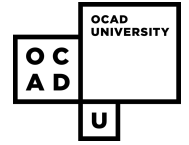


# Community Visioning through the Lens of Spatial Justice: A Guidance Framework for Inclusivity & Ecological Resilience

By Priyal Mehta | Silvana Sari | Tamara Mosqueda



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Priyal Mehta | Silvana Sari | Tamara Mosqueda

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Design (MDes)** in **Strategic Foresight and Innovation**

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# Abstract

This Major Research Project challenges prevailing perspectives on community engagement processes and spatial design, which are often colonial, capitalist, and anthropocentric. Instead, it proposes a multi-dimensional approach that takes into account planetary life-support systems, natural limits, human rights, and inclusive decision-making processes.

The study explores three main areas: the impact of globalization on colonization, bioregionalism in spatial design, and communal visioning. Through an extensive literature review, the study sheds light on how settler perspectives dominate the design of actions that interact with spaces and shape our envisioned future for the physical environment. Expert interviews uncover critical themes in the ongoing effort to decolonize processes and foresight tools when working with communities. Meanwhile, the literature review on bioregionalism and spatial justice challenges the prevailing mechanistic mindset regarding nature and resource distribution, emphasizing the inclusion of non-human actors and promoting emotional connection and responsible interaction with the natural environment.

Building upon our research findings, this study presents best practices in the realm of decolonization and foresight, and integrates them in a guidance framework for community planning and spatial design. The conceptual foundations of this framework have been previously employed by various foresight and decolonization practitioners who worked with communities, and what this framework aims to highlight are the effective practices and the core principles necessary when conducting inclusive and non-anthropocentric communal visioning with a focus on spatial design. There are **six** key principles guiding this framework: 'Culturally informed', 'Decentering dominant narratives', 'Mandatory inclusion of all actors', 'Non-anthropocentric approach', 'Empowering Stakeholders', and 'Forward Thinking'. The framework is portrayed in a 5 stage life cycle of a tree, illustrating the natural progression of life and growth, which emphasizes the holistic and interconnected system of actors and their functions within the framework.

**Key Words:** *Spatial Justice, Anglo-centric perspective, Natural Limits, Globalization, Bioregionalism, Foresight, Decolonization, Settler Perspectives, System, Non-anthropocentric*

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# Table of Contents

<b>Community Visioning through the Lens of Spatial Justice: A Guidance Framework for Inclusivity &amp; Ecological Resilience</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Copyright Notice</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures and Tables</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Glossary</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Background of the Study.....	13
Research Problem.....	13
Research Questions.....	14
Research Objectives.....	14
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Research Approach.....	15
Research Design.....	15
Sample and Population.....	16
Sample Selection.....	16
Subject Matter Experts.....	16
Data Collection Methods.....	17
Literature Review.....	17
Subject Matter Experts.....	18
Data Analysis.....	18
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Globalization & Colonialism.....	19
What is Globalization?.....	19
The Birth of Capitalism.....	20
The Start of Colonialism.....	22
Economy.....	23
Colonialism in Culture.....	25
Western Storytelling and the Role of Media.....	26
McDonaldization of Culture.....	26
The Loss of Language.....	27
Bioregionalism.....	27
What is Bioregionalism?.....	28
Lens.....	28
Philosophy.....	30
Framework.....	31
Social and Cultural Theory.....	32
Spatial Justice.....	34

Decolonizing Bioregionalism.....	36
Visioning the Future.....	38
Evolution of Future Studies: From Prediction to Exploration.....	38
Planting Colonial Narratives on Earth.....	39
Envisioning Together: Foresight for Inclusive Communities.....	40
Shaping Tomorrow: The Decolonized Approach to Future Visioning.....	42
<b>Findings &amp; Key Insights.....</b>	<b>45</b>
Thematic Analysis.....	45
Foresight.....	45
Decolonization: Through the Lens of the Individual and the System.....	49
Bioregionalism: Literature Review.....	52
Key Principles for Spatial Visioning Practice.....	54
Culturally Informed.....	54
Decentering Dominant Narratives.....	54
Mandatory Inclusion of All Actors.....	55
Non-Anthropocentric Approach.....	55
Empowering Stakeholders.....	55
Forward Thinking.....	56
The Cycle.....	57
SPROUTING: FORMING BONDS.....	59
GROWING: STORY SHARING & COMMUNAL VISIONING.....	63
BLOOMING: CO-CREATING.....	66
HARVESTING: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING.....	70
SEEDING: IDEATION.....	71
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>73</b>
Concluding Remarks.....	73
Limitations.....	74
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>88</b>
Subject Matter Experts.....	88

# List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1 Double Diamond Model (Image source: Design Council 2015).....	15
Figure 2 Process Cycle .....	57
Figure 3 Sprouting: FormingBonds.....	59
Figure 4 Sprouting Stage Stakeholders.....	62
Figure 5 Growing: Story Sharing & Communal Visioning.....	63
Figure 6 Growing Stage Stakeholders.....	65
Figure 7 Blooming: Co-Creating .....	66
Figure 8 Blooming Stakeholders .....	68
Figure 9 Feedback Loop between Actors .....	69
Figure 10 Harvesting: Implementing and Sustaining.....	70
Figure 11 Seeding: Ideation .....	71



# Glossary

## **Anthropocentric**

Anthropocentrism, in essence, is the view that places humans at the center, attributing intrinsic value solely to them. According to this perspective, everything else, such as living beings or systems, is valuable only insofar as it serves human interests or has instrumental value. This ethical stance grants humans a unique moral status that ends in and of themselves, while considering other entities as means to fulfill human objectives (Goralnik & Nelson, 2012).

## **Bias**

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.), bias refers to a tendency to favor certain individuals, concepts, or entities over others, often leading to unfair treatment of those deemed less favorable.

**Explicit bias** is when people acknowledge their prejudices and viewpoints regarding specific groups. Preconceived notions or attitudes toward a particular group are consciously recognized (Fridell, 2013).

**Implicit bias** refers to subconscious inclinations, either positive or negative, towards a particular group, shaped by prior experiences and entrenched stereotypes. It does not require overt animosity (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012). The term bias used in this paper encompasses both definitions.

## **Bioregionalism**

Bioregionalism is a philosophy advocating for sustainable and equitable political, cultural, and economic systems structured around naturally defined regions known as bioregions. These regions are delineated by physical and environmental attributes such as watershed borders, soil composition, and terrain features. Bioregionalism emphasizes that the identification of a bioregion is not only based on physical aspects but is also culturally influenced, highlighting the importance of local communities, their knowledge, and their solutions (Alexander, 1996).

## **Bioregion**

A bioregion is a self-sustaining geographical area characterized by watersheds, ecoregions, distinct physical boundaries, and the cultures that emerge within these boundaries. The term "bioregion" is derived from "bio-cultural region," reflecting the combined influence of both natural and cultural factors. These regions are delineated by physical attributes such as land composition, watershed boundaries, climate, plant and animal life, as well as the cultural characteristics of the people residing in and interacting with the environment. Ultimately, bioregions are defined by the communities that inhabit and shape them (Defining a Bioregion — Cascadia Department of Bioregion, n.d.).

### **Capitalism**

Pure capitalism is characterized by privately owned means of production operated for profit, where workers usually earn wages without owning capital (Zimbalist, Sherman, & Brown, 1988). In capitalist systems, land and production tools are typically owned by private individuals or firms (Rosser & Rosser, 2003).

### **Colonialism**

Colonialism is defined as the combination of territorial, juridical, cultural, linguistic, political, mental/epistemic, and/or economic domination of one group of people or groups of people by another (external) group of people (Murray, 2020). It is characterized by systems and actions aimed at enforcing the dominance of one group over another and exploiting the resources of the subjugated for the benefit of the oppressor (Assante, 2006).

### **Community**

A community is a social group that shares a common geographic area, along with shared interests and a strong sense of belonging among its members (Stebbins, 1987). In this paper, the term "community" refers to a physical community that exists and interacts within the boundaries of a specific bioregion.

### **Decolonization**

Decolonization is the effort of replacing the dominant with the marginalized (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes, 2012), as suggested by Fanon (1968) decolonization aims to reconceptualize power dynamics, transformations, and knowledge systems by incorporating diverse epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies. This reimagining of power structures necessitates a struggle against colonial power relations that threaten Indigenous ways of life.

### **Degrowth**

Degrowth refers to a deliberate decrease in energy and resource consumption, aiming to restore the economy's harmony with the natural world while simultaneously reducing inequality and enhancing human well-being (Hickel, 2021). One of the key principles of degrowth is the rejection of the "growth imperative," which asserts that economic growth is necessary for societal progress. Degrowth proponents argue for a "steady-state" or "post-growth" economy that prioritizes ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity. This entails rethinking production and consumption patterns, promoting localized and resilient economies, and fostering alternative measures of progress beyond GDP (Latouche, 2009).

### **Facilitators**

A facilitator is an individual who aids a group in improving collaboration, understanding shared goals, and devising strategies to attain these goals during meetings or discussions. A facilitator refrains from taking a specific position during the discussion.

### **Indigenous**

Considering the diversity of indigenous peoples, the United Nation (Oisika Chakrabarti & Mirian Masaquiza, 2021) has developed a system of modern understanding of what it means to be indigenous based on the following:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and Communities. (Oisika Chakrabarti & Mirian Masaquiza, 2021)

There are over 370 million indigenous people living in 70 countries globally. They maintain unique traditions and possess distinct social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics separate from those of the dominant societies they reside in (Oisika Chakrabarti & Mirian Masaquiza, 2021)

### **Human and Non-Human Actors**

The concept of human and non-human actors is derived from actor-network theory, which posits that both living and non-living entities possess value and agency, enabling them to influence social, cultural, technological, and ecological phenomena (Cresswell, Worth, & Sheik, 2010).

### **Marginalized community**

Marginalized communities are characterized by the lack of opportunities to participate fully and gain respect within society (Jenson, 2000). This extends to various groups such as persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and individuals facing long-term unemployment. Marginalization is not solely about economic status but also about social exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to resources and support networks (Jenson, 2000)..

### **Mechanistic worldview**

Mechanistic worldview promotes the views of living organisms as mechanical systems, where nature operates according to mechanical laws. This worldview, often referred to as Cartesian or reductionist, sees the material universe as a machine with explainable functions based on the arrangement and movements of its parts. Cartesian reductionism implies that complex structures, including plants, animals, and the human body, can be fully understood by breaking them down into their smallest components (Capra and Luisi, 2014).

### **Paradigm**

A paradigm encompasses a comprehensive and interconnected set of assumptions regarding the fundamental nature of reality (Maykut & Moorehouse, 1994). These assumptions form the foundation of our understanding about reality but are not directly testable themselves. Instead, a paradigm serves as the overarching framework within which we construct and verify our knowledge through research (Paradigm, n.d.). It provides the broadest context for conducting research and shaping our understanding of the world.

### **Spatial Justice**

Spatial justice revolves around the intentional consideration of geographical elements within the realm of fairness. This includes ensuring the equitable distribution of socially valued resources and the corresponding opportunities across different spatial contexts. It's important to note that spatial justice is not meant to replace other forms of justice but rather offers a critical perspective from a spatial standpoint (Sonja, 2008).

### **Eurocentrism (Anglo European-centric)**

Eurocentrism, also known as Eurocentricity or Western-centrism, is the tendency to position the West and its values as the normative standard, often considering them default or superior to those of non-European cultures (Hobson, 2012). Eurocentrism can be found in various forms such as historical narratives that portray European colonization and imperialism as progressive or beneficial to the colonized, and the replacement of indigenous culture with settler (European) lexicon, customs, and aesthetics, and economic structures that favor European interests at the expense of (generally) the local communities.

### **Wicked Problems**

Wicked Problems are described by Rittel and Webber in their paper "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," (1973). The term references complex and multifaceted issues that defy simple solutions. These problems are characterized by their high degree of uncertainty, ambiguity, and interconnectedness, making them challenging to define and address. Wicked problems are dynamic

and constantly evolving, often involving conflicting values, multiple stakeholders, and unpredictable consequences. Traditional problem-solving approaches are inadequate for wicked problems and propose a more collaborative and adaptive approach that embraces uncertainty and encourages continuous learning and adaptation.

### **Worldview**

Worldview refers to the shared set of beliefs, values, and ethical principles that individuals perceive as essential to uphold, typically shaped by religious beliefs, political affiliations, or professional standards (Inayatullah, 1998). Worldview is shaped by the layer of myths and metaphors underpinning it, forming a collective perspective on how individuals perceive the world and their role within it (Inayatullah, 1998).

# Introduction

## Background of the Study

In the pursuit of sustainable futures, a profound transition is underway – a departure from the conventional mindset of boundless resource exploitation, which often underpins capitalism. This transition is bringing about a focus on relocalization, highlighting the need to map regions' and communities' cultural, social, environmental, and political contexts. The challenge of our ecological footprint exceeding the Earth's regenerative capacity underscores the urgency of this transition. Within this evolving context, the concept of spatial justice emerges, emphasizing the intricate link between human existence, the spaces people inhabit, and the inequalities that have materialized from neglecting the connection between both. This shift prompts a reevaluation of how our engagement and connection with our physical environments contribute to systemic problems. It highlights the importance of our decisions regarding space design and our actions that interact with the environment, both directly and indirectly. The work of Edward Soja, particularly "Seeking Spatial Justice," provides a conceptual foundation for this perspective.

## Research Problem

In our study of various adaptation strategies involving community and spatial planning, several critical problems emerge:

1. The sporadic and gradual implementation of adaptation strategies often fails to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and neglects the importance of local contexts. This lack of alignment leads to slow progress, inefficiencies in adaptation efforts, and an inability to tackle core issues effectively.
2. The development of these strategies frequently overlooks the most vulnerable segments of the community it intends to support, adopting an anthropocentric mindset that often disregards the needs of non-human actors. This approach leans heavily on top-down, expert-led decision-making, potentially sidelining crucial stakeholders and their viewpoints.
3. The majority of tools and frameworks aimed at fostering resilience often overlook indigenous knowledge. The absence, if not a weak implementation, of decolonization efforts and the persistence of a settler mindset creates a disconnect between adaptation frameworks and indigenous and local knowledge, impeding inclusivity.



By addressing these research problems, this study aims to contribute in the creation of an inclusive communal visioning process which aligns with the capacity of natural systems and incorporate local components, fostering a more equitable and sustainable future.

## Research Questions

How can we facilitate community visioning that embraces inclusivity and socioeconomic equity, while adapting to and respecting the natural capacity of local ecosystems?

## Research Objectives

- Identify essential elements crucial for initiating communal visioning dialogues with communities to emphasize genuine stakeholder representation in informing effective spatial design decisions.
- Determine key participants necessary for ensuring the integration of the identified elements in communal visioning processes aimed at (direct and indirect) spatial engagement and action planning.
- Evaluate gaps in leveraging foresight and bioregionalism in communal visioning and spatial design to highlight their potential contribution to spatial injustice issues when utilized arbitrarily.

# Methodology

## Research Approach

This research undertaking utilized a qualitative approach to explore the interconnection of spatial justice, foresight, and climate change adaptation strategies at the community level. Qualitative research was chosen due to its capacity to expound on intricate processes and patterns of human behavior that are difficult to quantify (Foley & Timonen, 2015). By focusing on engaging stakeholders in climate change adaptation initiatives, the research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the current framework and strategy in bioregionalism and foresight. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts, group discussions in the form of workshops, and analysis of texts and documents, were employed to allow participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences regarding their relationship with the environment and the utilization of introduced frameworks.

## Research Design

The research design followed the Double Diamond Method by The UK Design Council. The Double Diamond model presented a clear design process involving two diamonds that symbolize a cycle of exploring an issue broadly or deeply (divergent thinking) and then focusing on targeted action (convergent thinking). There are four phases in the process: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver.

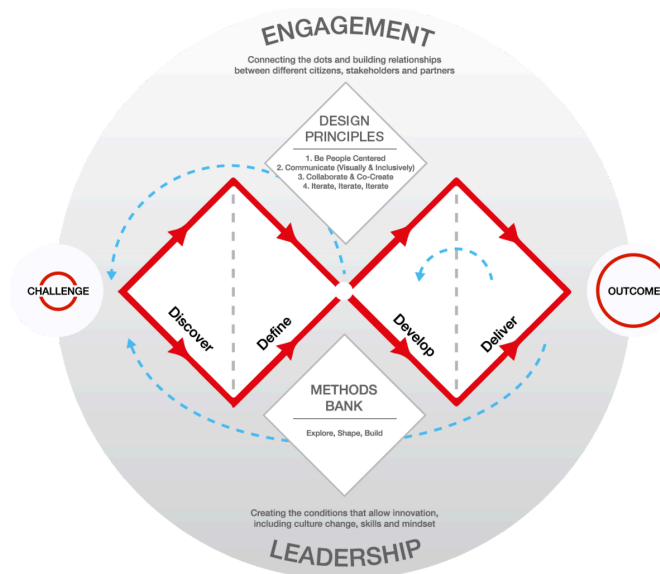


Figure 1 Double Diamond Model (Image source: Design Council 2015)

## **Discover**

**Objective:** Comprehensively gathering the existing frameworks and strategies utilized for community visioning, specifically focusing on participatory methodologies.

Research Methods:

- **Literature Review:** Conduct extensive research on existing literature, publications, and case studies pertaining to spatial justice, foresight, decolonization practices, and community based climate change adaptation.
- **Subject Matter Interviews:** Conduct insightful interviews with key experts and practitioners to gain valuable insights into current practices, limitations, constraints, and potential areas for improvement.

## **Define**

**Objective:** Synthesize and analyze data obtained from the Discover phase, with the goal of identifying recurrent key patterns, addressing existing gaps, and revealing opportunities for potential enhancement.

## **Develop**

**Objective:** Identify key principles and actionable recommendations for participatory framework to be used in communal visioning.

## **Deliver**

**Objective:** Develop a prototype for a participatory foresight framework that incorporates inclusivity and socioeconomic equity, within the natural capacity of local ecosystems.

# Sample and Population

## Sample Selection

### Subject Matter Experts

For the Discover phase, purposive sampling encompassed subject matter experts from the following domains:

- Foresight practitioners.
- Bioregional experts.
- Experts in decolonization.

The selection of foresight practitioners and bioregional experts spanned across both the global south and the global north. This selection was rooted in the necessity to gather insights from both regions, with a particular emphasis on the global south where documentation remained limited. Addressing this gap was crucial for enhancing the current foresight and bioregionalism strategy. This selection served to complement our literature research, aiming to fill the knowledge void and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field.

For the purpose of this MRP, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five (2 females and 3 males) experts in strategic foresight, systems design, climate change action and decolonial design/research methodology. We faced challenges due to limited visibility of self-identified bio-regionalists and a lack of universal recognition of the concept. Additionally, while terms like "ecoregion" or "biodistrict" offer alternatives, their interchangeability contributes to ambiguity and poses challenges in defining and understanding bioregionalism's scope.

All experts interviewed for this project were generally from non-western backgrounds and specifically from south-asian backgrounds (India and Philippines). Out of these, half of the interviewees were first or second-generation diaspora members in Canada, United States and UK. Their reflections on themes of decolonizing foresight frameworks within the principles of spatial justice within their respective fields of practice/study provided rich and complex data for the project.

The experts interviewed for this project include:

- **Juan Giusepe Montalván Lume**
- **Julius Lindsay**
- **Prateeksha Singh**
- **Pupul Bisht**
- **Shermon Cruz**

See the [appendix](#) for detailed biographical information.

## Data Collection Methods

### Literature Review

The research team gathered data from a comprehensive range of sources, including existing documents, articles, and peer-reviewed publications. This extensive search encompassed subjects such as foresight, spatial justice, bioregions, current environmental and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, local community engagement, and decolonization practices. The primary aim was to acquire a robust knowledge foundation. Additionally, this literature review identified thematic

patterns, areas of improvement, and opportunities within the existing body of knowledge, thereby enhancing the overall research scope.

### Subject Matter Experts

For data collection in this research, a protocol consisting of online and/or in-person interviews was employed. Prior to participating as subject matter experts, participants received the interview questions via email. Once they agreed to take part, the interviews were scheduled.

#### Methods for interview:

- Video conferencing was used as the primary method as it enabled researchers to access participants' visual cues through the screen, and the availability of video recording and digital transcription features integrated with the platform facilitated efficient data collection (Irani, 2019).
- The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach with open-ended questions, allowing participants the freedom to control the pacing and subject matter of the interview (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additional sub-questions were used as needed to explore specific areas of interest.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from literature research and subject matter interviews were analyzed using Framework Analysis. This approach provides a systematic way to analyze qualitative data, involving five distinct stages: familiarization, establishing a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Iliffe et al., 2015). The first stage involved becoming familiar with the collected data. Next, a thematic framework was developed to outline key themes and concepts. The indexing phase categorized data segments according to these themes, creating an organized dataset. This indexed data was then charted to visualize relationships and patterns, leading to the mapping and interpretation phase where insights were synthesized.

The data obtained from interviews with subject matter experts underwent a comprehensive coding and analysis process. This process involved identifying key themes, patterns, and insights within the interview transcripts. These emergent themes were systematically compared and contrasted with findings from the existing literature review to validate, enrich, and contextualize the resulting data.

# Literature Review

## Globalization & Colonialism

### What is Globalization?

Since the 1990s, the term "Globalization" has gained widespread usage in everyday discourse. This phenomenon is characterized by a diminishing significance of state boundaries. However, it is essential to note that the global economy necessitates institutions that can effectively manage global political affairs. Globalization has emerged amid swift transformations and ongoing difficulties. The sharing of information, concepts, technologies, products, services, funds, investments, and individuals among nations has nurtured interconnectedness among economies. This interconnectedness poses difficulties for governments in managing and overseeing their economies. (Klapper et al., 2010; Busse and Hefeker, 2007; Fogel et al., 2006; Kaufmann et al., 1999; Brunetti et al., 1998; Knack and Keefer, 1995).

In his book "Globalization: A Very Short Introduction," Manfred B. Steger delineates four fundamental aspects observed across various interpretations of globalization:

1. Globalization is characterized by the emergence and expansion of new social networks and activities.
2. It manifests through the widening and deepening of social relationships, activities, and interdependencies.
3. Globalization entails the amplification and acceleration of social interactions and exchanges.
4. It involves the subjective realm of human consciousness, wherein individuals become increasingly aware of the growing manifestations of social interdependence and the rapid acceleration of social interactions.

The start of globalization itself can be traced as far back as the prehistoric period when thousands of hunter and gatherer bands first reached the southern tip of South America (Steger and James, 2019). The invention of writing in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and central China between 3,500 and 2,000 BCE roughly coincided with the invention of the wheel around 3,000 BCE in Southwest Asia, propelling the speed of globalization and subsequently, the unification of Northwestern China in 221 BCE played a pivotal role in fostering innovations across various fields of knowledge and establishing the Silk Road as a vital trade route, connecting the Chinese and Roman Empires through Parthian traders (*Travellers on the Silk Road Before the Year 1000 AD - Silk-Road.com*, 2018). By the end of the premodern era, a complex global trade network had emerged, interlinking populous regions of Eurasia and northeastern



Africa through multiple trade circuits. These expansive networks spurred significant migration waves, leading to population growth and the rapid development of urban centers (Steger, 2017).

The early modern period, spanning 1500-1750, witnessed Europe as the primary catalyst for globalization (Steger, 2017). Adopting information sharing tools invented by Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, the European cities and merchants fueled the spread of globalization (Steger, 2017). Reflecting values of individualism and material accumulation, European economic entrepreneurs laid the foundation for the 'capitalist world system', shaping the rise of capitalism (Wallerstein, 1992).

### **The Birth of Capitalism**

The Scientific Revolution marked the emergence of distinct economic ideologies such as capitalism and individualism, while also challenging prevailing religious and metaphysical explanations of the world (Outram, 2006). This period emphasized empirical observation and experimentation, promoting critical inquiry and the dissemination of knowledge globally (Outram, 2006). Influential figures like Francis Bacon and René Descartes significantly shaped the philosophical landscape of this era (Outram, 2006).

Francis Bacon, known for championing empirical methods and the scientific method, emphasized observation and systematic inquiry, paving the way for modern science and empiricism (Descartes, 1641). Bacon's influence contributed to a shift away from traditional authority towards knowledge based on empirical evidence (Descartes, 1641). This philosophical shift aligned with a broader spirit of exploration and innovation, fostering the expansion of global connections (Capra & Luisi, 2014)

Similarly, René Descartes' emphasis on individual reason and skepticism laid the foundations for rationalism and critical thinking (Descartes, 1641). His mechanistic view of the universe and emphasis on mathematical reasoning further contributed to modern science and technology (Capra & Luisi, 2014). However, Descartes' dualism of mind and body also led to a reductionist understanding of human beings, influencing how globalization is conceptualized and practiced (Capra & Luisi, 2014).

During this era of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, significant technological advancements greatly influenced European civilization, with the invention of the magnetic compass and improvements in shipbuilding that allowed Europeans to explore distant oceans, leading to the age of discovery, while the printing press facilitated the spread of Renaissance ideas (Edwards, 1940). These developments required the establishment of a financial system and the creation of exchanges for trade in goods and money (Edwards, 1940).

Following the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment period from the late 17th to the 18th century witnessed a shift towards rationalism, empiricism, and questioning traditional authority (Jacob, 2019). Enlightenment philosophers emphasized humanity's intellectual powers to achieve systematic knowledge and guide practical life, often paired with skepticism towards traditional sources of authority (Bristow, 2023). This period saw the conception of nature as a complicated machine governed by deterministic causal laws, exemplified by Newton's universal laws of motion (Newton, 1687).

This era marked the emergence of modern capitalism, characterized by the rapid accumulation of capital. Trade in precious metals from South America, raw materials, food, and luxury goods, along with mining operations in Europe, generated substantial profits. Capital, previously tied to land under feudalism, transitioned to liquid forms like cash and raw materials, shifting ownership from the aristocracy to merchants and bankers, and by the late eighteenth century, Western Europe had evolved into a modern capitalist system with large-scale production, a national market, a diverse labor force, growing middle class, monetary systems, technological advancements, recognition of private property, and urbanization (Edwards, 1940). Liberalism emerged as a key ideology during this period, advocating for individual freedom and challenging the authority of both the church and state which influenced the secularization of government, the expansion of democracy and suffrage, and the promotion of free-market principles in domestic and international business operations (Young, 2002, Wolfe, 2009). Enlightenment philosophers are often credited with shaping liberal ideas, which were later systematized by John Locke, considered the pioneer of modern liberalism (Taverne, 2005, Godwin et al, 2002). Early enlightenment thinkers believed that establishing a sovereign authority with universal jurisdiction was essential to safeguarding life, liberty, and private property, which they considered as fundamental amenities of life (Young, 2002).

This leads to the formation of modern capitalism. Capitalism itself is defined as a system where the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit, with workers typically earning wages and lacking ownership of capital (Zimbalist, Sherman & Brown, 1988). In capitalist economies, private individuals or firms own land and the means of production (Rosser & Rosser, 2003). Based on this definition, capital accumulation is one of the primary tenets of capitalism, flourishing exponentially in a free market or laissez-faire economy. This accumulation goes hand in hand with the concept of privatization and ownership of resources, both tangible, such as land and properties, and intangible, such as intellectual property (Besanko & Braeutigam, 2010). "While the concept of supply and demand, which underscores the concept of a free-market economy, proposes that equilibrium will be naturally achieved in a perfectly competitive market, real-world market conditions often lead to monopolies, imperfect information flow, and barriers to entry (Besanko & Braeutigam, 2010). This perpetuates inequalities and a zero-sum game mindset, where a win or gain is achieved at the expense of another (Besanko & Braeutigam, 2010)." In a way, it brings us back to Descartes' concept of reductionism,

which catapults the scientific revolution and paves the way for the exponential growth of globalization and capitalism (Steger, 2003). This concept sets an individual apart from the surroundings and fellow humans, creating a perception of separation from communal glory and a focus on individual achievement, regardless of the consequences to what one perceives as an 'external' part of oneself (Steger, 2003).

Capitalism expects a redistribution of wealth through mechanisms like taxation, welfare, public services, land reform, monetary policies, confiscation, divorce, or tort law (Barry, 2018). However, the underlying idea of capital accumulation brings this expectation into imbalance (Barry, 2018).

### **The Start of Colonialism**

As individuals search for ways to maximize profits, expand ownership, and acquire more resources, one of the significant marks in the history of capitalism is the rise of European metropolitan centers and their affiliated merchant classes, as noted by Manfred B. Steger in "Globalization: A Very Short Introduction". However, this expansion often relied on government support and colonial endeavors, leading to exploitation and suffering in non-European regions (Steger, 2003).

Within this regard, colonialism is defined as the combination of territorial, juridical, cultural, linguistic, political, mental/epistemic, and/or economic domination of one group of people or groups of people by another (external) group of people (Murray, 2020). It is characterized by systems and actions aimed at enforcing the dominance of one group over another and exploiting the resources of the subjugated for the benefit of the oppressor (Assante, 2006). Even after the colonizers have left, colonialism can persist in the political, sociological, and cultural structures of a region.

European economic entrepreneurs, embodying the values of individualism and relentless material accumulation, laid the groundwork for what later scholars termed the 'capitalist world system'. The monarchs of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and England invested significant resources in exploring new territories and creating interregional markets that predominantly benefited them over their exotic trading partners. This pursuit of independent resource bases led European nation-states to impose direct colonial rule on large parts of the global South (Marx, 1867). To justify colonial exploitation, the concept of the "Other" was introduced, where individuals or groups are labeled as different or abnormal due to certain characteristics. This perception allows discrimination against those who do not conform to societal norms. During and after the era of colonialism, Western powers often regarded Eastern cultures as the "other" (Mountz, 2015).

This perspective views colonialism as a force promoting economic modernization and social progress, ensuring legal order, privatization of assets, basic infrastructure development, and the establishment of

modern political and legal institutions (Bauer, 1976). Contrarily, Marxist and neo-Marxist theories argue that colonialism functions as a destructive instrument, fostering dependency, systematic exploitation, economic inequality, and widespread poverty (Rodney, 1972; Baran, 1957; Frank, 1968).

Colonial authorities often justified their actions under the guise of enhancing the lives of native populations, managing natural resources efficiently, and maintaining law and order. However, this often led to the plunder, domination, exploitation, and appropriation of resources from colonized regions (Watts, 2005).

## Economy

In the global economic landscape, the emergence of digital realms has rendered money largely independent of traditional production and service sectors, facilitating global capital mobility while localizing the labor essential for capital sustenance (Castells, 1996). This spatial separation has engendered a dichotomy wherein capital accumulation, emblematic of capitalist pursuits, often overshadows collective welfare considerations.

Gottheil's examination of colonialism highlights a recurring motif: the imposition of privilege within economic paradigms. A critical aspect of recognizing colonial impact involves evaluating affected communities' capacity to regulate their economic landscapes (Gottheil, 1977). Private property which stands as a fundamental aspect of capitalist frameworks, constitutes both a legal and economic cornerstone (McConnell et al., 2009; Zimbalist et al., 1988). As illuminated by Bhandar (2018), private property can also function as an instrument of empire, perpetuating land appropriation and disenfranchisement among colonized communities. This dissonance between Western concepts of individual ownership and indigenous communal land use reflects broader power dynamics rooted in colonial legacies. Steger (2017) articulates that a significant portion of global financial exchanges revolves around speculative activities rather than productive investments. The proliferation of high-risk 'hedge funds' and speculative currency and securities markets underscores the speculative nature of financial systems. This speculation, dominated by highly volatile stock markets, engenders rampant competition and insecurity, with global speculators leveraging weak financial regulations to amass substantial profits, particularly in emerging markets (Steger, 2017). This evaluation gains significance in events like the 1997 Southeast Asia crisis, where IMF interventions, while preventing defaults, enforced rigorous economic reforms promoting rapid capitalist transitions (Finance and Development, 1998). This trajectory accentuates the tension between economic liberalization and socio-economic stability; countries were requested to reduce their social welfare expenditures in return for the helping hand offered by the IMF. The struggling nations, at this vulnerable point, were propelled into a fast track of capitalist mechanism.

The pervasive influence of capitalist ideologies is starkly evident in modern scenarios like Indonesia's Mandala circuit and Sri Lanka's luxury resort developments post-tsunami, where profit motives have spurred land displacements and socio-economic exclusions. These instances underscore capitalism's inclination towards wealth accumulation at the expense of community welfare, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and inequality.

*In Indonesia, the Mandala circuit project presents a case study highlighting the intersection of capitalist ventures, governmental policies, and indigenous communities' displacement. The project aimed to bolster Indonesia's economy through tourism revenue, particularly focusing on the Mandala region. However, the implementation of this project led to profound social and environmental repercussions, especially for the Sasak women in the area (Afra, 2023). The Mandala circuit project involved acquiring land inhabited by indigenous communities, leading to forced evictions and displacements. The affected communities, primarily the Sasak women, relied on the land for their livelihoods and cultural practices. However, the influx of the tourism industry disrupted their traditional way of life and jeopardized their economic sustainability (Afra, 2023).*

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami revealed stark disparities in land policies and post-disaster reconstruction efforts. The establishment of a coastal buffer zone post-tsunami, ostensibly to reduce vulnerability to future disasters, disproportionately affected poorer coastal communities (Samarasinghe, 2005; Government of Sri Lanka, 2005). These communities, predominantly consisting of fishermen and marginalized populations, faced uncertainties regarding resettlement and land ownership rights. The implementation of the coastal buffer zone policy further exacerbated socio-economic inequalities, leading to de facto gentrification of coastal areas (Ingram et al., 2006). Wealthier landowners and commercial entities were often exempt from the policy's strict enforcement, allowing them to continue their operations and expansions while marginalized communities struggled with resettlement and land rights issues (Rice, 2005).

Moreover, the tsunami reconstruction process in Sri Lanka also served as a mechanism for regularizing coastal land ownership, favoring affluent landowners and commercial interests over marginalized communities (B. Khazai et al., 2006). This trend of privileging economic interests over social welfare perpetuated existing disparities and reinforced power dynamics that marginalized vulnerable populations.

The rise of transnational corporations (TNCs) adds another layer to these dynamics, representing a modern iteration of colonialism characterized by exploitative economic relationships (Oshionebo, 2020). TNCs leverage their considerable financial and technological capabilities, often exploiting power differentials to negotiate imbalanced contracts favoring profit maximization over fair and equitable development. A UNDP report further highlights the exacerbation of global inequalities due to

substantial economic concentration. Nearly 40% of global trade in goods is concentrated in just three or fewer countries, and in 2021, the market capitalization of the three largest tech companies exceeded the GDP of over 90% of countries (*Rich Countries Attain Record Human Development, but Half of the Poorest Have Gone Backwards, Finds UN Development Programme, 2024*).

Additionally, the fragmentation of labor and the erosion of welfare provisions under globalization have worsened social inequalities, leading to increased economic concentration and wealth disparities (Castells, 1998; *Rich Countries Attain Record Human Development, but Half of the Poorest Have Gone Backwards, Finds UN Development Programme, 2024*). Government policies, such as tax cuts, deregulation, and anti-union measures, have further facilitated the transfer of wealth from the impoverished to the affluent (Stiglitz, 2012). This systematic wealth redistribution highlights capitalism's intrinsic mechanisms for accumulating and concentrating wealth.

Analyzing the intertwined aspects of colonialism, capitalism, and globalization within economic frameworks reveals the prioritization of capitalist interests over communal welfare and equitable development. The subsequent section will explore how these dynamics influence governmental structures, shaping policies and power dynamics within society.

### Colonialism in Culture

Colonialism in culture represents a multifaceted phenomenon that goes beyond mere political domination to encompass a comprehensive imposition of dominant cultural norms, practices, and values onto colonized populations (Dirks, 1992). This process entails not only overt mechanisms of control but also subtle, pervasive influences that shape societal structures, identities, and belief systems. It is essential to understand that colonialism in culture is not confined to historical contexts but continues to exert its influence in contemporary global interactions, often perpetuating hierarchies, inequalities, and power differentials (Dirks, 1992). The process begins with a forcible intrusion into indigenous territories, leading to the alteration or destruction of native cultures (Marger, 2000). This process is not merely about political domination but entails a systematic dismantling of indigenous identities, traditions, and ways of life. The colonizers view their culture as superior, using it as a tool for economic exploitation and control over indigenous populations (Marger, 2000). It encompasses the imposition of languages, religions, social structures, and even aesthetic preferences that align with the dominant colonial powers' worldview, which often results in the marginalization, erasure, or distortion of indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions, leading to a loss of cultural autonomy and identity for colonized communities (Dirks, 1992).

Furthermore, colonialism in culture operates through various mechanisms, ranging from direct forms of cultural assimilation and erasure to more subtle forms of cultural hegemony and cultural imperialism



(Dirks, 1992). It encompasses not only the material aspects of culture but also intangible elements such as values, beliefs, and symbolic representations.

### **Western Storytelling and the Role of Media**

Western storytelling, disseminated primarily through mass media platforms, plays a pivotal role in perpetuating cultural imperialism and shaping global narratives (Thussu, 2010). Films, television programs, digital content, and other media products often reflect and reinforce Western-centric perspectives, values, and ideologies. This dominance in storytelling contributes to the dissemination of hegemonic narratives that prioritize Western ideals of heroism, individualism, and consumerism (Moyzhes, 2019). Heroic fiction genres, prevalent in Western storytelling traditions, often depict narratives of chosen heroes endowed with special abilities or resources, reinforcing notions of exceptionalism and superiority (Moyzhes, 2019). These narratives promote values such as competition, aggression, and personal achievement, aligning with the colonialist mindset of dominance and control (Zhabskiy & Tarasov, 2023). Moreover, media flows from powerful Western countries, such as the United States, contribute to the global spread of Western cultural products and values, further consolidating cultural hegemony and imperialism (Thussu, 2010). The role of media in perpetuating Western narratives extends beyond entertainment to encompass news, advertising, and digital communication platforms.

Through media representation, Western cultures often portray themselves as progressive, modern, and superior, while marginalizing or exoticizing non-Western cultures (Thussu, 2010). This practice is being replicated in both China and India where dominant cultures are erasing Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities among others (“Break Their Lineage, Break Their Roots,” 2023). This construction of cultural hierarchies through media narratives reinforces colonialist ideologies and power structures, shaping global perceptions and influencing cultural practices worldwide.

### **McDonaldization of Culture**

The concept of McDonaldization, coined by sociologist George Ritzer, illustrates the homogenization and standardization of cultural practices in the context of globalization and consumerism (Ritzer, 1996). The proliferation of fast-food chains like McDonald's serves as a symbolic representation of broader trends in cultural globalization, where local customs, cuisines, and traditions are supplanted by Western norms and products. This phenomenon extends beyond food consumption to encompass various aspects of daily life, including language, fashion, entertainment, and consumer behavior.

The McDonaldization of culture reflects the commodification and commercialization of cultural identities, leading to the erosion of diverse cultural expressions and traditions (Ritzer, 1996). Western consumer culture, characterized by efficiency, uniformity, and mass production, becomes emblematic of global cultural hegemony and imperialism. The standardization of cultural practices often leads to

cultural homogenization, where local distinctions and identities are subsumed under a globalized, Western-centric framework (Ritzer, 1996).

Moreover, the McDonaldization of culture perpetuates inequalities and power differentials, as Western cultural norms and practices are privileged over indigenous, non-Western traditions (Ritzer, 1996). This process not only marginalizes cultural diversity but also reinforces patterns of cultural domination and exploitation. The imposition of Western consumer culture as a global standard further entrenches colonialist legacies and reinforces hierarchies of cultural value and worth (Ritzer, 1996).

### The Loss of Language

One of the most profound consequences of cultural imperialism and colonialism is the loss of indigenous languages and linguistic diversity (Mufwene, 2001). The dominance of colonial languages, particularly English, as global lingua franca contributes to the marginalization and extinction of many indigenous languages worldwide. Linguistic imperialism, rooted in colonial legacies, perpetuates power differentials and hinders efforts to preserve linguistic heritage and cultural autonomy (Mufwene, 2001). The imposition of colonial languages in education systems further exacerbates the loss of indigenous languages, as educational policies prioritize Western languages and knowledge systems over local, indigenous languages and epistemologies (Ball & Mclvor, 2013; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019; Phyak, 2021a, 2021b). This linguistic hegemony not only erases linguistic diversity but also undermines cultural identities and expressions tied to indigenous languages. The loss of language represents a broader erosion of cultural autonomy and self-determination for colonized and indigenous communities (Mufwene, 2001). Language is not just a means of communication but a repository of cultural knowledge, history, and identity. The extinction of indigenous languages reflects a loss of cultural heritage and contributes to the broader challenges of cultural homogenization, assimilation, and identity erasure in the face of dominant colonial narratives (Mufwene, 2001).

### Bioregionalism

Before the many environmental grassroots philosophies such as “Bioregionalism” entered the prevalent stream of terminology to represent environmental philosophies, its tenets had long been understood and practiced by many indigenous cultures and local populations (Durning, 1992). The physical environment wherein they dwell, and their cultural understanding of the surroundings are deep and important sources of indigenous and local identities.

In Maori, the Indigenous Polynesians who were the first to have reached and resided on the islands since A.D. 1200 are known as tangata whenua, meaning “people of the land.” (Thompson, 2021). The

term is rich with local nuance and meaning that integrates both the macro and microcosmic essence of existing on this planet, with “Tangata” being an old word that means “man,” “person,” or “human”, and “Whenua” denoting a range of meaning from “inhabited territory”, “land”, “village”, “settlement”, “house”, “garden”, “island”, even the “earth” or the “whole visible world”, and the “people who inhabit the world”. “Whenua” can also mean “placenta” from an old Polynesian custom of burying a newborn child’s placenta in a meaningful location to strengthen the ties between the child and the land (Thompson, *Sea People: The Puzzle of Polynesia*, 2019).

In the Philippines, Lumads are non-Muslim and non-Christian indigenous ethnic groups mainly based on the island of Mindanao (Filipinas Heritage Library). In 1986, fifteen of the more than eighteen indigenous cultural communities in the southern island of the Philippines, represented by the delegates of the Lumad Mindanao Peoples Federation founding assembly adopted the term Lumad, a Visayan word that literally means “born of the earth” to distinguish themselves from the Christian and Muslim groups and communities in Mindanao (Ugnayang Pang-Aghamtao: Anthropological Association of the Philippines, 2021).

In many parts of the world, especially in the Global South, deep connection and respect for the land have been a prevalent concept since pre-colonial times. Identity, meaning, and relationships are formed and influenced by the land one has been born into. Bioregionalism is but one subset of this overall body of belief and way of living.

### **What is Bioregionalism?**

In essence, Bioregionalism seeks that humans become “conscious of themselves and the places where we live in ecological terms and to harmonize human activities with ecological realities” (Glotfelty & Quesnel, 2015). This means that we, as humans, re-identify ourselves with the location in which we live in terms of the physical properties and natural borders of the land where we dwell.

As Bioregionalism has entered the mainstream environmental consciousness, it has been explored and expanded beyond being connected with the land. Bioregionalism is viewed as a lens, a political and ethical framework, a social theory, and a philosophy.

### **Lens**

Practitioners of Bioregionalism assert that one of the focal points of the concept is the recognition and appreciation of the diverse and interconnected functions of existing entities, not only of human beings but also of other living and non-living organisms. In Thayer’s (2003) words, Bioregionalism can be described by the “geography of watersheds, similar plant and animal ecosystems, and related, identifiable landforms, and by the unique human cultures that grow from natural limits and potentials of

the region.” Sale (1985) recognizes that the boundaries of a bioregion are challenging to define in a universally accepted way, as the inclusion of an identifiable landform would differ from territory to territory.

But more than the physical distinctions of what constitutes a Bioregion, the lens from which Bioregionalism views the land in which one dwells is generally intimate and even spiritual in nature. Snyder (1990) posits that “to know the spirit of a place is to realize that you are part of a part and that the whole is made of parts, each of which is whole. You start with the part you are whole in”. This refers to a place-based sensibility that allows one to understand that one living organism experiences reality differently from another. Uexhill (1975) coined this difference in perception of our environment as *umwelt*, which literally translates to “surrounding world”. He elaborates that any “living organism – no matter how simple or complex – had to be understood as subjects and the worlds they lived in as constituted and made meaningful through their specific ways of perceiving and acting upon their worlds, their *Umwelt*”.

However, the delineation and contextualization of the relationship between humans and the environment are not consensually agreed upon. The position of humans in the hierarchy of nature, the role humans (must) play, as well as the characterization of our relationship with the environment is highly debated. In Professor Magnaghi’s published collection of essays, *La Regola e il Progetto*, where he mainly discusses Urban Bioregionalism, he states the need to “re-balance the relationship between human settlements and the environment” to demonstrate the reclamation of the agency of humans to determine their living environments from the current living spaces shaped by “global and a-spatial techno-financial machines”. This determination has an underlying premise of humans as legitimate shapers of our environment; that we can design our living spaces to integrate with our natural physical environment in a fashion of respect and self-governance for all its inhabitants.

Robin Kimmerrer (2013) approaches human relationships with the earth from an indigenous perspective. She speaks of mending the broken and abused relationship humans have with the land and recognizing that in the “native ways of knowing, human people are often referred to as “the younger brothers of Creation”. According to Kimmerrer, humans must take wisdom from other species for guidance, as they are more experienced with how to live close to the land and “have had time to figure things out”. For the Anishinaabe, their connection with the land is representative of everything that identifies them and their ancestors. It is what sustains all of us, and in the principle of reciprocity, it is our responsibility to nurture it for what it is.

Kimmerrer’s narrative stems from the system of belief that humans and nature are not separate. Joe Brewer upholds the same belief, however, critiquing the advocates of biomimicry in their “confusion” that humans “learn from nature because we are somehow presumed to be separate from it”. He contests this rooting from the view that humans are part of nature, so “everything we do is, therefore,

the creative expressions of a living system”, which includes the “functional adaptations of human tools and behaviors in the context of their environments” (Brewer, 2019). Brewer rejects the overtone of humans being *beneficiaries* of intelligence acquired from nature and instead advocates that we learn from the social and cultural evolutions that humans have gone through, especially from successful cultural adaptations.

## Philosophy

Bioregional principles stand in stark contrast to the core tenets of globalism and the lingering remnants of colonial thinking, particularly anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism, and androcentrism (Fanfani & Ruiz, 2020). At its core, globalism and capitalism are driven by a relentless pursuit of growth, expansion, and profit. In contrast, bioregionalism is often perceived as a facet of environmentalism, and some even regard it as a post-environmental ideology (Glottfelty & Quesnel, 2015). Berg, a proponent of bioregionalism, critiqued mainstream environmentalism for its limited scope, which focuses primarily on conserving and protecting natural resources without addressing the deeper need to harmonize human activities with natural systems.

Thayer's (2003) insightful characterization of bioregionalism frames it as a delicate balance between freedom and obligation, delineated by the tangible boundaries of specific geographic areas. Within this paradigm, social and ecological justice emerge as central themes. However, the advocacy for justice may at times be eclipsed by the overarching philosophy of "living with the land." While integral to bioregionalism, the contentious ways in which individuals can authentically live with the land are complicated by historical precedents, which have led to the current disconnection of living beings, particularly humans, from the land they inhabit. The essence of bioregionalism lies in recognizing and respecting the limits of human expansion within a given territory. Rather than exploiting resources from distant places or dumping waste outside one's own boundaries, bioregionalism advocates for seeking alternative ways of living and producing that align with the constraints of the local ecosystem.

As both a philosophy and a form of justice, bioregionalism embodies a set of moral values. Soja (2009) introduced the concept of "spatial justice," which emphasizes the intricate interplay of values, knowledge, power, and consequences within geographical boundaries. Spatial justice, according to Soja, is not a replacement for other forms of justice but rather a critical perspective that acknowledges the inherent spatial dimensions of justice. Every geography, Soja argues, contains expressions of both justice and injustice, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of fairness, development, and freedom within specific spatial contexts.

## Framework

There are now a significant number of frames of reference utilizing Bioregionalism principles and tenets to manage territorial biodiversity and natural resources. As a framework, it is used to “study the complex relationships between human communities, government institutions, and the natural world, and through which to plan and implement environmental policies” (McGinnis, 1999). There is a rise in the concept of “activating” bioregions which appears to be synonymous with applying regenerative design around geographical landscapes containing “living systems that are capable of regulating the planet” (Brewer, 2018).

Bioregionalism is currently being used as groundwork for planning and designing urban spaces by “bringing nature into and inside buildings” (Fanfani and Ruiz, 2020). Fanfani and Ruiz expand on this by asserting that “a bioregional approach is endowed and suitable to foster an inclusive planning model for a redistributive and fair process of resources distribution to cope with socio-spatial inequalities. A model that contrasts with the current, top-down, and ‘extractive’ development and planning models.” Currently, no one government is utilizing the bioregional framework for political and economic system planning for the entire country. Rather it is predominantly adopted and forwarded by local and international movements and organizations that aim to regenerate critical territories and environmental features.

Brewer (2023) presents four processes required to activate a bioregion through collaboration, which employs Barichara as the first laboratory for the implementation of these workflows:

- (a) Weave the Local Workflows,
- (b) [Organize] Pool of Funding,
- (c) Create Support Tools (for on-the-ground projects), and
- (d) Hold the Field (or maintaining the synergy and coherence of the three former workflows).

Bioregionalists adamantly and consistently emphasize the practical more than the theoretical aspect of bioregionalism. Thayer (2003) asserts that a bioregionalism framework will be “judged not on how ‘warm and cuddly’ it makes people feel but on whether it contributes in a physical sense to the fulfillment of needs of life on earth: clean water and air; sufficient food, shelter, and clothing; peace from violence; a sense of meaning in life and a motivation for continuing to live; and enough of all of this to sustain life for other living systems as well as for our own species”. However, it is important to note that as ecological and social aspects vary from territory to territory, concrete definitions of bioregionalism are viewed as restrictive and imposing. Gray (2007) emphasizes how the interactions between human and natural systems allow them to influence and evolve alongside each other, but that human systems should only develop within the constraints of the natural system.



The 'limits to growth' have been a long-existing concept since 1972 by authors Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III. The authors published a report that made use of a computer simulation that forecasted a steep decline in both population and industrial capacity should the rate of resource consumption remain unchanged. Hutchinson (1996) specifically tackles the problem of current food production which continues to create a web of environmental and social dilemmas through its excessive production, preservation, packaging, and transportation processes and extending the solution of "reduction [of food production processes]...and strengthening of local control over local resources and integrated local food production and consumption, not only in the "developed" North but also in the poorer nations of the South."

Gray and Sale also reinforce the concept of 'urban-rural symbioses' and the mutual interdependence of both territories with each other. Urban Regionalism is an emerging design and planning discipline that is characterized as "retrofitting urban areas through the integration of nature and natural systems" (Church, 2015). The framework is not only aimed at physically and politically managing urban spaces with sustainable regulations but also at influencing and shifting the mindset, behavior, and consumption patterns of urban dwellers by addressing the gaps in the relationship between humans and the natural environment. As the Bioregional philosophy is largely a reaction against globalization and capitalism, which have mainly contributed to the disconnection between human settlements and the land they dwell on, urban bioregionalism design focuses on increasing the frequency of contact between humans and the environment by integrating bioregionalism principles in the democratic process, public discourse, and the physical environment of the city (Church, 2015).

This highlights the critical importance of integrating bioregionalism into spatial design through community leadership. As cited in the literature, bioregionalism goes beyond superficially adopting a "green lifestyle" or seeking occasional solace in nature amidst societal pressures. Instead, it offers a holistic framework guiding actions that foster mutual benefits for the environment and both living and non-living actors. Such endeavors must originate from communities deeply rooted in their surroundings, where sustainability isn't just a choice but a vital necessity for the continued existence of all beings. Leadership should not be alienated from those marginalized by current systems, as they endure the harshest impacts of unsustainable living conditions and coexistence dilemmas.

### Social and Cultural Theory

The attempt to link natural and social systems is not novel, with parallels constantly being drawn with how both systems operate. Peter Berg (2021) defines Bioregions as a "cultural idea of a place where you live in ecological terms". This posits how bioregions are not only composed of living systems but also social and cultural networks, with one identifying with the other. Bioregions are expected to self-organize not only the landscapes, flora, and fauna, but also communities, with the importance of diversity not only limited to biotic systems but also to the population within territories.

Social theorists have explored ecologically oriented organizational forms by applying different biological principles to social organizations. Dryzek (1987) proposes the principles in biology such as negative feedback, coordination, robustness, flexibility, and resilience, which is the criterion for “ecological rationality” that may be used to judge social systems, while Caldwell (1987) argues that values in biology such as diversity, stability, homeostasis, and learning should be highly emphasized in humans’ organization paradigm. McGinnis (1999) asserts that “human organizations should be adaptive, coevolving, complex, and capable of creative action” just like natural systems. He uses the biological principle of self-organization in nature following what biologists and systems theorists refer to as *autopoiesis*, which is the self-producing characteristic of living systems. In Donella Meadows’ (2008) discussion of the leverage points to intervene in a system, she calls attention to self-organization as a powerful and effective feature of a resilient system. According to Meadows, “A system that can evolve can survive almost any change, by changing itself.”

However, such qualities cited by Dryzek, Caldwell, and McGinnis are not easy to achieve organically. McGinnis argues that social systems that are socially engineered to mechanically manage society would likely fail with the disintegration of boundaries as these kinds of societies do not have the inherent capacity to reassemble, or as Meadows (2008) calls it, the “evolutionary raw material” that can innovate sustainably. A capitalist system with arbitrary political and geographical divisions among its geographical landscapes and communities is seen as spaces to manage bureaucratically, rather than a self-perpetuating system.

This emphasizes the importance of identity as the foundation of rules in society. In a bioregion with a self-organizing community, where one’s identity defines their obligations to the society they belong to, rules and order do not need to be strictly imposed or dictated (Zeleny and Hufford, 1992). As an example, members of the Cascadia Bioregion reported their use of social mapping as one of their bioregion maps as a way to further understand the diverse members of their community (Cascadia Department of Bioregion, 2021).

Doug Aberley (2021) supports this by discussing how bioregional mapping should also include mapping the people who live in the territory and the history of the place as a way to map the cultural identity of a bioregion. This can be done through speaking with the members of the community as they know most about what is considered culturally and socially distinct about their own community. This is referred to as participatory mapping, implemented with the intent to visually portray and address socio-environmental problems and “enable local communities to take control of the mapped spaces, challenging political limits and altering land use categories” (Andrade-Sánchez, Eaton-Gonzalez, Leyva-Aguilera, & Wilken-Robertson, 2021). Especially in communities where traditional culture, knowledge, and activities are crucially integrated into the environment, Indigenous mapping must be

implemented to spatially represent the territories' features not only with modern scientific data but with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as well.

## Spatial Justice

There is much to be dissected about bioregionalism, both its writings and practices. Bioregionalism serves as an alternative way of looking at space, and how we are and should be interacting with it. Globalization has allowed us a “spaceless lifestyle” that Cato (2013) defined as a withdrawal from the physical reality and the rise of a cosmopolitan citizen, originally uttered by Diogenes in his famous line: “I am a citizen of the world”. The thought has become the foundation of the modern way of living, manifesting in our communications, technology, economy, and governance. Bioregionalism ties back the importance of space in how we normatively move, think, feel—and design.

But Bioregionalism has its own share of gaps to examine within its framework and philosophy. Critiques point out Bioregionalism’s capacity (especially when implemented by non-indigenous individuals) for decolonization within its framework as a way to ethically talk about space. After all, space is a contentious topic, no matter what era, no matter where in the world. Space is always competed over by multiple actors and institutions, with varying levels of power, intents, and approaches.

Certoma, Sondermann, and Noori (2019) describe physical space as an arena where societal practices take place, shaping patterns of functions and just (or unjust) distribution of spatial goods. Usage of land and space have historically been agents of fragmentation among social groups subjected to arbitrary hierarchy, removing the original, subjugated residents from the land to be replaced by the newly favored (Clark & Worger, 2013). It is clear that the use and distribution of particular spaces shape the experience and quality of life of a group, leading to spaces having not only practical but also symbolic benefits.

And thus, the unjust contestation and imposition of wills into spaces have been a constant theme in all of history. Presently, its effects, which have permeated into both local and global systems, have come to be called *spatial injustice*. Soja (2010) introduces spatial justice as a ‘critical spatial perspective’ to social justice, which, for the longest time, has always been strongly associated with the equitable distribution and regulation of resources (Elster, 1992). The lack of historical consideration of this definition, however, has been a valid and prominent source of critique. It is important to note that the inequitable and disproportionate distribution of resources has important elements of historical oppression, discrimination, and domination, all of which were born out of unjust social relations that have occurred within the physical spaces of concern or as an extension of conflicts from outside of them. In other words, the current system has been thoroughly shaped by injustice inflicted decades ago and even by individuals and institutions oceans away from their own lands of dwelling, and this has

shaped the use and connection that we humans have with the land we live in and the other living beings that we share it with.

In addition, Young (2006) invites focus on the injustice that takes place in the processes that produce the distribution, as well as other structural processes outside the distribution system that contribute to the said injustice. For instance, the equal distribution and division of labor are not enough to be labeled as social justice; what is determined to be necessary labor, how that labor will be reinforced, how the labor is distributed, and who receives access to what kind of labor matters just as much. This led to the nuance of investigating social structures that build institutions of unjust social relations.

Bourdieu (1984) categorizes the different capitals that influence and are influenced by social structures, namely: social, cultural, economic, and symbolic. Any of these capitals are generally in the possession of groups involved in a social space, and both actors and actants shape both the social environment and rules (Bourdieu, 1984). Different groups deriving power and/or influence from similar types of capital may allow shared interests, experiences, and cultures among certain groups, which, if positive, would lead to these groups maintaining the status quo. The upkeep of the status quo can include the engineering of both the metaphysical institutions that uphold the rules and regulations and the physical landscape to support the perpetuation of this distribution of capital. This means that the conditions to create certain injustices have a crucial interaction with space and how it allows the production and continuation of human activities produced by capital forms, thus allowing the continued existence of social structures (Israel & Frenkel, 2017).

To mentally visualize this: two different and separate spaces with different climates and biomes would produce two different ways of material living, vis-à-vis food, physical residences, and technology. The presence of one resource such as the abundance of water, certain crops, and animals in the said separate spaces could completely change how one community decides to live. Likewise, the cooperation of these two different communities might radically change their own material lifestyles, with social, cultural, and symbolic capital changing subsequently. This is an organic flow of change within the involved groups' behavior and lifestyle that may have been decided to mutually benefit the participating communities equitably. In addition to this metaphysical change, the changes in one's physical space are usually determined by the natural changes in their physical environment, which in turn pushes the residents of the said space to make decisions of adding, reducing, and/or altering their physical environment as a response to the natural changes. This will directly or indirectly influence their behavior and experiences.

However, when these changes are imposed inorganically as a form of disruption (sudden, unexpected, and a discontinuation of the base of operations in status quo for the residents originally residing in the physical space) by outsider groups, especially with the intent to make use of the capital in possession by the original residents, this creates the foundation for spatial injustice in the form of *colonization*.

Mere social, physical, and cultural changes aren't considered injustice; they are considered as such when exploited for economic or political gain, often at the expense of the original inhabitants' rights and well-being. This disrupts social structures and cultural practices that are deeply rooted in the community's identity. While others may consider this issue to be mere identity politics, as identity is an integral part of how they engage and protect the land they live in, then this disruption becomes an ecological harm in the grand scale of things.

This is important to tackle in order to draw the line between "living green" or merely implementing green design and technology versus bioregionalism as a "transformational" purview towards political, economic, social, and architectural design. While bioregionalism having contesting definitions and nuances is not exactly alarming given the relatively fresh attempt to conceive its *formal* framework, the likely possibility of it being used to appropriate indigenous cultures and practices while still retaining the settler status quo should be suspended as soon as possible.

### **Decolonizing Bioregionalism**

Colonization is a particularly prevalent expression of territorial power, ranging from subtle to more blunt ways of imposing spatial control (Soja E. W., 2009). Measures to enact and maintain spatial control for the dominant or ruling group include preferential adoption of practices that attempt to slowly shift values and legitimacy of authority from the local body to the new 'rulers' (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017).

It needs to be said that defining colonialism is not an easy task. Not every form of inequality and injustice is colonialism, and even the metric of inequality can vary from community to community. It is important to understand the need to differentiate between an act of injustice borne out of reasons other than colonialism as the method and mindset in which it should be approached would have important and distinct nuances.

Moore (2016), in a comprehensive examination of colonialism and the kind of injustices that it inherently inflicts, points to two distinct characteristics of colonialism: "Alien rule" and "Taking of the Land". While both have elements of political, economic, and cultural domination, the three injustices are not unique to colonialism, but rather, a function of exploitation, which may be central to colonialism but is also a standalone injustice.

In addition, the concept of alien rule has to be assessed beyond the surface level injustice of foreign occupancy, but the taking away of the need of citizens to see their collective identities and dimension of their lives reflected and prioritized in their political, economic, and cultural institutions. Oftentimes, alien rule necessitates the delegitimization of a community's political order, and whether it was done with the presence of conquest or otherwise, the inherent injustice of disrupting the structure of identity that gives the community meaning in their daily lives remains. Due to circumstances of alien rule softening

resistance when the chosen members of the community are integrated into the implementation of order and changes, making it look less “alien”, the delegitimization and erosion of the community’s established system and identity becomes a subtle and accepted phenomenon over time (Berglund, 2019). While this isn’t an issue of freedom but that of identity politics, it is an important matter to the community all the same taking into consideration the generational effect it will have on the community’s future identity, especially in regards to their connection to the land they live in.

But most distinct to colonialism is the taking of the land from the original dwellers, whether it is through displacement or military subdual. Said (1994) argues that it is impossible to enforce colonialism and imperialism without the parallel efforts of acquisition, subordination, and intrusive political configuration of space. Kimmerer (2013) poetically spoke about the Chief of Arctic Village who introduced himself simply as “a boy who was raised by the river”, and herself as raised by strawberries, elaborating on how their sense of the world and their place in it was shaped by the distinct elements in their environments and the landmarks surrounding them as they grew up. This enforces original dwellers’ deep attachment to the land they live in as it holds the essential prerequisites that decide and influence many aspects of their lives, goals, and social relationships (Moore, 2016). Moore elaborates on this by adding that, by taking away the community’s control of their land, it also takes away the community’s control of their lives and the right to exercise various forms of self-determination concerning distinct and valuable geographical elements that are intertwined with their social and cultural systems (e.g., rivers, hunting grounds, worshiping grounds).

Given the above mentioned context, the decolonization of bioregionalism as a philosophy and framework must entail two things: the acknowledgment and legitimization of indigenous ways of engaging with the land, and the (uncomfortable) acceptance of the historical injustices that have shaped our political, economic, and cultural institutions, with the intent of accepting change in the direction of sustainability.

In line with this, spatial justice is an adequate approach to start from. According to Magidimisha & Chipungu (2019), spatial inequality in many developing countries is considered “a colonial creation.” It is a problem that many global southern countries are suffering from as a result of colonial exploitation of indigenous resources, extending to postcolonial conditions of spatial patterns excluding those below the poverty line from benefiting from the fruits of that exploitation. As Soja (2010) argues, everything that is social is inherently spatial, and everything spatial is inherently social. Thus, as many injustices are shaped and rooted in colonialism, decolonizing space and the institutions that shape and create policies for space is a straightforward argumentation on where to begin enforcing justice.

## Visioning the Future

### Evolution of Future Studies: From Prediction to Exploration

In the past five decades, Future Studies has transitioned from a practice focused solely on prediction to one that delves into possible, predictable, and preferable futures. This shift has brought to light the underlying worldviews and myths that shape each potential future. Initially dominated by Western perspectives, the field has gradually recognized the imperative of inclusivity and diversity. (Masini 1993; Bell 1996; Amara 1981; Sardar 1999; Inayatullah 2000; Saul 2001)

Certain methods in future studies suggest that they lean toward colonization and the continuation of the status quo, like “technological forecasting and other paraphernalia such as dynamic modelling, applications of general systems theory, computer simulations and Delphi method” (Sardar, 1993, p. 181); “linear, expert-led... [processes] based on deductive reasoning” like the “2X2 Uncertainty Matrix, Dator’s Generic Images of the Future, Three Horizons, Delphi, and trend extrapolations” (Bisht, 2020, p. 219); and “forecasting or trend analyses” (Milojevic, 1999, p. 69).

In contrast, the literature also suggests other methods, such as backcasting and visioning workshops with disadvantaged groups, empower marginalized voices and challenge dominant paradigms. (Milojevic, 1999, p. 69). There is no one-size-fits-all approach to decolonizing futures; instead, an experimental and multi-disciplinary approach is recommended (Nandy, 2006; Sardar, 1999). To truly decolonize, one must question who benefits from current practices and whether they reinforce existing power relations. This is evident in initiatives like the special “What Futurists Think” issue in the journal *Futures*, which aims to introduce a range of futures thinking from diverse perspectives. Practices like sustainable community visioning emphasize the importance of inclusive and empowering futures across diverse cultural contexts. (Inayatullah, 1996, p. 509).

Although not extensively, there are several futurists who actively practice such pursuits. Maria Guido advocates for Latin Americans to envision utopias free from distortions and critical of distorted memories. Linda Crowl believes in the contribution of Pacific Island voices to global information dissemination. Ron Crocombe emphasizes the importance of protecting Pacific Islands' diversity for positive futures. Cesar Villanueva uses typhoon forecasting as a method for envisioning a culturally rich future in the Philippines, while Ivana Milojevic focuses on creating positive feminist visions. There are numerous foresight practitioners who actively conduct visioning exercises at the community level, understanding the importance of integrating grassroots perspectives to gather distinctive insights about potential future scenarios. (Inayatullah, 1996, p. 513-516).

## Planting Colonial Narratives on Earth

Since World War II, important events have shaped the course of Future Studies. Literature on the topic shows how Future Studies has historically depended on Western culture's dominance to set its boundaries and research focus, often sidelining non-Western cultures. Three clear approaches have emerged in the development of Future Studies: a technical/analytical perspective prevalent from the post-war era to the 1960s, mainly concerned with military research; a personal/individual perspective gaining prominence in the 1960s and early 1970s, influenced by figures like Toffler and de Jouvenel; and an organizational/social perspective emerging in the 1980s, connecting Future Studies with the objectives of commissioning organizations. (Masini and Gillwald, 1990) However, while scholars such as Masini and Gillwald see these approaches as separate phases, Ziauddin Sardar suggests they represent a consistent Western-centric view of non-Western cultures throughout the discipline's development. At each stage, non-Western cultures have been utilized to shape and advance Future Studies, continuing a trend of marginalization and appropriation.

During post-WWII, the US emerged as a global power, shaping future studies from military research. It aimed to control ideological alignment in non-Western nations, driving a linear, progress-oriented approach to future thinking. Essentially, the Western dominance imposed linear time concepts globally, shaping science and social sciences within this framework. By 1970's advanced methodologies emerged in response to perceived threat was created by and of the West; a crisis related to environmental politics and economics of growth. This colonization of the future is evident in scholarly works like *The Futurist*, and reflect a dominant Western philosophical outlook despite claims of inclusivity. In other words, the future alternatives aimed to uphold the status quo, perpetuating western control while marginalizing diverse perspectives. According to Sardar, other cultures were included for decorative purposes, or worse, to be used as a prop to support a system of thinking and behavior that is causing serious problems society faces today. (Sardar, 1993)

Meanwhile, literature suggests that the 1970s also marked significant growth in futures studies. New social movements, especially those about the environment, broadened the scope of futures thinking, previously dominated by big American think tanks linked to the military and industry (Dahle, 1996, p. 127). Although famous futurists then, like Daniel Bell, Alvin Toffler, and John Naisbitt, mainly talked about trends, the conversation in futures studies started changing towards other futures, problems in the world, change, good futures, and culture. This period also saw a transition towards institution-building within the field, accompanied by a growing awareness of the limitations of materialism and the need to reconsider future societal values beyond industrial-centric perspectives. Recently, futures studies has started to look more critically at the future, thinking less about what might happen and more about what's missing in how we see the future. Led by futurists emphasizing inclusivity, this shift aims to broaden perspectives beyond traditional confines, envisioning societal



transformation. While many businesses and governments see futures studies as important for planning, there's still disagreement between planning, which wants to control what happens, and futures studies, which wants to think about different futures and keep things open. (Milojević, 2002; Sardar, 1993).

## **Envisioning Together: Foresight for Inclusive Communities**

One of the key Research Problems within the scope of this study was the neglect of the most vulnerable and non-human groups when it comes to community and spatial planning strategies. Such similar patterns are evidently visible when we look at the strategies for 'Climate Crisis'. The recent IPCC report on the physical science basis for responding to climate change clearly states that "... limiting human-induced global warming to a specific level requires limiting cumulative CO2 emissions, reaching at least net zero CO2 emissions, along with strong reductions in other greenhouse gas emissions" (IPCC, 2021, p.36).

This reflects a very singular perspective of looking at the climate crisis, exacerbating existing issues and overlooking essential factors like natural limits, human rights, and inclusivity. Instead, Wahl (2022) suggests that we ask ourselves "What are we missing as we focus on carbon metrics and structure policy to stimulate emissions reduction? Is 'fighting climate change' the appropriate framing? Could it be that to ask 'how do we get to net-zero emissions by 2050' is a dangerously insufficient approach that predisposes us to potentially ignore root causes?"

It's important to understand the prevailing beliefs that influence our current system, like prioritizing personal gain, human-centered perspectives, strict boundaries, fragmented systems, and viewing nature as dangerous and only useful. (Topa and Narvaez, 2022). These beliefs have shaped how we use and relate to the land we inhabit and the other creatures we share it with. It is worth noting that these beliefs aren't the only ones at play, but they're highlighted to emphasize our current connection to the land. In line with this context, we are compelled to agree upon the fact that "Climate Action" in many countries often has colonial and capitalistic roots. It is important to spotlight the many pointed criticisms that responding to Climate change is more than merely "Race to Zero", which is a very colonial way of thinking that all things are separate from each other. Even the drivers of climate change in this particular context are very western-oriented. At worst, techno-fix solutions and emissions trading will exacerbate and complicate an already wicked problem (Wahl, 2022).

In *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), the authors Graeber and Wengrow talk about three most common reactions in contemporary worldviews to existential risk such as climate change which include a reactionary, crisis mitigation mindset, the continued over-extraction of resources from the Earth, consumerism, and "technology will save us" mindset and climate deniers, mental compartmentalizers (people who believe climate change but choose to ignore it), and climate-doomers (people who are

paralyzed into inaction or believe action is hopeless). Abstraction and generalization, metrics and certification, control and prediction are central to a problem solving and solutioneering approach. This old way of working remains within the mental scaffolding of what Carol Sanford calls the 'extract value', 'arrest disorder' and 'do good' paradigms of modern living, which ignore systemic impacts and cascading consequences of actions.

These myths are useful for identifying common pitfalls of certain mindsets but are not particularly helpful or hopeful in creating resilience. The previous section of "Spatial Justice" in Bioregionalism explored the concept of "imposed disruption that often creates the foundation for spatial injustice in the form of colonization" that dismantles a community's identity, and as a result, their lives as tied to their physical environment. In the book Restoring the Kinship Worldview, Topa and Narvaez acknowledge that Indigenous people recognize the sentience of other-than-human beings, see themselves and all people as part of nature, rather than viewing themselves as masters of nature. Their relationship is reciprocal and interdependent, meaning, if they care for nature, nature will care for them. Indigenous people live by the laws of nature which informs their sense of responsibility and morals.

Through these precepts, we have come to understand some fundamental values and beliefs that inform an Indigenous worldview of the present and the future. A regenerative human impact on Earth is not only possible but has been the norm for most of our species' deep history. Oral traditions of indigenous cultures that pre-date agricultural or fossil fuel-based societies describe how human beings used to nurture abundance and diversity while actively regenerating the health of local and regional ecosystems. Our indigenous ancestors predominantly lived in bioregionally-based regenerative cultures. Co-creating a regenerative future to them meant supporting people and nurturing places and cultures to express their unique contribution to the health and vitality of the nested complexity in which we are embedded as expressions of life. The land invites everyone and everything living in it to pay attention to and learn from the bio-cultural uniqueness of the place — community by community, ecosystem by ecosystem, bioregion by bioregion. To do so simultaneously serves ourselves, our communities and life as a whole. (Wahl, 2022)

As part of the research, we aim to recognize and honor a plurality of perspectives and worldviews, especially those different from our own. The framework was designed with the intent to shift the dominant Eurocentric mindset into deliberating a planetary-focused consciousness in mind as a starting place for relocalizing or restoring place-based knowledge, aiming to challenge these culturally dominant narratives of 'separation from', 'power over' and 'ownership of' nature to overcome the mistaken belief that we can manage, technologically innovate, and (carbon) trade ourselves out of the evolutionary dead end we have been heading into for a couple of centuries. (Wahl,2022) The global problem of the climate crisis cannot be solved merely through scaling-up universally applicable "green

solutions”, which is a significant pitfall of many environmental planning and strategizing done by experts. The above mentioned context infers that if decolonization and systemic thinking are missing from climate action strategies, we will be perpetuating the existing structures that have fueled the climate crisis. We must critically tackle the line between “living green” or merely implementing green design and technology versus bioregionalism as a “transformational” purview towards political, economic, social, and architectural design.

Kovach outlines a key challenge of research involving Indigenous people: “finding (and using) a research approach that is not extractive and is accountable to Indigenous community standards on research so as to honor the tribal worldview.” Our research aspiration is to center Indigenous worldviews as a clear act of decolonization, plurality, and inclusion in order to bring spatial justice in a system with a fragmented (and even convoluted) definition of social justice in the context of space, bringing a critical lens in how we should relate with nature, other humans, and material goods.

Moreover, in addition to many planet-centric studies and practices, the importance of including both human and non-human actors is significantly stressed. This is not limited to foresight frameworks alone, but at every stage and level of a design framework aiming to directly or indirectly interact with physical space. The agency, perspectives, and impacts of non-human entities, such as ecosystems, animals, and technologies must be thoroughly considered using spatial justice considerations within future scenarios. Most importantly, identifying and analyzing power dynamics when envisioning the future, including both human and non-human actors, is necessary. It is important to seek to understand how power operates, how it is distributed, and work towards a more balanced distribution of power that promotes fairness, participation, and agency for marginalized communities in order to bridge the gaps in spatial engagements informed by foresight-centric strategies.

### **Shaping Tomorrow: The Decolonized Approach to Future Visioning**

The underpinning of our research is that the majority of tools and frameworks aimed at fostering resilience often overlook indigenous knowledge. The absence, if not a weak implementation, of decolonization efforts and the persistence of a settler mindset creates a disconnect between adaptation frameworks and indigenous and local knowledge, impeding inclusivity. Some key questions we kept asking ourselves throughout this Major Research Project and encourage our readers to think about are: “How can individuals committed to effecting systemic change through design, particularly within the realm of spatial contexts, thoughtfully assess our methodologies to identify any colonial influences in order to recognize our biases that foster a disconnect between ourselves and our physical environment? What can designers do to include non-Western (or non-standard) modes of thinking and knowing into their projects?”

A thorough investigation of the existing literature tells us that decolonizing future practice involves several key considerations, including methodology, project design, the role of futurists, exploring diverse worldviews, and challenging hegemonic notions of time (Journal of Futures Studies, 2023). As emphasized by Inayatullah, different combinations of methods could work in different contexts. To truly decolonize, one must break free from the current status quo of "business as usual" or will it reinforce current power relations, and is it a vehicle for dialogue and inclusion?— or question "Who benefits?" (Milojevic, 1999; Sardar, 1996).

When we think about "Project Design", considerations ranging from participant selection to physical setting are a core part of any foresight project (Miller, 2018). Inayatullah advocates that project design and "politics of planning - speaks to the power dynamics in a foresight project" are correlated. It is important to consider the role of participation and hierarchy, who gets to speak and listen? What adds value is when we dig deeper into questions such as "Who's in the room? Who's not in the room? Am I doing this to people? Or are we co-creating? Who makes the decisions?" Milojevic asserts that moving away from expert-led hierarchy towards more participatory and dialogic approaches can inspire decolonized visions of the future. The design of a project and how we address power dynamics, can change the project completely by privileging certain issues, trends, and events over others, and by privileging certain paradigms and epistemological frameworks (Inayatullah, 1998b; Milojevic, 1999)

Foresight practitioners constantly step into multiple shoes at different stages of a project. Foresight workshops generally encourage communicating stories of change, assist the participants in visioning outside the conventional and expected narratives available to them, delve into the larger contexts, explore new meanings, and create positive thinking or create learning experiences with participants. Primary endorsers of this point are both Ramos and Wilkinson (Ramos, 2015; Wilkinson, 2017) Often foresight practitioners are called "experts" who provide guidance and solutions to future problems. However, in order to open up the space for horizontal dialogue, we must escape our own cultural categories, and adopt a beginner's mind to enter into multiple ways of knowing and being, to move past their own conceptual categories, and co-create futures with participants on their own terms (Inayatullah quoted in Journal of Futures Studies, 2023b). To integrate diverse values and non-Western perspectives into alternative futures, it's crucial to recognize and release the notion of possessing universal knowledge and recognized methods of acquiring it. This is significant because unfamiliarity with the Western tradition can structurally delegitimize ideas and exclude certain groups (Nandy, 1989; Smith, 1999). This is easier said than done. In such situations the approach and frameworks of CLA (Causal Layered Analysis) can help practitioners create futures in the terms of the participant by creating epistemological distance from their own categories of thought to enter into the categories of participants (Inayatullah, 1998b).

CAUTION: Although CLA is the most in-aligned with the purpose of checking assumptions and biases in future work, we do acknowledge that the terminology used to describe the different levels in the framework is very specific and can often intimidate participants by coming-off as too 'jargony'. It can often become an initial hiccup to the ability of participants to engage freely with the tool. The second phase of the process, when the participants are required to change the identified metaphor in order to transform the layers above, can be extremely challenging without expert guidance. Futurists must take on the role of exploring ways in which it could be made more accessible.

An additional note must be made for moving away from "normative conceptions of time" as it serves the interests of a particular social group, and the current dominant linear, industrial clock time is a construction that is "western, Christian, linear, abstract, clock dominated, work oriented, coercive, capitalist, masculine, and anti-natural" (Griffiths, 2002, as cited in Milojevic, 2008, p. 333). There are numerous cultural constructions of time and the future around the world (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997; Inayatullah, 1993a; Inayatullah, 1993b) Given the importance of cultural categories of time for decolonization, practitioners should prioritize and address the question of time during an engagement. Once we loosen this grip, the practitioner and participants will be able to work toward alternative conceptions of time that could suit their desired alternative futures.

## Findings & Key Insights

### Thematic Analysis

#### Foresight

The thematic analysis of the findings from interviews delves into several critical themes essential for decolonizing foresight frameworks within the principles of spatial justice.

#### **Giving voices to the community: Foresight as a platform for storytelling**

An evident theme emerging from the findings underscores the facilitation of narrative sharing among diverse participants, particularly those who have historically been marginalized and muted. Pupul Bisht underscores the paramount significance of creating avenues for historically marginalized individuals to articulate their narratives, which serves to confront systemic exclusion and empower these communities to articulate their unique experiences, viewpoints, and aspirations. This aspect aligns with the principles of decolonization within foresight. Foresight, within this framework, serves as a medium for participants to share their narratives, as articulated by Prateeksha Singh. She further elaborated

that, in her experience working with marginalized communities, foresight enables participants to navigate different temporal dimensions, providing a safe space for them to delve into more sensitive experiences. It offers them a platform to articulate their thoughts and narratives within an environment that is both secure and conducive. As highlighted by Pupul Bisht, decolonization involves the equitable distribution of power and a departure from the scarcity mindset that perpetuates fear regarding potential uprisings and reversed oppression once voices are freely expressed. It is imperative to provide participants with a safe and inclusive space to narrate their own stories directly, without the need for intermediaries.

### **Meeting people where they are: Creating a safe space**

The thematic analysis underlined the importance of establishing safe spaces as a fundamental theme for promoting equitable and inclusive participation. These spaces encompass both physical and psychological dimensions. As highlighted by Prateeksha, the physical environment significantly influences workshop dynamics, impacting interactions and collaboration among participants. Both Pupul and Prateeksha emphasized the core principle of meeting individuals where they are, rather than imposing external frameworks onto the community. Utilizing familiar spaces offers distinct advantages, including communal energy, familiarity, and a sense of ownership, often leading to flattened hierarchies and facilitating equal engagement.

Prateeksha emphasized the importance of adapting spaces to suit participants' needs when choices are limited, ensuring a more egalitarian dynamic conducive to collaboration and mutual visibility. This necessitated a deep understanding of the local context and historical analysis, as noted by Pupul. She also advocated for humanizing facilitators by encouraging them to share their backgrounds, fostering trust and rapport with participants. Both Pupul and Prateeksha recognized the trauma experienced by many communities, leading to technical considerations aimed at designing workshops with frugality and flexibility to mitigate risks, especially when working with historically marginalized groups.

### **Community Engagement and Trust Building**

The analysis has identified the recurring theme involving the lack of pre-preparation before the actual facilitation process, highlighting the critical necessity for proactive relationship-building with the community. This is exemplified in the funding system, as mentioned by Prateeksha, which often only sponsors the actual workshop itself, overlooking the crucial pre-workshop phase aimed at establishing trust and gaining a deep understanding of the community's lived experiences, shared history, values, and culture. Prateeksha further emphasized the importance of collaborating with local facilitators or partners who possess intimate knowledge of the community space, a sentiment echoed by Pupul Bisht and Shermon Cruz. In his experience working with indigenous communities in South East Asia, he advocated for the inclusion of local practitioners in projects involving communities, as this approach

enables the development of a personalized and inclusive methodology tailored to meet the specific needs of the community.

### **Project Ownership and Sustainability**

It is essential to ensure continuity and realization of projects by equipping participants with the necessary tools and resources for sustaining and implementing initiatives. All three subject matter experts advocate for the inclusion of local facilitators and collaboration with stakeholders already immersed in the community, not only to gain a better understanding of the community and build trust but also to guarantee the project's continuity. They adopt a decolonization lens that prioritizes seeding power and enabling individuals to take ownership of their projects. According to Prateeksha, this reciprocal knowledge exchange is a fundamental aspect of the decolonization process, while Pupul stresses the significance of integrating the community in all facets of the workshop. Empowering participants and the community to take ownership of their concepts and ideas generated during the facilitation process reinforces a sense of agency and equitable power distribution, moving away from the colonial mindset reliant on individual agency.

### **Customized Approaches and Participant-Centered Design**

The analysis underscores the significance of customized approaches and participant-centered design in facilitation processes. A key theme identified is the necessity to personalize the facilitation process and methodology to align with the specific context of the community involved. Pupul emphasizes that while it's not mandatory to use entirely novel techniques, it is advisable to invest time in understanding the unique needs of a problem area and select the best tools from the available pool of foresight methodologies, combining them to create a unique set of approaches. She cautions against the arbitrary implementation of popular methodologies, particularly those rooted in academic approaches that may not resonate with the worldview of the community. The responses elicited from such methods may lack authenticity. This perspective is echoed by Prateeksha, who emphasizes the importance of soliciting feedback and suggestions from partners and stakeholders working closely with the community, collaborating to develop the approach and tools for the workshop. The focus should be on what is most relatable to the participants. Shermon illustrates this approach by drawing inspiration from local mythologies and legends during workshops with the community. Prateeksha also advises being mindful of the emotional risk and weight associated with prompting participants to contemplate their future, as it is one thing to simplify language in one environment and another to fully grasp the impact of these discussions on participants.

### **Anglo-centric Approaches in Future Visioning and Decolonizing Future Narratives**

The analysis highlights the prevalence of Anglo-centric approaches in visioning practices. Pupul Bisht identifies one such approach as the overreliance on individual agency, encapsulated in the narrative

that "as long as you know what you want, you will be able to create it." This approach risks entering communities with false promises and a lack of understanding of the power dynamics inherent in their systems. Shermon expands on this by noting how future narratives often adopt a dystopian outlook and technocratic mindset, devoid of personalization regarding culture and spirituality, resembling narratives commonly found in Western pop culture.

The imperative of decolonizing visioning processes is evident in the call for cultivating future narratives that prioritize inclusivity and community-centricity. Pupul stresses the importance of creating space for alternative ways of understanding our relationship with the planet and taking into account the diverse positions of actors within ecosystems. Meanwhile, Shermon underscores the necessity of moving beyond narrow economic concerns and profit-driven motives, advocating for a holistic vision that integrates cultural, social, and environmental perspectives. This decolonized approach envisions futures within a dynamic and interconnected network of human and non-human entities. It aims to foster equitable resource distribution and benefits across communities, acknowledging the interconnectedness of various systems and actors in shaping our collective future.

### **Interactive Tools for Engagement**

The analysis underscores the importance of interactive tools in the facilitation process, emphasizing the need to engage participants effectively, particularly when dealing with abstract concepts. As mentioned by Shermon, utilizing tools grounded in the local context and familiar to participants, such as stories, analogies, and local mythologies, can greatly enhance the relatability of the process and ground participants in the discussion, making complex ideas more accessible. Prateeksha mentioned bringing in a ceramic artist with experience working with refugee communities, as well as a spoken word artist, to help young female participants share and verbalize their experiences in various mediums. In the words of Pupul Bisht, "we've learned how to say what we think the other person wants to hear when we're using words. But when it comes to drawing, there is a raw part of our worldview that really often comes out if you have the right kind of prompts." It's essential to ensure that the tools employed enable participants to freely express themselves.

### **Sensitivity in Future Thinking**

A recurring theme in the interview is the necessity of fostering empathy and sensitivity when discussing the future with participants, particularly when engaging with communities that have faced systemic marginalization. Referring to his diverse experiences working with institutions in a top down approach, as well as with grassroots organizations and communities, Shermon noted that while leaders may hold more optimism for the future, marginalized communities often exhibit strong pessimism, being preoccupied with their fears and hopes while relying on institutions for support. This dynamic underscores the significant impact of power and privilege on future outlooks, with less privileged



individuals tending to be more skeptical about the future. In this regard, Prateeksha elaborated that for many communities, the future appears highly uncertain, especially for those without the privilege to plan ahead like middle-class or affluent families. The prospect of considering the future can even be traumatizing for some individuals. Pupul advised approaching workshops with a deep understanding of the power dynamics and influences present within the participants' living systems. This is reflected in Pupul's comment that when working with marginalized communities, they are keenly aware of the biases and prejudices that systemically marginalize or exclude them from decision-making processes.

## **Decolonization: Through the Lens of the Individual and the System**

### **Individual Perspective**

#### *Inclusive Design: Empowering Stakeholder Voices*

In the realm of design and collaboration, the question of who to involve and how to ensure comprehensive participation remains a continual pursuit. Neglecting to involve essential stakeholders can lead to superficial project outcomes at best and actively harm marginalized communities at worst. Julius Lindsay addresses this ongoing challenge, noting that even with concerted efforts, some stakeholders may only be recognized post-project completion. However, he emphasizes the necessity of persistently striving to include all relevant voices, which can be integrated into the feedback cycle of the project and/or including said participants in parallel efforts or adjacent projects.

This challenge is further magnified in diverse settings. Prateeksha Singh highlights, as an example, the importance of integrating childcare services to accommodate participants facing childcare constraints in collaborative community projects. This underscores the significance of acknowledging and rectifying the absence of essential stakeholders during collaborative phases, as their unique perspectives can significantly and productively shape project outcomes. When designing for a space, designers should ask themselves not only the question of “Who should (obviously) be at the table?”, but also, “Who uses the space?”, “Whose inputs have not been heard yet?”, and “Who would find it challenging to contribute to this project, why, and what can we do about this?”.

#### *Empathetic Engagement: Tailoring Design to Individual Perspectives*

Designers should tailor their approach to each individual they engage with, recognizing that everyone possesses unique perspectives and interests within their environment. Julius Lindsay emphasizes the importance of initiating conversations based on what individuals prioritize and take interest in. For instance, he acknowledges that for a mother, discussing climate change may not resonate; therefore, starting with relatable topics like their home or community gardens can yield valuable insights and knowledge relevant to the discussion.

Shermon Cruz adds to this by highlighting how individuals are often more interested in addressing their fears, whether they pertain to the present or the future. Prateeksha’s observations further support this point, noting that discussing the future can sometimes be traumatic for individuals. Designing for the future necessitates delving into individuals’ dreams and present concerns, reflecting on their identities and understanding the reasons behind their perspectives, often requiring an exploration of their past experiences.

This necessitates interacting with individuals using a language or communication medium in which they feel most at ease expressing themselves. Pupul underscores this by advocating for simplified and localized language that effectively contextualizes individuals’ experiences, identities, interests, and

aspirations, thereby dismantling the power of language as a colonial relic. Juan reinforces this notion by highlighting how language materializes one's conscious thoughts. Consequently, depending on how language or other communication methods, such as visual representation, are employed, individuals can articulate even their subconscious thoughts and insights.

When meeting individuals where they are, designers must be prepared to engage with not only their positive interests but also the negative ones that capture their attention. Having the capacity for empathy and compassion is just as, if not more, crucial than possessing technical design knowledge.

### *Identity Exploration: Unveiling Cultural Narratives in Design*

The preceding discussion naturally transitions into the exploration and comprehension of one's identity and motivations. Juan emphasizes the significance of exploring the complexity of personal identity and prompting individuals to question "Who am I?". While some may perceive individual identity as insignificant on a larger scale, Juan contends that culture is inherently intertwined with human identity, even more than what is confined in museum exhibitions.

Pupul echoes this sentiment by advocating for and utilizing storytelling as a primary tool for understanding people. According to her, envisioning desirable futures through storytelling can wield significant political power, as it allows individuals to articulate their interests and aspirations. Remarkably, narratives encompass more than just individual characters, which means that individuals articulate their dreams while simultaneously weaving them into the collective aspirations of their community. As a result, the individual's aspirations reflect those of the collective, and conversely, the collective's ambitions mirror those of the individual.

### **Systems Perspective**

#### *Decentering Dominant Narratives: A Retrospective Exploration of Our Roots*

In essence, decolonization encompasses the identification and dismantling of colonial remnants within the system. For Pupul, it involves decentering the dominant Anglo-Eurocentric view of the future, which currently upholds the system. She contends that contemporary institutions are deeply entrenched in colonial ideologies, and she believes that this should be challenged by spotlighting the dominant ways of knowing, being, and doing and how they continue to marginalize the marginalized or historically excluded. She advocates for creating space for marginalized voices and alternative ways of relating to the planet, which requires scrutinizing the components of our systems that were crafted to serve the interests of the dominant group.

#### *Collaborative Problem-Solving: Shaping Our Collective Future*

This leads to the understanding that dismantling the colonial mindset involves fostering collaborative approaches to problem-solving as opposed to expert-led design. Juan emphasizes the importance of collaboration over authoritative dictation in addressing community issues, a sentiment echoed by Julius. Both emphasize the fallacy of the expert-centric approach, acknowledging that no single individual, even experts, possesses all the answers. This paradigm shift from expert-led initiatives to collaborative endeavors is essential for genuine decolonization efforts.

*Recognizing Non-Human Actors: Prioritizing the Planet Once More*

Furthermore, decolonization necessitates reevaluating the centrality of human actors in our projects. Juan explores the role of non-human entities, arguing that focusing solely on human interests can have detrimental effects on the broader ecosystem. He highlights the significance of acknowledging the interconnectedness of humans and natural elements, challenging the modern tendency to overlook or diminish the importance of non-human actors. Subject matter experts were pleasantly surprised by participants who perceive bodies of water as allies, illustrating how meaningful connections to the environment shape individuals' perceptions of land elements as indispensable entities in their lives.

*Challenging Arbitrary Constructs: Harmonizing Systems with the Natural Environment*

Finally, a strong colonial element in the system involves arbitrary and biased constructs. Julius named a few such as geographical boundaries and standardized timekeeping methods. He reframes these seemingly arbitrary elements as deliberate tools of colonial domination and exclusion, highlighting their detrimental impact on marginalized communities. This critique highlights the dissonance between our natural environment and the current system, with negative implications for both human and non-human actors.

## **Bioregionalism: Literature Review**

The literature gathered on Bioregionalism encompasses two very important themes: our emotional connection to the environment and the land we live in, and the actions we take to interact with it.

### **Personal Connection to the Land**

Emotionally, it entails a deep respect for our surroundings and all living beings residing in it. However, our current societal structure often impedes this connection. Many dwellers, especially in urban spaces, are estranged from the land, lacking knowledge of its history, significance, or other people's perception of it. How we view the land is often shaped by our immediate experiences and the degree to which our lifestyles, cultures, systems, and livelihoods are intertwined with the environment. Those who are closely tied to the land, whose lives are intimately impacted by its well-being, naturally develop a stronger attachment.

Conversely, individuals who merely occupy the land without being affected by its condition tend to lack such a connection. Bioregionalism asserts that it is vital to recognize that the land and its inhabitants are interdependent because we sustain the land just as it sustains us. Indigenous communities do not view humankind as intrinsically parasitic to the land, reflected by traditional practices of indigenous societies that nurture many living entities, exerting similar roles of bees, wolves, and sea coral. Indigenous communities have long understood this dynamic and offer valuable lessons on how to harmonize with the environment. Mapping these communities and understanding their cultural connections to the land can empower us to forge meaningful bonds with our own surroundings.

### **Engagement with the Land**

In terms of engagement, our actions are guided by our emotional connection. Central to bioregionalism is the principle of honoring the natural boundaries or limitations of the land. While the environment offers abundant resources, it remains to be said that it also has finite capacities. Despite the plethora of resources, exceeding these natural limits through overexploitation is unsustainable. Respecting the needs of other inhabitants who rely on these resources fosters a symbiotic relationship among all caretakers and users of the land.

This is deeply reflected in traditional practices of keeping track of rain cycles and agricultural seasons, and of understanding the food web and the role of every living entity within it. Indigenous communities exemplify how to navigate these constraints while maintaining self-sufficiency. Embracing the concept of self-organization, with its inherent checks and balances and interconnectedness, is crucial for respecting environmental limits and ensuring its continued provision for us. Therefore, there is much

wisdom to be gained from their practices, and we should heed their insights as we strive for a more sustainable coexistence with our environment.

## **Key Principles for Spatial Visioning Practice**

### **Culturally Informed**

At the outset of a project, it is crucial to incorporate a historical analysis component into the project design, focusing on understanding the values, narratives, and collective visions of the community. Within this principle, there is a need to foster understanding and respect for the cultural representations within the community as essential aspects of identity and heritage. Humility is important when embracing and acknowledging different ways of thinking, being, and doing. Pose questions of identity in the visioning process to understand how cultural values, traditions, and histories shape future visions and aspirations.

This understanding can be integrated into the incorporation of local mythology, urban legends, and cultural artifacts into the visioning process, supporting the facilitation of discussions and activities that encourage participants to reflect on their shared history, identity, and cultural heritage as foundational elements for future visioning, as well as when synthesizing and co-creating strategies for the community.

Being culturally informed involves the knowledge and understanding of the potential trauma that discussing futures may evoke, particularly for marginalized communities. In this regard, facilitators are highly encouraged to prioritize psychological safety, emotional support, and respectful engagement throughout the process.

### **Decentering Dominant Narratives**

This principle requires a thorough examination of the remnants of colonial ways of knowing, being, and doing within the context of the community, which are often prevalent and deeply embedded in worldviews and narratives, both within the community itself and among facilitators and partner organizations. This necessitates broadening the understanding of colonization beyond Western contexts to encompass diverse forms of colonialism and land appropriation worldwide. At its core, colonization involves the displacement and marginalization of communities through forcibly taking their spaces and resources. It requires identifying and challenging dominant narratives and ideologies that perpetuate colonial visions of progress, development, and success.

Examine how power dynamics, historical injustices, and structural inequalities influence decision-making processes and shape future visions. Scrutinize the components of our systems crafted to serve the interests of the dominant group. This process requires recognizing the positionality of facilitators and partner organizations and openly discussing biases. It requires shifting from expert-led

initiatives to collaborative and community processes, acknowledging the roles and functions of facilitators and partners within the process and the larger system.

### **Mandatory Inclusion of All Actors**

At its core, both spatial justice and decolonization emphasize the need to disrupt the perpetuation of colonial practices that promote the exclusion and separation of specific actors. Instead, they advocate for a community-centered approach that prioritizes the inclusion of marginalized voices, perspectives, and lived experiences. This involves breaking down the barriers between humans and nature, advocating for the inclusion of non-human actors and placing them on equal footing with human actors. This foundational principle should guide the design of workshops, activities, and interactions within the community.

Another implication of this principle is the importance of creating a safe, welcoming, and participatory environment for historically marginalized communities to actively engage in the visioning process. This is supported by the aforementioned principle of understanding the cultural context within the community where the project is located. Such considerations can be reflected in the preparation of additional facilities and infrastructure that cater to the needs of specific stakeholders, such as providing a childcare facility for mothers with child-rearing responsibilities.

### **Non-Anthropocentric Approach**

The mandatory inclusion of all actors requires decentering the centrality of human actors and exploring the needs and roles of non-human entities. The tenets of decolonization emphasize mending the relationship between humans and nature and understanding how humans relate to their surroundings. These principles require humility from practitioners to learn from and about non-human actors and nature, stepping away from the Western-colonial mindset that promotes separation between humans and nature. In this regard, the inclusion of all actors within the community must encompass non-human actors, and when implementing spatial justice, there must be equal distribution of resources needed by both humans and nature.

This consideration can be applied to language use as well. For example, when using English as the main lingua franca, it's important to recognize that English itself is deeply rooted in epistemologies that promote human dominance over nature and position humans as the focal point.

### **Empowering Stakeholders**

This principle emphasizes encouraging storytelling from all stakeholders by creating opportunities to share personal narratives, perspectives, and experiences that inform their views on the past, present, and desired futures. This involves creating both physical and psychological safe spaces that are



familiar and accessible to the community, taking into account cultural norms, preferences, and comfort levels.

Often, there are visible or implied hierarchies within the social dynamics of a community. In this context, it is imperative to be well-informed about such structures and find pathways to create a space where hierarchical structures are flattened, allowing all participants to interact freely and equally.

The principle of foresight as a catalyst for future visioning itself can act a way to enable participants to navigate different temporal dimensions, providing a safe space for them to delve into more sensitive experiences. It offers them a platform to articulate their thoughts and narratives within an environment that is both secure and conducive.

Within this principle, community participants are encouraged to take the lead in communal visioning and shaping their vision of the future. Facilitators and partners take on the role of mediating open communication, actively listening, and ensuring an inclusive and safe process.

### **Forward Thinking**

The principle of forward thinking is a fundamental aspect that resonates with the principles of bioregionalism, which emphasize staying within planetary boundaries and acknowledging existing structures perpetuating unsustainable practices. By actively envisioning a future grounded in sustainable values, participants can feel assured and empowered in their capacity to shape a future that benefits all, particularly historically marginalized groups.

Forward thinking enables participants to ensure their inclusion and consideration in the future they are helping to create, prioritizing their local expertise and understanding of the natural environment. This approach safeguards against colonization or imposition by external agencies claiming authority over future outcomes.

## The Cycle

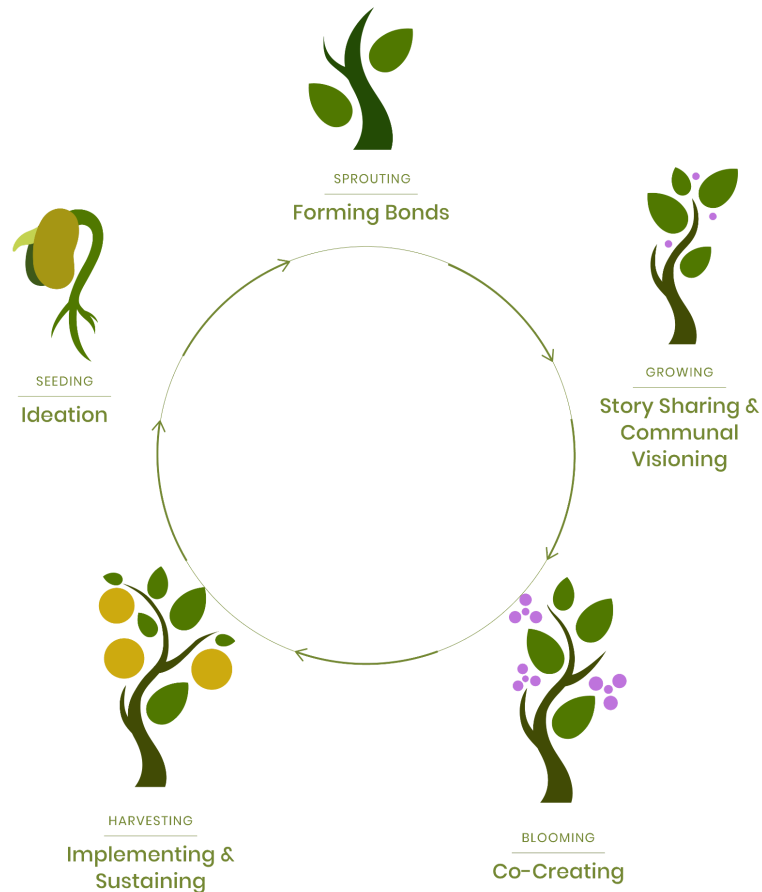


Figure 2 Process Cycle

The workshop's guidance framework combines an iterative approach with a five-stage life cycle, drawing parallels between the growth of a tree and the stages of a plant's life cycle. Just as a plant requires fundamental elements like soil, sunlight, and water for its flourishing, so does a community engagement workshop that aims to cultivate a dynamic, interconnected, and living bond among its participants, facilitators, and partners. This framework embodies the essence of symbiosis, emphasizing the interdependence and mutual nourishment necessary for sustainable growth and continuity, akin to propagation processes. Each category is metaphorically depicted by an accumulation of leaves, signifying their diverse roles and functions. The colors of the leaves change from bright to darker shades, symbolizing the evolution and integration of functions.

- The life cycle begins with the sprouting stage, signifying the initiation of pre-workshop activities. Similar to a tree's growth, this stage requires time for trust-building and community immersion.

- The growing stage represents engagement through workshops for communal visioning and storytelling, leading to the creation of future pathways.
- Moving to the blooming stage, the envisioned strategies take shape into tangible plans or reports. Feedback among actors is crucial at this point to ensure alignment with community needs and effective implementation.
- The harvest stage marks the implementation phase, focusing on sustainability and viability, similar to distributing fruits to different areas.
- Finally, the seeding stage symbolizes new inspirations and initiatives elsewhere, perpetuating the co-creating process. This cyclical nature encourages continual growth and evolution, fostering a harmonious ecosystem of sustainable coexistence among all inhabitants.

There are three actor categories in this framework, as follows:

- **Community:** This includes human and non-human actors within a defined spatial boundary where visioning occurs. They possess knowledge of their space, culture, traditions, and aspirations for the future.
- **Facilitators:** These stakeholders have expertise in conducting participatory design processes, synthesizing information, and creating a safe environment for visioning. They identify limiting structures and contribute to strategy formulation.
- **Partners:** Partners encompass a diverse range of stakeholders, including funders from both private and public sectors, as well as organizations that have previously engaged with the community or express interest in similar projects elsewhere. Their level of engagement varies depending on the nature of their funding and their commitment to the project's long-term sustainability.

It is important to note that within this framework, we view funders as more than just financial contributors; they are strategic partners involved in the project's conception and development. While they may not play active roles during the workshop process, their commitment to grasping the complexities of trust-building and adjusting to evolving needs throughout the discovery phase will prove crucial in advocating for the project's replication where suitable or necessary elsewhere. This level of engagement is crucial for ensuring the project's success and long-term impact. Different funding bodies may have varying criteria for allocating funds. Some may require a detailed proposal from the project initiator, which places a greater responsibility on the initiator to set up and manage the funding process effectively. This dynamic underscores the collaborative effort required between funders, project initiators, and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable outcomes and implementation.

## SPROUTING: FORMING BONDS

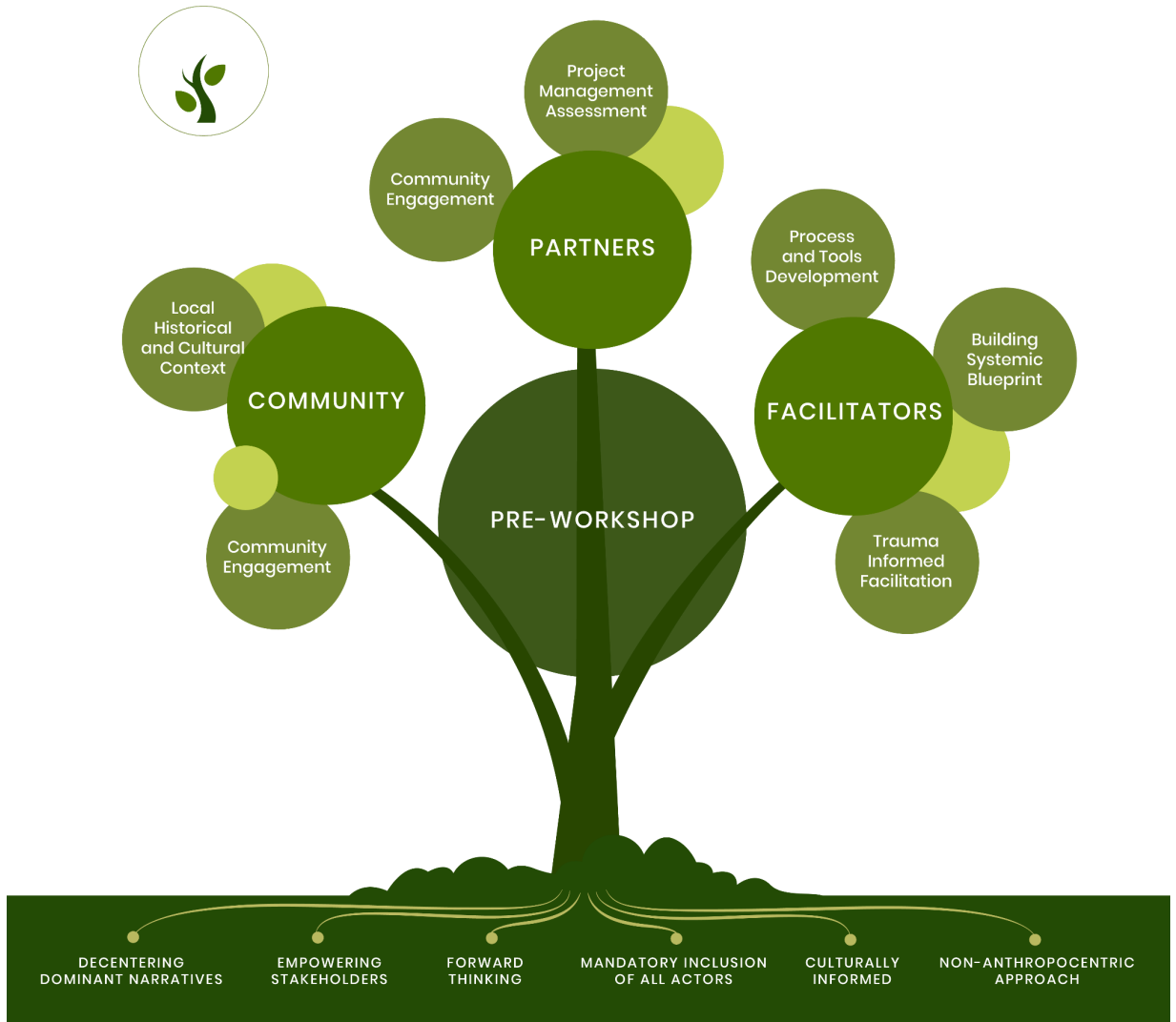


Figure 3 Sprouting: Forming Bonds

### Purpose

The pre-workshop stage aims to establish the groundwork for a decolonized approach, ensuring that the right individuals participate and that subsequent community engagement yields a thorough grasp of their current needs, historical obstacles, and envisioned future. During this stage, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the tools, physical environment, participants, and language (among other things) foster trust between attendees and facilitators. This approach guarantees a proper understanding of their perspectives, cultural practices, and ways of knowing, being, and doing, while avoiding the dismissal of their traumatic experiences or misinterpretation of their thoughts. It entails collaborating with partners and stakeholders to align project design, emphasizing clarity on objectives

and motivations, and discerning between systemic and individual biases to advance equity and justice. The pre-workshop phase aims to challenge power dynamics and prioritize marginalized voices in the visioning process by shifting away from the dominant perspective rooted in colonialism.

### **Approaches that should be considered**

- Collaborate with local partners for project planning, as they may have ongoing projects aligned with the intended project's goals and possess prior understanding of the community. They are likely familiar with many participants and have already earned their trust.
- Prioritize physical presence within the community space to diminish reliance on digital communication methods, which can perpetuate colonial, impersonal, and inaccessible practices.
- Hold workshops in safe, inclusive spaces that reflect cultural norms and preferences. Conducting workshops in unfamiliar environments is likely to discomfort participants and may even lead to feelings of intimidation and hesitancy to open up.
- Prioritize frugal and low-stakes environments to reduce barriers to participation and create a more grounded and less intimidating atmosphere.
- Train or inform facilitators in trauma-informed practices, effective communication, and trust-building. Recognize that discussing participants' envisioned futures may evoke deep trauma, especially when intertwined with historical injustices and grief. Incorporate this understanding into workshop design.
- Personalize tools and methodologies to participants' backgrounds and needs. Shape project goals and methodologies through inclusive engagement sessions. Incorporate historical analysis into project design. The more localized and relatable the workshop design, the more likely it is to resonate with participants and facilitate tangible, grounded outcomes.
- Analyze power dynamics through actor's network mapping within the community. Anticipate and understand power dynamics that may influence participants' engagement and insights. Recognize that participants' opinions are influenced by various human and non-human actors, not in isolation.
- Implement mechanisms for reflective practices to encourage introspection among participants and identify missing voices. Acknowledge that workshop designs may not always be perfect, and provide space for participants to freely process and suggest improvements during the workshop.

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## STAKEHOLDERS

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Representatives from:

- Community**
- Indigenous & BIPOC**
- Women and Mothers**
- 2SLGBTQA+**
- Children and Youth**
- People with Disability**

In public engagement, experts alone may overlook crucial perspectives. Including representatives from marginalized groups is vital to prevent injustice. In particular, voices from the indigenous community and individuals with disabilities highlight sustainability and accessibility, ensuring long-term protection and inclusivity.



Facilitators with expertise in:

- Trauma-Informed**
- Local**
- Foresight**
- Environment/Bioregion**
- Spatial Design**

Facilitators are tasked with creating a supportive environment across physical, social, and mental dimensions, and establishing the workshop framework. Leveraging their expertise, they not only design tools and spaces to encourage comfortable participant engagement but also ensure safety through the integration of trauma-informed experts and local facilitators who respect participant narratives. If the workshop aims to impact physical spaces, an environmental representative is essential as they also advocate for non-human actors.



Representatives from:  
**Commissioning Body**  
**Relevant Organizations**  
**Involved Local Organizations**

Workshop success relies on more than just designers and facilitators; partner organizations offer essential support, including financial and social assistance. Adequate preparation ensures respectful engagement, requiring sufficient resources. Success often prompts replication considerations. Having representatives from interested organizations observe aids in understanding implementation and identifying key stakeholders for future endeavors.

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Figure 4 Sprouting Stakeholders

## GROWING: STORY SHARING & COMMUNAL VISIONING

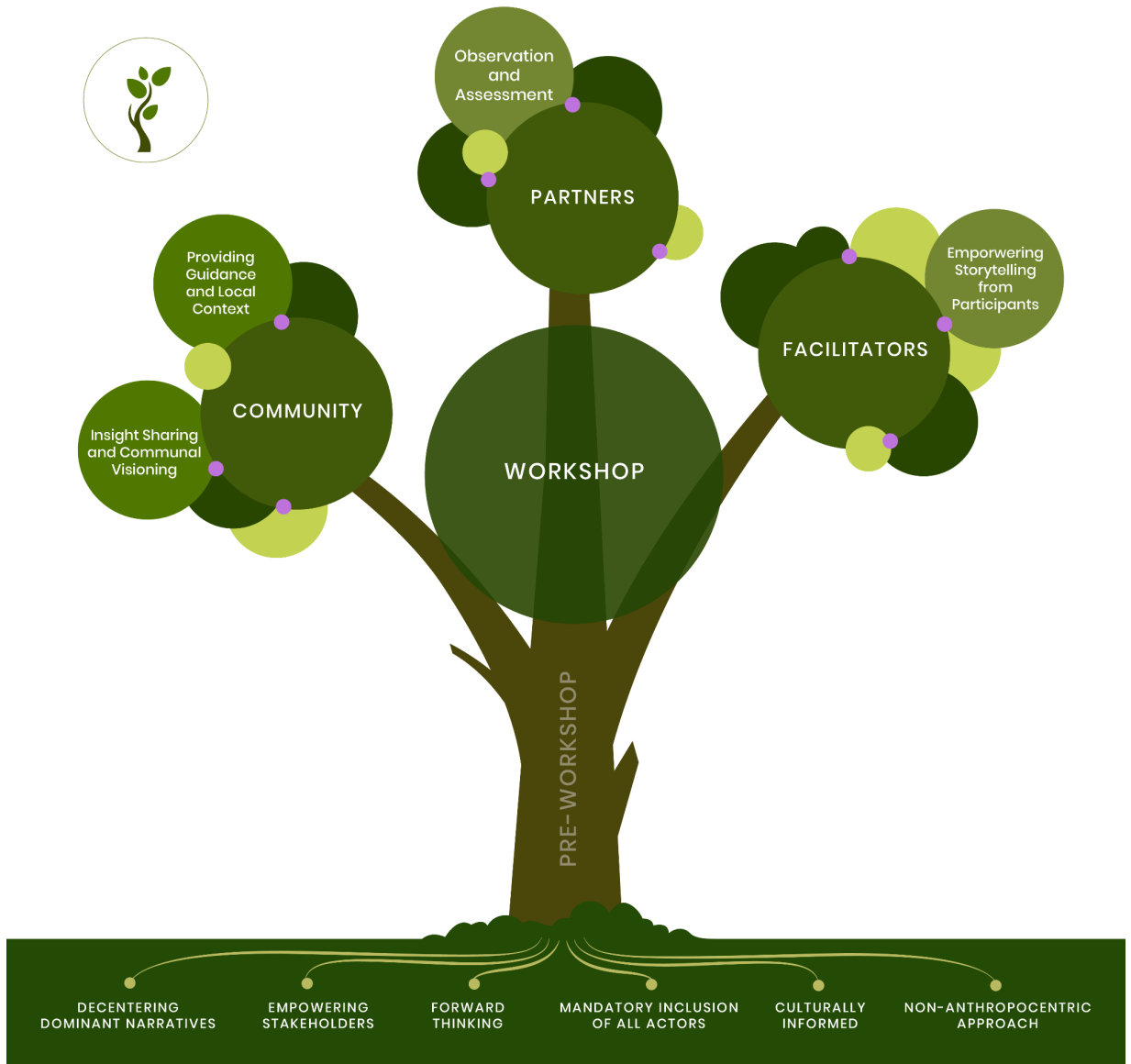


Figure 5 Growing: Story Sharing & Communal Visioning

### Purpose

The workshop's main goal is to facilitate structured community engagement, providing a platform to amplify diverse voices, especially those frequently marginalized, from a decolonial perspective. It recognizes that envisioning the future should be a communal activity, acknowledging the challenges posed by systemic barriers rooted in colonial legacies. While understanding that futuring may not always be optimistic for historically marginalized groups, it underscores the importance of involving them in the process to genuinely represent their viewpoints and empower them to shape their own future narratives.



Through prioritizing community-centric visioning and embracing diverse epistemologies, the workshop aims to establish an empowering space where historically marginalized individuals can leverage their lived experiences, aspirations, and needs to steer future trajectories. Participants engage in critical inquiry and reflection to identify and confront systemic biases, fostering equitable spaces for all involved.

Moreover, the workshop acknowledges the restricted range of futures accessible to marginalized communities, attributing this to engineered constraints within the prevailing system. It encourages participants to reclaim agency by exploring alternative and localized approaches to futuring, rather than adhering to predetermined and imposed narratives. Emphasizing humanized facilitation, cultural sensitivity, and flexible communication, the workshop fosters effective dialogue and understanding within the local context

### **Approaches that should be considered**

- Facilitate opportunities for storytelling and verbal expression within the workshop. Recognize the efficacy of certain tools in eliciting participants' unfiltered thoughts on grief and the future, often through creative and culturally relevant forms of expression. Integrate local mythology and cultural artifacts to enhance relatability and depth of meaning.
- Cultivate awareness of power dynamics and their impact on the facilitation process. Analyze how historical injustices and structural inequalities influence decision-making and shape future visions, fostering sensitivity to these dynamics.
- Utilize prototyping as a means of communication and decision-making. Creating tangible representations can ground participants in the practical manifestations of their ideas, offering insights into potential future artifacts.
- Empower participants to co-create solutions that address community needs and aspirations. Encourage decision-making informed by communal determination and shared visions, thereby enhancing agency in shaping the future.
- Transition from an expert-led approach to a collaborative, participatory process involving both designers and participants. This shift moves away from a colonial mindset that prioritizes expert knowledge and imposes external solutions, fostering a more inclusive and respectful approach to community empowerment.

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## STAKEHOLDERS

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Participants from:  
**Community Members**  
**Community Representatives**

Community representatives will step aside from direct involvement in the workshop but will actively advocate for the participation of individuals they deem essential for a rich and insightful session.



Facilitators with expertise in:  
**Trauma-Informed**  
**Local**  
**Foresight**  
**Environment/Bioregion**  
**Spatial Design**

During the workshop, local facilitators will lead, with additional support from foresight practitioners, trauma-informed facilitators, and space designers. These local facilitators, already equipped with training in futures thinking and capable at navigating discussions on trauma, will guide conversations and encourage participants to openly share their visions for the future within the framework established by the facilitators.



Observers from:  
**Commissioning Body**  
**Relevant Organizations**  
**Involved Local Organizations**

They won't actively participate but will offer passive support. Additionally, relevant organizations may quietly observe, ensuring not to overwhelm participants with too many facilitators, which could compromise the sense of safety and comfort within the space.

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Figure 6 Growing Stakeholders

## BLOOMING: CO-CREATING

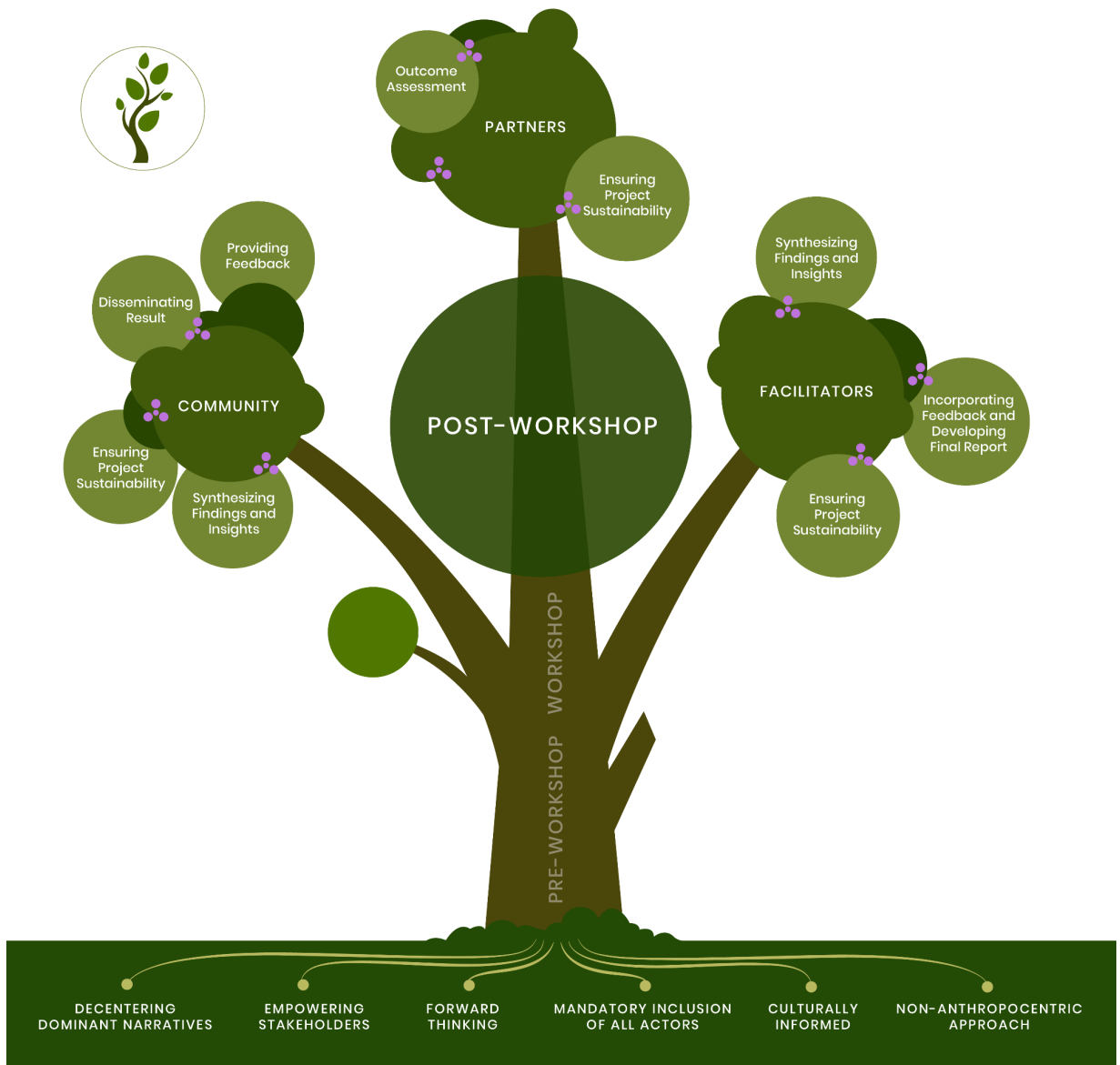


Figure 7 Blooming: Co-Creating

### Purpose

The post-workshop stage serves a crucial purpose in advancing the project's objectives with a focus on implementing a comprehensive strategy grounded in decolonizing principles. This stage also prioritizes the cultivation of strong relationships with the project by engaging local facilitators, ensuring a deep understanding of community dynamics, and guaranteeing continuity in project initiatives. Furthermore, it emphasizes the significance of critical reflection and learning to pinpoint areas of improvement and potential biases. By fostering an environment conducive to critical examination and maintaining a community-centric approach, the purpose of this stage is to uphold inclusivity and equitable participation throughout the project lifecycle.

### **Approaches that should be considered**

In the post-workshop stage, various functions are carried out to facilitate the realization of project goals. One such function involves the development of tools and resources designed to empower participants and sustain project initiatives within their communities. These resources encompass training materials, guidelines, templates, and capacity-building sessions tailored to enhance leadership skills and promote sustainability. Additionally, robust feedback loops are established to solicit insights from stakeholders, participants, and new community members, thereby fostering transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Furthermore, maintaining a community-centric approach is paramount throughout this stage, prioritizing the perspectives and agency of community members in decision-making processes and project development.

1. Develop Tools and Resources to empower participants and sustain project initiatives within communities:
  - Training materials
  - Guidelines
  - Templates
  - Capacity-building sessions
2. Establish Feedback Loops to gather insights from stakeholders, participants, and new community members:
  - Promote transparency and accountability
  - Encourage continuous improvement
3. Maintain a Community-Centric Approach:
  - Prioritize the perspectives and agency of community members in decision-making processes and project development.

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## STAKEHOLDERS

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Feedback from:  
**Community Members**  
**Community Representatives**

The primary responsibility of community representatives will be to provide feedback on whether the report accurately captures the discussions and activities of the workshop. Subsequently, during the design and implementation of actions based on workshop insights, their presence ensures that the community's perspectives are appropriately integrated.



Facilitators with expertise in:  
**Trauma-Informed**  
**Local**  
**Foresight**  
**Environment/Bioregion**  
**Spatial Design**

After the workshop, facilitators are tasked with analyzing and refining the themes, insights, and findings gleaned from the session. This process is iterative, as community feedback on whether the report accurately reflects their input and is sufficient to guide future actions must be incorporated. Additionally, community representatives are likely to be involved in replicating the workshop or implementing actions based on workshop insights, ensuring their ongoing engagement in the process.



Representatives from:  
**Commissioning Body**  
**Relevant Organizations**  
**Involved Local Organizations**

Their main responsibility lies in ensuring the replication and continuity of the work, ensuring it doesn't conclude after the initial phase, particularly if it proves successful and impactful. They work to continually generate resources to fund the ongoing continuity and replication of the project as a whole.

Figure 8 Blooming Stakeholders

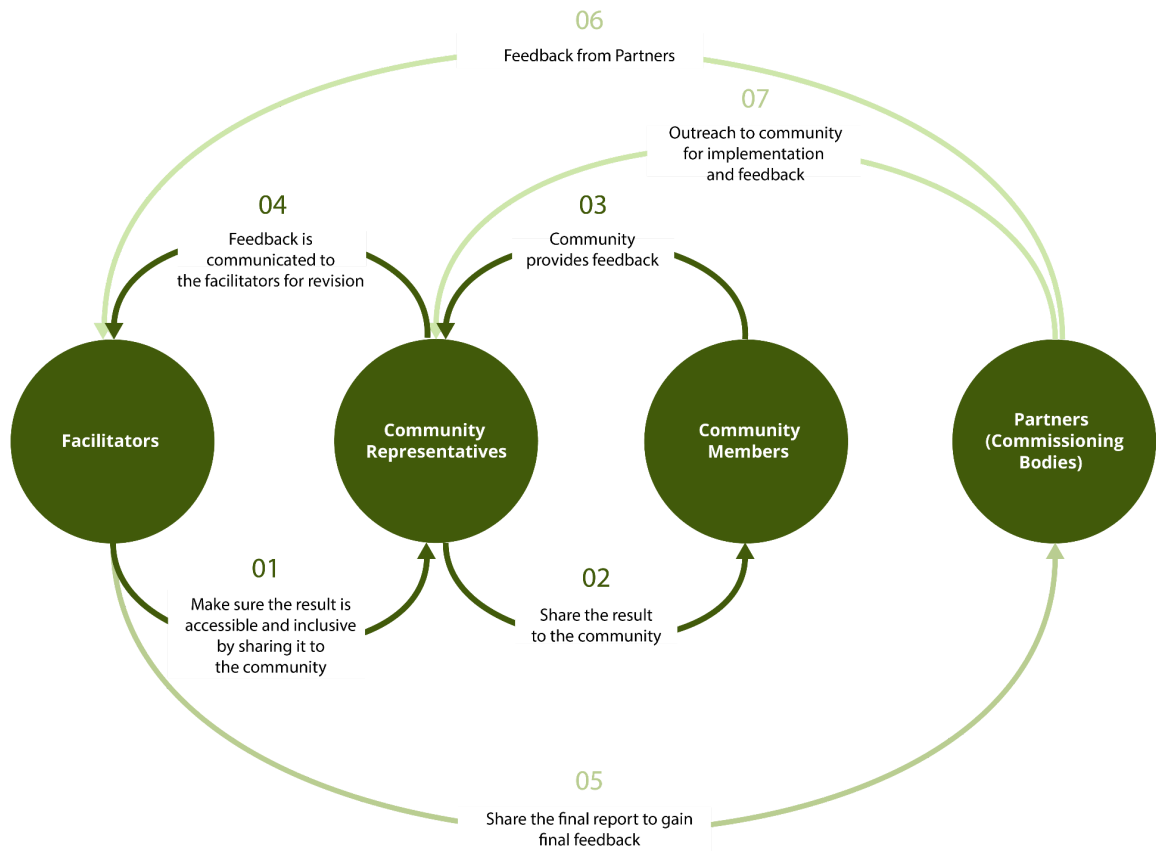


Figure 9 Feedback Loop between Actors

At this stage of the workshop, the feedback cycle, the aim is to ensure that the process remains open, inclusive, and responsive to the voices of the community and partners. Three main objectives are highlighted:

- Making the results accessible and inclusive by sharing them with the community.
- Actively seeking and integrating community feedback to refine the workshop approach.
- Welcoming input from the partners and integrating their perspectives into the process.

This stage embodies the commitment to infuse decolonization principles into the workshop by centering the power with the participants to shape how their insights are interpreted and utilized. Instead of simply presenting participants with a report that may not fully capture their contributions or feelings, facilitators should seek to engage in a dialogue that ensures authenticity, identifies areas for improvement, and empowers the community to influence future actions based on their experiences and perspectives.

## HARVESTING: IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

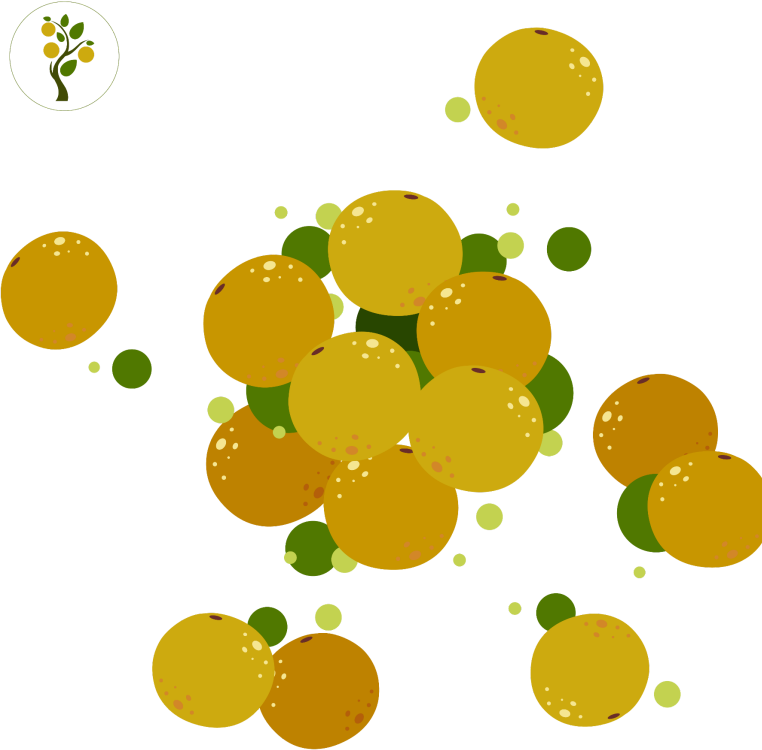


Figure 10 Harvesting: Implementing and Sustaining

### **Purpose**

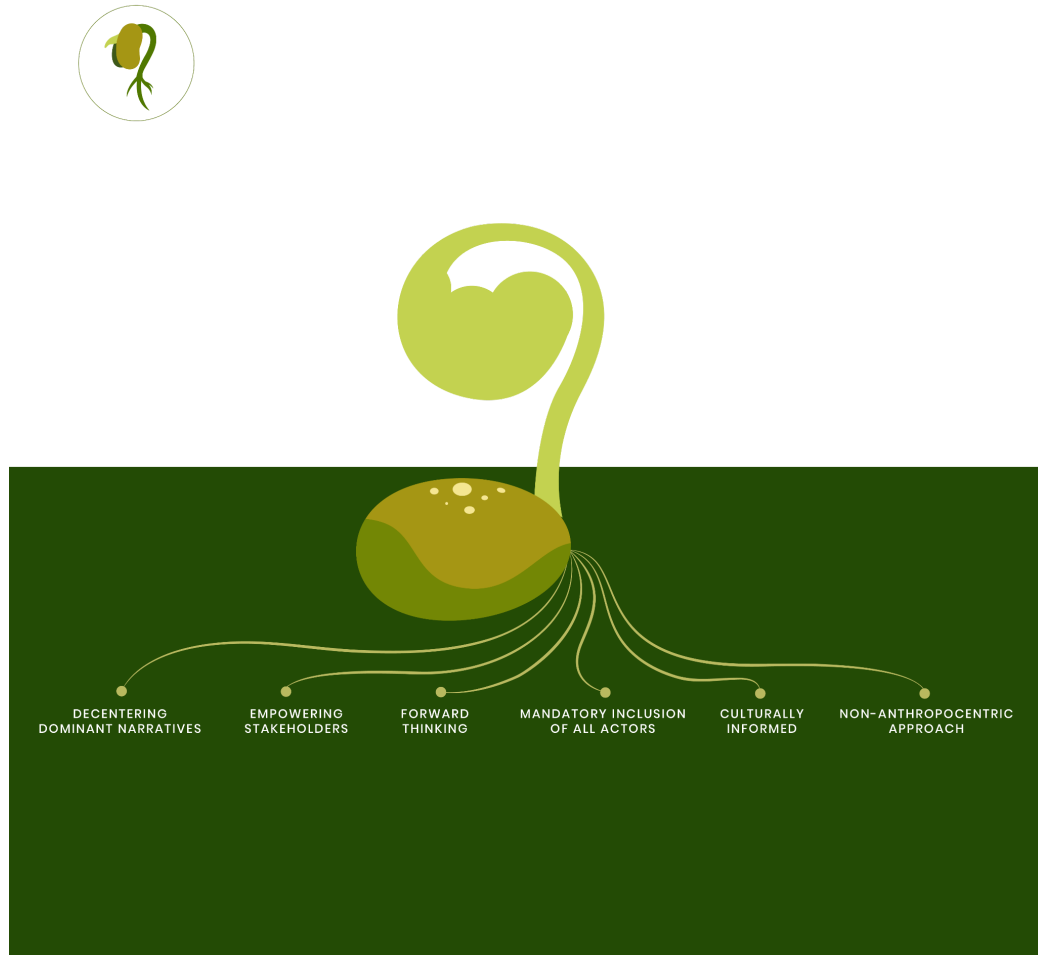
This stage serves the purpose of ensuring that the strategy and outcomes created in the previous stages yield tangible results and move forward towards achieving their goals, which in turn inspires similar efforts in other communities and sectors is about sharing the success and lessons learned from the project and encouraging the spread of spatial justice and decolonization practices.

### **Approaches that should be considered**

- Implementing the strategy involves putting the planned actions into practice. This includes carrying out specific tasks, initiatives, and interventions as outlined in the project's strategy.
- Assessing for implementation effectiveness by monitoring progress, identifying areas of success or challenges, and making adjustments as needed to ensure optimal outcomes.
- Disseminating project processes by sharing information and knowledge gained throughout the project. This could involve sharing best practices, lessons learned, and success stories with stakeholders, partners, and the wider community to promote transparency, accountability, and learning.

## SEEDING: IDEATION

Figure 11 Seeding: Ideation



### Purpose

The purpose of the seeding cycle is to cultivate new ideas and initiatives that can initiate the development of a community-led project integrating spatial justice and decolonization principles. This continuous seeding process aims to foster the growth of a thriving "forest" of projects, ultimately shaping an ideal future. This includes shifting away from anthropocentric colonial mindsets and implementing resilience strategies that empower the community to take ownership and work towards their goals.

### Approaches that should be considered:

- Foster the generation of ideas for parallel projects within community spaces to cultivate grassroots ideation.
- Collect and safeguard insights gained from best practices observed in benchmark community-led projects.



- Explore connections with other communities that may share similarities or have been influenced by the engaged community, leveraging the more in-depth understanding gained from the workshop.
- Identify potential partner organizations and individuals, and explore funding opportunities to support project continuity and replication.

# Conclusion

## Concluding Remarks

The study of systems reveals that systems operate precisely as intended. Surprisingly, the system isn't broken—it simply wasn't designed to accommodate most of us. Injustices against certain groups and the environment can often be traced back to colonial legacies, haunting our present societal structures and culture, and giving rise to wicked problems of oppression and environmental degradation.

Efforts to blend bioregionalism and future visioning into spatial design offer hope for crafting sustainable and resilient spaces for both living and nonliving actors, as these concepts prioritize harmony with nature and community inclusion. However, this fusion must be guided by decolonization to ensure spatial justice.

Without decolonization, our vision of the future risks perpetuating power imbalances, imposing future trends dictated by dominant actors to shape the future that only benefits the few. A truly bright future cannot be monopolized by the powerful; it must be shared with historically marginalized communities who've been denied agency in shaping their own paths. Pursuing bioregionalism without decolonization risks the appropriation of indigenous practices without acknowledging the historical injustices that led to their marginalization. It will truly be hypocritical to pride ourselves on applying ecological practices that led to the ruin of many communities (imposed by external power), rather than empowering them to lead the way to aligning ourselves with nature once again.

Therefore, prioritizing the voices and needs of marginalized communities is crucial for attaining spatial justice. This research, informed by practitioners who engage with or advocate for these communities, underscores that only by centering them can we create environments that are both environmentally sustainable and socially and culturally equitable. By integrating the principles of bioregionalism, which have long guided sustainable practices within indigenous communities, fostering environmental stewardship and honoring its limits, alongside a forward-looking perspective that comprehensively assesses the systemic impacts of actions and seeks transformative change, we are crafting a robust design framework for community engagement. This approach ensures that we are not merely consolidating the efforts of practitioners already active in these domains, but also facilitating change within our system through a structured framework guided by sustainable, forward-thinking, and planet-centered practices and principles, focusing on one community and bioregion at a time as a stride towards establishing a fair and just system for all.

## Limitations

Despite the importance of bioregionalism in promoting sustainable land use practices and ecological stewardship, its practical application faces challenges due to limited visibility of self-identified bioregionalists and a lack of universal recognition of the concept. This scarcity complicates engagement with practitioners and researchers, hindering knowledge exchange and literature review efforts. Additionally, while terms like "ecoregion" or "biodistrict" offer alternatives, their interchangeability contributes to ambiguity and poses challenges in defining and understanding bioregionalism's scope.

Moreover, despite the conceptual foundation of bioregionalism being well-established due to its roots in indigenous practice, its translation into concrete planning and design frameworks remains underexplored, creating a gap between theory and practice. Engagement with subject matter experts is crucial, but given the theoretical nature of the subject in this research document, the lack of practical application done by the researchers should be addressed in future works. The framework, designed to be flexible and guiding rather than prescriptive, recognizes the focus on communities comprising vulnerable and historically marginalized individuals, necessitating further enrichment from community insights at every phase of the design. In addition, although additional decolonial methods may enhance the framework, constraints like limited time prioritize tested approaches by foresight practitioners.

Addressing these challenges requires further research to bridge the gap between theory and practice in bioregionalism, including efforts to identify practitioners, clarify terminology, and explore practical applications in diverse contexts. By addressing these gaps, researchers can advance sustainable land use practices and realize the potential of aligning bioregionalism, future visioning, and decolonization for fostering inclusive and equitable spaces.

*Part of the content writing in this research used artificial intelligence language model trained on a diverse range of data for summarization purposes and grammar check. While efforts have been made to ensure the quality and reliability of the content, there may be limitations in the expression of the language.*

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# Appendix

## Subject Matter Experts

### **Juan Giuseppe Montalván Lume**

Juan is a Researcher specializing in Systemic Design and Socionatural Networks, Pluriversal and Decolonial Design, Bio-astronautics, Space Urbanization, and Design Theory and Methodology. He currently holds the position of Head of the Space Design Division at the Research Center for Space Emerging Technologies (C-SET) and is a Professor and former Head of the Industrial Design Program at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP), ranked as the top university in Peru.

Juan is actively involved in various professional organizations, including being an International Advisory Council Member of the Design Research Society (DRS), a Member of the Systemic Design Association (SDA), a Member of the Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S), and the Representative of Peru at the Latin American Network of Public Policy and Design (Red PP&D). He is also the Founder of the LeNS Peru node of the International Learning Network on Sustainability and the Founder of the CADi LATAM Conference of Latin American Design.

He is dedicated to assisting companies, institutions, and organizations in addressing complex contemporary challenges and making strategic decisions related to the socio-economic, techno-political, and socio-natural impacts of their projects. His expertise lies in designing and developing products, services, socio-technical infrastructures, and complex socio-natural systems.

### **Julius Lindsay**

Julius has comprehensive experience in creating an overarching sustainability vision and strategy with clear operating principles. He has built and managed effective climate change teams, both formal and informal. He has provided leadership in sustainable, environmental, and low-carbon initiatives with a focus on areas such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, energy and water management, and conservation. Throughout his career he has:

1. Led the creation of corporate-wide environmental, climate change, and sustainability frameworks and plans including developing triple bottom line (Environmental, Social, and Economic) indicators;
2. Led the creation and acted as a manager for corporate sustainability and climate change action plans;
3. Led assessments of climate change risks and opportunities, creating adaptation and resilience strategies, including advising on incorporating climate change into asset management;
4. Developed carbon reduction strategies including establishing targets and supporting business cases, and used carbon / GHG frameworks and standards (ISO 14064, WRI GHG Protocol, etc.) to develop and estimate carbon footprints and baseline years; and

5. Guided change management, a core principal in my career, using tools such as the Prosci ADKAR® Model.

Julius's experience has allowed him to be a subject matter expert, therefore, he spends a large part of his time being a connector and translator between departments and leadership within organizations. He has worked in, and with stakeholders, companies, and partners in the communities he has worked in. Julius has spent a significant amount of his career working in cooperation with other groups, leading strategic corporate initiatives and establishing high level relationships internally and in his sector. As a result, he is a strategic leader and manager well connected throughout the Greater Toronto Area.

### **Prateeksha Singh**

In her consulting work with the UNDP, Prateeksha Singh supports teams globally as a strategic facilitator of different innovation-based methods. She draws on participatory design, systemic thinking and doing, portfolio design, foresight, experimentation, as well as public policy innovation work to do so. She is one of the lead Sensemaking workshop facilitators at UNDP and incredibly proud of the boundaries the innovation team is pushing in its work to support offices to reframe and rethink how they work to have more impact on the ground.

Before joining UNDP, Prateeksha was involved in community-based work primarily based in Canada. She passionately explored how applying a living system lens to an inclusive futures and creativity-based practice can provide additional tools and perspectives for working with complex yet adaptive challenges. Her work centered on social justice and equity projects, and she focused on engaging in ethical and inclusive foresight work with broader cross-sections of society, largely those who remain un(der)represented in these narratives.

Prateeksha's work addresses a range of temporality (from past to future). Participatory projects that have some embodied/experiential element are her preferred modes of engagement. She is also the recipient of the 2019 Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Practitioner global award recognizing her work on equitable, anti-colonial, and culturally sensitive futures work.

### **Pupul Bisht**

A multidisciplinary designer, and globally recognized thought leader advocating for the power of storytelling in shaping just, inclusive, and equitable futures. Pupul has experience working closely with policy-makers, non-profit organizations, and local communities around the world to challenge hegemonic ideas and re-imagine narratives of our collective futures.

As the Winner of the Next Generation Foresight Practitioners Award 2018, Pupul founded the Decolonizing Futures Initiative, which aims to engage marginalized communities in imagining their preferred futures. She also hosts panels on the Future of Storytelling at the NABShow, hosted annually

in Las Vegas by the National Association of Broadcasting, USA, discussing the latest innovations in the field of media & entertainment and their impact on the world.

Pupul has been invited as a keynote speaker at prestigious global platforms such as the 76th United Nations General Assembly, Bavarian Film Centre (Munich), ESPAS Conference (Brussels), Publicis Groupe (New York), SDNow Conference (Australia). She has also spoken at UNESCO Global Futures Literacy Design Forum (Paris), PRIMER Conference (NYC), and the Global Foresight Summit among many others.

### **Shermon Cruz**

Shermon Cruz is the Founder, Executive Director, and Chief Futurist of the Center for Engaged Foresight, a global futures innovation and strategic foresight hub. The Center for Engaged Foresight is an institutional member of the Association of Professional Futurists and the World Futures Studies Federation. He serves as the UNESCO Chair on Anticipatory Governance and Regenerative Cities at Northwestern University, Philippines, Chair of The Millennium Project Philippines Node (MP), and former Chair of the Association of Professional Futurists.

He is a Co-Founder of Make Our Future, the Asia Pacific Futures Network. He holds the positions of Co-Founder, Chief Futurist, and Vice-President at the Philippines Futures Thinking Society (PhilFutures). He is a member of the World Futures Studies Federation (WFSF) and a pioneer member of UNESCO's Global Anticipatory Thinking Network (Futures Literacy). He is also a co-founder of the Global Future Society at the Dubai Future Foundation.

Previously, Shermon headed the Philippine Foresight Education and Innovation Research (PhilForesight) at Northwestern University. He is an Adjunct Faculty at the Asian Institute of Management, Philippine Public Safety Academy, Philippine Public Safety College, Northwestern University, and taught at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Executive Education Program, University of the Philippines Diliman, and the Development Academy of the Philippines.