Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's
SPJIMR

Co-Creating Responsible Aspiration

Normative Scaffolding, Activated Co-Creation, and Coordinated Affordances

Editorial for TaSIC 2026 Proceedings

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Executive Summary

Technology and Societal Impact Conference (TaSIC) 2026 addressed a central challenge for contemporary societies, particularly in the Global South: how rising and justified consumer expectations may be met without eroding the ecological, institutional, and economic systems on which those expectations ultimately depend. The proceedings frame this challenge as the aspiration paradox. The difficulty does not lie in aspiration itself. Expectations around access, dignity, convenience, affordability, recognition, and meaningful participation are legitimate. The more demanding question is whether the systems built to meet these expectations can do so responsibly and sustainably.

The conference brought together academic plenaries, disciplinary track papers, an industry panel, a practitioner design sprint, and the Wise Innovation Award ventures. Across these conversations, a shared analytical framework emerged inductively. The proceedings organise this framework around three interdependent dimensions: normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances. Normative scaffolding refers to the institutional and organisational capacity to preserve purpose amid scale, competition, and environmental complexity. Activated co-creation refers to the movement from aspiration framing to aspiration activation, that is, from stated support to meaningful participation through defaults, incentives, product design, and participation pathways. Coordinated affordances refer to the digital, organisational, and physical infrastructures that make such participation operationally possible. A further insight emerged with particular force from the practitioner sprint and was reinforced by the industry discussions: in a developing economy context like India, economic substrate cannot be treated as a mere background condition. Capital structures, credit architectures, financing models, and institutional viability shape whether any of the three core dimensions can be sustained over time. For this reason, the proceedings treat economic substrate as a structural condition that bears upon the framework as a whole rather than as a co-equal fourth dimension.

The academic chapters demonstrate that this framework is not simply conceptual. Across finance, marketing, information management, operations, and leadership research, the same tensions recur.

Sustainability intent without enabling systems produces symbolic adoption. Technological capability without trust and fairness weakens participation. Individual willingness without coordinated infrastructures yields limited impact. The plenary discussions deepen this argument by showing that aspiration is socially organised, institutionally shaped, and technologically mediated rather than reducible to individual preference.

The industry plenaries, design sprint, and Wise Innovation Award cases extend the framework into practice. They show that responsible aspiration becomes more durable when interventions work through existing infrastructures, treat coordination failure as a design brief, and align affordability with sustainability through redesign. Taken together, the academic and practitioner materials suggest that sustainability is fundamentally a problem of system design rather than of awareness or intention alone.

The principal contribution of these proceedings, therefore, lies in offering a conceptual framework for understanding responsible aspiration in the Global South. It provides a common vocabulary for linking institutions, organisations, technologies, and economic conditions, while also establishing a basis for further research, policy deliberation, and practical experimentation. Rather than treating sustainability, inclusion, and growth as separate domains, the volume shows how they are co-produced through the design and governance of interdependent systems.

A Reader's Guide to the Proceedings

These proceedings are designed to support multiple reading pathways. Readers may engage with the volume as a complete account of TaSIC 2026 or enter through the sections most relevant to their interests. The guide below identifies suggested pathways for academic leaders, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers while preserving the common argument that connects the volume.

For Academic Leaders and Accreditors

These proceedings may be read as an example of how a conference can be designed as an impact-oriented academic exercise rather than as a sequence of disconnected presentations. Its most relevant contribution lies in the way plenary discussions, academic tracks, practitioner engagement, and entrepreneurial cases were brought into a single analytical frame. Readers interested in research impact, institutional innovation, or conference design may therefore wish to begin with the *Executive Summary* and the opening sections of Chapter 1, where the framework and the logic of synthesis are developed.

Three features may be particularly relevant: the framework emerged through conference synthesis rather than being imposed in advance; academic track contributions were treated as evidence bearing on a shared problem rather than as parallel submissions; and the practitioner design sprint and Wise Innovation Award cases were used to test and extend the emerging framework. In this sense, the proceedings offer both a record of TaSIC 2026 and an example of how academic convenings can generate outputs that connect research, practice, and policy.

For Practitioners and Industry Readers

Readers interested in application may begin with Chapter 2, where the framework is examined through industry discussions, the practitioner design sprint, and the Wise Innovation Award ventures. This chapter illustrates how the aspiration paradox appears in product design, supply chains, digital systems, employability, healthcare, mental wellbeing, circularity, and resource management.

Three parts may be particularly useful. The first is the section on the three design patterns, since it distils recurring operational logics from across the conference material. The second is the sprint

analysis, because it shows how practitioners independently reproduced many of the same structural concerns identified in the plenaries, while also forcing the framework to take economic substrate more seriously. The third is the Wise Innovation Award section, which is best read as a set of entrepreneurial stress tests of whether responsible aspiration can be made durable under real conditions of scaling pressure, cost constraint, and uneven institutional support.

For a practice-oriented reading, we recommend moving from the Executive Summary to Chapter 2, and then to the recommendations in Chapter 3.

For Policymakers and Public Institutions

Policy readers may wish to begin with the framing of the aspiration paradox and the section on economic substrate, since these together make the clearest case that responsible growth is not simply a matter of encouraging better choices. Across the proceedings, outcomes are shown to depend on the institutional, economic, and infrastructural conditions that make participation feasible and sustainable. From a policy standpoint, three parts of the volume are especially relevant. The first is the discussion of failure configurations that recur across Indian settings, including waste, e-waste, affordability-anchored consumption, fragmented logistics, and uneven digital inclusion. The second is the treatment of economic substrate, which shows why financing structures, credit architecture, and institutional viability need to be treated as design conditions rather than as background context. The third is Chapter 3, where the implications for regulators, public institutions, and governance systems are drawn together more explicitly. Readers interested in public design, regulatory capacity, and system-level intervention may therefore find it most useful to move from the Executive Overview to the synthesis sections in Chapter 1, and then to the recommendations in Chapter 3.

For Researchers and Scholars

Academic readers are likely to find the strongest contribution of the proceedings in Chapter 1, the synthesis material, and the research agenda developed later in the volume. The plenary discussions and academic track papers together build the conceptual architecture of the proceedings, while the later chapters show how that architecture holds up when confronted with practitioner reasoning and entrepreneurial experimentation.

The volume may be read in at least two ways. One is as a conference-derived conceptual synthesis linking aspiration, participation, and system design. The other is as an agenda-setting piece that opens research questions around institutional durability, participatory activation, coordinated affordances, and the role of economic substrate in Global South settings. Academic readers interested in theory development may therefore wish to begin with Chapter 1, then move to the sprint material in Chapter 2B, and finish with the agenda in Chapter 3.

A Final Note to the Reader

The proceedings need not be read linearly to be useful. Some readers may enter through the conceptual chapters, others through the practitioner material, and others through the recommendations. What holds the volume together is the argument that runs across all of these sections: rising expectations are legitimate, but the systems that serve them have to be designed in ways that preserve purpose, enable participation, and coordinate infrastructures under real economic constraints.

Read in that spirit, the volume is intended to function not only as a conference output, but as a working document: something that may inform future research, shape institutional conversations, travel into teaching and practice, and support more grounded thinking about responsible aspiration in the Global South.

Chapter 1: The Academic Foundations of Responsible Aspiration

Summary

The academic plenary and synthesis session produced a three-dimensional framework inductively from conference evidence. Four international scholars examined aspiration, participation, and systems design from different disciplinary angles. Academic track papers from five disciplines independently corroborated the same structural conditions. Together, these discussions produced the analytical vocabulary that carries through the volume.

1. Introduction

The relationship between technology, aspiration, and societal well-being has become one of the defining questions of contemporary scholarship and practice. Across emerging and advanced economies alike, aspirations for better lives, greater convenience, higher consumption, and enhanced participation are being shaped with increasing intensity by digital infrastructures, market institutions, and organisational innovations. Yet the expansion of aspiration is accompanied by deepening tensions. Systems designed to widen access and accelerate growth often generate new exclusions, environmental burdens, and governance failures. The central question, therefore, is no longer whether aspiration should be enabled — it would be perverse to deny people that — but how it may be organised responsibly under conditions of ecological constraint, institutional complexity, and technological acceleration.

This proceedings volume is situated within that broader problem. The conference discussions did not treat aspiration as a simple matter of individual preference or market demand. Instead, they collectively pointed to a more demanding interpretation in which aspiration is socially organised, institutionally shaped, and technologically mediated. This shift matters because it moves analysis away from a narrow focus on consumption expansion toward the wider systems through which aspirations are framed, activated, coordinated, and experienced. It also foregrounds what may be called the *aspiration paradox*: the same market and technological arrangements that expand

access, convenience, and participation may also intensify resource pressures, reproduce asymmetries in participation, and strain the very institutional mechanisms required to secure legitimacy and sustainability over time.

The expectations at issue are concrete: access to affordable goods and services, dignity in transactions and workplaces, convenience that does not require navigating systems designed for different users, affordability that does not require trading off safety or quality, recognition as a legitimate participant in markets and institutions, and meaningful economic participation rather than peripheral inclusion. They belong to first-generation consumers, older adults navigating digital systems, workers in informal economies, small firms entering formal value chains, and communities downstream of production and logistics decisions. The conference began from the premise that these expectations are justified, and that the task is to design systems worthy of them.

The four plenary presentations, the practice-linked discussion that followed, and the synthesis session together generated a body of discussion that is richer than the sum of its parts. What follows in this introduction is an attempt to draw out that richness: first by presenting what each session contributed on its own terms, and second, by then allowing the shared analytical structure that runs through them to emerge. The theoretical framework proposed in these proceedings is therefore an emergent one, built upward from the conversations rather than imposed upon them.

2. *An Overview of the Plenary Sessions and Synthesis Discussion*

The opening plenary talks of TaSIC 2026 set the tone for the conference by foregrounding a critical yet often under-theorised construct in sustainability transitions: *aspiration*. Led by Prof. Joan Rodón Mòdol and Prof. Matteo Montecchi, the discussion moved decisively beyond familiar narratives of awareness, responsibility, or individual behavioural correction. Instead, it invited participants to examine how sustainable futures are imagined, made desirable, and materially enabled within socio-technical systems. In doing so, the talks directly engaged the central theme of the conference, "*Navigating the Aspiration Paradox*", by arguing that the challenge of

sustainability is not simply that people fail to act on what they know, but that contemporary systems actively shape what people come to desire, value, and strive toward.

At its core, their talks proposed that many sustainability challenges are not merely problems of information deficit or incentive misalignment, but of aspirational misconfiguration. Contemporary consumption systems - structured by digital platforms, brands, infrastructures, and algorithmic environments - do not simply respond to preferences; they participate in constructing them. They continuously signal what is desirable, attainable, modern, and prestigious. In this context, unsustainable behaviours are not best understood as accidental deviations from rational choice or moral intent. Rather, they are often the outcome of emergent aspirational cues that normalise convenience, speed, abundance, disposability, and frictionless consumption. This framing offered a starting point for the conference, because it shifted the focus from isolated decisions to the wider institutional and cultural architectures through which aspiration itself is produced.

2.1 Prof. Joan Rodón Mòdol: Moral Markets and the Infrastructure of Aspiration

Prof. Joan Rodón Mòdol's contribution grounded this discussion in the concrete and highly generative case of guifi.net, the community network that has become a prominent reference point in research on commons-based digital infrastructure and community-led connectivity[1]. His presentation highlighted how guifi.net is not merely an alternative telecommunications project, but an example of how communities can build and sustain socio-technical systems around principles other than extractive scale, platform dependency, or centralised ownership. In the guifi.net model, infrastructure is not treated solely as a private commodity to be purchased and consumed; rather, it is collectively built, maintained, and governed as a shared resource, under principles of openness, neutrality, reciprocity, and non-discriminatory access. Importantly, what made the case especially resonant with the theme of the conference was not just that guifi.net provided connectivity, but that it cultivated an alternative aspirational horison around digital participation itself. The system made it possible for users to aspire not only to access technology, but to co-produce, co-govern, and steward it. Prof. Rodón's discussion suggested that sustainable and morally grounded market

[1] https://landing.guifi.net/en/home/

systems do not fail simply because they lack demand or technical viability; they often struggle because scaling tends to erode the governance values that made them desirable in the first place. In this sense, the guifi.net case illustrated a crucial dimension of the aspiration paradox: how can systems scale while preserving the very institutional commitments, shared ownership, fairness, participation, and local empowerment that initially made them worth aspiring to?

What emerged from Prof. Rodón's intervention was a deeper argument about the infrastructural basis of aspiration. Aspirations do not emerge in a vacuum, nor are they reducible to personal preferences. They are shaped by the architectures through which people encounter possibility. Guifi.net demonstrated that aspiration can be built around collective capability rather than passive consumption, around stewardship rather than convenience, and around community resilience rather than platform dependence. This insight is especially significant in the context of TaSIC 2026 because it highlights that the "good life" embedded in many dominant digital systems is already a product of design and governance choices. If mainstream technological infrastructures train users to aspire toward frictionless services without visibility into ownership, labour, or consequences, then community-owned systems such as guifi.net show that alternative forms of aspiration can be institutionalised. Prof. Rodón's contribution, therefore, broadened the conference's framing by showing that aspiration is not only symbolic or discursive; it is also infrastructural, embedded in the rules, access models, and governance arrangements that make certain futures feel credible, and others feel marginal.

2.2 Prof. Matteo Montecchi: Markets, Brands, and Aspirational Reconfiguration

Prof. Montecchi's plenary complemented this infrastructural lens by focusing on markets, brands, and strategic marketing. Drawing from the article *"We could be heroes"* (Plangger et al., 2025), he argued that marketing must be understood not as a neutral mechanism for demand generation, but as a powerful socio-cultural force that helps define what is admirable, desirable, and worth pursuing. In this framing, aspiration is not an individual psychological trait but a collective, culturally mediated force, co-created through narratives, symbols, social comparisons, and increasingly through digital ecosystems. Platforms, brands, and algorithmic curation systems do

not simply reflect what consumers want; they actively shape aspiration trajectories by deciding what becomes visible, what signals status, and what lifestyles are repeatedly normalised. This has major implications for sustainability because algorithmically optimised environments often privilege high-engagement content, immediacy, and novelty, features that tend to align more easily with consumption intensity than with restraint, repair, or regeneration.

One of the most conceptually important contributions of Prof. Montecchi's presentation was the distinction between aspiration framing and aspiration activation. Aspiration framing refers to how sustainable futures are represented and narrated: whether they are positioned as sacrifice-driven, morally obligatory, and inconvenient, or alternatively as desirable, identity-enhancing, innovative, and socially meaningful. Aspiration activation, by contrast, concerns the mechanisms through which those framed aspirations are translated into actual behaviour and sustained practice, through defaults, social proof, incentives, institutional supports, product design, platform interfaces, and broader enabling infrastructures. This distinction helps explain why sustainability communication so often falls short. A sustainable future may be framed attractively, but if the systems required to act on that aspiration are inaccessible, fragmented, or burdensome, the aspiration remains inert. Conversely, even highly efficient systems may fail to generate change if the aspiration itself has not been culturally or emotionally legitimised. The talks' framing here was particularly strong because it showed that sustainable transitions depend on both symbolic desirability and material enactability.

In that sense, Prof. Rodón's and Prof. Montecchi's plenary offered a fitting and rigorous opening to TaSIC 2026. Fundamentally, it argued that sustainability transitions require not only redesigned systems but a reimagining of desire itself. By shifting the conversation from compliance to aspiration, from behaviour to infrastructure, and from isolated responsibility to collective system design, the speakers laid the foundation for the broader conversations that unfolded throughout the conference. Their combined message was both sobering and generative: without transforming what societies are taught to want, and without building the infrastructures and institutions that make better wants actionable, even the most sophisticated technological or policy interventions will remain limited in their transformative potential.

The final two plenary contributions extended TaSIC 2026's concern with the aspiration paradox into the architectures of participation: how the digital and organisational systems that enable sustainable inclusion are designed, and too often how they are designed in ways that systematically exclude.

2.3 Prof. Khaled Hassanein: Design Justice and the Digital Inclusion of Older Adults

Prof. Khaled Hassanein's presentation offered a compelling argument that the digital divide facing older adults is not reducible to a problem of access alone; it is, more fundamentally, a problem of design justice and participatory inclusion. His central claim - that ICT for ageing populations must be intentionally designed with and for older adults rather than merely delivered to them - resonated strongly with both the conference theme and broader work emerging from his research led at McMaster's digital inclusion initiatives. This position aligns closely with the evolving work around the EMPOWrD (Empowering Older Adults Through Digital Inclusion)[2] programme at the Centre, which explicitly frames digital inclusion for older adults as a co-designed, interdisciplinary, community-embedded challenge rather than a purely technical one. The EMPOWrD initiative foregrounds mobility, participation, and wellness, and emphasises collaborative, community-based research to co-design digital experiences that older adults can engage with confidently and meaningfully. That orientation was clearly visible in Prof. Hassanein's plenary: the elderly were not framed as passive recipients of "assistive" technology, but as heterogeneous participants whose lived realities, capabilities, anxieties, and aspirations must shape the design process itself.

A particularly important contribution of Prof. Hassanein's talk was the insistence on what might be called a *co-design mandate.* This perspective is consistent with the broader literature on older adults and digital participation, which finds that meaningful adoption depends less on access alone and more on whether technologies align with users' personal contexts, capabilities, and sense of agency.

[2] https://mdtrc.mcmaster.ca/empowrd/

Prof. Hassanein's work on digital health adoption helps deepen this point (Assadi & Hassanein, 2017). While arguing about the adoption of personal health record systems, the authors draw on Self-Determination Theory to show that consumer adoption is not driven only by functional utility or institutional pressure, but also by the extent to which technologies support users' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This is especially relevant for older adults. Systems that are technically available but experienced as confusing, paternalistic, or socially isolating may formally "exist," yet still fail to become meaningful vehicles of participation. By contrast, systems that reinforce a sense of control, confidence, and connectedness are more likely to be adopted and sustained. Read in light of the theme, this offers a powerful theoretical underpinning to Prof. Hassanein's practical message: inclusive ICT design for ageing populations is not simply about removing barriers; it is about creating conditions under which older adults can participate with dignity, confidence, and agency. That distinction is subtle but vital. It reframes inclusion from an access problem to a participation problem, and from participation to empowerment.

Another notable highlight of Prof. Hassanein's presentation was its insistence on the strategic and economic case for inclusion alongside the ethical one. Older adults were not portrayed as a niche or residual user segment, but as a rapidly growing and highly diverse demographic whose exclusion represents both a profound social loss and a missed market opportunity. This framing is especially important because it disrupts the common tendency to treat ageing populations as outside the "mainstream" of digital innovation. In reality, older adults bring decades of lived experience, tacit knowledge, care responsibilities, and purchasing power, and their digital participation has implications not only for health and social inclusion but for the broader legitimacy and resilience of digital transformation itself. In other words, if digital systems are increasingly becoming the default mode of service access, civic engagement, healthcare navigation, and social participation, then designing them in ways that systematically marginalise older adults is not a peripheral usability flaw; it is a structural failure of responsible innovation. Prof. Hassanein's argument thus directly supported the conference's concern with the aspiration paradox: societies increasingly aspire to digital transformation as a pathway to inclusion and efficiency, yet too often produce systems that exclude precisely those populations most likely to benefit from thoughtful design.

Equally significant was the emphasis on methodological rigour and interdisciplinarity. He stressed that bridging the digital divide for ageing populations cannot be accomplished through isolated technical fixes or simplistic user training models. Rather, it requires research designs capable of integrating perspectives from information systems, human-computer interaction, health sciences, psychology, accessibility research, community engagement, and public policy.

This methodological stance is important for two reasons. First, it recognises that the barriers older adults face are rarely singular: they are cognitive, physical, emotional, social, economic, and institutional all at once. Second, it resists the temptation to collapse inclusion into compliance with accessibility checklists. Accessibility standards matter, but they do not automatically produce meaningful participation. What is required is a richer understanding of situated use: how older adults encounter digital systems in everyday life, what support structures they rely upon, what forms of mistrust or anxiety they carry, and what kinds of interfaces, routines, and interaction patterns actually promote sustained engagement. This is precisely why co-design, field-based experimentation, and interdisciplinary research infrastructures matter so much. In that regard, this was one of the strongest takeaways from the plenary: *inclusive participation is not merely an interface problem; it is a socio-technical design problem requiring epistemic pluralism*.

2.4 Prof. Edward Sweeney: Supply Chain Integration and the Architecture of Sustainable Participation

If Prof. Hassanein's plenary foregrounded inclusion at the level of the individual and community user, Prof. Sweeney's expanded the conversation to the organisational and systemic scale by focusing on supply chain integration as the design challenge at the heart of sustainable economic participation. His central argument was that the supply chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and that this apparently operational insight has profound implications for sustainability, circularity, and inclusive economic development. Competition in contemporary markets is increasingly not between companies but between supply chains. No organisation, however well-intentioned, can achieve sustainability goals if the network of actors upstream and downstream remains

fragmented, misaligned, or excluded from the systems of coordination required to enable circularity and traceability.

Prof. Sweeney drew on his longstanding scholarly work on supply chain integration to argue that the dominant model of supply chain management, characterised by fragmentation between functions and between organisations, is no longer merely inefficient under contemporary sustainability pressures, but increasingly untenable (Sweeney, 2011; Sweeney et al., 2018). His presentation characterised the move toward integration not as a technical optimisation but as a strategic and governance imperative: one in which information flows, material flows, and financial flows need to be intentionally coordinated across the full network of actors, including smaller firms, informal operators, and community-level participants who are routinely excluded from formal integration architectures. The growing digital divide between large, technologically sophisticated firms and their smaller supply chain partners is creating precisely these weak links, and when weak links concentrate in the informal or marginalised segments of the supply chain, the social and environmental costs are borne disproportionately by those least positioned to absorb them.

Prof. Sweeney's presentation was especially effective in situating this integration imperative within the now-familiar but still highly relevant VUCA environment, conditions of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. In such a context, the traditional managerial instinct to optimise discrete functions independently becomes increasingly counterproductive. Procurement, logistics, warehousing, distribution, sustainability, and customer service can no longer be treated as separate operational domains if organisations are serious about resilience and decarbonization. Rather, what is required is a holistic, systems-level approach to managing interdependencies across the supply network. This emphasis is highly consistent with his work on the strategic adoption of logistics and supply chain management (Sweeney et al., 2018), which identifies an enduring divergence between how firms understand SCM conceptually and how they actually adopt it strategically in practice. In other words, many organisations rhetorically endorse integration while continuing to operate through compartmentalised structures. Prof. Sweeney's plenary sharpened that contradiction by showing that under contemporary sustainability pressures, this divergence is no longer merely inefficient, it is increasingly untenable.

A particularly emphasised element of Prof. Sweeney's talk, and one that gave it distinctive relevance to the Indian context of TaSIC, was his framing of logistics as a national pillar of societal well-being rather than a narrow back-end business function. By highlighting logistics as a sector of enormous economic significance in India - roughly a $200 billion domain accounting for a substantial share of GDP - he invited the audience to treat logistics infrastructure as foundational to inclusion, affordability, accessibility, and sustainability. This was a subtle but powerful reframing. When logistics is treated merely as an efficiency lever, questions of social welfare, emissions, regional equity, labour conditions, and small-firm participation are easily obscured. When logistics is understood as a societal system, however, its design becomes inseparable from broader development questions. Efficient and sustainable logistics affect the cost of food, medicines, mobility, energy, and consumer goods; it shapes regional market access; it determines whether SMEs can participate in value chains; and it influences the carbon intensity of everyday economic life. In that sense, Prof. Sweeney's intervention unexpectedly mirrored Prof. Hassanein's: just as digital interfaces can silently include or exclude older adults, supply chain architectures can silently include or exclude firms, regions, and communities from sustainable economic participation.

This broader framing helped better understand Prof. Sweeney's discussion of the "*integration mandate*." His core message was that meaningful sustainability in supply chains cannot be achieved through isolated green initiatives layered onto otherwise fragmented systems. Integration is not merely a coordination preference; it is the precondition for identifying waste, tracing emissions, aligning incentives, enabling circularity, and building adaptive capacity. The concept of circular value chains, which featured prominently in his plenary, depends on precisely this kind of integrative thinking. Circularity requires products, packaging, materials, data, and reverse flows to be visible and manageable across organisational boundaries. Without integration, waste remains invisible, end-of-life processes remain disconnected from design decisions, and sustainability remains confined to reporting rather than operational transformation. This is where Sweeney's presentation became especially valuable for the conference: it translated a familiar SCM concept into a richer socio-technical claim. *Sustainable participation in markets requires the design of*

value chains in which actors are not merely linked transactionally, but coordinated relationally and informationally.

The reference to "10 C" approach (McKinnon, 2018) by Prof. Sweeney in the context of decarbonisation in logistics added a useful operational dimension to this argument, even where the plenary itself appeared to use the framework more as a strategic organising device than as a narrowly codified model in the published literature. The significance of the framework, as presented, lay less in the exact taxonomy and more in the broader principle it embodied: decarbonisation in logistics must be treated as a multi-lever systems problem rather than a single-technology substitution problem. Cutting emissions and offsetting carbon across logistics operations requires interventions in network design, modal choice, consolidation, collaboration, capacity utilisation, packaging, routing, digital visibility, energy transitions, and performance measurement. In other words, decarbonisation is not an add-on sustainability workstream; it is inseparable from the redesign of logistics processes themselves. This is a valuable message in a conference focused on responsible technology and sustainability because it avoids the trap of treating sustainability as a downstream reporting function. Instead, it locates it in the architecture of operations and inter-organisational coordination.

A particularly important element of Prof. Sweeney's talk was his emphasis on grassroots circularity and the value of indigenous, context-sensitive solutions. Rather than presenting circular supply chains as technology-driven innovations emanating from advanced economies, he pointed to evidence that the most innovative circular-economy practices are often found in grassroots systems in the global south, including in the very city where TaSIC 2026 was held. Mumbai's informal recycling networks, repair ecosystems, and community logistics arrangements have developed working solutions to waste management and resource recovery that formal systems have failed to provide. This observation carries a double implication. First, the standard equation of innovation with technological sophistication is empirically wrong. Second, serious engagement with the circular economy requires not only technical analysis but genuine co-creation with the communities whose labour and ingenuity sustain these systems, the same co-design imperative that Prof. Hassanein advanced in the domain of ICT. This is an important thematic convergence

across the plenary: participation is sustainable only when those affected by the system have meaningful standing in shaping it.

2.5 The Synthesis Session: Making Interdependence Visible

The synthesis session with the four plenary speakers, hosted by the Dean of SPJIMR, Prof. Varun Nagaraj, was designed explicitly through a co-creation lens and functioned as the conceptual centre of the conference. If the earlier talks established the major domains of concern - aspiration, inclusion, infrastructure, markets, and systems design - the synthesis session made visible the *interdependence* that binds them together. Its significance lay not in introducing an entirely new theme, but in showing that the challenges discussed across the conference cannot be adequately understood, let alone addressed, in isolation. Inclusion in one domain may generate unintended exclusions in another; organisational strategies that appear efficient at one level may externalise ecological or social costs at another; and systems that successfully activate participation in the short term may still reinforce unsustainable or inequitable trajectories in the long term. In this sense, the synthesis session gave analytical form to one of the conference's most important insights: the aspiration paradox is not merely a mismatch between ideals and outcomes, but a consequence of *misaligned interdependencies* across socio-technical, organisational, and institutional systems.

A co-creation framework proved especially useful in making sense of these entanglements because it treats outcomes not as the product of isolated choices or discrete interventions, but as the cumulative result of interactions among actors, institutions, technologies, and infrastructures. This is precisely what the earlier sessions had already begun to reveal. The first two talks showed that aspiration is not an individual preference but a socio-culturally and technologically mediated force, shaped by infrastructures of visibility, governance, and market symbolism. The next two demonstrated that participation - whether in digital systems or supply chains - is not naturally occurring but deliberately designed through affordances, integration architectures, and institutional support. The synthesis session brought these strands together by insisting that neither aspiration nor participation can be understood apart from the systems in which they are embedded.

What appears as a behavioural problem in one setting may, upon closer examination, be an infrastructural problem; what appears as a market failure in one domain may in fact be a design failure in another. The session thus offered not only synthesis, but a methodological provocation: to study sustainability transitions requires attending to the layered and often hidden dependencies through which values, capabilities, and outcomes are jointly produced.

From this discussion emerged three theoretical dimensions that together form the shared scaffold of the framework developed in these proceedings: *normative scaffolding, activated co-creation,* and *coordinated affordances*. These dimensions are analytically distinct but mutually dependent. Each captures a different condition for meaningful and durable sustainability transitions, and each reflects a major line of argument developed across the conference. Taken together, they provide a way of moving from fragmented interventions toward a more integrated understanding of responsible innovation and socio-technical transformation.

The first dimension, *normative scaffolding*, concerns the institutional and strategic conditions under which organisations can pursue ethical, inclusive, or sustainability-oriented missions *without losing coherence as they scale*. This dimension draws most directly from the discussions initiated in plenaries, particularly the concern - illustrated through Prof. Rodón's guifi.net example and his broader framing of moral markets - with how values-based systems can grow without diluting the principles that made them meaningful in the first place. Normative scaffolding therefore refers not merely to having a salient mission, but to possessing the organisational and institutional capacity to preserve that mission under conditions of expansion, competitive pressure, and environmental complexity. Prof. Rodón's account of frame-overlapping mechanisms, especially amplification, bridging, and extension (Snow et al., 1986), provides the most developed theoretical expression of this dimension, because it explains how organisations and socio-technical communities can maintain legitimacy while translating founding values across new audiences, contexts, and scales. This connects directly to institutional theory's longstanding concern with legitimacy, field-level alignment, and the durability of organisational commitments. But in the context of the conference, the point is sharper: normative scaffolding is what allows organisations to remain ethically intelligible while navigating the aspiration paradox. Without it, even well-intentioned initiatives risk becoming symbolically progressive but structurally conventional.

The second dimension, *activated co-creation*, concerns the behavioural, relational, and organisational conditions under which individuals, consumers, communities, or partner actors move from passive awareness to meaningful participation. This dimension was strongly prefigured in the discussions around Prof. Montecchi's H.E.R.O.E.S. framing[3], where the emphasis was not simply on whether actors support sustainability in principle, but on whether systems actively enable them to enact that support in practice. Prof. Montecchi's intervention was particularly important here because it shifted responsibility away from the assumption that consumers or citizens must "do better" on their own and toward the organisations, brands, platforms, and institutions that shape the conditions of participation. In this sense, activated co-creation is not synonymous with engagement, nor is it reducible to communication or behavioural nudges. It refers to the deliberate construction of pathways through which aspirations become actionable: through narratives that make sustainable futures desirable, interfaces that reduce friction, incentives that reinforce participation, and ecosystems that make action repeatable and socially legible. His H.E.R.O.E.S. framework, grounded in stewardship-oriented thinking and consistent with service-dominant logic's emphasis on value co-creation, offers the most systematic account of this dimension because it insists that participation does not emerge spontaneously from good intentions. It must be activated through organisational design, strategic imagination, and relational accountability. This insight also links back to the distinction developed in the plenary between aspiration framing and aspiration activation. Sustainable futures may be framed attractively, but without activation they remain symbolic. Activated co-creation is therefore the bridge between aspiration and enactment.

The third dimension, *coordinated affordances*, concerns the design and governance of the digital, organisational, and institutional infrastructures through which co-creation becomes possible, or impossible. This dimension was most clearly developed in the later plenaries, where Prof. Khaled's work on inclusive ICT for ageing populations and Prof. Sweeney's supply chain integration mandate each highlighted, in different ways, that participation is not merely invited but structurally enabled. Prof. Khaled's affordance-oriented approach to inclusive ICT design made visible how

[3] *H.E.R.O.E.S* stands for (1) holistic integration, (2) ethical practices, (3) regenerative efforts, (4) openness to innovation, (5) empathetic engagement, and (6) storytelling (Plangger et al. 2025)

digital systems may formally exist yet remain practically unusable when they are designed around assumptions that exclude older adults or other marginalised users. Prof. Sweeney's integration logic showed that supply chains may be nominally connected yet remain functionally fragmented, undermining circularity, visibility, and sustainable coordination across actors. Together, these contributions make clear that coordinated affordances are not merely digital, nor are they confined to interface design. They encompass physical infrastructure, organisational routines, information flows, institutional arrangements, interoperability conditions, governance mechanisms, and the human capabilities through which these systems are understood and deployed. In this sense, coordinated affordances are the operational substrate of sustainable participation. They determine whether aspirations can be enacted, whether collaborations can be sustained, and whether ethical intent can be translated into repeatable socio-technical practice.

Crucially, the synthesis session underscored that none of these three dimensions is sufficient on its own. This was perhaps its most important theoretical and practical contribution. Normative scaffolding without coordinated affordances produces organisations that are normatively admirable but practically inaccessible. These are institutions that articulate compelling values yet fail to create the infrastructures or interaction pathways through which those values can be lived. Activated co-creation without normative scaffolding produces participation that may be energetic and visible in the short term, but is easily captured by dominant market logics, reduced to performative engagement, or redirected toward conventional forms of extraction and consumption. Coordinated affordances without activated co-creation produce technically sophisticated or well-integrated systems that nevertheless go underused, because the symbolic, motivational, and relational conditions for uptake have not been created. This three-way interdependence captures the conference's broader argument with unusual clarity: sustainability transitions fail not only because any one element is missing, but because the relationships among purpose, participation, and infrastructure are so often left uncoordinated. The aspiration paradox persists precisely in those gaps, where systems say one thing, invite another, and enable something else entirely.

Seen in this light, the synthesis session did more than summarise the earlier conversations; it reframed them as a cumulative theory of socio-technical transformation. Prof. Rodón's and Prof. Montecchi's talks had already established that sustainability is not only a matter of behaviour, but

of how aspiration is framed, activated, and locked in through market systems, governance arrangements, and symbolic orders. Prof. Hassanein's and Prof. Sweeney's talks extended that argument by showing that even when aspirations are normatively aligned, participation fails if the systems themselves are not designed to support diverse actors, whether older adults navigating digital interfaces or firms navigating fragmented supply ecosystems. The synthesis session integrated these insights by showing that aspiration, participation, and system design are not sequential stages but mutually constitutive dimensions of the same challenge. Organisations cannot activate co-creation unless they have both a normative orientation and the affordances to support participation. Infrastructures cannot remain inclusive or sustainable unless they are governed by a purpose that survives scale and complexity. And aspirations cannot become transformative unless they are embedded in systems that allow diverse actors to participate without disproportionate burden. This is what makes the framework emerging from the conference so compelling: it does not treat responsible aspiration as a single-domain optimisation problem, but as an interdependent design challenge spanning meanings, institutions, and infrastructures.

The relevance of this integrative frame became especially vivid in the practice-linked discussion that followed. Participants raised challenges drawn from Indian economic and social life across sectors rarely centred in management scholarship, from mobility and urban sustainability to waste, the credibility of sustainability claims, affordability-anchored aspiration, and finance as a behavioural driver of consumption. The cases that emerged reinforced the three-way interdependence at the heart of the framework: failures of normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances regularly appeared not as isolated problems but as compounding ones.

What this discussion contributed, therefore, was not simply a set of illustrative cases but a crucial reminder that the conference's conceptual framework must remain accountable to the messiness of lived interdependence. Sachet packaging, for instance, can be read through all three dimensions at once: a failure of normative scaffolding when affordability is pursued without ecological stewardship; a failure of activated co-creation when consumers are given few viable alternatives despite awareness of waste; and a failure of coordinated affordances when refill infrastructures, reverse logistics, and circular packaging ecosystems are absent. The Seelampur e-waste problem

similarly exposes how digital aspiration and technological turnover can produce downstream human and environmental harms when value chains are fragmented, and responsibility is displaced. The EV transition raises analogous tensions between decarbonisation as an aspirational public good and the social dislocations borne by workers, informal mechanics, and transitional infrastructure systems. These examples make clear that the framework proposed in these proceedings is not merely an abstract theoretical exercise. It is an attempt to provide a language and structure for thinking through precisely these kinds of cross-domain entanglements, where inclusion, sustainability, innovation, and economic participation are all simultaneously at stake.

For that reason, the synthesis session stands as one of the most consequential moments in the proceedings. It translated a set of rich but potentially disparate plenary conversations into a more coherent theoretical architecture without flattening their differences. It preserved the normative urgency of the conference while also sharpening its analytical precision. Most importantly, it showed that the aspiration paradox cannot be navigated by treating sustainability as a matter of better choices, better technologies, or better policies in isolation. What is required instead is a more integrated mode of inquiry and action, one that recognises that values must endure, participation must be activated, and infrastructures must be coordinated if sustainable and inclusive futures are to become more than episodic experiments.

Overall, the synthesis session made visible what the earlier talks had each implied from different angles: that the real challenge is not only to imagine better futures, but to design and govern the interdependencies through which those futures become durable, inclusive, and actionable. By articulating the three dimensions of normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances, the session offered a powerful integrative scaffold for the proceedings as a whole. It provided a way of connecting community infrastructure to responsible marketing, inclusive ICT to circular supply chains, and institutional mission to a lived participation. In doing so, it also clarified the deeper contribution of TaSIC 2026: the conference was not merely about sustainability, technology, or inclusion in parallel. It was about understanding how these domains co-produce one another, and how only by making those interdependencies visible can we begin to navigate the aspiration paradox with greater responsibility and practical norms.

3. Empirical Substantiation of the Framework Across Academic Tracks

The academic tracks of TaSIC 2026 provide a rich empirical grounding for the three-dimensional framework - normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances - demonstrating that these are not merely conceptual constructs but observable conditions across diverse socio-technical contexts. Across marketing, operations, information management, finance, and leadership-oriented research, a consistent pattern emerges: sustainability outcomes depend not on isolated interventions, but on how institutions preserve intent, how systems enable participation, and how infrastructures coordinate action.

3.1 Normative Scaffolding: Sustaining Intent Under Institutional and Market Pressures

Across tracks, a central challenge is the preservation of sustainability intent under competing economic, technological, and institutional pressures.

The finance track highlights how ESG integration often remains compliance-driven rather than strategically embedded due to fragmented regulatory frameworks, weak incentives, and a lack of standardised metrics. This reflects a failure of normative scaffolding: organisations articulate sustainability commitments but lack the institutional structures to sustain them under operational pressures. Similarly, ERM research demonstrates that governance systems can strengthen organisational resilience, but only when sustainability is embedded in core decision-making architectures rather than treated as peripheral risk categories.

In the operations track, this tension is visible in the governance–implementation gap in circular economy transitions. While policies such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) establish formal mandates, actual outcomes depend on firm-level commitment, cross-supply chain collaboration, and internal capabilities. Firms that move beyond compliance toward design-led circularity, through product redesign, reverse logistics partnerships, and lifecycle thinking, demonstrate stronger alignment between purpose and practice.

The marketing track further extends this insight by showing that well-being outcomes depend on how markets are structured. Microfinance research reveals that financial inclusion only becomes sustainable when supported by regulatory safeguards, monitoring systems, and income diversification strategies. Without these, access can increase vulnerability rather than resilience. Across these contexts, normative scaffolding emerges not as a stated intent but as an organisational and institutional capability to maintain coherence between values and action.

3.2 Activated Co-Creation: Designing for Behavioural Enactment

A second recurring insight is that sustainability depends on the activation of participation, not merely awareness or intent.

The marketing track provides relevant evidence on this dimension. The experimental study on sustainable delivery choices shows that consumer choices are highly sensitive to perceived fairness and design framing. For instance, the "green–time trade-off" demonstrates that sustainable options are rejected when they are framed as involving disproportionate time costs, indicating that participation collapses when sustainability is experienced as a penalty rather than a viable choice. Similarly, research on algorithmic pricing reveals that perceived procedural unfairness leads to betrayal and platform switching, underscoring that participation depends on legitimacy and trust rather than efficiency alone.

The information management track reinforces this by showing that digital technologies must be designed to support autonomy, fairness, and meaningful engagement. Whether in AI-enabled collaboration tools, gamified systems, or precision agriculture platforms, adoption depends on the alignment between technological capabilities and user contexts. Technologies that prioritise efficiency without considering human agency risk undermining participation.

The leadership and future of work track adds a critical relational dimension: across diverse studies, trust emerges as the central condition enabling or constraining participation in technology-mediated environments. Even when technologies are available, participation falters when trust in systems, organisations, or outcomes is weak.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that co-creation is not automatic. It must be activated through fair design, transparent processes, trust-building mechanisms, and alignment between user expectations and system affordances.

3.3 Coordinated Affordances: Enabling Participation Through System Design

The third dimension, "coordinated affordances" emerges most strongly in studies that examine system-level interdependencies.

The operations track emphasises that sustainability transitions require lifecycle coordination across actors, including firms, regulators, financial institutions, and informal sectors. Circular supply chains, for example, depend not only on technological solutions but on financial mechanisms (e.g., supply chain finance), institutional support, and inclusion of marginalised actors such as informal recyclers. Failure to coordinate these elements produces paradoxes where environmental gains come at the cost of social exclusion.

Similarly, the information management track shows that digital transformation outcomes depend on ecosystem-level alignment. Research on agritech adoption shows that no single factor enables adoption; instead, outcomes depend on configurations of task-technology fit, social influence, and infrastructure support. Studies on AI in education demonstrate that digital technologies can expand access or reinforce inequality depending on governance and system design.

The finance track further highlights that financial innovation can enable coordinated participation through digital banking, fintech platforms, and financial inclusion mechanisms, but only when supported by regulatory clarity, trust, and equitable access. Otherwise, digital divides and governance gaps limit their impact.

In the marketing track, coordinated affordances appear at the level of market design. Platform interfaces, algorithmic systems, and service architectures shape how consumers perceive fairness, make choices, and engage with sustainable options. These market infrastructures do not merely facilitate transactions; they shape the conditions under which participation becomes perceived as legitimate or burdensome. Well-designed systems can reduce friction, clarify trade-offs, and

encourage participation, whereas poorly aligned systems can amplify perceived inequities and discourage engagement.

Across tracks, the consistent finding is that participation is not simply a matter of individual willingness; it is enabled or constrained by how systems are designed and coordinated.

3.4 Cross-dimensional Insight: The Role of Perception

Despite disciplinary differences, the academic tracks converge on a shared insight: sustainability outcomes are produced through interdependent systems, not isolated actions.

- Institutional intent without enabling systems leads to symbolic adoption.
- Technological capability without trust and fairness undermines participation.
- Individual willingness without coordinated infrastructures results in limited impact.

This convergence reinforces the core proposition of the framework: the aspiration paradox persists not because individuals fail to act, but because systems misalign purpose, participation, and infrastructure.

3.5 Implications: From Conceptual Framework to Empirical Generalisation

The academic track evidence confirms that the three dimensions are empirically observable across diverse domains:

- ***Normative scaffolding*** ensures that sustainability intent survives institutional, regulatory, and market pressures.
- ***Activated co-creation*** ensures that aspiration translates into meaningful participation through trust, fairness, and design.

- ***Coordinated affordances*** ensure that systems enable participation by aligning technologies, institutions, and infrastructures.

Collectively, the academic tracks demonstrate that sustainability is fundamentally a problem of system design. Across markets, technologies, financial systems, and organisational structures, outcomes depend on whether participation is experienced as fair, feasible, and meaningful.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that addressing the aspiration paradox requires integrated design across institutional, behavioural, and technological levels, where purpose is preserved, participation is activated, and systems are coordinated to enable inclusive and sustainable futures.

4. A Multi-Level Framework for Responsible Aspiration

The three dimensions that emerged from the conference discussions, normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances, are not only descriptive categories. Each corresponds to a distinct level of analytical work and draws on a body of scholarship that gives it theoretical precision. This section makes that grounding explicit, not to impose theory onto conference content that arrived there on its own terms, but to show that the framework the discussions produced connects to established intellectual traditions. The empirical evidence from the academic tracks, presented in the preceding section, has already demonstrated that these three dimensions are observable conditions across diverse contexts. What follows grounds them in the theoretical resources that explain why they operate the way they do.

Importantly, this framework emerges progressively through the four plenaries and synthesis sessions, and it is best understood as a culmination of the conceptual architecture already developed across them. In particular, the opening plenary on *the architecture of aspiration* and the later plenary on *the architecture of participation* collectively provide the strongest basis for articulating why responsible aspiration must be understood as a multi-level phenomenon. The first showed that aspiration is not merely an individual preference or moral inclination, but something shaped through markets, infrastructures, governance arrangements, brands, and symbolic systems

that define what futures appear desirable, legitimate, and emotionally compelling. The second demonstrated that even when such aspirations are normatively aligned, they remain fragile unless participation is deliberately designed into the socio-technical and organisational systems through which those futures must be enacted. Taken together, these four plenaries make visible a critical progression: *the aspiration paradox is not simply that people desire sustainable or inclusive futures while behaving otherwise; it is that aspiration itself is socially and institutionally produced, and then either enabled or frustrated by the systems that structure participation.*

This point was especially clear in the plenary analysis of what might be called the framing deficit of much contemporary sustainability discourse. As the discussion emphasised, sustainable choices are too often communicated through narratives of compromise: less consumption, higher costs, reduced convenience, personal restraint, or moral burden. Such framings, while ethically serious, struggle to compete with the dominant aspirational logics of modern markets, which are built around abundance, immediacy, personalisation, and status. The result is a recurring disconnect between values and action, not because actors necessarily lack concern or information, but because sustainable futures are often presented as worthy yet unattractive. This insight matters deeply for the framework developed here, because it establishes that responsible aspiration begins at the level of *meaning formation*. Prof. Montecchi's intervention, particularly through the H.E.R.O.E.S. lens, suggested that firms and marketers must move beyond the assumption that sustainability is best advanced through guilt, compliance, or informational correction. Instead, they must participate in *aspirational reconfiguration*: repositioning sustainability as a marker of sophistication, resilience, innovation, future-readiness, and meaningful identity. Sustainable choices, in this view, must be experienced not as lesser substitutes for the "real" good life, but as more compelling and durable versions of it.

Yet the same sessions were equally clear that symbolic repositioning alone is insufficient. The distinction it introduced between *aspiration framing* and *aspiration activation* is particularly important for the present framework. Sustainable futures may be rendered narratively attractive and identity-affirming, but if the socio-technical arrangements needed to support them are absent, aspiration remains unactualised. A consumer may wish to reduce waste, buy local, or participate

in circular consumption, but if refill systems, repair ecosystems, interoperable services, or affordable alternatives are unavailable, the aspiration cannot be translated into practice. Activation, therefore, requires alignment across product design, distribution channels, policy frameworks, institutional supports, and digital interfaces. In other words, sustainable aspiration must be both narratively compelling and operationally feasible. This is precisely the kind of multi-level alignment that the present framework seeks to capture. What appears in these proceedings as coordinated affordances is foreshadowed here as the practical requirement that aspirations be materially supported, rather than merely symbolically endorsed.

The plenaries also contributed a concept that is especially useful for theorising the macro conditions under which responsible aspiration becomes difficult to achieve: *aspirational lock-in*. Existing socio-technical and market systems do not simply constrain alternatives; they often stabilise unsustainable aspirations through path dependency. Urban forms that normalise private car ownership, digital platforms that reward trend acceleration and fast fashion, financial systems that incentivise short-term consumption, and service architectures built around disposability all reinforce recurring cycles of unsustainable aspiration. Over time, such systems make particular lifestyles feel natural, modern, and even inevitable. This insight extends the conference theme in a decisive way. It suggests that the aspiration paradox is not only a matter of inconsistent behaviour, but of deeply entrenched institutional and symbolic orders that continually reproduce what actors come to desire in the first place. Guifi.net, as discussed by Prof. Rodón, demonstrates that alternative infrastructures can open different aspirational pathways, while Prof. Montecchi's analysis shows that firms and marketers can reshape what is seen as desirable. But aspirational lock-in reminds us that such efforts must contend with broader institutional and material conditions that reward continuity over transformation. Breaking these cycles requires coordinated interventions that simultaneously reshape narratives, infrastructures, incentives, and governance structures. It is not enough to ask actors to choose differently when the system continuously rewards them for choosing the same.

This also productively reframes the role of firms, platforms, and policymakers in the conference's broader argument. In doing so, we move beyond a conventional view of firms as peripheral

communicators of responsibility and instead position them as *architects of aspiration*. Through product design, service experience, interface architecture, cultural symbolism, and visibility allocation, firms and brands help define what counts as a "good life," which futures feel attractive, and which feel burdensome. From this perspective, the challenge is not incremental green positioning layered onto conventional business models, but a deeper rethinking of value creation itself: how profitability, legitimacy, resilience, and long-term competitiveness might be aligned with sustainable aspiration rather than unsustainable intensity. Similarly, it called for a shift from narrowly behaviour-centric policy tools toward what might be called *aspiration-centric governance*. Regulation, standards, incentives, and pricing mechanisms remain indispensable, but they are insufficient if they fail to engage the cultural and institutional conditions under which aspiration is formed. If sustainable futures continue to be represented as restrictive or elite, policy will struggle to generate broad-based legitimacy. If, however, public discourse, public infrastructure, and institutional ecosystems are shaped in ways that make sustainable futures materially accessible and socially desirable, governance can do more than constrain harm; it can expand what citizens collectively imagine as normal and desirable. These arguments map directly onto the first dimension of the framework, normative scaffolding, because they foreground the macro-level stabilisation of values, legitimacy, and collective direction.

If these plenaries established how aspiration is shaped, framed, and locked in, the later plenaries on *the architecture of participation* showed with equal force that aspiration, even when normatively aligned, remains insufficient unless systems are designed to make participation possible. Seen together, the plenaries by Prof. Hassanein and Prof. Sweeney formed a remarkably coherent intervention despite operating at different levels of analysis. Prof. Hassanein focused on micro-level socio-technical participation: how individuals, especially older adults, are included or excluded through interface design, user assumptions, support systems, and participatory methods. Prof. Sweeney focused on meso- and macro-level organisational participation: how firms, institutions, and supply network actors are included or excluded through integration architectures, information flows, coordination logics, and systemic design choices. Yet both converged on the same foundational insight: *participation is never simply a matter of invitation; it is a matter of design*. Systems that are nominally open can remain practically exclusionary if they are designed

around the wrong assumptions. Digital systems can be "available" yet unusable; supply chains can be "connected" yet fragmented; sustainability can be "prioritised" yet structurally impossible.

This contribution is indispensable to the development of the present framework because it extends the conference's treatment of the aspiration paradox from the level of desire to the level of enactment. The first two plenary talks asked, in effect, what people and organisations are taught to want. The ensuing talks asked whether the systems they built actually allow them to participate in those futures. This is not a secondary question; it is constitutive of responsible aspiration itself. Even when older adults wish to engage digitally, or when firms wish to pursue circularity and sustainability, participation fails if the systems around them are not designed to support it. The paradox, then, is not only that societies aspire to inclusion and sustainability while reproducing exclusionary or unsustainable outcomes. It is also that they often celebrate participation rhetorically while building systems that require extraordinary effort, adaptation, or coordination from those least positioned to bear it. Older adults are asked to "keep up" with platforms designed without them in mind. SMEs are asked to decarbonise while embedded in fragmented supply architectures that deny them visibility and bargaining power. In both cases, the burden of adaptation is displaced downward, while the design responsibility remains insufficiently interrogated. This insight directly strengthens the second and third dimensions of the framework: activated co-creation and coordinated affordances.

From a theoretical standpoint, the architecture of participation also provides a crucial bridge between inclusive design, responsible innovation, and systems integration. Prof. Hassanein's plenary suggests that inclusive participation requires movement from *access-centric* models to *agency-centric* models of digital inclusion, ones that foreground co-design, autonomy, confidence, and context. Prof. Sweeney's plenary suggests that sustainable participation in value creation requires movement from *efficiency-centric* models to *integration-centric* models of supply chain transformation, ones that foreground interdependence, visibility, circularity, and collaborative governance. Together, these arguments make clear that inclusion and sustainability should not be treated as separate normative agendas. They are mutually constitutive. Inclusion without systems integration can produce localised usability gains that fail to scale or endure. Systems integration

without inclusive design can produce efficient structures that remain socially brittle or distributively unjust. The more compelling path lies in designing systems that are at once participatory, resilient, and ethically attentive to those who must live and work within them. This is precisely the spirit in which activated co-creation should be understood in the framework developed here: not as generic stakeholder engagement, but as the deliberate construction of relational, organisational, and participatory arrangements through which aspiration becomes collectively actionable.

Therefore, *Co-creation*, as used throughout these proceedings, builds on the foundational arguments of service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and the value co-creation tradition (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), which challenged firm-centric models of value production by arguing that value emerges through interaction, participation, and resource integration across multiple actors. This perspective is particularly relevant here because it allows aspiration to be conceptualised not as something produced by firms and consumed by individuals, but as something jointly constituted through relationships among organisations, users, regulators, communities, and technologies. The conference discussions repeatedly reinforced this point. Whether through brands repositioning sustainable consumption, community infrastructures such as guifi.net institutionalising stewardship, older adults being brought into co-design processes, or supply chains being reorganised around collaborative visibility and circularity, aspiration appeared not as a fixed preference but as a relational accomplishment. Yet the conference also made clear that co-creation in a sustainability context cannot be reduced to generic collaboration or stakeholder engagement; it is also a matter of institutional embedding and socio-technical enactment. Aspirations are not activated simply because actors are invited to participate; they are activated when systems distribute the capacity to participate meaningfully and when such participation is recognised as consequential.

Institutional theory sharpens this view further. Organisational action does not unfold in a vacuum. It is shaped by field-level norms, legitimacy claims, regulatory pressures, and shared understandings of what constitutes appropriate conduct (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Suchman, 1995; Scott, 2014). The pursuit of responsible aspiration, therefore, depends not only on whether

actors can collaborate, but on whether such collaboration is recognised as legitimate, made durable through institutional arrangements, and diffused across broader organisational fields. This insight was central to Prof. Rodón's account of how guifi.net preserved its founding values over twenty-five years of growth: the answer lay not in individual commitment but in the institutionalisation of meaning through governance structures, licensing arrangements, and field-level legitimation. It also underpins the earlier discussion of aspiration-centric governance and the broader notion of aspirational lock-in. If institutions can stabilise alternative futures, they can also normalise undesirable ones. Thus, normative scaffolding in the present framework refers not merely to moral intent, but to the capacity of organisations, ecosystems, and policy regimes to sustain normative direction over time by embedding it in governance, legitimacy structures, and collective commitments.

Information systems scholarship adds an indispensable further layer. Technologies are not passive conduits through which pre-existing intentions are implemented; they shape what actors can see, do, coordinate, and imagine. The affordances and constraints of digital systems matter profoundly for participation, inclusion, and the distribution of agency (Orlikowski, 1992; Leonardi, 2011, 2023). Recent IS scholarship has sharpened this insight in the context of digital inclusion, showing that affordances should be understood not as fixed properties of systems but as emergent outcomes of the interaction between design and user context, with important implications for how marginalised communities are included or excluded in the design of digital technologies (Faik et al., 2024). Sociomaterial perspectives further remind us that social and technical arrangements are deeply intertwined, such that responsible growth cannot be theorised independently of the infrastructures through which it is organised (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2014; Nambisan et al., 2017). This was at the core of Prof. Hassanein's contribution: the problem of digital exclusion among older adults is not a social problem that happens to have technical features; it is a sociotechnical problem whose solution requires intervention at the level of design, not merely communication. Likewise, the discussion of fragmented supply chains showed that decarbonisation and circularity remain more aspirational than operational when visibility, interoperability, and coordination are absent. In this sense, the framework's third dimension, coordinated affordances, refers not simply to the existence of technological tools but to the

deliberate alignment of infrastructures, interfaces, integration architectures, and organisational routines that make responsible participation materially feasible.

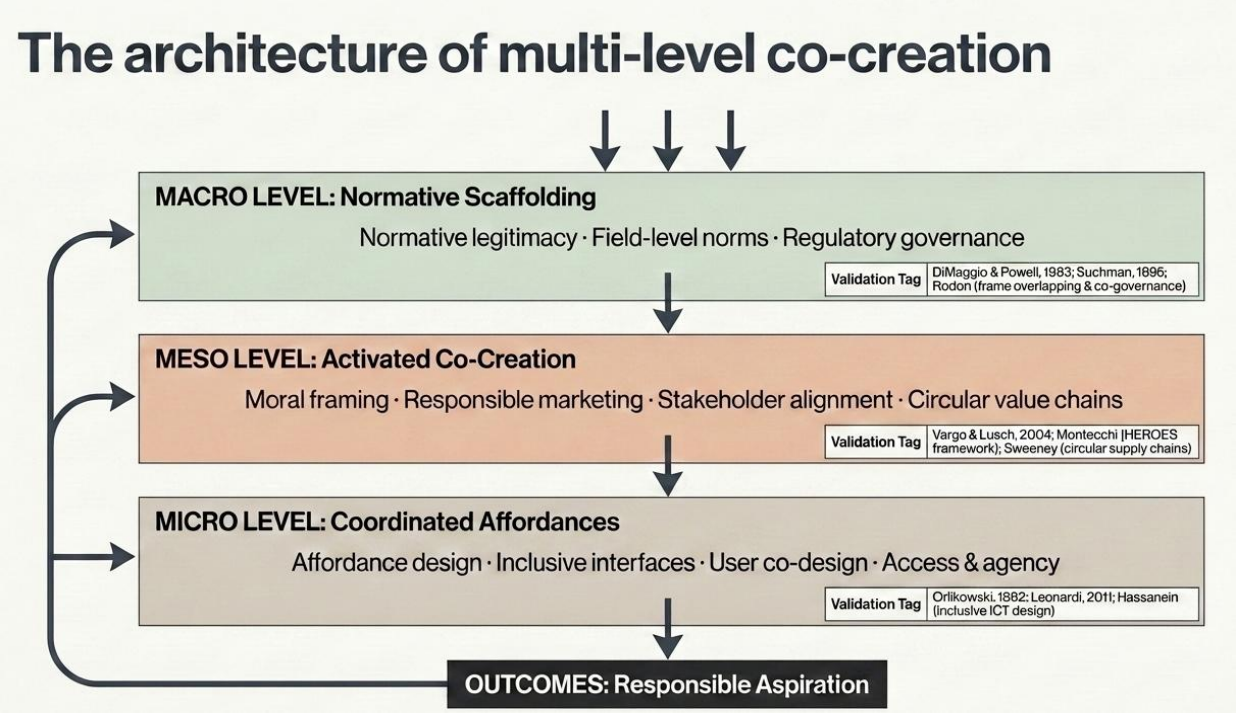
Taken together, these three theoretical traditions, co-creation, institutional theory, and information systems, suggest that aspiration is best understood as a process of multi-level co-creation, operating simultaneously at the level of meanings and legitimacy (*macro*), organisational and market arrangements (*meso*), and technological participation (*micro*). This formulation is not imposed from outside the conference; it is the logical synthesis of what the sessions themselves collectively demonstrated. The opening plenary established that aspiration is framed, symbolically mediated, and institutionally locked in or reconfigured through markets, brands, infrastructures, and governance. The later talks established that participation in those aspirational futures is never automatic but must be designed through inclusive interfaces, support systems, integration logics, and collaborative architectures. The three dimensions of the framework emerge from this progression. *Normative scaffolding* captures the macro-level work of sustaining normative direction, legitimacy, and value commitments against the pressures of aspirational lock-in. *Activated co-creation* captures the meso-level work through which organisations, communities, firms, and ecosystems translate those commitments into meaningful forms of participation, stewardship, and collaborative value creation. *Coordinated affordances* capture the micro- and infrastructural work of ensuring that the interfaces, systems, and material arrangements through which actors participate are actually usable, interoperable, and supportive of sustained action.

This multi-actor character of co-creation becomes especially visible again in the Wise Innovation Awards cases discussed later in the proceedings, where responsible aspiration is shown to emerge not from ventures alone but from patterned interaction among ventures, users, communities, and institutional actors across sectors such as health, education, circularity, and resource management. The analytical strength of this framework lies precisely in its refusal to isolate aspiration from the systems that produce and enact it. It suggests that responsible aspiration cannot be reduced to better messaging, better intentions, or even better products in isolation. Nor can it be achieved through participation rhetoric that leaves socio-technical and organisational burdens unevenly distributed. Rather, responsible aspiration requires simultaneous attention to what futures are made desirable, how those futures are institutionally stabilised, and whether the infrastructures of everyday

participation actually allow diverse actors to inhabit them. In this sense, the framework brings into one coherent vocabulary the central insights of the conference: that sustainability transitions require the reconfiguration of desire, the redistribution of participation, and the redesign of the systems through which collective futures become possible. Figure 1 schematically represents this framework, mapping the three dimensions onto these analytical levels and locating each speaker's contributions within it.

Figure 1 positions responsible aspiration as the outcome of interacting processes across three analytical levels. At the *macro* level, normative scaffolding concerns the normative and regulatory context within which aspiration becomes legitimate, contested, and governable: the institutional capacity to sustain values, legitimacy, and collective direction against competitive and market pressures. At the *meso* level, activated co-creation translates those commitments into concrete practices: aspiration framing, responsible marketing, stakeholder alignment, circularity, and value-chain coordination. At the *micro* level, coordinated affordances shape how users and communities actually experience, negotiate, and enact access, inclusion, and responsibility through specific sociotechnical arrangements. The framework is also recursive: the outcomes of responsible or irresponsible aspiration feed back into institutions, organisational routines, and technological design over time.

Figure 1: Multi-level Co-Creation Framework



Chapter 2: Industry Plenaries, Design Sprint, and Extension of the Framework

Summary

Six senior industry leaders examined the aspiration paradox from inside organisations that have been navigating it operationally. Twelve practitioner discussion groups in the design sprint then worked on the same structural problems independently, producing evidence that was coded against the academic framework. Six Wise Innovation Award ventures provided a third perspective at the entrepreneurial level. Chapter 2 shows where practice confirms, sharpens, challenges, and extends the framework, and where it introduces economic substrate as an upstream precondition the academic sessions had not fully theorised.

1. The Industry Plenary: Practice Perspectives on Responsible Aspiration

The industry dimension of TaSIC 2026 comprised two sequential components. The first was a moderated panel discussion in which Dean Varun Nagaraj moderated an invigorating discussion involving six senior practitioners to speak from direct operational experience: Deepak Iyer (EVP and President AMEA, *Mondelēz International*), Manjari Upadhye (Chief Marketing Officer, *Mahindra and Mahindra Automotive*), Subramanian Chidambaran (Chief Strategy and Sustainability Officer, *Cummins India*), Sunil Kataria (CEO and MD, Godrej Agrovet), Suraj Saharan (Co-Founder, *Delhivery*), and Venu Nair (Chief of Strategic Partnerships and Omnichannel, *Myntra*). The second was an executive design sprint in which approximately fifty SPJIMR alumni and invited industry leaders worked in cross-sector teams to develop prescriptions for responsible growth. Several panelists brought perspectives that crossed sector boundaries in analytically productive ways: Venu Nair drew extensively on his prior experience at Marks and Spencer, and Sunil Kataria drew on his earlier work at Godrej Consumer Products.

The panel discussion centered on the structural conditions under which responsible aspiration becomes operationally possible. Subramanian Chidambaran of *Cummins India* framed the energy

transition challenge with particular precision. A company committed to decarbonisation cannot unilaterally resolve a coordination failure spanning fuel infrastructure operators, government agencies, vehicle standards bodies, and consumers. Cummins' response, developing a fuel-agnostic engine architecture capable of running on diesel, hydrogen, or alternative fuels, is an organisational design decision that keeps the venture viable while the broader institutional ecosystem catches up. The logic is not hedging; it is the recognition that purpose without a viable enactment pathway remains aspiration without activation.

Manjari Upadhye of *Mahindra and Mahindra Automotive* extended this structural lens to the demand side, framing responsible aspiration as contingent not only on production design but on the alignment between sustainability and consumer value perception. She noted that sustainability initiatives such as recycled packaging often confront a willingness-to-pay constraint, revealing that intent alone does not translate into adoption without a viable market pathway. The constraint, therefore, is not attitudinal but economic and perceptual. Her illustration from Welspun's textile operations demonstrates how this constraint can be resolved through organisational redesign. By repurposing fitted bedsheet offcuts into comforters, the firm transformed production waste into a commercially successful product line, while simultaneously integrating approximately two hundred women into the value chain, substantially increasing their incomes. The intervention did not rely on consumers accepting a sustainability premium; it reconfigured the cost-value equation such that circularity became economically and socially generative.

Extending this logic to the automotive sector, Upadhye argued that Mahindra's electric vehicle strategy reflects a similar design principle. Rather than positioning EVs as a compromise for environmental responsibility, the company has developed them as aspirational lifestyle products. The strategic shift is not communicative but architectural: sustainability is embedded in the product's desirability rather than appended as an ethical attribute. As with Cummins' fuel-agnostic architecture, the underlying logic is that responsible aspiration becomes operational only when organisational design resolves the structural barriers to adoption. In this case, the barrier is not infrastructure but aspiration itself, and the solution lies in aligning sustainability with identity, performance, and experience rather than sacrifice.

Venu Nair's account of *Marks and Spencer's* Plan A illustrated a related point from a retail context. The programme, structured around five pillars spanning waste, energy, health, wellness, and recyclability, succeeded not because it asked consumers to absorb a sustainability premium but because efficiency gains from eliminating waste and redesigning packaging progressively financed the commitment. Sustainability became the operational default, and that default worked economically. The organisation redesigned what the standard choice was rather than asking the consumer to choose differently.

Sunil Kataria described an insight from his earlier work at *Godrej Consumer Products*. Ninety percent of liquid handwash is water, which is heavy to transport and expensive to package. Reformulating the product as a dissolvable powder sachet priced at ten rupees reduced packaging weight, cut logistics emissions, lowered the consumer price, and opened the category to households previously priced out of it. The innovation was simultaneously more sustainable and more commercially successful than the product it replaced, which challenges the assumption that affordability and sustainability are structurally in tension. In most cases where that tension appears, it reflects a constraint in organisational design rather than a genuine economic one.

2. The Design Sprint as Empirical Test

The design sprint was conducted independently and without prior exposure to the academic framework developed through the plenary. Twelve discussion groups (DGs) of industry professionals drawn from automotive, logistics, FMCG, technology, fintech, ESG investing, and sustainability practice each worked on a self-chosen sustainability problem, moving through three phases: framing causes, designing solutions and enablers, and surfacing risks and assumptions. Because the sprint ran in parallel with the academic plenary rather than after it, the convergence between the two is not a post-hoc rationalisation. It is an empirical pattern that emerged when practitioners working independently arrived at the same structural problems that the academic framework identified through theory.

2.1 What Did the Design Sprint Produce?

Table 1 maps each DG's contribution across the four components. Table 2 aggregates these into a component-level tally.

Table 1: Contribution Across Components

Table	Sector / Topic	Normative Scaffolding	Activated Co-Creation	Coordinated Affordances	Economic Substrate
1	Automotive (Fuel Strategy)	**V**	**V**	**V**	**V**
2	Logistics	**S**		**V**	**V**
3	Process Transformation (E-Waste)	**V**	**V**	**V, C**	**S**
4	Fashion & Retail (Food Waste)	**V**	**V**	**S**	**V**
5	FMCG (Greenwashing)	**E**	**V**		**V**
6	FMCG (Energy & Health)	**V**	**V**	**V, C**	**V**
7	Technology (Mobility & Ownership)	**V**	**V, C**	**V**	
8	Technology (Vending Redesign)		**V**	**E**	
9	Fintech	**V, C**	**S, C**	**V, C**	**E**
10	ESG Investing	**S**	**V, C**	**V**	**E**
11	Sustainability Experts (Urban)	**V**	**V**	**S, C**	**V**
12	Industry Senior (Mobility Harms)	**S**	**V**	**V**	**E**

Legend

V Validates the component. The DG's discussion produced evidence consistent with the component as articulated in the framework.
S Sharpens the component. The DG added a mechanism, distinction, or specific failure mode the framework had not previously named.
C Challenges the component. The DG surfaced a tension, contradiction, or pressure-test that the framework's current articulation does not fully resolve.
E Extends the framework. The DG pointed to material that does not fit any existing component, suggesting an addition or rethinking.

Table 2: Component Tally

Aggregating across the matrix gives a quantitative view of how the sprint engaged each component.

Framework Component	Validates	Sharpens	Challenges	Extends	Total DGs
Normative Scaffolding	7	3	1	1	12
Activated Co-Creation	10	1	3	0	11
Coordinated Affordances	8	2	4	1	11
Economic Substrate (proposed)	6	1	0	3	10

The twelve DGs covered problems spanning alternate fuel strategy for Indian mobility, CO2 reduction in primary road transport, e-waste and design for sustainability, food wastage in aspirational fresh-food retail, greenwashing and the trust deficit in sustainability claims, energy consumption in cooling and healthier processed food, individual ownership and sustainable cities, eliminating packaging at vending machines, the financial system as a sustainability lever, ESG investing and producer-side viability, sustainable urban living, and the harmful effects of mobility. The range was not pre-assigned; DGs self-organised and the concentration of teams within each domain was itself instructive. Mobility and urban sustainability attracted the most DGs, reflecting the degree to which transport and infrastructure sit at the intersection of aspiration, inequality, and ecological constraint in the Indian context.

2.2 How the Sprint Engaged the Framework

The sprint's relationship to the three-dimensional framework can be stated precisely. Normative scaffolding was engaged by all twelve DGs, validating the framework's macro-level claim that institutional fragility, lobbying, free-riding, and policy implementation drift are the binding constraints on sustainability work. DGs 5 and 12 sharpened this component by surfacing failure mechanisms the framework had not named. DG 5 identified free-riding among nominally committed consortium members as a specific governance failure and proposed routing accountability through the strongest commercial player in a value chain rather than through government, citing UPL's *Ecoscore* as a working precedent. DG 12, named institutional capture, where the agencies tasked with implementing sustainability have economic interests in keeping the problem alive, illustrating this through the BMC road sweeper example. DG 9 challenged the component at scale: if normative scaffolding succeeds in stabilising sustainability intent strongly enough to reduce consumption volume, the resulting macroeconomic slowdown threatens the very institutions meant to carry that purpose.

Activated co-creation was engaged by eleven of the twelve DGs. DGs 4, 5, 7, 11, and 12 each proposed concrete collaborative architectures: NGO partnerships for food repurposing, cross-auditing among industry consortium members, housing societies operating shared vehicle fleets, public-private urban planning structures, and ecosystem consortia for mobility transitions. DG 7

directly named the auto lobby as an active barrier to co-creation, the only DG to identify an incumbent industry as a structural obstacle rather than a potential partner. The framework treats co-creation as a positive design problem and is largely silent on resistance from those who lose from the transition. DG 12 sharpened the component by adding a third register beyond aspiration framing and aspiration activation: aspiration sensation, where the future is made felt rather than understood, which the AQI immersive experience centre proposal made concrete.

Coordinated affordances were engaged by eleven DGs and were the most challenged component in the sprint. DG 3 named data privacy as an impediment to tracking-based sustainability systems and warned that tracking costs may spiral. DG 6 demonstrates affordance rebound: star-rating rebates designed to incentivise energy-efficient appliances may instead induce overconsumption by lowering the price of ownership. DG 11 noted that AI deployed as a sustainability affordance can act as a destroyer through its own energy consumption. DG 8 extended the component by proposing a retail format redesign that makes the sustainable choice the default of the system rather than an opt-in, a stronger version of affordance design than the framework's existing articulation. Cross-layer coordination was visible across multiple DGs: DG 1's alternate fuel strategy fails without charging infrastructure, takeback policy, and consumer financing operating together; DG 8's vending redesign fails without FSSAI approval, digital tracking, and recyclable packaging operating together.

2.3. The Emergence of Economic Substrate as a Structural Precondition

Ten of twelve DGs raised economic viability as a structural concern, and four DGs addressed it directly enough to warrant treating it as a distinct element of the framework. The pattern is consistent across all four. Normative scaffolding can survive market pressure only if institutions can fund the work of stabilising it. Activated co-creation can be sustained only if participating actors have the economic capacity to engage over the long horisons that sustainability transitions actually require. Coordinated affordances can be built only if capital flows toward their construction and maintenance. The three-dimensional framework presumes a degree of economic feasibility but does not theorise it. In a developing economy context, this is a meaningful gap.

DG 9 proposed the most operationally specific institutional response: mandating that the *Reserve Bank of India* incorporate Extended Producer Responsibility and sustainability standards into project and company financing, building a Personal Sustainability Index linked to CIBIL credit scores with tangible benefits such as tax rebates and better mortgage rates, and structurally restricting EMIs below certain ticket levels to limit purchases without genuine affordability. DG 10 reframed sustainability as a cost-reducing innovation strategy, arguing that organisations focused on efficiency gains rather than premium positioning can make sustainability financially self-sustaining. DG 12's Planetary Debt Metric allocated environmental cost to the entity causing it, creating an accounting mechanism that makes the economic consequences of unsustainable decisions visible before they are externalised. DG 5's industry consortium model routed accountability through commercial power rather than regulatory power, addressing the collective-action failure that makes government-led standards chronically vulnerable to lobbying.

The disagreement between DG 9 and DG 10 is the sharpest internal tension in the sprint. DG 9 warns that aggressive consumption restrictions could slow the economy, reducing employment, profitability, and the tax base that funds the public institutions the framework depends on. DG 10 argues that cost-reducing innovation makes this tension unnecessary: sustainability does not require consumption sacrifice if organisations redesign their cost structures rather than asking consumers or governments to absorb the burden. What they establish together is that economic substrate is not a side constraint but a structural precondition: the three dimensions operate on economic ground, and if that ground is unstable, no amount of institutional scaffolding, activated co-creation, or affordance design will sustain a transition across the decades it actually takes. The sprint's treatment of economic substrate is therefore formulated as an upstream precondition rather than a fourth parallel dimension, preserving the three-component architecture while making its scope conditions explicit.

This upstream importance of economic substrate is echoed in the Wise Innovation Awards cases discussed later in the proceedings, where recurring institutional contracts, affordable access models, circular recovery economics, and cost-saving resource infrastructures appear as practical conditions that enable responsible aspiration to endure in entrepreneurial settings.

The most transformative proposals in the sprint share a design logic that the framework can now name precisely. Rather than building parallel sustainability-specific systems and asking participants to opt into them, these proposals reconfigure systems that already carry institutional legitimacy and operational infrastructure. DG 9's Personal Sustainability Index integrates into CIBIL, a credit architecture that already governs financial behaviour for hundreds of millions of people. DG 5's cross-audit consortium routes accountability through the strongest commercial player in an existing value chain. DG 8's vending machine redesign works within FSSAI-regulated formats that already govern point-of-sale food safety. DG 4's lunar calendar forecasting is embedded in demand planning systems that retailers already run. DG 12's integrated townships reconfigure urban planning frameworks that already have regulatory standing. None of these requires participants to adopt something new. Each makes the sustainable choice the product of the systems they are already inside. This is where the sprint's practitioner knowledge most usefully sharpens the framework's design implications: durable sustainability transitions are achieved by reconfiguring existing systems, not by building alternatives that depend on adoption decisions that may never be made at scale.

The academic and industry plenaries approached the aspiration paradox from entirely different positions, yet their underlying diagnoses converged with a consistency that is worth examining. Rodón argued that purpose erodes not through dramatic rupture but through accumulated interpretive concessions, and that preservation requires deliberate institutional design. Chidambaran arrived at the same point through engineering practice: a company cannot unilaterally resolve a coordination failure spanning OEMs, infrastructure operators, and governments, and a fuel-agnostic engine architecture is the kind of institutional design decision that keeps purpose viable while the system catches up. Montecchi argued that the gap between sustainable aspiration and sustainable action is structural rather than moral, and that closing it requires organisations to redesign defaults rather than improve communications. Upadhye's account extends this logic to the demand side: sustainability holds when it is embedded within value creation and identity formation rather than presented as a trade-off. Venu Nair's account of Plan A and Kataria's account of the magic handwash reached the same conclusion through practice: in both cases, sustainability held not because consumers were persuaded to choose differently but

because the organisation redesigned what the default choice was. Hassanein argued that participation fails not from lack of access but from affordance misalignment. Welspun's waste-to-wealth programme instantiated exactly this logic at the supply base. Sweeney argued that sustainability in supply chains requires integration rather than optimisation. Mondelez's EPR commitments and Delhivery's logistics work reflect the same integration mandate. Responsible aspiration fails when purpose is treated as declaration rather than design, when activation is conflated with framing, when participation is assumed rather than built, and when coordination is left to emerge rather than being deliberately engineered.

If the design sprint showed how the framework travels into practitioner diagnosis, the ventures winning the *Wise Innovation Award*s provided a different but equally important empirical test: they show how these dynamics operate inside emerging ventures that are already trying to build responsible aspiration into their business models. Across education, employability, mental health, preventive healthcare, water management, and clean mobility, these startups don't merely offer socially desirable products or services. Rather, they demonstrate how rising aspirations can be met through organisational design, institutional embedding, and resource-efficient innovation rather than through ever-greater material intensity. Read in this light, the Wise Innovation awardees extend the chapter's argument in two ways. First, they provide concrete entrepreneurial evidence that normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances are not only conceptual, but observable features of ventures attempting to scale responsibly. Second, they help assess whether the economic substrate identified in the sprint is best understood as a contextual constraint, an enabling condition, or a more foundational precondition for sustaining responsible aspiration in Global South contexts. This section applies that framework to six ventures recognised through the *Wise Innovation Awards*, using them as practice-based illustrations of how responsible aspiration is organised, enacted, and sustained in entrepreneurial settings.

3. Wise Innovation Awards: Startups as Empirical Stress Tests of Responsible Aspiration

The Wise Innovation Award (WIA) winners offer a vantage point from which the conference's central concern can be examined with the aspiration paradox. Unlike abstract models, these cases show how ventures operating in highly constrained, uneven, and institutionally complex environments attempt to organise aspiration responsibly in practice. Across diverse sectors like mental health, employability, battery recycling, preventive healthcare, industrial water management, and inclusive education, the common challenge is not whether aspiration exists, but how it is met without deepening social exclusion, ecological depletion, or infrastructural strain. What makes these ventures especially instructive is that they do not frame sustainability as downstream compliance or post hoc responsibility. Instead, they treat inclusion, affordability, circularity, prevention, and institutional embedding as central design conditions for their business viability. In this sense, the WIA ventures function as entrepreneurial-level stress tests of whether responsible aspiration can be made durable under real conditions of market pressure, limited resources, and scaling demands.

The six ventures are therefore read here not simply as award-winning startups, but as empirical probes into the framework developed across these proceedings. Specifically, they are analysed in relation to three interdependent dimensions: normative scaffolding (the capacity to preserve a responsible mission as ventures scale); activated co-creation (converting aspiration into meaningful participation by users, partners, and communities); and coordinated affordances (the socio-technical and institutional infrastructures that make such participation feasible in practice). At the same time, these cases also allow a further assessment of the economic substrate identified in the design sprint. In several of the ventures, financial viability, institutional funding models, frugal engineering, and cost-reducing innovation appear as conditions that make the other three dimensions durable. Read together, these cases therefore help clarify whether economic substrate should remain treated as an upstream precondition to the framework or whether, in entrepreneurial settings especially, it behaves more like an explicit fourth analytic factor.

The discussion that follows presents each of the six WIA winners highlighting the specific aspiration paradox they confront and the design choices through which they attempt to navigate that tension. These short narratives foreground how each venture organises aspiration through institutional partnerships, technology choices, funding models, and user engagement. They illustrate how normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, coordinated affordances, and economic substrate come together differently across sectors, while still pointing to a shared logic of co-creating responsible aspiration.

YourDOST

YourDOST addresses an acute version of the aspiration paradox: *intensifying aspirations for academic and professional success coexist with widening psychological distress and a severe shortage of accessible, stigma-free support.* Instead of treating this as a matter of individual help-seeking, YourDOST frames mental wellbeing as an institutional and infrastructural design problem. Operating as a primarily B2B platform embedded within corporates and campuses, it integrates counselling, workshops, and digital self-help tools into everyday organisational life, shifting mental health from crisis response to preventive, structurally supported care.

Viewed through the TaSIC framework, YourDOST exemplifies activated co-creation by lowering stigma and access friction so that students and employees can engage early and repeatedly with support. It demonstrates coordinated affordances by aligning digital interfaces, professional counsellors, and institutional workflows into a usable preventive-care infrastructure. Its use of certified professionals, governance safeguards, and privacy-conscious design reflects normative scaffolding, ensuring that care commitments survive scale and commercialisation. Finally, the move from high-priced B2C sessions to recurring institutional contracts underscores the importance of economic substrate as an enabling condition for making responsible aspiration durable rather than just episodic.

Languify AI

Languify AI addresses a development-facing version of the aspiration paradox: the aspiration for secure, upwardly mobile employment is intensifying across India, yet access to the communication confidence, interview readiness, and practice environments required to convert that aspiration into employment remains highly unequal. This is especially visible among students in tier-2 and tier-3 institutions, for whom employability gaps are often less about ambition than about the absence of affordable, repeatable, and confidence-building preparation systems. Languify responds by shifting career coaching from a scarce, premium service to a scalable institutional capability through an AI-enabled platform that offers personalised interview simulation, practice, and feedback.

Within the proceedings' framework, the venture demonstrates activated co-creation by turning employability from a passive aspiration into an ongoing practice involving students, institutions, and recruiters. It also exemplifies coordinated affordances through a low-infrastructure digital architecture that enables repeated skill-building without dependence on high-cost coaching ecosystems. Its emphasis on ethical AI, data deletion, and inclusion of underserved learners reflects normative scaffolding, embedding responsibility into the model rather than treating it as a corrective add-on. Finally, the venture's institutional partnerships and emerging recurring revenue model indicate the significance of economic substrate: aspirations for jobs become responsibly actionable only when the access model is affordable, scalable, and financially sustainable.

BatX Energies

BatX Energies addresses a structural form of the aspiration paradox that is salient in India's clean-mobility transition: rising aspirations for electric mobility depend on battery systems whose raw-material requirements and end-of-life waste streams can reproduce new forms of ecological pressure and import dependence. The venture shows how a high-aspiration sector can be made less *extractive* by building circularity into the value chain rather than treating waste as a downstream externality.

Within the proceedings' framework, BatX exemplifies coordinated affordances through the alignment of recycling technology, reverse logistics, recovery processes, and traceability mechanisms that make circularity operational rather than rhetorical. It also reflects normative scaffolding in the way social and environmental responsibility are built into the model through blockchain-enabled traceability and the integration of informal collectors at above-market rates rather than excluding them from formalisation. The case also strongly supports the importance of economic substrate: high recovery rates, saleable battery-grade materials, second-life applications, and commercially meaningful margins indicate that circularity becomes durable when it is economically generative rather than subsidy-dependent. BatX therefore pressure-tests the framework by showing that responsible aspiration in clean mobility depends on greener demand, and also on viable circular infrastructures capable of carrying that demand responsibly.

LogyAI

Logy.AI addresses the aspiration paradox in healthcare, where rising demand for timely, preventive, and widely accessible care collides with persistent shortages of specialists, uneven infrastructure, and late-stage diagnosis. Rather than treating quality healthcare as something that must remain concentrated in hospitals and expert-led facilities, the venture shifts screening closer to communities through smartphone-based diagnostic tools for oral disease, dental abnormalities, and cataracts. Its significance lies less in digitising diagnosis for its own sake than in moving care upstream, so that aspiration for better health is met through early detection rather than through more expensive and resource-intensive treatment later.

Within the proceedings' framework, Logy.AI most clearly demonstrates coordinated affordances: smartphones, AI models, frontline deployment, and referral pathways are assembled into a system that makes preventive screening operational beyond the conventional clinical settings. It also reflects activated co-creation to the extent that it enables insurers, providers, and frontline actors to participate in earlier and more distributed forms of care delivery. More broadly, it reinforces the central conference insight: responsible aspiration is often achieved not by expanding high-end infrastructure, but by redesigning existing systems so that access, efficiency, and prevention become mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive.

FluxGen

FluxGen addresses a foundational sustainability paradox: aspirations for industrial growth, urban expansion, and service reliability continue to rise even as water systems face mounting stress, inefficiency, and depletion. The venture responds by making water use visible, measurable, and manageable through digital tools that help organisations monitor consumption, detect inefficiencies, and reduce wastage. Its importance lies in reframing water responsibility not as a downstream conservation appeal, but as an operational capability that can be built into everyday decision-making across factories, campuses, and institutions. By deploying their AquaGen SaaS platform to over 110 enterprise clients like Tata Steel, Microsoft, Aditya Birla, and Mahindra, FluxGen has cumulatively saved over 5 billion litres of water.

Within the proceedings' framework, FluxGen most clearly exemplifies coordinated affordances. Sensors, analytics, dashboards, and decision-support tools are combined into a practical infrastructure that allows organisations to act on water risks rather than merely acknowledge them. The case also supports the idea of economic substrate as an enabling condition, because water efficiency becomes easier to sustain when reduced wastage and better management generate tangible operational value rather than depending solely on moral commitment. Also, FluxGen reinforces a central conference proposition: responsible aspiration is more likely to endure when sustainability is embedded into the routine architecture of organisational choice, making resource stewardship actionable, legible, and economically credible at the same time.

ThinkerBell Labs

Thinkerbell Labs addresses an inclusion-centred form of the aspiration paradox: education systems increasingly celebrate universal learning and future readiness, yet visually impaired students often encounter classrooms, pedagogies, and assessment systems that make meaningful participation far more difficult than the rhetoric of inclusion suggests. The venture responds by redesigning the learning interface itself through assistive educational technology that helps students access literacy and classroom engagement more independently. Its significance lies in refusing the assumption that inclusion is achieved once access is formally granted; instead, it treats participation as something that must be materially enabled through thoughtful design.

Thinkerbell Labs clearly demonstrates coordinated affordances, as its core contribution lies in creating tools that make educational participation practically available within real school settings. It also reflects activated co-creation insofar as teachers, schools, and students are drawn into a more enabling learning process rather than leaving adaptation burdens on the learner alone. Also, Thinkerbell aligns strongly with the conference's participation-centred insight, echoed in the later plenaries, that responsible aspiration depends on systems being designed with users' actual constraints and capabilities in view. Inclusion, in this sense, is not a symbolic commitment but a socio-technical accomplishment.

Taken together, these six ventures offer a grounded response to the conference's central "How might we" question. They suggest that responsible aspiration is not achieved by suppressing demand or asking users to choose less, but by redesigning the systems through which desirable futures are imagined, accessed, and sustained. Across the WIA startups, the strongest recurring pattern is not a single technology or sector, but the alignment of purpose, participation, and enabling infrastructure: some ventures illustrate this through institutional embedding, others through circular value chains, preventive service models, inclusive educational design, or resource-management systems.

Viewed against the proceeding's framework, WIA startups provide clear support for coordinated affordances and, in some if not all instances, activated co-creation, while normative scaffolding appears most strongly where responsibility is intentionally protected through governance choices, partnership structures, or inclusive business design. They also provide meaningful support for the importance of economic substrate. In entrepreneurial settings especially, affordability, recurring revenue, institutional adoption, and commercially viable impact models appear less like background conditions and more like active enablers of responsible aspiration.

4. Co-creation across actors

Another insight from these startups is that responsible aspiration is not created by them alone. It emerges through patterned interaction among multiple actors, especially ventures, users,

communities, and institutional or public intermediaries. The table below highlights the main co-creation configuration visible in each case.

Startup ➡️	**YourDOST**	**Languify AI**	**BatX Energies**	**Logy.AI**	**FluxGen**	**Thinkerbell Labs**
Actor ⬇️						
Venture/organisation	Builds institutional mental-health infrastructure	Scales employability preparation through AI platform	Builds circular battery recovery system	Deploys AI-enabled preventive screening tools	Builds water-intelligence and monitoring infrastructure	Designs assistive learning technology for classrooms
Users/beneficiaries	Students and employees seek early support	Students practise and improve job-readiness	EV ecosystem benefits from recycled materials	Patients gain access to early detection	Organisations act on water-use insights	Visually impaired learners engage more independently
Community/society	Helps normalise mental-health care	Expands access for underserved learners	Includes informal collectors in value chain	Extends screening beyond specialist centres	Supports broader water stewardship norms	Strengthens inclusion in school systems
Institutional/public actors	Campuses and employers enable delivery	Colleges and training institutions enable adoption	OEMs, recyclers, and regulators shape scale-up	Providers, insurers, and health systems enable pathways	Firms, campuses, and facilities teams enable use	Schools and educators enable classroom integration

The aforementioned table makes it clear that co-creation is the practical mechanism through which the aspiration paradox is navigated. In each case, the venture does not merely supply a product or service; it reorganises relationships among actors so that aspiration can be enacted more responsibly. Sometimes this occurs through institutions that absorb cost and reduce friction,

sometimes through infrastructures that coordinate value-chain participation, and sometimes through designs that make inclusion or prevention materially possible. Across all six, responsible aspiration appears not as an individual choice outcome, but as a socio-technical accomplishment jointly produced across actors.

5. Recurring Design Patterns from the Industry Evidence

Across the industry plenary discussions, the design sprint outputs, and the Wise Innovation Award cases, three design patterns appeared with sufficient consistency to warrant naming explicitly. They are not presented as universal prescriptions. They are recurring operational logics observed across the evidence assembled in this chapter, and they carry forward into the recommendations developed in Chapter 3.

The first is to redesign defaults within existing infrastructures. The most durable interventions rarely begin by asking people and organisations to leave the systems they already inhabit and adopt entirely new ones. They work by altering what established systems make easy, visible, or rewarding. Marks and Spencer's Plan A succeeded not by creating a parallel sustainability programme but by embedding responsible choices into the operational defaults of an existing retail system. The CIBIL-linked sustainability proposal from the sprint followed the same logic: attaching responsible conduct to a credit infrastructure that already governs financial behaviour at scale. The most durable interventions gain traction because they work through institutional reach that already exists rather than depending on adoption decisions that may never be made.

The second is to treat coordination failure as the design brief. Responsible aspiration frequently stalls because the surrounding ecosystem is incomplete. Fuel infrastructure, reverse logistics, regulatory frameworks, user habits, and supporting services may all be misaligned simultaneously. The strongest cases in this chapter did not wait for that misalignment to resolve. They treated it as the problem to be designed around. Cummins built a fuel-agnostic engine architecture whose commercial viability did not depend on the prior resolution of hydrogen infrastructure uncertainty. DG 1 of the design sprint developed alternate fuel strategies that functioned across regulatory and

infrastructure gaps rather than requiring their prior resolution. Coordination failure, in these cases, was the design brief rather than a reason to defer.

The third is to align affordability and sustainability through reformulation. Many apparent trade-offs between cost and responsibility turned out, on closer examination, to be failures of product, process, or business-model imagination. The magic handwash, Welspun's waste-to-wealth comforters, BatX Energies' commercially generative battery recovery model, and Languify's institutional subscription architecture all resolved the apparent tension not by asking someone to absorb a higher cost but by redesigning what the offer was. Where the affordability-sustainability trade-off appeared most intractable, the most productive response was to go upstream to the product or business model rather than downstream to the price or the communication.

Chapter 3: Synthesis, Recommendations, and Agenda

Summary

The evidence assembled across Chapters 1 and 2 is translated here into four outputs: policy and practice recommendations organised by actor group, implications for theory, implications for practice, and a future research agenda grounded in the specific challenges the sprint surfaced. The chapter is addressed to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers simultaneously and can be read selectively by each.

1. From Framework to Prescription: Policy and Practice Recommendations

The three dimensions of the framework and the economic substrate that underlies them each carry specific implications for the actors who must do the work of responsible aspiration in practice. What follows draws on the evidence assembled across both chapters: the academic plenary and synthesis session, the academic track papers, the industry plenary panel, the design sprint, and the framework's theoretical grounding. Recommendations are organised by what each element of the framework requires from distinct categories of actors.

Normative scaffolding requires regulators and public institutions to treat sustainability governance as a design problem rather than a compliance function. The most consistent finding across the sprint was that institutional fragility, not consumer indifference, is the binding constraint. Standards without enforcement mechanisms produce greenwashing. Consortia without governance architectures produce free-riding. Policies without implementation accountability produce the regulatory drift that DG 12 illustrates through the BMC road sweeper case. Regulatory frameworks must specify not only what is required but who verifies it, who enforces it, and what happens when nominally committed actors defect. DG 5's proposal to route accountability through the strongest commercial player in a value chain rather than through government represents one practical model for building institutional robustness without depending on regulatory capacity that may not exist.

Activated co-creation requires firms and platforms to move from aspiration framing to aspiration activation and to anticipate incumbent resistance as a design constraint rather than an exception. For firms, sustainable options must be designed as defaults, not as choices. *Godrej's* magic handwashes, Plan A, and the *Welspun* waste-to-wealth programme all demonstrate that sustainability becomes commercially viable when it is embedded in the production and delivery logic rather than appended as an option for motivated consumers. For platforms and digital intermediaries, algorithmic environments that reward consumption intensity, novelty, and speed must be redesigned to make sustainable choices visible, desirable, and frictionless. The aspiration sensation register that DG 12 identified, where the future is made felt rather than communicated, points to a design method that existing sustainability communication largely ignores. AQI experience centres, real-time consumption indicators, and immersive environmental feedback are activation mechanisms, not gimmicks.

Coordinated affordances require designers and systems builders to treat participation as a design accomplishment and to account for rebound effects in the design of incentive systems. Systems that optimise locally often produce externalities elsewhere: rebates that lower the price of energy-efficient appliances may induce consumption volume increases that offset the efficiency gains; tracking systems that make sustainability impact visible create privacy risks that erode the trust those systems depend on. These are not objections to affordance design; they are design requirements. DG 8's vending machine redesign is the sprint's clearest example of a system that accounts for its own failure conditions by changing the architecture of the delivery format rather than asking either the consumer or the regulator to behave differently.

Economic substrate requires capital markets, financial regulators, and governments to treat the financial architecture of consumption as a sustainability lever rather than a neutral infrastructure. DG 9's proposal to mandate sustainability standards in Reserve Bank of India project finance, DG 10's cost-reducing innovation framing, and DG 12's Planetary Debt Metric all locate the primary sustainability lever upstream of both the consumer and the firm. If the financial system rewards short-term consumption through BNPL mechanisms, penalises long-term investment through high capital costs, and fails to disclose the social and environmental costs of financed consumption, no combination of aspiration framing, co-creation architecture, and affordance design will be

sufficient. In a developing economy context, this upstream work is not optional. It is the precondition.

2. Implications for Theory

The aspiration paradox should no longer be treated as a narrow problem of individual choice, behavioural inconsistency, or managerial implementation failure. Across all sessions and tracks of TaSIC 2026, aspiration appears not as a static preference but as a socially produced, institutionally mediated, and technologically enacted phenomenon. What actors desire is shaped by moral markets, brand mediation, governance structures, and infrastructural conditions that render some futures attractive and others burdensome. Even when aspirations are normatively aligned, they remain unrealised unless systems are designed to make participation possible. This repositions aspiration not merely as an outcome variable but as a generative analytical construct for studying how sustainability, inclusion, and value creation become entangled across levels of analysis.

A second implication concerns the need for more explicitly multi-level and cross-domain theorising. The most pressing questions raised by the aspiration paradox cannot be addressed within single-level models or tightly bounded disciplinary frames. What appears at one level as a problem of behaviour may, at another, be a problem of institutional design, market symbolism, infrastructural coordination, or technological exclusion. Aspirational lock-in makes little sense if aspiration is examined only at the level of consumer preference; it becomes analytically powerful only when linked to broader systems of path dependency, legitimacy, and socio-technical reinforcement. For future scholarship, the most promising contributions will be those that examine how phenomena move across levels: how institutional logics shape design choices, how platform architectures influence inclusion, and how governance arrangements alter the uptake of sustainable consumption practices.

A third implication is methodological. The proceedings model the inadequacy of single-method orthodoxy for questions of this kind. Prof. Rodon's long-horizon study of guifi.net demonstrated the importance of longitudinal processual work for understanding how values are preserved or diluted over time. Prof. Hassanein's use of neurophysiological methods revealed systematic gaps between reported and lived digital experience that conventional usability approaches would miss.

Prof. Montecchi's conceptual synthesis illustrated the value of integrating bodies of scholarship that rarely speak directly to one another. Prof. Sweeney's emphasis on mixed methods in supply chain research pointed toward a more pluralistic methodological future for sustainability transition studies. The sprint extended this argument by showing that structured practitioner exercises produce empirical patterns not visible from survey or interview data alone. If the aspiration paradox is a multi-level phenomenon, methodological diversity is constitutive of adequate inquiry, not optional.

A fourth implication arises specifically from the design sprint's economic substrate finding. Sustainability frameworks developed in advanced-economy contexts typically presume stable institutions, accessible capital, and a consumer middle class capable of absorbing transition costs. The sprint established that these are scope conditions, not universal features of the problem. In a developing economy context, the economic substrate on which normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances must be built is itself uncertain, contested, and fragile. DG 9's macroeconomic caution, that sustainability transitions pursued aggressively enough to matter may slow the consumption economy in ways that destabilise the institutions they depend on, is a theoretical challenge to frameworks that treat economic viability as a background assumption rather than a primary variable. Future theory must engage with development economics literature on institutional capacity, capital market development, and the political economy of consumption if it is to produce frameworks that travel across economic contexts.

The venture-level cases presented later in the *Wise Innovation Awards* section reinforce this point by showing that, in practice, responsible aspiration often depends on whether organisations can secure viable pricing, adoption, and financing arrangements alongside normative and socio-technical design.

3. Implications for Practice

Sustainability and inclusion cannot be compartmentalised as isolated initiatives, communications strategies, or compliance functions. The most consistent lesson across the academic sessions, the industry panel, and the design sprint is that responsible aspiration depends on the alignment of narratives, organisational routines, governance structures, and socio-technical systems. The

framework of normative scaffolding, activated co-creation, and coordinated affordances has direct practical value: it asks organisations not only whether they have a sustainability strategy but whether their value propositions make responsible futures desirable, whether their governance and stakeholder arrangements make those futures participatory, and whether their infrastructures, interfaces, and operational systems make those futures realistically enactable.

For firms, the challenge is not incremental green positioning layered onto unchanged business models but a more fundamental rethinking of value creation. Firms and brands are not peripheral communicators of responsibility; they are architects of aspiration. The sprint's industry leaders demonstrated this consistently: the magic handwash, Plan A, the fuel-agnostic engine, and the Welspun waste-to-wealth programme all succeeded by redesigning the cost-value equation rather than by asking consumers to accept a sustainability trade-off. Responsible aspiration must be embedded across functions including procurement, product development, operations, remuneration, customer experience, and ecosystem partnerships, rather than isolated in marketing or ESG reporting.

For policymakers, behaviour-centric tools such as pricing, regulation, and standards remain necessary but are insufficient when detached from the cultural, infrastructural, and institutional conditions under which aspiration is formed and enacted. Public policy must not only constrain harmful outcomes but also cultivate the public infrastructures, institutional supports, and symbolic conditions that make better futures materially accessible and socially legitimate. The sprint's most ambitious proposals: the CIBIL-linked sustainability index, the Reserve Bank of India sustainability mandate, and the cross-industry audit consortium, are examples of aspiration-centric governance at different scales.

For designers, technologists, and systems builders, participation must be treated as a design accomplishment rather than a residual outcome. Systems should be designed around dignity, interoperability, agency, and distributive fairness. Inclusive participation requires co-design, support, contextual sensitivity, and the reduction of hidden adaptation burdens. Sustainable participation requires visibility, integration, circularity, and collaborative governance across organisational boundaries. These are normative commitments made concrete in design choices.

4. Future Research Agenda

The design sprint generated empirical material that both validates and challenges the three-dimension framework. Four specific research questions arise from the challenges, each pointing toward work that the framework cannot currently answer from within its existing theoretical resources.

The first concerns affordance rebound. DGs 3, 6, and 11 each surfaced cases where a designed affordance intended to enable responsible participation produced externalities that partially or wholly defeated its purpose. Existing affordance theory treats affordances as enacted through design-user interaction but does not provide a systematic account of second-order effects. A research agenda on affordance rebound would ask: under what conditions do sustainability affordances produce outcomes that defeat their own purpose, and what design governance mechanisms can prevent or mitigate this? The privacy-versus-transparency tension that DG 3 named as the one no other sprint DG resolved, even though seven DGs proposed tracking-based solutions, is a pointed empirical case for this question.

The second concerns incumbent resistance in co-creation processes. DG 7 identified the auto lobby as an active structural obstacle rather than a potential partner, the only DG to name an incumbent industry in these terms. The academic framework treats co-creation as a positive design problem and is largely silent on resistance from actors who lose from the transition. Research is needed on the conditions under which incumbent resistance can be anticipated, routed around, or absorbed within co-creation architectures, and on whether the distinction between incumbents who adapt and those who resist is a function of industry structure, competitive dynamics, or the specific design of the co-creation process.

The third concerns the distributional effects of sustainability transitions. Proposals like forced scrappage of old vehicles, restructured EMI systems, and mandatory EPR compliance all impose costs that may fall disproportionately on actors least positioned to absorb them. The framework's three dimensions describe conditions for responsible aspiration but say nothing about how the costs of transition are allocated. Research on the distributional politics of sustainability transitions, drawing on development economics and political economy literature, would strengthen the

framework's applicability in contexts where equity considerations are central to the legitimacy of the transition itself.

The fourth concerns the economic substrate question in Global South contexts. The sprint established that economic viability is an upstream precondition for the three-pillar framework, not a background assumption. Future research should examine the conditions under which normative scaffolding can be institutionally sustained in contexts with weaker regulatory capacity; how activated co-creation can be designed to function when participating actors face genuine economic constraints; and how coordinated affordances can be built and maintained when capital markets are thinner and technology infrastructure less reliable. This is not a question about whether the framework applies in Global South contexts; the sprint's evidence suggests it does. It is a question about the additional theoretical work required to specify the scope conditions under which each dimension can be sustained.

5. Conclusions

The aspiration paradox will not resolve itself. The structural pressures that generate it, demographic change, rising expectations, expanding market access, digital acceleration, institutional fragmentation, and the uneven distribution of participation, are not temporary distortions. They are durable features of contemporary economic and social life. Yet the proceedings gathered in this volume suggest that this durability should not be mistaken for inevitability. What these discussions collectively show is that the paradox persists not because aspiration is inherently incompatible with responsibility, but because the systems through which aspiration is formed, legitimised, and enacted are too often misaligned with social and ecological flourishing.

Through the academic plenary and synthesis session, it became clear that aspirations are shaped by markets, brands, infrastructures, and governance arrangements that determine what futures appear attractive, modern, and desirable. Through the academic track evidence, it became equally clear that these dynamics recur across finance, information management, marketing, and organisational behaviour as expressions of the same underlying structural condition. Through the industry panel and design sprint, the same diagnosis was confirmed through practice: the aspiration

paradox is not a communications problem, not an awareness problem, and not a consumer motivation problem. It is a systems design problem, and the systems that need to be redesigned span institutional governance, organisational architecture, digital infrastructure, and financial structure.

The multi-level framework synthesises these insights. Normative scaffolding concerns the institutional capacity to hold sustainability intent stable under competitive and market pressure. Activated co-creation concerns the organisational and ecosystem work of translating that intent into meaningful forms of participation. Coordinated affordances concerns the design of the systems, interfaces, and material arrangements that make responsible participation feasible rather than aspirational. Economic substrate, proposed by the design sprint as an upstream precondition, concerns the financial and institutional ground on which all three dimensions must be built.

What emerges is not a claim that aspirations should be moderated or suppressed, but a constructive proposition: aspiration itself can become an object of responsible design. The challenge is not that people want better lives, more meaningful identities, greater convenience, or wider participation. The challenge is whether the systems built to serve those aspirations can do so in ways that remain socially legitimate, environmentally sustainable, and meaningfully inclusive. This cannot be achieved through unilateral action. It requires institutions that make responsible futures legible and durable, organisations that make them desirable and accessible, and technologies that expand rather than restrict the field of participation. In that sense, the aspiration paradox is not solved by asking individuals to choose better in isolation; it is addressed by redesigning the conditions under which better choices become imaginable, actionable, and normal.

Aspirations will continue to rise, especially in societies marked by demographic dynamism, digital penetration, and expanding market participation. The more difficult question, and the one that animates this volume, is whether the systems built to serve those aspirations can be made worthy of them. The proceedings gathered here suggest that they can, but only if responsibility is understood not as a restraint imposed after the fact, but as a collective accomplishment: institutionally scaffolded, organisationally activated, and technologically coordinated.

Acknowledgements

We thank Prof. Varun Nagaraj (Dean, SPJIMR) for his valuable guidance and thoughtful inputs through various rounds of deliberation that helped shape this work. We are also very grateful to Prof. Shalini Talwar and Prof. Snehal Shah (Faculty, SPJIMR) for their careful review and for providing timely and constructive inputs. We also extend our sincere gratitude to all the conference participants, speakers, session chairs, and all other contributors whose engagement, insights, and efforts made the conference and these proceedings possible.

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