

Review

With an open mind and a bit of curiosity, this practice guide to regenerative design could become a key resource for anyone looking to work regeneratively, believes **Eva MacNamara**.

The Pattern Book for Regenerative Design

Author: Oliver Broadbent

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HANDS UP, WHO WANTS TO READ A PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER'S

choose-your-own-adventure book that could end up being the most coveted book in your office library? *The Pattern Book for Regenerative Design* is, at heart, just that for the curious engineer (and, importantly, other humans too). It's a book of tools and techniques regularly used in regenerative design practice with advice on how to use them, and how they might work in combination (as 'patterns') faced with different contexts, scenarios and circumstances.

As Oliver Broadbent puts it, it's 'for people who dream about the future, but work in the present. Who imagine what's

possible, yet feel the gap between their vision and today's projects is too wide to span'. If that sounds a bit lofty, don't worry, it's more accessible than it sounds. All you really need is an open mind and a bit of curiosity.

Remember those trusty crib sheets you might've made for the IStructE exam, and often still use? You never knew what you'd face on the day, but you knew your way around that notebook like the back of your hand, thanks to many a well-trodden path through it. *The Pattern Book* feels like it's destined for the same fate: dog-eared, well-travelled, and always within reach for those working regeneratively – whether it's in your bag, on your desk, or in your lap on the way to a workshop.

Like the best crib sheets, it's a friendly, accessible shorthand for things to try and experiments to run, but with a much broader scope. It creates a shared language you can pass on to a colleague, collaborator or client so you can literally be 'on the same page'. I've used parts of it in workshops with both private- and public-sector clients to draw technical conclusions, and even in executive board meetings at the Useful Simple Trust as we explore business transformation.

When I first started thinking about regenerative design a few years ago, I assumed there must be a perfectly optimised solution out there; something we could put on a pedestal, if only we understood the topic and constraints well enough. But something clicked when I began to see regenerative design not as a noun, but as a verb. It's a process, and we're all part of the system. If we think of our work as transforming the built environment into a force for good, then it becomes something everyone can engage with. Every step guided by the pattern book, whether big or small, is progress towards this aim.

In true regenerative spirit, Oliver's book is a generous sharing of ideas and approaches. It's designed to be used in multiple ways, making dipping in and out just as valuable (if not more so) than reading it cover to cover.

The 'pattern catalogue', represented by familiar weaving patterns, helps apply regenerative thinking in different contexts; maybe you're working with developers and asset managers (pinstripe), rethinking supply chains (linen), or exploring regenerative design intuitively (felt). Each pattern guides you through a sequence of tools and techniques to try out.

I particularly appreciated the 'user guides' that pop up throughout. For the sceptics among us (whether that's you or someone you're trying to convince), these bring the book to life. It's a self-aware, one-size-doesn't-fit-all approach to regenerative practice. Oliver encourages you to scribble in the margins and has left space at the back for building your own patterns. I'm still figuring out what works for me and what doesn't.

This book does exactly what it says on the tin: it's a practice guide. As Oliver writes, 'Practice is the application of theory, our habitual ways of working. It's the patterns we repeat whether we're supporting clients, building a portfolio, transforming a business or institution, teaching, shaping policy, or developing personal or regenerative practice.'

My advice? Give it a go. And be regenerative by letting someone else know how it went and being part of what happens next.



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