

# RESEARCH THEME

XLI Cycle – a.y. 2025/2026

**Title of the doctoral research** Collaborative Ecosystem in Business through Design: Drivers and Approaches for Organizational and Systemic Transformation

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**Abstract**

Business organizations play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in driving systemic transitions and transformative change. Over the past decades, the conceptual foundations guiding this shift have evolved significantly, from Corporate Social Responsibility to Shared Value Creation, Collective Impact, and more recently, Collaborative Ecosystems. These frameworks collectively encourage businesses to reshape and reconfigure their design, development, and delivery processes in alignment with societal and environmental goals.

Design, as the process of developing products, services, organizational structures, and business models, is inherently human-centered and responsive to societal development. However, in contemporary business contexts, the application of design and design thinking tends to prioritize economic returns and business-centric outcomes. This narrow focus often neglects the full complexity of designerly approaches, particularly their potential to address systemic challenges and contextual interdependencies.

Therefore, this research aims to understand the values and roles of design in transforming business organizations toward collaborative ecosystems. The main research questions are as follows: How does the goal of fostering a collaborative ecosystem influence the way business organizations redesign their business models and services? How can design strategically enable this shift from organizational to systemic level? What design capabilities are needed?

The study focuses on the topic of circular economy and is part of the Horizon Europe R-evolve project.

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**Keywords** Strategic design, collaborative ecosystem, organizational transformation