

Living Cities and Territories

An operational framework for resilient and regenerative transformation of urban-territorial systems

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2 Introduction

Cities and territories are at the centre of many of the defining challenges of the twenty-first century. Climate change, biodiversity loss, growing social inequalities and increasing pressures on resources are not experienced in isolation; they converge and interact through the systems that shape how people live, move, work and relate in urban, peri-urban and rural environments.

Over recent decades, urban policies have delivered important advances in sustainability, resilience and climate action. Yet many interventions continue to operate within sectoral boundaries, addressing symptoms rather than the structural dynamics that generate vulnerability, inequality and ecological degradation. As a result, progress often remains fragmented and insufficient in relation to the scale and urgency of current challenges.

Addressing these challenges requires a different perspective: one that understands cities and territories as living, interconnected socio-ecological systems. From this perspective, transformation involves reshaping the relationships between people, economy and nature in ways that strengthen resilience, restore ecological functions and create the conditions for long-term wellbeing. The future of cities cannot be addressed through cities alone. Urban resilience depends on territorial resilience. Territorial resilience ultimately depends on the resilience of the bioregion in which cities and territories are embedded.

The concept of resilient and regenerative cities and territories emerges from this shift. A resilient city can anticipate, adapt and respond to shocks and stresses. A regenerative city goes further: it actively reconnects with its bioregion, restoring natural systems, strengthening social cohesion and generating positive value for present and future generations. Together, resilience and regeneration provide a direction for urban transformation that seeks not only to sustain current systems, but to enable them to evolve towards healthier, more equitable and more prosperous futures.

The aim of this operational framework is to support that transition. It provides a direction of change based on principles, system dynamics and transformative portfolios of actions that can be adapted to different territorial contexts.

A distinctive feature of this framework is its connection with the Global Shared Agendas approach. Urban systems transitions depend on the capacity of multiple actors—public institutions, businesses, academia, civil society and communities—to organise action around a shared direction of change and coordinate action over time. The Shared Agendas framework provides the governance and

collective action architecture required to organise this process, linking place-based initiatives with broader system transformation.

The purpose of this document is therefore twofold:

- To define a framework that guides the transition towards resilient and regenerative cities and territories.
- To connect this framework with the Global Shared Agendas approach, enabling local action to contribute to wider societal and territorial transformation.

The following chapters present the conceptual foundations, principles and intervention portfolios of resilient and regenerative urban systems and then describe how these can be operationalised through Shared Agendas as a mechanism for collective action, learning and systemic change.

3 A framework addressing a transformative approach

3.1 Evolution of urban planning narratives

Urban planning approaches have evolved significantly over recent decades, in parallel with a growing understanding of planetary limits and the complexity of socio-ecological systems. Recent concepts such as planetary health, planetary boundaries and doughnut economics have reinforced this transition by highlighting the need to operate within ecological limits while ensuring social foundations for wellbeing.

The notion of planetary health has further expanded this perspective by emphasising the fundamental relationship between human wellbeing and the health of natural systems.

Within this evolving landscape, the regenerative approach emerges as a further step that enables communities to regenerate ecosystems, strengthen social cohesion and build a shared stewardship of their territory.

This shift implies understanding cities and territories as living systems, in which physical, biological and social components interact through interconnected processes, including resource flows, ecological cycles and socio-economic dynamics.

From this perspective, urban planning evolves towards more systemic, multi-scalar and integrative approaches, capable of addressing the relationships between people, buildings, communities, neighbourhoods and territories, and of responding to environmental, social and economic challenges in a holistic manner.

Ultimately, the transition towards a resilient and regenerative narrative builds upon the existing frames extending towards a more systemic, urban-territorial and action-oriented vision. The framework presented is intended to support that transition through a shared set of principles and systemic portfolios that can be adapted to different territorial contexts.

3.2 System dynamics of contemporary cities

The functioning of contemporary cities is shaped by a set of interconnected dynamics that influence their evolution over time. These dynamics can be understood as feedback loops that reinforce patterns of development.

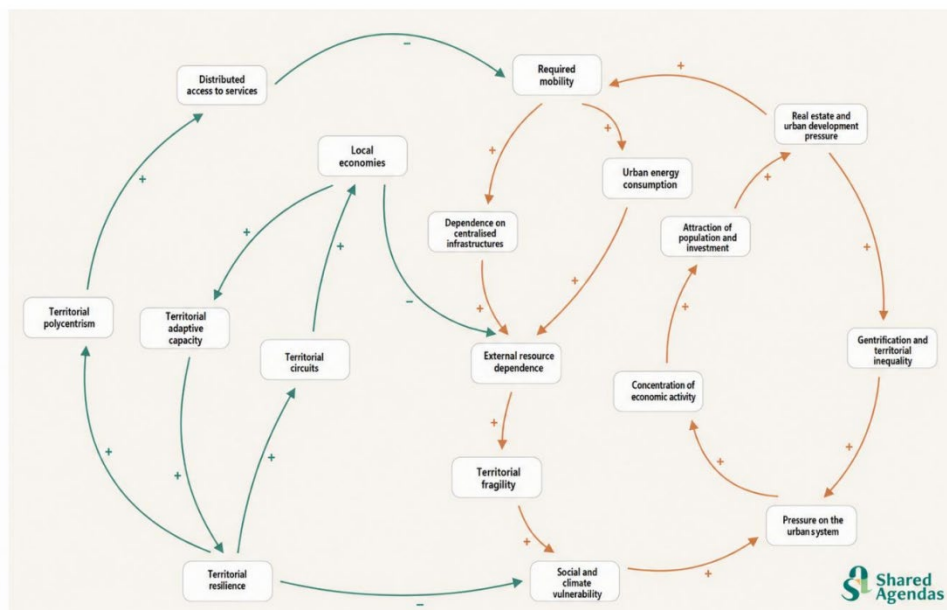
On the one hand, there are inhibiting dynamics that perpetuate extractive urban models. These include the concentration of economic activity and population,

intensive resource consumption, pressure on land and housing, and dependence on external territories for resource supply. Such dynamics contribute to increased climate vulnerability, environmental degradation and social inequality.

On the other hand, enabling dynamics are emerging, associated with the transition towards more sustainable models. These include the reorganisation of mobility systems, the expansion of renewable energy, improvements in water management and the renaturalisation of urban environments.

In addition, opportunity dynamics can be identified, linked to wellbeing, social cohesion and ecological regeneration. These dynamics highlight the potential of cities to generate positive impacts when conditions are aligned.

Figure 1. Urban concentration – territorial balance.



Source: SharedAgendas.org “Working with polarity loop tools” (2026).

Advancing towards resilient and regenerative models requires actively engaging with these dynamics. This involves reducing the influence of those that generate negative impacts, while strengthening those that support resilience, adaptation and regeneration. Such a complex process cannot be achieved through disconnected actions. It requires coordinated action across multiple domains, ensuring that changes in one part of the system reinforce progress in others.

3.3 Contribution to urban systems transformation

The framework presented provides a common direction while allowing each territory to develop its own pathway. The aim of the framework is to support transformation processes that can be interpreted and adapted to different territorial contexts.

It is structured around three core elements:

- **Directionality:** establishing a shared orientation towards resilient and regenerative urban systems.
- **Principles:** defining criteria that guide decision-making and action.
- **Adaptability:** enabling application across diverse territorial contexts within a collective action governance framework.

This framework aims to enable transformative processes, supporting the alignment of actors, resources and capacities around shared objectives. This implies working through iterative processes that integrate experimentation, learning and continuous adjustment, allowing strategies to evolve over time in response to changing conditions.

This framework can also provide a shared structure through which place-based urban transformation processes connect to a Global Shared Agenda (see chapters 5 and 6). It organises urban transitions through a clear direction of change, coordinated portfolios of actions, attention to the structural conditions shaping outcomes, and continuous learning based on observable changes across urban systems. This shared structure makes it possible to align diverse actors within a city while also enabling comparison and learning across different places.

4 Principles of resilient and regenerative cities

The transition towards resilient and regenerative cities and territories is not only a technical or operational challenge, but fundamentally a shift in the underlying values that shape how urban systems are conceived, developed and governed.

This framework is grounded in a set of core principles that express the desired qualities and outcomes of urban systems. These principles define what cities should aspire to become and provide a normative foundation to guide decision-making, investment and collective action.

1. Life preservation in equality
2. Prosperous and inclusive livelihoods
3. Economy within ecological and social boundaries
4. Territorial equality and interconnected systems
5. Resilient and adaptive planning for liveability
6. Culture, identity and sense of belonging

They are informed by regenerative thinking, which understands cities and territories as living, interconnected systems, embedded within broader ecological and social contexts. This perspective emphasises long-term value creation, the restoration of natural and social systems, and the capacity of places to evolve and flourish over time.

The principles are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Together, they describe the characteristics of urban systems that can sustain life, fostering wellbeing, operating within ecological limits and contributing to resilient and equitable territories.

4.1 Life preservation in equality

Resilient and regenerative cities prioritise the preservation and enhancement of life in all its forms, recognising the intrinsic interdependence between human health and ecological integrity. This principle encompasses both people's health and wellbeing and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, understanding them as inseparable dimensions of the same system.

Urban environments should actively contribute to improving physical and mental health by ensuring access to clean air, safe water, healthy food systems and high-quality natural environments. At the same time, they must protect and restore ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and reinforcing ecological functions.

A regenerative approach implies moving beyond harm reduction towards active participation in restoring living systems, enhancing soil, water and biodiversity conditions within and beyond urban areas.

Equity is central to this principle. Access to healthy environments and ecosystem services must be guaranteed for all, recognising that environmental degradation and health risks disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

4.2 Prosperous and inclusive livelihoods

Resilient and regenerative cities create the conditions for people to lead meaningful, secure and fulfilling lives. This includes access to adequate housing, quality employment, social stability and opportunities for personal and collective development. It also encompasses less tangible but equally important dimensions such as mental health, social cohesion and a sense of purpose.

Urban systems should support diversified and resilient local economies that generate long-term value, balancing efficiency with resilience and competition with collaboration, in line with regenerative economic principles.

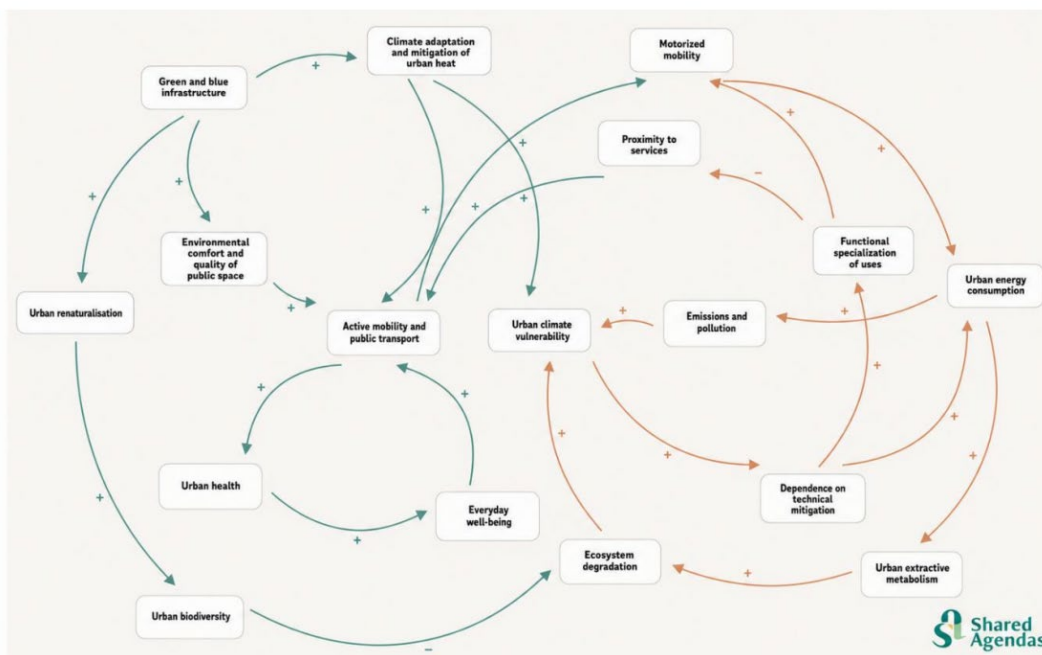
This principle recognises that prosperity is not only material, but also social and relational. Strong communities, trust, cultural vitality and shared identity are essential components of resilient systems. Ensuring inclusive access to these conditions is fundamental. Regenerative cities aim to reduce structural inequalities that limit opportunities and undermine social cohesion, strengthening the capacity of communities to adapt and thrive in changing conditions.

4.3 Economy within ecological and social boundaries

Resilient and regenerative cities operate within the limits of ecological systems while ensuring social foundations for wellbeing. This implies aligning production and consumption patterns with biocapacity, reducing resource extraction, minimising waste and promoting circular and regenerative economic models.

Urban systems should transition towards closed-loop metabolisms, where materials and energy are reused, regenerated and reintegrated into productive cycles, emulating natural systems. This principle is closely linked to the development of a regenerative bioeconomy, where biological resources are managed sustainably and contribute to both economic activity and ecosystem restoration. It also reflects the need to balance economic activity with social equity, ensuring that value creation contributes to collective wellbeing and does not come at the expense of ecological degradation or social exclusion.

Figure 2. Extractive urban metabolism – Resilient urbanism and ecosystem health.



Source: SharedAgendas.org “Working with polarity loop tools” (2026).

4.4 Territorial equality and interconnected systems

Resilient and regenerative cities extend beyond their administrative boundaries and are understood as part of broader territorial systems. This principle recognises the interdependence between urban and rural areas, and the need to address spatial inequalities in the distribution of resources, opportunities and environmental impacts. It calls for more balanced relationships between territories, reducing externalisation of environmental and socioeconomic impacts

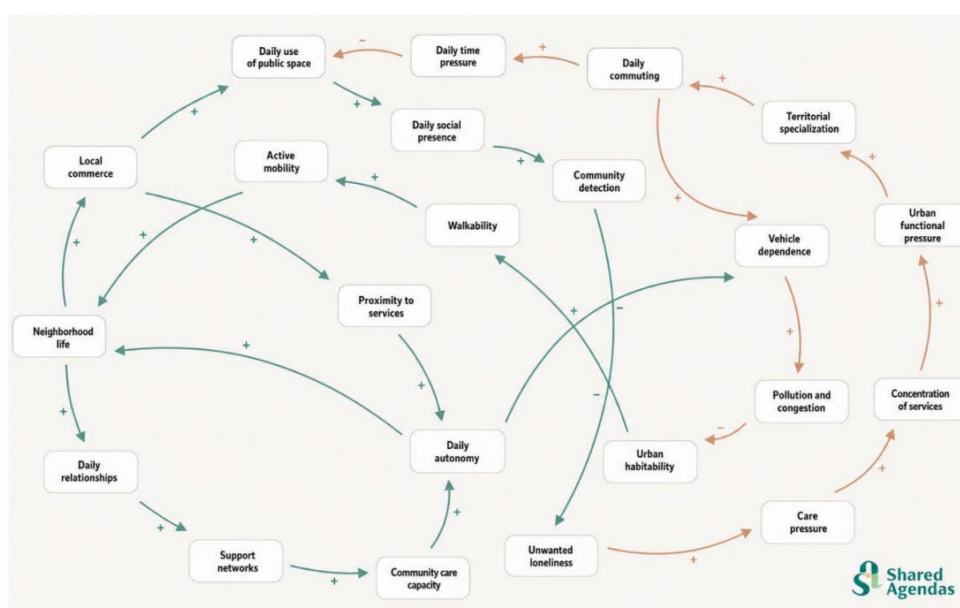
including more equitable land use distribution enhancing connectivity and accessibility within more integrated mobility systems.

Urban development should be aligned with territorial dynamics, strengthening local and regional systems rather than concentrating value and impacts in specific areas. This perspective reflects a nested systems approach, where cities are understood as nodes within larger ecological, economic and social networks.

4.5 Resilient and adaptive planning for liveability

Resilient and regenerative cities are designed and managed to adapt to changing environmental conditions while enhancing liveability. This includes addressing climate risks such as heatwaves, flooding, drought, wildfires, sea level rise and coastal vulnerability, through integrated and forward-looking planning. Key planning instruments — such as climate adaptation strategies, green and blue infrastructure plans, decarbonisation roadmaps and bio-based construction strategies — should be integrated within a holistic approach. Urban planning should integrate natural systems and infrastructure, creating environments that are both resilient and conducive to everyday life. This principle reflects the importance of designing cities as adaptive systems, capable of responding to uncertainty while maintaining functionality and quality of life.

Figure 3. Functional city – Liveable and relational city.



Source: SharedAgendas.org “Working with polarity loop tools” (2026).

4.6 Culture, identity and sense of belonging

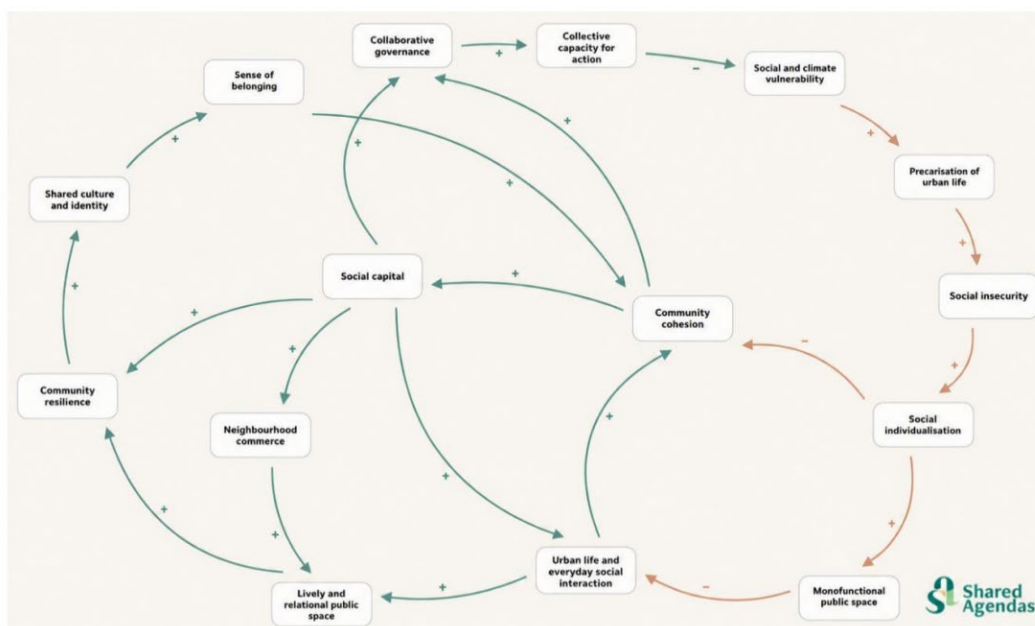
Resilient and regenerative cities foster a strong sense of identity, belonging and collective purpose. Culture plays a central role in shaping how people relate to

place, to each other and to the future. It is also a key driver of transformation, enabling new narratives, behaviours and forms of collaboration.

This principle emphasises the need to encourage social empowerment and agency for change through new narratives such as cultural place-based identity (“story of place”) and collective engagement in transformative processes.

Regenerative transition requires active participation from communities. It is not only about technical solutions but about enabling people to become agents of change. A strong sense of belonging reinforces social cohesion, strengthens collective resilience and supports long-term change processes.

Figure 4. Individualisation and social erosion – Culture and social capital with collective capacity.



Source: SharedAgendas.org “Working with polarity loop tools” (2026).

4.7 From principles to actions

These principles define the desired qualities of resilient and regenerative urban systems. Their implementation is articulated through four vectors, which structure action and are operationalised through portfolios:

- Flourishing → enhancing regenerative culture and wellbeing
- Reorganising → transforming urban metabolism and systems
- Restoring → regenerating ecosystems and natural processes
- Rebalancing → addressing social and territorial inequalities

Together, these vectors translate the principles into coordinated action, enabling systemic change across urban and territorial systems.

5 From principles to action: systemic portfolios

The principles outlined define the desired qualities and values of resilient and regenerative cities and territories. However, achieving these outcomes requires translating these principles into coordinated, systemic and place-based forms of action.

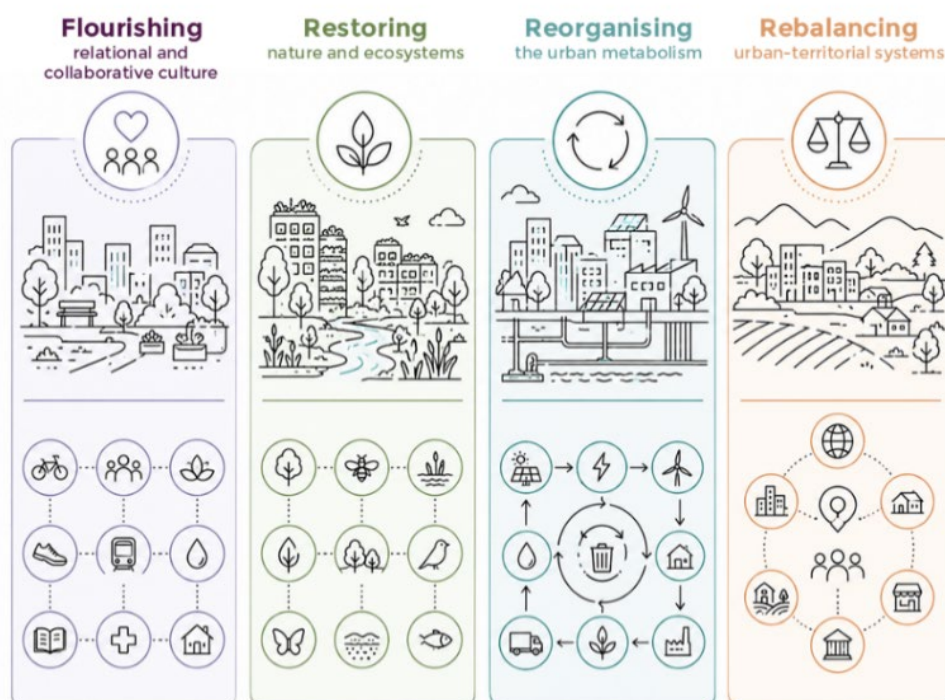
This is the role of systemic portfolios.

Systemic portfolios represent the operational expression of the principles, structuring action through four complementary and interconnected vectors of change: Flourishing, Reorganising, Restoring and Rebalancing.

Systemic portfolios do not operate independently from the dynamics described in the previous chapters. Rather, they are designed to influence the reinforcing and balancing feedback loops that shape urban-territorial systems.

Each portfolio focuses on a particular set of system dynamics while simultaneously contributing to broader systemic change. As these dynamics evolve, they become visible through observable system signals, enabling cities to interpret how transformation is unfolding over time.

Figure 5. Resilient and Regenerative Systemic Portfolios Scheme.



Source: SharedAgendas.org

These vectors should not be understood as separate domains or sectors. Instead, they represent systemic pathways of transformation, each addressing key dimensions of urban systems while contributing simultaneously to multiple principles.

For example, enhancing regenerative and wellbeing culture (flourishing) is directly linked to health and social inclusion, but also depends on ecological quality, access to services and territorial balance. Similarly, restoring ecosystems contributes not only to biodiversity, but also to climate adaptation, economic resilience and bioregional development.

In this sense, portfolios are not collections of projects, but strategic configurations of action designed to influence system dynamics, reconfigure feedback loops and accelerate system change.

5.1 Portfolio-based intervention logic

Urban systems are shaped by complex interactions between social, ecological and economic dynamics. Addressing current challenges therefore requires moving beyond isolated interventions towards coordinated approaches that engage with multiple dimensions of the system simultaneously.

The portfolio approach responds to this need by organising actions into interrelated sets of interventions that:

- operate across multiple scales (building, neighbourhood, city, territory)
- integrate short-, medium- and long-term perspectives
- generate synergies between actions
- enable experimentation and learning
- support the progressive scaling of solutions

Portfolios act as mechanisms to influence system conditions and dynamics, reducing the impact of processes that generate vulnerability while reinforcing those that support resilience and regeneration.

Each portfolio corresponds to a strategic vector and translates the principles into coherent areas of intervention.

5.2 Portfolio 1: Flourishing a relational and collaborative culture

This portfolio operationalises the principles of life preservation in equality and prosperous and inclusive livelihoods, by placing a regenerative culture at the centre of urban transformation.

Its contribution to resilience lies in the fact that healthier, more cohesive and more relational societies are better equipped to anticipate, respond to and recover from disruptions, including those associated with climate change. Factors

such as access to green spaces, air quality, active mobility and proximity to essential services play a critical role in reducing vulnerability to risks such as heatwaves, pollution and social isolation.

From a regenerative perspective, enabling flourishing urban-territorial systems goes beyond reducing negative impacts. It seeks to create the conditions for individuals and communities to thrive, strengthening social capital and fostering collective capacities that support long-term change.

This principle also recognises the importance of addressing inequalities that limit access to wellbeing. Unequal access to resources, services and opportunities significantly affects the ability of different groups to adapt to climate-related challenges.

This portfolio focuses on enhancing a regenerative culture and quality of urban life, while reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening social cohesion.

Key areas of action:

- Urban health and environmental quality
- Inclusive, liveable and relational public spaces
- Climate resilient community-led actions
- Culture, education and social innovation

Systemic contribution:

This portfolio strengthens social resilience by enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to shocks, including climate-related risks such as heatwaves, pollution and social isolation. It also contributes to long-term regeneration by fostering social capital and collective wellbeing.

5.3 Portfolio 2: Reorganising the urban metabolism

This portfolio translates the principle of economy within ecological and social boundaries, focusing on transforming urban metabolism systems including energy, water, mobility, materials and food.

Its contribution to resilience lies in reducing external dependencies, diversifying resource flows and improving efficiency. More decentralised, flexible and circular systems are better able to withstand disruptions, whether climatic, economic or infrastructural.

In terms of climate adaptation, reorganising urban systems involves redesigning infrastructures and services to respond to challenges such as rising temperatures, water scarcity and extreme events. This includes the transition towards low-emission mobility systems, the expansion of renewable energy, and the implementation of integrated water management strategies.

From a regenerative perspective, this portfolio of actions promotes the transition from linear to circular systems, where resource flows are optimised and interconnected, reducing waste and enhancing system efficiency within ecological limits.

This portfolio addresses the urban metabolism, acting on the systems that sustain the functioning of cities.

Key areas of action:

- Sustainable mobility systems for people and goods
- Renewable and decentralised energy systems and climate adaptation
- Integrated water management
- Circular economy and material flows
- Sustainable and localised food systems

Systemic contribution:

By reducing external dependencies, improving resource efficiency and increasing system flexibility, this portfolio enhances resilience to climate, energy and economic disruptions. It also supports adaptation to climate change through the redesign of infrastructures and services.

5.4 Portfolio 3: Restoring nature and ecosystems

This portfolio directly advances the principle of life preservation in equality, through the restoration of ecosystems and ecological functions. The aim of this portfolio is to recognise that cities are embedded within broader ecological systems and that their development has often contributed to environmental degradation.

Its contribution to resilience is direct, as healthy ecosystems function as natural infrastructures that help mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The integration of green and blue infrastructure, the restoration of permeable surfaces and the enhancement of biodiversity contribute to reducing urban heat, managing stormwater and improving environmental quality.

From a regenerative perspective, restoring ecosystems implies moving beyond conservation towards active ecological restoration. It involves strengthening the bio-physical matrix of urban and territorial systems, enhancing ecosystem functions and supporting biodiversity.

This principle also incorporates a territorial dimension, recognising that urban resilience depends on the health of surrounding ecosystems. Water cycles, food systems and resource flows require a more integrated approach that reconnects cities with their hinterlands.

This portfolio focuses on the recovery and strengthening of natural systems, integrating them into urban and territorial dynamics.

Key areas of action:

- Interconnected green and blue infrastructure
- Biodiversity restoration and ecological connectivity
- Nature-based solutions
- Bio-based and regenerative production systems (e.g. agroecology, bioeconomy)

Systemic contribution:

This portfolio directly supports climate adaptation by improving thermal regulation, water management and ecosystem resilience. It contributes to regeneration by restoring ecological biocapacity and reinforcing the bio-physical foundations of urban and territorial systems.

5.5 Portfolio 4: Rebalancing urban-territorial systems

This portfolio operationalises the principles of territorial equality and inclusive livelihoods, addressing structural inequalities across urban and territorial systems.

Current urban dynamics often generate unequal access to resources, services and opportunities. These inequalities translate into differentiated exposure to climate risks, such as heat stress, energy poverty or limited access to quality environments.

Rebalancing urban-territorial systems contributes to resilience by reducing these vulnerabilities and ensuring more equitable living conditions. This includes access to adequate housing, essential services, mobility and high-quality public spaces.

From a regenerative perspective, redistribution also involves rebalancing relationships between urban and rural areas, promoting more equitable distribution of resources, activities and opportunities across territories.

In addition, this principle includes the dimension of governance, emphasising the importance of inclusive decision-making processes and broader participation in shaping urban systems transformation.

This portfolio addresses social and territorial equity, ensuring a fairer distribution of resources, services and opportunities.

Key areas of action:

- Access to affordable and adequate housing
- Equal access to services, infrastructure and opportunities

- Rural and urban rebalancing
- Social inclusion and territorial cohesion

Systemic contribution:

Reducing inequalities lowers vulnerability to climate impacts and strengthens collective adaptive capacity. From a regenerative perspective, this portfolio supports more balanced and inclusive systems, both within cities and across territories.

5.6 Critical system intervention areas

In addition to the structuring of portfolios, the analysis of urban dynamics highlights key areas where intervention is particularly critical to enable systemic transformation.

These include:

- Urban growth models and spatial concentration, which generate pressure on land use, housing and social equity.
- Urban metabolism and external resource dependence, which increase environmental impacts and systemic vulnerability.
- Spatial planning and mobility systems, which shape urban form and patterns of access.
- The built environment, including energy retrofitting, climate adaptation and the integration of nature-based solutions.

Targeting these areas allows for direct intervention in the feedback loops that sustain the current model, accelerating the transition towards more resilient and regenerative systems.

5.7 Alignment with existing frameworks and instruments

Cities currently operate within a wide range of strategic frameworks and planning instruments addressing specific challenges such as climate change, mobility, energy and social inclusion. These include international agendas, European strategies and local plans, often associated with defined targets, indicators and implementation mechanisms.

However, these instruments are typically developed within sectoral silos, limiting their coherence and reducing their capacity to drive systemic transformation. The portfolio approach provides a way to overcome this fragmentation by acting as an integrative framework that aligns these instruments under a shared direction of change.

In this sense, systemic portfolios can incorporate and articulate instruments such as:

- Global sustainable development agendas
- Decarbonisation and climate adaptation strategies
- Sustainable urban mobility plans
- Energy transition and decarbonisation strategies
- Biodiversity and nature-based solutions frameworks
- Housing and social cohesion policies

The framework seeks to connect and align them, enhancing coherence and maximising their combined impact. This approach also enables the development of more integrated monitoring systems, combining existing indicators with new metrics that better capture the systemic nature of transition processes.

Systemic portfolio of actions for flourishing a collaborative culture

The transformative assumption for this portfolio is that creating the conditions for individuals and communities to thrive, strengthening culture, social capital and fostering collective capacities that support long-term transformation.

Table 1. Examples of place-based actions in flourishing collaborative culture portfolio.

PROBLEM DETECTED	CHALLENGE
Lack of adaptation to extreme heat and flood risks	Climate resilient adaptation and liveable neighbourhoods.
Risk of poverty, social and residential exclusion	Wellbeing and inclusive livelihoods to vulnerable groups.
Lack of sense of belonging and social cohesion	Regenerative culture and bioregional development.

Source: SharedAgendas.org

Systemic portfolio of actions for restoring ecosystems

Strengthening the bio-physical matrix (blue and green), enhancing the ecosystem functions that support biodiversity and landscape.

Table 2. Examples of place-based actions on restoring ecosystems portfolio.

PROBLEM DETECTED	CHALLENGE
Lack of green spaces due to land-use changes	Nature-positive urban regeneration through green and blue infrastructure.
Ecological fragmentation of territory	Connectivity through green corridors
Loss of biodiversity	Resilient urban and rural landscapes

Source: SharedAgendas.org

Systemic portfolio of actions for reorganising urban systems

Reducing external dependencies, diversifying resource flows and moving towards sufficiency will enable effective decarbonisation. Decentralised, flexible and circular systems will strengthen the ability to adapt to disruptions, whether climatic or socio-economic in nature.

Table 3. Examples of place-based actions on reorganising the urban system portfolio.

PROBLEM DETECTED	CHALLENGE
Car dependence and lack of space for active mobility	Redistribution of public space and reorganisation of mobility networks
Centralised energy models, highly centralised food systems and lack of self-sufficiency.	Distributed production and consumption models based on water-food-energy communities.
High emission-built environment dependent on fossil fuels and extractive construction systems.	Bio-based and circular built environment.

Source: SharedAgendas.org

Systemic portfolio of actions for rebalancing urban-territorial systems

Promoting a just transition for the most vulnerable through territorial symbiosis between urban and rural communities; equal opportunities to access services, resources and activities, especially for young people across territories.

Table 4. Examples of place-based actions on rebalancing urban-territorial system portfolio.

PROBLEM DETECTED	CHALLENGE
Residential exclusion, lack of access to housing	Affordable housing and inclusive living conditions for young people.
Lack of diversification of the economy and capacity-building in emerging sectors.	Entrepreneurship in bioeconomy, energy transition, and community health.
Lack of demand for local products and lack of opportunities.	Territorial agreements to manage trade-offs and strengthen ecological, social and productive resilience.

Source: SharedAgendas.org

6 Connection to Global Shared Agendas

The transition of cities and regions towards resilient and regenerative models does not occur in isolation. It forms part of broader processes of change that affect socio-technical systems such as energy, mobility, food, health and the built environment, and which evolve simultaneously across multiple contexts and at different scales.

In this context, the Shared Agendas framework enables collective action to be organised around a real complex problem and a common direction for change. It

allows for the coordination of multisector actors in place-based processes, encourages experimentation and learning, and relates initiatives within a broader transformation framework.

The Global Shared Agendas framework provides a structure for relating distributed processes and interpreting their broader contribution to system transformation.

Cities not only learn from one another but also generate information and knowledge that help us understand how broader transitions unfold. When several actors and initiatives coordinate their actions around similar challenges, their combined experience enables patterns to be identified effectively.

6.1 From place-based action to system transformation

Cities and territories are the primary spaces where transformation is enacted. It is at this level that actors engage with concrete challenges, develop solutions and implement actions adapted to specific environmental, social and institutional conditions.

However, the outcomes of these processes depend not only on local action, but also on how these actions relate to broader dynamics, including regulatory frameworks, market structures, technological trajectories and investment flows.

This implies that governance patterns emerge from distributed action across contexts and actors, where multiple initiatives evolve in parallel and interact over time. The governance challenge is therefore not only to act locally, but also to understand how these processes connect and contribute to broader changes in the way socio-ecological systems evolve.

In practice, place-based Shared Agendas are often organised around functional territories such as metropolitan areas, counties or regions. These territories, however, are embedded within wider bioregional systems, where ecological processes, resource flows and cultural relationships transcend administrative boundaries. Bioregions provide the ecological context through which water, food, energy, biodiversity and landscape systems interact, shaping the long-term resilience and regenerative capacity of cities and territories.

Recognising the bioregional scale helps reconnect urban transformation with the living systems that sustain it. It also provides an intermediate level between place-based action and global system transformation, enabling local initiatives to contribute to the resilience and regeneration of the wider socio-ecological systems on which they depend.

The resilient and regenerative framework presented, aligns with this perspective, recognising that:

- transformation emerges through interconnected actions across multiple scales;
- local processes contribute to broader system evolution;
- coherence between initiatives is essential to generate lasting impact.

6.2 The role of a shared global framework

One of the main barriers is the fragmentation of action. A wide range of initiatives, policies and investments are deployed across different contexts yet often lack a shared structure to relate their contributions and interpret their collective impact.

Global Shared Agendas address this challenge by providing a shared global governance framework that enables:

- the definition of a common direction of change
- the connection of processes developed across different territories
- the interpretation of how distributed actions contribute to system transformation
- the alignment of strategic decisions, including policies and investments

This framework does not rely on centralised coordination. Instead, it enables the alignment of distributed action around a shared direction, while allowing actors to operate autonomously within their respective contexts.

6.3 Articulating local and global agendas

The framework developed can be understood as a structure that enables the articulation of place-based Shared Agendas with a broader Global Shared Agenda.

Within this structure:

- the principles define the direction of change
- the portfolios of actions organise interventions within specific contexts
- the system conditions identify key leverage points for system transformation
- the system signals enable the interpretation of how the system evolves

This architecture is fully aligned with the theory of change underpinning Global Shared Agendas, which connects directionality, system conditions, portfolios of actions and system-level signals within a coherent structure.

Through this alignment, actions implemented in different cities and territories can be related within a common framework, enabling collective learning and a more coherent understanding of transition processes.

6.4 Implications for policy and investment

Connecting urban transition processes to a global shared framework has significant implications for how policies and investments are designed and implemented.

It enables:

- more coherent public policy, by aligning sectoral strategies with systemic approaches
- better-informed investment decisions, by positioning investments in relation to system dynamics rather than individual projects
- identification of scaling opportunities, by recognising where solutions can be replicated or expanded across contexts
- enhanced strategic decision-making, supported by a more integrated understanding of system evolution

This is particularly relevant in areas such as climate action, energy transition and ecosystem restoration, where large-scale coordination and resource mobilisation are required.

6.5 Towards collective intelligence

The Global Shared Agendas framework opens the way to new forms of organising and understanding transformative innovation, based on the capacity to relate information, interpret system dynamics and learn from distributed processes.

This involves combining data from multiple sources with analytical and modelling tools, digital and AI-enabled systems, and expert interpretation. Together, these elements support the development of collective intelligence systems capable of identifying patterns, detecting emerging dynamics and informing strategic decisions.

As more cities contribute comparable evidence and experience, this collective intelligence becomes stronger. It allows patterns to be recognised earlier, supports more informed decision-making and helps align action across different levels and places without requiring centralised control.

Such approaches are essential to navigate the complexity of urban and territorial systems, and to accelerate the transition towards resilient and regenerative futures. As cities advance, connecting their experience with others working on similar challenges can accelerate learning and strengthen impact.

7 Monitoring system evolution

The transition towards resilient and regenerative cities cannot be adequately assessed through conventional monitoring approaches based on isolated indicators or project-level outputs. Urban and territorial transition is a complex process that emerges from the interaction of multiple initiatives, actors and system dynamics over time. In this context, there is a need for an interpretation approach capable of capturing how systems evolve, rather than focusing solely on the results of individual interventions.

Drawing on the Global Shared Agendas framework, the evolving process can be understood and assessed through three interrelated dimensions: system conditions, system signals, and the interpretation of system dynamics.

Cities and territories can be participants in shared frameworks and producers of practical knowledge about how this evolution unfolds. By structuring their action around comparable challenges and observing similar types of changes, cities contribute to a growing body of evidence that helps clarify how transformation unfolds under different conditions and at different paces.

7.1 System conditions

System conditions refer to the structural factors that enable or constrain the achievement of the desired directionality. They shape how urban and territorial systems operate and determine the capacity of interventions to generate meaningful and lasting change.

These conditions span multiple dimensions, including:

- Policy and regulatory frameworks
- Economic structures and market dynamics
- Infrastructure systems and the built environment
- Institutional and technical capacities
- Social norms, cultural values and behaviours
- Availability and orientation of investment

These elements are deeply interconnected and interact through feedback loops that can either stabilise the current system or create opportunities for transformation. The portfolios of actions described in chapter 4 engage directly with these conditions. By activating enabling factors and addressing structural barriers, they contribute to shifting how systems operate over time.

7.2 System signals

System signals refer to observable patterns that indicate how the system is evolving in relation to the desired direction of change. Unlike traditional

indicators, these signals are not attributed to specific interventions but reflect broader dynamics emerging across the system.

When similar patterns are observed across multiple cities facing comparable challenges, these signals can also help identify broader shifts in how urban systems are evolving. This makes local observation valuable not only for city-level decision-making, but also for understanding the impact on wider processes.

Table 5 System signals and examples of manifestation.

Systemic portfolio	Transformative actions	System signals
Reorganisation of urban systems	Redistribution of public space, ensuring to allocate more relational and active mobility spaces rather than motorized space.	- o Healthier environment in streets due to reduction of emissions, noise and heat, people can gather more time in public spaces. - o Secure cycling pathways enables people to feel safer to take a bike. - o More children and elderly people in public spaces.
Reorganisation of urban systems	Local energy communities (citizens and productive sectors)	- o Increased deployment of decentralised energy systems. - o Equitable access to clean energy. - o Renewable energies' social acceptance.
Restoring ecosystems	Agroforestry activities and regeneration of soils	- o Application of regenerative practices in agricultural activities to restore soils. - o Increased ecological connectivity through green infrastructure and permeable urban surfaces. - o Access to proximity nutritious food.
Restoring ecosystems	Restoration of water cycle	- o Water management based on sufficiency criteria. - o Urban pavements permeability to infiltrate water to underground. - o Health and quality of underwater resources.
Flourishing collaborative culture	Shared spaces for social innovation	- o Cohesive communities and trust reliance. - o Increased use and social activation of public spaces. - o Operational collective actions
Flourishing a collaborative culture	Governance and systemic capacity	- o Stronger collaboration between public, private and civic actors - o Greater policy integration and alignment across sectors - o Increased participation in decision-making processes
Rebalancing urban-territorial systems	Economic innovation	- o Growth of circular and locally embedded bioeconomic industrial and business models - o Increased investment in sustainable and regenerative solutions - o Diversification of territorial value chains - o Food, energy and water territorial security

These signals do not provide direct attribution, but they allow for the identification of trends, emerging patterns and areas where transformative innovation is accelerating or facing constraints.

7.3 Interpretation of system transformation

Assessing processes requires moving beyond attribution and focusing on the interpretation of how system dynamics evolve over time.

This approach recognises that:

- Evolution results from distributed action across multiple contexts
- Impacts are non-linear and cumulative
- Change emerges through interactions between multiple factors

In this context, evaluation focuses on understanding:

- Which system dynamics are shifting, and in what direction
- How system conditions are evolving
- Where reinforcing or inhibiting feedback loops are emerging
- Which areas require further intervention or adjustment

This process combines quantitative data, qualitative evidence and expert judgement to develop a more comprehensive understanding of transformation.

7.4 Towards integrated monitoring systems

The system signals approach enables the development of more integrated monitoring frameworks that better reflect the systemic nature of evolving processes.

This involves linking sectoral indicators (e.g. energy, mobility, housing) to broader system dynamics, integrating data across multiple scales (local, regional and global) by incorporating information on system conditions, not only outputs, and developing capacities to interpret patterns and trends over time.

In this context, advanced analytical tools — including artificial intelligence — can support the identification of patterns, the aggregation of signals and the interpretation of complex system dynamics.

Such approaches make it possible to move from fragmented monitoring systems towards more coherent frameworks that support strategic decision-making and continuous learning. As cities develop their own approaches, connecting with others working on similar challenges can accelerate learning, reduce duplication of effort and strengthen the overall impact of transformation.

8 Conclusion

The future of cities cannot be addressed by considering cities in isolation. Building resilient and regenerative futures requires reconnecting urban systems with the territories and bioregions that sustain them and fostering collective action around a shared direction of change. This is the purpose of the framework presented.

The transition toward resilient and regenerative cities requires new ways of reconnecting urban systems with territorial conditions and sustaining learning across actors and scales, while reinforcing the human and relational dimension as the primary driver of change.

This framework proposes a common direction for this transition. Rather than offering a rigid or standardized methodology, it provides a conceptual and operational architecture that can help cities, metropolitan regions, and territories organize collective action, align investments, coordinate policies, and foster learning across multiple actors and scales, ultimately contributing to broader systemic change.

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