



Bioregional Financing Facilities

Reimagining Finance to Regenerate Our Planet

Case Study 3:

The Bioregional Learning Center in SouthDevon



BioFi Project



Capital Systems



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The Bioregional Learning Center in South Devon – Modeling Bioregional Hubs

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About Bioregional Learning Center South Devon

Bioregional Learning Center South Devon was founded in 2017 by three designers, ecologists and climate activists as a systemic response to the systemic impacts of climate change. The Center works creatively and collaboratively in and at the intersections of economy, ecology, learning, arts and culture and the gaps in between. While the bioregion it covers is South Devon, its projects operate at scales that range from the whole of the SouthWest, to Devon and down to the Dart catchment, or just a stretch of the river

Bringing a bioregion into being

The Center's aim is to create a resilient region that functions as a learning landscape by making collaboration possible and giving civil society a leading role alongside landowners, experts, NGOs, and policy-makers. Because it has received only a small amount of unrestricted core funding, the evolution of the Center has been mainly through funded projects in which it has honed its way of working. These projects represent the steps for bringing a bioregion into being, and are the core functions that any Bioregional Learning Center would need to perform.

1. Develop a story of place - This regenerative design process enabled the Center to understand the bioregion it serves, how it functions, and where its edges are. The character of a place is revealed by overlaying different lenses, all the way from deep geological time, through social and political history, to land use and human culture. The pattern that is revealed points to where the fuzzy boundaries of this island of coherence lie, and how it relates to its immediately surrounding places and the bigger region or nation. See: Story of Place for NW Plymouth.

2. Reveal the systems within the region - Human have always lived in webs of life-support systems – both ecosystems and human systems – that meet humanity's basic needs. Today these systems are typically managed by public utility companies and large-scale businesses, and regulated by local authorities and the state. By mapping for vitality in its bioregion, getting out on the land and meeting people, the Center organizing team developed an understanding of local systems and could determine how best to support and connect innovators. See: Learning Journey for Climate Resilience.

3. Intervene and demonstrate - Through leading or participating in projects in our bioregion Center members look for creative ways to intervene in systems such as the drinking water system. In a move towards common pool resource management¹²⁶ they make sure to bring in the voice of civil society, as well as experts, using data, design, the arts, and dialogue to bridge the gap between academia, policy makers, and people on the ground. The Center acts

as a trusted neutral player, with its learning center as a backbone organization. See: [Voices of the Dart](#).

4. Launch a multi-sector design process – The Center grasped the opportunity to start a big region-wide conversation in establishing the Devon Doughnut Collective. Over a year of fortnightly Zoom meetings, the collective put together an ecological and economic assessment of Devon, with twin-track indicators and pathways to action for both policy-makers and civil society. The Center hosted the project as an action learning endeavor, bringing key change-makers from all sectors into the same space to create an interactive Doughnut, available on a dedicated website. See: [The Devon Doughnut](#).

5. Widen reach and impact- The Center is currently embarking on the first steps to a climate adaptation strategy for the region, with funding from the regional government. In this first year, Center members plan to take elected councilors, government staff, community climate groups, and some members of the UK adaptation community of practice on a 5-day learning journey around the region, to widen the conversation, look at the risks and challenges, and visit the places

An emerging portfolio of regeneration projects

The portfolio of concepts can be thought of as a collection of systemic innovations that together can trigger a bioregional transition to local regenerative economies as well as thriving landscapes and communities, in line with the manifesto and overall BWL mission. The portfolio was developed through residential and local workshops – including at the evocative localities of Dromana House on the Blackwater River and the Coastguard Cultural Centre overlooking Tramore Bay. A major conference was held to consider innovative landscape and community financing using the portfolio and the support platform of the BWL and its BWL catalyst funds as a case study.

Currently, the 10 concepts are in the process of being matured and developed to become fundable and investable as an integrated portfolio of critical interventions for the bioregion. The concepts are interdependent and entangled, and the local team believes that only when viewed as a whole can investment and finance flows expect to address unexpected externalities, risks beyond linear value chains, and the potential of holistic aggregated returns. The hope is that investment in such an emergent portfolio will catalyze large-scale positive change for communities and for the landscape – and generate inspiration, social, natural, and financial capital.

Both the weaving team and local stakeholders are determined to find new ways of holistically financing the regeneration of their bioregion through a support structure and emergent portfolio that is built on local knowledge, bottom-up decision-making, and inclusive, equitable governance structures.

This Case Study on **The Bioregional Learning Center in SouthDevon** is an Excerpt from the book **Bioregional Financing Facilities: Reimagining Finance to Regenerate Our Planet**, by Samantha Power and Leon Seefeld. To see other case studies, or to buy or download the book, visit www.biofi.earth.

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