CYCLES OF CHANGE LINKED ACROSS SCALES

PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION

The purpose of this discussion is to reflect on how cycles of change over time may be relevant for understanding the dynamics of your system. Many systems go through different phases that can be characterized as: growth, maintenance, collapse, and reorganization. This pattern can be recognized at different organizational scales, where larger scales often provide "memory" after a collapse, whereas changes at smaller scales often propagate and generate "revolt". Discussing how these cycles of change are linked across scales may reveal new insights into system dynamics, and potential solutions to the dilemmas.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Drawing on the historical timeline constructed in work card 12, consider the four phases of the adaptive cycle and discuss how your system may have experienced the different phases of change through its history. Can you identify which phase of the adaptive cycle your system is currently in?
- If your system has been through periods of rapid change or collapse in the past, what led to the rapid change or collapse? Then, what types of capital (social, natural, physical infrastructure etc.) enabled its renewal? What, if any, innovative bottom-up ideas or practices enabled a different development trajectory after the collapse? What are promising sources of innovation today?

- Are there important influences from larger scale systems (e.g., policies, laws, cultural norms, climate patterns, markets, etc.) that effect how your system may respond to change? Do they constrain or enable change? Are they a source of innovation or do they limit innovation, experimentation and novelty?

- Are there promising bottom-up innovative approaches that you have identified that could be ‘scaled up‘ and spread, influencing scale above?