

# Designing System Interventions

In this three-part exercise teams will: **1)** develop a brief description of their vision of the long-term future in which the problem has been resolved; **2)** backcast from the vision to the present to create a transition pathway and articulate 3-5 'milestone' events or changes that would need to occur in order to move from the present to the desired futures; **3)** in the bottom half of the canvas, develop a concept for an "ecology" of interventions that address the wicked problem as it exists in the present. The interventions should be connected to each other and the long-term future vision to become a tangible "step" toward the first milestone on the pathway toward the desired future. At least one of the three interventions, should be an existing, one-off project that, if enhanced by Transition Design principles, could become part of a systems-intervention. At least two of the interventions should exist at different levels of scale.



## Developing Ecologies of Interventions in the Present

Prior to completing step 3 above, (but after completing the exercise of developing 3-5 milestones from the future vision to the present) begin to develop concepts for **three interconnected system interventions**. We refer to 'interventions' instead of 'solutions' to reinforce the understanding that no single, on-off solution will resolve a wicked problem or transition a complex system toward sustainable futures. Ecologies of interventions that are connected to each other and the long-term vision have the potential to destabilize 'stuck' infrastructure and established ways of thinking/acting at the Regime level and open up new opportunities at the Niche level that challenge the status quo. In this exercise develop 3 intervention concepts. At least one of these should build on an existing project or initiative that has the potential to be part of an ecology of Transition Design interventions that can act as a first step toward the future vision articulated on the far right, above (amplifying/scaffolding/refining existing projects and initiatives is a key Transition Design strategy). 1-2 of the 3 intervention concepts should be new/original. At least 2 (if not all 3) interventions should be situated at different levels of scale: you might choose to use the MLP levels (landscape/regime/niche) or you could also use the Domains of Everyday Life (household/neighborhood/city/region/planet). If you work with the Domains model, since the wicked problem has been defined at the level of the City, you will likely work at that level and perhaps the neighborhood or household, but it is also possible to conceive of an intervention at the regional/global level that has the potential to address problems at the level of a city. In the 3 circles below, visualize each concept and use the dotted lines beside it to add a description. Make sure to articulate how the interventions are connected to each other, the long-term vision and the nearest milestone. Refer to the key questions at the bottom of the canvas to help guide concept exploration and visual/verbal narratives.



### QUESTIONS THAT SHOULD INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ECOLOGY OF SYSTEMS INTERVENTIONS THAT ADDRESS THE WICKED PROBLEM AND CATALYZE SYSTEMS-LEVEL CHANGE

- At what **level of scale** will the intervention be situated?
- How does this project **connect and amplify** with the others?
- How does the intervention connect to both the **long-term vision** and the **near-term milestone(s)**?
- Does it represent changes in **material** (artifacts/processes/technology/policy etc) or **non-material factors** (attitudes/beliefs/values/cultural, social, disciplinary norms) in the wicked problem?
- Has the intervention been conceived with **Max-Neef's theory of needs** in mind? If so, what needs does it satisfy? Are they synergistic?
- Is the intervention **'synergistic'**; meaning does it solve for more than one issue connected to the problem at a time?
- What are the main **barriers** to its implementation/success?
- How long could/should the intervention last? What is its **lifespan**?