



## SESYNC Feedbacks

News from the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center



### CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS | Going Deeper

It's little secret that in today's world, we're constantly being inundated with videos, images, and texts designed to create and sustain various narratives. As a result, it's become increasingly important to be able to critically assess and decipher the media that we're consuming.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is one skillset that can help individuals understand the context in which materials are produced—within socio-environmental research and beyond.

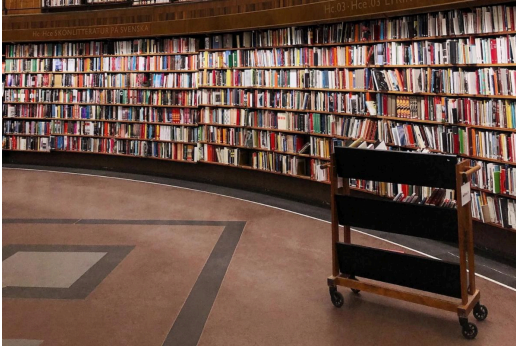
CDA involves a series of approaches for critically analyzing texts and cultural artifacts to reveal connotations and draw out the larger cultural narratives that these connotations support.

SESYNC has **a complete set of resources** on CDA, which we've included below. First, we have a series of explainers that introduce the different types of analysis and offer real-world examples of applications of CDA to socio-environmental research. Our series of lessons then provides guided activities for learning how to use and apply CDA techniques in various contexts. Together, they help users build a strong skillset in considering materials beyond their surface-level meaning.

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#### explainer: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – What Is It?

**This explainer article introduces the practice of Critical Discourse Analysis**—a series of approaches that researchers use to critically analyze texts and cultural artifacts. The article explains how CDA can reveal submerged power structures and elaborate on the role of discourse in both reflecting and constructing social realities. It provides an



overview of the ways that researchers can use and apply CDA, sample research questions, and additional resources for further exploration of the topic.

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### Explainer: CDA – Visual Analysis

This explainer introduces a branch of CDA, known as **Visual Discourse Analysis (VDA)**. The article explains how researchers can use VDA to “read” visuals—including photographs, films, advertisements, charts, and graphs—for their framing, the facts they imply, and the values they connote. It then provides real-world examples of how researchers who study socio-environmental systems and problems have used these analytical techniques in their scientific studies.



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### Explainer: CDA – Narrative Analysis

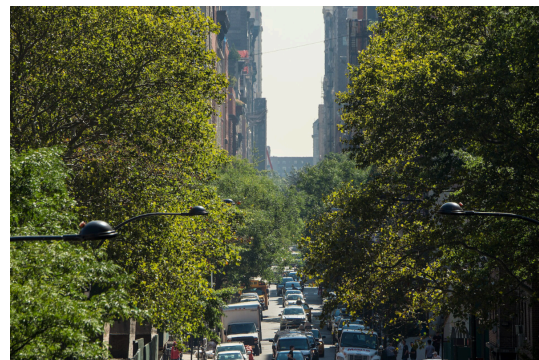
This explainer introduces **Narrative Discourse Analysis (NDA)**—a method of examining texts to uncover the motivations behind the way they present information to a target audience. It explains how NDA involves readers responding to texts by questioning the truth of narratives and examining how they may be the construct of particular stakeholders who often have submerged agendas. It then provides

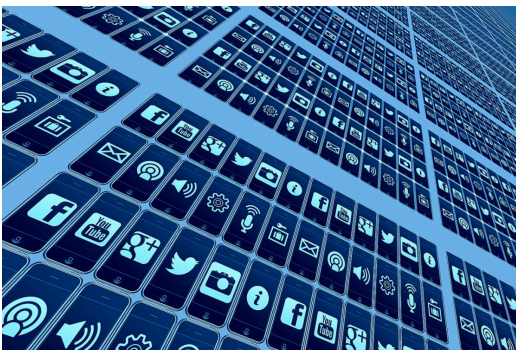
examples of how researchers have applied NDA to socio-environmental studies.

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### Explainer: CDA – Qualitative Content Approach

This explainer introduces **Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)**—an extension of narrative analysis that integrates specialized software. It explains how QCA blends qualitative and quantitative methods to organize a large number of texts into a standardized system of thematic coding, which can reveal discursive bias and cultural or organizational trends. The article covers real-world research examples to demonstrate how QCA can reveal historical, geographical, and demographic patterns, as well as how they represent and preserve existing power structures and the priorities of managers invested in the status quo.





## Explainer: CDA – Artificial Intelligence, Social Network, & Social Media Analyses

With advances in artificial intelligence (AI) analytics and the rise of big data created by high volumes of social media posts, critical discourse analysis (CDA) researchers have new quantitative, locational, and demographic tools at their disposal. **This explainer shows how researchers can harness software's**

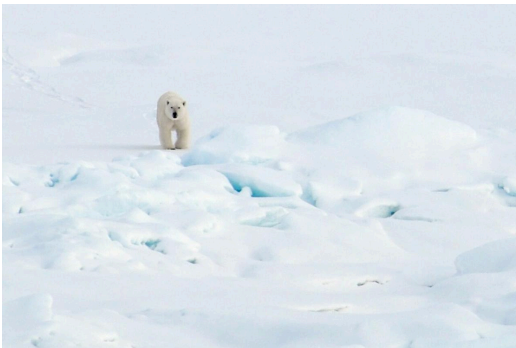
**quantitative analytical power to enjoy new qualitative insights about complex socio-environmental interactions.**

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## Lesson: CDA – Environmental Journalism

**This lesson applies CDA to environmental journalism.** Learners explore how the language that journalists use helps construct environmental realities, and thereby influences public opinion and policy.

Instructors will lead learners through a narrative and keyword analysis of environmental reporting in order to analyze the social messaging of environmental ideas, the types of narratives used, and tonal elements. The aim is to 1) help learners recognize editorial choices, bias, connotation, and subtext and 2) enable them to grow more aware of the complex ways that language constructs environmental narratives.



## Lesson: CDA – Visual Discourse Analysis and Climate Change

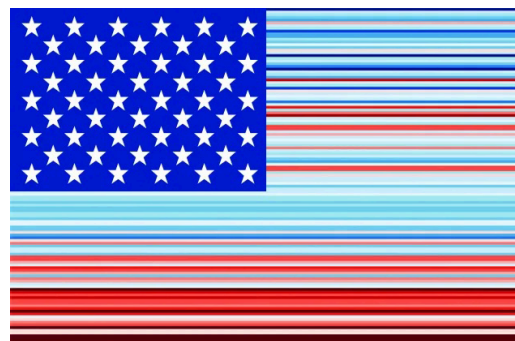
**This lesson has students apply visual discourse analysis to images related to climate change.** It encourages participants to become critical viewers who recognize editorial choices, bias, connotation, and subtext in climate change imagery. The lesson also helps learners grow more aware of the complex ways in which images

construct environmental realities, and thereby influence public opinion and policy.

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## Lesson: CDA – Visualizing Climate Change Data

**In this lesson, learners apply CDA to investigate the power of climate change visualizations.** Here, learners review several different types of climate change visualizations for their factual, rhetorical, emotional, and aesthetic powers. They then appraise each visual's success in capturing public awareness and concern about climate change.





## Lesson: CDA – Postcolonial African Pastoralism

This lesson applies Narrative Discourse Analysis to evolving discourses on the environmental effects of pastoralism in postcolonial Africa. Learners evaluate how rhetorical tactics in newspapers may be deployed to support policy decisions that disenfranchise traditional pastoralists. They will

also examine whether the rhetoric surrounding pastoralism has changed through time.

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