The Legacy Effect: Understanding How Segregation and Environmental Injustice Unfold over Time in Baltimore

Oct 16, 2017

Author:
Morgan Grove, Laura Ogden, Steward Pickett, Chris Boone, Geoff Buckley, Dexter H. Locke, Charlie Lord & Billy Hall

Abstract

Legacies of social and environmental injustices can leave an imprint on the present and constrain transitions for more sustainable futures. In this article, we ask this question: What is the relationship of environmental inequality and histories of segregation? The answer for Baltimore is complex, where past practices of de jure and de facto segregation have created social and environmental legacies that persist on the landscape today. To answer this question, we examine the interactions among past and current environmental injustices in Baltimore from the late 1880s to the present using nearly twenty years of social and environmental justice research from the Baltimore Ecosystem Study (BES), a long-term social-ecological research project. Our research demonstrates that patterns and procedures in the city’s early history of formal and informal segregation, followed by “redlining” in the 1930s, have left indelible patterns of social and environmental inequalities. These patterns are manifest in the distribution of environmental disamenities such as polluting industries, urban heat islands, and vulnerability to flooding, and they are also evident in the distribution of environmental amenities such as parks and trees. Further, our work shows how these legacies are complicated by changing perceptions of what counts as an environmental disamenity and amenity. Ultimately, we argue that the interactions among historical patterns, processes, and procedures over the long term are crucial for understanding environmental injustices of the past and present and for constructing sustainable cities for the future.

Read the full paper in Annals of the American Association of Geographers [1].

Associated SESYNC Researcher(s):
bhall [2]
dlocke [3]

DOI for citing:
doi:10.1080/24694452.2017.1365585

Source URL:

Links