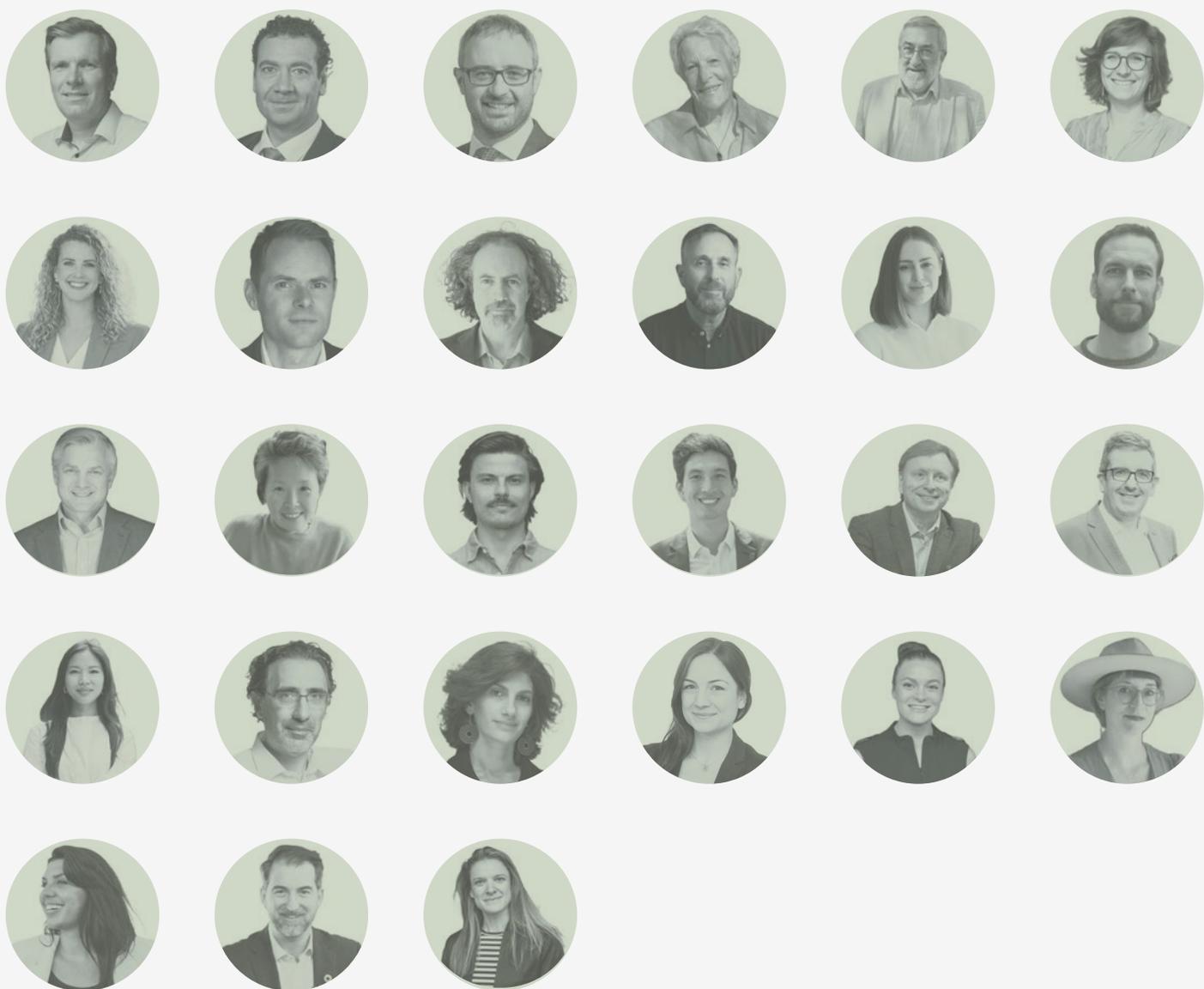


# HYB26

## Sustainability Edition

The Regenerative Question - What  
Hospitality Must Become



**The Hotel Yearbook**

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry



HYB



# Where Will You Place Your First Needle?

Destination regeneration

**Mahé Besson**

*Project manager, 7Generations*

*Using Camiguin Island in the Philippines as a living laboratory, Mahe Besson explores regenerative tourism through the metaphor of acupuncture: small, precise interventions that unlock a destination's own capacity to heal. Rather than rebuilding systems from scratch, she argues for carefully chosen "acupuncture points" such as teaching resorts, youth ocean programs, and co-created (un)Summits that let local ecosystems and communities regain their flow.*

Last September I joined a small team with a big dream: transforming Camiguin Island in the Philippines into a living model of regenerative tourism. So far, our journey has been filled with more questions than answers. What does regeneration mean in the tourism context? How do we practice it? What does it take for an entire destination to become regenerative?

These questions alone can feel overwhelming. Add to that existing patterns, entrenched power structures, and economic pressures, and meaningful system-wide change can seem impossibly distant. On Camiguin Island, home to just 100,000 people, these challenges are strikingly present. In our conversations with local hospitality providers, we keep bumping into the same primary concern: making ends meet. We believe many change makers in the tourism industry worldwide face similar tensions.

So how do we start making regenerative tourism a reality?

As we asked this question to regenerative development experts and practitioners, one image surfaced repeatedly: acupuncture. At first, it seemed surprising. But the more we reflected, the clearer the parallel became. Acupuncture offers a powerful analogy for both understanding and practicing regenerative tourism.

Consider how acupuncture works. In traditional Chinese medicine, health arises from balanced Qi, the vital life force flowing through the body. When this flow is disturbed, the acupuncturist does not perform surgery or prescribe medication. Instead, they insert thin needles at carefully chosen points, stimulating the body's innate capacity to heal itself. Like acupuncture, regeneration recognizes that living systems already possess the intelligence and ability to rebalance themselves. In practice, it is about restoring flow, not adding another layer of solutions.

The holistic perspective is crucial. An acupuncturist views the body as an interconnected whole and always starts a session by asking questions. Lots of questions. Some seemingly unrelated to the presenting symptom. This is because they know that disparate cues may point to a common underlying imbalance. And so, treating a headache might involve needling a point on the foot.

Similarly, regenerative tourism requires developing a deep, nuanced understanding of the living system that makes up the destination. At 7Generations, we believe this means listening to all voices—human and non-human alike. The wise grandmother, the dream-filled teenager, and the ocean are all part of the system's wholeness. Making decisions without integrating these diverse perspectives inevitably creates blockages in the life force of a place.

But here's what makes the acupuncture analogy truly liberating: a few well-placed needles are enough to activate healing capacities. In other words, small, precise interventions catalyze systemic transformation. This, transposed in the tourism context, frees us from the paralyzing belief that we must rebuild everything from scratch.

Most tourism destinations have decades, even centuries, of history. The fantasy of starting with a blank slate is not just unrealistic; it misses the point entirely. Regeneration isn't about demolition and reconstruction. It's about designing thoughtfully crafted and precisely targeted actions that will create conditions and impulses for the whole system to shift and transform.

This invites us to start now, to learn by doing. Whether you're building a new hospitality venture or transforming an existing organization, you don't need to wait for perfect conditions or complete consensus. All you need is to identify your first acupuncture point, that one strategic intervention that can help catalyze broader transformation.

On Camiguin, we're already experimenting with several such points. The [Malambo Ocean Lodge](#) is becoming a teaching resort, offering vocational training in regenerative tourism to local youth. Our Guardians for the Blue initiative invites children and communities to grow their relationship with the ocean and become its guardians. And this November, we're hosting a Regenerative Tourism (un)Summit. This participant-driven gathering will bring together practitioners from Camiguin, the Philippines, and beyond to share knowledge and forge connections.

Are these three initiatives perfect? No. Are they enough to transform the entire island? Not yet. But each represents a carefully chosen point that gives impulses for transformation. Each creates space for local wisdom and dreams to emerge and for regenerative practices to take root and grow organically. The acupuncture approach keeps reminding us of something vital: we're not here to fix the system. The place itself—its ecosystems, its community, its culture—holds the healing power. Our role is to remove blockages and to create conditions where life can flourish.

The transformation of tourism toward regeneration won't happen overnight. It will happen needle by needle, point by point, as more of us learn to read the landscape, identify where life wants to flow, and create the conditions for that flow to restore itself.

So we ask you: Where will you place your first needle?



“Show me only chemical-free,  
bed bug-safe hotels.”



What becomes searchable  
becomes bookable.

