



Environmental justice

with *Dr Stephanie Rutherford*
and *Dr Michael Classens*

Talking points

Knowledge

1. What is environmental injustice?
2. What is the role of mapping in the team's research?

Comprehension

3. Why did the team decide that a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods was best for promoting policy change?
4. "In our mapping work, we are finding that poverty is a key indicator of exposure to potentially harmful contaminants," says Stephanie. What does this mean in terms of environmental justice?

Application

5. How do you think the project's results might differ had the research team chosen not to engage with local community organisations?
6. How do you think the Mapping for Change project could benefit other towns facing similar issues of environmental justice?

Analysis

7. Why do you think that it is often difficult to stimulate policy change on issues of environmental justice? What barriers do you think need to be overcome?
8. Stephanie mentions that academics are often insulated from the realities faced by vulnerable communities. How do you think that academia can better connect with and welcome people from such communities?

Evaluation

9. What roles do you think technology has in addressing environmental injustice? Consider a range of new and emerging technologies in your answer.
10. The effects of climate change are becoming more severe every year, but at the same time issues of environmental justice are seeing increased visibility. Looking to the future, to what extent do you predict that environmental injustice will overall become a bigger or smaller issue? Consider the issue in terms of your country and worldwide.

Activity

A 'photovoice' project is a combination of photography and written or oral stories that uses personal perspectives to explore a particular issue. Stephanie and Michael's Mapping for Change project uses it to explore issues of environmental justice.

Think about an environmental issue in the vicinity of your home or school that affects you. For instance:

- Water pollution
- Air pollution
- Litter
- Lack of green space and/or trees
- Proximity to industry

Use a camera or smartphone to take photos in the area that is affected by this issue. Find creative ways to show how the issue originates, what it looks like, and how it affects the local community and environment.

Present your photos through digital (e.g., a slideshow) or physical (e.g., a photo album) methods. Write stories or captions to accompany each photo that provide context and indicate your personal experience or perspective of the issue.

Once completed, take time to look at your classmates' photos and accompanying stories.

- How do they make you feel?



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- Do your own experiences tally with theirs?
- To what extent do they make you want to take action?

Come together with your class. Talk about the issues you have identified and discuss whether you feel they are issues of environmental justice. Are they affecting the most vulnerable people in society the most? Are they affecting a particular demographic the most?

Next, choose one environmental issue and mind map ideas for the following:

- A. Actions that local decision-makers (e.g., councils, government authorities) could take to address this environmental issue.
- B. Actions that you and other members of the community could take to address this environmental issue.

As a class, split into two groups, Groups A and B, each focusing on one of the above challenges. Using the collected ideas, do the following:

Group A: Write a letter to local decision-

makers that sets out:

- The environmental issue
- Its relationship with environmental justice
- Why it is important to address this issue
- Suggested actions to address this issue.

Once agreed, sign and send the letter. You could also publish it publicly to gain further exposure if you wish.

Group B: Design a poster (for social media and/or print) that persuades community members to take action on this environmental issue. Include:

- A summary of the issue
- A call to action to address it
- Engaging graphic design
- If appropriate, a particular date and time to take action.

Once agreed, distribute the poster to relevant community groups and local spaces. Make sure to participate in the action yourself too, if you can!

More resources

You can find out more about Mapping for Change, including a number of 'storymaps' that the project has developed, on the project website: www.mapping4change.org

The Environmental, Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health (ENRICH) project, led by Dr Ingrid Waldon, gained international attention due to its community-based research into environmental racism. Find out more about the project, and the associated documentary "There's Something in the Water", here: www.enrichproject.org

This TEDx talk from Cristal Cisneros explores youth perspectives on environmental justice, including the development of an environmental justice curriculum: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oa8dDBP5-d8