

PER.K Power and Planetary Health: Critical participatory action research on leading and following for the environment and justice in a community based organization



Background:

- People for an Environmentally Responsible Kenmore (PERK): a CBO focused on “environmentally responsible practices in development & infrastructure” in Kenmore, WA, USA
- How do we sustain this work as a social movement for Planetary Health?
- Purpose: Describe the power-relations involved in leading and following in PERK

Major Finding:

Tangled power relations between the CBO (PERK) and other entities are influenced by participant **interests** in *action, expanding influence, maintaining good/bad relations, and seeking knowledge*

“You might have a tiger by the tail....I vomited out all that gravel over onto 60th and did the Niagara Falls over at the Trillium project”

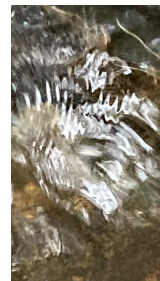
Methods:

- Participatory Action Research
- Stakeholder Interviews including a Stream (Ontopoetic Technique)
- Negotiation theory (Objectives, Positions, Interests, & Power Relations)
- Participatory Visual Analysis
- Critical Storytelling

Results:

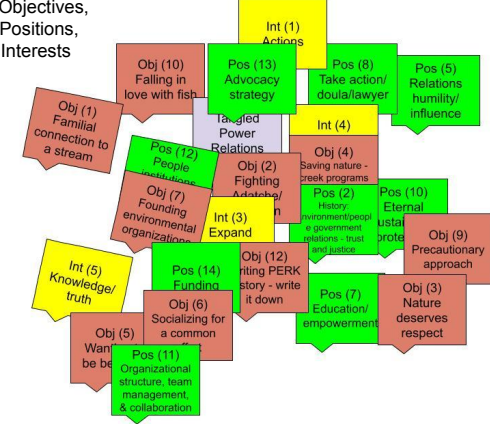
- Ten interviews
- Themes: Objectives (n=13 subthemes), Positions (n=14), Interests (n=6). Power-relations (n=5)
- Guidance for leading/following example: Tangled power-relations:
 1. Use the first fight to organize
 2. Wise stewarding of good/bad relations
 3. Leading/following is being a doula
 4. Friendship and trust come from familial connections to Nature/Fish

- Power Relation Subthemes:
- Expert Power
 - Money Power
 - Organizing Power
 - Tangled Power
 - Roles and Power
 - Balancing/Not Balancing Power



Thematic Key:
Ochre= Objectives,
Green= Positions,
Yellow= Interests

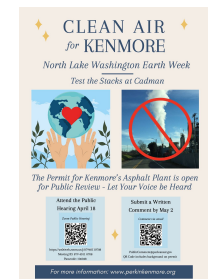
Tangled Power Relations



Participant table

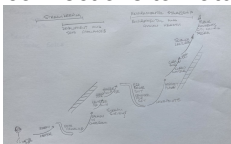
Participant identity (M/F/Nonbinary)/Age	Professional Identity	Social Identity
M/>60	Human Resources	Facilitator/organizer/Elder
F/<60	Project Manager	Mother/writer
M/>60	Fireman/Medic	Organizer
F/>60	Environmental Lawyer	Mother/Artist
M/>60	Black Activist	Organizer/Connector/Elder
M/>60	Indigenous Activist	Connector/Elder/Author
F/>60	Environmental scientist	Mother/writer
M/>60	Environmental scientist	Author
F/>60	Archivist/Journalist	Mother/Elder
Stream	n/a	n/a

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Mooney, E. & Evans-Agnew, R. A. (2025)

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This poster is a product of a 14 year collaboration between a public health nurse and a leader of a community based environmental organization focused on health justice for humans and a salmon stream in Kenmore, Washington State. Our purpose was to describe the power-relations involved in leading and following in this organization that addresses hyper-local pollution threats to Planetary Health. Employing Planetary Health frameworks and participatory methods, we interviewed nine people involved in following and leading in the organization and we interviewed the stream at the center of the action. Interviewing streams is a reflective technique recommended for centering the voice of Nature in environmental investigation (in this case the stream is quoted as “vomiting” gravel over a housing project called Trillium). This poster describes one key finding - tangled power relations - that influences the dynamics of leading and following for persons and the stream. Employing negotiation theory, we found that participant, organizational, and institutional interests “entangle” the work of protecting humans and the stream, for example those involved in the struggle between local wetland preservation groups, housing developers and the city. We suggest that public health nurses can encourage problem solving and sustain the work of such organizations through promoting “doula” - type practices (list/see, address/judge, support/teach/act) in moving amongst these tangled power relations.