The effects of climate change are tangible around the world. In terms of costs, it is impacting not only natural environments, but also human communities and infrastructure. As a result, there’s a call to invest in alliances to create new jobs, especially in clean energies.

However, the social impacts of climate change make imperative to recognize that climate change effects are a concern of social justice and human rights. In fact, environmental justice issues are part of a cycle exacerbated and that exacerbates climate change.

For example, the North–South divide is broadly considered a socio-economic and political divide, and is usually visualized by an imaginary line called the “Brandt Line” or “Brown line.” This division results from centuries of inequitable development processes that have roots in colonization. But this division can also be perceived in our cities and in our neighborhoods. Indigenous and local communities are the most affected by structural and global inequalities.

A potential solution is to advocate for a “just transition,” that will allow to change transactive and extractive practices characteristic of the current economy, and adopt cooperative structures. This is a movement that locally is promoted by organizations led by people of color such as SAGE and Got Green that look into how transform political, economic and social trends to empower communities of color. This is been done through organizing, self-reliance, cooperation and participation to empower local communities.

In the past, SAGE has collaborated with scientists at UW, but its members advocate to move away from institutionalized research to look on the experiences of immigrants, marginalized people and refugees, using a model of community-based participatory research. The products are envisioned to inform policy makers.
First Panel: Community Engagement through Participatory Action Research

Branden Born [UW Urban Design & Planning]
Patrick Christie [UW International Studies / School of Marine & Environmental Affairs]
Megan Ybarra [UW Geography]

What is participatory action research and how it is usually enacted?

Branden:

- Democratizing research
- Includes participation of local communities
- Universities have used traditionally an "extractive model" that takes knowledge from local communities without giving back
- To do PAR is important to develop trust as a way to establish fair relationships between researchers and community members
- There's a call for change and adopt a reflective process to look in what the position of the researcher in a community and to decentralize knowledge production models to recognize the importance of experiential knowledge.

Megan:

- PAR is about understanding the community's needs, interests, desires...
- Community-based and participatory approaches should think first in the safety of the community members participating in a research.
- Researchers can use their privileges to raise awareness and amplify the voice of the communities to authorities.
- Talk to people NOT at people
Patrick:

- Suggested to read Paulo Freire's book: “Pedagogy of the Oppressed.”
- PAR invites us to reflect on our privileges and put them at the services of others.
- PAR stands as a criticism of Science as an oppressive authority, leaving behind the idea of “objectivity” and taking scientists into action

What are the challenges of using action research in science-dominated domain like environmental management?

Branden:

- Access to funding, since PAR is used also to obtain qualitative data
- Recognition to researcher’s own framing and posisionality when collaborating with local communities

Megan:

- Engagement beyond epistemological and ontological differences is difficult
- Struggle to understand that what is being sought in Academia might not be same as what local communities want
- Stop acting “systematically” in order to collect data and just engage with the community
- Being part of a community, but at the same time not being part

Patrick:

- Create partnerships between institutions and local communities to transcend epistemic boundaries
- Timing in Academia is not the same as for local communities
- Recognition of researcher’s privileges and how to share them through collaborations
- Science & PAR do not have to be opposed, but criticism to scientific forms and methods is necessary
- Understand the principles of “social contracts”
- Learn to be humble and listen
How different is the mentorship you give from the one you received? [question from the audience]

Megan:

- The fact that are few professors of color and females in science
- First generation and students of color have to learn to navigate the system on their own
- Quarterly systems is too short and affects the work with communities, but she tries to create research opportunities for students who might have limited access such as DACA students
- Recognize that students bring knowledge and experience

Patrick:

- Creating spaces where students feel free to participate and not promoting a “banking education” (reference to P. Freire). For example, in Jackson School, students are able to join a task force and do meaningful research as part of their courses
- Promoting more spaces for experiential learning
- Mentoring on how to negotiate with members of local communities and become an agent of information at the service of these communities

Branden:

- In Built Environments, students are able to enroll in “Studio”, which involves experiential learning
- Bridging between institutions
- Doing and promoting “transgressive research”
- Mentoring URM students to empower them
Second panel: Collaboration & Coalition Building in Environmental Justice

Bonnie Duran [UW Social Work]

Vanessa Galaviz [UW Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences]

Jill Mangaliman [Got Green]

Tiffany Mendoza [Front & Centered]

**Bonnie:**

Resources:

- [Decolonial Futures](#) (website)
- [Epistemologies of the South](#) (book)- Good to understand principles of community-based participatory research
- [Engage for Equity](#) (website)

**Tiffany:**

Personal experiences lead her to environmental justice, especially considering that in environmental organization, less than 17% are people of color and 1% in the case of political consulting agencies.

**Jill:**

Promotes Just Transition for a just and fair economy through [Got Green](#)

**Vanessa:**

She decided to study public health because it allows her to combine science with community work to address access issues, especially looking into the effects of exposure to industrial pollution in farmworkers.
What does a fair collaboration look like between academic and local communities?

Tiffany:
- Front and Centered current director and other members of the staff come from Academia
- The differences between lived experience and specialized experience have to do with access to resources.
- She recommends reflecting and taking a look into what you have to offer.

Jill:
- Got Green collaborates with UW students from different departments
- Leave out the idea of being a “savior” and understand the role of a collaborator (stand in solidarity, build trust, do not just “jump in”), give credit to the knowledge in the community, communicate your result with the communities you collaborated, provide leadership opportunities to the community.
- Translate local experiences into information that can be used in policy making to bring positive changes to the communities you work with.

Bonnie:
- Think about the topic and the community you want to work with.
- If the topic you are interested in is a real issue for the community, look if there’s some efforts already going on to address the issue.
- Do your homework: Get to know more about the community you want to work with.
- Assume there’s always space for learning.

Vanessa:
- Immerse yourself in the life of communities to better understand the issues they are facing.
- Build capacity in the community by bringing education opportunities.

What would dialogue, horizontality and solidarity look like beyond professional and personal boundaries?

Jill:
- Pay attention on who is involved in spaces of power in order to create alliances.
- Look into shared struggles and understand the differences, to come with common goals.
Tiffany:
- We need to think about what are coalitions really are: It is about engaging and forging relationships.
- Bring different perspectives under shared goals into collaborative action, especially to build capacity in communities that have been historically marginalized.
- Build coalitions across communities and epistemic boundaries to act against systems of oppression.
- Reflect on the need and interests present in each community to think about what’s needed to bring change.

Bonnie:
- Follow a socioecological model that looks into funding and history of collaborations academia-community to bride social capital and foster authentic engagement based on trust.
- To guide interpersonal relations have written agreements.

Vanessa:
- Coalitions are labor intense and require dedication and should look into long-term engagement.
- Collaborations need to be just and fair, recognizing the time that members of the community dedicate, both explicitly and materially.

Climate change rhetoric can be elitist and far away from the reality of local communities, how do you address this? [question from the audience]

Jill:
- Actions need to relate to the lives of the people in the communities and incorporate the knowledge in that already exists in the community.
- Avoid making assumptions.

Bonnie:
- Recognize that tribal communities have been working in this area for decades.
Vanessa:

- Climate change is about how humans impact the natural environment, but we should also look into how the environment affect human communities
- Look into socioeconomic, ecological and historical stressors to better understand the effects of climate change in a community
- Local communities’ experiential knowledge should be incorporated into policies and practices to foster authentic community-driven efforts.
- Recognize bias and avoid being “blindsided”

Tiffany:

- Look into diversity, value it and explore differences to better understand and create common values and goals
- Connect with local communities and recognize their different perspectives

Vanessa:

- Do not speak on behalf of “all” communities
- Coalition building is about recognizing differences and establishing common goals
- It is important to move from building to implementation of goals