




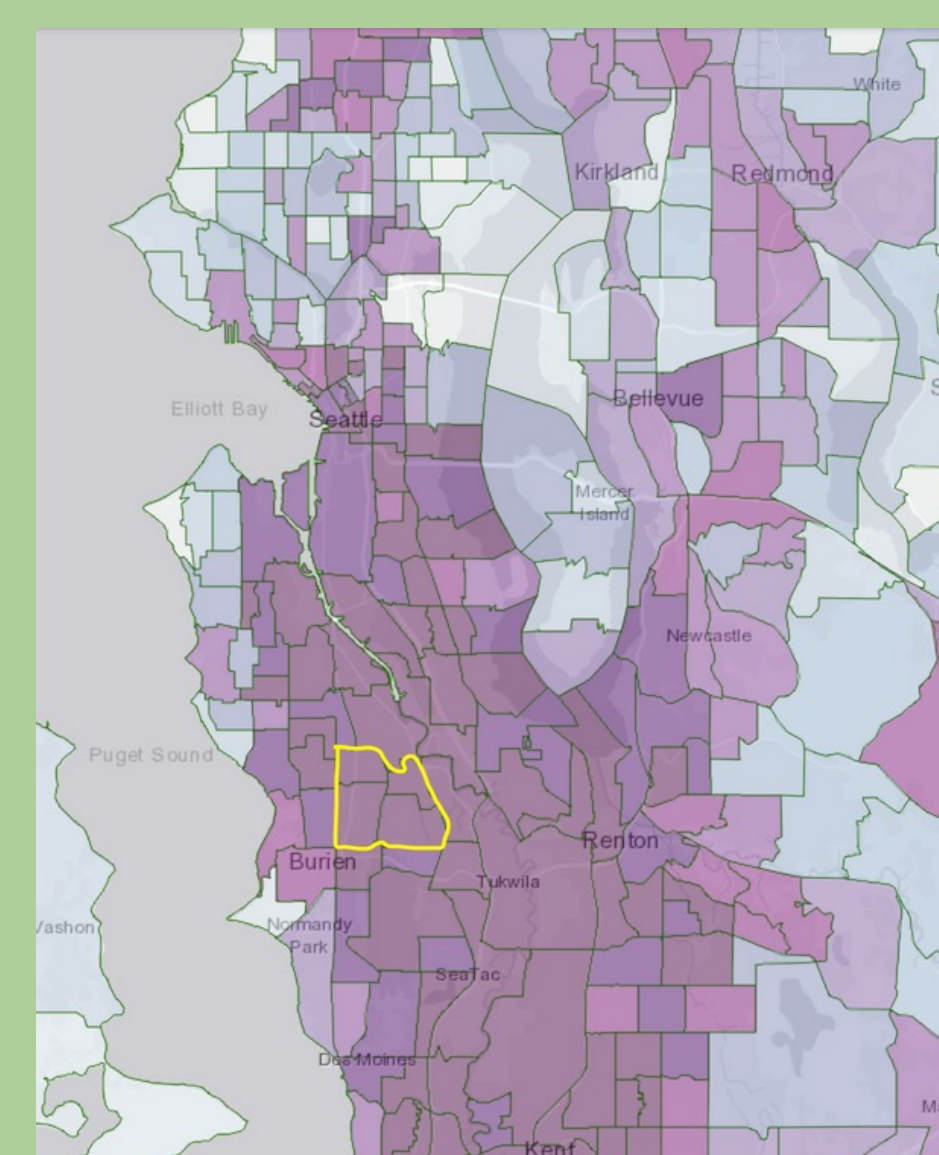
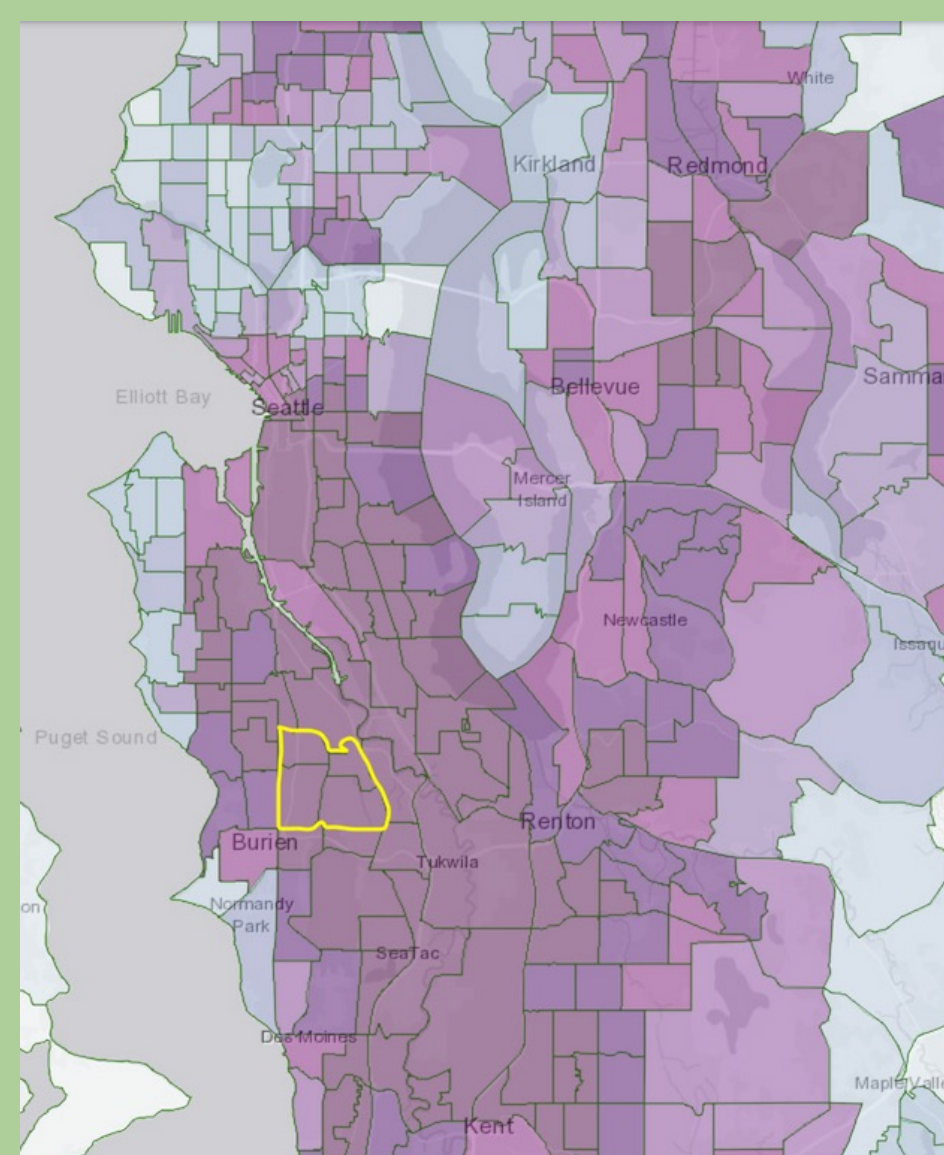
Tackling Multifaceted Environmental Justice Issues: The Importance of Community Engagement and How to Create It

Isla Scott*, Program on the Environment , University of Washington  @islascott21
Site Supervisor: Noemie Maxwell, Defenders of North SeaTac Park
Faculty Advisor, Karen Litfin, Political Science, University of Washington



Background

- Environmental justice is the principle that all people and communities are entitled to equal environmental protection under the law
- Community engagement has had profound impacts on the environmental justice movement and is critical for creating social change
- Generating this type of engagement in low-income and multi-ethnic communities can be challenging, as such communities often face more immediate needs
 - Ex: community surrounding North SeaTac Park in SeaTac City
- My research aims to determine productive and effective ways of communicating environmental hazards to low-income and multi-ethnic communities with a goal of creating and enhancing community engagement



Number of Non-White Residents

Environmental Health Disparities

Figure 1: Panel on the left shows the number of people of color based on the 2020 census. Panel on the right shows the average number of environmental health disparities residents encounter. The community surrounding North SeaTac Park is outlined in yellow. Data from Washington's Department of Health.




Research Questions

- Which outreach methods (in-person, digital, traditional) encourage the most community engagement?
- How does interaction with local government affect community understanding, awareness, and action?

Internship

I interned with the South Seattle Climate Action Network , and was focused with one of their partners, the Defenders of North SeaTac Park as a campaign outreach intern. I addressed these problems concerning community engagement by using North SeaTac Park as a case study.

Methods

-  Literature review: effective communication methods & value of community engagement.
-  Outreach: in the community, on social media, and via traditional marketing, such as flyers and fact sheets
-  Commented at Port of Seattle and King County Council public hearings to raise government awareness



Results (Outreach Methods)

- In-person outreach was found to be the most effective tool in communicating multi-faceted environmental problems, as it presents the least amount of obstacles (Figure 2)
- In-person outreach should occur in places where the community gathers, such as North SeaTac Park or Burien Farmers Market
- Outreach should be done with materials that are visually pleasing, comprehensive, and make engagement feasible, such as physical copies of a petition for people to sign in the moment



Figure 2: Images that demonstrate different outreach methods conducted over the summer. Panel on top depicts a planned community event at North SeaTac Park to celebrate the history and importance of the park and bring awareness to the risks it faces. Panel below depicts in-person outreach at Burien Farmers Market. © Scott, 2022.

Results (Government Interaction)

-  Having a channel of communication with the local government is vital to encouraging community engagement
-  Policymakers should acknowledge the valuable contributions, ideas, and leadership capacity of residents in low-income communities to implement environmental initiatives

Significance & Next Steps

- I propose using a three-step framework I created after thorough analyzation of my methods and results to generate community engagement
- The three steps are utilized to identify the important networks of communication that should be established, the most productive outreach platforms to communicate goals and information, and the materials needed to effectively deliver campaign messages when outreaching
- Using my findings and this proposed framework can enhance community engagement in any given community.
- Increased community engagement can drive social change, lead to more equitable and sustainable decisions and, overall, improve the livability of local communities

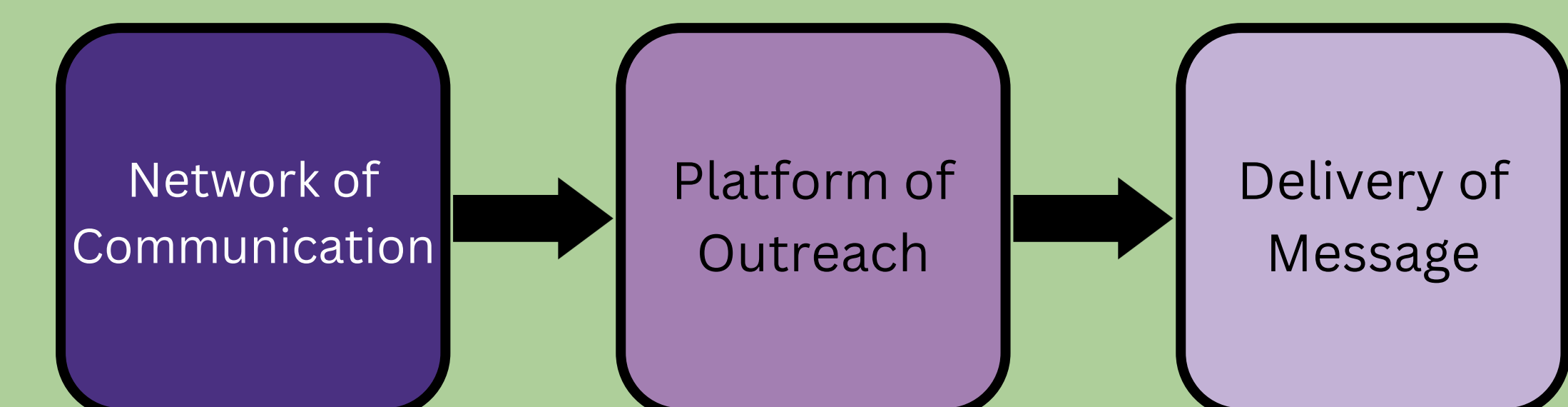


Figure 3: A proposed three-step framework for creating and enhancing community engagement. © Scott, 2022.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank my site supervisor, Noemie Maxwell, for giving me this amazing opportunity and helping me through it, and my faculty advisor, Karen Litfin, for providing me with meaningful guidance and support during the entire process.