



Just  
Transition  
Alliance

# KCI Case Study on Los Jardines Institute and the Justice40 Coalition

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# Acknowledging and Honoring Coalitional Relations

- Environmental justice movement organizers
- Insights from 90+ years of combined movement experience
- Richard Moore, Los Jardines Institute co-coordinator
- Dr. Sofia Martinez
- New Mexico Justice40 Coalition
- Ananda Lee Tan, Tyler Norman, and Dr. Fernando Tormos-Aponte, Just Transition Alliance

# Previewing Today's Talk

- Why environmental justice (EJ) to advance climate policy
- Case study: Los Jardines Institute (LJI), New Mexico No False Solutions (NM NFS), and NM Justice40
- Coalition building for just transitions
  - Principles and processes
  - Community- and worker-led transitions away from fossil fuels
- Challenges
- Recommendations
- Methods used that should inform future research

# Advancing Climate Policy via EJ

- Voluntary nature of Paris Agreement for emissions reduction targets
- Slow pace of climate policy adoption and implementation
- Exclusions and inequities mark environmental mobilization history in Global North (Brulle and Jenkins 2006)
- Disproportionate climate crisis harms
- EJ requires greater representation of communities impacted by environmental threats and harms, unlike other environmental mobilizations
- Community and civil society involvement in policy development and implementation for greater effective management of common resources (Villamayor-Tomas and García-López 2018)
- EJ mobilization uniquely suited to advance effective climate policy development and implementation

# Case Study

- Grassroots coalition building in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA
- Shows impacts when local, most impacted communities and workers lead just transitions
- Demonstrates resource allocations that advance a just transition and that block resources for fossil fuel projects
- Model for bottom-up, community-led advocacy and implementation to reduce climate crisis threats
- Involved LJI and NM NFS

# About Just Transitions (JT)

- Principles:
  - Thriving and healthy communities, economies, and environments can coexist.
  - To transition away from fossil fuel dependence justly, transitions must not sacrifice public health, the environment, jobs, or economic assets.
  - Any communities and workers affected by the energy transition must be compensated for their losses.
- Practices and Processes:
  - Ensure full participation and informed consent of frontline workers and communities in decision-making processes; follow their leadership in developing policy solutions.
  - There are no singular approaches to achieving a just transition, so we call for ***just transitions***.
  - Uplift and seek to advance Indigenous Peoples' visions for just transitions that pursue Indigenous sovereignty, restore Indigenous relationships with and responsibility for Mother Earth, and engage in transformative action to achieve Indigenous community well-being.

# LJI JT Examples

- Agri-Cultura Network: Farmers' co-op with 75 organic farms and ranches
  - Offers ag education and Grow the Growers Training Programs
- Local Food Solutions: Produce distribution cooperative
  - Large-scale clients throughout city
  - Identify toxic products in Dollar Stores products and work toward their elimination
- Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge: Community-managed land
  - Coalition raised funds to purchase former dairy farm that polluted local aquifer
  - Organizers transformed a would-be carbon-intensive development into ecosystem restoration and de-aridification projects
- “Food as medicine” program: Doctors can prescribe healthy food and provide vouchers for free organic produce
- Air pollution monitoring programs



Friends of Valle de Oro

# Developing Coalitions

- LJI, NM NFS, and the Justice 40 coalition: Building on years of collective EJ experiences
- Justice 40: Beyond Biden Administration's policy
- Engaging with and building a coalition with many affected communities and policy actors, including on public health issues, housing, and agriculture
- Shaping policy making
- Communicating problems in accessible ways to those most impacted
  - Plain-language fact sheets
  - Meeting spaces for sharing experiences and agenda building
- Commitment to both urban and rural communities
- Feeling and having shared ownership -> developed a New Mexico Justice40 coalition charter



# Coalitional Commitments

- Practice the principles of inclusion, democracy, and justice
  - Principles of EJ and the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing
- Abide by the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) to advance community benefits and avoid harms
- Build capacity for community and organizational self-determination
- Address own organization's internal structures of oppression and resolving internal and inter-organizational conflict restoratively

# Curbing Emissions through Civil Society Coalition-Building

- Civil society groups can be catalysts of policy change to promote environmentally just governance.
- Local EJ organizing can reduce barriers to access to government funding by designing and advocating for policies that reduce the administrative burdens placed on them.
- EJ groups can seek policy alignment across subnational, national, and international policies.
- Community-led collaborations can support efforts to apply for funding and mitigate the negative consequences of obstructive bureaucratic designs of finance mechanisms.
- Collaborations can aid in developing collaborative ties for regranting from nonprofit clearinghouses to community-based organizations.
- Community oversight and consultation needed to block privileging the privileged (Tormos-Aponte, García-López, and Painter 2021).

# Funding that Directly Benefits Impacted Communities

- The NM Justice40 Coalition
  - Direct federal funds to benefit communities and curb greenhouse gas emissions regionally and locally
  - Push to adopt local policy that empowers community members to participate in resource allocation decision-making processes, while preserving community autonomy and self-determination
  - Shape executive orders and resolutions at state and local levels
  - Guide community funds distribution and contribute to management oversight committee

# Challenges

- Advocating for effective implementation of climate change policies burdens communities and organizations that have already been burdened with the impact of climate change and the need to advocate for climate action.
- Navigating bureaucratic hurdles to gain access to funding often leads to exhaustion.
- Developing coalitions of influence requires intense labor.
- Uniting different groups with varying priorities and ensuring those who are benefitting should be the ones benefitting is challenging.
- Engaging in simultaneous proactive and reactive work requires pushing resource allocations toward community needs, while also fighting against the diversion of funds for false solutions.
- Changing priorities of presidential administrations is a lot to navigate, though, as LJI's Richard Moore says, **"Some of the biggest victories in decarbonizing were not dependent on federal funding."**

# Organizing with Critical Hope

- In contexts of political volatility, civil society groups seek consistent and increased support from the philanthropic community to sustain and scale up the operation of EJ organizations and programming.
- Obstructions to climate action in one scale of governance may not preclude advancements above or below that scale.
- Pursuing climate action across levels of governance has numerous benefits for environmental governance (Tormos-Aponte and García-López 2018).

# Recommendations

- Policies should include support for coalition-building and the operational costs of organizations involved.
- Just transitions require local knowledge of trusted community-based organizations and their ability to get diverse groups to become involved in energy and broader systemic transitions.
- Need greater resources devoted to community organizing and coalitional work.
- Policies must promote greater awareness and diffusion of principles of environmental and climate justice and inclusive organizing.
- These measures can aid civil society groups pursuing climate action to address the challenges of sustaining and coordinating a decentralized movement network.
- Moore calls for embracing horizontal and liberatory pedagogies that emphasize knowledge exchanges and the recognition of the value of community-held and generated knowledge, including Indigenous Peoples' knowledge.

# Methods

- Analyzed archival materials and conducted and thematically analyzed one interview
- Community and movement-based participatory research
  - Prefigures a form of movement-based research that establishes relationships of reciprocity among researchers and organizers
  - Recognizes organizers and the communities they are accountable to as knowledge-holders and knowledge generators
  - Seeks to avoid solely focusing on problems communities face by also focusing on community desires and efforts to advance solutions to their problems
  - Builds on a tradition that uses research as part of a broader series of actions aimed at advancing social change and resisting harmful policies in marginalized communities
  - Responsive to calls from Indigenous Peoples to ethically uplift Indigenous Peoples' knowledge
- Prioritizes the lived experiences and leadership of communities
- Fosters a deeper understanding of community and civil society needs, ensuring that research outcomes are meaningful and beneficial to all participants in the pursuit of transformative change

# Future Just Transitions Research

- Movement-based participatory research must be based on relationships of trust and reciprocity with organizers and the communities to which they are accountable.
- The EJ movement has experienced knowledge extraction from actors in research and academic positions of privilege that have, at times, caused harm due to the inaccurate or adverse conclusions, prescriptions, and assumptions made due to their detachment from the movement.
- Researchers can play an important role in enhancing the intelligibility of policy and the technical aspects of the application of existing knowledge. Researchers who only spend minutes, weeks, or months observing movement work will often face intractable hardships to accurately represent the rich and long history of the environmental justice movement and the activist traditions it builds and carries on.
- As with policy that affects them, communities must be involved in setting the ground rules for research. We argue that research lacks rigor when it cannot draw insights into social problems from those who hold knowledge of them stemming from lived experiences. **“Our people know and understand those issues... they have to see it, touch it, smell it, or taste it. It’s going to be hard to organize around things they can’t directly experience,” said Richard Moore.**
- It’s hard to do research when researchers have not directly experienced the topics being studied.