

Comparative Climate Analysis in Oakland

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Introduction & Background

With the Oakland 2030 Equitable Climate Action Plan unanimously voted in by the Oakland City Council, the City of Oakland is on its way to greatly reducing emissions and adapting to the needs of mitigating climate change, and improving the public's wellbeing. The draft of the plan specifically includes equity and claims to address the potential impact these policies may have on marginalized communities (Oakland Climate Change, 2020). Acting independent from state governance, policymakers in Oakland can have the power to help marginalized communities by voicing their opinion in favor of equitable environmentalist plans and incorporating equitable economic and health advancements (Bulkeley, 2010 & Shonkoff et al., 2009). Policymakers in Oakland have a guideline on how to approach the mitigating climate change policies where people of color are not left behind in environmental justice by integrating equity into the plan. (Woodruff & Stults, 2016). Because cities are able to create an appropriate climate change action plan, independent from state governance, to prioritize social justice in the city, policymakers might have the opportunity to mitigate the carbon footprint in urban areas to align with the goals of the UN Paris Climate Agreement, which could result in a substantial curbing of Californian extreme wildfires (Gross et al., 2020).

Urban climate change policy discourse proves to be a topic of contention written about frequently in the press, and many public figures have expressed opinions against climate change policy. Our goal in this study is to find out who the main policy influencers are and where they stand on issues of climate change, inequality, and policies, and see what policy influencers are agreeing on in the media.



Figure 1. The City of Oakland

Method

Using the Data Network Analysis software, we will be searching through news articles from Oakland news sources for quotes or statements that align a person with a stance on climate change policy. We will then classify that stance based on a list of concepts, ranging from "Addressing Inequality" to "Taking action to mitigate climate change" and others. Through this method, we can see which political figures or influencers in Oakland stand with the issues we are concerned about. We are looking for what debates come up among policy influencers regarding climate change, if any. Prior research using this method was able to show the polarization among congressional policymakers by creating networks among U.S. Congressional policymakers (Fisher, Leifer, & Iwaki, 2012). Our research aims to create a network at the local municipal level in Oakland. Using Newsbank and various other newspaper databases, we gathered articles from newspaper publications such as the Oakland Tribune, East Bay Express, and other Oakland-based sources. We used the Data Network Analyser (DNA) software to organize and code the newspaper articles (Leifeld, Gruber, & Bossner, 2018). With this software, we can link policy influencers and their statements to our list of concepts, and graph them. This will allow us to visualize and examine the networks of people created by urban climate change policies

Results

Figure 2 below shows our results from coding the data in the form of a visual map, using the software Visone. Figure 3 is a table with all the concepts we specified in coding with descriptions of what it means for an actor to agree or disagree with the concept. We can see all but one connections in the main web are in agreement, with one exception. Toward the center are actors, in pink, who we might expect to see, such as the Mayor of Oakland, Libby Schaff, and various Council members. What is interesting is that the concepts, in yellow, that connect these main influencers are mostly related to Inequality, Accessibility, and Technological Innovations, rather than Climate Change, specifically.

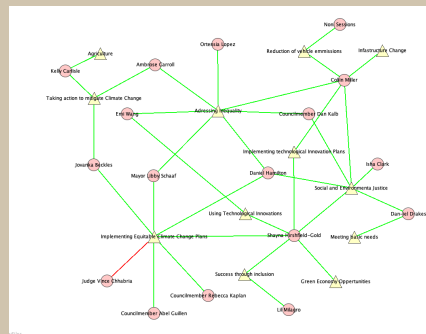


Figure 2. The Visual Map made in the Visone software connecting political actors, in pink, to concepts, in yellow

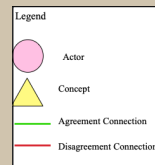


Figure 2.1 The Legend for the Visual Map

Concept	Agreement	Disagreement	Concept	Agreement	Disagreement
Units to fight climate change	Groups of people or sectors of society unite to change course of climate change; Inclusion	Only certain groups of people or sectors of society unite to change course of climate change.	Agriculture	Using urban agriculture and farming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Does not agree with implementing Urban Agriculture
Success through inclusion	If climate change is not included, then climate mitigation tactics will fail	Inclusion is not needed for success in climate change mitigation.	Infrastructure change	Promoting a change in infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Does not agree with promoting change related to Infrastructure
Implementing technology innovation plans	Climate change mitigation plans affordable for as many people as possible (programs for solar and energy)	Plans at market rate	Reducing vehicle emissions	Agrees with policies that ensure limits on vehicle emissions	Does not agree with policies that ensure limits on vehicle emissions
Green economy opportunities	Creation of green economy jobs; accountability for the people of Oakland; Upward mobility	Green economy jobs for people with a background in green economy jobs	Addressing inequality	Believes in expanding current systems for the benefit of marginalized groups	Does not believe we need to implement equity into our systems
Integrating Social and Environmental Justice	Making the case for integrating social and environmental justice	Only making the case for social justice	Addressing Habitat Damage	Making efforts to tackle habitat damage, saving for policy that supports the reconstruction of damaged habitats	Disagreeing with policy or plans to reconstruct damaged habitats
Meeting needs	Prioritizing the basic needs of the community	Not prioritizing the basic needs of the community	Taking action to mitigate climate change	More broad than implementing plans; Believes in taking action to betterment of the climate	Does not believe in taking action for the climate
Inter-generational	Advocating for multi-generational access to the city	Not advocating for multi-generational access to the city	Using Technological Innovations	Believes in using new tech to advance to technologically advanced, or action toward climate change	No action or disagreement in using this technology
Equitable Transit accessibility	Advocating for equitable expansion of transit	Advocating for equitable expansion of transit			

Figure 3. Our chart of concepts used to code articles, with descriptions on what it means to agree or disagree with each concept

Discussion

Because Oakland, California, is one of the first cities to incorporate social justice in their climate action plan, our research found several concepts regarding integrating social justice into the City's climate change approach. Prior conceptual research advocates for climate change policy to include social justice to provide equitable economic and health opportunities for urban residents (Bulkeley, 2010 & Shonkoff et al., 2009). Oakland policymakers embody the aforementioned framework by cultivating the concept of *success through inclusion*. Equity and Climate Action go hand in hand. By making climate change an inclusionary process, with an emphasis on including the social and medical wellbeing of people of color, the City of Oakland is able to address the inequality that is proliferated by climate change (Woodruff & Stults, 2016).

Mayor Schaff's power is limited when it comes to implementing climate change plans and regulations because the mayor is not part of the city council, and votes on only certain measures when there's a tie among the council members. Mayor Schaff is able to hire administration. Installing Daniel Hamilton and Shayna Hershfield-Gold in The Department of Public Works in Oakland gives Mayor Schaff influence by proxy. They are tasked with implementing equitable climate change and technological innovation plans. They are changing the infrastructure to create equitable access to economic and social opportunities for the people of Oakland when creating climate change policies.

The majority of people mapped out in our research network agree with climate change policies in the City of Oakland. Because people are concerned about their public reputation, people are not going to state on record that they're against climate change mitigation policies. But, one person in our research disagreed with *implementing equitable climate change plans*. This judge ruled against banning the transport of coal through the Port of Oakland because of the lack of laws regarding climate change mitigation. The local economy and transportation services still rely heavily on fossil fuels. For the judicial system to support climate change policies in cities, cities must implement a system of utilizing renewable energy and creating green economy employment opportunities for the people that rely on fossil fuels. Weaning the City off of fossil fuels creates a smaller carbon footprint, which could eventually result in curbing the Californian wildfires (Gross et al., 2020).

In Oakland, our research signaled the possible influence civil society groups have on climate change policies. Prior studies showed that cities pursue climate change because of co-benefits (Wang, 2012). Collin Miller, the head of Oakland Climate Action Coalition, and Isha Clark, a youth of the City and a member of the Youth vs. Apocalypse, advocate for the integration of social and environmental justice. Because of their connection to civil society groups, they advocate for the co-benefits of climate change. These individuals and others are able to have some influence on the City.

The research method proved to have limitations, as it called for articles that specifically state the stance that an actor has on an issue related to climate change or similar concepts. However, we were still able to find interesting connections among the political influencers of Oakland

Conclusions/Policy Recommendations

We found various climate change policy influencers, not only in positions of political power, but also members of civil society groups. We found most links were to concepts such as addressing inequality more so than climate related concepts.

After conducting our research, our team poses two recommendations for the City of Oakland to enhance their pursuit of just climate change policies. Firstly, if climate change is to be addressed through equity means, Oakland should invest in educational programs to shift the labor force that is dependent on fossil fuels to a green energy labor force. Without an educational infrastructure, more people, usually of low economic background with poor access to educational resources, will fall victim to unemployment due to the creation of green jobs. Green jobs usually involve some type of education in order to break into the green economy workforce. Secondly, we recommend the City of Oakland creates a Civilian Oversight Committee composed of people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This Civilian Oversight Committee would make municipal government officials accountable if there is a deviation when creating future equitable climate change policies.

For more information

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