

METHODOLOGY NOTE



THE REGENERATIVE SHIFT

Seven Business Attributes and Seven Archetypes to inspire action

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The core objective of our study was to define and validate attribute that help identify and characterize “regenerative businesses” and potential archetypes. This section describes how the attributes have been identified and defined, how the data base has been built and how the archetypes have been created. This multi-phase process aimed to ensure both academic rigor and practical relevance.

1. Defining and assessing attributes

1.1 Identifying the relevant academic literature

The academic literature on regenerative business is limited, with Hahn and Tampe’s (2021) work serving as a foundational cornerstone. However, we aimed to further validate the attributes of a regenerative business to strengthen and solidify the concept.

The earliest searches using the terms “regenerative” and “regenerative organizations” in academic articles databases had a sizeable scope and included results from other fields, such as mechanical engineering and medicine. Conversely, there was a limited availability of articles specifically on Regenerative Business: hence, additional keywords had to be used to ensure all related information was extracted. With “business” as a starting point, words related to the Regenerative movement were used to ensure all relevant articles were obtained, including the terms “regenerative”, “permaculture”, “living systems theory”, “social-ecological systems”, “ecofeminism”. Furthermore, the results were filtered so that articles related to medicine and braking systems were avoided, resulting in 771 articles pertaining to regeneration in businesses.

Database	Attribute	Value
EBSCO	Initial number of articles	1631
	Number of business-related articles	276
	% of business-related articles	17%
Web of Science	Initial number of articles	4157
	Number of business-related articles	512
	% of business-related articles	12%
Consolidated	Consolidated number of articles	787
Database	Duplicate articles	16
	Final number of articles in database	771

1.2 Identifying and validating attributes in the literature

Using the tool *Bunka* (*Bunka.AI*), we applied probabilistic topic modeling to identify clusters of articles sharing similar themes. *Bunka*'s Map View revealed distinct topic "clusters" (e.g., supply chain & resilience, cities, innovation ecosystem).

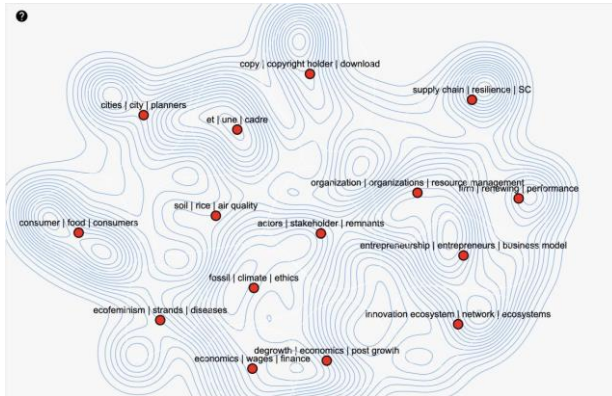


Figure 1. *Bunka.AI* Map View - Topic Modelling from the Academic Articles Database

Furthermore, *Bunka*'s Single-Axis View allowed us to test the alignment of the set of academic articles with polarizing concepts. For instance, "This has a Long-Term/Intergenerational Outlook" vs. "This does not have a Long-Term/Intergenerational Outlook".

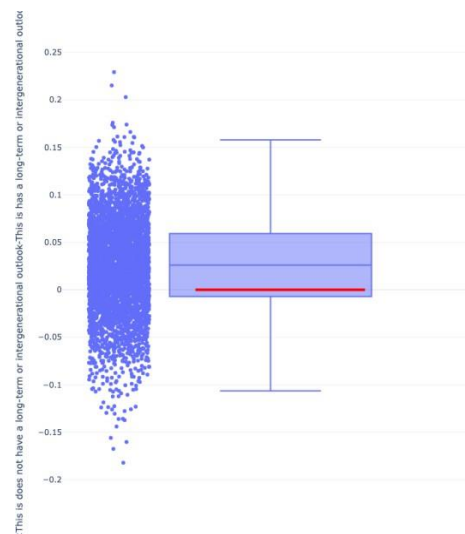


Figure 2: Single-Axis View - Has a Long-Term/Intergenerational Outlook

As shown in the figure above, the Box and Whisker Plot indicates that most articles discuss this feature. Therefore, the Long-term/Intergenerational Outlook item has been validated for inclusion in the list of attributes. It is important to highlight that some wording was adjusted to facilitate topic modeling. For example, the item mentioned above appears as "temporal orientation" in the relevant literature. Therefore, this wording has been retained in the final set of attributes.

1.3 Final set of attributes

The attributes validated by *Bunka* were then cross-verified with the relevant literature on regenerative businesses, resulting in the following final set of attributes:

1.System Level Impact	- “Has at system level approach” (Validated by Bunka) - “Adopter une vision systémique.” (Principe, Sempels) - “Systems based level of aspiration” (Hahn & Tampe) - “Ecological Worldview” (Buckton et al.) - “Voir beaucoup plus loin que le climat et intégrer la complexité”, “Adopter une vision systémique” (BPI Le Lab)
2.Relation with Ecosystem	- “Co-creates with nature” (Validated by Bunka) - “Relation with Ecosystem” (Hahn & Tampe) - “Co-creative partnerships with nature” (Konietzko) - “Planet - 'Right relationship with nature” (N.Fraguier & S.Vasconcellos) - “In right relationship”, “Robust Circulatory Flow” (Fullerton) - “Principe 4 : Renforcer les services écosystémiques de soutien et de régulation”, “Principe 9 : Utiliser des molécules bio-assimilables” (Sempels) - “Agency », “Reflexivity », “Diversity », « Mutualism » (Buckton et al.) - “Se reconnecter au vivant tout au long de la chaîne de valeur”, “Renforcer les services écosystémiques de soutien et de régulation”, “Utiliser des molécules bio-assimilables”, “Réduire de manière drastique l'utilisation de matières premières et de l'énergie”, “Être circulaire par design”, “Développer des gammes de produits ou services compatibles avec le vivant”, “Être sobre et multifonctionnel” (BPI Le Lab)
3.Elevation of human potential	- “Elevating human potential” (N.Fraguier & S.Vasconcellos)
Regenerative, Developmental Leadership	- “Creating conditions conducive to life and human flourishing” (D.Wahl) - “Regenerative leadership” (Konietzko) - “In right relationship”, “Empowered Participation” (Fullerton) - “Principe 7 : créer des relations vivifiantes”, “Principe 8 : Créer des relations réciproques et co-évolutives basées sur la coopération” (Sempels) - “Agency », « Reflexivity », « Diversity », « Mutualism » (Buckton et al.) - “Placer l'humain au cœur des transformations”, “Créer des relations réciproques et co-évolutives basées sur la coopération”, “Chercher un équilibre entre performance et robustesse”, “Créer des relations vivifiante” (BPI Le Lab)
Inherently adaptive	- “Inherently adaptive” (Validated by Bunka) - “Business Strategy and Strategizing Practices (Hahn & Tampe) - “Innovative, Adaptive, Responsive”, “Edge Effect Abundance”, “Seeks Balance “ (Fullerton) - “Principe 6 : Chercher un équilibre entre performance et robustesse” (Sempels)
4.Rooted in local communities and territories	- “Is anchored in local places”; “Is anchored in local communities” (Validated by Bunka) - “Sense of Place” (Hahn & Tampe) - “Honors Community and Place” (Fullerton) - “Places - "Empowering communities" » (N.Fraguier & S.Vasconcellos) - “Principe 11 : Être ancrée dans le local, ce qui favorise la sobriété et la multifonctionnalité” (Sempels) - “Être ancré dans le local” (BPI Le Lab)

5.Temporal Orientation	- <i>“Has a long-term/ intergenerational outlook” (Validated by Bunka)</i> - “Temporal Orientation” (Hahn & Tampe)
6.Business Design aligned with regenerative and distributive principles	- <i>“Purpose first” (Validated by Bunka)</i> - “Underlying Business Rationale” (Hahn & Tampe) - “Deep business design” (Purpose of the Organization, Governance, Ownership, Financing, Networks) – Criteria : “Alignment with regenerative and distributive principles” (Doughnut Economic Action Lab) - “Justice & fairness”, “Planetary health and societal wellbeing” (Konietzko) - “Purpose - 'Purpose at the core'", “Partners - "Value for all"” (N.Fraguier & S.Vasconcellos) - “Views Wealth Holistically” (Fullerton) - “Principe 5 : Partager la valeur monétaire avec ses parties prenantes et pour l'intérêt général”, “Principe 3 : être capable de se limiter” (Sempels) - “Être capable de se limiter, de renoncer”, “Partager la valeur monétaire avec ses parties prenantes et pour l'intérêt général” (BPI Le Lab)
7.Positive Net outcome on Human, Social, Ecological Health	- “Impact on Ecosystems” (Hahn & Tampe) - “Net positive impact & multi-capital accounting” (Konietzko) - “Ecological Outcome”, “Human Outcome” (Buckton et al.) - “Créer de la valeur positive nette pour les parties prenantes, les écosystèmes naturels et la société” (BPI Le Lab)

1.4 Attribute assessment

In their article, Hahn & Tampe (2021) present four types of strategies for each of their attribute: the Exploit–Restore–Preserve–Enhance continuum. As this four-fold assessment introduces nuance, allowing organizations that do not fully reach the advanced “Enhance” level but have still undertaken meaningful, albeit partial, regenerative strategies to be more accurately classified.

For attributes closely aligned with Hahn & Tampe's framework, we applied their continuum directly. However, for dimensions beyond their scope, such as “Aiming at System Level Impact” and “Elevating Human Potential,” we developed a similar continuum of strategies (Exploit–Restore–Preserve–Enhance). To ensure conceptual consistency, we used ChatGPT-4.0 to generate a preliminary version of these scales, aligning them with Hahn & Tampe's framework. Additionally, in developing the scale for “Aiming at System Level Impact,” we incorporated insights from Rayner and Bonnici (2021) on systemic approaches.

2. Building the database

The list of attributes and assessment levels is valuable in itself, but the main goal was to evaluate their relevance by applying them to real cases and determining whether they enhance our analysis. Hence, we have build a database or organizations, collected the data and analyzed it.

2.1. Identifying the organizations

We contacted or read the publications of 24 ecosystem stakeholders around “regenerative business”, that led us to identify around 200 organizations listed as case studies.

Name	Country	Typology
Global Regeneration Colab	International	Networks
Doughnut Economic Action Lab	International	Networks
Ashoka France	France	Networks
Bioregional Weaving Lab	International	Networks
Convention des entreprises pour le	France	Training
Purpose Economy	International	Fund
2050	France	Fund
Origens Media Lab, Université de C	France	University
Forum for the future	International	Consulting
NOW Partners	International	Consulting
Capital Institute	International	Training
AXA Climate Butterfly	France	Training
Danone Open Innovation	France	Large company
Conscious Food Alliance (CoFA)	International	Sectorial network
The Regenerative Technology Proje	International	Sectorial network
R3 (Publication with BPI)	France	Consulting
Lumia (Publications)	France	Training
Institut des Futurs Souhaitable	France	Training
Regenesis	International	Training
Rainforest alliance	International	Certification
Terre & fils	France	Foundation
The regenerative enterprise (N.de F	International	Publication
Konietzko et al.	International	Academic Publication
Hahn and Tampe	International	Academic Publication

From this list, we initially selected 45 organizations but later reduced it to 39, excluding 7 due to insufficient information, small size, a model based more on technology than a business model, or bankruptcy. Our selection included both for-profit and non-profit organizations that were undertaking or claiming to undertake a regenerative approach, with a self-generated revenue of at least 20%. The list is displayed here below:

Bastien Tissages technique
 Mountain Hazelnuts
 Knepp Estate
 Faith in Nature
 Wide Open Agriculture
 Lush
 Halage
 Commonland
 La Ferme du Rail
 Tikamoon
 Alenvi
 Guayaki
 Savory Institute
 Comfama
 Patagonia
 Cacao Hunters
 Convention des Entreprises pour le Climat
 Atelier 21
 Yuka
 Danone
 Walmart
 Paysans de Nature
 Fermes paysannes et sauvages

Friche La Belle de Mai
 Expanscience
 Metabief
 Hylo
 Les Marmites volantes
 Biocoop
 Regen Network
 Brattleboro cooperative
 Playa Viva
 Sinal do vale
 Omie
 Pocheco
 Sekem
 Voisin malin
 Arcadie
 Fleurs d'ici

The 39 organizations span multiple sectors, with agrifood being the most represented. They also operate in various countries, though over half are based in France, the authors' home country, which may introduce a potential bias. Additionally, only 9 of the organizations are businesses established by existing players. The majority were designed as regenerative from inception.

Sectors	#		
AgriFood	15		
Health & Social	3		
Third place	2		
Fashion & textile	2		
Regen Tech	2		
Cosmetics	2		
Tourism	2		
Social insertion ; Landscape regeneration	1		
Pharmaceuticals	1		
Other	1		
Education	1		
Flower & Plants Retail	1		
Tourism ; Agrifood	1		
Furnitures	1		
Learning & Education	1		
AgriFood, Tech	1		
Consulting	1		
Landscape regeneration	1		
Total	39		

Countries	#
France	21
USA	7
UK	3
Colombia	2
Bhutan	1
Australia	1
Australia, South Africa, Spain, The Netherlands	1
Mexico	1
Brazil	1
Egypt	1
Total	39

2.2. Data collection

For each organization, we collected information pertaining to:

- each of the Regenerative business attributes and their level (exploit, restore, preserve, enhance);
- the business model, defined as the Value Proposition, the Value Architecture, profit equation (Lehmann-Ortega et al., 2024):

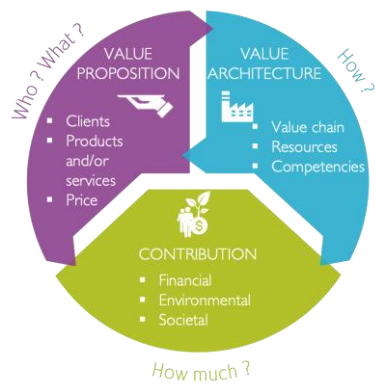


Figure 3: The business model framework

All sources were secondary, publicly available on the internet. Information on the contributions was usually very complex to find.

2.3. Depth of analysis

The process was conducted in two stages:

- **First Batch Analysis:** A detailed examination was carried out on an initial set of 17 organizations based on public information available on internet, requiring between half a day to a full day per organization. This in-depth approach also helped identify key archetypes for categorizing regenerative business practices with greater nuance.
- **Second Batch Analysis:** The remaining 23 organizations were analyzed more quickly, with approximately three hours allocated per organization. ChatGPT was used for writing support to streamline the process. However, this faster approach raised concerns about data quality and completeness, particularly for criteria like Contribution, Business design aligned with regenerative & distributive principles and Elevating Human Potential (including subcriteria such as "Inherently Adaptive" and "Regenerative, Developmental Leadership"), where information was more difficult to obtain.

The full data based in available on open source on the HEC S&O site.

2.3. Challenges and limitations in the analysis

Accessibility and Quality of Information

- Publicly available information on regenerative practices often lacked depth or relevance to our evaluation criteria, particularly for large companies.
- There is very little data on the net impact of organizations on human, social, and ecological health.

Buzzword Misuse

- The term "regenerative" is increasingly used as a buzzword, covering a wide spectrum of initiatives, from minor technical improvements to systemic transformations.
- Distinguishing genuine regenerative practices from superficial claims required careful evaluation.

Analytical vs. Systemic Approaches

- Balancing analytical rigor with a holistic, systemic perspective proved challenging.
- Certain criteria, such as *Relationship with Ecosystems* at the "Symbiotic Co-embeddedness" level, were particularly complex to assess due to a lack of clear data points.
- Regenerative approaches emphasize relationships over individual units, nested systems over isolated parts, and context-specific solutions over universal frameworks. This posed difficulties when applying a segmented, analytical methodology to evaluate these activities.

Cultural Context and Conceptual Gaps

- Some criteria were influenced by non-modern Western cultural approaches, making them harder to interpret and analyze.

- For example, *Symbiotic Co-embeddedness*, akin to *Co-creating in Partnership with Nature*, required nuanced understanding that was difficult to apply given the available data.

Confidence vs skepticism

- Due to gaps in available information and challenges in verifying claims, we frequently debated whether to adopt an optimistic or more critical stance.
- Assessing regenerative efforts based solely on publicly accessible data proved difficult.
- We aimed for a balanced approach but leaned toward a speculative, business-oriented perspective that emphasized potential. As a result, we may have been overly positive in certain cases.

3. Framing the seven archetypes

While building the database, we began by manually identifying key archetypes and patterns emerging from the Value Proposition, Value Architecture, and the regenerative attributes of the analyzed organizations. These patterns were based on the level of regeneration, unique innovations in value creation, and/or systemic approaches observed in the data.

To refine this initial categorization, we grouped organizations into clusters based on shared archetypes or patterns. To complement our manual analysis, we leveraged ChatGPT-4.0, uploading the data to explore whether it could identify additional archetypes or patterns that we had not initially recognized. This iterative process enabled us to cross-validate and deepen our understanding of the diverse approaches to regenerative business.