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COMMUNITIES RECLAIMING POWER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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As the climate crisis accelerates and disproportionately affects marginalised communities and countries in the global South, the need for power and social justice approaches is particularly important. Community psychology, with a long interest in the impacts of power discrepancies on the well-being of groups and communities, can offer theoretical and practical tools for addressing climate change and environmental problems without reproducing or intensifying existing inequalities and injustices. This special issue looks at communities' struggles for climate and environmental justice by focusing on how they resist, contest and overcome power inequalities. The issue consists of one perspective and six empirical articles. Most contributions come from high climate vulnerable countries and regions in the global South. Authors address current and relevant environmental and climate change issues such as renewable energy and natural resource extraction, social transformations and extreme weather events, the links between poverty, rurality and climate change, youth empowerment, and racism in climate activism. Inspired by their contributions, community psychology approaches and interdisciplinary research on environmental and climate justice, we discuss a research and intervention agenda for a community psychology of climate change.

***Keywords**:* climate change, social justice, power, decolonising methodologies, Global South

1. Introduction

The world was a completely different place when we started to put together this special issue about a year ago. We had not heard about COVID-19 and it was unimaginable that we would publish this special issue in the middle of a global pandemic. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that inequality is still a key issue facing the world today (O'Connor et al., 2020). The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated longstanding inequalities between nations and social groups (Ford et al., 2020; Manzanedo & Manning, 2020) and has disproportionately affected black, poor people, migrants and other minority communities (O'Connor et al., 2020; Pareek et al., 2020; Ford et al., 2020).

Climate change, meanwhile, continued unabated. It is likely that 2020 will finish as one of the hottest years on record (Di Liberto, 2020) with severe flooding in China, wildfires in California, the highest rainfall in 110 years in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and the first 'Atlantic Hurricane Season' on record. The intensity of these and other events suggests that the world will face more complex

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and linked challenges that will, in turn, affect communities' capability to recover from global pandemics (Salas et al., 2020). While we may be in a time of uncertainty regarding climate action, we believe that the current crisis provides opportunities to foster just sustainable transformations and long-term economic-socio-political change (Reese et al., 2020; Zabaniotou, 2020). In this sense, this special issue has never been timelier. Based on the voices of disadvantaged, marginalised and oppressed groups and communities, we discuss social justice in a time of environmental degradation and climate crisis. If the poorest and most vulnerable sections of our society are those who suffer the greatest impacts in any crisis (Salas et al., 2020), community psychology as a discipline committed to social justice should seek to support and work with marginalised communities to overcome global and local challenges.

Globally, communities are organizing collectively around environmental issues by resisting, contesting or adapting to climate change effects and consequences. Studies have shown that communities can initiate climate action through local grassroots initiatives (Diaw, 2010) and that people are capable of recognising, reflecting and taking action to address climate change and inequality (Speth, 2008; O'Brien, 2012). There are several examples of community-based organizations that have been initiated and maintained by local communities and triggered or accelerated by climatic events such as hurricanes, floods and droughts (e.g., Manuel-Navarrete & Pelling, 2015).

Yet, despite the increasing interest in how groups and communities engage in environmental and climate change issues (e.g., Christens & Collura, 2012; Tvinnereim et al., 2017), there has been a lack of studies focusing on the voices of vulnerable and marginalised groups and communities. By drawing on community psychology approaches and theories, the articles in this issue offer important contributions to addressing this knowledge gap. They do so by examining how communities engage with environmental and climate change issues as well as the processes by which affected communities contest environmental injustices and reclaim social justice and power. Importantly, the studies in this special issue are based primarily on the voices of the marginalised groups and communities who are the least responsible for climate change and have the least political power to influence climate change action.

The introduction to the special issue is divided into three sections. In the first section we describe the research gaps that set the basis for this special issue, that is, the link between climate change and social injustice as well as the potential role of community psychology to address climate change dynamics, effects and consequences. We also share our motivations for setting up the call for this special issue. In the second section, we describe the contents of the special issue, which consists of seven articles by more than 20 scholars from different regions of the world. In the third section, we offer a set of ideas for future research and intervention that are inspired by the contributions as well as by critical community psychology.

2. Climate change, social justice and community psychology

The climate crisis consists of a broader and systemic crisis marked by processes of domination that are still at the heart of the modern and patriarchal world-system (Grosfoguel, 2016). The coloniality practices by the global North over countries located on the periphery still influence our ways of living, thinking, and acting, and is manifested by the domination of economy, nature, subjectivity and knowledge (Quijano, 2000). These practices have been harming the subsistence

and sovereignty of subalternized groups (Sarker, 2016), such as traditional peoples, indigenous communities, small farmers and fishers (Acselrad, 2010). Thus, the neglect of the world's majority who suffer the most impacts of the climate crisis is linked to the historical injustice dynamics of domination and dependence between countries in the global North and South.

Climate change is well-established as an issue of justice, with climate justice playing a key role in global climate change debates and negotiations over many years (Alves & Mariano, 2018; Patterson et al., 2017; Robinson & Shine, 2018). Climate justice approaches argue for the need to safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable people, by sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly across different societal groups (Almassi, 2017; Patterson et al., 2018; Robinson & Shine, 2018). A social justice approach to climate change starts from the recognition that those individuals, groups, communities and countries who already exhibit high levels of social vulnerability will be the ones suffering the most with climate variability (e.g., Levy & Patz, 2015; Naser & Tanzim, 2009). This is particularly the case in countries and regions in the global South that often face a lack of infrastructure and resources to support vulnerable groups and communities (Dietz, 2018; George, 2018), have few available resources to adapt to climate change impacts, and where the vulnerabilities in the population are still growing (Welborn, 2018). Inequalities also exist within countries (rich or poor) and it is often the poorest, vulnerable and marginalised sections of society that are most at risk from climate change (Robinson & Shine, 2018).

Those most vulnerable to climate change impacts also have the least power to affect and influence social change (Holland, 2017). From this perspective, vulnerability to climate change is political (Dietz, 2018), as access to power may be the critical factor that shapes communities' ability to plan for, cope with and respond to the impacts of climate change (Thomas et al., 2019). Hence, there is a high probability that vulnerable people and communities will stay vulnerable if they remain unable to participate and influence the climate change related decisions that directly affect them (Eriksen & Lind, 2009; Robinson & Shine, 2018). Despite this, there has been a lack of research on how vulnerable communities particularly from the global South are engaging with climate change effects and solutions (Alves & Mariano, 2018).

Community psychology has a long history in promoting the advancement of justice and democracy (Montero, 2009; Prilleltensky, 2008) by focusing on empowerment processes and by giving voice to oppressed and vulnerable groups and communities. However, despite several calls to intersect climate change issues with the needs of vulnerable and oppressed communities (Pavel, 2015; Riemer & Reich, 2011), contributions from community psychology are still relatively sparse. Most psychological research to date has focused on providing explanations of how people relate to climate change issues through their consumption choices and individual lifestyles (Steg et al., 2014). In these studies, citizens' engagement has been largely associated with individual behaviours that either benefit the natural environment or imply the omission of acts that harm it (Lange & Dewite, 2019). More recently, scholars have started to look at pro-environmental behaviour as a group-based behaviour, which is said to be explained by classical socio-psychological predictors of collective action (e.g., Fritsche et al., 2018). Most of these studies, however, propose paths and models that see people's engagement with climate change issues as individual processes based on a set of psychological dimensions, rational decisions or human values. Even when considering citizens' roles in policymaking, there is a general trend to avoid structural factors (e.g., social norms, rules, regulations, institutions) and power relations (e.g., gender, class, space) (Uzzell & Räthzel, 2009; O'Brien, 2015).

Considering the need to increase the attention given to the voices of marginalised groups and communities, especially from the global South, this special issue proposes to look at these issues through the lenses of community psychology, namely its strength and community-based approaches, and its focus on power and social justice (Jason et al., 2019). Essentially, we argue that community psychology as a sub-discipline committed to community development, social justice, and critical approaches to social problems (e.g., Culley & Angelique, 2011; Jason et al., 2019; Montero, 2009) has an important role to play in addressing global challenges such as climate change.

2.1. On the roots of this special issue

This special issue was, first and foremost, inspired by interdisciplinary and critical approaches to climate change and environmental problems. Critical scholars have long argued that countries on the global North have developed their global supremacy through the intensive exploitation of natural resources in the global South (e.g., Moore, 2016; Tokar, 2014). Paradoxically, the distribution of climate change disproportionately impacts poor countries from the global South, who are far less responsible for climate change (Tokar, 2014). Although there is increasing recognition of the need to include South and minority perspectives in climate change-related research, there is still a greater focus on the opinions, views, experiences and visions of the global North (Baptiste & Rhiney, 2016; Walshe & Stancioff, 2018).

Furthermore, this special issue is also rooted in critical community psychology perspectives, such as liberation psychology (e.g., Martín-Baró, 2017; Lane & Codo, 2006). According to Martín-Baró (2017), in moments of intensification of social conflicts and inequalities, the community level acquires particular relevance. In the scenario of climate change, marked by environmental conflicts and injustices, community seems to be the most adequate level to understand how power relations can be contested and to break with an individualistic and decontextualized view of people and communities. The focus on community-based processes has also become a key focus of environmental transition theorists (e.g., Wilson, 2012) who argue that communities need to be empowered to set their agenda and develop strategies to reduce oil and carbon emission and build community resilience (Seyfang & Smith, 2007). Yet, research has been particularly scarce in terms of analysing power dynamics, despite the recognition that power often determines how people in local communities, particularly in the global South, respond to climate change effects and consequences (Mikulewicz, 2018). Following critical community psychologists, we see power as constituted within unequal social relationships that are often based on historically asymmetrical grounds (e.g., Serrano-Garcia, 1994; Fisher et al., 2007).

Importantly, despite power issues, marginalised communities are also agents and initiators of social change, and they can overcome inequalities in climate change in multiple ways (Baptiste & Rhiney, 2016; Chu & Michael, 2019; Gonda, 2019). Indeed, many communities around the globe are fighting against projects with environmental impacts (e.g., Temper et al., 2015; Scheidel et al., 2018), organizing community action to respond to extreme weather events (e.g., Manuel-Navarrete & Pelling, 2015), and building alternatives to ways of life that reproduce climate change (Diaw, 2010; Speth, 2008; O'Brien, 2012). Thus, rather than merely looking at vulnerable groups and communities as passive and receivers of change, as most studies and disciplines still do (Walshe & Stancioff, 2018), we called for papers on the processes by which marginalised communities are organizing, resisting, fighting and overcoming oppression in the face of climate change and environmental injustices. We expected that our geographical diversity (Brazil, South Africa, and

Portugal) would help to disseminate the call beyond the global North thereby expanding our knowledge on how to achieve more just and sustainable transformations.

There were also personal reasons for us. For Brendon, it was important to have a truly global feel to the collaboration. So much of the literature is written from the perspective of the global North. Where collaborations do occur, academic engagements often reinforce the very inequalities that they claimed to critique through, for example, discourses of academic 'development' and what is deemed 'acceptable' to the scholarly 'canon'. Collaborations tend to marginalise minority scholars, are characterised by disrespect and silencing, and feelings of being an 'outsider within' the process. Having grown up during apartheid South Africa and witnessed the continuing failures of mainstream psychology to address environmental injustices, Brendon was determined to understand the mechanisms that underpin injustices and how communities address them.

For Raquel, the involvement with the construction of this special issue was influenced by the understanding about the geopolitics of knowledge, which historically depreciated the production of knowledge (scientific and non-scientific) in the global South, placing it in a position of dependence, also in epistemic terms. As a Latin American, from one of the most impoverished regions of Brazil (Northeast), and being a light-skinned black woman, she recognises the impacts of the colonial and slave past on the lives of most of the population on the periphery of capitalism. This common past reverberates in specific phenomena, which also require specific readings, characterizing a production of local knowledge focused on global challenges such as climate change. Therefore, Raquel's position was that it is essential and urgent to open spaces for subordinate voices to claim the power that has been taken from them by continuous and unfair social processes.

For Maria, it was important to focus on the multiple scales and links of power to climate change. She was born on the Portuguese island of Madeira, and even though 'her country' initiated the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and was one of the biggest colonizers of that age, the myth of 'luso-tropicalism' is still broadly disseminated in Portuguese society (Valentim & Heleno, 2017). According to Moore (2010), Madeira was also the place where capitalism emerged, with the boom in sugar production and exportation during the second half of the fifteenth century. As a member of a working-class family and of the first generation to access more than a primary school education, she has also experienced how the colonization of nature only brings with its inequality and injustice, and that these effects persist over centuries. She felt it was important to give voice to research recognizing that the roots of oppression and inequality are tightly linked to the roots of environmental degradation and climate change. It is not easy to engage in meaningful research, but many researchers are doing so. We need to increase and create spaces and opportunities to share their contributions.

In our view, this special issue is a step in this direction. It worth mentioning that we are not the first scholars to foreground community psychology and climate change. Around a decade ago, the *American Journal of Community Psychology* organized what was probably the first special issue dedicated to climate change in a community psychology journal. The editors and the authors recognised the importance of examining climate change as a matter of justice and explored topics such as barriers and catalysts in pro-environmental behaviour, public participation, legal innovation, and locally based food systems (for more details see Riemer & Reich, 2011). The editors and authors also highlighted the need for more engagement in climate change related issues. Yet, despite the intensification of the climate crisis, climate change is still receiving little attention from community psychologists. We aimed to reinforce their call by proposing a set of

recommendations for greater engagement from community psychologists in climate change related issues worldwide.

3. Communities reclaiming power: An outline of this special issue

This special issue consists of six empirical articles and one perspective article. The articles take a social justice approach and/or focus on the voices of communities affected by environmental injustices and climate change effects. The first aspect that deserves to be highlighted is that our hope for geographical diversity was fulfilled. We have papers from Brazil, Italy, South Africa, the United States of America, Puerto Rico and Haiti. Importantly, contributions come from regions that are extremely vulnerable to climate change, namely the Caribbean islands (Puerto Rico, Haiti), Africa (South Africa) and South America (Brazil).

Research from low- and middle-income countries are generally underrepresented, and most studies tend to reproduce knowledge hierarchy and see countries of the South as recipients of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge (Sousa Santos, 2007). In this sense, this special issue disrupts the geopolitics of the production of scientific knowledge that historically reproduces de-contextualized, de-historical, patriarchal and racist approaches in knowledge production (Grosfoguel, 2016). By giving importance to cognitive justice, this issue highlights situated and embodied knowledge productions, seeking to account for historically hidden knowledge on human experiences that can be potential embryos of broader transformations (Sousa Santos, 2018).

Unanue, Patel, Tormala, Trott, Rodríguez, Serrano and Brown, focus on how communities galvanised after a hurricane in Puerto Rico. Much of the existing literature focuses on the negative impacts of natural disasters. Using interviews and analysis framed by grounded theory, the authors set out to understand how communities transform after the trauma of hurricanes. In addition to negative impacts, the authors identified a phased-based approach to community transformation following the hurricane. The paper identifies several important psychological processes that facilitated post hurricane transformation including building a sense of community, critical consciousness and post traumatic growth. The value of the article is in its ability to identify the intrapsychic, social and community level factors that facilitate community transformation.

Trott, Rockett, Gray, Lam, Even and Frame discuss processes of empowerment through arts, based on research with Haitian youth. Considered to be on the margins of discussions on climate change, the authors argue that this group should instead be brought to the centre of the debate. Placing them as critical actors for sustainability, this article gives a key contribution to youth-centered sustainability education programs. By using a participatory approach, this study contributes to advance our knowledge on collaborative research, and community organizing for intergenerational and climate justice. As a main contribution, the authors present a promising model to engage marginalised, under-resourced populations, based in a solidarity-focused approach. They show how the combination of arts and sciences offers young people avenues through which they can connect with, communicate about, and face sustainability challenges affecting their communities.

Rafaely and Barnes focus on the denial of racism by the media and how this served to undermine a young African climate activist. Vanessa Nakate was cropped out of a media photo with fellow white climate activists in early 2020. Vanessa claimed that this was a racist act and called for African climate activists to have an equal footing in global climate activism. The outcry led to a

denial of racism by the media. The paper focuses on how African media, who would have expected to have sided with her, undermined her claims of racism. Using discourse analysis, the authors demonstrate how the media positioned her is irrational, emotional and not representing who she claimed she was, thus undermining her role as an African climate activist. The article also highlights how Vanessa attempts to reclaim power. The paper demonstrates how power can be understood by focusing on talk-in-interaction and what this means for future work on environmental racism and justice.

Barnwell, Stroud and Watson, focus on the psychological experiences of ecological degradation and resistance in Rustenburg, South Africa. Based on a set of interviews and a focus group discussion with members of a community affected by extractive activities, this paper focuses on the long-term impacts of extractivism on the health and well-being of communities. Anchored by the novel term of “place severing”, this study shows how the continuous exploitation of land and resources lead to environmental health-related distress and compromise community’s ability to satisfy their needs over time and function properly. The role of intergenerational components of environmental injustice is stressed by the authors, who see environmental injustices as triggers of experiences of place severing and environmental health-related distress. Importantly, this paper also shows the key role of grassroots organizing groups in promoting community mobilisation, critical thinking, building alliances and empowering communities.

Farias and Pinheiro analysed the struggle of a local community against the installation of a wind farm in a location on the Brazilian northeast coast, by showing asymmetric power relations in the cloudy field of renewable energies. Cloudy because, as the authors argue in the title of the article, renewable energy that is commonly considered "clean" causes direct impacts on local people's ways of life. Through an ethnographic and participatory approach, focusing on the production of the meanings of place and place attachment, the authors shed light on the class dimension of the social-environmental conflict, the importance of local knowledge and experiences, and the role of the community in defence of its territory against the enterprise. In this sense, a fundamental contribution of this article is the tension created by the very notion of sustainability and how it cannot be detached from social issues.

Cidade, Junior and Ximenes analysed how climate change affects rural poverty, focusing on backlands of the Northeast and South of Brazil. The study used community psychology, the capabilities approach, and human geography to understand the occupation of Brazilian rural lands and the consequences of climate change on deprivation experiences. Through focus groups discussions, the authors identified the local experiences of deprivation including scarce food, improper housing and the lack of leisure areas. They also found a series of deficiencies linked to climate change, such as the loss of production and the feeling of insecurity for the future. An important contribution of this article is the analysis of the relationship between the objective and subjective dimensions of poverty considering the effects of climate change.

Francescato’s perspective article is an important call for effective global climate action. The author’s feminist approach and long commitment to social justice transpire in her style of writing. The result is a strong and convincing set of possible paths and effective recommendations for community psychologists across the world to urgently act on climate change. The proposed term “Planetary sense of community”, may have a transformative potential in the way we work together and collaborate to tackle climate change globally and locally. The author has several decades of experience as a community psychologist, which makes this a well-balanced article that values academic knowledge, community intervention and activism.

Despite their differences, all the articles in this special issue offer contributions to advance our understanding of the processes of how groups and communities struggle for social justice in the complex and unequal scenario of the climate crisis.

4. Community psychology of climate change: Contributions for (re)setting an agenda

The authors engaged in a very detailed analysis of the role of community psychology in addressing specific environmental and climate change challenges. Their work helped us to envision how a climate change research and intervention agenda for community psychology would look like, in terms of topics, approaches and methods. Specifically, we propose three paths: decolonising methodologies, fostering research and practice towards social justice, and looking at climate change through a lens of power. Below we explain each one of these three paths, by exemplifying with how articles of this issue have already incorporated social justice, power and decolonising approaches in their work.

4.1. Decolonising methodologies

Researchers using mainstream research methodologies have often (knowingly or inadvertently) undermined marginalised communities and groups. For example, researchers have used quantitative 'evidence' (or lack thereof) to support polluters and/or to sow doubt about their impact especially when these are challenged legally and in public discourse (Oreskes & Conway, 2011). Similarly, behaviour change studies have focused on 'manipulating' the psychological mechanisms like cognitions, affect and perceptions that underpin behaviour to help marginalised communities cope with unjust environments while ignoring 'upstream' causes of those injustices in the first instance. Psychological research has also reproduced problematic representations of the poor as lacking agency, in special need of 'development' and having innate characteristics of vulnerability or resourcefulness. Poor black women, in particular, are often constructed as in need of saving from their oppressive circumstances (Barnes, 2015). Problematic representations of minority groups found in mainstream research are reproduced by the media, programmes and public policy, which further undermine marginalised communities.

Psychology's preoccupation with the 'science' of the mind, emotions and behaviour in the context of environmental and climate crises reinforces an unbalanced focus on the individual over structural factors, coping and mitigation over community mobilization, western models over indigenous and localized knowledge(s), objectivity over (inter)subjectivity, neutrality over political action, research *on* people over doing research *with* people, top-down research design over engagement and consultation, and knowledge generation over concern for sustained political change. Importantly, after researchers exit the field, communities are left in the similar, if not worse, conditions than before the research took place. Thus, for many marginalised communities, research has, according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith, become a 'dirty word' (Smith, 2013).

We must be careful at this point to not place the blame solely on quantitative research. Many post-positivist qualitative studies suffer similar 'blind spots' albeit framed differently. There also exist many instances where quantitative research has been important in addressing inequalities. We must also be careful not to place the blame on researchers from the global North. The

performance of mainstream methodologies is particularly strong among researchers in the global South too. Methodology on its own is not the only issue. What matters is how methodology is framed by a broader set of critical paradigms, theories, ideas, values and principles that filter into methods.

Decolonial thinking has become popular particularly in the global South (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). With the 'decolonial turn', we have also witnessed the increasing popularity of methodological research movements under the umbrella of decolonising methodologies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Decolonising methodologies bring together several methodological movements including indigenous, transformative, liberation, feminist, critical disability and critical methodologies to draw attention to the potential for decolonial thinking, research and praxis to contribute social justice (Smith, 2013). Researchers draw on several research methods including participatory methods, autoethnography, photovoice, citizen science, storytelling and multi-media methods.

Decolonising methodologies cohere around the idea that contemporary social injustices are a consequence of colonisation, modernity, racism, and capitalism and that mainstream research has played a role in supporting and reproducing those. With the interests of marginalised communities prioritized, an understanding of power is central to decolonising methodologies. Researchers are aware of the types of questions that are asked, who asks them, who participates in the research, the appropriateness of the methods, how results are interpreted, how certain groups are represented and given 'voice' (Chilisa, 2019). Importantly, researchers are aware of how that research represents marginalised communities and how those representations are reproduced in public discourse. Researchers are also aware and reflexive of their roles and privileges in the research relationship (Bozalek, 2011). In addition, researchers want to avoid the research process being a form of epistemic dispossession in addition to the injustices they currently experience.

Unsurprisingly, the contributions of this issue tend to break with quantitative and de-contextualized methodologies (Marecek, 2011; Toomela, 2010). Papers in this special issue represent a nice range of transformative methodologies that allow for a deeper analysis of the barriers to mobilisation, how methodologies can be used as interventions for critical conscientization and how scholars engage with their own positionality in work with communities to reclaim power. We find a diversity of research approaches guided by community-based and qualitative methodologies, including interviews, focus groups, discourse analysis, ethnography, and participatory methodologies. These are marginal methodological approaches in psychology and thus constitute an alternative to the typical quantitative way of 'extraction' of data from individuals, groups and communities. Instead, the studies recognize the importance of bringing the voices of research participants to the centre of knowledge production and the need for collaboration, dialogue and partnerships with social and political actors, social movements, community-based groups, among others. Going forward, we believe that it is important for community psychologists to strengthen engagements with the methodological literature to strengthen environmental and climate justice efforts.

4.2. Research and practice towards social justice

As recognised by all the articles in this special issue, climate change poses many challenges to our societies, including to our sense of justice (Bond, 2012). Social justice has been a key concept in environmental degradation and climate change discussions particularly since the emergence of the environmental justice movement. The birth of the environmental justice paradigm has been

largely associated to the struggles of black and poor communities in the USA in the 80s, who sought to address the inequity of environmental degradation and toxic waste contamination in their communities (Bullard, 1990). Since then, activists have linked the environment to race, class, gender, and social justice, and reframed environmental issues as injustice issues (Taylor, 2000). Over the years, with the intensification of international climate-change debates, the concept of environmental justice has evolved to climate justice (Chatterton et al., 2013; Meikle et al., 2016). Climate justice discourses imply the distribution of environmental goods between nation-states, but also among national and local levels (Schlosberg, 2004). Importantly, climate justice comes into this debate as an attempt to politicize climate change, showing that countries in the North have developed their global supremacy through the intensive exploitation of natural resources in the global South (Tokar, 2014). At the heart of climate justice is what Latin American social movements define as an *ecological debt* of the industrialised countries of the North to the countries of the global South, that developed their supremacy based on extensive extractivism, land occupation and industrial waste disposal in South regions (Foster & Clark, 2004). The implications of such practices are described by Cidade, Junior and Ximenes (in this issue) who analyse the links between poverty and climate change and shown how climate change reproduces and intensify pre-existing inequalities. In a different context, the article by Barnwell, Stroud and Watson (in this issue) consolidates our understanding of the multiple and long-term social and psychological implications of environmental degradation.

Importantly, both studies show that to ensure that questions of justice are not only "taken up via ideal theory" (Almassi, 2017, p. 201), it is crucial to look at everyday environmental community problems and challenges, looking comprehensively to distributive (i.e., fair distribution of rights and responsibilities), procedural (i.e., participation and access to decision-making) and recognitional dimensions of social justice (i.e., recognizing existing forms of inequality and how climate change actions exacerbate or entrench underlying structural disadvantages) (Chu & Michael, 2019). For example, climate change is responsible for inducing droughts, floods, wildfires, desertification and hurricanes, leading to food insecurity, scarcity of water, poverty and spreading of diseases. These risks and factors have led to displacement, social conflicts and migration (Abel et al., 2018) in such a way that we know live in a time of the highest levels of forced displacement in history (UNHCR, 2018). Taking a distributive justice perspective to forced displacement implies that we recognize that countries in the global North have a massive debt to countries in the global South, and should be responsible for ensuring the legal, policy and institutional frameworks necessary to guarantee that the rights of all migrants and refugees are fully respected, protected and fulfilled (Naser & Tanzim, 2009). Oppositely, once migrants arrive at their destinations, they are excluded from decision-making processes, deprived of healthy environments and amenities such as green spaces, and tend to be the most exposed to climate hazards and effects (Leichenko & O'Brien, 2008). Simultaneously, their experiences of environmental risk are very often unrecognized in public policies (Chu & Michael, 2019), with mitigation measures (e.g., green roofs, resilient parks and greenways, rain gardens, or detention basins and canals) often overlooking or minimizing the negative impacts for vulnerable residents, including migrants and other minorities (Anguelovski et al., 2019). Thus, it is worth emphasising that justice-focused arguments could also have unintended consequences (Patterson et al., 2018) as top-down climate action (either involving adaptation or mitigation strategies) may amplify unequal power relations and contribute to the intensification of the marginalization of already vulnerable groups and communities (e.g., Chu & Michael, 2019; Eriksen et al., 2011; Nagoda & Nightingale, 2017). Firstly, from a distributive justice perspective, climate action goals

(as the one usually proposed by the IPCC) cannot be implemented in a social and historical vacuum. If a small portion of the population is responsible for most of the damage, measures of reparative justice must be implemented to repair the harm done by centuries of resources extraction and exploitation. This aspect should also be considered within national contexts, by avoiding and distributing fairly activities and industries that can lead to environmental degradation. Community psychologists, as argued by Francescato (in this issue), should take an activist role, and start by fostering and/or supporting community action against measures and activities that contribute to climate change. Advancing social justice in the context of climate crisis, implies strengthening the dialogue between the research and practice, through action-research, activism-scholarship, and research-community partnership.

Simultaneously, it is fundamental to look at how international and national efforts to reduce climate impacts, are being implemented worldwide and especially in vulnerable countries in the global South (Alves & Mariano, 2018). This is a pressing issue because climate action itself may constrain people's engagement with climate change, creating and/or intensifying social vulnerability, through the process of conferring differential levels of power on actors and agents, and by shaping the possibilities for climate action (Haugaard, 2010). Hence, climate solutions and interventions should require contesting disempowering and unequal systemic structures, by designing just and inclusive processes of decision making (i.e., procedural justice) and recognizing pre-existing inequalities when responding to climate change impacts and events (i.e., recognitional justice) (e.g., Holland, 2017; Patterson et al., 2018; Robinson & Shine, 2018). In particular, it is crucial to look at how environmental and climate change policies are being implemented worldwide, by focusing on how the voices and the needs of vulnerable and often discriminated groups and communities are being taken into consideration.

Furthermore, we believe that community psychology's focus on community wellbeing could help to foster a more comprehensive approach to environmental justice. As "community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential" (Wiseman & Brasher, 2008, p. 358), working to promote social justice in the context of climate change is essentially about the reducing the unequal distributions that affect the well-being of people and communities (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010). Working towards climate justice implies that we recognize who are the people, where they came from, and what they are saying. It implies that we bring communities' well-being to the centre of decision-making, by focusing on their needs and paths to promote their potential. Such an approach is aligned with the recent shift towards framing environmental justice in terms of capabilities theory (Edwards et al., 2016). Farias and Pinheiro's article (in this issue) offers an interesting contribution in this matter, by showing how a wind farm was highly contested by the community of Galinhos, who, in part, justified their opposition based on their community needs and existing resources.

4.3. Climate change through a lens of power

A social justice approach to climate change implies also increasing the focus on how power can be accessed. Scholars have been arguing that the societal transformations needed to address climate change will require the sustained involvement of citizens at the political level (Carvalho & Peterson, 2012). The political in climate change is then described as the engagement with processes of debate and decision-making on collective issues in which different values, preferences, ideals and solutions to climate change are discussed and opposed (Carvalho &

Peterson, 2012; Carvalho et al., 2017). In this regard, public participation (e.g., public consultations) has been proposed worldwide as a path to ensure that people are involved in the processes of climate decision-making (Robinson & Shine, 2018). Several studies have shown the importance of looking at psychosocial, contextual variables, as well as specific project-related dimensions that may deter people from participating (e.g., Baker & Chapin, 2018), but there still is a lack of attention being given to the power dynamics that may constrain people's engagement with public participation processes, and their perceived ability to influence social change. As unequal distributions of power may influence the ways people relate with current environmental and climate change challenges, it is crucial to look at the processes that sustain power dynamics (Fisher et al., 2007). Power dynamics can be found everywhere: in contexts of social domination, control, and manipulation ("power over"); in spaces of resistance to such dominance through collective action pursuing collective goals ("power to"); and in contexts of collective processes of learning, construction of alternatives and joint action in solidarity ("power with") (Kloos et al., 2012; Partzsch, 2016). It is expected that in some cases power asymmetries may not be physically visible (e.g. behaviours of manipulation in public participation processes), so we would recommend also looking at discursive dimensions of power (Marino & Ribot, 2012; Mikulewicz, 2018). The discursive dimension is key in understanding the processes through which certain actors shape the power people may have to influence issues and decisions in the public arena (Carvalho & Peterson, 2012) as well as how power inequalities may influence people's perceived legitimacy and sense of agency to engage politically (Gaventa & Martorano, 2016). Rafaely and Barnes (in this issue) propose a very interesting way of examining power following a discursive approach. Importantly, their work shows how racism and unequal "power" place African activists (especially women) in an unequal power relation that is highly contested.

The capacity of actors to contest and influence social change is also associated with ideational elements of power (i.e., ideational power) (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016), that may, for example, limit the range of possibilities and the type of solutions proposed to address climate change problems. A sense of collective agency can be a powerful impetus to action or inaction, depending on how communities perceive their ability to influence climate politics and which strategies are perceived as most influential (Kenis & Mathijs, 2012). The study by Trott, Rockett, Gray, Lam, Even, and Frame (in this issue) is particularly inspiring in this matter, as it shows how arts-based participatory methodologies can foster youth empowerment and sustainability action.

Considering the multiple ways people can influence structures, social systems and power relations (O'Brien, 2015), we argue that it is crucial to look at other forms of political engagement involved in local collective struggles, activism and community-organizing. In particular, we need to look at the community responses that are initiated and led by local communities, and that deliberately seek to shift social–ecological systems towards more sustainable trajectories may have the potential to have substantial social impacts (Bennett et al., 2019). These alternatives can constitute spaces of deliberative transformations when enabling reflection, contestation and purposive action to simultaneously reduce inequality and vulnerability (Pelling, 2011). In sustainability studies, scholars have been using the expression "deliberative transformations" to refer to discourses and practices that question the assumptions and mechanisms of dominant discourses and practices of adaptation and mitigation (Avelino et al., 2016; Pelling et al., 2012). Transformational perspectives can be found in both the global North and the global South (Adloff & Neckel, 2019; Knappe et al., 2019), in social movements such as *Degrowth, Transition Towns, the Commons, Buen Vivir,* and *Rights of Nature* (Escobar, 2015). Nevertheless, the representation of what constitutes a deliberative transformational action is still manifestly that from the global

North (Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017), which may constitute a danger of colonisation of our future (Feola, 2019). More specifically, many people in the global South, and also marginalised people in the global North, may not have the chance to aspire to futures that are independent of the global North (Appadurai, 2013). In this regard, more research is needed to engage in real-world examples of societal transformation (Gearey & Ravenscroft, 2019), particularly in South countries and from the perspective of marginalised groups and communities. Unanue, Patel, Tormala, Trott, Rodríguez, Serrano, and Brown (in this issue) focus precisely on how marginalised communities work collectively for the common good, providing mutual aid, and initiating community solidarity. Ultimately, their work contributes to the understanding of how transformative change can occur in climate crisis scenarios. In this regard, more research is necessary to fully understand how such social transformations can be sustained over time, and how just and sustainable futures can be created and fostered.

5. Concluding remarks

The articles that make up this special issue highlighted multiple and complex social dynamics involved in climate change, that demand an increasing recognition of social justice and power. Taken together, the articles addressed new and old environmental and climate change topics, such as renewable energy, natural resource extraction, extreme weather events, poverty and rurality, racism in climate activism, youth sustainability and climate activism, among other. These articles have shown how research and intervention in climate change can be conducted by following a decolonising methodological approach, intersecting climate change and social justice, and using a power lens to climate change and environmental degradation. Moreover, all the articles in this special issue proposed several paths and strategies to effectively engage in climate change related research, intervention and practice. Their recommendations are inspired by community psychology values and principles and involve a focus on collaborative and empowering relationships, considering social justice as a key goal of action, a strong commitment to the reduction of power inequality and oppression worldwide, and an increased focus on climate action and transformative change.

In compiling the special issue, we sought out ways to enact the principles that we attempted to promote in the special issue. We valued respectful engagement, inclusion, diversity, and political consciousness. We made deliberate decisions to use open access meeting software instead of more popular online meeting software, discussed language and power in how we operate (for example, the language of meetings and how to manage non English first language contributions), consulted and arrived at joint decisions, and allowed critical engagement with authors' voice without being overly prescriptive. We also encouraged each other to include our personal reflexive journeys on the process. In many ways, the process was an exemplar for how special issues can be put together.

Community psychology continues to be influenced by post-positivist European and North American psychology. While there is a growing body of critical and community psychology work focusing on social justice and decoloniality, there are very few psychologists working on environmental and climate justice. Each of our work has been on the margins of mainstream psychology despite what we believe are quite obvious links with justice. It was, therefore, pleasing to link up with scholars with similar interests and to see the good work being done by community psychologists worldwide. The process also led us to expand our network with like-minded scholars

who did not see communities as passive recipients of toxic environments and who appreciated the varied ways which communities mobilised to reclaim power. It stimulated thinking about future collaborations. We relished the opportunity both in terms of a reminder of the ideal of meaningful, respectful and egalitarian academic engagement as well as strengthening and expanding the role of psychology, environment, climate and justice. For this, we will forever be grateful.

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