

The material eco-system

The community ecosystems are constituted by living organisms (plants, microbes and animals including human beings) and the structured non-living elements of the environment including rocks, minerals, soils, water, and air. The base of the community system is its unique piece of geographical territory. This territory contains a material system which has boundaries established as a result of politico-administrative decisions although these may have been affected by features of the landscape such as rivers, escarpments and gullies. Within the boundaries at any point in time the place system is constituted through:

(1) interactions among local manifestations of larger material systems - altitude, climate, topography, geology, and ecology and

(2) material legacies of previous human interactions with the territory including land and water use, environmental degradation or re-habilitation, settlement patterns, roads, buildings and technological infrastructure.

The people system is constituted by the population of material historically-constructed human beings and their current embodied physical and mental human resources and liabilities.