




Growing the movement
for a regenerative Sydney

April 2022





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This report showcases our journey so far, and communicates the exciting potential we see. The narrative and findings included draw from public events, community workshops and desktop research conducted in 2021.

We thank the UNSW Allens Hub for providing us with grant funding that helped us to undertake this body of work.

For all our relations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Regen Sydney respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and the living cultures of the lands and waters that make up the place we now call Greater Sydney. We recognise that the Traditional Custodians have occupied and cared for this Country over countless generations.

We celebrate the continuing contributions that Aboriginal people make to the life of this city. We respectfully acknowledge their Elders, past, present and forever emerging.



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*“Regeneration means putting life at the centre
of every action and decision.”*

~ Paul Hawken, *Regeneration*

HOW DO WE LIVE IN THIS LAND WITH JOY?

“How do we live in this land with joy? To answer this question, we have to go back to where we made our mistakes, learn from that and then move forward.”

Uncle Phil Bligh, Darkinjung Elder, Co-founder,
Beyond the Campfire

Aboriginal cultures have been living in deep relationship with Country for millenia. Centring Indigenous ways of thinking and understanding helps us grow our awareness of how cultures work, through the values and beliefs that ground a person’s thinking and their motivations.

Regen Sydney is grateful to be guided by Elders who are teaching us cultural intelligence and showing us how to walk with First Nations people.

We invite you to join with us on this journey that puts reconciliation at the heart of regeneration, through deep relationships and reconnection with Country.

“If we want to coexist, we have to cocreate”

David Beaumont, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator,
City of Sydney

Adjacent: the trunk of a gulgadya/grass tree (Xanthorrhoea) - the name from which 'Gadi/Cadi' is derived



WHAT DOES GOOD LOOK LIKE FOR SYDNEY?

Regen Sydney has a big vision for regeneration on a citywide scale, tied into a fast-growing global movement. It's about nothing less than rewilding and rewiring everything that makes us who we are and how we view the world.

Guided by the simple question, "what does good look like for Sydney?", we are building a coalition to examine what initiatives and meaningful measures of progress are already in place for our city, and to uncover what else might be needed to shift our city's course towards a future that's inspiring for us all. A future in which everyone and everything has a role to play.

Join us in creating the Sydney Doughnut, and in redefining what good looks like in our city.

Watch the video:

[What Does Good Look Like For Sydney?](#)



WHAT DOES **GOOD**
LOOK LIKE FOR
SYDNEY?

[WATCH THE VIDEO HERE](#)

THREE PILLARS OF OUR VISION

1. Transition to an economy that heals and activates rather than destroys life, and in demonstrating that this is not only possible, it's already under way in Sydney.

2. Connect and grow the movement of individuals and organisations actively working towards making Sydney a resilient and regenerative city.

3. Get Sydney inside the 'doughnut' - the safe space for all life - within a generation.

HOW MIGHT SYDNEY BECOME A REGENERATIVE CITY?

Regen Sydney is on a mission to re-define measures of progress for our city. We're driven to establish both a new future-story for Sydney and a more holistic set of metrics that underpin it.

These metrics go beyond GDP to encompass not only the living infrastructure we depend on so entirely (water, trees, biodiversity, air quality), but also the things that determine the quality of our lives, and the health and cohesion of our communities (including housing affordability, education, fair work & income, accessibility).

"[GDP] measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

Robert F. Kennedy

Our goal is to reveal and communicate opportunities for deep economic transformations in Greater Sydney and beyond. We will achieve this by:

1. Investigating the appropriateness and adaptability of the Doughnut Economics model* to Sydney's unique context.

*see page 14 for more information

2. Developing preliminary community insights regarding how a regenerative future for Sydney might look and feel.

3. Increasing the connectedness between people and organisations across Greater Sydney who are committed to shaping a sustainable, biodiverse and inclusive future for all inhabitants.

WHO IS REGEN SYDNEY?

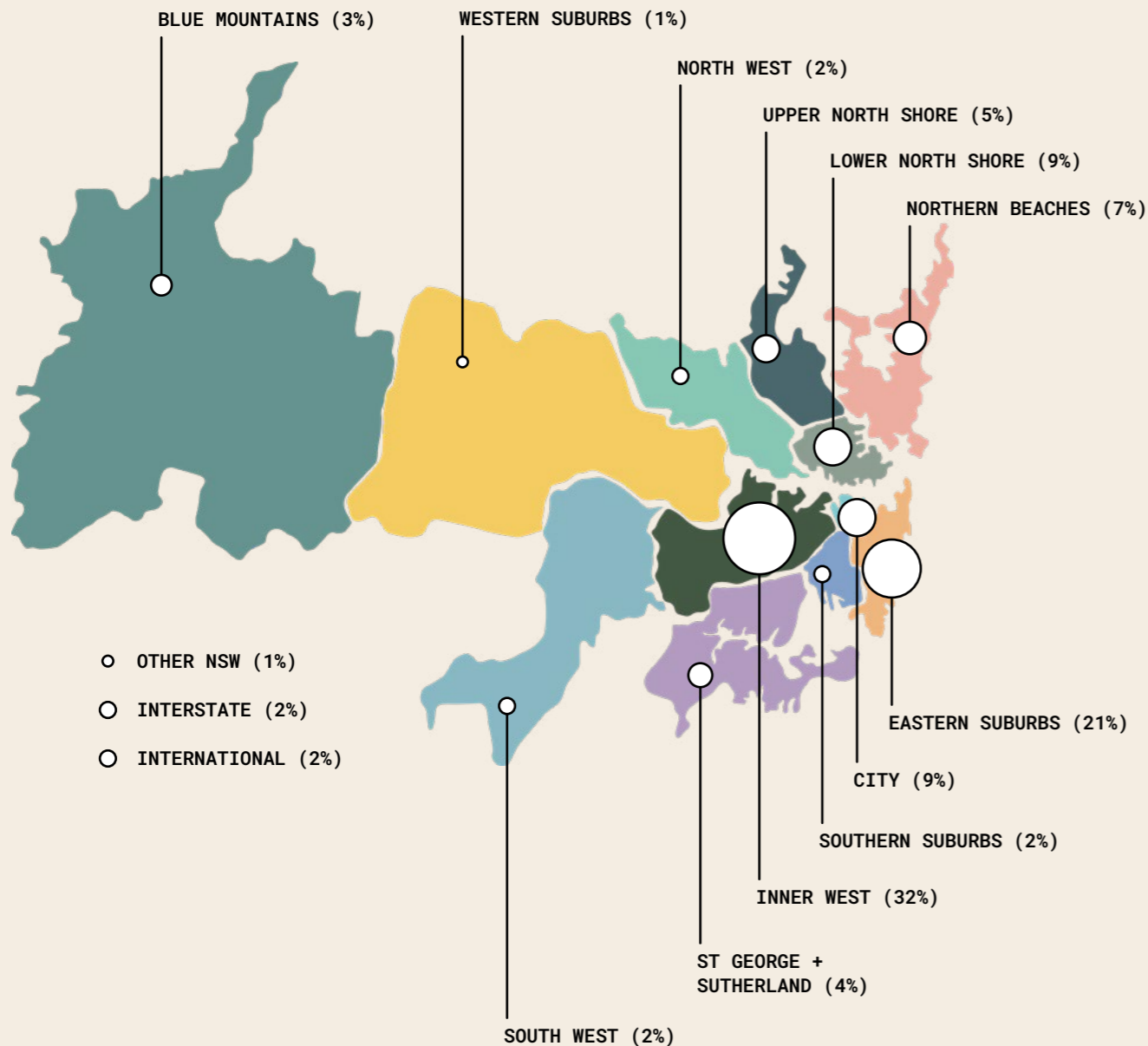
Regen Sydney is a rising coalition of over 230 individuals and organisations who are actively collaborating across sectors to create a healthy, equitable, thriving city for the citizens of Greater Sydney, now, and into the future, beginning by experimenting with Doughnut Economics.

We are part of a fast-growing network of cities and regions across the globe who are experimenting with localising and implementing more holistic measures of progress.

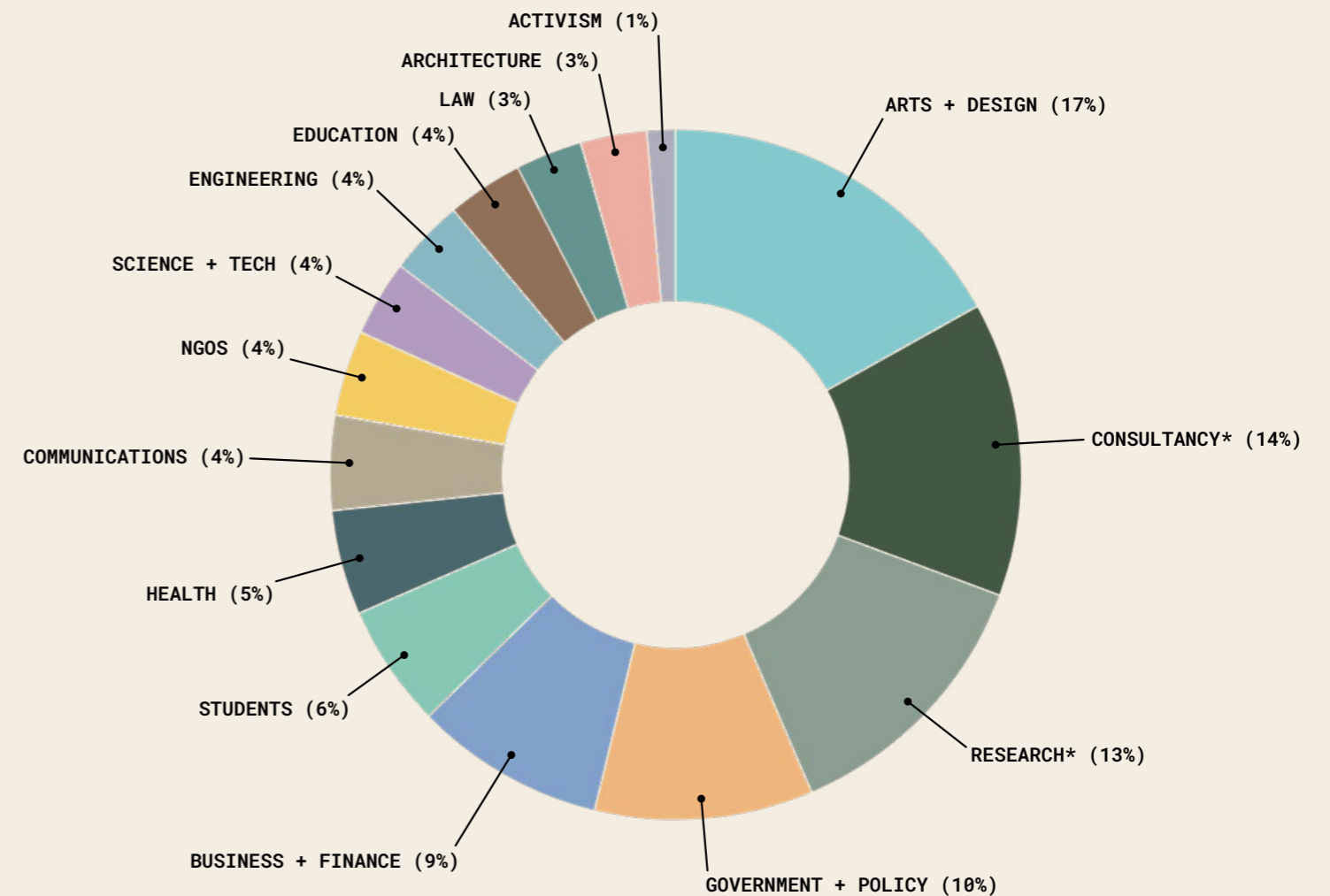
The diagrams on this page show how the over 230 network members are spread across (1) the various regions of Greater Sydney and further afield, as well as (2) diverse fields of industry, skillsets and professional experience.

The data shown is indicative of the responses received from community members. Our aspiration is to have representation from across Greater Sydney and a diversity of professions.

WHERE DO WE LIVE?



WHERE DO WE WORK?



*ACROSS DISCIPLINES - SUSTAINABILITY, STRATEGY, BUILT ENVIRONMENT ETC.

WHO IS ON THE JOURNEY WITH US?

Working together for a regenerative Sydney.



WHY THIS? WHY NOW?

Greater Sydney is a globally interdependent city. The way we live - the goods and foods we choose - relies on and affects people, landscapes and habitats across Australia and the world. Yet, we have few ways to account for and understand the impacts of our everyday decisions in ways that show the discrepancy between how we live and what we truly value as a society.

Regen Sydney formed in early 2021, immediately following the catastrophic bushfire season of 2019/20, which saw over 5.5 million hectares of land burnt², 26 human lives lost in NSW, and countless wildlife perish. The fires are estimated to have cost Australia over \$100bn³, however, the true cost is almost unimaginable and will be felt across generations.

During this time, Australia was also coming to grips with the Covid-19 pandemic, reported to cost Treasury \$291 billion by May 2021⁴. To date, over 4,200 Australian are reported to have died of the virus⁵. These events made Sydney's interdependencies as a globally connected city increasingly apparent as supermarket shelves emptied, transport and shipping slowed to a halt and national and state borders closed.

Across Greater Sydney, the flaws created by our current economic system were more visible than ever, with the effects of ongoing lockdowns experienced in vastly different ways from West to East, North to South, postcode to postcode⁶.

"Those who experienced more disadvantages were vulnerable populations, women and children, migrants and also workers with lower income," Epidemiologist, Professor Brennan-Olsen, Deakin University

The devastating floods in 2022 have similarly highlighted our geographical disparities when faced with the effects of a changing climate⁷. Through these recent catastrophes, decentralised community responses have been invaluable in recovery efforts. Pointedly, they have persisted despite structural impediments and inaction.

"Overall economic growth (measured by an increase in GDP) has been a traditional measure of economic health. Yet evidence shows that despite almost three decades of economic growth in this country, some members of our community have not participated in, or shared in, the resultant wealth." City of Sydney, Community Wealth Building Discussion Paper

Of course, this situation is not unique to Sydney. Globally, countries and cities around the world are realising that relentless economic growth sets us on a course for far greater social inequality into the future, and risks nothing less than the destruction of the everything that gives us life: clean water, healthy soils, biodiversity and a safe, stable climate.

Who do we want to become? When was the last time we paused as a collective to ask who we are and where we're headed as a city? Regen Sydney believes that the future we're creating needs a different story.



2 [Bushfires - Black Summer NSW 2019-2020](#)

3 [The Conversation](#), Jan 2020

4 Source: [Australian Govt, Treasury report](#)

5 Source: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) case numbers and statistics](#)

6 ABC News, ["How Sydney's COVID-19 lockdown is dividing the city"](#)

7 ABC News, ["Wild Sydney weather"](#)

REGENERATIVE ECONOMICS

Efforts to consciously design regenerative economies are expanding rapidly in Australia. These track rapidly rising global interest in shifting economic development from a focus on sustainability to regeneration, a trajectory observable from the World Economic Forum in Davos through to Indigenous communities.

A regenerative economy goes beyond the concept of sustainability - of being '100% less bad' than a conventional economy. As depicted in the diagram below, a regenerative economy takes a systemic view, with humans playing a reciprocal role in the web of life.

"A regenerative economy works to realize the potential and grow the wealth generating capacity of every living entity it touches."

Carol Sanford and Ben Haggard,
Regenerative Economy Collaborative

GLOBAL CONTEXT

Cities have always been experimental sites of collective social change, from the era of the city-state through to the contemporary urban megalopolis. Today, the twin challenges of climate change and rocketing inequality create an increasing need to 'think big', imagining systems-level and transformative change. The scale of cities provides a generative place for this kind of creative work, opening exciting opportunities for research, advocacy and storytelling that can contribute to systemic change at both local and global levels.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

A groundswell of localised 'Regen' movements were initiated in cities and regions in 2021, including in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and the Mornington Peninsula. Regen Sydney has close ties to these initiatives, contributing to a national base of action-oriented research. Together, this national movement provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore the legal, policy and governance reform

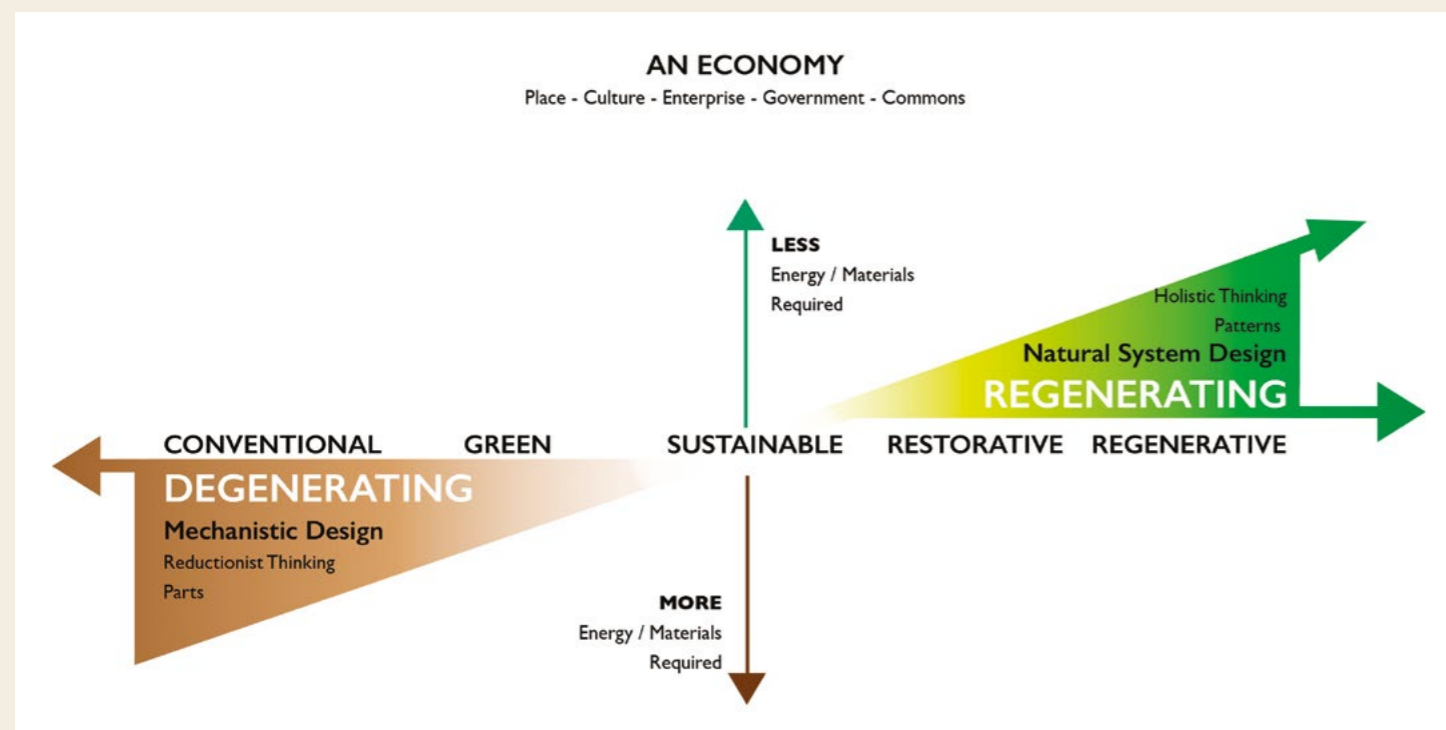
pathways that can support regenerative and distributive local economies, driven by broad conceptions of wellbeing and thriving. These Australian initiatives are also part of a broader global movement of local urban experiments, documented and supported by the global Doughnut Economics Action Lab.

THE DOUGHNUT

Doughnut Economics is the catalyst that will kickstart our collective dialogue. It is an engaging, simple-to-understand framework that places the economy firmly in the context of ecological boundaries and societal needs. The model encompasses a range of complementary approaches, and encourages bridge-building across sectors and siloes, the critical first step in system-wide transformation.

"It's a radically new compass for guiding humanity this century. And it points towards a future that can provide for every person's needs while safeguarding the living world on which we all depend."

Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics



Adapted by John Fullerton (2015) from Bill Reed's "Trajectory of Ecological Design" diagram

Regen Sydney will convene workshops and events centred around the 'doughnut', that engage a diverse range of perspectives and voices to ask the question 'what does good look like for Sydney?', with respect to our non-negotiable ecological ceiling and social foundations. In doing so, the Regen Sydney community will generate our own, contextually-specific Sydney Doughnut, which can act as a compass to guide future decision-making in the city.

Some examples of additional regenerative approaches are provided overleaf on page 15 and key initiatives using some of these approaches appear on page 17 in the section 'What initiatives are already underway?'.

OUR APPROACH

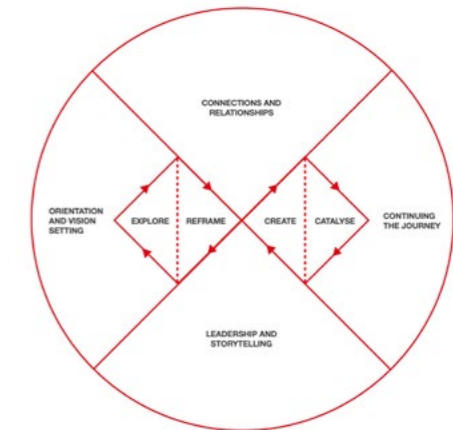
DOUGHNUT ECONOMICS

The Doughnut Economics model has a complementary City Portraits methodology for downscaling the doughnut to the city scale. Together, these provide frameworks with which to co-create visions and metrics for living within planetary boundaries and meeting social foundations.



SYSTEMIC DESIGN

Systemic Design approaches including that of Transition Design provide processes with which to respond to complex challenges through multi-stakeholder collaboration. Systemic Design is always contextual and allows for emergence in its explorations of deep shifts over longer time horizons.



A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

Regen Sydney is drawing from these key methodologies to help us grow our movement. Engaging with the qualities of Sydney's communities and ecologies is central to our collaborative research and development

GREENPRINTS

The Greenprints approach is an Australian framework for regenerative systems change developed by the Australian Earth Laws Alliance. Ecocentrism and Indigenous knowledge systems sit at the heart of this approach, along with a focus on creating thriving bioregions and meeting ecological limits.



COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

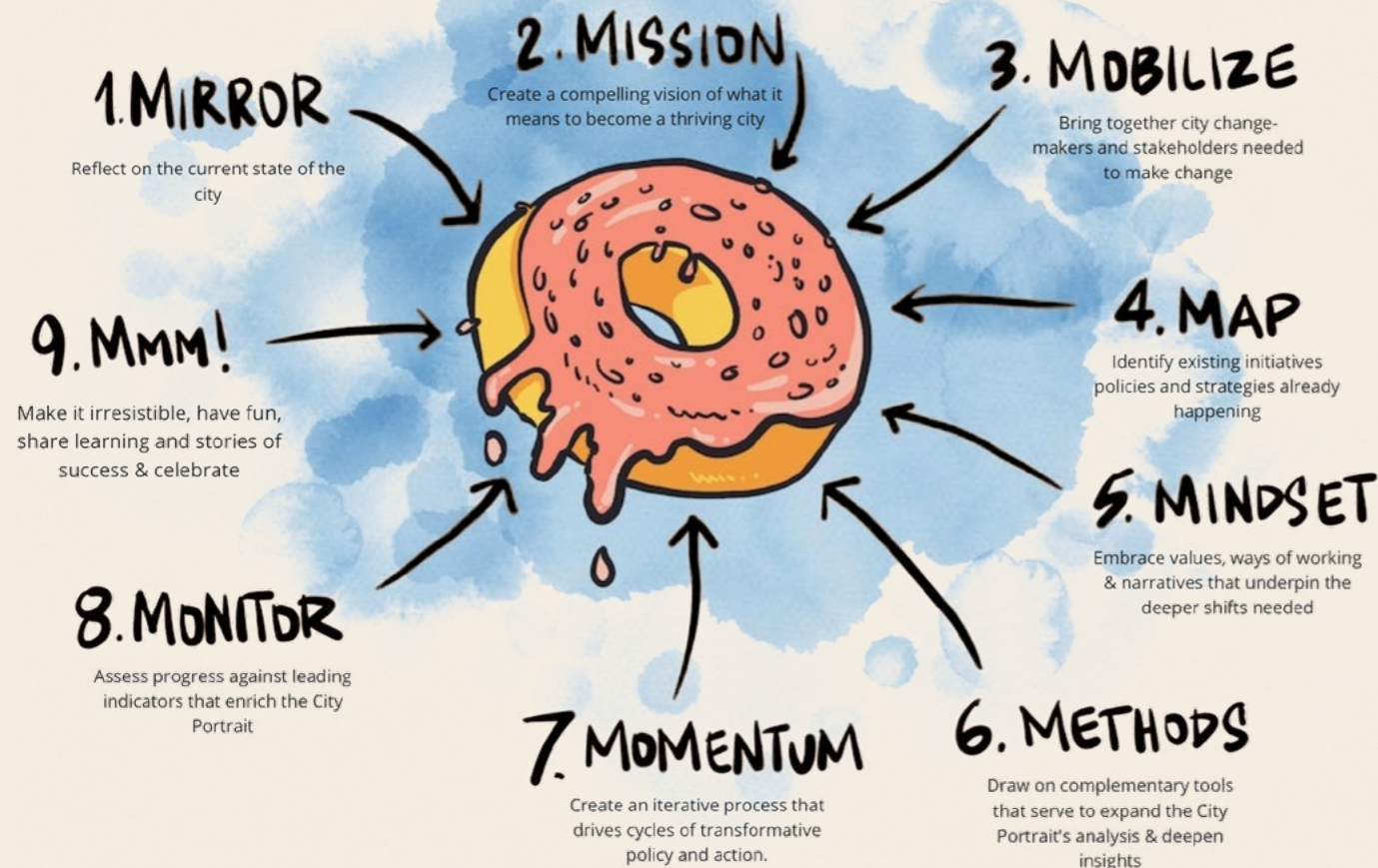
Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to economic development that aims to create an inclusive, sustainable economy. The approach redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places ownership and benefits into the hands of local community members and organisations.



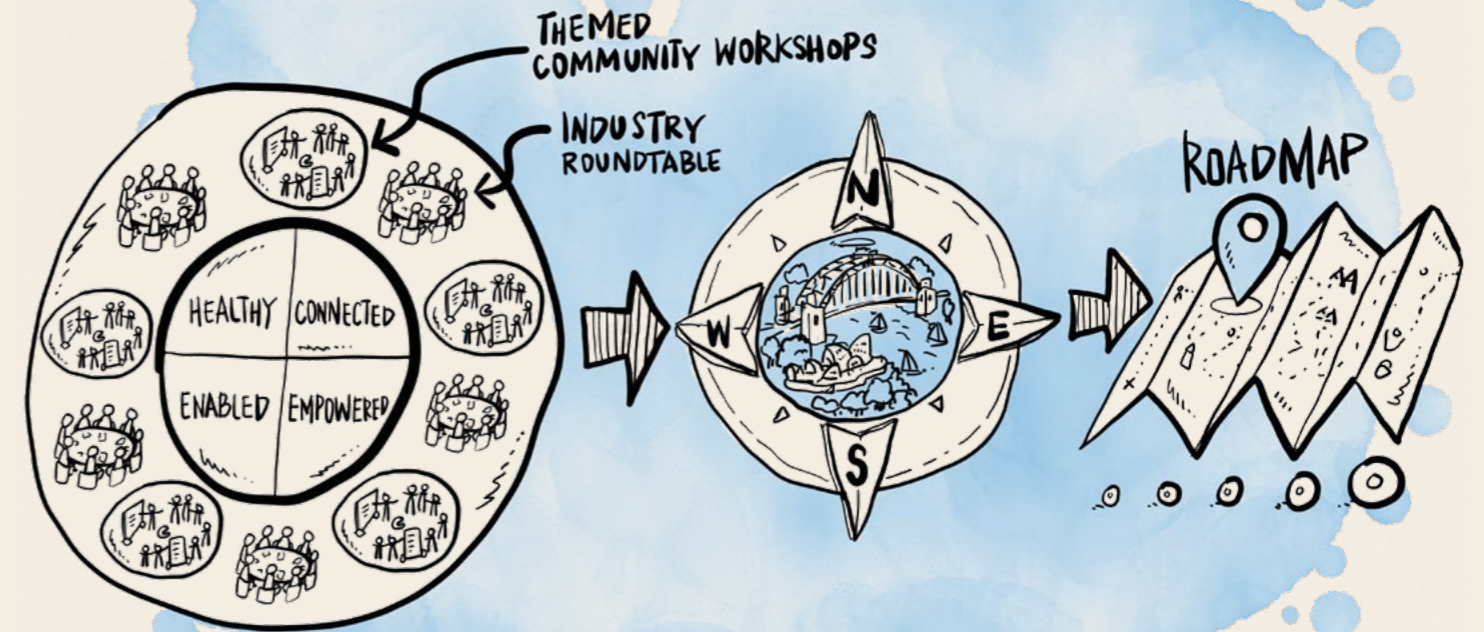
OUR STRATEGY

Regen Sydney's strategy is based on the 9 steps outlined by Kate Raworth in Doughnut Economics.

We're already making good progress in a number of areas - mobilise, map and mission. Our major focus for 2022 is the critical first step of 'mirror' where we hold the lens up to ourselves as a city, and take a 'City Portrait'. Asking the question, who are we now? And who are we becoming?



"KEY to the PERFECT DOUGHNUT IS GETTING the RIGHT INGREDIENTS"



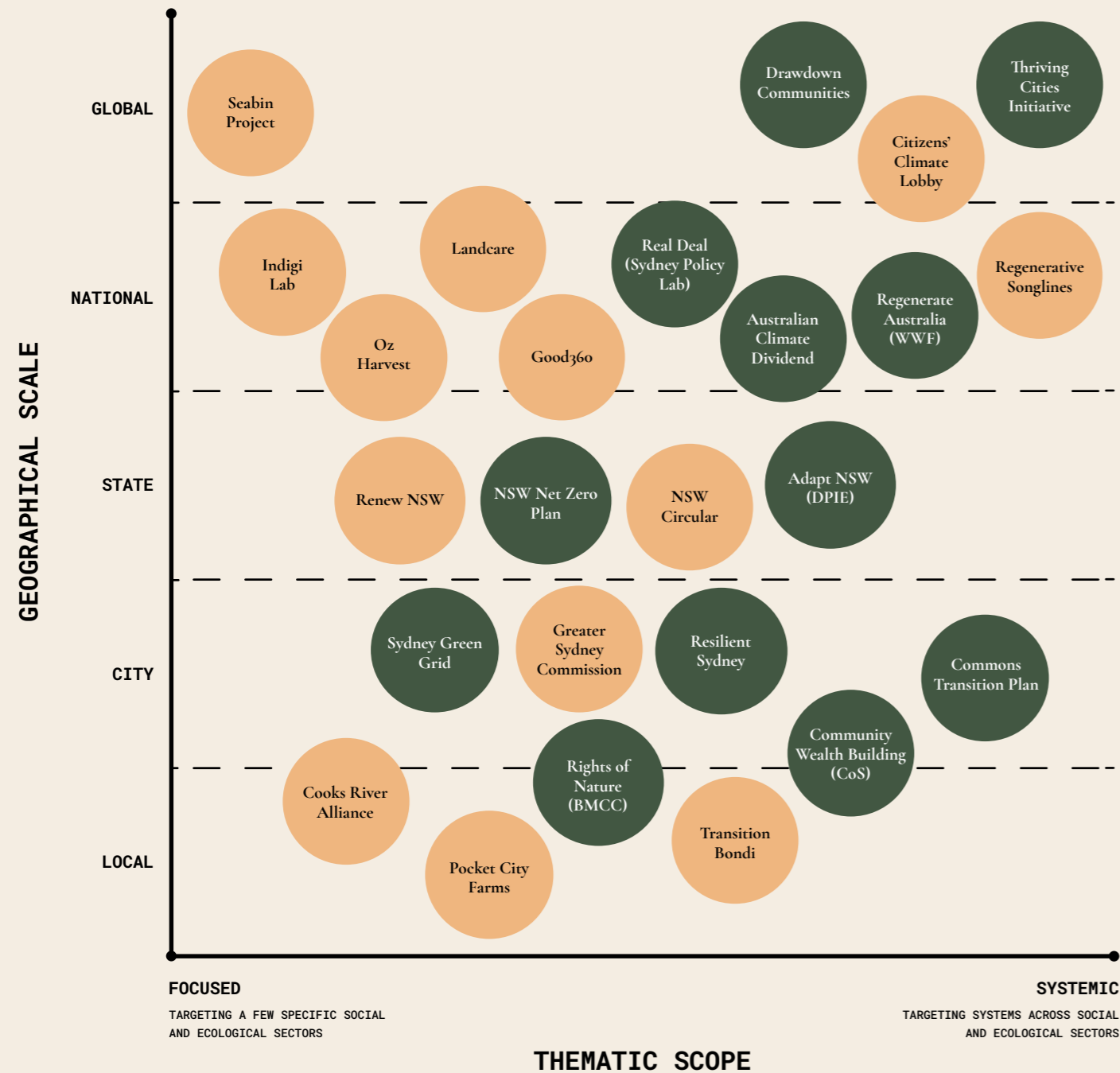
Together with community, we will create a Sydney version of the Doughnut.

We can't measure what we can't see. Our first step will be to hold a series of community workshops to surface and make visible the aspects of life that people hold dear across Sydney. What we learn from those conversations will form the basis of our collective 'compass', so we can see where we are on track, and where we need to recalibrate as a city to keep us oriented to what we value. What we discover can guide future decision-making, policy development and community actions.

Next, we'll generate a collective roadmap, which identifies the steps needed to bring our city into the 'safe & just space' of the Doughnut.

Graphic recording credit: [Fern Lecuna](#)

WHAT INITIATIVES ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY?



Of course, we're not starting from scratch. So many good things are already happening in Sydney... from local community programs to initiatives with global scale, and from highly focused operational efforts to cross-cutting systemic initiatives.

The organisations and initiatives shown are but a snapshot of those across the city, and provide a considerable amount of benefit to their communities. These regenerative programs are active across various scales in our geographically and culturally rich landscape, and complement each other with undertakings such as coastal care, sustainable procurement, urban food production and citizen deliberation. What we discovered in our early research though, is that there is enormous collaborative potential. Despite the raft of remarkable and obviously aligned initiatives, many of them are disconnected from each other.

Regen Sydney wants to change this. We aim to increase the visibility of regenerative initiatives and connectedness of those working on them through our community platform, events and workshops. This is a huge task. We have just begun but we already have hundreds of open and curious connection-seeking aspirations put forward by the community, such as:

- “...case study of a society that works for its people, businesses and the natural environment which supports both...”
- “...interested in learning First Nations perspectives and knowledge of Country in the Sydney basin...”
- “...a regenerative community that realises its agency...”

Prompts like these – and much more – are the kinds of connections that have the potential to put us on a path towards creating a regenerative future for Sydney.

KEY PUBLICATIONS

<p><u>Planning for 2050</u> CITY OF SYDNEY</p>	<p><u>Commons Transition Plan</u> SYDNEY COMMONS LAB</p>
<p><u>Resilient Sydney</u> CITY OF SYDNEY</p>	<p><u>A Roadmap to Recovery and Regeneration</u> WWF AUSTRALIA</p>
<p><u>The Circular Economy Opportunity in NSW</u> NSW CIRCULAR</p>	<p><u>The Million Jobs Plan</u> BEYOND ZERO EMISSIONS</p>

“Transforming systems is ultimately about transforming relationships among people who shape those systems.”

~ Peter Senge, *The Dawn of System Leadership*

HOW WERE WE ACTIVE IN 2021?

In 2021 Regen Sydney activated the community through the following:

- Grew the Regen Sydney community from 5 to 237 people.
- Hosted:
 - 5 Regen Cafes
 - 4 virtual events / community workshops
- Presented at:
 - New Economy Network Australia conference
 - TEDxSydney
- Partnered with:
 - UTS TD (Transdisciplinary) School on the delivery of the 'Past, Present & Future of Innovation' subject as a part of the Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation. There were over 200 students re-envisioning regenerative futures for Sydney across the areas of: food, health, housing and politics.
- Catalysed early conversations with key allies and potential partner organisations, including:
 - [Ethical Fields](#)
 - [Beyond the Campfire](#)
 - [Australian Earth Laws Alliance](#)
 - [Regen Melbourne](#)
 - [Regen Meeanjin](#)



Screenshot of participants on Zoom during the 'First Bite' event, August 2021

FIRST BITE OF THE SYDNEY DOUGHNUT

In August 2021, we held a Regen Sydney 'First Bite' event. 115 people attended from across Greater Sydney, representing community, circular economy, regenerative design, public policy, law, academia, First Nations and community.

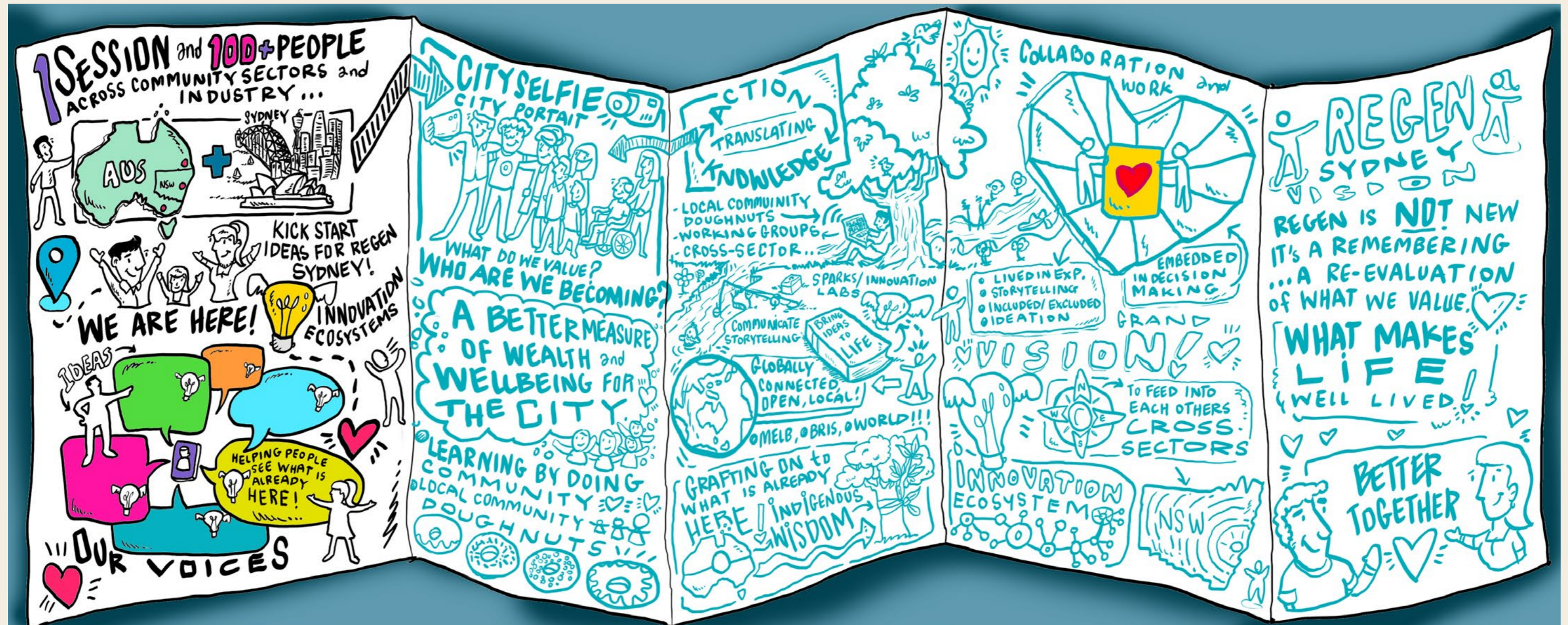
The event received support from City of Sydney Deputy Lord Mayor, Jess Scully, who joined us to share insights about citizen-led democracy - [see video here](#).

The event took place right in the thick of COVID lockdown. It was a challenging time, with structural inequalities vividly exposed by the Covid lockdown. The gathering acted as a beacon to diffuse anxiety, garner positive energy and chart a regenerative roadmap out of the current system.

In breakout groups, participants brainstormed potential collaborations, and described collective visions of the future. Participants had the chance to meet one another, share their perspectives and approaches to regeneration, and most importantly to seed momentum for the growing network.

“Our current measures of progress are built on short-term memory models. This way that we do things right now is not the way they’ve always been done. First Nations people didn’t work with these models in this short-term image of history. This extractive, individualistic and completely unsustainable model that we have today is a blip in history. It will not last if we change it. It is not the way things have always been or always have to be and we have to spread this message to everyone.”

Deputy Lord Mayor, Jess Scully



Graphic recording credit: [Fern Lecuna](#)

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

Regen Sydney is co-creating a ‘City Portrait’ for Sydney. Community workshops and industry roundtables will help us to identify and reflect what we value as a collective, as a city.

They are designed to generate a shared sense of who we are now - the values we cherish - and who we are becoming as a city. They will ask crucial guiding questions that allow us to reflect: ‘is that who we believe ourselves to be? Is that who we want to become? Are we moving in the direction of our values and the future we want to create, or contrary to it? And, if we are not on the right trajectory, how might we alter our course?’

A localised Sydney Doughnut can give us a point of reorientation.

By explicitly reflecting the aspects of our place and the quality of life we hold dear as a collective, (e.g. healthy waterways, social equity, the creativity of our communities), a local ‘Doughnut’ can point us towards the different data-sets needed in order to obtain more meaningful measures of wealth and progress.

Moreover, it invites communities, policy-makers and business leaders to use that data in contextually relevant ways to guide their own decision-making, so they can take actions that are aligned with the needs and qualities of the diverse communities and ecologies they represent.

Doughnut dreamings...

Imagine if... every council in Sydney had their own data-informed version of the Doughnut (co-evolved with their electorate) that fed into a Greater Sydney dashboard. And that dashboard enabled citizens across the city to see where the city is falling short on their collective aspirations (e.g. for healthy waterways) and where we might need to channel more energy and resources into turning things around (eg creating swimmable rivers initiatives, channelling funds towards waterways, phasing out pollutants etc).

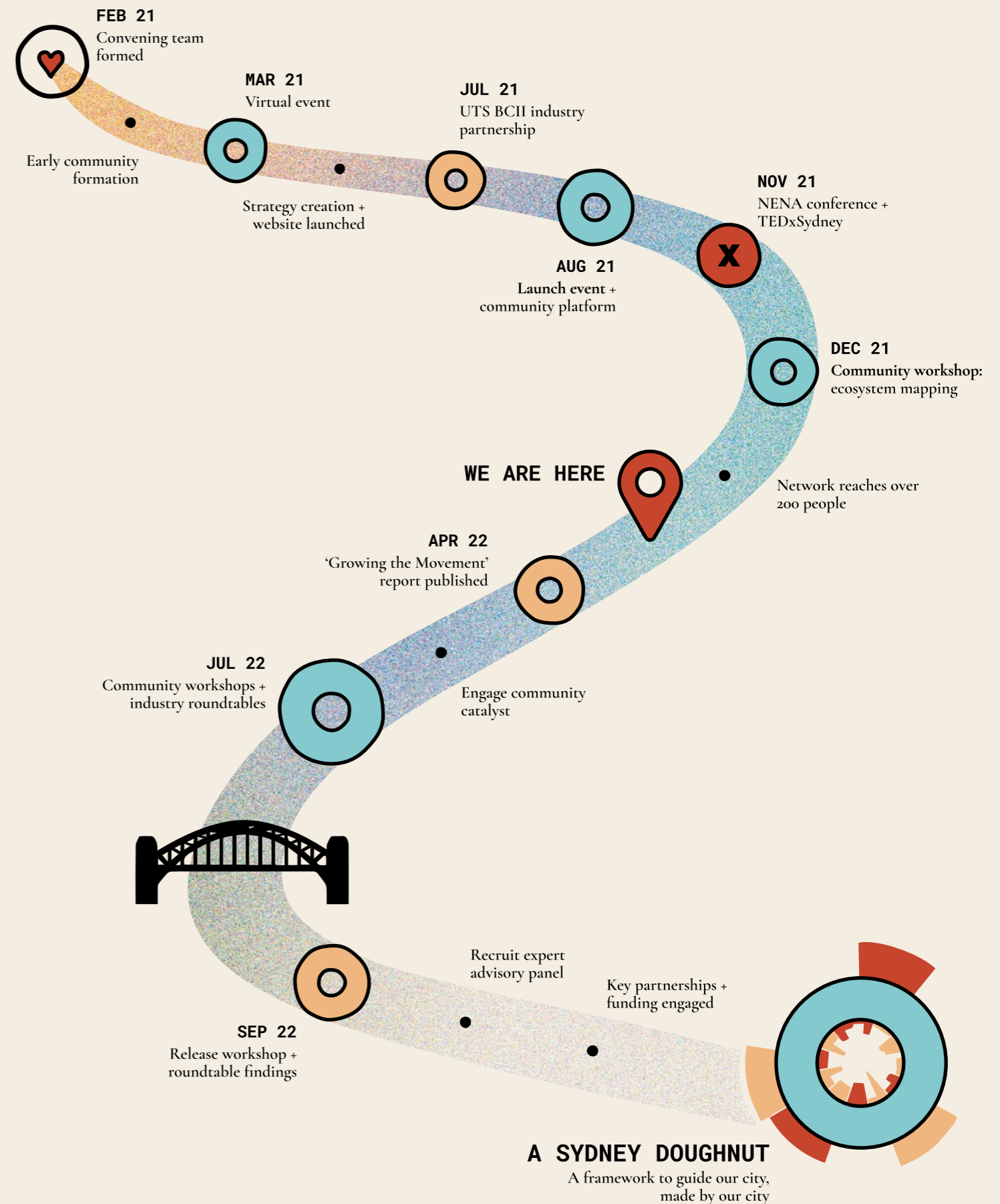
Does that sound too far-fetched? Actually, Amsterdam is just one of the cities across the world working on exactly that.

Going further, imagine if, by doing this, we were also able to heal and restore our relationships with each other, and the places we live. What if the journey to regeneration was actually a journey back to ourselves, back to Country? Back to seeing ourselves as Country.

“Co-evolution of human and natural systems is the cornerstone of regenerative thinking and practice.”

Kimberley Camrass, Regenerative Futures, Principles for Thinking & Practice

The potential of what Regen Sydney can achieve by working as a collective - weaving together regenerative design & development projects, initiatives and ideas already underway across city - is not only profound, it’s wildly exciting.



WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL?

The quotes below capture the aspirations and goals held by members of the Regen Sydney community.

“Collectively challenging the status quo and envision futures that inspire, reorient and shift our practices towards more regenerative, sustaining and just ways of living and being.”

Samuel Yu
Designer + PhD Researcher, UTS

“We are at a turning point. Let’s turn towards justice, beauty, kindness and a safer, healthier world for all living creatures!”

Chloe Watfern
Scientia PhD Scholar, UNSW

“A circular, local economy in Sydney. A city that reduces, recycles and reuses waste. Hundreds of village centres with local shops, childcare, community gardens, food coops and recycling centres.”

Fay Edwards
Communications & Engagement Officer, Landcom

“Equitably transition the Australian economy to effectively mitigate Climate Change whilst addressing social injustice in our Community (locally and globally!).”

Kimberley Virgona
Business Process Analyst, Wayside Chapel

“A regenerative community that realises its agency to make change happen and elect good people to lead us.”

Caroline Pidcock
Chair at 1 Million Women, Spokesperson at Architects Declare

“I hope we can co-create a city that heals, restores and realises potential. Or at least make some progress down that path.”

Chris Reidy
Professor of Sustainability Transformations, UTS

“We don’t want quick fixes. It’s about cultural change. And we need to really listen to each other, especially listen to First Nations people. Build that relationship. Build relationships with each other. And really bring forward our collective sense making.”

Tirrania Suhood
InCollaboration, Sydney Commons Lab

“For me, regenerative starts within yourself, rather than a city. I don’t look at the big picture, I look at the small picture... even smaller than myself. It’s the essence of who we are. We need to regenerate ourselves as human beings before we can move out and do anything in the field. So it’s within us first and that’s what regenerative is to me. Regenerate the lifeforce within yourself, and then move forward.”

Luca Gatti
Audio-visual Technician

GET INVOLVED IN REGEN SYDNEY

You may already be working on a project that aspires to create a regenerative future, or you may have an idea you want to bring to life.

Become a member of a community of co-creators, facilitators and allies.

Support us to deliver upcoming community workshops and industry roundtables.

Join our expert advisory panel.

Share your lived experience working on regenerative projects with our community at Regen Cafes and on [Mighty Networks](#).

Join our team - apply for the role of community catalyst to keep the network energised.

Talk to us about sponsoring Regen Cafes & events.



ABOUT

REGEN SYDNEY CONVENORS



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HUMANISE THIS



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For more information please visit the following:

WEBSITE : <https://regen.sydney/>

MIGHTY NETWORK : <https://regen-sydney.mn.co/>

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