

Bridging Connections: Environmental Justice Organizing in the Inland Empire

Giselle Serafin

ABSTRACT

Environmental Justice (EJ) framing must be at the forefront of city planning and community development. In disadvantaged areas with predominantly communities of color, it is especially important to address EJ concerns. There are currently EJ components entering policy and regulations, which lead to funding opportunities to address these issues such as the Transformative Climate Communities Grant. To understand how EJ is being addressed in a specific community in the Inland Empire, I interviewed three main groups of stakeholders in the City of Ontario. These stakeholders included city government workers, city planners, and members of the community organization Huerta Del Valle. Four themes arose throughout all of the interviews: the emphasis on *community involvement*, *city government involvement*, *organizational limitations* and *navigating power relations*. Within these themes, the stakeholders noted key challenges in communicating and creating change, which include majority Spanish speaking communities, low-income neighbourhoods, economic development, food deserts, private vs public land, and low-education attainment. In addressing these barriers and injustices in general, I found that local city governments have a lot of power and influence over the framing of environmental justice in their city. They can either support these endeavours directly funding community organizers as seen in the city of Ontario, or prioritize economic development and other issues, which is the more common outcome especially of smaller more conservative cities.

KEYWORDS

city planning, Ontario California, community voice, power structures, organizing

INTRODUCTION

Environmental justice organizations need to engage Latinx populations because they are susceptible to injustices and want positive environmental change. Many of the 15 million Latinxs in California live and work near environmental hazards, with polluters systematically locating facilities near disadvantaged communities of color (Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp 2001), but their voices often are not heard in the environmental movement (Morello-Frosch et al. 2002). Yet, Latinxs care deeply about and are disproportionately affected by environmental issues. Nine out of ten Latinxs want climate action, 78% want members of congress to publicly support carbon pollution limits, and 59% believe environmental progress is good for economic opportunity and job growth (Quintero et al. 2016). Also, many Latinxs perceive humans to be intimately connected with their natural surroundings, unlike the American view of nature as separated from the individual and community (Johnson et al. 2004). Yet, environmental and public health issues are not always a direct focus for organizing in Latinx communities among many other injustices.

Experience and culture influence our positive environmental behavior or pro-environmental behavior, and thus should be components integrated into environmental justice organizing. Historically, environmental knowledge alone does not necessarily cause people to take part in positive environmental behavior, rather experience is more influential (Burgess et al. 1998). Many non-governmental organizations use marketing strategies that depend solely on distributing knowledge and expect people's actions to change, although there are many factors that contribute to an individual's personal values. (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). This simplified method to market environmentalism excludes people's indirect experiences and normative influences, which include culture and societal expectations. For instance, those who have directly experienced environmental injustice are more likely to take action compared than those simply who are simply learning about environmental problems from a textbook with no personal significance (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). Thus, it is important to harness personal experiences for empowerment, which is a process that fosters power in people to advocate in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues they define as important (Page and Czuba 1999). This is particularly important for Latinx communities and communities of color like those in the Inland Empire of southern California that are outside of mainstream environmentalism seen in big cities like Los Angeles, California. With this in mind, there is room for growth in environmental justice

advocacy for Latinxs in Ontario, California because many of the environmental injustices are not being addressed simply by a lack of access to resources and knowledge of what could be done and connecting to community members.

Ontario, California is a city in San Bernardino County in southern California housed within the Inland Empire. It is far enough from Los Angeles for community members to experience different environmental injustices specific to this area, but close enough that environmental justice organizations could influence each other or collaborate. In recent years, there has been a qualitative change in environmental justice politics to a new type of environmentalism in Latinx communities of Los Angeles. First, there is a move away from the reaction to urban environmental toxins of the 1970s to interest now in the 2000s in incorporating natural resources in the city, such as parks, for communal enjoyment. This is because of a shift of strategies in community organizing that is less dependent on unchanging regulations set in legal battles, and instead, organizers are incorporating Latinx “green products” needs that result in tangible changes, alongside the prior regulatory challenges (Carter 2014). However, Ontario is behind Los Angeles in this respect, because there has not been an era of the first type of environmentalism. In Los Angeles, whites have secured relatively cleaner environments by moving away from older industrial cores via suburbanization and exercising forms of white privilege (Pulido 2010). Some of those locations of movement include the Inland Empire, creating communities with great wealth and others of great disparities. Latinx communities in these areas exhibit the needs of environmental organizing, but there are few organizations that focus on these specific environmental health and injustice issues catered only to Ontario’s needs.

The organizations that exist in the area include Huerta del Valle, United Voices of Pomona for Environmental Justice, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ), and Inland Communities Organizing Network (ICON). These organizations exhibit all forms of organizing from community centered and led like United Voices of Pomona for Environmental Justice to larger organizations that focus more on training individuals to organize and affect legislation like CCA EJ and ICON. However, Huerta del Valle is the only organization that focuses solely and is located in Ontario tackling environmental justice through an interactive community garden, workforce development, workshops and communicating with city officials. Grassroots organizing through participatory democracy and public-oriented scientific endeavor founded in a meaningful cultural foundation, Inland Empire’s existing environmental organizations must

incorporate more of Ontario's community members, a majority of which are Latinx (Kebede 2005). Within grassroots organizing, a useful tool is community-based participatory research (CBPR), which fosters community development in participation, equity, collective action and empowerment (Petersen, 1994). This empowers partners (community members and organizers) to come together in action to identify community concerns and develop intervention strategies, while facilitating participation, the enhancement of relationships, capacity building and empowerment. There is room to grow in terms of environmental justice action in the City of Ontario and the greater Inland Empire stemming from community based organization and communicating to power holding bodies.

The goal of this study is to analyze how environmental justice leaders see their challenges and future directions in the city of Ontario in terms of environmental justice. In doing so, I will ask: I) What the role does the city government play in environmental advocacy? II) How do power dynamics affect positive environmental change? III) How are community members actively involved and included in the conversation? Within these stakeholders, I will focus on the dialogue between city officials and community organization representatives to analyze how their goals and strategies relate to the overall well-being of the community. Thus, to what capacity can community organizations influence decision making bodies such like city officials and city planners to address environmental injustices they hear from the community. To what degree do these stakeholders then build community empowerment through their work? Furthermore, what current goals and changes do these stakeholders hope to achieve in regards to the transformation that the city is already experiencing (in terms of development of new industry and recent Cap and Trade funding). At the forefront, I anticipate that language, ethnicity, and cultural barriers must be addressed when discussing environmental empowerment and community participation in the environmental justice movement. These elements are necessary when addressing the foundations of environmental health issues that Ontario experiences.

Background

Organizing frameworks

Environmental activists, policy makers, government and non-government agencies, among others engage in environmental issues by establishing frames of reference, which further complicates the general mode framework of communities organizing. *Framing* refers to the process by which individuals and groups express social and political injustices, which is critical in environmental dialogues (Taylor 2000). The framing process depends on the identification of problems and source of the problem, thus framing also depends on the experiences of the communities experiencing the injustices. Collective action frames are emergent, action-oriented discourses that legitimize campaigns and organizing to continually garner community support (Taylor 2000). There are three components of collective action frames: injustice, agency, and identity. The *injustice* element refers to “the moral outrage” activists are able to express, explain, and justify because of their political awareness. *Agency* refers to individual and community feeling of empowerment towards injustices that they experience, thus sparking the feeling of change. The *identity* aspect of collective action elicits the “we or us” and “they or them” narrative that distinguishes the groups experiencing injustices and the opposition injustice causers (Taylor 2000). Framing is extremely important in environmental organizing for communities of color because environmental injustices are often results of environmental racism. Environmental racism identifies situations where environmental hazards are intentionally placed in disadvantaged communities a majority of the time because these communities do not have political power (Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp 2001). Thus, the overall goal of environmental justice involves identifying the causes of the issues and remedying them from the source, where harmful pollutants and hazards are created, for the well-being of the communities at stake.

Environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income in regarding the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulation and policies (US EPA). Community organizing is founded on various frameworks that can be combined and used to instill EJ, when it is not already in place. Approaches to community intervention or in general social justice organizing can be classified in locality development, social planning/policy, and social action (Rothman 2001).

Locality Development is rooted in community building, where community members build skills to make decisions together to address their needs. *Social Planning/Policy* relies on community members informing planners about their needs to influence plan design. Social planning can be done by community surveys, focus groups, and public hearings, for instance. *Social action* requires a shift in power, where community members have equal weight in decision making (Rothman 2001). Furthermore, the feeling of empowerment in social action is necessary for community members to continue involvement and action, in other words social sustainability. However, an equal exchange of empowerment and the development of power for community members and organizations must take place to offer justice (Speer and Hughey 1995). Most organizing efforts contain elements of all frameworks to better engage complex issues.

Policy

California SB 1000, “The Planning for Healthy Communities Act”, authored by Senator Connie Leyva and co-sponsored by the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) and the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ), requires cities and counties to adopt an Environmental Justice element, or integrate EJ-related policies, objectives, and goals throughout other elements of their General Plan through incorporating communities in the decision making process (Leyva 2016). CEJA created an SB1000 toolkit, integrating various organizing frameworks. In the planning process, new city ventures must seek community engagement through access to local knowledge and perspectives, increased community support for goals and objectives of plans, and development of local leaders to represent the community during environmental justice policy implementation (CEJA 2018). CEJA outlines the ways in which all stakeholders can participate, while acknowledging the need to overcome important barriers to community participation, organizing and decision making such as minimal accessibility, lack of resources language barriers, lack of familiarity with planning processes (including lack of prior inclusion), lack of access to information, and history of exclusion and marginalization (CEJA 2018). These processes to address barriers include using language and terms that are community friendly and using creative methods to present and share information that is easy to understand by providing translation, interpretation, child care, food and bus passes to easily accessible locations (CEJA 2018). Beyond community engagement, environmental education must also spread knowledge

about the environmental issues that exist in the community to allow for informed community needs assessment that prioritize long term solutions. Thus, it is up to both the community to be active in their well-being, but also it is the city's responsibility to address community needs and reduce barriers to participation in community organizing.

Ontario: transformative climate community

CEJA's SB1000 toolkit is important for programs like the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) Program, which funds community-led development and infrastructure projects that achieve major environmental, health and economic benefits in California's most disadvantaged communities (SGC 2017). By creating a carbon market through buying and selling carbon permits, California's Cap-and-Trade program seeks to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by allowing polluting industries to pollute in the cap of emissions to create revenue (CA ARB). TCC, funded by California Cap-and-Trade revenue funds, allows the communities most impacted by pollution to choose their own goals, strategies and projects to create change. The Strategic Growth Council (SGC 2017) has awarded grants to the City of Fresno, the Watts Neighborhood of Los Angeles and the City of Ontario a total of \$140 million altogether with Ontario receiving \$35 million for their Ontario Connects plan through a coalition with CCAEJ (SGC 2018). The Ontario Connects plan for Downtown Ontario (4.86 square miles) is outlined as followed in Table 1:

Table 1. Ontario Connects Plan Proposal.

Development	Transportation Program	Emissions offset
101 new affordable housing units	Transit passes for local residents	Planting of 365 new trees
Installation of solar panels on affordable multi-family developments and single family homes	Increased frequency in bus service	Creation of Ontario Carbon Farm, which will compost green waste from local restaurants and provide job training and fresh produce opportunities for the community
New small business incubator space	Over 5 miles of bike lanes and 3 miles of sidewalk construction and improvements	

Ontario has become a center of industry relocation as of the last 10 years, bringing new factories and warehouses into the area. In general, Ontario is rated in the 95-100% highest score according to CalEnviroScreen 3.0 rating, defined as one of the worst disadvantaged communities defined by indicators; Figure 1. shows the cumulative results where the entirety of the city is labeled red. Indicators like ozone, PM 2.5, diesel, drinking water, and unemployment all rank above 90 percentiles of concern for the city (Calenviroscreen 2018).

New developments in industry on the rise will continue to keep air quality down and the public health of the community and especially their workers at risk with business as usual. Changing economic, environmental and social parameters makes it difficult to track issues and to develop both short-term reactive initiatives or longer-term strategic plans for development (Button 2002). Although difficult, economic growth can consider positive long term ecological benefits through intentional social and political decision making (Button 2002). Thus, there is potential to continue organizing to address the foundation of the present environmental harms that address long term development.

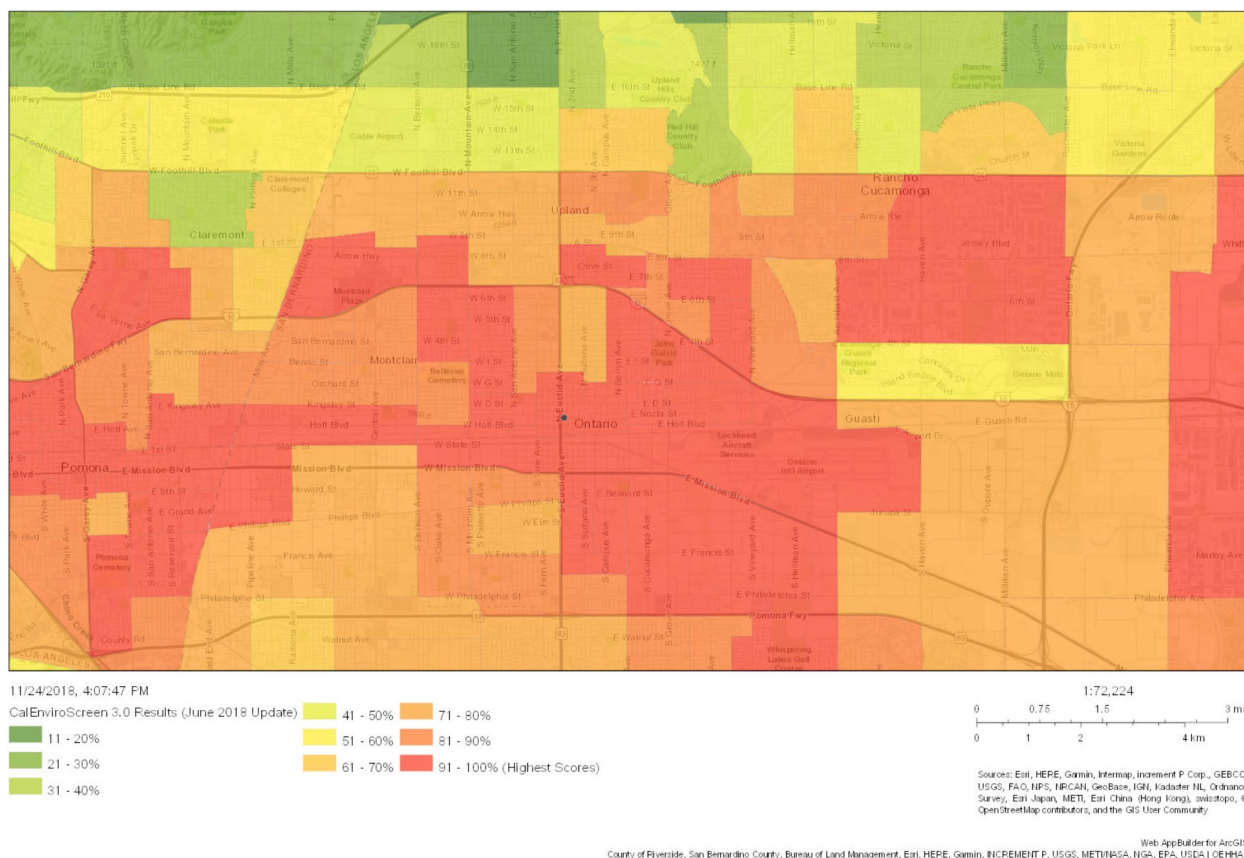


Figure 1. CalEnviroScreen results for the City of Ontario.

METHODS

To understand the goals and strategies of the environmental justice work in Ontario, I conducted semi-structured interviews with organizers in stakeholder environmental justice organizations and key members involved in the planning process of the Ontario Connects Plan. These individuals hold different positions of power in the city regarding implementing change, which enabled me to collect a variety of perspectives on the future of Ontario. Representing community grassroots organizing, I interviewed Maria Alonso, founder of Huerta Del Valle (HdV) and Arthur Levine, Board Member for HdV. HdV also played an active role in the Ontario Connects plan. Furthermore, I interviewed Scott Ochoa, Ontario City Manager, and David Sheasby, Deputy City Manager, representing Ontario City Officials. Finally, I interviewed Karen Thompson, Associate Planner for the City of Ontario and Healzone planner to complement policy makers and organizers with city planning. With semi-structured interviews, I was able to unfold a conversation with the interviewees that allow them to further explore their responses to questions (Longhurst 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I interviewed three main groups of stakeholders for environmental justice in the City of Ontario. These stakeholders included city government workers, city planners, and members of the community organization Huerta Del Valle. Four themes arose throughout all of the interviews: the emphasis on *community involvement*, *city government involvement*, *organizational limitations and navigating power relations*. Within these themes, the stakeholders noted key challenges in communicating and creating change, which include majority Spanish speaking communities, low-income neighbourhoods, economic development, food deserts, private vs public land, and low-education attainment. Using a “just growth” lense, I will analyze how rhetoric for growth in Ontario should not be limited in terms of economic growth but also should include social growth through community. I will conclude with limitations of these recommendations alongside discussion of the future of Ontario and the necessary research and attention needed in this area. Analysis of Environmental Justice discourse in Ontario can be more closely attributed to other areas of the Inland Empire and similar cities throughout California.

Community Involvement: Voice

When engaging in environmental justice work, community leaders, whether that be city officials or service organizations, have the responsibility to represent their community wholeheartedly with them not just to serve them. This responsibility lies in those who hold decision making power, and thus those decisions must rely on the voice or concerns of the community. However, in the city of Ontario, being a majority Latinx low income area, there are difficulties that present themselves through culture, identity, and societal pressures, which barriers to participation. Each Ontario stakeholder explained that including community voice must be intentional; it is not necessarily that the community does not want to participate, but there are so many other worries that come first. Community voices can be easily excluded if decision makers fail to cater to community needs.

Scott Ochoa, Ontario City Manager, describes how attendance to city council meetings and community meetings is difficult for many of the City of Ontario residents. He gives an example of a common Ontario resident and says:

If I have a bunch of folks that are making \$30,000, \$25,000, maybe even \$55,000 a year living in central Ontario, driving into LA or San Gabriel Valley, so they leave at 5 in the morning, they get back at 6-7 o'clock at night, there's not a lot of interest to come to a council meeting or come to a community meeting. They want a safe neighbourhood, they want the water to work, they want the trash to pick up they want low crime, and they want to be left alone for the most part.

This example emphasizes how income can be barrier to participation both in putting stress and worry for basic necessities and time. If viable job opportunities are only found outside of Ontario, then the community members spend less time in Ontario altogether and spend time commuting rather than participating. Furthermore, spending more time away and at work, residents may not feel a strong tie or responsibility to their community or that they even have the right to then participate if they are not present or interact with the community. Thus, decision making can easily leave out community voices if they cannot be physically present at the time and place of the meetings.

Maria Alonso, founder of Huerta Del Valle (HdV), complicates Ochoa's example by reflecting on identity as a barrier to participation for the Latinx community in particular. Alonso

explains that it is difficult to include Latinxs because “in our culture we have a lot of paradigms; we have a lot of pride in saying ‘I don't need anything from anyone, I don't need help from anyone’ or I can do everything by myself.” However, these issues that prompt a need for help or assistance stem from structural racism inequities that place people of color at a disadvantage. Therefore, accepting resources or simply participating in council meetings to address these issues is moving towards the direction of equity, which is deserved and not earned. These paradigms are then exacerbated by lack of education and information about participating or even resources in general. This is even further complicated by immigration status; Alonso explains that many individuals in the Latinx community feel:

If they take something from someone, from the system, from the government, from those that are offering resources, they feel that they won't be able to in the future you won't be able to apply for citizenship. If they go to an organization that is offering resources they have to give their contact info and now they are more exposed.

Alonso explains that because of misconceptions individuals in the community believe connecting with any kind of government is risky, and there is justified doubt of people with power. These complexities of culture and identity that complicate participation are not isolated solely to the Latinx population but seen as well in other minority groups (Manzo and Perkins 2006).

Language barriers are challenges that city officials, city planners and organizers must address as many Ontario residents are monolingual Spanish speakers. This discourages community interaction because of the potential that there is not a translator available, and the feeling of inferiority due to not knowing English. Furthermore, it also makes it difficult for decision makers to communicate with the community. Karen Thompson, Associate Planner for the City of Ontario and Healzone planner, says that her team works with an organization called El Sol specifically for the Healzone, which is a small section of Ontario that shows poor social determinants of health. El Sol offers community health workers that interact with the residents in their neighbourhoods through surveys, visioning sessions, community forums so planners can get feedback and help address the environmental health issues; essentially the organization brings local planning out into the community. The five community health workers called “Promotoras” are paid through a grant; they live in Ontario, so they are respected members in the community that bridge the gap between community and officials to engage individuals that might not have otherwise participated. This

program addresses several of the barriers mentioned including language, inclusivity, time and access. Since the Promotoras are community members they are able to relate and understand the community because they are a part of the community themselves. However, it is also based on available private grant funding, so if grants are not attained then these promotoras would be cut. Regardless of these bridging bodies, individuals sitting at the decision making table should represent the community as well which includes policy makers, city planners, and city officials, which are predominantly white.

Regardless of the barriers to participation, all of the stakeholders emphasized how important community input is and how their voices and concerns should always be at the forefront. Since the Latinx community makes up the largest percentage of people in the City of Ontario, many of their needs revolve around access to good jobs that are paying a living way, access to cleaner safer communities, safety, food, nutrition education, and the ability to actually procure nutritious food and other health issues like diabetes and obesity. From a community organization perspective, HdV has community as staff and leadership and tries to address some of the most prominent issues felt by the community simultaneously through their community garden. Arthur Levine, Board Member for HdV, explains that it is quintessential to support the Latinx community by really communicating with community to find their needs. Both place attachment and experiences should be considered in seeking participation and community empowerment as these are important factors in the drive to improve one's community (Manzo and Perkins 2006).

After conversations with the community about their concerns and issues experienced, all of the stakeholders emphasized the importance of self agency through different forms of empowerment. Alonso defined empowerment through core values that she instills in the mission of Huerta Del Valle; she says:

For me empowerment is certify me, educate me, inform me, share with me, teach me, learn from me, that's empowerment. It's that I learn from you and you learn from me. Certify me with something so that I can do something.

This definition of empowerment is at the root of community growth through building individual and collective social capital (De Lara 2018). The more individuals given the tools to communicate environmental injustices results in a ripple effect of the spread of knowledge to their friends, family, and neighbors to the overall benefit of everyone involved.

Specifically for the Ontario community, workforce development is a desperately needed source of empowerment that would address both community participation and community well-being altogether. Because many Ontario residents commute to Los Angeles and beyond to have access to higher paying jobs or just jobs in general, David Sheasby, Deputy City Manager, emphasizes that workforce development is a way to present more opportunities to Ontario residents locally. Sheasby says we must diversify our workforce to create these higher paying jobs and create these educational opportunities to redefine Ontario in a positive inclusive kind of way, emphasizing the importance of workforce development. Workforce development is directly tied to education and school involvement in city planning and vice versa. Thompson says that school administrators come to Healthy Ontario planning meetings to represent the youth they interact with. In this way, administrators have the power to instill district wide goals to uplift students of color in the area of environmental health. Knowledge of resources from the Healthy Ontario Initiative coupled with needed workforce development and education from K-12 to local community colleges will allow residents to live healthier and fulfilling lives with the ability to make decisions about their own well-being (Giloith 2000).

Yet, it is not enough to solely have those in power attend planning meetings. Youth in Ontario have shown the importance of youth in city planning (McKoy and Vincent 2007) but their involvement should also be intentional in their school curriculum not only afterschool or as an extracurricular activity. Thomson states that more youth involvement is critical for sustainability. After all, current city planning decisions will directly affect youth in the future long after the adults currently in power. For example, Thompson shares that youth in community centers have worked on a smoke free park campaign to get policy passed by our city council banning smoking in public parks. The youth succeeded, because they presented their concerns and needs clearly to policy makers, so the policy was passed. Engagement by all community coming from all backgrounds is needed to better the city as a whole.

City Government Involvement

As the body that has access to funding, it is important that the city government allocates resources to combat environmental justice issues. They have the power to plan for the future and facilitate projects that the community wants. David Sheasby says that fundamentally,

Local government should go back to the philosophy of we are them and they are us. Local government is embodiment of the residents, so I have always challenged the dichotomy of the city versus the community; they should be one and the same.

At the same time, local government as the decision making body has a responsibility to facilitate that interaction intentionally addressing the barriers to participation mentioned. He also states that community transformation and growth only comes from relationships. Being able to develop relationships with residents, key stakeholders, the nonprofit world, the school districts, those relationships are the ones that will truly uplift and transform our community through unique partnership of comradery across all sectors. These conversations are also important because environmental injustices are complex and can range from a point source to an unidentifiable source or a broad system. Thus, solutions do not always exist in one field, and expertise and dialogue from multiple sectors is needed.

The city officials and community organizers interviewed have had genuine partnership especially through their work with the Transformative Climate Communities grant application process. Sheasby says that the Strategic Growth Council, which administers the grant, wanted to see a genuine partnership between local government and those members of the community that are active in the environmental field to guarantee a successful partnership using the city as apparatus of finance and governance. The grant itself calls for community and local government collaboration, thus open dialogue of shared goals of environmental justice must be addressed before even deciding to begin the grant. However, this is not the norm; both parties noted that other city governments do not give importance to environmental justice issues, so even applying to this grant is revolutionary for a city in a historically politically conservative region like the Inland Empire (De Lara 2018). Levine states that other cities simply do not want to do this work, are not concentrating on it, or do not have the financial backing to put it into action. Without the financial backing, Levine says that Huerta Del Valle might have experienced more resistance to their ideas of projects for the TCC grant, but also emphasized that Ontario has been progressive in doing this work because of two prior grants received from the Kaiser foundation. The Kaiser grants have backed this work, which shows the city that there is great incentive to doing it and there are resources that prioritize environmental health and justice work. Yet, receiving the TCC grant is just the beginning to addressing pressing environmental injustices. Sheasby emphasizes that the

projects the grant funds are a “catalyst” for future change as it funds permanent projects that the community can benefit from for a sustained period of time.

Besides finances, the city of course manages the politics and the permits behind projects like Ontario Connects. They have the ability to make policies, codes, ordinances that help push environmental justice agendas forward. For instance, Thompson explains how there was no development code or ordinance that allowed a larger scale urban garden, so they amended regulations to allow for that garden use everywhere while giving Huerta del Valle city owned land. This example shows how cities can be allies to community based organizations by giving the the tools and resources to fulfill their goals, as a power holding body both in terms of regulations and funding.

Organizational Limitations

Because of the location of the city and the existing built environment, the City of Ontario is a logistics hub, which is an area that houses activities related to transportation, organization, separation, coordination and distribution of goods for national and international transit. There are three freeways two rail lines, and an international airport, which facilitate a heavy warehousing industry sector in the city for the manufacture and distribution of goods. In our capitalistic system, success is measured by the growth of trade, the local, regional and national economy without taking into account the external costs such as environmental impacts on vulnerable communities.

Moving forward, Thompson and other city planners work on policies like buffer zones, which create buffers between residential and industry uses with feet of landscaping or business parks with light uses. As a city planner, Thompson says:

The logistics hub is the nature of where we're located, unfortunately. I think every city has challenges, but when you work with the residents and community you can come up with creative solutions that contribute to quality of life.

However, these challenges only becomes more difficult when industry grows, especially when becoming a logistics hub is seen as economic growth. Ochoa explains that if we're gonna measure success by the growth of trade and the growth of the local regional and national economy, then we also have to pay attention to the environmental impacts. He further explains that this analysis

includes the sustainability impacts of the folks that live in that region and more directly in that community and those neighbourhoods with all of these assets. Thus, these individuals living in the more remote areas of the city by the manufacturing areas of the city must not be forgotten because they are pushed to live in these areas by their income; every resident's well-being should be considered and embody a 'just city' (Griffin 2015).

In an effort to address these issues, Sheasby noted that the city cannot do anything until a factory or warehouse decides to relocate, then the city can reclaim the land. Therefore, Sheasby emphasized that the city must do "advanced planning and diligently." The city of Ontario currently is right updating their general plan, the Ontario Plan, and updating the climate action plan to then regulate future contacts between community and industry. Sheasby recognizes that past planning especially in the central part of the city did not recognize long term effects of industry on community, and he says "you can see some of the dirtiest oldest industrial that we have in town." Therefore, these are the job opportunities that exist in the community for workers in warehouses, which is why many commute out of the city to at least attempt to receive a higher paying job. Again, Levine responds to this economic issues with the "need for training and education around all kinds of skills, like computer technology or english as a second language" to move people out of these industries to other opportunities, such as the green job market, that are not risking their environmental health in the same way.

Navigating Power Relations

Current city structures tries to incorporate community voice as much as possible. However, there will always be limitations as long as we are operating under a capitalistic structure. Environmental injustice will always be measured against monetary cost and efficiency rather than the impacts on communities or even individuals within a community. Ultimately changing systems is extremely difficult, Levine explains:

Environmental justice, social justice, organizing, radical social change, egalitarian society are all words that can be red flags depending on who you are working with. Some people think we need slow step by step reform in order to make change, and others demand that we end injustices towards communities of color as as soon as possible and say we need to have reparations, justice equality to change whos in power When you discuss issues of power, power doesn't give itself up willingly.

Levine also emphasizes that land is a form of power, but land also is not given up easily, as the city has to wait until industry leaves to reclaim land. He said that having access to the four acre farm currently is already significantly more than other communities have access to. To create even more jobs and provide healthy food in a food desert, more land and therefore more gardens would be needed. Thus, as highlighted before, there must be clear communication between city officials and community efforts such as Huerta Del Valle to facilitate the transition into more green development such as community gardens. More importantly, Levine states that the more land that is converted into these community spaces is another piece of land that isn't turning into a warehouse, something that's potentially polluting and "everytime we plant a tree, we are contributing to growing a safe community greenspace."

Through the needed communication between the city and community, there still will be a power dynamic because of funding. Thus, the city must make these projects a priority in their budgets just as much as other departments like police and fire. However, according to the city manager, it is not that simple. Ochoa explains:

After doing this job for as long as I have, it's tough to convince local elected officials or any elected officials for that matter to not put money in public safety. When you think of local government, what do they think of, police and fire. Don't put money there, go put money in solar panels, or got put money in a community compost program because, but it just isn't something that hits you right between the eyes as 'wow this is something that we really need.' But, if you're using somebody else's money, in this case the Transformative Climate Communities initiative money, well then it takes away a lot of that institutional resistance so let's do this experiment.

Yet, it is important that the city manager in particular recognizes the reality of the makeup of the leadership and is willing to push for EJ and community participation (Feldman and Khademian, 2007). However, the Transformative Climate Communities money is not a permanent source of funding, and there are other projects throughout other cities in California that also need the funding just as much. This may then require leadership to change and power to shift that does see the severity of these issues (De Lara 2018). Thus, again to address these environmental injustice issues, it is making them priorities throughout local government, state government and federal government if these are the current power holding bodies that implement policy and have access to funding.

Of the larger issues, air quality severely affects Ontario but it is not just particular to Ontario. Sheasby explains that air quality in Ontario is so much worse than what you would observe in Los Angeles partly because of vehicular pollution. The issue then lies in that air quality is not regulated at the local level nor the state level but at the federal level through the Environmental Protection Agency. Sheasby says explains:

“There's only so much we can do through some local type of projects but there's these macro issues that are really larger and out of our control from a city perspective. We can spend our 35 million dollars and we can do everything right here in the City of Ontario, and we'll still suffer from that terrible air quality.”

But from an environmental justice perspective, remedying air quality should be one of the utmost priorities. He explains that some secondary type problems that we can better address, is the warehousing issue through zoning and buffer policies as Thompson mentioned. Yet, the power the city has does not even extend over the power that industry has in this region through long-term contracts, and the land they are using among community homes.

However, people power must not be ignored as well. Community members will always need to put pressure on the elected officials to make sure they are fulfilling their roles in representing and working with the community. Not only that, our society structure could shift into a more codependent economy. Alonso described managing trade the way our ancestor did but instead of using money trading commodities or “things of survival.” This method of trade also takes into account individual knowledge and strength in cultivating a certain commodity, and that knowledge can continually be passed down and empower future generations for self sufficiency within their community.

Limitations and future directions

This research was limited by the number of available stakeholder interviews, interviewing community members without help city or board positions, and further policy analysis. More interviews would broaden the viewpoints observed and strengthen the relevance of the themes already observed. However, the issue is that there are not any other organizations focusing directly on environmental justice and specifying in Ontario to interview. On the other hand, organizations

that span the greater Inland Empire and neighbouring cities could also be interviewed to compare viewpoints. As a result, there would be a more in depth analysis of the region and the broader impacts of environmental justice organizing beyond city bounds as the injustices felt are similar in the area in general. Furthermore, examining policies in depth that are currently prohibiting structural change is important to understand the background of this research and advocate for clear future policy implementation. Most importantly, individual community members should be interviewed because their voice and perspectives are important to reinforce and realign the goals of both city officials and community organizations.

This research is also only the beginning and a small part of larger in depth analyses of environmental justice in Ontario and other cities outside bigger cities like Los Angeles. Understanding the complexities of environmental justice in each region, there will be more room for critique and the overall empowerment of all communities not just those that have the resources to explore these topics.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Justice must be considered and analyzed in all aspects of environmentalism as communities of color continue to face environmental health disadvantages based on where they live and work (Pastor, Sadd, and Hipp 2001). The City of Ontario is just one of countless examples of where environmental injustices occur, which means those in power need to build environmental justice curriculum into their plans and budgets. This is especially important in city planning as seen in this study, where many of the foundational issues are a result of poor planning and inattention to the communities being affected. Therefore, moving forward city planning must be intentional in considering community impacts.

From this research, the following can be concluded: local city government has a lot of power in framing their work through an environmental justice lense or completely working without it. The City of Ontario has been taking steps to address environmental justice issues because of funding like TCC, which shows how important this work is for the future. Funding controls what conversations and what dialogue can place and to what extent, so it is best to allocate funding to community leaders without unnecessary restriction to their work centered on empowerment and liberation. Furthermore, all work and projects whether that be through community organization or

through the city must center community voice regardless of the barriers to entry for the individuals. As a whole, these stakeholders must work to empower individuals, which would move the community forward altogether. However, Ontario is a specific example of positive dialogue between all communicating parties. The interviewees noted that this is not the reality for many of the neighbouring cities and within local government in general. Thus, more studies like this one should take place to analyze what is being done in other locations and to foster dialogues between working bodies around environmental justice issues.

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