

Two Faces of Green Urbanism

Face 1: The Green Transformation (Capital Mobilisation and Resilience)

- **From Corporate to Urban:** Originally designed as corporate disclosure tools, ESG criteria have evolved into a major spatial planning paradigm. They are now actively used to guide land use, regeneration strategies, and urban policy frameworks.
- **Attracting Green Capital:** By aligning with ESG frameworks, cities and private developers can mobilise significant capital to fund post-pandemic redevelopment, clean transit, and energy-efficient infrastructure.
- **Economic and Environmental Value:** ESG integration yields tangible benefits. For instance, sustainable real estate projects often command premium valuations (e.g., 15-25% in markets like Kenya), lower operating costs, and exhibit greater market resilience during economic disruptions.

Face 2: The Dark Side (Spatial Inequality and Green Gentrification)

- **Uneven Investment Geographies:** The video's "second face" examines the growing tension between environmental ambitions and socio-spatial equity. ESG-aligned urban regeneration frequently concentrates in affluent districts that already have robust governance and infrastructure, leaving disadvantaged or peripheral neighbourhoods underserved.
- **Green Gentrification:** When top-down nature-based solutions and green infrastructure (like high-quality parks and transit upgrades) are introduced without redistributive safeguards, they often trigger displacement. These green amenities raise local property values and rents, pushing out low-income residents who can no longer afford the revitalised area.
- **Infrastructural Violence:** Without proper social protections, financialization mechanisms can turn environmental goals into speculative redevelopment, a process some scholars critique as "infrastructural violence" or mere "greenwashing" that legitimizes exclusionary development.

The Path Forward: Reconciling the Two Faces.

To ensure that ESG-driven urbanism advances true socio-spatial justice rather than just corporate profit, the video emphasises that ESG must move beyond a technocratic checklist. Urban planners must implement grassroots mechanisms like community land trusts, cooperative housing, and redistributive justice frameworks to buffer against displacement and guarantee that green urban investments are culturally and economically accessible to all residents.