

The Stockholm Seminars

- focusing on the dynamics and stewardship of social-ecological systems

“Civic ecology: social-ecological innovations in human-nature connections in cities”

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Thursday 7 May, 2012, 11.00–12.00
Linné Hall, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences,
Lilla Frescativägen 4, Stockholm

In cities across the US, immigrants, African-Americans, and other residents are finding innovative ways of stewarding nature that integrate environmental, community, and individual-level outcomes.

These urban civic ecology practices — including community gardening, shellfish reintroductions, tree planting and care, and “friends of parks” initiatives to remove invasive and restore native species — generally begin as small, self-organized efforts after a prolonged period of economic and environmental decline or more sudden major disturbances such as hurricanes or typhoons.

Those practices that are sustained expand to encompass partnerships with non-profit organizations; local-, state-, and federal-level government agencies; and universities.

Civic ecology practices reflect local cultures and environments, as well as the practical knowledge and social-ecological memories of city residents, and thus vary widely across different cities.

Our investigations into civic ecology practices provide insights into how residents in densely populated urban neighborhoods are designing means to connect with urban nature.

Marianne Krasny is professor and chair in the Department of Natural Resources, and Director of the Civic Ecology Lab, at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

She works with community-based organizations to examine how self-organized, environmental stewardship practices in cities contribute to ecosystem services, civic renewal, and social-ecological systems resilience. She also directs the US Environmental Protection Agency’s national environmental education training programme. Through this initiative, Dr Krasny serves as a “scale-crossing broker” to foster exchange of ideas between an emerging group of urban environmental educators and the more established environmental education community, with the goal of redefining environmental education for an urban society.