

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in Management with an area of expertise in Customer Experience and Hospitality from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

Towards Regeneration: How Luxury Hotels can give back to Place and People
Promoting a Regenerative Mindset within a Luxury Hotel

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17-12-2024

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 focus of this individual thesis is on the organizational part.

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.

Key Words

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

This work used infrastructure and resources funded by Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (UID/ECO/00124/2013, UID/ECO/00124/2019 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209), POR Lisboa (LISBOA-01-0145-FEDER-007722 and Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209) and POR Norte (Social Sciences DataLab, Project 22209)

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List of Abbreviations

CO ²	Carbon Dioxide
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DHM	Discovery Hotel Management
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
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

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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. Within the

whole project, 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 part of the research with a special focus on **RQ1** in this thesis:

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 neighboring 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 seven-days-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 over-tourism which negatively affects local ecosystems, community and guest experience (Bra 2024). The on-going economic, 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 (CO²) 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-make-dispose” 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 Eufrazio (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 Eufrazio 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.

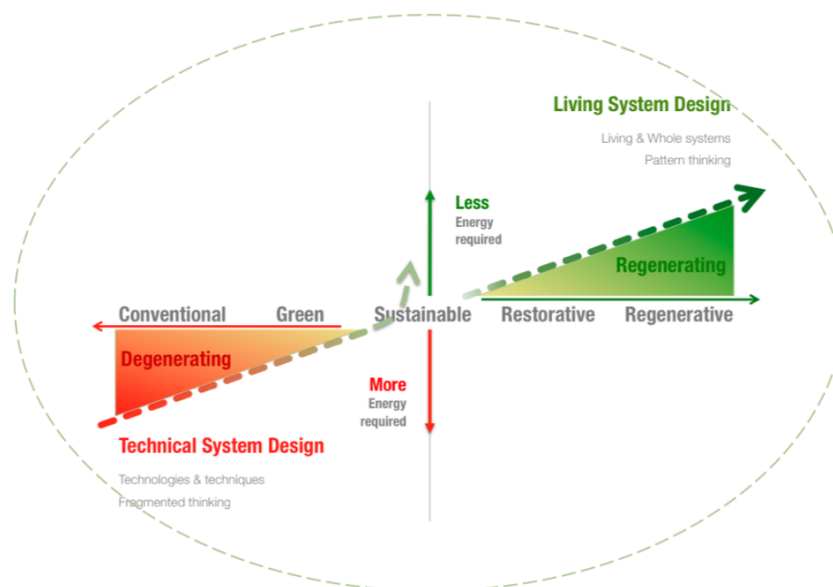
2.3 The Concept of Regeneration

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” (Holmgren 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 than 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”).

	Internally degenerative	Internally regenerative
Externally regenerative	<p>SELF-SACRIFICING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social enterprise that burns out its employees • A regenerative farm forced to sell its land because its affordably priced produce brings in insufficient revenue • A martyr for a regenerative cause 	<p>FULLY REGENERATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A country that becomes carbon-negative through ecosystem restoration and regenerative agriculture • A city that meets the needs of its citizens by restoring its hinterlands • A thriving farm that boosts biodiversity in the wider landscape and acts as a hub for community interaction • A social enterprise that nourishes society and (therefore) its employees
Externally degenerative	<p>FULLY DEGENERATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A society that extracts and burns fossil fuels, causing climate change and extreme weather that is increasingly deadly to the society's citizens • A country that starts a war with another country, killing people and crippling the economy on both sides • A predatory company merger or acquisition that reduces the value of both companies and leads to redundancies • A person whose addiction to a harmful drug also damages the person's social relationships 	<p>SELF-CENTERED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A country that invests in social infrastructure using profits from activities driving climate change and biodiversity loss • A business that pays and treats its employees well but pollutes the environment • Humanity prioritizing its own reproduction and population growth at the expense of millions of other species' reproduction

*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 (“self-sacrificing”) 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)	<p>Principle 1: Draw from an ecological worldview</p> <p>Principle 2: Use living systems thinking</p> <p>Principle 3: Discover the unique potential of a regenerative tourism place</p> <p>Principle 4: Leverage the capability of tourism living systems to catalyze transformations</p> <p>Principle 5: Adopt healing approaches that promote cultural revival, returning lands, and privileging of the perspectives, knowledge and practices of Indigenous and marginalized peoples</p> <p>Principle 6: Create regenerative places and communities</p> <p>Principle 7: Collaborate to evolve and enact regenerative tourism approaches</p>
King and Burns (2022)	<p>Principle 1: Center community needs first</p> <p>Principle 2: Improve ecosystem integrity and biodiversity</p> <p>Principle 3: Embrace diverse and inclusive business models</p> <p>Principle 4: Develop transparent governance structures accountable to all stakeholders</p> <p>Principle 5: Enhance regenerative partnerships</p>
Ho (2022)	<p>Principle 1: Whole systems thinking</p> <p>Principle 2: Honoring sense of place</p> <p>Principle 3: Community inclusion and partnerships</p> <p>Principle 4: Aspirational in nature</p> <p>Principle 5: Continual Coevolution</p>

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 behaviors.

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

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 well-established 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. Overview Sublime Hotels & Discovery Hotel Management

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 eco-conscious, 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 cabana-style 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 free-flowing 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 were 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 Gonçalves
- Quality Management: Sandra Teixeira, 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.

4.5 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

5. Promoting a Regenerative Mindset within a Luxury Hotel

The purpose of this chapter 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.

5.1 Analysis of Sublime Hotels and DHM

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).

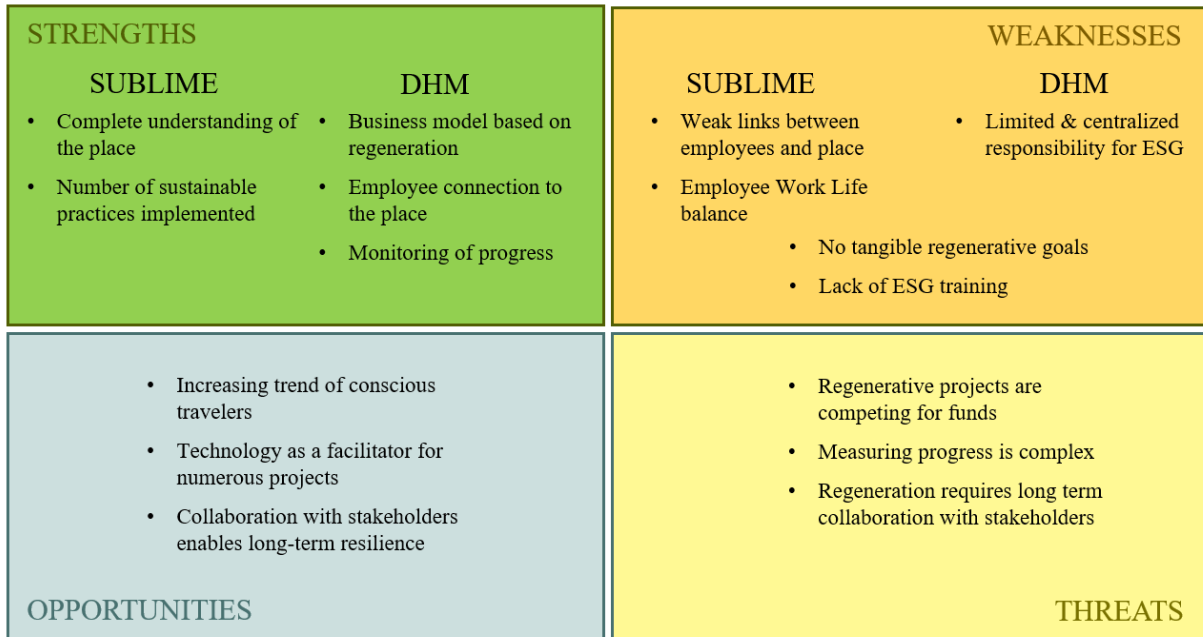


Figure 7: SWOT Analysis

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.

5.2 Practical Implications for Sublime Hotels and DHM

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	Initiative 3: Designate ESG managers on site
Initiative 2: Integrate regenerative goals into employee KPIs	Initiative 4: Establish more open roles - Cross training
People	Work System & Processes
Initiative 5: Connect employees with the place	Initiative 8: Internal fund for employee led initiatives
Initiative 6: Create wellbeing plan for employees	Initiative 9: Establish ESG- and cross-training
Initiative 7: Promote local employment	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.

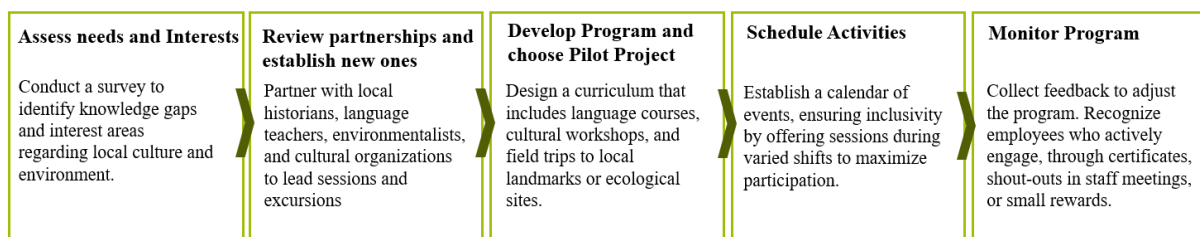


Figure 8: Connecting Employees with Place

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.

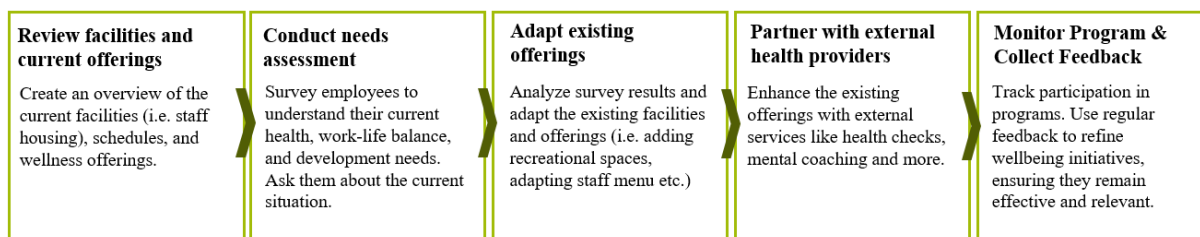


Figure 9: Enhance Employee Wellbeing

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.

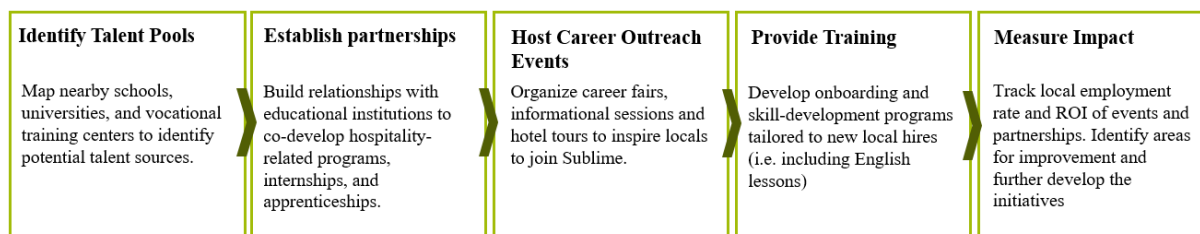


Figure 10: Promote Local Employment

- **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).

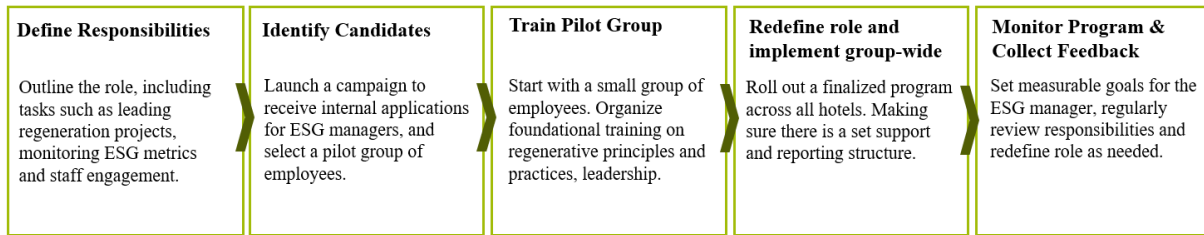


Figure 11: Designate ESG Manager

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).

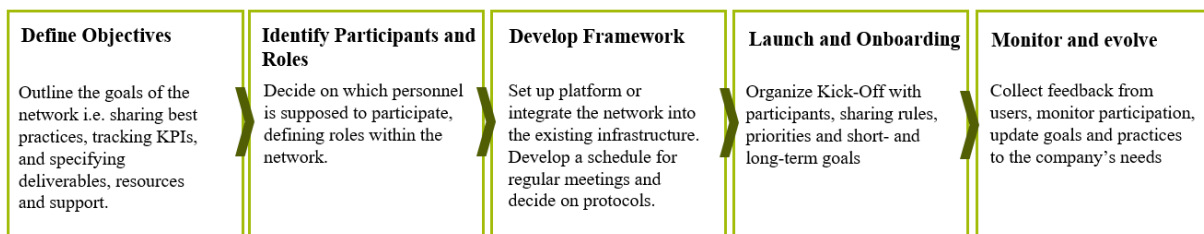


Figure 12: Create ESG Network

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.

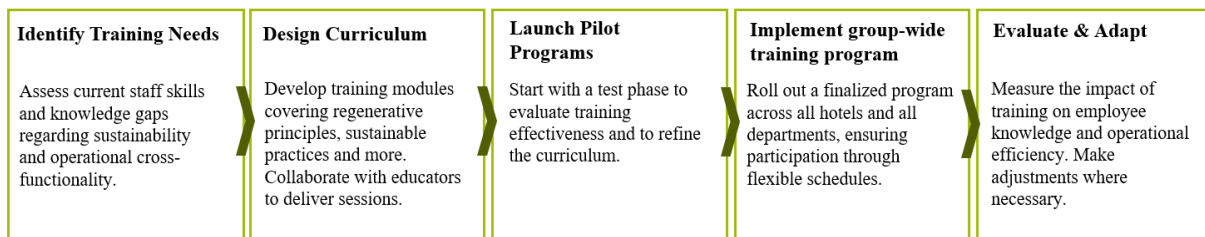


Figure 13: Establish ESG Training

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, focusing 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.

6. General 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).

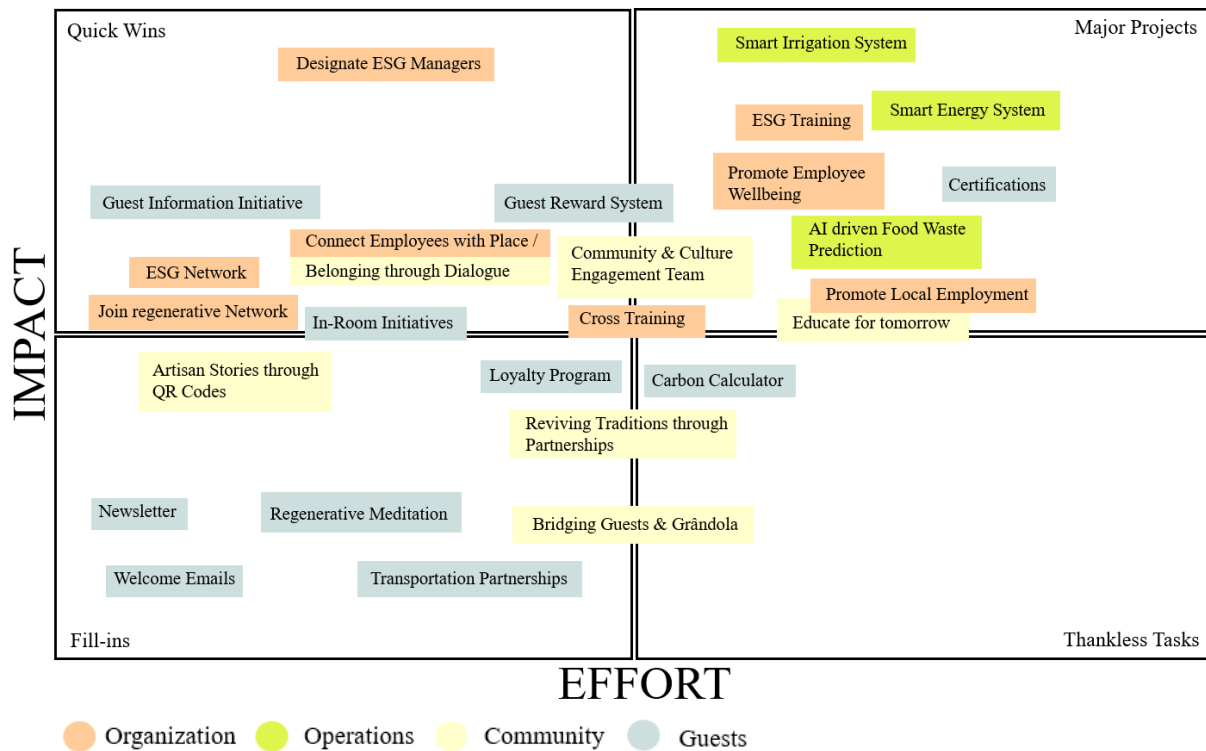


Figure 14: Prioritization Matrix

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 long-term 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-by-step 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.

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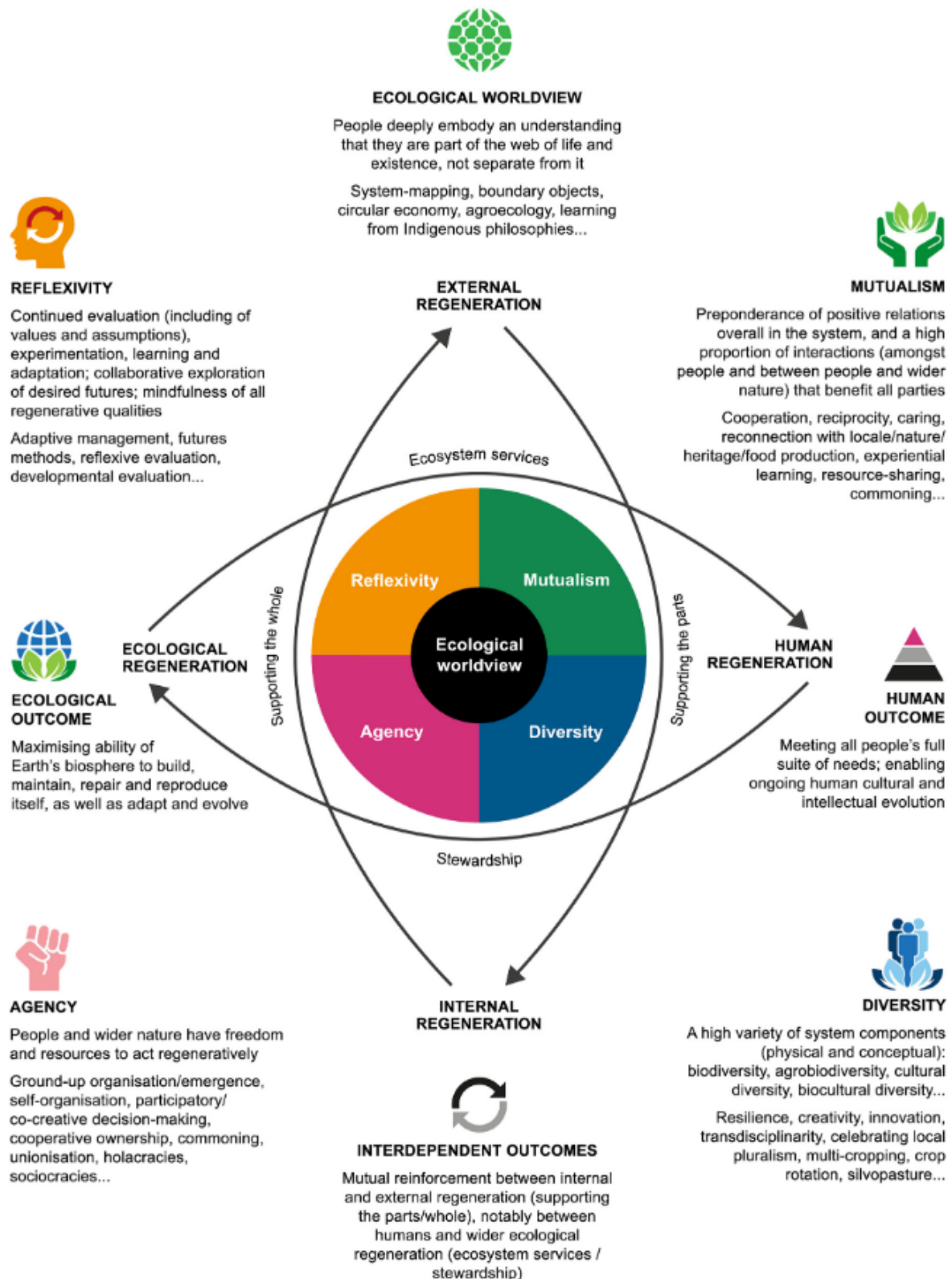
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Appendix 1 – The Regenerative Lens Framework



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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 exist, 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 self-sufficiency. 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 stakeholder 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 hotel 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 measure water consumption

The water tank 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

Appendix 5 – Site Visit Sublime Comporta

Researchers: Pia Moser; Miguel Chibante; Chiara Vaglianti
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 Season: 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 sustainability-conscious 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 Gonçalves

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 Teixeira

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 7 – Initiatives to promote Regeneration within the Organization

Leadership Initiatives	
Initiative 1: Anchor Regenerative Goals in the Company Agenda	Introduce regenerative goals into the company’s strategic agenda. KPIs could include measurable objectives like reducing carbon emissions, increasing biodiversity on-site, and community engagement projects. Success would be defined by contribution to people and the planet, not just financial metrics.
Initial Investment	Some consulting may be required to set ambitious but realistic goals. Investing in initiatives that focus on benefit for the environment and people can mean however, to forgo profits that would be achieved with a more commerce-driven approach.
Impact on Operations	Adjusting the company’s strategic focus could mean operational changes, including new processes, technologies, or partnerships aimed at meeting regenerative goals.
Impact on Environment	Explicitly setting regenerative goals ensures that the company takes meaningful action to restore ecosystems, reduce waste, and lower its carbon footprint.
Impact on Employees	Employees will feel more aligned with the company’s values, knowing their work contributes to long-term positive environmental and social change.
Impact on Customers	Guests increasingly value businesses that are transparent about their goals, especially if they are more than profit oriented. The initiative demonstrates a commitment to values beyond profit, which appeals to conscious consumers.
Impact on Reputation	Being one of the few hotels with explicit regenerative goals will distinguish the business as an industry leader in sustainability, earning trust from customers and stakeholders alike.
Initiative 2: Integrate Regenerative Goals into Employee KPIs	This initiative ties employee performance reviews to regenerative goals, rewarding staff for contributing ideas or taking action that supports environmental or social sustainability. For example, KPIs could include suggesting ways to reduce waste, energy usage, or implementing local community engagement projects.

Initial Investment	Financial resources may be needed to establish a reward system or incentive program. Training will also be necessary to ensure employees understand the new KPIs and how to meet them.
Impact on Operations	By aligning employee KPIs with regeneration, employees will be more proactive in identifying opportunities for development. This will likely increase operational efficiency in areas like waste management or energy use.
Impact on Environment	Tying individual performance to regenerative goals will drive more collective environmental action, accelerating the hotel's overall efforts.
Impact on Employees	Empowering employees will increase engagement and motivation. Rewards and recognition can enhance job satisfaction and retention.
Impact on Customers	Guests will see a more motivated and knowledgeable workforce dedicated to regeneration, potentially improving their overall experience.
Impact on Reputation	The approach will reinforce the hotel's image as an organization that values engagement and creativity, strengthening its brand as a regenerative hospitality leader.

Decision Making Initiatives

Initiative 3: Designate and train ESG Managers	Appoint dedicated managers or train existing staff to assume the responsibility for regeneration efforts in the hotels on site. These managers will spearhead regenerative projects at the premises and ensure that the company meets its goals in that area. Specific regeneration related training will be important not only for the designated managers but for all members of staff.
Initial Investment	Salary or training costs for the ESG managers, as well as resources for their projects.
Impact on Operations	Having a dedicated ESG manager will ensure that regenerative principles are embedded in daily operations. This might initially require more oversight but will improve efficiency in the end.
Impact on Environment	With a dedicated role focusing on ESG goals, the hotel can more effectively implement eco-friendly practices.
Impact on Employees	Employees will have a clear point of contact for their issues, and the manager can serve as an educator and advocate, helping staff align their work with the hotel's regenerative goals.
Impact on Customers	Guests will appreciate knowing that the hotel takes regeneration seriously, as seen in a leadership committed to environmental and social matters.
Impact on Reputation	Employing an ESG manager highlights the hotel's commitment to regeneration and sustainability, enhancing its image as a responsible and forward-thinking organization.
Initiative 4: Establish open roles and empower employees	Instead of limiting employees to narrowly defined tasks, this initiative would open roles up to broader responsibilities, transforming them into "hosts" who contribute to a more dynamic, responsive and empowered work environment. Cross-training or regular role rotation can also be introduced to broaden the employee's horizons and deepen their knowledge of the work environment.
Initial Investment	It may require restructuring employee roles and updating job descriptions, which will involve management time. Training and mentoring will also be necessary.
Impact on Operations	Initially, there may be some growing pains as staff adjust to new roles and responsibilities. In the long term, operations become more flexible and adaptive.
Impact on Environment	When employees understand the bigger picture and what impact their work has, they can make more thoughtful choices in their work environment.
Impact on Employees	This approach boosts employee engagement and satisfaction by giving them a sense of ownership and personal investment in the hotel's mission. Rotating roles and fostering open positions increase their skills and make them feel more valued.
Impact on Customers	Guests will experience better, more holistic service from empowered employees who see themselves as hosts rather than just workers. This could improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.
Impact on Reputation	This forward-thinking approach to employee roles will enhance the hotel's reputation as an innovative employer, attracting top talent and making it a more attractive destination for socially conscious travelers.

People Initiatives	
Initiative 5: Connect employees with the place	This initiative involves immersing employees, especially those who are not local (e.g., Nepalese), in the local culture and environment through language courses, workshops, and organized field trips. This initiative aims to build a deeper understanding and respect for the area, promoting a sense of stewardship for the land.
Initial Investment	Moderate financial investment for organizing trips, courses, and workshops, as well as time commitment from both employees and trainers. Human resources will also be needed for planning and coordination.
Impact on Operations	This may require periodic shifts in work schedules to allow employees to participate, potentially causing minor disruptions during implementation. However, it can be offset by better employee engagement and motivation.
Impact on Environment	Employees who understand and appreciate their surroundings are more likely to support regeneration initiatives and make decisions that reduce environmental harm. Engaging with nature will foster a regenerative mindset.
Impact on Employees	This will enhance employee well-being, reduce burnout, and strengthen ties between staff and the local environment. It will cultivate a workforce that is more mindful of ecological and social impact.
Impact on Customers	Guests will perceive a more knowledgeable and engaged workforce that can offer rich stories and insights about the local area, enhancing their overall experience.
Impact on Reputation	This initiative will position the hotel as a leader in promoting cultural and environmental integration, which boosts its reputation among environmentally and culturally conscious travelers.
Initiative 6: Create an Employee Wellbeing Plan	Develop a comprehensive employee wellbeing plan that prioritizes work-life balance and encourages employees to reach their full potential, personally and professionally. Partnerships with medical institutions for preventive health checks and wellness resources, flexible work schedules to support balance, and access to nutritious, locally sourced meal. Additionally, wellness programs like yoga, meditation, and fitness classes could be offered to enhance both physical and mental health.
Initial Investment	Financial investments for partnerships with medical institutions, wellness program facilitators, and potentially upgrading the in-house cafeteria or dining options to provide nutritious meals. Human resources are needed for coordination.
Impact on Operations	The program might require adjustments to work schedules to allow participation in wellness activities. A healthier, more balanced workforce will likely lead to improved productivity and reduced sick leave.
Impact on Environment	Encouraging healthier lifestyles often translates into more environmentally conscious behavior. The focus on nutritious, local and organic food in the cafeteria could reduce the hotel's carbon footprint.
Impact on Employees	Employees will benefit significantly, as the initiative supports their mental, physical, and emotional well-being, potentially improving morale, motivation, and loyalty. Access to health resources and balanced work schedules will make employees feel valued, reducing burnout and turnover.
Impact on Customers	Customers will likely notice and appreciate the hospitality and attention to detail that comes from a motivated workforce, which could enhance their stay.
Impact on Reputation	Investing in employee well-being will enhance the hotel's reputation as a forward-thinking, responsible employer, appealing to potential hires and customers alike.
Initiative 7: Promote Local employment	Promoting local employment by building relationships with nearby schools, universities, and vocational institutions. Through outreach programs, career fairs, internships, and educational talks, the hotel creates a pathway for local talent to join the hospitality industry. By focusing on hiring from the local community, the hotel not only strengthens its workforce but also invests in local economic development and cultural preservation.

Initial Investment	This initiative will require financial resources for marketing materials, recruitment events, and personnel to conduct outreach and attend career fairs. Human resources will need to coordinate with local institutions, build partnerships, and oversee internship or apprenticeship programs.
Impact on Operations	An onboarding period and mentorship program might be needed to familiarize new recruits with company standards, resulting in minor disruptions.
Impact on Environment	Hiring locally reduces the need for long commutes or relocating employees, which cuts down on the hotel's overall carbon footprint.
Impact on Employees	This initiative provides meaningful job opportunities to local residents, which can improve morale and loyalty, as employees feel a direct connection to their community. A diverse workforce enriched by local perspectives also helps create an inclusive work culture, benefiting both local and international employees.
Impact on Customers	Customers often appreciate engaging with staff who have a deep understanding of the local culture, as it enhances their travel experience and makes their stay more memorable. Guests may feel a stronger connection to the location through local stories, customs, and insights shared by the staff.
Impact on Reputation	Promoting local employment underlines the hotel's commitment to community development and social responsibility, positively influencing its reputation as a regenerative business.

Work systems & processes Initiatives

Initiative 8: Create a Fund for Employee-Led Regenerative Practices This initiative would establish a fund that employees can access to implement small-scale ideas within the hotel or its surrounding environment. By providing financial support and a straightforward approval process, employees can more actively contribute to the hotel's regenerative goals.

Initial Investment A financial investment is required to create the fund itself, with potential for periodic contributions to keep it sustainable. Additional resources would involve a team or committee to review and approve proposals.

Impact on Operations The operational impact will likely be manageable and may even improve efficiency over time as employee initiatives streamline sustainable practices.

Impact on Environment This fund encourages regenerative thinking, resulting in projects that reduce waste, save energy, promote biodiversity, and more. The direct environmental benefits will vary with each project.

Impact on Employees Empowering employees to take action on their own ideas increases engagement, autonomy, and ownership in their work. This fund supports creative thinking and strengthens the connection between individual roles and the company's regenerative goals, fostering a sense of personal investment and pride in the workplace.

Impact on Customers Customers often enjoy hearing about unique, employee-driven sustainability efforts, especially if these initiatives enhance their experience (like an herb garden for fresh ingredients). This adds an authentic touch to the hotel's regenerative story.

Impact on Reputation Establishing a fund for employee-led projects demonstrates that the hotel values its staff's creativity and commitment to positive change. It will also distinguish the hotel as an innovator in regenerative hospitality, showcasing a proactive approach that values both environmental and social contributions.

Initiative 9: Establish regenerative trainings Implementing a new training regimen that includes cross-training programs and specific training on regenerative principles. Cross-training will allow employees to gain experience in different roles, fostering a more versatile workforce, while regenerative training will educate employees on sustainability and regenerative practices, empowering them to incorporate these principles into daily operations.

Initial Investment Investments are needed for training materials, external consultants, and potentially new software for tracking training progress and certifications. Human resources and department managers will need to coordinate these programs and facilitate training sessions.

Impact on Operations	Cross-training enhances operational flexibility, enabling the hotel to maintain service levels even during high-demand periods or unexpected staff absences. ESG training aligns employees with the hotel’s sustainability goals, fostering a cohesive approach to regenerative practices across departments.
Impact on Environment	Through training, employees will gain the knowledge and skills needed to minimize resource waste, reduce energy consumption, and implement eco-friendly practices. Cross-training also empowers employees to make environmentally conscious decisions across departments, creating a more efficient hotel operation.
Impact on Employees	Cross-training gives employees broader skill sets and career growth opportunities, improving job satisfaction and reducing turnover. Training fosters a sense of purpose, as employees can see their direct contributions to the hotel’s regenerative efforts, reinforcing their personal investment in the company’s mission.
Impact on Customers	Trained employees who understand the importance of regeneration and sustainability can communicate these values effectively to guests, enhancing their experience and inspiring eco-conscious choices.
Impact on Reputation	A commitment to employee development and regenerative principles strengthens the hotel’s brand as a forward-thinking, socially responsible employer.
Initiative 10: Join a Regenerative Network	By joining hospitality and tourism networks, the hotels can access expert knowledge, tools, and best practices. Associations such as “The long run” or “Sustainable Hospitality Alliance,” provide resources like step-by-step guides, reporting templates, and regeneration-focused checklists that help businesses operate more sustainably.
Initial Investment	Membership fees, time investment in attending meetings or webinars, and participation in knowledge-sharing platforms. Some staff may need to be dedicated to liaising with these networks (e.g. an ESG manager).
Impact on Operations	Access to expert insights will streamline operations by offering ready-made sustainability tools and frameworks, saving internal research time. Participation can lead to a more efficient and focused regenerative strategy.
Impact on Environment	The expert knowledge gained will guide the hotels in reducing their environmental footprint, helping it move from sustainability to regeneration.
Impact on Employees	Employees will benefit from access to knowledge, helping them learn regenerative practices, and feel more involved in the regeneration movement.
Impact on Customers	The hotel can communicate its involvement in such networks, appealing to eco-conscious travelers.
Impact on Reputation	Membership in reputable networks will reinforce the hotel’s image as a thought leader in the hospitality industry, making it attractive to both customers and investors focused on ESG.