



SESYNC Feedbacks

News from the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center



THINKING GREEN | Meeting the Challenges of Sustainability

To quote a famous frog... "It's not easy being green." Whether it be trying to use resources more sustainably, creating equitable green spaces, or building environmentally friendly systems and infrastructure—striving to be "green" can be incredibly challenging.

Despite the hurdles, socio-environmental researchers are making strides in finding ways to make our daily lives greener—from policy implementation to environmental justice initiatives to community programs. Together, these efforts show all the various capacities in which we as a society can aim to be a bit more green and eco-friendly.

The following SESYNC resources capture the idea of "thinking green" in different ways: from implementing green infrastructure, to challenging greenwashing tactics used by corporations, to investigating how access to green spaces affects human health and well-being. We hope you'll explore these resources below (and others on our site) and find inspiration in the fight to be green.



Green Infrastructure Lesson: Urban Metabolism and Smart Cities

As 21st-century human migration to cities increases alongside the pressures of climate change, the techno-socio-environmental challenge of how to develop and manage cities sustainably is at a critical juncture. **This lesson will use the concepts of urban metabolism and smart cities to have learners explore initiatives that bring tomorrow's cities closer**

to human equality and ecological balance with their surroundings.

Green Infrastructure Lesson: Urban Stormwater, Policy, and Justice

This lesson challenges learners to think about how green infrastructure (GI) policy planners can consider and integrate environmental priorities into their planning. By doing so, planners can hopefully meet policy goals set by the EPA and redress the gentrification that can accompany GI investments.



Greenwashing in the Fashion and Apparel Industry Lesson

In this lesson, learners will review the major findings of the MacArthur Foundation's audit of the fashion apparel industry and their proposed initiatives. They will also apply the 19 rhetorical tactics of greenwashing from de Freitas Netto et al. (2020). **Ultimately, learners will assess the levels of greenwashing among five major corporations across the garment industry and present their findings to their peers.**

Ecological Restoration and Corporate Greenwashing Lesson

In this lesson, learners will read a short article to learn how multi-factor designs may improve restoration outcomes.

Learners will then apply this analysis to prominent case studies of ecological restoration by major corporations involved in oil & gas extraction and chemical production. Ultimately, participants will learn to scrutinize the claims surrounding restoration projects and analyze the degree of greenwashing inherent to corporate-led site reclamation.



Spatial Ecology Lesson: Landscape Design Contest

This lesson aims to get learners to be able to understand and use spatial ecology to measure, design, and implement more healthful interfaces between human infrastructure and green space. In addition, students will learn how complementary benefits, such as greater physical and mental health,

local food production, and wildlife habitat may coexist in well-planned spatial ecologies across urban, suburban, and rural habitats.

Sustainable Agriculture Lesson: Community Gardens – Justice, Safety, and Climate Solutions

Community gardens are a form of green infrastructure often overlooked in urban climate change and development plans, despite many environmental benefits. **This lesson synthesizes the socio-environmental challenges and benefits of community gardens with the call for cities to designate more community garden space in planning for climate change, resilience, food security and sovereignty, and community integration.**



Redlining and Tree Cover Lesson: Measuring Environmental Inequality in Baltimore

This lesson is a simplified, web-based exploration of the residual effects of redlining on neighborhood tree cover and species diversity in the city of Baltimore.

Using online databases for redlining maps and tree surveys, learners will explore contrasting

neighborhoods in Baltimore to better understand how historical inequality endures to this day and how cities may implement proactive measures to increase environmental equality across a metropolitan area. If these resources are available for your city, instructors may adapt this lesson to explore redlining and tree cover correlations in your region.

Not All Parks Are Created Equally

Historically, environmental justice initiatives focused on urban parks have evaluated where those green spaces are located and who has access to them. But, according to SESYNC researcher Jeffrey Clark, “Just because there is a park, doesn’t mean it necessarily has the features that that community values or needs.”



In fact, making park access truly equitable means ensuring residents get the best use and value from the green spaces available to them.

Generally, parks departments know a lot about who they serve, explained fellow SESYNC researcher Charles Nilon. “So, they know a lot about who lives within say a 10-minute walk to the park or a half-hour walk to the park,” he said. “That’s information that’s really important, and it’s a really important part of park planning. But the sort of broader picture of how people use those parks, what resources are there, those really need to be explored because those are probably an equally important part.”

Nilon—Professor Emeritus of Fisheries and Wildlife, in the University of Missouri’s School of Natural Resources—added, “The question of how cities provide parks to people is really complex. It’s something that really needs to be considered when we think about what access means.”

Part of ensuring equal access is recognizing that parks provide more than just physical benefits to city residents. **Continue reading this article.**

"Challenges and opportunities for the governance of hydropower." Published in *Nature Sustainability* by Sergio Villamayor-Tomas, Maria Claudia Lopez, Caroline C. Arantes, Daniela Del Bene, Ratha Chea, Daniel B. Kramer, Christopher Schulz, Giuseppina Siciliano, Bryan Tilt & Emilio F. Moran. This paper resulted from the Pursuit, [Impacts of Hydropower Dams](#).

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