

Co-producing Knowledge to Foster Equity in Climate Action in Los Angeles: A Cautionary Tale

October 13, 2025

Paty Romero-Lankao
Adaptation Futures Conference



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH



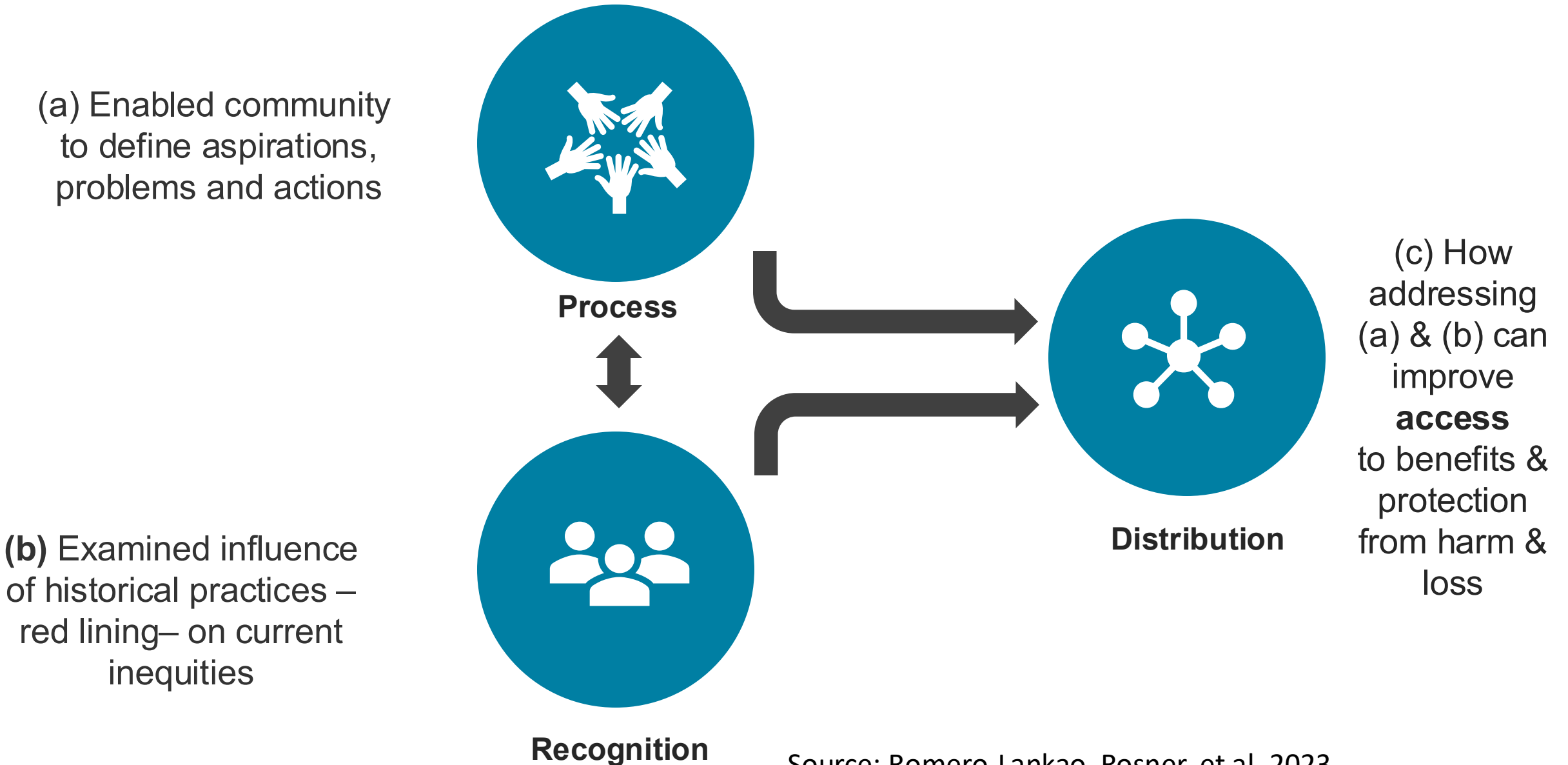
An aerial photograph of a Los Angeles neighborhood. In the foreground, there are several multi-story residential buildings, including a prominent white one with blue accents and a bright blue one. The middle ground shows a dense residential area with various house styles and colors. In the background, the Los Angeles city skyline is visible under a clear blue sky with a few clouds.

LA100 Equity Strategies co-created actionable knowledge to ensure that Los Angeles' transition to 100% clean energy improves energy equity

Co-production purpose: The utility tasked us with developing strategies to increase equity in its transition to 100% clean energy by 2035. We used LA100ES to include underserved Angelenos' understandings of aspirations, problems and solutions.



Relational approach to examine how climate action targets equity



Source: Romero-Lankao, Rosner, et al. 2023



Politics: Co-production helped shift existing engagement approaches. Still, we were constrained in our ability to operationalize procedural justice.



Although we overcame NREL and LADWP resistance to engage underserved Angelinos, they still face entrenched procedural barriers.



Self-determining what they need & how to access the resources & opportunities for navigating climatic & social stressors



Participation in deciding problems & solutions; acknowledgment of their **right to benefit** independently of their income or status,

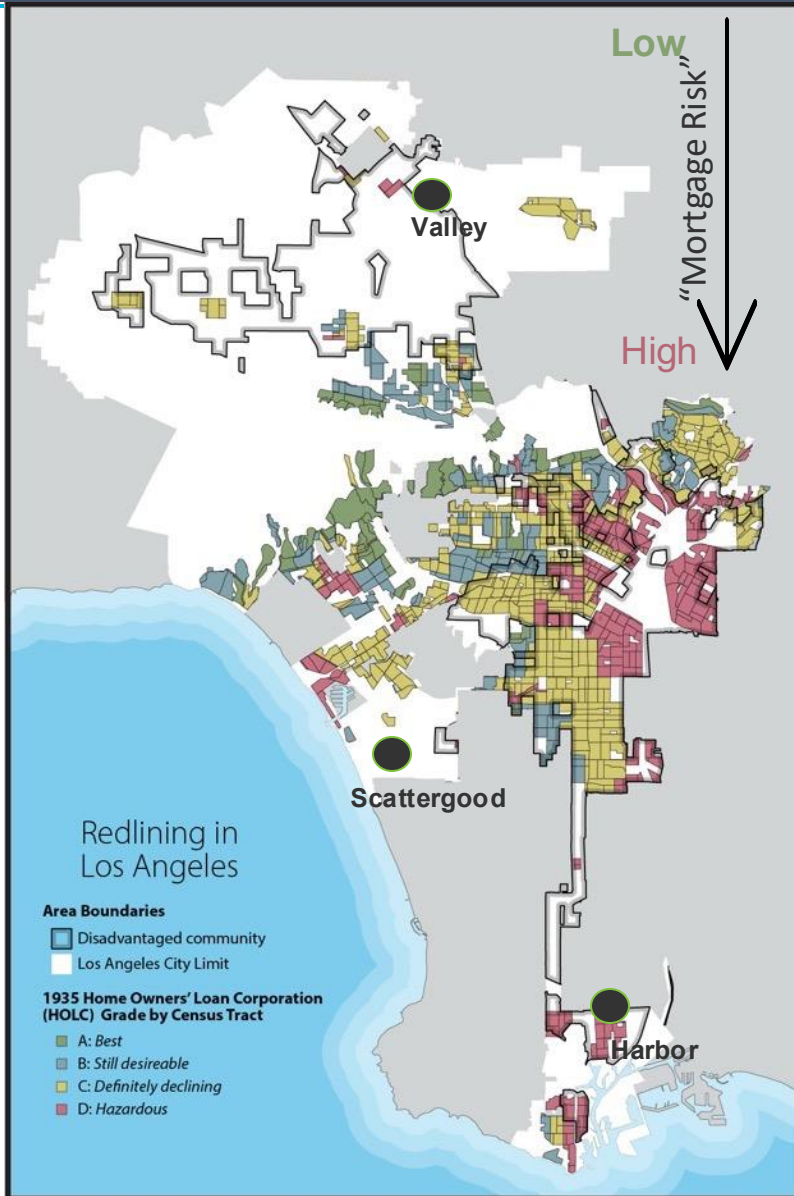


Accountability: eligibility criteria, predatory practices, lack of accessible information, and renter and homeowner issues.

Communities' rights were emphasized by an Angelino

“We have the right to know what they are offering us. Now, for the pandemic, supposedly, that office had a lot of money that the government had given to help the community. And I never saw that money. I wanted to know where [that money was]. Because if I am low-income, I also have the right to [receive] a little because I am a ratepayer. I have been here for 24 years paying a bill. So, I feel that I also have the right to see if I could qualify for help even with a dollar”

Recognition Justice: work precarization and redlining structurally determine current distributional inequities



Redlining legacies entail four critical structural inequities.

- Limited investment and segregation resulted in poor-quality housing.
- Siting of infrastructure – e.g., gas plants and freeways
- These neighborhoods are more likely to be exposed to urban heat islands, extreme heat, and other climate stressors.
- The poor quality and inadequate maintenance of housing infrastructure are a result of decades of disinvestment and neglect.

One resident boldly described the systemic infrastructure neglect and lack of trust in city officials

*“There is a **sense of neglect**. In terms of the **outdated infrastructure that needs remediation**...I’m hearing **discussions about what we are going to do to fix, improve the infrastructure to make way for new**. But how are we going to **remediate the old**? And I think that's also about **building trust in the community**... Where is the **plan to remediate some of the things that currently are causing damage and have been causing damage for quite some time now**?”*

Thanks!
Q&A

Please visit us <https://cercnest.ca/>

Be part of our Community of Practice
[Register here to join the conversation](#)