ReRoot: A Community Hub for Regenerative Living

Enabling communities to reroot into regenerative ways of living.

The Problem

Rural Himalayan Communities at a Crossroads:

- In the rapidly changing landscapes of the Eastern Himalayas, communities face an ongoing challenge of balancing traditional ways of life with the pressures of modern development.

- The region's ecological systems are under threat as external economic forces encourage unsustainable practices.

Tourism and the Crisis of Ecological and Cultural Integrity:

- The influx of tourism in ecologically fragile rural regions like Sangti Valley in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh has brought short-term economic benefits, but at the cost of long-term environmental degradation.

- Unregulated tourism infrastructure—concrete home stays and resorts, roads, and cafes—has altered the landscape and disrupted the natural habitat of endemic and migratory species in rural Himalayan regions.

- As tourist expectations shift toward convenience and comfort, there is increasing pressure on locals to abandon traditional architecture, food systems, and community ethics.

Waste: A Tangible Symptom of an Invisible Disconnect:

- The rise in tourism and consumerism has introduced packaging, plastics, and non-biodegradable waste into Himalayan villages historically rooted in zero-waste living.

- Traditional systems of reuse, community sharing, and organic material cycles are struggling to survive amid a surge of synthetic waste streams.

- With no formal waste management systems in place in these villages, rivers, forests, and grazing lands are increasingly becoming dumping grounds.

- Waste has become a visible sign of deeper issues—disconnection from indigenous systems of stewardship and the internalization of extractive development models.

The Need to Preserve, Revive, and Reimagine:

- The urgency of the problem lies not just in environmental impact, but in the quiet erosion of indigenous knowledge systems that have sustained both people and place.

- There is a pressing need to foster community ownership and empowerment, enabling local people to take the lead in defining what progress means in their own context.

- Solutions must be rooted in local wisdom while being adaptive to modern sustainability challenges. This calls for integrated, community-driven models that go beyond awareness, creating visible, living systems that inspire long-term transformation.

Problem Statement

How might we co-create regenerative futures with rural Himalayan communities by reimagining progress in harmony with nature and traditional wisdom?

ReRoot- A Community Hub for Regenerative Living

WHAT?

ReRoot is a community-rooted space that brings together the wisdom of the past and the possibilities of a regenerative future. Designed as a living, breathing ecosystem of ideas and action, ReRoot invites community members, travelers, and collaborators to reimagine progress in harmony with nature and traditional wisdom. As unchecked development and mass tourism pull rural Himalayan communities away from their ecological and cultural roots, ReRoot becomes a call to return — to live differently, consciously, and regeneratively.
ReRoot is not just a place, but a practice — one that puts planet before profit, and enables communities to co-create livelihoods rooted in care, resilience, and ecological balance.

WHY?

The Eastern Himalayas are one of the world's most ecologically and culturally significant regions — and Arunachal Pradesh, often called the green lungs of India, holds over 60% forest cover, compared to the national average of around 21%. These mountains are not only biodiversity hotspots but also home to indigenous communities, whose ways of living have long been in harmony with nature. Yet today, the region stands at a dangerous crossroads — threatened by extractive development, concrete tourism, and a gradual erasure of indigenous knowledge systems. ReRoot emerges in this fragile, vital landscape as both a sanctuary and a spark: a place to protect what still thrives, and to rekindle what is being lost. But this isn't just about the Himalayas. As cities grow increasingly unlivable — choking under climate stress, pollution, and loneliness — we believe spaces like ReRoot can inspire new imagination across geographies. By anchoring regenerative futures in one of India's last ecological frontiers, we hope to plant seeds that ripple outward — offering lessons, hope, and models for rural and urban communities alike, to reconnect with nature, with each other, and with more meaningful ways of living.

WHERE?

ReRoot is envisioned in Sangti Valley, a breathtaking landscape nestled in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district. Home to the Monpa tribe, this valley is not only culturally rich but also ecologically sensitive — known for its seasonal visitor, the black-necked crane, a vulnerable species revered by the community. Over the years, Sangti has emerged as a tourist hotspot, however, this growing popularity has brought with it mounting ecological stress. Since 2020, Northeast Waste Collective has been working closely with the Monpa community here, co-creating a unique, community-led waste management system that thrives on community ownership and cultural integration. This existing foundation makes Sangti not just a beautiful setting for ReRoot, but a deeply strategic one — a living lab already practicing many of the regenerative values the space seeks to amplify. With an active tourism circuit already in place, Sangti offers a powerful opportunity: the chance to share emergent models, tools, and stories with travelers, turning them into ambassadors of change. As a seedbed for innovation grounded in indigenous wisdom and lived community action, ReRoot in Sangti is poised to ripple its impact far beyond the valley.

ReRoot's core components: Spaces that seed change

1. **Circle of Change: The Community Hall**

Evoking the power of dialogue, collective action, and transformative learning—where change is seeded and nurtured.

- A semi open space to pause, reflect, and realign towards regenerative living.
- Serves as the heart of ReRoot—a space for education and enlightenment.
- Hosts workshops, storytelling circles, trainings, meditation.
- **Doubles up as a space for collective waste segregation on designated days.**
- Once the Sangti community begins to reroot, this space becomes a living example—ready to inspire visiting communities to reflect, reconnect, and begin their own regenerative journeys.
- Draws in experts, thinkers, and changemakers from diverse fields to-
  - share knowledge and co-create solutions with the community.
  - host workshops to facilitate learning with diverse visiting groups

2. The Material Recovery Facility

A reimagined MRF that blends into village life—functionally, culturally, and architecturally.

- **Community-centric**

100+ local SHG women segregate dry waste into multiple categories of recyclables to be sent for recycling —no external or salaried manpower. Fosters community ownership and collective action.

- **Designed to be Seen**

Waste is not hidden but humanized. A space open to visitors, children, tourists to participate and learn —breaking taboos around waste work.

- **Mimics Communal Living, Not Industrial Operations**

From its open structure to its shared responsibilities, it echoes the spirit of village collaboration.

- **Functional + Educational**

Infographic walls, guided walk-throughs, and interaction points make this not just a waste storage and segregation facility, but a public learning space.

- **Equipped for Value Addition**

Houses key machinery like a baler and shredder to improve efficiency and add value—empowering SHG women to process waste more effectively and increase income from recyclables.

3. The Makerspace

A space of innovation, creativity, and circular economy.

- **Equipped with small-scale plastic recycling machines. (Precious Plastic Machines https://www.preciousplastic.com)**
- Open to SHG women, youth, children, visitors and tourists to create upcycled and recycled products.
- A hands-on lab for sustainable enterprise and material reimagination.
- Transforms low-value, non-recyclable materials—often rejected by local scrap dealers—into useful or aesthetic products.
- Enables the production of items for community use, local retail, and sale to tourists, corporates, and government bodies (e.g. souvenirs, utility products, gifts).

4. The Regenerative Living Museum

A space that honors traditional wisdom and sparks revival.

- Showcases the traditional zero-waste lifestyle of a Monpa ancestor through immersive, thoughtfully curated exhibits that reflect a way of life deeply aligned with nature.
- Documents the daily practices and traditional ecological knowledge of a Monpa ancestor — knowledge that is rapidly disappearing and risks being lost forever if not preserved and shared.
- Features a 'Living Exhibit'—an evolving space that highlights ongoing community-led efforts to revive ancient regenerative practices and adapt them to contemporary life.
- Acts as a repository of intangible cultural heritage, inspiring intergenerational learning and community pride.
- Designed to resonate deeply with locals while offering tourists an authentic window into sustainable Monpa traditions.
- Functions as an educational resource and an alternative revenue stream through cultural tourism.
- Encourages reflection, continuity, and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge into regenerative futures.

5. The Storytelling Café & Eco Store

Where meals, memories, and movements come together.

- A community-run café operated by local SHGs, offering a seasonal, organic, and thoughtfully curated menu that features traditional Monpa cuisine alongside other wholesome, locally inspired meals.
- Walls that narrate the journey of Sangti's waste revolution.
- A store that showcases recycled/upcycled products and local crafts.
- Revenues cycle back to support SHGs, artisans, and young entrepreneurs.

6. ReRoot Stays

Tourism that nurtures the land and those who live on it.

- A shared dormitory welcoming backpackers, researchers, volunteers, artists, educators and all travelers seeking a community stay at ReRoot
- Two thoughtfully designed rooms for tourists seeking mindful stays.
- Community Kitchen, also to be known as the Wisdom Kitchen, where guests will learn traditional recipes and values.
- A model for ethical, low-impact, immersive rural tourism—for Sangti and other rural mountain communities to emulate.

7.Demonstrative Systems of Regenerative Living

Learning through living, and living as learning.

- **Permaculture Kitchen Garden**

Supplies fresh, organic food while demonstrating sustainable and regenerative gardening practices.

- **Composting Units**

Creating our own bio inputs from organic waste to regenerate soil health and reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers.

- **Natural Wastewater Treatment Systems**

Cleanse wastewater through systems made of natural materials and promote its reuse

- **Replicable Models**

These visible systems serve as practical models for replication across villages, fostering regenerative living practices.

8. Azure Lotus Foundation Workspace

The operational heart of ReRoot—embedded within the community ecosystem

- **Integrated, Not Isolated**

Designed to seamlessly blend with community activities, ensuring that the Foundation's presence is both accessible and collaborative.

- **Collaborative Hub**

Serves as a dynamic space for planning, coordination, and interaction among staff, volunteers, community stakeholders, visitors and tourists—fostering inclusive participation and shared learning experiences.

- **Responsive Design**

Architecturally and functionally tailored to support both administrative tasks and community engagement, reflecting the Foundation's commitment to adaptability and inclusivity.

Each of these components is both a standalone structure and part of a unified vision—working together to regenerate community, culture, and ecology from the roots up.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Climate Resilience through Regenerative Systems
Project ReRoot will demonstrate low-impact, nature-aligned solutions that enhance local resilience to climate stress, and serve as scalable models for other fragile Himalayan ecosystems.

A Model for Community-Led Waste Management
Building on an already successful waste management system in Sangti, ReRoot will deepen community ownership and innovation in zero-waste living—creating a replicable framework for other mountain villages grappling with the rising waste footprint of rural tourism.

A Model for Regenerative Tourism
ReRoot will showcase a livelihood-generating tourism model that respects local culture, ecology, and community values—setting a benchmark for other high-footfall Himalayan destinations.

Revival and Transmission of Endangered Cultural Wisdom
ReRoot will create a replicable cultural preservation model for other indigenous mountain communities facing cultural erosion.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

A Bold and Collaborative Rural Innovation

ReRoot is a community-rooted regenerative living model that combines local knowledge with innovative, low-cost, and replicable solutions for waste, livelihoods, tourism, and climate resilience—offering bold, scalable models for rural transformation.

Convergence in Action

Anchored in cross-sectoral convergence, ReRoot integrates sustainable agriculture, off-farm livelihoods, natural resource management, waste systems, and eco-tourism.

Enhancing Rural Livelihoods

By empowering SHGs, youth, farmers, local artisans and homestay owners through skill-building, eco-enterprises, and regenerative tourism, ReRoot contributes directly to rural income generation.

Deeply Aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

ReRoot advances SDG-linked outcomes: from climate action and waste reduction to cultural preservation, gender inclusion— positioning it as a bold, place-based model for rural resilience in the Eastern Himalayas.

With your support, ReRoot can become a nationally visible initiative—igniting a wider movement for decentralized climate action, cultural revival, and rural self-reliance in India's most vulnerable frontiers.

THANK YOU

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