

The Regenerative Shift

Seven Business Attributes and Seven Archetypes to inspire action

Laurence Lehmann-Ortega,
Professor of Strategy at HEC Paris

Sarah Dubreil,
Systemic & regenerative strategy for
business, Founder of circl-earth

September 2025



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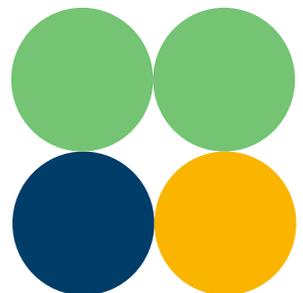
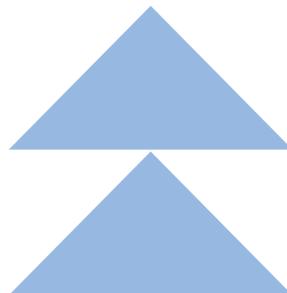
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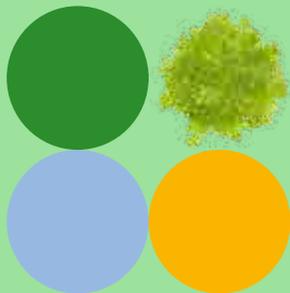
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Preface

Regenerative shifts – an actionable approach to build climate resilience.

Regenerative approaches are a novel area of research and practice that conciliates nature within existing socio-economic systems. Regeneration implies building on and moving beyond resource intensive and circularity-oriented strategies towards nature-regeneration processes. By implementing regenerative shifts, businesses can contribute to halting biodiversity loss and to increase their own capacity to restore planetary health in the socio-ecological systems they operate.

When assessing the potential implementation of regenerative archetypes at the business level, it is unavoidable to identify many complementarities and synergies between regenerative attributes and different levers of change to foster climate resilience (across industries, value chains, and territories). Knowingly or not, systems thinking, increased adaptation and transformative capacity, experimentation and learning, and multi-actor collaboration are key operational concepts and tools that shape emerging resilience strategies of organisations. The use of nature-based solutions is a key solution for regeneration, which is one of the most important levers of change or key enabling conditions required to achieve transformational climate resilience in business, territories, and communities.

Regeneration and climate resilience are at the core of the think, teach and act strategy of the S&O Climate and Earth Center of HEC Paris. This work of Laurence Lehmann-Ortega and Sarah Dubreil offers a well-needed bridge between practice and scholarship, providing a practical and actionable way for business decision makers, government officials, academics and educators, and students to gain a deeper understanding how regenerative attributes and archetypes are key components of transformational change – ultimately helping shifting value chains, businesses, projects and initiatives to build the required regenerative capacities to thrive in a changed climate.

Fernando J. Diaz Lopez, Ph.D.
Executive Director S&O Climate and Earth Center,
HEC Paris
Lead author for the IPCC Seventh Assessment Report (AR7)



Prologue

A research to inspire action

The increasing pressures of climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequities are posing significant risks to business operations and profitability. In response, forward-thinking companies and entrepreneurs are pioneering “regenerative” business practices that go beyond sustainability—actively restoring and enhancing ecological, social, and human well-being,

while gradually shifting from net degradation to a net positive contribution. This white paper draws insights from both academic research and the practices of 39 leading organizations, with its key contribution being the introduction of seven attributes and seven archetypes of regenerative businesses. While it strengthens the academic foundation of the regenerative business concept, its main aim is to inspire practical action beyond a buzzword.

01 Context and objective

Minimizing negative impacts is no longer sufficient

Humanity has exceeded seven of the nine planetary boundaries, pushing Earth's systems toward potentially irreversible tipping points. As a result, disruptions such as extreme weather, resource volatility, and supply chain vulnerabilities are escalating, posing risks to both societal well-being and business stability. Simply minimizing negative impacts is no longer sufficient. Business leaders increasingly recognize the need to adopt practices that **restore and strengthen the health and vitality of ecosystems and societies** (also called 'social-ecological systems') to **build resilience¹ against future ecological and social crises and thrive**. The concept of 'regenerative' business is emerging, defined as "**businesses that enhance, and thrive through, the health of social-ecological systems in a co-evolutionary process²**." Social-ecological systems are integrated systems of nature and humans, deeply intertwined and co-evolving³. This concept allows us to understand the world through the lens of their interdependence and mutual influence.

1. Stockholm Resilience Center, 2014.
2. Hahn and Tampe, 2021.
3. Adapted from Biggs et al., 2021.
4. World Economic Forum, 2020.

The interconnectedness of crises

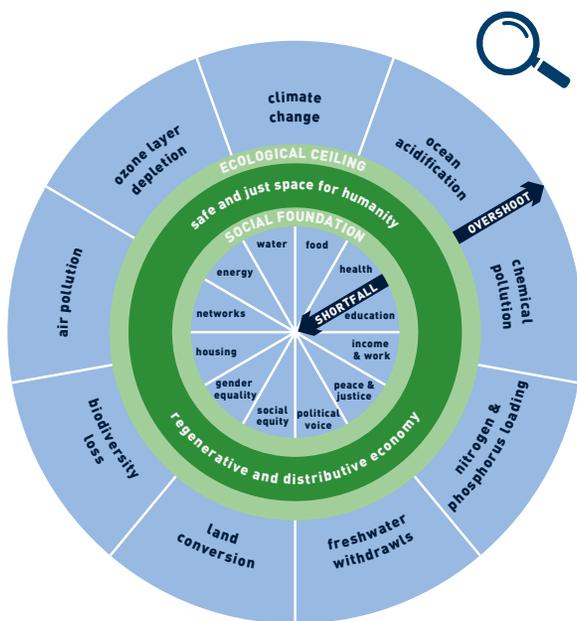
Challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity are deeply interconnected. For example, if global consumption patterns mirrored those of developed countries, the demand for resources would require the equivalent of three Earths.

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Meanwhile, vertebrate species populations have declined by 70% since 1970,
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and half of the world's GDP relies directly on natural systems⁴. In that context, businesses that adopt a **systemic approach** are better equipped to manage complex risks and seize new opportunities.

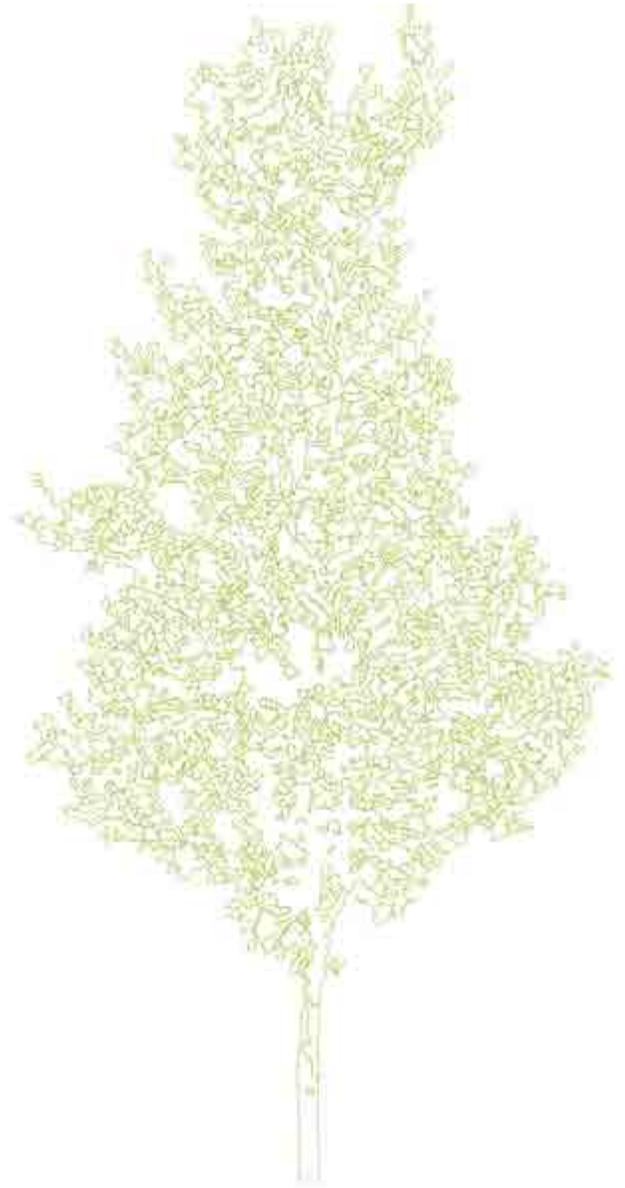
Beyond sustainability: embracing regenerative business

Regenerative business practices mark a fundamental shift from merely minimizing harm to actively enabling net positive environmental and social outcomes. This approach aligns with Kate Raworth's Doughnut Economy framework⁵, which envisions a safe operating space for business—balancing ecological limits with social foundations.



By fostering the health and resilience of social-ecological systems, regenerative businesses help bring humanity back within this “Doughnut.” Rooted in and deeply connected to specific territories, they enhance our ability to co-evolve with ecosystems under increasing strain, collectively strengthening long-term viability and resilience.

5. Raworth, 2017



Our objective: inspire action through rigorous research

By integrating academic literature with real-world business practices, this white paper aims **to inspire business practitioners**—whether in start-ups or established firms—by showcasing archetypes of innovative business models of regenerative businesses with their own revenue stream, developed by pioneers pushing the boundaries of regeneration. In doing so, it also seeks to further embed the concept of regeneration into academic business literature.

02 Methodology⁶

This work bridges academic literature with insights from advanced business practices.

Regenerative business: an emergent literature

Most existing research on regenerative approaches comes from non-business fields such as urbanism, architecture, agriculture, and ecology, with limited academic publications focused on business⁷. A key exception is the work of Hahn and Tampe (2021) on regenerative strategies, which is extensively referenced here. Additionally, foundational theories such as systems thinking informed our approach. Most of the literature on regenerative business comes from thought leaders rather than academic research.

Building a database of case studies featuring organizations at the forefront of regenerative business

To anchor this white paper in real-world practice, we identified 39 pioneering businesses. This selection was informed by engagement with 24 stakeholders in the “regenerative business” ecosystem, either through direct interactions or by analyzing their publications⁹. The agriculture and food sector stands out, accounting for 15 of these organizations. One key selection criterion was ensuring that these organizations—whether for-profit or non-profit—generated revenue from their activities rather than relying mostly on subsidies.

Identifying patterns in Regenerative Business practices

We established a set of attributes to characterize and evaluate both the depth of regenerative maturity and the type of regenerative strategy adopted by the 39 identified organizations. These attributes were initially derived from the key academic literature⁸, then validated and refined using topic modelling.

The maturity level of each attribute was assessed through four types of strategies: exploit, restore, preserve and enhance. Only this final level represents full regenerative maturity, while “Restore” and “Preserve” illustrate transitional stages.

This characterization and evaluation process revealed a fundamental challenge:

.....
regenerative approaches are inherently systemic and resist traditional categorization.
.....

Therefore, attributes and evaluation levels were refined through an iterative process to enhance their relevance and applicability. However, we acknowledge that some subjectivity remains in this process.

Finally, we identified seven archetypes through manual and AI-assisted classification, based on patterns related to recurring strategies, unique innovations, and systemic approaches observed in the data. The analysis was conducted based on publicly available data.

6. A detailed methodological note is available on the S&O website.

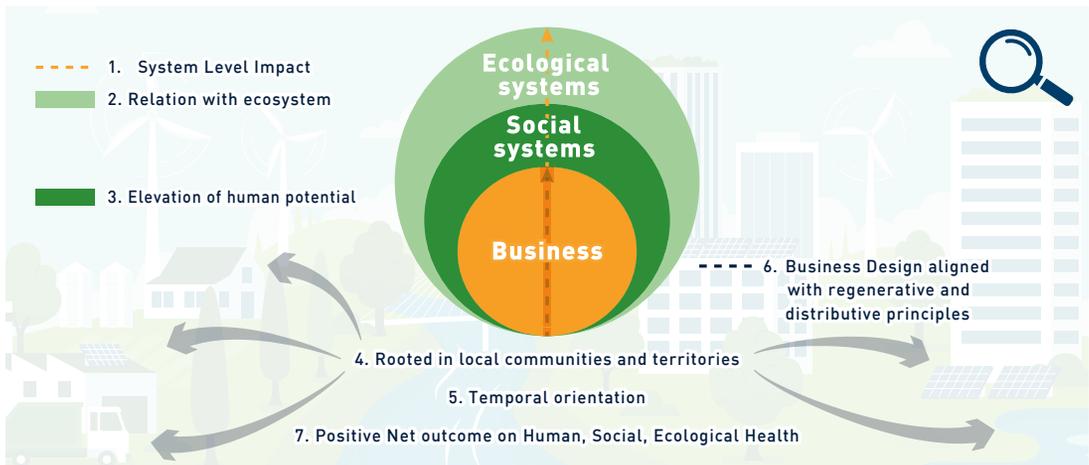
7. We have identified 771 academic articles referring to regeneration and “business”. See details in appendix.

8. The details of the academic literature and thought leader publications reviewed to define the attributes in this report are provided in Methodology section 1.3. It should be noted that an AFNOR Spec on the “Regenerative Economy” (led by I. Delannoy, President of L’Entreprise Symbiotique) was published in France after the research for this paper was completed.

9. Half of the organizations analyzed are based in France, reflecting the authors’ connection to the country.

03 Seven attributes of regenerative businesses

The first outcome of this research is the identification of seven key attributes of a regenerative business and the definition of maturity levels for each attribute. This framework helps further define what regenerative businesses are and enables anyone to assess their regenerative maturity across different levels.



The 7 core attributes of regenerative organizations are:

1 System level impact: How and to which extent a business is involved in shifting its industry, value chain or local context toward the health of social-ecological systems with a systemic approach (going beyond business as usual).

2 Relation with ecosystem: How a business interacts with natural ecosystems, from resource exploitation to regeneration and co-evolution with nature.

3 Elevation of human potential (regenerative & developmental leadership, inherently adaptive): How a business shapes its leadership culture, work environment, and strategic practices to foster human development and social well-being, ensuring both people and ecosystems co-evolve and thrive harmoniously.

4 Rooted in local communities and territories: The depth of connection and embeddedness of a business within the specific social and ecological characteristics of its place.

5 Temporal orientation: The degree of alignment between business time horizons and the time cycles of social-ecological systems.

6 Business design aligned with regenerative and distributive principles (purpose, ownership, financing, governance, networks): The extent to which the underlying business design—its purpose, ownership, governance, and financial mechanisms—supports and is aligned with the health of social-ecological systems.

7 Positive net outcome on human, social, ecological health: The overall net impact of business activities on social-ecological systems, considering human, social, and ecological well-being.

The details of the maturity level for each attribute were largely inspired by Hahn & Tampe's (2021) four categories: Exploit, Restore, Preserve, Enhance, presented as a continuum. They are provided in appendix 1.

.....
Our work revealed that no business “is” inherently regenerative. Rather, a business can “build regenerative capacity” for a specific context, ecosystems or communities.
.....

Organizations may either directly contribute to the regeneration of local ecosystems and communities or indirectly assist their customers or providers in enhancing their own efforts in their local context.

Both the attributes and the maturity level assessment provided a framework to analyze the regenerative nature of the 39 businesses we identified. Ultimately, this framework can serve as a valuable tool for organizations to integrate regenerative practices into their strategic design and track their progress over time.



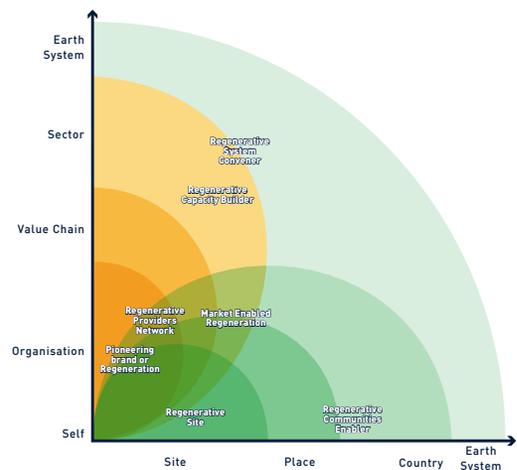
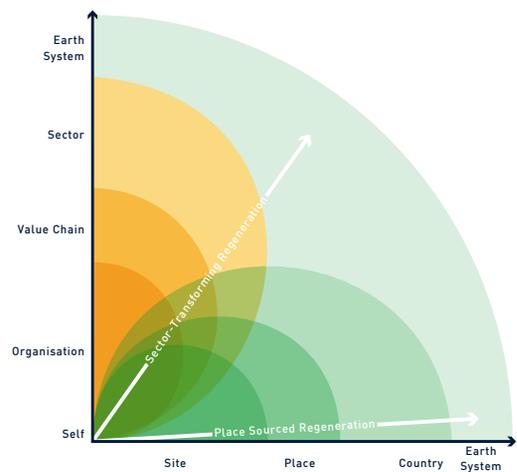
04 Seven archetypes of regenerative businesses

Seven archetypes emerged from our analysis of 39 organizations. These seven archetypes can be grouped into two categories:

- **Place-Sourced Regeneration:** These businesses are built from the ground up and deeply rooted in their local communities. The organizations reviewed were often public-private partnerships or not for profit organizations, interested in building the capacity of their local community.
- **Sector-Transforming Regeneration:** These businesses seek to transform their industries, shifting away from traditional “business as usual” models toward regenerative practices. They focus on building sector-wide capacity to reconnect with places and regenerate local ecosystems & communities. This transformation can unfold at multiple levels:

- at the level of an **individual organization & its direct value chain** (for example, the “Regenerative providers network” archetype). Lush, the cosmetics company, has developed collaborative networks of local producers regenerating local forests across Indonesia, Africa, and Latin America. While Lush openly shares the methodologies it built, its core intent is not to reshape the entire cosmetics industry but to embed regeneration within its own value chain.
- at a larger level, by an **organization seeking to change the entire industry** value chain (for example, the “Regenerative System Convener” archetype). The Savory Institute, for instance, is reshaping how farmers, global brands, and consumers perceive agriculture and land management. It is also matching purchasers and producers that are on the same journey towards regenerative practices. These organizations go much further than marketplaces, and aim at bringing along the different stakeholders of their sector in a collective transition.

Most of these archetypes start with embodying or sharing a different vision of the world, of their sector, their territory. They attract through resonance, as illustrated by the tuning fork in the logos on the next page.



The core principles of each archetype are described on the next page, each illustrated with a lead example. The full description can be found in Appendix 2.

Sector-transforming regeneration

	<p>Pioneering Brand for Regeneration</p> <p>Organizations who publicly redefine sector norms through bold narratives, transparent and value aligned practices, and stable ownership models.</p> <p>Lead example : Patagonia (US)</p>
	<p>Regenerative Providers Network</p> <p>Organizations supporting supply chains that build local producer capacity, invest in regenerative sourcing, and adopt transparent, fair partnerships, minimizing intermediaries and positively impacting ecosystems.</p> <p>Lead example : Lush (UK)</p>
	<p>Market-Enabled Regeneration</p> <p>Organizations leveraging premium product sales or innovative revenue models to directly finance environmental restoration and community development, often bridging North-South market gaps.</p> <p>Lead example : Guayaki (US – South America)</p>
	<p>Regenerative Collective Capacity Builder</p> <p>Organizations facilitating co-learning journeys for stakeholders and peers cohorts, supporting systemic shifts through skill-building, collective learning, and cross-sector collaboration.</p> <p>Lead example : Convention des Entreprises pour le Climat (France)</p>
	<p>Regenerative System Convener</p> <p>Organizations that champion a new sector narrative, reshaping market dynamics, standards, and customers' expectations around regenerative principles.</p> <p>Lead example : Savory Institute (USA)</p>

Place-sourced regeneration

	<p>Regenerative Site</p> <p>Organizations that manage immersive locations—such as farms, touristic places, or third places—that model regeneration in action. They integrate architectural design, local identity, and ecological restoration, providing tangible proof of regenerative outcomes.</p> <p>Lead example : La Ferme du Rail (France)</p>
	<p>Regenerative Communities Enabler</p> <p>Organizations that empower local communities to self-organize around social and environmental well-being, building progressively complementary offers, often partnering closely with public authorities or local stakeholders.</p> <p>Lead example : Comfama (Colombia)</p>

Ultimately, these archetypes offer strategic guidance for businesses aiming to build resilience against future ecological and social crises as well as reverse the current trend. They show how business models can actively build the capacity of the ecosystems and communities they depend on to regenerate—unlocking new pathways for vitality and long-term value creation.

Unlike many circular models that optimize within existing systems, regenerative models **strengthen**

the capacity of living systems to adapt, evolve, and thrive. These archetypes provide actionable patterns to reimagine strategy, innovation, and business development through the lens of systemic health.

By surfacing pioneers, emerging initiatives, and less visible actors already operating in this paradigm, we aim to make regeneration tangible—and invite others to accelerate the shift.

05 Conclusion: a call for action towards regeneration

In an era of escalating ecological crises and interconnected social challenges, regenerative businesses represent a powerful source of hope for the future.

Key Contributions

Through an extensive literature review and a detailed analysis of 39 pioneering regenerative organizations, this paper offers valuable insights for practitioners. In particular, it is possible to highlight the following key contributions:

1 A set of **seven attributes** that define regenerative organizations, along with a framework to assess their current level and guide progress toward regeneration.

2 **Seven archetypes** of regenerative businesses designed to inspire practitioners to transform their current business models.

In addition, the analysis revealed recurring patterns in the evolution of regenerative business:

- They start with a **collective story of hope**, inspiring action rather than simply addressing problems.
- They seek to **reshape and create new markets** rather than optimizing existing ones.
- They prioritize **building capacity for collective transitions**, focusing on transforming practices rather than just deploying solutions.
- They emphasize **co-learning journeys**, creating space for diverse stakeholders within a sector or territory to collaborate in new ways.
- They are **deeply rooted in specific territories and communities**, drawing inspiration and resources from their local context.

- They **align their governance structures** to enable ambitious regenerative projects and empower employees, often navigating conflicting goals and tensions along the way.

Limitations of the underlying study of this document

While this work lays important groundwork, it has some limitations briefly outlined below.

- **A significant number of the analyzed organizations are French:** the analysis should be expanded to include more examples from all the World.
- **There is insufficient information on net contribution to socio-ecological systems:** Most organizations do not communicate their overall impact on ecosystems and society, making it difficult to assess whether their activities are truly regenerative.
- **Systemic complexity:** The analysis focuses on individual archetypes rather than their interconnections and potential to create virtuous cycles, limiting the systemic perspective crucial to regenerative approaches.
- **Lack of contextual anchoring:** Findings remain abstract and require deeper integration into specific regional, sectoral, or ecosystem contexts. The ability to shape markets with a net positive impact on socio-ecological systems is highly dependent on local rules, institutions, and values.
- **Ecosystem dynamics:** The role of organizations in fostering and leveraging collective dynamics within their sector or territory remains underexplored. A broader analysis at the sector or territorial level, rather than just the individual level, would provide deeper insights into regenerative business models.

Next steps and avenues of future action-research.

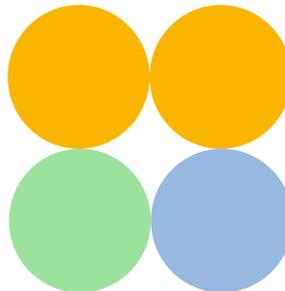
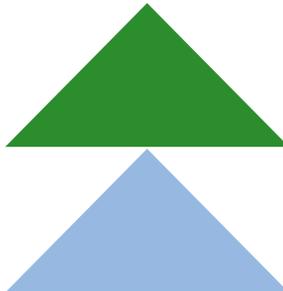
To deepen understanding and practical application, future research could:

- **Explore detailed organizational pathways** within specific contexts, examining the challenges faced, tensions experienced, and actions taken by pioneering organizations. Interviews and qualitative methodologies could provide firsthand insights into these dynamics.
- **Develop new tools and metrics** that support a more ecosystem-oriented and a developmental vision of business models. Building on a review of existing regenerative frameworks used (including by non-business stakeholders), such tools would help companies build long-term resilience, assess their own degree of maturity in terms of regenerative archetypes and business models, and to thrive.

- **Adopt systemic action inquiry formats** to ground future studies in specific territories and ecosystems. This approach would help observe how businesses evolve within their environments and contribute to collective, systemic transitions.

In particular, further research could explore the interrelation between territory, business models, and culture & leadership —examining how place-based identity and leadership dynamics shape, and are shaped by, regenerative business practices.

By advancing these future steps, we can further refine regenerative business approaches and create actionable frameworks that not only inspire but also drive large-scale systemic transformation.



Appendix 1&2

1. Definition and assessment
or regenerative businesses'
attributes

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2. Detailed description of the 7
archetypes

Attributes	Strategies
<p>1. System Level Impact</p> <p>How and to which extent a business is involved in shifting its industry or local context toward the health of socio-ecological systems with a systemic approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit: Minimal impact, maintaining the status quo • Restore: Incremental, punctual improvements without addressing systemic issues • Preserve: Regular efforts to adapt and improve within existing systems • Enhance: Transformative actions driving systemic change, fostering new paradigms for regeneration and systemic innovation
<p>2. Relation with Ecosystem</p> <p>How a business interacts with ecological systems, from resource use to regeneration and co-evolution with nature.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit: Domination • Restore: Instrumental separation • Preserve: Mutual co-existence • Enhance: Symbiotic co-embeddedness
<p>3. Elevation of Human Potential</p> <p>How a business shapes its leadership culture, work environment, and strategic practices to foster human development and social well-being, ensuring both people and ecosystems co-evolve and thrive harmoniously.</p> <p>Underlying dimensions:</p> <p>A. Regenerative, Developmental Leadership</p> <p>The extent to which leadership approach promotes self-organization and human development, ensuring both people and ecosystems thrive.</p> <p>B. Inherently adaptive</p> <p>The extent to which a business embeds flexible, iterative, and participatory strategies to navigate change and complexity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit: Leadership prioritizes short-term productivity over well-being and relationships, with minimal adaptability. • Restore: Basic care for employees and stakeholders, with occasional process adjustments. • Preserve: Participatory leadership fosters well-being and collaboration, adapting regularly to feedback. • Enhance: Regenerative leadership drives care and collaboration, is developmental, continuously aligning processes to serve long-term human and ecosystems flourishing.
<p>4. Rooted in Local Communities and Territories</p> <p>The depth of connection and embeddedness of a business within the specific social and ecological characteristics of its place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit: Disembedded from place and ecosystem • Restore: Place and ecosystem as exchangeable commodity • Preserve: Acknowledgment of place-specific characteristics and requirements • Enhance: Uniqueness and nestedness of place within social-ecological system

5. Temporal Orientation

The degree of alignment between business time horizons and the time cycles of socio-ecological systems.

- **Exploit:** Short-term, linear
- **Restore:** Transactional, linear
- **Preserve:** Long term, linear
- **Enhance:** Long term, cyclical, synchronic

6. Business Design aligned with regenerative and distributive principles

The extent to which the underlying business design—its purpose, ownership, governance, and financial mechanisms—supports and is aligned with the health of socio-ecological systems.

- Yes / No

7. Positive Net outcome on Human, Social, Ecological Health

The overall net impact of business activities on socio-ecological systems, considering human, social, and ecological well-being.

- **Exploit:** Impact as externalities, Net negative impact
- **Restore:** Compensate negative impact
- **Preserve:** Avoid impact or net zero impact
- **Enhance:** Net positive impact



Pioneering Brand for Regeneration

Organizations that reshape industry standards by promoting bold narratives, transparent and value-driven practices and stable ownership models.

These businesses transform their industries by embedding **regenerative principles** into their core value proposition. They craft **bold, transformative narratives** that challenge conventional practices and inspire systemic change.

By prioritizing **transparency, trust, and long-term alignment**, they establish themselves as leaders in shaping the future of their sectors. Many maintain **stable ownership structures** that reflect their values, often reinforced through **steward ownership models** or **shareholding foundations** to ensure mission-driven continuity.

Key features: Visionary storytelling and advocacy, transparent and ethical value chains, long-term commitment through stable ownership structures, ownership and governance structures aligned on regenerative principles, participative and decentralized leadership.

Lead example: Patagonia

Patagonia, an outdoor apparel company founded in **1973**, frames a bold narrative that combines environmental activism, transparency, and long-term alignment with planetary health. To the question “can the group sincerely fight the climate crisis as a for-profit apparel company?”, its chief executive officer Ryan Gellert answered to the Guardian in 2023 :

“If you’re serious about [the climate crisis] and this is your business, you’ve got to develop a level of comfort with contradiction. [...] The idea of ultimately **running a regenerative business, that is the biggest idea that we’re capable of**, and we’re a long, long way from realizing that.”

Its founder Yvon Chouinard further emphasized the company’s mission, stating, “We’re in business to save our home planet.” In a pioneering move, Chouinard **transferred ownership to an innovative ownership structure**, placing the Earth as its sole shareholder. Patagonia’s profits are now redirected to funding climate solutions and environmental advocacy.

Patagonia’s value proposition includes high-quality outdoor gear, repair and resale services through Worn Wear, and regeneratively produced food products via Patagonia Provisions. By producing 85% of its goods in Fair Trade Certified™ factories, promoting regenerative organic farming, and sharing detailed supply chain transparency, Patagonia has built enduring trust with environmentally conscious customers. Its activism platform, Patagonia Action Works, empowers individuals to engage with grassroots organizations, solidifying its role as a sector pioneer committed to regeneration and systemic change. Patagonia’s sales were estimated at around 1,5bnUSD in 2023.

Other organizations: Lush (cosmetics), Arcadie (spice/herbal), Faith in nature (cosmetics), Metabief (ski resort), Pocheo (envelopes manufacturing), Expanscience (pharmaceuticals & dermo-cosmetics), Tuffery (fashion)



Regenerative Providers Network

Organizations that **support supply chains** by **building local producer capacity, investing in regenerative sourcing**, and fostering **transparent, fair partnerships**, minimizing intermediaries and create positive impact on ecosystems.

This archetype goes beyond circular supply chains by **prioritizing the regeneration of natural resources and ecosystems while empowering local communities**. By minimizing intermediaries, strengthening local infrastructure, and investing in regenerative practices, they ensure that a larger share of profits directly benefits local communities.

Key Features: Direct sourcing, capacity-building for local producers, fair pricing and fair relationships, regenerative practices at the source, decentralization, resilience.

Lead example : Lush

Lush, founded in **1995** in the UK, is renowned for its handmade cosmetics made from fresh, organic ingredients. Committed to ethical practices, the company emphasizes cruelty-free, environmentally friendly products and minimal packaging while actively advocating for social and environmental causes. Its **"People Care, Earth Care & Fair Share Buying Policy"** aligns with permaculture principles, guiding its approach to sourcing and regeneration.

Lush **embeds local capacity-building, ecosystem restoration, and value creation directly at the source**. It employs **dedicated teams to scout for local partners** in its sourcing hubs across Indonesia, Africa, and Latin America **to develop regeneration projects**.

In Sumatra, for example, Lush funded a permaculture training center, equipping 150 farmers from six villages with regenerative patchouli cultivation techniques, replacing slash-and-burn practices and improving soil health. Lush also invested in carbon-neutral distillation equipment, allowing farmers to produce high-value essential oils rather than raw materials. This minimizes intermediaries, ensuring a greater share of profits remains within the community. The initiative restored 50 hectares of degraded land, introduced village-level regulations to prevent deforestation,

and supported community-led conservation. Lush further amplifies impact through philanthropic investments, local partnerships, and serving as an off-taker of regenerative materials, fostering landscape-level regeneration.

Committed to **transparency and knowledge sharing**, Lush **documents its methodologies** through **initiatives like "Regenerosity"**, encouraging other businesses to adopt regenerative supply chain practices. By embedding regeneration into its value chain, Lush not only supports ecosystems and communities but also provides a **replicable blueprint for aligning economic activity with ecological and social well-being**.

Lush remains **privately owned, with 10% of shares held by employees** through an Employee Benefit Trust. It sells cosmetics that are vegetarian, cruelty-free, "naked" (minimal packaging), fresh, ethically sourced, and handmade with love, available both in stores and online. Lush's sales were 708mGBP in 2023, according to its audited accounts.

Further examples: Patagonia (outdoor clothing), Arcadie (spice & herbal), Faith in Nature (cosmetics), Danone (food), Biocoop (food), Bastien Tissage Technique (textiles), Tikamoon (furniture)



Market enabled regeneration

These business models use the **sale of products or services as a means to support and drive the regeneration of ecosystems and communities**. They demonstrate how environmental restoration and business success can co-evolve, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Often positioned as premium brands or leveraging higher prices in the Global North to fund local projects in the Global South, they **create financial mechanisms that sustain regeneration efforts**. However, **as they scale**, they may face **tensions between their core mission** of ecosystem and community regeneration **and the demands of green growth** in conventional markets.

Key Features: Premium positioning, ecosystem restoration financing, place sourced, social regeneration financing.

Lead example: Guayakí (South and North America)

Guayakí exemplifies the "Market-Enabled Regeneration" model by **using its yerba mate products to drive environmental restoration and community empowerment in South America**. Founded in **1996**, the company partners with indigenous and smallholder farmers to cultivate yerba mate in agroforestry systems, helping to preserve native forests and combat deforestation. This approach enables local communities to earn a sustainable income without resorting to clearcutting or timber sales.

Guayakí **pioneered a thriving North American market for premium yerba mate**, initially positioning it as a **trendy, energizing soft drink** among West Coast university students. Today, its products—including canned, bottled, and loose-leaf yerba mate—are sold in supermarkets (Whole Foods, Safeway, Kroger), online retailers (Amazon, Walmart), and through direct sales.

Through a **fair-trade framework**, Guayakí pays premium prices for yerba mate, ensuring fair wages and funding community-led projects in infrastructure, education, and food sovereignty. The company **collaborates with the Aché Kue Tuvy community to support cultural heritage while fostering economic self-sufficiency**. It also holds Regenerative Organic and Fair for Life certifications.

As Guayakí scales rapidly (**\$100M in sales in 2021, \$75M raised** in 2023), concerns have emerged regarding the **balance between green growth and its core social and environmental mission**. Some critiques highlight potential risks of replicating post-colonial economic dynamics that have historically marginalized indigenous communities.

Guayakí operates as a **Social Purpose Corporation (SPC)**, registered in the United States.

Further examples: Mountain Hazelnuts (hazelnuts production), Commonland (landscape project development, access to concessionary financing), Regen Network (landscape project development, carbon & biodiversity credits), Cacao Hunters (premium chocolate, community & ecosystems regeneration), Akili (social projects financed by carbon offsettings)



Regenerative Collective Capacity Builder

Organizations **facilitating multi-stakeholder learning journeys, supporting systemic shifts via skill-building, co-learning, and cross-sector collaboration.**

These businesses **bring together private stakeholders within a sector or territory** for a co-learning journey toward regeneration. They help establish a **shared inquiry** aligned with regenerative goals, fostering **collective hope** and commitment to the process.

Their role is to **build capacity** by equipping stakeholders with leadership, self-organization, and technical skills. They facilitate the adaptation and spread of regenerative knowledge, tailoring approaches to local and sector-specific contexts. Rather than offering fixed solutions, they focus on **guiding transitions and supporting bottom-up capacity building** instead of top-down implementation.

To do this effectively, they embrace a **different leadership style**—one centered on **inner development, co-learning, self-organization, and shared governance**. Some businesses specialize in concrete technical practices, particularly in agriculture, while others focus on social and human dynamics.

Key Features: Shared co-learning platforms, building collective capacity for a sector transition, transition of practices rather than deployment of solutions, peer learning.

Lead example : Convention des Entreprises pour le Climat (France)

The Convention des Entreprises pour le Climat (CEC) engages business leaders in an immersive, co-learning journey toward ecological regeneration. Established in France in **2020**, CEC runs **8-month programs tailored to cohorts of businesses** from specific regions or sectors, guiding them through a **transformative process toward a regenerative economy**. After successfully running 25 cohorts, CEC has built a thriving network of over **1,400 alumni companies** (2,800 executives) , with **1,000** of them having successfully **delivered their roadmap toward a regenerative economy**.

CEC employs a **"head, heart, hands" pedagogy**, bringing together CEOs with decision-making authority and their "Planet Champions" with the drive to implement change. Participants work in small peer groups, where they alternate between going through transformative experiences such as deep time walks, learning from leading researchers and pioneering practitioners, and engaging in collective reflection and emotional sharing. Each company develops a tailored roadmap toward regeneration while contributing to collaborative projects designed to drive sectoral or regional change.

By fostering deep personal transformation and creating a space for collective inquiry, CEC accelerates the shift of mainstream CEOs and the spread of regenerative practices. Facilitated by expert coaches in shared governance and collective intelligence, the journey equips CEOs with the skills and insights needed to lead in a participative way the ecological transition, redefining the role of business in addressing the environmental crisis and driving systemic change.

Convention des Entreprises pour le Climat generates its revenues through **contributions from companies participating to its co-learning journeys**, and through philanthropic funding from the companies and from ecosystem partners. CEC is a **not for profit**, also **owner of a for profit entity** active in consulting (CEC Institute).

Further examples: Hylo (social network), Paysans de Nature (agriculture), Fermes paysannes et sauvages (agriculture)



Regenerative System Convener

Organizations that **champion a new sector narrative, reshaping market dynamics, standards, and customers' expectations** around regenerative principles.

These businesses act as **thought leaders, blending visionary storytelling with concrete action** to shape sectoral values, norms, and practices. Through new sector narratives, active lobbying, and multi-sided capability building, they seek to influence what people and institutions prioritize. Their goal is to **open space for new markets** that **align more closely with ecological and social well-being**.

Serving as lighthouses for stakeholders seeking change, these businesses actively **create supportive infrastructures**—such as new standards, assessment frameworks, and policies—that **enable the growth of activities within this new paradigm**. Establishing a compelling narrative and attracting like-minded stakeholders is a key starting point. Many of these organizations collaborate with researchers, policymakers, and the cultural sector to amplify their impact. Notably, we also identified data organizations focused solely on shaping new narratives.

Key Features: Visionary storytelling, alliances with policymakers, researchers and the culture sector, development of certifications or standards, capacity building for both sides of a market, multi stakeholders convening.

Lead example: Savory Institute (USA)

The Savory Institute is **transforming the way agriculture and land management are perceived by farmers, global brands, and consumers**. By promoting the **Holistic Management framework**, it connects soil health, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration to broader sustainability goals.

Its **Land to Market** program works with **FMCG brands, retailers, and consumers to create a transparent supply chain**, linking regenerative farmers with sustainability-conscious buyers and brands willing to pay a premium. Through storytelling, **partnerships with over 80 brands (with 1,000+ verified products)**, and certification efforts, the Institute elevates regenerative producers **from the margins to the mainstream**. 'Land to Market' also serves as a **product label**, exclusively applied to goods sourced from farms verified through the **Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV)** protocol. Unlike traditional certifications, EOV focuses on measurable ecological outcomes rather than prescribed practices. The combined label and protocol further empowers consumers to support regenerative agriculture with their purchasing choices.

The **Savory Institute supports land managers and farmers** on their regenerative journey through **direct capacity building, peer-to-peer learning, and hands-on training at its own site**, embodying its Holistic Management approach. With a decentralized, asset-light model, the Institute enables anyone to become an educator or open a regional hub, fostering a network of **50 hubs worldwide**. Rather than competing, it fosters **"coopetition"**, encouraging collaboration.

To date, more than **30 million hectares are managed under the Savory Institute's Holistic Management approach**, with 3 million hectares independently verified through the EOV protocol — providing tangible proof of regenerative outcomes.

As a **nonprofit**, the Savory Institute **generates revenue through its Land to Market program, large scale projects, events, and network programs**, ensuring a sustainable approach to its mission. The Savory Institute earned 3,6mUSD in 2023.

Further examples: Alenvi (care sector), Danone Ecosystem & Les 2 Vaches (food & agriculture), Omie & Lively.earth (food & agriculture), Commonland (landscape projects development), Sekem (agriculture), Biocoop (food & agriculture), Yuka (food)



Regenerative Site

An **immersive location**—such as a **farm, tourist destination, or community space**—that **actively demonstrates regeneration in practice**. These sites blend architectural design, local identity, and ecological restoration, offering tangible examples of regenerative impact.

These spaces serve as living laboratories, showcasing regenerative principles through hands-on, place-based experiences. They blend **experimentation with community-led learning** and are **deeply rooted in their local environments**, creating opportunities unique to their surroundings while fostering new ways of connecting. Acting as hubs, they demonstrate how regeneration can thrive at the intersection of nature, community, and local landscapes. Often founded by individuals with a deep connection to a place or community, these projects sometimes emerge organically and intuitively.

Key features: Architecture and experiences that embody regenerative practices, celebrate local identity, and deeply engage the local community. Strong localized partnerships foster mutual growth and trust, as well as visible ecological restoration.

Lead example: La Ferme du Rail (France)

La Ferme du Rail, located in Paris, is a dynamic **third place** uniting cooperatives and associations. It has created an **integrated ecosystem** that combines **food catering, social inclusion, sustainable urban agriculture, and eco-friendly construction**. The site features a farm and a restaurant, providing training and employment for marginalized individuals while promoting environmental sustainability.

As both a social and architectural project, La Ferme du Rail experiments with ecological materials and design to establish circular systems, such as water management and onsite waste composting. It evolves through local partnerships, offering workshops like woodworking and embroidery while supplying fresh produce to the neighborhood, strengthening its social and ecological impact.

The project **generates revenue** through its **food services, housing, and public social reintegration contracts**. Its business model aligns with regenerative and distributive principles and is operated by REHABAIL, a **social cooperative** founded in **1993**. La Ferme du Rail is a tangible example of regeneration in action, deeply rooted in its local environment.

Further examples: Playa Viva (tourism), Sinal do Vale (third place & training center), Knepp Estate (tourism), Friche la Belle de Mai (third place)



Regenerative Communities Enabler

Organizations that **empower local communities to self-organize** around social and environmental well-being. They gradually develop complementary initiatives and often collaborate closely with public authorities and local stakeholders to create lasting impact.

These businesses **create the conditions for local communities to self-organize and manage their own regenerative projects** focused on social and environmental well-being, such as **healthcare, environmental restoration, and banking services**. They foster **resilience, community ownership, and local agency** at the city or regional level.

Among all regenerative business models, these organizations are **the most closely connected to public authorities**, often engaging through public tenders or governance structures. **Rooted deeply in their specific territories**, they **prioritize “pollination”**—spreading their impact locally—over expanding into new regions.

Key Features: Place sourced, participatory governance models, local capacity-building programs, enabling community & individual agency, local ecosystems regeneration, social regeneration.

Lead example: Comfama (Colombia)

Comfama, Colombia’s first Family Compensation Fund, was founded in **1954** in Medellín in response to systemic social challenges during a time of dictatorship, violence, and economic crisis. Established through a **collaboration between unions and industrial employers**, it initially redistributed 1% of workers’ salaries contributed by affiliated companies to provide family subsidies. Today, Comfama serves **4.4 million affiliates** and **120,000 employers** across Antioquia, guided by values of solidarity and social dialogue.

Over the years, Comfama has expanded its services to include education, health, housing, cultural programs, nature reserves, and financial services—creating the **infrastructure and tools for local communities to thrive**. As a key player in sustainable urban and rural development, it promotes economic redistribution, empowering workers and their families while fostering long-term social mobility. Initiatives like **Bosques Comfama** and **Culturas Regenerativas** strengthen ecological resilience, sustainable resource use, and community-led regeneration.

Deeply embedded in the Antioquia region, Comfama collaborates with **2,229 suppliers, 129 cultural organizations, and 56 associations**, integrating public, private, and community partnerships to enable self-organization and leadership. Its mission, structure, and impact are all rooted in empowering local communities.

As a **nonprofit private entity under state supervision**, Comfama generates revenue through employer contributions—companies pay a percentage of their employees’ salaries—as well as through its broad range of services. In 2023, its audited revenues reached approximately **€540 million**.

Further examples: Halage (soil & social regeneration), Voisin Malin (solidarity economy), Les Marmites Volantes (local schools canteen meals & agroecology), Brattleboro cooperative (local food coop)

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01 Context and objectives

Minimizing negative impacts is no longer sufficient

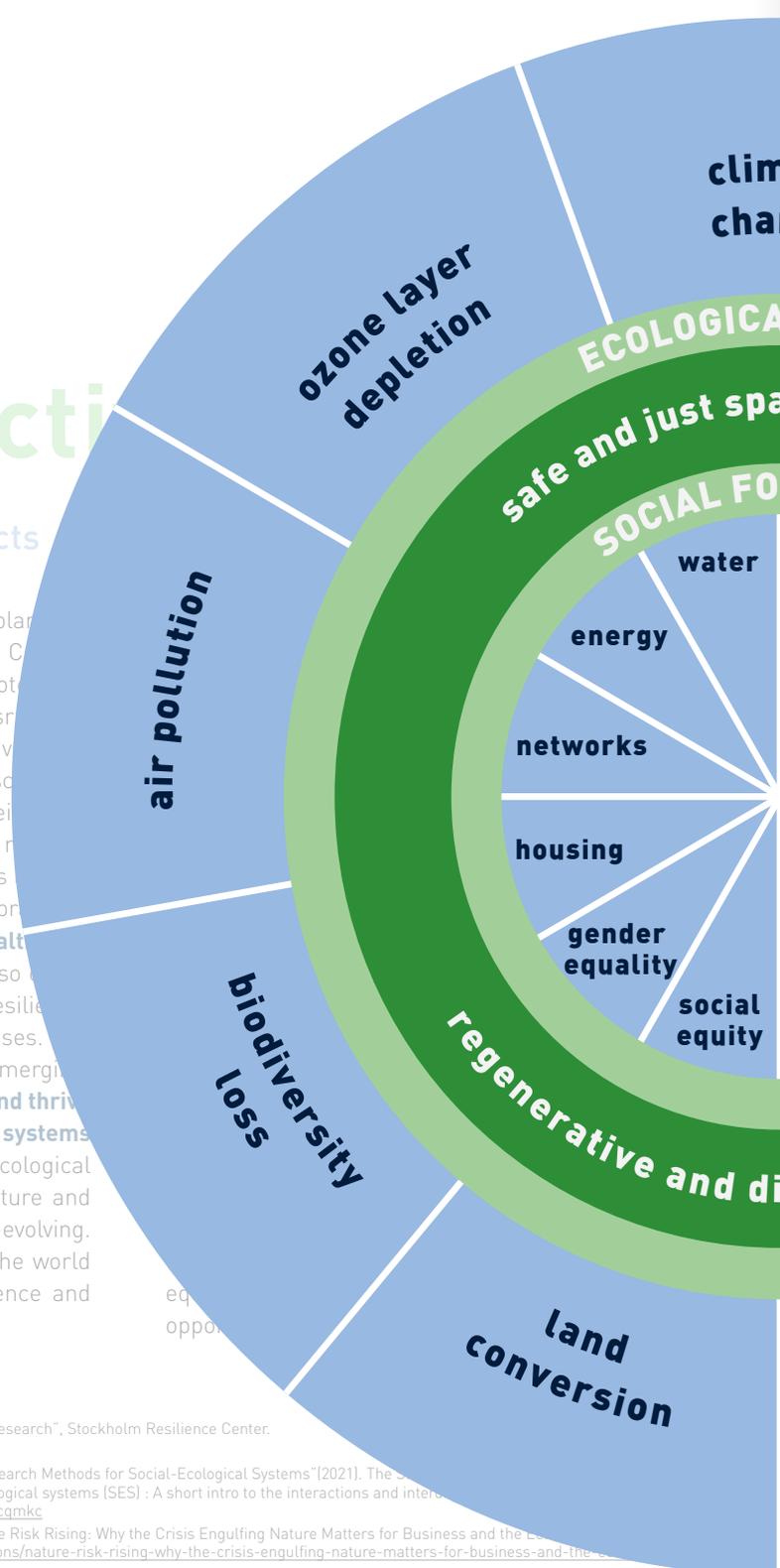
Humanity has exceeded six of the nine planetary boundaries (Stockholm Resilience Center), pushing Earth's systems toward potentially irreversible tipping points. As a result, disruptions such as extreme weather, resource volatility, and supply chain vulnerabilities are escalating, posing risks to both societal well-being and business stability. Simply minimizing negative impacts is no longer sufficient. Businesses are increasingly recognizing the need to adopt practices that **restore and strengthen the health and vitality of ecosystems and societies** (also known as 'social-ecological systems') to build resilience against future ecological and social crises. The concept of 'regenerative' business is emerging, defined as **"businesses that enhance, and thrive through, the health of social-ecological systems in a co-evolutionary process"**.² Social-ecological systems³ are integrated systems of nature and humans, deeply intertwined and co-evolving. This concept allows us to understand the world through the lens of their interdependence and mutual influence.

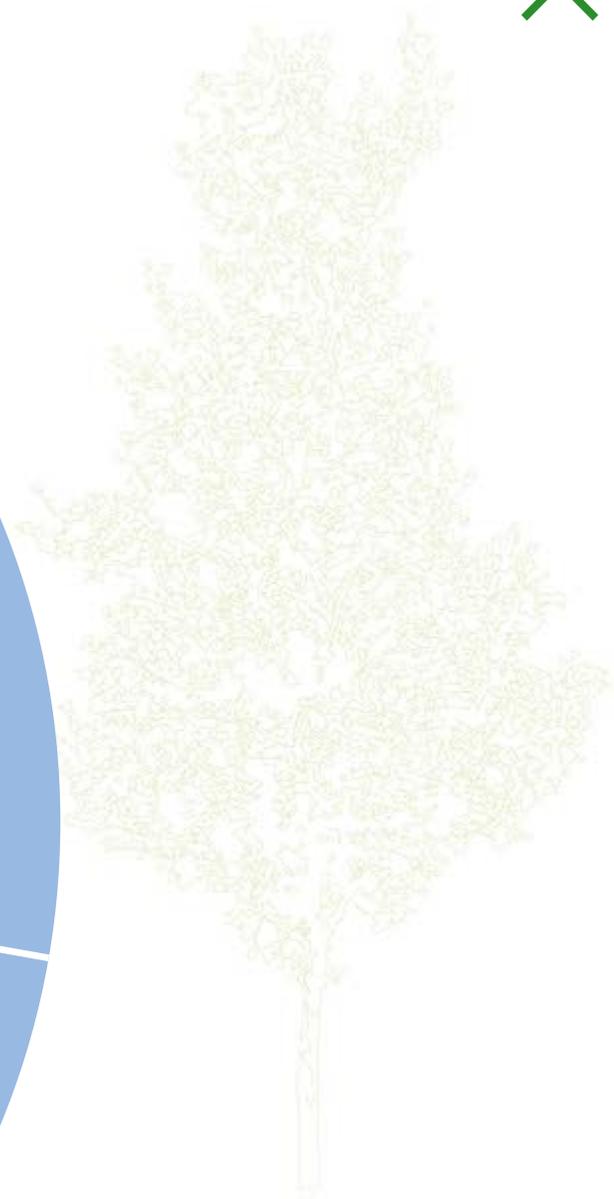
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Our objective: inspire action through rigorous research

By integrating academic literature with real-world business practices, this white paper aims **to inspire business practitioners** -whether in start-ups or established firms- by showcasing archetypes of innovative regenerative business models with their own revenue stream, developed by pioneers pushing the boundaries of regeneration. In doing so, it also seeks to further embed the concept of regeneration into academic business literature.

02 Methodology⁶

This work builds on previous research and provides new insights into the relationship between business and ecosystems.

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their activities rather than relying mostly on subsidies.

unique innovations, and systemic approaches observed in the data.

6. For details on the methodology, refer to the appendix.

7. We have identified 771 academic articles referring to regeneration and "business". See details in appendix.

8. The details of the academic literature and thought leader publications reviewed to define the attributes in this report are provided in Methodology section 1.3. It should be noted that an AFNOR Spec on the "Regenerative Economy" (led by I. Delannoy, President of L'Entreprise Symbiotique) was published in France after the research for this paper was completed.

9. Half of the organizations analyzed are based in France, reflecting the authors' connection to the country.

10. According to Hahn and Tampe, 2021.

1. System Level Impact

2. Relation with ecosystem

3. Elevation of human potential

4. Rooted in local community

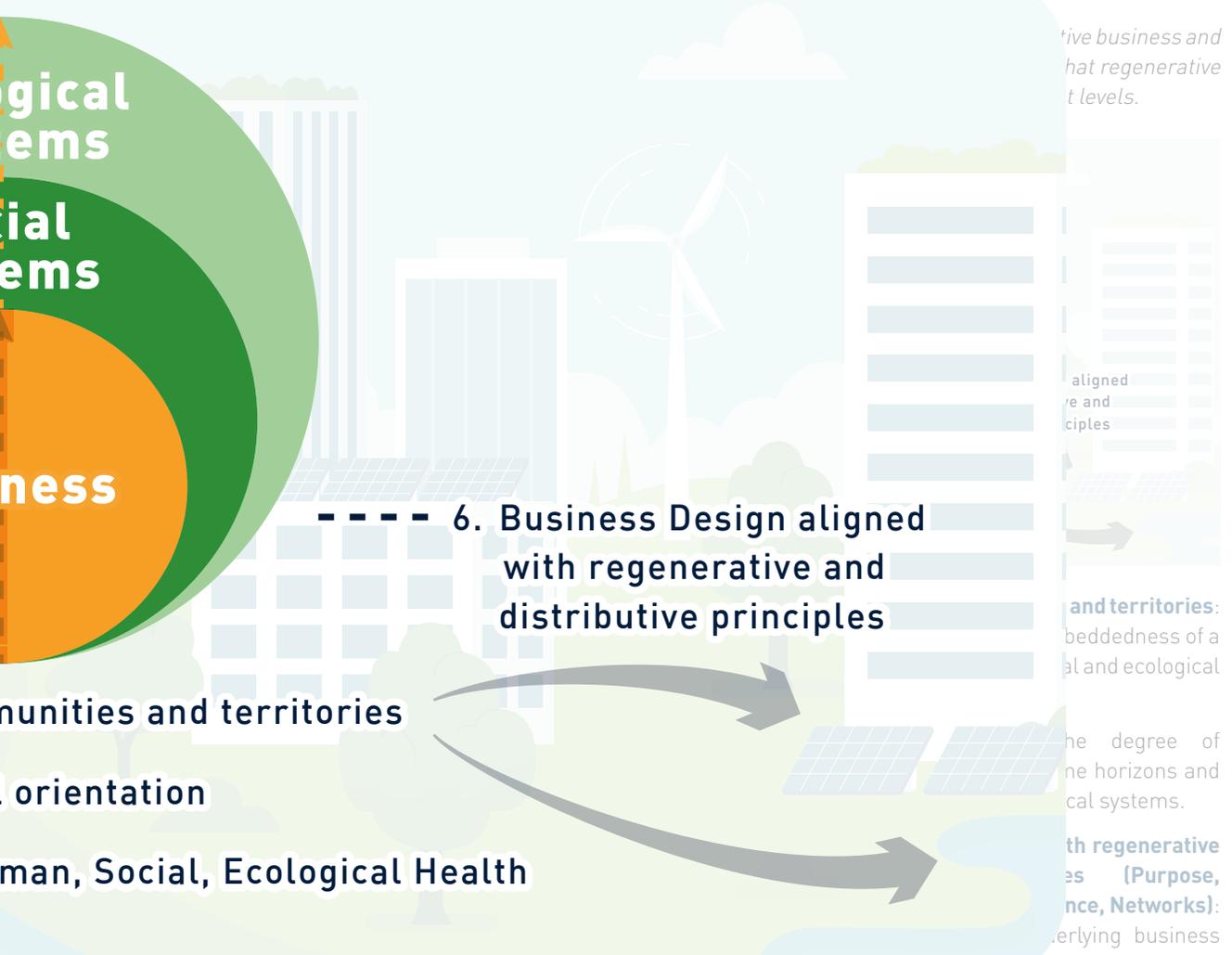
5. Temporal

7. Positive Net outcome on Human Well-being





03 Seven attributes of regenerative businesses



--- 6. Business Design aligned with regenerative and distributive principles

...tive business and that regenerative levels.

aligned core and principles

and territories: embeddedness of a social and ecological

the degree of the horizons and social systems.

with regenerative (Purpose, Finance, Networks): underlying business ownership, governance,

evolution with nature.

3 Elevation of human potential (Regenerative & Developmental Leadership, Inherently adaptive): How a business shapes its leadership culture, work environment, and strategic practices to foster human development and social well-being, ensuring both people and ecosystems co-evolve and thrive harmoniously.

and financial mechanisms—supports and is aligned with the health of social-ecological systems.

7 Positive Net outcome on Human, Social, Ecological Health: The overall net impact of business activities on social-ecological systems, considering human, social, and ecological well-being.

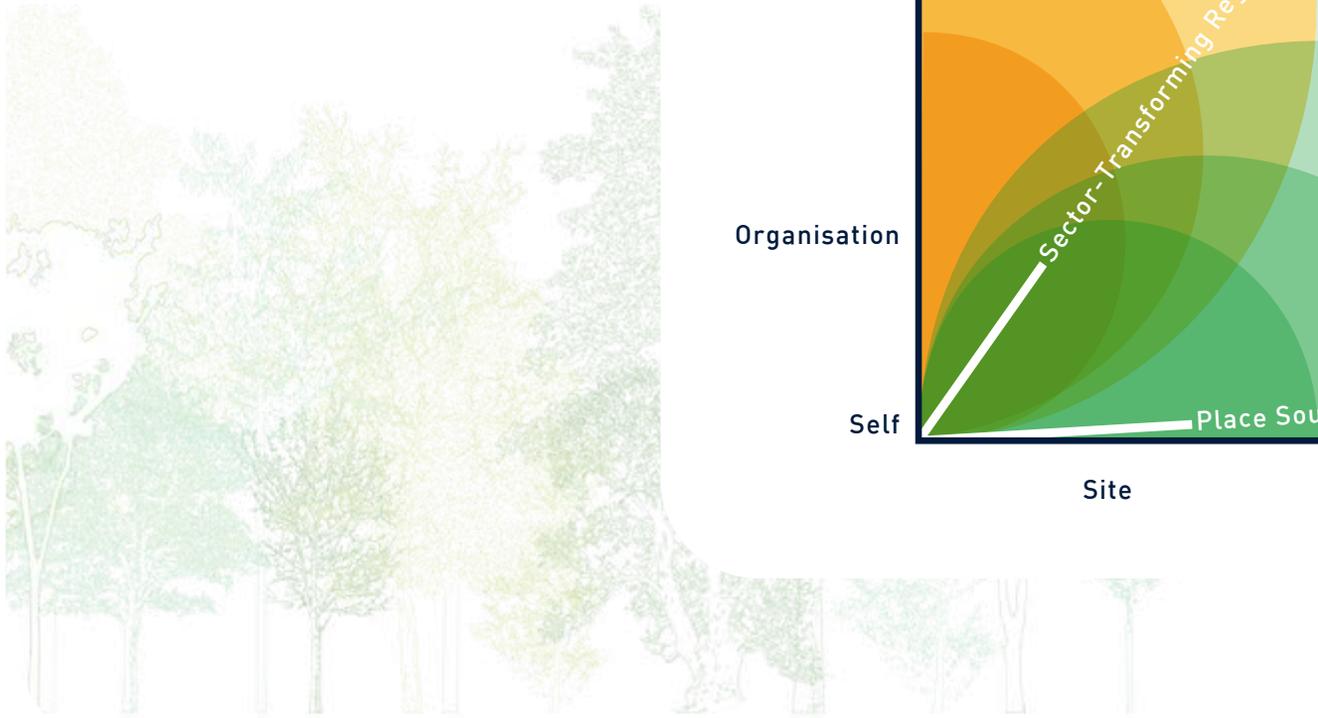
The details of the maturity level for each attribute were largely inspired by Hahn & Tampe's (2021) four categories: Exploit, Restore, Preserve, Enhance, presented as a continuum. They are provided in appendix 1.

Our work revealed that no business "is" inherently regenerative.

Rather, a business can "build regenerative capacity" for a specific context, ecosystems or communities.

Organizations may either directly contribute to the regeneration of local ecosystems and communities or indirectly assist their customers or providers in enhancing their own efforts in their local context.

Both the attributes and the maturity level assessment provided a framework to analyze the regenerative nature of the 39 businesses we identified. Ultimately, this framework can serve as a valuable tool for organizations to integrate regenerative practices into their strategic design and track their progress over time



04 Seven archetypes of regenerative businesses



Analysis of can be

Businesses rooted in place, with deep relationships or building

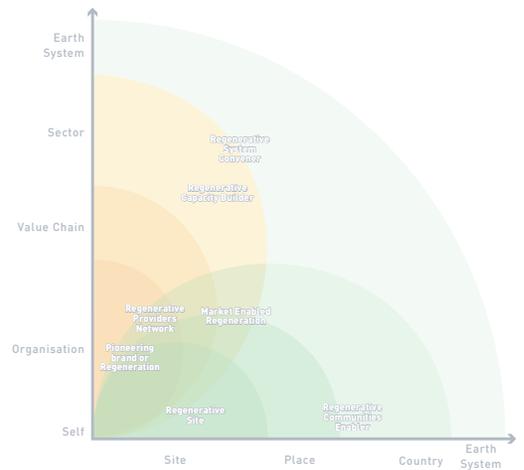
These industries, usually focus on connecting communities & unfold at

Education & health, the archetype). Developed producers in Indonesia, openly embrace industry but embrace the chain.

Seeking gain (for "innovator" instance, brands, and

consumers perceive agriculture and land management. It is also matching purchasers and producers that are on the same journey towards regenerative practices. These organizations go much further than marketplaces, and aim at bringing along the different stakeholders of their sector in a collective transition.

Most of these archetypes start with embodying or sharing a different vision of the world, of their sector, their territory. They attract through resonance (illustrated in the logos here below through a diapason).



The core principles of each archetype are described below, and each is illustrated with a lead example. The full description can be found in Appendix 2.

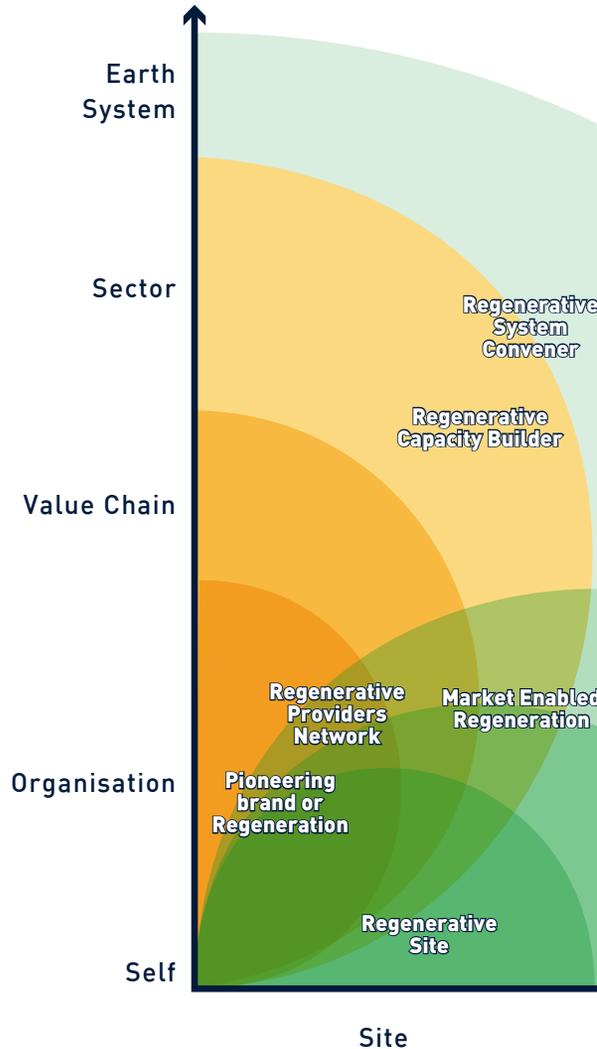
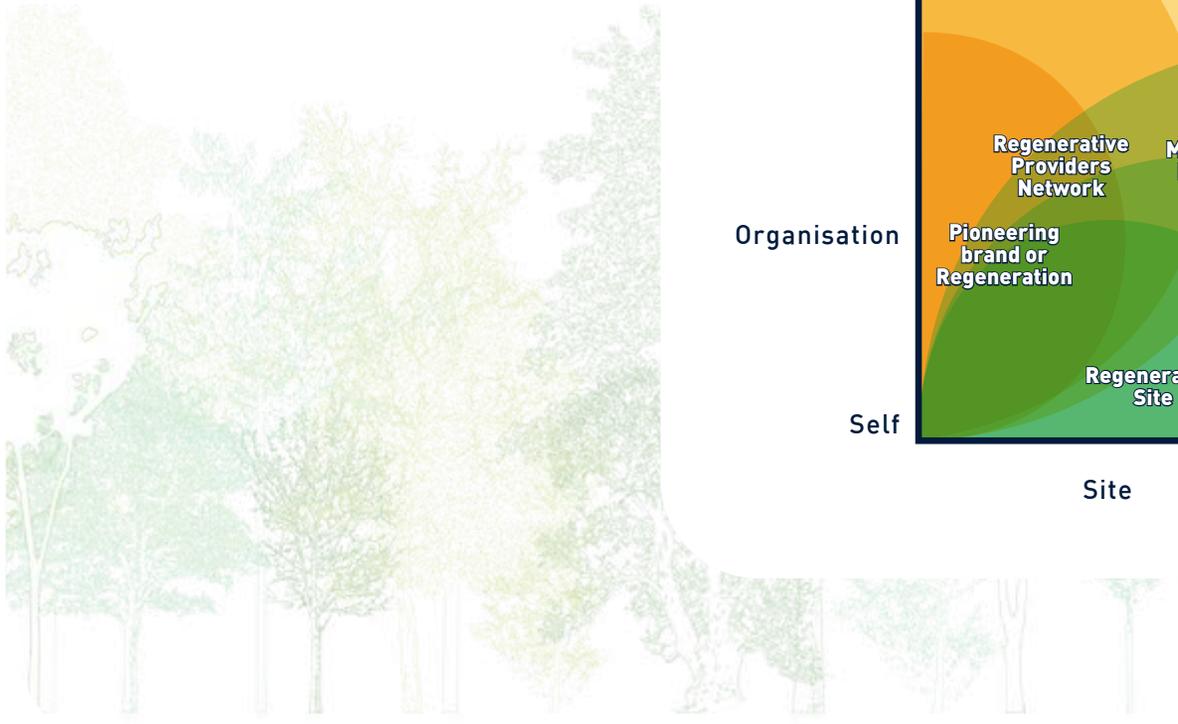
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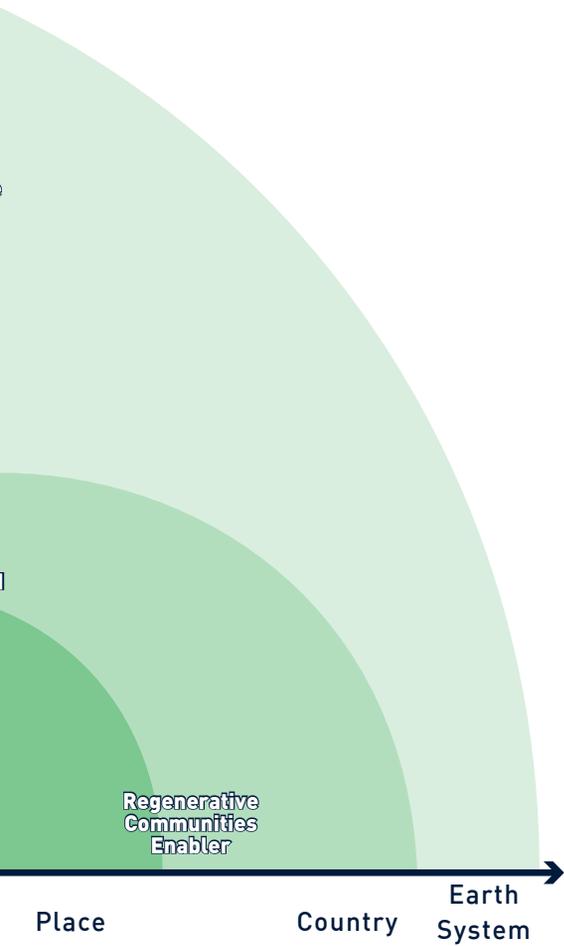
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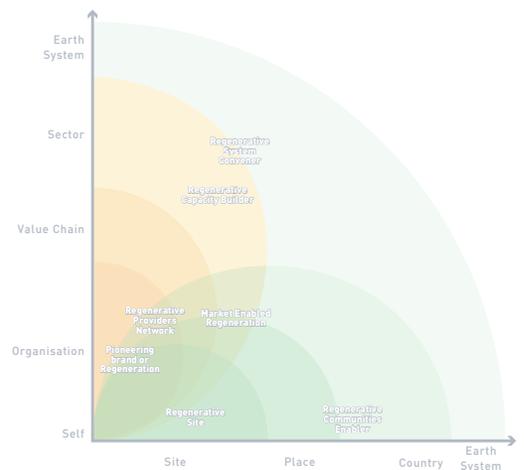
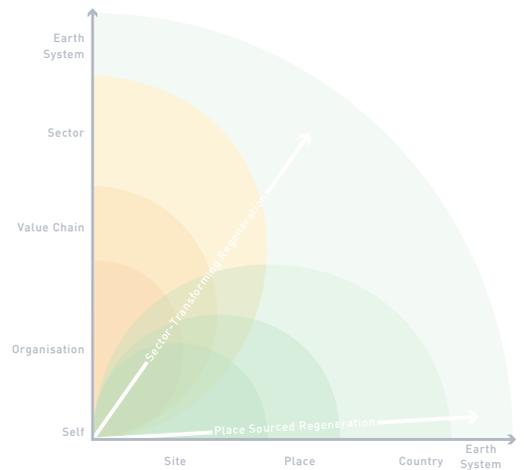
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Produced by the S&O Institute Climate & Earth Center
Authors: Laurence Lehmann-Ortega and Sarah Dubreil
Editorial Project Manager: Laurianne Thoury
Design and Content Editor: Hannah Saliou and Quarante-six
Credits: Adobe Stock



HEC Paris Sustainability and Organizations Institute
1, rue de la libération – 78350 Jouy-en-Josas
so-institute@hec.fr – Tel : 01.39.67.94.20

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