

# Regenerative tourism: A paradigm shift

Speaker's Science Forum

Royal Society Te Apārangi

Grand Hall, Parliament, Wellington

Weds 7 April 2021



James Higham  
Department of Tourism  
Otago Business School



**100% PURE  
NEW ZEALAND**

# Pristine, popular... imperilled?

The environmental consequences of projected tourism growth

December 2019



**Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment**

Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

“To thrive, the tourism sector needs to radically rethink its role in our natural environment, society and economy. Its greatest opportunities lie in tackling its greatest liabilities” (Oram, 2020).



## 1. International aviation emissions



# High-carbon mobility



Global tourism is dependent on high-carbon transport;

Demand for high-speed, long haul air travel has increased;

Length of stay has declined globally;

Aviation continues to be omitted from meaningful global efforts to mitigate climate change.



## 'Up in the air': A conceptual critique of flying addiction

Martin Young<sup>a,\*</sup>, James E.S. Higham<sup>b,1</sup>, Arianne C. Reis<sup>a</sup>

---

### *Article history:*

Received 21 February 2014

Revised 24 July 2014

Accepted 7 August 2014

**Coordinating Editor: Susanne Becken**

---

### *Keywords:*

Frequent flying  
Sustainable tourism  
Consumer culture  
Addiction  
Pathology  
Social control

The 'flyers' dilemma', where an individual's self-identity as an environmentally-responsible consumer conflicts with the environmental impacts of frequent air travel, has been shown to produce a range of negative psychological effects. Some have argued that frequent flying may represent a site of behavioural addiction, characterized by guilt, suppression and denial. While this sort of pathologisation finds parallels in other forms of excessive consumption, its application in a tourist context is problematic in terms of classification validity, attribution of negative consequences, transfer of responsibility, and tendency towards social control and domination. We argue for an alternative conceptual approach to frequent flying which elaborates the structural reproduction of the 'flyers' dilemma', rather than its individual, psychological effects.

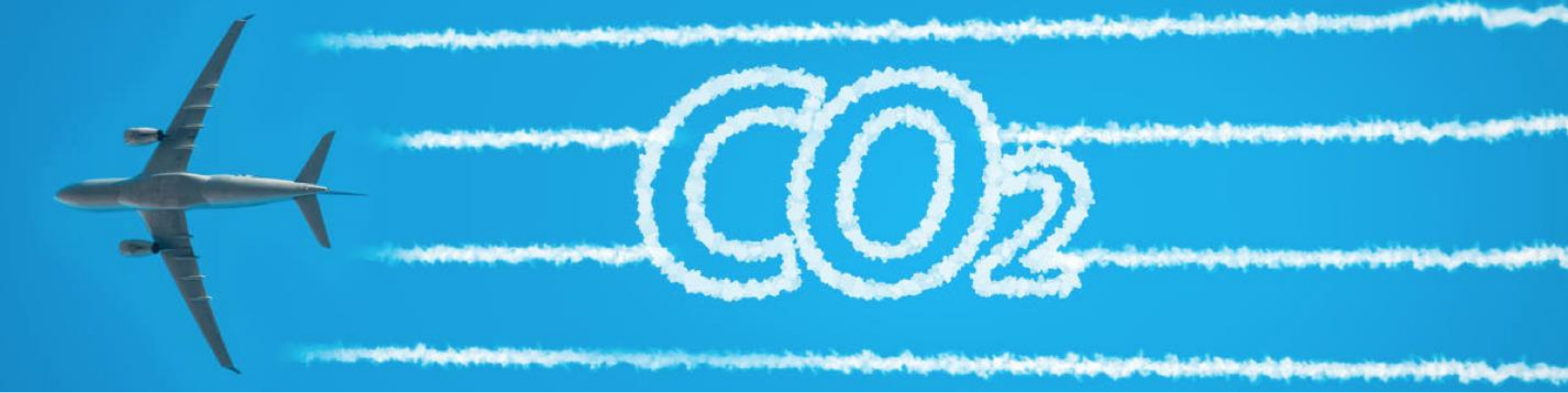


# Australia's first Pet Frequent Flyer program

Four legs. 300 Points.







Geographically distant



Aviation dependent

- Our tourism is aviation dependent;
- Visitors to Aotearoa fly an average distance of 10,000km to get here;
- We are vulnerable to flight shame...

Das neue Heft.  
Jetzt im Handel!

Oder hier gratis testen:  
[www.zfz.de/zw-aktuell](http://www.zfz.de/zw-aktuell)

**ZEIT WISSEN**  
abnehmen?

PREIS DEUTSCHLAND 5,50 €

# DIE ZEIT

WOCHENZEITUNG FÜR POLITIK WIRTSCHAFT WISSEN UND KULTUR



27. JUNI 2019 Nr. 27

## Hier sieht es ja aus wie ...

... in Neuseeland! Fünf Ziele, die spektakulär weit weg wirken, aber ziemlich nah sind

### EIN TRAUM VON EINER SEE

Der Ort und die Lage der See in Neuseeland sind ein Traum für viele Menschen. Die See ist von der Natur so schön umgeben, dass man sich vorstellen kann, dass man hier ein Leben lang wohnen möchte. Die See ist von der Natur so schön umgeben, dass man sich vorstellen kann, dass man hier ein Leben lang wohnen möchte.



Whangamoa, Neuseeland



Whangamoa, Neuseeland

### DER TRAUERSTRAßE

Die Straße ist eine Straße, die von der Natur so schön umgeben ist, dass man sich vorstellen kann, dass man hier ein Leben lang wohnen möchte.



### REISER STRAND

Der Strand ist ein Traum für viele Menschen. Der Strand ist von der Natur so schön umgeben, dass man sich vorstellen kann, dass man hier ein Leben lang wohnen möchte.





# **Tourist Aviation Emissions: A Problem of Collective Action**

Journal of Travel Research  
2019, Vol. 58(4) 535–548  
© The Author(s) 2018  
Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](http://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/0047287518769764  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/jtr](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jtr)



**James Higham<sup>1</sup>, Elisabeth Ellis<sup>2</sup>, and James Maclaurin<sup>2</sup>**

## **Abstract**

While transportation currently accounts for 23% of total global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, transport emissions are projected to double by 2050, driven significantly by continued high growth in global passenger demand for air travel. Addressing high growth in aviation emissions is critical to climate stabilization. Currently we rely on individual decisions to forego air travel as the means of reducing these high-risk emissions. In this paper we argue that encouraging voluntary responses to such risks cannot succeed because of the nature of human reason and the structure of the problem itself. We use decision-making theory to explore why individuals have been generally unwilling or unable to act upon these risks, and collective action theory to illustrate the futility of relying on uncoordinated actors in such cases. Participation in the high-carbon air travel regime is a social convention, and transition from social conventions requires coordination among players. Our theoretical discussions lead us to conclude that it is our moral duty to promote coordinated collective action, via national or global policy mechanisms, to address tourist aviation emissions. We offer various avenues of future research to advance this moral duty.

# Not 100% – but four steps closer to sustainable tourism

February 2021

- The Government considers introducing a distance-based departure tax that reflects the cost of greenhouse gas emissions generated by passengers flying from New Zealand. The revenue generated by the tax should be ringfenced to support research efforts to reduce emissions from the aviation sector and provide a source of climate finance for Pacific Island nations.



Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

## 2. High carbon per dollar tourism GDP





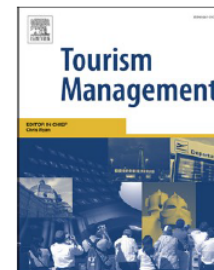


ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

# Tourism Management

journal homepage: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/tourman>



## Overcoming information asymmetry in tourism carbon management: The application of a new reporting architecture to Aotearoa New Zealand

Ya-Yen Sun<sup>a,\*</sup>, James Higham<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Business School, The University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, Brisbane, QLD, 4072, Australia

<sup>b</sup> Department of Tourism, The University of Otago, 362 Leith Street, North Dunedin, Dunedin, 9016, New Zealand

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Tourism carbon emissions  
Carbon reporting  
Decarbonization  
Emission-GDP trade-Off  
Benchmarking  
Aotearoa New Zealand

### ABSTRACT

Responding to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate commitments are urgent priorities facing many governments. Meeting these commitments will require new industry management architectures that align measures of progress (economic, environmental, human and social) with government structures, datasets, and reporting. Comprehensive emissions quantification and reduction targets for tourism must be a part of this new architecture. In this paper we propose a comprehensive Tourism Carbon Information System (TCIS), comprising four essential information components: national tourism carbon footprint, the carbon-economic linkage, drivers and decarbonization progress, and benchmarking. The TCIS is then tested and applied to Aotearoa New Zealand (2007–2013) to track tourism carbon performance and its decarbonization speed, compared to the national average across sectors. This critical information sheds light on future growth in tourism relative to the national greenhouse gas inventory and establishes the required mitigation trajectory for destinations to move onto a sustainable emissions pathway.



Source: Sun & Higham (2021)



## A climate conscious tourism policy



1. National  
tourism  
carbon  
footprint



2. Tourism  
carbon  
emission per  
GDP



3. Tourism  
de-  
carbonization  
speed



4. Tourism  
benchmarking  
with other  
sectors

The Tourism Carbon Information System (TCIS)



Source: Sun & Higham (2021)

# Application of the TCIS framework to Aotearoa

1. Tourism as a sector produces the largest energy-related carbon emissions in New Zealand;
  - Aviation, cruise and domestic transportation - private and rental vehicle use.
2. Tourism carbon emissions per \$GDP was 2.3 times higher than the national average across all sectors;
3. Tourism per \$GDP decarbonized during the period at an annual rate of 2.8%, lower than the national average of 3.7%.
4. Without action continued growth in visitor arrivals will mean that tourism carbon emissions will continue to increase.



### 3. Tourism and wildlife conservation



## **Managing whale-watching as a non-lethal consumptive activity**

James E.S. Higham <sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Lars Bejder <sup>c</sup>, Simon J. Allen<sup>c</sup>, Peter J. Corkeron<sup>d</sup>  
and David Lusseau<sup>e</sup>

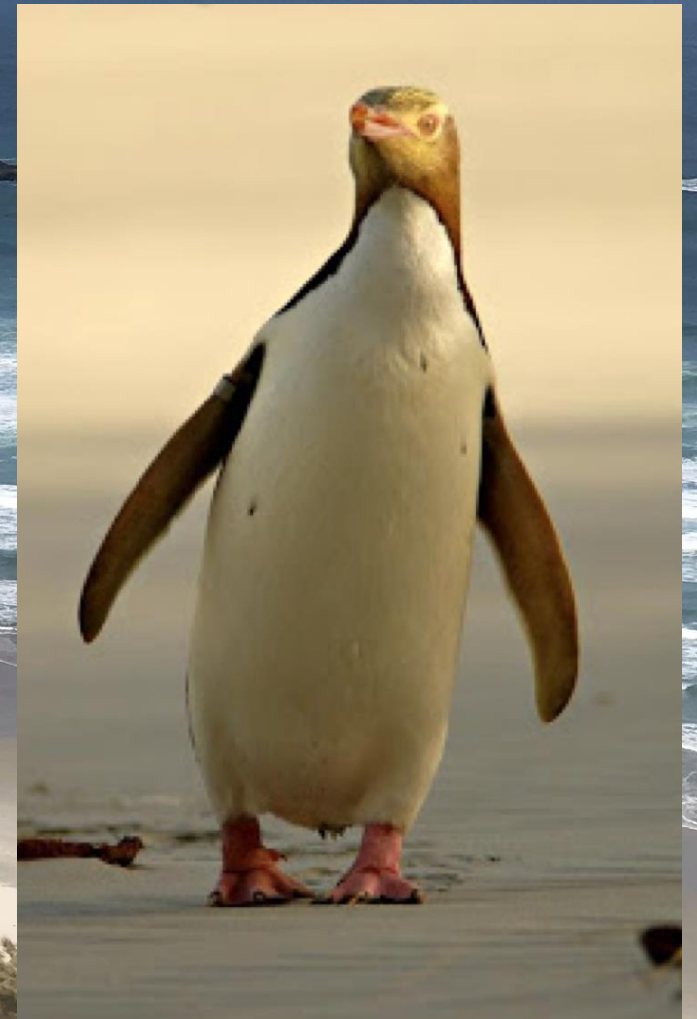
Marine tourism is a new frontier of late-capitalist transformation, generating more global revenue than aquaculture and fisheries combined. This transformation created whale-watching, a commercial tourism form that, despite recent critiques, has been accepted as non-consumptive activity. This paper uses four academic discourses to critique whale-watching as a form of capitalist exploitation: (1) commercial whale-watching and global capitalist transformation, (2) global capitalist politics and the promoted belief that whale-watching is non-consumptive, (3) the inherent contradictions of non-consumptive capitalist exploitation, and (4) whale-watching as a common-pool resource. These discourses lead us to critique whale-watching practices in relation to the common capitalist sequence of resource diversification, exploitation, depletion and collapse. **Using specific impact studies, we conclude that a sustainability paradigm shift is required, whereby whale-watching (and other forms of wildlife tourism) is recognized as a form of non-lethal consumptive exploitation, understood in terms of sub-lethal anthropogenic stress and energetic impacts.** We argue the need for a paradigm shift in the regulation and management of commercial whale-watching, and present the case for a unified, international framework for managing the negative externalities of whale-watching. The relevance of the issues raised about neoliberal policy-making extends beyond whale-watching to all forms of wildlife and nature-based tourism.















BLUE  
PENGUINS  
PUKEKURA

# OVERVIEW

[BOOK TOUR NOW](#)

In 2008, the Korako Karetai Trust and the Otago Peninsula Trust agreed to establish a joint venture accord to manage the environmental, historical and amenity values of the area known as Takiharuru Pilots Beach at Pukekura Taiaaroa Head.

# Regenerative tourism: The paradigm shift

**Extractive/depletive**

**Sustainable**

**Restorative**

**Regenerative**



- Nature is produced and consumed according to capitalist principles.
- Profit is extracted from putting humans into direct contact with animals (Neves, 2010).
- Nature is exploited, controlled and managed.



Source: Prof. Susanne Becken  
Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)



**Extractive**

**Sustainable**

**Restorative**

**Regenerative**



- Raising awareness about tourism sustainability issues;
- Limiting harm;
- Minimising the use of resources;
- Recycling, reusing etc...

**Extractive**

**Sustainable**

**Restorative**

**Regenerative**



The Real Journeys Cruise-for-a-Cause this year will assist Forest & Bird with predator control and help train Southland & Otago Cancer Society volunteers.



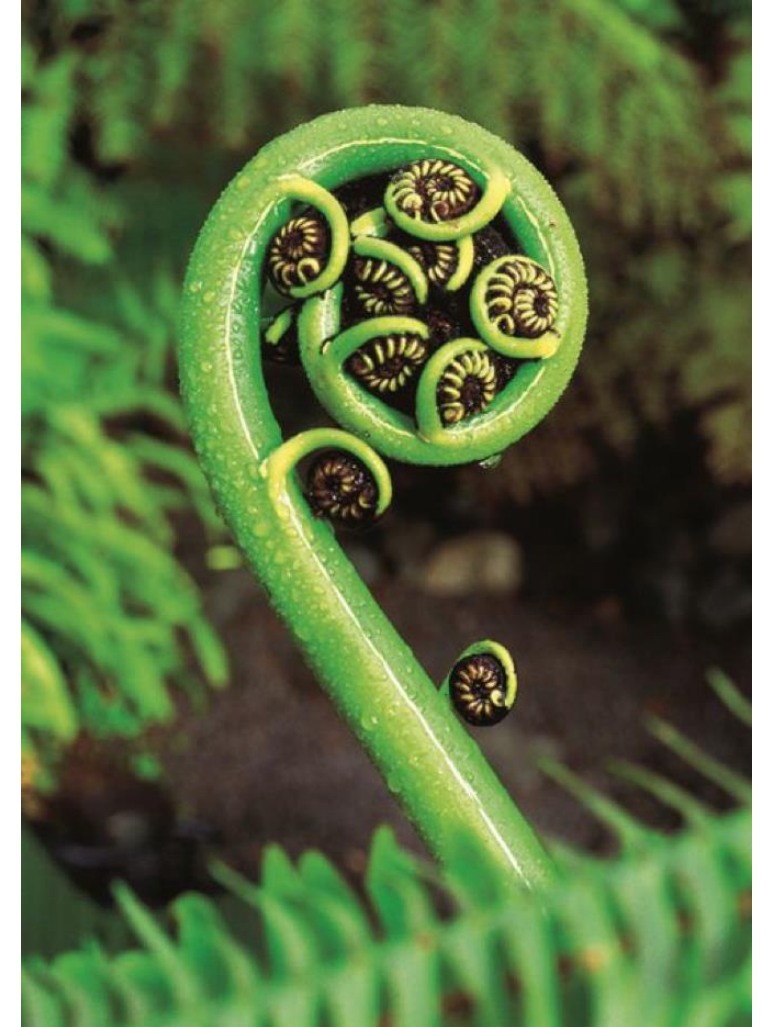
- Repairing damage
- Restoring ecologies
- Contributing to conservation
- Educating and advocating

**Extractive**

**Sustainable**

**Restorative**

**Regenerative**



- Functional self-renewal
- Te Ao Māori and mātauranga Māori
- Kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga
- Understand ecological systems
- Long term, intergenerational perspectives
- Humans as part of, not separate from, nature



- Low-carbon
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Restoring nature and biodiversity
- Protecting and saving water
- Respecting wilderness

Environmental

- Empowering community
- Activity does not exploit people
- Offering inclusive experience
- Designing fulfilling experiences
- Enhancing safety and resilience
- Providing quality employment

Social

- Providing knowledge-sharing opportunities
- Providing health benefits
- Connecting visitors to place
- Stimulating knowledge / creativity
- Delivering quality / authenticity

Cultural

- Generating local employment
- Providing income
- Enhancing local/regional economy
- Providing affordable visitor experience

Economic



Prof. Susanne Becken

Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)

- Low-carbon
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Restoring nature and biodiversity
- Protecting and saving water
- Respecting wilderness

Environmental

- Empowering community
- Activity does not exploit people
- Offering inclusive experience
- Designing fulfilling experiences
- Enhancing safety and resilience
- Providing quality employment

Social

- Providing knowledge-sharing opportunities
- Providing health benefits
- Connecting visitors to place
- Stimulating knowledge / creativity
- Delivering quality / authenticity

Cultural

- Generating local employment
- Providing income
- Enhancing local/regional economy
- Providing affordable visitor experience

Economic



Prof. Susanne Becken  
Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)

- Low-carbon
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Restoring nature and biodiversity
- Protecting and saving water
- Respecting wilderness

Environmental

- Empowering community
- Activity does not exploit people
- Offering inclusive experience
- Designing fulfilling experiences
- Enhancing safety and resilience
- Providing quality employment

Social

- Providing knowledge-sharing opportunities
- Providing health benefits
- Connecting visitors to place
- Stimulating knowledge / creativity
- Delivering quality / authenticity

Cultural

- Generating local employment
- Providing income
- Enhancing local/regional economy
- Providing affordable visitor experience

Economic



Prof. Susanne Becken

Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)



- Low-carbon
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Restoring nature and biodiversity
- Protecting and saving water
- Respecting wilderness

Environmental

- Empowering community
- Activity does not exploit people
- Offering inclusive experience
- Designing fulfilling experiences
- Enhancing safety and resilience
- Providing quality employment

Social



Cultural

Economic

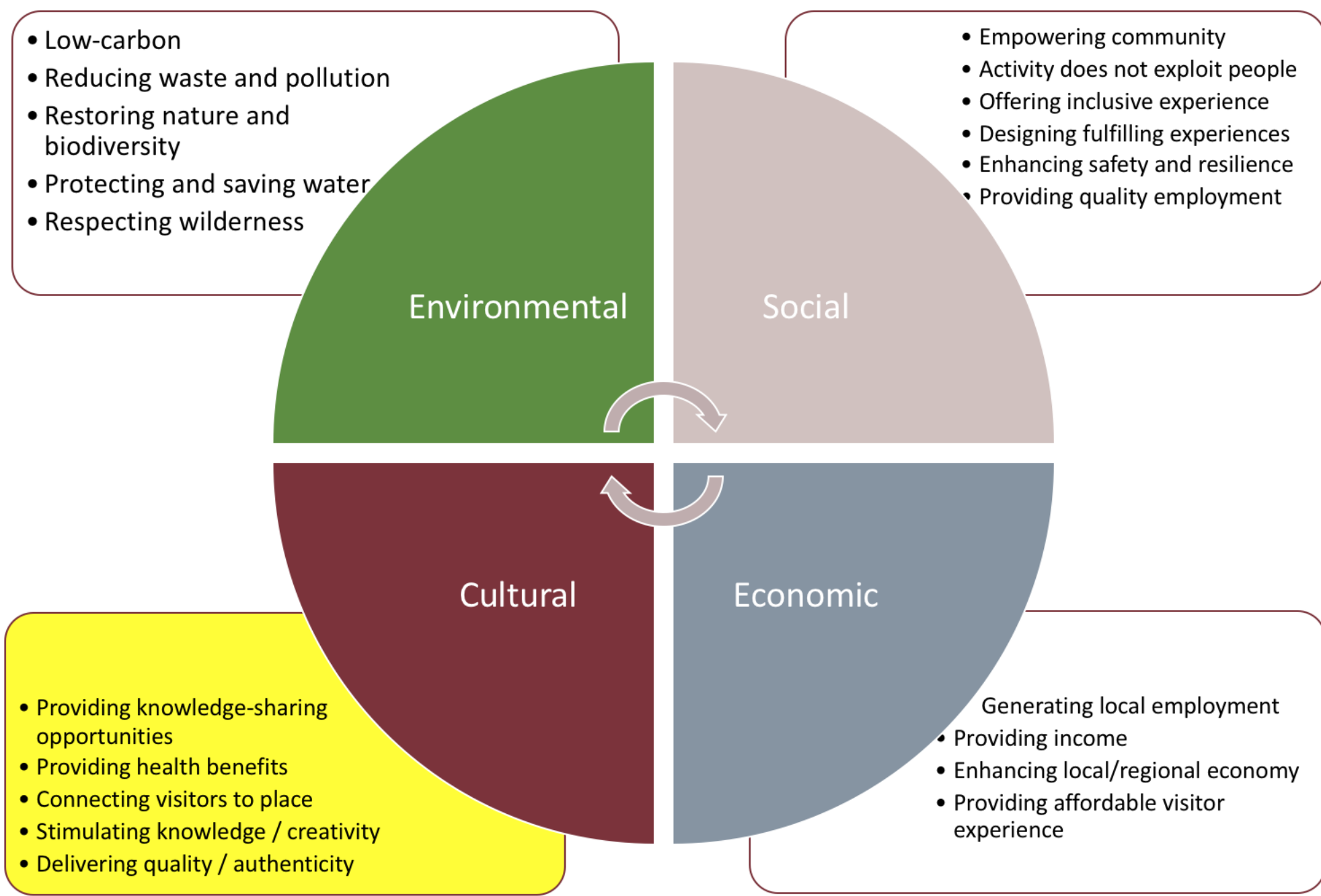
- Providing knowledge-sharing opportunities
- Providing health benefits
- Connecting visitors to place
- Stimulating knowledge / creativity
- Delivering quality / authenticity

- Generating local employment
- Providing income
- Enhancing local/regional economy
- Providing affordable visitor experience



Prof. Susanne Becken

Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)



Prof. Susanne Becken  
Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)

- Low-carbon
- Reducing waste and pollution
- Restoring nature and biodiversity
- Protecting and saving water
- Respecting wilderness

Environmental

- Empowering community
- Activity does not exploit people
- Offering inclusive experience
- Designing fulfilling experiences
- Enhancing safety and resilience
- Providing quality employment

Social

- Providing knowledge-sharing opportunities
- Providing health benefits
- Connecting visitors to place
- Stimulating knowledge / creativity
- Delivering quality / authenticity

Cultural

- Generating local employment
- Providing income
- Enhancing local/regional economy
- Providing affordable visitor experience

Economic



Prof. Susanne Becken

Otago Tourism Policy School (19 March 2021)



# Regenerative tourism: A paradigm shift

Speaker's Science Forum

Royal Society Te Apārangi

Grand Hall, Parliament, Wellington

Weds 7 April 2021



James Higham  
Department of Tourism  
Otago Business School

