Reimagining Sustainability and Community: The Role of Eco-Villages in Urban Responses to the Intersecting Crises of Environmental Degradation and Affordability

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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on urban eco-villages and how they can potentially be a model for genuine urban sustainability through simultaneously addressing the crises of environmental degradation and affordability in cities. This question is explored here through a case study of the Los Angeles Eco Village constructed through in depth interviews with residents. This case study is supplemented by interviews with a city planning official and a prominent scholar on eco-villages and equity. This research looks at eco-villages through a critical lens and investigates ways in which eco-villages potentially fall into the category of green consumerism or otherwise perpetuate problematic ideas about environmentalism, nature, and change making. Through this research process this report concludes that many aspects of the Los Angeles Eco Village are a model for genuine and intersectional sustainability in urban life and that it is well worth exploring how these aspects can be replicated and institutionalized in planning urban form and life.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban life in the United States is increasingly becoming defined by two crises: environmental degradation and affordability. As climate change worsens, cities are scrambling to adapt and mitigate the effects. Yet simultaneously, American cities are struggling with vast social and economic inequalities, and affordability is a driving factor of these crises. There is still no official, broad-based strategy to proactively address intersecting social and environmental issues in urban centers. It is not clear at this point that official responses will intentionally and effectively seek to integrate the social and environmental aspects of the urban crises in their strategies. This research is broadly centered on how cities can potentially address both the crises of environmental degradation and the crises of affordability simultaneously.

Within this context, eco-villages have emerged in the United States as one model for simultaneously addressing social and environmental ills, yet they have also been criticized for being socially and racially exclusive. This moment is an opportunity to bring marginalized perspectives to the forefront and truly change the way we think about urban form and life, the human-nature relationship and the landscape of social and political power. Eco-villages hold a lot of potential to mediate these tensions and create urban spaces to address environmental and social degradation simultaneously and in a transformative way.

Through a case study of the Los Angeles Eco Village, this work examines urban eco-villages and their potential to be a model for sustainable urban life. This case study is

constructed through a series of in-depth interviews with residents of the Los Angeles Eco Village, as well as a city planning official and a prominent scholar on eco-villages and equity. Through this case study this work will seek to answer the question, *is there a potential role for eco-villages in facilitating just and transformative responses to the intersecting crises of environmental degradation and inequality in cities, and if so what is it*? In order to answer this question, I ask two secondary questions, *how are eco-villages dealing with issues of equity and diversity?* And *what is the potential for eco-villages to affect structural and regulatory change in cities?*

This paper will explore the literature on urban challenges in the face of climate change and the urban crises of inequality and social justice, specifically focusing on Los Angeles. It will also explore the literature on eco-villages and their position in environmental and social crises and movements, looking specifically at the literature on diversity and equity in eco-villages. Finally, I will explore the literature on the phenomenon of green consumerism as a response to environmental crises and how this influences the ways in which we collectively address environmental and social issues in the United States.

This work also draws out conflicts between the environmental justice and mainstream environmental movements and explores the ways in which transforming eco-spaces into inclusive and intersectional spaces is challenging. This work also explores how issues of diversity and equity play out in an eco-village and how eco-villages can potentially affect structural change in cities. In order to inform these questions, ideas and practices of activism are explored in depth as well as conceptions of what sustainability means and how we achieve it.

From this research on this unique urban eco-village, I make recommendations at three levels: the level of eco-villages, the level of city planning and the level of the environmental movement. These recommendations are all grounded in this research and are aimed at helping eco-villages be intersectional eco-spaces and forces for change within their contexts, helping cities address social and environmental degradation in an intersectional and effective way, and helping the environmental movement shift its focus and conception of sustainability to one that centers cities and communities that have been historically marginalized by mainstream environmentalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Unique Environmental and Social Justice Challenges of Cities

We are all vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation and climate change, but urban areas are particularly challenged to mitigate and adapt to environmental challenges. The United Nations has stated that urbanization will be the defining trend of the next several decades, and surely it has already defined the last few (UN, 2013). Over half of the world's population now lives in cities, and cities consume about 75% of the world's resources and produce 75% of the waste (Irrgang, 3). Cities also tend to be centers of business and industry, three quarters of global economic activity is urban (UN, 2013), so cities are valuable economic hubs, but they currently require a level of resources to operate that is not sustainable in the face of rising energy prices and climate change. On a global scale, cities are responsible for the majority of global greenhouse gas emissions, and are also home to most of the efforts to reduce global emissions (UN, 2013). Because of this, cities will have to play a crucial role in shifting global resource use and waste production

and transitioning to an ecologically sustainable way of life. Cities are also centers of culture, art, music and community life, and people often want to live in cities to be close to those amenities as well as many others. Cities offer a proximity to amenities, services and infrastructure that creates the opportunity for sustainable development and low resources use, if this density is planned and executed effectively (UN, 2013). The social and cultural dynamism of cities also presents the opportunity to increase social inclusion and understanding.

Cities are not going away, they are a central institution of our time, and we want them to be great places to live. However, America's cities are suffering a crisis of both ecological and social sustainability. Environmental degradation is often concentrated and magnified in cities due to density of population and industry, and social inequality in cities is at a crisis point. While cities were once the epitome of upward mobility, many have become bastions of wealth and inequality, leading to severe social segregation and breakdown (Kotkin, 2014).

Income inequality in the United States is notorious. The income gap among the top 1% of the US population and the bottom 90% is currently the highest it has been since 1928 (Pew Research Center, 2013). This unequal distribution of wealth affects life everywhere in the US, but urban centers tend to be places where the consequences of income inequality are particularly pronounced due to the combination of density and scarcity of essential resources such as space/housing, water, and jobs. As prominent American economist Paul Krugman points out, roughly 15 years ago America's urban centers began to reverse their decades long trend of decline and started becoming richer,

more educated and whiter. Urban centers are now providing more and more amenities and are attracting very affluent Americans (Krugman, 2015). Krugman posits that this trend in urban demography is due to the tendency of high-skill, high-pay industries to locate in urban centers and the willingness of wealthy Americans to pay more to live in urban centers close to work and other social and cultural amenities (Krugman, 2015). As Joel Kotkin points out in his article on urban inequality, cost is a driving factor for urban inequality. The highest rates of inequality were found in the most expensive cities in the United States in a Brookings Institute study (Kotkin, 2014). This study found that in Los Angeles, as well as New York, Portland, Miami and San Francisco, the middle class has among the lowest real earnings anywhere in the country (Kotkin, 2014). So affordability is a huge issue for urban America that must be dealt with if sustainability- social, ecological or economic- is to be achieved.

Additionally the decrease in domestic manufacturing jobs and the transition of the US economy from a "goods" to a "services" economy has also influenced the rising inequalities in America's cities (Zubrinsky Charles, 15). While Krugman points out that all of this does not necessarily mean that living in urban centers must become too expensive for anyone but the wealthy to afford, this is the current reality. Indeed, the high concentration of both rich and poor in urban centers (as compared to the rest of the country) is not necessarily a bad thing, says Alan Berube, a Brookings Institute researcher who specializes in inequality (Hamilton, 2014). "The question is how do cities and leaders navigate that but keep their cities diverse and able to provide opportunities for upward mobility," Berube says (Hamilton, 2014). There must be a way to do this, Krugman insists, blaming housing policy and land use restrictions for much of the gentrification plaguing

America's cities (Krugman, 2015). Through my research I investigate the potential of eco-villages as an avenue for addressing the lack of access to affordable housing in cities, while also addressing issues of sustainable lifestyles and community integrity. Because this research centers on Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Eco Village specifically, I will now address the literature on the particular environmental and social justice challenges facing Los Angeles in order to contextualize the project of Los Angeles Eco Village and its mission to address the intersecting issues of environmental and social degradation.

The Environmental Crisis in Los Angeles

As one of the largest and most populous cities in the Unites States, Los Angeles faces its own unique set of challenges in addressing environmental degradation. California as a state is particularly sensitive to climate change due to its overall scarcity of water, and economic dependence on industries such as agriculture, which are sensitive to and dependent on climate (Hayhoe et al, 1). These issues show up again and again in LA, as we are experiencing with the current California drought. Other forms of environmental degradation, which contribute to climate change, are also issues for California, such as soil degradation and waste due to agriculture, fossil fuel production and consumption, air quality, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss (Howard, 2014).

Los Angeles is commonly criticized for being the epitome of an unsustainable metropolis. Urban sprawl, "car culture", and general materialism are typically associated with Los Angeles, and fairly so. The rhetoric that the natural environment of Los Angeles cannot possibly sustain the city's massive population and consumptive lifestyle is common. Angelinos seem to have a particular fear of their environment, characterizing it as hostile,

something to protect oneself against, and thus justifying the continual alteration and subjugation of nature by human beings (Davis, 7-11). As Mike Davis points out in his book *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*, "paranoia about nature...distracts attention from the obvious fact that Los Angeles has deliberately put itself in harms way. For generations, market-driven urbanization has transgressed environmental common sense" (Davis, 9). If the environmental disastrousness of Los Angeles does indeed have anthropogenic roots, then we have both the power and the responsibility to change our approach to the city-nature relationship and thus change the collective story about Los Angeles. This applies to the social context of Los Angeles as well. "Market-driven urbanization" has not only created and continually contributed to an ecologically unsustainable city, but a socially unequal and unsustainable one as well. While environmental common sense has certainly been transgressed, as Davis says, social common sense has also been abandoned in so many ways, creating a deeply unequal, racially segregated, and polarized city. The prioritization of profits over people, the abandonment of communities, institutionalized racism and our notions of what growth and progress look like have all contributed to these crises. Reimagining Los Angeles and changing our approach to urban living is not only about shifting the balance of power between environment and economy, but shifting the balance of power among urban dwellers and communities and valuing all lives and perspectives equally in the imagination and construction of urban spaces.

Inequality and the Social Justice Crisis in Los Angeles

This artificial opposition that has been set up by land developers, builders, and politicians (Davis, 1998) does not simply affect the natural environment of LA, it affects the social environment as well. Indeed, while LA is notorious for smog and freeways it is also known for stark social and economic contrasts between neighborhoods such as Beverly Hills and Watts, Hollywood and South Central, Venice Beach and Inglewood (Zubrinsky Charles, 7). Los Angeles is simultaneously the poster child for wealth and glamour and for the plight of inner cities. Some of the wealthiest people in America live in Los Angeles, and much of the city's economy is organized around the extremely profitable entertainment industry. However, at the same time, in 2013 the LA Times reported Los Angeles' poverty rate at 27%, the highest of any county in California (Holland, 1, 2013). The extremes of these two coexisting realities bring into sharp relief the social polarization and instability in Los Angeles, which creates immense tension and injustice.

In addition to being home to an economically diverse population, Los Angeles is also one of the most racially, ethnically, culturally and politically diverse cities in the United States (Zubrinsky Charles, 6). Camille Zubrinsky Charles, Professor of Sociology at University of Pennsylvania argues, "if there was ever a metropolis that holds forth the promise of a heady social melting pot, it would be La Ciudad de Los Angeles- the City of Angels" (Zubrinsky Charles, 6). However, this diversity has tended to mean that inequalities are stratified along racial and ethnic lines, creating another layer to the social polarization and breakdown of the overall urban community. The poverty rate in 2000 for non-Hispanic whites in Los Angeles was 8.5%, while the rate for African Americans was

24.4%, the rate for Hispanics was 24.2% and the rate for Asians was 13.9% (Zubrinsky Charles, 17). In 2013, after the recession of 2008, the median wealth of white households was 13 times greater than that of black house holds and 10 times the median wealth of Hispanic households (Kochhar & Fry, 2014). The study did not compare the wealth of white households to Asian households.

These disparities show up geographically as well, with wealthier, whiter communities juxtaposed to poorer communities of color (Zubrinsky Charles, 10-11). This geographic segregation between communities is not just spatial, but has environmental and health consequences as well. The wealthier, whiter communities tend to enjoy cleaner air and water, more access to green spaces, and overall higher quality of environmental life (Barboza, 2015). Communities of color, on the other hand, tend to suffer much higher rates of asthma, diabetes, and other health issues related to environmental quality and have little to no access to safe, green spaces or other environmental goods (Barboza, 2015). These experiences tend to produce different relationships with nature, due to different interactions with and access to it, and these relationships are often not recognized by mainstream environmentalism. This shows up in many different ways in the environmental movement, one of which is urban planning and land use, and whose ideas about nature and urban living are codified in policy. This will be discussed in more depth throughout my literature review and in the results of my research.

Ultimately, the complexity and intersectionality of physical and social urban environments means that the racial/social justice crises and environmental crises Los Angeles is facing cannot be divorced from one another. The two continually reinforce each

other. If true sustainability is to be achieved in LA, and if the city is to successfully respond to the challenges of climate change and environmental and social degradation, understandings of and responses to the social and environmental challenges will have to be integrated.

Los Angeles and "The Environmental Moment"

Los Angeles is currently facing a challenging environmental moment, as are many cities in the United States. The unsustainable nature of urban environmental and social structures is coming to a fore, and LA is certainly no exception. As we gain more knowledge and awareness of the potential consequences of anthropogenic climate change, cities in particular are faced with the overwhelming and complex financial, regulatory and socio-political challenges of responding to these threats. As city governments try to figure out how to grapple with the simultaneous environmental and social challenges they face, individuals and communities within cities are also looking for ways to respond on a smaller scale (Ergas, 1). The public consciousness about issues of environmental degradation and sustainability has been steadily growing, particularly in the last decade (Cohen, 2014). Factors influencing this shift include the increase in scientific research and knowledge about climate change and other aspects of the environmental crisis, the objective environmental degradation people see, smell, hear or otherwise experience, and the increased media attention to issues of sustainability and the environment (Cohen, 2014). An increased focus on "wellness" (physical and psychological health) in America is also influencing people to pay more attention to the food they eat, the water they drink, the air they breathe, the products they buy and the spaces they inhabit (Cohen, 2014).

Additionally, due to the extent to which we have exploited the Earth's natural resources, in combination with other economic influences, energy and manufacturing costs are rising and the cost of living is getting more expensive (Gensler, 2015). For many people, some combination of these factors and others is influencing them to personally seek a more sustainable lifestyle (Ergas, 1). Eco-villages are one such strategy which, although outside conventional political avenues, seek to fundamentally shift the way daily life is structured, what is prioritized, and how we think about being a member of a community.

So we are at a unique environmental moment. It is widely acknowledged that we are at a tipping point in terms of climate change and environmental degradation and as public knowledge and concern is growing the desire to act is becoming stronger. Small-scale strategies, such as eco-villages, are beginning to form, yet there is still no official, broad-based strategy to proactively address intersecting social and environmental issues in urban centers. It is not clear at this point that official responses will intentionally and effectively seek to integrate the social and environmental aspects of the urban crises in their strategies. Philosophical and practical differences, and even contradictions, continue to exist between strategies to promote social justice and strategies to promote environmental sustainability (Di Chiro, 1996). So it seems to be a moment of truth. There is so much potential to dynamically integrate responses to these intersecting crises and fundamentally shift the way we approach urban life and development in US cities. This moment is an opportunity to bring marginalized perspectives to the forefront and truly change the way we think about urban form and life, the human-nature relationship and the landscape of social and political power. Eco-villages hold a lot of potential to mediate these tensions and create urban spaces to address environmental and social degradation simultaneously and

in a transformative way. The next section of this literature review will outline the history of eco-villages as an institutionalized modern project and review the challenges and potentials of eco-villages to create just and transformative responses to the intersecting crises of climate change and inequality in cities.

The Challenges and Potential of Eco-Villages

The Global Ecovillage Network defines an eco-village as "an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments" (GEN, 2015). These communities vary in size and design and can be urban, rural or suburban. Eco-villages in the United States have emerged as one way to address both environmental impact and the breakdown of community in the United States (Chitewere, 315). Eco-villages can also be situated within the anti-globalization movement and are often a vehicle for people striving to find an alternative to the mainstream Western consumer lifestyle and corporate dominated neo-liberal economic system (Jackson, 2). In some cases, these influences imbue eco-villages with values of justice and equity. Yet in other cases we see eco-villages as an expression of the wilderness myth Cronin talked about, a form of escapism from the plight of modern urban life. Therefore, urban eco-villages are a particularly interesting experiment because they produce a stark contrast, striving to create an ecologically and socially sustainable lifestyle in the midst of the chaotic environmental and social degradation of cities. Instead of leaving the cities to create a sustainable community, urban eco-villages are

experimenting with creating that sustainability in the midst of modern urban life and form. This tension will be explored in more depth in the results of my research.

In 2010 the Global Eco-village Network reported 102 eco-villages in the United States and 347 in countries around the world (Chitewere, 315) and in 1998 eco-villages were celebrated by the United Nations as excellent models of sustainable living on the UN's list of 100 Best Practices (GEN, 2015). However, although eco-villages have been touted by many as an exciting and viable solution to the intersecting issues of social disconnectedness and environmental degradation, the criticism remains that eco-villages are generally socially, racially and economically exclusive (Chitewere, 2010). Although social sustainability is a tenant of the eco-village model, environmental justice, and particularly racial and economic justice, are often not the explicit goals of eco-villages (Chitewere, 315). Eco-villages have tended to attract middle class white Americans, and more specifically people who are critical of the mainstream Western lifestyle, the destruction of wilderness and green space, and the culture born out of suburbanization and urban sprawl (Chitewere, 318). Eco-villages are striving to create a sustainable lifestyle within the greater structure of a society that they see as inherently unsustainable and unjust, and in doing so they bring to light an important aspect of the challenge, particularly for Americans, of addressing environmental degradation and climate change in a truly sustainable way. As eco-village and equity scholar Tendai Chitewere eloquently puts it, "eco-villages have brought to light the daunting task that faces those living comfortably in the United States- addressing both the local and global crises of hunger, violence, and environmental degradation while maintaining a comfortable lifestyle, a lifestyle that is also responsible for a disproportionate consumption of the world's resources" (Chitewere,

318). The tragic reality is that Western, and particularly American, colonialism and capitalism has deeply influenced if not created these current social, economic and environmental crises. Our Western lifestyles have and continue to create the majority of the environmental and social destruction, and therefore in order to shift the direction of our civilizations Western capitalism and its colonial roots must be addressed. Eco-villages, though they obviously cannot solve these complex and deeply historical problems, are a small-scale strategy attempting to answer questions about how we can begin to dismantle these unsustainable, unjust structures that govern our lives, and they are doing it in the context of those very structures. This is a central tension that this research seeks to examine, and the complexities and implications of eco-village living in the United States will be explored in more depth throughout this paper.

The Environmental Justice Challenge to Eco-Villages

While in theory the missions of the eco-village model and the environmental justice movement seemed closely aligned, in practice this is not always so. Many eco-village members and advocates have argued that racial and economic justice is not the goal of the eco-village movement, and therefore should not be a requirement (Chitewere, 320). However, many other members and advocates of eco-villages have expressed discomfort with the lack of diversity and focus on equity and justice within eco-villages (Chitewere, 319). Scholars across much of the literature on eco-villages and equity agree that if eco-villages are to be a viable model for sustainable living, especially in urban areas, they must meaningfully and explicitly incorporate equity and justice into their mission and practice. These tensions within the eco-village movement over equity and racial and economic

justice are situated within the larger context of historical and contemporary tensions between the mainstream environmental movement and the environmental justice movement (i.e Pezzullo & Sandler, 2007). In this next section I will briefly review the literature on this conflict, though there exists a much more extensive history and analysis on this topic.

As Phaedra Pezzullo and Ronald Sandler discuss in the introduction to their book *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement,* although in theory the environmental justice and mainstream environmental movements would seem to be natural allies with aligned goals, their relationship has often been divided, and even hostile (Pezzullo & Sandler, 2). The 1970's environmental movement, while important and successful in many ways, can easily be characterized as a white, middle-class effort focused on preserving wilderness land and protecting endangered species while paying little attention to the plight of those suffering the human consequences of environmental degradation, often in urban areas, due to their race and socioeconomic status (Chitewere, 317).

While preserving wilderness land and protecting endangered species are valuable pursuits, as William Cronin posits in his iconic essay *The Trouble With Wilderness*, "we mistake ourselves when we suppose that wilderness can be the solution to our culture's problematic relationship with the non-human world, for wilderness is itself no small part of the problem" (Cronin, 70). Cronin's essay challenges the idea that wilderness is the answer to the plight of modern civilization and that preserving wilderness is the way to "save the planet" (Cronin, 69). He also challenges the idea that wilderness is a place that is

entirely separate from human beings and their civilization saying, "far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation- indeed a creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history" (Cronin, 69). By this he means American frontier culture, and within that mainly wealthy white men. The history of the idea of wilderness is intimately tied up in colonialism, patriarchy, the exotification of nature of people of color, and myths of rugged individualism and American liberty (Cronin, 78), It is also divorced completely from the horrifically violent history of its making, the slaughter and dislocation of indigenous peoples who once called this "virgin" land home (Cronin, 79), and the enslavement of those who were then forced to work that land. The idea of wilderness also upholds the dualistic view of humans and nature, leaving no place for people or their communities in the vision of what nature is. The tragedy of this, Cronin says, is that "we thereby leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like" (Cronin, 81). This history explains much of why mainstream environmentalism has failed cities and the people who live in them; cities do not count as the environment in the eyes of the dominant brand of American environmentalism. The result of this, according to Cronin, is that "to the extent that we live in an urban-industrial civilization but at the same time pretend to ourselves that our real home is in the wilderness, to just that extent we give ourselves permission to evade responsibility for the lives we actually lead" (Cronin, 81). In evading this responsibility to our urban-industrial lives we also evade responsibility to the people who make those lives possible, those that labor to make the urban-industrial project run but rarely benefit from its profits. The worst burdens fall on low income people of color, who have been historically shut out not only of

the conversations about wilderness and environmentalism, but also from the conversations about urban planning and land use policy.

The harsh reality of the deep dysfuntion of American environmentalism was first officially brought to the attention of the mainstream environmental movement in 1990. The Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership Development Project wrote a letter to the "Group of Ten", the ten big mainstream environmental organizations, declaring the racism and whiteness of the environmental movement as a problem, not only for the people and communities who are being excluded, but for the mainstream environmental movement itself in being an effective force for change (Pezzullo & Sandler, 3). The criticism was not just that people of color and low income people (those most vulnerable to and affected by environmental degradation) were being excluded from the discussions on how to address environmental problems, but also that many actions and positions taken by the mainstream environmental movement were deeply destructive to communities of color (Pezzullo & Sandler, 4).

Mainstream environmentalism, for all its value and good intention, is located within a historically privileged and oppressive culture, and espouses a conception of nature and environment grounded in colonialism. Mainstream environmentalism's focus on protecting wilderness lands and endangered species in the 1970's was not an accident, it was grounded in the colonial philosophy that "nature" is "out there", entirely separate from human beings and necessitating their control and either protection or exploitation (Di Chiro, 1996). Surely protecting wilderness, ecosystems, and the various plant and animal species that inhabit those ecosystems is a valuable and necessary goal. We know now how

crucial the health and functioning of the earth's ecosystems are to overall planetary health and thus to our health and survival as human beings (WHO, 2016). Therefore the effort to preserve and protect is an important goal of environmentalism. However, the discourse and underlying philosophy within which these efforts are situated is deeply problematic for people of color, and ultimately for everyone who cares about environmentalism and true sustainability (Pezzullo & Sandler, 2007).

In addition to dichotomizing humans and nature, "colonial nature talk", as Di Chiro calls it, also conceptualizes nature as Edenic or sublime, romanticizing and at the same time devaluing it (Di Chiro, 311). The deeper problem however, is that this dichotomization and characterization does not end with non-human nature but is extended and applied to people of color (Di Chiro, 311). As Di Chiro points out, "Edenic or sublime notions of nature from Western traditions have been and continue to be problematic and even genocidal for people who have been characterized as being more like nature and thus less than human" (Di Chiro, 311). She goes on to argue that, "the Edenic notion of nature becomes, for many communities of color, a tool of oppression that operates to obscure their own "endangered" predicaments" (Di Chiro, 311). When mainstream environmentalists issue pleas for whales and polar bears while the survival of many communities of color is being threatened by toxic waste dumping, air pollution, crime, lack of healthy food, unemployment and disenfranchisement, it is an expression of either blindness or lack of concern for the environmental, social and economic realities of people of color (Di Chiro, 311). Not that whales and polar bears are not valuable and necessary creatures inour ecosystem, they are, but these calls are an expression of the broader blindness of the mainstream environmental movement to the relationships between what it conceives of as the

environment (i.e. non-human nature) and the social and economic systems within which humans live. The disconnect between the environmental justice and mainstream environmental movements then is not just that the mainstream environmental movement's causes tend to ignore and even exacerbate the struggles of communities of color, but that the two movements define nature itself in a fundamentally different way (Di Chiro, 1996). This difference has been defining for urban development and continues to influence the way cities are responding to social and environmental issues. Therefore, understanding the historical context of both the environmental justice movement and the mainstream environmental movement is critical to creating more integrated, intersectional and effective solutions to these issues.

The chasm between the environmental justice and mainstream environmental movements is pertinent to urban responses to climate change because these conflicts get played out more intensely in cities. The mainstream environmental movement's conception of "nature" means that cities get ignored. This is a huge problem, in part because it leaves out (and ultimately deeply harms) the people who live in these areas, and in part because cities are where so much environmental degradation occurs. Di Chiro argues that, "the colonial discourse of nature has positioned cities as repositories of waste, garbage, vermin, disease, and depravity- all features that, in colonial nature talk, are also associated with the people who must live there" (Di Chiro, 314). As I explored earlier in this literature review, the refusal of the mainstream environmental movement to focus on, or often even acknowledge, the environmental plight of urban areas and those who live there is not just an abandonment of those spaces, but is also an abandonment of the people who live there. Many scholars argue that eco-villages have been part of that abandonment, creating oasis's

of "sustainability" in or outside of cities that continue to be deeply unsustainable and unjust. My research will seek to understand how this can potentially be avoided and how eco-villages can instead become spaces where these tensions can be mediated and new solutions and strategies for sustainability can develop.

Green Consumerism vs. Social Movements: Dangers of Purchasing Sustainable Lifestyles

In this final section of literature review, I will explore the literature on green consumerism and its connections to eco-villages, using Andrew Szasz's theory of inverted quarantine and Tendai Chitewere's research and analysis of eco-villages as a form of green consumerism. In their current form, eco-villages are at risk of simply becoming a form of green suburbanization or isolated oases in cities, rather than a meaningful model for truly sustainable urban living. Szasz and Chitewere's frameworks are helpful in pointing out ways in which capitalism falls short of being able to solve environmental issues and in fact often exacerbates them. I use this analysis as a lens through which to examine the Los Angeles Eco Village as a way of assessing where the community falls within the scope of green consumerism and the potential of their model to foster true sustainability.

As discussed earlier in this literature review, in light of the current social and environmental crises, and with the lack of political action on these issues, many people are personally seeking alternative practices and lifestyles. Sometimes this is out of necessity and sometimes it is due solely to social and/or environmental values and consciousness. In particular, with growing awareness about the myriad of toxic chemicals in our food, air and water, many people are both seeking protection from these hazards and attempting to reduce their environmental impact (Szasz, 68). Chitewere argues that the construction of

nature as an individual, transcendental experience, as Cronin discussed earlier, fosters these individual responses to collective environmental problems (Chitewere, 194).This often takes the form of green consumerism, purchasing products that are marketed as "eco" "natural" "organic", "sustainable" and a myriad of other practicably meaningless labels. These products are often more expensive than their traditional counterparts, and thus they become tools for creating class distinction and status (Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). Due to the higher prices and the "trendiness" of these products, participating in green consumerism is an expression of status, and usually does not lead individuals to participate in actual collective political action for the environment (Szasz, 152).

In his book *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed From Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*, Andrew Szasz discusses the theoretical underpinnings of green consumerism and outlines why it is a phenomenon worthy of serious consideration and concern (Szasz, 2007). Green consumerism, Szasz argues, is an expression of what he calls "inverted quarantine" (Szasz, 27). Inverted quarantine is essentially the opposite of the well-known public health strategy quarantine. Instead of isolating the individuals who are "contaminated" in order to preserve the health of the broader community, healthy individuals attempt to isolate themselves from a ubiquitous threat, at the expense of those who cannot afford to do so (Szasz, 2007). Of course, this phenomenon is deeply defined by the socio-political landscape of America (and of the entire world). Individuals who have the time, money and other resources to spend insulating themselves from the myriad of toxic chemicals and other environmental "bads" omnipresent in the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat can do so. However people of color and people of low SES continue to be disproportionately exposed

to toxins and environmental degradation and do not have the means to participate in inverted quarantine activities (Szasz, 74).

Inverted quarantine, Szasz argues, is not just a problem for those who are unable to afford it, it is ultimately a problem for everyone on the planet because it directs time, money, and political energy away from the collective response, we need to actually affect the problem and creates a culture of political apathy (Szasz, 201). As Chitewere puts it, "Green consumption points to a critical junction that reveals an ethical difference “between those who believe we can reform our way [of life] to a sustainable future and those who believe that only radical and wholesale restructuring of beliefs and human behavior can save the planet” (Chitewere, 193). Inverted quarantine is an expression of the individualization and commoditization of the risks of environmental degradation and climate change (Szasz, 178). Individualism, he argues, is at the very core of our culture, both as a mode of experience and action (Szasz, 7). When individuals participate in inverted quarantine behaviors, they are acting as consumers, not political actors or members of a collective (Szasz, 180). Buying, or more specifically paying more for, "green/natural/organic/non-toxic" products is only rational if one believes that the structural and political conditions which are creating the environmental crises will not or cannot change (Szasz, 8). Participating in green consumerism then is in a way giving up on ourselves as political actors, on our power to collectively affect the systems of which we are a part and create change.

Due to the political and economic realities of our social systems in the United States (and across the globe), barricading oneself against environmental threats also means

insulating oneself from the people in society who are unable to afford to participate in inverted quarantine activities. Green consumerism is not only an expression of denial and escape from environmental threats, but also a denial of the realities of those most affected by environmental degradation (and unable to escape from it), and a refusal to act collectively in order to change those realities (Szasz, 178). In a way it is the modern consumer expression of the wilderness myth of which Cronin speaks, a form of escapism from our lives and all their ugly consequences, and an attempt to redeem ourselves from ourselves.

These analyses are useful to frame my research on the Los Angeles Eco Village and give a lens through which to examine if and how this community perpetuates these ideas of green consumerism and inverted quarantine. The literature on green consumerism, and how it pertains to eco-villages, is fairly young and limited. However, this literature sheds light on the limitations of the market to create solutions to the problems of environmental degradation. Climate change and other forms of environmental degradation affect us all, they are collective problems, and they are reaching a scale at which it is doubtful that small-scale solutions will be able to solve them. Additionally, beyond the ineffectiveness of individual solutions to actually address the issues, these strategies also leave out an important piece of the problem and of what I think we are ultimately yearning for-community. Green consumerism offers nothing in the way of building social connection and understanding. Eco-villages it seems are an interesting space, however, to bring the immediacy of small-scale solutions to environmental degradation together with a commitment to equity and building resilient and active communities. My research will

investigate how these dynamics play out at the Los Angeles Eco Village, and what the potential role is for urban eco-villages to be spaces for mediating these issues.

METHODS

In order to answer the research question, *what is the role of eco-villages in facilitating just and transformative responses to the intersecting crises of climate change and inequality in cities*, I collected data through two primary avenues. I accessed demographic data for the Koreatown neighborhood where the Los Angeles Eco Village is located through the US Census for years 1990, 2000 and 2010. This data is used to compare the populations and racial/ethnic makeup of the neighborhood before and after the founding of the eco-village in order to provide context for the community. I was unable to access internal demographic data for LAEV itself, so the case study does not include the changing demographics of the intentional community over time. The demographic makeup and diversity of LAEV is inferred through the interview responses of LAEV residents.

The primary part of my research consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews with five LAEV members, one LA City Planning Department official, and two academics in the fields of equity, sustainable urban development, and eco-villages. The interviews with LAEV members make up my case study of LAEV, informing the demographic data with qualitative data and the lived experiences of Los Angeles Eco Village members. The interview with the City Planning official and academics will seek to inform the broader questions about the role of eco-villages in cities grappling with the intersecting crises of climate change and inequality. This data will help to generalize my research and inform cities other than Los Angeles.

Interview questions for LAEV members focused on reasons for choosing to live at LAEV and how they have experienced issues of equity/inequity, diversity and inclusion, how they have experienced the integration of environmental and social issues at LAEV, and whether thier activism has been affected by living at LAEV. Questions also focused on the relationship between LAEV and the city of Los Angeles as a whole and attempted to discern if and how the two affect each other and what avenues exist for creating inclusive and sustainable systemic change.

Interview questions for the City Planning official focused on city-wide strategies for addressing the issues of climate change and inequality and the how planning can help and/or hinder the ability of communities to be active facilitators of social and environmental sustainability. These questions focused more on the challenges and benefits of community-based urban development strategies to deal with social and environmental issues rather than on eco-villages specifically, in order to include intentional and non-intentional communities who are practicing sustainability and trying to address social and environmental degradation but do not identify as eco-villages. This interview also sought to address the regulatory aspects involved in the development and success of sustainable communities and the overall social and environmental structure of cities.

Interview questions for academics focused on broader issues of equity and inclusion regarding eco-villages as a model and the general integration of social and environmental issues when it comes to responding to climate change. They also focused on ideas of activism and green consumerism. These interviews sought to contribute a theoretical

perspective to ground the other data and contribute to the structure of analysis and the general applicability of my research.

Interviews took place over the five-week period between January 15 2016 and February 19 2016. A total of eight interviews were conducted during this time. Interviews were conducted via Skype, phone, or in person and were recorded with participant consent. Two interviews were conducted in person with LAEV members at the community. Three interviews were conducted over the phone and the remaining three were conducted via Skype. The researcher also took manual notes during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and then repeatedly read through to identify common themes and ideas about eco-villages and their role in cities, equity and diversity, urban environmentalism, activism, green consumerism and how to create systematic change. The interviews conducted with Los Angeles Eco-Village (LAEV) residents or past residents were read through and coded by hand looking particularly for experiences at LAEV, thoughts on LAEV's relationship to the surrounding neighborhood and city of Los Angeles, how issues of equity and diversity play into life at LAEV, activism, green consumerism and how eco-villages as a project can potentially affect structural change in cities. Interviews with scholars were coded by hand for the same themes and ideas in a more general sense, not limited to LAEV, as well as more general thoughts and theories about equity and diversity in environmentalism, activism and structural change-making, and individual versus collective action on social and environmental problems. The one interview done with a Los Angeles City Planning official was coded by hand more specifically for ideas about community planning and the relationships between planning and structural change, planning and sustainability, and planning and equity and diversity.

BACKGROUND

This background section will give a brief overview and history of the Los Angeles Eco Village in order to contextualize the community in the city of Los Angeles and within LA's environmental and social justice movements. Information on the Los Angeles Eco Village for this section is taken from the LAEV website and from a KCET interview with founder Lois Arkin, and is also informed by my interviews with LAEV members.

The Los Angeles Eco Village

Located in the heart of Los Angeles in the north end of Wilshire Center/Koreatown, the Los Angeles Eco Village (LAEV) was established in 1993. Originally planned to be built on an 11-acre vacant city-owned site in northeast LA, LAEV's planning committee changed course after the post- Rodney King riots in 1992 (Villanueva, 2013). Instead of building an expensive new housing development, they decided to retrofit inner-city buildings in need of repair in a part of the city that was both diverse and deeply impacted by the uprisings. LAEV founder Lois Arkin had lived in the building that is now home to for 13 years at that point, so there was already a relationship established between the fledgling community and the existing neighborhood. LAEV founder Lois Arkin said, "in its broadest sense LAEV's mission was to reinvent how we live in the city by demonstrating the processes of living more ecologically and more cooperatively, thereby creating a higher quality of life at a much lower environmental impact. As we became increasingly aware of how to integrate the social, economic, and ecological processes and systems of the neighborhood, we grew more and more adept at walking our talk without judgment and without self-righteousness"(Villanueva, 2013). While LAEV was certainly motivated by ecological

principles, it was also motivated by the city of Los Angeles and particularly by how sustainable lifestyles could fit into that context. The social landscape of Los Angeles in 1992/93 also seems to have greatly influenced the community, infusing it with social awareness and a commitment to social justice and diversity from the beginning.

Since it's founding, LAEV has grown to be a 30-40 member community, and has consistently had roughly 50% members of color over that time, though the exact number has varied over the years (Villanueva, 2013). Members live primarily in two adjacent apartment buildings and are organized under a non-profit called Urban Soil/Tierra Urbana, which is a limited equity housing cooperative (Villanueva, 2013). Under this structure, the buildings are owned and managed by the residents themselves. In addition, the land LAEV's buildings are on is now owned by the Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust, which means the land, and therefore the buildings, can never be returned to the speculative real estate market. This is a crucial component in ensuring the long-term affordability of the Los Angeles Eco Village. A community land trust is usually a private not-for-profit organization that seeks to serve the community's land access and housing needs by purchasing land and taking it out of the speculative real estate market, therefore removing its productive value ("The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust"). The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust states their missions as, "to exercise land stewardship as the basis for creating pedestrian-centered neighborhoods emphasizing affordable housing, work and recreational spaces that are economically and socially sustainable, and that integrate urban living with nature" ("The Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust"). This model ensures the long-term affordability of LAEV housing and also puts control of land use into the hands of residents. As I will explore more in the findings of my research, this model holds a huge

amount of potential to address the need for affordable housing, community empowerment and sustainable lifestyles in cities, and is a defining characteristic of the Los Angeles Eco Village.

FINDINGS

In order to contextualize the Los Angeles Eco Village in its surrounding neighborhood, I accessed demographic census data in order to compare racial and socio-economic data for the area before and after the establishment of LAEV. This data cannot produce any conclusions about the effects of LAEV on the surrounding neighborhood, however it gives a useful snapshot of the demographic make-up of the area over time in order to contextualize the community and the neighborhood in LA. Below is a table of the demographic data for the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles, which encompasses the Los Angeles Eco Village. Data spans from the 1990 census, three years before the establishment of LAEV, to the 2010 census, seventeen years afterwards.

Year	**Population**	**White**	**African American**	**Native American**	**Asian/ Pacific Islander**	**Another Race Alone**	**Two or more races**	**Latino/ Hispanic**
1990	39, 093	24.19 %	5.74%	0.59%	29.18%	40%	N/A	64.02%
2000	50, 460	4.1%	3.75%	1.26%	21.54%	40.81%	5.51%	69.91%
2010	45, 767	4.6%	3.9%	.95%	29.24%	32.66%	4.29%	62.9%

Although these demographic data are extremely general, and do not include the specific demographics of the Los Angeles Eco Village, they do give a glimpse into the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood over the time LAEV has existed in the area. This helps to show the demographic context of the community, which is generally unusual for the types of eco-villages I explored in my literature review.

Interviews

Interview participants' answers and conceptualizations are discussed below. The data is broken down by theme and participants' roles (i.e. LAEV residents, scholar, planner, etc.) are specified to contextualize their responses. For the purposes of synthesis and in order to capture the complexity and interconnectedness of the data, I have woven the responses of the scholar and city planner in with the responses of eco-villagers. The data from the interview with the city planner will be used to inform the data from eco-villagers with a planning perspective as well as inform the regulatory context of urban sustainability. The data from the interviews with the academics will primarily serve to contextualize eco-villages within the broader global sustainability movement and give some theoretical grounding to the various themes that came up in the research process. For the purposes of efficiency, the Los Angeles Eco-Village will be referred to throughout this paper as LAEV.

Equity and Diversity at LAEV

Eco-villagers' experiences and conceptions of equity and diversity at LAEV, both in terms of practice and culture and in terms of conversations and intentions within the community, were varied and incredibly nuanced. All residents expressed feeling like LAEV

was generally conscious of and intentional about fostering a diverse living space, but could still do more to improve. Most residents talked about how LAEV was whiter than the surrounding neighborhood and whiter than the community that had been in the LAEV buildings before the eco-village. However, most residents also expressed that LAEV was more diverse than most- if not any- other eco-villages that they knew of. One LAEV resident of 16 years said, "within the eco-village realm we have a way higher percentage of people of color for sure, and even among urban eco-villages I think we're one of the most diverse, but that said it's still a challenge" (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.). Another eco-villager echoed this sentiment saying,

> We've always been whiter than the surrounding neighborhood but we've always been way more diverse than any other eco-village. And even though we didn't kick anyone out when we took over this building we're a lot whiter than what was here, but I think we're still roughly half non-white (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.).

One point that came up for residents in terms of diversity at LAEV was the membership process. One resident talked about the membership process and how she sees social networks playing into diversity at LAEV. She described the membership process as being "a pain in the ass" due to the time and energy it takes to build relationships with community members (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.). She felt that the membership process needed more sophisticated and intentional criteria to ensure a diverse membership saying,

> What are the things that make someone a member or not a member? When it comes down to it we're humans and social creatures and we're probably not going to say yes to someone who makes us uncomfortable. Which again gives me fears about this becoming a more homogenous place if there aren't those standards for inclusion that are based on something other than is this person

> good at making conversation with me at a potluck (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.)

She extended this concern beyond the membership process, again emphasizing social networks and how they could potentially be counterproductive in creating a diverse and inclusive living space saying,

> The people who become interested in living here, largely I think it's because they know someone who lives here, so that makes a lot of sense for humans, we learn about things through our social networks, so we end up with the fact that there is this issue of environmentalist movements being more white centered spaces where white people feel more comfortable and people of color tend to feel like they're not fitting in as well.
>
> I think there is the real possibility that this place can be that way too simply because if you get enough people who move in here who don't have those relationships with other kinds of people then fewer other kinds of people are going feel like it's a home for them, not because they're actively being excluded, but just because that's how social networks work. So I think it's crucial to keep this space a place where that mixing can happen and I feel like that's what it was for me in my experience. But it's hard to know how you make that intentional...it's really hard to know (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.).

This response points to the tension between intentionally creating a diverse living space and socially engineering a "diverse" community. What is the line between actively seeking to attract and include people from different backgrounds and cherry-picking or tokenizing diversity? Additionally, diversity simply for the sake of diversity is not enough. A diverse community can still be un-inclusive or even oppressive if it does not actively foster cultural understanding and practice respectful communication and constant learning and improving.

Residents touched on this issue when they spoke about the tendency for cultural conflict between environmental issues and social justice issues when they are narrowly defined. When these two sets of issues are seen as separate instead of deeply intersectional,

they often come into conflict, and even opposition, with each other as I explored in my literature review. This was expressed both explicitly by residents who pointed out this problem, but also implicitly by other residents who spoke about environmentalism and social justice/equity as separate issues.

One eco-villager noted the bias that often comes up in the membership process for "people who will be perfect for eco-village", which he described as meaning they are already very involved and experienced with sustainable practices such as permaculture (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.) He noted that "early on we struggled with getting people of color here and having them feel good about it, and there were conflicts where they felt disrespected" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). He attributed these conflicts to a culture where "environmental stuff trumps equity stuff" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). Implicit in this reaction is a belief that environmental and equity/diversity issues are inherently separate from one another, or even that they can be separated at all.

Making Connections for Equity and Diversity

Another eco-village resident emphasized the need to understand the connection between issues that may on the surface seem separate. She identified as working on "environmental issues very broadly defined" in her professional work as an organizer, mentioning human rights, environmental issues and public education within that scope. She emphasized the need to have strong open spaces at LAEV to have discussions about the intersections between issues of equity and diversity and specifically environmental issues (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

> When things are happening like the Black Lives Matter movement I think it's important to have a space to talk about it and be able to articulate how that's related [to the LAEV project]. I think a lot of people think there's a connection but I don't think we have a good community space for that (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

The issue of making connections extends far beyond struggles in Los Angeles, or even the United States, to the need to make global connections between social and environmental issues. That is the crux of what my conversation with scholar Tendai Chitewere focused on. One thing she pointed out about eco-villages is that they are spaces where a group of people come together with a commitment to addressing very serious and complex questions about how we should live, particularly how we in the Western world, who are creating so much of the global environmental degradation and social destruction, should live. She applauded this sentiment and commitment, noting that, in her experiences with eco-villages, they are full of well-meaning people who genuinely want to answer these questions and who are publicly experimenting with new structures that might work better (Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). However, she cautioned, truly addressing the global environmental and social consequences of our western lifestyles can too often become simply buying organic food or driving hybrid cars- green consumerism (Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). Even within structures such as eco-villages that are intentionally creating community and trying to think critically about these problems market solutions and individualism can still take over. So having spaces to connect issues that might otherwise be left separate, from Black Lives Matter to global poverty, is crucial to eco-villages' mission to promote equity.

Making connections to foster equity and diversity is also important in a logistical sense from the planning perspective. The city planner I spoke with talked about the

challenges of coordinating small-scale community strategies and broader city or even state strategies for addressing environmental and social degradation. She emphasized the need for both top down and bottom up approaches to addressing these issues, but acknowledged that often it is very difficult to coordinate those efforts in an effective way. She pointed out that in many of the sustainable neighborhood projects she has worked on in LA, the project itself has been a success, but once outside the boundaries of that project there is little benefit to the broader community (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). She emphasized that city-level planning can be very myopic and that there is a need for "staff who have their ear to the streets of state and federal legislation and try to connect those dots because ultimately that's what is going to bring the money and sway the tide" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). She mentioned California's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund as an example of this saying, "I don't think planning has sat down with those agencies and said okay, there's this whole pot of money that's going to be substantial so what's our long term strategy so we can really leverage that. So that's kind of the breakdown between projects and long term policy" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.).

Making social and cultural connections within the community is certainly crucial for eco-villages to be successful vehicles for social, economic and environmental sustainability. However, in order to have the opportunity to create such a community in the first place there is money and planning required, which necessitates building that same understanding and shared language within government structures and agencies and between those agencies and communities.

Communication

A big challenge in the equity conversation is communication. The issue of communication and how to communicate across issues and across cultures came up for several residents. One woman stated, "sometimes [diversity] gets in the way of basic communication...In some ways it makes things stronger, everyone's coming from different places and different ideas and we can come together and make things work, but if we don't have the tools for communication it can really be a struggle" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.).

Another resident also brought up the communication issue and emphasized the necessity of the conflict resolution team LAEV has developed to deal with conflicts within the community. She and several other residents were trained in conflict resolution skills, which she felt had really enhanced the community's ability to deal with issues more consciously and effectively. "I think it made everyone much more conscious that there isn't one way to communicate and you shouldn't assume everyone means the same thing when they say something or their body language...there are different kinds of communication and different cultural variations of what those things mean. So I think that has helped infuse a certain consciousness around diversity of cultures" (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.). She also mentioned that there was a group within the eco-village that was beginning to meet to discuss diversity, though they wanted the conversations to really explore issues of power and privilege, she said. She expressed that as a community LAEV was consciously navigating those issues and trying to figure out how to have those conversations in a good way and was generally moving in a positive direction (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.)

The city planner I spoke with also talked about communication as a challenge for planning, particularly participatory planning. When asked about the benefits of participatory planning she said, " it can become a challenge to get everyone on the same page, like in terms of language, and that can mean speaking the same language or just having a shared understanding of what words like sustainability mean" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). This comes back to conceptions of sustainability and ideas about the human relationship with nature. We see, then, that effective communication and cultural understanding is not only critical within eco-villages and communities but also between those communities and the greater societal structures of which they are a part.

Defining Diversity

The issue of defining diversity also came up for several residents. One resident pointed out that although diversity is one of the values of LAEV, that can mean many things to many people and be interpreted in different ways. She went on to point out that the vast majority of LAEV members are college educated (meaning not a lot of diversity in level of education), but that there was a diversity of ages and incomes. She did emphasize that although there was a diversity of incomes, some of the members with low incomes lived that way by choice rather than necessity. She also distinguished between "active members" and "members". "Active members" were members who were active both within the eco-village and in social or environmental issues outside the community in some way. She stated that the majority of the "active members" at LAEV were white and college educated (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

Experiences of LAEV as a space that fostered diversity and inclusion varied among residents, and much of their perspectives can assumedly be attributed to their own personal identities, experiences, values and relationships with nature. However, overall there was a shared sentiment among residents that LAEV was uniquely diverse for an eco-village, and even for an environmental space, which was greatly appreciated by all residents. Adonia spoke about this several times in her interview saying,

> I came to appreciate that this place had given me a space where I didn't feel out of place, I didn't feel different or racialized, it was just a place where there were a bunch of different kinds of people working on different things and it allowed me to develop those things within my own identity (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.)

Additionally there was a shared sentiment that, although LAEV was generally diverse and inclusive, the community could and should do more to intentionally foster diversity and ensure cultural understanding and inclusion in the mission and practice of the eco-village.

Activism

Many of the interview questions pertained to activism. Most of those questions were about activism at the Los Angeles Eco-Village or related to being a member of LAEV, but all interviewees also spoke about activism more generally as a practice and a lifestyle. In order to make the discussion of activism more manageable, this section is divided into a discussion of activism at LAEV and pertaining specifically to being a member of LAEV, and activism more broadly as it pertains to being a concerned citizen of the world, though the two realms are deeply interrelated.

Activism at LAEV

Most eco-village residents felt that living at LAEV enhanced their activism, although the significance of the eco-village as a facilitator of activism varied among residents. One past resident said, "[Living at LAEV] absolutely facilitated it. One hundred percent. Because there were always things going on, and LAEV seemed to find itself in the middle of things all the time" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). This resident gave the example of going to community meetings, saying,

> I never go to community meetings about schools and stuff like that, but I was at community meetings like it was my job when I was at LAEV. And that was actually really wonderful because it showed me the reason to go to community meetings and be involved in what's going on in your neighborhood. I feel like living at LAEV really encouraged residents to claim their neighborhood (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.)

This resident also mentioned that having the structure of the intentional community helped her go to meetings or be involved more than she would otherwise have been. "When you've got people knocking on your door saying 'hey I'm going to this meeting want to walk over together?' and all you're doing is watching your seventh episode of Star Trek, it might encourage you to go" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). This seems to be a general benefit of eco-villages and intentional communities in terms of promoting engagement in local issues, though this may not be true in all communities, particularly rural ones.

Two other residents felt like living at LAEV facilitated their activism in a more general way. Both spoke about LAEV as being a center for activism or activity in the city and about it being a space that people could come together to work on issues. One eco-villager said, "you get like minded people that reinforce each other and contribute to each other's activism so...it serves as a center space- like with the Bike Kitchen- it's a place

where people come together and exchange knowledge and help each other out to be more effective" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). Joe's reference to the Bike Kitchen, a bike repair shop and educational space that grew out of LAEV, is a clear example of how LAEV has served as a hub for action and cooperation. For instance, LAEV is also where the LA Bicycle Coalition was incubated (by Joe Linton, a participant in this research project, and Ron Milam) and where CicLAvia was essentially started in Los Angeles (by Adonia Lugo and others). These are a few ways in which LAEV has had an affect on the larger city of Los Angeles. Adonia also pointed this out saying, "It's here as a site that represents a number of things to a number of people, they can come here and meet other like-minded people and depending on what they're engaged in beyond here then that has effects on the larger city" (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.) Both Joe and Adonia were speaking primarily of transportation issues, particularly biking, most likely partially because they both work professionally on transportation issues and partially because LAEV has been a particularly important space in LA for bicycling and the issues of sustainability, safety, and social justice that surround it.

Another eco-villager however did not feel that activism was a particularly strong aspect of living at LAEV. When asked if and how she felt activism played into life at LAEV she replied, "yeah, I mean I don't know if I ever thought it was super strong, but I guess around transportation this was a hub" (Yuki Kidokoro, 2016, pers. comm.). Yuki is an activist by trade and has been professionally organizing and working in activist communities for decades, so it is also possible that her conception of what activism looks like are different than those of other residents or of the eco-village as a whole. However, she also mentioned that LAEV had played a role in getting grey water systems up and

running and has been fairly innovative in their Land Trust/Coop ownership model. She also emphasized that LAEV plays a role by being an example, an educational space, and a venue for people to gather.

The conception of activism was also a topic that came up several times throughout the interview process. One eco-villager said she did not consider herself an activist. "Activism is such a strong word, I don't know if I would still even consider myself and activist, but I definitely know more living here and I try to support movements that are trying to rectify issues that we have" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). This resident, though she does not consider herself an activist, co-founded an affordable childcare program under CRSP, the non-profit that developed LAEV, for children of the eco-village and children in the surrounding community, which can be viewed as a form of activism. Although most residents I interviewed considered themselves activists they seemed to define this role in a myriad of ways, from community organizing to attending rallies to riding their bikes to work. Additionally, the resident who did not consider herself an activist nonetheless held a deep commitment to making ethical and conscious choices in her life and working to make the world a better place.

Activism Beyond LAEV: Affecting Structural Change

This section will explore the theme of activism in more depth beyond the confines of the LAEV community. These conversations tended to focus on systemic change and how activism plays a role in creating that, as well as different forms of activism and how activism can be integrated into ones lifestyle.

Most residents saw activism more as a lifestyle or mindset than as a specific set of activities such as going to rallies or protests. As stated above, Leslie did define activism in these more narrow terms, but still found it deeply important to be a responsible global citizen and work to make the world a better place. Most residents emphasized the importance of constantly striving to learn and be more intersectional and inclusive in ones activism. A past eco-village resident and long-time activist said,

> The danger with communal living situations is that they can become cultish very quickly and if there's not an infrastructure that reinforces and consistently supports critical thought, then you're in danger of becoming navel-gazing and self-congratulatory and not consistently revising and interrogating your own approach to things and getting more and more nuanced in the way you approach your activism (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.).

This applies to LAEV as well as environmentalism as a movement. In order to foster genuine and intersectional sustainability constant self-reflection and reevaluation is crucial in not falling into problematic ruts or ignoring important aspects of problems.

Yuki echoed the need for consistent self-reflection and constant revision of one's process and ideas throughout her interview. She also emphasized the importance of relationships for individual and institutional capacity for this saying,

> One piece around how eco-villages can engage in systemic change is that it is important to be in relationship to other movements. It's important for us to be connected to other low income housing projects and fighting eviction and fighting for immigrant rights and against mass incarceration, because the more you're in relationship with folks the clearer it is how you can support and be in solidarity (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

All residents talked about LAEV as affecting structural change through leading by example, educating others and engaging conversation about issues. The focus of structural change tended to be on environmental sustainability, affordable housing and gentrification,

and equity and socio-economic justice. All residents did express that they felt it was important for LAEV, and eco-village projects in general, to strive to affect structural change. Joe expressed this saying, "I think we need to influence urban form and policy so that people don't have to be motivated by ecological principles" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). He went on to use New York as an example, talking about how people walk everywhere because that is how the city is structured, not because they think it's good for the environment. A past resident echoed this sentiment saying, "so much of urban communal living is low income housing, and so if low income housing can engage a conversation with eco friendly living I think that is an incredible opportunity" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). This seems to be the potential of eco-villages; to really engage those conversations and integrate approaches to addressing affordability and inequality with approaches to sustainable development and lowering environmental impacts.

Residents seemed to feel that LAEV was engaged in a kind of first step of being innovative on many fronts, but could do more in terms of pushing for those innovations to be incorporated into the mainstream. Joe used the example of grey water saying, "we hosted grey water workshops when grey water was illegal and taught people how to build them...so I think we change policy by getting people involved in stuff, and I think that was true of bicycling too" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). Yuki also mentioned the grey water workshops and expressed the importance of leading by example and "starting where we're the strongest" (Yuki Doko, 2016, pers. comm.) She talked about LAEV's involvement in what she called the "pre-legal" days of grey water system development and argued that,

> That's what we could do is do the things we think are necessary or important and then push for legal framework so you can get to the scale you need. So

> it's not about us being able to get away with it because no one's paying attention but we show that it's possible and push for legal frameworks around that (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

She went on to mention LAEV's model of affordable housing as an example of where this kind of push could happen in order to make sure there is an effort at the state level to create legal and regulatory frameworks to make establishing housing coops easy and affordable (Yuki Doko, 2016, pers. comm.). Another resident echoed this sentiment in relation to the affordable housing coop saying, "I am interested in the Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust and finding ways to give them more capacity to buy property because there's another great way we can make an impact in the community, because if they can buy more property there can be more low income housing" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.). Another resident pointed out the importance of this saying,

> I see that commitment to economic sustainability in the particular way of making this place affordable and it always has been way below what the affordability thresholds are...This is one area I feel has been so unique and wonderful about this project. I feel like culturally and in other ways there's a risk that this particular eco-village is a gentrifying force, but the fact that it's always been affordable and open to a wide range of folks, and that the land is land trusted and no longer open to speculative land interests, has been potentially stabilizing for the community (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

This point came up for every resident as a crucial aspect of the sustainability of LAEV and as a particularly unique and innovative aspect of the community. This structure also inhabited conversations about sustainability beyond the LAEV community and how LAEV could be a force for structural change in the city of Los Angeles.

This aspect of LAEV does seem to be unique. One of the problems with eco-villages Tendai Chitewere spoke about was their tendency to draw focus and energy away from people and places that truly need it. "[You] are addressing environmental and social

degradation but moving away from people for whom you could contribute to addressing a better social environment," she said (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.) She went on to say that many eco-villages have pulled attention away from addressing social and environmental degradation where we are, instead creating these communities "outside" of the structures that perpetuate social and environmental degradation (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). However, with its centrally urban location and social context, LAEV seems to be practicing this mantra of addressing social and environmental degradation where they are. Tendai talked about this saying, "I think in the urban context you have the opportunity to leverage the energies that go into eco-villages at the policy level. In cities we can leverage policies to increase public transportation, to increase resources that benefit more than just the residents of the eco-village" (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). Although LAEV still seems to be figuring out how best to leverage policy, and if that is really one of the roles it wants to prioritize as a community, the opportunities that arise for structural changemaking due to urban proximity are definitely present in the minds of residents.

Capacity

An issue that came up repeatedly for most of the residents I interviewed was the issue of capacity. Maintaining and running an intentional community is a lot of time, energy and work. How much capacity do people really have beyond that work and their personal work and home lives to engage in other activities and discussions about activism, diversity and equity, sustainability and/or structural change? The balance between enough inward

focus to function effectively as a community and enough outward focus to have a broader impact was something several residents spoke about as a major consideration.

After talking about the lack of a shared politics and guiding political values at LAEV Yuki said, "Maybe this isn't the vehicle for that. Maybe this is for other things but the list might be too heavy and it might not be the appropriate place for that" (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.) She emphasized her own personal conflict around this as well saying, "there are days when I feel like I work really hard and I just want a nice place to live and other days I feel like I do want us to be a stronger force for change" (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.) Another resident echoed the capacity issue saying, "in terms of getting people from the neighborhood involved we're trying to figure that out, and we need to build capacity to do that because we're all volunteers...We're so bogged down in just the logistics of running the non-profit that it's hard to get people involved from the outside" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.).

Longtime eco-villager Joe Linton articulated the need for balance saying, "I think for the eco-village project to work it has to have enough inward focus to be steady and sustainable and for the eco-village project to change the world it has to have enough outward focus too" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.) He also talked about how the balance between inward and outward focus varies depending on what is going on both within the eco-village and around the city. "Some years we are more concerned with plumbing problems and other years we're concerned with the fact that the city's re-doing the community plan and we're going to meetings" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). Joe also attributed some of the perceived shift inward to the shifting age demographic of LAEV,

mentioning that personally he has gotten older, gotten married and now has a young daughter and many other residents have also aged and the structures and priorities of their lives have shifted (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). Adonia mentioned this as well and talked about how she first got involved in LAEV when she was in her twenties and saw very few people now at LAEV who were in their twenties and engaged in that kind of way (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.)

The strongest influence on the capacity issue however seemed to be the processes and dynamics of transitioning to the cooperative ownership model. Over the past several years, the LAEV community has transitioned from the non-profit CRSP owning the buildings to a limited equity housing cooperative model in which the residents co-own the buildings. They have also gone through the process of land trusting the land the buildings are on through the Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust, which ensures the land can never be returned to the speculative market and thus locks in long-term affordability. Many residents felt that this was a crucial way in which LAEV practiced the social and economic aspects of sustainability and upheld values of equity and inclusion. However, all residents also acknowledged that the transition to and maintenance of this model has been incredibly time consuming and often exhausting. Yuki talked about this as a factor in the level of activism at LAEV saying,

> The transition to buying our buildings and managing ourselves took a lot of work and a lot of time and meetings and developing our governing documents and coming to consensus on different sections and figuring out our maintenance and governance plans. So I think through that we lost a certain amount of outward attention and I think we're starting to gain some of that back, but I also think there's just a permanent area of work that we have now that we didn't used to (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

Other residents echoed this sentiment, talking about the time and energy this transition has taken and the ways in which that focuses more of people's energy inwardly and uses up a lot of the capacity people have for outward engagement and activism. However, although this was a concern for some residents, all residents felt that it was well worth it in that is ensured the long-term affordability of LAEV housing, potentially stabilized the surrounding community, and was in itself a form of activism for equitable and affordable housing in Los Angeles.

The capacity issue is an important one for eco-villages to think about if they want to be effective vehicles for change in cities. This model seems to hold huge potential for addressing social and environmental sustainability issues in cities, and so finding an effective balance of inward and outward attention is crucial.

Sustainability

Another core theme of the interviews was sustainability itself. Included within this theme were questions and tensions such as: how do we define sustainability? What are considered sustainable practices or not? Whose lifestyle is considered sustainable and why? Who gets the credit for sustainable practices? What is the culture and language of sustainability? What are our conceptions of nature and the environment and what does that mean for urban sustainability?

These questions are about sustainability and environmentalism, but they are also about equity and diversity, social and racial justice, and ultimately also about colonialism and capitalism. Obviously, answering these questions is far beyond the scope of this project, but residents' thoughts and responses drew out a lot of important points and

considerations. In order to make the discussion of sustainability more manageable, this section will be divided between sustainability at Los Angeles Eco-Village and sustainability in more broad and theoretical terms. It will begin by discussing sustainability in the more specifically ecological sense, and then expand to encompass intersectional sustainability.

Environmental Sustainability at LAEV

As an eco-village, ecological sustainability is central to life at LAEV. However, sustainability can and does mean many different things to many people, and the various ways in which residents spoke about sustainability, both directly and indirectly, showed a broad and for the most part highly nuanced understanding of sustainability. All the residents I interviewed conceptualized sustainability as encompassing environmental, social and economic components. All the residents I interviewed also worked professionally in some way on issues related to sustainability broadly defined. This is important to note for two reasons, one is that it points to the fact that LAEV attracts people who are deeply involved in a range of issues related to sustainability. The other is that these residents' sophisticated understanding of sustainability is most likely influenced by their professional work and may not be reflective of the general understanding of sustainability within the community as a whole.

One thing that came up for two of the residents I interviewed was the strong anti-consumer, DIY culture at LAEV. This came up in the context of conceptions of sustainability and particularly the problems of green consumerism. One resident said, "One thing I really love about this place is the DIY approach. We're not waiting for the perfect landscape for sustainability engineered for us by our corporate overlords, we're doing stuff today"

(Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.). Some examples of this given by the residents were having a free shelf in the lobby, doing clothing exchanges, sharing appliances and resources such as vacuums, brooms, and laundry appliances, composting, and building a grey water system to reduce fresh water use. Another resident also mentioned the anti-consumer culture and DIY approach of LAEV saying, "At LAEV I do feel like there's a very strong anti-consumer sentiment and that intersects with economic sustainability...we can exchange for things we would otherwise have to buy...and we don't all have to have 50 of one thing, we can share" (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.). Both of the residents that mentioned this aspect of sustainability at LAEV felt that it was an important distinguishing factor and an example of LAEV's intersectional approach to sustainability.

Sustainability Beyond LAEV

One key theme for the Los Angeles Eco-Village is the idea of urban sustainability and nature in the city. Mainstream environmentalism, as I explored in my literature review, is often about conservation of plant and animal species and of "wild" spaces, however with over half of the global population now living in cities, what does that mean for environmentalism and for our conceptions of and connections to nature? One eco-village resident brought this up right away in his interview, saying his focus of interest was "how do we live in ways that lower our ecological footprint but also how do we within cities connect to nature; how does it make sense ecologically to live in cities" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). That question seems to be at the heart of what LAEV is trying to figure out. These questions again bring out the tensions between mainstream environmentalism and

environmental justice, or a more social justice focused environmentalism. The same eco-villager said,

> A lot of environmentalists want to see lots of green, but better for the environment is to have great cities that people want to live in so we don't sprawl out and wreck those wild spaces...even though it doesn't look like what's on the Sierra Club brochure that's what's better for the environment and if we're going to solve big issues like global warming then we need to make cities great places that people want to be in (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.).

A past eco-village resident touched on the issue of making cities great places to live as well saying,

> People moved to the cities in the first place to get that sense of culture and community that you can only get by living close together. So to me the more close together we live and the less intention there is about that close living, the dangerous it is to live in the city...And to me social connection and social capital and social fabric is the thing that keeps you safe. It's the hidden web behind everything that takes care of things that you can't even see (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.)

So figuring out how it makes sense ecologically to live in cities and how to make cities great places to live for everyone are deeply intertwined issues. As Joe said, if we are going to tackle issues like climate change, of which cities are going to have to play a central role, then we must also address the decaying social fabric of cities and make them places people want to live for both social and environmental reasons.

Critical Sustainability

Many eco-villagers also brought up questions about what qualifies as sustainability. Joe Linton, who has worked on transportation issues for 20 years, brought up the issue of the popularity of different sustainable practices saying that in LA and in environmentalism more broadly, "people were excited about recycling and planting trees but they weren't

excited about giving up their cars" (Joe Linton, 2016, pers. comm.). This again brings up issues of the privilege and ultimate support of the status quo that can often be found within the mainstream environmental movement or within movements that advocate green consumerism. For instance, driving cars is not just an environmental issue in terms of air pollution, fossil fuel use and climate change. Car culture is a deeply political and social justice issue. Fossil fuel exploration and extraction disproportionately impacts low income communities and communities of color, air pollution disproportionately impacts low income and communities of color, and many other effects of climate change also disproportionately affect low income communities and communities of color. So while planting trees and recycling are perhaps more popular and "exciting" ways to engage in sustainability, giving up ones car not only makes a larger environmental impact but is an act for social and political sustainability as well.

Tendai Chitewere brought this up in her interview pointing out, "who decides that driving a hybrid is green? That's total marketing. Why not a bus? Why not a high speed rail? Why aren't public buses the ones being touted as green?" (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). The sustainable activities that we choose to participate in or not participate in do matter, they are not all equal, and in order to achieve sustainability in a way that does not negatively affect certain communities it is important to be critical of which activities we participate in and why.

Yuki brought up the issue of recycling as an example of the need for greater scrutiny of what qualifies as a sustainable practice. She talked about having worked for an environmental justice organization in South East LA where there is a huge recycling

industry, "and a very dirty recycling industry" (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.). She went on to point out, "you see an issue very narrowly when you say you can keep buying stuff as long as you recycle it...then you're not really solving anything and you're often making things worse for some communities"(Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

This topic was the focus of much of my discussion with Tendai Chitewere, a prominent scholar on eco-villages, equity and green consumerism. She brought up the problem of green consumerism and, more fundamentally, of mediating solutions to environmental degradation through a capitalist structure saying,

> We as environmentalists need to be very critical of the ways in which environmental solutions are beings marketed to us. We have to be very cautious of the ways in which solutions to environmental degradation are being packaged as a commodity and not through grassroots social action. If we are critical of how the market is benefitting from our concern about climate change and the environment, and if we critically talked about the market and how that is destroying our neighborhoods, destroying our communities, because it is getting us to focus on individualism and consumption, then I think we can start to have empathy for people who live in polluted environments and I think that might sort of bridge the sustainable community stuff with environmental justice (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.).

This seems to be one of the opportunities presented by eco-villages; the creation of a space for both having those critical conversations and practicing and experimenting with ways to live sustainably and justly.

Diversity and Representation in the Environmental Movement

The biggest issue that came up for people around broader sustainability was diversity and representation of marginalized voices in the environmental movement. However, there also seemed to be a deeper thread to this narrative; not just diversity for

diversity sake, but a true re-conceptualization of environmentalism and of the environment itself, of what nature is, and of whose ideas about nature and the ways we should live are heard and incorporated into policy and infrastructure. This theme was present in Joe's point above that environmentalism shouldn't be all about green space or preserving 'wild spaces', but should also seriously incorporate ideas about nature in cities and how we can connect to nature in an urban environment and make cities great places to live for everyone.

Yuki spoke about this as well, bringing up the issue of who is the face of the environmental movement. She was involved in the fight at the Climate March in New York in 2014 to get those most affected by climate change, primarily indigenous communities and urban communities of color, as well as other urban and rural low-income communities, at the front of the march.

> We pushed and fought and if we hadn't it would have been Leonardo DiCaprio and Bill McKibbon and maybe even Ban Ki Moon at the front of the march, but instead it was young people of color from communities most impacted by Sandy and folks from New Orleans and indigenous young people... so getting really strong messaging about the face of the climate movement was a really big moment. And it's not just an either or thing, it strengthens the whole movement not to have these blind spots. There are so many instances where there was an effort of a mainstream environmental organization that was detrimental to a low income community of color because we have blind spots, because for them sacrifice zones are okay and they will compromise or negotiate away things that for them don't impact them, don't impact their kids, don't impact their lives or communities. And so those communities need to be front and center at the table in creating the solutions because otherwise it's always going to be invisiblized (Yuki Kodokoro, 2016, pers. comm.).

This issue of representation and acknowledgement also came up in terms of the label "eco-village". A past resident acknowledged this saying, "the terminology of eco-

village can be hard...there's a connotation with calling a group of people living together a particular thing" (unnamed, 2016, pers. comm.).

Tendai focused on this issue as well, speaking about the problems with the label of "eco-village". Part of the issue, she says, is that this label often credits people living comfortably, mostly in the Western world, with this "innovative" solution to social and environmental degradation, which is deeply misleading and disrespectful to people all over the world living this way out of necessity. Speaking about her experiences in Zimbabwe (her home country) she said, "people have been living in these ways and they don't call themselves eco-villages but they use low energy, they grow their own food, literally all of it, they share resources, they've been doing it for generations" (Tendai Chitewere, 2016, pers. comm.). So, she pointed out, the concept of "eco-village" then becomes a commodity, and through that process we discount all the ways in which people all over the world are living in ecologically sustainable ways, not because it's trendy, but because they have no other choice. Meanwhile in the Western world, particularly the United States, the glamour of the commodity distracts us from actually changing the ways we live that have such far-reaching consequences. We are encouraged by the market and the culture of individual consumerism to feel good about ourselves for spending that extra money to buy the organic tomato or the eco-friendly version of the product, but are not forced to examine or change the ways we relate to nature, to our fellow human beings and to our own lives.

These issues of representation, acknowledgement and diversity in sustainability are rooted in our conceptions of what the environment is, what nature is, and what our relationship with nature should look like. As explored in the literature review, these

themes play out both in the mainstream environmental rhetoric about conservation and endangered species, as well as in conversations about urban form and development.

Speaking about these tensions Adonia said,

> There are lots of people of color who don't have the opportunity to develop that [mainstream] relationship with nature and they have different relationships with nature that aren't recognized by the mainstream environmental movement...The environmental justice project is in one part about reducing the harms of where things are sited but also about addressing why more people don't have access to the goods and what the goods are. What is it even that we're trying to protect? Whose idea of nature and the environment gets recognized? For me that largely plays out with whose vision of urban space and land use gets support from government investment and whose doesn't (Adonia Lugo, 2016, pers. comm.).

So questions about eco-villages and how they can foster diversity and cultural inclusion and be forces for structural change in cities become questions about the concepts of environmentalism and sustainability themselves. What does urban environmentalism look like? What does sustainability mean? Who and what gets included in our collective concepts of these issues that are so defining for our time? These tensions and questions are perhaps most clearly seen and experienced- and most important- in cities. What does it mean to be an urban dweller? What should cities look like and how should they function? What does urban environmentalism look like? These are questions that extend far beyond the scope of this project, but through these conversations with members of the unique community that is the Los Angeles Eco-Village, we can begin to glean some insight and understanding into how these dynamics play out and interact with each other, and how we can potentially come together to integrate our thinking, shift our ideologies and our practices, and create a future that is more sustainable in every sense of the word.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the Level of the Eco-Village

The overarching recommendation for all eco-villages is to actively engage in questions and conversations about equity and diversity within the community and within the environmental movement as a whole. Without seriously confronting issues about equity and diversity, both on a personal and institutional level, eco-villages will never be a positive force for genuine sustainability.

In terms of creating eco-villages that are not merely "green" reinforcements of existing unjust structures, but actually facilitate just and equitable responses to the intersecting crises of environmental degradation and affordability in cities, a lot can be learned from the Los Angeles Eco Village. One recommendation that came out of my research process is for eco-villages to ground themselves in the social context and history of their location, particularly their city. Social uprisings are happening all over the United States (and the world) and creating intentional communities, whether they are called eco-villages or not, to engage people in rebuilding sustainably and creating new structures that address social, environmental and economic degradation is a powerful tool for change.

Eco-villages, and urban eco-villages in particular, would also benefit from emulating LAEV's ownership approach. Establishing a housing cooperative and land trusting the land the eco-village is on not only contributes significantly to social and economic sustainability, but also engages residents in a political and community-building process. In order to ensure these processes are successful, another recommendation is to have a trained conflict resolution team, as LAEV does. Residents who spoke about the conflict resolution

team felt it was hugely helpful in facilitating discussions and fostering cultural understanding in the community.

At the Level of the City

One recommendation that has come out of my research process is to prioritize the land trusting of land in Los Angeles. One of the crucial aspects of LAEV that contributes to social and economic sustainability is that the land is owned by the Beverly-Vermont Community Land Trust and therefore can never be returned to the speculative real estate market. This was mentioned by all the current LAEV residents as an important part of what they appreciate about LAEV and a critical component of the community's commitment to social and economic sustainability. It was also mentioned as one of the primary forces preventing LAEV from being a gentrifying force in the surrounding neighborhood and instead potentially stabilizing affordability in the area. More specifically, the land trusting of the land ensures the long-term affordability of living at LAEV, allowing it to be open to a wide diversity of folks. Therefore, due to the results of my research, I recommend the development of either a public or private body to seek out and purchase land in Los Angeles to be land trusted in order to create a sustainable affordable housing stock. Land is arguably the most tightly controlled and most profitable form of capital, so I also hope that this recommendation could potentially begin to shift our relationship with land away from such a capitalist framework.

Establishing a structure for land trusting land in LA would require shifts in regulatory and land use policy from the LA City Planning Department, as well as either government or private investment is buying up land. Private investment could potentially

be encouraged through government subsidies or other benefits of some kind. Public investment would clearly require a significant reallocation of funding and priorities, and would be politically difficult to accomplish. I echo the city planner's recommendation for a concerted effort on the part of the LA City Planning Department to sit down and look at all the current and incoming funds available for sustainable and community development and create a long term strategy for how to access and effectively allocate funding. I also echo that these projects should be participatory and should seek to balance the immediate community with the city as a whole to avoid silos of sustainability that are not integrated.

In addition to opening up avenues to land trust land in LA, I also recommend opening up avenues for the creation of housing cooperatives. Making it easier for communities to establish housing cooperatives would potentially facilitate greater community empowerment, participation, and ownership of neighborhoods. Housing cooperatives also allow residents an institutionalized vehicle to push for social and regulatory change at the policy level, and lend credibility and organization to communities pushing for social, environmental and economic lifestyle changes.

Many of these recommendations obviously require money, so the final recommendation at the level of the city is to prioritize and significantly increase investment in sustainable urban development. Sustainable urban development includes the development of physical, social and economic urban spaces. It also means prioritizing investment in neighborhoods and communities that have been historically neglected or underserved, and elevating their voices in the planning and policy-making processes. This

funding also needs to be flexible in order for communities to be able to use it in ways that fit their needs and make tangible differences for them.

My last recommendation at the level ofthe city is that people working in planning, particularly sustainable development, should be well-educated on the historical context of environmentalism and environmental justice and trained in cross-cultural communication on these issues. I hope this would help to reverse, or at least discontinue, the historical trend of planning negatively impacting both the environment and marginalized communities.

At the Level of the Environmental Movement

Through the process of my research I have come across countless recommendations for the environmental movement, each seemingly more complex than the last, so for the purposes of this paper I will focus on three main issues that arose from my research.

The first issue is similar to city investment in sustainable development but on a much broader scale. The environmental movement needs to prioritize channeling funds to environmental justice organizations and other environmental organizations fighting for intersectional sustainability. As Yuki Kidokoro pointed out in her interview, environmental justice organizations get only a fraction of the donations and funding that mainstream environmental organizations receive, so addressing this imbalance would greatly increase the capacity of environmental justice organizations to fund campaigns and projects. In a society in which money is power, we need to start shifting the power by shifting the money.

The second, and much more complex, recommendation is about representation in the environmental movement and it is threefold. The first aspect of representation that must be addressed is representation in the leadership of environmental organizations. As Adonia Lugo pointed out in her interview, while there are many people of color working for both environmental justice and mainstream environmental organizations, they tend to be organizers instead of CEOs. Increasing the diversity of the leadership of environmental organizations increases the breadth of perspectives being heard and incorporated into the overall environmental agenda.

The second aspect of representation that needs to be addressed is a little more nebulous- the face of the environmental/climate movement. This is definitely something that is beginning to shift, as Yuki talked about with the Climate March in New York in 2014, but more work still needs to be done. The face of the climate movement needs to be those most affected by climate change, by environmental degradation, by the colonial relationship with nature that has dominated environmentalism and the capitalist system that feeds off of that relationship. Changing the face of the environmental/climate movement is both a symbolic and practical task. On the one hand, we need to shift the culture of environmentalism from focusing primarily on conservation of wilderness and endangered species to focusing on the social, cultural and economic roots of the environmental crisis. These roots lie in colonialism and the ideology of domination, and empowering those who have suffered at the hands of these philosophies will hopefully begin the process of de-colonizing environmentalism.

The third aspect of representation that must be addressed within the movement for sustainability is recognition of sustainable practices and accurate accreditation of sustainable practices. This is an issue that came up with eco-villages in the US being touted as an innovative solution to social and environmental degradation, but people in other parts of the world who are living far more sustainably (often out of necessity) get no praise for being "green". As Tendai Chitewere pointed out multiple times, many people all over the world have been living sustainably and in "eco-villages" for generations, and they have never been the faces of the environmental movement or even included in the conversations about sustainability. When we allow the market to be the mechanism for creating solutions to environmental problems hybrids become the way to sustainability instead of public transportation and organic food becomes trendy while workers rights are ignored. We need to begin redefining what sustainability means and what it looks like. We need to change our perception of who is a champion of sustainability. We need to stop congratulating people in the Western world for being sustainable when they buy organic food or drive a hybrid and start critically examining the ways in which these activities, and all our activities, contribute to social and environmental degradation at home and abroad. We also need to start giving the adequate recognition and support to people everywhere who are actually living sustainable lifestyles, and elevate their voices in the environmental movement.

CONCLUSION

In order to answer the research question *what is the potential role of eco-villages in creating just and equitable responses to the intersecting crises of climate change and affordability in cities* I used the Los Angeles Eco Village as my case study and supplemented that data with both an academic and planning perspective. I conducted a series of eight semi-structured in-depth interviews with members of the Los Angeles Eco Village, a prominent scholar and eco-villages and equity, and an official from the LA City Planning Department. I then transcribed and repeatedly read through my interviews, coding them by hand for common themes and ideas about eco-village life, sustainability, equity and diversity, and activism.

This research process drew out a lot of the conflicts between the environmental justice and mainstream environmental movements, and explored the ways in which transforming eco-spaces into inclusive and intersectional spaces is challenging. I found that, in general, living at LAEV does facilitate activism and encourage residents to be more involved in what is going on in the eco-village and the surrounding community. I found that LAEV is more diverse than the "typical" eco-villages discussed in my literature review, although it is still whiter than its surrounding neighborhood and the city of Los Angeles in general. A definite limitation of this research is the lack of internal demographic data for the Los Angeles Eco Village over time. That data would have given a clearer picture of the community and would have further informed residents experiences of diversity and equity at LAEV. I also found that while LAEV is a more diverse eco-village than many others in the United States, fostering diversity and cultural respect and understanding continues to be a

challenge. The structure of ownership and operation at LAEV is a significant aspect of the community and a significant aspect of how the community practices sustainability. Opening avenues in policy to make housing cooperatives and land trusts similar to LAEV's would, I believe, further environmental, social and economic sustainability in Los Angeles.

Ultimately, my research on the Los Angeles Eco Village gave me more hope and faith in the eco-village model than I expected. Although LAEV has room for improvement on many fronts, the community is deeply committed to environmental, social and economic sustainability and is consciously innovating new ways to further all of these aspects. More than anything, I was incredibly impressed by the intelligence, engagement, thoughtfulness, and creativity of each of the residents I interviewed. These are people who are thinking incredibly critically about sustainability, about activism, and about how to make cities great places to live. They are also conscious of constantly questioning and reevaluating themselves, their friends and peers, and their strategies in order to continue improving. In those ways, I see them and their community as a model for a dynamic strategy to address the intersecting crises of environmental degradation and affordability in cities, and continuing to challenge the ways in which we view sustainability, equity and diversity, activism, and what it means to be an urban dweller.

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