrandi and Rinaldi (2002) argue that it is at the environment's expense. Despite the United Nations (UN) calling for the more sustainable development of all sectors through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), the continual disregard for the environment suggests that the current linear economic system is outdated (Zhong et al, 2011), with interest peaked towards a circular economic system which promotes resource minimisation (Andersen, 2007). Similarly in NI, challenges to environmental and societal wellbeing, such as pollution, climate change (DAERA, 2019) and low spending on transport remain (Torrance, 2022). To combat this, the NI Department for the Economy published a report – “The Circularity Gap” – highlighting a significant circularity gap within Northern Ireland. Only 7.9% of the NI economy is currently deemed circular, with the report showcasing the tourism sector as one of the most offending culprits of linearity (DfE, 2022). However, the report remains vague on how to improve circularity. Therein lies the aim of this research: to develop a policy framework for a circular economy within the NI tourism industry; and thus, contribute to the development of circular economy research within tourism literature. Circular economy literature has roots in industrial ecology which is the study of material and energy flows through industrial systems (Andersen, 2007). However, the circular economy is mainly referred to in industrial ecology literature within a manufacturing context; and with regards to practice, only three countries have begun to embrace this new economic structure: China, Japan, and Germany (Ogunmakinde, 2019). Despite this advancement, the circular economy remains under-researched within a tourism context (Korhonen et al., 2016), with a keyword search for terms relating to the circular economy and tourism yielding only 69 results among nine reputable databases. Moreover, it is noted in literature that a circular economy demands a holistic approach, therefore this research intends to adopt a co-design methodology, which is particularly beneficial in a governmental context (Blomkamp, 2018). The data collection will comprise of a three-step qualitative approach. The first step will be an extensive analysis of relevant NI policy documentation. This will be followed by a series of Nominal Group Technique workshops

with policymakers and agents of change within the tourism and circular economy space in NI to develop a draft tourism circularity conceptual framework. The draft framework will then be discussed during a consensus workshop with all prior participants, resulting in the in the codesign of a tourism circularity conceptual framework, which will support the narrowing of the circularity gap within NI, and will also be applicable to comparable destinations. Furthermore, this research will provide an academic contribution to circular tourism literature as well as a methodological contribution to co-design research within tourism literature.

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**Title:** Delivery of a Quality, Value-Driven Regenerative Experience in Irish Business Tourism Development

**Student Bio:** Lorraine Dunne is currently completing her PhD studies at TU Dublin in the area of Business Tourism. She is a lecturer at Dundalk Institute and lecturers in Tourism, Event & Hospitality Management within the Business Studies School. She has an honours degree in Hospitality Management from The University of Ulster, Jordanstown and an MBA from Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). Lorraine has also completed a Masters in Learning and Teaching (MALT). She is a member of the Tourism Research Group at Dundalk Institute and works closely with industry association bodies in the tourism and conference business in Ireland.

**Authors:** Lorraine Dunne

**Keywords:** Business Tourism, Destination Marketing, Regenerative Tourism Product

**Abstract:**

This research will provide an analysis of the current business tourism product which is offered to business tourists travelling to Ireland. The selling of the business tourism product is intricate and needs to encompass many component parts, both tangible and intangible. One of the key contributing factors in successfully selling to the business tourism market is the destination itself. Alongside this, many other factors will be considered and the idea of creating an experiential product is essential. The Experience Economy, identified by Pine & Gilmore initially in 1999, will be considered in relation to the current business tourism offering with a view to developing a true quality, value-driven experiential and regenerative tourism business product which will include important elements of technological development while also taking into consideration the European Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). By considering the delivery of the overall business tourism experience, an authentic, unique and regenerative Irish business tourism product can be delivered to targeted international markets. This is supported by the view of Axhami et al (2023) who believe that a valuable customer experience can be achieved while also delivering a product and service with a more sustainable approach. This is supported in Ireland by The Department of Tourism, Culture Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in their Statement of Strategy for 2023-2025 where they have embedded sustainability and have ambitions for growth build on it's foundations.

This qualitative study will comprise firstly of a review of secondary literature in the area of tourism services marketing, destination marketing and branding and business tourism. This will include reviewing both published books and relevant book chapters and also a review of relevant published journal articles. The sample for the primary research will consist of Destination Management Organisations (DMO's) and Professional Conference Organisers (PCO's) in Ireland and also Failte Ireland and Meet in Ireland to investigate their role in the attraction of business tourism to Ireland. Primary information will also be gathered from clients who have previously held a business tourism event in Ireland. The findings of this research will provide clear empirical information to the

suppliers of the business tourism product and to government bodies responsible for the attraction of business tourism to Ireland, to enable them to compete at a higher level for business tourism at an international level. It will also provide findings of a gap in literature in the application of a marketing module to the business tourism product

**Title:** Towards Regenerative Festivals: Embedding Net-Positive Relationships Through Participatory Cultural Tourism.

**Authors:** Aminah Dastan, Dundalk Institute of Technology; Kevin Burns; and Dathi Kearney.

**Student Bio:** Aminah Dastan is in the third year of her PhD at DkIT and is studying Festival Stakeholder Relationships.

**Keywords:** Regenerative Festivals, Well-being, Place

**Abstract:**

Participatory culture and arts practice contribute to well-being, positive people and place relationships (Rossetti 2021, Yin 2020) and social solidarity (Turino 2008). Developing relational approaches which emphasise 'creative placemaking' can engender greater engagement toward valued outcomes (Richards 2020). For example festival-making and participation, informed by the needs of a local community, is a creative activity which may benefit both community and place (Duffy 2019, Quinn 2018). This presentation develops the concept of 'Regenerative Festivals' as a cultural-creative framework to promote and enhance the 'Regenerative Tourism' paradigm.

A regenerative festival approach requires the design and realisation of net-positive outcomes. Where participants may engage in whole-systems-health imperatives, engaging social, ecological and cultural concerns in a nested context, relative to place. Imparting experiential regenerative benefits to all stakeholders, leaving the host site (and local community) in a better condition than prior to event.

Paradoxical claims for tourism as an ecological and social stressor, whilst having the potential to improve relationships between stakeholders presents a challenge for communities engaged in developing festival experiences (see McEnhil 2020, Niewiadomski 2023). A balance is required to re-imagine the potential of cultural-creative tourism as a continuum for regenerative design.

Ethnographic semi-structured interviews with festival organisers involved in seven smallscale Irish festivals provides initial data for the development of a regenerative festival framework. Data gathered provides opportunity for social and ecological empowerment, for flows of information and feedback from bottom-up community sources to inform regenerative policies and actions. Developing reflexive processes and outcomes at a local level, through multi-disciplinary festival forms.

Within the area of regenerative tourism studies this paper contributes to ongoing research by proposing small-scale festival design as a versatile and co-creative process through which net-positive stakeholder relationships can be integrated. The arts and cultural participation can embed well-being values for ecological, social, cultural and economic benefit. With many advantageous outcomes for participant mental health, social cohesion and relationship to place (Matarosso 2019, Jensen 2018, Quinn 2013).

This paper introduces a framework for designing small scale regenerative festivals within the local or regional context as a continuum of the regenerative tourism paradigm.

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**Title:** Regenerative Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSMEs) in the Tourism Industry: Exploring Motivations and Practices

**Author:** Shirley Sheehan, Bournemouth University; Dimitrios Buhalis, Bournemouth University; Adele Ladkin, Bournemouth University; and Isaac Ngugi, Bournemouth University

**Student Bio:** Shirley Sheehan is a PhD student at Bournemouth University (BU) in regenerative tourism and an associate member of the *International Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Research* at BU. She holds a Research Masters (2010) from Munster Technological University (MTU) in Cork, Ireland, on the topic of corporate social responsibility in the hotel sector. She is also a lecturer in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality at MTU and a member of the *Circular Economy for Regenerative Tourism* research team at MTU. She is actively engaged in research and industry linked projects relating to sustainability and regenerative tourism.

**Keywords:** regenerative tourism, business, motivation, business model

**Abstract:**

Background and justification for research in this area

Considering the current polycrisis that the world is experiencing, there is a necessity to drastically change how humanity thinks and behaves in relation to production and consumption. Given the scale of the global tourism industry, this research will seek to investigate the functionality of a regenerative approach to operating tourism businesses from a socio-ecological perspective, with a particular focus on motivation. With regenerative tourism as an emerging area of academic research this thesis will contribute novel theoretical knowledge from the business perspective that has not been explored to date. Regenerative tourism research thus far has sought to advance an understanding of the general concept of regenerative practice within the tourism industry but lacks depth. This, together with practitioner-led initiatives taking place around the world, offer an opportunity now to explore the area on a deeper level and advance the theoretical foundations of this emerging phenomenon.

The research seeks to contribute new knowledge regarding the behaviour of regenerative tourism MSMEs and the motivation behind choosing to operate businesses with a regenerative business model.

Overview of relevant literature

Since the dawning of the Anthropocene, a body of knowledge around regenerative agriculture and permaculture has emerged since the 1970's (Mollison 1988; Lockyer and Veteto 2013). The phenomenon has also emerged in the built environment, with the practice of urban regeneration (Roberts and Sykes 2000; Weber-Newth 2019). Furthermore, authors such as Bill Reed (2007), Pamela Mang (2012), Daniel Wahl (2022)



and Carol Sanford (2017) have published on the topics of regenerative development and design, regenerative cultures and regenerative business, respectively.

New models and frameworks are emerging that seek to capture the essence of regeneration that can be applied in multiple contexts, such as, the regenerative design framework, (Reed 2007), the doughnut of social and planetary boundaries (Raworth 2017), the Principles and Criteria of Regenerative Business (Hahn and Tampe 2020), the Action Framework for shifting to regenerative business practice (Caldera et al. 2022) and the regenerative lens framework (Buckton 2023).

Due to the extent of the mindset and paradigm shift required to effectively move to regenerative practice there is a need to develop transformation literacy (Kunkel and Vala Ragnarsdottir 2022) and eco-literacy (McBride et al. 2013) within tourism businesses and destinations. Resulting in a change in perspective from primarily economic, to socio-ecological impact; anthropocentric to ecocentric (Gilbert et al. 2023) with nature being acknowledged as stakeholder in its own right (World Economic Forum 2020).

Details of the proposed methodology

The research will take an interpretivist stance and inductive approach utilising and appreciative enquiry strategy which will involve a qualitative survey pilot study followed by semi-structured interviews with business owners/managers and rounded out with a confirmatory focus group with interview participants across three case study locations.

Description of next stage in the research process.

This PhD is currently in the literature review stage with primary data collection proposed to commence in Autumn 2024.

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**Title:** Understanding the Needs of Dark Tourism Providers

**Author:** Beth Storey; Noelle O'Connor, Technological University of the Shannon; and Anthony Johnston, Technological University of the Shannon

**Student Bio:** I am a graduate of Technological University of the Shannon and work at The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna, Co Galway as a tour guide. As well as conducting tours, the job includes curating exhibitions and conferences and creating materials for school resources. This research builds upon my current knowledge of the field of dark tourism in the workhouse museum sector, and of how difficult history can be sensitively presented to the public. The PhD supervisors for this project are: Dr Noelle O'Connor, Dr Anthony Johnston and Professor Paulo Almeida.

**Keywords:** Dark Tourism, Management, Workhouses

**Abstract:**

This PhD research aims to understand the needs of dark tourism providers, using the workhouse museums of Ireland and the United Kingdom as case studies. This is a comprehensive study of the management of a dark tourism venue, investigating the attitudes, knowledge, and needs of the managers of such sites, with the projected outcome of a framework for dark tourism providers. The workhouse museums are an important part of British and Irish history and were so feared by the poorest sections of society that their influence lingered for many years after they closed. Several ex-workhouses have been opened to the public as museums in recent years, including The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna, Co Galway, and Southwell Workhouse in Nottinghamshire, England. These museums tell the story of life within the workhouse, which often includes mention of starvation, child death and suicide. This makes the workhouse museum an excellent area for research into dark tourism management.

The literature review examines the current practices, challenges, and opportunities of dark tourism in the heritage sector, specifically workhouse museums. Interest in places of suffering and death is not a new phenomenon, dating back centuries (Lewis, Schrier and Xu 2021). The gladiator games of ancient Rome were an early form of dark tourism, as were public executions and pilgrimages to places of martyrdom and battle sites (Lennon and Foley 2000). Today, dark tourism destinations are abundant, places like Auschwitz-Birkenau, the killing fields of Cambodia, the workhouse museums of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and the graves and death-sites of celebrities. There are many issues surrounding the use of sites of suffering and death as tourist attractions and since the 1990s the study of dark tourism has become a popular area for researchers. Early research concentrated on defining dark tourism, the term itself was introduced by Foley and Lennon in 1996, Seaton (1996) introduced the term 'thanatourism', Rojek (1993) disaster tourism and black spot tourism, and Blom (2000) morbid tourism. Mangwane et al (2019) studied visitor motivation at the Apartheid Museum, finding that

visitors were knowledge-seeking and interested in remembrance and morality. Light and Ivanova (2021) found that even lighter dark tourism brings reflection into the morality of the past and comparison with modern times. The scope of research has broadened in recent times, with an investigation into the role of social media (Rivera-Eraso and Lorenz, 2023) and the design of the dark tourism experience (Wyatt, Leask and Barron, 2020).

Many of the workhouse museums of Britain and Ireland were developed through community initiatives such as South East Galway Integrated Rural Development, with local people heavily involved in the planning and implementation stage, as well as staffing and management. Even those such as Southwell, which is owned and operated by the National Trust, use volunteers for certain functions. Others, such as Donaghmore in County Laois and Llanfyllan in Wales, are volunteer run at every level. Community-based development consists of 'projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design and management' (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Successful community-based tourism has a number of benefits, it can improve livelihoods, providing employment for marginalised groups and keeping revenue in the local area, it can help strengthen self-governance and preserve cultural traditions (Habiba and Lina, 2023). There are challenges for community-based tourism initiatives, including lack of training, insufficient knowledge of tourism trends and lack of community involvement but training and support from government bodies, in addition to adequate funding, can help overcome them (Habiba and Lina 2023). For the visitor, there are also benefits to community-based tourism experiences. By building tourism around local people, the visitor gains a closer, more authentic experience (Chambre and Saayman, 2024)

There have been numerous studies into dark tourism, but few from a community-based viewpoint. Dark tourism has been found to aid in recovery after natural disasters (Martini and Minca, 2021) and can be beneficial to local communities (Lin, Kelemen and Tresidder, 2018), but the effect on the local people must be considered in the development of a dark tourism site and the views of locals can be mixed (Panayidou, Prokopis and Saveriades, 2024)(Talebzadeh, Yorganci, Nosrati and Kilic, 2024). Workhouses in Ireland closed in 1922 and those in the UK closed in 1948. The workhouse was a looming presence over the lives of the poor across Britain and Ireland, and the shame, stigma and suffering that were closely associated with the workhouse were still within living memory until the 1990s, which is when the development of workhouse museums began, adding to the difficulty of presenting difficult heritage to the public, especially as many families in the local areas may have had links to the workhouse. Preserving the buildings then becomes a means of preserving the memory of those who suffered within, as well as those who worked there (Madandola and Bousaa, (2023).

Regenerative tourism is a newer concept which takes a holistic approach (Tham and Sharma, 2023) seeking to ensure that tourism reinvests in the community socially, culturally and ecologically (Dredge, 2022) centering place and communities, and providing a positive effect on the environment and inhabitants (Bellato and Pollock,

2023). Most Workhouses were built on the edge of towns on large sites making them suitable for community events and offering space for gardens. Many the UK workhouse museums include wildlife gardens (Llanfyllan, Southwell, Gressenhall), vegetable gardens offering items for sale (Southwell) or free cuttings (Ripon, although it is one of the few built in a town centre). The museums also tend to be located off the main tourist trails and can bring much-needed tourism revenue to rural areas.

### Methodology

Methodology is the theory of how the research should be undertaken and the method is the techniques used to obtain and analyse the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Data can be either qualitative or quantitative. The methods chosen for this research are qualitative. This will allow the researcher to gain a full understanding of the issues from the perspective of the management and staff of the chosen organisations. One of the benefits of qualitative research is that it allows for open-ended enquiry that can broaden the scope of the topic and lead to a fuller understanding of the issues discussed (Choy, 2014). However, this does have the drawback of being more difficult to analyse.

Many of the needs of managers of dark tourism are the same as those of any other heritage venue but the difficult history of the venues may create an extra layer of concerns that must be navigated. The research will be aimed at discovering how the managers view these issues and whether they have a bearing on decisions that are made. Research objectives will also be to discover how the venue managers integrate the venue into the local community, and the measures taken to ensure viability. The study will be conducted across Ireland and the UK and an aspect of the research will be to discover any differences in approach to the presentation of the history. Some of the UK workhouse museums are operated by larger organisations with their own methods and structures, how does the operation of a dark tourism venue fit into the structure of an organisation such as the National Trust? Do the managers and staff feel that the unique needs of their venue are supported by a head office that may not understand the difference between their venue and a standard heritage product? Staffing is an important part of any manager's role and one of the research objectives will be to investigate how managers approach this issue. The answers to these research questions will be used to create a framework for managers of dark tourism venues.

The proposed methodology will, therefore, use qualitative research, primarily semistructured interviews to investigate the research objectives. The researcher will interview a broad section of staff at the museums, including managers, paid staff, and volunteers, and will also seek to interview other officers and higher managers.

Preliminary research has already been conducted into the UK museums to assess them for inclusion as case studies. This was undertaken during the summer and was based on observations carried out during a visit to each of the workhouses. Most of the Irish

workhouse museums are community enterprises, and as such will be suitable case studies.

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