Cover Page

Summary of WP Student Team

# Towards Regeneration – How luxury hotels can give back to place and people

# Towards Regeneration – Cultivating Regenerative Relationships with the Local Community

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## Abstract

This thesis addresses the question “How can luxury hotels give back to place and people?”, proposed by the Sublime Hotels Group and Discovery Hotel Management. The question is answered through research into four areas for regeneration in a hospitality context: organization, operations, community, and guest experience.

The findings of the research underline the importance of hospitality companies to move beyond sustainability and embracing models of regeneration. As a result of this work, a set of initiatives is developed to support the Sublime Hotels Group and Discovery Hotel Management on their journeys towards regeneration.

My part in specific focuses on the relationship between the hotels and the respective local communities, analyzing this interaction based on previous studied and established frameworks, with the ultimate objective of providing real and applicable initiatives for both hotels to become a regenerative force for the locals and their respective region.

## Key Words

Sustainability; Regeneration; Regenerative Hospitality; Organizational Culture, Operations; Community; Guest Experience

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# Table of Content

List of Abbreviations ..... 3
List of Figures ..... 3
List of Tables ..... 4
1. Introduction ..... 5
2. Theoretical Overview of Regenerative Hospitality ..... 7
2.1 Relevance of Regeneration for Hospitality ..... 7
2.2 From Sustainability to Regeneration ..... 10
2.3 The Concept of Regeneration ..... 15
2.4 Principles of Regenerative Hospitality ..... 20
2.5 Pathways towards Regenerative Hospitality ..... 23
2.6 Barriers to Regenerative Tourism ..... 27
3. Company Overview: Discovery Hotel Management & Sublime ..... 28
3.1 Discovery Hotel Management ..... 28
3.2 Sublime Hotels Group ..... 30
4. Methodology ..... 32
4.1 Path of the Research ..... 32
4.2 Research Questions ..... 33
4.3 Research Subjects ..... 33
4.4 Data Collection Methods ..... 34
4.3 Evaluation Criteria ..... 36
5. Implementation of Regenerative Practices in luxury Hotels ..... 38
5.1 Promoting a Regenerative Mindset within a Luxury Hotel ..... 38
5.2 Adapting Luxury Hotel Operations towards achieving Regeneration ..... 53
5.3 Engagement of the Local Community to give back to Society ..... 91
5.4 Creating a Regenerative Guest Experience ..... 68
6. Practical Implications and Recommendations ..... 84
7. Conclusion, Limitations and further Research ..... 88
8. References ..... 107
9. Appendices ..... 118

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| ADKAR | Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement |
| CJM | Customer Journey Map |
| $CO^2$ | Carbon Dioxide |
| CSR | Corporate Social Responsibility |
| CX | Customer Experience |
| DHM | Discovery Hotel Management |
| DWHR | Drain Water Heat Recovery |
| ESG | Environmental, Social, Governance |
| EU | European Union |
| GM | General Manager |
| GSTC | Global Sustainable Tourism Council |
| IRD | Inner Regenerative Development |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OTA | Online Travel Agencies |
| ROI | Return on Investment |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SHA | Sustainable Hospitality Alliance |
| TBL | Triple Bottom Line |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
| WSHA | World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance |
| WWTP | Waste Water Treatment Plant |

## List of Figures

Figure 1: United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals ..... 11
Figure 2: Technical System Thinking vs. Living System Thinking..... 16
Figure 3: Classification of Regeneration ..... 17
Figure 4: The Octant Brand by DHM ..... 29

Figure 5: Octant Vila Monte ..... 30
Figure 6: Sublime Comporta ..... 31
Figure 7: SWOT Analysis ..... 45
Figure 8: Connecting Employees with Place ..... 47
Figure 9: Enhance Employee Wellbeing ..... 48
Figure 10: Promote Local Employment ..... 48
Figure 11: Designate ESG Manager ..... 49
Figure 12: Create ESG Network ..... 49
Figure 13: Establish ESG Training ..... 50
Figure 14: Prioritization Matrix ..... 99

## List of Tables

Table 1: Literature Review on Principles of regenerative Hospitality ..... 21
Table 2: Literature Review on Pathways to Regeneration ..... 24
Table 3: Research Questions ..... 33
Table 4: Research Documents provided by DHM & Sublime ..... 34
Table 5: Initiatives to promote Regeneration within Sublime and DHM ..... 46
Table 6: Criteria for regenerative Water Management ..... 53
Table 7: Smart Irrigation System ..... 57
Table 8: Criteria for Sustainable Waste Management ..... 58
Table 9: AI-driven Food Waste Prediction ..... 62
Table 10: Criteria for regenerative Energy Management ..... 63
Table 11: Smart Energy monitoring System ..... 65
Table 12: Initiatives to engage with the local Community ..... 76
Table 13: Belonging through Dialogue Initiative ..... 77
Table 14: Community & Cultural Engagement Team Initiative ..... 78
Table 15: Bridging Guests and Grândola Initiative..... 78
Table 16: Reviving Traditions through Partnerships Initiative ..... 79
Table 17: Educating for Tomorrow Initiative ..... 80
Table 18: Artisan's Stories through QR Codes Initiative ..... 80
Table 19: Octant Vila Monte's Customer Journey Map ..... 87
Table 20: Sublime Comporta's Customer Journey Map ..... 87
Table 21: Regenerative Guest Experience Initiatives ..... 88

# Group Part

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the global hospitality industry has increasingly adopted sustainability practices, aiming to minimize its environmental footprint and reduce negative social impacts. However, as the world faces unprecedented environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and social inequality, it has become evident that sustainability, while crucial, is no longer sufficient (Line and Hanks 2015). The concept of sustainability is primarily focused on maintaining the status quo - preserving resources, reducing waste, and limiting harm to ecosystems and societies. Although these efforts are essential, they do not address the deeper need for restoration and renewal in the face of growing ecological and social crises. A more transformative approach is required: regeneration.

Regeneration goes beyond sustainability by seeking not only to prevent further damage but to actively restore and renew natural and social systems. Luxury hotels, which often operate in fragile ecosystems and culturally significant locations, are uniquely positioned to play a leading role in this movement. With a clientele that values both high-quality experiences and responsible practices, luxury hotels have the potential to lead by example in shifting towards regenerative practices.

This thesis explores how luxury hotels can adopt a regenerative approach that gives back to the places and people they engage with, moving beyond the aim of “doing less harm”. Starting with a theoretical overview on sustainability and regeneration, the focus is on identifying the principles and pathways to regenerative hospitality. The research is conducted in collaboration with two Portuguese luxury hospitality companies, Discovery Hotel Management and the Sublime Hotels Group. Special attention is given to their properties Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, two 5-star hotels in unique settings in the middle of nature.

To explore the possibilities of a regenerative approach in luxury hospitality, four main areas of interest are defined: organization, operations, community and guest experience. Four research questions are to be answered by using the two companies and their properties as examples. Literature review on each topic is enhanced by practical examples from the hospitality industry and an analysis of the two hotels in the respective area. The following questions are to be answered through this work:

**RQ 1: How can a luxury hotel promote a regenerative mindset within its organization?**
This question examines how hotels can foster a culture of regeneration internally, ensuring that the principles of regeneration become embedded in the organizational values and leadership, and the workforce is engaged in its regenerative efforts.

**RQ 2: How can a luxury hotel adapt its operations to foster positive environmental impact?** This question looks at how luxury hotels can move beyond sustainability by designing operations that not only reduce environmental harm but actively contribute to environmental restoration, such as renewable energy and biodiversity enhancement.

**RQ 3: How can a luxury hotel engage with the local community to give back to people?**
Recognizing the interconnectedness of place and people, this question investigates how luxury hotels can support local economies, cultural heritage, and community well-being, fostering long-term social and economic benefits.

**RQ 4: How can a luxury hotel create a regenerative guest experience?**
Finally, this question explores how the guest experience can be designed to educate and inspire visitors, offering immersive, nature-based and culturally enriching experiences that align with regenerative principles.

After analyzing the current standpoint of the two luxury properties, initiatives are developed for each of the areas to be implemented in luxury hotels and thereby support the hotel's efforts

towards regeneration. After evaluating and prioritizing the initiatives, practical recommendations are given, limitations of the study are identified and an outlook on further research is provided.

This thesis aims to contribute to the emerging discourse on regeneration within the luxury hospitality sector. Luxury hotels, with their global presence and influence, have the potential to be at the forefront of this movement, offering a vision of hospitality that truly gives back to both place and people.

# 2. Theoretical Overview of Regenerative Hospitality

The purpose of this chapter is to explore and define key terms and concepts relevant to hospitality, sustainability and regeneration while discussing theoretical models and frameworks related to these concepts. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of regenerative hospitality, its principles, pathways and barriers.

## 2.1 Relevance of Regeneration for Hospitality

To understand the role of hospitality in regeneration, hospitality must first be defined.

Hospitality is one of the oldest professions with evidence tracking back to 15,000 BCE in the Lascaux caves in France, built to welcome neighbouring tribes (MacArthur 2023). Conceptually, hospitality is what makes individuals from everywhere and anywhere reciprocally participate in hospitable acts, while its professional practice is commonly referred to as the service industry (Raj Kunwar 2017; Gotman 1997). It is the art and practice of creating welcoming, comfortable, and memorable experiences for guests by anticipating and meeting their needs with care and generosity.

Professional hospitality is synonymous to the service industry because they both involve a receiver (the guest) and a giver (the host). This dynamic highlights the duality of service as providing and receiving. The Latin etymology of hospitality, “Hospes”, reflects this dual nature

with its translation meaning both “host” and “guest”, emphasizing the interconnectedness of those offering hospitality and those receiving it (Glare 1982). In the case of professional hospitality, the “host” becomes the individual working in hospitality and the “guest”, the customer. Even so, the hospitality practice, being the result of intangible service, has made it the subject of numerous discussions (Raj Kunwar 2017).

However, the service industry is vast, and not all its occupations fall under the umbrella of hospitality. Hospitality can be categorized into four main areas: “‘Food and Beverage’, ‘Accommodation’, ‘Travel and Tourism’ and ‘Entertainment and Recreation’” (Birmingham University n.d.). Categorizing hospitality has not only made it more tangible but also facilitated space for deeper conversations on its various dimensions. The research subject, luxury hotels and resorts, intersects in all four categories. At their core, hotels and resorts provide accommodations such as suites and guestrooms. However, they also provide food and beverage with amenities such as fine dining and room service. They also try to create an entertaining environment for their clientele with facilities such as spas and golf courses. Finally, luxury hotels and resorts aim to enhance their customers’ experiences, often travelling tourists, by providing tailored excursions. By framing hospitality this way, it becomes evident that luxury hotels and resorts have foundations in all hospitality service categories.

However, luxury hospitality is a dynamic concept that has evolved significantly, reflecting shifts in consumer expectations, cultural influences, and industry practices. The term “luxury” in hospitality is often associated with exclusivity, high standards, and unique experiences, but its definition and application can vary widely depending on context (Jain et al. 2023). Recent research suggests that the definition of luxury is becoming more fluid and context dependent (Luna-Cortés, López-Bonilla, and López-Bonilla 2022). Eijdenberg, Thirumaran, and Mohammadi (2024, 410) note that “The changing socio-economic and cultural realities have turned the dynamic concept of luxury from status-gaining and materialistic orientations of

privileged individuals to luxurious ways of experiential and deeply intrinsic rewarding experiences". This reflects a broader trend in the luxury market where consumers seek experiences that are emotionally and culturally enriching rather than just materially opulent. To provide tailored experiences that resonate with the individual preferences and cultural backgrounds of their guests, luxury hospitality providers must go beyond standard service offerings (Jain et al. 2023). Along with the constant pressure of offering new personalized experiences, luxury hotels and resorts also maintain high-end facilities such as golf courses, spas and pools, with expansive use of space and energy. Hotels being a 24-hours and sevendays-a-week service, "makes them one of the most energy-intensive types of organizations" (Huang, Wang, and Wang 2015, 56). Still, having to stay ahead of trends further drives these facilities in adopting environmentally and socially deteriorating practices.

Hospitality is a huge industry, with the sector of the hotels and resorts alone reporting a global revenue of 1.5 trillion US dollars in 2023 (Statista 2024). The revenue from hospitality is at times so high in certain countries that it becomes one of their main economical drivers. Although COVID-19 crushed the hospitality industry, it only grew threefold thereafter reaching numbers higher than pre-COVID (Sinclair 2023). In 2023, the European Union (EU) country whose GDP was most impacted by the hospitality industry is Croatia with an influence of 25.8%. Portugal is second, with an influence of 19.6% on its GDP (Statista 2024). Unfortunately, the regions most economically reliant on tourism are often at risk of overtourism which negatively affects local ecosystems, community and guest experience (Bra 2024). The on-going economical, social and environmental strains can often be felt through the seasonality of hospitality. Hospitality knows peak seasons where heights in revenue and reservations can be observed. However, this also causes peaks in frustration from all stakeholders.

Luxury is an ever-growing sector with cars, personal goods and hospitality representing 80% of its market (EHL 2023). Hospitality, being part of “travel and tourism”, highly involves the use of polluting transportation methods such as long-haul flights, private jets and yachts.

According to the latest research conducted by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), carbon dioxide ($CO^2$) emissions from transport within tourism grew at least 60% from 2005 to 2016, and are projected to grow another 25% by 2030, which would represent 5.3% of global emissions (UNWTO and International Transport Forum 2019; Sustainable Travel International, n.d.). The vast scale and influence of hospitality on place and people gives it not only the potential to but compels it to implement measures guiding towards a positive Anthropocene.

Sustainable tourism and hospitality have grown as key areas of focus in the global travel industry, with associations like the UNWTO, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), or the World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (WSHA) promoting eco-friendly practices, cultural preservation, and social responsibility. Even after the COVID-19 events, the One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of Tourism committed to planning a recovery that transforms the sector in alignment with the objectives of the Paris Agreement (WTO, n.d.). These organizations shape the global tourism and hospitality industry by setting standards, influencing policies, and promoting best practices for sustainability. Nonetheless, these associations stay within the delimitations of sustainability and have yet to promote regenerative practices, despite the urgency of addressing regeneration.

## 2.2 From Sustainability to Regeneration

Sustainability is a concept that has been dominant in the last decades. It is rooted in the principle of balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives to meet the needs of the present

without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (ARE 1987). This notion, first formalized by the Brundtland Commission, emphasizes the interconnectedness of three pillars, often referred to as the "triple bottom line" (TBL): people, planet, and profit, while safeguarding the necessities of future generations (ARE 1987). The TBL framework advocates for a comprehensive assessment of business performance, integrating social and environmental impacts into the evaluation process alongside traditional economic metrics (Hall, Daneke, and Lenox 2010). In practical terms, the focus is on reducing anthropogenic harm through improving efficiency e.g. achieving "net zero" carbon targets, that are deemed to be too incremental in their outcome, considering the overshooting of planetary boundaries (Buckton et al. 2023).

To this end, the sustainable development goals (SDGs), as identified by the United Nations (UN) (figure 1), hold important ground in promoting the importance of engagement of local communities and the integration of cultural practices and social respect. The UN identifies 17 SDGs who "meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world" (UN n.d.). The goals are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a framework adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 to address pressing global challenges and improve lives worldwide (UN n.d.).

*Figure 1: United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2024)*

To foster the interconnection between ecosystems' perseverance, economic growth, and social well-being, the SDGs turn to frameworks like the circular economy (CE), which offers practical strategies to operationalize these ambitions. Circular economy has emerged as a transformative model that seeks to achieve sustainable economic growth by minimizing waste and maximizing resource efficiency. Unlike the traditional linear economy, which follows a "take-makedispose" pattern, the circular economy aims to create a closed-loop system where resources are continually reused, recycled, and recovered. This model not only addresses environmental degradation but also promotes economic prosperity and social equity, making it a compelling framework for future development (Kirchherr, Reike, and Hekkert 2017).

Although sustainability emerges as a guiding principle for balancing environmental, social, and economic needs (TBL), its application reveals significant shortcomings in addressing the scale and urgency of current issues. In response to environmental degradation, protection of the environment is perhaps the most widely recognized aspect of the TBL, involving the responsible management of natural resources to prevent depletion and degradation. Oppon, Koh, and Eufrasio (2024) highlight that environmental sustainability involves reducing

greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing energy use, and managing material use responsibly. This aspect of sustainability is critical in the context of global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, requiring businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices that contribute to long-term ecological balance. Alas, as of 2023, researchers have been able to quantify the usage of the nine planetary boundaries, indicating that we have transgressed six of them; four of which are in the high-risk zone (Richardson et al. 2023). The planetary boundaries represent the space in which the effect of our operations does not further deplete the planetary resources. Having transgressed means, we are now outside those delimitations and are actively damaging the planet (Richardson et al. 2023). Therefore, environmental sustainability becomes insufficient as we cannot sustain damage rather, we must aim to repair and renew.

Social equity is another crucial aspect of the TBL, focusing on enhancing the quality of life within communities. Social sustainability addresses concerns like labour rights, human health and safety, and socio-economic contributions, ensuring that economic activities not compromise social welfare (Oppon, Koh, and Eufrasio 2024). This dimension requires that industries adopt practices that promote social equity and community well-being, ensuring fair distribution of resources and opportunities across different societal segments. Unfortunately, since the 1980s, the disparity between classes has only grown, increasing the inequalities in both advanced and emerging economies (Qureshi 2023). The ongoing disparity growth reflects the inefficiencies of not only social but also economic sustainability, as they both fail to promote stability.

Economic viability is a core component of sustainability, focusing on practices that support long-term economic growth while minimizing negative impacts on society and the environment. Economic sustainability emphasizes the efficient use of resources and fosters sustainable economic growth, ensuring that businesses not only thrive financially but also contribute positively to their broader contexts (Hall, Daneke, and Lenox 2010). This approach challenges businesses to innovate and adopt strategies that align profitability with

sustainability.

Businesses have shown their promise to sustainability through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR encompasses a company's efforts to manage its impact on society in ways that go beyond profit making. The concept of CSR is rooted in the idea that businesses have economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) responsibilities that society expects from them. The importance of CSR in the hospitality industry has grown as companies increasingly recognize the need to address environmental and social impacts, which is why hotel companies nowadays implement CSR strategies to not only enhance their reputation and comply with regulations but to meet the expectations of increasingly environmentally and socially conscious customers. However, with the pressure to appear ethical, the threat of greenwashing arises.

Greenwashing is "misleading the public to believe that a company or other entity is doing more to protect the environment than it is, greenwashing promotes false solutions to the climate crisis that distract from and delay concrete and credible action" (UN n.d.). When screening commercial websites for false claims, the European Commission and "National consumer protection authorities had reason to believe that in 42% of cases the claims were exaggerated, false or deceptive and could potentially qualify as unfair commercial practices under EU rules" (EU 2021). The pressure to achieve sustainability is causing the model itself to fail, as companies promote false claims for financial gain thereby perpetuating their negative impacts on the Anthropocene.

The state of TBL is not improving towards a sustainable condition. On the contrary, as mentioned by the U.N. secretary general, António Guterres, in a press release of 2022 while addressing sustainable development, "It is clear — we are moving in the wrong direction" (Guterres 2022). Guterres refers to the continued deterioration of the planet, the ongoing social injustices and the growing sparsity in economical stability, rendering the concept of sustainability redundant. Hence, the need for regenerative measures to promote economic

growth while also attending to the planet and social justice. In this thesis, **regeneration** is proposed as the solution to the current dilemmas, as it aims to not only repair but regenerate. The main shortcoming of sustainability is its focus on approaches that view problems as external issues and applying technological solutions to solve them while neglecting values, worldviews and beliefs (Wamsler and Bristow, 2022). As sustainability becomes insufficient in the face of the significant environmental challenges faced today, the concept of regeneration emerges as a more comprehensive and proactive approach. This shift from sustainability to regeneration reflects a fundamental change in the perception and interaction with the environment, emphasizing a symbiotic relationship between human and natural systems.

## 2.3 The Concept of Regeneration

Along with permaculture, **regeneration**, a term coined in 1978 by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, came to be from observations of ecosystems' lifecycles. Permaculture holds "three broad maxims or principles: care for the earth, care for people and set limits to consumption and reproduction surplus" (Holmgreen 2002, 3). These principles introduce a more cyclical approach to sustainability. Lyle (1994) applied these principles to landscape architecture which later resulted in the book, "Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development". Regenerative development is the implementation of technologic and strategic developmental procedures that promote "diversity, complexity and creativity" to improve co-existence and co-evolution between humans and the planet (Mang and Reed 2013, 8).

As one of the early scholars, Krones introduced a model called "**Levels of Work**" in 1992 to visualize the complexity of systems (Mang and Reed 2012). The model depicts a hierarchy of four levels of work that show how everything within an ecosystem relies on each other. All living systems need to constantly engage in those levels of work to be able to live and grow. The lower levels of work enable prevailing processes to "operate" and "maintain" (focus on existence), while the upper levels offer opportunities to "improve" and "regenerate" (focus on

potential). The framework shows how to “continually evolve the value-generating capacity of a system by indicating its potential in relation to larger systems” (Mang and Reed 2012, 6). The cornerstone of the regenerative paradigm is **living systems thinking**, which relates to the interconnectedness shown by Krones (Bellato and Pollock 2023). In contrast to technical systems thinking, it rejects separating humans and their deeds from nature. Regeneration seeks “not only to reverse the degeneration of the earth's natural systems but also to design human systems that can co-evolve with natural systems—evolve in a way that generates mutual benefits and greater overall expression of life and resilience.” (Mang and Reed 2013, 9). Regenerative systems are defined by their ability to maintain “Positive reinforcing cycles of well-being within and beyond themselves, especially between humans and wider nature” (Buckton et al. 2023, 824). Unlike sustainability, which focuses on minimizing harm, regeneration reaches further by actively seeking to restore and enhance the ecological and social systems.

Mang and Reed (2012) developed a continuum model that contrasts technical system design and living systems design, while naming different stages of progress. Figure 2 shows the horizontal path from conventional over green, sustainable and restorative practices to regeneration.

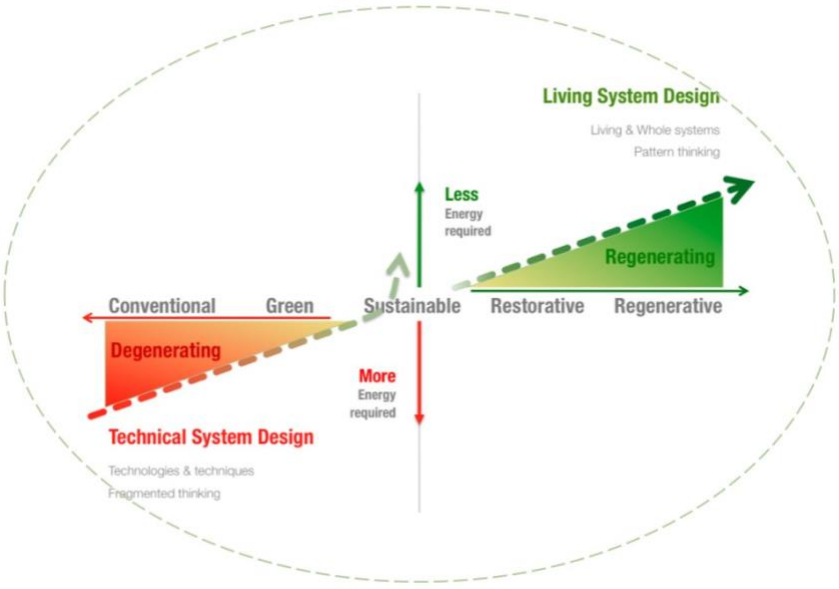

*Figure 2: Technical System Thinking vs. Living System Thinking (Mang and Reed, 2012, 9)*

**Conventional** practices maximize productivity and efficiency without considering long-term impacts. **Green** practices aim to reduce harm and improve resource efficiency. Those two types of practices are declared as degenerating practices, as their energy consumption result in a negative balance. **Sustainable** practices try to balance the resource use to meet current needs without compromising future generations. In terms of energy, there is an equilibrium between the energy required and created. Practices that need less energy are **restorative** practices which aim to repair damage caused by humans, and **regenerative** practices that enable systems to continuously renew and evolve, leaving them in a better state then before.

According to Buckton et al. (2023, figure 3), systems can be classified into categories using the terms degenerative and regenerative. They can be either externally degenerative and internally regenerative, such as companies that have a negative impact on the environment but that treat their employees well ("self-centered"), or internally degenerative, as in a company that is polluting and treating their employees badly ("fully degenerative").

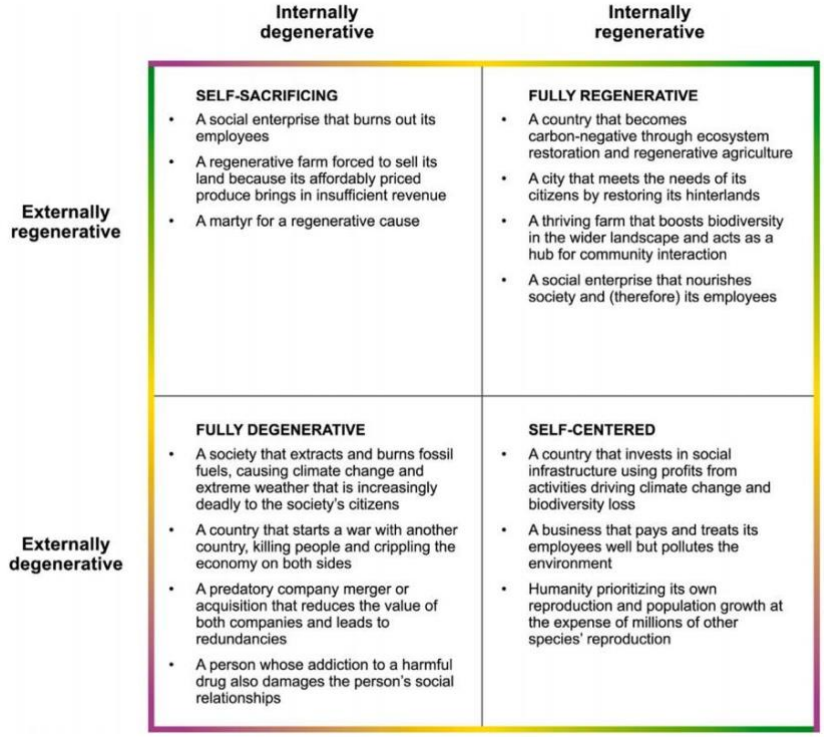

*Figure 3: Classification of Regeneration*
*(Buckton et al. 2023, 831)*

On the other hand, externally regenerative systems can also either be internally degenerative, as i.e. a regenerative farm that needs to sell their land due to insufficient revenue ("selfsacrificing") or at the same time internally regenerative, as such a farm that is thriving and that interacts as a hub for community interaction ("fully regenerative"). A fully regenerative business manages its resource flows in an efficient and resilient way and focuses on positive outcomes for its employees and shareholders but also for the wider society and the ecosystem (Buckton et al. 2023).

To ensure the continual existence across ecosystems, there needs to be a balance between efficiency and resilience and the characteristics of the system producing them. A regenerative system manages resource flows in a way that this balance is ensured while the needs of human culture and the environment are fulfilled in the long term. This balance is usually seen under natural selection and results in flows of i.e. energy or carbon being maximized while the system remains resilient. The regenerative lens framework from Buckton et al. (2023, appendix 1) provides a view of business and organizational practices in a way that moves beyond sustainability to actively restoring and enhancing ecosystems, communities, and economies. It emphasizes a holistic, systems-thinking approach that aligns human activity with natural processes and cycles. Key qualities are identified that are essential for enabling regenerative systems: Ecological Worldview, Mutualism, High Diversity, Agency and Continuous Reflexivity.

An **Ecological Worldview** involves understanding humans as part of a complex web of life, where every action is performed with an awareness of its impact on the broader ecosystem. This worldview promotes a deep connection with nature and fosters practices that support ecological health. Mang and Reed (2013) also emphasize the importance of an ecological

worldview, “shifting from seeing humans as separate from nature to understanding them as integral parts of a living system” (27).

**Mutualism** in regenerative systems is about fostering interactions that benefit all parties involved, thereby enhancing the overall health and resilience of the system. This approach necessitates cooperation and reciprocity, recognizing that mutual relationships are crucial for the evolution and flourishing of life (Buckton et al. 2023).

**High Diversity** is critical for the resilience and adaptability of regenerative systems. This includes biodiversity, agrobiodiversity, cultural diversity, and diversity of organizations and roles within society. Diverse systems are better equipped to withstand shocks and stresses, ensuring long-term resilience (Gompers and Kovvali 2018; Buckton et al. 2023). Mang and Reed (2012) also support this, suggesting that diversity in regenerative systems is not just about species or cultures, but about creating interactions that strengthen the whole.

**Agency** refers to the capacity of individuals and communities to act regeneratively. This includes having control over livelihoods, the ability to meet material and immaterial needs, and the empowerment to make choices that contribute to collective regenerative goals (Buckton et al. 2023).

**Continuous Reflexivity** involves ongoing re-evaluation of values, assumptions, and actions. It is essential for adapting to changing conditions and maintaining the viability of regenerative systems. This continuous process of learning and adapting is crucial for the success of regenerative approaches, as it ensures that systems remain dynamic and responsive to new challenges and opportunities (Buckton et al. 2023).

The framework of the regenerative lens with its five qualities is significant because it provides clarity and guidance for transitioning from sustainable practices to regenerative systems. The approach bridges the gap between conceptual understanding and actionable strategies in regeneration, enabling industries to contribute meaningfully to global ecological and social

health. Designed to be cross-disciplinary, it offers a tool to rethink and improve practices in various sectors, such as food systems, urban planning, agriculture, and tourism. The following subchapters illustrate how regeneration can be lived in the context of hotels and tourism

## 2.4 Principles of Regenerative Hospitality

In 2019, the article "Regenerative Tourism: The Maturation of Sustainability" attracted widespread attention, and provoked debates and discussions about the previously less known term **regenerative tourism** (Pollock 2019). Regenerative Tourism is a proactive approach that sees tourism as being embedded in nature as a living and networked system and it being subject to nature's rules and principles (Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard 2023). Regenerative tourism "seeks to restore tourism resources while promoting the well-being and harmony of local communities" (Luong et al. 2024, 365). This is achieved through a holistic approach where nature is seen as a teacher, care and collaboration are encouraged and local actors included in decision-making. The tourism system is seen as inseparable from its place and surroundings (Sheldon 2021). Regenerative tourism initiatives develop a relationship with the planet that is evolving, reciprocal and cooperative within the planetary boundaries. Beyond that, regenerative tourism includes various stakeholders with their own respective interests but also the common goal of nurturing a healthy place (Bellato and Frantzeskaki 2021). Additionally, it concentrates on vigorous accountability toward staff, guests, community and environment (Inversini et al. 2024). The goal is to continuously improve the relationship between these stakeholders to achieve harmony, collaboration and participation in fostering a positive impact on the ecosystem.

Another term that is often used in relation to regenerative tourism is the one of **net positive tourism**. This kind of tourism aims to ensure that the overall impact of tourism activities results in a net benefit, where the positives outweigh the negatives for the destination, the people, and the planet. Both concepts move beyond sustainability, aiming to create a positive change rather

than merely minimizing harm. However, as regenerative tourism often encompasses net positive principles, it also emphasizes a deeper, more localized, and holistic transformation of places (WSHA 2022).

Diving deeper into literature on regenerative tourism and hospitality, scholars have developed principles that provide an understanding of what makes tourism regenerative (table 1). These principles show similarities with the key qualities identified by Buckton et al., while considering stakeholders and characteristics specific to tourism. As the research into the concept of regenerative hospitality started a few years back, the number of publications on the topic is rising but still limited at this point. In this work, the focus lays on three publications from Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard (2023), King and Burns (2022) and Ho (2022), that emphasize varying numbers of principles. By comparing these three publications, a comprehensive understanding of regenerative hospitality principles can be achieved.

*Table 1: Literature Review on Principles of regenerative Hospitality*

| Regenerative Hospitality Principles | |
|---|---|
| **Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard (2023)** | **Principle 1**: Draw from an ecological worldview<br>**Principle 2**: Use living systems thinking<br>**Principle 3**: Discover the unique potential of a regenerative tourism place<br>**Principle 4**: Leverage the capability of tourism living systems to catalyze transformations<br>**Principle 5**: Adopt healing approaches that promote cultural revival, returning lands, and privileging of the perspectives, knowledge and practices of Indigenous and marginalized peoples<br>**Principle 6**: Create regenerative places and communities<br>**Principle 7**: Collaborate to evolve and enact regenerative tourism approaches |
| **King and Burns (2022)** | **Principle 1**: Center community needs first<br>**Principle 2**: Improve ecosystem integrity and biodiversity<br>**Principle 3**: Embrace diverse and inclusive business models<br>**Principle 4**: Develop transparent governance structures accountable to all stakeholders<br>**Principle 5**: Enhance regenerative partnerships |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ho (2022)** | **Principle 1**: Whole systems thinking<br>**Principle 2**: Honoring sense of place<br>**Principle 3**: Community inclusion and partnerships<br>**Principle 4**: Aspirational in nature<br>**Principle 5**: Continual Coevolution |

Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard (2023), some of the prominent authors in the field, mention an ecological worldview that should be fostered through a combination of indigenous and western scientific knowledge as their first principle. Their second principle includes the living systems thinking approach. Ho (2022) agrees on the importance of the interconnectedness within ecosystems, calling it whole system thinking.

“Discovering the unique potential of a place” and “Honoring sense of place” are two additional principles where both publications align (Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard 2023; Ho 2022). These translate into making an effort from the start in comprehending the multifaceted history and characteristics of a place and engaging in practices that are conscious and thoughtful of local communities, supporting them in maintaining their culture and taking care of their home. Ho’s (2022) principle adds to not only immerse oneself in the destination and the community, but to wholly involve guests in the history of the place. This is achieved by connecting guests to local people and the place through experiences that involve storytelling, observation and education.

“Leverage key capabilities of tourism living systems” are named as drivers for change by Bellato, Frantzeskaki, and Nygaard (2023, 1037). Examples for those can be strategic foresight, cultural understanding, innovation, and governance. Ho as well as King and Burns, however, frame their principles differently. King and Burns (2022) put the local community needs in focus and stress the importance of building an inclusive business model with transparent governance structures that focusses on benefiting said community. Regenerative businesses must ensure locals have an equal say in decisions. The key is sharing the responsibility to preserve the place for the joint benefit of the company and the community. Ho (2022) puts her

focus on continual coevolution, stating that positive change can be accomplished when there is a promise to continuous progress and change. That entails adapting infrastructure and acknowledging the human potential for growth. Commitments must be made among

stakeholders, including the environment as one of them.

One principle that stands out between the three approaches is “Aspirational in nature” of Ho (2022). In this case, aspiration describes the way in which people apply their human qualities in order to unlock the potential in people and place. By connecting people with themselves and their surroundings, humans develop a gratitude for and a deeper understanding of Life, translating into their behaviours.

All three publications share consensus on partnerships and collaboration as vital elements of regeneration. Joining forces, sharing roles, responsibilities, knowledge and resources are essential to enable regenerative hospitality. Transparency in governance is crucial in order to foster collaboration and maintain meaningful partnerships. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of all parties within the ecosystem, businesses can be an intermediary between local people, the government and the environment to drive ecological and social regeneration and create a lasting benefit.

## 2.5 Pathways towards Regenerative Hospitality

As the last subchapter has introduced the principles that shape regenerative hospitality, this subchapter offers more tangible recommendations into how hospitality businesses can achieve regeneration. Examining proposals of five different publications helps to identify the key areas for regeneration and steps towards it (table 2). Mang and Reed (2012) are consulted as prominent scholars in the field of regeneration and, even though their pathway is not specific to hospitality, it remains relevant and shows similarities to the works of other authors. Pollock (2019), Ho (2022) and Inversini (2024) offer pathways with varying depths. As Ho (2022)

identifies the least number of steps, Pollock (2019) goes into more detail, suggesting seven steps. Finally, a more generic proposal of the WSHA is added, that is not declared as a model for regeneration, but for "net-positive hospitality". This proposal is deemed helpful as it acknowledges that many businesses start with sustainability measures before advancing to regeneration.

*Table 2: Literature Review on Pathways to Regeneration*

| Pathways to Regeneration in Hospitality | |
|---|---|
| **Mang and Reed (2012)** (not specific to hospitality) | **Step 1**: Place and Potential - Understanding and conceptualizing right relationship to place<br>**Step 2**: Regenerative Capacity - Defining Goals for realizing regenerative Potential<br>**Step 3**: Partnering with Place - a new role for humans and buildings<br>**Step 4**: Progressive Harmonization |
| **Pollock (2019)** | **Step 1:** Learning to see planet earth, our relationship with it and with each other through fresh eyes.<br>**Step 2**: Exploring what it means to be fully human by applying our whole selves to whatever task we face.<br>**Step 3**: Gathering in diverse groups, acknowledging differences while aligning around a shared purpose<br>**Step 4**: Defining growth and success differently<br>**Step 5**: A spirit of a place can only be lived and shared by those for whom it is home<br>**Step 6**: Regenerative tourism sees the guest as a whole human being having a complete experience, not a segment to be targeted<br>**Step 7**: Regenerative Tourism depends on caring hosts willing to ensure their destination is healthy and full of life |
| **Ho (2022)** | **Step 1:** Determine your value to your community<br>**Step 2**: Understand your supply chain<br>**Step 3**: Inspire transformation through the guest experience |
| **Inversini et al (2024)** | **Step 1:** Adopt the right mindset to practice regenerative hospitality<br>**Step 2:** Build an ecosystem business model<br>**Step 3:** Commit to local stakeholders and regenerate their ecosystems<br>**Step 4:** Involve guests in the regeneration process |

| | |
|---|---|
| **World Sustainable Hospitality Alliance (2024)** "Pathway to Net positive Hospitality" | **Step 1:** Measure and mitigate negative impacts<br>**Step 2:** Minimise negative impacts and initiate positive impacts<br>**Step 3:** Neutralise negative impacts and build robust positive impacts<br>**Step 4:** give back more than you take |

Comparing the steps towards regeneration presented in the different publications, there is evidence of some communalities. Primarily, Mang and Reed (2012), Pollock (2019) and Inversini (2024) stress the importance of a regenerative mindset. The willingness to learn about a place and to build a close relationship with it is emphasized by Mang and Reed (2012), while Pollock (2019) refers to seeing the earth with "fresh eyes". Pollock (2019) highlights that humans are applying their "whole selves" to every task, that regeneration evolves from within and is then carried into workplaces and organizations. Additionally, Pollock writes about the necessity of the hospitality sector to acquire eco-literacy, which is achieved through living systems thinking.

The right mentality for regeneration furthermore embodies a will that revolves not solely on profit orientation but focusses on giving back more to society and the planet than one takes. This does not mean that economic growth is perceived negatively, but that businesses need to concentrate on the aspects that are most vital to the whole system. Mang and Reed (2012) recommend defining goals considering the organization's regenerative potential and Pollock agrees on this, stating that regeneration defines growth and success differently.

Pollock (2019) declares that host communities must keep their place healthy and resilient. Mang and Reed (2012) underline partnering with a place, translating into collaboration with communities but also designing buildings in a way that blends in with the environment, minimizing harm to the ecosystem. Inversini et al. (2024) suggest creating a business model that works with and within the ecosystem. This includes the integration of sustainable, restorative and regenerative measures. According to the WSHA (2024), hotels must first focus

on the areas they are held accountable for (e.g. operations) and afterwards on areas where they can influence other parties (e.g. supply chain), in order to enable long-term transformations. Following each stage, hotels should use well-known guidelines to set goals and make progress. Ho (2022) also mentions the significance of the supply chain, especially the sourcing of responsible produce. By creating an ethical supply chain, businesses can steer guests toward healthy and responsibly sourced products, benefiting not only guests but also the communities producing them.

Mang and Reed (2012), Pollock (2019), Ho (2022), and Inversini (2024) et al. all highlight the role of stakeholders in their work. Ho (2022) suggests determining first what value a business can bring to its community. Inversini et al. (2024) state that regenerative hospitality must commit to caring for local communities and to further expand regeneration efforts into their ecosystems as well. For tourism to be regenerative, it depends on hosts that care about their place and are willing to share their destination with guests. Pollock (2019) names the place as an additional stakeholder and suggests seeing it as a partner for collaboration.

Ho (2022) talks about driving change and inspiring people by involving guests in the regeneration process; Inversini (2024) mentions this aspect as well, emphasizing educating guests about their regenerative practices. Hoteliers and other providers in the industry should enable guests to interact, understand and learn about a place and thereby help to spread a regenerative mindset. Furthermore, rejuvenating approaches of living and travelling slower are promoted to regenerate guests' health while encouraging them to take on a lifestyle according to regenerative principles. This resonates with Pollock's (2019) proposal of the guest as a human being having a whole experience. Experiencing emotions, guest and host interactions are crucial to hospitality, offering the opportunity to share human qualities and creating meaningful relations for both sides.

Summarizing the insights on the pathways to regeneration, organizations need to adopt the right mindset and understand the place they are operating in which includes not only the environment but also the community with its values and traditions. By involving staff, communities and guests in their regenerative efforts and utilizing shared knowledge, businesses can make lasting change. This change however needs to be driven by the right reasons, prioritizing people over profit and evaluating initiatives through their environmental and social impacts.

## 2.6 Barriers to Regenerative Tourism

The previous subchapters have shown what characterizes regenerative tourism and hospitality. As this concept has potential to contribute significantly to the worldwide efforts battling climate change, it remains to examine what is keeping businesses from adopting this approach.

A primary barrier for regenerative practices is the initial financial investments. Especially for small operators with limited resources and lack of funding, additional investments besides operations can pose a significant challenge. Transitioning to a business model that actively contributes to the wellbeing of environment and society involves upgrading the infrastructure, adopting technology and undertaking investments that do not necessarily translate into profits. As measuring regenerative outcomes can be complex, it is challenging to unite forces towards the ultimate goal of regeneration (Saul et al 2023).

The right leadership and governmental incentives can boost regenerative efforts while the lack thereof can pose significant challenges. Operators in the tourism industry often act within wellestablished frameworks that revolve on maximizing financial gains and occupancy rates. Regeneration requires a disruption of existing business models and a change in leadership. It can be facilitated through the mobilization of like-minded people and communities to lead to change for good. Yet, restructuring social relations and management is not an easy undertaking. Changing systems in place can often lead to dissatisfaction and meet a resistance to change among stakeholders (Gerke et al. 2023).

Regenerative tourism and hospitality demand active commitment and shared responsibilities. Even though there are associations and hotels that are already progressing on their journey to regeneration, the majority of companies are still working on becoming sustainable. The lack of awareness of the concept, together with a lack of skills and knowledge that are needed for regeneration, slow down the progress on a broader level (Sharma and Tham 2023). Building awareness for regeneration and educating stakeholders is essential but requires coordinated efforts and resources.

The barriers to regenerative tourism and hospitality highlight the need for a systemic change in the hospitality industry. Overcoming the challenges requires collaboration, investment and the development of metrics to measure success. The two hospitality companies that collaborate in this project are not immune to these challenges. The following two subchapters will provide insights into the two companies, their portfolios and plans for the future.

# 3. Company Overview: Discovery Hotel Management & Sublime

This work project is created in collaboration with two Portuguese luxury hospitality companies, Discovery Hotel Management (DHM) and the Sublime Hotels Group. This chapter provides a brief introduction into both companies and their properties.

## 3.1 Discovery Hotel Management

DHM is a Portuguese hotel management company founded in 2014, focused on revitalizing and operating hotels with a modern, design-centric approach. DHM, with its headquarters in Lisbon, belongs to an investment fund, the Discovery Portugal Fund, which owns the assets. Their hotels have a total of 1671 rooms and the company achieved a turnover of 65 million euros in 2022. In 2023, the company held 18 management contracts for hotels of all segments across Portugal, aiming to reimagine hospitality by combining contemporary design with personalized

service, often incorporating elements of nature, culture, and local gastronomy into their offerings.

DHM stands out for its adaptive approach to hotel management, regenerating older properties and emphasizing sustainability, local culture, and experiential travel. Their hotels span different segments, from luxury to mid-range, catering to diverse travelers. Their properties are located in a variety of settings, including urban areas, coastal regions, and rural retreats, each tailored to its surroundings and emphasizing local influences in architecture and experiences. In 2022, DHM launched the Octant Hotels brand, with eight hotels in the design and boutique segment. These hotels position themselves as luxury hotels that offer unique experiences within their surroundings and that operate in harmony with the environment and communities. Each hotel is branded through an object that is typical for the culture or the natural environment of the hotel (figure 4). Octant Hotels curated experiences highlight regional culture, such as olive oil tastings and local artisan workshops. Additionally, the brand prides itself on offering flexibility to its guests, allowing them to access hotel services at any time of day, which is part of DHM's overall goal of delivering highly personalized and guest-focused experiences.

*Figure 4: The Octant Brand by DHM (DHM 2022)*

A member of the Octant brand is the Vila Monte Farmhouse, located in Moncarapacho in the Algarve region. In 2015, the former private holiday home underwent a complete renovation and was opened as part of the boutique brand. As oranges are typical for the Algarve region and there is an orange orchard on the premises, the orange is represented in the hotel's logo. Vila Monte has become one of DHM's flagship properties and renowned for its peaceful environment, where guests can enjoy modern amenities in a setting that reflects the local culture, in a blend of contemporary design and traditional Portuguese architecture (figure 5).

*Figure 5: Octant Vila Monte*

*(DHM 2024)*

In November 2024, Octant Vila Monte closed for 17 months to undergo a renovation and expansion process, during which 24 rooms and a spa area will be added to the hotel. The new spa will further elevate Vila Monte's appeal, offering wellness treatments designed to align with the property's emphasis on tranquility and natural surroundings.

## 3.2 Sublime Hotels Group

The Sublime Hotels Group is a Portuguese luxury hotel group known for offering ecoconscious, design-forward, and nature-centric hospitality experiences. Founded with a focus on sustainability, authenticity, and wellness, Sublime properties are typically located in serene, natural settings that emphasize environmental integration. Sublime manages one hotel in Lisbon, one resort in Comporta, two restaurants and a Beach club. The group targets a clientele

that values exclusive experiences, environmental responsibility, and a connection with nature and local heritage. Sublime's flagship property is the Sublime Comporta Country Retreat & Spa (figure 6).

The complex, known for its rustic and wild nature, is located within a 17-hectare estate of pine forest in the region of Comporta. The resort offers 23 rooms and suites, along with 22 cabanastyle villas, each designed to provide privacy and comfort while remaining deeply connected to the surrounding landscape. Guests have access to a range of amenities, including three restaurants, four swimming pools, a spa, and wellness programs that cater to both physical and mental relaxation.

*Figure 6: Sublime Comporta*
*(Sublime 2024)*

The hotel provides high-end services such as farm-to-table dining, wellness programs, and nature activities like horseback riding, birdwatching, and cycling. The dining options include Sem Porta, which focuses on local, seasonal produce, and the Food Circle, a unique outdoor farm-to-table restaurant where guests dine under the stars surrounded by the resort's organic gardens.

The Sublime Spa offers a variety of treatments, with facilities that include a heated indoor pool, steam bath, and sauna, as well as a dedicated yoga pavilion for indoor and outdoor yoga sessions. Sublime Comporta also offers a collection of private villas to guests that are seeking privacy and a connection to nature. The villas are inspired by local architecture and feature

large outdoor spaces, private pools, and natural materials that blend harmoniously with the surrounding environment.

Sublime is currently seeking to expand their Comporta property with the addition of a total of 43 villas as part of the Sublime Comporta Villas project. The housing development aims to offer architecturally unique villas for sale. Villa owners will benefit from professional management and villa services that take care of all arrangements, requests and activities as well as all facilities of the Comporta resort (Sublime Comporta Villas 2024).

# 4. Methodology

As the most relevant concepts as well as two partners of this research have been introduced, this chapter offers insights into the different stages and aspects of the research process itself.

## 4.1 Path of the Research

The research of this thesis can be separated in different phases. The initial literature review into the topics of regeneration and regenerative tourism resulted in the identification of four areas of interest, that are based on the regenerative principles and pathways from subchapters 2.4 and 2.5. The literature review was followed by the preparation and conduction of the field research. Within this phase, company specific information was gathered through different methods. Subsequently, each researcher focused on one area in order to provide theoretical context, analyze the current situation of the hotels and develop initiatives to help the hotels become regenerative. The goal was to provide initiatives that are relevant and applicable for at least one of the two hotels. To ensure this, a first set of initiatives was presented to both companies in order to get their feedback before deciding on a final selection. The selected initiatives from each area were finally brought together in order to evaluate and prioritize them for implementation.

## 4.2 Research Questions

The following four areas and stakeholders are considered crucial to hospitality in the context of regenerative hospitality: **organization, operations, community**, and **guests.** More specific, the focus is on how regeneration can be promoted within the organization and employees as the main stakeholders. Secondly, how the operations of a hotel can be adapted using technology. Thirdly, engaging local communities and regenerating their ecosystems and finally involving guests into the regeneration process to achieve long term benefits. By approaching regeneration from those four different angles, it is possible to make recommendations that benefit the company as a whole, while at the same time ensuring that improvements can be implemented in a disaggregated manner.

The four areas are addressed separately, to gain a deeper understanding of each of them, while providing specific theoretical frameworks as well as examples of the hospitality industry on how success in these areas can look like. For each of the four areas identified, a specific research question is developed (table 3).

*Table 3: Research Questions*

| Number | Question |
|---|---|
| **RQ 1:** | How can a luxury hotel promote a regenerative mindset within its organization? |
| **RQ 2:** | How can a luxury hotel adapt its operations to foster positive environmental impact? |
| **RQ 3:** | How can a luxury hotel engage with the local community to give back to people? |
| **RQ 4:** | How can a luxury hotel create a regenerative guest experience? |

## 4.3 Research Subjects

The companies DHM and Sublime were introduced in chapter three. Following the request of the quality department of the Sublime group, the focus within this company was put on their flagship property **Sublime Comporta**. Regarding DHM, the research can be considered

broader, as a significant part of the information provided is related to all of the group's hotels. Nevertheless, **Octant Vila Monte** was picked by the Chief executive Officer of DHM to receive special attention in this research. The reason for this decision is the property's similarity to Sublime Comporta in terms of segment, location, and connection to nature.

## 4.4 Data Collection Methods

The field research for this thesis is based on a mixed method approach. Different methods were used to gather data. As this approach seeks to combine the strengths of more than one methodology, it was possible to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem and add additional insights where needed.

The first type of research is secondary research that was conducted in form of a **desk research**, using public information from the company's websites, as well as several documents provided by both companies (table 4). Initially, more documentation was requested, especially about financial information and forecasts. Both companies did not provide these documents. Some information from Sublime was only provided in Portuguese, requiring translation.

*Table 4: Research Documents provided by DHM & Sublime*

| DHM | Sublime |
|---|---|
| Sustainability Report 2022 | Biosphere Certification |
| Sustainability Report 2023 | Monitoring report Bio pool (Portuguese) |
| List of Sustainability KPIs | List of Sustainability KPIs |
| Overview on community collaborations | Report Water Consumption July 2024 |
| Sustainability Policy | List of species – harvest register (Portuguese) |
| List of local suppliers | Framework of the WWTP (Portuguese) |
| List of sustainable products at Vila Monte | |

An **open-ended survey** answered by the Quality department of Sublime Comporta enhanced the set of documents provided. As the quality department requested to receive questions before the site visit, a set of questions was sent via email and answered in written form. The questions

were based on public information gathered through the desk research, in order to get more detailed information (see appendix 2).

The third type of research is a **semi-structured expert interview**. This method enables the researcher to obtain in-depth insights, validate findings or examining a professional perspective on a topic. It is possible to gather information that would not be available through other sources. Limiting to this method is that the findings may reflect a possible bias, as statements may be subjective (Magaldi and Berler 2020). The semi-structured interview for this research was conducted with Ana Mendonca, Head of ESG at Explorer Investments, and Filipe Amaral, Head of Maintenance for DHM at the DHM Headquarters in Lisbon. The company's sustainability report from 2023 was used as input and a guideline for the interview. The interview lasted about two hours, and the transcript is presented in appendix 3.

The initial interview was followed by two site visits of the hotel properties that consisted of a combination of **observations** and **conversations**. A conversation is a method that uses freeflowing dialogue to explore perspectives and experiences (Swain and King 2022). Conversations were used, as the tours of the hotels involved several changes of location and people, which made a structured interview situation impractical. By using this natural way of communication, the researchers where able to gather valuable information while not compromising on observations. The observations on the hotel premises involved watching and documenting interactions, the environment and characteristics of the hotel. By engaging in observation, the researchers were able to gather real-time data. However, observer bias poses a threat to influence interpretation (Smit and Onwuegbuzie 2018).

The **site-visit at Octant Vila Monte** included a conversation with Joaquim Costa, General Manager (GM) and Hernani Eugenio, Front Office Manager and a tour of the property and parts of the back of house guided by Hernani Eugenio (see appendix 4). Two of the researchers were hosted in the hotel for one night and were able to experience the property from a guest's point

of view. The visit was followed by a viewing of the golf course Quinta da Ria guided by Victor Brandão, Golf Operations Manager.

The **site-visit at Sublime Comporta** included several conversations and guided tours of the premises with employees (appendix 5). Three of the researchers were hosted for one night in the hotel's staff quarters and were able to experience the property from an employee's point of view. The conversations throughout this time took place with the following employees:

- Head Chef: Tiago Maio
- F&B Manager: André Condenço
- Responsible for Garden: Joana Bizzaro
- Responsible for the Biopool: Armando Gouveia
- Maintenance Chief: Lúcio Gonçalinhos
- Quality Management: Sandra Teixera, Joana Rodrigues, Valter Oliveira
- General Manager: Miguel Plantier

The information gathered through observations and conversations were recorded through freehand **linear notetaking** on a tablet (when walking over the premises) and linear notetaking by typing on a laptop (during the interview). The linear approach organizes details using headings, bullet points, and numbering to differentiate between main ideas and supporting details (Friedman n.d.). As not all researchers were physically present during both site visits, photos were also taken. These types of documentation gave the researchers the opportunity to reference and share their notes when conducting analyses.

## 4.3 Evaluation Criteria

To be able to compare the impact of initiatives across the four categories of operations, mindset, community, and guest experience, a set of evaluation criteria is needed. Therefore, the proposal of each initiative is structured as followed:

- Description of initiative

- Initial investment of resources – financial, human etc.
- Impact on operations
- Impact on environment
- Impact on employees
- Impact on customers
- Impact on reputation

The proposed initiatives consider as many criteria as applicable.

# 5. Implementation of Regenerative Practices in luxury Hotels

The following subchapters each focus on one of the four identified key areas for regenerative hospitality in the luxury segment, beginning with the importance of mindset, operations, local communities and finally guest experience. Each topic is structured similarly, providing an insight into theory and offering examples from the hospitality industry. An analysis of the two hotels is conducted in each area, to be able to develop initiatives for the hotels to implement.

## 5.1 Promoting a Regenerative Mindset within a Luxury Hotel

The purpose of this subchapter is to understand what measures an organization can take to promote regeneration from within. It is important to define what makes a regenerative organization and how examples look like in practice, to see where the two hospitality companies stand in that context.

An organization is a social unit of people that pursue collective goals. A management structure determines relationships between positions and roles, responsibilities and authority to carry out defined tasks (Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson 2013). In subchapters 2.4 and 2.5, it is evidenced that adopting the right mindset is crucial for redirecting company efforts towards regeneration. Mackie (2021, 4:09) describes mindset as “an organizing function that brings together goals, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors into a meaning system”. It furthermore shapes motivation, learning and challenge seeking. This definition of mindset overlaps with Schein’s (2010, 8) definition of a company culture, which describes it as “a system of shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape the behaviors and practices of employees within an organization”. In the context of an organization, mindset refers to “the organization’s collective view of the system it manages”, and how to control and influence it towards an intended state (Karlsson, Malvius, and Lindberg 2020, 292).

Connecting the principle of regeneration with organizations, a regenerative organization is characterized as one that actively seeks to create positive impacts on the environment and

society by integrating principles of regeneration into its core operations and culture. It focuses on creating a resilient and thriving workplace that supports well-being, inclusivity, and continuous improvement for both employees and the environment. It prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and adaptability, fostering an atmosphere where employees feel appreciated and enabled to contribute to an organization's success. This culture fosters individual growth and fulfillment but also contributes positively to the community and ecosystem, aligning business goals with social and environmental responsibility (Marquis 2024). As the areas of operations and environment will be covered in the following subchapters, this part of the work focuses on hotels as a workplace and employees as the main stakeholders of the organization.

The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) consulting group Bridgespan (n.d.) offers a model of four essential components for building and sustaining a strong organizational culture: **leadership**, **decision-making**, **the right people**, and **work systems** (appendix 6)**.** Each element is interconnected, showing how they influence and reinforce each other to create a cohesive company culture. Culture is established at the highest levels of the organization. Leaders set the tone by aligning their actions with the organization's vision and mission. The decision-making processes within the organization should align with and support the desired culture. This means making choices that reinforce the organization's core values and goals, which helps embed the culture into daily operations. It is essential to select and develop individuals who align with and reinforce the culture. Furthermore, organizations should offer incentives and support to ensure employees embody the desired cultural values. By creating structures that align with the company's vision, systems support employees in executing their roles in ways that reinforce cultural norms. The Bridgespan model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how organizational culture is shaped and sustained, connecting culture to practical, actionable processes.

**Leadership**

As introduced in subchapter 2.5, building the right relationship to the place is a crucial element for owners and operators to successfully direct their organization towards regeneration (Mang and Reed 2012). When there is a complete understanding of the place, management needs to decide what long-term impact they wish to achieve, which translates into a company's vision and mission.

**Company vision & mission**

A company's vision provides inspiration for the future direction. In the regeneration context, it might focus on the broader societal and environmental change the company wants to drive. The company's mission on the other hand outlines what the company does, for whom, and often how it operates to fulfill its objectives (Alegre et al. 2018).

Playa Viva in Juluchuca, Mexico serves as an exemplary model of a regenerative resort, with a mission that deeply integrates environmental restoration and community partnership. Emerging from a master plan developed in 2006 and 2007, Playa Viva's approach is built on core principles aimed at creating lasting ecological and social impact. The hotel embodies regenerative tourism by including concise actions into their mission, displaying their commitment to continuously become better (Playa Viva 2024).

As for the two companies in research focus, DHM has made a name for itself through buying and turning around run-down or abandoned properties. On the company website, DHM states that the organization is "inspired by the ancestral tribal spirit, where common values and goals guide a community. We live according to the spirit that each one of us is part of a larger whole" (DHM – About us 2024). Further, the company claims to highlight each of its hotels' own identity, respecting "the place and culture where it is located" (DHM – About us 2024). Both statements align with the concept of living systems thinking that is crucial for regeneration.

The Sublime Hotels Group makes a series of commitments to guide its decisions and pursue economic prosperity, environmental responsibility and social equity. The company's sustainability policy is based on the Global Charter for Sustainable Tourism. It presents 13 general statements on the company's efforts to operate sustainably. The group claims that "Sustainability is at the essence" of their DNA, while the two owners want to invest in a way that contributes to the local economy, tells a story of the region and increases the awareness of Comporta and Portugal. (Sublime Comporta – Sustainability, 2024). The Sublime Comporta property holds a "Biosphere" certification that underlines the hotels efforts in the areas of environment and climate change, society and culture, and local development.

The two hotels analyzed both emphasize sustainability in their mission and vision statements, demonstrating a clear commitment to environmental stewardship and resource efficiency. Even though DHM's statements align with the main principles of regeneration, neither of the hotels use the term, which suggests they have not yet integrated or fully explored this emerging concept.

**Setting regenerative goals**

Regenerative projects set goals "that address all three aspects of regenerative built environments – operational capacity, organizational capacity and aspirational" (Mang and Reed 2019, 20). Examples for regenerative goals in practice are to actively contribute to the health of the ecosystem by planting, i.e. 100 native trees over the next five years, or to create a volunteer program which dedicates 1,000 hours annually to participating in conservation and habitat restoration projects in a national park. A prime example for setting regenerative goals is Fogo Island Inn, a 5-star hotel in Shorefast, Canada. The charity of Shorefast that founded the hotel returns 100% of operating surpluses to be reinvested in community development work (Regenerative Travel 2023).

The ESG manager at DHM points out that investments into luxury amenities are essential to bring properties to the group standard and maintain the brand image. Especially for run-down properties, these investments can be substantial, making it difficult for the company to prioritize sustainability in the company agenda (appendix 3). In 2022, 10 areas were selected in which the company aims to progress: energy, carbon footprint, water, waste energy, responsible sourcing, ecosystem and biodiversity, labour practices and equity, local communities, human rights and trafficking, and governance. These areas were named as the most important ESG aspects after an analysis of the business model and operations. The company states that the named sustainability criteria are incorporated in the initial design phases of projects to ensure efficiency and achieve financial benefits (DHM - Sustainability Report 2023). Asked about specific sustainable or regenerative goals, the ESG manager answered that they do not have established goals. The same applies to Sublime Comporta. Enquired about their goals in relation to sustainability, they only refer to the reporting that they are currently setting up but fail to name any tangible goals (appendix 2).

**Decision-making and Structure**

Regenerative governance-models imitate the living system characteristics of modularity, subsidiarity and feedback. That means hierarchical structures are flattened or replaced with a more self-managing model where responsibility is spread across all levels of employees. Roles and domains of work might be overlapping, decisions are made by mutual consent and feedback. Referring back to the key qualities of Buckton et al. (2023), regenerative systems are enabled by agency, which is achieved through self-organization and cooperative ownership and decision-making. In practice, this means that employees need to have the freedom and the resources to act in the interest of regeneration.

The Dutch hospitality company Zoku is a B Corp corporation that has adopted an alternative approach to the typical roles within a hotel. Instead of narrow responsibilities, the hotels employ

duty managers and assistants who share a number of responsibilities. As all-rounders, the employees improve their skills in various departments, are encouraged to apply their creativity and problem-solving competences to various situations. This initiative is an excellent example of how employees can be empowered and developed to thrive in their environment (Zoku n.d.). Within DHM and Sublime, the roles and responsibilities follow a typical approach with employees being assigned to specific tasks like concierge, housekeeper or waiter. As for ESG topics, one manager together with the Head of Maintenance are responsible for all 18 hotels of DHM, as there are no dedicated people on site at the hotels (appendix 3). At the Sublime Hotels Group, there is currently no team assigned to take care solely of sustainability or regeneration (appendix 5). The three-person quality department situated at Sublime Comporta oversees all sustainability related operations as one of their responsibilities.

Narrow responsibilities present a challenge to DHM and Sublime, as there needs to be commitment in the hotels on site to drive forward regenerative initiatives. For both companies, however, this is also an opportunity to involve their employees more in such projects and to draw from their skills and knowledge.

**People**

In order to be successful in moving the organization to become regenerative, the right kind of people need to be hired, developed and retained. Companies need to make sure that employees are connected to the place, are able to apply themselves fully to their tasks, and are willing to take on responsibility. Taveras-Dalmau (2024, 3) establishes the term “inner regenerative development” (iRD) as a “process of cultivating mindsets, values, beliefs, and personal qualities that foster regeneration from the inside-out”. Mathisen, Søreng, and Lyrek (2022) agree with Taveras-Dalmau, explaining that a change in a system is determined by the inner transformation of individuals, highlighting the importance of staff and their mindsets in driving forward regenerative projects. Buckton et al. (2023) emphasize a learning community as critical

for fostering a regenerative mindset. This community can be built through investments in education that include indigenous knowledge and encourage creativity and mutualism. Creativity can help embracing trans-disciplinarity, ambiguity and the complexity of the ecosystem. While diversity is crucial for the success of regenerative projects, locality of people is just as important, as local people can deliver an authentic experience.

As an example, the hotel Aguas Claras in Costa Rica follows a policy that ensures all staff are hired from the area, empowering them throughout their career to grow into management positions. In addition, the hotel implemented a company doctor program to ensure healthcare is accessible to its entire staff (Aguas Claras 2024).

In 2023, DHM conducted a survey among its employees on the organizational work environment. While leadership, diversity and inclusion, values and ethics, and integration into the organization were named as the company's strengths, the employees identified trust and recognition, as well as work-life balance, as areas for improvement (DHM – Sustainability Report 2023). In the same year, DHM delivered 14,530 hours of training to their employees. The company is currently rolling out an employee program that gives employees access to resources like mental health or personal finance consultants, in order to ensure employee wellbeing. More information on the relationship with their employees at DHM is provided by the GM of Vila Monte: as the majority of employees are local and feel a sense of belonging to the area, appreciation for the natural and social ecosystem plays a big role for the management and operation of the hotel (appendix 4).

On the Comporta premises, Sublime employs around 250 people. While touring the premises, it became apparent that a substantial number of employees originate from South Asia.

According to the quality department, this is due to low demand of employment in the area and presents a significant challenge (appendix 5). Most of the foreign employees reside in shared rooms on the premises with a limited offering of recreational spaces and healthy food options.

Considering the conditions on site, Sublime needs to make improvements in order to ensure an environment for the employees in which they can thrive. It must be mentioned that the research team did not get any insight into the staff housing of Vila Monte, which is why there cannot be any statement made about it. As Vila Monte has a high rate of local employment, both companies find themselves in unlike situations.

**Work processes & Systems**

Work systems and processes in the context of regeneration can be declared as ways to provide structures that support employees in acting in the best interest of place and people. In a regenerative organization, performance is measured in terms of the contribution to the regeneration of the larger living context (Mang and Reed 2012). Common means to monitor this progress are Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to regeneration. Technology can help track resource consumption, employee performance and more. The focus of the organization must be on its regenerative capacity, which is developed and embedded in the local ecosystem to support the ongoing co-evolution. To increase the regenerative capacity, additional knowledge and resources can be tapped into. Interacting with likeminded individuals, experts in the field and other businesses that are on a similar path can foster innovation and lead to beneficial outcomes for all parties involved. The singularity of regenerative practices leaves space for establishments to share and learn from each other's difficulties and successes. Sublime is currently in the process of setting up sustainability reporting and is planning to publish the report in 2025 for the first time. As the process is ongoing, access to information and KPIs is limited (appendix 5). DHM on the other hand publishes an annual ESG report for all their hotels since 2022. In their report, the company presents their progress in each of the

10 areas that were identified (appendix 3). The ESG manager and Head of maintenance monitor DHM's sustainability metrics through a dashboard that is partly filled manually. As the data at

Sublime has not yet been recorded, the monitoring of operations at Sublime Comporta has still to be set up.

A communality between both hotel companies is a lack of structure or guidance for their employees, such as ESG-related trainings or KPI-tracking, which would create a framework for them on how to act responsibly, save resources and have a positive impact. Furthermore, neither of the companies is currently collaborating with other hospitality companies to jointly increase their positive impact or share best practices with the industry.

**Summary**

To summarize the findings in the four areas of leadership, decision-making, people, and work systems, the results of the analyses are put into a SWOT analysis (figure 7).

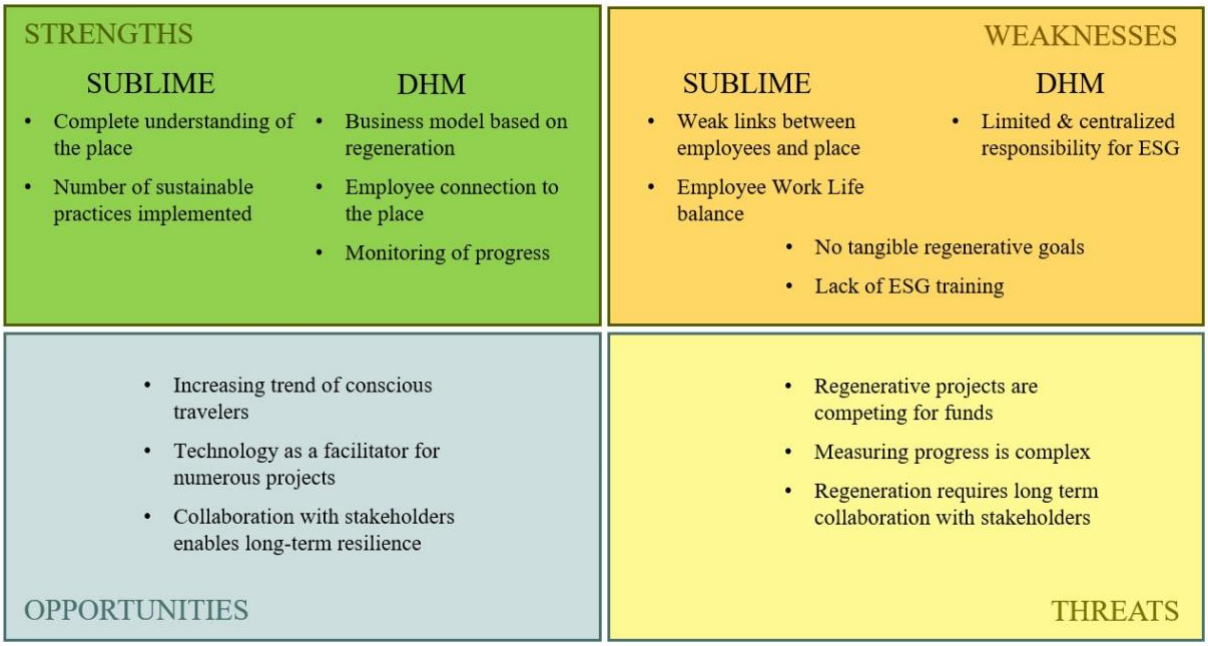


*Figure 7: SWOT Analysis*

A SWOT analysis is a useful tool to assess organization-specific strengths and weaknesses while contrasting them to industry-specific opportunities and threats. By analyzing these four areas, the hotels can gain a comprehensive view of their current position and identify pathways for improvement (David and David 2016). For DHM and Sublime, the analysis shows that both

companies have different strengths, while sharing some aspects that provide potential to improve.

After analyzing both hotels in the four areas, a preliminary set of 10 possible initiatives was developed. Table 5 provides an overview on the initiatives and how they can be categorized. However, this categorization is ambiguous as initiatives can have an impact on more than one area. A description of each initiative along with its impact on finances, stakeholders and operations can be found in appendix 7.

*Table 5: Initiatives to promote Regeneration within Sublime and DHM*

| Leadership | Decision Making & Structure |
|---|---|
| Initiative 1: Anchor regenerative goals in the company agenda<br>Initiative 2: Integrate regenerative goals into employee KPIs | Initiative 3: Designate ESG managers on site<br>Initiative 4**:** Establish more open roles - Cross training |
| **People** | **Work System & Processes** |
| Initiative 5: Connect employees with the place<br>Initiative 6: Create wellbeing plan for employees<br>Initiative 7: Promote local employment | Initiative 8: Internal fund for employee led initiatives<br>Initiative 9: Establish ESG- and cross-training<br>Initiative 10**:** Join a regenerative network |

The 10 initiatives were briefly presented to representatives of both companies. The goal was to receive feedback on the applicability of the initiatives and to narrow down the number to the most relevant initiatives for each of the companies. In the following, the relevant initiatives for each of the hotels are explained and detailed with a step-by-step plan on how to implement them.

**Sublime Hotels Group**

According to the analysis, the area of people shows the greatest potential for improvement at this stage, which was confirmed by the Sublime Comporta representatives. While advancements in other areas would also be important, the company should focus on their workforce at this point in time. This recommendation aligns with the concept of iRD, to

concentrate on individuals first, in order to develop their regenerative capacity and enable them to drive initiatives in the future.

In order to connect the employees with the environment they are living and working in, Sublime should provide educational resources for their non-native employees and immerse them in the local culture and nature (figure 8). Having employees that originate from countries creates diversity, which is an important quality for regeneration. However, in order to be able to act with the health of the place in mind, employees need to know about the local customs and how to protect their environment. This can be achieved through language courses, field trips to local suppliers, crafting workshops with local artisans and other activities like birdwatching, that Sublime is already offering to its guests. These activities will not only familiarize the foreign employees with the area but will also enhance employee wellbeing, cultivate a workforce that is more conscious of its ecological and social impact and stimulate iRD among staff.

*Figure 8: Connecting Employees with Place*

An additional factor connected to the iRD is the wellbeing of employees at Sublime (figure 9). The current living conditions of employees in the staff housing are not in line with regenerative principles. Employees whose basic needs are not fully met will not be able to work towards meeting the environment and community's needs. Therefore, Sublime should invest in its staff facilities in order to make sure their employees can recharge after work and offer them facilities to spend their free time, considering the remote location of the premises. Furthermore, the employees need to be able to eat on a varied and healthy diet that the company should support. Sublime could further take DHM's wellbeing package as an inspiration to offer additional services to their employees and partner with health services and medical institutions. Investing

in employee wellbeing will not only improve employee morale and performance but will also enhance the hotel's reputation as a responsible employer.

*Figure 9: Enhance Employee Wellbeing*

Another challenge that Sublime is facing is not employing local people. In order to overcome this challenge, Sublime should build relationships with local schools and partner with universities to attract young people from the area. Furthermore, Sublime could engage with clubs and providers of adult education, in order to hire people from varying age groups and backgrounds. Events like career fairs, hotel tours for children or open-house events to invite the local community could enhance the picture of Sublime as a reputable employer, leading to more local talent interested in working with them. By promoting local employment, Sublime will establish a balanced and diverse workforce, which fosters regeneration (figure 10). Employees that are able to share stories about the destination are able to provide an authentic experience to guests, while acting in the best interest of place and community.

*Figure 10: Promote Local Employment*

**DHM**

For DHM and Vila Monte, the challenge is to establish a structure within the company, that promotes agency, shares responsibility for ESG topics and fosters communication between

headquarter and the hotels. The main strength of the company is their engaged workforce and their ties with local communities. As the reporting mechanisms at DHM have been set up, the first recommendation is to designate ESG managers in each of the hotels (figure 11).

*Figure 11: Designate ESG Manager*

Establishing a local responsible on site will facilitate the hotel-specific reporting and monitoring and employees will have one designated contact person to support them in case of issues or questions. The ESG manager in Lisbon on the other hand will have more resources to tend to company wide matters, while serving as a coordinator for the managers on site. Coordinating their motivated and interested workforce in their efforts will enable DHM to become a role model within the industry.

Initiating from the discussion with the representatives, an additional initiative was developed, which focuses on utilizing an existing internal blog to be transformed into an ESG network (figure 12).

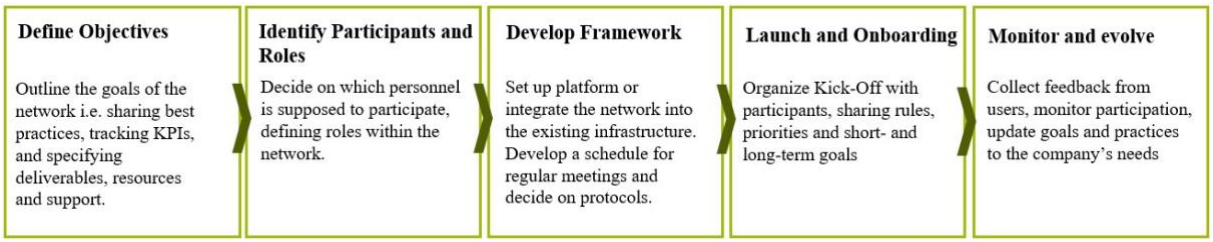


*Figure 12: Create ESG Network*

This network will enable the future ESG managers to connect, share ideas and initiatives and provide them on the other hand with resources to facilitate their work, such as templates and guidelines. By providing access to information and connecting employees with each other,

DHM can create a learning community that is crucial for the success of regenerative efforts and strengthen commitment among all hotels of the group.

The GM furthermore shared an incident that occurred recently and that underlined the consequences of employees not being trained in sustainability related topics. Garbage from the hotel could not be picked up due to the waste not being separated properly. Therefore, ESG trainings with at least a focus on waste separation, energy savings and circular economy should be mandatory for the employees (figure 13). This training regimen will ensure employees build a solid knowledge of sustainable practices, which can be enhanced by including regenerative principles. Being informed about how to protect the environment and save resources, employees will be able to act responsibly and help others rethink their actions.

*Figure 13: Establish ESG Training*

Summarizing, the three initiatives per hotel presented provide personalized recommendations on how to move forward on the companies' journeys towards rooting regenerative principles in their organizations. Nevertheless, there are some more initiatives that are deemed to be beneficial for both hotels.

**Sublime Hotels Group & DHM**

Currently, both hotels fail to establish tangible goals when talking about their sustainability practices. With DHM having implemented their reporting system two years ago and Sublime being in the process of setting up theirs, the companies need to commit to driving a change not only with words but also with measurable goals. Incorporating regenerative KPIs into the company's agenda will ensure accountability, transparency and provide reference points not only for management in their leadership but also in daily operations for the staff.

Another valuable initiative for both companies is cross training, which can be performed within different departments or between different hotels. Both companies have hotels of varying segment and location, where employees can gain valuable knowledge. As regeneration is fostered by the spirit of learning and community, it would even be great to see both companies collaborating and creating a joint training program. This program could even go beyond cross training to include overarching ESG training. Granting interested employees access to the program would give them insights into innovative practices and help them set up their own initiatives in their respective hotels.

Beyond a possible joint venture in terms of training, becoming member of a regenerative network would connect the two hotels with likeminded associations and give them access to a pool of resources, such as templates, forums, events and workshops. Regenerative Travel and The long run are two examples of global associations that focus on regenerative principles in travel and hospitality. Memberships start at $275 for individuals (Regenerative Travel) or $1,500 for businesses (The long run) and would be useful investments for both companies. Both hotels have made significant progress on their journeys; however, they show different stages of how far they were able to root regenerative principles in their organizations. DHM and especially Vila Monte is in a favorable position, having implemented a number of sustainable and even regenerative practices while having a workforce that values the place they are working at. Sublime on the other hand is still struggling to engage their workforce in their efforts, focussing on reporting and measurement at this point in time. While DHM is in the lead when comparing both companies, Sublime has the potential to make significant progress once their reporting is set up and they manage to involve the workforce in their efforts.

## 5.2 Adapting Luxury Hotel Operations towards achieving Regeneration

In the evolving luxury hospitality industry, sustainability has now become a central element of hotels that aim to reduce their environmental impact while offering high-level experiences to their guests. The concept of sustainability is evolving, shifting the attention from reducing the ecological footprint to actively promoting regeneration, including operations. Regenerative hotel operations in a luxury context imply rethinking every operational process, analyzing in detail the operations value chain, and integrating innovative solutions that actively promote the restoration of natural resources, therefore creating benefits for the environment, local communities, guests, and owners in terms of long-term resource savings. This section examines and reviews the operations in water, waste, and energy management of luxury hotel properties, evaluating the performances compared to industry standards and proposing initiatives that may help them reach a regenerative enhanced business model on the operational side.

Properties such as Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, two hotels of relevance, are transitioning to a path from basic sustainability practices to the adoption of more regenerative principles, where the objective is not only reducing environmental damages but also restoring and actively enhancing the surrounding ambiance. As for hotel operations, the proposed initiatives would align with their current mission, allowing both hotels to redefine a hospitality model that combines efficient operations, sustainable responsibility, technology, and luxury to redefine the industry's standard and become leaders in the regenerative sustainability industry. The initiatives proposed aim at integrating artificial intelligence (AI), and in particular smart management systems in operations for all the three analyzed areas – water, waste, and energy – because of the representation of the ideal meeting point between innovative technology and regenerative principles. These systems allow data monitoring and data management in real time, allowing resource optimization in a highly precise and reactive way. With the integration

of AI, hotels can reduce waste and inefficiencies but also anticipate future needs through predictive analysis, creating a virtuous circle that contributes to natural resource regeneration. This analysis capability and advanced optimization make smart systems particularly suitable for the luxury industry, which needs to respond to excellent operative expectations and sustainability from its guests. The choice of these initiatives is based on the capability of smart management systems to better hotel operations performance without compromising the aesthetic and comfort that define luxury. In addition to environmental benefits, such as ecological footprint reduction and support of the local ecosystem, these systems offer economic and reputational advantages: they guarantee long-term savings thanks to major efficiency and strengthen the properties positioning as leaders in regenerative hospitality. In a highly competitive sector, the adoption of a smart management system is not only an opportunity to optimize resource usage but a strategic action towards an operative model that unites innovation, responsibility, and luxury, making these initiatives the most valid to propose to Octant Vila Monte, Sublime Comporta and the industry in the complex.

**Water Management**

An efficient water management system is essential for hotels that aim to align with regenerative practices. In the research of Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020), regenerative water management focuses on operative efficiency and the minimization of water wastage. The main criteria to determine whether a luxury hotel is regenerative fall as follows:

*Table 6: Criteria for regenerative Water Management*

| Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| **Improved water quality** | The hotel should reduce water pollution, eliminate the discharge of damaged materials, and enhance the recycling and usage of wastewater. This implies the investment in wastewater treatment systems to diminish the percentage of untreated wastewater and follow a circular path. |
| **Water efficiency in all departments** | Water-efficient devices, such as low-flow WCs and infrared-activated sinks, are fundamentals to reach high efficiency in water usage. Additionally, greywater usage systems, such as water for washing vegetables or showers, can be implemented for non-potable aims such as irrigation. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Integrated handling of water resources** | Regenerative hotels monitor water usage in all departments, rooms, kitchens, and landscaping to trace and reduce water use. Research by Amado dos Santos et al. (2020) has demonstrated that linen and towel reuse programs can save 794 liters of water and 541 liters of detergent per year in a medium hotel with 150 rooms: these practices should be adopted to obtain results on a large scale. |
| **Rainwater harvesting** | Collecting rainwater for irrigation or toilet flushing is a fundamental strategy to reduce town hall water dependence. This helps store and preserve freshwater resources and mitigates the impact on local water infrastructures, especially in areas at risk of water scarcity. |

*adapted from Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020)*

Their research on green 4-stars and 5-stars hotels reveals different tendencies in water management practices. Water-efficient devices are the most common practice adopted, with over 70% of hotels acquiring low-flow fixtures and efficient appliances in guest areas. Nonetheless, recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting remain the less adopted practices, especially in 4-stars hotels, due to budget limitations. Only 30% of 5-stars hotels have implemented greywater recycling systems, and an even inferior percentage has adopted rainwater harvesting initiatives, mainly due to high initial investment costs. Industry competitors such as Hilton Hotels & Resorts and Accor Hotels have established water conservation standards by integrating advanced greywater treatment systems and smart water monitoring systems working with AI.

Analysis of Octant Vila Monte and Sublime: Current Practices

At the property Octant Vila Monte, water management is supported by a circular system that emphasizes the usage of water resources and self-sufficiency. The Hotel collects 2% of water from the town hall, whereas the rest comes from an on-site aquifer. This water is recirculated in the property through night irrigation systems, allowing natural filtration back into the aquifer to then use water for landscape maintenance, ensuring minimal impact on local water resources Additionally, wastewater from showers and toilets is treated through the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and released in a nearby river according to environmental standards. The property has also implemented solar panels to heat water in guests' villas, improving the hotel's independence on municipal water supply. Nevertheless, even if there are already valid

adoptions of water savings methods, Octant Vila Monte is planning an important renovation of the water system to additionally enhance water management practices, acquiring so a competitive positioning compared to other players in the industry.

Sublime Comporta, similarly, is adopting sophisticated water management practices to achieve water self-sufficiency. The hotel is self-sufficient for both potable water and irrigation, with a WWTP and a mini-ETAR that allows the reuse of water in the extensive gardens on the property. Sublime Comporta also uses rainwater harvesting and hosts a bio pool that is cleaned through aquatic plants instead of chemicals, representing an example of sustainable service luxury that contributes to biodiversity while enhancing guest experience. Nonetheless, water consumption caps (9 cubic meters per minute) limit irrigation capacities of the hotel during peak periods. Sublime practices, especially wastewater recycling and rainwater harvesting, place this player in an advantageous position over many competitors, even if, as implementation, the hotel could benefit from individual water meters in villas to track consumption more efficiently.

Water Management Initiative: Smart Irrigation System

The proposed initiative is the implementation of a smart irrigation system as both properties present wide green areas, distinctive elements of their hospitality offering and fundamental criteria of choice for their clients. Considering the strategic importance of preserving these areas, and reducing at the same time water usage, this initiative represents a targeted and efficient initiative to improve operational sustainability. The proposal perfectly aligns with the unique characteristics of both structures: Octant Vila Monte, with its system oriented to circular water usage, and Sublime Comporta, which distinguishes for the water self-sufficiency and innovative practices such as the bio pool. A smart irrigation system not only optimizes the usage of resources but also strengthens the positioning of the brands in regenerative tourism, responding to the growing expectations of guests and industry requisites. The data-driven

irrigation solution allows the optimization of water usage, as it is based on real and remotely controlled sensors that monitor environmental factors such as soil moisture, plant needs, and weather conditions along the selected area. Based on this information, the system automatically adjusts the irrigation schedule and helps maintain a healthy landscape with minimal environmental impact (Hassan, Sheta, and El Kordy 2020).

The main advantages of the initiative would be:

- Water conservation: by regulating irrigation based on real-time data, this system minimizes water usage, reducing dependency on treated sources or aquifers by up to 30% annually (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2021).
- Economic efficiency: the precise control of water flush from the system reduces unnecessary use, reaching significant savings on costs in time.
- Operative efficiency: automatic programming and monitoring reduces manual intervention, freeing resources and diminishing the requests for manutention.
- Environment protection: avoiding excessive irrigation and minimizing the deflush, the system sustains the refurnishing of the local aquifer, reduces the water extraction, and aligns with regenerative principles.
- Guests' perception: the adoption of advanced sustainable technologies aligns with the ecoconscious values of guests, positively influencing the experience of the guest and their loyalty.

A smart irrigation system uses advanced sensors and predictive software to optimize water usage for the landscape. The system establishes when and how much to irrigate based on parameters such as soil humidity, type of plants, and meteorological conditions. The implementation of this system requires different phases: quantification and evaluation of the site, installation of sensors and integration with the meteorological station, integration of calibration system, and testing.

First, an accurate area evaluation of the property, climate, and plant exigences must be conducted to determine the specificities of the system. After mapping the type of soil, existing irrigation layouts, and water sources, it is possible to develop an efficient smart system. The sensors, including the ones for soil humidity and temperature, are installed in green areas of the property and monitor the conditions in real-time to communicate with a central control irrigation system. The cost of sensors varies between €100 and €300 per sensor, whereas meteorological stations vary between €2,000 and €5,000 (RainBird Corporation 2024). The information collected from the sensors is elaborated in the central control software, which determines if irrigation programs are ideal. The software regulates the flush index and its lasting based on soil saturation level, meteorological prevision, and minimizing water usage during high humidity conditions or rain. The training of employees revolves around system usage, regulation, and problem resolution, and it is recommended a regular and recurrent calibration of each seasonal change (Hassan, Sheta, and El Kordy 2020).

*Table 7: Smart Irrigation System*

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | The total initial investment ranges then between €20,000 and €30,000 considering the installation of the software and appropriate employee training, but the savings on energy costs are estimated to be around 20-30% per year, with a potential saving of approximately €5,000-€10,000 per year based on current water costs. With these savings, the payback period is around 3-5 years. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2021). |
| **Impact on Operations** | With the automation of the irrigation, the system reduces the manual innervations, allowing a more efficient allocation of resources. The human resources can now focus on other tasks, as the system serves real-time alerts and allows regulations at distance. The water efficiency improves as water resources are used following a precise method. |
| **Impact on Environment** | The smart irrigation system conserves the water reducing the excess of irrigation water usage, gaining in advantage to local aquifers and with a minimal environmental impact. Studies indicate that smart systems can reduce water usage up to 30%, allowing a significant saving in time. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2021). |
| **Impact on Employees** | The training and continuous usage of system allow to the team to interact with an advanced technology, improving the work satisfaction and skills development. Also, employees will be able to focus on landscape aesthetic and landscape maintenance. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Guests are always more sensitive to sustainability efforts. The visible implementation of a smart irrigation system betters the guest's perception |

| | |
|---|---|
| | compared to the environmental effort of the property, especially for those who look for environmental conscious options. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | The adoption of an innovative technology reinforces the image of the properties as leaders in the sector of sustainable luxury. Sustainable practices are very much appreciated when aligned with regenerative tourism, attracting guests and receiving positive feedback on reviews platforms (Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, 2022). |

*adapted from Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020)*

To implement this system, different brands offer smart irrigation solutions with operative support, with a focus on Portuguese land. Rain Bird Corporation is a supplier at a global level that offers advanced smart irrigation systems with smart controllers and humidity soil sensors included (Rain Bird Corporation 2024). Hunter Industries specializes in landscape irrigation solutions and their irrigation controllers use habilitation wi-fi systems with real-time monitoring, available with redistribution in all of Portugal (Hunter Industries Corporation 2024). Netafim specializes in precision irrigation, with a focus on type-of-plant adaptation with drop irrigation systems reducing evaporation and outflow, and ideals for regions with limited water resources (Netafim Corporation 2024).

To conclude, the introduction of a smart irrigation monitor system represents for both properties the active commitment to water conservation and sustainable operations. With real data information and predictive analysis, these systems reduce water consumption, optimize operative efficiency, and align with regenerative principles. The choice of advanced technology will also result positively in stakeholders supporting the properties in a journey towards regenerative hospitality.

**Waste Management**

A waste management system that is efficient is essential for hotels that aim to reduce their environmental footprint and adopt regenerative practices. The research by Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020) highlights key operational criteria to evaluate the sustainability of waste management in hotels. These criteria include:

*Table 8: Criteria for Sustainable Waste Management*

| Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| **Waste separation** | The hotel should separate at the source, using clearly labeled bins for recyclables such as glass, metal, and paper. This practice ensures that waste flows are correctly handled, reducing landfill contribution. |
| **Composting organic waste** | Composting of food and other organic materials is fundamental to minimize waste output. Hotels can also reuse advanced materials, such as soap remnants or kitchen leftovers, for secondary use, supporting a circular economy. |
| **Reduction of food waste** | This is one of the main areas of intervention, as hotels can implement menu design, portion control, and local procurement practices to minimize the waste at the source. Additionally, waste monitoring systems can help track waste levels and highlight inefficiencies. |
| **Programs of donations** | The hotel should donate food and linens in surplus to local charities to align with circular economy principles and minimizing waste destined for landfills. |
| **Sustainable procurement** | Sustainable procurement: green procurement practices such as local purchase and the choice of biodegradable products help reduce the impact linked to packaging and the supply chain. |
| **Advanced waste system** | The implementation of biogas digestors to transform food waste into energy to increase the percentage of the hotel's renewable energy. |

*adapted from Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020)*

The research conducted by Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020) shows that waste separation is the most adopted practice in the industry, with 75% of 5-stars hotels that use clearly labeled containers for differentiated collection. Nonetheless, the handling of food leftovers is less advanced, with only 25% of hotels adopting complete systems to track and reduce food waste. The composting system is not implemented, with only 20% of luxury hotels that own it. Most competitive players, such as Marriott International, have implemented food waste tracking systems, reducing them by 17% in three years. On the contrary, Hilton Hotels & Resorts focuses on programs of donation, deviating annually from 1 million lbs. of food from landfills thanks to partnerships with local charitable entities (Camilleri 2021).

Analysis of Octant Vila Monte & Sublime Comporta: Current Practices

Octant Vila Monte significantly bettered its waste management operational system with an implementation of waste separate collection that includes paper, glass, and plastic daily. These materials are collected by a contracted company, ensuring that they are recycled properly. Nonetheless, the hotel does not have a weight-tracking waste system that limits the capability to monitor progress in waste reduction. Solid waste from food is currently managed through basic practices, but the property is exploring ways to improve food waste management through

partnerships with local charity entities. The Kids club educates younger guests on waste reduction with several activities and re-usages of some waste for recreational activities, demonstrating the commitment of the hotel to sustainability. Compared to the competitors in the industry, Octant Vila Monte is in line with the standard practices of waste collection and separation but could benefit from advanced systems such as food tracking and composting, areas in which the main competitors are excelling.

At Sublime Comporta, waste management is integrated with sustainable practices, focusing on the usage of biodegradable materials and composting of food waste. Organic waste from the kitchen is composted and used to fertilize the gardens of the hotel, subsequently reducing the need for external fertilizers and representing an effective means of waste recycling. Nonetheless, some materials, such as cork and vacuum bags, are not yet recycled, and the lack of a weight tracking system makes it difficult to monitor with precision the output of waste and set quantitative targets for future improvement. The employees receive training on food separation mostly through the app Factorial, guaranteeing coherent practices in all the structures. Whereas Sublime Comporta made progress in waste separation and composting, it is behind competitors that have integrated completely waste monitoring and donation practices, such as Hilton Hotels & Resorts and Marriott. The introduction of a monitoring system should help Sublime Comporta reduce the environmental impact additionally and compete with leaders of the industry.

Waste Management Initiative: AI-Driven Food Waste Prediction

The initiative of AI-driven food waste prediction to enhance waste management towards regenerative practices is proposed as it represents an innovative strategy that focuses on facing the main challenges related to food waste, a crucial area for hotels. This approach, which integrates detailed monitoring, predictive analysis, and operation optimization, is in line with regenerative principles: it not only allows for significantly reduced food waste through precise

planning but also contributes to a circular economy, transforming waste into resources. The capacity of the system to predict the levels of waste and adapt in real time the production of food to specific exigencies of each period offers a clearer competitive advantage, making operations more sustainable and optimizing costs. Additionally, the integration of a predictive system reinforces the reputation of the properties as leaders in regenerative tourism, offering innovative solutions that can engage guests as well (Camilleri 2021). For both properties, this initiative not only resolves current gaps but positions them as models to follow.

The provision of food waste is based on AI, which allows for the monitoring of detailed food waste, including weight, type, and location (for example, guest buffet, kitchen preparation, or guest plates). The integration with AI analyses these data through software to preview future waste schemes based on historical tendencies, past occupancies percentages, and seasonal factors. It performs real-time adjustments to portions and procurement. This predictive system allows kitchens to adapt menus and portions to prevent overproduction. The article by Da Costa et al. (2022) highlights how, during high occupancy seasons, the AI system alerts to adapt quantities of production, and in lower occupancy seasons, to lower it to avoid waste. The systems work through sensors that are installed strategically in key areas of the property: in the kitchen to monitor food waste during the preparation of plates, in the buffet for guests to detect leftovers, and in the washing areas to track food residuals. These sensors track the weight and quantity of food waste and send data in real-time to central software, combined with the interaction of the staff that highlights the type of waste. The core of the system is the AI platform that analyses data to identify schemes and tendencies. For example, it combines historical data on alimentary production with external factors such as hotel occupancy and proposed menus to predict future trends. From a technical point of view, the system is designed to be easily integrated into hotel infrastructures: it is connected through Wi-Fi or cabling to a dashboard that is accessible to stand with a tablet or laptop. The interface gives detailed reports

and intuitive visualization and can interact with the software stock to reduce supply. The installation requires an initial evaluation of the property to identify key areas of waste production; the sensors are calibrated and connected to the central system while the software is configured with specific structure parameters such as menu or operations habits (Onyeaka et al. 2023). In terms of costs and impact on savings, the AI predictive system previews an initial cost of €10,000 and €20,000, including training for employees (Winnow Corporation 2024). The savings are estimated to be between 3-8% annually, translating into €5,000 and €10,000 less on food costs. The return on investment (ROI) is estimated to be reached in 2-3 years, considering the savings in food (Da Costa et al. 2022).

*Table 9: AI-driven Food Waste Prediction*

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | For the installation of the software, €10,000 - €20,000 are thought to be used, comprehending also the integration of data and formation of employees on how to use the information based on AI (Da Costa et al., 2022) |
| **Impact on Operations** | As for the Operations impact, the main results are to be seen in the reduction of waste and energy production. With the integration of AI-based prevision, there would be a reduction of wood waste between 10% and 20%, which adds up to the 30% achieved by standard monitoring (Said et al., 2023). |
| **Impact on Environment** | In terms of environmental impact, the reduction of food waste will contribute to the reduction of methane emissions derived from decomposing organic waste, supporting overall climate change goals. |
| **Impact on Employees** | As for Impact on employees, the main areas touched will be formation and engagement and improvement of operational efficiency. The employees, especially in the kitchen and dining department, will receive training on how to use the AI system. With the predictive AI system, employees will be able to adapt the quantities of prepared food, reducing the time and resources spent on handling food waste. |
| **Impact on Customers** | The experience of Guests will be significantly improved as the AI system allows quality and freshness optimization. The system can also be communicated as a sustainable initiative of the hotel to potentiate the perception of ecologically aware clients. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | As for Impact on Reputation, both initiatives strengthen the image of Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta as leaders in the industry of Sustainable Hospitality and differentiate them from the majority of competitors that do not use advanced systems in handling waste. |

The main software of AI Predictive analysis for Food waste real-time prediction is Lean path, which serves advanced reporting and alerts (Lean Path Corporation 2024); Winnow Solutions, very much diffused around Portugal and also adopted by Sana Hotels (Winnow Corporation

2024) based on a system that classifies food waste in advance, and Kitro, with a detailed analysis renewed for the easiness of use and positive impact on eco-friendly hotels (Kitro Corporation 2024).

To conclude, the initiatives of AI predictive analytics represent a strategic solution for Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta to improve sustainability related to mining operations. With this integration, the properties not only reduce waste but strengthen their reputation as leaders in the luxury sustainability industry.

### □ Energy Management

Energy Management is the least key area to be analyzed for a hotel that aims at reducing its environmental impact. The study of Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020) describes different operative criteria to evaluate if the practices of energy management are regenerative (table 10).

*Table 10: Criteria for regenerative Energy Management*

| Criteria | Description |
|---|---|
| **Use of Renewable Energy** | The hotels should increase the quota of renewable energy sources of total consumption, such as solar panels, reducing the dependency on fossil fuels and mitigating the carbon footprint. |
| **Low consumption Appliances** | Efficient appliances in guest rooms, common areas, and offices are a key point. LED lights, motion detectors, and timers in low-traffic areas contribute to minimizing necessary energy consumption. |
| **Preventive Maintenance Programs** | HVAC systems and boilers should be regularly monitored in order to prevent waste and prolong the life of appliances. |
| **Smart Energy monitoring systems** | Regenerative hotels integrate smart systems to track and optimize the real-time energy consumption in all departments in order to have detailed control and regulate operations based on effective demand. |
| **Energy Training Programs** | Training the employees on energy saving practices, such as efficient management of heating and cooling systems in fundamental to. Improve in total the management of property energy management. |

*adapted from Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief (2020)*

The study reveals that the use of LED and energy-efficient appliances is the most adopted practice by 90% of luxury hotels. Nevertheless, renewable energy remains very much lower, with only 25% of luxury green hotels that use solar or wind energy. On the contrary, preventive maintenance programs are more diffused with a 60%. Competitor leaders such as Six Senses Resorts and Intercontinental Hotels largely invested in Smart Appliances for energy management, significantly reducing the consumption of energy. Hilton Hotels & Resorts has also invested in Energy training programs such as LightStay.

Analysis of Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta: Current Practices

At Octant Vila Monte, the energy management is supported by 50 photovoltaic panels that cover the parking area and provide energy to hotel operations, reducing dependency on grid power. Additionally, 98% of lighting in the property is provided by LED lights, and the hotel has installed motion detectors and timers in low-traffic areas such as corridors and storage. Energy consumption is monitored with smart systems, and HVAC units are connected to the keycards of guests, avoiding energy when rooms are not occupied. Compared to leaders in the industry, Octant Vila Monte is making significant improvements with renewable energy. Sublime Comporta adopts an energy management system as much as possible, with solar panels to heat water in guests' rooms, in the main building, and in pools. The majority of lighting has been substituted with LED bulbs, and EVs are used to transport staff and guests, reducing fossil fuel dependence. Even if Sublime Comporta has adopted good energy reduction practices, it has not yet adopted a smart monitoring system on a larger scale.

Energy Management Initiative: Smart Monitoring System

The choice of proposing an Energy Management smart monitoring system offers a solution that aligns operations efficiency and regenerative principles. The implementation of the below not only reduces operational costs through consumption optimization but also allows us to adopt a proactive and predictive approach toward energy management. This system tracks energy consumption in all departments in real-time, identifying inefficiencies and optimizing the HVAC system, lighting, and kitchen equipment based on occupancy and demand, allowing precise energy management. With the installation of smart meters and sensors in key areas of the hotel, it is possible to track real-time energy consumption and send data to a central monitoring system (Telkonet Group 2023). This centralized monitoring system collects and visualizes in an easy-to-read dashboard, showing high energy consumption areas and allows staff to adjust the system accordingly. The predictive management of energy is based on

collected data, and an AI algorithm is used to preview future energetic demands, regulating the appliances functioning accordingly, including HVAC, heating, and cooling systems (Telkonet Group 2023). The system is based on a network of advanced sensors and meters installed in strategic areas of the hotel, such as guests' rooms, kitchens, corridors, and stocking areas, and is also able to measure environmental conditions (temperature, humidity) aside from use and functioning of appliances (lights, HVAC…). For example, in the rooms can be installed to key cards of guests: when the guest is not in-house, the system directly deactivates lights and AC, avoiding waste of energy. To apply the system, it is necessary to map the property to identify the areas with the highest energetic consumption and main inefficiencies, collected data are sent to a central software that through an AI algorithm analyzes and creates energy consumption models. The system, as an example, can detect when a kitchen uses excessive lighting or when air conditioning works unnecessarily. Through an intuitive dashboard, staff can see real-time data and receive notifications of anomalies, such as working of appliances outside the schedule. The software also allows the programming of personalized energetic scenarios, automatically reducing the lighting in less attended areas at night, with the sensors that continuously cooperate to adapt energetic consumption to effectively need to guarantee responsible usage of resources.

*Table 11: Smart Energy monitoring System*

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | In terms of financial investment and considering the eco-luxury tourism, the installation costs between €20,000 and €50,000 depending on the scale of the system and the number of sensors and monitors requested (Hoteltech Report, 2024). In terms of human resources, the staff will need training on data comprehension and how to adjust the system accordingly. |
| **Impact on Operations** | The impact on operations will be on energy efficiency and maintenance optimization. The system together with listed practices can reduce energy consumption by up to 15%-20%, allowing dynamic energy handling (Orynycz et al., 2021), and the alerts of preventive maintenance ensure that appliances work accordingly, reducing the need for costly reparations. |
| **Impact on Environment** | As for environmental impact, the initiative translates into carbon footprint reduction and energy saving. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Providing adequate training to the staff, they will be able to promote saving initiatives and feel empowered through their skills implementation of a smart system use. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Impact on Customers** | Clients will perceive a more efficient service energy management (such as lighting), noticing an ambiance with more attention to sustainability (Abdou, Hassan, and El Dief 2020). Additionally, a guest-facing dashboard can be displayed in the lobby or other guests' areas or accessible via an app to allow them to view personal energy consumption during the stay and participate in energy-saving challenges. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | As for reputation impact, both Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta would strengthen their position in the eco-luxury tourism market, implementing advanced technology and demonstrating attention towards efficiency and regeneration (Orynycz et al., 2021) |

Suppliers active in Portugal are Schneider Electric, which offers advanced smart monitoring systems for the hospitality industry (Schneider Electric Corporate 2024), Siemens Smart Infrastructure, already a supplier of big chains in Portugal of automatic energy (Siemens Corporate 2024); and EDP Commercial, part of ODP group to track energy efficiency (EDP Commercial 2024).

Implementing a smart monitoring system represents a strategic choice for Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, with less carbon emissions and better operative efficiency. This advanced system will not only improve environmental performance but will strengthen the hotel's reputation in regenerative hospitality.

Conclusion

Regenerative operations represent a crucial aspect of sustainable tourism. Luxury hospitality properties are adopting more initiatives with the aim not only to reduce environmental impact but also to restore natural resources. Most advanced practices include water resources smart management systems, food waste tracking with the integration of AI and energy systems to monitor consumption. In this context, Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta differentiate themselves by their commitment to reaching a complete regenerative approach, elevating sustainable standards in the luxury hospitality industry.

## 5.4 Creating a Regenerative Guest Experience

In this subchapter, we will explore how hotels transform their regenerative impact through their guests' experience, from understanding the client base, creating an educative and inspiring customer journey, to spreading a regenerative discourse.

"Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" (proverb). The same principle applies to regeneration: while a single act may provide immediate resolution, enduring progress comes from instilling regenerative practices. Human behaviours are taught and since regenerative development is a relatively new concept, it has yet to become second nature (MacDonall 2016). The same way that fundamentals are taught to the future generations, such as walk and talk, regenerative habits need to be cultivated for self and others. Similarly to sustainability, regeneration is based on the TBL (people, place and profit), which includes all stakeholders (subchapter 2.2). Regeneration aims for more and calls for an ecological worldview – an understanding and reflection of the interconnectedness of people within the complex web of existence (Inversini et al. 2024; Buckton et al. 2023). In the context of luxury hospitality, we have already addressed the importance of mindset and properly including staff on regenerative practices. Guests are just as much part of this ecological worldview and integral to the regenerative mindset. Both Ho and Inversini call for guest involvement in the last step of their pathways towards regeneration (Ho 2022; Inversini et al. 2024). In this last step, Ho calls for directly inspiring guests to move towards transformation, while Inversini involves the guests in the paradigm shift. Luxury hotels and resorts that involve guests through educative regenerative material may further inspire their clients to participate in such behaviours. **Guest experience** can become a catalyst for regeneration and create a ripple effect beyond the hotel limits.

The guest experience is omnipresent; it is simply up to the luxury hotels and resorts to shape it into a regenerative experience. Unfortunately, customers are often caught within the

“intentionaction gap”. Within sustainability, the “intention-action gap” proves that the average client wants to make better sustainable decisions, but their purchasing behaviour does not reflect their ideals (White, Hardisty, and Habib 2019). For example, in Portugal, as of 2022, 80% of consumers “prefer to buy environmentally friendly product rather than a slightly cheaper product”, while only 53% “buy environmentally friendly products on a monthly basis” (Statista 2022). Customers may have sustainable intentions but do not follow through with them. This gap is often a result of businesses not informing or communicating to their consumers on sustainability, while also not providing any eco-friendly options from which consumers can choose (White, Hardisty, and Habib 2019; Yu, Li, and Jai 2017). Additionally, consumers face five significant obstacles when making sustainable decisions: lack of awareness, negative perceptions of green products, distrust of environmental claims, high prices, and low product availability (Bonini and Oppenheim 2008). To combat this gap and obstacles, hospitality establishments could transform their host-guest relationship by addressing and providing regenerative behaviours specifically for guests (White, Hardisty, and Habib 2019; Cavagnaro, Düweke, and Melissen 2018). As seen in subchapter 2.1, the luxury hospitality market’s demands for exclusivity and high standards can be met through unique experiences, rather than creating demand through high prices and product sparsity (EHL 2023). Lack of awareness, negative perceptions and distrust can all be addressed through education on sustainability and regeneration. The process of educating guests is not merely to teach but to empower them, making education a “driving force for sustainable development” through “fostering inclusivity, diversity, and an understanding of global interdependencies” (Aada 2024).

As understood, a critical step to creating a long-lasting regenerative experience for guests is through educative measures, but only if the hotels have proper regenerative behaviours (Aada 2024; White, Hardisty, and Habib 2019). For example, the Six Senses Laamu, located in the

Maldives, is a Sea Hub of Environmental Learning. It is a luxury resort that doubles as an environmental education center that hosts immersive marine conservation experiences and exhibitions, as well as a Maldives Underwater Initiative. They also partner with three local NGOs: The Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation and Olive Riley, to help establish their sustainable concept. This hotel's marine biologists harbour the different environmental initiatives, focusing mainly on underwater life while also educating guests. Rather than presenting sustainability as an additional factor, they create a sustainable regenerative experience for their customers (Playa Viva 2024; Ho 2022). While hotels and resorts may have the power to counter their customers' impact with regenerative actions during their stay, they must aim to promote regeneration beyond the limits of the premises. Educating guests throughout their journey inspires them to choose sustainable practices, while also enhancing their satisfaction and fostering loyalty. (Ho 2022; Merli et al. 2019). To properly educate guests, the hotels must be earning their regenerative status first. The work towards regeneration can not be performed solely by the clients. For example, the Hamanasi Resort, located in Belize, provides a leading eco-tourism experience for their guests in their path to becoming regenerative. They have implemented an Environmental Management policy that considers the triple bottom line through the lens of reduce, reuse and recycle (Hamanasi, n.d.; Ho 2022). This has brought them to become one of the founding members of Regenerative Travel – "an association of travel companies *regenerating* people and place" (Regenerative Travel, n.d.). However, to create a unique experience accordingly curated to the guests, luxury hotels and resorts must first have a good understanding of their clientele.

Not all clients are the same and applying one-set measures for all may not inspire them to act regeneratively. Research assessments of physical, emotional, and existential personal triggers of guests need to be executed to alter the guest experience accordingly to the challenges they face, before their visits (Fu, Tanyatanaboon, and Lehto 2015; Buehring and O'Mahony 2019).

The inclusion of client research contributes to the creation of memorable personalized, emotionally engaging and culturally unique guest experiences, that brings a sense of luxury through its exclusiveness (Buehring and O'Mahony 2019). Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, being two five-star hotels, have already executed this research. Both establishments' GMs helped the authors identify their customer base. In terms of nationality and seasonality of guests, Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta share some similarities. In the low season, from November to February (except the holidays), Portuguese and Spanish guests are the biggest group of guests. Both GMs of Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta agree that these guests are more cost sensitive and expect a good value for money (appendix 4 and 5).

Sublime Comporta receives more guests from the UK and continental Europe in the mid-season who tend to be more environmentally conscious and enjoy engaging in outdoor activities (i.e. horse riding or bird watching). In the high season, Americans represent around 80% of guests and are mainly high net worth individuals from urban areas that seek a nature escape (appendix 5). The variety of villas with their own driveways, and pools, and lounges ensures a sense of privacy and luxury, valued by this latter type of customers.

Octant Vila Monte, with its vast offering of rooms, suites and villas, has a majority customer base of families and couples. A separate designated children's area with a pool and playground specifically caters to this target group. The main selling points for customers choosing to stay with them are the local and authentic experiences, and the level of service and the friendliness of staff (appendix 4).

While both these establishments welcome a wide variety of guests, the common traits are value for money and unique experiences. The customers' value for price and unique experiences was taken into consideration when proposing new regenerative initiatives. Establishing the clientele base is only the beginning of understanding the guest experience. To effectively initiate and

sustain regenerative changes in guest experience, the ADKAR framework can be examined and utilized.

**ADKAR**, developed by Jeff Hiatt, is a specific model of change management which helps prepare, equip and support individuals and organizations in successfully transitioning through changes (Horlick 2023). This framework breaks down the path towards the implementation and acceptance of change into 5 steps: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement (appendix 13). In the context of this proposal, the first step is **awareness** as guests may not be conscious of regeneration. While clients might be aware of regeneration, their **desire** to contribute must be fostered. Once guests have desire for regeneration, the next step is to present **knowledge** clients will be seeking to acquire on the subject. With the knowledge assimilated, guests will then need training on the various ways of applying it, hence gaining the **ability** to be regenerative. Finally, change is constant and so is regeneration, **reinforcement** becomes helpful to ensure the regenerative practices are well incorporated and maintained. Through this framework, the customer journey will be analyzed to better implement the change towards a regenerative guest experience.

The **customer journey** concept was developed during the 1980s and 1990s when company operations shifted from provider-centric to customer satisfaction (Pantouvakis and Gerou 2022; Patov 2024). To better understand their customers' experience, companies would break down their clients' journey with a customer journey map, which reflects the overall experience customers encounter when engaging with a product. CJMs usually have five steps: awareness, consideration, purchase, after-sale and advocacy, which can also be grouped into three major categories: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase (Klosse 2018). Since companies vary in products and services offered, clientele base and market, so do the touchpoints of customers with their company. The three CJM categories hold many subsections depending on these varying touchpoints (Klosse 2018). For luxury hotels and resorts, the three main categories can

be established as: *prior stay*, *stay* and *post-stay*, and each hold different touchpoints. The ***prior stay*** stage can be broken down into the inspiration & research, the booking and pre-arrival planning. The first touchpoint within the *prior stay* is the **inspiration & research** where hotels' marketing first reaches potential guests before **booking**. Once they have booked, customers **plan** their transportation arrangements and potentially excursions, meals and experiences. The ***stay*** opens with **check-in**, followed by the actual **stay** on the premises: from room to dining to ambience. The ***post-stay*** starts at **check-out** and incorporates all the aftermath of the *stay*, whether it was a good or a bad experience and what the customer **retains and advocates** (appendix 14). A customer journey serves to understand how to improve the customer's experience in hopes that they will return. To establish a long-lasting regenerative customer experience (CX), the integration of regenerative practices at every step of the customer journey will be examined.

**Customer Journey**

Achieving a regenerative state is not as simple as it seems. It may take more effort and time depending on where hotels and resorts stand in their journey to regeneration. Analyzing Octant Vila Monte's and Sublime Comporta's customer journeys will rationalize their regenerative stance, to identify possible respective initiatives. Now that the different categories and touchpoints of luxury hotels/resorts CJMs have been established, as well as the respective customer base of Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, their specific CJMs can be explored. The respective CJMs were generated according to the site-visits (appendix 4 and 5).

*Table 19: Octant Vila Monte's Customer Journey Map*

| Prior Stay | Stay | Post Stay |
|---|---|---|
| **Inspiration & Research:** Potential customers can encounter Octant Vila Monte through many marketing touchpoints such as Instagram posts, luxury travel blogs, YouTube review videos, | **Check in:** During check-in, guests are presented with a refresher towel, drink and an agenda of the ongoing activities. A concierge is also available to assist with luggage and any requests. | **Check out:** The check-out process is straight forward; the clients go through the concierge at the front desk where they can receive help in planning any travel arrangements. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Pinterest boards, travel agencies, reports and word-of-mouth. | | |
| **Booking**: Customers can book their stay through online travel agencies (OTA) such as Booking.com or directly with Octant Vila Monte's website/phone number.<br>**Pre-arrival Planning:** Once booked, customers receive an email confirmation of their stay and a welcome email presenting experiences, wellness center and restaurants and inviting them to book to secure availability.<br>Customers are invited to plan their transportation to Octant Vila Monte as the hotel offer an electric shuttle. | **Stay**: Clients not only have access to accommodation during their stay but also have the possibility to participate in a variety of experiences:<br>-Health & Wellness center<br>-Restaurants<br>-Pools<br>-Tennis court<br>-Outdoor cinema<br>-Park with pond<br>-Golf Course<br>-Shops (local products)<br>-Breakfast included<br>-Playground | **Retain & Advocate:** After their stay, customers may want to share their experience. Many tools are at their discretion such as online reviews and social media. The Octant Vila Monte website also offers a contact page, for any comments or questions. Guests also have the possibility of subscribing to their Newsletter to keep updated on any news and obtain exclusive offers. |

*adapted from Operto (2024)*

*Table 20: Sublime Comporta's Customer Journey Map*

| Prior Stay | Stay | Post Stay |
|---|---|---|
| **Inspiration & Research:** Potential customers can encounter Sublime Comporta through many marketing touchpoints such as Instagram posts, luxury travel blogs, YouTube review videos, Pinterest boards, travel agencies and wordof-mouth. | **Check in:** Customers check-in at the front desk where a concierge is available to help with luggage. When arriving, clients with residences have access to parking allocated in proximity. Otherwise, because of the vast premises, clients are offered to be driven with golf caddies. | **Check out:** The check-out process is straight forward; the clients go through the concierge at the front desk where they can receive help in planning any travel arrangements. |
| **Booking:** Customers can book their stay through online travel agencies (OTA) such as Booking.com or directly with Sublime Comporta's website/phone number.<br>**Pre-arrival Planning:** Once booked, customers receive a welcome email confirming their stay. | **Stay:** Clients not only have access to accommodation during their stay but also have the possibility to participate in a variety of experiences:<br>-Health & Wellness center<br>-Restaurants<br>-Pools<br>-Tennis court<br>-Garden with Pond<br>-Bird watching & horse<br>-Shops (local products)<br>-Breakfast included | **Retain & Advocate:** Now that customers have left the premises, they may want to share their experience. Many tools are at their discretion such as online reviews and social media. The Sublime website also offers a contact page, for any comments or questions. |

*adapted from Operto (2024)*

## Initiatives

An analysis was conducted, and a series of regenerative initiatives are presented based on the insights gathered from the CJMs and the client base. The proposed initiatives, as presented below, are categorized into the three customer journey segments: *prior stay*, *stay* and *post-stay* and reflective of the ADKAR model. All initiatives can be found on table 21, as well as further developed according to the evaluation criteria (subchapter 4.3) in the appendix 15.

*Table 21: Regenerative Guest Experience Initiatives*

| Prior Stay | Stay | Post-Stay |
|---|---|---|
| Initiative 1: Certifications | Initiative 5: Reward System | Initiative 9: Newsletter |
| Initiative 2: Welcome Emails | Initiative 6: Information-dense Activities | Initiative 10: Loyalty Program |
| Initiative 3: Carbon Footprint Calculator and Offset Solutions | Initiative 7: In-room signage enticing regenerative behaviours | |
| Initiative 4: Eco-Friendly Transportation | Initiative 8: Regenerative meditative sessions | |

The initiatives presented in the table 21 do not hold any order of priority but rather engage as a whole system.

### Prior Stay - Awareness

The first encounter from guests, ***inspiration and research***, corresponds to the guests' interest in taking a vacation or travelling and conducting the research according to their wishes. This first step is heavily reliant on the hotels' marketing and presence, to sustain the guests' attention. As seen in the CJMs, both hotels can be found on numerous websites and apps. Many luxury hotels promote their sustainable measures but do not think of sustainability as effective marketing communication means (Amatulli, De Angelis, and Stoppani 2021). However, regenerative marketing can influence the perspective customers have on an establishment's brand integrity and in return their willingness to book (Preziosi et al. 2019; Yu, Li, and Jai 2017). According to Octant Vila Monte's GM's perspective, most guests do not necessarily book the hotel because of its efforts in terms of sustainability but do consider it as "nice to have" (appendix 4). Yet, Ana Mendonça, ESG manager at DHM, believes that having recognition for their ecological features is needed. Therefore, they aim to obtain certifications and awards to attract the clientele that values these efforts (appendix 3). Research analyzing sustainable versus customer-service oriented marketing in the luxury hospitality market found

an increase in consumers' perceptions of a hotel's integrity (moral and ethical values), which improved their willingness to book (Amatulli, De Angelis, and Stoppani 2021). Including regenerative marketing would also bring *awareness* to customers as called for by ADKAR at this stage of the implementation process (appendix 13).

Regenerative marketing can take many forms but mostly reflects the inner workings of a luxury hotel/resort. For example, Sublime Comporta find themselves on the "Select Green Hotels" booking platform that showcases how they fulfill six out of eight criteria and need improvement regarding circular economy and conservation (Select Green Hotels 2024). To receive proper regenerative representation, luxury hotels and resorts need to prove their evolution toward regeneration. Aiming for and obtaining sustainability certificates brings a competitive advantage for hotels and should be communicated to guests to gain a considerable competitive lead (Bianco, Bernard, and Singal, 2023; Merli et al. 2019). The first initiative proposed is the earning of certifications (appendix 15). Earning certifications can release a series of different marketing touchpoints such as being integrated onto sustainable online travel agencies (OTA). For example, when verified by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the hotel becomes certified on OTAs such as Booking.com, EasyJet, Transat and more. Another well recognized verification association is B Corp that certifies a business is "meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials" (B Corp, n.d.).

Aiming for this initiative should only be done after reaching a certain regenerative status. The Hamanasi resort's regenerative efforts have earned them many awards and certifications such as the Green Globe Certification and the Bronze Sustainable Tourism Education program (STEM) (Krauskopf 2015). The goal is for these certifications to directly reflect the state of regeneration that the hotels and resorts have achieved and not to be confused with

greenwashing. Greenwashing further creates distrust on environmental claims. “According to Zita Cobb, Innkeeper at Fogo Island Inn, [located in Canada] […], “there's an enormous industry growing around certifying properties in sustainability. Can we simply aim to have radical transparency about where the money goes?”” (Ho 2022, 28). Certifications can be tricky and putting energy and money into being certified may not be the answer. Aiming for specific certification associations rather than general ones avoids greenwashing. The specificity of the certifications would entail having aimed, achieved and maintained regeneration in a specific area. Overall, regenerative marketing calls for having earned a regenerative status.

Once a customer’s attention has been caught and they have chosen to ***book*** their stay, still at the *awareness* stage of ADKAR, hotels should aim to transmit regenerative information (appendix 13). Both Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta send out a welcome email, however, information about regenerative practices is missing from these emails. These emails could help clients engage and partake in the hotels’ regenerative behaviours before arriving to the premises. The second initiative presented is the addition of regenerative information to the welcome emails such as local initiatives and experiences (appendix 15). For example, instead of Octant Vila Monte providing an agenda of activities only to encourage clients to book these, they could also include information on regeneration. These emails would bring awareness to clients who may not have noticed prior to booking.

Once booked, customers start to ***plan*** for their stay. Luxury hotels and resorts can attend to their customers’ planning by providing helpful information on their websites. For example, the Hamanasi Resort provides a webpage presenting various options to their customers to help them minimize the environmental damage of their trip (Krauskopf 2015). They also help their clientele offset their footprint by providing a carbon footprint calculator. The third initiative proposed is adding a carbon footprint calculator and offset solutions to the website (appendix

15). This addition would bring awareness to customers who may not be conscious of their footprint while also offering solutions. Including offset solutions proves to the customers that the hotel not only cares for the environment but wants to be involved in the guests' sustainable efforts.

A major aspect of ***planning for a stay*** at a hotel or resort is transportation. Both Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta are situated outside of city limits, as are many resorts. However nice it is to enjoy disconnecting from cities, transportation is inevitable to reach secluded nature escape establishments and public transport is usually not available. An enjoyable aspect of the Octant Vila Monte is the integration of an electric shuttle vehicles fleet (appendix 4). For the fourth initiative, a similar arrangement is recommended for Sublime Comporta, the addition of eco-friendly transportation (appendix 5 and 15). Even though cars may be the most common transportation method, transportation takes on many forms such as bicycles, buses and more. Octant Vila Monte could also expand on this initiative by incorporating the possibility of bike rentals or electric vehicles through a partnership with different transportation companies such as the SIXT for electric vehicles and BikeIberia or Go Cycling for bikes. The latter are two of many companies offering bike rental solutions in Portugal.

**Stay – Desire, Knowledge & Ability**

Now that guests have been made aware of regenerative measures (along with some solution), a *desire* to become regenerative and participate in the hotels' actions needs to be instilled (Appendix 13). As mentioned, the first touchpoint of clients during their stay is at ***check-in***. As required for a five-star hotel, both Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta have a concierge available for check-in; to take care of any luggage and any realistic client demands. In Octant Vila Monte's CJM, customers are presented with a refresher towel, drink and an agenda of the ongoing activities (appendix 4) during their arrival. This first touchpoint is a great opportunity to create incentives that will change the course of their stay. For example, in

the case of a field experiment conducted in a hotel located in the United States of America, it was found that “when guests made a brief but specific commitment at check-in, and received a lapel pin to symbolize their commitment, they were over 25% more likely to hang at least one towel for reuse, and this increased the total number of towels hung by over 40%” (Baca-Motes et al. 2013, 1070). Guests can be incentivized to act regeneratively especially when receiving something, even as small as a pin, for their commitment to regeneration (Baca-Motes et al.

2013; Tussyadiah and Miller 2019). As Pavlov’s classical conditioning proves, beings learn through association (Clark 2004). Having a reward attached to certain behaviours incentivizes customers to reproduce those actions. Encouraging guests through feedback mechanisms for their commitment also gives them a sense of accomplishment (Tussyadiah and Miller 2019). Therefore, the fifth proposed initiative is the implementation of a reward system to spur desire and participation in regenerative measures (appendix 15). The implementation of reward systems could be linked with software such as a phone application that monitors resource consumptions and appropriate KPIs (Menendez, Saura, and Sanchez 2020).

Now that guests have arrived at the premises, it is easier for hotels to transmit their regenerative knowledge and to create incentives. During their ***stay***, guests will have the opportunity to participate in many activities and take advantage of the many installations. The CJMs show that both hotels provide many activities designed for their clientele base. These activities can be an opportunity for hotels to engage their customers in these regenerative initiatives. There are many mediums by which this information can be transmitted such as educative talks, nature walks, signage and more. For example, Playa Viva, located in Mexico, will engage with their guests by presenting “the menu and talk about where in [their] farm or community [the] food comes from, invite [guests] to walk the land, meet the farmers who tend to the gardens and into the community to meet the ranchers, and maybe invite [them] to participate in the farm” (Ho

2022, 10). The sixth proposed initiative is the inclusion of information-dense activities such as nature walks (appendix 15). These activities can be developed to provide *desire*, *knowledge* and the *ability* to be regenerative (appendix 13). There is a wide variety of information that naturebased and community-based activities can provide such as energy saving, waste reduction, local partnerships, menus with local suppliers and provenance and so on. Hotels have the possibility of creating unique experiences that create emotional engagement through sensory and cultural practices, at little to no cost, which fosters customer loyalty by reflecting their values (Buehring and O'Mahony 2019).

At the hotel Casa de Palmela in Portugal "signs have been placed with welcome messages, for nature conservation, and requests for information to be delivered at the reception of the hotel in case they encounter something strange or damaged" (Pereira, Silva, and Dias 2021, 12). These signs bring knowledge to customers and encourage them to be part of the experience. For customers to develop the *ability* to be become truly competent in regenerative behaviours, they must engage with such initiatives (appendix 13). For example, many little initiatives can be done within the rooms to reduce waste such as reusable water bottles, recycling and many more.

These initiatives rely heavily on the customers' participation and the addition of informative pamphlets or signage throughout the rooms to help achieve a regenerative hotel stay (Lee and Oh 2014). During the research, it was discovered that guests visiting Octant Vila Monte do not encounter any communication material in their rooms encouraging them to engage in regenerative efforts. The GM mentioned that the management has confidence in the guests' ability to make conscious decisions, which is the reason given for the absence of communication materials (appendix 4). Nonetheless, a leaflet can be found in several rooms introducing a fox that lives on the property, asking guests not to leave any belongings outside of the room, as they might qualify as prey for the fox. Similarly to these leaflets, the seventh

initiative recommends the inclusion of signage in the rooms to promote regenerative behaviours (appendix 15). Although clients act to their own free-will, even when away from any external judgement, they are more likely to act environmentally conscious when provided reminders (Pereira, Silva, and Dias 2021). The inclusion of specific signage could incentivize guests to close their lights, take shorter showers, reuse their linens and so on. Casa de Palmela ensures that its guests are actively involved in its sustainability efforts by keeping them informed about the hotel's environmental practices through detailed briefings and booklets and encouraging them to participate in sustainable practices, such as using personal care products provided in reusable glass jars thereby reducing single-use plastic waste (Pereira, Silva, and Dias 2021). Regeneration is not only externally about the TBL but also about the self. With the ongoing life stressors, it is important to also take a step back and self-care to be present in regenerative actions. It should be noted that self-care was initiated by the American Black Power movement of the 1960s-70s as a form of self-preservation and as political warfare (Houseworth 2021; The Audre Lorde Project 2015; Audre Lorde 1988). In the height of eco-anxiety, addressing selfpreservation through collective action and psychological support, promotes mental well-being in the face of environmental challenges (Coffey et al. 2021). Both Sublime Comporta and

Octant Vila Monte already provide guests with health & wellness centers. The Octant Vila Monte's Health & Wellness center can even be found in a self-healing guidebook and website: The Healing Guide, as they provide regenerative meditation programs (Zerlauth, n.d.). The addition of regenerative meditative sessions for the self can bring guests both a desire to be regenerative and the ability to regenerate. This eighth initiative proposes regenerative meditative sessions during which guests would be invited into holistic sessions about regeneration of the self (appendix 15), helping them achieve a clear mind. "Six Senses Hotels

Resort and Spa CEO Neil Jacobs describes their resorts' unique role in inspiring guests to reconnect with themselves and develop compassion and gratitude, which contribute to their well-being and, consequently, the regeneration of self" (Ho 2022, 22).

When the stay comes to an end, customers go through ***check-out***. However, the guest experience does not end as they leave the premises. Following the ADKAR implementation model, customers have now gained the desire and ability to apply regeneration and will need continuous *reinforcement* (Horlick 2023). The aim of a regenerative guest experience is not only for guests to participate along with the hotels behaviours but to transfer those abilities gained beyond the hotels' premises. Customers having now experienced staying at the hotel, ***retain*** certain emotions reflecting whether they enjoyed their stay and may ***advocate*** their experience. Many external platforms are at their disposal to leave their reviews, comments and feedback. Clients will often receive a prompt, either by email or text message, asking them to review their stay, if they booked through an OTA (e.g. Booking.com, n.d.). A hotel should have the possibility to directly receive and adapt itself according to customer feedback, perhaps even assess KPIs. Communication channels extending beyond a guest's stay can be established to foster open dialogue, helping to bridge the gap between the hotel offerings and guest values (Buehring and O'Mahony 2019). The ninth initiative proposed is the inclusion of regenerative measures and communication channels within a **newsletter** (appendix 15). Octant Vila Monte invite clients to subscribe to their newsletter (Octant Vila Monte, n.d.). Newsletters can be used as a two-way communication channel for updates on regenerative behaviours, feedback and regenerative tips. The Hamanasi Resort includes regenerative tips on their webpage not only for prior stay but also for post stay (Hamanasi, n.d.). It is important to not only use these channels for KPIs but to also keep customers updated on any new regenerative measures they can upkeep. Similarly to desire, *reinforcement* calls for incentives such as social feedback (Horlick 2023; Buehring and O'Mahony 2019).

These communication channels can be used to gather feedback and transmit information and to build and reinforce customer relationships (Buehring and O'Mahony 2019; Merli et al. 2019; Preziosi et al. 2019). Just as they take into consideration what customers value to create unique experiences during visits and build loyalty, hotels can continue harvesting their values and building loyalty beyond the stay. The customer journey intrinsically with regeneration is an ongoing loop which for guest is repeated through their loyalty. Loyalty is developed by hotels by understanding and exceeding customer expectations through emotional connection, personalized experiences and consistent quality (Buehring and O'Mahony 2019; Fu, Tanyatanaboon, and Lehto 2015). The final initiative is loyalty programs to ensure the continuous loop of regeneration also brings on constant customer flux (appendix 15). An extension of the rewards initiative, loyalty programs reflect how synced the hotel and customer values are. These programs also promote customer retention and brand loyalty resulting in increased revenue (Wang 2023; Merli et al. 2019).

At this point, the customer journey as well as regeneration enter an infinite cycle, continually evolving to meet the dynamic needs of their environments. Crafting a truly regenerative guest experience is an ongoing effort requiring constant adaptation and innovation. Luxury hotels must cultivate a profound understanding of their clientele, design a customer journey that identifies and addresses pain points to enhance guest experiences, and actively engage guests by disseminating information and promoting participation in regenerative practices. The inclusion of regeneration in the guest experience not only benefits environment, society and economy, but also brings prosperity to the luxury hotels involved. Through the analysis, the case studies of DHM Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta showed a great understanding of their customers' value and responding accordingly yet fell short in engaging and educating their customers on regeneration.

# 6. Practical Implications and Recommendations

The proposed initiatives in the four areas offer a clear and practical overview of the transition of luxury hospitality properties towards a regenerative model. For DHM Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, the initiatives provide concrete solutions to accelerate the shift of organizational mindset, operations, community involvement and guest experience.

Throughout the analysis, we were able to get insights into both companies' current practices in terms of sustainability and regeneration. A model to classify companies in terms of regeneration was provided by Buckton et al. (2023) and presented in subchapter 2.3. This framework offers a structured approach to evaluate an organization's progress towards regenerative practices by considering internal and external systems. Referring to this model, we can conclude that although the situational conditions are different, DHM has put more effort into integrating regenerative measures into its activity than Sublime. DHM can be placed as **partially regenerative** (progressing towards fully regenerative) and Sublime is placed as **partially degenerative** (with potential to improve). The following summary of the four areas of research justifies this positioning.

In terms of organization, the principle of a regenerative mindset was analyzed, and DHM Octant Vila Monte showed a solid understanding and application through their designated ESG management and the engagement of their local workforce. Sublime Comporta on the other hand concentrates on reporting and measuring rather than developing their workforce. Both companies show potential to improve in terms of training, collaboration and setting goals.

Concerning operations, key areas of water, waste and energy management were analyzed, and while both companies have advanced water management practices, use renewable energy and practice waste separation to some regard, Sublime Comporta shows advances in self-sufficient systems while DHM Octant Vila Monte focuses on foundational improvements.

As for community, the analysis was based on the engagement of the hotels within their communities, and DHM Octant Vila Monte presented strong local engagement and integration, leading to positive outcomes for society. Despite engaging in environmentally conscious activities, Sublime Comporta's efforts to engage with the local community fall short, leaving the hotel in an isolated situation.

Regarding guest experience, the analysis was conducted on each hotels' customer journeys, and while both companies show a unique understanding of what their customers value, neither of the companies communicate their regenerative efforts to their customers or educate them about the topic of regeneration.

DMH and Sublime Comporta present a certain understanding of regeneration and follow some regenerative principles. However, many of both companies' measures are limited to sustainability and they would both benefit from embracing an extensive regenerative approach to become leaders in regeneration in the luxury hospitality market. DHM and Sublime should focus on a few initiatives to improve their efforts along the regenerative pathway, since the implementation of all the initiatives presented in this work project would be challenging.

A prioritization of specific initiatives that address their most critical challenges is recommended for each hotel specifically as well as for both companies together. A classification into "quick wins", "major projects", "fill-ins" and "thankless tasks" is presented in the prioritization matrix in figure 14. A prioritization matrix provides a structured approach to determine what is most important or impactful, in order to help allocate resources and focus on the right tasks (Renzi and Agner 2023).

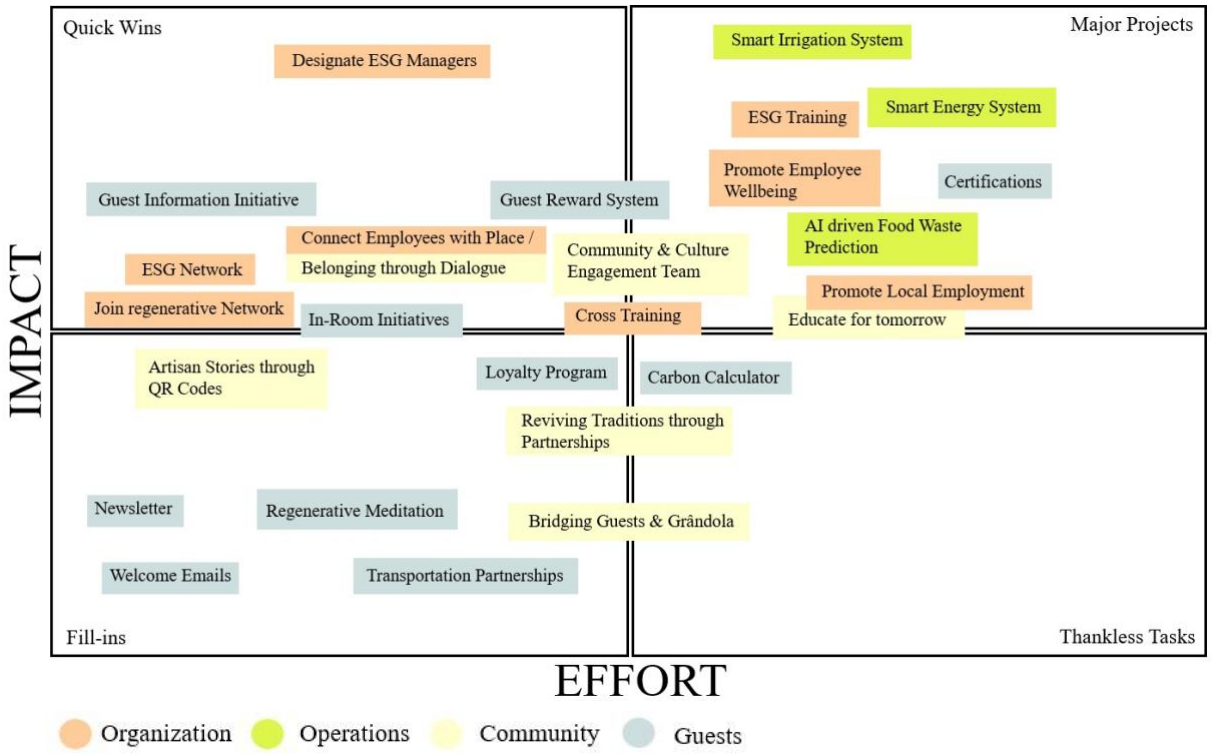


*Figure 14: Prioritization Matrix*

For the quick wins, initiatives with high impact and low effort, concentrating on designating ESG managers in the different hotels will help DHM continue to establish and develop their regenerative efforts in a more structured and detailed way. Connecting those managers with each other can then have a rippling effect, benefitting from a learning community. Sublime should focus on addressing gaps in employee integration and fostering a deeper connection to the local culture. It is remarkable, that this aspect surfaced in two separate areas of research, underlining its importance. Therefore, the implementation of an initiative based off belonging through dialogue and connect employees with place should be undertaken promptly. In terms of guest experience, communicating more about both companies' sustainable or regenerative efforts is a simple and impactful way of educating guests and creating a more regenerative experience.

As for major projects, initiatives that will have a great impact but require higher effort, the implementation of smart systems will be a valuable addition to both hotels. However, due to the pressing water scarcity in Portugal, the implementation of a smart irrigation system should

be prioritized. For Sublime, the improvement of the workers' wellbeing will be an impactful initiative, as well as promoting local employment. In addition to that, the establishment of a community & cultural engagement team should be a priority since it will serve as a catalyst to start establishing a meaningful relationship with the local community and begin to create a longterm impact on the lives of the locals. This goes along with the proposal of educating younger generations from the community perspective for DHM. Improving in various areas from working conditions over resource efficiency and community engagement, will enable both hotels to obtain certifications, that will finally communicate their success to guests and have a positive effect on reputation. To engage guests during their stay, creating a reward system for responsible behavior could be another valuable addition for the hotels.

For some fill-ins, a simple integration of artisans' stories through QR codes to products displayed at DHM is ready to be implemented with little extra costs and offers an immediate access to regional culture. The same applies to implementing information on the companies' regenerative efforts into welcome mailings and newsletters.

Together, all the developed initiatives not only strengthen the relationship with the destination but incentivize the guests and employees to feel as an active part of positive change. Additionally, these initiatives require detailed planning, considering not only immediate advantages but also long-term perspectives, to facilitate their success. Focusing on a step-bystep implementation will lay a foundation for both companies to then improve their efforts on the pathway towards regeneration and being able to grow organically with their surrounding ecosystems. DHM and Sublime can cooperate with academic institutions, technological suppliers, and local authorities to develop shared standards and programs that can incentivize the adoption of regenerative solutions. These collaborations not only accelerate the adoption of regenerative models but also create a platform of continuous innovation, capable of adapting to the evolving exigencies of the industry and society.

# 7. Conclusion, Limitations and further Research

This thesis not only highlights the value of the initiatives proposed for DHM Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta but also tracks a clear vision for the hospitality industry. Regeneration is not a simple choice, but a necessity to face the environmental, social, and economical challenges of our time. By adopting regenerative practices, the luxury hospitality sector can help address the escalating environmental, social, and economic concerns, necessitating profound changes that extend beyond merely embracing sustainable actions. This thesis identified four relevant areas through detailed literature review, case studies and analysis: organization, operations, community, and guest experience, through which multiple innovative initiatives were proposed for both DHM Octant Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta, to help integrate regeneration within luxury hotels for a thorough regenerative involvement. From these four areas, we drafted four questions to shape our analysis, which addresses the larger question: "Towards Regeneration – How luxury hotels can give back to place and people?".

To conclude, luxury hotels can give back to place and people by understanding and thoroughly applying regenerative principles to all sectors of organization, operations, community and guest experience. Each sector references a different stakeholder. However, within regeneration, all stakeholders become connected to each other. As understood, regeneration, unlike sustainability, aims to not only sustain the ongoing state of the world but to actively restore towards a better state. However, making the shift from sustainability to regeneration involves long-term commitment for long-term holistic benefits. Throughout this thesis, we have analyzed and proposed a regenerative implementation process by going through each sector.

Starting with organization, the implication of a regenerative mindset promotes an internal organizational transformation, encompassing all employees, towards acting regeneratively.

Empowering employees to actively participate in the companies' efforts ensures proper maintenance and upkeep of regeneration throughout the hotels.

Additionally, the operations call for managing water, waste and energy into regenerative sources for a positive environmental impact. The effective management of operations ensures that hotels achieve a net positive environmental impact by actively transforming essential resources—such as water, waste, and energy—into regenerative systems that restore and sustain the ecosystem rather than deplete it.

Then, integrating local communities both culturally and socially to participate authentically and amicably promotes an interconnectedness with people and place. Thoroughly engaging with local communities keeps hotels accountable of their influence and provides opportunities to address and improve their impact while fostering meaningful relationships.

Finally, the development of a regenerative guest experience effectively educates guests, equips them with the ability, and inspires their desire to adopt regenerative practices. The inclusion of guests within the regenerative experience propels the regenerative impact of hotels beyond its premises. Therefore, to pursue regeneration, luxury hotels must integrate regeneration across all sectors as they come together to create a holistic transformation that impacts both people and place.

While this thesis provides actionable insights into how luxury hotels can promote regeneration in various areas of their business, several limitations need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the research focuses on two hotels in Portugal, which offers a detailed but narrow perspective. Therefore, the findings are not fully representative of broader trends across diverse geographic regions or varying market conditions. Secondly, the study relied on a mixed method approach, primarily on observations and conversation with employees and managers. While rich in context, these insights could be complemented by quantitative data to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the initiatives' potential impacts. Furthermore, the research reflects conditions and perspectives at a specific point in time. Especially the observations made could have been different, had the visits taken place at another time. It should also be noted that

any financial projections in this report are context estimates and therefore should be considered with care. Finally, while employees and managers offered valuable information, perspectives from other stakeholders, such as local community members, guests, and owners, were not further explored. Including these viewpoints might yield a more holistic understanding of the hotels' regenerative potential.

For further research in the context of the two hotels, it could be of interest to accompany the implementation of specific initiatives and to quantitatively measure the economic, social and environmental impacts they have, in order to evaluate their effectiveness and refine strategies. As both companies continuously add new properties to their portfolio, another interesting aspect would be to assess how a new development can be designed to be regenerative from the very start. Leaving the context of the two hotels, it could be interesting to include a broader range of luxury hotels across different regions and segments to gain comparative insights and help identify universal, as well as more context-specific regenerative practices.

By addressing these limitations and building on the current findings, future research can deepen our understanding of how luxury hotels can meaningfully contribute to the well-being of their surroundings while setting new benchmarks for the hospitality industry. Ultimately, this research offers an innovative perspective on regenerative hospitality but also offers an invitation to redefine the role of hospitality in current times. It is not only about offering luxury experiences but also creating a positive and long-lasting impact, capable of transcending the borders of single properties. The challenge now is to continue innovating, listening to the exigencies of guest, and looking forward with vision and ambition. This thesis contributes to tracking a pathway clear and concrete toward a future where luxury meets responsibility, transforming hospitality into a powerful tool of regeneration for present and future generations.

# My Individual Part

## 5.3 Engagement of the Local Community to give back to Society  My Individual Part

A local community refers to the group of people that live in a particular geographic area, who share the same culture, principles, economic ties, and are often deeply rooted in the history and natural environment of the place where they live.

As Bramwell and Lane (2000) mentioned on their collaborative work, local communities of the place are the custodians of the traditions, cultures, and environments that define a destination's uniqueness, making the involvement critical in sustainable and regenerative tourism development. According to King and Burns (2022, 21), "Engaging local people provides vital context about how they view the natural world and how it has changed. Centering community needs means the initiative recognizes societal challenges, understands potential trade-offs embodied in the protection of nature, and works to maximize benefits for local people, including those most marginalized." This perspective underscores the critical role that communities play in shaping regenerative practices in the hospitality sector, ensuring that such initiatives provide shared benefits among all stakeholders, especially those with deep-rooted connections to the land and culture. This chapter is guided by the framework developed by Anna Pollock, Bill Reed and Amanda Ho, that outlines five principles to achieve regeneration in hospitality, each principle is then further explored through complementary frameworks from other leading researchers. The analysis of this framework is contextualized within the two regions where DHM Vila Monte and Sublime Comporta operate, Moncarapacho, in Olhão, for DHM, and Grândola, for Sublime.

**Moncarapacho**, located within the municipality of Olhão in Algarve, home to a population of around 9267 residents, with a significant percentage of the population being over the age of

60, is a small rural community with a deep connection to agriculture, known for its cultural traditions, such as the Carnival of Moncarapacho, agriculture, folk music festivals, and traditional crafts and artisanship. Moncarapacho has a very strong sense of community and cohesion between the locals and is home a of a vast territory of natural beauty including Ria Formosa Natural Park.

**Grândola**, home territory of Sublime, located in the Alentejo Litoral is also known for its agriculture, having its main landscapes covered by rice fields, olive groves, and cork oak forests. This region has undergone significant transformations in recent years due to the big influx of luxury tourism investments, a consequence of the sale of heritage proprieties previously owned by the Espirito Santo family to these luxury hotel chains. This shift caused economic pressures on local families that were forced to sell their proprieties as rising costs and external investments made it difficult to maintain traditional livelihoods. This is also threatening the culture of the region that once had a big impact on Portugal, being famously associated with José "Zeca" Afonso, who composed "Grândola Vila Morena" the symbol of the Carnation Revolution of 1974 that guided the country out of dictatorship. Similarly to Moncarapacho, Grândola is also characterized by the aging demographic, and is facing unique challenges such as the declining of the population.

In a collaborative work between Anna Pollock, a researcher and advocate for regenerative tourism, Bill Reed, an expert in regenerative design and sustainability, and Amanda Ho, the cofounder of Regenerative Travel, five principles emerged from their discussion regarding what it means to be regenerative and how can a company consider itself regenerative in the context of local communities.

**Whole Systems Thinking**

The regenerative tourism premises lay on the idea that tourism's key purpose is not to sustain itself or serve economic growth, but to contribute towards sustaining and regenerating life

(Jamrozy 2007). With the idea of everything being interconnected, and dependent on each other, tourism can be characterized as a web that involves and connects its surrounding at multiple scales, allowing different systems to work together and simultaneously help each one of them grow. As Mang and Reed (2012, 19) further reinforce, stating "Implementing these processes therefore involves a much greater degree of systemic complexity and dynamism, one that encompasses multiple scales or levels of nested systems, and requires an ecosystem and placebased perspective, multidisciplinary teams and extensive local stakeholder participation." The Transformative role configurations of Transformative Learning Systems (appendix 8) developed by Bellato explains how a regenerative tourism destination is much more than just the hotels' staff and owners, it is formed by a vast net of different stakeholders of a place which include government planners, the tourists, tourism operators, researchers, the place, and local communities that co-create a tourism place and work together to help shift the tourism development towards a regenerative approach and a positive influence for the local communities. Playa Viva, a hotel in Mexico exemplifies a successful integration of all stakeholders roles to develop a regenerative system, through initiatives and collaboration between stakeholders, such as watershed regeneration, educating the community on pesticidefree farming, local employment, and fostering meaningful connection with the local culture, Playa Viva was able to transform a degraded plot of land into a thriving ecosystem (Playa Viva 2023).

When focusing on the two companies, DHM really has this principle integrated into its activities, as one of the propriety's main selling points is the local and authentic experience that the guests feel. From the architecture, the staff, the service, everything feels natural, interconnected, and deeply rooted in the local culture. This is consistent across all departments and interactions, which creates a sense of community within the hotel that mirrors the broader community of the place.

As for Sublime, the incorporation of its architecture and the way the hotel seamlessly blends into the environment is truly remarkable, the bio pool also evokes a sense of a natural ecosystem that is a part of the landscape. As for the service itself since there are very few locals working at the hotel, it lacks the connection to the local culture, that was evident in DHM, the experience does not translate any customs or traditions of the local community. While the service is good, it lacks characteristics from the area, and makes the overall experience feel detached from the region's identity.

**Honoring Sense of place**

The whole Systems Thinking lays the foundational understanding of perceiving the place as a living and complex entity as a whole, Honoring the sense of place is directly aligned with Mang and Reed's Living System Thinking, "Living Systems Thinking is a means for consciously improving the capacity to apply systems thinking in a way that responds to the uniqueness of a given place", (Mang and Reed 2012, 19). This principle emphasizes the importance of deeply understanding and respecting the unique characteristics, culture, customs and history of a place. The Innkeeper at Fogo Island Inn, a pioneer in this sense, main concern was, how do they weave as many elements as possible of our community, of its past, of its practices, of its dreams and of its stories into the fabric of how it is built and how it operates. Incorporating navigation songs that were used by their ancestors to help them steer while navigating, waving some fragments of the words into the showers of every room, experimenting different colours to explore how the building would blend into the landscape, encouraging residents to reactivate the gardens they once abandoned, are some examples of the company's initiatives that allowed the community and the ones who visit "to rediscover what was already on their doorstep" (Ho 2022, 18).

Honoring sense of place is the commitment of the hotel to understand the unique dynamics and potential of the site, project, and community in relationship to their living place, and to conceptualize how, through the right relationship, the project can be a regenerative force, as Mang and Reed name it “Understanding and Conceptualizing Right Relationship to Place” in their System of Processes framework.

DHM does an extraordinary job regarding this principle, in addition to already feeling connected to the place from the service provided, this connection is also visible by the way the staff works, and takes care of the people, and the place with such delicacy. An example that shows this, told to us by the GM of Vila Monte, is the cleaning ladies who walk through the garden and collect flowers every day to put it on the guests rooms, without having to, no one asks them to do it, is just about feeling connected to the place and wanting to make the place proud and people to fall in love with it. This connection is also visible in the traditional local food, and the activities the hotel provides where most of them, if not all of them, include local traditions and the culture of the region, the majority of these activities are based on the interaction of the guests with the locals, with the objective of establishing a connection between the two. With the Reception Chief, Hernani Eugenio, being a true local and his father being a famous local artisan, the connection to the place and the root of the culture is always present everywhere you go.

Sublime in addition to aligning its design with the local features, showcases the local’s rich flora, spread across the entire propriety. Many of these plants are utilized in the hotel’s restaurant, offering guests an authentic taste of the local region. Sublime also provides some activities that allow the guests to connect with the region’s unique identity, such as nature walks through the rice fields, bird watching, and horseback riding, which gives the opportunity for the guest to connect with the local environment, honoring the sense of place and working

towards developing a deeper connection between the guests and the region, but no direct involvement with the local community, nor local traditions that create the identity of the region.

**Community inclusion and Partnership**

As valuable stakeholders, the local community is a crucial part of any regenerative system, the first principle of King and Burns (2022) is Center Community Needs First, they state "Centering community needs means the initiative recognizes societal challenges, understands potential trade-offs embodied in the protection of nature, and works to maximize benefits for local people including those most marginalized." (King and Burns 2022, 21), in order for a system to be regenerative in any way it has to have a foundation that acknowledges and embraces local context. The success and truly honorability of what is called a regenerative system has to be grounded in the wisdom and values of local people and are developed and managed based on two-way knowledge exchanges and trust with local communities. (King and Burns 2022). The inner/outer perspective by Alessandro Inversini (appendix 9) which was developed from qualitative exploratory research conducted by 19 senior travel professionals from 15 different countries, explains how this symbiotic relationship works, composed of two dimensions, People

Intelligence (inner perspective), that focuses on the internal operations, and Place Intelligence (outer perspective), having the focus point the broader community and environment. (appendix 10). Through this framework Inversini reinforces the idea that the well-being of a tourism business and the local community are interdependent, Inversini notes "the quality of the services and interaction with guests is much better because the team is also so involved in it. So, I think there's a win-win in all aspects." (Inversini et al. 2024, 14), when hiring local staff as cultural ambassadors.

A prime example of a hotel that has this principle embedded into their core is Jetwing Hotels located in Sri Lanka, by actively engaging with their local surroundings as true collaborators.

The hotel's Sustainable Agriculture Project is a prime example of this action, where the hotel collaborates with local farmers by providing them with training, and resources to implement sustainable farming techniques. The hotel then purchases a portion for their operations and the rest is sold to the local market by the farmers creating a model of shared economy (Jetwing Hotels n.d.).

This is another strong area of focus for DHM since, as mentioned before, the vast majority of the workers in Vila Monte are locals, with a big aspiration to interconnect the local community and the local culture into the hotels' operation, DHM has a specialized team that visits the local community multiple times a month to gather feedback, identify opportunities for improvement, and try to always find new ways to uplift the community. Through regular donations and strategic partnerships, DHM is constantly contributing to the regeneration of the local community and supporting local businesses.

Sublime on the other hand, lacks a strong connection with the local community. While the smaller, aging population in Grândola and the increasing working immigrants in the region presents challenges, Sublime does not have any initiatives that foster community inclusion, nor connect their guests with local customs or traditions.

**Aspirational in Nature**

The main purpose of this principle is to reinforce the idea, that a regenerative system must go beyond maintaining the conditions it finds itself in, and to pursue transformative goals that inspire progress and regeneration. Anna Pollock depicts aspiration in action affirming that when creating the conditions for life to thrive because life, imagination, aspiration, all of these things are latent in the potential of that community. The challenge is you can't prescribe solutions. But you can create the conditions for that essence of potential to emerge. Aspiration is the vehicle through which potential is realized (Ho 2022). This aspirational development has a bigger impact when it translates to the guests, in order to do so, there is a learning process

that needs to be assessed.With the inspiration of various sources including design thinking pedagogy

(Stickdorn et al. 2016), regenesis (Mang and Reed 2011), and the U:Lab (online); Dianne Dredge and John Jenkins developed what they called “The learning and sense-making journey” (appendix 11).

This learning journey is a framework that can be used by the hotels to inspire progress and regeneration, with the implementation of a regenerative thinking progress into the conceptualization of the hotels offerings, these institutions are able to co-create initiatives that not only meet immediate needs but also contribute to a shared, long term vision of a thriving and inclusive destination, and connect guests with the community’s aspirations. The framework is composed by two interconnected flows, the foundational flow which integrates listening, understanding, designing and evaluating, which is fundamentally the backbone of the process, and the action-oriented flow, translating the theory into meaningful initiatives.

Bateson (2022) argues that tending to conversations, connecting and listening deeply to the experience of others enriches the “soil” by fueling new ideas, creativity and ground-up innovation, which enables a continual adaptation from the hotel to address local challenges and keep co-creating aspirational initiatives. Using Jetwing as an example once again, Jetwing has a PATA Grand Award winning initiative, the Jetwing Youth Development Programme (JYDP), that focuses on underprivileged youth in rural areas in Sri Lanka, by providing free vocational training programs in the area of hotel management, helping the locals to gain a working knowledge of hotel operations as well as English, etiquette, cultural history, and industry insights so that in the future they can work in the hotel business if they intend to do so. As for DHM, the hotel reflects this principle by embedding long-term transformative goals into their efforts, by supporting regional and cultural regeneration with programs and workshops that maintain the region’s traditions alive, with initiatives like cleaning the Ria Formosa, DHM

shows a consistent effort to, not only, not disturb the local heritage, but to restore it, encouraging guests to be a part of the activities and to connect with the community in meaningful ways. Regarding Sublime, through initiatives like local sourcing for their ingredients, natural compounding methods, and respecting the fauna and flora in the premises, the company shows its commitment to sustainability, and the hotel's dedication to operating harmoniously with its surroundings. Although the lack of connection to the local community, and the lack of sense of belonging among the hotel workers are aspects that Sublime should improve on, on to make sure it inspires an ongoing progress for the connectivity of the hotel with the place and consequential development of the local community.

**Continual Co-evolution**

Principle 5, Continual Co-evolution is a very important aspect emphasized by Bill Reed which affirms that regeneration is not episodic, it evolves continually, and one must be conscious of its evolution. Continual adaptation is the essence of regeneration. (Ho 2022). This idea is further confirmed in Mang and Reed's Designing from a place article where they state that "What is sustainable today may not be so ten years from now. To stay "alive" a system needs to maintain its adaptive capacity, and its capacity to create new and unpredictable things. (Parzen et al, 1996, 27)" (Mang and Reed 2012, 18). In order for a system to achieve the goal of being truly regenerative there has to be a continuous effort and commitment throughout the time, the goal should always be to contribute more than the day before. Fogo Island is a also a great example in this principle, the hotel invests a great part of their income into the Shorefast Foundation, that supports local entrepreneurship, and cultural preservation, by constantly gathering feedback from the residents to adjusts their initiatives accordingly with the communities needs, creating a cycle of communication and continuous improvement, adapting to the dynamics shifts of the local community (Regenerative Travel 2023).

As for the companies in focus, DHM shows a big commitment to proactively always try to improve and create new opportunities, instead of simply implementing static initiatives, the hotel through its designed Experience Team is constantly gathering feedback, listening to the community and try to refine its practices, providing the best service possible to the guests while striving for having a genuine regenerative impact on the local community.

Sublime, although combines efforts, and demonstrates commitment to sustainability and regeneration, still lacks a structured mechanism to collect feedback from the local community, and consequently analyze, and use that information to improve its relationship and connection to the community, with the absence of this formalized system that brings these stakeholders together, it limits the ability for the company to improve effectively.

In conclusion, after analyzing where each company stands in each one of the five regenerative principles, we can than conclude that although the situational conditions are different, it is clear that DHM has been the one more focused on supporting local communities, setting a stronger foundation for further progress. Sublime, although aligning its mission with a sustainable vision, still has still significant potential to improve its connection with the local culture and provide long-term value for the local community.

**Initiatives**

During the meeting with the companies, 11 initiatives were presented to Sublime and seven to DHM, indicated in the table below. Appendix 12 provides a description of the impact on finances, stakeholders, operations and a resumed implementation of those. After presenting them to the hotels and hearing the opinion of the representatives, three initiatives for each hotel were chosen to be further examined.

*Table 12: Initiatives to engage with the local Community*

| DHM | SUBLIME |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Initiative 1 - Reviving Traditions through Partnerships<br>Initiative 2 - Educating for Tomorrow<br>Initiative 3 - Bringing Local Experiences to Light<br>Initiative 4 – Artisans' Stories Through QR Code<br>Initiative 5 – Moncarapacho Cultural Calendar<br>Initiative 6 – Moncarapacho Folklore and Dance Workshop<br>Initiative 7 – Olive & Wellness | Initiative 1: Homes for Community Integration<br>Initiative 2: Belonging Through Dialogue<br>Initiative 3: Regeneration Fund for Local Development - ADL – Associação de Desenvolvimento do Litoral Alentejo<br>Initiative 4: Community & Culture Engagement Team<br>Initiative 5: Local Artisanal and Upcycled Art Integration<br>Initiative 6: Teatime with Local herbs and Live Regional Music<br>Initiative 7: Crafting with Local Traditions<br>Initiative 8: Regional History and Storytelling Nights<br>Initiative 9: Authentic Local Finds: Sublime Store<br>Initiative 10: Farmers' Market Experience at Sublime - "A Horta Vai à Vila"<br>Initiative 11: Bridging Guests and Grândola |

**□ SUBLIME**

Many employees at Sublime come from outside the region, and face the challenge of connecting to the place and local culture, and that is something that can be felt by the guests, although the service is good, since there is no strong connectivity with the local community, the region's culture is not extended to the guests, and there is no particular local traditional characteristic that is transmitted through the overall experience on the hotel. By enhancing a sense of pride into the workers, not only the staff creates a stronger connection with the local community, but also take more pride in their roles, which enhances their commitment to the service, increasing their appreciation for the region's culture, and, if cultivated, can then extend to the guests and improve the visitor's experience.

*Table 13: Belonging through Dialogue Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Belonging Through Dialogue |
|---|---|
| **1. Assess Needs** | Conduct surveys to understand the biggest integration challenges, can be language barrier, cultural disconnection or others. |
| **2. Develop Programs** | Work with already partnered teachers or partner with new local educators to provide more tailored Portuguese lessons, and programs. |
| **3. Cultural Workshops** | Organize cultural workshops, collaborating with local historians and artisans to teach them about local tradition, and history. |
| **4. Immersive Experiences** | Create immersive experiences such as field trips to local suppliers, nature walks, traditional shops, for the workers to connect with the local area. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **5. Monitor & Feedback** | Monitor and gather feedback from the participants rewarding employees who actively engage in these activities and foster a sense of belonging. |

An area where the Sublime Comporta representatives, during our meeting, expressed interest in developing is the experiences, searching for initiatives that connect the guests to the local community and embrace more of the local culture into the guests experiences, in order to do so, the establishment of a Community & Cultural Engagement Team in charge of finding and developing new ways and activities to bring the guests closer to the local culture and community can be the beginning of a healthy and regenerative relationship between Sublime and the local community.

*Table 14: Community & Cultural Engagement Team Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Community & Cultural Engagement Team |
|---|---|
| **1. Establish the Responsible Team** | Establish the team, either use the existing team responsible for the activities that are conducted inside the hotel, or form a new dedicated team with some knowledge and understanding about the local culture |
| **2. Community Relationships** | Build Community Relationships, schedule regular visits to local communities, talk to locals, visit artisans and identify collaboration opportunities. |
| **3. Cultural Activities** | Create a calendar of cultural activities with the information and connections made during those visits, promoting the local culture. |
| **4. Monitor & Feedback** | Promote the initiatives and monitor the success and satisfaction of the guests that participate, the locals that are a part, and the employees by gathering feedback and then constantly improve. |

To intensify this connection between the guests and the locals, encouraging guests to explore Grândola, can be a great way to increase foot traffic to the local businesses, directly boost the local economy, and have a positive impact on the community. In addition to that by encouraging the connection between guests and the city, it highlights Grândola's cultural events and helps keep the local culture and customs alive. To develop this connection Sublime can create a cultural calendar with local events, offer exclusive discounts, as well as provide transportation for those who intend to attend those, reinforcing the connection of the guests and the local community.

*Table 15: Bridging Guests and Grândola Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Bridging Guests and Grândola |
|---|---|
| **1. Key Events** | Identify Key Events, contact and collaborate with local entities and event organizers to curate a list of cultural events, such as the Cine Granadeiro screenings, Vila Jazz Nights and seasonal markets. |
| **2. Cultural Calendar** | Develop a detailed calendar with event dates, times, and descriptions, also including other attractions like historical monuments, artisanal shops and local restaurants. |
| **3. Partnerships** | Establish partnership with these entities to offer discounts and exclusive deals for guests to promote the local businesses even further. |
| **4. Promote** | Promote Guest Participation, either by in-room materials, and digital platforms, promote and share the events that are happening in the city. |
| **5. Monitor & Feedback** | Monitor and collect feedback from the guests and the local partners to adjust and improve the offerings. |

**DHM**

Although it was a challenge to figure out new initiatives for DHM to be more regenerative in this area, since their effort towards engaging with the local community are very strong and well developed, a potential enhancement of the message that they spread, is the establishment of partnerships with projects like the TASA Project, and Proactivetur. Proactivetur is a Portuguese company that focuses on promoting local culture, and ecological awareness. The TASA Project (Ancestral Techniques, Current Solutions) has the mission to preserve and revitalize traditional artisanal crafts, which resembles a lot with DHM core mission and can be a catalyst for the spread of the company's message, and a partner for the future.

*Table 16: Reviving Traditions through Partnerships Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Reviving Traditions through Partnerships |
|---|---|
| **1. Identify Commonalities** | Engage with TASA Project to understand how their expertise and mission aligns with DHM's cultural and sustainable goals, be enraging meetings and constantly be connected. |
| **2. Co-Design Activities** | Establish collaboration agreements, and work with TASA to integrate some of their initiatives into guest experiences that are not yet being practiced by DHM such as their vegetable fiber workshop, Reed Weaving Workshop, Programs on Regional Sweets. |
| **3. Promote Partnerships** | Promote these partnerships through the hotels' channels, advocating for local community support and integration. |
| **4. Monitor & Feedback** | Monitor and collect Feedback from the guests, and the community partners to keep improving and refining the activities. |

As DHM is a great example for the hospitality industry on how to be more sustainable and regenerative towards their community, establishing connections and collaborations with local schools to involve the younger generations and introduce them to the importance of sustainability and promotion of local culture, aspires the next generation to withhold those values and contribute towards a more regenerative future.

*Table 17: Educating for Tomorrow Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Educating for Tomorrow |
|---|---|
| **1. Partner with Local Schools** | Use internal contacts and partner with local schools to design programs and workshops to address regional challenges and regenerative growing. |
| **2. Develop Educational Sessions** | Develop sessions to educate the youth about regeneration and the hospitality industry's role in community development. |
| **3. Engage Staff** | Engage staff and community as guest lecturers to provide the students with real life case studies and experiences. |
| **4. Organize Initiatives** | Organize field trips and initiatives such as competitions, contests and projects that promote innovative ideas and regenerative actions towards the local community. |
| **5. Monitor & Feedback** | Monitor and gather feedback from the schools and the students to keep improving and enhance the programs and workshops. |

While it is important to highlight and connect guests with the local community as a whole, it is also important to highlight the individual talent, and the admirable work of local artisans and artists that reflect the region's culture and tradition. DHM already does so, by sharing stories of locals online and publishing articles on cultural traditions on their online platforms. On the propriety's store all of the products are regional and made by local artisans but there is no information that showcases and connects the piece to the actual artisan or artist that made it, by having cork QR Codes, which is a feature that the hotel already uses for other information, by the products, visitors can scan and get access to the name and story of artisan, having an option to donate if the guest resonates with the story and decides wants to help the cause.

*Table 18: Artisan's Stories through QR Codes Initiative*

| Implementation Process | Artisans' Stories Through QR Codes |
|---|---|
| **1. Use Existing Content** | Leveraging from existing content and collect more artisans' stories by continuing to collaborate with artists and gather more personal stories. |
| **2. Develop Digital Platform** | Develop a simple webpage to host the artisans' stories, photos and videos. |
| **3. Design QR Codes** | Design the QR Codes using the same method as the hotel already does and integrate them into the store according to where the work of the artisans is. |
| **4. Monitor & Feedback** | Monitor the effectiveness and visits to the page, as well as regularly update the platform with new artisans and stories. |

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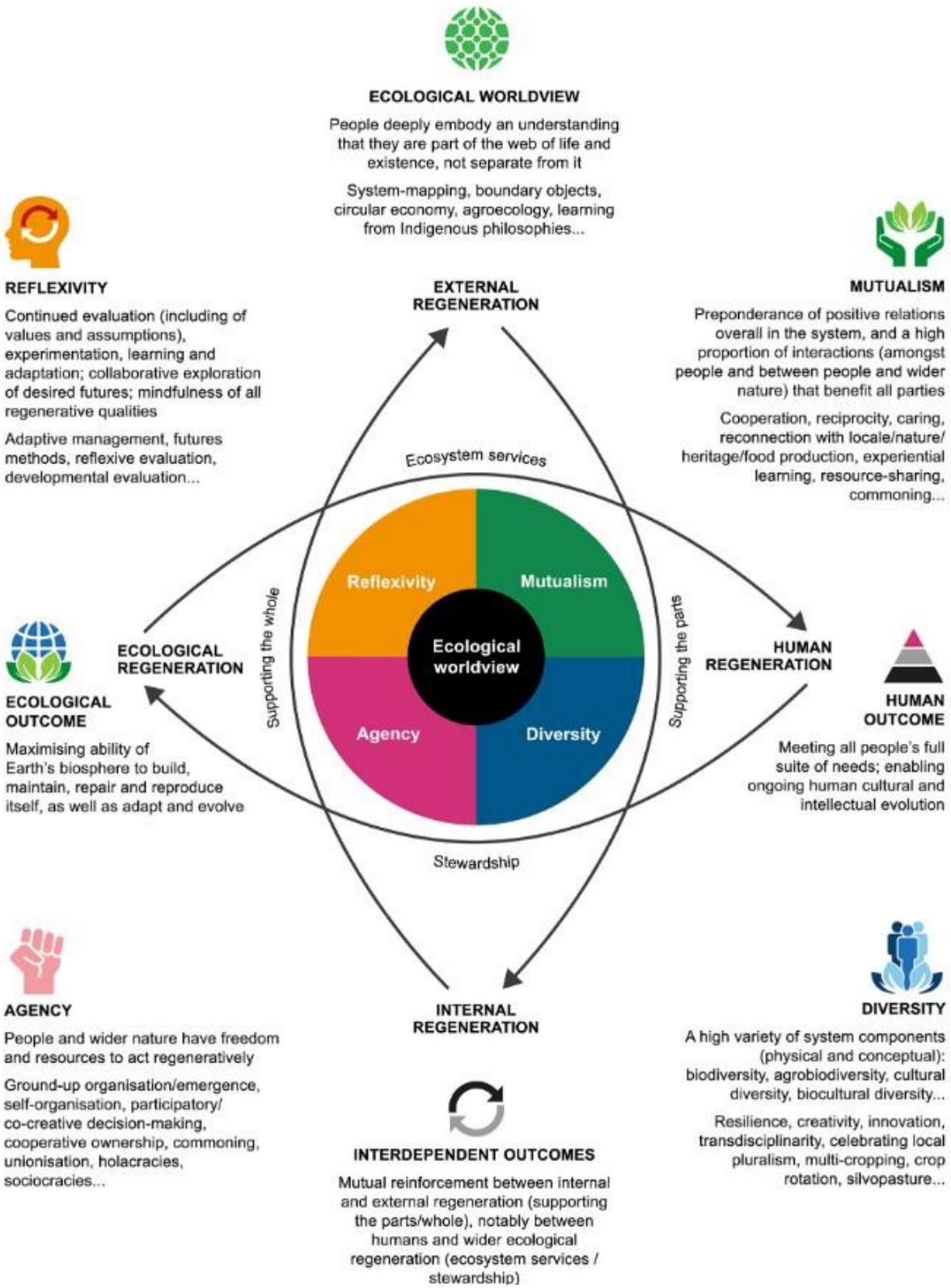
# 9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Regenerative Lens Framework ..... 116
Appendix 2 – Open-ended Questionnaire Sublime ..... 117
Appendix 3 – Interview DHM ..... 122
Appendix 4 – Site Visit Octant Vila Monte ..... 125
Appendix 5 – Site Visit Sublime Comporta ..... 127
Appendix 6 – The Bridgespan Organization Wheel ..... 130
Appendix 7 – Initiatives to promote Regeneration within the Organization ..... 130
Appendix 8 – Transformative Role Configurations of TLSs ..... 135
Appendix 9 – Regenerative Hospitality Framework ..... 135
Appendix 10 – Regenerative Hospitality: the inner/outer Perspective ..... 136
Appendix 11 – Learning and Sense-Making Journey ..... 136
Appendix 12 – Local Community Initiatives ..... 137
Appendix 13 – ADKAR Framework ..... 143
Appendix 14 – Hotel Guest Journey Stages ..... 143
Appendix 15 – Guest Experience Initiatives ..... 144

## Appendix 1 – The Regenerative Lens Framework




Buckton et al. 2023, 830

# Appendix 2 – Open-ended Questionnaire Sublime

**ARCHITECTURAL AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES**

**Materials and Impact**: What specific sustainable materials were selected for the construction of the villas and main buildings, and how do these materials minimize environmental impact?

*Answer: We tried to adapt the project to use natural materials, such as wood, in order to integrate the villas into their environmental surroundings*

**Tree Integration**: Could you elaborate on the process of designing villas around existing trees? Were there any challenges, and how were they overcome?

*Answer: The project was designed to avoid the cutting of trees and to integrate native plants while avoiding vegetation cover. To this end, the intervention zones were delimited in terms of implementation of the works*

**Natural Light Usage**: How have the floor-to-ceiling windows impacted energy consumption and guest experience in terms of natural lighting and heating? Does it impact energy consumptions in regard to air conditioning...?

*Answer: We try to choose a construction solution with glass that avoids thermal and acoustic losses, studying to incorporate special components that prevent heat loss through reinforced thermal insulation. This minimises energy consumption in terms of air conditioning. Sustainable Materials:* **Sustainable Materials**: Are there plans to incorporate new or emerging sustainable building materials in future expansions or renovations?

*Answer: We are always looking for new sustainable products for future expansions and/or renovations.*

**Waste Management During Construction**: How does the hotel manage waste generated during construction or renovation projects to ensure minimal environmental impact? - Could ethical environmental maintenance be included in the construction and land maintenance?

*Answer All the waste produced in the development is separated and sent to licensed operators, favouring reuse. At the same time, when the contract was being awarded, we ensured that the work was contracted to a company certified under environmental management (ISO 14001). These concerns were implemented right from the start of the construction phase.*

**ENERGY MANAGEMENT:**

**Solar Energy**: How much of the hotel's energy needs are met by the solar panels? Are there any plans to expand this solar capacity? Could local communities benefit of any extra solar energy produced?

*Answer: We have solar panels that allow us to help with the heating of the sanitary hot water.* **Electric Vehicle Support**: Are electric charging stations available on the premises? If so, what has been the response from guests using this service?

*Answer: We have electric charging stations for our guest and for our company vehicles to. As we are in the charging station maps, some guest came to our property to charge his car and enjoy our restaurant/ bar while the car is charging. We have an increase of electric vehicles in the last year including rental cars.*

**Energy Efficiency**: Are there any measures in place to improve the energy efficiency of buildings besides natural light usage and solar panels?

*Answer: No.*

**WATER MANAGEMENT:**

**Water Self-Sufficiency**: Can you provide more details on your wastewater treatment system and mini ETAR? How effective are these systems in recycling water for irrigation?

*Answer: The WWTP allows us to use the hotel's wastewater, which, after being filtered and settled, is reused for irrigating part of the garden (Wastewater Treatment Plant).*

**Guest Involvement**: What specific measures are in place to encourage guests to participate in water conservation efforts? (*no answer*)

**Water Consumption Monitoring**: How does the hotel monitor and report water consumption across different areas (rooms, kitchens, gardens)?

*Answer: Through the monitoring of water consumption meters.*

**RESPONSIBLE/LOCAL SOURCING**:

**Organic Garden**: Can you provide more details about the permaculture principles applied in your organic garden? How do you ensure the garden remains productive and sustainable year-round?

*Answer: Permaculture and its principles associated with the organic garden:*

*Keywords / Key words: systemic view / systemic view; self-sustaining agricultural biodiversity ecosystems; circular economy principles*

*Permaculture is a method that considers a systemic vision and can be reproduced on the most varied themes. In relation to agriculture, it foresees a systemic way of viewing and intervening in the world, as well as the links/connections established between all participants in the system.*

*It presupposes the growth of agricultural ecosystems in a self-sufficient and sustainable way. Some of the permaculture principles that are present and are an integral part of the system under study are listed, taking care of the land and its resources in a sustainable way, taking care of people in order to guarantee access to their needs without compromising future generations and sharing surpluses, donating what is in abundance, as well as reusing all components of the system.*

*In terms of production and maintenance of the sustainable system year after year, some sustainable techniques must be carried out. Firstly, it requires a deeper specific analysis, in order to understand the path of nature and the symbiosis that exists throughout the different cycles of the system.*

*Some techniques are considered, at appropriate times, namely the system's biological fertilization procedures, in order to enhance its production, through the use of compost produced internally, through the reuse of green and brown organic waste from the Hotel Sublime Comporta, which After transformation - composting process, they will perform important functions in the organic garden. Many of the plants introduced annually are developed and germinated by us, by collecting the seed and storing it for later germination.*

*The balance of the organic garden is of enormous importance, in the sense that the system itself protects itself from existing pests, revealing symbiosis between plants and many associations, benefiting and avoiding the use of techniques to combat pests, however, they will always existing, in the organic garden of sublime Comporta, whenever necessary we use homemade recipes and apply them to the organic garden.*

*At the level of production obtained in the organic garden, the organic product obtained is distributed to different internal departments of the hotel, namely the kitchen, bar and spa.*

*The majority of the products we produce, whether through seed collected, stored and later germinated, or the plants we acquire externally, are from organic and local producers.*

*In addition to the strong system implemented and the creation that nature itself leads, the introduced species meet the products with the greatest internal flow of the sublime hotel. Therefore, it allows us to provide a biological product, free from chemical substances, known and maintained by all of us.* **Local Partnerships**: How do you select local suppliers for your restaurants? What criteria do you use to ensure they align with your sustainability goals?

*Answer: We select local suppliers by focusing on their quality, proximity to our restaurants, ensuring that transportation costs and environmental impact are minimized. We prioritize suppliers with a reputation for reliability and quality, and we often seek recommendations from partners we work with. To ensure suppliers align with our sustainability goals, we evaluate them based on sustainable practices, certifications, packaging or cost-effectiveness.*

**Organic Coffee**: What was the motivation behind selecting 100% organic coffee? How do you ensure the quality and sustainability of your coffee supply chain? Ethical sourcing?

*Answer: Although our coffee isn't entirely 100% organic, we chose a local supplier (Delta) to support our community and reduce environmental impact. Our motivation is to offer high-quality coffee while promoting sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing the local economy. We cannot fully ensure sustainability nor ethical sourcing, hence our commitment to look for a solution with the supplier we work with and, if necessary, with alternative partners.*

**Local Sourcing**: Can you provide examples of how the hotel's local sourcing practices have directly benefited local farmers and suppliers? (*no answer*)

**Expansion of Organic Practices**: Are there any plans to expand organic sourcing to other areas of hotel operations, such as cleaning supplies (like eco-friendly, and organic cleaning products) or guest amenities (like organic shampoos, soaps, lotions)?

*Answer: We have already in our rooms and public areas some amenities like shampoo, conditioner and soap based in essential oils and natural parfums. 95% of the ingredients are of plant origin.*

**Composting System**: How does the composting plant work? What types of waste are composted, and how is the compost used on the property?

*Answer: The composting process at Sublime is based on the recycling of all organic waste produced in the hotel, essentially coming from the restaurant and bar areas. This waste is combined with waste from the maintenance and cleaning of the hotel's green areas, considering the agroforestry system, the organic garden and the orchard. These residues are deposited in the composting station, resulting in the final product called compost, which is extremely beneficial for enriching the soil, considering numerous benefits for it, in addition to its balance in terms of nutrients, it will provide greater capacity to retain nutrients. water, given that it is a sandy soil, provided with a low amount of organic matter and low water retention.*

*Naturally, composting is a process that considers numerous principles of sustainability, a concept that protects the health of the planet, aiming to recycle the products in question, avoiding waste and providing new life to the materials, instead of purchasing fertilizers abroad, Sublime compost, has the capacity to produce its own compost, which is produced in the hotel based on the various sources and processes described.*

*Compostable materials: Greens:*

✓ *Fruit remains (except citrus fruits);*

✓ *Vegetables;*

✓ *Flour and legumes, crumbs, crushed bread;*

✓ *Remains of green plants;*

✓ *Waste resulting from cleaning the biological pool;*

✓ *Egg shells;*

✓ *Coffee grounds (small quantity), biodegradable textile tea bags, paper filters;*

✓ *Natural cosmetics.*

*Brown:*

✓ *Branches, plants, leaves and dried flowers;*

✓ *Crushed untreated wood;*

✓ *Cardboard straw not printed with synthetic paints;*

✓ *Untreated wood ash.*

*Materials to be rejected from the composting process:*

✓ *Citrus fruits – they are very acidic and spoil the compound - orange, lemon, lime, tangerines, kiwi, plums, pineapple, blackberries;*

✓ *Human sanitary waste;*

✓ *Leftover cooked food;*

✓ *Animal by-products;*

✓ *Fats and dairy products;*

✓ *Ashes and cigarette butts;*

✓ *Invasive herbs with seeds and plants with diseases considered dangerous for the balance of the ecosystem in formation;*

✓ *All types of synthetic products or products containing them;*

✓ *Used toilet paper, diapers.*

**Food Waste**: Does the hotel have specific targets for waste reduction, and how are these targets communicated to staff and guests? How does the hotel educate guests about its waste management practices and encourage their participation?

*Answer: We don't have targets for waste reduction yet because we are not measuring that data.* **Plastic Reduction**: Besides eliminating plastic straws, what other steps has the hotel taken to reduce single-use plastics? Are there any initiatives to eliminate them entirely? *Answer: We don't use single use amenities like shampoo, we refill them in the room with a 5l Container. We have changed our slippers to an option entirely made without the use of plastics and completely biodegradable. The soles are made with materials such as cork, jute and pressed cardboard, making them the ultimate green solution.*

**BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM:**

**Bio Pool Maintenance**: How do you maintain the bio pool, and what specific types of aquatic plants are used for water treatment?

*Answer: The treatment process consists of aquatic plants that produce dissolved oxygen. Riparian plants are used, including examples like Juncus, Schoenoplectus, Phragmites, Lythrum, Lysimachia, and Nymphaea.*

**Seed Bank**: Can you share more about the types of seeds preserved in your seed bank and the importance of these species to the local ecosystem?

*Answer: In relation to the seed bank, we collected all the seeds that we believe we will use in the future and germinate again, namely the species most requested internally, as well as the species with high importance and essential function in this system, as well as, flowers that attract pollination, aromatic species, some vegetables, such as tomatoes. We harvest the seed, it goes through the drying process, appropriate storage and subsequent germination at an appropriate time. All the seeds that we can collect and treat, we are always attentive to this process.*

**Forest Garden and Orchard**: What specific techniques are used to manage the forest garden and orchard sustainably? How do you measure the success of these practices? How is the local fauna interacting?

*Answer: The organic garden is integrated between stone pines and cork oaks, where a group of fruit trees are located. The system is quite balanced and sustainable, annual and planned techniques emerge to control the system and make it increasingly resilient and self-sustainable. These techniques are part of daily routines, others weekly, others more punctual, cleaning green areas, appropriate and necessary pruning at the indicated times, biological fertilization in green areas, sustainable irrigation from existing holes on the property. The existing fauna is very rich and is an integral part of the hotel, it is very well adapted.*

**Invasive Species**: Are any measures in place to remove or control any invasive species?

*Answer: The Sublime Comporta forest system is quite balanced, revealing great resilience and selfsufficiency. The association of stone pine and cork oak is very well connected and the introduced*

*green areas reveal the presence of native, local species. Considering the above, invasive species have great difficulty appearing and gaining a place.*
*However, whenever they are identified, the necessary measures are taken to control and eliminate them.*

**Educational Programs**: Are there any educational programs or activities for guests focused on biodiversity and ecosystem preservation?

*Answer: Yes, there is a strong connection between the guest and the community with the forest and the principles of its preservation that exist at the sublime hotel. The identity of the sublime hotel clearly involves respect for nature, fauna and flora, respect for sensitive habitats and a clear desire to maintain direct contact between accommodation, the user's experience and nature.*
*In the organic garden we do guided tours with guests, we reinforce the importance of the organic garden, the principles we follow, and the way we do it. Here the guest has a super interesting experience and comes to understand the principles of sustainability and permaculture that exist at the Sublime Comporta hotel. In addition to this guided tour, where you can enjoy a series of sensations, olfactory, tasting, among others, it is possible to have dinner at the food circle, a restaurant in the centre of the organic garden, where part of the cooked products, namely aromatic herbs, can be obtained directly, now, from the organic garden.*

**Long-term Biodiversity Goals**: If there are any, what are the hotel's long-term goals for biodiversity, and how do they plan to achieve them?

*Answer: We don't have goals now, but we are working in our 1st sustainability report for the Sublime Group, and we are measuring and monitoring for the 1st time to report. In 2026 we will have some goals already to work with.*

**COMMUNITY AND CSR**

**Local Economy Support**: How does the hotel measure its impact on the local economy? Can you provide examples of how your partnerships have benefited local businesses and communities? *Answer: The hotel measures its impact on the local economy growth of these local businesses, and the number of jobs created through our partnerships. By always giving priority to local producers, we have helped them grow through increased revenue, job creation, skill development, and word-to-mouth with other hotels, hotel co-workers and associates.*

**Cultural Preservation**: What initiatives does the hotel have in place to promote and preserve local cultural and social traditions among guests? (*no answer*)

**Employee Involvement**: What kind of training and awareness programs are provided to employees to ensure they are engaged with the hotel's sustainability practices? (*no answer*)

**OUTLOOK**

**Future Goals**: What are the long-term sustainability goals for Sublime Comporta, and what new initiatives can guests expect in the coming years?

*Answer: No, we are reporting for sustainability the first time in 2025 about the 2024 data.*

**Sustainability Certification**: Besides the Biosphere Certification, are there plans to pursue additional certifications? *Answer: No*

**Feedback and Improvement**: How does the hotel collect and utilize feedback from guests and staff to continuously improve its sustainability practices?

*Answer: We collect all the reviews and responses to our survey in the Review platform and we analyse and respond to all feedback and take measures to improve based in all the comments*.

**Failures & Learning:** Have any of the measures put in place ever been unsuccessful? If yes, how did you revise them? Did you learn anything from this experience?

*Answer: Some guests mention having difficulty resting at night due to the noise from the frogs near the bio pool. We decided to provide information explaining why they are louder at certain times of the year, printed on paper as a bookmark that guests can use or take with them. We also have earplugs available*

*in this type of room for guests who are more sensitive to noise."* **Cost**: What are the current costs associated to the sustainable measures?
*Answer: N/A*
**Budget**: Is there a budget designated to sustainability measures and initiatives?
*Answer: No*
**Forecast**: Is it possible to have access to the company's forecasts? (*no answer*)

# Appendix 3 – Interview DHM

Interviewers: Pia Moser; Miguel Chibante
Interviewees: Ana Mendonça (Head of ESG at Explorer Investments); Filipe Amaral (Head of Maintenance at DHM)
Time and Location: 16th of August 2024, DHM Headquarters in Lisbon Duration: ~ 2,5 h

**Transcript (structured by topics)**

**About DHM:**

Filipe Amaral as head of maintenance is responsible for energy, water and all technical aspects. He and Ana Mendonca work together closely on Sustainability topics.
Most of DHM's developments include turnaround processes – not starting from scratch but buying old, deteriorated, abandoned or vacant properties and regenerating them
The fund was set-up by Portuguese bank in 2014 - the government ask private equities to help hotels to turnaround
DHM manages 19 hotels in operations, 5 golf courses, 6-7 real estate developments
Challenge: Sustainable/regeneration measures fighting for funds along with all departments and the initial hotel project – not integrated throughout the decision making
Importance of the climatization of the hotel – and energy consumption and saving
CAPEX competing with sustainability – These are luxury hotels and certain services and amenities are more valuable to building the image brand and consistency (i.e. Spa,..). To bring the deteriorating hotels to the same level
2021 – Ana Mendonca was hired as sustainability consultant - All sustainability decisions are developed by her in cooperation with management. There are no responsible people for sustainability or ESG in the hotels
The start of establishing sustainable practices – They started by looking at the materiality of the hotels, then establishing policies, lastly the actions needed to follow said policies
Materiality – something that would change the decision of a stakeholders in regards to a company.
Fieldwork and better understanding of stakeholders need to establish materiality
Materiality - Keeping the authentic cultural experience, and uniqueness of locations
Working on two levels -Central level, main fabric – and main level on the operations & major CAPEX
Filipe works directly with the maintenance department in each hotels to make sure the practices are sustainable (closing the lights, recycling, water consumption,…)
The Furnas Hotel on the Azores has better sustainable measures – All of the Azores generally better promote sustainability – Hotels held to higher sustainable standards
TO GET: sustainability manager
No main goals related to sustainability – they have recorded KPIs and studied them but no established goals

No sustainable standards - Do as they can and compare with bigger hotel chains
Ana Mendonca uses a Benchmarking Tool to have an international comparison - 2023 Database that's filtered by country Cornell

**ENERGY**
Buying 100% renewable energy since July – reduce carbon footprint – no added cost to implement for now – establishing contracts with suppliers to try to maintain price levels

**WATER:**
Golf course water consumption – KPIs only/purely consider the hotel consumptions
Golf courses are very water intensive and are generally not compatible with sustainability goals
Lake within the golf course helps lower water consumption
Nextbitt – DHM invested in the company with interest in better/lower energy consumptions. They are now expanding their portfolio to include water consumption. Exploring sustainability solutions and portfolios
With Nextbitt installation of several meters across the hotel departments – smart meters that measures water consumption
The water bank leaks – unclear when it started – construction done too fast and perhaps lacking some security measures? Or old structures that were overlooked in maintenance?
Vila Monte Well water, fully self-sufficient with their water. Quality control of water? Up to local standards
Portuguese water bill differs per municipality - sometimes include water treatment Impossible to compare water consumption between city boutique hotels and resorts

**WASTE:**
Portugal not ideal for waste measures and retribution – hotels would have to measure themselves – private waste company only – and hotels still use public bins
DHM has asked certain hotels to measure themselves for short period of times
There is a general understanding that hotels should have recycling implemented – recycling trainings?
Not mandated – the HR teams have overseen creating and conducting them, if wanted
Hospitality society signed for waste postponed – no updates
Total control project – E.U. partnership to reduce food waste
No client awareness measures – only towel on floors if you want them washed
Are recycling bins supplied in individual rooms? – future project
2022 – operations team, legislation coming into force that if X amount of liter of waste is produced you need to higher private provider to take care of it – Each hotel had to measure the waste themselves – new operations were put in place to facilitate
Measure of CO2 per occupied room

**RESPONSIBLE SOURCING:**
No central system/measures were in place, purchasing team have worked to put that in place – to make sure
They get stuck in their ways. They bought a software and set it up to their needs
Let's plan our purchasing, to make sure someone from the hotel is not always going to buy something when it goes missing. I think not even all the hotels have established that.
Finding suppliers that work for the community and the clients. Local supplies such as honey, jam,..
Establishing inventory of suppliers for each communities. Establishing how the suppliers can supply to the hotels. How they get there, how much, when,..

**LOCAL COMMUNITY**:
No measures for hiring locals or ethnic diversity
Could improve turnover rates

Staff houses to help with housing issues
Not sure the HR teams has those metrics – could be interesting to ask?
Development of the communities – Octant specifically concentrates on providing local products, because clients want a local experience
Policies to donate to local communities, not just money (ex. Stays at the hotel,..)– should not stay within just charity work, but be part of the community
They have invited local individuals to showcase their work and art (pottery, knitting,..) – or local experiences within the community, off hotel grounds
Extensive Partnership list will be provided
Campaign to help Ukraine – Also donated rooms for Ukrainian to stay in transit
General Manager's involvement with the local community is also affected by whether the GMs know the municipality or are from there

**BIODIVERSITY/ECOSYSTEM**:
Vila Monte have a partnership with Rias for educative walks educating on the local environment (night walks and for kids)
Vila Monte works with the Ria Formosa association
Vila Monte also releases animals back into the wild, because of its location and vast environment – they have pictures
Front office manager has more information (Hernani – on-site contact)
They believe having recognition for their ecological features is needed, and so they put some ecological measures in place, so they can have clientele that finds them through certifications
Crowne Plaza and Six Sense going through certifications – they require that ecological features be present
Environmental partnership with local charity to work on the ecosystem and features – Octant hotels General Directors oversee the day-to-day activities – the sustainability consultant can only work on a bigger scale, when creating the hotels
Working on the Vila Monte expansion – will go back to working on the original building after Cascais Palace – working to certify

**GENERAL**:
Biggest Challenge: that they have to completely change a system that was already in place Competing for resources against other departments
Easier to make a building sustainable when you are starting from scratch then building it up from existing infrastructures
The development of one property was rushed to deliver to the bank – there were problems afterwards with defect plumbing etc.
Client satisfaction: measured, but nothing in regard to sustainability
Conflict of interest between luxury and sustainability, up standards without engaging unnecessary resources
Turnaround funds not allocated towards luxury hospitality, only sustainability
What customers expect in terms of sustainability versus their luxury expectations

# Appendix 4 – Site Visit Octant Vila Monte

Researchers: Pia Moser; Miguel Chibante
Interviewees: Joaquim Costa (General Manager); Hernani Eugenio (Front Office Manager)
Time and Location: 24-25th of August 2024; Octant Vila Monte; Moncarapacho Duration: ~ 1,5 days

**GENERAL:**

Guest profile: mainly families and couples, looking for experiences. According to the GM, most guests do not care a lot about the sustainability aspect, but it is a „nice to have "

The main selling point is the local and authentic experience, the service and the staff

You can tell that sustainability and regeneration is at the very heart of the GM and the FOM. Both are very enthusiastic about the property and the staff and see both as parts of a whole ecosystem that they need to care for.

The hotel does not communicate their sustainability initiatives to the public or their guests. There are no leaflets or call to action for the guest. According to the GM, they trust that the customers will make the right decisions and follow their lead.

They justify their lack of communication about their efforts by not needing to force their thought pattern on guests or use it as publicity. They seem to sincerely care about the place and its maintenance.

**WATER:**

Water comes from several sources. There is a lake below the ground from where water is pumped up into a lake on surface level. This water is then used for irrigation and is brought back into the soil from where it goes back into the underground lake. This is usually done overnight, which is why the water level is lower in the morning

Water needs to be cleaned, as it has a lot of lime. It is then used for the taps and the water stations around the pools and the reception.

In the rooms, there is bottled water from Vitalis, which is free for the guests There

are underground water pipes that are used for automatic irrigation

There are Filters on taps that reduce the water pressure without a visible effect, however instead of 12 L per minute only 6L per minute flow through the tap. The same system was installed for the shower. For the toilet flushing, 1,5L per flushing are saved through a comparable apparatus.

Some time ago, grass fields and tiles were watered / washed frequently to maintain a fresh and cool feeling and smell. However, they have moved to dry cleaning tiles and only using water scarcely. The grass fields are not watered without any purpose The air in the restaurant area is humidified

The adult pool is not heated, the children's pool is

Laundry is mostly outsourced, the highest amount comes through pool towels (they already try to reduce that) Laundry of guests is gathered (48h) to try to fill up a whole load before washing (industrial washing machine)

**BIODIVERSITY:**

Native plants that are used: quint trees, carob trees, Olive trees, orange trees, fig trees

**Community aspect**: employees are allowed to pick olives and carobs to take home and either process them themselves or sell them off

**Herbal garden**: number of herbs and vegetables used for tea and meals

Almost all of the plants are native to the premises with exception of a small tropical garden

Native species: a fox, hedgehogs, frogs, bats, snakes, rabbits, boars

Additional animals: turtles, koi fish, 2 cats

Frogs are quaking quite loud

**Initiatives**: bug hotel, herbal garden, study of native bird species and initiatives to help them set up their nests on the premises,

**Cooperation with Vita Nativa:** One employee of the association works at the kids' club to educate children about nature and animals on the premises

**Coming soon**: a beehive will be installed on the edge of the premises for the bees to enjoy carob and lavender. As bees have certain flight routes, they need to be placed in a way that guest do not come in the way.

**Coming soon**: the hotel is working together with "Rias" to have all of the different plants recorded and to be able to put signs labelling the plants and informing guests about them

The stems of the orange trees are coloured with limestone (helps them against bugs?)

All wild «animals are tolerated on the premises and are accepted as part of the whole system. Guests are asked to be considerate (card about the local fox)

Vila Monte works with an association to preserve the beaches and dunes around Ria Formosa and employs 2 people per season to make sure the beaches and dunes are well maintained and that guests do not leave anything behind. They also make sure that guests are not harming the ecosystem in any way. They have learned from the past that bringing people to places in nature can cause those places to deteriorate and want to make things better now.

Future: 24 more rooms and a spa area will be added, renovation period from November 2024 for 17 months

**WASTE:**

Paper bags in all trash cans in the rooms

Glas jars for bedtime cookies

Bedtime kit (sleeping mask, earplugs, sleep spray, partially wrapped in plastic)

Guests get tetra packs with water to go

Where they need to use plastic, they try to take plastic made from corn,

No plastic amenities in the room (except crisps packaging), otherwise amenities are mainly made from bamboo, all beverages in glass bottles No "put your towels on the floor" sign

At banquets, amenities are only offered on demand, not every seat is equipped with paper pens etc. They try to plan ahead and clarify with guests what exactly is needed

In the kitchen, as much as possible of the produce is used to avoid waste

No composting is currently done at Villa Monte

Trash is separated into recyclable, paper, cooled garbage and indifferent

Old furniture and wood are either reused for constructions at events or burnt in the fireplaces on the premises

The trash is picked up every 2 days

## Appendix 5 – Site Visit Sublime Comporta

Researchers: Pia Moser; Miguel Chibante; Chiara Vaglienti Interviewees:
Time and Location: 29-30th of August 2024; Sublime Comporta, Comporta Duration:
~ 1.5 days

**GENERAL – Miguel Plantier**

Sublime owns several restaurants, a beachclub, resort and villas

In Comporta ~ 250 employees Staff

housing and offices on site

**High Seaso**n: **May to October**, Primarily American (80%), British, French, and Spanish guests. Av. Rate is 2.500€ a night, high networth individuals from Urban Areas and with a high profile. Not extremely engaged with sustainability

**Mid-Season**: Mostly couples from the UK and continental Europe, who are more sustainabilityconscious and enjoy activities like horse riding.
**Low Season**: **November to February** (except Christmas & New Year) Portuguese and Spanish guests, who tend to be more cost-sensitive and expect value for money.
Challenges: The American market is the most important during the high season due to higher purchasing power, while the low season poses challenges with other types of clients.
Comporta is still kind of a secret

Reducing the footprint while being luxurious

Minimizing impact

17 acres

No "save towels" signs in rooms, guest take as much as they can
Be sustainable while not cheaping out on guests -> communication and awareness
Guests are sometimes conflicting, flying private but demanding sustainability

Sustainability seems to be more of a commercial goal than a part of the DNA We are doing our work to be able to communicate it to guests -> reputation
**Question: What is the net benefit of solutions / initiatives in the long run?**
Not many budget concerns – Santa

Cruz 5* Hotel without AC

EMPLOYEES:
Employees: The property has houses for employees (90 on-site and others available for €70 a month).

Workforce: There's a lack of local training; many employees are Indian or Asian, with few locals due to low demand for jobs in the area.

**WASTE – Tiago Maio**
Kitchen separates waste (organic, paper, plastic, glass) + what is not eaten is given to the canteen; Not recycled material: cork & vacuum bags.
No waste is weighted so it's difficult to compare with other realities
One bin for all in the room, paper bag. Then the teams separate, and the Council collect. No weights.
In Reception building: separate bins for each material, everyday collect them.
Main waste: packaging of suppliers, plastic in the kitchen, glass.
Training for employees, induction/training for starters with HR department with the quality department is carried on. Presentation of waste management/data shown, app Factorial.

**F&B – André Condeço**
Main products – fish from fishermen & vegetables from local farms & national products from meat Dishes with specific needs
Food waste is high. Breakfast fruit to compost and fertilize gardens (nutrients), and vegetables. 10/20% waste: given to the canteen. Max 6 hours refrigerated.
Seasonal products
Each menu engineering, technical recipe, costs Program Primavera. Organized per week and end of the month. Waste per recipe not always tracked. Menus are seasonal and changed around every 6 months.
New project ongoing in order to create a kitchen for all activities
To engage the team in waste management there are bonuses Guests:
Local people during people, more Portuguese in winter Shower gel
& amenities done from herbs in the hotel.
Composting system for organic waste

**LOCAL SOURCING – André Condeço**
The menu includes local and Portuguese dishes, with some influence from French and European cuisine.

They source vegetables from two local farms. Fish is sourced from local fishermen in Sines, Sesimbra, and sometimes Setúbal. Despite efforts to prioritize national products, they occasionally purchase from Spain, focusing on the sustainability of the place and its potential to boost the regional economy. Some produce comes from small, uncertified local producers, such as Iberian pork from Aveiro. Seasonal products are commonly used, although there isn't a dedicated search for local suppliers. They plan to centralize their supply management in a new property, which will also include a pastry production facility to support large events, potentially highlighting the region.
They use materials from their garden in the bar. Natural fire starters are made from dried orange peels used at breakfast. Showers and amenities incorporate products derived from local fruits and plants, such as aromatic water made from lemons and oranges.
They are making a documentary about their producers. Simple and Portuguese ingredients are featured at Canalha restaurant, which is aiming for a Michelin star. They invite producers and local people during the winter to simplify the food, aiming to attract more locals.

**WATER – Lúcio Gonçalinhos**

Waste water treatment plant – water is separated from sediment and filtered through active charcoal Separation, Filtration, Chloride

Only 9 cubic meters per minute can be taken from the repository – that is the maximum that their license allows licence

Sometimes the irrigation needs to be stopped for clients to have water

Need to save water with clients to have more for irrigation

No meters in the villas yet, only the pressure can be monitored by each villa

In 6 months, connection to the water system of the council

Aesthetics are important – No collection of rainwater

Bio-pool overflow – there is no overflow-system when it rains

Water pressure reducers are installed

No grass on purpose – untouched, cabins in the middle of nature at the start

**BIOPOOL – Armando Gouveia**

Water is moving within the pool

Plants clean the water (they produce oxygen), also wind and pumps help with the cleaning

Plants around the pool prevent animals from entering the pool

Guests only have access to restricted areas in the pool (foam walls)

There are frogs, blue lizards, snakes and water cockroaches, no fish

A little bit of chloride without metals is added to clear the water

Manual process of filtering

There are no overflow mechanisms

Water is coming from an underground repository (pool was built by men)

2m deep, 7.8 PH

There are 25 Pools in total in the resort

**VEGETABLE GARDEN & AGROFOREST – Joanna Bizzaro**

The resort has a vegetable garden, an agroforest and a park ~ 17 acres total size

Landscape architects and a team of gardeners take care of them

Vegetable garden: numerous herbs, vegetables and other edible plants. The harvest is mainly used for the "Food circle". Whatever is harvested is reported by the team. Guest can tour the garden on request.

Trees: mainly cork and pines. Cork trees are protected and need to be shaved every 9 years. Lots of local people are in the cork business.

Pines: make the ground acidic. The ground has a lot of sand and loses water quickly

Agroforest: mix of herbal plants, trees and ornamental plants

In Agroforest: fig, orange, lemon, grapefruit, clementine, quinces, pomegranate
Cooperations: Local nursery delivers plants, sometimes uni cooperations -> not more
Animals: woodpeckers -> there is a list of species to be delivered No
beehives on the premises but flowers to attract them
Mulch and pine needles are used for the ground (walking paths)

Pinecones are used in the Food circle to burn or smoke

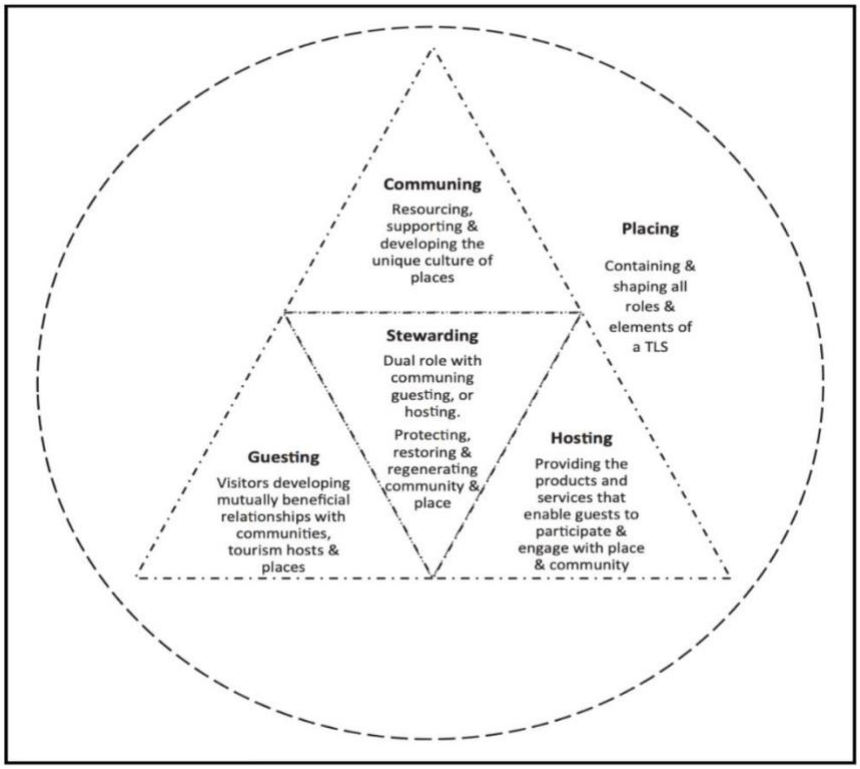
There is a compost centre that steadily produces new soil
There are no traps for animals, only Owl statues to avoid birds and peep-system to avoid moles
Irrigation: plants are waters by a system that is separated in areas. Some plants need manual irrigation on extra hot days. Some areas can be watered by the WWTP, but that is only a small part. They are testing with polymer in some soil because it preserves more water in the soil.

**GUEST EXPERIENCE – Sandra Teixera**
All activities are within the property with no specific or traditional activities offered.
They plan to create new activities for groups, integrating local people, markets, artisans, and art pieces.
**Challenge**: High water pressure in worker facilities, difficulty in advising guests on sustainability without appearing to cut costs, and theft of room items by guests seeking value for money.

# Appendix 6 – The Bridgespan Organization Wheel

Bridgespan n.d.

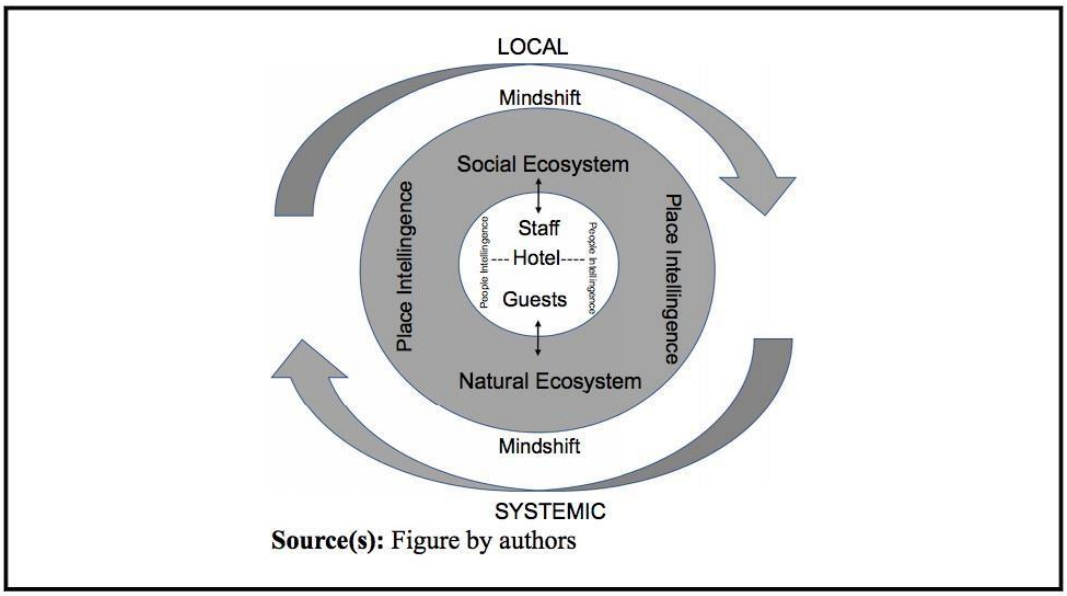
# Appendix 8 – Transformative Role Configurations of TLSs




Bellato et al. 2022

# Appendix 9 – Regenerative Hospitality Framework

**Figure 2** Regenerative hospitality framework



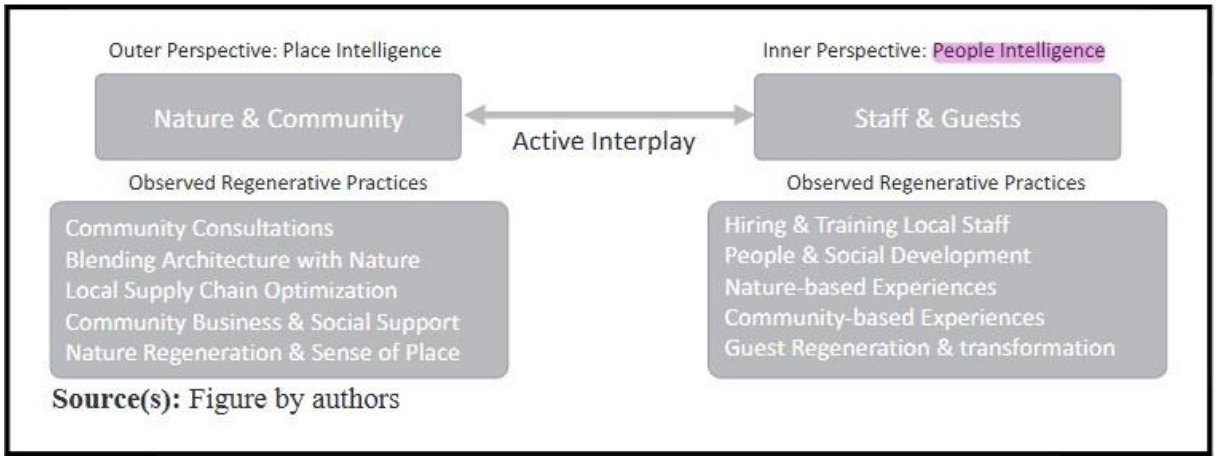

**Source(s):** Figure by authors

# Appendix

Inversini et al. 2024

## 10 – Regenerative Hospitality: the inner/outer Perspective

**Figure 1** Regenerative hospitality: The inner/outer perspective




**Source(s):** Figure by authors

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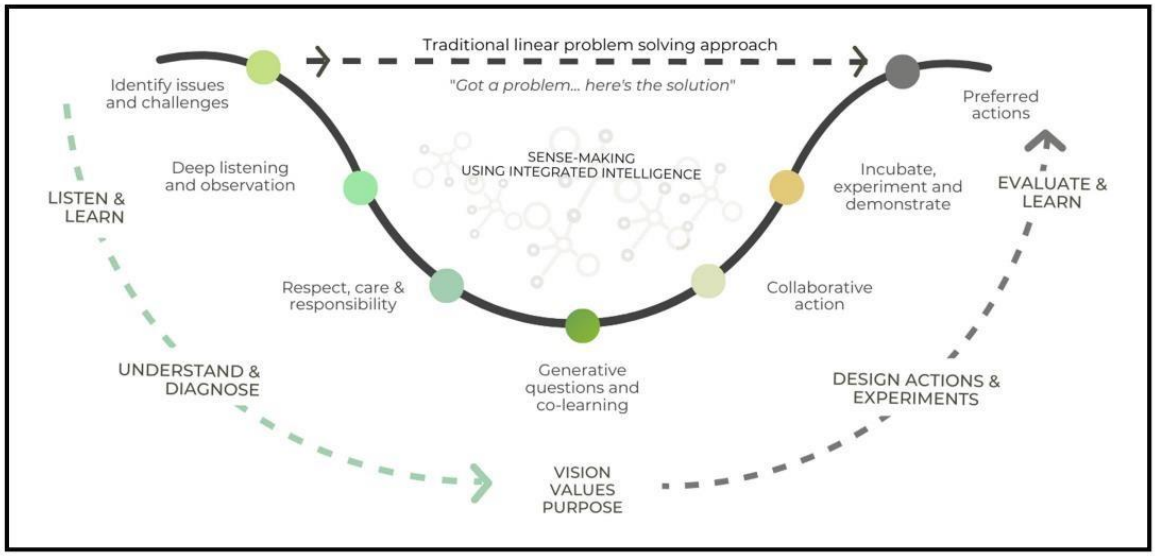
## Appendix 11 – Learning and Sense-Making Journey

**Figure 2** The learning and sense-making journey




Dredge et al. 2020

## 12 – Local Community Initiatives

# Appendix

## Sublime

### Initiative 1: "Homes for Community Integration"

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Partner with Grândola's Municipality, where Sublime provides the land, on their new propriety, and the Municipality takes care of the plan housing and building projects, being the main responsible for the investment. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Reduce the trips to pick up employees from the working houses and increase satisfaction among the workers and consequently integration within the place and retention. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Reduces the company's environmental footprint, as employees are closer to the working place. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Increases employee well-being and overall satisfaction, fosters a bigger sense of community and connects the workers with the place and local community. |
| **Impact on Customers** | With the enhancement of the happiness and connectivity of the workers with the local culture, the service provided also improves and is felt by the customers. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Improves the hotel reputation on addressing a serious challenge of the region and demonstrates to the community a big sense of care and responsibility towards the well-being of their workers. |
| **Implementation Process** | Contact the municipality regarding the project – establish a partnership – understand and develop the Municipality's funding plan – Build sustainable housing – Collect feedback of the workers. |

### Initiative 2: "Belonging Through Dialogue"

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Minimal investment, work with already partnered teachers or partner with new local educators, organize cultural workshops and Portuguese lessons. |
| **Impact on Operations** | It improves the understanding of the individual roles and promotes a more seamless service with a higher quality. |
| **Impact on Environment** | No specific impact on the environment. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Big impact on the employee's well-being, increasing the sense of belonging and increasing the satisfaction of the workers specially foreigners. |
| **Impact on Customers** | With the employees feeling more connected to the place the promotion of the local culture through the guest experiences increases and creates the service more authentic. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the image and reputation of the hotel, as an inclusive company that cares and invests in community-focused initiatives |
| **Implementation Process** | Assess Needs - Develop Programs - Cultural Workshops - Immersive Experiences - Monitor & Feedback |

# Appendix

**Initiative 3: "Regeneration Fund for Local Development"**

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Integrate a percentage-based model for the Sublime's store, where a percentage of the profit on the goods sold is allocated towards the local development fund (ADL). |
| **Impact on Operations** | Minimal change regarding the operations of the hotel, just monitoring and tracking the allocated money and report the numbers. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Through the investment into the local community, ultimately connects to a sustainability trend and has a positive impact on the environment. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Creates awareness on the employees of the businesses thar are developed in the region and creates a sense of meaningful work from the employees. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Also encourages the customers to be more regenerative and promotes concious guests to support the initiative. |

### Initiative 4: "Community & Culture Engagement Team"

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Investment in training a dedicated team focused on local community engagement. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Coordination of staff, transportation, and schedules for the arrangement of the meetings with local ambassadors and implementation of the initiatives. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Supports local communities that indirectly are connected to the environment and care for the preservation of the local ecosystem. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Opportunity for employees to connect more with the local culture, get to know traditional customs and feel more connected to the region. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Significantly enhances the guest experience from a cultural and personal enrichment point of view, developing a connection between the guests and locals. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Positions the hotel as an active member of the community, using it as a business partner and establishing a shared economy showing responsibility for the development of the region. |
| ***Implementation Process*** | *Establish the Responsible Team - Community Relationships – Cultural Activities - Monitor & Feedback* |

### Initiative 5: "Local Artisanal and Upcycled Art Integration"

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | With the resource of the culture engagement team to find local artisans, allocate minimal investment to support these artisans by buying the pieces as well as develop upcycled art. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Coordination with the team to find the artists and integrate the results of their art into the hotel scenery. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes environmental sustainability by integrating upcycled materials and creating awareness towards this cause. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Showcases to employees the art and local artists that exist in the area and are being promoted through their activity creating a bigger sense of pride in what they do. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Enhances the guest experience as it creates a more traditional environment, more connected to the roots of the region and gives a sense of connectivity with the local culture. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Establishes the hotel as a active promoter of the local culture and customs supporting local artisans and creating a regenerative image towards its local community. |
| **Implementation Process** | Find Artisans – Commission these projects – incorporate the pieces into the propriety's landscape. |

### Initiative 6: Teatime with Local herbs and Live Regional Music

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Very small investment, local herbs collected in the propriety premisses for free, small fee for the local musician to promote the preservation of this local tradition. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Scheduling and rearranging of the space to host these events. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Supports the cultivation and usage of local herbs, promoting these autochthone species. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Employees can also learn about the usage and effects of these herbs as well as get to know traditional music of the region fostering a sense of belonging. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Provides memorable culture experiences and brings the guests closer to the traditions and the culture of the region. |

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| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local heritage and the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Source local herbs – Schedule local musicians – Promote Event – Monitor % Feedback. |

### Initiative 7: Crafting with Local Traditions

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment, hiring the traditional artisans willing to conduct workshops and cost of materials needed. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Design the space where the workshop would be conducted either inside the hotel premises or outside, minimal impact. |
| **Impact on Environment** | No direct relation with the environment. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Promotes staff interest in local traditions, connecting them more with the region's customs. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Teaches the guests about local cultural traditions, connecting them more to the local community and promoting ancestral techniques helping them maintaining present in this day of age. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local heritage and the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Partner with local artisans – Design Workshop structure and schedule – Promote to the guests – Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 8: Regional History and Storytelling Nights

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment, partnering with local historians willing to conduct the activity, and a translator in case the local historian does not know English. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Scheduling and rearranging the space where the activity is being conducted. |
| **Impact on Environment** | No direct relation with the environment. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Provides the opportunity for employees to get to know more of the region and the local history, developing the connection with the place. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Cultivates the connection of the guests with the local community and integration of the local history into the guests' experiences. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | The hotel is recognized by its efforts of promoting local culture and region history, acting as a cultural hub. |
| **Implementation Process** | Partner with local historians – Design and structure storytelling sessions – Promote to the guests – Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 9: Authentic Local Finds: Sublime Store

| *Category of Impact* | *Description* |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment, leveraging from the Culture Engagement Team find typical local products that resonates with local culture and from the local community to incorporate into the store. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Collaboration with local producers and artisans to source regional products. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes local sourcing, reduces reliance on outside of the region products as well as mass-produced goods. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Gives a more in-depth perception for employees on the products that are developed in the region through the store offerings. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Customers have access to more cultural products, and unique souvenirs that resembles better the place they visited and the culture that surrounds it. |

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| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local heritage and the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Find local artisans – Establish Partnerships – Integrate the products into the store – Promote the store and collect Feedback. |

### Initiative 10: Farmers' Market Experience at Sublime - "A Horta Vai à Vila"

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Minimal investment as the market already exists, cos to buy the ingredients and products at the market. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Planning the schedules and timelines to visit the market, as well as coordinate with the availability of the chefs to not only visit the markets but to cook the meal for the guests afterwards. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Supports the local agriculture and sustainable production. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Allows staff to interact with local producers and develop connections with local community members. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Supports cultural immersion by allowing guests to visit the markets first-hand and pick the ingredients directly from local producers to eat afterwards. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local agriculture and the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Arrange visits to the local market – Partner with farmers – Promote the experience –Buy local products and cook private meal for guests – Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 11: Bridging Guests and Grândola

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Minimal investment for promoting Grândola's events, through flyers and marketing campaigns, and the development of a cultural calendar |
| **Impact on Operations** | Developing partnerships with cultural organizations and providing transportation to and from Grândola and the hotel to encourage guests to visit the city and its attractions. |
| **Impact on Environment** | No direct impact in the environment. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Encourage employees to be more connected to the city and the local community, to act like cultural ambassadors. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Offers authentic cultural opportunities, for guests to fully immerse in the lifestyle and traditions of the region. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local agriculture and the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Identify Key Events - Create a Cultural Calendar - Develop Partnerships - Promote the initiative - Monitor & Feedback |

### □ DHM Initiative 1 - Reviving Traditions through Partnerships

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low costs for establishing partnerships with TASA Project and Proactivetur, and collaboration programs and workshops. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Increase the number of experiences for guests, which means a higher working load for the staff in charge of this area. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Supports the preservation of traditional and cultural practices which is aligned with sustainability principles. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Continues to develop and strengthen the connection between employees and the local community. |

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| **Impact on Customers** | Increase the guest experience with the region's cultures and ancestral customs, offering meaningful experiences. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Establishes the hotel as leader in cultural and community-integrated tourism. |
| **Implementation Process** | Identify Commonalities - Co-Design Activities - Promote Partnerships - Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 2 - Educating for Tomorrow

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment in the partnerships itself with the schools, moderate investment for funding and providing prizes for competitions challenges, |
| **Impact on Operations** | Creates a new dynamic of having to visit schools and prepare workshops and educational programs. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Creates awareness for sustainability principles and the importance of this area for the future generations. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Promotes staff involvement in the workshops and programs, developing a sense of commitment and purpose to the cause. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Ensures a better future, and a sustainable development for the region which guarantees the continuation of the excellent guest experience in the upcoming years. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner, with social responsibility and community committed. |
| **Implementation Process** | Partner with Local Schools - Develop Educational Sessions - Engage Staff - Organize Initiatives - Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 3 - Bringing Local Experiences to Light

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment in developing more marketing and communication methods to showcase the hotels' commitment to being a regenerative force towards the local communities. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Low impact on operations, just the responsible person/team responsible for publicizing more the hotels initiatives. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes the sustainable initiatives of the hotel to others, with the objective to influence and others follow th example. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Encourages staff to promote the cultural events of the hotel. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Ensures every guest is in tune with the hotel's offerings and initiatives. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Vastly increases the hotels reputation, by communicating all the local community focused initiatives that the hotel provides, although that is not the goal, but instead to inspire others. |
| **Implementation Process** | Collect the data of all the Initiatives – Develop an Initiatives Agenda – Promote and Publicize the Experiences. |

### Initiative 4 – Artisans' Stories Through QR Code

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment to create QR Codes, collect Artisans stories, and develop the webpage. |
| **Impact on Operations** | No direct impact on the operations of the hotel. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes the local traditions and cultural customs by shining a light into the specific artisans of the region. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Allows employees to also get to know these stories behind the local crafts sold at the store. |

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| **Impact on Customers** | Provides a quick and unique way for customers to connect with the artisan's story and background of a specific piece. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Reinforces the position of the hotel as an active community partner that supports the local community traditions. |
| **Implementation Process** | Use Existing Content - Develop Digital Platform - Design QR Codes - Monitor & Feedback. |

### Initiative 5 – Moncarapacho Cultural Calendar

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Minimal Investment, gather all the dates and the cultural events of the region presenting them together in a cultural calendar. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Collaboration with local entities to gather all the regional events details. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes the conservation and participation of guests in these cultural festivities. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Allows employees to be cultural ambassadors and promote the cultural events in a more effective way. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Strengthens the connection of the guests with the local community and traditions allowing them to have an immersive experience. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | The hotel is recognized by its efforts of promoting local culture and region history, acting as a cultural hub. |
| **Implementation Process** | Partner with local entities – Elaborate a calendar with the Events – Promote & Gather Feedback. |

### Initiative 6 – Moncarapacho Folklore and Dance Workshop

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment for organizing traditional dance and folklore workshops n collaboration with local groups. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Extends the hotels' cultural program. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Supports the preservation of traditional and cultural customs. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Staff is encouraged to join and learn these traditions, fostering a strong sense of belonging. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Offers guests an immersive and special opportunity to be immerse int he regions culture. |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Shows the commitment of the hotel to preserve local traditions and to transmit them into their guests' experiences, amplifying them. |
| **Implementation Process** | Partner with folklore groups – Schedule workshops – Promote & Gather Feedback. |

### Initiative 7 – Olive & Wellness

| Category of Impact | Description |
|---|---|
| **Initial Investment** | Low investment, use partnerships already established with local olive oil producers, and medium investment for developing wellness products using the local product. |
| **Impact on Operations** | Collaboration with the local Olive oil producers. |
| **Impact on Environment** | Promotes local agriculture. |
| **Impact on Employees** | Not a direct impact on Employees. |
| **Impact on Customers** | Offers guests a unique immersive treatment deeply rooted into the regions natural resources |
| **Impact on Reputation** | Positions the hotel as a sustainable force that promotes local agriculture while providing wellness practices. |

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| **Implementation Process** | Use olive oil Producers Partnership – Develop Spa Porducts – Integrate them into the hotels' wellness offerings – Monitor & Feedback. |