

# Towards a regenerative paradigm for the built environment

Chrisna du Plessis

This paper was published as: Du Plessis, C. (2012) Towards a regenerative paradigm for the built environment, *Building Research & Information*, 40:1, 7-22.

## Abstract

The concept of regenerative design and development is situated within the broader theoretical context of sustainability. The emerging regenerative paradigm is contrasted with the two current sustainability paradigms – internationally negotiated ‘idealistic’ public policy and private sector ‘Ecological Modernization’ – that seek to maintain the status quo. Each of these sustainability paradigms is explained through a brief historical narrative to illustrate their response to broader social pressures, the main critiques of each and some commonalities. It is argued that the dominant sustainability paradigms are reaching the limitations of their usefulness due to their conceptual foundation in an inappropriate mechanistic worldview and their tacit support of a modernization project that prevents effective engagement with a complex, dynamic and living world. The regenerative paradigm provides an alternative that is explicitly designed to engage with a living world through its emphasis on a co-creative partnership with nature based on strategies of adaptation, resilience and regeneration. It provides a foundation for a sustainability paradigm that is relevant to an ecological worldview.

**Keywords:** built environment, ecologism, regenerative design, resilience, sustainable building, sustainable design, urban sustainability