Chapter 7
Downscaling Resilience from Los Angeles to Watts: Contestations, Appropriations, and Opportunities

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Introduction

In the past two decades, interest in climate justice at the urban scale has become more prominent, and resilience remains a central, albeit contested, aspect of that discussion. Cities worldwide continue to adopt resilience plans, finding promise in the ability of the concept to intersect social and environmental goals with climatic concerns. What sets resilience plans apart from climate action plans is that they adopt a systems-wide approach to addressing climate change risks, so that the goals outlined in resilience plans may not necessarily explicitly or solely address climate-related impacts (Woodruff et al., 2018).

Despite recent attention to resilience, how resilience scales down from plans developed at and targeted from the city level to the scale of the community is a question that remains unanswered. How the act of downscaling affects marginalized neighborhoods within a city more specifically, and how it addresses equity, are also unclear. While there has been, more recently, a great deal of attention on the ways in which increasing extreme weather events affect marginalized populations, for example, rarely do resilience plans and proposals acknowledge the historic and ongoing systems by which some communities face such risks in the first place. Taking Los Angeles (LA) as an example, this chapter discusses how resilience goals and strategies conceived of and generated at the city level are adopted, understood, implemented, and contested at the finer scale of the neighborhood.

Considering the diversity of populations, microclimate conditions, risks, vulnerabilities, and capabilities that different communities within a city face, downscaling resilience from strategies adapted at the city level to the neighborhood will presumably take different forms. To better understand this process, I look at how residents

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B. Petersen, H. B. Ducros (eds.), *Justice in Climate Action Planning*, Strategies for Sustainability, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73939-3_7

of Watts, a community in South LA, adopt and appropriate resilience principles and goals into their neighborhood's planning efforts. Watts is a community facing multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities but also possessing a strong identity and social networks. The question of how this community, within the larger LA landscape, adopts resilience language and towards what end is a critical one in terms of climate justice.

Climate justice is defined at multiple scales and through different frameworks: the responsibility developed nations have for the effects of their development and industrialization on developing and poorer nations; a developments-rights approach of non-industrialized nations; fostering a just transition from fossil-fuel dependence; and a specific focus on the local impacts of industrial and energy pollution (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). To understand climate justice beyond questions of distributional impacts and procedural rights, however, the historical and cultural context of an urban setting needs to be central. In this research, I rely on this framework that a comprehensive approach to climate justice is a function of *recognition* at the urban scale. Although there is overlap and interdependence between redistribution and recognition justice, in that the former involves socioeconomic inequalities and the latter engages with the marginalization and non-recognition of certain populations, recognition can be a useful analytical framework if separated from redistribution (Fraser, 1995). Doing so allows us to ask the question of how addressing recognition can achieve redistribution.

Climate justice at the urban scale should consider the idea of justice as recognition of existing, historic, and systemic inequalities so that climate change policies avoid exacerbating climate risks in vulnerable communities (Bulkeley et al., 2013). The recognition of systemic inequalities is necessary in order to avoid implementing policies and designs that are meant to address resilience but which end up reinforcing underlying vulnerabilities and risks faced by communities. Building on this framework, this chapter focuses on how a particular vulnerable community takes on, challenges, appropriates, and deals with the principles outlined in the resilience plans adopted by their city.

Resilience in Climate Justice

The majority of early environmental justice (EJ) work, particularly from the 1980s onwards, focused on the unjust distribution of environmental harms and amenities as well as the underlying racial and class structures that facilitate such unevenness (Schlosberg, 2013). In more recent years, EJ scholarship began incorporating critical race studies in order to reveal environmental injustices as a function of larger pervasive racialized systems of oppression (Pulido, 2015). This move, from exposing a correlation between a polluting source and a minority neighborhood to the entanglement of a racialized society in producing and perpetuating environmental and social inequalities, is taken up explicitly by environmental justice scholar Laura Pulido: "interrogating the underlying conceptions of racism informing these (EJ)

debates, I showed how most US researchers conceptualized racism as a highly conscious and deliberate set of acts infused with racial animus or intent. In short, they saw racism as a form of personal prejudice rather than in structural terms" (Pulido, 2015, 809). Moving beyond race as a fixed category, Pulido positions institutions as active manipulators in creating racialized communities through their unequal enforcement of environmental protection regulations (Lombardi et al., 2015). The association of race with environmental and social degradation is, in this later EJ work, a political act that involves institutional and systemic oppressive efforts to move or keep environmental harm in minority neighborhoods (Bullard & Johnson, 2000).

While EJ studies have focused almost exclusively on social injustices, whether in terms of exposure to a polluting source or in relation to vulnerabilities and risks associated with climate change (Raymond et al., 2018), climate justice not only elevates the importance of climatic concerns but frames inequalities and vulnerabilities as interrelated, interdependent, and co-constituted. Climate justice encompasses more than climate risks. It has been associated with housing justice (Lockwood, 2017) and food insecurity (Ranganathan & Bratman, 2019), among other, and is multidimensional, intersecting with a number of social and environmental facets (Hardy et al., 2017). The broad reach of climate justice may seem like a weakness, unable to precisely measure risk or vulnerability given how entangled climate is with other social issues, such as housing, employment, and education. But this is exactly where its strength lies; namely, in its refusal to focus solely on climate, climate justice has the opportunity to address historic and structural injustices.

Processes that give rise to injustice in urban spaces are entangled with the construction of gender, race, class, and the environment (Braun, 2005). Recent scholarship argues that the specific intersection between race, space, and nature offers particularly insightful research trajectories that challenge strictly Marxist explanations for injustice (Brahinsky et al., 2014). At the intersection of the social construction of race and of the environment is the recognition that "cities have been produced through racialized logics that have been engineered into their building blocks, facades, plumes of dust, streams, forests, and air circulation" (Heynen, 2016). It is therefore impossible to separate housing, education, economic development, and public health, among other, from strictly environmental concerns.

Centralizing race and discrimination, as opposed to the question of the distribution of climate risk, positions climate justice as an analytical framework that scrutinizes politics, capitalism, and power in producing racism. The systemic and systematic actions that privilege certain groups and marginalize others are no longer passive and hidden, but can be understood as actively produced and re-produced (Pulido, 2000). And by understanding justice as specific, embedded, and place-based, climate justice can uncover the multiple and intersecting ways in which injustice is produced and perpetuated. Climate justice is enacted rather than assumed. Justice itself is to be understood not as something to be dispatched and applied to a site or condition, but "an open egalitarian ideal that movements across

the world continuously redefine in embodied and performed ways which are historically and geographically distinct" (Velicu & Kaika, 2017, 305).

As cities turn to resilience to address inequalities in their communities, whether resilience policies and projects address historic racial injustices is a question that needs to be asked. The turn to resilience planning as a way to address climate change unpredictability was initially based on the idea that ecological processes are better suited for dealing with both slow and extreme weather events than our traditional reliance on hard infrastructure and engineering. Resilience in urban settings is also a function of exposure to risk, a framing that departs from the strict ecological definition of resilient systems as complex and adaptive (Folke et al., 2010). As a result, resilience takes on a specific meaning in urban settings—where an adaptation or mitigation measure, for example, against wildfire risk involves regulating setbacks, building materials, and strengthening evacuation routes; a resilience approach potentially addresses systems-wide and interdependent links between housing, exurban development, and forest management.

Urban resilience now encompasses more than environmental concerns, and resilience plans adopted by cities across the USA include a number of social considerations, from economic development and education to housing and public health (Lambrou & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2021). This seemingly ever-expanding resilience framework is facilitated by the fact that resilience does not have a clear definition when applied to urban studies, in part because the definition of urban is unclear and in part because of the ambiguity between adapting to a specific threat and the more general approach of strengthening adaptive capacity (Meerow et al., 2015). In the absence of a clear definition that takes into account socio-environmental inequalities, resilience can be a tool for institutions and agencies with the power to define and narrate it for their purposes.

Though resilience is a seemingly neutral response to the problem of climate change, parsing through resilience plans to understand whom resilience is for, especially when resilience calls for changes in governance, regulations, and the form of urban landscapes, is an important task. Researchers Meerow and Newell explain that socio-ecological systems as a unit of analysis "can obfuscate inequalities within the system, fail to account for the range of social actors involved, and pay insufficient attention to social dynamics" (Meerow & Newell, 2016, 4) and rightfully call for "advancing a politics of urban resilience, which entails confronting inherent political and scalar complexities and trade-offs" (Meerow & Newell, 2016, 16).

Decisions on how to mitigate climate and social risks are made at multiple levels and are driven by a number of factors with embedded and unstated values: how we frame an issue and the ends we want to achieve, and the selection criteria and alternatives we identify as important in determining an outcome and establishing the guidelines that are best deployed to achieve those goals (Davidoff & Reiner, 1962). Insofar as the goals of resilience include strengthening the adaptive capacity of an urban system as an end in itself, the nature of resilience becomes critical especially for questions of justice and equity (Chu et al., 2017). If resilience plans promote our adaptive capacity to an unknown future, not just to a specific and foreseeable event,

it also matters whether and how we plan for debate, questioning, and contestation at different scales of governance and lived experiences.

In the context of the broad nature of the resilience framework and the need for climate justice to consider equity at different scales, I ask whether and how resilience can strengthen the pursuit of climate justice. Can climate justice encompass addressing risks and oppressive structures that are related but not yet central to the work of most climate activists within its framework? What, if any, is the potential role of resilience in this? In this study I attempt to answer these questions by looking specifically at how urban transformations proposed for a community in South LA are appropriated and contested by the Black American residents of that community in their pursuit of climate justice. In doing so I describe how the language of resilience is used to support their arguments for expanding the scope of these proposed projects to include strengthening social networks that will mitigate the out-migration of younger Black Americans from the neighborhood.

Research Design

Research for this chapter took place between 2018 and 2020 and involved a series of in-depth interviews with city planners, residents, and grassroots organizations; content analysis of LA's resilience plan; research on social and environmental vulnerabilities across the city of Los Angeles; a neighborhood survey (n = 128); and participant observation through attending the various workshops that residents and neighborhood representatives in Watts organized around how to address the urban projects at hand.

Planners from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) were tasked with engaging community organizations and residents, along with other agencies, in implementing a set of 24 projects in Watts. These projects varied in scale and scope, but they all meant to create a more resilient and sustainable neighborhood. HACLA was required to engage with Watts organizations, churches, and other community-based organizations (CBOs) and other working groups. Many of the interviews and participant observations took place with members of these CBOs, including the Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee, the Neighborhood Council, and the Watts Rising Collaborative.

Much of this research also relies on a set of meetings that took place in the latter half of 2019 by representatives from a number of organizations within Watts, along with Watts residents, who formed the Watts Consortium. The Consortium acted as a task force whose goal was to direct how planners were handling the implementation of proposed urban transformations in the Watts community. Members of the Consortium represented various advocacy groups in Watts who focused on environmental and social issues that spanned from air pollution to urban agriculture and from economic development to housing. The intention of the Consortium was to interface with city planners tasked with implementing a series of 24 projects in the

Watts neighborhood. Members represented the community's needs, which often challenged the framing of those projects.

I begin by discussing social and environmental risks and vulnerabilities specific to Watts as compared to the larger city of LA. I discuss the specific resilience frameworks, goals, and implementation strategies outlined in the Resilient Los Angeles document, the official resilience plan adopted by the city of LA. I then analyze how the concept of resilience influenced the framing of projects presented by city planners to Watts residents and how those framings were then contested and challenged by Watts activists. Through this process of tracing resilience from city to neighborhood level, I extract two main frameworks—first, opportunistic resilience which uses the language of resilience in order to expand the narrow scope of each project by incorporating multiple risk-mitigation strategies, and second, embedded resilience which reveals how resilience can address intersecting vulnerabilities faced by residents by refocusing attention to the systems that perpetually devalue their communities.

Watts and South LA

LA's Watts neighborhood, made up of about 35,000 people, is significant in the larger context of Los Angeles in part because of its central role in racial tensions that materialized in riots at two different times: the neighborhood is home to the Watts riots of 1965 and the Rodney King riots of 1992, both of which were triggered by violence inflicted by the LA Police Department on the Black American community. Neighborhoods near industrial corridors, such as those in South LA where Watts is located, were racially unrestricted during the second Great Migration during the early part of the twentieth century and attracted Black Americans from states where segregation was still upheld. During World War II, there was an influx of manufacturing in the region; with increasing suburbanization after the war, white residents moved out of the South and Southeast LA region to outlying suburbs. A few decades later, during the 1980s, many Black Americans moved out of Watts because of rising housing and living costs. Today, nearly three-quarters of Watts residents are Latinx and only one-quarter Black (see Fig. 7.1a, b).

Watts faces multiple intersecting vulnerabilities resulting from a history of disinvestment and environmental pollution, compounded by climate risks. One major source of air pollution is the freeways that enclose Watts—the Alameda Corridor to the East, the I-105 along the South, and the I-110 to the West. In the context of rising temperatures, and given Watt's urban form, dictated by a density of asphalt and concrete and a general lack of street trees and overall greenery, extreme heat events are predicted to have an especially severe effect on the Watts residents. Air pollution, and proximity to other environmental toxicities, continues to be a major public health issue in Watts, whose effects are expected to have an even greater adverse impact on Watts residents, as increasing heat days are spurred on by climate change (Singh et al., 2020; Vahmani et al., 2019).

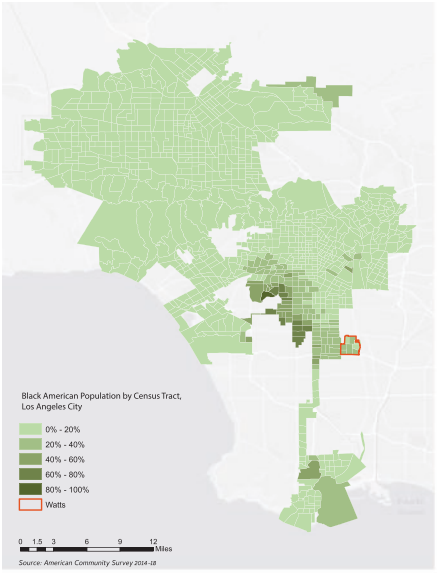

Figure 1a. Black American Populations by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

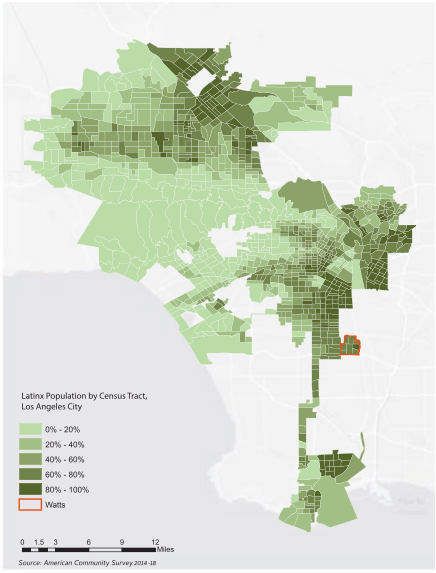

Figure 1b. Latinx Populations by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

Fig. 7.1 (**a**) Black American populations by Census Tract, Los Angeles City. (**b**) Latinx populations by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

Just over 75% of Watts households do not have a college education, while in LA City just over 42% lack a college education (see Fig. 7.2a). The poverty level for the majority of Watts residents is many times that of LA City (see Fig. 7.2b), with 40% of Watts households under the poverty level compared to less than 15% of LA City households. Most households in Watts are renter-occupied, and most residents are considered severely rent-burdened, defined as paying more than half of their income on rent (see Fig. 7.3a, b). The Watts neighborhood is also ranked highly on the CalEnviroScreen index, whose index factors in air pollution, asthma rates, and a number of other environmental threats, an especially critical issue given that a large percentage of Watts residents do not have access to health insurance (see Fig. 7.4a, b).

In analyzing whether South LA, of which Watts is a part, changed from 1960 to 2019 across housing, employment, and transportation, researchers Comandon and Ong (2019) found that investment in the region has not translated to increased prosperity for its residents. They note that South LA's narrative is an example of how "stigma is uneven and interacts with class and race in ways that are difficult to separate" (Comandon & Ong, 2019, 21). Resilience planning in Watts is as much about race as it is about dealing with climate risks—these are inseparable, and they not only inform but define one another. How resilience is taken up by a municipality, how planners frame potential projects in a particular neighborhood through their understanding of resilience, and how residents of that neighborhood contest or appropriate those framings through their lived experience are all questions that are indelibly tied to race and ethnicity. Whether, and in what manner, LA's resilience

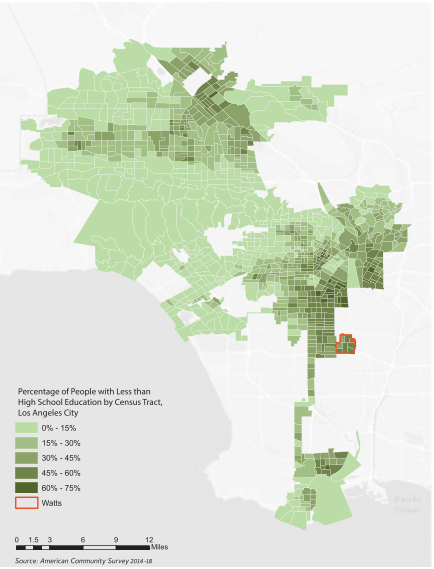

Figure 2a. Percentage of People with Less than a High School Education Levels by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

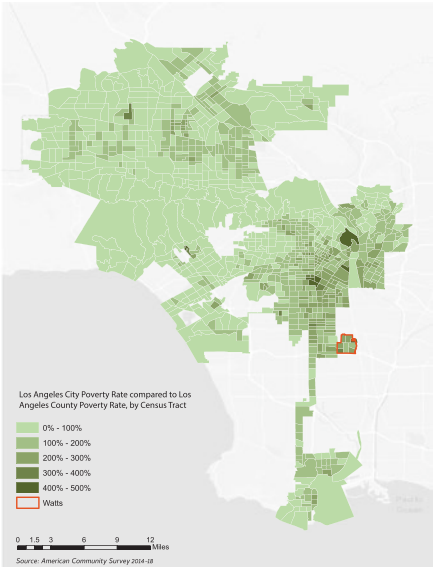

Figure 2b. Los Angeles City Poverty Rate Compared to Los Angeles County Poverty Rate by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

Fig. 7.2 (**a**) Percentage of people with less than a high school education level by Census Tract, Los Angeles City. (**b**) Los Angeles City poverty rate compared to Los Angeles County poverty rate by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

plan takes on the systemic disinvestment and discriminatory practices of marginalized populations, defined by race and ethnicity, is therefore a crucial consideration.

LA's Resilience Plan

The LA resilience plan, issued in 2018, is broken up into four main chapters, or major frameworks, each of which contains three to four goals and a number of action items to meet those goals (Resilient Los Angeles, 2018). The first framework calls on individuals, families, and business and property owners to educate themselves around risk preparedness, to provide financial networks of support to vulnerable residents, and to cultivate leadership in a younger generation. The second framework aims to build social cohesion by fostering collaborations and partnerships across communities and prioritizes mitigating exposure to extreme heat and addressing health and wellness disparities. The third framework focuses on creating a responsive city through post-disaster recovery pathways, upgrading infrastructure, providing affordable housing, and integrating government with resilience principles. Finally, the fourth framework more specifically discusses the role of collaborations, along with public, private, and other forms of partnerships, in strengthening local resources and critical infrastructure.

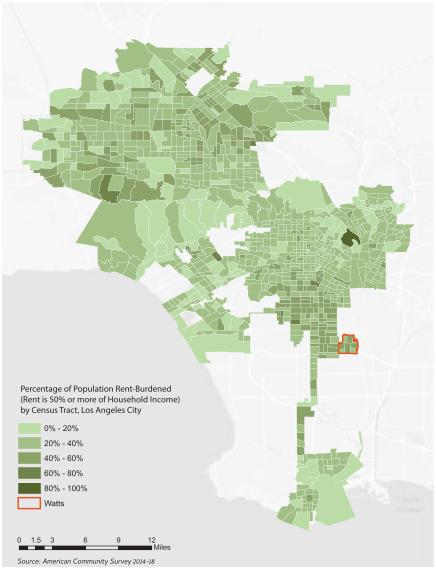

Figure 3a. Percentage of Population Rent-Burdened (Rent is 50% or more of Household Income) by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

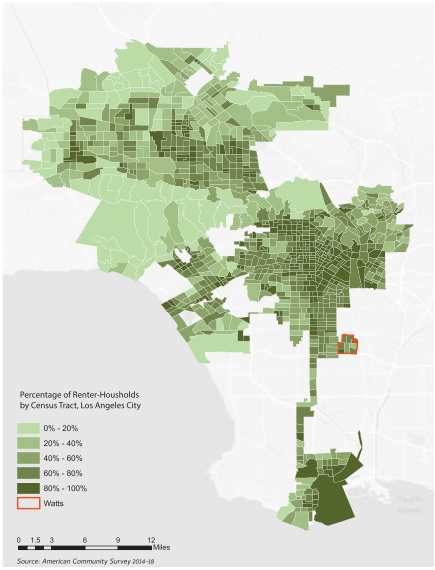

Figure 3b. Percentage of Renter-Occupied Households by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

Fig. 7.3 (**a**) Percentage of population rent-burdened (rent is 50% or more of household income) by Census Tract, Los Angeles City. (**b**) Percentage of renter-occupied households by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

The majority of goals listed in the LA resilience plan subtly place responsibility for mitigating exposure to socio-environmental risks on communities and residents: relationships need to be strengthened, new partnerships forged, collaborations and networks revealed and fortified, and so on. However, it is precisely those communities most vulnerable and most exposed to risks that lack the resources to circumvent vulnerability and risk in the first place. The ability to have an affordable home, secure and long-term employment, access to healthy food, transportation, clean air, and education are all conditions that must be met by systemic investment. To prepare and protect people most vulnerable to extreme heat, for example, the conditions that place people in that vulnerable position in the first place must first be understood; they involve contending with healthcare, education, air pollution, zoning of industrial land uses, and housing, among others. These intersecting vulnerabilities, and systems that give rise to risk, require contending with the ongoing history of systemic racial discrimination. These systems and histories are not fully acknowledged in resilience frameworks, which makes the implementability and efficacy of resilience goals questionable.

To varying extents, many of the strategies discussed by city planners and by Watts residents echo the aspirational nature of the resilience frameworks outlined in the Resilient Los Angeles plan. But when these resilience goals translate into implementable projects, contention arises because local histories, existing networks, identities, cultures, and social vulnerabilities are not visible or taken into account.

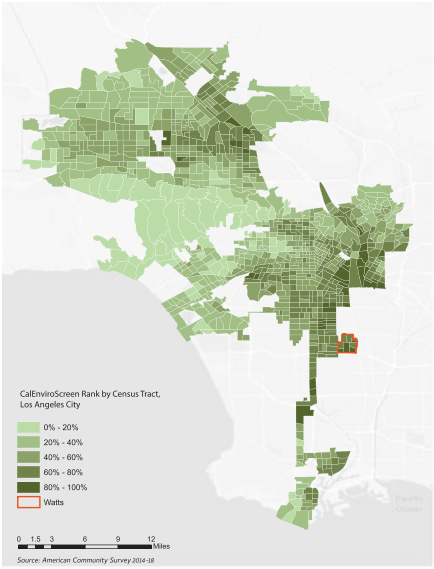

Figure 4a. CalEnviroScreen Rank by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

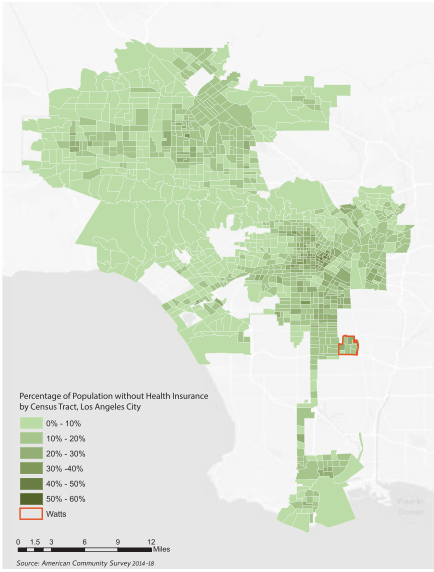

Figure 4b. Percentage of Population without Health Insurance by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

Fig. 7.4 (**a**) CalEnviroScreen Rank by Census Tract, Los Angeles City. (**b**) Percentage of population without health insurance by Census Tract, Los Angeles City

In other words, it is not the resilience goal itself that is questioned or contested, but whether the larger context giving rise to vulnerabilities and risk are acknowledged when proposing projects aimed at achieving resilience. The Resilient Los Angeles plan does acknowledge the inequitable distributional nature of risk and vulnerability: "inequities in access and opportunities, both generationally and suddenly, strain the community fabric on a daily basis—worsening disparities and impacting Angelenos' health, wealth, and quality of life" (Resilient Los Angeles, 2018, 23). Notable is the city's tacit acknowledgment that to discuss resilience, we must discuss equity, as researchers have shown that adaptation strategies tend to affect vulnerable populations either directly, through acts such as displacement, or indirectly, by omitting their consideration in adaptation plans (Anguelovski et al., 2016). It is not enough, however, to acknowledge the distributional impacts of inequities; planners and policy makers should incorporate directed ways to change it in order to turn resilience goals and actions from aspirational to implementable and transformational.

Downscaling Resilience

In 2018 the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) awarded Watts $35 million dollars, the Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant, to address climate risks in this neighborhood. The TCC grant is funded by California's cap and trade program, directing investments to low-income communities that have borne the majority of air pollution effects resulting from transportation infrastructure and industrial activity. According to SGC, the TCC grant is awarded to a neighborhood that is severely impacted by pollution and is meant to give those neighborhoods the opportunity to identify their own goals, implementation strategies, and projects that will both reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (SGC, 2020). The projects that city planners propose in Watts therefore focus on producing measurable results for greenhouse gas emissions.

The influence that funding has on climate-related projects is an important part of any discussion on urban transformations. The void left by a lack of implementation guidance on resilience planning is then filled by the narrator of a particular resilience project. In this case that narrative is driven by the requirements of the funding source, namely, the need for measurable greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Watts Consortium members framed what they considered a too-narrow scope of Watts projects proposed by planners as an issue rooted in the source of funding for the grant. Specifically, the fact that the funds are available through California's cap and trade program in turn requires that their implementation would aid the state's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a main goal of the California Strategic Growth Council who is administering the funds. Since the main goal is greenhouse gas emission reduction, planners prioritize projects that involve tree planting and incentivizing electric vehicle ownership over what the Watts residents, as discussed in Watts Consortium meetings, consider much more fundamental to their neighborhoods.

Particularly noteworthy was the Watts Consortium's efforts to create and command leadership based on the existing expertise that community members brought to the negotiating table. The Watts Consortium was formed by representatives from local CBOs, at least some of whose members were well-informed on environmental and social issues, with access to technical data and tools to measure and represent that data. One Watts Consortium member explained that HACLA's attempt to form partnerships with other institutions outside of Watts was evidence of their distrust in Watts and in the resources already in the community and in the ability of the community to take care of itself. Cultivating leadership was therefore a fundamental aspect of the group, arguably an effort that should have been fully supported by city agencies and planners insofar as building on existing community resources and promoting leadership roles are an explicit goal in LA's resilience plan. Though resilience involves capacity-building and, by extension, strengthening existing and new stewardship relationships (i.e., Tyler et al., 2016; Ziervogel et al., 2016; Hölsher et al., 2019), leadership taken up by Watts residents was equally about self-empowerment as it was about preparing for climate risks. As one Watts Consortium

member and long-standing Watts resident noted, referring to the knowledge that the Watts Consortium represented on behalf of the community—"We don't bow down. You guys got so much expertise, we could use that, right? Are we capable of rolling out that level of expertise, in a position that is supportive, not authoritative?"

Notably, planners expressed ambivalence about the term resilience. One planner in particular, a Latinx resident of Watts, admitted that though resilience planning needs to recognize the historical context within which it is applied, it fails to do so. In the case of Watts, she noted as an example, tree planting is a charged issue because canopies were deliberately withheld from South LA in order to increase visibility, and therefore surveillance, along streets. Though planners understood the neighborhood with which they were working quite well, their reach was limited because they were situated in broader networks: funding streams, conflicting accounts from residents, and the separation of environmental and social knowledge areas into different planning offices at different levels of governance. This reinforces existing literature, which argues that participatory governance may not be as effective as its promise holds given entrenched institutional dynamics (Healey, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2010). More recent literature on the transformative potential of co-planning and co-creating urban change also reveals similar implementation obstacles (Scholl & Kemp, 2016; Bisschops & Beunen, 2019).

With limited implementation guidance for resilience plans, the source of funding for projects that are meant to increase resilience in communities ends up dictating the shape urban transformations will take. Such transformations privilege certain projects and framings over others. In the case of the TCC fund, since those framings are singular and focused on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions first and foremost, they face opposition by residents of those neighborhoods where those projects will take place. These residents approach resilience in a more comprehensive and holistic way, one that recognizes the complexity of a lived urban experience that is compounded by a history of disinvestment and overt racial aggression by institutions and structures in power. For residents, the effects of projects are interconnected and should be understood and framed as such. This recognition is what drives the opportunistic nature of their counter-resilience planning. Residents who face multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities identify and see those vulnerabilities as interconnected and find opportunities to address more than the single aspect of social or environmental intervention presented to them. They do so by bringing those connections to light and by attempting to expand the scope of the singular resilience project towards a multi-faceted and complex set of dependencies that constitute a racialized landscape facing present and future climate risks.

Opportunistic Resilience

Watts residents identified risk in their communities as involving issues beyond strictly environmental ones. Namely, they advocated for projects that promote technology use in schools, safer public transportation routes, transitioning to solar

energy for each household, and access to high-speed internet as critical for their community. Watts Consortium members capitalized on the fact that planners were expected to engage the community, a fundamental component to securing and administering the TCC fund. They consistently reminded planners of this fact during their monthly meetings with them and actively sought to reframe how planners approached suggested projects. For example, where planners outlined a tree-planting project, Watts Consortium members strategized on which streets would be the most appropriate ones for tree planting based on the ones most frequently traveled by students to and from elementary and high schools in the neighborhood, referring to this expanded approach as the "Safe Routes to School" project. The low rate of education in this neighborhood makes the education of the younger generation a central concern for Watts residents. Ensuring the safety of students not just while they are in the classroom but also on their way to and back from school is especially important. In the words of one community member, this is a discussion that is as much about the nature of community engagement as it is about where to plant trees:

> The takeaway is that they just want to get these projects done and the less that the community is involved the easier it is for them. They said—let's be honest, we put a tree over here (or) we put a tree over here, it's going to do the same carbon sequestration, so why should we ask them what they think? And my position is if you put the tree here and you ask the community, then that tree means something to them. That's what engagement means.

When discussing pilot projects presented by planners to the community, Watts Consortium members often attempted to widen the scope of each narrowly defined proposal so that it could incorporate what they felt were pressing needs. Assuring the energy independence of households through renewable measures, for example, was a matter as tied to the economic insecurity of the area as it was to sustainability concerns. Such attempts were meant to mitigate more than climate risks. They were meant to mitigate the inequalities caused by systemic disinvestment and racism in their community. The goal to provide renewable energy, to retain stormwater, and to upgrade the insulation capacity of each household was as much a sustainability concern as it was an economic one, mitigating the taxing percentage that energy use takes up from each household's income.

One of the more interesting results from the survey, in which 71% of respondents identified as Latinx, was that residents cared the most about "cleanliness and/or local culture" when it came to Central Avenue, a central historic corridor in the neighborhood slated for major street improvements through a separate grant by the city. "Sustainability and environmental preservation" received one of the lowest ratings by respondents (9% of votes), whereas "encouraging economic growth and supporting local businesses" and "accessibility and safety" both received one of the highest ratings (15% of votes each). In discussions with residents as they were filling out the survey, they repeatedly brought up safety as a serious issue that keeps the community from creating the social and communal relationships they were hoping for from such a public street. Upgrades, they explained, should focus first and foremost on physical infrastructure, reducing car speeds and associated gang activity,

and on promoting small business expansion. The connection between social cohesion and people's ability to mitigate climate vulnerabilities is well established (Klinenberg, 2002), so the need to create a public space that can foster and strengthen social relations that this survey revealed must be seen as a central component to climate justice.

In interviews with Watts Consortium members and other residents, it also became clear that empowering community residents was not a question of, for example, simply upgrading central commercial corridors, unless that upgrade was accompanied by an assurance that broadband would be laid down underneath the streets that were slated for renovations. Watts Consortium members specifically advocated for laying down fiber-optic infrastructure on church land, allowing the church to then provide internet service and to pay back a portion of any revenue earned to the fiber-optic owner. This proposal would allow churches to make themselves financially secure so that they can continue their presence in the neighborhood, as important social institutions for residents, while concurrently acting as an internet service provider. Watts Consortium members proposed to couple this important infrastructural upgrade with ongoing efforts to upgrade neighborhood churches through sustainable initiatives.

These examples show that social and environmental concerns are inseparable, and they are issues that residents attempt to address through opportunities provided by the otherwise strictly environmentally oriented projects to be implemented in their community. Environmental and social issues cannot be discussed, understood, or analyzed separately. Watts residents similarly discuss their inseparability in workshops and meetings, both internal to themselves and in conversations with city planners. "Because it's 54 years later (referring to the Watts riots of 1965) and we're rebuilding it ourselves," a prominent reverend in the neighborhood noted repeatedly, a sentiment echoed by many others during nearly each of the Watts Consortium meetings.

Most effectively, Watts Consortium members argued for a reframing of how climate knowledge, and accompanying projects based on that knowledge, is handled at different levels of governance. Climate knowledge should not be something that exists a priori and separate from the projects that planners bring to residents. Rather than view climate knowledge as untouchable, Watts Consortium members discussed, it should be embedded in the community itself, something that is learned, altered, and wrestled with in workshops and in school classrooms. Watts Consortium members argued that funding should go towards supporting building climate knowledge and supporting projects from the ground up. In the words of one prominent member of both the Watts Consortium and the Watts Clean Air and Energy Committee:

> They are so interested in data to show how Watts and South LA have been done wrong. But we know how we've been done wrong, and the wheels keep rolling. Where is our data to help us make our decisions for this community?

In this sense, climate knowledge needs to be funded by supporting the proliferation of technology, public platforms, spaces, and programs through which community

members can define risk for themselves and generate their vision for a resilient future. At the scale of the city, evidenced through both the LA resilience plan and the city planners who conceived of the projects for this specific neighborhood, resilience is vague, broad, and largely aspirational. Where its action items are specific, such as the effort to capitalize on existing networks and resources, there is opportunity to test whether those action items do indeed lead to resilience. In at least this case, however, residents argued that their existing networks, resources, and knowledge were sidestepped, in large part because of the requirements set by the funding source for the proposed projects and because of the fragmented nature of planning agencies and jurisdictions. Given these constraints, residents actively sought to be opportunistic by taking advantage of the language of resilience, which assumes a comprehensive and holistic approach, in order to broaden the breadth and scope of each proposed project. Importantly, residents sought to expand each project's original intent by capturing efforts to mitigate risk and vulnerabilities that are a direct result of historical trauma.

Embedded Resilience

Community members defined risk for themselves to include more than environmental concerns, extending well beyond the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Risks, and the resulting proposals to help mitigate them, were the result of this community's history of oppression and a desire to overcome that oppression, particularly for the younger generation. Those histories were not acknowledged by planners, evidenced by their adherence to narrowly defined projects whose effectiveness could be measured as a function of a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, such as tree planting and incentivizing electric vehicle use.

In discussing how to embed social considerations into resilience projects in Watts, such as creating a sense of safety in routes to schools and bringing broadband access into the neighborhood, residents were equally concerned with maintaining a Black American identity in this community. The displacement of Black Americans into surrounding neighborhoods and into cities outside of LA was seen by Black Americans in Watts as forced, and the subsequent effect this had on the long history of Black identity in South LA was brought up repeatedly by Watts Consortium members. Though Watts Consortium does not have a set number of members, only a set number of CBO involvement, the vast majority of members during its biweekly meetings were Black.

Resilience was tied to maintaining the Black culture in Watts, especially critical because nearly three-quarters of residents there are Latinx and because one of the main city planners tasked with executing the TCC projects is a Latinx resident of Watts. Safety, education, access to technology, adding trees, and transitioning to renewables, among others, are all projects that were seen as critical to creating spaces for Blacks to stay in place. A challenge for planning in multiracial neighborhoods is attempting to find unity in worldviews that are embedded in different

histories, cultures, and collective memories (Umemoto, 2001). Though the projects, largely promoting environmental and social benefits among Watts residents, were sought after and supported by Black Americans and Latinx residents of Watts, the Watts Consortium specifically framed them as potentially empowering the Black American community to stay in place.

Economic opportunities to keep people in the neighborhood were also critically important to Watts residents for similar reasons. Economic empowerment was discussed as a long-term wealth-building strategy, spanning many generations.

> They're going to bring all these cities into this new paradigm. And they only use the term jobs, they really don't use the term careers. What are the businesses that come out of these types of ideas? How do we build those businesses? Because those business then become the multi-generational wealth generations. We don't see that in any of the public documents.

Crucially, residents discussed economic opportunities as something to be tied to the development of public space. Main commercial corridors in the neighborhood, currently comprised of largely vacant storefronts, are slated for redevelopment by planners. Watts Consortium members discussed how the language surrounding those projects, such as the city's Great Streets initiative, does not ask the important question of what constitutes public space for this particular community.

> And they do not think businesses because they don't think sustainability. They do not want to look at that. And so when you look at developing these boulevards, is it fair to say a Great Street or a Complete Street is actually a public space? Is it going to build a community?

These are pursuits that fall outside strictly constructed ideas involving risk and resilience but are absolutely essential in pursuing climate just futures. The issue of education is one such example and was a critical part of every discussion Watts Consortium members had. Each project proposed to Watts by city planners was an opportunity that Watts residents used to extract the main themes from them and advocate for its inclusion into the public education curriculum. Watts Consortium members formed relationships with the Los Angeles Unified School District in order to allow these projects to be discussed in high school classrooms and for students to get involved in considering their implementation in their communities. Education was seen as a way to empower the younger generation, to cultivate leadership potential in their communities, and to ensure a resilient, just, and persistent Black American identity in the neighborhood. As one Watts Consortium member put it:

> It's as much about education as it is about leadership. So we got people in the community that will take leadership responsibility but may not have all the knowledge. They're in a position of authority without any knowledge. So us coming with more knowledge or coming with more professionalism is very threatening. And they're young—they're probably 30 years old. So it's a little bit to their disadvantage that their arrogance with their skill trumps their ability to accept other people to come in and really try to help them.

Rather than push against the limitations imposed by planners and the funding source of the proposed projects, the act of reframing those proposals to incorporate more than their original intention was an act of resistance whose ultimate goal was to achieve a more resilient and just future. In doing so, residents not only claimed

authority over how resilience projects should be implemented in their community but also sought to address historical trauma through an emancipatory vision that foregrounded acknowledging structural racism. If resilience is to be just, it must be understood as embedded, growing out of and contending with past and present histories. Beyond the conclusion that adapting to climate change requires an ongoing negotiation between past and present understandings of risk and vulnerabilities, discussions held by Watts residents also revealed that the past is always present. Dealing with the past's material urban manifestations is a way to deal with injustices that are felt at multiple scales and across multiple timeframes.

Conclusion

Resilience is not a moment we arrive at; it must be understood as a process that involves more than present or future exposure to climate risks. The case study discussed here has implications for climate justice through a resilience planning framework in a number of distinct ways. First, resilience must include the ability of residents to contest how the idea of risk is handed down and to define it for themselves. Who assesses risk and resilience, and the process by which it is defined, has implications for how risk is controlled (Holifield, 2009). As discussed through the specific example of the Watts neighborhood in South LA, risk can be as much about a lack of a tree canopy as the lack of access to the internet and as much about retaining stormwater as reviving local churches. Importantly, these issues are not to be understood as separate, categorized into either environmental or social goals, but as part of a socio-environmental relationship, dependent upon and defining each other.

Second, resilience can be a powerful promise whose language communities can use to fight for the more than strictly climate-related goals of climate justice. I refer to this as opportunistic resilience and deliberately characterize the act of appropriating the resilience framework towards a climate justice goal as positive. Resilience's broad scope, much of which has been researched and theorized as reason to challenge and replace the term (i.e., MacKinnon & Derickson, 2012), can be capitalized on to expand an otherwise narrow climate goal by focusing on the necessary social and environmental rights, otherwise considered tangential to climate-related risks, required for a community to become resilient.

Third, and relatedly, recognizing that resilience is embedded entails a constant negotiation between past, present, and future entanglements of social life and its material urban manifestations. Embedded resilience implies that when a resilience framework touches the ground, it inevitably gets entangled in local politics, and sometimes conflicting histories, of residents. For Watts residents, caring for people in the Watts community meant restoring social ties through promoting safety, inclusivity, and financial empowerment, as well as securing the future education and career success of children, in order to create opportunities for Black Americans to remain in the community.

These arguments assume that climate justice depends on seeing climate risks and vulnerabilities as inseparable from social injustices. Strategies to contest and challenge how proposed urban transformations will yield a climate-just future often give rise to solidarities that potentially shift the way we discuss and deliberate on climate change (Chatterton et al., 2013). The link between climate change and local environmental inequities, such as the effects that fossil fuels have on atmospheric greenhouse gases globally while polluting the air locally and at the source, has connected environmental and climate justice movements worldwide (Mendez, 2020). Researchers and activists have also repeatedly shown that environmental inequities are a function of race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Climate justice, then, cannot be achieved outside of racial, ethnic, gender, and social equity. This is not to say that such categories are fixed. On the contrary, categories of gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity are increasingly understood as malleable, open to different interpretations depending on what actors are making those claims and are able to make those claims heard (e.g., Young, 2002; Butler, 2004; Gregson & Rose, 2000). Still, the act of producing categories such as black, woman, and minority reveals inequalities by politicizing those terms, even while acknowledging that what defines those categories are movable and fluid notions whose meaning and value changes alongside specific interests and dominant voices.

Interrogating systemic and pervasive racial issues is central to climate justice work. Beyond pointing out the correlation between marginalized populations and the distribution of environmental and climatic harm, taking on the question of structural racism in order to achieve climate justice involves revealing deeper and broader contexts that give rise to vulnerabilities. As the residents of Watts persistently and consistently declared, the environments in which we live are more than a series of discrete social, environmental, and climate concerns. Planting trees along central corridors and providing permeable pavers for stormwater retention may be significant and relevant, but people's concerns reach forwards and backwards in time to capture housing, economic, and education risks whose repercussions are multigenerational.

Paying attention to the embodied experience of place is therefore fundamental to climate justice. Justice, in this sense, ought to be thought of as an act, a deliberative process, and is not an assumed objective shared universally. In order to deliberate on the distinctive path towards justice each case demands, climate justice work would benefit from remaining open to the specific ways in which socio-environmental meanings and relations are formed from one context to the next. By remaining expansive, climate justice goals are not diluted, as may be the fear, but are understood as situated, relational, and embedded in different ways that call for different action.

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