

Designing the Transition

SEVEN DESIGN PERSPECTIVES TO BUILD CAPACITIES
FOR PEOPLE, ORGANISATIONS AND ECOSYSTEMS

Paola Bertola, Carmen Bruno, Erminia D'Itria, Silvia Maria Gramegna,
Francesca Mattioli, Michele Melazzini, and Xue Pei

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Authors

Paola Bertola, PhD: Full Professor, Deputy Director, Department of Design (POLIMI). Her research concerns creative processes, design management and planning, and design-driven innovation within “culture-intensive” industries. Recently she has been focusing on the role of design in driving digital transformation processes.

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Xue Pei, PhD: Researcher (Assistant Professor), Department of Design (POLIMI). Her research focuses on applying design (thinking) approaches and methods, as a strategic catalyst, to fostering innovation. Currently, her work addresses developing design-driven strategies towards sustainability in the furniture sector.

The urgent need for sustainable transformation calls for innovative approaches that integrate design as a strategic force for systemic change. *Designing the Transition* explores how design can build capacities for individuals, organizations, and ecosystems, enabling them to navigate the complexities of sustainability transitions. Structured in two parts, the book first introduces the *ECODeCK* project, a design-driven capacity-building model developed to support sustainable transitions in the manufacturing sector. This section outlines its theoretical underpinnings, including the Sustainable Transition Competence framework and the role of design in transformative learning. The second part articulates seven key design perspectives, each addressing a critical dimension of sustainability: participatory action, collaborative systems, regenerative creativity, organizational culture, circular manufacturing, learning processes, and systemic change. These perspectives illustrate how design can facilitate innovation, cultural shifts, and strategic interventions across different levels, from individual behaviours to broader systemic transformations, positioning design not only as a problem-solving tool but as a mindset capable of enabling transitions toward a more resilient and sustainable future.