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| C:\Users\bjaco\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Word\SLS-Teaching-Toolkit-Logo_Stacked-Initials.jpg | Society, Equity, & Sustainability | | |
| **Discipline:** All | **Type:** In-class exercises, Take-home Assignment, Discussion | **Time Commitment:** 25-90 minutes | **Category:** Equity, Justice & Sustainability |
| **Big Ideas:**  [Equity & Climate,](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/equity-and-climate) [Environmental Justice & Citizen Science](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/environmental-justice-citizen-science), [Inequality, Poverty & Sustainable Development](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/inequality-poverty-and-sustainable-development), [Valuing Community Impact](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/valuing-community-impact), [Participatory Processes & Collaborative Governance](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/participatory-processes-and-collaborative-governance), [Voice & Agency](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/big-idea/voice-agency) | | | |
| **OVERVIEW:**  SLS approaches sustainability as an integrated system, linking environment, economy, and society. As an initiative focused on “creating sustainable *communities,*” we especially emphasize the role that SOCIETY plays in sustainability – and particularly issues of social equity and community voice. You can learn about [SLS’ approach to sustainable communities here](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/welcome_to_sls_-_students_0.pdf). The purpose of this tool is to help students begin to understand the SOCIETY part of sustainability. It includes two exercises and resources for learning more. The tool is divided into three parts: 1) An introductory [PowerPoint presentation](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/sls_society_equity_sust_ppt.pptx) that explains the relationship between societal issues, sustainability, and equity; 2) An assignment and discussion activity, to help students explore this relationship in a bit more depth; and 3) A short wrap-up discussion applying these exercises to your class.  This tool was contributed by Jennifer Hirsch, Bethany Jacobs, and Katie Martin. | | | |
| **INSTRUCTIONS:**   1. Using the [PowerPoint presentation](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/sls_society_equity_sust_ppt.pptx), introduce and discuss the Oxfam Doughnut diagram, to help students think about how societal issues, and particularly issues of equity, impact sustainability. 2. Read and analyze a real-world case study about creating a sustainable community, to examine how the diagram plays out in practice. 3. Lead a wrap-up discussion connecting Society, Equity & Sustainability to your class and what you’ll be working on for the remainder of the semester. | | | |
| **SLS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES & ASSESSMENT:**  The Serve-Learn-Sustain toolkit teaching tools are designed to help students achieve not only SLS student learning outcomes (SLOs), but the unique learning outcomes for your own courses. Reflection, concept maps, rubrics, and other assessment methods are shown to improve student learning. For resources on how to assess your students’ work, please review our [Assessment Tools](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/tool-category/assessment).  **This tool achieves SLO 1. See the end of this tool for further details.** | | | |

**Want Help?**

Jennifer Hirsch is the contact for this tool. You can reach her at [jennifer.hirsch@gatech.edu](mailto:jennifer.hirsch@gatech.edu).

Society, Equity, & Sustainability

**Part 1: Introduction (approx. 20 min.)**

This tool begins by focusing on a diagram called the Oxfam Doughnut, to help students think about how societal issues affect sustainability.

1. Walk students through the attached PowerPoint, [“Introduction to Society, Equity and Sustainability.”](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Toolkit-Docs/sls_society_equity_sust_ppt.pptx) For your own preparation, refer to the Notes in the PowerPoint beforehand so that you have a sense of each slide’s larger purpose.
2. After introducing the Oxfam donut (Slides 1-5) share the remainder of the PowerPoint, which focuses on Equity from many perspectives. Feel free to adjust these slides to meet your needs.

**Part 2: Exploration through Case Study: ReGenesis in Spartanburg, SC (approx. 60 min.)**

The second part of this tool provides students with an example of a real-world initiative that they can analyze in terms of the Oxfam Doughnut diagram. You can do all of this in class, or have the students do the reading and exercise as a take-home assignment and then bring it to the next class to discuss and wrap up. You may also choose to end the tool with Part 1, which is especially appropriate if your class has a focus on equity and the students will be exposed to real-world examples of the diagram in action. In this case, skip to the Wrap-Up section below. If this isn’t the case, it’s important for students to see how the different concepts about social foundations and ecological ceilings play out.

1. Distribute the ReGenesis Case Study Worksheet on page 5 of this tool. It instructs students to read the EPA’s case study, “ReGenesis – A Practical Application of the CPS Model” (Chapter 4 of [*EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model*](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf)). If also suggests that they watch [this 1-hour video](https://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/56518), featuring ReGenesis founder Rep. Harold Mitchell, who shared his experiences during a visit to Georgia Tech in Spring 2016.

The ReGenesis case study tells the story of how residents in Spartanburg, SC teamed up with the EPA to create a sustainable community through broad and deep stakeholder engagement. Spartanburg was experiencing higher levels of health issues due to chemical plants and other polluting factors in the area. ReGenesis, a community-based organization led by community member Harold Mitchell – now a member of the South Carolina legislature – worked with the EPA to use their Collaborative Problem Solving methodology to expose the inequity and turn the community around.

1. Have the students work in small groups (in class) or individually (outside of class) to analyze the case study in terms of the Oxfam Doughnut diagram. The worksheet itself will prompt them to do this.
2. Put the Oxfam Doughnut slide back on the screen. Based on their completed worksheets (which they should refer to throughout) facilitate a discussion about the ReGenesis case study and how it demonstrates connections between social equity and sustainability.

**Part 3: Wrap-Up (5-10 min.)**

Wrap up the discussion by offering some connections between the topic of equity and sustainability and the topic of your class. Slide 13 of the PowerPoint Presentation, titled Wrap-Up, prompts this discussion.

Per Question 2, help students shape their own questions, and add some of your own, so the class ends with a concrete list of 2-4 questions.

Tell the students you will distribute these (through the course management system or otherwise) so you can all continue to refer to them over the semester.

Revisit them at different points to keep social equity questions top of mind.

**Further Reading**

Encourage your students to continue learning about the complex relationship between society, equity and sustainability. Here are some of SLS’ other favorite resources:

* [RAWORTH’S OXFAM DISCUSSION PAPER](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/dp-a-safe-and-just-space-for-humanity-130212-en_5.pdf): It is suggested reading for the case study worksheet.

Raworth, Kate, et all. "A Safe and Just Space for Humanity." Oxfam Discussion

Papers, February 2012.

* Sonam Vashi for *Atlanta* magazine: “[All Eyes on Equity: How Nonprofits are Mobilizing to Solve Atlanta’s Structural Inequities](https://www.atlantamagazine.com/news-culture-articles/all-eyes-on-equity/).” This is a great local resource by a local journalist on how issues of society, equity, and sustainability play out in the city of Atlanta. Vashi highlights the Grove Park Foundation, Partnership for Southern Equity, and other local groups to talk about the complex nature of sustainability and equity in an urban space.
* WORK BY JULIAN AGYEMAN ON “JUST SUSTAINABILITIES:” Agyeman is Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University, one of the world’s leading scholars of the relationship between equity and sustainability, and one of the creators of the concept of “just sustainabilities,” which is part of SLS’ approach to sustainable communities. For undergraduates, his most accessible work includes some of his blog posts, especially “[Equity? That’s not an issue for us, we’re here to save the world](https://julianagyeman.com/2011/08/24/equity-thats-not-an-issue-for-us-were-here-to-save-the-world/),” and some of his talks, especially [Just Sustainabilities: Re-Imagining E/Quality with Julian Agyeman](https://vimeo.com/100723353) (1 hr), in which he discusses the central role that equity and social justice play in sustainability. The first 30 minutes are well worth watching.

Agyeman, Julian. "Equity? “That’s Not an Issue for Us, We’re Here to Save the

World”." Julian Agyeman. August 24, 2011. Accessed April 05, 2018.

* *THE SPIRIT LEVEL* BY RICHARD WILKINSON and KATE PICKETT: Chapter 15 discusses the conjunction of equality and sustainability. These authors look at measures throughout the world and examine the correlation of innovation and wealth equality, ecological footprint and human wellbeing, inequality and consumerism. For additional reading on equity from multiple aspects, The Spirit Level is a great choice. This book analyzes mental health, health and family planning, education, imprisonment, and more through the lens of equity throughout the US and the world.

Wilkinson, Richard G., and Kate Pickett. *The Spirit Level*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009.

* LOCAL CASE STUDIES: This tool uses the ReGenesis case study because it shares a success story of creating sustainable communities. Local case studies from the Atlanta Region are more fraught, especially related to societal issues – not surprising considering that the city is regularly rated one of the most unequal cities in the country. There are two cases that are particularly worth reading, and having students analyze in terms of the Oxfam Doughnut diagram. These are:
  1. [“Opportunity Deferred: Race, Transportation, and the Future of Metropolitan Atlanta,”](http://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/2017_pse-opportunity_deferred.pdf) published by SLS’ partner organization, Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE). This is an approachable piece focusing on local issues and highlighting the ways in which racism has prevented the Atlanta region, and especially its transportation systems, from developing in a sustainable manner. It is also a good resource for thinking more generally about racial equity in both past and future Atlanta. SLS hosted the launch of the report in January 2017, featuring, among others, co-author Alex Karner, who was a faculty member in City and Regional Planning at the time. Students may be interested in watching [the video of that event](https://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/56425), which includes a short presentation by Dr. Karner.
  2. The Atlanta BeltLine is also a good case study for exploring these issues, especially since it grew out of a GT master’s thesis by luminary architect Ryan Gravel. The SLS Teaching Toolkit includes a [case study tool of the Atlanta BeltLine](https://serve-learn-sustain.gatech.edu/atlanta-beltline) that would be a good follow-up exercise.

ReGenesis Worksheet: Oxfam Doughnut Analysis

**Instructions**

1. Required: Read the ReGenesis case study (Chapter 4 of [*EPA’s Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model*](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf)). You may also enjoy hearing from ReGenesis founder Rep. Harold Mitchell himself: watch all or part of [this 1-hour video](https://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/56518), in which he shares his experiences during a visit to Georgia Tech in Spring 2016.
2. Suggested: Read the Oxfam Discussion Paper, [“A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: Can We Live Within the Doughnut?”](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/dp-a-safe-and-just-space-for-humanity-130212-en_5.pdf) to learn more about the social foundations and ecological ceilings that you’ll evaluate below.
3. Suggested: Consult the [ReGenesis website](http://rcdc.us/) to see what updates have been made in the recent past to this ongoing story.
4. Then, circle the social foundations and ecological ceilings that seem to come into play in this case study.

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| **SOCIAL FOUNDATIONS** | **ECOLOGICAL CEILINGS** |
| Food | Climate Change |
| Water | Freshwater Withdrawals |
| Health | Nitrogen and Phosphorus Loading |
| Education | Ocean Acidification |
| Energy | Chemical Pollution |
| Voice (political or otherwise) | Air Pollution |
| Income & Work | Ozone Layer Depletion |
| Peace & Justice | Biodiversity Loss |
| Social Equity\*  (income equality) | Land Conversion |
| Gender Equality |  |
| Networks |  |
| Housing |  |

\*Note: Raworth uses “social equity” to mean income equality, whereas SLS uses it to refer to addressing deprivation and social foundations overall.

1. Choose one of the foundations or ceilings you circled and write a few sentences about its role in the case study, as a problem and/or a solution.
2. Finally, pretend that you were a resident of Spartanburg, SC or a staff person or expert brought in by the EPA to assist with this project. Share a few thoughts about how you could use your disciplinary expertise – from your major or another subject you are studying at Tech – to contribute to this work.

SLS Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems.
2. Demonstrate skills needed to work effectively in different types of communities.
3. Evaluate how decisions impact the sustainability of communities.
4. Describe how to use their discipline to make communities more sustainable.\*

\* *Note:* SLO 4 is intended to be used by upper division, project-based courses such as Capstone.