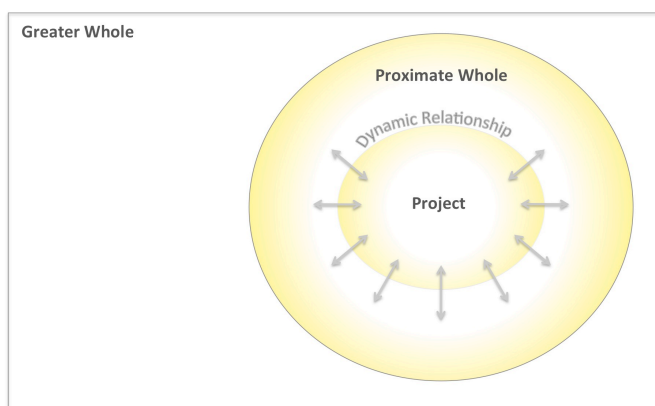


## The Regenerative Practitioner™

### ASSIGNMENT 3: MAPPING YOUR PROJECT'S NESTED SYSTEMS OF PLACE

The following instructions are designed to guide you through the process of defining and developing a coherent description of the nested systems of your project's place.

If you haven't already, start by doing the earlier exercise, "Imaging Nested Systems," in the reading for Session 3 to develop some understanding of the place where you live. Then shift to your project and, if you can, invite a few local people into an exploratory conversation, drawing on their familiarity with your project's place.



→ **Read this assignment in advance of Session 3, when we will discuss it with you and assist your with any questions you may have. Complete it for Session 4, when we will revisit it and discuss your work.**

1. **Define an Initial Map of Your Project's Nested Systems of Place.** For this exercise, each level of system is defined from the lens of its relationship with the system nested within it, starting with the project.
  - a. Describe what the project is intended to function or serve as (e.g. community center, eco-resort, wastewater treatment system, etc.).
  - b. With the project description as a starting point and drawing on your experience imaging your project's place as a living context, use your intuition to briefly describe its proximate whole—the next level of living system within which it is located—and then its greater whole.
2. **Look through Three Lenses to Refine Your Definition of the Proximate Whole.**
  - a. *Spheres of Influence.* What are the arenas that your project directly impacts or is impacted by?

*One way to determine the proximate whole is to look at what (or who) the project will influence and be influenced by in a direct and ongoing way. For example, when working on a school in a small town in western Colorado, we discovered that it served children from multiple small communities in the surrounding region. This caused us to expand our purview, and we soon realized that all of these small communities also had a shared history, landscape, and local culture.*

- b. *Alignment of Purpose.* With regard to the relationship between your project and its proximate whole, can you begin to discern where this alignment exists, where it once existed and could be regenerated, or where it could be created?

*Different levels of nested system can be understood as having shared benefits, shared challenges, or shared overall direction. (For example, on a housing project located outside the boundaries of a village in southern Arizona, it became clear that the desirability and economic viability of the village was key to attracting residents to the project. The village and project teamed up to secure the village's drinking water supply, promote the local school, and strengthen local businesses.)*

- c. *Shared Identity.* What is the shared identity that seems to knit together all of the elements within the proximate whole for your project? As you go further out from the apparent center of that whole, at what point does this sense of shared identity disappear, to be replaced by the identity of a different place? (We observe that this often occurs at watershed boundaries, even when people are unaware of those boundaries.)

*When individuals or communities share the same roots and nature, it is often the case that they also share the same core identity. For example, people on both sides of the Rio Grande at McAllen, Texas see themselves as part of the same community, even though an international border divides them. This sense of shared identity is a telling indication of how big here actually is.*

- 3. **Refine Your Definition of the Greater Whole.** Repeat the process above using the same questions, but replace your project with the proximate whole and the proximate whole with the greater whole.
- 4. **Articulate Your Understanding.** Write a *narrative* (rather than a list of bullet points) describing your project's relationship to the nested wholes of its place. This should convey what you are seeing and why you think it's significant or important. Don't aim for a polished document; limit yourself to a page and a half at most. The value of this exercise lies in imaging a living context for re-seeing the project.

## SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

Add the definitions of your project's nested whole to your scenario journal, along with a brief sketch of the thinking that brought you to them. Then take a few moments for further reflection and add answers to these reflection questions as well.

Looking back at the project and personal baseline tetrads you developed for Assignment 2, how has seeing the project in its living context—the nested systems of its place—changed the thinking at the tetrads' ground points? Why? What were the key ideas that contributed to these shifts? What do they imply about how you would work on the project? Add this reflection to your scenario journal.

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

The primary focus of this assignment has been to develop your capability to define the nested systems of place and to see the dynamic interrelationships between them. If you have the time and interest, you might enjoy exploring further and deepening your understanding of the nested wholes you've mapped. The following are some questions developed from the internal and external perspectives on place discussed in the reading for Session 3.

Given our time constraints, you probably cannot answer the questions in depth. We encourage you to move through them lightly, paying attention to what attracts your attention and seems most significant. Look for websites and other written resources that provide summaries or overviews of (for example) natural and human history or economic and cultural activities. The idea is to use varied perspectives and sources of information to identify key patterns. You can go back later to dig more deeply.

*The work on internal and external perspective is done iteratively, with subjective insights tested and deepened through background research and research to reveal new avenues for subjective questioning. For the purposes of this assignment, we suggest that you begin with questions from the internal perspective. This will help vector your research and may make it easier to recognize significant features of place that simple fact-finding might overlook.*

- **Internal Perspective.** Holding both the proximate and greater wholes in mind, see what you can learn about how this place is experienced subjectively. This includes how you yourself experience it, along with (other) locals. Interestingly, observant visitors can also provide a fresh perspective, if you can find ways to elicit from them their inner experience.
  - *How Locals Describe the Nestedness of This Place.* How does your intuitive sense of the nested layers of your project's place align with the way others speak and write about it?
  - *How Locals Express This Place.* What is celebrated and honored here? What themes in local literature, culture, and lifeways reflect people's experience of this place?

- *What Locals Love About This Place.* Why do you and others live here? What is special that needs to be treasured? (One fun way to get at this is to ask locals where they would take an out-of-town guest if they wanted to give them the *true* experience.)
- **External Perspective.** Again holding both the proximate and greater whole in mind, use the following questions to begin to look for organizing patterns that reveal how this place actually works. These patterns might be operating at different or multiple scales. For example, the greater whole might be manifesting an underlying geological structure at a coarser grain than the proximate whole.

If some parts of this list are outside of your current knowledge base, a quick scan of the internet for maps and studies can get you started. Alternatively, a conversation with a knowledgeable local person or colleague can be very helpful.

- *Geophysical Organizing.* How is the physical landscape structured? What does that contribute to the way this place works?
- *Biological Organizing.* What's happening in the biological systems here? Have they changed through time? What do they tell you about the productive potential of this place when it is in an optimal state of health?
- *Human Organizing.* How have humans responded (culturally and economically) to the underlying geophysical and biological forces? In the pre-contact era? Historically? Currently? What do the differences tell you about the range of patterns that are possible and/or desirable?