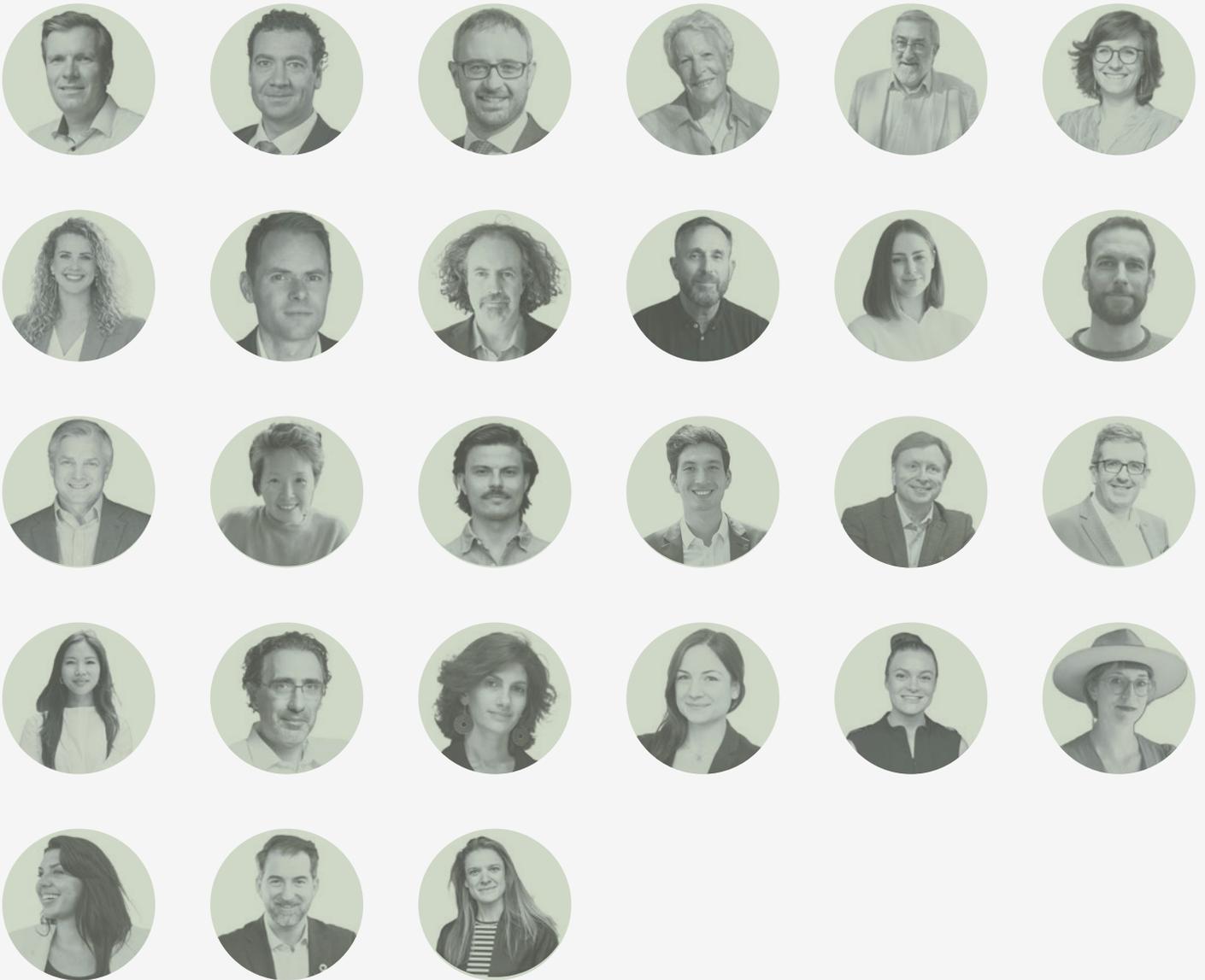


# HYB26

## Sustainability Edition

The Regenerative Question - What Hospitality Must Become



**The Hotel Yearbook**

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry



HYB



# Leapfrogging Regeneration

Community & environment

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SIX SENSES

*Dominic Paul Dubois argues that truly regenerative hospitality is a journey, not a label you can jump to because the word is fashionable. Using a luxury alpine resort as an example, it outlines three non-negotiable "inner development" stages, showing how each step must be in place before a property can credibly claim to benefit its community and environment more than it harms them.*

*Disclaimer: The following is my personal human-centric perspective on Regenerative Hospitality in the luxury hospitality industry.*

*It is assumed the reader understands the incremental evolution from CSR, Sustainability, ESG to Regenerative Hospitality which we speak of today.*

It's always tough to answer journalists when asked if we practice 'Regenerative Hospitality'. To say with confidence that the community is better off in all aspects thanks to our existence is a tall order. That said, it is clear Regeneration is what we work towards, so let's break down the steps: What are the prerequisites of regeneration? What are the check-boxes? What can't we leapfrog?

Distilled to its core, regeneration as anything beyond breakeven of your impact P&L. To 'sequester' more impact than what we emit, nuanced, of course by the challenge of quantifying Environmental and Social impact.

I posit the following: For a property to be labelled 'Regenerative' is the equivalent of reaching enlightenment, and as such, there are inner development steps which cannot be skipped.

## 1 MAXIMISING RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

First and foremost, we must focus on reducing and optimising the resources which feed our building and operations: electricity, water, gas, biomass, plastics, paper, foods, chemicals, etc. These physical resources enable our resort and its operations to function.

These are reduced through means we are already familiar with, pertaining to energy efficiency practices within the building envelope, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning), MEP (Mechanical, Engineering, Plumbing), and how we handle daily operations.

At my current property, heating accounts for 2/3rd of our scope 1 & 2 energy consumption. The building is heated with wood pellet biomass, a waste stream from the local agroforestry industry, purchased down the valley. The ash produced is used for compost, and magnetic ESP filters ensures clean air leaving the building. Residual heat creating through kitchen, spa & engineering operations are reinjected into the heating system. So, the carbon-neutral primary ingredient is cheap local waste, costing 25 cents on the dollar compared to a fossil fuel system, the industrial byproducts are handled with care, and the waste heat recuperation results in massive cost savings. This system ticks both Environmental and Financial boxes. Remember, the success of technical solutions depends on geographical and climate factors.

Don't forget the upwards management of suppliers: improved packaging, take-back programs, the *where* and the *when* of the products. This addresses the scope 3 impact you have least control over.

This step is the easiest to justify, as the ROI is intelligible to all stakeholders.

## 2 SETTING INTERNAL CULTURE

Once the tangibles have been addressed, we turn to the intangibles: Our Culture.

Many working in hospitality today are sceptical, blasé from years of greenwashed marketing strategies and low impact solutions. To show our teams that they are part of a larger movement which genuinely cares is a gargantuan undertaking. The only way to do so is to take them along for the ride and have them actively participate. Bring them on a clean-up event led by the GM, have them harvest honey from the on-site beehives, show them energy reduction data & waste metrics and let them propose actions, have them lead initiatives and ensure leadership follow-ups, and above all, celebrate their success.

Once won over, the team become the causes greatest cheerleader, as they are celebrating change they themselves created. They, not us, are on the frontlines, communicating directly with the guests. Have them experience diverse impactful initiatives such that they have stories to tell. Prepare the car but let them drive.

Work with HR to instil values through engaging methods such as excursions, trainings, workshops, anything that requires active participation. Remember to use the canteen, as it's the great equaliser, where GMs sit with stewards. Food waste campaigns are particularly powerful, as they are relatable. Don't underestimate the leverage of being a preferred employer in retaining talent, today's generation looks for purpose.

Your business cannot emanate sustainability if it isn't practiced internally. Should leadership take shortcuts: uses plastic bottles, waste food at the canteen... a profound disconnect will immediately be perceived by the teams, and the **cost of doing poorly outweighs the cost of not doing**. People don't believe what they are told, instead what they experience. This alignment begins at the back-of-house.

## 3 RETHINKING GUEST EXPERIENCE

Once the structure is optimised, and the walls inhabited, we look to our guests. There are basic prerequisites within the guest journey: No single-use plastics front-of-house, refillable products in bathrooms, menus indicating provenance, etc. Think 'compliance'.

But let's dig deeper in the proactive delivery of 'Sustainability' as an experience. At Six Senses we have the Earth Lab, a semi-science lab, semi-kitchen, where sustainability is lived through upcycling activities, getting guests' hands dirty and letting them enjoy a phone-free moment with their loved ones. Every workshop has a green twist: Candles with used kitchen oil, seed bombs using homemade compost and endemic seeds, and postcards using shredded office paper.

Last summer we faced a dilemma with the landscaping team. We didn't have the budget to take on another full-time position, but we needed extra hands (or hooves). The solution was instead to adopt 5 sheep from a local farmer (henceforth known as: Feta, Haloumi, Pecorino, Ricotta, & Mozzarella), who roamed around the resort. An addition to the environmental benefit of a fossil fuel-free lawnmower was the joy of the guests, who came to the Swiss Alps for the Heidi experience, which could now be enjoyed directly from their balconies, bells and musk included. We even launched the 'Finding Feta' experience, where guests were invited to feed, interact with, and understand the role ruminants play in sequestering nutrients. Feta and Co. proved to be an Environmental, Financial, and Experiential triple win.

We partner with a multitude of third-party suppliers who curate guest experiences: cheesemaking with farmers, woodwork with carpenters, fly-fishing led by the fishermen who own rights to the nearby lakes... all featuring enhanced sustainability touchpoints. Cheesemaking begins with milking of the cow yourself, ending with a fondue on the slopes. Woodwork starts with a stroll in the forest where species you will work with are pointed out. And fly-fishing ends with us preparing the freshly gutted rainbow trout in a dignified way, worthy of the life it led. Hakuna Matata. Full circle.

On their own, the environmental impact of these experiences is negligible. Yet they embody the tenets of sustainability without being overtly educational. They are *salt-of-the-earth* reconnection experiences, transporting families back to a simpler time. These moments are indescribably enriching, and a catalyst for rethinking the definition of luxury.

I was telling a student about such reconnection experiences. She snickered and remarked *"Isn't it funny how guests will pay to milk a cow, when it once used to be a chore for our grandparents?"* She hit the nail on the head.

It's a win-win. The establishment is rewarded by bridging luxury & nature, parents cherish a shared memory as a family unit, and children are nudged to reconsider their definition of 'value'.

## ALL OR NOTHING

You see, we can't leapfrog to transformative guest experience without first addressing resource optimisation and internal culture, because the misalignment will stand out like a sore thumb and the experience will be delivered inauthentically. The same applies to bringing Regeneration to a community whilst leapfrogging these incremental steps.

In the wagon of Regenerative Hospitality, your teams, guests, communities, and integrity must all be along for the ride.



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



What becomes searchable  
becomes bookable.

