



SESYNC Feedbacks

News from the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center



GOVERNANCE | Looking through a Socio-Environmental Lens

Governance can be an unwieldy topic when it comes to socio-environmental (S-E) systems. A wide range of economic, legal, cultural, social, and other influences factor into how different entities manage, allocate, and utilize natural resources. To unpack the systems, processes, and people involved, SESYNC offers a series of resources that examines governance through a socio-environmental lens.

These resources break down the concept of governance; provide illustrative examples; and offer structured activities meant to engage learners in thinking about the who, what, where, when, and how involved in making decisions related to governing the environment. Explore more below.



Explainer: What Is Governance? A Socio-Environmental Perspective

This brief explainer article introduces the concept of "governance" as used in the context of socio-environmental systems. It includes explanation of the differences between informal and formal governance, as well as a brief history of the evolution of the term in S-E research. Additionally, the article provides

examples of S-E research that examine different dimensions of governance in terms of sustainability.

Explainer: Polycentric Governance: When Is It Good?

This brief explainer article explains the concept of polycentric governance and how it can have positive outcomes when there is a good "social fit": the ability to

reconcile diverse people's values, beliefs, and expectations in the management of a (S-E) system. This explainer then introduces two case studies of polycentric governance applied to marine protected areas.



Governance Theory Lesson, Part 1: Revising the Tragedy of the Commons

This lesson introduces the framework of the Tragedy of the Commons, introduced by Garret Hardin in 1968—which argues that the overuse of shared natural resources was inevitable without top-down government management or privatization. It then focuses on this paradigm shifting to the more inclusive

and constructive model of polycentric governance, introduced by Elinor Ostrom. In the lesson, students examine polycentric resource-management strategies used to address global climate change. **The lesson aims to get learners to evaluate the advantages and challenges of polycentric design**—particularly as they relate to the evolution of structure and flows of communication and trust among diverse stakeholders.

Governance Theory Lesson, Part 2: Case Studies in Polycentric Resource Management

Building off the previous lesson, **this exercise uses a case study of a vast marine reserve in Hawai'i to demonstrate how the design of polycentric governance can include local, tribal, state, and federal stakeholders**. It also shows learners how the design can evolve in time to promote sustainable use, community input, and information sharing. Participants will apply the principles of trust, communication, and social fit to a new case study and develop flow diagrams of the regulatory networks that would result in optimal sustainable use of common pool resources.



A Dialogue on Indigenous Knowledge and Science in Co- Creation

In this video, SESYNC's Dr. Heidi Scott speaks with Dr. Billy van Uitregt, a senior lecturer in the School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington, Te Herenga Waka. **Dr. van Uitregt provides his perspective on the integration of Indigenous knowledge, values, and worldviews into**

Water & Governance

This video shows how the SESYNC Resilience & Governance team works to better understand the implications of water management decisions and collaborate on developing a set of tools to help society navigate a more sustainable future.



Marine Spatial Planning for Sustainability Lesson: An Example of a Semi-Qualitative Synthesis Approach

This lesson illustrates the use of a semi-qualitative synthesis approach to study **Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)**—a process for allocating access to marine resources. As the use of MSP has spread worldwide, there is a need to determine if these plans are achieving

their intended results. The study used in this lesson presents a framework to help stakeholders and natural resource managers evaluate and improve MSPs for equitable and sustainable socio-environmental outcomes. The synthesis approach in this lesson combines a modified systematic review, expert opinion, and a critical interpretation of literature.

Novel Ecosystems and Natural Resource Management: For Whom? Lesson, Part 1

This lesson introduces the argument for and against novel ecosystems—combinations of species, associated with humans' influence on nature, that differ from those that existed historically at that site. **Here, participants consider disciplinary and sector perspectives on decision making, or governance, related to managing ecosystems that have been or are about to experience dramatic changes due to human activities.**



Novel Ecosystems and Natural Resource Management: For Whom? Lesson, Part 2

This lesson explores the concept of novel ecosystems from a scientific, management, ethical, and personal perspective. It has learners explore the challenges and nuances associated with natural resource management decisions and governance. Participants engage in designing, articulating, and revise a specific management plan based on the agenda of a stakeholder group. The lesson encourages learners to consider



who is included in management decisions and processes that may open doors to those who are typically left out.

Find more [resources on governance on the SESYNC website](#).

NEW PUBLICATIONS | SESYNC in the Journals

"It's a Snow Day! How Winter Weather Extremes Affect School Bus Cancellations."

Published in *Weather, Climate, and Society* by M. Catherine Eimers, Nora J. Casson, and Alexandra R. Contosta. This paper resulted from the Pursuit [Winter Weather Whiplash](#).

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