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## Systems Analysis

To begin to truly understand your clients' needs, you must understand their current state or system. In order to accomplish this, you must go through a discovery process, which will allow you to gain enough insight about them to record their current state. This is typically done through an interactive process, involving enough of the individuals within the organization who have accurate data and information.

One example of this might be the programming of a public health clinic. If you were to interview the administrative staff and ask them to map out their current work process, you would probably get a completely different outcome than if you asked the same task of the nurses, and you would get yet another if you asked the doctors. The reason is that each of the participants sees the system from a different perspective and in fact does not understand exactly what actually happens. Through this example, we can see why it is so important to use "cross-functional" teams of individuals when you are working with organizational complexity.

It is also important to talk to each of the department or groups individually, so that you can understand their individual perspectives and needs, in isolation from the whole; otherwise, you may easily miss an important issue. Even in the case of residential design, if you discuss the client's needs with only the couple, you may never discover an unspoken but truly important need of one of the individuals.

Also, through the interactive process of defining the existing conditions, one needs to record what works and what does not work within the system. Often, in a designer's excitement to create a new space, things that worked quite well, and are truly important to the client, can be lost and are not missed until the project is complete. By asking questions about what works and why, the designer can gain a deeper level of insight into a variety of conditions in the client's organization. This will make the designer more astute when the program is finally complete and as the design is being developed.

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## Work/Life Flow Analysis

Work flow analysis or life flow analysis (for residential projects) is one tool which helps record the day-to-day reality of an organization or group. Every aspect of the organization or group must be discussed as you walk through

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a typical day, week, month, and year. It is important to capture physical, cultural, emotional, financial, technological, and organizational needs that are attributed to the way one leads one's life and work.

If any one of these aspects is forgotten, the user and the designer will not be fully aware of how change might affect them and will be unable to plan a design that will support them fully. As our lives become more complicated, as change becomes a constant, and as time becomes more demanding, the way we work, live, share knowledge, and survive will become more dependent on the quality of the spaces in which we live. The ability of the design space to nurture our personal and professional needs will better serve our personal responsibilities both within organizations and society as a whole.

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### **External Factors and Drivers**

Once this information is captured, the discussions should expand to external factors that will drive the system. Something as mundane as how the garbage is stored and collected, how supplies are delivered, how the children enter the house on a rainy day, can often lead to process discoveries that have real and serious design implications.

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### **Logistical Issues**

Another level of analysis that should be performed is the review of logistic issues that will affect the project and the client in the process of completing design and construction. Does the project need to be phased? Will your client occupy the space during a remodel? How will move coordination be handled? What contingencies need to be included in the schedule? All these may seem to be construction-related questions, but in fact they may lead to the discovery of elements that will need to be considered in the program, design, and certainly in the project planning from the very beginning of the project.

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### **Conclusion for Systems Analysis**

The concept of doing a full investigation into all of the matters that might affect your client in the process of change leads to the discovery of the unknowns and allows for you to work collaboratively with your client to