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MASTER'S THESIS

**URBAN REGENERATIVE APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:
INSIGHTS FROM GENERATION Z VISITORS**

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GLOSSARY OF MAIN TERMS

Collaborative Participation – The involvement of different stakeholders in the development and implementation of sustainable and regenerative tourism initiatives, including government, visitors, residents, and businesses. It emphasises shared roles, responsibilities, and resources to achieve common goals (Adapted from Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2022, 2023; Dredge, 2022; Panse et al., 2021)

Ecological worldview – A combination of Indigenous and Western scientific perspectives, seeing the world as an interconnected, self-organizing system. It emphasizes harmonious and reciprocal relationships between humans and nature, focusing on cooperation and mutual benefits within a dynamic environment (Adapted from Bellato et al., 2022, 2023)

Net Positive – “Net Positive is an approach that means doing more good than bad. It goes beyond ‘doing less harm’ and urges businesses to have a positive impact on the world” (UN, n.d.-b)

Regenerative Tourism – As per this thesis intended as an alternative approach that expands the STD paradigm by aiming to create net positive impacts on human societies and ecosystems, viewing tourism as inherently connected to nature and respecting ecological principles (Adapted from Bellato et al., 2022, 2023; UN, n.d.-c; UNWTO, n.d.-a)

Sustainable Development – “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UNWTO, n.d.-a)

Sustainable Initiatives – Actions and efforts undertaken to promote sustainability, aimed at reducing environmental impact, enhancing social well-being, and supporting economic development, thus aligning with the broader purpose of the sustainable tourism development paradigm (Adapted from: UN, n.d.-c; UNWTO, n.d.-a)

Sustainable Tourism – “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UN, n.d.-c)

Sustainable Tourism Development – This thesis refers to it as the overarching paradigm that integrates sustainable development principles into tourism, balancing economic, social, and environmental impacts to ensure long-term benefits for all stakeholders involved. This approach is crucial for assessing and improving tourism practices in line with sustainable and regenerative goals (Adapted from: UN, n.d.-c; UNWTO, n.d.-a)

Visitor – “A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose). A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise” (UNWTO, n.d.-c)

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMO(s)	Destination Management Organisation(s)
RT	Regenerative Tourism
SD	Sustainable Development
ST	Sustainable Tourism
STD	Sustainable Tourism Development

ABSTRACT

The current understanding and implementation of sustainable tourism face several challenges, including the overuse and greenwashing of the term "sustainability" and a lack of clear evaluation metrics. The need for change is evident in the still visible environmental damages caused by the misapplication of this paradigm. This context has given rise to regenerative tourism, an alternative approach aiming to create net positive effects on societies and ecosystems by understanding tourism as inherently connected to nature and respecting Earth's principles. This thesis explores Generation Z visitors' perceptions of Copenhagen's regenerative approach within the Sustainable Tourism Development paradigm. The literature review covers sustainable and regenerative tourism theories, focusing on urban destinations and Generation Z's perspectives on sustainable tourism. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Generation Z visitors reveal a general appreciation for Copenhagen's sustainability efforts but a lack of specific knowledge about regenerative initiatives. Findings further indicate that effective communication and practical engagement are crucial for increasing awareness and participation in regenerative tourism. Participants also reported challenges related to individual motivations and behaviours, such as financial constraints, length of stay, and travel purpose. However, leveraging Copenhagen's sustainable reputation and image, enhancing digital strategies, and fostering stakeholder collaboration present significant opportunities to improve regenerative tourism efforts. This study contributes to understanding how regenerative tourism is perceived by Generation Z visitors and offers recommendations for policymakers and tourism practitioners. It emphasizes the need to design visitor experiences that align with sustainable and regenerative tourism goals, ensuring long-term positive impacts on the environment and local communities.

Key words: Sustainable Tourism Development Paradigm, Regenerative Tourism, Generation Z, Copenhagen, Visitor Engagement, Visitor Personal Motivations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The industry and the dynamics of tourism have for long been understood as the main driving forces of a neoliberal capitalism, in which achieving economic growth has always been the primary and fundamental objective. Ever since the post-war period, tourism has undergone significant transformations and kept proliferating, having significant consequences on the development of the global economy (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). This increased demand for tourism products, therefore, lead to a dramatic and exponential increase of production and, consequently, consumption (Sezgin & Yolal, 2012). As this phenomenon kept presenting itself as a continuous, incessant and unregulated development, it became clear that such growth could not be sustainable any longer (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). The impacts of mass tourism began to show important negative effects on the environment as well as society, resulting *“in social dislocation, loss of cultural heritage, economic dependence and ecological degradation”* (Panse et al., 2021, p.896).

Since the 1980s, efforts have been made in the field of tourism research to acknowledge the importance of shifting to a more sustainable development of the industry (Panse et al., 2021). This transition was initiated by the Brundtland Commission’s report (Gibbons, 2020a, 2020b; Mihalič, 2022; Panse et al., 2021) that, in 1987, provided the first definition of sustainable development. A development is sustainable when it *“meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”* (UNWTO, n.d.-a). Therefore, tourism's direct reliance on natural resources, which are extensively exploited and impacted by tourism, turned the adoption of this concept into a major focus for this sector. As a result, protecting and conserving these resources became its primary concern (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022). The acknowledgement of this perspective represented a paradigm change into the approaches that currently guide the development of the travel and tourism industry. Sustainable Tourism Development (STD), in fact, fosters the assumption that growth should not be understood only in terms of financial gain and profit, but acknowledging that it also takes social prosperity and environmental health into account (Mihalič, 2022; Panse et al., 2021).

The concept of sustainability, however, has been criticised for failing to properly address the required social-ecological shift, and posing significant methodological challenges (Gibbons, 2020b; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Mihalič, 2016, 2022). The warning signs of those issues are to be seen in the fact that *“environmental and social degradation continue at increasing rates to the extent that we are in a state of planetary emergency”* (Gibbons, 2020b, p1). This is due to the fact that, despite the efforts and the objectives that the paradigm tries to achieve, the perspective adopted is still overly anthropocentric and capitalistic.

Economic growth, therefore, continues to outweigh the negative effects that tourism has on the social and environmental dimensions. Moreover, unanimity and consensus are lacking on the characteristics and principles of sustainability (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Dias, 2018; Gibbons, 2020b; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). In response to those biases, the academia is fostering the need to implement degrowth strategies and promote an alternative consideration of the concept of sustainability and tourism's objective in light of the ongoing growth and development of the tourism industry (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). More attention should be given to socio-ecological well-being when determining and measuring economic growth (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Mihalič, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic, moreover, contributed to raise awareness on the need of the industry to become more resilient, pushing for necessary changes in both the approach and the production and consumption of sustainable tourism. The intent is to strengthen the industry's resistance to similar events in the future (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). Consequently, adjusting the "*purpose of tourism*" (Becken & Kaur, 2022, p.5), could enable this industry to be the catalyst for a more conscious society (Hussain, 2021).

Regenerative tourism is advancing as an alternative approach to sustainable tourism development. The term "regenerative" is a transdisciplinary concept that derives both from Indigenous knowledge and from Western science (Bellato et al., 2023; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022). Although to date the academia lacks a comprehensive and integrated definition of regenerative tourism, several authors sought to provide one that integrates diverse perspectives on how to globally determine, develop and implement this ideology. As for this research, however, "regenerative tourism" will be acknowledged and employed as an extension of the STD paradigm, and an alternative approach to sustainability. It will not, therefore, be understood and defined as a new paradigm itself.

Regenerative tourism promotes an important shift in traveller behaviour, emphasising the critical role that human engagement plays in supporting environmental and community improvements. This strategy encourages such transition in order to foster a deeper sense of environmental stewardship and respect in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable global community (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022). Despite this growing recognition of importance and value, however, different challenges have been identified also in relation to the adoption of a regenerative approach to tourism. These include difficulties in incorporating natural science concepts into economic models, and an overall lack of accuracy and transparency associated with its practical application in the tourism industry (Bellato et al., 2023; Hussain & Haley, 2022). These challenges are particularly evident

when considering urban tourism, which has experienced a sharp rise in visitor numbers over the last 20 years. The phenomenon of overtourism, consequently, emerged following the rapid development of tourism services, technological innovations, and an escalating demand for social and cultural experiences. Undoubtedly, it has an impact not only on the local population, whose quality of life tends to decline as tourism increases, but also on the urban environment, compromising and jeopardising its ecosystems (Nilsson, 2020). Given these challenges, there is a growing consensus on the fact that a governance model that places greater emphasis on the sustainability of urban destinations is essential. Implementing a regenerative approach, however, could be challenging. Reasons behind this are not only to be found in the complex nature of urban tourism, but also in the lack of practical tools and clearly defined methodologies that can be implemented in urban contexts (Panse et al., 2021). Many of the obstacles associated with the implementation of this approach, therefore, originate from a lack of a clear understanding and consensus about its principles and characteristics, as well as the absence of a universally accepted definition of what the approach truly means and involves (Bellato et al., 2023).

In this context, furthermore, the potential contributions of Generation Z become particularly significant. According to different authors, in fact, they have been identified as the generation most suited to acknowledge and implement the changes needed to lessen the negative effects of the tourism industry's current development (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). The numerous global challenges that Generation Z experienced, in fact, such as terrorism, climate change, economic crises, migration issues and, most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic, have shaped their perspective on sustainable practices. This is further supported by the fact that this generation is currently dealing with most of the consequences that these events are causing, including social inequality, lack of job opportunities, and economic downturns. All these factors, therefore, have had an impact on this generation, increasing their concern about their future (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Their expert use of social media, however, raises their level of awareness about the subject and could strengthen their capacity to encourage sustainable behaviours. Consequently, they could play a key role in shifting tourism into a more sustainable and regenerative industry (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). It is crucial, in conclusion, to take into account Generation Z visitors' opinions to improve the current strategies and encourage sustainable development, as well as to assess their level of satisfaction. Positive experiences, in fact, can motivate travellers to support ongoing improvements in the field of tourism and perhaps also generate recommendations or repeat visits (Lee et al., 2014; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019).

Given the previously discussed arguments, therefore, the following is the research question that this thesis will pursue and seek to address: How do Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's Regenerative approach within the broader Sustainable Tourism Development paradigm?

The rationale for this decision originates from the identification of a gap in the literature concerning urban sustainability research. How sustainable and regenerative approaches or practices are applied in urban contexts is normally overlooked by research that aims at exploring nature and natural destinations. This is mostly because tourism presents negative consequences that are much more evident in natural settings, leaving its effects on urban contexts often neglected and underestimated. Along with this, the complex nature of urban tourism can pose a limit to the efficiency and effectiveness of the holistic perspective and collaborative environment that the regenerative approach is entailing (Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021). Additionally, given its significant contributions to sustainable development, Copenhagen was chosen as the site for data collection. The city has received different recognitions, including being named the "Best of the Best Destination" by Tripadvisor in 2024 and reaching excellent rankings in the Global Destination Sustainability Index. With its ambitious goal of becoming the first carbon-neutral city by 2025, the city further demonstrates a proactive approach to tackling environmental issues (Bærenholdt & Meged, 2023; Denmark.dk, n.d.; Khan et al., 2021; Krähmer, 2021; Wonderful Copenhagen, n.d.).

Within the context of Copenhagen's sustainable tourism development, therefore, this study will carry out a qualitative analysis to investigate how Generation Z visitors perceive and engage with initiatives that reflect or employ a regenerative approach. Specifically, this study relies on face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather data from participants, and thematic analysis to process their answers.

This thesis explores sustainable and regenerative tourism, focusing on Generation Z's perceptions regarding those topics and their application in urban settings. The "Triple-A model" serves as the main framework, directing the research through the phases of "Awareness", "Agenda", and "Action". The "Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions" is further integrated in the model to provide a focus on specific principles related to the implementation of a regenerative approach (Bellato et al., 2023; Mihalič, 2016, 2022). This integration frames Generation Z visitors' perceptions through a regenerative lens, analysing their engagement with Copenhagen's sustainability initiatives. By aligning the interview questions with these frameworks, the research gathers insights into the approach's effectiveness and significance to Generation Z.

The work will be structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents relevant literature on sustainable and regenerative tourism, sustainability in urban tourism, Generation Z's perspectives on sustainability in tourism, and presents the study's theoretical framework. Chapter 3 explains the choice of Copenhagen as a case, further emphasising its policies and strategies that are most relevant to the research topic. Chapter 4 explains the research design, methodology and data analysis procedure. In Chapter 5, results are presented and discussed in relation to the research question. Finally, chapter 6 provides the study's conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review elaborates on the topics of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, regenerative tourism approach, sustainability in urban contexts, and Generation Z's perceptions on sustainability in tourism. The aim is to understand, also through the support of specific frameworks and models, why regenerative tourism is emerging as an alternative approach to sustainability, and how it is understood by Generation Z visitors.

2.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PARADIGM

The purpose of this section is to explain and clarify how and why the term "sustainability" emerged in our language, what principles it operates on and, finally, what constraints or challenges it presents. A review around the evolution of what has been referred to as the phenomenon of mass tourism is necessary in order to comprehend the motivations behind the introduction of this concept.

Since the 1930s, and particularly in the postwar years, tourism has grown steadily due to industry advancements (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Sezgin & Yolal, 2012). Increased incomes, social aspirations, and technological innovations in transportation led to mass movements. This period, consequently, known as the "golden age" of mass tourism (from the 1950s to 1980s), saw exponential economic growth (Sezgin & Yolal, 2012). What seemed to be an unstoppable and relentless growth, however, began to show its detrimental effects. At a global level, mass tourism generated environmental deterioration, economic reliance, loss of cultural heritage and social instability (Panse et al., 2021). The reasons for this are that mass tourism has always been associated with the free market, which implies unregulated economic growth. This leads to a destination's constant expansion and ultimate depletion (Weaver, 2004). Therefore, it became evident that such growth was no longer sustainable, and that a new, different approach to development was required. This is when the concept of sustainability was first introduced (Mihalič, 2022; Panse et al., 2021).

Although discussions about what defines sustainable development had begun in the academia and scientific community already in the 70s with the United Nations Stockholm Conference, an official definition of the term was not given until 1987. In this year, during

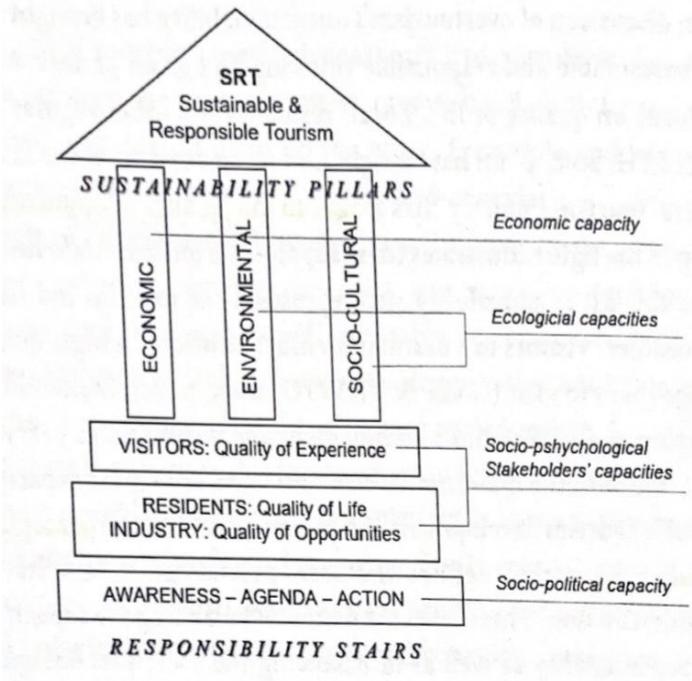
the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the expression first appeared in the “Our Common Future” report, which is also better known as “Brundtland Report”, adopting the name from the Norwegian president that oversaw the commission (Gibbons, 2020a, 2020b; Mihalič, 2016, 2022; Panse et al., 2021; Weaver, 2004). In this report, sustainable development is defined as a development that “*meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (UNWTO n.d.-a). Building on this, sustainable development began to establish itself as a paradigm supported and guided by international conferences and meetings. The purpose of those conventions was to increase political awareness of the need for a more conscious and controlled growth that would improve and enhance not only the economy, but also the social and environmental dimensions of nations at a global level. Furthermore, those encouraged governments to set goals and agendas that gradually included this paradigm in their strategies for development. The most recent, and the one that regulates the current sustainable approach, is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was advanced during the 2015 climate conference in Paris. In order to guide and measure sustainability across various fields, this plan entails the establishment of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Mihalič, 2022). Those are objectives that symbolise a global call to action for international collaboration aimed at ending poverty, safeguarding the environment, and guaranteeing that everyone lives in peace and prosperity. The United Nations (UN) Member States approved and adopted the SDGs, however, in order to successfully implement and accomplish those goals, businesses and governments alike must take effective actions (UN, n.d.-a).

As per the Brundtland Report, sustainable development is a paradigm that refers and applies to different disciplines and fields. It was thanks to Inskip, however, that in 1991 this concept began to be employed in tourism. The key objectives of Sustainable Tourism Development (STD), consequently, are to maintain ecological balance, improve economic and ecological conditions, promote equitable development, and enhance the living standards of the host community and the quality of tourist experiences (Mihalič, 2016, 2022). Sustainable Tourism (ST) is thus understood and acknowledged in relation to the three sustainability pillars concept. According to this model, development can be considered sustainable if it also takes into account its negative impacts on the ecological and socio-cultural dimensions. Therefore, even though tourism greatly benefits the economy in terms of economic revenue, job creation, and profit, it's crucial not to forget that these gains cannot be achieved at the expense of the social and environmental aspects (Mihalič, 2022; Panse et al., 2021).

The “three pillars of sustainability” is the main concept implied when referring to the term Sustainable Development (SD), and it serves as the foundation for the STD paradigm. Over time, however, this initial idea expanded and changed, suggesting new elements or substantial additions. The reason for this has to be found in the dynamic and transformative character of paradigms, which develops and changes in time and space (Mihalič, 2022).

Moreover, according to Kuhn (as cited in Mihalič, 2022), in order to be considered scientific and legitimate, a paradigm has to include not only the theoretical foundation that explains and presents its principles, but it also has to provide tools and methods on how to apply those concepts and find a solution to a specific problem. Responsible Tourism thus emerged as an approach to sustainable tourism development, encouraging a more hands-on dimension of the paradigm, and reinforcing the need for a more tangible and practical sense of collective responsibility towards the environment (Mihalič, 2016, 2022). This perspective relies on the urgency “to take responsibility, to take action, [as] consumers, suppliers and governments all have responsibility” (Mihalič, 2016, p.4). In order to ensure tourism sustainability in the long term, therefore, all the stakeholders engaged in its organisation, provision and consumption have to be aware and involved in all decision-making processes to develop adequate and suitable actions (Mihalič, 2016). As it can be seen in figure 1, the model of Sustainable and Responsible Tourism (SRT) entails the three sustainability pillars, but also acknowledges the need to consider the “responsibility triggers”. A comprehensive inclusion of all the actors operating in the tourism industry, consequently, needs to take into account the demand side, by guaranteeing a constant quality of visitor experience, as well as the supply side, by fostering the preservation of the standard of living among local communities and the overall quality of the industry. This is carried out in conjunction with the application of the “Triple As model”, which facilitates the collective implementation of sustainable development by promoting a growing awareness of the subject and overseeing and assisting in the comprehensive strategy development with subsequent actions enforced to meet the established goals (Mihalič, 2016, 2022).

Figure 1: Sustainable and Responsible Tourism (SRT) model



Source: Mihalič, 2022

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), consequently defined ST as a tourism “*that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities*” (UN, n.d.-c).

The STD paradigm's interpretation evolved and progressed since its first applications and is now acknowledged and understood across a range of disciplines and fields. However, it further presents significant constraints and challenges that different authors identified and attempted to assess. The paradigm has drawn criticism for not adequately addressing the required and pursued social-ecological shift and for still posing relevant methodological issues (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Gibbons, 2020a, 2020b; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Mihalič, 2016, 2022). The detrimental effects of tourism are still obvious and visible, even given the ongoing global efforts to decrease or at least mitigate its effects both on the natural and on the social environment, and to make efficient use of the resources available. The exponential growth defining the industry's current development and the constant rise in the world population can only serve to exacerbate the already significant ecological footprint humans are leaving on the planet (Dias, 2018; Gibbons, 2020b). According to Gibbons (2020b, p.1), the objectives and goals set at international summits and conferences are far higher than what has been accomplished so far. Given the state of “*planetary emergency*” that the author describes our planet as being in, one may even question whether we will ever be able to achieve such sustainability. Weaver (2004) further argues that one reason for this may be that concepts like “Sustainable Tourism”, “Sustainable Development” and “Sustainability” can be misleading and open to different interpretations. This lack of clarity in terms of meaning, therefore, can cause the phrase to represent nearly anything to anybody, or rather becoming “*essentially and effectively meaningless*” (Weaver, 2004, p.514).

Other authors, on the contrary, state that the predominantly capitalistic and anthropocentric nature of the tourism industry remains a major contributing factor to the challenges and limitations that STD is implying (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Gibbons, 2020b; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). The objective of consistently increasing profit and numbers, frequently tends to ignore the adverse impacts that the growth and development of this sector have on the sociocultural and environmental aspects (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Consequences of still perceiving human values and activities development as above nature, are to be seen in the fact that “unsustainability” is instead presenting itself as the predominant outcome of this paradigm (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Gibbons, 2020b). As a result, those detrimental effects are not limited to the environment, with destinations being irreversibly destroyed and available resources being used to the point of scarcity (Dias, 2018; Gibbons, 2020b). Negative externalities of tourism also affect cultures and societies (Nilsson, 2020). This is particularly evident in urban settings, where overtourism is putting the destinations' survival and conservation at risk. As the number of visitors increases, indeed, the quality of the experience worsens. While locals oppose the inconveniences tourists bring to the economy, such as gentrification and rent increases, and perceive tourists as inappropriate in

both behaviour and attitude, tourists also feel unwelcome. This challenges the equilibrium between the two parties and frequently results in clashes (Nilsson, 2020).

Therefore, the approach that STD is currently advocating relies on a top-down and deductive strategy, where interventions are implemented to mitigate and reduce the damages, rather than to address the root causes of the issues (Bellato et al., 2023; Gibbons, 2020b; Hussain & Haley, 2022). The current understanding of sustainability, consequently, is reflected into a word that is frequently used merely for commercial purposes, and to support and foster the ongoing growth of the economy, which still carries with it an anthropocentric and capitalist perspective (Becken & Kaur, 2022). Consequently, the phenomenon known as "greenwashing" developed as a result of this misuse. A misuse that caused the loss of awareness in terms of the paradigm's main objectives and values, as well as potential consumer mistrust of products and, in the case of tourism, destinations (Hussain & Haley, 2022; Weaver, 2004). A reason behind this is to be found in the fact that an agreement has not yet been reached by the academia on the characteristics of ST (Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). Moreover, this concept still lacks the practical approach necessary to offer tools and methods to address these urgent issues. There is, in fact, a lack of comprehensive and globally recognized indicators that can effectively measure a long-term dedication to sustainability (Weaver, 2004). This discrepancy arises from the necessity of considering tourism as a component of a complex system in which everything is interconnected, dynamic, and changes over time and space. Yet, there is currently a deficiency in this broader understanding of the system (McDonald, 2009; Weaver, 2004). This inaccuracy has been observed by different authors in the idea behind the SDGs that the UN developed (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Gibbons, 2020a). It is questionable, for instance, whether goal number 8, which aims at promoting economic growth (UN, n.d.-a), can be accomplished in the long run as it requires an ongoing rise in both production and consumption (Gibbons, 2020a).

Even though these flaws in the sustainable development paradigm have been known for a while, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 marked a major shift in the travel and tourism sector (Hussain, 2021). When COVID-19 began, no one could have predicted the catastrophic effects it would have on the world's economy and society. States have long been attempting to respond to developments and advancements in the tourism industry, as well as to mitigate the potential effects of unforeseen and destructive events. Despite this, the pandemic has only brought attention to the fact that it is not resilient or sustainable, and not particularly susceptible to shocks and unforeseen events of this kind (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). Tourism has been among the industries most affected by this crisis, and predominantly blamed for contributing to the virus's propagation. Due to restrictions on people's freedom of movement and several other factors that directly and indirectly affected tourism, the industry was forced to stop. A crisis of this magnitude only served to recognise how unpredictable and fragile this industry is, following its contribution to the global decline in economic growth, as well as an overall reduction of

consumers' travel desires and motivations (Hussain & Haley, 2022). This contributed to better understand how closely related tourism is to other sectors, both in terms of what it can offer them, and what support it requires from them. In fact, the advent of COVID-19 has had a noticeable impact on tourism in both directly and indirectly related aspects (Hussain & Haley, 2022). As a result, the pandemic has brought attention to the need for the tourism sector to become even more resilient and sustainable, driving changes in the way that tourism is produced and consumed. By adopting an alternative approach and addressing the underlying causes of the problems, the industry seeks to become more resilient over time and increase its resistance to similar events in the future (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). For this change to occur, degrowth strategies have to be implemented at a global level, and a shift has to be carried out in relation to the purpose of tourism. Capitalistic and individualistic perspectives have to evolve, overcoming the merely economic objectives and including a wider and holistically recognised importance of the values of environmental and social well-being as well (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Given its interconnectedness and collective understanding of its principles, the tourism industry has the potential to serve as a catalyst for a more conscious society (Hussain, 2021). A change in the prevailing mindset is needed to accomplish this, encouraging the adoption of transformative tourism experiences that place people, societies, and the environment at the centre of tourism development (Nandasena et al., 2022). Reed (2007) claims that if there isn't a significant and prompt transformation, there won't be enough time to address the urgent and essential changes the world needs.

2.2 REGENERATIVE APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

This section aims at presenting and discussing the emergence of regenerative tourism. It is important to note that this thesis will use the term “regenerative tourism” (RT) to refer to an alternative approach to the STD paradigm that was previously discussed. To better understand how it operates and how it relates with the goal of this work, an overview of its origin, definitions, guiding principles, and challenges will be conducted.

Similarly to how the idea of sustainability initially emerged, the term "regenerative" originated in the natural sciences before spreading to social science disciplines. This transition occurred as a result of the two fields' increased cooperation, which was developed in order to enhance research and, consequently, the understanding of the effects that humans have on the natural world. The concept of regeneration pertains to the field of agriculture, and it refers to any activity and operation that aims to replicate the resilience and development mechanisms found in nature (Dias, 2018; Hussain & Haley, 2022). In this scenario, “regenerative” implies the establishment of “*conditions for life to continuously renew itself, to transcend into new forms, and to flourish amid ever changing life-conditions*” (Hussain & Haley, 2022, p.4). However, shifting from one field to another is not always easy and requires careful consideration of several factors, especially since the disciplines have highly divergent characteristics. In the field of social sciences, Owen was the first one to apply the term to tourism, linking the design of ecotourism establishments to

regenerative principles. In her work she defined RT as *“tourism critically engaging with place, creating a positive impact, seeing humans as part of nature, and connecting environmentalism with socio-political processes”* (Bellato et al., 2023, p.1033). In the case of tourism, therefore, regenerative development needs to rely not only on natural elements, but also considering its interrelation with the three pillars of sustainability, namely the environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Gibbons, 2020b; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Reed, 2007). A comprehensive approach is necessary in order to carry out a regeneration process successfully, therefore, tourism must develop a symbiotic relation with the other dimensions and aspects to which it is interrelated to, just like nature does. This means that all dimensions are all equally gaining from this relationship and tourism is not just intended to take from them (Dias, 2018; Hussain & Haley, 2022).

An important aspect that characterises the RT approach is that it emerges and develops combining different types of knowledge, from indigenous cultures and values to the western science. Those are further understood and acknowledged in such a perspective, the ecological worldview, which considers nature and earth as a dynamic and complex system (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022). The current lack of a universally recognized definition of RT, consequently, can be attributed to the complexity of perspectives, knowledge, values, and points of view that exist within it (Bellato et al., 2023). However, Bellato et al. (2023), attempted to provide a definition that consists of a pluriversal perspective of the term, thereby incorporating the variety of definitions that have been given by different authors in the field. This definition acknowledges and considers multiple approaches to the ideology of RT, as well as the different contexts and backgrounds that affected and shaped their implications. The authors thus defined RT as:

“A transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems. [...] Tourism systems are regarded as inseparable from nature and obligated to respect Earth’s principles and laws” (Bellato et al., 2023, p.1034).

Hence, while sustainability aims at mitigating tourism’s negative externalities and fosters a development that is *“able to last”*, regenerative tourism approach refers to the *“capacity to bring into existence again”* (Dias, 2018; Hussain & Haley, 2022, p.3). To achieve a regenerative approach, therefore, rather than exclusively focus on targeted interventions on the impacts of tourism, actions and prioritizations should be taken to address the potential and capabilities of the whole system. This entails that, unlike the sustainable approach previously mentioned in this chapter, RT approach is not a top-down but rather a bottom-up strategy that involves and progresses thanks to a co-creation that is happening directly in the place. It thus prioritises all stakeholders’ perspectives as well as an equal harmonisation among the three sustainability pillars (Bellato et al., 2023). RT, therefore, *“pursues net-*

positive effects and improved system capacity while incorporating sustainability measures” (Bellato et al., 2023, p.1035).

As it was in the case of its definition, a clear and thorough summary of the principles of RT is also lacking. However, to gain a better understanding of the foundations upon which this approach is based, as well as on the theoretical frameworks supporting this thesis that will be discussed later in this chapter, a summary of the principles provided in the work by Bellato et al. (2023) and Becken & Kaur (2022) is presented here.

As mentioned above, RT combines western science and indigenous values to foster an ecological perspective, considering the earth as a dynamic and complex system (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022). It requires, therefore, an understanding of the complexity science theory, that defines tourism as a complex system operating in a tight, dynamic, and evolving interconnection with all the actors involved in it. Therefore, none of its parts can be understood or examined independently and individually; rather, its results come from the relationships between them (Hussain & Haley, 2022; McDonald, 2009; Reed, 2007). According to Leiper (as cited in Bellato et al., 2022 and in Hussain & Haley, 2022), moreover, this complexity can be explained by the partially industrialised nature of tourism, and the fact that it does not operate as an isolated industry; rather, it is intertwined, dependent on and affected by other sectors. Furthermore, as stated by Bellato et al. (2023), RT involves the fundamental acknowledgement of the living system theory. In this perspective, tourism is perceived as a self-organising system that changes and reorganises itself as a result of its components' cooperation and interconnectedness. Through this process, a destination can identify and take advantage of its potential to grow and improve its thriving on all scales, from the individual to the system as an entire entity (Bellato et al., 2022; Dias, 2018; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Gibbons, 2020a, 2020b). In such systems, therefore, *“all things are alive and in a process of becoming”* (Reed, 2007, p.675), rooted in the natural dimension and adhering to the laws and regulations of nature (Hussain, 2021). The objective of RT is to enhance a destination's inherent potential. By implementing place-based processes, it draws attention to the area's unique characteristics and develops specific initiatives to enhance them. Supported by the tourism living system concept (TLS), RT promotes positive changes by combining environmental aspects with tourism. This approach can improve both the environment and the tourism experience through tourism activities that incorporate nature conservation (Bellato et al., 2023).

One essential and important feature of RT is the collaborative effort it calls for, and the fact that all decision-making is done by adopting a shared understanding and perspective among stakeholders connected to and involved in the destination (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023). TLS theory, in fact, encompasses every actor in tourism, including those that are non-human (Bellato et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of shifting from the anthropocentric perspective and instead recognising *“humans and their values [...] a part of nature, not apart from nature”* (Bellato et al., 2022; McDonald, 2009, p.457). RT approach

even moves further from this, perceiving humanity's connection with nature as "*being-as-becoming*", rather than merely developing "*in*" or "*with*" it (Becken & Kaur, 2022, p.14). In TLS, moreover, various interrelated roles are adopted by stakeholders in order to achieve RT objectives and, consequently, a continuous thriving of the systems. The most crucial of them all, and the one that affects each actor individually, is stewarding (Bellato et al., 2022, 2023), a function involving actions, strategies, and initiatives aiming at "*protecting, restoring and regenerating the place and community*" (Bellato et al., 2022, p.320).

Emerging as a transformative ideology, the RT approach increasingly focuses on encouraging a shift in the values and knowledge surrounding tourism. By overcoming the mere objectives of volume and profit and implying the urgency for a decrease in and rethink of economic and production growth, it advances the STD paradigm as it has been understood and applied this far. It emphasises how important it is to transform the values that drive tourism development and its ultimate purpose (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Gibbons (2020b, p.3) defined "*regenerative sustainability*" the direction that the STD paradigm is gradually adopting with the contribution of the RT approach. Similarly, this aspect is supported by Hussain (2021) when advocating for a "*holistic normal*". In such a perspective, sustainability is understood to encompass the capacity for restoration and revitalization rather than merely attempting to reduce socio-ecological harm. In order to reach those objectives, however, a change has to occur as well in relation to tourists and travellers' current mindset. To embrace a more meaningful and conscious way of viewing and pursuing tourism, one must let go of the individualist and self-centred way of thinking (Dredge, 2022). This approach already started to gain traction among individuals, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging, for instance, the local and slow travel concept (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Hussain, 2021; Nandasena et al., 2022).

There are, however, several obstacles to the pursuit of RT, despite it has been considered to be the best opportunity for society, at present, to address the negative effects of tourism that an unclear, inconsistent, slow and generally non-consensual implementation of the STD paradigm has failed to eradicate (Bellato et al., 2022; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Gibbons, 2020b; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). The difficulties in incorporating ideas and ideologies from natural science into economic models represent one of the primary challenges. Furthermore, not much research has been done on this subject by academics, particularly when looking at RT strategies in urban contexts (Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021). Stakeholders fail to adopt a comprehensive approach and aren't aware that a strategy that can withstand uncertainties is needed. This is due to the fact that, since the tourism system, as a living system, will inevitably change and evolve over time, we must learn to deal with this unpredictability (Gibbons, 2020b). Therefore, there is a need for an increased understanding of the long-term nature of these changes, as well as the need for a broader perspective that takes into account all industry's actors and aspects. Consequently, RT cannot be determined immediately or by employing fragmented, goal-oriented approaches (Gibbons, 2020b). Problems also arise due to tourism's heavy dependence on other sectors

of the market. Stakeholder collaboration and smooth management, in fact, may be hindered when collective efforts and understanding are required to design and develop appropriate strategies (Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). Eventually, it can be concluded that there is a general lack of awareness regarding environmental ethics as well as practical resources for the application of regenerative principles (Gibbons, 2020b). Governments and corporations should work to raise public awareness of the issue that our society's development is causing and witnessing and offer practical solutions and strategies for practically implementing this approach. Mihalič (2022), asserts that difficulties in implementing a different strategy occur when intentions are not translated into real behaviours and actions. Therefore, merely sharing knowledge and increasing awareness about what needs to be done and the kinds of behaviour that should be followed is not enough (Mihalič, 2022; Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021).

A final criticism of RT is that it often appears as a luxury option used by destinations and businesses to promote high-end tourism, and thus only accessible for wealthy visitors. Therefore, the idea that RT is an expensive, exclusive practice also represents one of the barriers to its broader acceptance and implementation (Butcher, 2024).

As this work is going to centre around visitors' perspectives, an emphasis will be placed on how tourists, as stakeholders, can perceive, promote, and foster RT. Namely, how they can act as stewards for this emerging approach to STD. It is essential to take into account visitors' participation while delving into their perspectives and opinions. The so-called feedback loops can offer useful insights about how visitors perceive and implement strategies and actions that governments or businesses develop. They, in fact, can encourage and support a destination's development as well as its conservation and restoration efforts, just like any other stakeholder (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Reed, 2007).

Finally, a remark is again made on the fact that, while there are currently multiple perspectives on RT, this ideology will be perceived and defined throughout this work as an alternative approach to sustainability and an expansion of the STD paradigm. It won't be applied or understood as a novel or emerging paradigm itself.

2.3 URBAN TOURISM: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In this section, the concept of urban tourism will be elaborated, emphasising its increase in significance and demand in recent years. As a consequence, the need for more consistent and tangible applications of sustainable and regenerative development will be pointed out, in order to lessen, if not completely prevent, irreversible harm to places and destinations involved in this kind of tourism.

Before delving into an analysis of Urban Tourism (UT) development, it is relevant to mention that UT, according to the UNWTO, refers to the type of tourism that occurs in cities,

where “[those] offer a broad and heterogenous range of cultural, architectural, technological, social, and natural experiences and products for leisure and business” (UNWTO, n.d.-b). Moreover, as pointed out by Boivin & Tanguay (2019), this type of tourism is being driven by a broad spectrum of push and pull factors. Tourists tend to choose urban settings when “*visiting relatives, [for] business and convention, culture, outdoor activities, entertainment, sightseeing or shopping*” (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019, p.55). These are, consequently, just a few examples of factors that have fuelled the dramatic rise in UT in recent years, with cities accounting for over 70% of all travel-related spending in Europe (Panse et al., 2021). The surge in visitors to those destinations has led to the phenomenon of “overtourism”, that carried adverse effects on the environment, as well as on the quality of life and experiences of both locals and visitors (Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). The UNWTO (2018), in fact, has defined the phenomenon as “*the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof that excessively influence perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors’ experiences in a negative way*”. Consequently, the tourism industry has been identified as a primary cause of entropy in urban areas due to its negative externalities on the economic, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions (Panse et al., 2021).

The inadequacy of suitable government policies and regulations also poses barriers and limits to the adoption of sustainable approaches in urban settings. Reasons for this are that, for the most part, sustainable, and in this case regenerative, efforts are usually more focused on natural destinations, where, in most cases, the impacts of an unregulated development are more visible compared to urban destinations. Moreover, those initiatives also tend to be rather fragmented and only aim at addressing issues on a small scale thus failing to take into account the overall implications and role of sustainability in urban contexts (Miller et al., 2015; Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). The complex, dynamic and diverse nature of urban environments is therefore the underlying cause of those challenges (Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). Urban destinations involve a diverse range of stakeholders, each of whom prioritises or attempts to promote a distinct area or feature of the territory. They all rely on the destination's assets and features while operating from various points of view. It is often challenging, therefore, to achieve, control and benefit from an effective and successful collaboration among those actors, particularly when the resources they depend on are common and limited (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Panse et al., 2021). In those terms, it is more likely that competition will take over the other delicate aspects that sustainable development is implying, for instance in terms of its socio-cultural or ecological dimensions. The competitiveness between stakeholders and different destinations can occasionally give rise to a belief that the STD paradigm's requirements have a negative impact on the industry's overall economic growth. Consequently, there is a tendency to overlook or disguise these non-economic aspects, since the common perspective may argue that sustainability requirements hinder economic growth (Panse et al., 2021).

A regenerative approach to tourism development in urban contexts, therefore, would involve all the stakeholders, thus considering urgent and timely issues such as the environmental impacts of tourism, but also relevant topics such as the conflictual relations between locals and tourists (Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). The priorities of this approach, in fact, centre on encouraging the consideration of sociocultural and natural aspects without overlooking them in favour of a capitalist, anthropocentric perspective that aims to achieve uncontrolled growth. In order to adopt a regenerative perspective, businesses and governments should be pressured to progressively take those aspects and issues into account in policy making processes (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Panse et al., 2021). Every destination should maintain competitiveness and attractiveness by leveraging its market performance and push and pull factors. However, resource allocation must consider cultural, social, and environmental limits, actively enhancing these aspects to regenerate and add value to the destination (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019).

Nonetheless, it is true that, over the past few decades, tourists have shown a greater willingness to take the environment into account in their travel decisions. They revealed a propensity to place a high value on a destination's SD policy, particularly in urban settings. In fact, the more successfully a city integrates sustainable practices, the more evident are the benefits to the environment and to the perceptions of tourists. This is because the more environmentally friendly solutions cities implement, the more likely it is that visitors will make better use of these projects and initiatives, thus improving their perceptions of the city (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Miller et al., 2015). However, despite growing interest in their broader implementation, there is still a lack of research on the actual application of ST strategies, particularly with regard to the development and integration of regenerative approaches in urban settings (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Khan et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021).

2.4 GENERATION Z'S PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM

The following rationale underpins the decision to focus on the awareness and perspectives of Generation Z visitors regarding SD in the tourism and travel industry.

The term “generation” is normally employed to identify and classify individuals that are born in the same year and “*have been influenced by the same social, economic, cultural, and political events*” (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022). Furthermore, it has been argued that a generation influences and is influenced by society and earlier generations, in addition to sharing common values and ideologies (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022). Various authors have argued that Generation Z is the generation that is becoming more and more aware of environmental issues and sustainable practices. They often adopt a global perspective, show more receptive and tolerant behaviour, and tend to be more sensitive to social issues (Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). This can be explained by the threats that this generation has endured and is currently experiencing, as well as the effects that those problems had and will continue to have on their lives. Consider challenges such as terrorism, climate change, the

economic crisis, and the migration issue. Not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). All these are, in fact, events that have marked this generation, thus increasing their concern for their future. Moreover, they are also currently experiencing their most serious consequences, which include a relentless economic downturn, lack of jobs, and severe social inequality. It follows that such issues have shaped and will continue to shape their perspectives and understanding of the world (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). Furthermore, Generation Z's presence is quite significant for society and the economy. This generation, in fact, counted for more than 30% of the world's population in 2020, and it is predicted that, by 2030, they will serve as the workforce's primary members (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). Therefore, due to their increasing importance in society and the pressing issues they face, especially with regard to environmental sustainability, Generation Z will need to take a more active role in decision-making. They will need to implement strict policies and regulations to prevent serious, irreversible environmental harm (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). According to what they often call for, in fact, "*there is no planet B*" (Pinho & Gomes, 2023, p.2). Furthermore, it is argued that the constant social pressure placed on Generation Z contributes to their growing interest in ethical behaviour and environmental preservation. This is also reflected in their belief that governments should be giving their interests more attention, since their individual efforts are thought insufficient to meet the set targets and goals concerning sustainability (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

In the context of the tourism sector, it is expected that Generation Z will be the driving force behind significant industry transformations and the advancement of sustainable development for the future (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). This generation is an increasingly relevant segment in the travel and tourism field. Generation Z, in fact, travels more but does so with a greater awareness of sustainability. As such, their choices and actions are increasingly influencing the development of tourism resources and services, ensuring that these closely match their expectations for a sustainable tourism development (Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). Their travel pattern reflects a commitment to sustainability that is evident in their behaviours and choices. Generation Z, in fact, tend to prefer environmentally friendly options especially in terms of transportation. They also tend to choose destinations that show commitment to sustainability and to integrate sustainable behaviours in their travels (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022). Studies further acknowledge that such behaviour is a result of Generation Z becoming more conscious of the positive effects that sustainable travel practices can have on destinations. As a result, when they understand how their actions affect their destination, they are more inclined to act sustainably (Salinero et al., 2022). Such efforts and behaviours are seen at all the levels concerning sustainability: economic, social and cultural (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

Supporting this is the fact that Generation Z's individuals grew up in a digital era. They are frequently referred to as the "digital generation" or "digital natives" for this reason. Thus, they are closely connected to the technological progress that have marked recent decades.

Social media and the internet, therefore, serve as their main channels of communication (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). These tools enable Generation Z to access and process a broader volume of information, exchange news and opinions, as well as engage in debates and forums. Consequently, such accessibility increases Generation Z's awareness about the pressing global issues and challenges that the world is facing, including sustainability and climate change (Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). Their use of digital media, therefore, has an enormous influence on how they behave as consumers, especially in ethical and political contexts (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). The "Fridays for Future" movement, started by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, serves as an example of this. From starting out slowly, the protest quickly spread throughout Europe, involving various groups of people, particularly schools. This kind of movement gained momentum mainly through social media platforms, and people who took part in it and relied on such channels to raise their voices and share the movement's message were mostly members of Generation Z (Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023). As a result, social media are perceived as an effective tool that Generation Z employs to encourage participation, raise awareness about environmental issues, and build online communities that foster and promote sustainable tourism behaviours (Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

Because of the aforementioned reasons, therefore, Generation Z is also recognized as the "generation of disruption", or the "generation of hopes," with the ability to "*drive sustainable development in the tourism industry*" (Pinho & Gomes, 2023, p.2).

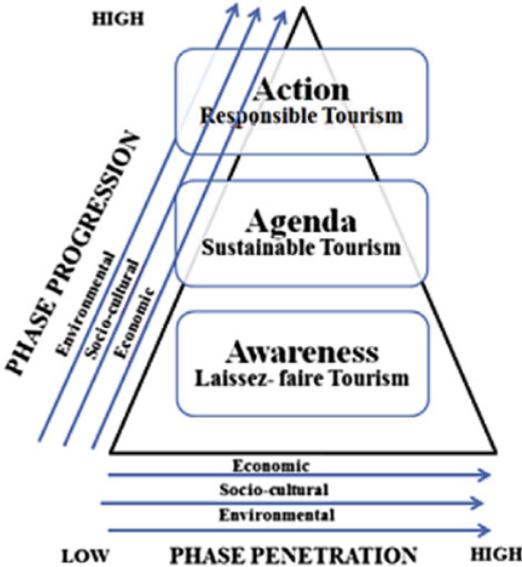
2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS GUIDING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This section offers a thorough explanation of the models and theories that serve as the foundation for this thesis. In order to better understand how data on Copenhagen will be selected and employed to structure the interviews, this paragraph is intended to demonstrate the dynamic interaction between those frameworks and the literature review of the key concepts.

One of the models that will be taken into account along the development of this work is the "Triple-A model", also defined as the "3As model" (Mihalič, 2016, 2022). This model has been developed as a practical approach to SRT and aims at providing effective guidance on how SD can successfully be implemented in strategies both at a governmental and businesses level (Mihalič, 2016, 2022). It thus constitutes the socio-political dimension of the paradigm and, as it can be seen in figure 2, it is structured in a pyramid configuration divided into four different stages. "Ignorance" is the first step, and it defines the situation where issues and challenges regarding sustainability and its three pillars are not considered in tourism development strategies. "Awareness" constitutes the second stage, in which society acknowledges the existence of tourism's negative externalities on the environment and on the socio-cultural dimension. "Agenda" defines the phase in which sustainability discourse begins to be involved in governmental consultations and deliberations, thus forming part of

the development strategies implemented. Areas and aspects related to the environmental and socio-cultural dimensions are included in the objectives and priorities just as much as the aspects regarding the economic level. The fourth and most important stage of the model is “Action”, and it defines the actual processes that development strategies require to put into practice to reach the goal set in the previous phase. This refers to the practical side of the paradigm and it relies on the overall contribution of all the stakeholders' engagement towards the implementation of sustainability policies (Mihalič, 2016, 2022).

Figure 2: Triple-A model



Source: Mihalič, 2016

Adopting the “3As model”, moreover, requires bearing in mind that it is based on an ongoing process in which each step is dependent upon the others. Awareness has to be raised before being able to discuss sustainability pillars and integrating them in the current agendas. Ultimately, in order to achieve the goals and objectives set, specific behaviours and actions must be adopted after those issues have been considered and strategies for advancing sustainable development have been developed. In order to assess the integration of the model, stages are measured in terms of progression and penetration (Mihalič, 2016). Progression refers to the implementation according to time, namely in which stage of the pyramid society is collocated. Penetration, on the contrary, refers to the extent to which each stage is understood, considered, and developed. It's not necessary to fully acknowledge one of the stages in order to move forward to the others. Though there may still be more to be done in terms of raising awareness, for instance, certain strategies can be developed in the meanwhile or specific actions can be put into practice (Mihalič, 2016). Therefore, a destination may reach the higher levels of the pyramid without having completely employed and developed the features of the stages before it (Mihalič, 2016, 2022).

The “Triple-A model” offers a staged and structured framework that is relevant to understand how sustainable policies and practices develop, but also how they are communicated, received, and adopted by visitors. The degree of visitor knowledge regarding Copenhagen's sustainability initiatives will be exposed within the “Awareness” stage. The “Agenda” stage will determine whether visitors recognize the government's sustainability agenda. Finally, the “Action” stage will assess visitors' behaviour and practical engagement by observing how they take part in or react to initiatives that have been put into action by the city. Therefore, the “Triple-A model” can assist in determining the effectiveness of the communication and implementation strategies by aligning visitor perception with these three stages. At the same time, this will support the understanding of the impact that such initiatives and policies have on tourists' behaviour and experiences.

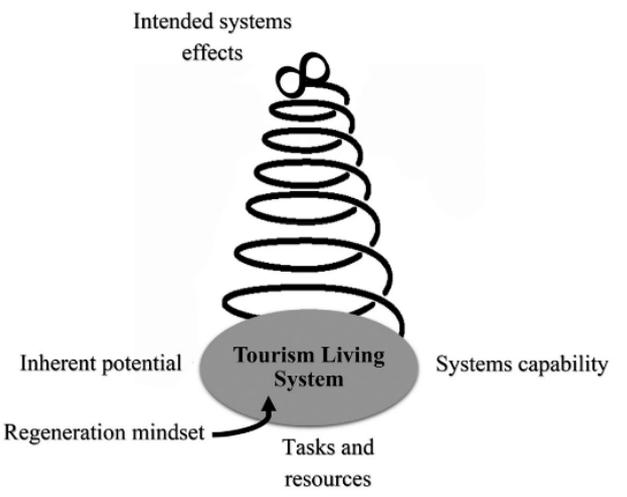
The “Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions” is the second theoretical model that this thesis relies on (Bellato et al., 2023). This framework builds on the key principles of regenerative approach that have been detailed in the previous section. Here, these concepts are briefly restated to facilitate understanding. According to Bellato et al. (2023), therefore, regenerative tourism: 1) originates within the “ecological worldview”; 2) relies on “living system thinking”; 3) “discovers the unique potential of a regenerative tourism place”; 4) “leverages the capability of tourism living systems to catalyse transformations”; 5) “creates regenerative places and communities enabling net-positive impacts”; and 6) “entails collaborative participation” (Bellato et al., 2023, p.1035-1038). Using a spiral to represent the five different dimensions, this framework illustrates how regenerative development is dynamic and ever-evolving (figure 3). Moreover, in order to help stakeholders navigate this process, each dimension presents a crucial question. As the framework's principles 1, 5 and 6 will be the ones taken into consideration for this thesis, the questions we will consider from the model are the following:

1. Principle 1: “How can tourism align with the ecological worldview and living system thinking?”
2. Principle 5: “What new regenerative capabilities can be created in tourism and related systems?”
3. Principle 6: “What tools, resources, and frameworks are necessary to co-create and implement this regenerative approach?” (Bellato et al., 2023, p.1038-1040).

The decision to consider those three principles only is driven by the fact that those aspects are also accessible for visitors' assessment. The principle related to the “Ecological Worldview” understanding supports the thesis by helping to assess and improve visitors' understanding and awareness of regenerative tourism, which forms the basis of the research. As it calls for visible outcomes, the principle concerning the “Creation of Regenerative Places and Communities” is significant. Visitors can directly experience, identify and assess such places or communities that benefit and align with regenerative principles, making it a tangible aspect for data collection. Similarly, the degree to which tourism initiatives integrate

cooperative efforts between stakeholders, including tourists, can be evaluated through the “Collaborative participation” principle. This principle allows for examining how participatory processes could contribute to positive and regenerative outcomes. By focusing on these principles, visitors can directly assess how regenerative initiatives can be implemented and perceived in real life. Aspect, this one, that is in line with the “Triple-A model’s” “Awareness”, “Agenda”, and “Action” stages. Consequently, by relying on elements that visitors can most easily evaluate and reflect upon, this narrowed approach improves the research's relevance and applicability while guaranteeing that the findings are supported by experiential data.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions



Source: Bellato et al., 2023

In conclusion, these frameworks are significant for examining how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen’s initiatives, allowing this thesis to delve deeply into how young visitors understand and interact with SD practices in a city context. It is indeed important to consider visitors’ perceptions not only to assess their satisfaction, which can result in recommendations or repeated visits but also to promote sustainable development and improve current strategies. Positive experiences can thus encourage travellers to support ongoing developments and growth in the travel industry. When sustainability efforts and practices are made clear and tangible, visitors are more likely to acknowledge and embrace them (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Lee et al., 2014). This is particularly true for visitors who are members of the Generation Z, as their commitment to sustainability and responsible travel is well-known. Furthermore, as previously pointed out in the previous section, their expectations and values can significantly influence the implementation and the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

3. CASE OF COPENHAGEN

This chapter's objective is to provide an overview of Copenhagen, the selected empirical site for data collection. Additionally, in order to introduce and contextualise the questions on which the interviews are based, examples of current policies and strategies concerning SD are presented and examined adopting a regenerative perspective.

3.1 URBAN TOURISM

On a national level, Denmark is generally considered among the most successful examples of importance given to the promotion and support of ongoing sustainable development (Khan et al., 2021). Together with the other Nordic Countries, in fact, Denmark is fostering and advancing the necessary and pressing need for a green economic transition. Their policies, therefore, mainly focus on three strategic priorities in order to jointly assess and mitigate the effects of climate change and unsustainability before 2030: “1) *transition to carbon neutrality, circular and biobased economy*; 2) *green growth and competitiveness*; and 3) *social sustainability and welfare*” (Khan et al., 2021, p.597). This development strategy is most evident in its capital, Copenhagen, which has been and still is a relevant example of SD and planning even in the field of tourism (Krähmer, 2021). The city has received multiple awards and recognitions as a result of its sustainable urban development and environmental protection strategies. In 2021 the National Geographic identified Copenhagen as “Best of the world” in terms of sustainability (VisitDenmark, 2020). The city, moreover, has been for several years among the top positions in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index), the latest being the year 2023, when Copenhagen ranked 3rd (Wonderful Copenhagen, n.d.). According to the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (n.d.), cities and Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) that take part in the GDS-Index, “*advocate for a regenerative and inclusive transformation, emphasising the need for new mindsets and toolsets*”. Furthermore, Tripadvisor named Copenhagen the “Best of the Best Destination” in 2024 (Wonderful Copenhagen, n.d.). This recognition is built upon travellers' reviews and opinions and assesses the destination’s dedication and contribution towards sustainability (Tripadvisor, n.d.). This commitment is also pursued with regard to Copenhagen’s future ambitions and goals, such as becoming the first carbon-neutral city in 2025 (Bærenholdt & Meged, 2023; Denmark.dk, n.d.; Krähmer, 2021). This objective was set in order to address the consequences resulting from the failure to take into account the possible impacts that the city may experience from continued unsustainable development and ongoing urbanisation. In relation to this, therefore, a variety of policies that affect various aspects of governance at a governmental and urban level have been or are going to be implemented by the destination (Denmark.dk, n.d.).

Like many other major capital cities, Copenhagen has been experiencing an important rise in the phenomenon of urbanisation, which is predicted to grow exponentially by 2050, when almost everyone will move from rural to urban areas (City of Copenhagen, n.d.;

Denmark.dk, n.d.; Panse et al., 2021). This is therefore significant from the perspective of UT as well. A growing population in a given city, in fact, necessitates careful urban infrastructure and service planning. As a consequence, an urban development that is sustainable and capable of considering the implications and outcomes on its environment and society instead of restricting itself to just its economic aspects, also serves to make the city more tourist-attractive (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019). This trend is also noticeable in Copenhagen, where the number of overnight tourists has increased significantly in recent years. In fact, it reached a peak of 10,9 million in 2019, compared to roughly 6,2 million in 2008 (López, 2021a; López, 2021b). Despite lacking an accurate number of the post pandemic number, there appears to be an increasing trend, as evidenced by Copenhagen's UT industry continuing to grow. Thus, even though the problem is less pronounced than in other European cities, and the city is effectively developing policies and strategies to lessen its effects, it can be said that Copenhagen is still suffering from overtourism (Bærenholdt & Meged, 2023). Considering the exponential growth that this phenomenon will experience, it is imperative that the standards for management and governance of those tourism flows are raised, and that a comprehensive plan is adopted. In those terms, this is what the city of Copenhagen is doing and intends to do in the near future (Denmark.dk, n.d.).

Ultimately, this decision to adopt Copenhagen as a data collection site was also made possible by the city and the country's ability to clearly and simply communicate their strategies and policies regarding sustainable development.

3.2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM THROUGH REGENERATIVE APPROACHES

The literature review in the above chapter leads to the conclusion that the RT approach is still in its early stages, particularly with regard to improving and progressing the state of STD as it exists today. Moreover, because of its multidisciplinary and holistic nature, implementing it entails a long-term process that takes time to complete both in terms of planning and results (Bellato et al., 2023; Dias, 2018; Gibbons, 2020a; Hussain & Haley, 2022). For these reasons, it is still challenging to effectively incorporate this approach into official destination development strategies, as well as to observe tangible outcomes, at least when it comes to European urban destinations. The implementation of this approach, in fact, is made even more difficult by the complex, dynamic, and diverse nature of urban environments (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). However, despite the lack of explicit mention or reference to regenerative principles in official documents, there are already some strategies and initiatives in Copenhagen that partially embody or reflect these values. Those will be emphasised in this chapter, to then understand how and what effects a RT approach has, or can have, on sustainable urban development. In addition, few of the examples discussed in this chapter will be then included in the interview structure in order to investigate how visitors perceive them.

This section builds upon the two models discussed in the theoretical framework. These models were used to frame and evaluate existing documents and policies, making them relevant for the following overview of Copenhagen's SD strategies. The Triple-A model's

stages of implementation (Mihalič, 2016, 2022) have allowed the identification and evaluation of strategies that align with each layer of the model. The policies and tactics discussed in this section, in fact, are intended to raise awareness (“Awareness” stage), establish objectives for promoting SD (“Agenda” stage), and carry out specific measures to put these efforts into practice (“Action” stage). By providing innovative approaches to SD, the "Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions" (Bellato et al., 2023) further assisted in identifying potentially regenerative initiatives among current policies. The adoption of this framework has facilitated the identification of example strategies that embody regenerative principles, particularly those concerning the understanding of the “Ecological Worldview”, “Collaborative Participation” and the “Creation of Regenerative Places and Communities”.

One strategy that is worth taking into consideration is the one presented by Wonderful Copenhagen, the city’s DMO, in 2017. It is called “The End of Tourism As We Know It” and it was developed with the aim of better managing and combining tourism with the quality of life for locals (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017a). This approach, therefore, takes into account all the three sustainability pillars in addition to emphasising the economic aspect of development. Moreover, being able to provide guests with an *“experience of localhood”* by combining the experiences of visitors and locals is a key component of this strategy (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017a, p.4). Since it encourages co-creation elements, and the goal of developing a collaborative strategy to build experiences for tourists, this approach can be considered in line with the regenerative principles. According to this approach, the mutual cooperation between tourists and locals can truly benefit both parties without giving rise to or creating tensions over who is harming the destination and who must bear the consequences. This positive engagement of locals is also fostered and supported by the “10XCOPENHAGEN” initiative. This was also presented by the DMO in 2017, and its goal is to guide the development of tourism toward sustainable growth by 2030, placing a focus on approaches that improve city livability and actively involve the community (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017b). However, a limitation of those strategies is that they convey the idea that the DMO's primary goal is still to draw tourists to the destination. As a result, with an increase in visitors being the main goal, the economic pillar continues to overpower the environmental and sociocultural aspects (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017a).

An additional strategy that builds on the city's goal of pursuing sustainable tourism development by 2030 is called "Tourism for Good" (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2018). By attempting to mitigate the detrimental effects of growing visitor numbers on the destination, this strategy also addresses the three pillars of sustainability. One notable difference is that, in contrast to the other examples, this strategy makes it clear that the objective of expanding tourism is to ensure that visitors *“make broader use of the destination”*, rather than merely attempt to attract more tourists to the destination (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2018, p.6). In this sense, by promoting experiences that can *“broaden the use of Greater Copenhagen geographically, time-wise and in terms of the interests catered for”*, the goal is to increase

the value of visitors and their satisfaction (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2018, p.6). Furthermore, it highlights the DMO's responsibility to manage its operational impact sustainably in order to set an example for other industries. As such, this strategy also proposes and offers a comprehensive approach that incorporates the three pillars of sustainability and emphasises the need for positive collaboration to support tourism's future while simultaneously preserving the standard of living for residents and protecting the environment (Wonderful Copenhagen, 2018).

Another example that can be taken into consideration is the “CPH 2025 Climate Plan”, a document primarily stating the intention of the city to achieve the goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2025 (City of Copenhagen, n.d.). With a focus on four crucial areas, namely energy production and consumption, mobility, and city administration initiatives, this strategy aims at positioning Denmark and Copenhagen as leaders in the green transition. Through increased employment opportunities in green industries, better air quality, and improved energy consumption, it not only improves the quality of life in the area but also enhances visitor experience by promoting a vibrant and thriving destination. Consequently, it can be said that Copenhagen can set an example for sustainable urban tourism by lowering its carbon footprint and leveraging its climate initiatives to strengthen its attractiveness and competitiveness as a travel destination (City of Copenhagen, n.d.).

The strategies and policies mentioned above are to be understood as broad, and thus involving different industries and aspects of the destination's sustainable development. There are, however, also action plans that concern specific aspects of such development. One, for instance, can be the strategy addressing sustainable urban development. Denmark is well known for being a pioneer in the development of environmentally friendly cities, and Copenhagen is an excellent example of this. Focusing on smart infrastructure, efficient transportation systems, and renewable energy, the city is actively pursuing its sustainability agenda in order to help reach carbon neutrality (Denmark.dk, n.d.; VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-c). Copenhagen is, in fact, among the leading cities in the world in terms of bike culture, with cycle paths that extend for almost 400 kilometres (VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-a; VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-b). Several aspects indicative of a regenerative approach emerge when analysing the city's urban sustainable development. For example, the Nordhavn project is regarded as one of the biggest and most innovative sustainable urban development projects in Northern Europe. Previously one of the main industrial areas, this part of the city has been developed into a vibrant, green neighbourhood that is exclusively for cyclists and pedestrians. At the same time, the buildings are energy-efficient and environmentally friendly (Danish Architecture Center, n.d.). In a similar way, the Østerbro neighbourhood of St. Kjeld's serves as an example of how tourism can actively support urban revitalisation. Because of the abundance of green spaces and vegetable gardens that can be found on rooftops in addition to the many parks, this neighbourhood is regarded as being the greenest in all of Copenhagen. Here, volunteering days are planned to teach people about urban farming or to assist the locals in caring for their plants and animals. In terms of reimagining

and giving a different function and purpose to industrial neighbourhoods, those are pertinent examples of regeneration. Everyone, visitors and locals, can participate in their maintenance and tourists can also transfer such initiatives to other cities and learn from them (VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-d).

Finally, examples of regenerative principles in terms of sustainable development are to be found also in smaller initiatives that aim at nudging both tourists and locals on the pressing and timely problem of climate change and, therefore, on the extreme consequences we might face if nothing is done soon. This is, for instance, the case of the elevated benches that have been placed around the city to symbolise the threat of sea level rising. This installation forms part of the broader initiative called “The Copenhagen Bench 20100” that has been carried out by TV 2 Denmark (Ingvarsen, 2022). This type of nudging can present itself as a tool for environmental education and community engagement, thereby fostering a culture of sustainability and proactive environmental stewardship.

The examples provided, which are drawn from a few of Copenhagen's current development strategies, could be seen as steps towards the destination's opportunity to embrace and implement RT in their development strategies. In particular, those efforts have recently been summarised in the establishment of the so-called “Nordic Regenerative Tourism - NorReg 2022”, a pilot project founded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Icelandic Tourism Cluster (Atladóttir et al., 2023). The aim of this project is to support small and medium businesses in the Nordic Countries (Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark), by providing them the necessary tools and guidance in order to strengthen regional and local tourism organisations. This to ensure that tourism can effectively contribute *“to the regeneration of places, nature, and communities; and build a community of tourism stakeholders in the north, committed to regenerative tourism, self-empowerment and nurturing”* (Atladóttir et al., 2023, p. 7).

To conclude, therefore, it can be said that SD has already advanced significantly in Denmark, and in the city of Copenhagen. The destination, therefore, could better address the negative effects of tourism by adopting and explicitly integrating RT approaches. Such efforts would not only improve their current performance but also strengthen Copenhagen's position as the front-runner among sustainable urban destinations in Europe.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the research conducted throughout this work, as well as the methods used for data collection and analysis. The objective is to clarify the steps through which data was processed and elaborated to determine the outcomes that will be presented in the following chapter.

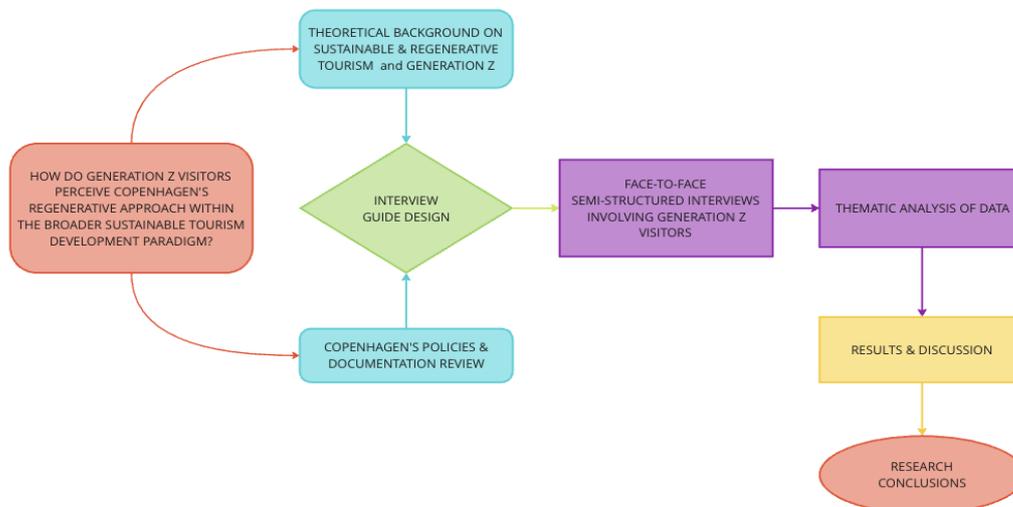
4.1 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS RESEARCH PROCESS

This research relies on an empirical, qualitative inquiry that draws on phenomenology. Through the application of the interpretivist paradigm, this study aims to comprehend the subjective experiences and meanings that visitors from Generation Z assign to Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative practices. Such an approach implies acknowledging reality as a social construct that is built upon a variety of different individual and subjective interpretations. Reality is shaped by the continuous interactions between people and their experiences in the world. Therefore, the ability to understand and interpret reality is directly connected to these interactions (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). The aim of this work is, thus, to consider and draw from a range of diverse perspectives in order to understand this multilayered and intricate reality in terms of ST and RT development. The reasoning behind this decision is that qualitative analysis is generally employed when an investigation relies on a primarily descriptive and emerging topic, and thus lacks a comprehensive body of research. This kind of qualitative research, therefore, is also referred to as “exploratory inquiry” since it aims to look into subjective opinions and perspectives on a subject that is relatively new and has recently drawn a lot of interest (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Stockemer, 2019). Moreover, carrying out a qualitative analysis implies the adoption of an inductive approach. This approach, in order to be successful, entails the observation of phenomena and reality in order to subsequently be able to identify patterns and themes related to the topic. Unlike in the case of quantitative analysis, that draws from already existing theories and principles, a qualitative approach aims at constructing and developing models from current reality and experiences (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gautam & Gautam, 2023). The subjective nature of qualitative analysis, consequently, is also reflected in the specific methods that it implies for data collection. These tools are primarily descriptive and thus aim to explain and present findings in words rather than mere numerical data (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gautam & Gautam, 2023). Consequently, because of its subjective, transdisciplinary, and multilayered characteristics listed above, qualitative research mainly employs interviews as a method of data collection (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kallio et al., 2016). Consequently, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were selected for this study's data collection method. In terms of data analysis, qualitative research centres on thematic analysis. Reflecting the fundamental aspect of qualitative research, it supports a descriptive approach through the identification of recurring themes and patterns that can be identified in participants' answers (Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

This study's research design (figure 4) is based on a series of steps that lead to the presentation of the findings and an in-depth discussion on how visitors from Generation Z understand RT in the context of STD. After the research question was established, in fact, a comprehensive literature review was conducted on the following topics: 1) sustainable development; 2) sustainable tourism development paradigm; 3) regenerative tourism; 4) sustainability in urban destinations; and 5) Generation Z's perceptions on sustainability in

tourism. In addition to the above research, a thorough analysis of the existing documentation and policies regarding the current sustainable tourism development strategy that the city of Copenhagen has adopted was conducted. Therefore, the main topics and arguments identified in the literature as well as in the city's development strategy served as the primary basis for the interview structure. Consequently, specific and detailed questions regarding each topic have been developed, and visitors have been asked to assess their thoughts on the matter. After data had been collected, it was thematically analysed, and represented in a figure that illustrates the key themes and patterns that emerged, in relation to the two theoretical frameworks that this thesis relies on. Along with the pre-identified arguments that served as the basis for the interview questions, the visual also includes new themes that participants emphasised. Finally, this study's conclusion was marked by a comprehensive discussion on how visitors currently perceive the emerging RT approach within Copenhagen's STD strategy.

Figure 4: Research Design



Source: Own

4.2 PARTICIPANTS SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

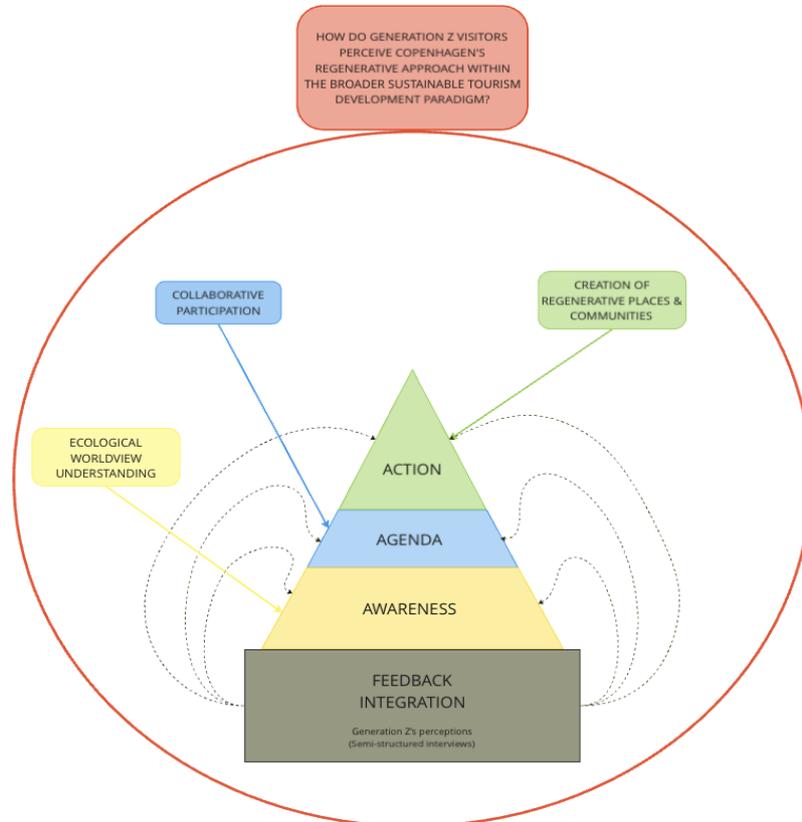
This study aims at analysing the demand-side awareness and perception of RT approaches to STD in the city of Copenhagen. To achieve a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding, the study's population will be limited to members of Generation Z. As previously mentioned in the literature review, one of the main reasons for concentrating on this generation is the increasing recognition of their importance in achieving and fostering SD. There is a growing consensus, in fact, that they are the generation that is best capable to embrace and implement the changes needed to lessen the negative effects of current tourism practices (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). While a comprehensive agreement on the exact age range that defines Generation Z is lacking, this thesis will try to combine

different author's opinions. In fact, while some studies include in this generation all individuals born between mid-/late 90s to mid-/late 20s (Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023), others specifically consider people born after 1997 (Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023), or after 1994 (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). Others, instead, include all those born from 2000 onwards (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022). The study will therefore comprise participants who were born in-between 1995 and 2004. This range was selected to ensure that it is relevant to the study's objectives and context. Additionally, the study's sample size will be restricted to members of Generation Z who are either in Copenhagen at the time of the interviews or who have been visiting the city after the Covid-19 pandemic. For the purpose of this thesis, "post pandemic" refers to the period after the 1st of January 2022. This date, in fact, is considered the end of the major global wave of pandemic, as many countries started to gradually loosen travel restrictions and resume tourism promotion (UNWTO, 2022). The primary justification for this decision is that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic made us realise that we must take actions and transform our current pattern of development to prevent more irreversible harm from occurring (Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022). Furthermore, studies additionally demonstrated that Generation Z's environmentally conscious attitudes have been triggered by such an event, thus influencing their intentions to behave in a more sustainable and responsible manner (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). The pandemic has therefore been perceived as the "*opportunity to reset tourism*" (Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022, p.346).

Data has been collected relying on a non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling is usually employed in qualitative analysis for exploratory research where there are constraints on the quota of population that can be reached. Samples are in fact chosen depending more on the researcher's personal evaluation than on random selection (Fleetwood, n.d.; Obilor, 2023). Purposive sampling, specifically, is a technique used to identify participants with unique characteristics or experiences that are pertinent to the study's research question. This approach allows researchers to collect rich, relevant data from people who have different perspectives and opinions, thus enhancing the level of accuracy and depth of the results (Campbell et al., 2020; Obilor, 2023). For this study, therefore, participants have been selected adopting two different approaches. Firstly, participation was extended to people the researcher knew either via personal or academic networks in the tourism industry. This group was selected because of their knowledge about or close engagement with tourism practices, which was thought to result in insightful perspectives on Copenhagen's sustainability initiatives. Moreover, participants were also recruited through the researcher's network of acquaintances, thus including a number of non-experts in the field, as long as they corresponded to the above-mentioned population's characteristics. The researcher introduced them to the study's objectives and extended an invitation to take part in the interview after they demonstrated interest in the case. The aim, therefore, was to collect a broader and more varied spectrum of perspectives and experiences by combining these two approaches and balancing expert and non-expert opinions. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews have been employed to further support this goal. This

method, in fact, allows for more in-depth responses and unique perspectives on the topic. In terms of sample size, moreover, interviews have been conducted until data saturation was reached. According to Gautam & Gautam (2023), saturation is “*the point at which researchers no longer identify new themes or insights emerging from additional participants*”. This approach, therefore, ensured that the data collected was both comprehensive and representative.

Figure 5: Theoretical Models Integration



Source: Adapted from Bellato et al., 2023 & Mihalič, 2016

A draft of the interview guide was first created drawing from the integration of the two models presented in the theoretical framework section. As it can be seen in figure 5, the “Triple A’s” model (Mihalič, 2016, 2022), constitutes the main framework and it is therefore represented in its original pyramidal structure. This, in fact, represents the progression of the stages that constitute it: “Awareness”, “Agenda” and “Action”. As per the "Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions" model (Bellato et al., 2023), only three of the principles it enunciates have been selected. Those are the principles of “Ecological Worldview”, “Collaborative Participation”, and “Creation of Regenerative Places and Communities”. The first one is integrated into the “Awareness” stage of the “Triple A’s” model, the second one into the “Agenda” stage, and the third one into the “Action” stage, for the following reasons: The first principle emphasises understanding diverse perspectives, helping visitors appreciate the complex relationships between humans and the environment

to support regenerative tourism. The second principle focuses on how different stakeholders collaborate to develop sustainable and regenerative initiatives, and how visitors perceive this kind of collaboration. The third principle, instead, helps understand how specific sustainable and regenerative practices are implemented and perceived by visitors in terms of their tangible effects on the environment and community. These principles are chosen because they rely on direct observations and insights from visitors, making their assessment more genuine and insightful. "Feedback Integration" characterises the foundational layer supporting the pyramid. This layer points out how feedback and insights from Generation Z visitors, obtained through the interviews, are crucial to the overall model. Furthermore, the arrows reflect a feedback loop, representing the iterative nature of the model in which Generation Z visitors' feedback validates the ongoing sustainability practices while simultaneously pointing out areas for improvement.

After drafting the interview guide, a pre-test has been carried out, in order to “confirm the relevance of the content”, and to implement changes or improvements to the structure (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2959). As per this research, the questions were submitted to four individuals: two studying or working in tourism, and two non-experts in this field. The experts assessed the theoretical aspects of the questions and gave feedback on how clearly the content was presented and understood. In contrast, the non-experts shared their thoughts on the language's clarity and whether or not the terms employed were understandable to those with no prior knowledge of the topic. The pre-test, consequently, led to the formulation of the final version of the interview guide (Table 2 in appendixes) that consists of eight main questions related to the four themes originating from the models’ integration. Interviews were conducted during the months of May and June 2024 in Copenhagen and in its surrounding areas, and a total of 12 interviews were collected. The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of participants’ information while ensuring their anonymity.

Table 1: List of participants

<i>PARTICIPANT</i>	<i>GENDER</i>	<i>AGE</i>
Participant 1	Male	29
Participant 2	Male	26
Participant 3	Female	27
Participant 4	Male	26
Participant 5	Female	24
Participant 6	Male	27
Participant 7	Female	24
Participant 8	Female	23

Participant 9	Female	22
Participant 10	Female	24
Participant 11	Female	25
Participant 12	Female	22

Source: Own

It is essential to mention that ethical considerations were a key aspect of this research. Consent was collected from all participants and their privacy was taken into account at every stage of the research development. Care was given to ensure that the questions would not be harmful or invasive for participants but would instead encourage them to express freely (Husband, 2020; Kallio et al., 2016). Moreover, participants' privacy and anonymity were strictly maintained, and information was only gathered with their permission. This was granted through a preliminary statement prior to the start of the interview (in the appendixes under "Informed Consent Statement"). Finally, data collected along this research has been reported transparently, maintaining the authenticity of the sources. No personal information was shared during the analysis, and participants' age and gender were collected only for representational purposes. This approach, therefore, ensured the integrity of the participants while fostering an open dialogue to support the research topic (Husband, 2020).

4.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In order to provide a concrete and relevant answer to this thesis' research question, data collected was processed and interpreted using thematic analysis. This work acknowledges that when considering qualitative research, there is often an overlap of the concepts of "content analysis" and "thematic analysis" that can generate confusion. While there are papers differentiating the two approaches (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), others use the terms interchangeably, describing processes that align with thematic analysis but labelling them as content analysis, or vice versa (Camprubí & Coromina, 2016; Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This thesis, therefore, will differentiate the terms as follows. While both methods involve decoding material to identify recurrent themes and patterns, they differ in focus. By counting how often a particular code appears in the material, "content analysis" emphasises the frequency of themes and codes. In contrast, "thematic analysis" places a stronger focus on providing a comprehensive qualitative explanation of specific themes found across the dataset (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This approach is particularly suited for capturing the nuanced perceptions and experiences of Generation Z visitors regarding Copenhagen's regenerative and sustainable tourism practices. This thesis, therefore, will refer to the data analysis method as "thematic".

In terms of its definition, consequently, thematic analysis is the process generally employed to decode material (interviews' transcriptions in the case of this study), and thereby identify and pinpoint the most recurring themes and patterns among participants. Through such an

analysis, in fact, the researcher's objective is to uncover participants' behaviours, attitudes, thoughts, and motivations (Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). One of the main advantages of thematic analysis, moreover, is its flexibility to allow for both inductive and deductive approaches. This entails that themes can be generated directly from the data collected (inductive), or that existing theories and concepts can be implemented to guide the analysis (deductive). This proves to be, therefore, an effective method to explore both emergent and predefined themes (Camprubí & Coromina, 2016; Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Walters, 2016). An aspect, this one, that will be significant for this study. The majority of this research, in fact, relies on an inductive approach, meaning that themes and patterns have been identified following a comprehensive data analysis (Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). However, this study also incorporates a deductive approach. In order to structure and define the topics that needed to be covered, in fact, this research integrated given themes from the "Triple-A model" and the "Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions", previously defined in the theoretical framework section (Bellato et al., 2023; Mihalič, 2016, 2022). Transcriptions were first examined to identify codes related to these given themes and, subsequently, they were reread to uncover new themes and patterns that were not predefined but emerged from the data. Those new themes either aligned with the existing themes or constituted new categories. This process further supports the reiterative nature of thematic analysis, thus reflecting a continuous process of interpretation, identification and development (Walters, 2016).

The analysis' outcomes will then be presented through an illustration reporting the connections between the different themes and patterns that emerged from the participants' responses and the integrated theoretical framework. With the aim of displaying and simplifying the results related to a particular subject, visual maps are an essential and valuable tool in qualitative research. As per this study, this illustration is employed to support data analysis and present findings in a more comprehensible way (Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). Furthermore, quotations from the interviews' transcriptions are also reported in the findings chapter in order to support the analysis's results. This serves to enhance the narrative's readability and offer a more thorough understanding of the findings. Quotations, in fact, are used to emphasise the authenticity and reliability of data reporting participants' responses, thus ensuring transparency and commitment to ethical values and principles (Eldh et al., 2020).

The process of thematic analysis is carried out through a sequence of six steps (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Walters, 2016). After transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were read multiple times to familiarise with the data and identify significant codes. In this study, a "code" refers to a text segment relevant to the findings, labelled to summarise its content (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). For example, the code "Awareness and Understanding of the Concept of Sustainability" includes all extracts where participants provided or failed to provide a definition of sustainability. Next, potential themes were

identified and coded extracts were grouped under these themes. A further review ensured that themes accurately represented the codes, summarising recurring topics and arguments. For instance, the theme containing the code “Awareness and Understanding of the Concept of Sustainability” was labelled “Visitor Awareness and Perception.” This iterative process was then repeated multiple times to ensure comprehensive coverage (Walters, 2016). Finally, each theme was assigned a colour, and supporting codes in the transcripts were highlighted accordingly. The results and, consequently, the relationships between the codes and themes that emerged were then represented in an illustration that will be detailed and discussed in the following chapter.

4.4 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Before delving deeper into the specific findings of this thesis, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations to provide a clearer context and enhance the understanding of the results.

One of the most relevant aspects to address is that RT is an emerging topic and, therefore, there is currently no universally accepted definition nor understanding of the principles that characterises this ideology (Bellato et al., 2023). This is also reflected in the absence of explicit references to the implementation of RT (both theoretically and practically) in Copenhagen’s official strategies and policies. Similar challenges are present in the broader STD paradigm, primarily due to its unclear, inconsistent, slow, and generally non-consensual implementation. The term "sustainability" has become so widely used that its actions and implications are often overlooked and predominantly used for commercial purposes. Additionally, there is a lack of tools to measure the effectiveness of sustainability actions due to the absence of agreements on the main characteristics of sustainable tourism (ST) (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2022; Fusté-Forné & Hussain, 2022; Gibbons, 2020b; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Hussain, 2021; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Weaver, 2004). This ambiguity, consequently, resulted in a vague comprehension of the terms, principles, and practical applications also form the public. Given the emerging nature of RT, and the lack of awareness on its definition and implementation, therefore, this study's results may not be widely acknowledged. This research aims to present visitors' current understanding on these approaches, identify obstacles in their effective implementation, and explore ways to enhance their education and behaviour about those topics. It seeks to initiate a discussion on the perceptions on RT rather than provide definitive answers.

The selection of participants presents another research limitation. Since purposive sampling relies on subjective participant selection, it could result in a sample that is not representative of the overall population, and limiting the generalizability of the findings (Obilor, 2023). Additional limitations are introduced by the age of the participants, as they are not representative of the entire age range established prior to the interviews. Furthermore, all respondents were in Copenhagen for leisure, and only stayed for a short period. Insights might have differed if the purpose of travel or length of stay varied. Finally, there is an

unequal gender representation among participants. Out of twelve people, only four were males. This limits the generalizability of the findings in terms of gender.

Moreover, a significant limitation in qualitative analysis is the personal biases that the researcher may bring to the analysis process. These biases are particularly evident as the researcher's role is to interpret and decode respondents' insights, effectively acting as a mediator to synthesise different opinions and perspectives (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). This issue is further pronounced in thematic analysis, where biases can emerge during coding and themes identification. While efforts were made to minimise these biases in this research, it is acknowledged that some level of influence is unavoidable (Humble & Mozelius, 2022).

Finally, a key limitation of this work is the limited generalizability of the results presented in the following section. As highlighted in the literature review on RT, this ideology emphasises the unique characteristics and potential of each destination, implying a bottom-up approach. Consequently, the findings and the strategies or policies that may be improved or implemented based on these results are specific to Copenhagen. Since the approach starts from the area's unique and distinctive attributes and develops targeted strategies, it is unlikely that these findings would be directly applicable to other destinations (Bellato et al., 2022, 2023). Despite this limitation, the research still offers valuable insights and thought-provoking considerations that can inform the implementation of this approach in other destinations. Although the results are not generalizable, they could still provide guidance when adapting the RT approach to different contexts and conditions.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Following the previous chapter's summary of the research structure, data collection, and analysis methods, this section provides an overview of the results. Additionally, a comprehensive discussion will be carried out in order to address this study's research question.

5.1 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

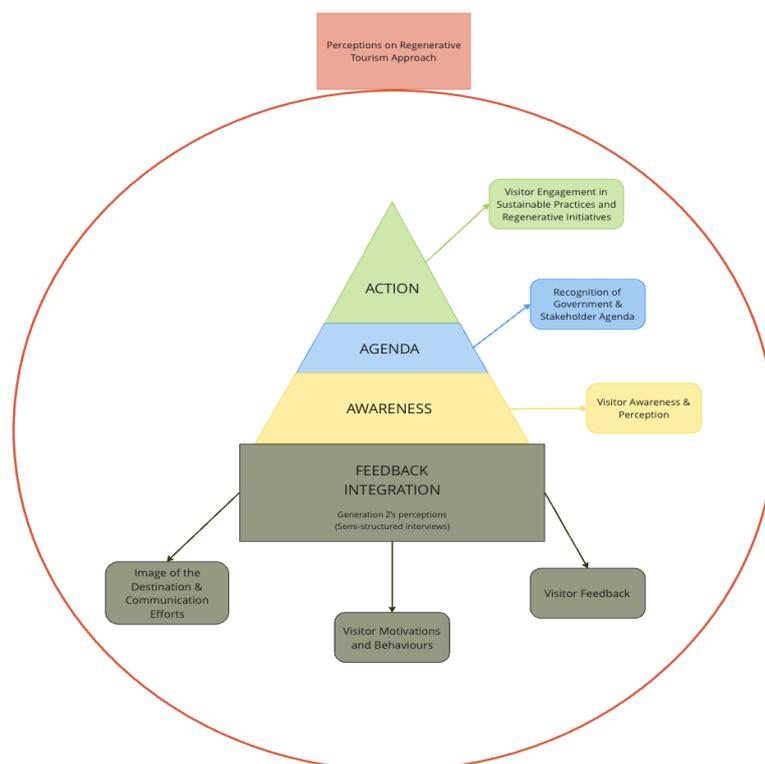
This study aims to explore the potential of regenerative tourism in Copenhagen, by investigating the perceptions and opinions of generation Z visitors. The findings, therefore, will attempt to answer the following question: How do Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's Regenerative approach within the broader Sustainable Tourism Development paradigm?

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts led to the identification of seven different themes, each providing relevant insights into the participants' perspectives on the topic. These will be presented and discussed in this section and are the following: 1) Visitor

Awareness and Perception; 2) Recognition of Government and Stakeholder Agenda; 3) Visitor Engagement in Sustainable Practices and Regenerative Initiatives; 4) Image of the Destination and Communication Efforts; 5) Visitor Motivations and Behaviours; 6) Visitor Feedback; 7) Perceptions on Regenerative Tourism Approach.

Figure 6 provides a visual representation of those themes, facilitating the understanding of their relations and contribution to the research question. This figure reflects the framework integrating the “Triple A’s model” (Mihalič, 2016, 2022), and the “Conceptual Framework for Regenerative Interventions” (Bellato et al., 2023), previously presented in the methodology section. As seen in the figure, all the identified themes relate to the different stages of the pyramid. Themes 1, 2, and 3 represent the arguments that provide insights for the three stages of the Triple A’s model, respectively “Awareness”, “Agenda”, and “Action”. These were the three pre-given themes. Themes 4, 5, and 6, on the contrary, emerged from the discussion with participants, and thus constitute the “Feedback Integration” level of the pyramid. Theme 7, placed at the top of the figure, reflects the main research focus, summarising all other themes’ findings, and reporting participants’ main perceptions, reflections and opinions on the RT approach. This figure aims to visually represent the themes covered and their connection to the initial framework. A detailed list of the codes identified for each theme, along with the corresponding colour used in the colour-coding process, can be found in the appendixes (Table 3).

Figure 6: Results Presentation



Source: Adapted from Bellato et al., 2023 & Mihalič, 2016

5.2 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

This section will encompass a thorough explanation and discussion of each of the themes identified, supporting and addressing the study’s research question. The quotations used in this chapter are extracted from the color-coded transcripts, which are included in the appendixes under the section titled “Interview Transcripts & Colour Coding Process”.

5.2.1 Visitors Awareness and Perception

Figure 7: Theme 1 – Visitor Awareness & Perception



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

To assess how regenerative tourism is perceived by Generation Z visitors, it is important to investigate their awareness and understanding of

both sustainability and the regenerative ideology. This first theme (figure 7), therefore, reflects the “Awareness” stage of the “Triple A’s model” (Mihalič, 2016, 2022), and it will summarise Generation Z visitors' opinions and perspectives, highlighting the different levels of familiarity with those terms.

According to what emerged from the interviews, it can be said that participants have an overall clear understanding of the concept of sustainability and, consequently, of the practices that it entails. In particular, when thinking about the travel and tourism sector, they mostly understand sustainability in terms of minimising our environmental impacts and try to act in a way that preserves the resources our planet presents: *“I think taking care of those [environmental] resources, and trying to be more considerate about them is important”* (Participant 9).

Some of the participants, moreover, provided an answer that aligns with the definition of Sustainable Development given by the UNWTO (UNWTO, n.d.-a): *“Sustainability means making wise use of the resources available to us so that we don't spoil them, and we preserve them for the future generations to use”* (Participant 6).

It is important to note, however, that while the majority of the participants impulsively associated sustainability with environmental protection and conservation efforts, some of them mentioned the importance of taking into account also other dimensions: *“I mostly think of environmental issues, but I kind of know that sustainability is not only about this”* (Participant 3). In particular, a few of the participants referred to the social and economic aspects, thus aligning their understanding with the three pillars of sustainability (Mihalič, 2022; Panse et al., 2021): *“[Sustainability] is based on three different parts, which is economic, ecological, and social sustainability. These different parts all have to be taken into account”* (Participant 2).

It is interesting to note, moreover, that when asked about the practices they associate with sustainability, the majority reported the importance of choosing environmentally friendly options. In this case, participants referred to those practices that contribute to reduce the CO2 emissions and, in the context of travel and tourism, this was mainly associated with the importance of shifting from planes to trains or choosing to bike instead of using cars and public transport: *“I think that sustainability related to travel and tourism can be applied to means of transport in the first place. So, for example, we all know that if we take a train, it's a more sustainable practice than taking a plane”* (Participant 10). *“I think about things like choosing environmentally friendly means of transportation, such as bicycles”* (Participant 12).

Other aspects often associated with sustainability, additionally, were recycling, reducing, and reusing the waste individuals generate, especially while travelling, as well as trying to choose sustainable accommodation options. However, only few participants associated with sustainable practices the effort to adapt and adjust to the local community. Those who mentioned this, emphasised the importance of adopting respectful and understanding behaviours towards the hosting community, while at the same time trying to support and foster the local economy. This can be done, for example, by buying local products instead of relying on large chains or international brands. Those are significant aspects that tourists have to take into account, and that can be considered part of the social and economic dimensions of sustainability. Participants 10 and 8, clearly pointed out the fact that tourists should not act as outsiders, as invaders, but rather try to integrate with the local community, participate in it, and show interest in it: *“I think that sustainability can also be seen in relation to the community itself that you are visiting. So, maybe, I don't know, maybe not destroying the environment, respecting the culture or maybe also trying to understand their culture, their cuisine, their practices without interfering too much”* (Participant 10). *“It can take many different forms from the way we interact with locals to where we purchase our food and drinks, or which kind of activities we choose to do in the place we visit”* (Participant 8).

It is relevant to emphasise, however, that despite participants have mostly been positive and supportive about the concept of sustainability and the practices associated with it, some of them reported certain criticisms and misunderstandings. The biggest issue they pointed out is that the term sustainability has been overused and, consequently, it has now become a buzzword. A word that lost its original meaning and implications, and that is now mainly being used as a greenwashing tool. Companies, for instance, tend to use this term to promote their products or image as environmentally friendly, without actually implementing substantial environmental efforts. It has become, therefore, a word that is often used without actually implying some sort of action or behaviour behind it. The risk this misuse can lead to, consequently, is that this type of communication could have the opposite effects on people, thus making them desist from adopting sustainable behaviours (Hussain & Haley,

2022; Weaver, 2004). This criticism reports an alignment with the fundamental issues concerning the STD paradigm, highlighting that people feel the need to move beyond the traditional methods. This shift could then be reflected in the adoption of a regenerative approach to effectively address the damages and impacts caused by current development practices. *“I think people are just tired of the word sustainability in a way. Because sustainability is just used so much that it has lost its credibility”* (Participant 7). *“You know, at some point, the topic of sustainability is discussed so frequently that many people start to avoid it, thinking, - here we go again-”* (Participant 9).

However, if in terms of sustainability awareness, the feedback was overall positive, the same cannot be said for the RT ideology. Participants, in fact, showed different degrees of awareness and understanding about it. Among them, only a minority were aware of the meaning of regenerative, as they had heard it before in the context of travel and tourism. They were, therefore, able to define this approach, although perhaps in broad terms: *“I think essentially the idea is to leave the destination better compared to how it was when you arrive. This can be in the forms of economic benefits, environmental benefits, and aspects like that”* (Participant 8). *“Sustainable just being that it is sustaining itself, as the word suggests, regenerative is generating something new out of that, so actually, well, going one step further from sustainability, in a way”* (Participant 2).

The majority of respondents, however, had a limited understanding of what RT refers to. Although they felt the concept was easy to grasp, they had mostly never heard of it before. And even those who had encountered the term or to whom it seemed familiar, found the information they had about it insufficient to be able to define it: *“(I’ve heard about it), yes. But I don’t really know how to define it”* (Participant 4).

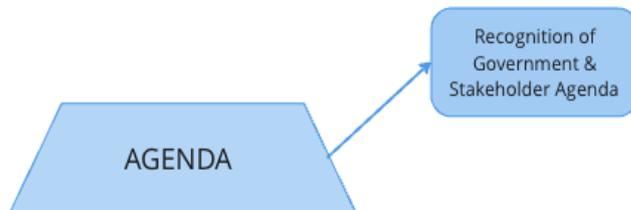
According to the participants, the reason behind this lack of knowledge and tools to define the RT ideology is to be found in the fact that this approach *“it’s still in such an infant stage, [so] it’s not really something that’s being communicated”* (Participant 1). The interviews revealed that this may also be because it is a term that is not often used in tourism campaigns or advertisements. It is therefore difficult to become aware of it unless one is an expert in the field or familiar with this ideology: *“No, I haven’t. I have never heard about the term regenerative tourism. I can imagine what it can mean, but I’ve never seen it, for example, in campaigns, ads, or any communication related to tourism”* (Participant 10). *“I have heard of it but haven’t put much thought into it to be honest. I wouldn’t be able to define it, as it is not a term that is common to hear in connection to travel or tourism”* (Participant 11).

While Generation Z visitors generally have a positive understanding of sustainability, they are less familiar with what the RT approach entails. To effectively raise awareness and engage these visitors, a broader educational campaign could be implemented. Leveraging social media in communication strategies would be particularly effective for this, given this

generation's digital expertise (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

5.2.2 Recognition of Government and Stakeholder Agenda

Figure 8: Theme 2 – Recognition of Government & Stakeholder Agenda



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

This theme, reflecting the “Agenda” stage of the “Triple A’s model” (Mihalič, 2016, 2022), summarises Generation Z visitors' understanding of the city’s STD agenda (figure 8). In particular, it focuses on visitors’ recognition of sustainable approach and initiatives; consistency in

communication in terms of sustainable efforts; and importance of stakeholder collaboration. As a pre-given theme, just like the previous one, it contributes to establish Generation Z visitors' recognition of these issues, thus setting the stage to further explore their perceptions on the RT approach.

One of the biggest issues emerging from the interviews is that most of the participants were not aware of Copenhagen’s sustainability recognitions. While they generally perceived Scandinavia and Northern countries as more sustainable than others, they were not familiar with specific awards or recognitions the city claims. Consequently, those were not factors influencing their decision to visit the destination, as implied in the following statements: “*I didn’t know about any recognition in particular. So, this was not the reason why I decided to visit Copenhagen to be honest*” (Participant 11, p.53). “*It’s not that I chose it because I knew about its sustainable recognition, to be honest*” (Participant 3).

This suggests that Copenhagen’s sustainable achievements are not effectively communicated to this demographic. More efforts are therefore needed to foster those recognitions as pull factors for the destination. Although this was the opinion of the majority of participants, it is also true that a small percentage of them were aware of these recognitions prior to visit the destination. In fact, they stated that the city’s approach to sustainability and the initiatives they implemented in relation to it were one of the aspects that attracted them to the destination: “*I would actually say it was one of the reasons for visiting. I knew it’s a green, beautiful, sustainable city. So, yeah, maybe that influenced it a bit*” (Participant 9).

If most participants were not initially aware of Copenhagen’s sustainability efforts before visiting, their perspective changed once they arrived at the destination. They mostly mentioned, in fact, that the city’s commitment to sustainability is evident, in particular concerning its extensive bike options and the number of green areas. Respondents, therefore, praised the city for being bike-friendly, clean and green. The city’s infrastructure was thus regarded as enhancing visitor experience while reinforcing its commitment to sustainability:

“I think Copenhagen is generally very good at making cycling attractive. You can see this from most of the city’s communication and infrastructure. The bike lanes are very accessible and good. They cover most of the city so you can really cover quite a long distance on them” (Participant 12). *“Even the fact that everyone is on their bikes. It is just a simple thing, but it already gives you enough context and kind of motivates you and urges you not to be unsustainable in that city”* (Participant 9).

The city's commitment to sustainability is somewhat evident in its efforts to nudge visitors into adopting sustainable behaviours by providing the necessary tools and resources for tourists while in the destination. Visitors, in fact, reported that these efforts are effective, as it is clear what sustainable practices are encouraged in the city. This is particularly true in the case of biking, recycling, and using public transport. *“I think the city does a relatively okay job at communicating their interest in sustainability when you're there”* (Participant 8). This is a positive observation, especially if considered alongside other participants that mentioned noticing consistency in the city's adherence to its sustainability agenda. According to them, the city seems to be consistent in presenting itself as a green city dedicated to sustainability. In this way, Copenhagen is strengthening its position in terms of sustainable commitment and reinforcing its reputation among visitors. *“I’m sure [that information on the city’s approach to sustainability] can be found if one looks for this, I am sure the city, and Denmark in general, normally rely on sustainability and “green” practices to support their communication”* (Participant 12).

One participant noted, moreover, that the city seems to follow a steady and consistent path in terms of its sustainable development strategies compared to other cities: *“Other cities change their strategy every four years. Copenhagen seems to be more consistent. I think it also shows in a way how the city designed the strategies and how it is trying to implement them”* (Participant 4). This consistency further strengthens visitors’ understanding of the city's sustainable commitment. The fact that they noticed and recognised such consistency, in fact, indicates effective communication and builds trust in their perceptions of the destination.

A positive aspect emerging from the interviews is that all respondents reacted positively when mentioning stakeholders’ collaboration in sustainable and regenerative initiatives. Their overall opinion was that such collaboration is vital in order to achieve and foster those results. Participants agreed that including all actors in decision-making processes is essential for such initiatives to be effective. One of them further emphasised that everyone of us is affected by the negative consequences that an uncontrolled development could have on our planet. Consequently, everyone could benefit from collaborative efforts that aim at improving the economic, environmental, and social dimension of a destination: *“I think collaboration is really important. You know, I think everyone should be aware of environmental issues, or the consequences of climate change. So, at the same time everyone should be involved in trying to address those issues. They all should make their part, as they*

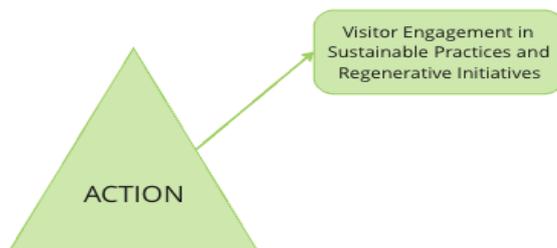
all in a way benefit from sustainable practices. If they all collaborate, of course the results of those collaboration will be positive” (Participant 11).

This collaboration is particularly valued because of its potential to generate bigger impacts, as participant 12 is suggesting: *“When all their opinions are considered, I think it creates a stronger and more cohesive effort for sustainability. It might sound maybe a catchphrase, but when everyone is involved and committed, the impact is much more bigger, significant” (Participant 12).* One participant further emphasised the paramount importance of involving locals in the decision-making processes. Aspect, the latter, that normally tends to be overlooked. Social sustainability, intended here as the consideration of locals as significant stakeholders, is crucial to avoid conflicts between visitors and residents, and ensures that the satisfaction of both groups is equally considered and valued (Nilsson, 2020): *“[This collaboration] is very important, especially when you mention locals, because in the end, it's their place that you're visiting. So, if you have sometimes not well thought out sustainable initiatives where tourists are engaged in something which was initiated by politics, but then the locals have nothing to profit from it or don't understand it or aren't kept on board, it's really not good” (Participant 2).* All respondents agreed, therefore, that stakeholder collaboration is essential in fostering sustainable development, especially when considering a regenerative approach to tourism. This ideology, in fact, emphasises collaboration as one of its core principles (Bellato et al., 2023; Panse et al., 2021).

Despite the positive aspects that participants praised, there is a general lack of awareness about Copenhagen’s specific sustainability awards and recognitions. These aspects should be better leveraged to strengthen the city’s already positive image as a leader in sustainability. By highlighting its achievements and implementing new and timely ideologies, as it would be RT in this case, Copenhagen could attract visitors who value these efforts. Engaging these visitors, consequently, will not only enhance their experience but also lead to better outcomes for the city’s sustainability objectives.

5.2.3 Visitor Engagement in Sustainable Practices and Regenerative Initiatives

Figure 9: Theme 3 – Visitor Engagement in Sustainable Practices & Regenerative Initiatives



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

This theme (figure 9) aligns with the “Action” stage of the “Triple A’s model” (Mihalič, 2016, 2022), and explores whether Generation Z visitors engage in sustainable practices and regenerative initiatives in Copenhagen. A particular focus will be placed on the specific actions they undertook, or places they visited; the positive impacts these had on their overall experience; and their consideration of individual efforts in relation

to sustainability. This will further support the understanding of how their engagement in sustainability practices could shape or influence their perception of the RT approach.

When asked about sustainable actions they engaged in, some respondents mentioned taking a train instead of flying, which appears to be the most common action associated with sustainable behaviour. However, the main purpose of this theme is to focus on actions and initiatives that are specific to Copenhagen. Therefore, the following discussion will highlight sustainable behaviours that are particularly relevant to Copenhagen's context. In this case, participants mostly agree on biking being the most sustainable mode of transport, and their primary choice in the city. According to them, this popularity of bikes is fostered and supported by the city's infrastructure, which provides extensive bike lanes but also different rental options. It is therefore easy moving around the city by bike and, consequently, this is considered the best option not only for its convenience, but also because it allows visitors to save money and experience the city from a different perspective. *"We rented a bike [...] and we biked around Copenhagen, which was amazing"* (Participant 4). *"Biking is just the best option. It is also an opportunity to see the city from another perspective"* (Participant 11).

Some visitors further mentioned the use of public transports, while others considered, instead, walking as the most significant sustainable choice. Similar to biking, these actions were recognised not only to promote and engage in sustainable behaviours, but also to experience the city more fully and from diverse perspectives. An interesting aspect that one respondent pointed out, moreover, is the presence of water dispensers around the city. They claimed those to be something one doesn't normally find in other cities, and a way to prompt visitors to bring their own bottles thus reducing plastic waste. In terms of accommodation choices, a different example that emerged during the interviews is "Couchsurfing", an option that allows travellers to stay with locals for free. This cuts out the need for travellers to search for a hotel or other type of commercial accommodation, while also promoting cross-cultural exchanges: *"I do Couchsurfing a lot, and I think that's also a good way for sustainable accommodation, because you don't stay in a hotel, and you don't use all this power and everything [this type of accommodation implies in terms of consumption]"* (Participant 5).

Considering that those were the actions that respondents predominantly associated with sustainable behaviour, it can be said that their answers mostly align with what several authors argued: Generation Z tend to have a preference for environmentally friendly options, especially in terms of transportation. They show efforts in trying to incorporate sustainable behaviours into their travels (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022).

However, when asked about regenerative initiatives or places, most respondents could not directly identify any. The few that were mentioned only came up after the researcher provided examples or hints about what could fall into this category. As a result, the area of Christiania was one of the most mentioned examples. Respondents, in fact, identify in this neighbourhood an example of initiative aligning with regenerative principles because of its

commitment to sustainability and self-sustainment: *“In Christiania they have communal gardening, and cars cannot enter the place, they have their own cycling system and they are quite aware of their consumption. Also, the buildings that they make, they either preserve the old buildings that exist there, or they use materials that are already existing, for example from the ruins of the parts of the city. So, they really try to either upcycle or reduce the consumption of the material. Christiania was one of the places that is recognized for the environmentally friendly practices and that's the only example I can think of in terms of regenerative practices in Copenhagen”* (Participant 3).

Another example that was emphasised by different respondents is Copenhill, a waste-to-energy plant located close to the city centre. They praised not only its innovative character, but also how the city managed to make it an attractive building that also engages the community. While its main scope is to transform waste into clean energy, it also accommodates recreational spaces that attract not only locals but also visitors. In the building, in fact, there is a ski slope, different hiking trails and a climbing gym (CopenHill, n.d.).

While these were the examples most participants associated with a regenerative approach, others mentioned some lesser-known instances. An interesting one was the Absalon, a church that has been transformed into a community centre that now hosts different events in order to foster community engagement (Folkehuset Absalon, 2023): *“One of the most memorable ones was Absalon. It's somewhere in the city. It used to be a church, but they converted it into a community centre for arts, community dinners or community events. So, I participated in that, and they had like a zero-waste dinner which was for like two euros”* (Participant 8). The fact that such an example has been mentioned emphasises visitors' interest in engaging in similar initiatives and trying to integrate into the community. Moreover, the participants' surprise at the high level of recycling highlights a valuable opportunity for visitors to learn about sustainable practices. This reaction suggests that such initiatives also serve as educational experiences. By learning about these practices in Copenhagen, visitors can be inspired to adopt and implement similar sustainable behaviours in their own communities, thereby extending the impact of these initiatives beyond the destination context. Leveraging these opportunities can therefore enhance the overall impact of sustainable tourism. In this context, another participant highlighted an interesting example of a well-known restaurant that uses self-produced and locally sourced food. They believe that the restaurant aligns with regenerative principles by supporting the local environment and economy, and by reducing costs and emissions associated with transportation and importation: *“I've heard of a restaurant called Noma and they grow their own vegetables. They do not buy in bulk, you know, they grow and collect based on the quantity they need. And also, by doing this, they cut down the cost or the transportation, what they would pay if they imported such things, for example”* (Participant 6).

What emerged from this discussion with respondents, therefore, is the significant connection they emphasised between engaging in sustainable practices and the increased visitor satisfaction. In the case of Copenhagen, specifically, this seems mostly to be reflected in the choice of biking, considered as enriching and improving visitor experience. According to several participants, in fact, this positive experience is further supported by the fact that it is cost-effective and allows them to better immerse themselves in the city. An aspect, the latter, hindered when moving by car, taxi, or metros. These experiences involving broader and diverse interactions are said to foster a deeper connection to both the environment and the destination itself: *“It also means a lot to me to see the city by cycling around it, like getting fresh air, and do a bit of exercise. And yeah, I think it is maybe a small thing, but it really made my experience of the city better. More enjoyable and accessible I would say”* (Participant 12). *“Yeah, definitely [biking had a positive impact on my experience of the city]. It was one of the things I remember the most”* (Participant 4).

Those insights align with the previously discussed topic that positive experiences originating from sustainable behaviours can encourage more visitors to engage with the destination (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Miller et al., 2015): *“In Copenhagen, instead of taking a cab I biked, because you are more motivated to take a bike”* (Participant 7). This increased engagement further supports the idea that visitors are more likely to recognize and accept sustainability efforts and practices when they are made evident and concrete. Consequently, the increased consideration of these factors by DMOs in their development strategies will further promote sustainable urban development and enhance the destination's overall sustainability (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Lee et al., 2014). Additionally, such behaviours can also impact visitors' individual actions and perspectives, strengthening their consideration of sustainable behaviours even beyond their visit: *“I think it's just the general choices that I also try to not do, like for example buy new plastic bottles every time”* (Participant 2). This participant is referring to a practice that is not necessarily only travel related, as it is a behaviour that each of us can adopt whenever. However, it is supporting the idea that this generation is becoming more conscious of the impact that our current development has on the environment, in this case in terms of the amount of plastic and waste we generate (Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Some participants mentioned, moreover, that engaging in such initiatives can generate a sense of pride and satisfaction, originating from the recognition that they are contributing to the community. Connected to the act of upcycle and reducing waste, a respondent commented the following: *“I feel like I'm giving these things a new life because if no one takes it, they're just going to be crashed and maybe burned or I don't know, like however they treat this trash. But now I give them a new life and they are still being used. And when I'm doing it, I also feel very proud that this [food in this case] is not going to waste. And I think it's, how to say, it's very rewarding”* (Participant 5).

In relation to this, other participants further emphasised the importance of individual choices and actions in sustainable travel: *“I just focus on myself. On myself I mean how sustainable*

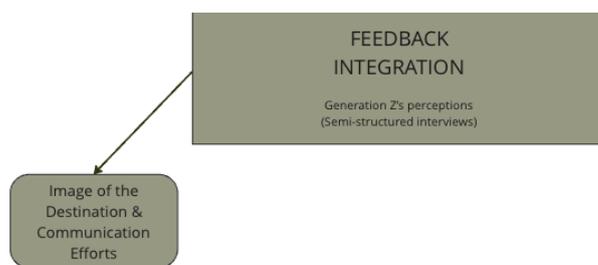
I could be while travelling you know, rather than what the city has to offer to me” (Participant 6). “Maybe in a way I think I am motivated to think green in small daily decisions, you know. If I can I might try and do my part” (Participant 12).

These quotes highlight that it is not only what destinations offer that motivates visitors to engage in specific actions and adopt sustainable behaviours. Equally important is the visitors' awareness of the importance of such behaviours and their willingness to contribute both in the destination, but also during other travels or at home. Consequently, it is clear how visitor education should be given more attention in the development and implementation of sustainable and regenerative initiatives. Fostering a culture of sustainability, therefore, is equally important to providing visitors with the right tools and resources to engage and adopt sustainable behaviours. These insights emphasise the need to redefine the role of tourists, encouraging them to adopt a sustainable mindset while travelling. It is not only the responsibility of the city and residents but also of tourists to contribute to and engage in sustainable practices: *“They are aware of the fact that as a tourist they are consuming resources and they have to contribute at the same time, so not just exploiting the destination” (Participant 9).* Their involvement and education, consequently, are crucial for the successful implementation of sustainable actions (Nandasena et al., 2022).

It can be said that those insights and considerations that visitors pointed out, overall align with the holistic perspective that the RT approach entails (Gibbons, 2020b; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021), and with the potential for tourism to serve as a catalyst for a society that is more informed and responsible (Hussain, 2021). This further reflects the evidence that Generation Z is increasingly aware and considerate of the positive effects that sustainable practices have on the destinations, and this is shown in their tendency to integrate and adopt such behaviours (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022).

5.2.4 Image of the Destination and Communication Efforts

Figure 10: Theme 4 – Image of the Destination & Communication Efforts



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

Unlike the earlier pre-given themes, this one developed during the conversation with participants (figure 10). It will focus on the image people have of Copenhagen as a destination; the influence of this image on their overall experience; and the city's communication efforts regarding sustainability. These

insights are crucial for understanding how effective communication can support and foster the implementation of sustainable and regenerative initiatives. This will further support the research on how Generation Z visitors perceive the RT approach in Copenhagen.

The most significant aspect emerging from the interviews is that nearly all participants stated they generally perceive Scandinavia and Northern countries as sustainable and innovative: *“Scandinavian cities have this image of quite progressive and also in terms of tackling climate change and so on, and also this image of design and innovation”* (Participant 2). *“I think maybe it's an assumption that is generally known among our society, that they [Denmark, Scandinavia and Northern cities] are usually more involved and more advanced in ideas or in sustainable practices, or that they are more connected to the environment”* (Participant 10). This perception further extends to Denmark, reinforcing the image of Copenhagen as a reflection of the country's established leadership in sustainability: *“It's just what we think of Copenhagen. You automatically think of sustainability. It's the impression I already had of Copenhagen as being the bike capital and sustainable”* (Participant 4).

This image is strengthened by respondents' observations that Copenhagen's infrastructure supports sustainable efforts and strategies. The city's well-designed bike lanes and efficient public transportation system make it easy for tourists to engage in sustainable practices, contributing to the generation of positive experiences. *“I think that a big part of those achievements is made possible by the context of a place, you know? If the context of that place is ready to bear this, those businesses or those initiatives would be able to achieve it. They get the support from the communities, they get the support from the government fundings and subsidies and everything. Also, I think they can find more educated workforce. They can, because their context is kind of ready to do this, so they can achieve this much easier, in my opinion. And yes, it is effective”* (Participant 3). *“I can tell you that bike-friendly cities are really difficult to manage, just to have that infrastructure is really important, it encourages people to do it, even as a tourist”* (Participant 7).

However, as one participant clearly pointed out, this infrastructure is not only intended in terms of urban planning and physical resources available for tourists and residents. This infrastructure also includes and is reflected in the mindset and education of the Danish people: *“I think the Danish society is very aware of the environmental issues. So, I think they care about this, and they notice this. In a place like Copenhagen or Denmark, this might be effective, but in other places in the world, I'm not sure if something like this can be done or introduced. I would say that because in general Danish people are educated in a way, or they care about this kind of stuff, they are concerned about this”* (Participant 3).

The examples of regenerative initiatives mentioned in the interviews, such as the church transformed into a community centre, or the example of Copenhill, further demonstrate that respondents perceive the city as sustainable and innovative. These examples, therefore, can be considered effective in terms of visitor engagement and awareness. According to a participant, innovation is also entailed in the way the destination communicates some of those specific efforts, such in the case of signage in urban parks. Signs at parks' different entrances, in fact, explain the main characteristics of the specific park, and emphasises the importance of green spaces in cities: *“I thought that was like a very “covert” way of*

explaining our responsibility to us and to climate change as a whole” (Participant 8). Another respondent, instead, mentioned that the city is working towards the implementation of broader and different car-free areas: *“I think it is really positive, the initiative, but also that the city is experimenting in a way. It shows it is innovative and believes more can be done”* (Participant 11).

If what has been reported and discussed by now under this theme reflects a positive image that visitors have or developed of the destination, negative aspects also emerged. One of the biggest issues that several participants pointed out, in fact, is that effective communication seems to be lacking. There are several instances, in fact, where respondents pointed out gaps in terms of communication on the city’s sustainable efforts. Gaps not only concerning practices that visitors can engage with, but also regarding the city’s overall stance on sustainability. When asked about examples of sustainability efforts that the city is implementing (in addition to the most often mentioned cycling paths, green areas and public transport), or the resources and tools it offers to tourists, most of the participants stated that such information is missing: *“To be honest, I haven't seen so much of the communication, either online or when I'm there”* (Participant 4). Consequently, they were not fully aware of these efforts. A respondent further stated that, despite the image of sustainability and innovation that characterises the destination, they *“didn't notice anything that would go beyond what other cities are doing”* (Participant 2). This issue, therefore, may also be a reason contributing to the lack of awareness about the city’s recognitions that has been discussed in the first theme analysed.

Again, participants were not aware of most of the initiatives that could align with regenerative principles that the researcher mentioned during the interview. For instance, when asked about the urban farming initiative, or the neighbourhood that has been transformed into a green area (Danish Architecture Center, n.d.; VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-d), most of the participants said they had never heard of these examples before. They reported a lack of communication about these projects, especially in terms of their purpose. They all agreed, consequently, that maybe more should be done to promote these initiatives, as they considered them both unique and effective: *“I think those are all very interesting and I would say positive examples. But to be honest I didn't really notice any, and I didn't know about those before you told me so I really can't say about their effectiveness”* (Participant 11).

It is important to note that, as mentioned in the dedicated section of this thesis, one of the main limitations of this research is the lack of explicit reference to the RT approach in the official communication, strategies and policies of the destination. However, the criticism here emphasises that, even if not labelled as regenerative, there is still a lack of communication about the existence of such initiatives. Given that RT is understood within this work as part of the broader STD paradigm, these initiatives should still be communicated as integral to the city's strategies for adopting and integrating this comprehensive paradigm.

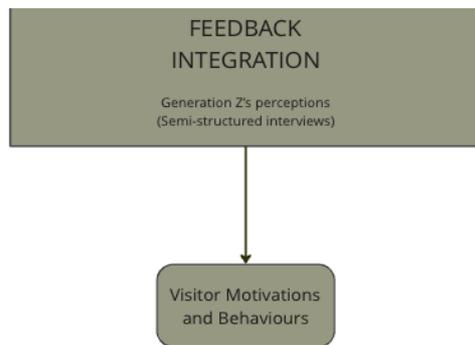
As one respondent pointed out, however, it is also true that not everything needs to be communicated officially. Instead, it may be more important to target communications according to the needs and preferences of visitors, ensuring that they effectively understand and consider these efforts: *“I don't think like sustainability efforts or regenerative efforts have to always be like openly communicated. I think it's important that you do them and that people accept them and use them”* (Participant 2).

While respondents generally critiqued Copenhagen's communication efforts, they also praised certain initiatives, such as the elevated benches (Ingvarsen, 2022). According to some participants, this initiative was interesting due to its artistic, innovative, and interactive nature, which they believed engages people most effectively. Many agreed that practical engagement and artistic installations tend to "spark" people's interest: *“Especially when you're a tourist, you like stop at these sorts of things and you are interested. So, if it wasn't there, I don't think you would have these thoughts. And things like this are quite an easy way to spark new thoughts and debate”* (Participant 2). Several respondents agreed, in fact, that such installations are effective in capturing visitor attention and lead them to reflect deeper on the meanings behind the creation and development of these installations: *“I think that artistic installations can somehow talk to people. I think that if they are weird, like different in a way, they can attract much more attention, leading people to reflect”* (Participant 10). *“I think it's a simple but very effective way to engage people and make them think about these issues. Maybe more than just talking about it, seeing what the effects could be it makes you more aware of the issues behind”* (Participant 12). They suggested, however, that the aim and purpose of such initiatives should be better clarified for them to function effectively as educational tools. Consequently, recommendations were made to enhance the city's communication strategies. For example, if the purpose of the high benches had been made clearer, participants felt they would have been more aware of it, leading to a more effective outcome: *“It's engaging, but maybe there should be an explanation. Because again, without an explanation maybe people might think it is just because the Danes are very tall”* (Participant 7). *“Maybe if those examples are more visible or more communicated in a way, maybe more people will know about it and then they would also feel more engaged”* (Participant 11).

Overall, Copenhagen is generally perceived as a sustainable city. However, communication about specific efforts and initiatives is lacking. Improving this communication would enhance the accessibility and visibility of the city's commitment to sustainability, and consequently better meet visitors' expectations. The current discrepancy in communication has left some visitors disappointed, as their high expectations based on Copenhagen's reputation for sustainability were not entirely met.

5.2.5 Visitor Motivations and Behaviours

Figure 11: Theme 5 – Visitors Motivations & Behaviours



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

Since participants indicated several factors influencing their decision-making processes, it is crucial to include a discussion about visitor motivations and behaviours in relation to sustainable and regenerative practices. When there is a lack of actual engagement, in fact, the “fault” is not only to be attributed to a lack of communication or visitor engagement strategies from the destinations’ side. Personal and subjective choices also have to be considered.

The purpose of this theme (figure 11) is to emphasise these aspects and issues, and to understand how they can be leveraged to improve visitor education and engagement. Consequently, the content of this theme is further considered relevant to better understand and assess Generation Z visitors' perspective on RT, thereby contributing to the study’s research question.

A significant issue that emerged among most respondents was the lack of effort in researching information about a destination’s commitment to sustainability. Many confessed that they tend not to look for such information before visiting a destination: *“I didn't read to be honest. It was not an important matter to me, so I didn't research anything about it”* (Participant 3). This tendency can limit their engagement with sustainable practices, as well as reduce their overall understanding of the city’s commitment to sustainability. Efforts from all stakeholders are essential for achieving significant and effective outcomes. If any party is missing, not engaging enough, or unwilling to contribute, it may diminish the results or even invalidate the overall broader efforts. It follows, therefore, that improved communication and education strategies are needed to better inform visitors and enhance their overall experience and engagement with sustainable initiatives. It is not, however, only before visiting. A lack of engagement is perceived also when in the destination. When asked if the city provides the resources and tools to engage in sustainable practices, some respondents indicated that this was not their priority. One participant mentioned that they mostly tend to look for popular attractions and do not inform themselves about sustainable options and practices: *“I haven't looked for it. It is just that to be honest I haven't made it a priority, because I usually just look for interesting spots and popular attractions”* (Participant 12).

This lack of engagement and interest in this subject, consequently, can be due to barriers that visitors find in accessing such information. Given the generation’s proficiency with digital platforms, it is important to leverage these tools to better reach this target audience (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). This approach not only raises awareness and

education but also informs them about existing opportunities, places, and initiatives they can engage with or contribute to. Several respondents mentioned that they generally rely on social media or the destination's websites for information. However, this information they research usually merely concerns popular activities and main attractions. TikTok was frequently mentioned, aligning with this generation's primary information sources choice. According to one respondent, TikTok is very useful because it provides various recommendations and tips from other travellers and content creators. Others emphasised the importance of word-of-mouth in their decision-making processes, particularly advice from family or friends: *"I mostly use social media and apps like Instagram to find inspiration and information about places to visit. However, I also trust what friends or relatives say sometimes"* (Participant 12). Only a few respondents reported visiting tourist offices or using tangible resources like travel guides: *"I think word of mouth is really important for me, but I also go to the tourist offices because I feel I get a more holistic view. Because I mean everything is, of course, subjective, but from tourist offices I get more like the actual facts and attractions about the city. But from people it's more like their experience and it could be based on different perceptions, so you get different opinions"* (Participant 9). It is clear, therefore, that focusing on digital platforms is essential for reaching this target audience. Most of the respondents clearly emphasised the importance of social media, validating the literature review's findings: For Generation Z, social media and digital platforms are crucial tools for encouraging participation and raising awareness about environmental issues (Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Destinations should leverage these tools to engage visitors, who rely on them not only for researching information, but also to feel part of a community, such as following travel influencers for advice and tips.

Those barriers, however, are not only related to communication and information accessibility, but also heavily rely on personal motivations and choices. Many participants mentioned that cost is one of the biggest obstacles. Sustainable and regenerative practices are often perceived as expensive, which can be a significant limitation for them, as most are either students or working students, with only a minority being full-time workers. Consequently, they frequently have to choose more cost-effective options: *"I tend to also be budget conscious. Like I wouldn't choose the expensive option that's more sustainable, to be honest"* (Participant 1). *"I would definitely look for options that are more sustainable in a way. But again, as I am a student, it's more about budget, this is my priority. So, I have to go with the cheapest option, even though I care about the environment"* (Participant 7). This aligns with the literature, which pointed out how such initiatives are often seen as luxury or too expensive, therefore catering only to those who can afford them (Butcher, 2024).

Budget constraints are particularly evident when considering transport options. Participants criticised that taking a train is often much more expensive than flying, consequently forcing them to choose the less sustainable option: *"It's not only because of sustainability, so it is not that I chose to do this [flying instead of taking the train] because it was sustainable. It's because of financial restrictions I had"* (Participant 3). Participants highlighted that

Copenhagen is already very expensive compared to other European capitals, which further limits their budget choices for the destination. It would be beneficial for the city to develop policies or strategies that balance cost-effectiveness with sustainable choices, enabling more people to engage with sustainable practices and enhancing the outcomes and applications of this paradigm.

Cost is not the only factor affecting participants' choices regarding sustainability. According to them, the length of stay in the destination also plays a significant role. Many visitors, especially those staying for a short period, such as a weekend, do not prioritise or show interest in looking for and engaging with sustainable practices: *“Honestly, I normally don’t look for this type of information. When I’m planning a trip, I’m more focused on things to do and places to see rather than the sustainability efforts of the destination. Especially if I am planning a short stay I would say, you know, I normally try to focus on the sightseeing opportunities the destination has”* (Participant 11). In such cases, people tend to focus on the main attractions of the city rather than specific initiatives such as the ones mentioned during the interview. This consequently makes it challenging for DMOs to involve them in these activities, as in their opinion such efforts are usually linked to longer stays in the destination.

Another aspect that according to respondents seems to influence their choices in terms of sustainable practices is the purpose of travel. Reasons behind this is that different types of tourists have varying motivations for visiting a destination, therefore leading to different ways they wish to experience it. Consequently, their interests and needs will differ. As one participant mentioned, we cannot expect everyone to be inherently interested in sustainable or regenerative practices: *“[If] their purpose is just to stay on the beach and lay on the beach. I don’t see them interacting with the community that much”* (Participant 10). Such behaviour seems to reflect the underlying motivations for visiting a destination. If the primary reasons are to relax and detach from daily routines, for instance, it is understandable that engagement and participation in sustainable or regenerative initiatives may not be their top priorities: *“I’m just going to do whatever I can to enjoy the most. It’s really hard to ask people to care about this. You don’t even want them to care about this, you know? You cannot expect”* (Participant 3).

However, these motivations and behaviours don't always limit visitor engagement. For instance, a participant highlighted the influence of social pressure, which aligns with the literature, indicating that this generation often adopts sustainable behaviours because they are influenced by or feel the pressure of societal norms (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). In this case, the participant noted that they are more likely to act sustainably because of the destination’s infrastructure and the behaviour of locals. They further suggested that this is because people tend to automatically adapt to the behaviours of those around them: *“Most of the things we are doing are sort of automatic; we do it just because society does it. So maybe it can be said that people will be affected by how something is done or acknowledged*

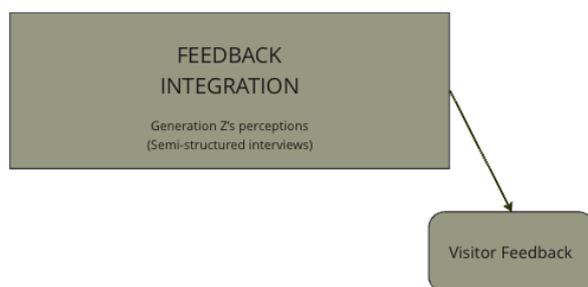
in their society” (Participant 9). This is a positive aspect that should be leveraged to improve visitor engagement. Educating more people on sustainable practices and encouraging their adoption could lead to a chain effect, where others will follow their example. Such behaviours could, in fact, be adopted not only in the destination but also when visitors return to their home countries, enhancing the overall impact on the environment, economy, and society. As inferred by a participant: *“I think, for example, if these tourists, that usually behave badly, like throwing trash everywhere, travel to a very green city, and they see that people are, like, doing all those practices, and they are not throwing trash everywhere, they are not spitting everywhere, they will change their behaviour as well”* (Participant 5).

Finally, as it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, there has been an unequal representation of participants in terms of gender. If this aspect was initially included to understand if or to what extent gender influences Generation Z visitors' awareness of, or engagement in ST or RT, it can be now said that not enough data was collected to make comparisons in terms of gender.

This theme revealed that financial and time constraints are the main factors limiting visitors' engagement in sustainable and regenerative initiatives. To address this, developing cost-effective solutions could foster greater interest and participation in these initiatives.

5.2.6 Visitor Feedback

Figure 12: Theme 6 – Visitor Feedback



This theme (figure 12) will present participants' feedback on the destination and highlight specific aspects that according to them should be leveraged for improved results and visitor engagement. It will also contribute to build a deeper understanding of how visitors perceive the RT approach.

Source: Adapted from Figure 6

As evident from the positive image many visitors already had of Nordic countries and their sustainability efforts, there is an overall favourable opinion about Copenhagen. Respondents generally agree that the city's approach to sustainability is still perceived as superior to most of the other destinations they have visited. *“I don't think that a lot of cities make a lot of effort in this to be very honest. I would say Denmark is quite special in that sense”* (Participant 8). *“Copenhagen is doing a much better job, I would say. Yeah, it is true that I didn't see so much of the communication, but I've seen more than other cities”* (Participant 4).

What visitors perceived as positive was not so much the policies and agendas reflecting the destination's commitment to sustainability, but rather the infrastructure and locals' mindset. They particularly praised the effectiveness of the city's bike-friendly design and the number of parks and green spaces throughout the city: *"It's still way better managed [...]. So I really, really love that about Copenhagen, the fact that you're always close to nature. And it's just that it's so walkable, bikeable, that is something that, you know, should not be taken for granted, even though it's very common in Europe"* (Participant 7).

Some participants stated that after visiting the city, they gained a better understanding of Copenhagen's approach to sustainability. However, this view was not shared by all participants; others felt the opposite: *"It's not that I came back from my Copenhagen trip and had something of their sustainability efforts noticed"* (Participant 2). This discrepancy further underscores the need for better communication and engagement strategies that has been mentioned also in relation to the previous themes. This lack of visitor engagement appears to derive from the diverse motivations and behaviours behind visitors' choices. As noted previously, visitors, especially on short stays, focus on the main attractions and fun activities, often overlooking sustainable or regenerative efforts. Additionally, financial constraints typical of this generation limit their choices to more affordable, and sometimes less sustainable, options. Moreover, a worrying aspect identified by a participant is the scepticism about the general interest in these topics: *"I'm not sure how many tourists are concerned about these topics. I'm quite pessimistic about this part"* (Participant 3). This consideration further emphasises the need for better communication and engagement strategies. Consequently, some participants suggested that enhancing and leveraging visitor education on ST and RT could improve and increase their engagement: *"So, then if people are aware of the need to minimise their impacts, maybe they can also think of contributing to it somehow, so aligning with this regenerative ideology. So, I think here it's very important that destinations take responsibility"* (Participant 9).

The need for better visitor education and engagement emerged primarily concerning the regenerative ideology, as most respondents were unfamiliar with this approach or the initiatives that align with it. According to some participants, engagement should not only involve the city improving its efforts, but also encouraging visitors to actively participate. This hands-on involvement can enhance visitors' understanding and willingness to engage further, possibly inspiring them to adopt sustainable behaviours at home. This is why the regenerative ideology is seen as unique and interesting, offering visitors meaningful ways to contribute to sustainability efforts: *"If they could capture, or engage the visitors, I think more people would be inclined to have sustainable behaviour in their mind, if they can say they're doing something. I think that would help, at least to create a sort of awareness about it"* (Participant 1).

Improved engagement will consequently enhance visitors' positive perceptions of the city's commitment to sustainability and regenerative practices: *"Then if people feel more engaged,*

like they feel they can contribute and do something good, maybe they could also have a better perception of the city, and they will appreciate it more” (Participant 11).

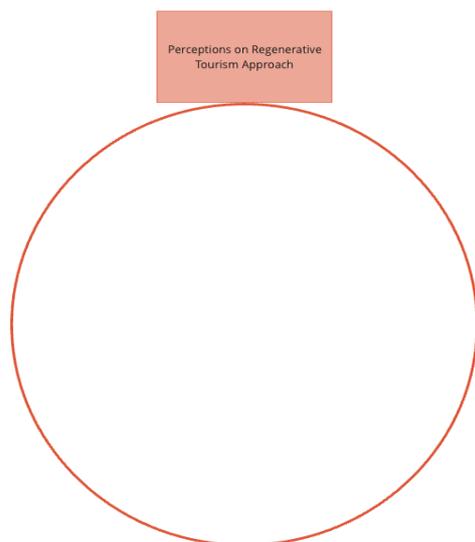
While most of the feedback received from the participants was positive, some did mention that there is always an opportunity for improvement. They suggested enhancements both in infrastructure and communication. For instance, one participant recommended creating more car-free areas, while others focused on improving the city's overall cleanliness and further enhancing green spaces. Regarding the communication side, one participant suggested that Copenhagen should improve its communication strategies to reach a wider audience, emphasising the city's potential given its status as a European capital. Another participant further emphasised the importance of broader and clearer communication about the city's sustainability commitment to educate and engage visitors: *“More communication about the environmental and climate change issues and how the city is combating them would be necessary. Maybe if such information is clearer for visitors it could make them more aware and consequently make them adopt a different behaviour” (Participant 11).*

An important insight from some respondents is that Generation Z visitors value actions more than words. They emphasised that it's not just about what and how sustainability efforts are communicated, but what the city actually does in practice: *“I don't think sustainability efforts or regenerative efforts have to always be like openly communicated. I think it's important that you do them and that people accept them and use them” (Participant 2).* *“It's more important that they are delivering what they promise which is something I can see when I'm there” (Participant 8).* In relation to this, examples mentioned during the interviews include artistic or physical installations, the innovative Copenhill facility, community events, and the transformation of areas into spaces for community engagement. These initiatives are seen as more engaging and leave a lasting impression on visitors, motivating them to seek similar experiences in future trips or to implement such examples in their own countries.

Visitor feedback is crucial for assessing the city's sustainability efforts and determining how to leverage these efforts to further educate and engage visitors. This feedback can enhance their experience while promoting tourism development that balances environmental, societal, and economic factors. In Copenhagen's case, visitors generally provided positive feedback on the destination but emphasised the need for more participatory experiences to increase their engagement.

5.2.7 Perceptions on Regenerative Tourism Approach

Figure 13: Theme 7 – Perceptions on Regenerative Tourism Approach



Source: Adapted from Figure 6

This theme builds on the insights and discussion from the previous sections in order to assess participants' perspectives on the study's research question (figure 13). It will therefore primarily focus on visitor perceptions of the RT approach in Copenhagen. These perceptions arise from an extensive discussion on the city's current sustainable practices and the respondents' individual experiences and feedback. The aim is to understand the extent to which this ideology is perceived and how it could be fostered and promoted, and to highlight aspects or tools that the destination could leverage in order to successfully implement this approach.

The main aspects emerged from participants and that will be significant for the conclusions of this research is that most of the respondents struggled to understand RT approach. As already mentioned, some of them have heard about this before, but they had a really broad understanding of it and were thus not able to define it. Others, on the contrary, have never heard about it before. Some participants associated RT with existing travel programs such as Workaways, which involve working within a community in exchange for accommodation and the opportunity to explore the area. Generally, however, it was clear that most of the participants have shown confusion regarding the practical applications of this concept, reporting uncertainty as to how it can be implemented or how it may actually differ from the broader concept of sustainability. Many participants, in fact, asked for a definition of RT and struggled to identify any initiatives they had seen or participated in that aligned with this ideology. This reflects a lack of effective communication and awareness: *“So, regenerative, that's something new. But I think that for people to use that term, they really need to learn what that is”* (Participant 7). Respondents, in fact, emphasized that destinations should enhance their communication and visitor engagement efforts to promote RT. This would not only engage a broader audience but also contribute to the overall STD paradigm. As another participant noted, therefore, *“it should be communicated more, because it is interesting as I said, but it is difficult to achieve it if no one knows about it”* (Participant 12).

Another interesting aspect emerging from this discussion is that, despite initially being unaware of this ideology, all respondents appreciated the purpose of this approach and recognized its benefits for both the environment and the community. They found it stimulating and positive. One participant, when asked about the perceived effectiveness of such initiatives, mentioned: *“I mean, this is something that it always helps to know because*

when you're in such a place you feel like this is inspiring in some way" (Participant 2). Some participants also highlighted the potential benefits of RT over the traditional sustainability efforts, perceiving it as a positive step forward. They further appreciated its impact on the social pillar of sustainability and how it can engage and involve both visitors and locals, making them feel part of the change: *"It shows a community effort and personal responsibility to improve our environment. And of course, tourists would also benefit from this"* (Participant 12). One participant, moreover, found it interesting and positive to consider RT in relation to its potential for advancing urban planning. This aligns with the idea that sustainability is crucial in urban development. Environmentally friendly solutions encourage visitors to engage with these projects, improving their perception of the city. Thus, sustainable urban development benefits both visitors and locals, enhancing the city's overall appeal (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Miller et al., 2015): *"I'm very passionate about turning the industry areas into green areas and actually think of how people perceive the city. I think it's very important not to just build cheap apartments, as you see in some cities. So, to have that in mind when you're establishing those green areas to acknowledge the importance of both the visitors and the inhabitants, I think is super important"* (Participant 4).

Overall, respondents agree that regenerative initiatives are more engaging. They believe this is because regenerative efforts are more tangible and involve direct contributions from individuals, making people feel they are actively contributing to positive change. This perspective is reinforced by the criticism associated with the current sustainability approach, which is often seen as outdated and not accurately representing the actions and intentions behind it (Hussain & Haley, 2022; Weaver, 2004). In contrast, regenerative initiatives are perceived as new and impactful, providing concrete and measurable contributions: *"Regenerative, like you said, is more engaging, it's more about talking and, you know, doing things together, giving back. So, there's some action related to it. And it would definitely change my perspective. Like if I have to choose between a sustainable initiative, let's say, or a regenerative one where I can actually engage in the process, you know, I would choose that, definitely. It does influence the mind of people our age, I guess, or younger probably"* (Participant 7). This seems to align with the belief that this generation has a genuine interest in doing more to mitigate the impact of their actions on the planet and to safeguard their future (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Moreover, the active involvement that regenerative initiatives require not only engages visitors but also emphasises and enhances their role in these efforts. A positive aspect emphasised during the discussion is that such initiatives can blur the distinction between visitors and locals, fostering a sense of community: *"In my opinion, you're not just a guest in a place where a host is just hosting you. You become the local, you know? You feel involved. You feel welcome. And I think this is a very interesting aspect of it because you feel more integrated. You feel much more integrated if you feel that you're giving back"* (Participant 3).

Another participant mentioned that learning about these perspectives and ideologies, and knowing they could actively engage and contribute to the community, helped them to deeper understand the impact of their choices. This aspect is crucial as it reflects the social dimension of sustainability, emphasising that visitors should contribute to the communities they visit rather than act as outsiders. Aligning with one participant's observation that we are all part of the same planet and should act responsibly, this perspective connects to the concept of transformative travel experiences. The ultimate aim should be to enhance the purpose of our travel, shifting our thinking from a focus on individual needs to a collective approach (Dredge, 2022; Nandasena et al., 2022): *“Tourists should believe that they are not just foreigners here, that they cannot just do whatever they want because they do not belong to the destination, and it is not where they live. So, then if people are aware of the need to minimise their impacts, maybe they can also think of contributing to it somehow, so aligning with this regenerative ideology”* (Participant 9).

RT initiatives, therefore, are essential in creating these impactful experiences and promoting STD. Participants noted that awareness of this ideology can influence their future travel choices and behaviours: *“If I can contribute to enhancing the community or the places that I'm going to visit, yeah, surely, it would benefit me and it is an efficient way of travelling as well, I would say”* (Participant 6). *“It can influence future travels in a way that maybe I can try to be more sustainable or to interact more with the community”* (Participant 10). Although they found the approach interesting and worth considering at a destination, however, they do not see it as a primary factor in their decision-making process: *“I think it sounds very positive. However, I don't think it would have the final say in regards to visiting a destination. I mean, I struggle to see it as a factor that could influence my decision to visit a destination”* (Participant 11).

Criticism, however, also emerged regarding RT. Two participants linked RT principles to the Workaway program, a cultural exchange opportunity where people work in exchange for food and accommodation (Workaway, n.d.). However, according to them, the mindset and purpose behind such engagements differ. People choose Workaway to become part of a community and support it, an aspect that may be harder to find in urban contexts. Additionally, participants noted that RT seems to require a longer implementation time. This is because RT initiatives are place-based and rely on a bottom-up approach, making them specific to a location and difficult to replicate elsewhere. Their implementation requires time, not only for planning and overcoming obstacles to collective agreements but also for achieving results (Bellato et al., 2023; Dias, 2018; Gibbons, 2020a; Hussain & Haley, 2022). For example, projects like creating community gardens or restoring local ecosystems involve lengthy processes that may not yield immediate results visible to short-term visitors. This understanding might explain why some participants believe that people visiting a city for a weekend, or a short leisure trip may not be particularly interested in these types of initiatives. As mentioned by several respondents, short-term visitors often look for activities that

provide instant enjoyment and fit their idea of a relaxing trip, which can make RT projects feel less relevant compared to what they are seeking.

Therefore, while Generation Z visitors recognize and appreciate the potential of RT, their understanding and engagement are hindered by several factors, with communication being perhaps the most significant.

This paragraph will emphasise the key aspects that have emerged, leading to the conclusions of this research. Visitors generally perceive the city of Copenhagen as a leader in sustainability and innovation, reflecting a positive image of the destination's commitment to STD. However, there is a lack of awareness and recognition of specific sustainability initiatives or awards. This discrepancy arises from the difference between general perceptions shaped by regional reputation and the detailed knowledge of specific initiatives and awards, which may not be prominently communicated or visible to visitors. While visitors perceive Copenhagen as a sustainable city, they often do not research or seek out information about specific certifications, awards, or detailed initiatives before or during their visit. Effective communication is crucial in shaping visitors' perceptions, especially for Generation Z. How a destination communicates its efforts to sustainability, in fact, tends to significantly influence visitor behaviour (Salinero et al., 2022). As per this thesis, the lack of effective communication and the presence of other factors hindering visitor's engagement, may explain the fragmented results in terms of awareness and participation.

Another significant issue that emerged, and that will be central to addressing this thesis's research question, is that participants reported challenges in understanding RT approach. These challenges, according to participants' answers, exist both at a theoretical level and in terms of its practical applications and implications. These challenges, however, reflect the broader limitation given by the lack of a generally accepted definition of the ideology and its main characteristics and principles. This ambiguity, therefore, can limit a proper understanding of its purpose and applications (Bellato et al., 2023; Hussain & Haley, 2022).

From these two main aspects, it is clear that the primary issue lies in the need for better communication and visitor education. Enhancing the visibility and accessibility of this information can align visitors' general perceptions with specific and tangible achievements. Targeted educational campaigns, the use of social media and other digital platforms can improve awareness and engagement with Copenhagen's sustainability initiatives. As different respondents pointed out, digital communication tends to be for them the first source of information about a destination, and how they determine the importance and relevance of issues (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). Therefore, as previously emphasised, effective digital communication is necessary for capturing their interest and engagement. However, in order to achieve this, it is essential to consider the factors influencing visitor participation. According to what respondents mentioned, those include financial constraints, but also presents their interest in initiatives that foster active participation. Addressing these issues

and leveraging visitors' suggestions can help develop and enhance relevant and effective initiatives. This requires collaboration among stakeholders to both create and implement these initiatives and to remove those obstacles, such as costs, that could hinder such engagement. Stakeholder collaboration is crucial for a successful regenerative approach. Involving various stakeholders in strategy planning and development, in fact, can foster a more cohesive effort in promoting and implementing ST and RT initiatives, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness and reach (Bellato et al., 2023; Gibbons, 2020b; Hussain & Haley, 2022; Miller et al., 2015; Panse et al., 2021). This entails, moreover, that visitors themselves are essential stakeholders, and their contributions are crucial for effectively implementing this approach and enhancing efforts within the STD paradigm. The discussions with respondents revealed a lack of understanding that these efforts go beyond environmental concerns. As discussed in this work, RT also prioritizes communities and local economies. Adopting this holistic perspective could be the missing step for tourists, encouraging a more comprehensive and engaged approach.

It can be said, consequently, that tourism contributes to the adoption of a regenerative perspective, not just by educating visitors, but also through the changes, transitions, and developments that destinations must implement to support and foster this ideology. This is particularly evident in urban contexts, where tourism drives urbanization and sustainable development (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Miller et al., 2015). It is not tourism itself that is regenerative, but the transformations implemented in the industry to comply with the RT approach.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this thesis has been to investigate visitors' perceptions of RT approach in an urban context. Generation Z has been chosen as the focus population, and Copenhagen as the empirical site for data collection. Reasons behind these choices is that there is a growing consensus that Generation Z is best capable of embracing and implementing changes needed to mitigate the negative effects of current tourism practices (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Additionally, Copenhagen's strong reputation and recognition in terms of sustainability, along with its ambitious future objectives, made it an ideal data collection site for this thesis (Bærenholdt & Meged, 2023; Denmark.dk, n.d.; Khan et al., 2021; Krähmer, 2021; Wonderful Copenhagen, n.d.).

The research question that this thesis attempted to assess, therefore, is the following: How do Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's Regenerative approach within the broader Sustainable Tourism Development paradigm?

To effectively evaluate these perceptions and provide relevant insights, this thesis relied on a qualitative analysis. An exploratory approach was adopted to examine subjective opinions and perspectives on a relatively new and increasingly significant topic. This approach perceives reality as a social construct, shaped by diverse individual interpretations and continuous interactions (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Stockemer, 2019). Data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gather personal insights and perspectives. This method is significant and useful as it combines a pre-established structure aligned with the theoretical framework, while allowing participants to express themselves freely (Antwi & Hamza, 2015; Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kallio et al., 2016). The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically to highlight the main issues and arguments raised by participants, which are crucial for answering the thesis research question (Gautam & Gautam, 2023; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Before presenting the conclusions of this thesis, it is important to emphasise the novelty of the topic. As noted in the limitations section, this was one of the main challenges encountered during the research. RT, in fact, is an emerging topic that lacks a clear consensus on its definition and operating principles. This is due to the diverse and numerous perspectives it incorporates, making it difficult to establish a universally accepted definition (Becken & Kaur, 2022; Bellato et al., 2023). Additionally, this ideology represents one of the first attempts to integrate a concept originating from natural science into economic models. The term, borrowed from agriculture, is challenging to incorporate into economic frameworks without a defined framework for its integration, function, and measurement (Bellato et al., 2023; Hussain & Haley, 2022). The absence of these anchors hinders a thorough and effective understanding of the term, affecting both destinations, consequently still reluctant to adopt and promote such an approach, and visitors themselves. This lack of awareness, therefore, poses obstacles to an effective assessment of the RT approach. While participants appreciated and praised its innovative nature, their main concerns were how to achieve a regenerative impact, and how to measure that impact in concrete terms. Acknowledging this limitation, this thesis opened the debate on how Generation Z perceives the implementation of RT in urban contexts such as the city of Copenhagen. Useful insights will be presented on what could be done to implement this ideology according to this generation's perceptions, understanding, and needs.

Challenges in implementing the RT approach have been identified in terms of communication and visitor engagement. The lack of awareness about the existence and principles of RT influenced participants' responses, as they lacked the tools and knowledge to identify such initiatives at the destination. Consequently, their perspectives on the effectiveness of these initiatives were rather superficial, as it is difficult to elaborate on something unfamiliar. This communication gap is further complicated by DMOs not being fully confident and supportive of RT approach either, which may contribute to the lack of promotion on the destinations' side. Additionally, the complexity of urban contexts, with their extensive number of stakeholders, makes reaching agreements and fostering

collaboration more difficult (Nilsson, 2020; Panse et al., 2021). Participants find, therefore, such information difficult to access and acknowledge.

This lower awareness and communication gap consequently lead to reduced engagement in RT initiatives. However, as participants pointed out, engagement also largely depends on personal motivations and behaviours. One significant challenge identified were financial and time constraints. Participants often overlooked sustainable initiatives in favour of more budget-friendly options, as such initiatives were perceived to be more expensive. This lower engagement due to financial constraints can hinder efforts within the broader paradigm of STD. For example, if train travel is significantly more expensive than flying, people will likely choose flights despite being aware of their higher emissions.

Moreover, engagement is also influenced by the purpose of travel. Participants noted that RT initiatives do not necessarily appeal to short-term visitors who spend only a weekend or a few days at the destination, especially in urban contexts. Typically, urban destinations attract visitors for short stays focused on main attractions or museums. According to the results, RT initiatives seem to be more suited to different contexts, such as the previously mentioned Workaway program, or natural destinations. In such cases, travellers are motivated by the opportunity to contribute to and become part of a community, making them more willing to engage and better understand the practical application of RT principles.

Despite these limitations, participants generally expressed interest in RT, considering it timely, innovative, and necessary. Opportunities have been identified to enhance awareness and further engage visitors, even in urban destinations. According to participants, these opportunities lie primarily in improved communication and education. Enhancing these aspects can lead to better tourism engagement. What therefore could be done is leveraging the city's existing sustainability recognitions and awards in targeted campaigns in order to attract young and environmentally conscious travellers. By emphasising Copenhagen's reputation as a sustainability leader in Scandinavia, moreover, marketing efforts can effectively draw visitors who prioritise eco-friendly travel. Additionally, promoting the city's well-functioning infrastructure, such as extensive bike lanes and public transportation, can highlight the ease of access to sustainable options. Creating engaging and interactive educational content, such as workshops or social media campaigns, can educate visitors on RT principles. In relation to this, developing volunteer programs and hands-on experiences will further involve visitors in meaningful RT projects, aligning with their preference for active participation and interactive learning. Lastly, fostering strong stakeholder collaboration between local businesses, government agencies, and community organisations will ensure the successful implementation and promotion of RT practices. Effective collaboration will also be essential in addressing budget constraints by developing cost-effective and accessible sustainable options, thereby enhancing visitor engagement and participation.

All this must be supported by an effective and extensive use of digital platforms, especially considering Generation Z as the main target. Generation Z heavily relies on these tools for information accessibility and for shaping their opinions and perspectives. As digital natives, their close connection to technology makes these platforms their primary channels for forming opinions and behaviours both as individuals and consumers. There have been instances where social media has raised awareness about sustainability and created online communities that foster and promote such behaviours (Görpe & Öksüz, 2022; Homer & Kanagasapathy, 2023; Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Salinero et al., 2022; Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023).

An interesting point that emerged from this research is that tourists are increasingly interested in learning and experiencing new things while travelling. This is evidenced by respondents' preference for initiatives that are innovative, actively engaging, and that present a different approach to the concept of sustainability, now a buzzword mainly used as a greenwashing tool (Hussain & Haley, 2022; Weaver, 2004). Those, therefore, potentially align with the implementation of RT. Providing more opportunities of this kind, consequently, will contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the RT approach. This adjusts with the literature, which suggests that the more successfully a city integrates sustainable practices, the more evident the benefits are. Those benefits are not only the environment and community, thereby enhancing the three pillars of sustainability, but also for tourists' perceptions. The more visitors interact with and utilise what the city offers, the more positively their perceptions will be influenced (Boivin & Tanguay, 2019; Miller et al., 2015).

Positive aspect of this learning process is that visitors who experience destinations that effectively incorporate these principles are more likely to take these practices back with them and apply them in other destinations or in their home countries. This could be understood as a consequence of the automatic behaviours that people tend to have when around others, and the social pressure they feel, as previously discussed (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023). Understanding how our actions contribute to sustainable and just tourism worldwide supports the literature's emphasis on better travel purposes and the creation of meaningful experiences (Nandasena et al., 2022). Generation Z visitors can adopt the role of "steward," acting to protect and regenerate destinations (Bellato et al., 2022, 2023). By embracing this transformation, they can "be the change," reflecting their potential to disrupt and ensure a future for the tourism industry by fostering sustainable tourism development (Pinho & Gomes, 2023). More awareness, education, and accessibility around these experiences can lead to a better-engaged generation that is more active and prone to adopt the RT approach. The goal is to make tourism a catalyst for a destination's regenerative development. By educating and engaging people in these initiatives, we can ensure that tourism contributes to the destination rather than taking from it, balancing and considering the three pillars of sustainability (Bellato et al., 2023; Hussain, 2021). Improving the current situation can mitigate the issues caused by current development practices and leave better places for future

generations. This approach could become a motivation for travel, encouraging people to travel to contribute rather than to exploit.

Following this discourse on stewardship, it is necessary to point out that, since RT is primarily a place-based approach, the results cannot be fully generalised (Bellato et al., 2023). The findings are based on the insights provided by a specific sample of Generation Z participants and their tourism experiences in Copenhagen. Therefore, different target groups or destinations could lead to different conclusions. Despite this limitation, the research provides relevant insights and stimulating considerations that can inform future policy development and implementation.

A final remark must be made regarding the scope of the research. While a broader analysis using a mixed-method approach would have been beneficial, this was not possible due to time constraints and the requirements of a master's thesis. Future research could expand the demographic scope, for instance, by including another generation. Other options could involve conducting a longitudinal study, thus repeating the research in a few years to understand how perceptions have changed. This would be particularly valuable if RT becomes a clearer and more established approach to STD. Additionally, it would be insightful to compare perceptions among different generations, to determine whether RT is perceived differently or more fostered and acknowledged in one generation than in others, given the continuous development of the tourism industry. In line with this, Wonderful Copenhagen recently announced a new campaign to improve and deepen visitors' engagement in sustainable and regenerative practices. The campaign, called "CopenPay," will launch on July 15th (VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-e). Various initiatives and organizations, including some mentioned in this thesis, such as urban farming and the Absalon community centre area, are participating in this campaign. Visitors who engage in sustainable actions, such as waste collection or biking to attractions, can earn rewards that include free lunches, kayak tours, or cultural experiences. This initiative essentially treats these sustainable behaviours as a form of currency, while contributing to the city's green transition but also to enhanced visitor experiences and satisfaction (VisitCopenhagen, n.d.-e). This aligns well with the objectives of this thesis, further supporting the notion that Copenhagen is continually innovating its approach and commitment to sustainability. It underscores the value of RT approach as an alternative to the STD paradigm, that should be promoted for broader and more effective results. Additionally, it highlights progress in stakeholder collaboration within urban contexts. It would therefore be relevant to focus on evaluating the impact of the CopenPay campaign, which was not possible in this thesis due to its recent implementation. Exploring how visitors engaged with these initiatives and how this engagement affected their overall experience would provide valuable insights. Moreover, it would be important to assess whether this involvement improved their education and awareness of sustainability. Finally, from the supply side, evaluating if the campaign achieves its expected environmental, social, and economic outcomes could also be a significant research.

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APPENDIXES

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

This interview is part of my research on how Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches and will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I will record it just to transcribe later and ensure I have all your answers accurately. Your responses will stay anonymous. I will note your age and gender, only for representational purposes. If you give me your consent, I will start with the first question.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Table 2: Interview Guide

<i>THEME</i>	<i>MAIN QUESTION</i>	<i>FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS</i>
AWARENESS	What does “sustainability” mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? Can you describe any specific sustainable efforts you associate with this?	<p>Have you ever heard the term “regenerative” in the context of travel and tourism?</p> <p><i>Definition:</i> A regenerative approach to tourism goes beyond sustainability by not only minimising negative impacts but actively improving the places we visit. It ensures that tourism activities respect and enhance local economy, communities, and the environment, ensuring that our visits contribute positively</p> <p>Has this definition changed your understanding of the term, and how might this influence your future travel choices?</p>

<p>AGENDA</p>	<p>Were you aware of Copenhagen’s recognition for sustainability before your visit, and did this influence your decision to visit?</p>	<p>To what extent did digital platforms (like social media, apps, or websites), travel guides, brochures, or word-of-mouth influence your decision to visit the destination?</p> <p>If you were not aware of these efforts and recognitions, was it because you generally don’t look for this type of information, or was the information difficult to find?</p>
<p>ACTION</p>	<p>During your visit, did you engage in sustainable practices, such as biking, or choosing sustainable accommodations?</p>	<p>What motivated you to engage or not in such practices? And how did these efforts impact your experience of the city?</p> <p>Did you find that Copenhagen provided the resources you needed to engage in sustainable efforts or were there any challenges or barriers that impacted your ability to participate?</p>

<p>Creating Regenerative Places & Communities</p>	<p>Can you describe any activities or places in Copenhagen that actively improved the environment or contributed positively to the community? For example, were you aware of initiatives like urban farming or the transformation of industrial areas into green spaces?</p> <p>During your visit, did you notice visual elements like for instance tall benches symbolising rising sea levels or any other initiatives/installation designed to highlight environmental issues? What are your thoughts on how effective these are in raising awareness about such concerns?</p>	<p>How do you perceive their effectiveness, and how did such initiatives impact your perceptions of the city?</p>
<p>Collaborative Participation</p>	<p>Do you think these initiatives/projects can be seen as forms of collaboration between tourists, locals, and businesses? Why do you think such collaboration is essential and significant for achieving more sustainable/regenerative outcomes?</p>	

<p>FEEDBACK INTEGRATION</p>	<p>Based on your experiences, how does Copenhagen’s approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited in terms of its effectiveness in promoting regenerative and sustainable practices?</p> <p>Considering the sustainability and regenerative efforts you've observed in Copenhagen, what specific improvements or additional actions would you suggest?</p>	
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Source: Own

LIST OF THEMES AND DETAILED CODES

Table 3: List of Themes and Detailed Codes

<i>THEMES</i>	<i>CODES</i>
<p>1: Visitor Awareness & Perception (<i>Awareness</i>)</p>	<p>Awareness and understanding of the concept of sustainability</p> <p>Criticism to the concept and term of sustainability</p> <p>Different degrees of awareness of the regenerative ideology</p>

<p>2: Recognition of Government & Stakeholder Agenda (<i>Agenda</i>)</p>	<p>Recognition and public perception of the city's sustainable efforts</p> <p>Consistency in communication and policy implementation</p> <p>Importance of stakeholders' collaboration & collaborative efforts</p>
<p>3: Visitor Engagement in Sustainable Practices & Regenerative Initiatives (<i>Action</i>)</p>	<p>Examples of sustainable practices visitors engaged with</p> <p>Examples of regenerative initiatives/places in Copenhagen</p> <p>Engaging in sustainable actions can have a positive impact on the overall experience</p> <p>Individual actions or perspectives</p>
<p>4. Image of the Destination & Communication Efforts</p>	<p>Scandinavia and Denmark as the image of sustainability & innovation</p> <p>City's infrastructure supports sustainability initiatives and policy implementation</p> <p>Lack of communication on sustainability</p> <p>Interactive & unusual installations spark visitors' interest</p>

<p>5: Visitor Motivations & Behaviours</p>	<p>Lack of visitors' effort in researching these topics</p> <p>Use of digital platforms & WOM to gather information</p> <p>Factors Influencing Sustainable and Regenerative Choices</p>
<p>6: Visitor Feedback</p>	<p>Better approach compared to other urban destinations</p> <p>Reduced visitor engagement & interest</p> <p>Leverage visitor education</p>
<p>7: Perceptions on Regenerative Tourism Approach</p>	<p>Challenges in understanding and applying the regenerative approach</p> <p>Engagement and Scale of Regenerative efforts</p> <p>Role of tourists in regenerative efforts</p>

Source: Own

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS & COLOUR CODING PROCESS

Legend:

R: Researcher

P: Participant

Yellow: Theme 1 – Visitors Awareness and Perception

Light blue: Theme 2 - Recognition of Government & Stakeholder Agenda

Green: Theme 3 – Visitor Engagement in Sustainable Practices & Regenerative Initiatives

Purple: Theme 4 – Image of the Destination & Communication Efforts

Water Green: Theme 5 – Visitor Motivation & Behaviours

Brown: Theme 6 – Visitor Feedback

Red: Theme 7 – Perceptions on Regenerative Tourism Approach

PARTICIPANT 1 (Male, 29)

R: Hi! So, as I was explaining to you before, this interview is part of my research, and the purpose is understanding how Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take round 15 minutes. I will record this conversation just for the purpose of then transcribing it and collect more detailed insights of your answers. I want to make sure you understand that your name or personal information will not be saved and won't come up along the research. The recording is then just for academic purposes. So, if you are okay and you give me the consent to record this conversation we can proceed.

P: Yes, I give my consent.

R: Okay, thank you. So, first question. What does “sustainability” mean to you in the context of travel and tourism, and could you describe any specific effort that you associate with the term sustainability?

P: Well, most likely, that's the whole method of transportation. If instead of taking a plane, you can take a train, it's more sustainable, so to speak. What comes to my mind the most are hotels when I think about sustainability. For many years, hotels have had a policy of reusing towels, where they only get washed if guests specifically request it. So, yeah. Those are maybe the main efforts I can think of related to sustainability in travel.

R: Okay, and what about the term regenerative, always in the context of travel and tourism? Have you ever heard about it?

P: Not in like an everyday basis, I would say. Mostly from articles popping up.

R: Because you have studied that?

P: Yeah, so it's not something I hear about when talking or going into a hotel, for example. “Oh, this is regenerative”, or like “we adopted new regenerative measure”. It's more like something that's floating around. And probably mostly among the people that are trying to get the ideas and trying to make policies about it, you know, thinking how to incorporate it.

R: And did knowing about the regenerative tourism or the concept, the ideology behind it influence your travel choices or your travel understanding?

P: No, not for me personally. Because it's still in such an infant stage, like it's still in the start stage. If you look at the DMOs, for example, it's not really something that's being communicated that much out. Sustainability is being communicated a lot. “Come to our destinations, because we have a lot of sustainability measures and practices”, you know? But it's not like the regenerative has taken over, so there's a specific focus on that. If I'm just researching before going to a place, I might think of, okay, how much emissions do I produce by traveling to this destination? But that's not really regenerative, that's something sustainability-related, so to speak.

R: Okay, I get your point. And before reaching Copenhagen, were you aware of the city's recognition in terms of its sustainability efforts, and was this something that influenced your visit?

P: To be honest, I have not been that aware of it, of its sustainability efforts. It is probably also bad of me when I'm Danish. I would say that if I was more aware of it, I would be perhaps more inclined to choose this city. Maybe by doing this I actually don't cause as much harm as I would by choosing another destination, for example.

R: When you said you were not aware of such recognition was this because you didn't research that much, or was it because you couldn't get this information?

P: Yeah, I think it's mainly on me. Like if I decide to go to a destination, it's not something that I chase, so to speak, its approach to sustainability. But if it's something that is quite visible, clearly communicated, like, "oh, thank you for choosing this hotel, you have saved this and this amount of CO2, and you have done this and this for the community", for example, then it's just an extra bonus. But if I'm looking for a hotel or an Airbnb, it's not like I'm sitting and going through them to find the most sustainable. Also if I find a plane ticket, for example, for 100 crowns, and the same distance in a train is 200, I won't take the train. Because I tend to also be budget conscious. Like I wouldn't choose the expensive option that's more sustainable, to be honest, so it's mainly me, I would say, in that case.

R: Okay, I see. And you were also mentioning looking for information. Do you normally do it through digital platforms, or do you still rely on a travel guide or brochure, or do you go to tourist offices?

P: Oh, mainly digital, I would say. Also, new digital platforms. TikTok is a great platform once you get to a place to see what is there to do. I used that a lot in Vienna, like, what is there to do, which bars to visit, which restaurants, where to go if you're looking for some nature areas, for example. So yeah, it is definitely digital platforms that I'm using.

R: Okay. And while you were in Copenhagen, did it happen to you to engage in sustainable practices? I don't know, for example, using public transport or, I don't know, biking, or choosing a sustainable accommodation, or engaging in recycling.. Did it happen?

P: Well, recycling, yes, because that's pretty much something we have to do in Denmark, so that's just a regular, everyday thing. And public transports, yes. I would like to bike if I felt more comfortable biking in this city, but in Copenhagen and other big cities, there's quite a lot of bicycling traffic and traffic in general, so I'm much more comfortable doing public transport or just walking around. Because for me, it's also more interesting than just taking a Uber, or taxi, you know? Because you get straight to the point, from A to B, but if you take a bus, for example, you get more opportunities to see more of the city, so to speak, and the same if you walk around. So, you can just go around and explore a bit, eventually coming to your destination.

R: It is interesting that you mentioned bike traffic. Is this because you feel that there's this problem in Copenhagen?

P: Well, yes and no. I think the municipality is working on making it better. Also, I'm not from Copenhagen originally, so it might also be a preconception of life in Copenhagen. I think that it's very hectic, and it's just that other bicyclists are also being a bit aggressive, more than the cars, so to speak. Like, there's been numerous cases with aggressive bikers running the red light and stuff like that, so yeah, I would say Copenhagen is probably the city with the biggest bicycling problem in Denmark, but that's also because it's the biggest city we have.

R: Okay, that's interesting. And apart from this challenge, let's say, do you think that the city is communicating and providing the resources you need if you want to actively engage in those practices? Like, I don't know, is the city providing information about eco-friendly options or on how to properly recycle?

P: That's a good question, because that's not really something I think about when I'm in the destination, to be honest. Again, my opinion is you should make it as easy as possible to find the information and get the information. You shouldn't really be chasing the information, because then people won't really find it. I think there's always something you can do to make it more obvious to..

R: To engage more people.

P: Yeah, to engage more in the sustainability talk and sustainability efforts, but how to do so, I don't know, to be honest.

R: So do you think there would be a positive connection between Copenhagen providing more information and people behaving more eco-friendly, let's say, or having a more positive experience of the city if they behave in a more sustainable way?

P: Yeah, I would say so. I don't know how Copenhagen would do it, but if they could capture, or engage the visitors in Copenhagen, I don't know how, maybe a QR code or something with information about it, then I think more people would be inclined to have sustainable behaviour in their mind, if they can say they're doing something. I think that would help, at least to create a sort of awareness about it.

R: Okay, I see. And in terms of regenerative approach, let's say, could you describe, have you witnessed, or do you know about activities in Copenhagen, places in Copenhagen, that improve the environment or contribute positively to the community? Like, for example, did you know that there are initiatives such like urban farming or that former industrial areas of the cities were transformed into green spaces? How do you think those practices can enhance the urban context and the community living there and people visiting the places?

P: Well, I know there's the **power plant**, I can't remember what it's called.

R: Where the ski slope is?

P: Yeah, that's been transformed into a ski slope and community area where people can come and hang out. **I think there's bars and stuff, you can grab a beer and there's a skate park and stuff. I think that's a great way of doing it, because you have to have that kind of energy plant in the city, so why not just doing something that's actually useful for the community as well,** instead of just having one big ugly big building in the city? I would say that's perhaps one of the closest to the regenerative thinking that I can think of right now. Of course, there's like **Christiania**, which also has some regenerative principles, you know? But you can discuss how good that is for the community when there's also something called Pusher Street. But in terms of sustainability and in terms of recycling, for example, they have one of the only places where you can buy recycled building materials for bigger buildings and stuff like that, which is really cool. **I think it gives a lot in terms of community aspects.** It's definitely more interesting. Again, the energy plant, the ski slope, to have I would say. It is positive to actually create something that's useful for people. So something not just to work there, but also to engage and try to create a certain atmosphere with it.

R: Okay, I see. And did you also notice, for example, that there were some those tall benches in the city? And the meaning behind it was to raise awareness on environmental issues, in particular the sea level rise. What do you think of this? Do you think they are useful in raising people's awareness, especially visitors?

P: Well, it depends on how well it's communicated, I would say. I think it was something that was set up with one of the bigger climate meetings with international partners as well. Well, there was a lot of talking about it in the news and local papers and stuff like that. It's generally known for people living in the city and people in Denmark. But for tourists, if there's anything...

R: Clear.

P: Yeah, exactly. If it's just a small plaque, let's say, at the bottom of the bench, I don't know how effective that would be. I think maybe you would have to do something more dramatic than that. But yeah, **if it's known, I think it would be creating some awareness.**

R: Thank you. So, do you think that there's a collaboration between stakeholders in Copenhagen to actually improve the level of sustainability? I'm thinking in the way of how it is communicated or perceived, and the actions that have been done in the cities.

P: Can you clarify?

R: Do you think that different stakeholders, so for example, consider governments, tourism operators, visitors, but also residents, are all together involved in the planning of the urban

spaces, both for tourism purposes and not? So do you think they work together so that results in those terms could be beneficial for everyone?

P: I can't really come with an example, but I would hope that there's like an agreed direction for the city. Because to have tourists is also something that everybody should accept, to have the most of it, so to speak, to see it as a possibility or opportunity rather than an obstacle. So, I would hope that there's some communal measures that all stakeholders have to be part of. I don't really know any examples that I can think of, to be honest.

R: Okay, I still get the point. So, based on your experience, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare to other cities you've visited?

P: I would say it's probably better than most of the cities I have visited. I'm thinking more about just the basic things. Like cycling, trying to choose or do something that's sustainable. In Copenhagen is more possible than what I would do in Paris, for example. So, I think they're better, but I might be a bit biased as well, because well, I'm Danish. So, I would hope they do better. There's quite a lot of big targets that the government wants to meet. So yeah, I would hope they do better than most cities.

R: Well, one of the goals is to become carbon neutral.

P: Yeah, in 2025, that's the goal at least.

R: And what do you think? Are there still improvements to make for that?

P: Yeah, I think so. They're trying to do the, what is it called, the car-free zones and conjecture zones where you can't enter with an old car, for example. But yeah, I think that goal it's still optimistic, to meet the 2025 carbon neutrality goal. But I think they're in the right direction.

R: Okay, interesting points. Well, I'm done with my questions. Do you have some comments or doubts?

P: No, I don't.

R: Then thank you so much for participating and for your insights.

P: You're welcome.

PARTICIPANT 2 (Male, 26)

R: Okay, so this interview aims at gathering insights from Generation Z and to understand how they perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative tourism efforts. Of course, this interview is part of my research for my thesis, so I will be recording the conversation, but it will be just for academic purposes because I will need to transcribe it. Just wanted to make sure that you know that I won't take any personal data, I will just note your age and

gender, but no personal information will be shared during the interview. It will take around 15 minutes, so if you're okay with this and you give me your consent, I will start recording.

P: Yeah of course.

R: Okay, thank you. So, what does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism, and could you describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: Well, sustainability. I'm basing this mainly on what I was taught about sustainability in tourism. It is based on three different parts, which is economic, ecological, and social sustainability, so these different parts all have to be taken into account, and you can pretty much apply them anywhere, and some places try to do it more than others, but yeah, it's just more of a general framework for me, I'd say.

R: Okay, and in relation to this, have you ever heard about the term regenerative applied to tourism and travel?

P: Yeah, I've heard it, yeah.

R: And would you be able to define it, or do you have an idea of what it means?

P: Yeah, well, sustainable just being that it is sustaining itself, and as the word suggests, regenerative is generating something new out of that, so actually, well, going one step further from sustainability, in a way.

R: Did knowing this affect or influence your travel choices?

P: I'm sure it did indirectly. It's not that I go around and research which places are regenerative, but of course, it's something that's important to me, and that I keep in mind, and that can be a criterion, of course.

R: Okay. Yeah, I agree. And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before your visit? Did this somehow influence your choice to visit Copenhagen?

P: No, I wasn't aware of this statistic. I was aware that it generally has quite a sustainable image, let's say, but I didn't know that it was that highly ranked, and so it also didn't affect my decision to go there. It's more practical reasons that I was interested to go there, convenience.

R: Okay, and normally, when you look for a destination to visit, do you rely on digital platforms to gather information on it, or do you mainly use brochures or go to tourist office?

P: No, it's almost exclusively online resources, and maybe if I know someone who's been there, maybe talking to them, but that's it.

R: I see. And while you were in Copenhagen, did you engage yourself in any sustainable practices, like, I don't know, for example, taking public transportation or using bikes instead of moving with cars, or did you stay in sustainable accommodation?

P: Probably not really, because effort would suggest that I would like knowingly do it. I mean, I didn't use any cars, because that was just not an option, but that was for practical reasons. I didn't choose my accommodation, because it was more sustainable or anything like that. Maybe you could say that I travelled there by train, which is a sustainable decision, but in terms of actually looking for sustainable stuff to do, that was not on my mind.

R: Okay, that's an interesting point you raised. But did you notice if Copenhagen actually provided the clear resources and information if people want to engage in such sustainability efforts? Like, I don't know, they mentioned how to save water in the hotels, or how to use reusable towels, or how to invite people to take public transport or biking, or was this not that clear?

P: I didn't notice anything that would go beyond what other cities are doing, you know, like, I mean, in most hotels nowadays you have, like, don't waste your towels or something like that, and yeah, I think the awareness was not linked to the place. I think it's just the general choices that I also try to not do, like for example buy new plastic bottles every time or something, but that's, I wouldn't consider that to be, like, a travel issue, so no, it's not that I came back from my Copenhagen trip and had something of their sustainability efforts noticed.

R: Okay, interesting. And have you ever heard about some places or projects done in the cities that could be considered regenerative in a way that improve the environment or try to make a positive impact on the community?

P: No, I'm struggling to think of anything, to be honest.

R: For example, there are some initiatives such as urban farming, so they are building and growing gardens on the rooftops or, for example, they transformed some areas of the city that were once industrial and are now just green areas with eco-friendly housing and urban parks. So, how would you perceive such efforts in terms not only for their impact on the environment but also on the community and tourism?

P: Well, pretty much just positively. I mean, this is something that it always helps to know because when you're in such a place you feel like this is inspiring in some way. It's not something that was that obvious to me when I was there. I mean, it was also winter and so

probably the aspect of urban farming doesn't come into it that much. And I think it doesn't have to be also. If you're going somewhere and there's also people who are not interested in regenerative stuff, so it doesn't have to be mentioned everywhere. But, yeah, it would be good to be informed about it, I think.

R: Okay, and so maybe a similar question. There's an area in the city in which they built those tall benches, and the aim of this installation is to represent and show what would happen if the sea level rose. So, the purpose was to try and raise awareness among people on the issues and consequences of climate change. Have you seen this or something similar? And do you think they are working in relation to this aim of raising awareness?

P: I don't think I've seen this particular installation, but I'm generally quite in favour of it, I would say. Like, it's easy to ridicule and say it's just art, but actually, especially when you're a tourist, you like stop at these sorts of things and you are interested. So, if it wasn't there, I don't think you would have these thoughts. And things like this are quite an easy way to spark new thoughts and debate.

R: Interesting point. And if you're thinking about those that could be either sustainable or regenerative efforts, how important do you consider collaboration between different stakeholders? And much do you think this cooperation is needed in order to reach those outcomes and why?

P: It's very important, especially when you mention locals, because in the end, it's their place that you're visiting. So, if you have sometimes not well thought out sustainable initiatives where tourists are engaged in something which was initiated by politics, but then the locals have nothing to profit from it or don't understand it or aren't kept on board, it's really not good. And in a way, if you think about it, it's not socially sustainable then. So that part of it, like the social sustainability suggests that as many players as possible should be involved.

R: I agree with you, yeah. And based on your experience, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare to other cities you've visited? Do you think, as you said before, that it's not doing differently from other cities?

P: I don't think it's the impression I had, and it's purely like a touristic perspective, it's not that it was better communicated, but still, even before visiting there, you associate it with something better. Because generally, I would even say generally, Scandinavian cities have this image of quite progressive and also in terms of tackling climate change and so on, and also this image of design and innovation. So, I suppose that's what puts it apart a bit from other cities. But it's not like there are any communication efforts or something that were really noticeable.

R: And do you think there's something you would suggest that the city could improve in terms of sustainable or regenerative efforts? Did you find some challenges in moving around the city or considering sustainability in your travel?

P: I found it was quite a large city to walk. Because when I was there, we wanted to see a lot in quite a short time, so we walked quite far. So maybe in that sense, bikes would have been an option. I didn't really see this option, you know? I didn't look for rental bikes as well, but if it's communicated differently, then you might be more aware of it. For example, if you step off the train and you immediately see like a bike rental, that puts it on your mind and gives an option for you. So, things like this in terms of like transportation could be an option. Otherwise, I don't think like sustainability efforts or regenerative efforts have to always be like openly communicated. I think it's important that you do them and that people accept them and use them. Like for example, in Ljubljana. They always win prizes for sustainability and so on, but it's not really something that they tell you everywhere. So, I think the actions are more important actually. And this is why these sorts of rankings and awards make sense, because they look at how it actually is and not what a city is claiming, you know.

R: Okay, good point. I agree with you on this. And I think actually we are done with the questions. So, thank you for participating and for your insights.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 3 (Female, 27)

R: As I mentioned before, this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable regenerative approaches. It will take around 15 to 20 minutes. And as I also already mentioned, I will record this just to have a transcription of your interview later for me to be better carry out the analysis, but I won't take any of your personal information, the analysis and the presentation of the results will be anonymous. I will just note your gender and age for representational purposes, but that's it. So, if you are okay and you give me your consent, we can start the interview.

P: Yes, I give the consent.

R: Thank you. So, the first question I have is what does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you describe any specific effort you associate with this?

P: Well, what does sustainability mean to me is that maybe at the very first seconds, I mostly think of environmental issues, but I kind of know that sustainability is not only about the environmental issues, it's also about social impacts and also about economic aspects. So, to sustain is to be able to, in an environmental sense, I guess it's about to keep the natural resources for the generations to come and make the least impact and like leave the least traces. In an economical sense, it's about to, I guess, to be able to keep the economic cycle,

like I am thinking the revenue cycle, to be able to sustain this. In terms of social impact, I guess it's to be able to engage and communicate with locals and I guess make the least changes for them and their life let's say. I guess for tourists, it's to have the knowledge about the local community of that destination and be able to participate in whatever kind of social dimensions they have and keep away. There was a second question, right?

R: Yeah. If you can describe any specific efforts you associate with this, like actions or whatever you think of associated with sustainability.

P: Okay, I think for me in an environmental aspect, I try to be, to have the least carbon footprint. I try not to take airplanes, especially for the, I mean, if it's a long haul or if it's like more than a thousand or two thousand kilometres, I might do it. Like the last time that I went to Copenhagen, I went with a flight because it was like too time consuming for me to go with the bus and the train was quite expensive. So, leaving the footprint in an economical sense is to buy more local and in a social aspect is to try to know the local community and try to engage with them.

R: Okay, and in connection to this, have you ever heard about the term regenerative?

P: Uh, I've heard, yes.

R: So, for example, if I say that it's an approach that goes beyond sustainability, that tries to not only avoid taking what is there already, but to give back more, to contribute more to the environment, to the economy and the community. Do you perceive this as different from sustainability also in terms of your personal travel choices?

P: I think that the contradiction that I have with regenerative tourism also, I don't have a lot of information about it, but I guess the tourist is an outsider of a society and even if you try to give back, you are still an outsider. So, you're again imposing something to the locals, for example. In an economical sense, I'm not sure how it exactly works. In an environmental sense, I assume it's to like to go very much net zero or even compensate the footprint and as I said, I don't have much information about it. In the two aspects of economic and environmental, I can, if I know more, maybe I can make a choice, but in a social aspect, I'm not sure.

R: Okay, Interesting. Yeah, I get your point. I wanted to ask you if you were aware of the city's recognition for sustainability before you visit and if this was a reason that influenced your decision to visit.

P: No, I visited as a student, and it was given to me. After I visited, I could say I know more, but it's not that I chose it because I knew about its sustainable recognition to be honest.

R: And when you said you didn't know about Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability, was it because you didn't research such information that much or was it because you couldn't find it, like you were struggling to find the information?

P: I didn't read to be honest. It was not an important matter to me, so I didn't research anything about it.

R: I see. And when you normally choose a destination, when you're looking for information on which destination to visit or what to do in a destination, do you normally use digital platforms or do you rely on tourist offices, travel guides, or also the advice from your friends? How do you normally gather information?

P: I think word of mouth kind of counts for me, but like going in person to a tourism office, no. But I guess it's either word of mouth or online information.

R: Okay, I see. And while you were in Copenhagen, did you observe any environmental protection efforts from the city or something the city was doing to protect the environment? Or did you also engage yourself in sustainable practices? For example, I don't know, did you chose to bike, or you chose to stay in a sustainable accommodation?

P: Well, transportation-wise, yes, I used Donkey Republic for my transportation, and I used public transportation like buses or either walked, but it's not only because of sustainability, so it is not that I chose to do this because it was sustainable. It's because of financial restrictions I had, so it helped me. As an accommodation, I stayed with a friend, again, because of the financial restriction, but what was the city actively doing in terms of environmental efforts? I don't have any information on Copenhagen about this, to be honest.

R: I see. And do you think those obstacles you find was because the city didn't provide enough information on sustainability efforts or was it also because it was not the main aspect you were noticing and considering at the time?

P: Both. The city was not showing anything special about this, in my opinion, and I didn't look.

R: Okay, interesting. And could you describe, or have you engaged in places in Copenhagen that actively improve the environment? For example, I don't know if you were aware of initiatives like urban farming. People growing gardens on the rooftops, to increase the number of green spots. Or, for example, there are some areas in Copenhagen that were once industrial areas and they've now been transformed into like green urban spaces, with urban parks and eco-friendly accommodation.

P: I don't know about the green urban spaces. One example I can think of is the building of the waste management, I guess. The one that on the top has like a ski slope. That looks quite

innovative in a sustainable sense to me. Also, Christiania was one of the places that I mostly visited. I was five days in Copenhagen and I was all the time almost in Christiania and they have communal gardening and cars cannot enter the place, they have their own cycling system and they are quite aware of their consumption. So yeah, Christiania was one of the places that is recognized for the environmentally friendly practices and that's the only example I can think of in terms of regenerative practices in Copenhagen.

R: And in your opinion, how do you perceive the effectiveness of such places? How did such initiatives or places in this case, such as Christiania, impact your perception of the city?

P: Well, to be honest, the social impact of Christiania is very bold for me. But this is still in the environmental sense, the fact that cars cannot enter, keep it quite green and there are like a lot of green spaces, a lot of public spaces for people to just sit and chill and just enjoy the scenery. And they use a lot of bikes, they have their own specific bike, which is called Christiania bike and well, it's quite expensive, but people use it quite easily. Because I think there is like less tax and also there is like those big boxes in which they can carry their children and their stuff. Also, the buildings that they make, they either preserve the old buildings that exist there, or they use materials that are already existing, for examples from the ruins of the parts of the city. So, they really try to either upcycle or reduce the consumption of the material.

R: Okay, that's interesting. I didn't know this aspect. Also, I don't know if you noticed during your stay, there are some tall benches that they built in Copenhagen. And the goal of this installation is to raise awareness among people, visitors and locals of the rising sea levels. And I don't know if you saw them, but do you think such installations can be effective in raising awareness among people on the consequences of climate change, for example?

P: I didn't see this, but I think the Danish society is very aware of the environmental issues. So, I think they care about this, and they notice this. In a place like Copenhagen or Denmark, this might be effective, but in other places in the world, I'm not sure if something like this can be done or introduced. I want to say it again, I would say that because in general Danish people are educated in a way, or they care about this kind of stuff, they are concerned about this. If you notice in Denmark, for example, everybody is more aware about the environment, and I think in their education system they kind of care about this, that's why they are kind of concerned, and it's not that they don't care at all, or it's not a new topic to them. I think they kind of work on this, and in general I think Danish people are concerned about the environment, that's why it works in Denmark. Otherwise, if you put it in some other places, I think, for example, if you put it in Barcelona, it's not going to work, no. It's not going to work as much as it's going to work in Denmark, because if in Denmark 60-70% of the people think about this in their lifetime, or they, I don't know, decide to do something, to act on it, in other places you will get much less percentage of the people.

R: That's true, I agree. I think it's also a topic that is more discussed in school, and at university, more than in other countries or cities.

P: When I was in Copenhagen, I was staying with one of my friends. In his apartment he had this big picture, and the picture represented a broccoli on top of a carrot. A very sexual picture, so I asked him what that was about, and he said that they were putting this picture up in the schools, and they were trying to do a word play between the number six and the word sex. Have you noticed that when people want to say six, they say sex? They were trying to say that you have to eat six pieces of vegetables per day to keep healthy. So even the way they tried to educate is good and different, you know? It was off topic, sorry but I was like “wow, your education system is so crazy”.

R: No, I think it can be relevant and interesting to learn about such a different approach compared to what I am used to as well.

P: Yeah. I liked the idea. Sometimes I'm really, even the signage that you see on the street for restaurants, everything, they're quite creative.

R: Yeah, that definitely. I agree. And do you think that all those initiatives or practices we mentioned in connection to Copenhagen can be reflecting a sort of collaboration that the city is fostering between locals, businesses, and tourists? And do you think such collaboration is important in achieving these results?

P: In the context of Denmark or in general?

R: In Denmark if you can, but also, in general. I just wanted to try to understand if you perceive that a collaboration is necessary in those cases to achieve sustainable and regenerative results.

P: I mean, of course it is necessary to achieve those results. Like, it's quite obvious. But when I was in ITB, I went to some of the panels and some of the talks, you know, and I realized there were some businesses working in Denmark. One of them was called “Be Cause”, and they were working for the GSTC, the certification, you know? I think that a big part of those achievements is made possible by the context of a place, you know? If the context of that place is ready to bear this, those businesses or those initiatives would be able to achieve it. They get the support from the communities, they get the support from the government fundings and subsidies and everything. Also, I think they can find more educated workforce. They can, because their context is kind of ready to do this, so they can achieve this much easier, in my opinion. And yes, it is effective. But, again, in places where the other stakeholders are not collaborating with you, it's not possible. Like you cannot really achieve this. Because I guess it takes much more effort and endeavour to achieve the regenerative work. I think you need infrastructure for this, you know? And if a place is providing this

infrastructure, you can do it much easier, and you can grow in that context much easier. But if a place is not doing that, then it's not possible. So, to be honest, I don't have a lot of information about this. I don't have a lot of examples or information about regenerative tourism. But what comes to my mind is, like, volunteer tourism or the farms that you said. Those are, I guess, examples of regenerative. But maybe you can give me more examples. I can, like, brainstorm if I have seen anything.

R: So, what I found is, like, those green areas that were before industrial areas and now are regenerating into, like, eco-friendly apartments or, like, green parks in the middle of the cities to, create a more diverse environment compared to the city centre. Or I don't know, for example, those urban farming. Those initiatives involve people and also tourists can volunteer, and this is maybe something that not all tourists know about. You can just contribute to growing these gardens on the rooftop with the locals. So, I was thinking in this case, like, how should collaboration be integrated in order to involve also more tourists in this? Because I think it's something for everyone in a way, you know, that everyone can benefit from.

P: I think what looks interesting to me in the concept of regenerative is that you don't feel like a person that is just a visitor and a consumer, you know? It's also a producer, right? And in my opinion, it looks like you become a local. You're not just a guest in a place where a host is just hosting you. You become the host and you become the local, you know? You feel involved. You feel welcome. And I think this is a very interesting aspect of it because you feel more integrated. You feel much more integrated if you feel that you're giving back. But I'm not sure how many tourists are concerned to be thinking like this, you know? I'm quite pessimistic about this part.

R: So, do you think one of the aspects that could be improved is how tourists are taught or engaged in those aspects? Like already before coming they should be more aware of what's their role as tourists or what they could do better compared to just being a tourist?

P: Yeah, if they care because in many cases the tourists don't even care. The tourists in general, they don't care because people work, they earn money. It depends like how much money. Most of the people don't earn that much. I think in a global level you can't say that people earn a lot of money, right? A lot of people earn a lot of money, and they can't afford traveling a lot. So, most of the people when they have money and they want to go on leisure, they're just thinking about how to spend this and how to enjoy it the most, you know? Like "how can I just consume and just have my time?". It's like leisure time, right? It's not that most people can travel often. For example, many people, from out of Europe or not, they can't even afford to go abroad once a year. Also, it's not as well connected as European Union, right? So, they're just like if I can travel once abroad, once a year, I'm just going to do whatever I can to enjoy the most. It's really hard to ask people to care about this. You don't even want them to care about this, you know? You cannot expect. As I said, if the

country is in a way that the salary of the people is high and they can have more self-development, you know, maybe they care. Otherwise, I don't think people care that much.

R: Okay, thank you. That was really exhaustive, I have to say. So, based on everything we discussed now, how do you think the city's approach to sustainable efforts or practices is compared to other cities?

P: Well, the thing is that in general, I guess, Denmark is not depending on tourism that much. The cities that, for example, I have visited in Europe are Barcelona, Madrid, Berlin, Ljubljana, even Marseille. These cities, they're heavily touristic, right? Some places like Madrid or Barcelona, they're depending on tourists for their GDP. But in Denmark, I don't think it's based on the tourists that much. And I think that makes a difference in the decision-making of their tourism sector, you know? And I don't know how much they depend on it and how much they're concerned about tourism. But I guess they have a lot of resources and organisation to think about everything, so it's possible for them. But I believe in places like other cities like Barcelona and this kind of places, they're not that concerned. They're just thinking mostly about the money. And for promotion of sustainability, as I said, maybe I didn't notice, maybe I didn't pay attention. But I didn't see much of things. Yeah, what you notice when you go to Copenhagen is the number of bicycles you see. But it's like mainly locals. I'm not sure how much of them are tourists. That is one of the main activities that I saw in terms of sustainability. The rest, I don't know. I think the public transportation is quite expensive. If I'm not wrong, for 24 hours, I don't know.

R: I think it was around 100 crowns for 24 hours, something like that.

P: See. I think it's very expensive. A 10-day trip in Barcelona was like 11 euros. Again, it's not comparable. They are economically totally different, right? The amount of taxes they pay, the amount of income they have, the labour force. It's quite different. It's not comparable. But in general, it's an expensive destination. It's not affordable.

R: I agree with you on this. And I think that's everything. Thank you for participating and providing very exhaustive answers.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 4 (Male, 26)

R: Okay, so as I told you, this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take around 15 to maximum 20 minutes. I am recording just to then be able to analyse your answers. I'm noting your age and gender for just representational purposes, but I wanted to make sure that you know that your responses are anonymous, and I won't take any personal information. So, if you give me your consent, I will start the interview and the recording.

P: Yes.

R: Thank you. So, the first question is, what does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you describe any specific efforts that you associate with sustainability?

P: Well, I think it's a paradox. Because you travel, you're very environmentally unsustainable, also socially, because you go into a local community and you're kind of being a disruptive force, I would say. But it's also a good way to spread awareness over how one can be sustainable if you go to other places and see how they do it there. For example, going to a football match in Germany, they had like those reusable beer glasses, and there was no garbage. Or somewhere in the Netherlands where they use like the canals to get around easily, just with boats, electric boats. You see those examples and in a way you see that there are those options, so one can also try and reproduce in other places, you know. So, I guess it's the paradox with traveling being very unsustainable, at least flying. I mean, you can take train, but for me, from Norway, it's very hard and very expensive. So yeah.

R: Okay. I get your point, yeah. And have you ever heard about the term regenerative in the context of travel and tourism?

P: Yes. But I don't really know how to define it.

R: Well, regenerative is an approach that tries to go beyond sustainability, so it's not only trying to minimize the impacts tourism, in this case, has on the destination, but to actively improve the places we visit. So, to make a further step to respect and enhance the local community, the economy, and the environment. Did this definition somehow changed your understanding of the term, or do you think it can influence your future choices on travel?

P: No, I'm very selfish. No.. wait.

R: No, it can be. So, knowing about the existence of this regenerative concept doesn't influence in a way or like make you do different choices in terms of travel, let's say.

P: Wait. Maybe. Well, maybe it will. Yeah, it can change somewhat what I do. For example, there was in Copenhagen, they had like a kayak where you can rent it for free and then you can pick up garbage. I didn't do it, but I was thinking of that. But and also like the volunteering project I've been considering (nrd. Volunteering experience for youths), I guess you can compare that somehow. Because you're giving back.

R: Okay, that's interesting. And were you aware of the city's recognition for sustainability efforts before visiting Copenhagen?

P: Yeah.

R: Okay. And how did you find out? Was it because you were interested and you research this, or was it because you saw it on social media or heard from friends?

P: Yeah, I think it's just word of mouth, it's just what we think of Copenhagen. You automatically think of sustainability. So, I think I just associated. But I think I also read it somewhere before, like a newspaper or a strategy report. I'm not sure.

R: Okay..

P: It's more like the impression I already had of Copenhagen as being the bike capital and sustainable.

R: I see. That's interesting. And so, while you were in Copenhagen, did you observe any environmental protection efforts? In a way, you mentioned already the initiative to clean the environment, the canals in this case, while kayaking. But did you also engage in other sustainable practices? I don't know, like biking or choosing sustainable accommodation?

P: Yeah, we rented a bike, I remember, from Donkey Republic and we biked around Copenhagen, which was amazing. I can't remember what we did more that could be considered sustainable. You mean sustainable for the environment, or in terms of social sustainability?

R: In general, what you would associate with a sustainable practice.

P: No. I don't think I have other examples now.

R: And for example, if you're considering your choice of renting a bike, what did motivate you to do this? Was it because you were having sustainability or sustainable behaviour in mind, let's say, or was it because it was more comfortable, or a different way to move around?

P: I think both. I think the simplicity of biking in Copenhagen, it's by far the easiest way to get around. And also, we need to get from A to B fast. And then, yeah, just biking in Copenhagen, I would say is the main attraction in Copenhagen, biking in the summer. So, it's like all pluses because it's pretty cheap also.

R: Okay. So, you would say in this case biking positively impacted your experience of Copenhagen?

P: Yeah, definitely. It was one of the things I remember the most.

R: I see. And again, taking the example you provided with the bike rental, did you think Copenhagen has the resources that tourists or visitors need to engage with sustainable practices? Like is the city offering the opportunity to rent bikes, for example, or it provides an efficient, reliable transportation system? And do you think they are communicated in a way that visitors can easily engage in/with those practices?

P: To some extents maybe. But wouldn't say much is being done in the city in terms of communication. I just thought of something. That slalom thing on the roof of the recycle station.

R: Copenhill you mean?

P: Yeah. That is a very sustainable and very cool attraction. But like this example, I had to hear from someone, it could be much more marketed. Because you don't know much about it. It is also true that I haven't read so much about it. But besides that, well, I read their report form Wonderful Copenhagen, where they mention how they want to connect locals with the visitors. And according to them they are doing this also in terms of social sustainability rather than just environmental. But to be honest, I haven't seen so much of the communication, either online or when I'm there.

R: Okay. That's a good point. So, you're saying that maybe more should be done in terms of communication?

P: Yeah, exactly.

R: Okay. The next question was to understand if there were some activities you engaged with that could be considered regenerative. I'm taking the initiative you mentioned about cleaning the canals with the canoeing. This was a relevant example, but were you also aware of other initiatives, for example, urban farming? This is an example where people are cultivating gardens on top of rooftops. Or there are areas in the cities that were former industrial areas and are now transformed into green spaces where they built accommodations. So, even maybe this was thought for locals, at the same time also tourists can go there, and they can enjoy and benefit from more and greener areas. How do you perceive those initiatives? Do you think they are effective in creating some regenerative areas around the city? And do you think they could change the perception of the city for visitors?

P: Yeah, definitely. I'm very passionate about turning the industry areas into green areas and actually think of how people perceive the city. I think it's very important not to just build cheap apartments, as you see in some cities. So, to have that in mind when you're establishing those green areas to acknowledge the importance of both the visitors and the inhabitants, I think is super important. I think eventually you would gradually maybe change the

impression of Copenhagen of being an urban destination, but that is combining it with nature and sustainability. But I still think it's more that can be done like going down the main street and it's like a massive highway in the middle of the centre, that is not nice to see, especially for tourists.

R: Yeah, that's true.

P: And yeah, it's a bit, incoherent maybe? Also, there are aggressive bikers that almost run you over. Yeah, maybe there are problem like this that could be solved.

R: Oh, did you perceive bikers as a problem?

P: Yeah, especially as a visitor, and if you are not used to bike. It can be kind of intimidating, yeah.

R: I see. Okay. So, do you think those initiatives could be considered a form of collaborations among visitors, locals and government? And do you think this collaboration is a relevant aspect for a positive outcome of these initiatives?

P: I think it's hard because most of these initiatives are going to take time, like urban gardening. And I'm guessing people go to Copenhagen for a weekend. So when you're there for a short period, it's kind of hard to combine it, you know? Sustainable and regenerative efforts are long-term in my opinion, it will take time to see the results. But if it will be some short-term sustainable efforts that visitors could contribute to, I don't know what this could be. Maybe like planting flowers or yeah something like this. Like, I don't know, the city maybe should think innovative on a short time. Then I think like the kayak cleaning garbage is the best example because it's easy to do. It's easy and you get an experience with the kayak trip. Yeah.

R: Okay, interesting point. And so, in your opinion, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare to other cities you've visited?

P: Between most of the cities I've been to, Copenhagen is doing a much better job, I would say. Yeah, it is true that I didn't see so much of the communication, but I've seen more than other cities. When I compare it with Oslo, there seems to be like a much more holistic approach in Copenhagen. In Copenhagen you have a strategy and then you follow it while other cities..

R: It seems like some strategies or initiatives get lost in the way.

P: Yeah, exactly. Other cities change their strategy every four years. Copenhagen seems to be more consistent. I think it also shows in a way how the city designed the strategies and how it is trying to implement them.

R: Okay. Thank you. Unless you have other doubts or questions, I'm done.

P: Yeah. No further comments.

R: Okay, thank you for participating.

PARTICIPANT 5 (Female, 24)

R: I'm doing this interview as part of my research, which is about understanding how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take around 15 to 20 minutes, and I'm just recording to then be able to transcribe the interview. If you're okay with this, I will just take your gender and age for representational purposes, but I won't use any personal information, and the answers will be anonymous. So, if you give me your consent, I can start with the first question.

P: Yeah, I'm okay with that.

R: Okay, perfect. So, the first question is, what does the term sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism, and could you maybe describe any specific efforts you associate with the term?

P: Oh, that's a big question. Well, sustainability for me, especially considering the travel field, is, for example, to do the least harm to the locals and also to have the lowest carbon footprint during the travel process. For example, if it's a short distance, the more sustainable way, of course, is to take a train. Especially if it's electricity-powered train or a bus, that will be better than taking a plane. And then in other sense, for example, I do CouchSurfing a lot, and I think that's also a good way for sustainable accommodation, because you don't stay in a hotel, and you don't use all this power and everything. For example, we usually cook together with the host, so we don't use too much extra power or energy.

R: Okay, that's a good point. And what about term regenerative? Have you ever heard about it, or are you familiar with it?

P: Oh, regenerative. I'm not very sure. What does it mean?

R: I can try and give you a definition. Regenerative approach is trying to go beyond sustainability. This is done not only by avoiding doing harm to the places we visit. So, not only trying to minimize our impacts on the environment, on the society or on the economy, but also give back to them. So, trying to respect, and enhance the environment, economy or community in the places we visit. Do you have a different perception or understanding of the term after this definition? And does this somehow influence or change your future choices on travel?

P: Oh, this is a very, how to say, it's a very good concept. But I think personally speaking, I think it's very difficult to have a regenerative impact, practically speaking, when you traveling somewhere. To be honest I can't think about any ways of giving back to the locals out of all my financial support.

R: Okay, so you are thinking this is an interesting topic theoretically speaking, but are you struggling to understand how this could be practically applied?

P: Yeah exactly.

R: Okay, I understand your doubts. And before visiting, were you aware of Copenhagen recognition for sustainability?

P: Well, I was not aware of Copenhagen in particular, like I was more aware that Denmark is a country that's very focused, and it is paying attention to sustainability in a way.

R: And did this somehow influence your decision to visit Denmark or Copenhagen in particular?

P: Oh, I think so, it made a big impact. Like I'm an Erasmus student and I'm also non-EU, so I had to choose only between three countries when considering where to live in. And I chose Denmark. And well, a big reason behind this is because of their sustainability perceptions. Like when I was living there for the six months, I really, really enjoyed their way of implementing sustainability. Like for example, all the recycling rules, swap spots and also dumpster diving. And that's really like fascinating me a lot.

R: I'm just going to connect to the next question that was if you ever engaged in such practices. You mentioned the recycling "culture", dumpster diving or similar actions. Are those the ones you engage in while you were in Copenhagen?

P: Yes, exactly

R: And you also mentioned, for example, the CouchSurfing, and I think this can be considered as a sustainable practice also. So, what motivated you to engage in such practices and how this, well, you already said it in a way, but did these practices influenced your perception of the city, did they not?

P: Yes, they did. I would say that I started because I'm poor. Like I just moved here and I'm only living, I don't know for how long, maybe five months, six months and then I'm living. So, I don't want to like spend money to buy brand new furniture and decorations and everything. And then my roommate introduced me to some recycling centres. Centres where you can go and have a look. Everything is free because they are things that people wouldn't

use anymore so you can just take it. So now everything in my room, like the shelves, the table, chair, everything, I took it from recycling centres. And I feel like I'm giving these things a new life because if no one takes it, they're just going to be crashed and maybe burned or I don't know, like however they treat this trash. But now I give them a new life and they are still being used.

R: That's very interesting. And I've heard through my interviews that it's a thing that not many people do. So that's a good point you came up with.

P: Yeah. And also, dumpster diving. First, I started because I'm poor. Because food in Copenhagen is very expensive. But then like when I'm doing it, I also feel very proud that this food is not going to waste. Now I'm taking it and I'm sharing with my roommate and with like people I'm living with. And I think it's, how to say, it's very like rewarding.

R: Well, I think somehow if I'm going back to the definition I gave you, also those small actions could be considered regenerative in a way, like, you know, trying to not take that much from the environment and give back in a way that is just not wasting. So, just not purely materialistic. It is not just buying stuff that then go to waste. I think it can be a positive point. So, do you think that Copenhagen in this case provided the resources to actually allow people, if they want to, to engage in such efforts? Like is the city's communication clear on, for example, how to recycle, or is the city trying to engage people in not using cars or rather take the bike or public transports?

P: Well, I think so. For example, in terms of transportation, there are more bikes than cars in the streets. And I have a friend, actually my colleague, she bought a car one year ago and then she had to spend one more hour on the traffic, compared with before when she bikes all the time. And then now after one year, she sold the car because she realised it's useless. She said it's better to take the bike for everything. And also, the road, there's like, for example, a whole road specifically for bikes, you know. This is amazing to bike. But I feel like, for example, this kind of recycling centre is not very marketed, like they don't have enough information for newcomers to Copenhagen to do that. For example, many of my friends, they're both new here or others have been living for two years and they have no idea of this recycling centres. So, I think it would be better if we have more accessible information about where the recycling centre is and how it works and everything.

R: Yeah, okay. I agree with you on this. And in connection to this, when you're thinking of like those type of communications, in Copenhagen in this case, but also in other destinations, do you think it would be easier for you to have an access to those information in a digital way or would you still relied on, I don't know, tourism offices or guides or like, I don't know, also relying on people's advices so the classic word of mouth? I am thinking of whatever type of information, from those recycling centres you mentioned but also simply find out information on what do to and visit in the city.

P: Like all this information I get is from word of mouth and then the second is digital form, yeah.

R: Okay, thank you. So, if we go back to what could be associated with a regenerative approach, I know that there are some initiatives or places in Copenhagen that not only improve the environment, but also try to contribute positively to the community. For example, I don't know if you are aware of initiatives such as the urban farming. So, there are people that are trying to foster the growth of plants and vegetables on rooftops. And in such initiatives, also tourists can contribute in a way. They can participate in gardening or also like learning how to do this, you know, so then they can take this knowledge back to their cities. Or for example, there are areas in Copenhagen that were once industrial areas and now they have been regenerated, so transformed into green areas. By doing this they created more green spaces, such as urban parks and they built some eco-friendly accommodations. So, how do you perceive such efforts? Do you think they could improve visitors' perceptions of the city?

P: Definitely, because I personally haven't seen any, you know, rooftop that has plants or vegetation growing, but I do have heard about it or like read it somewhere. But I think if you go in the city, like no matter you're a tourist or you're a newcomer who just moved to the city, and if you see all the buildings have all the plants growing on the rooftop and everything, this definitely changes their opinion.

R: I don't know if you saw, that there are some benches in Copenhagen that are taller than normal benches. And the aim of those installations is to raise awareness among people about environmental issues. So, in this case, their purpose is to represent how sea level rising would affect the city.

P: Oh, really? Okay. I thought they were for the lifeguard.

R: No, no actually. The main objective was to raise awareness among people. Do you think it's an effective way of doing so?

P: Well, I have been living here for four months and I didn't know the purpose of this installation, so I don't know how effective it is, but it's a very good way of thinking, but maybe work harder on the, you know, communication side.

R: Okay. So again, it's like, in a way, a problem of communication?

P: Yeah, maybe you are putting a sign near the benches and saying, this is what we mean, because like, all of us, we just thought it's for lifeguard and their kids, they're trying to climb there.

R: That's also a fair point. So again, if you think about such initiatives, regenerative or sustainable, do you think collaboration among tourists, local businesses and government, is important? And would it be beneficial for the city to try and foster more collaborations of such kind?

P: Yeah, I would say so. Like, for example, when the tourists arrive here, they are very ignorant of what the city is doing in term of regenerative, is that the word? I think if they work together on this, definitely, it's going to make some impact with the tourists. And also, I think, for example, if these tourists, that usually behave badly, like throwing trash everywhere, travel to a very green city, and they see that people are, like, doing all those practices, and they are not throwing trash everywhere, they are not spitting everywhere, they will change their behaviour as well.

R: Okay, interesting. Yeah, maybe sometimes making people feel out of space in a way, can be a way for them to learn. You know by showing them how they could differently adopt another behaviour.

P: Yeah, that makes sense.

R: So based on your experiences, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited before?

P: I would say that the recycling centre is definitely better than Slovenia or Spain, like, the only two other countries I've lived in. And of course, definitely better than China, nothing to compare. I think it's doing a good job, like, regarding all these things, and also the creation of a bikeable city, like, there's tourists come here for joining this biking tour. I think it's a very good way for showing the tourists, not only show, but make them experience how it feels like to live in a bikeable city.

R: Okay, yeah, well, then thank you so much for your insights. I think they will be really useful. So, unless you have other questions, that was the end of mine. Okay, then thank you for participating and for the insights you brought.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 6 (Male, 27)

R: Hello! As I was mentioning to you before, this interview is part of my research that aims at understanding how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take around 15-20 minutes. I am recording because then I need to be able to analyse your answer so it's easier to have transcriptions, but I wanted to make sure that you know that your answer will be anonymous. I won't take any personal information. I'm

just taking notes of your age and gender for representational purposes. So, if you give me your consent, I can start the interview.

P: Yes, I give you my consent.

R: Thank you. So, the first question is more about the awareness of the terms we are going to use during this interview. What does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you maybe describe any specific efforts that you associate with this term?

P: Okay, for me, sustainability means making wise use of the resources available to us so that we don't spoil them, and we preserve them for the future generations to use. In personal examples, I don't know, like maybe I'm thinking carbon emissions. I prefer to travel with buses rather than flying to different cities whenever I have the opportunity to travel.

R: And have you ever heard about the term regenerative?

P: Yes, during my course of study, yes, but I don't have any deeper knowledge of it.

R: Well, when referring to a regenerative approach, we refer to something that tries to go beyond sustainability. And this means that it's not only a matter of trying to minimize our impacts on the environment, society and economy of a destination, but also a matter of enhance it. So, try to give back more than what we take, let's say, from the environment, from the economy, and from the community. Following this definition, did your understanding of the term change? Or do you have a different perspective on how this ideology could push you to adopt a different behaviour while travelling?

P: Yeah, surely. If I can contribute to enhancing the community or the places that I'm going to visit, yeah, surely, it would benefit me and it is an efficient way of travelling as well, I would say.

R: I see. And before going to Copenhagen, were you aware of the city's recognition for sustainability? Was this a choice that influenced your decision to visit the city?

P: No, to be honest. I was not aware of the sustainability part of the city.

R: And was this because you were not looking for such information, like you were not researching this, or because you think this information was difficult to find?

P: I don't know. I think I didn't look for it in the first place, I would say.

R: And if you're thinking about maybe other experiences you had, about other destinations, do you normally tend to look for such information online or are you relying on, I don't know, advice from friends, are you visiting tourism offices, or reading brochures?

P: So, when I travel, I think I don't really look into these aspects, like what the city is offering to us. I just focus on myself. On myself I mean how sustainable I could be while travelling you know, rather than what the city has to offer to me.

R: Okay, that's an interesting point as well. And in Copenhagen, did you observe any environmental protection efforts that the city was trying to do, or did you engage yourself in such sustainable practices? I don't know, for example, you chose to bike, or you chose to stay in sustainable accommodation?

P: Well, I haven't been to many places in Copenhagen, to be honest. And even then, like, 50% of my travel was by foot, and the rest 50% was by bus. And when it comes to other sustainability practices, I don't know, I haven't noticed as much.

R: Okay, so would you be able to assess whether Copenhagen is providing the essential resources or information to actually engage in those practices?

P: Yes, I would say so. My perception of the city is so.

R: Okay, I understand. And if we go deeper on what I was telling you about the regenerative aspect of such places or activities, do you have some examples of such places or activity in Copenhagen that reflect those principles. So, in a way that they are not only minimizing, but trying to give back more than what they take, let's say? I can maybe try and give you some already, so you can tell me if you know about those, or others. There are some urban farming initiatives, for example, so it's about people trying to grow gardens and plant on the rooftops in the middle of the city. So, try to give the city more green areas and, in a way, be sustainable. Because by doing this they not only try to reduce their carbon footprints, the carbon emissions. But they also try to engage the community and the visitors. Because, for example, in these urban farming initiatives, also tourists can contribute. They can go there and try and grow plants, but also learn how to do it, and its contribution to the environment so they can take it back to their city. Or, I don't know, for example, there were also examples of areas in Copenhagen that were once industrial, and they regenerate them into green areas, so they remove all the industries, and they build eco-friendly accommodation or urban parks. Do you think those initiatives are effective in trying to create and foster regenerative areas in the cities?

P: Oh yes, yes, I think this is a great initiative to convert everything. Especially when you mentioned the industrial thing, I think that's a very positive approach to regeneration of the city. And thinking about other examples, I don't know, I've heard of a restaurant called Noma

and they grow their own vegetables in the same way. They do, I don't know if the term is correct, foraging? Like they go to the forest to collect everything, you know. They do not buy in bulk, you know, they grow and collect based on the quantity they need. And also, by doing this, they cut down the cost or the transportation, what they would pay if they imported such things, for example.

R: Oh, I didn't know this. That could definitely be an example of this. And also, I don't know if you saw, there are some tall benches in the city. Like benches that are higher than normal. And the purpose behind this, is to raise awareness among people about the consequences of the rising of the sea level due to climate change. How do you perceive such initiatives? Do you think they could actually be a positive way of trying to engage people and raise awareness on those topics?

P: Yes, I think it would. But again, like, I think people should be open to the perception as well, you know. Just like you said, okay, you were curious enough to know what it was, but I don't know if among 100 people, all 100 are actually curious enough to be interested in this. But if everyone does so, yeah, I think it's a good initiative overall.

R: Okay, I see your point. So, do you think that the city should try not only to better communicate what those sustainability or regenerative efforts are, but also to engage, every stakeholder in their efforts and in what they do in relation to this? So, that those initiatives could be more a result of a better collaboration between businesses, locals, government, and tourists?

P: Oh yes, yes.

R: And do you think such collaboration would be important?

P: The collaboration should be there, yeah. And I don't think that the state alone can make changes. I think when it's a collective effort, you know, there is proper outcome to it.

R: Okay, I see. So, last question. Based on your experiences, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited before?

P: Well, I think the best example that I would compare it with is Ljubljana. And I believe Ljubljana is doing immensely great when it comes to green deal and sustainability factors. So, I think Copenhagen should buckle up and do the communication in a proper way so that it reaches out to maximum number of people. And since it being the capital, a bigger capital than Ljubljana, I think it has more potential in doing that.

R: Okay, interesting point. Well, if you don't have any questions, this was most what I wanted to ask you. So, thank you for participating.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 7 (Female, 24)

R: Okay, so as I was explaining to you, this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I will record your interview just then to be able to transcribe it and do a proper analysis, but I wanted to tell you that I won't take any personal information and the answers will be anonymous. I'm just noting your gender and age for representational purposes. So, if you're okay with this and you give me your consent, I will start with the interview.

P: You have my consent. Let's do this.

R: Okay, so the first question aims at understanding what's your awareness on the topics. What does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you maybe describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: Sustainability, it's more about taking into account what's left in the environment and using it accordingly so there's no waste. Also, this usage should be done in a way that there's some left for the next generations. I know that's similar to the textbook's definition of sustainability, but that sums it up I would say. And what was the next part of the question?

R: If you can describe any actions or practices you associate with sustainability.

P: Waste reduction would be one, because that's the easiest way to start, waste. And the second would be energy sources, renewable energy sources. That's just the beginning, and I think I would associate this term with them most, because the rest of the things, it takes time to implement.

R: Okay, interesting point. And what about the term regenerative? Have you ever heard about it?

P: I have heard about it, but I'm not totally familiar. I cannot define it if you ask me, but I have heard about it.

R: Okay, so if I try and give you a definition, we can say that a regenerative approach to tourism, encompasses all those actions that go beyond sustainability. So, it's not only about minimizing the impact we have on the environment, on the community, and on the economy, but also trying to give back, to enhance, and to contribute more positively to those dimensions. Did this definition change your understanding of the term, and do you think this might somehow influence your choices on travel in the future?

P: Yeah, definitely it would. I mean, if it's more about giving back, it's definitely more interesting. And actually, it would, more than sustainability, because I think nowadays sustainability, the word, is used more and more as a greenwashing tool. So, regenerative, that's something new. But I think that for people to use that term, they really need to learn what that is. So, I think it would be a good change from sustainability and a good step forward.

R: So, do you believe that if such ideology would be better communicated, and consequently better understood, it could lead to better outcomes?

P: I would say so, yeah.

R: Okay, I see your point. And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before you visit? If so, was this something that influenced your decision to visit the city?

P: No, I didn't know about it before, to be honest.

R: Okay, and was this because it was not something you were not looking for at the time, or was it because you struggled to find this information, so the city lacking clear communication?

P: It was a last-minute trip, so I didn't look for that. It was a weekend trip, so that didn't really influence my decision. For a weekend trip, I don't think looking for such data.

R: Okay, and normally, when you try to find such information about the destination. And I am thinking of information on order to get some awareness of it, but also about its practices in terms of sustainability, where do you normally research? Like, is it through digital platforms, or more tangible information for instance tourist offices or travel guides? Or I don't know, do you also just rely on advice from other people?

P: So, any destination goes into my bucket list from social media, and then I research about it on Google, and then different blogs. I don't really access books about it, but then again, you know, I don't have travel guides lying around, so it's mostly on the internet. I would definitely look for options that are more sustainable in a way. Or trying not to use the word sustainable, I would say that are just a better option. But again, as I am a student, it's more about budget, this is my priority. So, I have to go with the cheapest option, even though I care about the environment.

R: So, do you believe those choices also depends on the motivations behind visitors travel and their purpose? Do you think these can also lead you to take different decisions?

P: Exactly! Right now, as a student, I have a limited budget for travel, and these things matter also.

R: Okay, this is an interesting point you raised. And while you were in Copenhagen, did you notice any effort or action that could be considered sustainable made or taken by the city, or did you also engage yourself in such actions? So, I don't know, for example, did you rent a bike, or did you choose to stay in a sustainable accommodation?

P: Bikes, definitely, I used bikes in Copenhagen. I've walked around a lot, instead of taking a cab or a private transport. Also, I think they have a lot of water stations, so I've carried my own water bottle, and that's really important, considering plastic waste. and well, I can't think of anything else right now to be honest.

R: Okay, don't worry those are still relevant examples. And what was the reason or motivation behind engaging in such actions in your opinion? Was this something that impacted positively your experience?

P: Definitely, like a bike-friendly city is not easy to come by when you're from India, and right now, since I'm in the US, I can tell you that bike-friendly cities are really difficult to manage, and when, just to have that infrastructure is really important, it encourages people to do it, even as a tourist. Like, I'm there for two days, or three days, but I would still participate in their efforts to do good for the environment, in a way. So, yes, it definitely changes my outlook, and I would choose that option. Because here in the US I would rather take a cab than a bike, even though there are bike stations here. But there, in Copenhagen, instead of taking a cab, I biked, because you are more motivated to take a bike.

R: So are you saying in a way that Copenhagen, as a city, is able to provide the resources to engage in sustainable practices? Like you said, the water dispenser, the bike options.. do you believe the city provides the resources to engage in such activities?

P: Yes, exactly. It does.

R: Okay, I see. And in terms of what could be considered regenerative efforts, so aligning more with the definition I gave you before, have you ever engaged or participated in initiatives that can be considered as trying to improve the environment, or contributing to the community? I can try and give you an example, because I know maybe it can be difficult to think about. Were you aware of certain initiatives like urban farming? For example, people growing gardens or vegetables on the rooftops. And those initiatives are also trying to involve tourists. So, as a tourist, you could contribute to growing those plants, but also learning how to do it, so that you can, like, bring it back to the country where they lived. Or, I don't know, for instance, there was this area of the city that was an industrial area, and now has been regenerated into a green area. So, they built parks, urban parks, but they also built

some like apartments block. Those are though eco-friendly, so a building that tries to minimize if not eliminate its environmental impact, you know? I don't know if you've ever seen something like this in Copenhagen, something similar. Or how do you perceive those efforts?

P: So, **urban gardening**, I know about the concept of it, but **I didn't know that tourists could participate in this, because that's not something you would assume, you know, you wouldn't think that tourists would be interested in urban farming**, but **that's actually very interesting**. Especially if they could take those back, you know, they could learn about it and from it. So, that is good. **And as for the public parks, like the urban parks, I've seen a lot of them all around Copenhagen, just, you know, you're walking and then you see a park, and that's, I think, I really love that part about the city**. Also, when I went to meet a friend, she took me to her rooftop. There were a lot of plants and everything, and she is living near Kastrup, near the airport, and it is interesting because it is just next to her, but there is also a whole protected forest area. So, thinking of her apartment, I think you might be talking about that. They have, like, gardens and everything on the rooftop, so it's a bit similar to what you said, and **that actually looked pretty cool**.

R: Yeah, I think it's useful not only to reduce CO2 emissions and promoting sustainability, but also to providing a change in the surrounding environment. It's nice to have spaces that aren't just buildings and grey blocks. Also, I don't know if you saw this, in an area of the city, there are some these high benches..

P: **Oh yeah, I've seen that, it's in the central square. I don't know what it's about though**.

R: Basically, the reason behind this is to show and try to raise awareness among people on how climate change could impact the rise of the sea level, and what would be the consequences on our planet. What do you think about those installations? Do you think they are effective?

P: I think they need to have a plaque or a board somewhere that says something about it, because I've been there many times, so I've seen it many times and I clearly remember it. Because I saw people trying to take pictures, you know, trying to jump on it and sit on it, so definitely, people love taking pictures with that. **I believe if only they have some kind of QR code or a board that says what it is about, I think it would be more interesting**, but yeah, I've definitely seen that.

R: So is it maybe a matter of trying to communicate more clearly, what the intentions behind it and its meaning is?

P: Completely, yeah. Or maybe they had it when they installed it, and it's not there anymore, but it is definitely interesting, because you can see people are curious. I was sitting there for

an hour, I was waiting, I was actually people-watching at that point, everyone came, took pictures, tried to sit, left. So it's engaging, but maybe there should be an explanation. Because again, without an explanation maybe people might think it is just because the Danes are very tall.

R: Yes, I definitely agree. Another person I interviewed that told me she thought those benches were for the lifeguards, so yeah, I think that's definitely a matter of communication missing somehow. Do you believe that the efforts we've discussed involve communication and collaboration among tourists, locals, the government, and businesses? Do you think that such collaboration is essential for achieving outcomes related to sustainability and regeneration?

P: Yes, definitely. I think people are just tired of the word sustainability in a way, and sustainability is just a one-way thing. Regenerative, like you said, is more engaging, it's more about talking and, you know, doing things together, giving back. So, there's some action related to it. And it would definitely change my perspective. Like if I have to choose between a sustainable initiative, let's say, or a regenerative one where I can actually engage in the process, you know, I would choose that, definitely. It does influence the mind of people our age, I guess, or younger probably.

R: That's an interesting point.

P: Yeah, because sustainability is just used so much that it has lost its credibility.

R: Yeah, okay, thank you. And how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you've visited in your opinion? Is this city doing better in terms of the visible actions and opportunities for engagement, as well as how the city communicates these efforts?

P: I think it is doing much better. But since it's a capital city, there's obviously going to be, you know, some issues. It still has a big population and I've seen trash laying around, but that's still very less compared to other cities. It's still way better managed, the green spaces, it's just, oh, wow, I'm just walking and there's another garden, I'm just walking, there's another garden. So I really, really love that about Copenhagen, the fact that you're always close to nature. And it's just that it's so walkable, bikeable, that is something that, you know, should not be taken for granted, even though it's very common in Europe, like, you know, in Denmark, especially, but that should not be taken for granted.

R: Yeah, like despite it being a capital somehow you don't feel like you're in a capital.

P: Exactly. It has a lot of areas that where you can just let go of the city and, you know, just be this.

R: I agree, yeah. Well, that's all on my side. Thank you so much for your insights and participating in the interview.

P: You're welcome.

PARTICIPANT 8 (Female, 23)

R: Okay, so as I was mentioning to you earlier, this interview is part of my research and is trying to understand how Generation Z's visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. It will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I'm just recording to then be able to transcribe your answers, and I am noting your gender and age for representational purposes, but every personal information is going to be anonymous. So, if you're okay with that and you give your consent, I will start with the first question.

P: Go for it, I give you my consent.

R: Okay, the first question is about the term sustainability. What does this term mean to you in the context of travel and tourism, and could you maybe describe any specific action that you associate with the term sustainability?

P: Sustainability in relation to travel for me is basically trying to reduce the negative impact I make in the place I visit from the moment I arrive to the time I leave. It can take many different forms from the way we interact with locals to where we purchase our food and drinks, or where I purchase my food and drinks, or which kind of activities I choose to do in the place I visit. I'll be honest that like how I arrived in a specific place has not been the top priority of sustainability to me. It's more of what happens when I'm there itself or what happens after with the money that has been invested in the destination.

R: Okay, I see. And what about the term regenerative? Have you ever heard about it in the context of travel and tourism in particular? Would you be able to explain what it is, or define it?

P: I heard about regenerative travel sometime in 2020 during the pandemic where there was a refocus on what or how we could travel, or how we could leave a place better than it was when we arrived. I learned about it through somebody who was doing regenerative travel in Sri Lanka, and he started his own business. I spoke to him and that's when I first understood it. But I also read about it through a really famous lecturer/professional in the tourism industry. I can't remember her name now, but that's how I first came across it. I think essentially the idea is to leave the destination better compared to how it was when you arrive. This can be in the forms of economic benefits, environmental benefits, and aspects like that. Yeah.

R: Yeah, it's precisely that. And do you think being aware of this topic, or have this ideology in mind, let's say, will influence or somewhat change your travel choices?

P: Yeah, I think knowing what it is has helped me to reflect more on my choices. Like to think about the actions or the impact my choice has in a destination. I don't know if it immediately changes my choices because a choice is something I make constantly so maybe small choices can change, big choices still take time to change. I think what this concept has helped me do is give me an inner compass to understand the impact of my actions.

P: Okay, that's an interesting point you made here. And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before you visited the city? And in case was this something that influenced your decision to visit Copenhagen?

R: No, it was not actually. I had never been to Copenhagen prior to doing my master's in Denmark so I had no idea about the labels and awards the city has. I think I only understood it while I was there and while I was visiting the city, the different recognition and certificates they have. It was not something I knew before.

R: Okay, and the fact that you didn't know about this before, was it because you didn't research this type of information specifically, or was it because you think that the city is not clearly stating or communicating its understanding and commitment to sustainability?

P: I don't think I would search this certificate in any case, not just specific to Copenhagen. I mean as much as these certificates are useful and helpful, I don't think they are what I search for when I go to a place. It's more important that they are delivering what they promise which is something I can see when I'm there versus seeing if they have it or looking up if they have it in the first place. I think the city does a relatively okay job at communicating their interest in sustainability when you're there. So, I don't have any comment more on that.

R: And while you were in Copenhagen, did you see any of those environmental protection efforts or did you engage in some sustainable actions yourself such as, I don't know, biking or choosing sustainable accommodations?

P: I think one very clear example of how they do it is definitely separating their trash. It's very clearly demarcated all across the city in the places I stayed with. I mainly stayed with a friend so I never actually stayed in any hostels or accommodation outside of it, so I can't comment on that, but all the events that I went to whether it was in Christiania or whether it was like part of a museum, they always made an effort to use recycled material, paper, pencils, even the gifts that they gave away were things that had longer use versus like one-time use. So, I felt that it was a good communication of their stance.

R: Okay, I see. And do you think that the way Copenhagen provides those resources to engage in those efforts is something that also motivates you to actually do this?

P: Yeah, I guess we can say that.

R: And was this consequently something that also positively impacted your experience in the city?

P: Yeah, it did. It impacted my impression of the city because I felt like it was nice to be part of a city that had a commitment to sustainability that different stakeholders were trying to keep up. It also made me kind of wonder how it could be done this way, what was the different levels of communication that were done between stakeholders that made the suppliers, like the restaurants or the museums, attractions also want to contribute to it. Because it felt quite coherent across different stakeholders.

R: Okay, that's interesting because it would have been one of my following questions. I was wondering how important you consider this cooperation and collaboration amongst stakeholders in order to get those results. So, I'm happy you mentioned it already because it means you are considering this as a quite significant aspect, don't you?

P: Yeah, definitely.

R: Okay, and then in terms of regenerative initiatives, have you ever heard about places or initiatives that can align to the principles of regenerative? I don't know if you heard about some urban farming initiatives. Those initiatives can be interesting also because they are trying to engage tourists, apart from locals; they can also participate in growing plants, or also just learning about how to implement such initiatives, and then being able to bring it back somehow to their countries. Or I don't know if you were also familiar with some areas of the city that have been regenerated into green spaces. Those areas were transformed into green areas, with numerous parks or eco-friendly buildings and facilities. I don't know if you have other examples, but how do you perceive those initiatives in their effectiveness and impact on the perception of the city?

P: I definitely went to many places like that. One of the most memorable ones was Absalon. It's somewhere in the city. It used to be a church, but they converted it into a community center for arts, community dinners or community events. So, I participated in that and they had like a zero-waste dinner which was for like two euros. That space also used like thrown away materials to do like textile design and they decorated the place only with stuff that was thrown away. So, it was very alternative, and I really liked that space. And another one was, I don't remember the name of the place but it's close to Noma restaurant and it's basically the end of Christiania when there is like this slope that they made out of rubbish, I think. I forgot what's the name of the place.

R: You mean Copenhill, the plant?

P: Yeah, I think it's the plant. I don't remember exactly because I didn't go in to visit it, but I know that from the outside I could see that it was a slope. That can be an interesting example also.

R: Yeah, that's also an interesting example, definitely. They not only burn trash but it's also like they produce energy back and they try to minimize the CO2 level through it.

P: Yeah, exactly.

R: Then I don't know if you saw that there are some benches that are higher than normal benches in the city. The purpose of this initiative is to raise awareness among people on how the sea levels could rise due to climate change. So, it's like a way of raising awareness on how pressing those consequences are on the environment. Do you think those initiatives are also in a way effective in the message they are trying to communicate?

P: I don't know this particular example but it's a good small way I think of them explaining the effects of climate change. The other thing I felt was quite nice about explaining the impact of climate change is the fact that there are many parks in Copenhagen, and at the start of every park they kind of tell you how big the park is and why it's important to take care of green spaces. So, I thought that was like a very "covert" way of explaining our responsibility to us and to climate change as a whole.

R: I didn't know about those signs. Thank you for bringing that up. I just have now a small conclusive sentence. How does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you've visited in your opinion? Do you think it's standing out compared to other cities?

P: I don't think that a lot of cities make a lot of effort in this to be very honest. I think it's not something I pay attention to in terms of research I do before. Like I told you it's more important what happens in the city itself. Maybe the only other place I would say I noticed it is in... no but no actually I've not seen this level of communication across all stakeholders. I would say Denmark is quite special in that sense.

R: Okay so this is all on my side. I don't know if you have more questions or more insights to add, otherwise I think I am done with my questions.

P: No, I have nothing else. I hope it's useful for your research.

R: It definitely is, thank you for participating.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 9 (Female, 22)

R: Hello. So, I already told you that this interview is part of my research, and it is trying to investigate how Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches. I think it will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I am recording because I will transcribe your interview to analyze your answer, but I won't take any personal information. I will just note your gender and age for representational purposes, but I won't use any of your personal information. So, if you give me your consent, I will start with the first question.

P: Yes, it's yours.

R: Thank you. So, what does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism, and could you be able to describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: Um, yes. Okay, so sustainability in my mind, it's more considering yourself as part of something bigger, not separating it, but meaning taking care of something bigger than you. In this context is more like nature maybe and our living environment. I guess in travel and tourism, where people move from place to place, we have to consume some resources and I think taking care of those resources and trying to be more considerate about them is important. Like if you are on holidays, it doesn't mean that world stop, and we can do whatever. This is what I think in connection to sustainability. As per what I've done, I'm trying to not take flights and trying to usually take trains, especially because I'm traveling a lot. And even if I take like the plane, I'm trying to do this sustainable traveling option thing..

R: The offsetting option you mean? So, pay to compensate your emission? Or in this case the amount of emission that your flight involves?

P: Yes, exactly. I know that it's just greenwashing, but I still feel guilty if I don't contribute. I guess maybe that's the problem. Also, I'm trying to choose more sustainable accommodations and when I travel, I try still to separate the garbage, at least some small steps that I somehow can contribute. Yeah, I think that's all I can think of now.

R: Okay, and what about the term regenerative? Have you ever heard about it, like do you have an idea of what it means or what it implies?

P: I think I've never heard of it, but I mean, I can guess?

R: Okay, yeah, exactly. We can say that a regenerative approach to tourism, encompasses all those actions that go beyond sustainability. So, it's not only about minimizing the impact we have on the environment, on the community, and on the economy, but also trying to give back, to enhance, and to contribute more positively to those dimensions. Trying in a way to leave a destination, in this case, better than we found it. Did this definition in a way change

your understanding of the term, and do you think this might somehow influence your choices on travel in the future?

P: Yes, I think it's very interesting and it's very important to do. Maybe the problem now is that it's not even on personal level, but it's not done enough. And the destinations, maybe they don't really promote it enough. So, you don't feel the urge of doing it.

R: This is a good point you raised.

P: So, now I'm thinking that I actually would like to do that but how am I doing this? I think maybe I don't have enough knowledge on that or maybe the destinations also don't really.

R: So, let's say it's interesting and it's kind of motivating you theoretically speaking but you're struggling to see it in practice, correct?

P: Yes, exactly.

R: That's an interesting point, thank you. And were you aware of the city's recognition for sustainability before you visit? Was this something that influenced your choice?

P: I think it was just always in my mind. I always perceived Copenhagen as a sustainable place. I kind of knew it out of nowhere. I can't even remember if and how I researched it.

R: Was it just the image you had in mind associated with Copenhagen?

P: Yeah, exactly. So, that was the perception. And I would actually say it was one of the reasons for visiting. I knew it's a green, beautiful, sustainable city. So, yeah, maybe that influenced a bit.

R: That's interesting. I know you said you didn't research that much about the sustainability efforts of the city, but when you normally do, do you rely more on digital platforms or word of mouth, or are you going to tourist offices or reading travel guides?

P: Well, I do both actually. I think word of mouth is really important for me, but I also go to the tourist offices because I feel I get a more holistic view. Because I mean everything is, of course, subjective, but from tourist offices I get more like the actual facts and attractions about the city. But from people it's more like their experience and it could be based on different perceptions, so you get different opinions. So, I'm trying to kind of find a balance between those.

R: Okay, that's interesting. Thank you. And while you were in the city, did you actually engage in some sustainable practices? I don't know, did you bike, did you choose sustainable accommodations? And what motivated you to engage in this?

P: Okay, well, that's an interesting question because I walked. I didn't use any public transport and I was walking the whole day until I destroyed my feet and I think that was a really great commitment to sustainability of the city aligned with my hobby. So, that was like I guess the main thing. Apart from that, I've tried to choose a sustainable accommodation. There were some things happening. I don't remember exactly what to be honest, but I guess they were mentioning about their sustainability practices and asking us to keep in mind those. And also, they were doing like little workshops. I think this was what I mainly did, but otherwise I can't think of anything else.

R: And did you think this sustainable engagement in a way was something that impacted your experience positively?

P: Yeah, definitely. It's like I assured myself that Copenhagen is actually like how I imagined it. It wasn't like an expectation versus reality situation. It was just like how I imagined it.

R: Okay, that's an interesting point. So, do you think that the city provides all the resources, and it is communicating those resources in a clear way, so that people can engage in those sustainable practices?

P: Yeah, exactly. Even though it's maybe not explicit in all communication and ads, but you can see from their lifestyle, from the way people live. Like even the fact that everyone is on the bikes. It is just a simple thing, but it already gives you enough context and kind of motivates you and urges you not to be unsustainable in that city. Like you feel social pressure.

R: Okay, yeah, I agree with you. And if we then go back to what I mentioned before about the regenerative ideology, did you ever see or engage with places or initiatives in Copenhagen that can align with those principles? So that can contribute positively to the environment or the community? I know it can be difficult to assess, so I can try and give you some examples. I don't know if you were aware of those initiatives like urban farming. So, trying to grow plants and gardens on top of rooftops. Some of those are actually also engaging tourists; as a tourist you can take part in those initiatives, and I think it's interesting because in a way maybe you can also bring what you learn back to your country, you know, and try to do the same there. Or another example, there are some industrial areas that have been regenerated into green spaces. They created parks and built eco-friendly accommodations. So, you know, those buildings that try to minimize, if not eliminate their environmental impact. I don't know if you knew about this, but do you think they can be a positive contribution to urban destinations from a tourist perspective?

P: Well, I guess like it's a very huge responsibility of the destinations to actually deliver this information to tourists because as a tourist if you research like on a basic level the information about the destination, people don't really read about it much. It's mostly like the

main things happening in the city that are highlighted. So, when they go there, they're not loading their brains with the heavy information, but they try to enjoy their lives. So maybe, if the destinations actually involve people in that or motivates, inspires them to contribute to the city life, then maybe it's a really good idea. Now, I can't really remember if I've seen anything like that. I don't know if this is related to that, but do you know the working holiday visa in Australia? It can be a similar initiative because basically you're a tourist, but at the same time you're contributing to the local community. I guess that's a really good thing that also people are aware of that. They are aware of the fact that as a tourist they are consuming resources and they have to contribute at the same time, so not just exploiting the destination. Tourist should believe that they are not just foreigners here, that they cannot just do whatever they want because they do not belong to the destination, and it is not where they live. I think people are really inclined to keep their own space safe and clean, but then if it's not their own they don't really care anymore. So, maybe if they actually understand that even if they travel and there are political or geographical border, there is still only one planet, and they also have to take care of it and contribute to it somehow. So, then if people are aware of the need to minimize their impacts, maybe they can also think of contributing to it somehow, so aligning with this regenerative ideology. So, I think here it's very important that destinations take responsibility.

R: So, the problem could be a lack of communication from the destination, but also a lack of initiative from tourists to engage in this, let's say. Because if we are not aware of one thing, of course we tend not to look for it either.

P: Yeah, exactly, that's true.

R: Okay. Also, there is another example that I think it's quite significant. I don't know if you saw that in the city there are some high benches. The aim of this installation was to raise awareness about environmental issues, the sea level rise in this case. But what's your thought on this? Do you think this kind of installation are effective in trying to raise awareness among people?

P: Okay, I guess it's very interesting. I've seen those but I actually never read of it. I didn't know the reason behind this. I just saw this for fun, and I was just sitting there, you know, just enjoying. But that's very interesting and I think it's a really nice way of engaging people. Because if you just talk about it, people listen to it, and they just get whatever they want to get from it. But if they actually experience it or like try to feel it, I guess it makes more sense and it raises awareness way more than just like information they read or they listen to. You know, at some point, the topic of sustainability is discussed so frequently that many people start to avoid it, thinking, "here we go again". But I think those initiatives and installations are very interesting like I would really support it if I actually had a word in this.

R: Yeah, I agree. I think also that interactive installation are always a good way to engage more people because you're doing it, you're experiencing it, so you feel more connected to that somehow.

P: Yeah, that's true.

R: But I had the most like varied responses to this example. I had people telling me that it was because they thought Danish people were too tall, or some people that thought that was for lifeguards because it was close to the canals or the sea. So yeah, I think this is another example of lack or missing communication. They should explain more about what they are doing.

P: Definitely.

R: Okay. And do you think overall those initiatives can be considered a form of collaboration between the different stakeholders? I am thinking of government, tourists, but also locals and businesses. Do you think such collaboration is important and beneficial for the city to try and foster more initiatives of such kind?

P: Yes, I guess it's like as you just mentioned earlier. A destination can deliver as much information as possible, but if people don't want to get it, they will just ignore it. It's impossible to influence everyone's decisions, as people choose what they want to listen to. Like I can choose to listen to sustainable things, and I can choose to listen to unsustainable things. So, I guess it's really important to collaborate in these terms, as equally important is the personal value: do you actually care for environment? But the main factor maybe is also an extent of social pressure that people must have. Most of the things we are doing are sort of automatic; we do it just because society does it. So maybe it can be said that people will be affected by how something is done or acknowledged in their society. So, I guess it's all about collaboration in any way, whether it is practical or theoretical, in an informative way or whatever. But collaborating here is a key point, I guess.

R: I agree, and I really like the point you made before when you said without thinking of borders and countries the world is one and everyone is in a way benefiting from it, so it everyone's responsibility to care for it. So, consequently, collaboration will still benefit everyone.

P: Exactly. Of course.

R: Okay, last question. How does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited?

P: Well, I think in general in Denmark, and in Copenhagen especially, consideration of sustainability it's just in the air. I don't know how to explain it but like I'm just inclined to

act this way, you know. It's not that I sit and read about it the whole day. It's not that I plan that in advance like "oh I'm going to do this and that". But I'm trying to be sustainable as much as I can. At the same time, when I travel to unsustainable places it's harder to follow those rules when no one does it. So, I think Denmark and Copenhagen are doing really well in that way. And again, the problem might be a lack of collaboration. People might change a little while they're in Denmark, but then they'll go back and behave the same. There are places in which I'm just not really that sustainable because no one else does it. But I don't know I really enjoy Copenhagen being clean also in my mind. Like I feel clean here. I guess I don't know if I answer this question.

R: You did, you clearly made your point. Well, unless you have other questions, I think I'm done with mine.

P: No that's okay.

R: Thank you so much for participating and for the insights you shared.

P: Thank you.

PARTICIPANT 10 (Female, 24)

R: Hello! Okay, so as I was telling you earlier, this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z perceives Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches, and it will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I am recording just to be able to transcribe and analyze your answers, but I won't take any personal information. I will just note your gender and age for representational purposes, but I will assure you that every answer you will give me is going to stay anonymous. And so, if you give me your consent, I can start with the first question.

P: Yes, you have my consent.

R: Thank you. So, the first question is, what does sustainability mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you maybe describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: Okay, so I think that sustainability related to travel and tourism can be applied to means of transport and travel in the first place. So, for example, we all know that if we take a train, it's a more sustainable practice than taking a plane. However, I think also that it depends on where we are traveling to because there are some places that you can reach better by plane rather than by train. And I think that sustainability can also be seen in relation to the community itself that you are visiting. So, maybe, I don't know, maybe not destroying the environment, respecting the culture or, I don't know, maybe also trying to understand their culture, their cuisine, their practices without interfering too much. Yeah, I think that these are maybe the most meaningful to me.

R: Okay, I think it's a good point you raised about not only considering the community but also to respect it, adjust to it, and trying to be part of it. And what about the term regenerative instead? Have you ever heard about this, or do you know what it is, what it refers to?

P: No, I haven't. I have never heard about the term regenerative tourism. I can imagine what it can mean, but I've never seen it, for example, in campaigns, ads, or any communication related to tourism.

R: Okay, I can try and give you a definition and then maybe you can tell me how and if this definition changed the way you're understanding this topic. Also, if you think then this could influence and affect what your future choices will be in terms of travelling. So, when we refer to this regenerative approach, we refer to this ideology that is trying to go beyond the term sustainability. It is not only trying to minimize our impacts on the environment, economy, and society, but also trying to give them back more than what we take. The aim then should be to try to make our visit to the destination positive for the environment, the economy, and our society. I don't know how you would then interpret this definition in your opinion, if it's something maybe that is doable, interesting or interesting on a theoretical level, but difficult to put into practice..

P: I think that this regenerative approach is actually very interesting, and I think that it is somehow already done maybe in some types of travels. I wouldn't say in tourism, but maybe in such platforms like Workaways or that kind of travelling where you go into a community, and you work for that community and at the same time you have some time for yourself to explore and visit the area. This is mostly what comes to my mind when I think about the definition that you've just given me. I think that maybe it can influence future travels in a way that maybe I can try to be more sustainable or to interact more with the community. But I think that it is maybe a little bit difficult to do. For example, if you just go and visit a city for a weekend, maybe you don't have much time to also engage in such practices. I don't know if it makes sense.

R: It makes perfect sense. So, do you think it also depends on what ones' purpose of travelling to that destination is?

P: Yeah, exactly. For example, some friends of mine maybe they just want to relax on the beach and even if they go to Greece or Spain or wherever, their purpose is just to stay on the beach and lay on the beach. I don't see them interacting with the community that much.

R: Okay, that's a good point. And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before your visit, and in case do you think this was something that influenced your decision to visit?

P: Not really, because I went to Copenhagen just for a couple of days. I know that Denmark and Scandinavia and northern cities are well known for sustainable practices and for the fact that they give more attention to the environment or to the community, but it wasn't actually the first reason why I visited Copenhagen.

R: Okay, and normally, you said that Scandinavian cities or countries have this image of sustainability. Was it because you researched for this? And in case what did you use to research about this? Did you use digital platforms or how do you normally get to know about this information?

P: I think maybe it's an assumption that is generally known among our society, that they are usually more involved and more advanced in ideas or in sustainable practices, or that they are more connected to the environment. But I think that maybe when I see this type of information, it's usually from social media or maybe websites. If I look something up on the internet, maybe they are stating you know that they care about nature or they do this and that in connection to this, so this is how I normally get to know more about their efforts.

R: Okay, thank you. While you were in Copenhagen, could you say you somehow engaged in sustainable practices? I don't know, did you bike, or did you try to choose sustainable accommodations? In case, was this something that improved your experience of the city?

P: Well, I didn't bike when I was in Copenhagen, but I walked a lot and that's my sustainable practice number one whenever I travel. And I used public transport. As far as the accommodation is concerned, I mean, I stayed in a hostel, so I don't know how much sustainable it is.

P: So, for example, you didn't notice the hostel promoting specific sustainable practices? Was their position on sustainability not clear?

P: No. I mean, if they did, I didn't notice.

R: Okay. Do you think the city's efforts and practices, such as promoting public transport or recycling, are communicated effectively? Or do you feel there are challenges and gaps in this communication and accessibility to such resources?

P: I don't think they were that clear, but also to be honest I didn't go to the information point because I made everything by myself. So maybe if I had gone there, maybe they would have told me something more.

R: Okay. This was mostly because I have heard that a better communication on those efforts and how to engage it appears to be missing.

P: Yeah, exactly, maybe I would say so.

R: Okay and if we go more into what I described to you as what could be considered regenerative. Have you ever noticed any of those examples that could be reflecting this ideology? I know, like you said, you stayed a short period, so it is understandable that maybe you didn't. But I can try and give you some examples if you want to.

P: Yes, please. Because I am struggling to think of something.

R: What we can associate with this is this urban farming initiative. People, locals in this case, are growing plants and gardens on the rooftops in a way that makes the city even greener. So, you know the appearance of the city is not like, you know, cements and buildings. And those initiatives are also trying to involve tourists, because as a tourist, you can participate in those activities. And I think it's interesting because, you know, it's not only that you do it in that place, but you can try and learn something and bring it back to your country in a way. And then another example maybe is the city that regenerated, some industrial areas to create more green spaces. So, created urban parks and eco-friendly buildings. I don't know, how do you think those initiatives can be perceived from a tourist? Do you think they can impact the experience of the city?

P: Okay, so when I was in Copenhagen, I didn't see this kind of initiatives. Honestly, I wasn't looking for this kind of initiatives either. What I saw is that the city is actually green. And I think that, for example, urban farming is a nice initiative and maybe it can appeal to tourists if they stay for longer periods. Because maybe people who visit the city just, I don't know, a couple of days or three, four days, maybe they prefer to do something else or to visit the main attractions. But I think I also saw in other cities this transformation, or regeneration of industrial areas into parks or, I don't know, into an art district or those kind of things. And I think that that is particularly interesting, especially if they provide eco-houses for the population, but also maybe for tourists. So maybe if there is an eco-hotel or something sustainable, that could be an option. The problem, I think, is the same as before. How do I get to know that there is that kind of opportunity in Copenhagen? So maybe, I don't know, I haven't checked the website if there is some reference to this, but maybe that could be an option. Or through social media also, because I think this is the main channels where people get information nowadays when they want to travel.

R: Yeah, so a bit of lacking communications again is the main problem in your opinion, right?

P: Yeah.

R: And connected to this, because I've also heard this was a problem of miscommunication. Have you ever noticed the tall benches that there are in Copenhagen? The purpose of this installation, according to the city, was to raise awareness among people about the effects of environmental issues. The sea level rise, in this case.

P: Ah, interesting.

R: I don't know if you saw them, and I don't know how you perceive the effect of these installations. I think it can be really interesting and valuable to option of engaging people, concretely let's say.

P: I don't know if they were there when I went, because I don't remember seeing them, but I think that if they are put somewhere where a lot of people pass by, I think they would recognize and reflect on them. And I think that, I don't know, I'm a big fan of art, so I think that artistic installations somehow can talk to people. I think that if they are weird, like different in a way, they can attract much more attention, leading people to reflect. Also, if you put something next to them, like a plaque or a sign that explains what they are, maybe this can be like a seed you plant in people's mind.

R: Yeah, I get what you mean. Because that is exactly the problem. They are missing a plate or something that explains them. Some people thought it was because Danish people were too tall. Or another person told me they thought those were for lifeguards. So yeah, I think it's an interesting idea, that could have positive results in terms of engagement, but should be done better.

P: Yeah, I agree on that. I mean, it's interesting, but I think that you always need to give an explanation, because sometimes people don't think about that immediately, just because they are not used to talk about sustainability or, I don't know, the rise of sea level in this case.

R: Yeah, definitely. Okay next question is a bit, I think, maybe specific. Do you think overall those initiatives, especially those that align with a regenerative ideology, can be considered a form of collaboration between the different stakeholders? I am thinking of government, tourists, but also locals and businesses. Do you think such collaboration is important and beneficial for the city to try and foster more initiatives of such kind?

P: I think that it would be nice if there was a sort of collaboration between locals, businesses and tourists. But what I feel is that if we talk about tourism, and consequently the most stereotypical tourists, I don't really see how they can be involved in such practices. So maybe they could be involved in the result, but I mean, I think it really depends on what they want to do when they visit the city, how long they stay, and how they perceive sustainability as value in their life.

R: So, you mean it depends on how interested they are in having such behaviors?

P: Yeah, exactly. Because once again, maybe if I do something like a Workaway and I go there and stay there like a week, I'm aware that I'm going to do some work for the city in exchange of the accommodation. But it's something that I decide before going there. So, it's

like I already know that I can have an impact there. But maybe the most stereotypical person going on vacation just wants to see the city and does not look for this. So, maybe they could be involved in the result, like in actually knowing that there was that opportunity and maybe that opportunity is something that makes them want to come back later and engage in a different way and at a different level. I don't know.

R: No, that's a good point, actually. I know you already answered me in a way because you said you didn't stay long enough, or you didn't have enough experiences of this kind in the city to assess this. But how do you think the city's approach to sustainability compares with other cities you have visited? The fact that you said there's this image, you know, that Scandinavia or like northern countries have, is also in a way supporting the idea that results here are more visible and clear. Also, the fact that you mention that despite this a certain degree of communication it still lacking, it's also a good point you raised.

P: Yeah. When I was walking around the city, I could see, for example, that the city was very clean and there were a lot of trees. I mean, I went in winter, so the trees were not green, but I could see them. So, I can imagine how it is in summer or in spring. So, I believe it is sustainable, but I haven't stayed that long enough to compare it with other cities. What I saw, for example in other cities in Germany, is that they have this thing for plastic bottles that you can return them. Or I also saw in Denmark is that there were a lot of bike roads, and I think that's actually really interesting. It's something that, for example, in Italy, it lacks. So yeah, I think this is mostly what I think about Copenhagen.

R: No, don't worry. You made your opinion clear and it is really relevant. So yeah, I think this was all for me. Unless you don't have any other questions, I think we can finish the interview.

P: No, fine on my side.

R Okay. Then thank you for participating.

P: You're welcome.

PARTICIPANT 11 (Female, 25)

R: Hello! Thank you for being here. As I mentioned to you already this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches and will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I will record it just to transcribe later and ensure I have all your answers accurately. Your responses will stay anonymous, I will only note your age and gender for representational purposes. If you give me your consent, I will start with the first question.

P: Yes, I give you my consent.

R: Okay let's start. What does "sustainability" mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: I think sustainability in travel and tourism means making choices that minimize our environmental impact and support local communities. As practical examples I would mention the extra fees that are normally implemented on flights in order to lower and compensate the CO2 emissions, but also those fees that tourists have to pay in terms of environmental protection. I am thinking of the tourist taxes, or the ones implemented to limit the number of tourists in specific sites, in order to preserve nature, but also the local community. Those are maybe the efforts I associate to the concept of sustainability.

R: Okay, they are all significant topics. And have you ever heard about the term "regenerative" in the context of travel and tourism?

P: I have heard of it but haven't put much thought into it to be honest. I wouldn't be able to define it, as it is not a term that is common to hear in connection to travel or tourism I would say.

R: I know it can be challenging so I can try and give you a definition. We can say that regenerative approach to tourism is the ideology that goes beyond sustainability. Its purpose is not only to minimize the negative impacts on the places we visit, but actively improving them. In simpler words, it tries to promote the idea that tourism should respect and enhance the local economy, communities, and the environment. This is done by basically trying to give back more than what tourism takes. So, did this definition somewhat change your understanding of the term, and if so do you think this could influence your future travel choices?

P: It has given me a better understanding of the term, and I think it sounds very positive. However, I don't think it would have the final say in regards to visiting a destination. I mean, I struggle to see it as a factor that could influence my decision to visit a destination, as I would say that convenience and cost would be the factors I consider more before visiting a destination. At the same time, as I said I think it is a very interesting approach, so I might consider it as an incentive to engage in and support such initiatives when I am in the destination. So yeah, I think it is interesting, but I would not say it can be a factor that will make me choose a destination rather than another one.

R: Yeah, I see what you mean. And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before your visit, and did this influence your decision to visit?

P: No, I was not aware. I know that Denmark is far ahead of many countries in general, so maybe it is something I expect since it's the capital, but I didn't know about any recognition in particular. So, this was not the reason why I decided to visit Copenhagen to be honest.

R: Okay. And when you said you were not aware of these efforts and recognitions, is it because you generally don't look for this type of information, or in this case was the information difficult to find?

P: Honestly, I normally don't look for this type of information. When I'm planning a trip, I'm more focused on things to do and places to see rather than the sustainability efforts of the destination. Especially if I am planning a short stay I would say, you know, I normally try to focus on the sightseeing opportunities the destination has.

R: I see. And do digital platforms, social media for example, support your information research before visiting a destination? Do you normally rely on those, or do you also refer to travel guides, brochures, or word-of-mouth?

P: Digital platforms normally have a huge influence on my decisions. I use TikTok a lot to find new cool places to visit. I really like it because you can find a lot of recommendations and tips both from other travellers and content creators.

R: Okay, interesting point. And during your visit, did you engage in sustainable practices? I don't know, for example, did you bike, or did you choose sustainable accommodations?

P: Yes, I did. I generally tried to bike everywhere because it's easy. You know there are many bike lanes, and you can get almost everywhere. I would say it is really a bike-friendly city. I know many hostels and hotels also provide the opportunity to rent bike for their guests. Also, I think it is the cheapest way, you know taking the public transports is more expensive, it can help if the place you have to reach is far and distances are long, that is for sure. But I would say otherwise biking is just the best option. It is also an opportunity to see the city from another perspective. To be honest, I cannot think about others and more specific actions I did. I don't know.

R: Don't worry. So, would you say that biking improved your experience of the city?

P: Yes, definitely. Again, it allowed me to see the city differently I would say, rather than spending the time on a bus or, even worse, in the tube you know. So yeah, I think biking it is the easiest way to get around and the cheapest option as well. So, for me, it is the best transport combination I would say.

R: I agree, yeah. And so do you think that Copenhagen provides the resources you needed to engage in those actions? Biking in your case, but I am also thinking of finding accommodations, or the recycling options. Like, when you said you didn't do much more,

was it because you think there were any challenges that stopped you from doing specific actions?

P: I don't really know to be honest. I mean in terms of public transport it is pretty easy both to take and find information on it, but I don't know in terms of other options or resources to be honest. As I said maybe it is because I didn't engage in similar actions or rather, I didn't feel the need to so. Maybe then I also didn't actively look for them, in a way, you know? If you are not aware or don't need something in particular, maybe you don't pay that much attention either.

R: Okay, yeah, I get your point. And could you maybe describe any activities or places in Copenhagen that in a way align to the regenerative ideology I mentioned to you before? So, in other words, have you ever come across places or initiatives or activities that somehow tried to actively improve the environment or somehow contribute to the community?

P: I am not really aware of any places or initiatives to be honest. Could you maybe give me some examples?

R: Well, initiatives that align with this is, for example, urban farming. People are trying to foster the growing of plants and vegetables on rooftops. This can somehow contribute to make the city greener but also to help reducing CO₂, through plants or trees. And such initiatives are interesting as also tourists can contribute in a way. They can participate in gardening, so in this case participating also involves learning how to do this, so they could then take this knowledge back to their cities. Or for example, there are areas in Copenhagen that were once industrial areas and now have been regenerated in green areas. So those areas now have a higher number of green spaces and urban gardens and parks. Also, eco-friendly accommodations have been built in this area, and there have also been some examples of the creation of community centres. I have learnt from another person I interview that a church has been converted into this community centre where they now have art exhibitions and organise events for the community. So, yeah, I was thinking of something like this when I asked you the question. How do you perceive such efforts? Do you think they could improve visitors' perceptions of the city?

P: I think those are all very interesting and I would say positive examples. But to be honest I didn't really notice any, and I didn't know about those before you told me so I really can't say about their effectiveness. What I can say is that maybe if those examples are more visible or more communicated in a way, maybe more people will know about it and then they would also feel more engaged. Then if people feel more engaged, like they feel they can contribute and do something good, maybe they could also have a better perception of the city, and they will appreciate it more. I am not sure.

R: No, I get your point. I agree that there can be a positive relation between the engagement and the perceptions that visitors have of the city. Or at least if not directly of the city, they could maybe have a more positive experience.

P: Yeah, exactly.

R: And also, did you notice that there are also some visual elements let's call them, tall benches in this case, that are meant to try and raise awareness among people on the negative effects of climate change? In this case those benches want to symbolise what the rise of sea level can imply for people. What do you think about those installations? Do you think they are effective?

P: Again, I did not notice to be honest. Maybe this can be another communication issue?

R: Yeah, I would say so, also because when you get there, I notice there is not an explanation you know, a plaque that explains them.

P: Yeah, so maybe that is also why not many know about that or have seen that. But again, I think if it would be done better, we can go back to what we discussed before. It is a form of engaging people. So, something visual and physical could maybe stick more to their mind you know? And then maybe have the desired effect on them.

R: Yeah, I definitely agree with you on this. And what is your thought then on the collaboration behind all those examples we mentioned? I am thinking of collaboration between tourists, locals, and businesses. Do you think this is significant and maybe in a way necessary to achieve more sustainable and regenerative outcomes let's say?

P: Yeah, I think collaboration is really important. You know, I think everyone should be aware of environmental issue, or the consequences of climate change. So, at the same time everyone should be involved in trying to address those issues. They all should make their part, as they all in a way benefit from sustainable practices. If they all collaborate of course the results of those collaboration will be positive, they have all been involved in the process let's say and they will all benefit from the results.

R: Okay, thank you for the point you made. Now based on your experiences, how do you think Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited? I am always thinking in terms of its effectiveness in promoting regenerative and sustainable practices.

P: I think Copenhagen is far ahead of other cities I have been to. In having bike lanes, for example, but also in public transportation. If I am not wrong, I have heard they are also testing new initiatives that could be interesting for sustainability, like care-free areas. I think it is really positive, the initiative but also that the city is experimenting in a way. It shows it

is innovative and believes more can be done. So, they do a lot, but also to be honest I don't think they are best in class.

R: Oh, that is interesting, I didn't know about this car-free initiatives. I think it is an interesting point you made on the city's innovative side. So last question. If you consider again the sustainability and regenerative efforts you've observed in Copenhagen, or the initiatives or actions you engaged in, do you have some improvements or changes you would suggest implementing?

P: Well mostly I would say more communication about the environmental and climate change issues and how the city is combating them would be necessary. Maybe if such information is clearer for visitors but also for locals it could make them more aware and consequently make them adopt a different behaviour. More sustainability oriented, hopefully. Yeah, I can't think of anything else to be honest.

R: No, it is fine. If you don't have other questions or comment, then I am done with my interview.

P: No, I don't

R: Perfect. Thank you so much for participating and for your insights.

P: You are welcome.

PARTICIPANT 12 (Female, 22)

R: Hi! So, as I said to you earlier this interview is part of my research on how Generation Z visitors perceive Copenhagen's sustainable and regenerative approaches and will take around 15 to 20 minutes. I will record it just to transcribe later and ensure I have all your answers accurately. Your responses will stay anonymous, I will only note your age and gender for representational purposes. If you give me your consent, I will start with the first question.

P: Yes, you have my consent.

R: Okay, let's start. What does "sustainability" mean to you in the context of travel and tourism? And could you describe any specific efforts you associate with this?

P: Well, for me sustainability in travel and tourism is about taking care of the culture and nature in the places we visit. I think about things like choosing environmentally friendly means of transportation, such as bicycles. But also supporting local restaurants and shops. Then, I would say traveling more by train is something I consider, and it is also something that concerns me. Especially you know now with the upcoming European Parliament

elections, because I think it is incredible and unacceptable that it is economically more viable to travel by plane than by train.

R: Yeah, I perfectly agree with you on this. I believe more should be done to strengthen railways connections. The difference in terms of price is too much, and then of course that is not how you encourage people to choose trains over planes.

P: Precisely.

R: And what about the term “regenerative” in the context of travel and tourism? Have you ever heard of it?

P: No, that's not an expression I've heard before to be honest. It sounds interesting though, and I would like to learn more about it.

R: Yeah, it is still an emerging approach, so I understand not many people heard about this, especially when not directly studying or working in the field. I can try and give you a definition.

P: Yeah, please.

R: Regenerative approach to tourism is that ideology that goes beyond sustainability. Its purpose is not only to minimize the negative impacts we have on the places we visit, but actively improving them. So, we can say it tries to promote the idea that tourism should respect and enhance the local economy, communities, and the environment. The idea is to give back to those places more than what tourism takes from them. Did this definition somewhat change your understanding of the term, and if so, do you think this could influence your future travel choices?

P: I would say now I can have a clearer idea of what it is, and I think it is a really interesting approach, especially now that we are more and more facing the consequences of environmental issues and climate change. As you said it is still new, but I would support it I would say, we should try and limit our consequences on the environment. It should be communicated more, because it is interesting as I said, but it is difficult to achieve it if no one knows about it. I don't know if I can say now this will influence my travel choices. It could be a factor I consider maybe when I am in the destination. Try to adopt a more sustainable behaviour in a way. Or trying to engage more, to do better to the destination.

R: I see. This is still something. I believe we have to start at some point, you know? And were you aware of Copenhagen's recognition for sustainability before your visit? Was this something that influence your decision to visit?

P: I must admit that I don't think much about sustainability in Copenhagen beyond cycling, so I wasn't that aware of its recognition. And so maybe this is also why I would say sustainability wasn't a factor in my decision to visit.

R: And do you think the reason behind you not knowing about this was it because it is something you don't normally research about a destination? Or was it because you couldn't find this information on Copenhagen?

P: No, that's definitely because I haven't looked for it. I'm sure it can be found if one looks for this information, I am sure the city and Denmark in general normally rely on sustainability and "green" practices to support their communication. It is just that to be honest I haven't made it a priority, because I usually just look for interesting spots and popular attractions. So, also in the case of Copenhagen I haven't specifically looked for sustainable places and activities.

R: Okay, I see. And how do you normally research this type of information, like what you said about what to do in a destination? Do you search on digital platforms like social media, or do you rely on travel guides or tourist offices?

P: I mostly use social media and apps like Instagram to find inspiration and information about places to visit. However, I also trust what friends or relatives say sometimes, you know, sometimes it really helps knowing other people's opinions or recommendations as well.

R: Yeah, I agree with you. And while you were in Copenhagen did you observe any environmental protection efforts that the city is trying to do, or did you engage yourself in sustainable practices? I don't know, for example, did you choose to bike, or did you choose to stay in sustainable accommodations?

P: Yes. I would say I mostly, biked. Yeah, I often cycled around the city because it is one of my favourite ways to get around. But I can't think of anything else more specific on this to be honest. I stayed at a hostel so I don't know if this can be included, I didn't pay much attention to their actions for sustainability.

R: Okay, and when you were mentioning the fact that you chose to bike, what motivated you to do this? And would you say this is something that in a way made you experience of the city better? More positive in a way?

P: Maybe in a way I think I am motivated to think green in small daily decisions, you know. If I can I might try and do my part if we can say this. But it also means a lot to me to see the city by cycling around it, like getting fresh air, and do a bit of exercise. And yeah, I think it is maybe a small thing, but it really made my experience of the city better. More enjoyable and accessible I would say. Ah, and it is also cheap.

R: I see. So, in your experience do you think that Copenhagen provided the resources you needed to engage in those efforts, like biking in your case? Or were there any challenges, obstacles that you face?

P: Well, I think Copenhagen is generally very good at making cycling attractive and reminding people about waste sorting. You can see this from most of the city's communication and infrastructure. The bike lanes are very accessible and good. They cover most of the city so you can really cover quite a long distance on them. And for recycling yeah, it is maybe something you see both in public spaces and accommodations also. Normally they give you the option to correctly separate your trash and it is quite clear. However, I have experienced that some areas of the city do not comply with waste sorting regulations. So maybe it would be great if there were more consistency in this aspect.

R: That is a good point you raised, yeah. And could you describe maybe any initiative or places you saw or heard about that actively improves the environment or contributes positively to the community? I am thinking of the definition of regenerative approach I mentioned before here. I can try and give you some examples cause maybe it can be difficult to assess?

P: Oh, that would be great.

R: Okay. So, for example, urban farming. People are trying to foster the growing of plants and vegetables on rooftops. This can somehow contribute to make the city greener but also to help reducing CO2, you know. That is maybe mostly the reason why we consider plant and trees this important. And such initiatives are involving also tourists. They can participate in gardening, so a hands-on experience that also will teach how to do this, so then they could take this knowledge back to their cities. Or for example, there are areas in Copenhagen that were industrial areas and now have been regenerated into green areas. Green because those areas now have a higher number of green spaces, urban gardens and parks. Also, eco-friendly accommodations have been built in this area, and people created those community centres. There is the example of this church that has been converted into a community centre where they have art exhibitions. So, yeah, I was thinking of something like this when I asked you if you had some examples. How do you perceive such efforts? Do you think they could improve visitors' perceptions of the city?

P: Well, I will be honest, I did not see or take part into anything that could compare or that can be similar to this. I didn't know about most of those. But what I know, for example, is that one of my colleagues that lives in Copenhagen has been allowed to plant trees along the road she lives on if she takes care of it herself. So, I think that's really cool, maybe somehow related to what you mentioned. It shows a community effort and personal responsibility to improve our environment. And of course, tourists would also benefit from this.

R: Did you also notice that installations in the city that consists of tall benches? I think that is interesting because the meaning behind it is to raise awareness on environmental issues. Like the rise of sea level in this case. What do you think of this? Do you think they are useful in raising people's awareness, especially visitors?

P: Oh, I have seen the high benches, yeah. Well to be honest I think they are successful in create awareness and you know make people conscious about this problem. And if people are conscious then they might start talking about it more or consider it more at least in their behaviours. Of course, I think it really depends from people to people, but hopefully. I think it's a simple but very effective way to engage people and make them think about these issues. Maybe more than just talking about it, seeing what the effects could be it makes you more aware of the issues behind.

R: Definitely. I agree with you. So, do you think that collaboration among tourists, local businesses and government, is important? And would it be beneficial for the city to try and foster more collaborations like this if we want to achieve better results?

P: Yes, absolutely. I think that cooperation between tourists, locals, municipalities, businesses, and other parts is important because it makes sure that they all work together towards common goals. So, when all their opinions are considered, I think it creates a stronger and more cohesive effort for sustainability. Might sounds maybe a catchphrase, but when everyone is involved and committed, the impact is much more bigger, significant.

R: Definitely. Maybe it is just a matter of make this clear sometimes, people should think in a less individualistic way.

P: Yeah.

R: And based on your experiences, how does Copenhagen's approach to sustainability compare with other cities you have visited? I am thinking always mostly in terms of promoting regenerative and sustainable efforts.

P: Well. It's hard for me to answer that; maybe it's not something I can easily compare. Overall, I would say Copenhagen does quite well. But as everything there is still room for improvement. Especially, there is room for more green areas, avenues, and sustainability in the city. It would be nice to see more initiatives that enhance the urban environment and make the city even greener.

R: I see. Well, this was the last question on my side. If you don't have doubts or questions...

P: No, I don't.

R: Then thank you for participating.

R: You are welcome.

