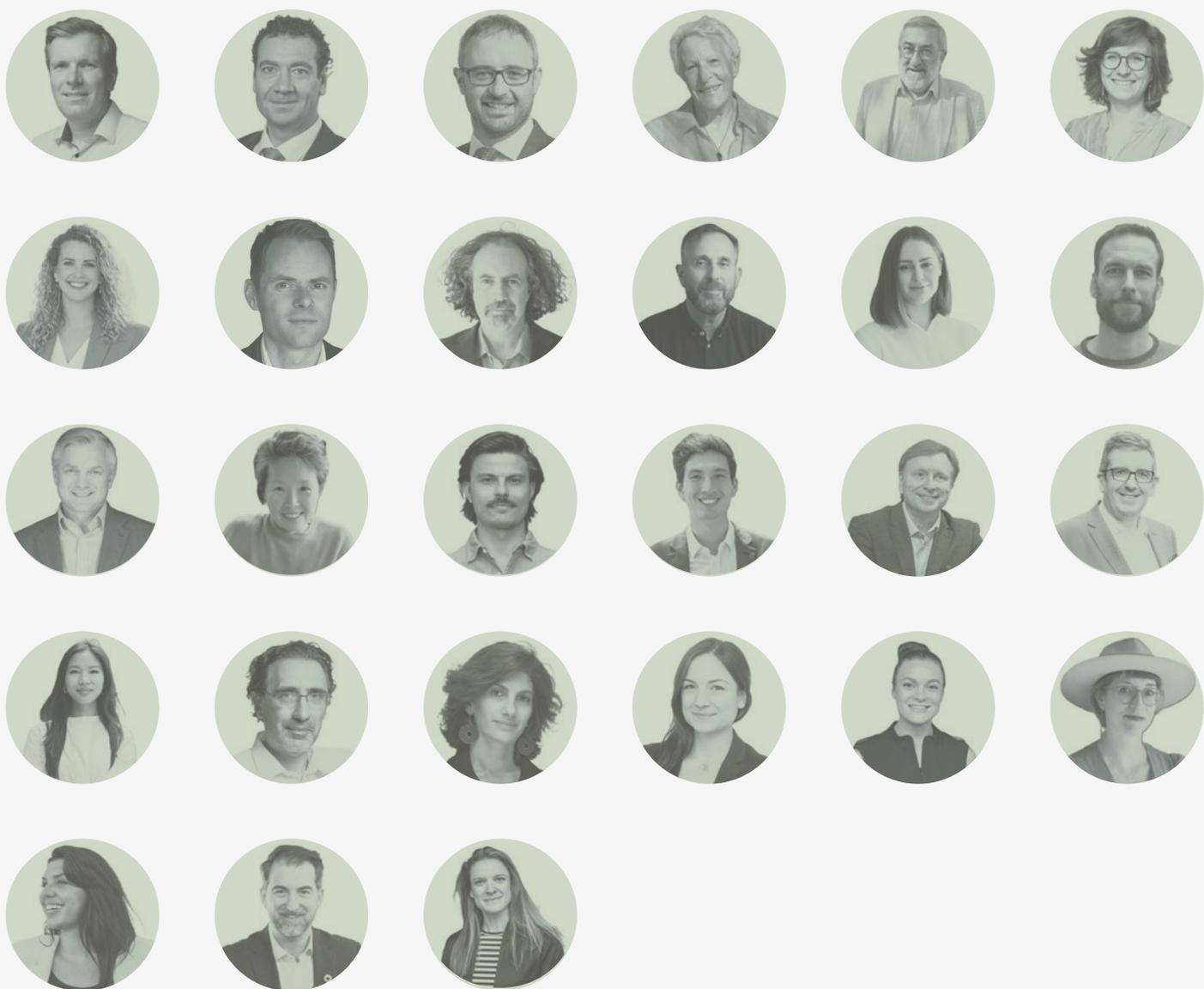


# HYB26

## Sustainability Edition

The Regenerative Question - What  
Hospitality Must Become



**The Hotel Yearbook**

Foresight and innovation in the global hotel industry



HY8



# My journey toward regenerative futures

Mindset and worldview shift

**Martin Hohn**  
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*Martin Hohn reflects on a personal journey from traditional hospitality management toward regeneration, arguing that sustainability has been diluted and cannot succeed as long as infinite economic growth clashes with planetary boundaries. Regeneration is framed not as a technological fix but as a social and mindset shift: a place-based, whole-systems approach that reconnects hospitality with life, community, and ecosystem health.*

When I came across the term regeneration six years ago, I loved the idea. As the years went by, it became clear that “regeneration” faced the same fate as “sustainability” — it got diluted and misunderstood.

When the UN released the Brundtland Report in 1987, the definition of the term sustainability was as follows: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” As of today, we are very far away from that goal.

Now, we jump on the next concept that promises to solve our problems. But we will continue to fail until we realise that infinite economic growth is incompatible with planetary boundaries — boundaries imposed by the natural laws of physics, where we have currently overshot seven out of nine thresholds.

So far, nothing new, you might think. Where does regeneration come into play?

As we all know, the tourism industry is growing strongly. And we are happy about this. So we are stuck in a conundrum: how do we preserve our industry and our businesses without becoming an even more climate-hostile industry?

Unfortunately, I don’t have the solution. Or at least not an easy one. Because there are no easy solutions to complex problems. What might save us, though, is a change in mindset — maybe even in our worldview.

And that’s where regeneration comes in. Regeneration is much more about social rather than technological innovation. This means behaviour change — and that’s what we humans are not so good at. It seems easier to find workarounds for throwaway shampoo bottles than to actually change our consumption patterns. But it is very likely that we will have to do that sooner or later anyway, so why not start now? Carbon credits and other modern forms of indulgence trading won’t prevent us from that.

So what is the promise of regeneration?

Simply put, regeneration offers us an opportunity to rediscover our relationship with life. With regeneration, you apply whole-systems thinking — nature, local ecosystems, and communities are key. Basically, it’s a very place-based development approach that enables the emergence of resilient socio-economic systems infused with local culture and heritage.

What may sound like utopia is the foundation of a potential-based narrative that is inherent to the way I see regeneration. If we don’t dream big, we won’t be able to solve the challenges we are currently facing.

What does that mean for your business, you may ask? My personal answer to that is the reason why I quit my managerial career in hospitality ten years ago. I wanted to reconnect to what I felt was the essence of hospitality: slowing down, creating deeper and more authentic connections with customers, offering them transformative experiences and creating meaningful impact for society and nature at the same time.

We often talk about memorable experiences, but what is truly memorable in a world where most hotels look alike, where you get similar products and services anywhere you go?

I believe it’s experiences that inspire us and reconnect us to ourselves, nature, and the world around us. What contributes to such experiences are passionate staff, intentional experience design, curated information — because often experiences have an educational aspect — and, last but not least, a strong sense of purpose that drives the concept of a property.

The property and its surroundings are key elements in this. In a regenerative approach, we look beyond the borders of a property and adopt a placemaking lens. In placemaking, one tries to create places that foster a high quality of life, which is also shaped by the neighbourhood.

In placemaking, I work with the three dimensions of infrastructure, utilisation, and organisation. The built infrastructure ideally reduces grey energy and offers a multifunctional setting that enables diversity in its use. Participatory organisation and collaborative governance then ensure cohesion and adoption. Obviously, this has to happen in harmony with the natural ecosystems.

Regeneration is a call for pioneers who want to reinvent the industry. It’s also about prototyping new hybrid business models, new ways of working, and creating showcases for resilient hotels that are cornerstones of their destinations.

To embark on a regenerative journey is a beautiful and rewarding, although challenging, endeavour for any business. The choice to do so very much depends on your ambitions as an owner, operator, or manager: how do you want to balance profit and purpose? And, more importantly, what legacy do you want to leave as an individual and as a company?

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



What becomes searchable  
becomes bookable.

