Environmental Justice 2.0: new Latino environmentalism in Los Angeles

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Abstract:

This paper presents the results of ethnographic research conducted with several environmental justice (EJ) organizations in Latino communities of Los Angeles, California. Traditional EJ politics revolves around research and advocacy to reduce discriminatory environmental exposures, risks, and impacts. However, I argue that in recent years there has been a qualitative change in EJ politics, characterized by four main elements: (1) a move away from the reaction to urban environmental "bads" (e.g. polluting industries) in the city towards a focus on the production of nature in the city; (2) strategies that are less dependent on the legal, bureaucratic, and technical "regulatory route"; (3) the formation of a distinctive "Latino environmental ethic" that offers a more complex consideration of the place of race in environmental justice organizing; and (4) a spatial organization of EJ politics that moves away from hyperlocal, vertical organization towards diversified city-wide networks that include EJ organizations, mainstream environmental groups, nonprofits, foundations, and entrepreneurs. This shift in EJ movement politics is shaped by broader political-economic changes, including the shift from post-Fordist to neoliberal and now green economy models of urban development; the influence of neoliberal multiculturalism in urban politics; and the increasingly prominent role of Latinos in city, state, and national politics. New spaces of Latino environmental justice also reflect the ambitions of Los Angeles as a global city, with urban growth increasingly framed in an international discourse of sustainability that combines quality of life, environmental, and economic development rationales.

Key words: environmental justice, environmental politics, Latinos, Los Angeles
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Introduction

Where is the U.S. environmental justice movement headed? Environmental justice (EJ) has succeeded in broadening the relevance of environmentalism for working-class communities of color, expanding the issue domain of conservation, stopping many instances of discriminatory land use change, and institutionalizing its agenda in local, state, and federal government policies (Taylor 2002; Mohai, Pellow & Roberts 2009). However, some scholars express concern that the movement has lost momentum and energy, with only sporadic political achievements and a stagnation of EJ rhetoric (Benford 2005; Brulle and Pellow 2006; Foreman 2003). Meanwhile, the advent of the New Environmental Politics of Urban Development (NEPUD; Jonas, Gibbs, & While 2011) suggests that the anti-development stance and oppositional tactics of many environmental justice groups, born of the 1960s Civil Rights Era, are at odds with current political economic realities. Can the EJ movement change with the times? Is such a change already underway?

In this paper, I argue that there has been a palpable and qualitative change in the discourse and practice of EJ politics in the Latino community of Los Angeles. To make sense of changing tendencies in EJ politics, I present a generalized descriptive model that compares an earlier yet continuing phase of EJ organizing, which I term EJ 1.0, with a more recently developed phase, EJ 2.0. The difference between the two styles of organizing derives from interrelated changes in the issue domain, political strategies, and spatial organization of the EJ movement: (1) a move away from the reaction to urban environmental "bads" in the city (e.g. polluting industries) towards a focus on the production of nature in the city; (2) strategies that are
less dependent on the legal, bureaucratic, and technical "regulatory route" towards a "de-centering" of the state; (3) the formation of a distinctive "Latino environmental ethic" that offers a more complex consideration of the place of race in EJ organizing; and (4) a spatial organization of EJ politics that moves away from hyperlocal, vertical organization towards diversified city-wide networks that include EJ organizations, mainstream environmental groups, nonprofits, foundations, and a new breed of "environmental entrepreneurs."

While some of the reasons for these changes may be somewhat endogenous to environmental politics in the city, there are also external, macro-level, and structural factors that explain the development of EJ 2.0: a shift in the regional political economy from a post-Fordist to neoliberal model, the latter more recently encompassing a move towards a new "green economy"; the rise of neoliberal multiculturalism, which privileges essentialized claims about cultural identity; and dramatic changes in the political structure of Los Angeles, where Latinos have become part of the power elite, perhaps still not at a level commensurate with their share of the population, but one that makes representations of Latinos as a marginalized, subalteren group less tenable than before.

Admittedly, the distinction between "EJ 1.0" and "EJ 2.0" is simplified, schematic, and overtly dichotomous. These categories should be considered as two ends of a rather narrow political spectrum; as a result, organizational missions or analytic perspectives that seem more aligned with EJ 1.0 might appear broadly similar to EJ 2.0, and organizations may collaborate across this artificial categorical boundary. Continued commitments to social equity and to some kind of improvement or maintenance of environmental quality are characteristic of EJ organizations in Los Angeles, across the spectrum. Moreover, the four new tendencies in EJ politics that I have identified would not necessarily coincide, consistently, in any given
organization or political action. Although the EJ 2.0 style is undoubtedly newer, many organizations continue to base their work on a classic environmental justice frame, often with great success. Nevertheless, as I explain in the conclusion, it is important for EJ organizers, activists, and scholars to recognize that success of the EJ movement depends on recognition of shortcomings of classic modes of organizing and shrewd reaction to larger social, cultural, and political-economic trends.

What I call the "new" Latino urban environmentalism in Los Angeles may be the leading edge, or perhaps just a local manifestation, of a national trend of transformation of environmental justice politics. EJ 2.0 bears a strong resemblance to what Agyeman (2005) has called the "just sustainability paradigm" (JSP), a politically viable "rapprochement" between environmental justice and mainstream environmentalism. Relatively new urban environmental actions, many of them related to the nexus between food, health, and environment (e.g. farmer's markets, community gardens, and "food justice" activism), grapple with how to couple sustainability and justice, for low-income minority communities, but outside the classic EJ frame, and in the context of an emergent "green economy" (Alkon 2012; Gottlieb & Joshi 2010). Thus, while the empirical base of this paper draws exclusively on experience in Southern California, and specifically that of Latino communities, I believe that the movement shifts analyzed here can be found in other places, and among other ethnic groups—although varying by local circumstance, due to the decentralized nature of the EJ movement.

This paper is based on three months of intensive field work with environmental organizations mainly serving the Latino communities of Los Angeles. I interviewed leaders of twelve EJ and community development organizations in the area, including Mothers of East L.A., Pacoima Beautiful, Mujeres de la Tierra, The City Project, Unión de Vecinos, East L.A.
Community Corporation, Urban Semillas, and Anahuak Youth Soccer Association. In some cases, I was also able to speak with rank-and-file members of the organizations. I also observed and participated in community planning meetings, environmental education classes, public demonstrations, community garden projects, and other activities these organizations were involved in from January-March 2011, mainly in Pacoima, East L.A. and Boyle Heights, Northeast L.A. (Highland Park and Lincoln Heights), Maywood, and Baldwin Hills. Recorded interviews were coded and analyzed thematically using a grounded theory approach, aided by Atlas.ti software. Evidence from the interviews and participant observation was supplemented by documents and reports the organizations provided, media accounts, and web sources.

To be clear, not all of these organizations classify themselves as "environmental justice" groups. For many of these groups, the range of issue advocacy, from tenants’ rights to neighborhood safety to transit planning, is so broad that EJ is far from an adequate descriptor. Almost none of the organization leaders accepted the "environmental justice" label uncritically, and our conversations often revolved around the politics of movement discourse. Many activists I spoke with carefully situated their work in relation to both (mainstream) "environmentalism" and "environmental justice." Insofar as identities, in this case organizational identities, are constructed relationally (Wade 1997), such attempts at differentiation are to be expected. Moreover, as I explain below, the articulation, presentation, and performance of "brand" identities is especially important for "entrepreneurial" environmentalists, who fill highly specific niches in the new green economy.

In the following section, I draw on the EJ literature and the empirical evidence from my Los Angeles research to elaborate on the characteristic features that distinguish EJ 1.0 and EJ 2.0. Subsequently, I identify long-term, structural shifts that promote changes in EJ discourse.
Environmental Justice 2.0: the New Latino Urban Environmentalism

Reaction to environmental "bads" vs. production of nature in the city

From its roots in localized battles in the 1970s and 1980s, the EJ movement has been centered on the reaction to environmental "bads," mainly in cities, but also in rural areas (Bryant 2003; Pellow & Brulle 2005). In classic EJ politics, communities organize to defend themselves against present or imminent threats to human health and well-being from industrial development, land use change, and toxic contamination. However, a more recent mode of environmental justice activism, while not totally abandoning this issue domain, presents a contrast with an earlier generation. In effect, rather than reacting to local, neighborhood-level hazards as they develop, EJ groups are taking a more proactive approach to restoring nature and producing new environmental "goods" in the city, which are construed mainly as spatially fixed amenities such as parks, greenspace, bike paths and trails, and community gardens. A more expansive notion of environmental "goods" includes the availability of new job opportunities, program funding, and investment options that revolve around the new green economy.

In Los Angeles, the standard modus operandi of EJ 1.0 groups has been to mobilize the grassroots at the neighborhood level in reaction to sudden development threats. One classic and well-documented example is the fight against LANCER, a planned municipal facility for incinerating garbage and generating electricity, in South-Central Los Angeles (Marquez 2012; Pardo 1990; Pulido 1996). A coalition of community organizations, including Mothers of East LA (MELA), invoked a history of discrimination in the siting of industrial activity in poor,
minority communities, mobilized effectively, and used legal-regulatory tools to stop the LANCER project.

EJ 1.0 issue advocacy and activism persist because environmental harm is not evenly and fairly distributed throughout the city. Epidemiological and socio-demographic studies show that low-income communities of color are disproportionately exposed to airborne pollutants and toxic disposal facilities, with an associated risk of cancer, asthma, and other health impacts (Morello-Frosch, et al. 2002; LACEHJ 2010). More recent policy efforts, such as the "Clean Up, Green Up" campaign, led by a coalition of EJ groups in Los Angeles, or the fight to limit expansion of the Port of Los Angeles (Siegler 2013), carry on this important line of issue advocacy, aided by new methods of analyzing cumulative impacts of pollutants.

Despite the fact that many EJ 1.0 battles are still being waged, there has been a palpable shift in emphasis among organizations towards the production of new environmental "goods" in the city. The fate of the 14-acre LANCER site symbolizes this change: from 1994 to 2006, it became the home of South Central Farm, a green oasis in the midst of poverty and industrial land use (Mares & Peña, 2010). The transformation of the disused site into a greenspace of labor, food production, agroecological diversity, and deep cultural expression, especially for Latino immigrants, was an avant-garde illustration of EJ 2.0. Although South Central Farm met a tragic end, the publicity around its demolition served to energize the now-thriving urban agriculture movement in Southern California (Cultivate L.A. 2013; Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010).

Some of the most prominent recent battles over land use in the city relate to the expansion of parks. The City Project, an NGO founded by Robert Garcia, a civil rights attorney, has made equitable distribution of, and access to, parks the core of its mission. A shift in community priorities on children's health is partly responsible for the renewed interest in parks.
While environmental toxins and air pollutants are still a persistent health hazard in low-income Latino communities in Southern California, in the last decade or so increasingly more attention has been focused on the problem of childhood obesity. Arguably, childhood obesity and its associated health effects, such as diabetes, represent a more persistent and widespread threat to the Latino community than toxins in the environment (Foreman 2003, p. 118; Pérez-Escamilla & Melgar-Quinonez 2011).

This health crisis has given stronger moral weight to the pro-parks campaign; organizations such as The City Project are fighting not just for aesthetically pleasing amenities, but rather for sites of active recreation in the interest of public health (Garcia & Strongin, 2011). As Garcia explained to me, The City Project is "pushing the envelope of environmental justice because traditional environmental justice has stopped bad things from happening in communities of color, stopped toxic sites and dumping in communities of color. We are pushing the envelope of environmental justice because we are affirmatively creating public goods in communities of color" (García interview, 2/3/11). While there has been rightful concern about the appeal of new park space, such as an expanded Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, for the poor, people of color, and immigrants (Byrne, 2012; Byrne, Wolch, & Zhang, 2009), Latino-centered EJ organizations are increasingly protagonists in discussions about the production and control of new urban greenspace, such as the "Cornfield" park in Downtown L.A. (discussed in more detail below).

*Regulatory route vs. "decentering the state"

Changes in the issue domain of environmental justice politics are only a part of the story. After all, advocacy for equality in sharing the burden of environmental harm can also
complement attempts to reconnect with, restore, or even reconceptualize nature in the city. A more crucial change relates less to the substance of EJ claims and more to political strategies and tactics. The state, via the courts and regulatory agencies, has been the key arbiter of EJ claims. EJ 2.0, however, decenters the state, with much of the political action taking place in a network of NGOs, nonprofits, businesses, and foundations, thus adapting environmental justice to the conditions of a neoliberal political economy.

Commonly, EJ 1.0 organizations have used legal strategies to compel action from the government or polluting industries, or to prevent undesirable development and land uses of all sorts. These organizations have relied on a well-developed corpus of environmental law, based on federal and state regulations that date back to the 1960s and 1970s. The most essential tool in the EJ legal arsenal has been the environmental impact report (EIR), required prior to any government-funded development due to both federal law (NEPA, 1970) and state law (in California, the CEQA, or California Environmental Quality Act of 1970). Private industries and government entities must demonstrate compliance with the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. The federal Superfund law provides funds and technical resources for remediation of contaminated sites. Courts have interpreted Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as prohibiting discriminatory environmental impacts. More recently developed legal theories of "cumulative impacts" may compel mitigation of emission of air pollutants, even if they meet federal regulations for acceptable concentrations, if complainants can prove threats to human health from synergistic mixing and long-term exposure to pollutants in specific locations (e.g., adjacent to freeways) (LACEHJ, 2010; Morello-Frosch, et al. 2011). With many legal tactics to choose from, lawsuits brought by EJ organizations may compel corporations and regulators to
action, but detractors argue that lawsuits (or even threats of legal action) delay development, sometimes indefinitely.

A case in point of successful EJ 1.0 action in Los Angeles was the fight against the location of a state prison in East L.A. in the mid-1980s, as Frank Villalobos, a leader of MELA at the time, related to me in an interview. The state Department of Corrections planned to build a prison in East L.A., since a recent state law had mandated that a prison be built somewhere in Los Angeles County (based on a reasonable argument that the county was responsible for the largest share of state prisoners). The fight to stop the prison in East L.A. actually proceeded along two fronts: in the state legislature, powerful local politicians such as Gloria Molina negotiated intensely, while neighborhood leaders mobilized the grassroots opposition in East L.A. Religious, business, and civic leaders formed an ad hoc coalition for the express purpose of stopping the development.

The legal strategy centered on forcing the Department of Corrections to comply with every aspect of CEQA and other applicable regulations, including the need for open hearings and comprehensive EIRs. Whatever the merits of the claims, the underlying goal behind all of these legal maneuvers was to stall the development process indefinitely, making it too expensive, time-consuming, or politically unpalatable to continue to pursue the project. The Coalition Against the Prison never expected compliance with the substance of their CEQA complaint; rather, CEQA was used to halt the development altogether. The strategy worked, as the prison was never built, and this mobilization led to the creation of MELA, which employed a similar strategy to stop the LANCER development a few years later.

Despite its effectiveness in some classic EJ battles, this approach has become more problematic and arguably less effective in the last couple of decades. Unsurprisingly, the cost of
legal action can sap the resources of grassroots EJ groups. Villalobos claims that the Coalition Against the Prison spent over $2 million; although that fight was successful, community defenders are likely to encounter financial limits to pursuing this legal strategy before developers do. Second, as has been well-documented, across the country there has been environmental regulatory rollback, marked by indifference or antipathy from regulators and the courts (Gordon & Harley, 2005). The civil rights law basis for EJ claims (Title VI) has been weakened over time, and polluting industry, reacting to the success of EJ opposition through the 1990s, takes special care to be fully compliant with environmental regulations (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts 2009; Marquez, 2012). Between 1994 and 2006, the EPA received over 100 Title VI-based EJ complaints and none of the cases were resolved (Brulle & Pellow, 2006, p. 114). Overall, institutionalizing EJ concerns within the environmental regulatory apparatus, such as a federal office of environmental justice formed during the Clinton administration, has not had much of a real impact (Brulle & Pellow 2006, p. 114; Gordon & Harley, 2005).

How do EJ activists in Los Angeles react to the stagnation of favored political tactics? One approach is to circumvent obstacles along the regulatory route through a direct takeover of political power. In Maywood, a small, densely-populated, and predominantly Hispanic municipality between South-Central and East L.A., there are long-standing concerns over the safety of the domestic water supply, which is delivered by small private companies. An alliance of Unión de Vecinos (UdV), based in Maywood and Boyle Heights, and the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water (EJCW), a statewide organization, initially fought to improve the water supply through existing regulatory and legal means, i.e. by taking repeated samples of water, having them tested in labs for chemical concentrations, and sharing results with the EPA and state regulators. Yet, this approach has never decisively proven higher-than-permitted
chemical concentrations, and the city's water companies have resisted going beyond what the law mandates (Duhigg 2009). Frustrated with this "paralysis of analysis" (Hynes & Lopez 2007, p. 31)—or, as Leonardo Vilchis, leader of UdV, puts it, "the sample game"—UdV and EJCW decided on a completely different tack, shrewdly using the laws of incorporation of the water companies to elect progressive community members to their boards of directors, in order to transform the companies and make improvements from within.

As an example of innovative political strategy, Maywood's story is interesting but probably exceptional. More typically, EJ 2.0-oriented organizations work through legal-regulatory mechanisms when convenient or necessary, but they are also able to work around the state by relying on networks of foundations, nonprofits, and small and large environmental NGOs. Increasingly, urban green initiatives often take the form of public-private partnerships, a favored form of neoliberal governance, for example to create new greenspace (Boone, et al. 2009; Perkins 2010; Pincetl 2003). Developing the so-called Cornfield site near Downtown into a state park is a case in point. While the state parks agency, using funds from a special bond issue, ultimately purchased the land from a developer to create the park, the private Trust for Public Land brokered the deal and provided funds for environmental remediation, while coalitions of smaller organizations, some working within the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río de Los Angeles coalition, provided legal expertise and grassroots support for the park (Barnett 2001; Gottlieb 2007; Kibel 2004; Sanchez 2001). Somewhat controversially, the Annenberg Foundation provided some of the park's infrastructure and, through a surrogate urban agriculture and art collective ("Farmlab") essentially managed part of the park until quite recently. Other big foundations, such as the Liberty Hill Foundation, are major players in L.A.'s environmental justice and parks movements, because of the financial resources that they command (and which
Geographers and other critical urban political ecologists have noted similar trends across the U.S. As Harold Perkins (2010, p. 256) observes, "Decades of direct state investment and management of urban infrastructure like parks is largely ended. We witness instead a move toward neoliberal, political economic policies embraced by government, corporations, and various sectors of the public." This is an example of what Erik Swyngedouw (2005, p. 1992) calls "governance-beyond-the-state." For environmental activists in the city, the new forms of governance present pros and cons. Arguably, with the right connections, they can meet their goals faster; on the other hand, such associations might "blunt the more radical edges of the environmental justice frame [...] in order to receive funding from these foundations, environmental justice groups have had to embrace less radical objectives and practices" (Holifield, Porter, & Walker 2009, p. 598). Under neoliberal forms of governance based on public-private partnerships, the question of what constitutes "public space," who has rights to decide what is acceptable use of that space, and who is the arbiter of disputes becomes even trickier, as the controversy over land use and management on the Cornfield site demonstrates (Perkins 2010).

Hispanic culture at the margins vs. a distinctive Latino environmental ethic

Race and ethnicity are central concepts in the EJ movement (Taylor 2002). Yet EJ 1.0 often operates with a very "thin" conceptualization of race/ethnicity that has its roots in a legal, political, and scientific/regulatory discourse about equity and discrimination. This "census view" of race provides a crucial conceptual linkage between civil rights law, environmental law, and
quantitative/spatial epidemiology. The substance of Latino or Hispanic identity—language, history, culture, traditions—is somewhat beside the point in much EJ research and in certain modes of EJ activism. It's not that EJ advocates are avoiding hard, critical questions about the state's role in constructing and reinforcing "racialized identities" (Kurtz 2009). Rather, within the EJ 1.0 discourse, the political strategy (regulatory route), research paradigm (positivist), and perspective on race and ethnicity all complement and reinforce one another. By contrast, discourse on Latino cultural identity in EJ 2.0 embraces the complexities and nuances of identity construction in contemporary U.S. society; incorporates ideas of environmental stewardship into that process of identity construction; and relies not only on US historical frames of reference (e.g. the Civil Rights movement), but also global discourses and transnational experiences of racial, ethnic, and national identities.

The "census view" of race is an assumption integrated into much epidemiological, environmental, and social-science research on environmental justice. In such positivist research, census categories are assumed to be an objective classification of the racial/ethnic characteristics of the population. Census data underlie so much EJ research because they provide the material for a quantitative analysis of discriminatory or disparate environmental impacts (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts 2009). Within a spatial-epidemiological framework, aided by the tools of GIS and statistical analysis, and with increasingly large data sets (not only of census data, but also locational data on risk and exposure to toxins in the environment), geographers and other environmental health scholars have had some success demonstrating disparate and cumulative impacts of environmental toxins on communities of color (Morello-Frosch et al., 2002). For the sake of quantitative analysis, and the legal-regulatory efforts it might support, it is necessary to
characterize populations in terms of broad racial/ethnic categories (e.g., non-Hispanic White, Hispanic, Asian-American, etc.).

EJ 1.0 issue advocacy continuously reproduces this discourse on environmental health disparities, reflecting the hegemony of both the "regulatory route" and the "census view" of race. For example, a national report entitled *Hidden Danger: Environmental Threats to the Latino Community* (published by the NRDC, a "mainstream" environmental group with a relatively strong environmental justice emphasis), relies on an essentially quantitative and epidemiological research design to demonstrate the disproportionate risk that Latinos face from air pollution, pesticide exposure, and other sources of environmental contamination (NRDC, 2004). Yet, aside from passing reference to Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, the report almost completely ignores the history, culture, and political activism of Latinos in the U.S. A similarly titled report, *Hidden Hazards*, details the disproportionate and cumulative impacts of various sources of pollution in "toxic hotspot" communities in Southern California (LACEHJ, 2010). In it, race is framed abstractly, in the discourse of census-based analysis: "In the Los Angeles area, there is a clear pattern of inequality in terms of cumulative impacts of air pollution, with low-income communities of color bearing the greatest burden" (LACEHJ, 2010, p. 9).

The problems with this narrow conceptualization of race and ethnicity in EJ studies have been pointed out for years. For one, it has led to what many consider a distracting dispute, the "race vs. class debate" (Brulle & Pellow 2006, p. 106): that is, are "environmental inequalities"—differential exposures to environmental harm—based more on racial or socioeconomic differences? Pulido (2000) has forcefully argued that efforts to clarify the respective weight of race and class as causal factors of EJ (i.e. the tendency to reduce race and class to "independent variables" for spatial-statistical analysis) are ill-advised, and instead
research should focus on how different forms of inequality are produced and reproduced in conjunction with one another. More broadly, a generation of scholarship on race and ethnicity deeply questions the notion that race is a stable, objective category, i.e. that labels such as "Asian" or "Latino" adequately describe the reality of racial difference. Critical race theorists view this notion of race as objective categorization as deeply problematic, and instead contend that racial categories construct (rather than describe) our social reality (Omi & Winant 1994; Wade 1997). Meanwhile, some critical EJ scholarship in geography, sociology, and related fields has also sought to move beyond research paradigms based on simplistic understandings of race and the use of census classifications in spatial-statistical analysis (Holifield, Porter, & Walker 2009; Kurtz 2009; Walker 2010).

Whatever the trends in academia, however, many EJ activists subscribe to these arguably outdated categories and methods. But why? I argue that there are at least two reasons, one political and the other legal-regulatory. Categories of racial/ethnic distinction are deeply embedded in the U.S. political discourse, and EJ groups have to speak within the paradigm of urban ethnic politics. As Robert Garcia, head of The City Project, acknowledges, "Latino" is a "political construct" (interview, 2/3/11). But it is one that, despite generalizing greatly, and collapsing other categories of ethnic difference (based on national origin, or identification with indigenous heritage) into one, serves as a commonplace descriptor for the ethnic geography of Los Angeles, ostensibly composed of Latino neighborhoods, Latino city council districts, and so forth. Similarly, Latino (or Hispanic) is a necessary term for engaging with the realm of environmental regulations, since so many of the legal bases for discriminatory impacts, such as Title VI, must be framed in terms of race/ethnicity, not socioeconomic status (Foreman, 2003, p. 188), and "plaintiffs can bring discrimination claims based on statistical weights and trends,
rather than on the basis of intent or animus" (Brulle & Pellow 2006, p. 114). Moreover, Census recognition of Latino (or Hispanic) identity, a template for demographic reporting at every level of government, has been indispensable for clarifying trends in Latino population health, educational attainment, and social mobility since the 1970s, when "Hispanic" first appeared as a U.S. Census category (Hayes-Bautista 2004).

Equity, to be sure, is a laudable societal goal, and, theoretically, an achievable one within the legal-regulatory paradigm that the EJ movement has long worked within. Nevertheless, the EJ 2.0 orientation treats race and ethnicity somewhat differently. Rather than maintaining a "thin" conceptualization of race/ethnicity that almost inevitably leads to statistical claims about disproportionate impacts, many Latino environmental activists in Los Angeles today propose a distinctive Latino environmental ethic. Such an ethic has a basis in Hispanic and indigenous cultural traditions and values, in a transnational field, which offer a sustainable alternative to values and practices that are endemic to Westernized capitalist societies. Perhaps in response to a widespread sentiment that Latinos in the U.S. are indifferent to environmental concerns (Sahagan, 2010), Latino environmentalists today counter with a discursive practice of "strategic essentialism" (Pulido 1998; Spivak 1993) situating Latinos as not merely interested in environmentalism but as possessing special insight into how to protect and restore the natural world (Peña 1998, 2005a; Pulido 1998).

A good example of this trend is the organization Mujeres de la Tierra, led by Irma Muñoz and based in Los Angeles. In its name, rhetoric, and practices, the organization employs a "double essentialism," positing the ecocentric values of Latina women in particular. As Muñoz told me in an interview, "If you look at the history of Mexican-Americans, our whole lives are related to Mother Earth and the natural elements." Similar to arguments made by scholars such
as Devon Peña, the Mexican-American environmental ethic is based on stewardship of the land and its resources (rather than "wilderness" values), connections to the sacred realm, and rejection of U.S. imperialism, whether in its historical form, which stripped indigenous and Hispanic peoples in the Southwest of rights to land and water resources, or more recent "Green imperialism" (Peña 2005a, 2005b). For Muñoz, an attorney who has also served on the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board since 2012, a career in urban environmentalism came not through grassroots, neighborhood-level EJ 1.0 groups, but rather through her work at mainstream environmental organizations, where she was often the lone person of color. Weary of many white environmentalists asking her to "speak for" Latinos everywhere, she decided to start her own nonprofit, focused on making sure that Latino voices and cultural frameworks were represented in environmental discussions in the city. As she told me, "you know, the environment is not a political thing, it's not a fad, it's not something we do—it's a living, it's something we live 24/7 because of the way we were brought up by our grandparents and our parents." As for the name Mujeres de la Tierra: "I wanted to come out and say here is Latino women's organization that's focusing on environmental issues through their lens, their perspective." Moreover, "Mujeres de la Tierra sounds very organic" (interview, 3/16/11).

Essentialized identities of Latinos as environmental stewards are not merely rhetoric, but they are also performed through interaction with material nature in new kinds of greenspaces. As in many other parts of the country, community gardens have become important spaces for enacting cultural identity and for new engagements with urban environments (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010; Gray, et al. 2014). The South Central Farm, an experimental and communal space for agriculture in the city, provided a key space for imagining and enacting an urban Latino land ethic (Peña 2006; Lawson 2007). Although it was razed by a commercial developer in 2006, the
farm's promising vision has been vindicated by the recent proliferation of community gardens throughout working class and minority neighborhoods of Los Angeles. In the Milagro Allegre Garden, on a tiny lot in Highland Park, gardeners of many ethnic backgrounds work side by side, but notably, many of the Latino gardeners cultivate plants they view as having deep cultural significance. Naturally, choices of chili peppers, tomatillos, and maize relate in part to culinary preferences, but they also present a revival, or reinvention, of the indigenous agricultural roots of Mexican society. Many conversations at the garden revolved around the pre-Columbian origins and medicinal uses of certain plants, such as chia (Salvia hispanica), amaranth (Amaranthus spp.), and tlapanche (Porophyllum spp.). When the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río de Los Angeles opposed the Annenberg Foundation's plan to manage the new state park downtown, they specifically objected that the planting of maize on the contaminated brownfield site (as part of an art installation; see Gottlieb 2007) was "tantamount to sacrilege for many Mexicans and Guatemalans in the neighborhood. For them, corn is a sacred food, deeply intertwined with their indigenous religious beliefs and cosmology" (Gonzalez 2005).

Thus, in new Latino environmentalism, environmental struggles are wrapped into a constant and dynamic process of identity formation (Carter, Silva, & Guzmán 2013). Or, as Juanita Sundberg (2004, p. 44) has put it, "conservation-in-the-making is also identities-in-the-making." Yet, at the same time, social movement politics may dictate the presentation of "essentialized" identities, partly in response to views that Latinos are illegitimate participants in U.S. environmentalism. Laura Pulido (1998, pp. 122-123) has argued that cultural essentialism, or "culturalism," is a "form of resistance" that helps to "consolidate the moral authority" of politically marginalized groups in environmental struggles.
While Pulido emphasized the localized nature of such struggles, a discursive scale framing typical of EJ 1.0 (Sze, et al. 2009), EJ 2.0 discourse goes global or, more accurately, transnational, by borrowing strategies of good living and environmental conservation from other countries. While there has been a lot of research on "global" EJ struggles, especially with respect to the rights of indigenous groups to territory and resources in developing countries (e.g., Lizzaralde, 2003), there has been precious little research on how ideas for sustainability from other countries filter back to the United States. But it stands to reason that environmental ideas in a transnational field travel along culturally-specific pathways, analogous to "social remittances" (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011). In this case, Latinos effectively lay claim to environmental ideas generated in Latin American countries, spawned, in part, by indigenous rights movements and Latin American new urbanist ideals.

For example, Muñoz and other members of the new Latino environmental organizations participated in the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Bolivia in 2010, where sustainability and environmental conservation were reconsidered from the vantage points of indigenous and Hispanic peoples recovering from centuries of European and U.S. imperialism. With the Internet and social media (more on this below), EJ organizers may participate and actively shape a transnational field of EJ activists. Certain innovations in urban environmentalism have been directly imported from Latin America; one good example is the Ciclavía, a "takeover" of city streets by bicycles one day a month, an idea that originated in Colombia. It matters that it's from Colombia and carries this Spanish name. This kind of sustainable transit solution is, in a sense, an extension of a dynamic brand of "Latino New Urbanism" that proposes a remedy for the ills of U.S. models of urban planning (Mendez 2005, Rojas 2010)—a movement that, similar to EJ 2.0, exhibits a tendency to essentialize
Latino identity (Londoño 2010). It also notable that many of the key actors in EJ 2.0 in Los Angeles, such as Miguel Luna, Robert García, and Leonardo Vilchis, are themselves first-generation immigrants from Latin America. They embrace a "global urban Latinidad" emergent in art, architecture, and design (Londoño 2010, p. 487), and connect EJ to questions of urban sustainability (Agyeman 2005).

In all, this shift in discourse may address one of the dilemmas of environmental justice. EJ organizations, immersed in local struggles and often micro-scale planning efforts, may lose sight of the deeper and more universal problematics that the movement has tried to identify and remedy: "although environmental justice advocates emphasize 'first order quality of life issues', they also offer a holistic social critique that could form the basis of an alternative hegemonic order" (Kebede 2005, cited in Holifield, Porter, & Walker 2009, p. 596). Yet the scientific/regulatory discourse and legal strategies of EJ 1.0 actually tend to incorporate EJ into an existing hegemonic order, rather than subverting it. Drawing on Latin American models of "alternative modernisations" not only provides a vocabulary and theoretical tools, perhaps, but also examples of workable models of environmental sustainability, multiculturalism, and citizenship that have become institutionalized (Radcliffe, 2012). In addition to the example of Morales's Bolivia, there is also the 2010 Ecuadorian constitution, which enshrines the Andean indigenous concept of sumak kawsay, a complex term that places value on "good living" based on environmental stewardship, rights to subsistence resources, and ecological and cultural diversity, which has been elevated to the status of a "postneoliberal development alternative" (Radcliffe 2012, p. 240; Zimmerer 2012). EJ 2.0 groups might be seizing on the examples of grassroots struggles and social movements from abroad, not only because they help articulate and clarify a deeper social critique, but also because countries like Bolivia and Ecuador have
demonstrated, with considerable but still-debatable effectiveness, how to build bridges between movements for social justice, environmental justice, anti-imperialism, and indigenous rights, and transform those movements into political institutions.

Hyperlocal verticalism vs. city-wide networking horizontalism

Environmental justice battles have often been fought at the neighborhood scale (Brulle & Pellow 2006, p. 110). Localism is endemic to EJ organizing for various reasons. In the legal-technical-scientific discourse of EJ, proximity is meaningful: logically, those living closest to a pollution source, eyesore, or nuisance are those most at risk of impacts (Mohai, Brulle & Pellow 2009). Consciousness-raising that usually precedes EJ battles relies on shared observations and concerns of neighbors, such as noticing clusters of cancer or asthma cases (Brown, 2007). Finally, localism often prevails because of the "siege mentality" of neighborhoods that have ample grounds to believe they have been targeted as dumping grounds for undesirable land use.

This has certainly been the case for East L.A., where EJ organizing took on the role of "resisting siege" by the state, industry, and developers. Asserting dignity and demanding respect were not merely means to the end of improving the local environment, but were important outcomes of the early organizing efforts that laid the groundwork for further community cohesion. Oppositional EJ groups have often been formed ad hoc through existing networks of kin and local organizations, for example parents' groups at local schools, business associations, charities, and churches (Pardo 1990). Resurrection Church, in Boyle Heights, played a pivotal role in bringing together the members of MELA. These local EJ groups, while reliant on tight-knit networks, could also be incorporated into a vertical structure of the patronage system of local politicians, such as Gloria Molina, a pioneering Mexican-American legislator from East
L.A. Many local EJ organizations, such as Unión de Vecinos or Pacoima Beautiful, see their principal goal as community empowerment through grassroots mobilization. Their neighborhoods' concerns come first, and there is no presumption of an ideological commitment to environmentalism or environmental justice that might trump other issues.

For all of these reasons, the hyperlocal scale of much EJ organizing will persist, but EJ 2.0-style organizations have developed alternative, loosely-structured, citywide networks, with a distinctive division of labor, and focused on concerns that might transcend neighborhood boundaries. By deploying these more spatially expansive "scale frames" (Sze, et al. 2009), EJ 2.0 organizing is more squarely focused on "environmental" or "sustainability" issues, especially new and creative ways of producing nature in the city, as explained above. These newer organizational networks, while fully cognizant of persistent divisions and inequalities within the city, promote a green geographical imaginary for the whole of L.A., one that builds on cultural essentialisms to write an alternative, Latino environmental history of the city.

Horizontal, cross-city networks in Latino urban environmentalism resemble, in many respects, the networks of new economy entrepreneurs. EJ 2.0 network participants provide complementary skills and access to resources, and work through micro-organizations (nonprofits, consultancies) that connect to philanthropic foundations, academics, politically influential leaders, and grassroots organizers. These many moving parts enmesh in temporary or longer-lasting coalitions. For example, in the effort to create urban state parks in Downtown L.A. and Northeast L.A. in the early 2000s (at the "Cornfield" and "Taylor Yards" sites) a small but resilient network of mostly Latino professionals came together to accomplish the necessary real estate transaction that made the parks possible. Calling themselves the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río de Los Angeles, the coalition was comprised of the Willie C. Velasquez Institute, which has
strong connections with Latino political elites in the city; The City Project, which provided legal
counsel; Mujeres de la Tierra, whose founder, Irma Muñoz, is well connected to mainstream
environmental organizations; and the Anahuak Youth Soccer Association, whose leader, Raúl
Macías, was skillful at providing a grassroots "presence" at planning meetings and
demonstrations, mostly comprised of Latino children and parents from park-poor neighborhoods
of Northeast L.A.

Miguel Luna, the founder of Urban Semillas, serves as a good example of a new class of
entrepreneurial environmentalist. Urban Semillas is an "entrepreneurial" endeavor because it
lacks a permanent staff of employees, grassroots membership, or board of directors, thus making
it an expression of Luna's own values and interests. This kind of independence, however,
requires networking with other groups and organizations, and Luna is plugged in to many efforts
to improve the local environment, whether related to urban parks, restoration of the L.A. River,
water quality issues in Maywood, or community gardens. Luna shows an impressive ability "to
concert" (concertar, in Spanish), which one grassroots development theorist calls a "capacity to
plan or arrange in mutual agreement," in the "associative space" of civil society (Daubón, 2002).
Luna's major role in the issue ecosystem of green L.A. is to serve as a culture broker between
mainstream, professionalized organizations and the grassroots, working class Latino community,
especially young people, and, perhaps even more particularly, children of immigrants. In my
interviews with him, Luna referred constantly to his role as a "translator" between different
interest groups; he meant this only partly in the literal sense of translating between Spanish and
English (which he often does), but more in the sense of making a project palatable to the
community it is intended to serve. He also realizes that, even when they have the best of
intentions, academics, activists, and politicians need the participation and support of the
grassroots, for example, to fulfill conditions of a research grant. He helps to bring people together; to put it another way, he brokers relationships between groups who may lack competence in communicating across cultures. As Agyeman and Erickson (2012) argue, this kind of "cultural competency" is a crucial skill for urban planners and other professionals with an interest in promoting social and environmental equity, yet it is largely absent, and difficult to teach.

Luna realized this skill before he started Urban Semillas, when he worked at Heal the Bay, a mainstream environmental organization based in the more affluent (and somewhat Anglo-dominated) Westside. In his first year, he organized the Coastal Cleanup Day, explaining the importance of watershed protection to working class communities in South Gate, Huntington Park, and Compton. "It was great," he says, "because it was taking this information with water quality, and why it's important to take care of watersheds, and translating it, not only language-wise but culturally, so that the people would receive it in a way that was relevant and important to them" (Luna interview, 2/1/11). Luna is deeply aware of positionality in discourse and practice of environmentalism. As he recounts, "we remember someone from the Nature Conservancy, they did a poll and they said 'Yeah we polled kids and they don't like to be labeled environmentalists.' we said, 'Well yeah, it depends on who asks the question. And what was labeled as being an environmentalist?'" (Luna interview, 2/1/11). Pitching an environmental action at the right level, or within the right cultural frame for a specific audience is crucial (Carter, Guzmán, and Silva 2013). Pondering his role as an environmental educator (often in partnership with universities or environmental NGOs), Luna told me "it's not the 'what' but the 'how'"—meaning that any subject (say, forest ecology or water monitoring) can be taught effectively with a culturally relevant approach.
To establish and protect his niche in the organizational ecosystem of LA's new green movement, Luna has taken special care to develop a brand identity. Similar to what Muñoz has tried to evoke with "Mujeres de la Tierra," the name "Urban Semillas" uses a kind of Spanglish to announce itself as a venture that crosses between cultures and hopes to appeal to bilingual youth; alternatives such as "Urban Seeds" or "Semillas Urbanas" would transmit subtly different brand messages. Adjunct projects, such as "Agua University" (an intensive water quality monitoring training program, aimed at local youths) use the same rhetorical strategy. A well-designed website, an active Twitter feed, a popular Facebook page, and YouTube videos showcase Urban Semillas' activities and keep the organization connected to users well outside of Luna's main neighborhood of grassroots organizing activity (Northeast L.A., mainly the Highland Park area).

Social media permits and encourages an intense level of networking, which combined with the flexibility of a tiny and non-hierarchical organization, allows Luna to plug into all kinds of environmental policy organizing. With the Anahuak Youth Soccer Association, probably his closest partner organization, Luna promotes environmental education for at-risk youth. He has helped raise awareness about protecting the L.A. River watershed on a local Spanish-language TV station. In the San Fernando Valley, he helped organize a pilot project for "bioswales" (a structural alternative to storm drains to improve water conservation) in a Latino neighborhood. He collaborated on a video documentary on Maywood's water issues. He has also found a way to capitalize on resources from California's shift to a "green economy"; the "Agua University" courses on water quality monitoring have been incorporated into a Green Jobs program through the L.A. Conservation Corps. Such contracts provide important job training for at-risk youth, and also serve as one way that Luna materially sustains Urban Semillas.
Horizontally networked EJ organizing builds upon, and extends, a green geographical imaginary wherein far-flung and disparate parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area are woven together not by freeways but by natural features, such as rivers or watersheds. In effect, the natural features become nodes of meaning that give coherence to Los Angeles (Desfor & Keil 2000). The incoherence of Los Angeles—its decentered nature—has been a consistent trope in academic analysis and popular discourse. How to make sense of (and give meaning to) this chaos has long been a concern of urban planners and civic leaders, especially as they seek to present a coherent vision of L.A. to promote it as an environmentally conscious place with a high quality of life, on the global stage (Jonas, Gibbs, & While 2011). Notably, Latino organizations have embraced the opportunity to participate and even lead the reinvention of L.A. as a "green urban world" (Wolch, 2007), in the process reasserting the indigenous and Latino roots of the city.

In EJ debates, "scale frames" are deployed as discursive strategies to define and spatially delimit a resource, and to include or exclude actors, based on authority and expertise (Kurtz 2003). As Sze, et al. (2009) point out, reifying and naturalizing Central California's Delta region is an important discursive maneuver that shapes and limits debate over who manages resources, what is considered an environmental problem, and reinforcing nature vs. society binaries (rather than addressing "socio-natural" entities). But there is no a priori reason to think that EJ advocates cannot turn scale politics to their own advantage. In this sense, the L.A. River and its watershed represent a new scale of analysis and activism, offering a "natural" reason why smaller environmental organizations from across the city should work together, based on a metaphor of ecological and hydrological unity. This deployment of an L.A. River watershed "scale frame" solidifies historical claims to the city's Hispanic/indigenous history, an important step in
asserting the Latino "right to the city" (Mitchell 2003). As an article reproduced on The City Project website explains:

The Alianza de los Pueblos del Rio formed after [Robert] Garcia and others decided that development of a new L.A. River was a symbolic and literal convergence of a myriad of issues confronting L.A.'s Latino population. To be left out of the discussion, they realized, was to be left high and dry, as the river shifts directions into the future. Instead, the alliance . . . spearheaded river meetings and community outreach that have ballooned into a comprehensive new platform of urban Latino environmentalism. Part legal strategy, part organizing principle, this green movement en español has put people — immigrants and poor people, mostly — at the center of an issue traditionally focused on flora and fauna, and which has pitted some environmentalists against immigrants. (George, 2006)

In essence, a Latino green geographical imaginary helps to substantiate essentialized identity claims by anchoring them to real places in the city, and re-telling the city's history not as one where the Latino contribution in shaping the spaces of the city has been marginal until recently, but rather narrating urban history as one having roots in indigenous and Mexican-American cultural practices.

**The Political-Economic Context of EJ 2.0**

What is driving this gradual transition from EJ 1.0 to EJ 2.0? While some of this change may come from within the EJ movement, I suggest that structural shifts, somewhat exogenous to the EJ movement, are pushing it in new directions. First, there is the long-term transition in Southern California's economy from a late-Fordist to neoliberal regime, and possibly into an
even newer "green economy" phase, which may be viewed as something of a variant on neoliberalism (Alkon 2012). Secondly, there is the rise and continued validation of neoliberal multiculturalism, which makes cultural issues highly political and tends to work against a class-based politics. Lastly, there is a decisive shift in the political landscape of Los Angeles, marked by the rise of a Latino electoral majority and the influence of Latino politicians among the city's elites and power brokers. Together, these changes in political economy, identity politics, and urban electoral politics are not so powerful as to overcome historical momentum (demonstrated, for example, in persistent residential segregation by race and class), but they will structure new opportunities and challenges for EJ as a social movement.

EJ 1.0 politics in the U.S. developed against a backdrop of a late-Fordist political-economic regime of deindustrialization, disinvestment, and fracturing of the social contract between organized labor and industry. While deindustrialization began in the 1970s, or earlier, in the Rust Belt states, by the early 1990s Southern California also saw the dismantling of major industries such as aerospace, defense, and automobile manufacturing. Not only did the state have to come to terms with the contaminating legacy of an earlier era of heavy industry, but the uneven process of deindustrialization in Southern California gave credence to the EJ argument of environmental racism (Pulido 2000). Some parts of the city, like East L.A., the Harbor district, the Northeast San Fernando Valley, and the Los Angeles River industrial corridor were continued "dumping grounds" or "sacrifice zones" for industry, while other areas were targeted for cleanup and redevelopment. EJ 1.0 organizing has been quite successful in stalling or stopping large-scale industrial development in Southern California and in other parts of the U.S., making it "extremely difficult for firms to locate incinerators, landfills, and related LULUs anywhere in the nation without a political struggle" (Brulle & Pellow 2006, p. 113).
In the process, however, targets of EJ 1.0 protest have become smaller and more spatially dispersed, and therefore, perhaps, less amenable to change in an EJ 1.0 strategic framework. There are exceptions, such as the current efforts led by CBE (Communities for a Better Environment) to stop the expansion of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, due to local concerns over traffic, noise, and pollution, especially from diesel trucks serving the harbor (Siegler 2013), or the campaign to close Exide Technologies, a battery plant, in Vernon (Christensen & Garrison 2013). Such "classic" EJ battles—wherein marginalized localized communities fight "outsider" industry interests—are dramatic (and often protracted), but relatively rare. When sources of contamination become more diffuse, from what are often locally owned and staffed businesses (dry cleaners, auto body shops, small factories), a shared "local" political objective is not so easy to define.

Neoliberalism also favors a shift to political organization based on market incentives, public-private partnerships, nonprofits, and entrepreneurs. This post-Fordist, neoliberal moment has, possibly, entered a new phase that strongly incorporates goals of environmental sustainability. In the New Environmental Politics of Urban Development (NEPUD), global cities compete against one another to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability goals valued by an increasingly influential and highly mobile class of urban entrepreneurs (Jonas, Gibbs, & While 2011). A move in this direction is already palpable in California, where the promise of a shift to a "green economy" is, possibly, more than mere rhetoric. With state support, California has seen substantial investment in green technology, such as renewable energy and energy-efficient building materials, and the "green" sector was more resilient during the recent recession, experiencing faster growth than most other economic sectors (Next 10 2012). The state of California has prioritized job training programs for the new green economy (Zabin & Chapple
The new green economy is also well adapted to principles of the New Urbanism (e.g., the City Repair Project), which have begun to dominate urban planning, and with significant influence from Latino and Latin American templates for sustainable urban living (Diaz & Torres 2012). In a sense, EJ 1.0 activism continues the fight against the environmental side effects of an urban development model that has not completely disappeared, even as EJ 2.0 groups, like Urban Semillas, skillfully maneuver for the resources available through NEPUD and the new green economy.

Along similar lines, the last few decades have seen the rise of neoliberal multiculturalism in urban and national politics, a trend that EJ research has mostly failed to consider. As Londoño (2010, p. 489) puts it, neoliberal multiculturalism is "a version of global competition squarely defined within a neoliberal economy and a postindustrial, postmodern, multicultural society. This confluence has created an environment in which cultural and identity politics are desirable insofar as they are also marketable." The rise of such a politics has also occurred in conjunction with neoliberal economic restructuring in Latin America (Hale 2005). From struggles against neoliberal reforms, Latin American models for "alternative modernization" have emerged, where the language of culturalism (i.e., essentialism) provides support for environmental sustainability (Radcliffe 2012). Under these conditions, and given the historical exclusion of people of color from environmental movements in the US, a major aspect of EJ activism, it is little wonder that new Latino EJ movements argue for an ethnically based brand of ecological stewardship.

Lastly, there has been a qualitative change in Latino power in Los Angeles that complicates the politics of environmental justice. Latinos now represent a majority of the population in the city of Los Angeles, and through decades of struggle and strategic organizing, they have joined the city's power elite. While it is important to avoid painting an unrealistically
rosy portrait of social, racial, and ethnic equality in Southern California, it has become increasingly difficult for EJ advocates to sustain a characterization of Latinos, generally, as subaltern actors victimized by environmental racism. Moreover, the influx of new Latin American immigrants since the 1980s has made the inadequacies of "Latino" or "Hispanic" labels ever more apparent, undermining from within the EJ movement the "census view" of racial identity upon which so much EJ research and activism depends. Lastly, while Latinos probably are a majority in the mixed-use, industrial or post-industrial neighborhoods that are hotspots of environmental injustice, the broad dispersion of Latinos throughout the Southern California region would tend to work against the vertically-oriented, hyperlocal organizing so common to EJ 1.0 struggles.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have argued that the EJ movement is changing, and possibly for the better. The activist research paradigm of EJ 1.0, despite scattered success, has limited capacity to produce the kind of social and ecological change that most EJ advocates desire. Reacting to environmental "bads" at a hyperlocal scale, pursuing claims through the regulatory route shaped by environmental and civil rights law, and neglecting creative approaches to constructing both urban natures and cultural identities, are all movement strategies that are ill-adapted to ongoing political, economic, and social changes. In Los Angeles, a rising generation of Latino EJ advocates has recaptured some of the cultural energy that marked the early days of the movement. Latino environmental entrepreneurs work within a networked space of non-profits, foundations, grassroots organizations, and state actors to promote the creative construction of new natures in the city. Reflecting the ethos of neoliberal multiculturalism, environmentalism
and identity construction are intertwined projects: Latino environmental activists, many of them new immigrants, draw on transnational discourses and alternative development models from Latin America to substantiate claims to "ecological legitimacy" (Pulido 1998).

This model of the transition from EJ 1.0 to EJ 2.0 has implications for practitioners and academics alike. Insofar as many of the structural changes driving this shift might be occurring in other parts of the country, the relevance of this argument extends far beyond Los Angeles, California, and the Latino community. Clearly, further research is required to substantiate my claims that EJ 2.0 is a generalized trend in environmental justice movement politics. But if this change is occurring, we should evaluate the premises and impact of certain modes of EJ research, much of which continues to interrogate "1.0" questions by developing an evidence base to aid in regulatory battles, especially with respect to concentrated and disproportionate exposure to toxins. There is no denying that this style of research (which might be particularly prominent in such fields as geography, urban planning, and epidemiology) is still important for many reasons. But, perhaps, the utility of such research in the U.S. might be declining. The "holy grail" of EJ research, epidemiological evidence that decisively proves environmental racism, is clearly difficult to obtain, and moreover, it is rarely convincing even within its specific sphere of influence, the legal-regulatory framework of environmental and civil rights law.

Along the same lines, the influence of transnational discourses on identity formation and environmental thought deserves deeper consideration in EJ research. Even when addressing issues affecting people of color, most research on EJ movement politics and activism in the US tends to disregard the rest of the world, ignoring how discourses, norms, and ethics—in domains of social justice, environmentalism, and racial identity—move across national borders, in a transnational field. As we have seen, discourse and practice in environmental justice in L.A. are
changing due, in part, to local, regional, and national trends; however, the influence of ideas of new Latino migrants and the continuous, accelerated exchange of ideas in a transnational discursive field (perhaps especially unifying Latin America writ large) have fostered imaginative new directions in the EJ movement. The new Latino environmentalism in Los Angeles gives credence to the speculation that "transnational environmental justice movements may bring new external levers and emerging global norms back into the United States, whence this movement and scholarly field began" (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts 2009, p. 425).

While it is empowering for activists to define their ethnic identities in sophisticated and creative ways, researchers must also be attentive to the negative consequences of essentialized identity claims in environmental justice. The stereotype that working-class Latinos are indifferent to environmental issues is inaccurate and dismissive; yet, it is also possible that the new Latino environmentalism makes overstated claims about the essential qualities of Latinos as wise stewards of the environment. Strategic essentialism, as with many of the discursive tactics of neoliberal multiculturalism, may provoke skepticism and work against cross-cultural coalitions for environmental justice.

Lastly, it is fair to ask whether EJ 2.0 contributes to social and environmental justice goals. Some scholars have already begun to address the consequences of EJ movement shifts. In many ways, the new Latino environmentalism in L.A. resembles the "just sustainability paradigm" (JSP) that bridges the environmental justice paradigm (EJP) and what is usually considered a more mainstream environmentalism. Agyeman (2005, p. 183) argues that movements organized around this emergent paradigm have the potential to be more politically successful, because the JSP "has a wider range of progressive, proactive, policy-based solutions and policy tools; the JSP is calling for and has developed a coherent 'new economics'; the JSP
has much more of a local-global linkage; [and] the JSP is more proactive and visionary than the typically reactive EJP." Similar to the JSP, what I have called EJ 2.0 is politically progressive but better suited to contemporary political realities.

On the other hand, a neoliberal green economy regime may not promote social and environmental justice goals. In a study of farmer's markets in the Bay Area, Alkon (2012) exposes this tension in California's green economy: in the neoliberal consumer democracy, people "vote with their dollars" to support products, organizations, and narratives consistent with their values; yet, those with the most dollars may prefer quite specific environmental objectives over economic justice goals. Some EJ movement veterans would balk at what might seem like neoliberal trappings of groups like Urban Semillas or Mujeres de la Tierra, such as concern with branding and marketing, an entrepreneurial ethos, a devotion to networking, and savvy use of social media. EJ 2.0 politics are clearly less radical and less oppositional; the "injustice frame" (Taylor 2002) of EJ 1.0, dependent on the invocation of historical grievances, recedes in favor of a discourse that imagines the green, sustainable, culturally diverse, and economically thriving city. Perhaps, EJ 2.0 is not really conventional politics at all, but instead an example of "post-political" forms of urban environmental governance (Swyngedouw 2007).

While many critical scholars may be inclined to dismiss non-radical environmental movements, I offer a cautiously optimistic conclusion: although EJ 2.0, as with alternative food movements and other new environmentalisms, belongs to today's neoliberal moment, it may also offer a viable "politics of the possible" (Harris 2009) for those with a commitment to equitable and sustainable futures.
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