

# 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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# 6. Designing New Creative Processes for Sustainable Transition

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## 6.1 Introduction

In the face of accelerating environmental degradation, deepening social inequalities, and the depletion of critical resources, it has become abundantly clear that companies and organisations must urgently engage in a sustainable transition. The climate emergency and biodiversity loss are no longer distant threats – they are present and escalating realities that call for transformative action. Institutions such as the European Union have already begun to take decisive steps. The EU Green Deal, for instance, sets an ambitious goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050, aiming to decouple economic progress from the exploitation of natural resources (European Commission, 2019). Yet, these initiatives, while necessary, mark only the starting point of a much deeper and more fundamental transformation. To date, many sustainability efforts have operated within a framework of damage control – reducing emissions, minimizing waste, increasing efficiency (Rockström and Sachs, 2013). While valuable, these actions are no longer enough to reverse the damage already done or to build

resilient systems for the future (e.g., Alvaredo *et al.* 2018; IPBES 2019; IPCC2022; Rockström *et al.*, 2023 as cited by Grund *et al.*, 2023). We are at a juncture where mitigation and harm reduction must give way to rethinking our role on the planet; a cultural and cognitive shift capable of inspiring new behaviours and mindsets is needed (Romero *et al.*, 2023) to establish a more hopeful and regenerative way of engaging with the natural world (Reed, 2007).

### **6.1.1 A Paradigm Shift: from Sustainability to Regeneration**

While the term *sustainability* has become a cornerstone of contemporary discourse in policy, business, and education, its capacity to inspire and guide meaningful transformation is increasingly questioned (Wahl, 2019; East, 2020). Sustainability, as often practised, tends to focus on maintaining balance, reducing harm, and slowing down degradation. However, in a world already facing ecological overshoot, systemic inequity, and cascading crises, sustaining the current state is not only insufficient – it is no longer desirable. The concept of regeneration offers a more compelling and ambitious alternative (Robinson&Cole, 2015). Rather than aiming to preserve existing conditions, regeneration seeks to restore, renew, and revitalise systems – natural, social, and economic alike (Reed, 2007). It emphasizes a dynamic, co-evolving (Mang & Reed, 2011) and participatory relationship between humans and the planet, one in which we are not external observers or managers, but integral co-evolving participants (Plaut *et al.*, 2012)

Regenerative thinking is grounded in a deep understanding of living systems (Benne & Mang, 2015). It moves beyond sustaining what remains, toward restoring what has been lost and generating conditions for life to thrive. Regenerative thinking embraces the dynamic interdependence of living systems, recognizing that humans are not separate from nature but embedded within it (Gibbons, 2020). It invites us to shift from a mindset of control and extraction to one of participation, reciprocity, and care (Svec *et al.*, 2012). Regeneration is not limited to physical restoration of landscapes and habitats – it is a holistic process that includes cognitive, cultural, social, and economic dimensions. It requires a shift to redefine our role and responsibilities within Earth's web of life (Capra, 1996) for a continual proliferation of

whole-system health and wellbeing (Gibbons, 2020; Sterling, 2003). Organisations have a critical role to play when facing a sustainable transition, as they are in a unique position to reimagine their purpose and strategies, aligning their economies with ecological and regenerative principles (Shannon *et al.*, 2022). Rather than simply reducing their environmental footprint, they must actively contribute to the vitality of the ecological and social systems they are part of and restore what has been lost. This requires building futures that are not only less harmful but fundamentally restorative, inclusive, and adaptive. The task is no longer just to *do less harm*, but to participate in processes that generate more life, cultivating systems that thrive. This shift demands a corresponding transformation in capabilities, developing a ways of thinking and acting that embrace the uncertainty and complexity of futures, work across disciplines, and invite collaboration beyond borders. It calls for an evolution in how we learn, think, and act. As Sterling (2011) suggests, this is a matter of what he calls *Level III learning* – not just doing things better or differently, but rethinking the very values and worldviews that shape our behavior, enabling us to respond meaningfully to the complexity of planetary life. It requires what Bohm (1980) refers to as a continuous unfolding of our consciousness, enabling us to perceive ourselves as part of an interconnected whole. This means that it becomes paramount for change-makers and creators to acquire a new set of skills to master this transition and enabling people to change their behaviour. In this context, creativity and imagination emerges as the most important skill (WEF, 2020) and key lever for change in order to ensure a sustainable and regenerative transition (Canina, Bruno & Efremenko, 2021; Fantini van Ditmar & Toivinen, 2024). It is considered our uniquely human capacity to imagine, shape, and navigate complexity and uncertainty, enabling people to envision alternative paths, adapt to disruption, and co-design new possibilities. However, our current and anthropocentric conception of creativity is not sufficient to meet the needs of a regenerative transformation. *Creativity requires a deep transformation in how it is understood*; it must be coupled with new knowledge, skills and attitudes related to ecosystem interdependence, long-term thinking, among others. Therefore, the main question addressed in this chapter is the following: *What new requirements*

*must creativity embrace to become a driver of regeneration?* The first part of the chapter explores how creativity must itself be redefined to support regenerative transformation: how it must evolve from being a source of innovation to becoming a distributed practice that fosters co-evolution between people, places, and the planet. *Creativity also requires a deep transformation in the way it is activated and guided.* Design, as a field concerned with empowering creativity and design skills for innovation, holds transformative potential in this context. Designers are increasingly being called upon not only to solve problems but to facilitate transformation (Miller & Baumber, 2024). As design researchers and educators, we should pose the following questions: *How could design empower regenerative creativity skills, mindset and behaviours? What new models and methodologies?* The second part of the chapter will present a design-oriented regenerative creative process, developed within the ECODeCK project, demonstrating how design can guide the sustainable transition through people's creative empowerment. Designed to foster behavioural change towards sustainability and regeneration and unlock the creative potential of people, this model can serve as a reference point for developing new educational formats capable of forming the next generation of regenerative thinkers and designers.

## 6.2 Beyond Generative: Toward a Regenerative Creativity

Creativity, the generation of novel and useful ideas (Amabile, 2012), has been widely studied by different disciplines, which leads to it becoming a complex and multidimensional concept (Bruno, 2021). According to the most common definition of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012), it represents the ability to discover something new, to adapt one's available knowledge purposefully and to generate wild ideas to solve the problems in an original, flexible and effective manner. Creativity unfolds through a process which tends to occur in a sequence of stages (Sawyer, 2012) including both a problem-finding and a problem-solving approach. When we define creativity and innovation, it is essential to take into consideration the social, cultural

and economic context in which we live. In fact, with human evolution, there are new domains in which creativity is often expressed, such as politics, digital technology, moral and everyday life (Runco, 2017) and its definitions have to evolve and fluctuate over time (Runco, 2017). The complexity and urgency of today's global challenges related to climate breakdowns, social fragmentation and ecological decline, demand a profound shift in how we understand and apply creativity. Traditional notions of creativity, often focused on generating novel and useful solutions, are no longer sufficient when addressing systemic problems that threaten the very foundations of life on Earth. This means stepping outside the boundaries of the known and rethinking creativity not merely as a tool for creative problem-solving, but as a Post-Antropocentric process for systemic transformation (Canina, Bruno & Glaveanu, 2023). In this new context, *creativity becomes not just a competitive advantage but a collective responsibility to regenerate the health of both human and natural communities*. This demands a move toward regenerative modes of living, working, and innovating, which requires going beyond familiar solutions and imagining radically different futures. The organizations that will thrive in this transition are those that recognize creativity as a key capacity for reimagining and redesigning the structures, products, services, and relationships that shape our lives. Many companies and institutions have already acknowledged that creativity is essential for navigating this volatile environment. However, tapping into creative potential requires a strategic and cultural shift (see Chapter 7). *Organisations must foster cultures where innovation aims to regenerate the environment, meaning it should not only avoid harming the planet but also actively restore and enhance it*. Regenerative innovation prioritizes creating positive, long-term benefits for both nature and society (Thomas, 2025). This redefinition of creativity has implications across all sectors but is particularly critical in design and innovation fields, as design, in its essence, is a practice of shaping futures. Also, future design professionals should support organizations and society in facilitating the regenerative transformation. This means supporting organizations in rethinking their missions, reframing challenges, and developing new mindsets that recognize interdependence, equity, and long-term well-being as central design criteria. Therefore, it is

essential for design research to understand and investigate how creativity is evolving and what are the components that have to be nurtured in order to develop a regenerative creativity behavior and approach.

### **6.2.1 Components/Elements of Regenerative Creativity**

Regenerative creativity requires a shift in people's mindsets and behaviours. In this section are described the fundamental aspects that influence a regenerative creative process: I) the application of a future oriented imagination to be able to create regenerative futures, visions and scenarios II) the understanding that humans, nature and all the living organisms are part of a unique ecosystem and actors of the creative process III) the nurturing of regenerative values and mindset to be able to drive a purpose driven innovation.

#### *Applying a Future-Oriented Imagination*

The future is underpinned by uncertainty, complexity and wicked problems influenced by socio-economic, political and rapid technological changes. It appears less as a fixed destination and more as a space of potential, shaped by the choices we make today. With regard to the sustainability challenges we are facing today, we must ask ourselves: *What kind of futures do we want to create? Are we merely delaying systemic collapse, or are we actively designing futures that are inclusive, regenerative, and resilient?*

To answer these questions and engage with such challenges, individuals, companies, organisations and society in general must learn to navigate the multiplicity of uncertain futures and imagine possible scenarios that could guide regenerative innovation. *Regenerative creativity and innovation require a future-oriented imagination to anticipate strategies for building regenerative and healthy futures.* This means – developing fluency in futures thinking and the creative agility to envision what has not yet been imagined. Futures thinking and methods could bring further richness to regenerative thinking and practice (Slaughter and Bussey, 2005; Camrass, 2020). *Understanding the future as something we co-create rather than predict opens up space for empowerment and collective responsibility.* The future can be understood, explored, mapped and even

created (Slaughter, 1998) inviting us to explore alternatives in a deep, layered manner.

**In the context of transitioning to more hopeful and regenerative ways of engaging with the natural world, futures studies provides the “tools for human beings to grasp their historical predicament, respond to it and move on to new stages of civilised life” (Slaughter, 1998, p. 373). Camrass, 2020**

Futures studies emphasize that we do not face a singular pre-determined future, but rather a plural *futures* (Ramos, 2006) each shaped by values, decisions, and cultural narratives. Through participatory and action-based methodologies (Ramos, 2017), people are not only invited to reflect on possible trajectories but also actively engage in shaping them. This process involves integrating diverse perspectives, fostering a sense of agency, and constructing shared visions that can catalyze deep transformation – both individually and collectively.

Crucially, the creative act of imagining distant or unconventional futures can liberate people from pre-existing ideas and boost creativity in many ways (Koh & Leung, 2019). Imagining an unexpected future, different from the present, can help us take leaps forward, and imagining multiple alternative futures can liberate our thinking and inspire us to try something new (Chiu, 2012). Futures thinking is therefore a component of creativity (Hiltunen, 2021) and regenerative creativity, encouraging a creative mindset to generate transformative scenarios.

### *Embracing a Systemic Multispecies Perspective*

To build regenerative futures, there is a growing need to move beyond human-centred approaches in design and creativity. Humans have traditionally been a central figure in the creative design process, where innovation has been centred on human needs, desires, hopes and aspirations. Today, as we move towards a sustainable transition and a regeneration, we need to develop an environment-centred approach (Sznal, 2020) when approaching innovation, taking other species intelligence into account (Bridle, 2022).

Regeneration requires an expanded awareness and an establishment of a new approach – one that *recognises humans as part of, not*

*separate from, complex ecological systems.* This shift calls for a deeper understanding of the connection and interdependence between human and non-human life forms, and an ethical reconsideration of the relationships that sustain life on Earth.

As a consequence, it is no longer sufficient to view knowledge and creativity as uniquely human capabilities. Scholars working within post-humanistic studies, are trying to redefine what and who has the capacity to produce knowledge and engage in the creative thinking process, where new materialisms and ecologies thrive (Ulmer, 2017). Scholars and designers are beginning to acknowledge that creativity emerges from the interaction of multiple agents – human, non-human, and material. Bruno Latour (1996) in his actor-network theory (ANT) has emphasized that both humans and non-humans hold agency and advocated for a deeper understanding of the relations between these assemblages. In this view, knowledge is generated not only through human cognition, but also through sensory, material and affective exchanges within ecosystems.

*This reconceptualization opens space for plants, animals, landscapes, and even weather systems to be understood as active participants in shaping futures. Regenerative creativity thus becomes a distributed process – one that arises through entanglements with the living world (Milkoreit, 2017) that produces hybrid knowledge and experiences.*

Nature as a non-human agent “can influence the imagination, too: our experience of or interactions with plants and animals, flooding rivers, disappearing lakes, and rising oceans, soil, mountains and glaciers, weather, climate and seasons, volcanic eruptions, a starry night sky” (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 5).

However, integrating non-human perspectives into design is not without challenges. Traditional Human centred design methodologies – such as interviews, surveys, or visual observations – are deeply rooted in human experience can unintentionally perpetuate patterns of overconsumption or exclusion. Regenerative creativity must therefore develop new tools and frameworks that incorporate ecological data, indigenous knowledge systems, multispecies awareness, and insights from sustainability science. It must also embrace methodologies that foster systemic thinking to recognise that the

entirety is interconnected – every design decision has cascading effects across natural and social systems. In this light, designers are no longer isolated problem-solvers, but co-creators embedded within living systems, influencing and being influenced by the environments they inhabit. It is the role of design to move beyond human needs and human experience. Thus, regenerative creativity can help us develop and implement ecological forms of intelligence and thus move to a new form of consciousness and knowledge formation. By embracing a more-than-human perspective – i.e., an approach that includes perspective from nonhuman “which can include animals, plants, micro-organisms, climatic systems, ecosystems, or technologies” (Grusin, 2015, p. 7) – regenerative creativity pushes us to cultivate new forms of consciousness – ones that are attuned to reciprocity, interdependence, and care. This paradigm shift not only enriches the creative process, but also lays the foundation for more just, resilient, and truly regenerative futures.

### *Nurturing Regenerative Values*

Regenerative creativity cannot emerge without a foundational shift in values. At its core, creativity is driven by intrinsic motivation – an internal desire to make meaning, explore and contribute – which is essential not only for initiating the creative process but also for sustaining engagement throughout it (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). In the context of regeneration, this motivation must be anchored in deeper, purpose-driven inquiry: *Why are we doing this, followed by what should we be doing?* (Wahl, 2016). These questions prompt a re-evaluation of the intentions behind creative acts and invite a broader ethical and ecological awareness.

In this light, Candy's (2014) perspective on the role of futurists is particularly relevant. He believes that designers engaging with future thinking have to facilitate exploration of the future keeping the attention focused on process rather than product. This process perspective encourages us to ask whether a truly regenerative future is possible without a parallel shift in human consciousness and values – from extractive to regenerative mindsets. Regenerative futures require not just technical innovation but a heightened awareness of our place in complex living systems, inviting us to ask whether long-

term ecological healing can occur without profound inner growth and responsibility.

Developing regenerative values means recognizing our embeddedness within a web of life that includes not only human communities but also non-human systems and species. It calls for a moral realignment that prioritizes integrity, justice, and non-violence in how we design, think, and live. Learning with and from local ecological communities supports the emergence of these values, grounding them in lived experience and reciprocal relationships. Ultimately, regeneration is not merely a technical or aesthetic goal, it is a way of being. Regenerative creativity arises from this ethical foundation – a commitment to designing futures that are inclusive, life-affirming, and continuously evolving in harmony with the systems they inhabit.

## 6.3 Fostering Regenerative Creativity Through Design: the ECODeCK Model

In this context of transformation, design plays the pivotal role of a medium through *which regenerative creativity can be channeled, oriented and made operational*. While regenerative creativity represents the generative force – the ability to imagine, invent and reframe regenerative futures – *design offers the processes, tools, and methodologies to steer this energy towards concrete, meaningful transformation*. Therefore, in an era marked by the urgency of transformation, it becomes crucial for design research to understand how to act as a catalyst for enabling a shift of behaviours and mindset toward regeneration. Designers are increasingly called to become facilitators of regenerative futures – equipped to guide individuals and organizations in navigating uncertainty, cultivating imaginative capacity, and aligning long-term vision with transformative action. Therefore, there is a growing need for educational models rooted in art and design (Fantini van Ditmar & Toivinen, 2024) that empower professionals to act as catalysts of sustainable and regenerative transformation within organisations and society at large.

This is one of the main goal of the ECODeCK project, educating people for a sustainable and regenerative transition through creativity and design empowerment. The project developed an educational model that empower people to creatively design preferable futures – where innovation is regenerative and value-driven – to benefit both the health of the people and the planet. At the core of the model lies a regenerative creative process aiming at fostering people's regenerative creative attitudes, which is illustrated and described in this section of the chapter. To enable a design and creative approach to sustainability and regeneration, and a behavioural change, the model has been built by integrating different theories and elements, each one with a crucial role:

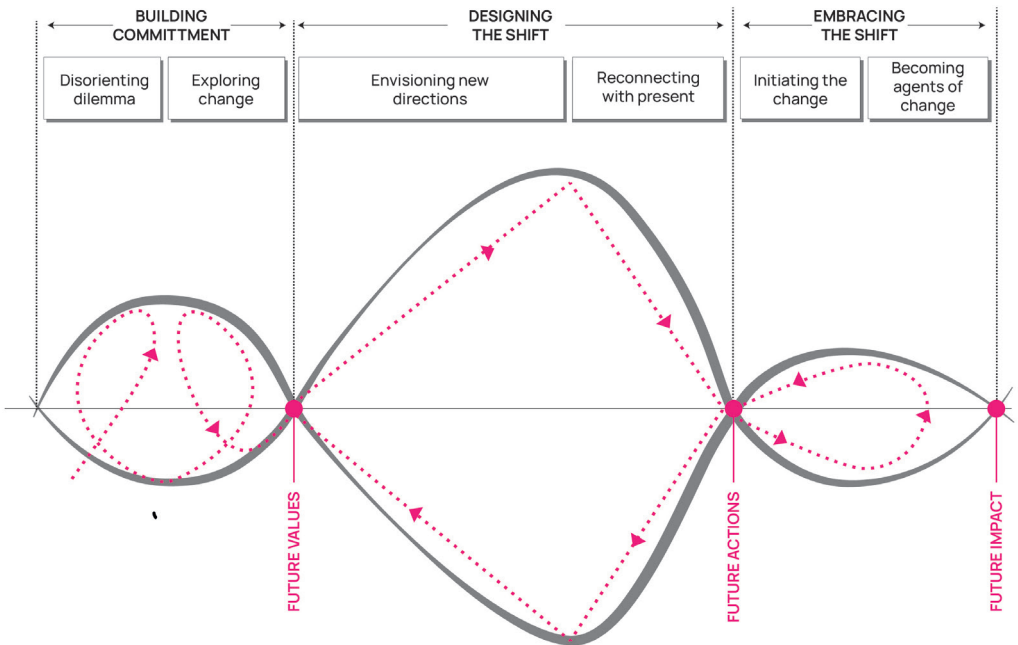
- **a transformative learning theory** (Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow, 1991) to transform mindset and behaviours, which has been used as a basic theoretical structure of the process;
- **the design thinking approach and methods** to foster creative and strategic thinking, which have shaped the structure of the process to make it design-oriented and produce innovative ideas. Design methods also influence engagement throughout the process;
- **the specific components of regenerative creativity**, described above, which have shaped the contents and outcomes of the process, making sure that the regenerative innovation is value-driven, future-oriented and considers multiple stakeholders perspective.

The result of this integration is a regenerative creative design process where regenerative creativity is channeled through design methods and approaches. People going through this process are at the same time envisioning regenerative futures and transforming their behaviour and mindset towards regeneration. The process indeed enables people transformation, promoting individual behavioural change for sustainable development, equality and respect for human rights and the planet's health. Through the process, people can develop their cognitive and non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking and competencies for collaboration, problem solving, coping with complexity and risk, building resilience, thinking systemically and creatively, and empowering them to take responsible and regenerative action.

The choice of adopting a transformative learning approach has been guided by the will of creating a creative process that enable a transformation of unsustainable mindsets and the adoption of a paradigm towards sustainability (Balsiger *et al.*, 2017). As mentioned in chapter 2 of this book, transformative learning is the process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising our perceptions of the world, how we see ourselves and the world around us (Cranton, 1994; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999 as cited by Henderson, 2002). In the field of sustainability, transformative learning has gained increasing impetus and recognition and is considered critical to enhancing and catalysing social transformations towards sustainability (Boström *et al.*, 2018). And so we assumed for regeneration.

The regenerative creative process is divided in three main stages: building commitment, designing the shift and embracing the shift. Each stage has a different objective with regards of regeneration and creative empowerment, and each one is divided in two steps (Fig. 6.1). Below each phase is explained, illustrating how the three aspects described above have been integrated.

**Figure 6.1.** Visualization of the regenerative creative process, which constitutes the foundation of the ECODeCK model.



### 6.3.1 Building Commitment

The first stage of the regenerative creative process is Building Commitment. As the name suggests, its primary aim is to raise participants' awareness and foster a deep, personal commitment to adopting regenerative behaviours and mindsets. Crucially, this commitment must stem from an internal decision to engage – intellectually and emotionally – rather than from external pressures or directives (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). It is closely linked to intrinsic motivation, the internal drive that guides people's actions, behaviours and intentions based on their own personal beliefs and values or the ones of the community they are part of.

Therefore, this stage wants to stimulate people's 'inner dimension', which is a core element when envisioning and creating sustainable futures (Grenni *et al.*, 2019; Landmann, 2020 as cited by Grund *et al.*, 2023). Activating this dimension requires engaging both emotional and reflective capacities to enable a transformative shift in perspective. The process begins with a *Disorienting Experience*, which draws on Mezirow's concept of the *Disorienting Dilemma* from his Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). In this step, it is fundamental to expose individuals to the realities of sustainability crises or allow them to experience unsustainable conditions firsthand. The intention is to provoke strong emotional reactions – both negative and positive – that can motivate collective action and environmental responsibility (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Landmann & Rohmann, 2020, as cited by Grund *et al.*, 2023). Through emotional engagement, in this step, people confront and self-assess their current individual values, opening space for deep critical reflection and inner questioning. Following this, the process moves to a second step of *Exploring Change*, where, through social dialogue, the exchange of ideas and experiences, and collaborative reflection, people can build and choose new sustainable and regenerative values that can drive future creative actions. Besides transforming existing value systems, this step also helps individuals build a renewed personal perspective towards sustainability and regeneration. Unlike the traditional creative process, which starts by analysing and exploring a given problem, searching for information to redefine it (Sawyer, 2012), a regenerative creative process begins by disrupting people's existing system of values in order to rebuild them

around regenerative and sustainable principles, driving decisions and creative actions in the future. The Building Commitment phase creates the conditions for nurturing regenerative values as a foundational component of regenerative creativity. This stage, therefore, fosters the nurturing and acquisition of regenerative values, ensuring that innovation emerges from a value-driven foundation, instead of being shaped by market needs and logics.

Thus, designing activities that support this stage requires careful attention to a few essential elements. First, it is important to work on *identifying regenerative values*. Within the ECODeCK project, for example, two core value pillars were drawn from the ST Comp (Bruno *et al.*, 2025): *Supporting fair and ethical practices*, which help individuals take actions that preserve ecosystems and natural resources; and *Embracing environmental stewardship*, which calls for a recognition of humanity's interdependence with nature and a commitment to restoring resilient ecosystems and respecting the rights of all species. Second, it is critical to *design immersive and participatory activities* that engage participants emotionally and imaginatively. Creating fictional worlds with alternative rules through storytelling, role play, and worldbuilding methods can help participants access deeper layers of self-awareness and creativity. These experiences enable them to explore unfamiliar mindsets and experiment with new behaviours in a safe and generative environment. Lastly, *fostering co-design practices that incorporate diverse forms of knowledge* is vital. This means structuring learning environments that alternate between individual and collaborative reflection, aligning with the principles of transformative learning. Encouraging the participation of individuals with different perspectives and expertise broadens understanding of complex issues, such as climate change or unsustainable behaviours, and fosters the creation of a collaborative system of values as well as collaborative commitment. It is essential to ensure that these environments are safe, respectful, and supportive so that every participant feels comfortable contributing to the shared process.

### **6.3.2 Designing the Shift**

The second stage of a regenerative creative process is Designing the Shift, building on the transformative learning process. Indeed,

Mezirow's process foresees that after a disorienting and critical reflection phase, individuals are ready to take concrete actions to make a change. Based on it, this stage empowers individuals to take concrete actions by designing new plans grounded in the regenerative values developed during the previous stage (Rodriguez Aboytes & Barth, 2020). It supports a shift from reflection to regeneration through applied creativity. As a design-oriented process, Designing the Shift activates future-oriented imagination as well as a systemic, multispecies perspective, core elements of regenerative creativity. This stage guides people in designing preferred regenerative futures and in constructing feasible pathways for achieving them. This is accomplished through iterative cycles of divergent and convergent thinking (Tasoul & Buijs, 2007), which allow for broad exploration of possibilities followed by the focused refinement of concrete actions. The adoption of a design futures approach enables participants not only to imagine and co-create alternative scenarios but also to define structured roadmaps toward systemic transformation. The first divergent step, *Envisioning new directions*, supports participants in exploring a wide landscape of future possibilities. Through the analysis of social, technological, economic, environmental, and political trends and signals, individuals and groups can identify emerging patterns and construct speculative maps of potential futures. This process creates the conditions for deep immersion in imagining and co-designing alternative, desirable futures that are aligned with the regenerative values developed during the Building Commitment stage. Participants are encouraged to think beyond conventional paradigms and to embrace systemic perspectives that prioritise the health of both human and ecological systems. The second step, *Reconnecting with the present*, aims to translate envisioned futures into actionable strategies. This convergent phase supports individuals in exploring new behaviours, actions and roles while acquiring the competencies and knowledge necessary to act responsibly. It involves defining a clear and actionable roadmap – structured in progressive steps – through which the envisioned shift can be pursued. This step anchors future aspirations in present realities, providing a pragmatic bridge between imagination and implementation. This stage enables people to gain personal creative confidence and to develop design, managerial and strategic

skills which increases their sense of agency and empowerment with regard to regenerative transformation. This could lead people to express willingness to make a change in their communities, promoting sustainable actions (Iliško, 2007; Bell *et al.*, 2016; Piasentin & Roberts, 2017; Probst *et al.*, 2019 as cited by Rodriguez Aboytes & Barth, 2020), expressing feelings of responsibility towards climate change (Bentz and O'Brien, 2019 as cited by Rodriguez Aboytes & Barth, 2020). By going through the process of designing regenerative future, people begin to cultivate critical, systems, and complex thinking, allowing them to perceive the interconnectedness of cultural, social, economic, and environmental systems (Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2010; Kalsoom & Khanam, 2017 as cited by Rodriguez Aboytes & Barth, 2020). These capabilities are essential for understanding the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability challenges (Piasentin & Roberts, 2017) and for engaging with them in an informed and creative way

Designing activities that support this stage requires careful attention to a few essential elements. First, is fundamental to *envision scenarios with both people and planet at the centre*. Scenario building activities should be designed to expand people's focus beyond human needs, prompting them to consider the rights, needs, and roles of other species as well. The interdependence of all life forms and the health of ecosystems must be recognised as central to regenerative futures. This perspective fosters an ethical and relational understanding of design, grounded in the co-flourishing of people and the planet.

Second, is important to *work on real world challenges*. Grounding the creative process in actual problems enhances relevance, motivation, and engagement. Activities should involve real stakeholders and actors of the ecological system which are affected by the issue, enabling people to work with concrete constraints, perspectives and system relationships and dynamics. This connection with reality helps ensure that imagined futures are both visionary and context-sensitive. Lastly, regeneration is inherently place-based and requires *acting locally*. Activities should guide participants in analysing the complexity of local systems – both biotic and cultural – as part of a broader transformation process. Understanding the *master pattern* of a place helps identify key leverage points where small, strategic interventions can catalyse meaningful and lasting change. Developing

mental maps of these dynamics supports contextually grounded and health-generating design practices (Reed, 2007).

### 6.3.3 Embracing the Shift

The third and final stage of the regenerative creative process is Embracing the Shift. This stage is dedicated to integrating the designed change into the specific context, establishing new relationships with all the relevant stakeholders, and activating the envisioned solution. Through iterative cycles of learning and validation of the solution and feedback collection, the idea is validated by all the stakeholders involved. In this stage ideas are tested, adapted and implemented through iterative cycles of learning, reflection and validation. This iterative cycle of feedback involves different types of stakeholders and it becomes a conscious process of learning and participation through action, reflection and dialogue. Solutions are tested in context, their feasibility and resonance evaluated, and revised in response to real-world challenges and insights.

The first key step, *Initiating the Change*, revolves around the collaborative validation of the proposed solution. This involves understanding its *impacts across multiple levels* – on people, on organisations, and on the local ecosystem, including multispecies stakeholders. It requires assessing not only the functional effectiveness of the solution but also its *ethical implications*, long-term benefits, and its ability to reflect and reinforce the *regenerative values* established during the initial stages of the process. This step helps identify which new, sustainable, and regenerative behaviours the solution might activate, and how these can become embedded in daily practices.

The second step, *Becoming Agents of Change*, focuses on building *confidence and capacity* to embody the new roles and relationships required for regeneration. Through reflection and experiential learning, individuals begin to internalise the values and behaviours fostered throughout the process. This includes not only their application in professional or organisational settings but also their integration into personal life and worldview that shape their creative mindset. Participants develop a clearer sense of their *agency*, expanding their identity as regenerative designers and changemakers and cultivating the commitment and resilience needed to sustain the transformation over time.

Designing activities that support this stage requires careful attention to a few essential elements:

Firstly, *developing tangible prototypes and artefacts*, is an essential aspect of initiating the change. These material outputs serve as concrete expressions of the envisioned future, helping to visualise strategies and solutions in ways that are both actionable and collectively understood by all the stakeholders involved. Prototypes not only support iteration and validation but also serve as tools for alignment, enabling stakeholders to imagine and commit to the future collaboratively.

Secondly, it is crucial to *create spaces for deep personal and collective reflection*, encouraging participants to critically examine their own values, motivations, and behaviours in relation to the broader system. Activities should invite questions such as: What new practices have emerged? What behaviours have changed or been challenged? How do these shifts affect others – both within the organisation and the wider community? This fosters a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of individual and collective transformation.

Lastly, activities should guide participants to *consider the impacts on the ecosystem* and the broader ecological implications of the change. This includes exploring how the proposed solutions influence not only human stakeholders but also non-human agents within the ecosystem. Participants should assess how newly adopted behaviours might contribute to the *amplification of regenerative practices*, encouraging their diffusion across contexts and communities. This perspective nurtures a deeper ecological consciousness and reinforces the systemic nature of regeneration.

## 6.4 Conclusion

Regenerative creativity invites us to rethink not only what we create, but how and why we create. It calls for a deep transformation in the way we imagine the future, understand our place within ecosystems, and cultivate values that sustain life. Throughout this chapter, we have explored regenerative creativity as a multidimensional and relational process – one that demands both cognitive and emotional

shifts, and that positions creativity as a means to generate systemic, ethical, and ecological value.

At its core, regenerative creativity is shaped by three interdependent components. First, it requires a *future-oriented imagination* capable of navigating uncertainty and embracing complexity. By envisioning alternative futures and expanding the horizon of possibility, individuals and organizations can cultivate the mindset necessary to innovate beyond present constraints. Second, it embraces a *systemic, more-than-human perspective*, acknowledging that creativity is not the sole domain of humans but emerges from entanglements with living systems, materials, and environments. This expanded view fosters greater accountability and responsiveness to the non-human world. Finally, regenerative creativity rests upon the *nurturing of values* such as empathy, care, integrity, and purpose. These values guide not only creative outcomes but the intentions and relationships that underpin them.

To operationalize these principles, the chapter introduced a three-stage regenerative creative process – *Building Commitment, Designing the Shift, and Embracing the Shift*. These stages form an actionable framework to foster reflective learning, shared visioning, and collaborative change-making. The process is inherently iterative and participatory, promoting agency, co-creation, and the embodiment of regenerative practices within real-world contexts.

This framework is not purely theoretical; it emerges from and is embodied in the *ECODeCK model*, a structured approach developed within the manufacturing field, specifically in the fashion and furniture sectors. ECODeCK applies the regenerative creative process through its training model, offering context-specific tools, content, and activities that immerse participants in emotionally resonant learning experiences. These experiences activate both cognitive understanding and affective engagement, thereby amplifying the impact of the training.

ECODeCK's approach demonstrates that regenerative creativity can be meaningfully adapted to professional environments, where it supports the development of competences, relationships, and innovations aligned with sustainability goals. By offering methods that are applicable within working contexts and promoting collective reflection, ECODeCK fosters diverse perspectives and strengthens the capacity for shared transformation.

However, this process is not limited to one sector. The regenerative creative process – while exemplified through ECODeCK – can be reinterpreted and customized across domains. It offers valuable guidance to *design educators* who aim to prepare future professionals capable of leading systemic and ethical transformation. For such adaptation to be effective, facilitators must anchor the process in the specific conditions, needs, and purposes of their context.

Ultimately, regenerative creativity is not a linear methodology, but a *living, evolving practice* – one that invites ongoing dialogue, experimentation, and care. It encourages us to ask not only what kind of futures we are designing, but also what kind of designers we are becoming. In cultivating this awareness, we shift from isolated creators to relational agents of change, capable of contributing to more just, resilient, and life-affirming futures.

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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.