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Navigating Diverse Visions of Water Justice Within Unlikely Alliances

Sophia L. Borgias

School of Public Service, Boise State University, Boise, ID, USA; sophiaborgias@boisestate.edu

Kate A. Berry

University of Nevada, Reno, NV, USA; kberry@unr.edu

ABSTRACT: The notion of water justice is increasingly invoked by both scholars and activists working to address issues of inequity in water governance. However, water justice means different things to different people, which can present challenges when building alliances among diverse actors. In this paper, we examine these dynamics in the context of unlikely alliances formed among environmental, ranching, and Indigenous actors in response to rural-to-urban water transfer projects in the arid Great Basin region of the western United States. Through more than 60 interviews across two cases in eastern California and eastern Nevada, we find that though these actors aligned in their opposition to projects they viewed as unjust, they had different views of what justice would look like. We discuss their diverse visions of water justice in relation to notions of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice. While many of these visions overlapped and complemented each other, others were more starkly divided by their orientation towards the current state of water governance, with some seeking to protect it and others seeking to transform it. Building alliances thus required some to strategically focus on the common ground around protecting existing water allocations and systems of accountability, while separately pursuing broader visions of repairing past harms and transforming underlying systems. This research demonstrates that understandings of water justice are diverse and dynamic and that they shape and are shaped by alliance-building. It underscores the methodological value of asking people to articulate not only how they ally against injustices but also what they would consider a just outcome and how they approach collaboration when there are different visions of water justice.

KEYWORDS: Water justice, unlikely alliances, rural-urban water conflicts, Nevada, Owens Valley, western United States

INTRODUCTION

Amid mounting concerns about water scarcity, inequity, and conflict, water justice is of growing interest to both scholars and activists. Rooted in environmental justice frameworks and movements, the concept of water justice has been invoked in relation to issues such as uneven water distribution and access, exposure to hazards, recognition of cultural identities and practices, and participation in decision-making (Castro, 2007; Groenfeldt and Schmidt, 2013; Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Hensengerth, 2017; Robison et al., 2017; Knudson et al., 2022; Ulloa et al., 2022). It is increasingly referenced as not only a topic of research but also an approach to studying issues of inequity within water governance (Neal et al., 2014; Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Boelens et al., 2018; Grafton et al., 2022). But what does water justice mean to people on the frontlines of water conflicts? How do visions of water justice differ among the diverse actors involved? What happens when there are divergent visions of water justice within alliances brought together by opposition to a shared threat or source of injustice?

This article considers these questions and invites further study of how people envision water justice and what role those visions play in efforts to build alliances and social movements in response to water conflicts. We use the term 'visions' here in the sense of images of the future that people hope to bring to fruition. We are particularly interested in how visions of water justice shape and are shaped by collaboration among actors with diverse backgrounds and interests, sometimes called unlikely alliances or strange bedfellow coalitions (Grossman, 2017; Hillis et al., 2020; Bosworth, 2022; Grosse, 2022).

We examine two cases in which environmental, ranching, and Indigenous actors have formed unlikely alliances in resistance to large rural-to-urban water transfers in the arid Great Basin region of the United States. One, often referenced as a quintessential history of water *in*justice in the western U.S., is the more than century-long conflict over Los Angeles's diversions of water from the Owens and Mono basins in eastern California (Kahrl, 1983; Reisner, 1986; Borgias, 2024a, 2024b). The other is the case of the thirty-year struggle that in 2020 finally defeated a proposal to extract groundwater from rural eastern Nevada and transport it to the Las Vegas area via pipeline (Seigel, 2020; Whear, 2022). We share findings from more than 60 interviews with the various actors involved in these struggles, taking a relational approach that considers comparisons and connections between these cases within a regional context, as well as their broader relevance to other struggles for water justice.

We find that, while these diverse actors found common ground in fighting *in*justice, they did not all share the same vision of what a *just* outcome would look like. We discuss the broad range of visions of water justice in relation to notions of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice. While many visions were multi-faceted and incorporated elements of several different types of justice, others were more starkly divided by their orientation toward the status quo, with some seeking to protect the status quo and others seeking to transform it. Still, participants expressed a willingness to 'move together' in the direction of justice, even if individuals had different end points in that journey. Ultimately, we argue that this process of moving together shapes – and is in turn shaped by – the way that people understand, articulate, and pursue water justice.

CONCEPTUALISING WATER JUSTICE

A growing number of researchers have been invested in understanding, theorising, and communicating struggles for water justice in recent years (Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Boelens et al., 2018; Sultana, 2018; Boelens et al., 2022; Knudson et al., 2022). This work complements and builds upon scholarship on water equity (Perreault, 2014; Boelens et al., 2017; Wilder and Ingram, 2018) and ethics (Groenfeldt and Schmidt, 2013). Its explicitly values-oriented approach differentiates it from more apolitical perspectives on water governance that centre around water management, institutions, and sustainability (Castro, 2007; Groenfeldt and Schmidt, 2013; Perreault, 2014; Wilder and Ingram, 2018). The term 'water justice' is often used broadly to reference the topical focus of this research, as well as to distinguish its approach to studying water issues.

But what does water justice actually mean in theory and in practice? A few scholars have taken up this question, emphasising that water justice is multifaceted and that it has no single universal meaning, such that it is best approached in a relational, context-specific manner that attends to how it is actualised through social practice (Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014; Harris et al., 2017; Boelens et al., 2018; Sultana, 2018; Mills-Novoa et al., 2022; Ulloa et al., 2022). This approach allows for recognising the diversity and plurality of views about water (in)justice (Zwarteveen and Boelens, 2014). In this context, scholars have called for more empirical research into "how people on-the-ground experience and define water justice" and how they "design alternative hydrosocial orders" (Boelens et al., 2018: 22-23).

We contribute to this line of inquiry by asking diverse actors how they envision water justice in the context of specific rural-urban water conflicts. In prompting individuals to not only articulate what they are fighting against but also what they are ultimately fighting *for*, we recognise a rich opportunity to illuminate the way that people envision and pursue change. Struggles for water justice bring diverse

actors into conversation about where water belongs, what should be done with it, and who should have the power to decide (Crow et al., 2017). Empirical research into the range of different visions can offer important insights into the process of envisioning 'new water regimes', building alternative approaches to water management, and reshaping hydrosocial relations (Suhardiman et al., 2017; Boelens et al., 2018; Cantor and Emel, 2018; Duarte Abadía et al., 2019).

Grounding notions of justice in the thinking and practices of those involved in these movements can make important contributions to theory building (Holifield et al., 2010; Schlosberg, 2013). As Schlosberg puts it in the context of environmental justice more broadly:

The point is that different discourses of justice, and the various experiences and articulations of injustice, inform how the concept is used, understood, articulated, and demanded in practice; the engagement with what is articulated on the ground is of crucial value to our understanding and development of the concepts we study (Schlosberg, 2013: 50).

Examining visions of water justice can also enrich understandings of how people build alliances and social movements around water and water justice (Hommes and Boelens, 2017; Roa-Garcia, 2017; Verzijl et al., 2017; Duarte Abadía et al., 2019; Grafton et al., 2022). This is a fruitful area for water justice scholars to respond to calls for more research into the role of social movements in water governance (c.f. Perreault, 2008; Boelens et al., 2010; Borgias, 2018). It can serve to "illuminate the diverse movements, alliances, water users associations, federations, committees and networks that seek change toward equitable governance of water and toward many forms of water justice" (Crow et al., 2017: 389).

By focusing on cases of unlikely alliances in particular, we are able to examine the way that people navigate diverse and plural visions of water justice within a movement. Unlikely alliances among environmental, ranching, and Indigenous actors are playing an increasingly prominent role in water and environmental governance in the American West (Grossman, 2017; Hillis et al., 2020; Grosse, 2022). They have formed not only around water transfers to cities, as in the cases we examine here, but also the water resource impacts of mines, military bases, oil pipelines, and other industries (Grossman, 2017; Bosworth, 2022). Bringing together actors with diverse backgrounds and interests, these alliances offer a unique opportunity to examine how actors reckon with differences among their visions of water justice as they work toward individual and collective goals. Examining these dynamics requires attending to the different levels of power and privilege held by these actors within existing legal, political, and cultural systems (Berry and Jackson, 2018; Bosworth, 2022) and recognising the tensions and synergies that surround visions for change.

Differences among visions of water justice can be understood in relation to existing concepts of justice drawn from legal, philosophical, and geographic scholarship, as well as the environmental justice movement more broadly. Numerous frameworks for conceptualising justice can be found within the water justice literature (Boelens et al., 2018; Knudson et al., 2022), as well as the energy justice literature (Jenkins et al., 2016), environmental justice literature (Liboiron et al., 2023), and climate justice literature (Mills-Novoa et al., 2022; Heikkinen, 2024). Three types of justice are often identified: distributive justice, procedural justice, and recognitional justice. We briefly discuss the meaning of these three types of justice, and then suggest the utility of also considering restorative justice and transformative justice alongside them.

'Distributive justice' refers to the equitable distribution of benefits and impacts, which, applied to water, often centres around questions of water allocation – who gets what water and where – as well as who benefits and who bears the costs, impacts, or hazards associated with it (Knudson et al., 2022). In considering who benefits and who bears the costs, populations are typically distinguished by race, indigeneity, location, occupation, socio-economic class, gender, age, and other social stratifications related to power and privilege (Liboiron et al., 2023). In some cases, distributive justice includes water allocation not only for people but also for non-humans, such as ecological riverine entities, and includes the impacts on non-humans as well as humans (Boelens et al., 2018).

'Procedural justice' shifts attention to the process by which decisions are made, hinging upon ideas of fairness, equity, transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making about water (Knudson et al., 2022). Procedural justice often "manifests as a call for equitable procedures that engage all participants in nondiscriminatory ways", which includes the ability to mobilise local knowledge (Jenkins et al., 2016: 178). This type of justice also extends to institutional representation and having bargaining powers in the development and enforcement of laws and regulations (Jenkins et al., 2016; Liboiron et al., 2023).

'Recognitional justice' emphasises the importance of acknowledging social and cultural differences, noting the undue burdens borne by marginalised communities and respecting the unique rights that stem from particular socio-cultural and political identities (Mills-Novoa et al., 2022). Recognitional justice emphasises the importance of plurality, given the diversity of normative and governance frames, and also draws attention to the significance of Indigenous sovereignty and the need for decolonial/anticolonial approaches to justice. Recognitional justice is closely related to cultural justice (Boelens et al., 2022) and elements of Indigenous environmental justice (Liboiron et al., 2023).

'Restorative justice' and 'transformative justice' are two additional types of justice that emerge primarily from the environmental justice movement and that we suggest merit more attention within water justice scholarship and activism. 'Restorative justice' (cf. Forsyth et al., 2021) focuses on repairing harms and impacts and restoring relationships, which, extended to the areas of water and environmental justice, requires attending to the needs of the environment and of non-human entities as well as those of diverse human communities. This aligns with Ulloa's (2020) notion of relational water justice, which involves rethinking and restoring relationships within and between communities and water. Notably, we understand restorative justice to differ from distributive and procedural justice in the sense that it involves repairing an injustice that has already taken place, as opposed to prescribing an alternative process to avoid injustice.

'Transformative justice' (cf. Rodeiro, 2020) also involves addressing existing harms and inequities, but on a much larger scale, seeking to dismantle or fundamentally reshape the systems and power structures understood to produce injustice. While a restorative justice approach centres on repairing harms caused by a particular instance of injustice, transformative justice takes aim at the root causes of that harm and others like it. It involves transforming unjust political, economic, and social systems and practices. In this regard, transformative justice is closely related to critical environmental justice (Pellow, 2017), as well as decolonial (Temper, 2018; Alvarez and Coolsaet, 2020), anticapitalist (Faber et al., 2021), and abolitionist environmental justice (Pulido and De Lara, 2018; Thompson, 2023), which are all transformative approaches focused on changing a particular system or set of systems producing injustice. In relation to water, these systems may include water law, over-extraction and depletion of water bodies, and the settler colonial worldviews and institutions in which these systems and practices are embedded.

There is rich potential to apply these concepts of restorative and transformative justice to water justice studies, considering the distinctive complexities of water's material properties, cultural and spiritual meanings, and connections to racialised power relations. The notion of transformative justice, in particular, articulates well with discussion of structural injustice in water governance (Fioret, 2023) and movements toward transformative water relations (Neville and Coulthard, 2019), including "new water justice movements" (Boelens et al., 2022) and the 'water back' movement led by Indigenous scholars and activists (Leonard et al., 2023). As we will show, it also brings into stark relief the differences between visions of water justice that hinge upon protecting the status quo and those that are set on transforming it.

Each of the types of justice that we have discussed here – distributive, procedural, recognitional, restorative, and transformative justice – offers a lens onto different ways of understanding and pursuing water justice. In what follows, we utilise these concepts as a rough framework for analysing diverse visions of water justice within unlikely alliances formed in response to two rural-urban water conflicts in

the Great Basin. In particular, we focus on ideas of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice, because these are closely aligned with the visions of water justice that we heard articulated by participants in our study. In regard to recognitional justice, we find that visions of rights being recognised and respected tend to overlap with procedural, restorative, or transformative justice, depending on whether they were looking for that justice within or beyond existing systems and institutions. Thus, we discuss recognitional justice in relation to these other types of justice, rather than as its own separate category (though, in other cases, it may be relevant to elevate it as such). In the next section, we discuss the research design and grounded theory approach that informed our analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN

We take a relational approach to examining two cases of resistance to rural-to-urban water transfers in the arid Great Basin region of the United States. The first is the ongoing conflict over the Los Angeles Aqueduct, which was built in 1913 to divert the Owens River from rural eastern California, extended into the Mono Basin in 1940, and expanded again in 1970 to accommodate increased groundwater extraction from the Owens Basin (Kahrl, 1983; Reisner, 1986; Walton, 1993; Borgias, 2024a, 2024b). The second is the 30-year conflict over a proposal by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) to extract groundwater from rural eastern Nevada and pipe it south to the Las Vegas area (Kiriscioglu et al., 2013; Whear, 2015, 2022; Welsh and Endter-Wada, 2017), which was successfully defeated in 2020 (Seigel, 2020). As can be seen in Figure 1 and Table 1 below, the water transfers are fairly similar in scope and design, but were proposed and contested within different social, regulatory, and environmental contexts.

In both cases, unlikely alliances of ranchers, environmentalists, Indigenous activists, and others formed to oppose water transfers, but they did so in different contexts and with very different outcomes. In the Nevada case, an alliance was formed to oppose SNWA's Groundwater Development Project, with organisations like the Central Nevada Regional Water Authority and the Great Basin Water Network building upon relationships formed in an earlier struggle against the MX Missile Project. We conducted interviews in the year after SNWA abandoned the water transfer project, as participants were reflecting back on what had worked and on what remained to be done to prevent similar threats in the future.

Meanwhile, in the California case, participants were grappling with the latest developments in a long history of conflict with the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) over its extraction and export of water via the Los Angeles Aqueduct System. Many had been involved in longstanding struggles to restrict groundwater pumping, restore damaged ecosystems, and settle tribal water rights left unresolved in its wake. However, our interviews were largely focused on the recent formation of unlikely alliances opposing a proposal by the city to halt water deliveries to ranch leases sustaining some of the only remaining meadow habitat in the region. Thus, while most were focused on alliance-building around this new threat, many were also concerned about more long-standing impacts and injustices.

Examining the two cases in relation to one another provides an opportunity to consider both the place-based nuances and the broader dimensions of water justice. It also allows us to consider how people understand water justice both within and beyond resistance to a particular project. Finally, it allows us to also capture the way that the two cases have been in conversation with each other, with the history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct informing the resistance to the SNWA project and the success of the alliances in Eastern Nevada in turn inspiring stronger alliances in Eastern California.

Figure 1. *Left*: Map of the Los Angeles Aqueduct System adapted from Aqueduct Futures (Lehrman, 2018) under CC NC SA. *Right*: SNWA’s proposed Groundwater Development Project (SNWA).

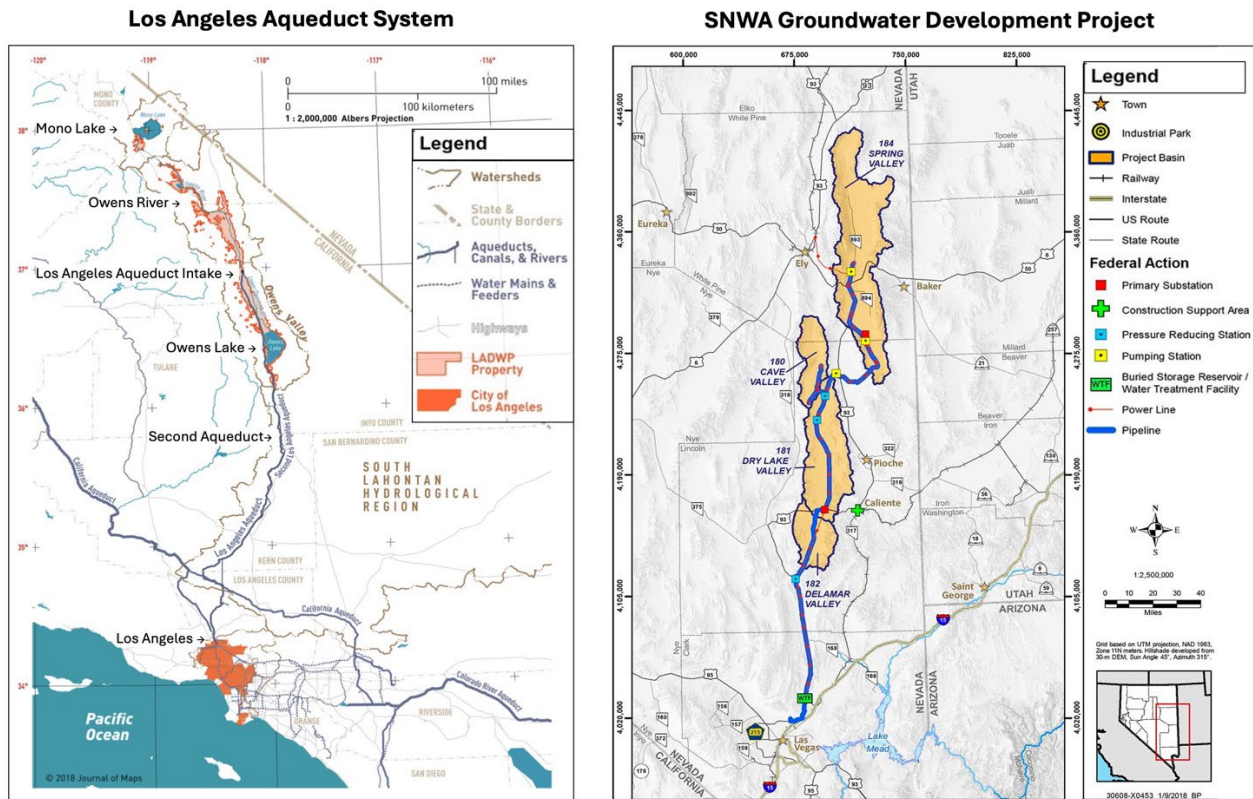


Table 1. Case studies.

	California	Nevada
Water transfer	Los Angeles Aqueduct System	Groundwater Development Project
Status	Operational since 1913 in Owens; extended to Mono in 1940; expanded with a second aqueduct in 1970	Proposed in 1989; withdrawn in 2020
Developer	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)	Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA)
Origin of water	Owens and Mono basins <i>Nüümü/Newe</i> (Paiute-Shoshone) territory	Snake Valley, Spring Valley, Cave Valley, Dry Lake Valley, Delamar Valley, and Coyote Spring Valley <i>Newe</i> (Western Shoshone) territory
Destination of water	Los Angeles, CA	Las Vegas, NV, and surrounding water districts
Distance	338 miles	300 miles
Water rights/ exports	Annual exports (of surface water and groundwater) averaged 464,000 acre-feet from 1970-1989 and then dropped to an average of 249,000 acre-feet since 1990 following environmental lawsuits (LADWP 2022, Fig. 1.13)	Rights to extract 83,988 acre-feet of groundwater per year from Spring, Cave, Dry Lake, and Delamar approved in 2012 (later appealed and denied)

Methods

We used a mix of qualitative methods in this study, informed by iterative feedback and input from community partners and participants. We started by getting feedback about the design of the project and obtaining review and approval from six different tribal governments. Data collection took place from October 2020 through August 2021. Our methods included document review, participant observation of virtual public meetings and events, 65 semi-structured interviews, and two focus groups. Interviews and focus groups were conducted remotely via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2. Interviews.

Case	Number and timing of interviews	Interviewees
Nevada (N#)	Total: 31 All in 2020-2021	14 environmental/conservation organisation members 7 tribal members or staff of Goshute, Ely, and Duckwater Tribes 6 ranchers 4 state or county representatives
California (C#)	Total: 34 28 in 2020-2021 6 in 2018-2020 ¹	14 environmental/conservation organisation members 12 tribal members or staff of Bishop, Big Pine, and Lone Pine Tribes 4 ranchers 4 county representatives

The primary source of data for this article was the semi-structured interviews that the first author conducted with a range of actors, including environmentalists, tribal leaders and Indigenous activists, ranchers, and local government officials (see Table 2). The interviews focused on how these actors got involved in resisting large water transfer projects, how they came together and found common ground with one another, and how they have understood these relationships of alliance and alignment over time. Of particular relevance for this paper were the following interview questions: "What would constitute justice on this issue?" and "Did the other people and organisations opposing the transfer share your concerns and vision for justice? Or how were they different?"

Interview responses were transcribed and uploaded alongside other textual data into Quirkos, a software program that facilitates collaboration on qualitative analysis. The transcripts were anonymised and are referenced in the text with a code, referencing the case with a C for California or N for Nevada, followed by a number referencing the order in which they were conducted chronologically (i.e. Interview N2). We used a grounded theory approach to analyse narrative data by coding it to key themes regarding water justice and alliance-building.

In regard to visions of justice, themes that emerged included reduced water extraction and urban sustainability, participation and fair process, protection of landscapes and livelihoods, restoration and reparation, and structural reform. Many of these aligned clearly with ideas of distributive, procedural, and restorative justice. Others, such as 'protection of landscapes and livelihoods' and 'structural reform',

¹ These were part of a larger set of interviews conducted by the first author during doctoral research about conflicts over the Los Angeles Aqueduct. We got consent from participants to include these six in this study because they involved preliminary questions about alliance-building and visions of water justice that helped inform the design of this project.

included a wide array of views that were re-examined and reorganised in relation to these various types of justice, adding the category of transformative justice to capture the visions of systemic change.

We discussed these initial findings with participants in a focus group conducted over Zoom in August 2021, as well as an in-person presentation and discussion at the Great Basin Water Justice Summit in August 2022. These conversations helped shed additional light on what participants make of the diverse visions of water justice, as well as how their perceptions inform their efforts to build and sustain alliances. We discuss these findings in the next section, first introducing some context for the discussions of visions of water justice, then describing the visions that aligned with the four types of justice, and finally discussing how they inform alliance-building.

DIVERSE VISIONS OF WATER JUSTICE

Many of the participants in this study had been fighting injustice for decades, so they were well practiced at explaining what they were *against*, presenting a long list of the negative impacts of inter-basin water transfers on rural landscapes and livelihoods. But questions about what they were fighting *for* – what water justice would look like – gave many of them pause. Several participants noted that the daily grind of the fight had left little opportunity to discuss or envision justice.

One participant in Nevada explained, "There was always something going on (...), so it was very hard for us to focus on what is a victory" (Interview N15). Similarly, a participant in California said, "Environmental groups have been kind of pigeonholed into just being adversaries and shutting down projects or, you know, kind of more like watchdog groups. (...) You need someone to paint a vision where things change" (Interview C22). Another responded, "That is the question that needs to be asked that is often forgotten. (...) it's not what we're here simply to be against. We need to have the imagination – the pictures, the dreams, the actions, the prayers – around what we're for" (Interview C21). Given the time to reflect, participants began to articulate visions of water justice and discuss their role in building unlikely alliances.

Through the course of the interviews and focus groups, we heard many different visions of water justice, each rooted in individuals' unique understandings of the current state of water governance, the threats posed by rural-urban water transfers, and the possibilities for change. We discuss these visions of water justice in relation to notions of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice, as outlined in the conceptual framework and research design sections. Table 3 provides basic definitions of these different types of justice, shows how they might be considered in water conflicts, and provides examples of how they were reflected in the visions of water justice articulated by participants in this study.

These types of justice resonated with the different ways of thinking about water justice that we heard in interviews. However, we do not mean to imply that they are a complete or universal set, nor that they are necessarily mutually exclusive. Individuals' visions of water justice often incorporated elements of various types of justice and the boundaries among them could be quite blurry. In what follows, we discuss visions of water justice that align with each type of justice listed above, followed by what they mean for building alliances in water conflicts.

Distributive justice

Notions of distributive justice featured prominently in the visions of water justice described by participants. This came as no surprise, since we were asking about water justice in the context of conflicts over water transfer projects designed to redistribute water from rural to urban areas. The most common visions of water justice had to do with preventing this redistribution of water (and its associated benefits and impacts) from occurring. The visions centred on leaving water in its basin of origin and protecting rural landscapes and livelihoods from the impacts posed by water transfers.

Table 3. Types of justice and their application to water conflicts and visions of water justice.

Type of justice	Meaning	Consideration in water conflicts	Visions of water justice articulated by participants
Distributive	Distributing benefits and impacts equitably	Who gets what water, where, and for what purpose?	Protection of existing landscapes and livelihoods from new impacts of water extraction and export Water remaining in its basin of origin and cities finding alternative sources
Procedural	Using equitable, transparent, and accountable processes	Who decides, and how are they held accountable?	Meaningful involvement of rural and Indigenous communities in equitable decision-making Fulfilment of legal obligations and commitments
Restorative	Repairing harms and restoring relationships	How will impacts/harms be addressed?	Restoration and reparation to address impacts to water, ecosystems, and communities
Transformative	Transforming unjust systems and power structures	How can hydrosocial systems be re-imagined and re-constructed?	Adoption of different approaches to distribution, process, and restoration, seeking to avoid reproducing injustice within and beyond the local area

In the Nevada case, visions of distributive water justice generally centred on defeating SNWA's water transfer project, such that the proposed redistribution of water would not take place. As one participant put it, "A just outcome would be that they don't start the pipeline" (Interview N8). That outcome would support visions of maintaining existing uses and benefits, with one participant explaining, "I'd like to see a lot of what we already have still here" (Interview N6). It would also affirm the idea that, as one participant put it, "water should belong to the basin where it originates and shouldn't be transferred" (Interview N7). Some participants explained that they came to a clearer understanding of what it would mean to truly defeat the project over the course of their decades-long resistance to it. They ultimately arrived at the collective understanding that 'victory', as referenced in the introduction to this section, meant not only having the water rights permits and rights of way denied, but also having SNWA withdraw their water rights applications, as it finally did in 2020.

In the California case, the Los Angeles Aqueduct System has been in operation for more than a century, transferring water south to the city. So, while there is no singular pipeline proposal to defeat, there has been ongoing resistance to Los Angeles's various efforts to expand this system and increase their exports from the region. From the 1970s to the early 2000s, there were protracted legal battles over the construction of the second aqueduct, intensification of groundwater pumping in Owens Valley, dropping lake levels at Mono Lake, and dust emissions off the dry bed of Owens Lake. These struggles over distributive justice produced various legal decisions and settlement agreements that forced Los Angeles to leave more water for rural communities and ecosystems. With those agreements in place, those struggles largely shifted into the arena of procedural justice, as discussed in the next section. However, new questions of distributive justice continue to emerge.

The most recent distributive issue on the minds of many participants was Los Angeles's announcement in 2018 that it would no longer provide irrigation water to 6000 acres of pastureland that it has leased to ranchers in Long Valley for most of a century. This sparked an uproar from local communities and inspired the formation of the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition. Much like in the Nevada case, the shared vision of water justice was to prevent this redistribution of water from taking place. One rancher simply stated, "I'd like to maintain the status quo" (Interview C13). Other coalition members sought a commitment to a baseline allocation to support not only the ranchers but also the sage grouse species and the broader ecosystem. One participant emphasised the need for clarity on these distributive questions so that "everybody understands what the water's going to be" (Interview C28).

While most of the visions of distributive water justice in both cases focused on protecting rural areas, some incorporated urban interests as well, recognising that the two are interdependent and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Many participants reflected on the need to support urban water conservation measures to reduce the need for cities to import water from rural areas. However, several framed this as supporting water justice for urban populations as well as rural ones. One noted that they aimed to "help L.A. recognise that their dependence on Eastern Sierra water is not a very good way to plan for the future for their people" (Interview C23). Another described efforts to "bring the body politic in Nevada to realise that this was a destructive project that wasn't going to pan out well for the proponents or for the people in Las Vegas and the surrounding communities in Clark County – that there had to be a better way to secure their water future" (Interview N2). And while much of this was pragmatic, some explained that it also had to do with empathy. One participant in California reflected, "There's only justice if the people in L.A. have water – we have to have empathy too, just like we want them to have empathy for us" (Interview C11).

Viewed together, these visions of distributive water justice highlight several important insights. First, issues of distributive justice are often the most immediate concern for people involved in fighting rural-to-urban water transfer projects, since these projects are by nature about redistribution of water and its benefits. Second, unlikely allies find fertile common ground in visions of distributive justice that involve protecting rural areas from new impacts associated with these water transfers. And finally, although distributive water justice may mean maintaining the status quo of water availability for rural areas, this often requires major changes to the status quo in urban areas as they are pushed to meet their needs without importing water.

Procedural justice

Ideas of procedural justice were also common in participants' visions of water justice. These visions often built upon the visions of distributive justice discussed in the previous section but shifted focus to the processes through which decisions are made about the (re)allocation of water and its associated benefits and impacts. In particular, they emphasised the importance of representation and respect for rural and Indigenous communities, as well as the need for full accountability to existing laws and legal agreements.

In the Nevada case, participants' visions of water justice often centred on having transparent decision-making processes in which rural and Indigenous communities have meaningful opportunities to participate and make their voices heard. In articulating these visions of procedural justice, many individuals noted the influence of messaging from the earlier fight against the MX Missile project, with its slogans like "rural Nevada has a right to a future" and "rural Nevada should have a voice in decisions that affect it". As one participant noted in regard to the SNWA project, "This is not just about water, but also about the smaller towns having a voice – showing that everyone in Nevada has equal rights in Nevada law and decision-making" (Interview N28).

By connecting the conflict over SNWA's proposed water transfer to these same issues of procedural justice – of representation, self-determination, and due process – opposition leaders galvanised a broad-based alliance of people and organisations that were willing to formally protest the water rights filings in

the early 1990s. And, when the project was renewed in the early 2000s after a period of dormancy, many of these same actors rallied around ensuring that the water rights hearings would be reopened. One of the participants who was involved in the legal case stated:

I think it's incredibly important for a process like this to be as open as possible and for as many potentially affected or concerned members of the public, or you know Indian tribes, local city councils, or county commissions or whatever, irrigation districts or companies (...) to be able to participate (Interview N16).

Some study participants in Nevada also emphasised procedural justice from the standpoint of public input and accountability throughout the review of the project's Environmental Impact Assessment and mitigation plans, noting:

If a proponent like SNWA can go forward with a project like this and basically punt all serious consideration of how they'll deal with the effects of it to some undetermined time in the future under some system that's going to be defined as they go along, with no public scrutiny and no public input and no accountability, that's profoundly dangerous (Interview N16).

Another element of procedural water justice that various participants emphasised was the importance of meaningful consultation and consent. One stated, "There needs to be prior and informed equitable consent" (Interview N1), and another contrasted this to SNWA's actions: "They just take it without asking – no consultation or discussion" (Interview N24). This procedural concern was particularly prevalent among tribal officials, whose visions included outside entities like SNWA upholding tribal consultation laws and international standards for obtaining consent from sovereign Indigenous nations. Others put it in broader moral terms: "It's almost immoral for a city to come in and just decide that they're going to take rural water, or anybody's water!" (Interview N7).

In the California case, there were similar procedural justice concerns about process and consultation. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the related AB-52 statute have been critical legal tools to ensure that Los Angeles assesses environmental impacts and conducts tribal consultations ahead of implementing new projects. However, participants noted that CEQA is "an accountability statute more than anything" (Interview C8) and only requires studying and consulting about, but not necessarily avoiding, impacts. For example, Mono County and the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition won a lawsuit requiring Los Angeles to prepare an environmental impact report prior to making any changes to the provision of water. However, the lawsuit does not ensure that those changes will not take place, leaving ranchers and local communities plagued by uncertainty. Thus, the coalition is also calling for procedural justice by asking Los Angeles to provide more transparency and accountability in future water allocations by agreeing to a management plan. One rancher emphasised that this would provide a more reliable process to "at least get a forecast of what [irrigation allocation] we're going to get" (Interview C10). These perspectives demonstrate some of the ways that distributive and procedural justice can be intertwined and thus are often pursued simultaneously.

Many of the participants involved in the Keep Long Valley Green Coalition had also been involved in longstanding struggles for procedural justice in other parts of the region. Environmental lawsuits during the 1970s and '80s resulted in legal settlements and management agreements. These included Inyo County's 1991 Long Term Water Agreement (LTWA) with Los Angeles, which restricted groundwater pumping in Owens Valley, and a 1994 decision by the State Water Resources Control Board, which conditioned Los Angeles's diversions of water from the Mono Basin on meeting target lake levels at Mono Lake. However, ensuring that Los Angeles actually upholds and implements these agreements has become a primary challenge for water activists, with organisations like the Mono Lake Committee, the Sierra Club, and the Owens Valley Committee (OVC) playing a critical vigilance role, as exemplified by OVC's slogan "*We watch the water*".

Ideas of procedural justice were often at the core of the visions of water justice held by these participants. For example, one said water justice would be "that they [Los Angeles] complete their

mitigation projects and produce the type of habitat that was envisioned by the authors of the 1991 EIR [Environmental Impact Report for the LTWA] [and] that they let Mono Lake rise to the level stated in the 1994 settlement agreement" (Interview C2). Another said of the LTWA, "If they would only implement it, it would work! There would be no more continued damage" (Interview C5). Many framed meeting the goals of the existing legal requirements as a baseline measure of water justice, with one participant saying, "If they could at least live up to that, then that may be all of the justice that we're going to be able to achieve, but we're not even there yet" (Interview C11) and another stating, "I mean, it sounds like really low standards – but that would be huge!" (Interview C7).

Looking across the two cases, we can see how visions of procedural water justice are often closely tied to issues of distributive justice but are distinguished by their focus on questions of process – of *how* decisions are made about the distribution of water. Among Indigenous communities, visions of procedural justice are also often intertwined with visions of recognitional justice, as proper process and protocol stems from the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. Yet, procedural justice's basic premise of respect and accountability also provides ample space for common ground with unlikely allies, all of whom share an interest in due process, equitable participation, full implementation of agreements, and transparency about decision-making.

Restorative justice

Ideas of restorative justice showed up in some participants' visions of water justice that centred upon repairing harms or impacts to communities and ecosystems. This was more prevalent among participants from California, where more than a century of water extraction has left many harms in its wake. By contrast, participants from Nevada were focused on preventing those sorts of harms from happening in the first place, as discussed in the distributive justice section, even using the slogan "Remember Owens Valley" as a cautionary tale about the consequences of rural-to-urban transfers (cf. Roessler, 2006). However, we did hear several participants assert visions of restorative justice in which SNWA would divest of the lands and ranching operations that it had acquired and set about "restoring everything that people sacrificed to fight the pipeline" (Interview N16).

In the California case, ideas of restorative justice were prominent among environmental and Indigenous activists, emphasising the need to not only protect what exists from *new* extraction (as discussed in the distributive justice section) but also to address and repair harms from the past. For example, one participant stated, "Maybe it is time for [LA]DWP to consider, 'Well, what are some things we can do to provide justice, given our history and the harm that has happened as a result of us coming in here?'" (Interview C15). Another described a vision of water justice that would have Los Angeles "heal the environmental damage they have done [and] give the Big Pine and Bishop Tribes the water rights to the land they traded them" (Interview C2). These two themes were emphasised by many participants in the California case, with variations on Los Angeles 1) repairing harms to ecosystems by taking less water and 2) repairing harms to Indigenous communities by returning land and water to them.

The most common vision aligned with restorative justice was one of Los Angeles reducing their groundwater pumping beyond what they have done to satisfy legal requirements. One participant described a vision of water justice in which pumping is reduced to the point that "they let the groundwater table rise to the level it once was, where alkali meadows and springs return, and then they pump in equilibrium with the run-off, so the water table doesn't fluctuate radically from year to year" (Interview C2). Quite a few participants expressed a vision of water justice in which Los Angeles does not pump any groundwater for export and only diverts surface water, essentially removing the need to use the second aqueduct constructed in 1970. One participant said, "I think that we ought to start moving forward with the message, 'Just use the first aqueduct – quit using the damn second aqueduct!'" (Interview C9). While these visions are also fundamentally about the distribution of water, they focus on the need for redistribution within the existing system in order to repair damage that has already been

done. And while some restoration has been accomplished through the procedural work described in the last section, these visions of restorative justice push beyond the scope of any of the existing laws and agreements.

For many Indigenous participants, visions of this kind were also directly tied to visions of cultural restoration. One explained:

I believe that [reducing pumping] would give us the opportunity to start having our aquifers to refill, which would obviously benefit the land and the ecology of this whole area. And you know, we'd start seeing plants coming back, things that we haven't seen in a long time. And that would be a great cultural revitalisation. (...) the culture and the environment go hand in hand (...) We need the plants, we need the resources, we need the water to do those practices. And so, I would see a lot of that coming back, which would cause a resurgence of gathering and people starting to utilise that knowledge that we once had of taking care of those medicines and those plants (Interview C27).

Many Indigenous participants described visions of water justice involving not only restoring these cultural landscapes but also returning them to the Tribes. These visions of restorative justice, again closely tied to recognitional justice, centred upon securing broader land and water rights for the Tribes as a form of reparation for Los Angeles's role in the dispossession of Indigenous communities that is "still affecting us today" (Interview C16). As described in the procedural justice section, some focused on the need for Los Angeles to finally transfer the water rights that were left out of the federal land exchange that created the Bishop, Big Pine, and Lone Pine reservations in 1939. However, others pointed to the need for more of a restorative justice approach to address the broader impacts of this exchange, such as the fact that it had not accounted for population growth and "there's not conceivably enough land for, like, even the current generation" (Interview C15). This participant explained that it would not be enough for Los Angeles to just live up to the process outlined in that agreement: "If you come at it with a framework of, like, 'Well, if we just abide by this land exchange...' (...) to me, even that starting point is not justice" (Interview C15).

This participant was not alone in suggesting that water justice would require a restorative approach that attends to the broader inequities experienced by Indigenous communities due to the legacy of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. One participant pointed out that "people got rich off of the land and the water, while (...) many of the Tribal members are living below the federal poverty line" (Interview C16). Several raised the idea of economic reparations, including the idea that Los Angeles residents could opt into paying a small tax on their water bill to support Indigenous communities in the areas from which that water was sourced. A participant explained, "I frankly think if people knew better and had the option, they would probably give \$1 of their bill to the people up here" (Interview C12). Another clarified that this kind of approach is not about profit but about giving back:

If you are extracting a resource that comes from the very calculated and planned removal of actual people from their land as a means to get access to that resource, then at the very minimum we should have a stake in that resource and we should also be profiting off that resource. And when I say profiting, it even feels disgusting to say, because Native people getting a slice of the pie of something that was taken from them is not a profit. It's not even like a revenue. It's just, like, something that's going to be used to give back to the community (Interview C15).

Restorative water justice can take many forms, as the visions included in this section demonstrate. However, whether they involved repairing harms to ecosystems, communities, or the cultural landscapes that tie them together, these visions of water justice all looked beyond the threat of new impacts to consider damage already done and what it would take to repair it. And, while most of these visions were rooted in place-based and historically embedded contexts, they were often connected to the broader visions of transformative justice that we discuss in the next section.

Transformative justice

Some participants held visions of water justice that centred on transforming dominant approaches to water management and governance, seeing these systems as the root source of injustice. These visions align with notions of transformative justice, reaching beyond the specific cases of rural-urban water transfers to consider the legal, economic, and cultural systems they emerge from. One participant described the SNWA project as being representative of "a horribly unsustainable and destructive way of approaching water resources in the West [that] isn't going to be allowed to go forward" (Interview N16). Another described it as the outcome of an economic system focused on growth and profit: "I think this is a basic story about human consumption" (Interview N23). From these viewpoints, the water transfer project is just one symptom of a broader systemic issue that must be addressed for there to be water justice.

Many Indigenous participants also articulated a need for transformative water justice but described water injustice as stemming from Western and settler colonial approaches to water governance. One Indigenous participant in California highlighted the anthropocentric and hierarchical nature of these approaches, in which humans "put themselves above everything else", when "they're really related to the other creatures that live on Planet Earth" (Interview C25). A participant in Nevada contrasted the Western worldview to their Newe worldview, which considers water "the milk of Mother Earth" (Interview N23). Another explained that it wasn't enough to defeat the SNWA project, because the underlying systems that had produced it remained in place: "Only the players have changed, but the attitude hasn't, which means the laws" (Interview N26). For these participants, water justice would require transforming water governance to reflect Indigenous values and ways of knowing, often aligned with the notion that 'water is life'.

Some participants described more specific visions for how this kind of transformative work could take place. One participant in Nevada described finding a way to recognise water rights for sacred areas, noting that this would require looking "beyond the State terminology of what water is to be used for" (Interview N31). Another in California described creating systems to "resolve environmental contentions (...) for not just the human community, but just the holistic community – nature – everything that's dependent on the water, trying to look at our Indigenous perspective of relationship" (Interview C25). Others returned to the need for transferring land and water rights back to tribes and revitalising Indigenous stewardship practices, with one participant emphasising how that would enable them to provide "a model for the world about how to reorient your relationship to water and land" (Interview C12). Many of these visions include an interest in recognitional justice but emphasise the need for transformative work to make recognitional justice possible.

In the California case, ideas of transformative water justice raise a question that has long been the topic of heated debate: Can there be water justice while Los Angeles continues to control land and water in the Owens and Mono basins? For some, the answer is a clear 'no', with one participant saying water justice would be "[LA]DWP leaving and this place getting some self-determination" (Interview C17). But others fear that if Los Angeles were to divest itself of these lands, they would be opened to development, creating new forms of impacts seen in other areas with "the crisis of humanity pushing itself into every beautiful place in the West and essentially destroying it" (Interview C9). Many participants favoured some kind of middle ground, with one stating that they preferred "a shift of the status quo, more than, like, an expulsion of that, like where [LA]DWP is out entirely" (Interview C22).

While some participants expressed doubts about the feasibility of even shifting (much less transforming) the status quo, others were adamant about the need to think big. One participant emphasised that it was important to imagine a future without the Los Angeles Aqueduct exporting vast quantities of water:

I think the history of this valley in the last hundred and fifty years has really put us at a place of sometimes only asking for crumbs (...) I think most of us are educated to think a lot of things are the way they are because

that's how they're always gonna be. I don't believe that part. Just because it's been here for one hundred years don't mean it has to be there for the next hundred years (Interview C12).

They added that having these ambitious visions of transformative change also helped shift others' visions of what they can fight for, noting that they "help people try to reach a little further and expect a little more" (Interview C12). In recent years, movements in the direction of these visions, such as land transfers to tribes in the region (Cowan, 2024), have begun to make these transformative visions seem more readily achievable. However, for some, they are still seen as controversial and potentially divisive, as we discuss in the next section.

The common thread among the visions of transformative water justice discussed in this section is the way they look beyond any one instance of injustice to the systems that produced it. They look from the local impacts to the aqueduct system that created them; from the proposed pipeline project to the model of unlimited urban growth and consumption that made it seem necessary; from the degradation of water, ecosystems, and sacred sites to the settler colonial frameworks that devalue nonhuman life. They are visions of transforming not only the specific rural-urban water conflict at hand but also preventing others like it by building alternative models of water governance. However, this can mean transforming the very systems that other allies are aiming to protect and uphold with their visions of distributive and procedural justice. In the next section, we examine how unlikely allies navigate these differences among their visions of water justice.

Allying for water justice

As shown in the above sections, unlikely alliances bring together people with diverse visions of water justice that align with notions of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice. While these each represent different ways of understanding and articulating justice, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Some participants held visions of water justice that incorporated various notions of justice, such as this one that includes elements of distributive, procedural, and restorative justice:

I would see a future where tribes have a little more share of the pie, ranchers can still exist and operate in a responsible manner, [LA]DWP still owns their lands but [does] more co-management with tribes, and they listen more to environmental groups and they're exporting a whole lot less water. That would be rad! (Interview C22).

However, in their orientation to the status quo, some visions are closer to one end or the other of the wide spectrum between protecting and transforming the current state of water governance. This can create tensions among allies, since the current state of water governance privileges some and disadvantages others. For example, the rancher's intentions "to maintain the status quo" of water allocation (Interview C13) stand in tension with those of the Indigenous activist that pointed out, "How many of the status quo years have been actually beneficial to Native people? None!" (Interview C15).

Thus, while protecting existing landscapes and livelihoods from new threats provided fertile common ground for alliance-building, it did not, on its own, constitute the full vision of water justice for everyone. However, many participants who had more transformative visions of water justice described setting them aside in order to focus on the common ground that held the alliances together. For example, one participant in Nevada described setting aside underlying concerns about the sustainability of existing land use practices:

The coalition that evolved was very careful not to touch on related issues that weren't specifically the pipeline, with the concern that the coalition could fragment. Which it could. You know, one could argue about "well, you know, should we be growing that much alfalfa out in the middle of the desert?" (Interview N1).

And another described focusing on preventing *injustice* while avoiding proposals for more systemic change:

We band together to stop bad things from happening and perpetuate the status quo, everyone all the while knowing that the status quo is kinda messed up and probably needs to be changed. But I think the coalition completely falls apart if we start pushing proactive policy (Interview N13).

Similarly, an Indigenous participant in California discussed how their vision of a return of land, water, and stewardship authority to tribes could be divisive, particularly if any of it was land or water that LADWP currently leases to non-Indigenous ranchers. Given that context, they explained that "sharing that bigger, brighter vision, at least from my perspective, is not conducive to being able to support the relationships we have" (Interview C23). They further explained that this left room for people's perspectives of water justice to shift:

It's almost because of that lack of understanding that you can walk together. And then, as you walk together, things can shift and change, and what you might have imagined in the beginning looks very different as you get to the final stages. (...) And so I think that not sharing everything in the beginning (...) it's really to be able to safeguard the relationship and help it to mature to a point that the alliance may not have recognised it could mature to when it first started walking together (Interview C23).

Quite a few participants noted that their perspectives and visions of water justice did shift over time as they allied with people who had different viewpoints. One participant in California explained that, with the "accelerated" efforts to work with Indigenous communities in recent years, it had become something they were "more interested in" (Interview C6). An environmentalist in Nevada stated that their involvement in the efforts to stop the pipeline project "definitely did shape and influence my perceptions of rural Nevadans (...) just getting to know those folks and making genuine friendships with those folks" (Interview N13). It also seemed to adjust their view of how agricultural interests fit into their notion of water justice in that "it showed me that protecting senior water rights very frequently involves protecting the environment" (Interview N13). One other mentioned that, while people had started "on opposite ends of the spectrum" on certain issues, "both sides have moved toward the centre a little bit" (Interview N8).

This kind of learning and these shifts in perspective were often cited as part of the fundamental value of building unlikely alliances beyond their strategic benefits in water conflicts. It is worth noting that, in fact, all of the participants in our study said that they thought it was important to continue to build these kinds of alliances, even while acknowledging the concerns and tensions discussed above. A few emphasised that unlikely alliances were particularly beneficial in the context of growing political polarisation. For example, one said:

I see it as an opportunity to build bridges to help to understand different perspectives. And again, I think that's kind of vital, especially in these days where things have become so polarised politically, that these coalitions are one way to sort of help to melt away some of those barriers. (...) I think people that are activists think they're always right about something and the other side is wrong. But I like to feel like I'm open enough to think, well, maybe I'm not right about everything. Or maybe there's something I learned from them also (Interview N1).

In other words, working with unlikely allies creates unique opportunities to learn about diverse visions of water justice, sometimes reshaping those visions in the process.

Taken together with the broad range of visions outlined in the earlier sections, these findings underscore that visions of water justice are not only diverse but also dynamic, and that they shape and are shaped by alliance-building – by the process of "walking together" (as participant C23 put it above). In fact, there was a notable tendency for participants to describe their work in alliances using metaphors of travel and movement. They described the process as a 'path' or a 'journey' that people are 'walking

together' toward justice, while knowing that individuals may 'stop' at different points along the way. Some described visions of distributive and procedural justice as 'steps' (Interview C17) or a 'progression' (Interview C23) toward visions of restorative and/or transformative justice. One noted that, in the meantime, "what I've been working for is something less than justice, and yet it's something that I could be proud of at the end" (Interview C23). Another stated that it was still unclear what a shared vision of justice would look like, but that they were "moving in the faith that we could figure it out as we get there" (Interview C12).

These insights resonate with Laura Pulido's reflection on environmental justice, that "maybe it is meant to be a moving target and continuously evolving as our world changes. (...) perhaps its 'unknowability' is also its virtue" (Barkan and Pulido, 2017: 37). Similarly, water justice is a concept that is dynamic and can have many meanings. Perhaps that vastness and unknowability is part of what creates space for diverse communities to unite around visions of a brighter hydrosocial future. Perhaps that space is what allows for not only collaboration but also learning among unlikely allies as they walk together toward justice.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have discussed how individuals navigate diverse visions of water justice within unlikely alliances formed in resistance to large rural-to-urban water transfers. Through analysis of interviews and focus groups, we have examined how they envision and pursue water justice, as well as how their visions of justice shape and are shaped by their participation in unlikely alliances. We found that individuals' visions of water justice were diverse and dynamic and that allying often required strategic decisions to focus on the common ground. Allies tended to share an interest in protecting existing landscapes and livelihoods from new threats, encouraging rural and Indigenous participation and upholding existing systems of accountability. Meanwhile, broader visions of repairing past harms or addressing underlying systems were understood as a source of tension.

We discussed these visions of water justice primarily in relation to notions of distributive, procedural, restorative, and transformative justice. While this framework is not meant to be universally applicable, we find it helps to distinguish different ways of thinking about water justice in relation to the current state of water governance. Visions of distributive and procedural justice tended to seek more equitable relations within existing systems of water allocation and decision-making, while restorative visions looked for justice beyond them and transformative visions sought to fundamentally reshape them.

These different ways of conceptualising justice are not mutually exclusive. There is plenty of overlap among them, and participants often articulated visions that combined elements of several. For example, one person's vision might have included protecting existing water distribution and upholding fair process but also striving to repair harms that have gone unaddressed by existing frameworks. However, others held visions of water justice that aligned more closely with one end of the spectrum or the other: protecting the status quo or transforming it.

Differences among visions of water justice can present challenges for alliance-building, since the current state of water governance benefits some while disadvantaging others. However, we found that participants in these alliances made strategic decisions to focus on the common ground, coalescing around visions of distributive and procedural justice in regard to concerns about inter-basin transfers. Meanwhile, outside of the realm of this collective action, many of these actors were also working towards broader visions of restorative or transformative water justice. This demonstrates that there can be diversity in understandings of water justice, even among actors allied in opposition to injustice. Working with unlikely allies provides opportunities for learning and for these understandings of justice to shift over time amid ongoing changes in the water conflicts and alliance-building efforts.

While our study is grounded in specific rural-urban water conflicts in the Great Basin, these findings may be broadly relevant to other water struggles that bring diverse actors together. They underscore the rich potential for more research that attends to the way that people on the frontlines of water conflicts envision and chart pathways toward water justice. They also highlight the important relationships between water justice and alliance-building. We have shown that individuals' visions of water justice inform how they build and maintain relationships, and that those relationships in turn shape the way they pursue water justice both individually and collectively. There is much insight to be gained from asking people on the ground about their visions of water justice and how they work with others to bring them to fruition.

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