Campus Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaigns

Milan Ilnyckyj

February 26, 2017

Contents

1 Research question

What factors are correlated with the success or failure of campus fossil fuel divestment (CFFD) campaigns, as defined according to three metrics? To what degree can causal claims be substantiated by examining cases?

Independent variables

Institutional characteristics Public versus private universities; policies in place regarding divestment; specific individuals or bodies empowered to make divestment choices; overall governance system; content of investment portfolio (and history of recent returns); political context; financial or other relationships with fossil fuel corporations

Institutional history Divestment precedents, both successful and unsuccessful

Campaign origin Whose initiative? Initial resources, if any, provided by outside organizations

Campaign organization Decision-making procedures, organizational structure — Are there elected positions? Does decision-making happen in an accessible forum?

Campaign strategy Whose behaviour are they trying to change, and through what broad means? Any enduring alliances with outside organizations or campaigns? To the extent it can be determined, what theory of change was the campaign initially based on? Did it shift, or was it contested while the campaign was going on?[1]

---

[1] 'Theory of change' (TOC) is a core concept in the practice and study of activism. In *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben confesses his earlier naivety about the concept, summarizing his implicit notion as: "people would read my book — and then they would change". In a sense, the foundation of 350.org can be seen as McKibben's next attempt at a more promising mechanism. At the time of their merger with U.S. climate activist group 1Sky in 2011, 350.org expressed a threefold TOC: "We will directly confront the barriers to climate progress–from Big Coal to the US Chamber of Commerce, from the cabal of corrupt politicians attacking the Clean Air Act to an administration too timid to defend it. We will empower and mobilize a grassroots army–individuals, businesses, organizations, and front-line community leaders pushing for climate solutions in the United States. We will continue our work globally to build a diverse climate movement all around the world that unites for strategic mobilizations on a scale previously unimagined." On their current website for job listings, they say: "We get how social change works. It's not just about winning campaigns — it's about changing the politics of what's possible."

Campaign tactics Persuasive versus confrontational, short-term cooperation with other groups or campaigns, media and public relations strategy

Campus activism landscape Specifically, other ongoing divestment campaigns? In particular, is a BDS campaign happening at the same time?

Timing Which other fossil fuel divestment campaigns had succeeded or failed before or during this campaign? Did any relevant changes in the political leadership of the relevant jurisdiction take place? Were economic times good or bad while the campaign was going on, both locally and nationally? What happened to fossil fuel prices during the campaign?

Student commitment Number of volunteers and organizers; frequency of meetings; total investment of time and resources

Faculty involvement When, if at all, did faculty become involved? In what capacity? To what degree did they influence the choice of strategy and tactics?

Dependent variables

Campaign success, as assessed via three metrics:

Institutional response Including public statements, the establishment and reporting of committees, and changes to investment strategies (as well as any public justification — economic, ethical, or both — for why changes were or were not made)

Influence on outside actors Including other universities, institutional investors, and decision-makers (for instance, the U of T divestment brief was used in locally-tailored form by successful campaigns at the Trinity St-Paul United Church in Toronto and the University of Glasgow)

Training and motivation of activists Status of volunteers in ongoing fossil fuel divestment campaigns, subsequent activist work done by former divestment campaigners, and changes to the theory of change of activists who have been involved in divestment

Internal assessments about success and failure by campaigns themselves — as well as their public statements — will also be considered, but accorded lesser importance.

2 Hypotheses

My hypotheses about the three dependent variables have been developed on the basis of long-running exposure to ongoing CFFD campaigns, including extensive personal involvement with the U of T campaign. It is also informed by continuous media monitoring on CFFD campaigns in Europe, North America, and elsewhere, as well as activist publications, mailing lists, and personal correspondence. The object of these hypotheses is to consider what explanatory power we can bring to bear on the experiences of campus fossil fuel divestment activists and organizers in the period between 2011 and 2017, as well as those who their campaigns have sought to influence.

H1: Institutional responses will be most readily explained by path dependence, specifically in terms of the existence and outcome of prior divestment

campaigns, and the decision-making processes targeted by activists.

This hypothesis could be contrasted with effort to explain divestment outcomes based on the specific financial circumstances of each university (including both composition of and recent performance of their endowments) or the economic conditions in the relevant jurisdiction (economic growth, unemployment, or the fossil fuel industry's share of the total economy).

Attempts at explaining variation in institutional responses on the basis of rational financial calculations are complicated because CFFD includes a financial as well as an ethical case for action.[2] If governments eventually become serious about constraining global climate change to less than 2 ° C or 1.5 ° C, they have the legislative and regulatory powers necessary to prohibit the production of most of the world's remaining fossil fuels. In that scenario, it's likely that the fossil fuel options with the lowest extraction costs and energy requirements for production that would be prioritized during an aggressive phase-out to climate safe forms of energy. Producers with exceptionally high costs and per-unit greenhouse gas emissions may be those who are most likely to find their assets stranded in such a scenario. In February 2017, Exxon Mobil "revised down its proved crude reserves by 3.3 billion barrels of oil equivalent" and "de-book[ed] the entire 3.5 billion barrels of bitumen reserves at the Kearl oil sands project in northern Alberta, operated by Imperial Oil, a Calgary-based company in which Exxon has a majority share".[3] This arguably creates massive regulatory risk for the fossil fuel industry, making it a poor investment on purely financial terms. There are also backward-looking assessments showing that the industry has underperformed markets

---

[2]See: Toronto350.org, *The Fossil Fuel Industry and the Case for Divestment: Update*, p. 77–94.

[3]Reuters, *Exxon revises down oil and gas reserves by 3.3 billion barrels*.

as a whole in recent years and decades, meaning fossil fuel divestment undertaken years ago would have been a smart financial choice.

One open question is the extent to which the strategic and tactical choices made by campaigns affect their success, as opposed to pre-existing features of the universities where they operate. The main strategic choice made by CFFD campaigns is the degree to which they emphasize persuasion as opposed to confrontation in their engagement with university officials. While the two strategies can be used together in a certain measure, campaigns must essentially either embrace the decision-making process proposed by the university and seek to encourage a positive decision through rational argument, evidence, and the development of support in various campus constituencies, or they can reject the proposed process as illegitimate and seek to pressure the university to change it. An insurgent campaign that rejects a university's process loses the ability to present itself as a reasonable source of credible information, though an approach based on cooperation risks being subtly undermined by resistant administrations or opponents with private channels of influence. Another strategic question is precisely what form of divestment to seek. A common choice, essentially recommended by 350.org is to divest from "The Carbon Underground: The World's Top 200 Companies, Ranked by the Carbon Content of their Fossil Fuel Reserves", though alternatives include calling for divestment specifically from mountaintop removal coal mining, or more broadly from institutions like banks that themselves invest in major fossil fuel projects. Some campaigns have chosen specifically or especially to target the coal industry and Canada's bitumen sands.[4] This has particular political and geographic relevance

---

[4]There has been much discussion about the appropriate terminology for this Canadian resource, with proponents generally favouring "oil sands" and opponents using "tar sands". This thesis will use the more

6

in North America as production of these fossil fuel types is concentrated in a fairly small number of political jurisdictions and plays an outsized role in their local economic makeup. Another strategic decision is what recommendation to make for divested funds: to reinvest in the stock market at large, to invest specifically in climate-safe forms of energy, to invest in on-campus energy efficiency, etc. Specific tactics, including occupation of administration buildings, may also affect campaign outcomes for institutions and organizers.

One somewhat odd feature of many CFFD campaigns is that they present themselves as demanding insurgents who are somehow able to "force" divestment, while in actuality they are in a position where they need to persuade university decision-makers that divestment is prudent and desirable. Such language may be empowering and emotionally satisfying for organizers, but risks skewing the selection of strategies and tactics away from those with the best odds of success. This distinction between persuasion and forcing also relates to the perceived audience of divestment campaigns which, in the eyes of some, may be political decision-makers or the general public rather than those empowered to make investment decisions at their school. The general aspiration to de-legitimize the fossil fuel industry (which may be served indirectly by convincing a university to divest) can also be pursued directly by ongoing campaigns, taking advantage of public attention and media interest which the campaign has created.

Maybe strategic and tactical choices make a difference in marginal cases; more confrontational tactics should be expected at schools where fossil fuel divestment is more controversial. Tensions between more and less formal approaches to decision-making have been a source of

accurate term "bitumen sands", since the substance is neither tar nor oil chemically.

contention and conflict within climate activist groups and divestment campaigns.[5,6]

The case of divestment at Université Laval in Quebec City is suggestive. While Alice-Anne Simard does write about standard campaign tactics like reaching out to student government, she has also written a remarkable account of how, two hours into their first discussion with Éric Bauce, executive vice rector in charge of sustainable development, the university committed to divestment.[7,8] This illustrates how the constellation of potential sufficient conditions for divestment is large and that initial institutional response may be a key explanatory factor in at least some cases.

H2: Some work done by campus fossil fuel divestment campaigns will be easily transferrable to comparable campaigns at other institutions, but such influence will generally be *ad hoc* rather than coordinated between activist groups.

Hadden's emphasis of the importance of brokers to the functioning of activist networks engaged in contentious forms of politics is likely applicable in the case of CFFD campaigns.[9] These brokers include paid staff of 350.org, students who move between schools, and people who volunteer with local organizations and seek to coordinate their campaigning and instruct one another in techniques including public relations and both the training and implementa-

---

[5]For an important analysis of formal versus informal decision-making systems, see: Freeman, *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*.

[6]The eclipsing of formal by informal structures of decision-making is an interesting mechanism for explaining the emergence of decision-making elites within many types of organizations. It's possible Robert Michels' iron law of oligarchy applies within some climate activist groups, as broad-based communal decision-making is supplanted by informal coordination by an elite sub-group. One dimension of Curnow's study of the U of T campaign concerned the perception of expertise accorded to some organizers but not to most. Michels, *Political Parties*.

[7]Simard, *Laval makes history with fossil fuel divestment: How did they do it?*

[8]This article also illustrates deliberate attempts to communicate and coordinate success strategies between CFFD campaigns. Simard explains that the article was written because of "many messages asking one simple question: How did we make it happen?"

[9]Hadden, *Networks in Contention: The Divisive Politics of Climate Change.*

tion necessary for non-violent direct actions like the occupation of buildings (a tactic seen in some CFFD campaigns). These are the most important nodes to try to understand between these activist networks. Whereas Hadden found Friends of the Earth to be an important source of connections between otherwise-disparate activist networks in the context of the UNFCCC climate negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009, it seems likely that 350.org is playing a similar role in CFFD activism in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. The focus on a global brokerage role is illustrated by how (as of February 2017) 350.org was seeking to hire an Africa Regional Team Leader; Arab World Senior Campaigner; Germany Campaigner; Global Organising & Campaigning Trainer; Mobilisation Strategist; Senior Digital Campaigner, Brazil and Latin America; among others.[10] The skills they are seeking are also indicative, with any prospective Mobilisation Strategist needing "[f]irst class project management skills, across international and multidisciplinary teams" and "cultural intelligence" manifested as being "truly interested in learning about different regions and able to articulate issues in a manner that bring people together to make progress".[11] 350.org also currently employs Isaac Astill as a divestment campaigner with 350 Australia; Richard Brooks as a "North America Iconic Divestment Campaigns Coordinator"; Yossi Cadan as a global senior divestment campaigner; Beta Coronel as a "US Reinvestment Coordinator"; Clémence Dubois as a France divestment campaigner; Cristina DuQue as a "Southeast U.S. Divestment Campus Network Organizer"; Shin Furuno as a Japan divestment coordinator; Ellen Gibson as a U.K. divestment network coordinator; Tine Langkamp as a Germany divestment campaigner; Katie McChesney as a U.S. divestment campaign manager; Liset

---

[10]https://350.org/jobs/
[11]https://350.org/jobs/?gh_jid=563419

Meddens as a Netherlands divestment coordinator; Ahmed Mokgopo as a "Africa Regional Divestment Campaigner"; Danielle Paffard as a U.K. divestment campaigner; Katie Rae Perfitt as a Canada divestment coordinator; and Christian Tengblad as a Sweden divestment campaigner.[12]

Given that interviews will be an important source of data, choosing research methods which will encourage the participation of brokers (and which will hopefully reward them with some useful broader perspective) will be an important part of the methodological design. This may involve engaging with them at an early stage, devoting methodological attention to questions which they identify as highly relevant, and addressing any concerns they raise.

H3: Involvement in fossil fuel divestment campaigns will have mixed results for activists, with some becoming more enthusiastic and involved and others becoming dispirited and uninterested in further involvement. Theories of change held by activists will shift from those focused on the power of rational argument (and perhaps mass actions like marches) to compel decision-makers to those focused on stakeholder and bureaucratic politics.

One variable which may help explain outcomes for activist themselves is the prevalence of interpersonal conflict within CFFD campaigns. This likely influences what groups choose to do when their petitions fail or succeed, what other organizations activists subsequently work with, and how active organizers remain overall on climate change issues. The highest degree of research subject protection will need to be maintained regarding any material deemed confidential by participants. A clear policy will be necessary regarding any instances which

---

[12]https://350.org/about/team/

I might need to report to law enforcement (such as an activists involvement in criminal activity). Part of the letter explaining the research ethics protocol to interview subjects will be a description of our policy on confidentiality in the face of lawful requests, such as a court order. I would consider any such outcome a lot more likely in the case of anti-pipeline activists, but it is worth planning for in this context as well. If interviewing subjects about acts of civil disobedience — the willful and open, non-violent violation of the law for a political or moral purpose — I will be clear that I don't want to be told about any past, planned, or possible criminal acts aside from acts of civil disobedience, potentially including property destruction, etc. As a measure to mitigate the chances any such official request is made, and protecting subjects in case any research materials are authorized by either legal of clandestine means.

The psychological state of activists seems like a variable that, if it could be ethically tracked, would reveal something about the cycle of activist action, media response, political response (including seeing populist governments appointing heads of important environmental protection organizations normally more insulated from partisan politics, and seeing long periods in which major democracies are governed by parties which are not making emission cuts a priority or who are actively promoting fossil fuel production), and the slow physical unrolling of the consequences of unchecked fossil fuel use, made emotionally salient by never-ending news about ice sheets cracking up and temperature records being set. Tzeporah Berman raises some important points about the relevance of morale to both the extent to which an individual suffers anxiety from their concerns about uncontrolled climate change and to the kind of behaviours they undertake in response:

"Often when we talk about global warming and climate change, people's default reaction is guilt. And that makes sense because ultimately it is our lifestyle and our dependence on fossil fuels that have created the problem. So people automatically think, *Oh my God, I've got to change the light bulbs, I've got to walk to work, I've got to save for a hybrid. It's my fault, it's all my fault.*

What we see in social movement theory and psychological studies is that if a problem is so big that it cannot be easily understood, or the risks are overwhelming, people will make some changes to their lifestyle but try to forget about the actual problem. You're walking to work once a week, you're using canvas bags for groceries, but the problem is getting worse. So eventually you get off your soapbox and go back to "normal" life." (emphasis in original)[13]

The note she strikes about futility is especially resonant in the context of climate change activism — you can never know a proposed bitumen sands pipeline has been stopped forever, and most campus divestment fights have involved major rejected proposals. Nonetheless, even rejected divestment proposals constitute active resistance, and when divestment has been used as a tactic in other social movements (resisting apartheid in the South African context, tobacco regulation advocacy, the arms trade, BDS, etc), the first attempt at various universities and other institutional investment was not sufficient to produce a change in policy, yet the strength of campaigns were able to grow across time as sentiment in the general population more gradually shifted.

---

[13]Berman and Leiren-Young, *This Crazy Time: Living Our Environmental Challenge.*

3   Place in the literature

First, I will summarize some of the political science literature that pertains most directly to this project, especially the social movements literature. I will then specifically discuss how the literature relates to my research question and hypotheses. The literature examined here is drawn from discussions with committee members and others within the department, the core Canadian and public politics mailing lists, branching out from initial sources to their own references, and a search of scholarly databases undertaken with the assistance of the political science librarian at Robarts. The principal databased used were WorldWide Political Science Abstracts, PAIS International, Sociological Abstracts, and FRANCIS (Humanities & Social Sciences).

3.1   Literature on divestment

In October 2011, a group in Pennsylvania called Swarthmore Mountain Justice began calling for Swarthmore College to divest from the fossil fuel industry. A website on swarthmore.edu explains:

> "The national fossil fuel divestment movement started at Swarthmore with the student group Swarthmore Mountain Justice. In 2010, a group of students traveled to West Virginia on their spring and fall breaks to learn about mountaintop removal coal mining and its effects on the communities of Appalachia. Back at Swarthmore, the students "decided on a divestment campaign as a way for us to use the power and position we have as students to move our institution's money

to stop funding practices that harm people's health and communities." The fossil
fuel divestment campaign, picked up and expanded by 350.org and others, has
become one of the best-known organized responses to climate change".[14]

350.org subsequently identified fossil fuel divestment as a promising strategy which could be
replicated in many different institutional contexts by local campaigns affiliated with but not
controlled or funded by the NGO.[15] Bill McKibben issued a stirring call to arms in Rolling
Stone in 2011, highlighting the effectiveness of divestment in the fight against South African
apartheid in the 1980s, calling for a campaign to "weaken … the fossil-fuel industry's political
standing", and explaining that humanity needs to "keep 80 percent of those [fossil fuel]
reserves locked away underground to avoid" catastrophic climate change.[16] The appeal was
broadly taken up, particularly in Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. These
campus campaigns are sometimes branded with "350", as with UofT350.org. Sometimes,
they use "fossil free" branding, as with ULaval sans fossiles.

Work by Jessica Grady-Benson and Brinda Sarathy speaks to many of the concerns of this
project in a U.S. context. With a methodology combining participant observation with sur-
veys and interviews, they found that universities with smaller endowments and "institutional
values of environmental sustainability and social justice" were more likely to divest, that con-
cern about financial responsibility and effectiveness are emphasized in many administration
arguments against divestment.[17] They also found that divestment campaign participants de-

---

[14]swarthmore.edu, *Divestment Debates*.
[15]See: Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, p. 353–8.
[16]McKibben, *Global Warming's Terrifying New Math*.
[17]Grady-Benson and Sarathy, "Fossil fuel divestment in US higher education: student-led organising for climate justice", p. 673.

velop a long-term commitment to organizing and were encouraged by their involvement to move beyond "individualised sustainability efforts" and into collective political action which focuses on climate change as a social justice issue.[18]

There is some scholarly literature about both historical divestment campaigns targeting things like apartheid in South Africa and ongoing non-fossil divestment proposals like the BDS campaign targeting Israel. [TK — historical accounts] The BDS campaign contrasts most sharply with CFFD campaigns in terms of the visibility of opposition. While fossil fuel divestment opponents have generally used private channels to try to influence university decision-makers, those opposing BDS have been much more willing to present a public argument and lobby openly.

It's important to interpret campus fossil fuel divestment within the broader climate change divestment movement. In early May 2017, 350.org is helping to coordinate efforts in Australia and New Zealand to encourage a major bank to divest; trying to encourage investors in Japan, China and South Korea to divest; pressuring European universities, cities, churches, pension funds, and museums (including the Louvre and the Nobel Foundation); supporting vigils for climate change victims to encourage divestment in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay; and pushing for the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University, along with the city of Cape Town to divest. [TK — Cite as 2017-02-22 email from Jenny Zapata López]

There is also a broad literature on contemporary environmentalism, tactics and strategy, and alliances with other causes. For instance, in a short case study on the Tar Sands

---

[18]Grady-Benson and Sarathy, "Fossil fuel divestment in US higher education: student-led organising for climate justice", p. 667.

Blockade campaign to stop construction of the Keystone XL pipeline in Texas, Will Wooten discusses how the pipeline activists coordinated with groups like Occupy Wall Street and YourAnonNews and claims:

> "To reach such a variety of groups and concerns we connected our fight with theirs, talking about their issues as well as our own. Our fight for climate justice is tied with racial justice, with environmental justice, with patriarchy and class struggle. This is the larger story we are telling and social media is a megaphone we use to connect the dots." [CITE]

While they have contemporary expression, these ideas are not new. In a speech with a surprising degree of relevance to the fossil fuel divestment movement, Martin Luther King Jr. emphasized the need for an "international coalition of socially aware forces" able to "form a solid, united movement, non-violently conceived and carried through, so that pressure can be brought to bear on capital and government power structures concerned, from both sides of the problem at once".[19] King goes on to discuss efforts to coordinate an economic embargo campaign against the apartheid government of South Africa. Perhaps the most fundamental tension and axis of disagreement in contemporary environmental and climate change activism is whether each movement can succeed as a reform movement, as a radical movement, as both, or neither. Groups engaged in environmentalist activity must therefore find ways to mediate between activists who disagree on these questions, whether by fragmenting and requiring a particular perspective from their members or by 'agreeing to disagree' while pursuing commonly-desirable objectives.

---

[19]King, "Non-violence and Social Change", p. 207.

3.2 Social movements

The principle literature which can be drawn upon to better understand the fossil fuel divestment movement — and where analysis of divestment can most plausibly make a theoretical contribution — is in the study of social movements. Many previous social movements have relevance for understanding what is happening in response to climate change today. Social movements are broadly defined by Manuel Castells as: "purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society".[20] Alternatively, in his 1908 Nobel Prize lecture, Rudolf Eucken described how:

> "The social movement, too, reveals man as not entirely limited by a given order, but as a being that perceives and judges a given situation as is confident that it can change it essentially by its own efforts."[21]

William Gamson calls social movements "one product of social disorganization" and "symptoms of a social system in trouble".[22,23] Social movements are connected both historically and theoretically with the question of how large-scale social and political change occurs, whether voluntary human actions can induce it, and what factors contribute to whether one group or another achieves its aims.

Peter Dauvergne emphasizes the diversity of environmentalism as a social movement:

> "Environmentalism will always be a "movement of movements," with a great diversity of values and visions surfacing out of a turbulent sea of informal groupings

---

[20]Smith, *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada, Second Edition*, p. xix.
[21]White, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution*, p. 53.
[22]Ibid., p. 53.
[23]See also: Goldstone, "The weakness of organization: A new look at Gamson's The Strategy of Social Protest".

and formal organizations."[24]

Specifically, he emphasizes disagreements about the appropriate role for markets; whether technology can solve environmental problems; the desirability of economic growth; the plausibility of eco-consumerism and corporate social responsibility as solutions; pragmatic versus radical theories of change; and different conceptualizations of the environment as a necessary support for humanity or as something with inherent value. A common theme in environmentalist organizations has been the emergence of disagreeing factions, leading to splits and the emergence of confrontational groups like the Earthforce Environmental Society in 1977 (renamed the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society) and Earth First! in 1979.[25,26] As Dauvergne notes, the phrase "movement of movements" ties environmentalism to "global resistance to capitalism and globalization", highlighting the complex ways in which the analysis and policy preferences of those in overlapping movements interact.[27] In earlier work with Jennifer Clapp, he developed a broad typology of environmentalists as market liberals, institutionalists, social greens, and bioenvironmentalists.[28,29] The relationship between environmentalism and corporate capitalism is also a major subject of contention in non-academic writing about environmentalism and political change. Naomi Klein devotes a significant portion of *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* to arguing that the major environmental organizations have been co-opted by corporations and lost their ability to take adequate

---

[24]Dauvergne, *Environmentalism of the Rich*, p. 6–7.

[25]Ibid., p. 104–6.

[26]Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, p. 206.

[27]Dauvergne, *Environmentalism of the Rich*, p. 154–5.

[28]Clapp and Dauvergne, *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*.

[29]The category of "liberal environmentalists" who favour markets and believe existing political and economic systems can address problems including climate change is attributed to: Bernstein, *The Compromise of Liberal Environmentalism*.

action in response to climate change.[30,31]

Scholarly literature on previous social movements which sought wide-scale political and economic change is relevant to the analysis of the CFFD movement. The movement to abolish slavery in the United States and elsewhere challenged the existing economic system in a way that bears some relation to what ending fossil fuel use rapidly enough to avoid the worst impacts of climate change does today, with some similar social and political consequences. The two movements also share a broad ethical focus on what kinds of duties human beings bear toward one another, and at what point the harm you are causing to others compels you to change your behaviour. In terms of involving a concerted effort to rapidly and profoundly shift public opinion and public policy, there are also parallels with the feminist, civil rights, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans- and Queer (LGBTQ) rights movements. These movements also involved major questions about allyship and intersectionality, and the ways in which progressive efforts on one front ought to be done through a joint campaign for other progressive causes. As with feminism, climate change activism emphasizes how 'personal' choices have society-wide political consequences, and both raise questions about how to handle that politically.[32]

3.3 Key texts

3.3.1 Social movements

Betsill, Michele *Greens in the Greenhouse: Environmental NGOs, Norms and the Politics of Global Climate Change.* 2000.

---

[30]Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, p. 191–229.

[31]Klein is especially vitriolic about oil and gas production which The Nature Conservancy allowed in an ecological preserve starting in 1999, and where subsequently the main species being protected died off by 2012. ibid., p. 192–5.

[32]George H.W. Bush's 1992 comment at the Rio summit that "The American way of life is not up for negotiation" is illustrative.

Davis, Gerald F et al. eds *Social Movements and Organization Theory.* Cambridge University Press. 2005.

Goldstone, Jack A. ed *States, Parties, and Social Movements.* Cambridge University Press. 2003.

Hadden, Jennifer "Explaining Variation in Transnational Climate Change Activism: The Role of Inter-Movement Spillover." *Global Environmental Politics.* 2014. 14 (2): 7–25

Ingold, Karin and Manuel Fischer "Drivers of collaboration to mitigate climate change: An illustration of Swiss climate policy over 15 years." *Global Environmental Change.* Volume 24, January 2014, p. 88–98

McAdam, Doug and Hilary Boudet *Putting Social Movements in their Place: Explaining Opposition to Energy Projects in the United States, 2000–2005.* Cambridge University Press. 2012.

Stroup, S. S. 2012. *Borders among Activists: International NGOs in the United States, Britain, and France.* Cornell University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney *The New Transnational Activism.* Cambridge University Press. 2007.

Wong, Wendy "The Organization of Non-state Actors: Varieties of Linkages between Structures and Agents."

Wong, Wendy 2012. *Internal affairs: How the structure of NGOs transforms human rights.* Cornell University Press.

Networks:

True, Jacqui and Michael Mintrom "Transnational Networks and Policy diffusion: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming." International Studies Quarterly 45 (March 2001), 27-58.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie M. and Alexander H. Montgomery "International Organizations, Social Networks, and Conflict." Journal of Conflict Resolution 50/1 (February 2006), 3-27.

Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, (Cornell University Press, 1998)

Marin, Bernd and Renate Mayntz, eds. 1991. *Policy Networks, Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations.* Boulder: Westview Press. (Especially chapter by Schneider and Kenis.)

Dowding, Keith 1995. "Model or Metaphor? A Critical Review of the Policy Network Approach." Political Studies, 43: 136-58.

Hay, C. 1998. "The tangled webs we weave: the discourse, strategy and practice of networking," in D. Marsh (ed.) *Comparing policy networks.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Borzel, Tanja A. 1998. "Organizing Babylon — on the Different Conceptions of Policy Networks." Public Administration 76: 263-73.

Thatcher, Mark. 1998. "The Development of Policy Network Analyses: From Modest Origins to Overarching Frameworks." Journal of Theoretical Politics, 10, 4: 389-416.

Marsh, David and Martin Smith 2000. "Understanding Policy Networks: Towards a Dialectical Approach." Political Studies 48: 4-21.

Howlett, Michael. 2002. "Do Networks Matter? Linking Policy Network Structure to Policy Outcomes: Evidence from Four Canadian Policy Sectors 1990-2000." Canadian Journal of Political Science 35, 2: 235-67.

Skogstad, Grace. 2008. "Policy Networks and Policy Communities: Conceptualizing State-Societal Relationships in the Policy Process" in *The Comparative Turn in Canadian Politics.* Eds. Linda A. White, Richard Simeon, Robert Vipond and Jennifer Wallner. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Ward, Michael D., Katherine Stovel, and Audrey Sacks. 2011. "Network Analysis and Political Science." Annual Review of Political Science 14: 245-264.]

Paterson, Matthew, Matthew Hoffmann, Michele Betsill, and Steven Bernstein 2014. "The Micro Foundations of Policy Diffusion Toward Complex Global Governance: An Analysis of the Transnational Carbon Emission Trading Network." Comparative Political Studies 47, 3: 420-449.

Issue emergence:

Carpenter, R. C. 2007. "Setting the advocacy agenda: Theorizing issue emergence and nonemergence in transnational advocacy networks." International Studies Quarterly, 51(1), 99-120.

Carpenter, R. C. 2011. "Vetting the advocacy agenda: network centrality and the paradox of weapons norms." International Organization, 65(01), 69-102.

Birkland, Thomas A. 1998. "Focusing Events, Mobilization and Agenda Setting." Journal of Public Policy 18, 1: pp. 53-74.

Cohen, M., March, J, and Olsen, J. 1972. "A garbage can model of organizational choice." Administrative Science Quarterly, 17, 1-25.

Durant, R., and Diehl, P. 1989. "Agendas, alternatives, and public policy: Lessons from the U.S. foreign policy arena." Journal of Public Policy, 9, 179-205.

Baumgartner F.R. and B.D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics.* University of Chicago Press. (Especially chapters 1 and 3.)

Kingdon, John. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies.* Boston: Harper Collins, chapters 1, 4 and 8.]

3.3.2 Contentious politics

della Porta, Donatella *Where Did the Revolution Go? Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy.* Cambridge University Press. Forthcoming.

Diani, Mario *The Cement of Civil Society: Studying Networks in Localities.* Cambridge University Press. 2015

Hadden, Jennifer *Networks in Contention: The Divisive Politics of Climate Change.* Cambridge University Press. 2015.

McAdam, Doug *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970.* University Of Chicago Press. 1999.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly *Dynamics of Contention.* Cambridge University Press. 2005.

Meyer, David S. and Debra C. Minkoff "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity." *Social Forces.* 82 (4): 1457–1492

Tarrow, Sidney *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics.* Cambridge University Press. 2011.

Tarrow, Sidney *The Language of Contention Revolutions in Words, 1688–2012.* Cambridge University Press. 2013.

Tilly, Charles *From Mobilization to Revolution.* Addison-Wesley. 1978

Tilley, Charles and Sidney Tarrow *Contentious Politics.* Oxford University Press. 2015.

Wood, Lesley J. *Direct Action, Deliberation, and Diffusion: Collective Action after the WTO Protests in Seattle.* Cambridge University Press. 2012.

Climate change activism

Mitchell, Timothy *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil.* Verso. 2013.

Technology and collaboration in activism:

Wong, Wendy and Peter Brown "E-Bandits in Global Activism: WikiLeaks, Anonymous, and the Politics of No One." Perspectives on Politics 11:04, 2013.

Wooten, Will "Case Study: Tar Sands Blockade, Fighting the Keystone XL in Rural East Texas." [TK — Date and URL]

3.3.3 Methodology

Interview methods:

Eckstein, Harry "Case Study and Theory in Political Science." in Gomm, Roger, Martyn Hammersley and Peter Foster. *Case Study Method.* 2009.

Elgin, Dallas J. "Utilizing Hyperlink Network Analysis to Examine Climate Change Supporters and Opponents." *Review of Policy Research.* 2015.

Geddes, Barbara "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics." *Political Analysis.* 2 (1): 131-150. 1990.

Gerring, John "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?" *The American Political Science Review.* Vol. 98, No. 2 (May, 2004), pp. 341-354.

Mosley, Layna ed. *Interview Research in Political Science.* Cornell University Press. 2013.

Rogowski, Ronald "How Inference in the Social (but Not the Physical) Sciences Neglects Theoretical Anomaly." in Brady, Henry and David Collier. *Rethinking social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards.* 2004.

Schatz, Edward ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power.* University of Chicago Press. 2009.

Related disciplines:

Hachen, David S. Jr. *Sociology in Action: Cases for Critical and Sociological Thinking.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. 2001.

4   Case selection

At least three kinds of cases potentially bear consideration for this project. First, there are universities where climate activist groups have formed but chosen not to mount divestment campaigns. Examination of these cases can help to mitigate concerns about selecting on the dependent variable, as well as provide broader understanding about the objectives and strategies of campus climate activist groups. Second, there are CFFD campaigns which have led to a clear result. Because of the ever-present possibility that a university will choose to

change its fossil fuel investment choices in the future, no campaign can ever be permanently considered over. That said, media reports examined to date have not revealed any universities where divestment was rejected but subsequent activist effort lead to a reversal, nor any universities that committed to divest at one point but later reversed themselves. It is, of course, quite possible that cases of both types will emerge with time. There may be value in examining cases where an initial rejection has been met with major continued activist effort, such as at Harvard, McGill, and MIT.[33,34,35] Third, there are ongoing CFFD campaigns where the university administration has not yet made a clear, public decision.

350.org maintains a database of successful divestment campaigns at gofossilfree.org. They classify commitments as "Fossil Free" (fully divested from the 200 corporations with the largest fossil fuel reserves), "Full", "Partial", "Coal and Tar Sands", and "Coal only" and also break down organizations by type, including governments, educational institutions, for profit corporations, NGOs, pension funds, philanthropic foundations, etc.[36] Laval University (listed as "Full") is the only Canadian success listed as of February 2017, though a variety of Canadian churches and private foundations have divested.

In the United States, they list:

- Boston University (Coal and Tar Sands)

- Brevard College (Full)

[33]Stephenson, *Other Universities Are Divesting From Fossil Fuels—but Harvard Is Doubling Down on Them*.

[34]McCarthy, *McGill University board rejects fossil-fuel divestment initiative*.

[35]Nazemi and Lin, *MIT will not divest, announces climate change 'action plan' with key role for industry partners*.

[36]https://gofossilfree.org/divestment-commitments-classifications/

- California Institute of the Arts (Full)

- Chico State University (Full)

- College of the Atlantic (Full)

- ESF College Foundation, Inc. (Full)

- Foothill-De Anza Community College Foundation (Full)

- George School (Coal Only)

- Georgetown University (Partial)

- Goddard College (Fossil Free)

- Green Mountain College (Full)

- Hampshire College (Full)

- Humboldt State University (Partial)

- Naropa University (Full)

- Peralta Community College District (Full)

- Pitzer College (Full)

- Prescott College (Partial)

- Rhode Island School of Design (Full)

- Salem State University (Full)

- San Francisco State University Foundation (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Stanford University (Coal Only)

- Sterling College (Full)

- Syracuse University (Full)

- The New School (Full)

- Unity College (Full)

- University of Oregon Foundation (Full)

- University of California (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Dayton (Full)

- University of Hawaii (Full)

- University of Maine System (Coal Only)

- University of Maryland (Full)

- University of Massachusetts Foundation (Full)

- University of Washington (Coal Only)

- Warren Wilson College (Full)

- Western Oregon University (Partial)

- Yale University (Partial)

In the United Kingdom they list:

- Aston University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Birmingham City University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Bournemouth University (Full)

- Cardiff Metropolitan University (Full)

- Cranfield University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- De Montfort University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Goldsmiths University of London (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Heriot-Watt University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- King's College London (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- London School of Economics (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (Coal Only)

- Manchester Metropolitan University (Full)

- Newcastle University (Full)

- Nottingham Trent University (Full)

- Oxford Brookes University (Full)

- Oxford University (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- Queen Margaret University (Full)

- Queen Mary University London (Full)

- SOAS, University of London (Full)

- Sheffield Hallam University (Fossil Free)

- University of Abertay Dundee (Full)

- University of Arts Bournemouth (Full)

- University of Bedfordshire (Full)

- University of Cambridge (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Edinburgh (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Glasgow (Full)

- University of Gloucestershire (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Greenwich (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Hertfordshire (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Kent (Full)

- University of Lincoln (Full)

- University of Portsmouth (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Sheffield (Full)

- University of Southampton (Full)

- University of St. Andrews (Full)

- University of Surrey (Full)

- University of Sussex (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Full)

- University of Warwick (Full)

- University of Westminster (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

- University of Worcester (Full)

- University of the Arts London (Full)

- University of the West of Scotland (Fossil Free)

- Wolfson College, Oxford (Coal and Tar Sands Only)

[TK — Number of students, location, size of endowment for each]

Ideally it would be desirable to find some cases where faculty were involved from the outset and played an entrepreneurial role as group and campaign initiators; others where faculty eventually became actively involved as volunteers; and others where faculty only provided a measure of public support, such as by signing petitions or open letters.[37] It would be desirable to assess the degree to which forms of governance within organizations

---

[37] U of T and UBC contrast on this, both in terms of the involvement of faculty from the outset in one case and not the other, and in terms of limited overall faculty support at U of T, despite energetic outreach efforts from CFFD organizers and volunteers and an endorsement from the Faculty Association.

campaigning for divestment affect the outcomes of campaigns, both in terms of institutional decisions and impacts on participants.

One major motivation for the CFFD campaign is the idea that universities are thought leaders and that their decisions to divest would encourage other investors to consider regulatory risks to the fossil fuel industry, while also delegitimizing the industry in the eyes of public policy-makers and the general public.[38] By delegitimizing the fossil fuel industry in the same way anti-tobacco campaigns previously achieved, new political possibilities like prohibiting them from advertising or making political donations might become possible.[39] Based on that, a case could be made to focus attention on the highest-profile schools that have made some kind of divestment commitment, notably: Laval, Georgetown, Stanford, The New School, the University of California, Yale, King's College London, the London School of Economics, Oxford, and Cambridge. At the same time, it would be worthwhile to look at similarly high-profile schools where a campaign took place but divestment was entirely rejected, such as: UBC, the University of Toronto, McGill, Harvard, and MIT.

An important practical and ethical question for my project is whether to use the University of Toronto (U of T) as a case study. On one hand, my personal involvement in the campaign offers me a great deal of experience for evaluating the plausibility of various claims and I have pre-existing information about processes and people that have been important. During the campaign, Joe Curnow, a PhD student at U of T's Ontario Institute for Studies

---

[38]Chloe Maxmin, coordinator of Divest Harvard, explains: "What the fossil fuel divestment movement is saying to companies is your fundamental business model of extracting and burning carbon is going to create an uninhabitable planet. So you need to stop. You need a new business model." Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*, p. 354.

[39]Ibid., p. 355.

in Education explicitly made use of the campaign itself as a subject of study, both through detailed multi-directional video recording of meetings and through participant observation. All major planning meetings were videotaped in this way, with consent provided by participants, indicating a broad willingness for their efforts to be the subjects of academic study. On the other hand, my involvement was as an activist and not as a researcher. As a result, all the information which I have was not collected under an academic ethics protocol. Also, my involvement was motivated by a desire to have the campaign succeed, rather than to produce the most defensible possible understanding of the movement as a whole. It's impossible for me to ignore my experience at U of T when answering these questions, but these issues of ethical approval and objectivity probably make the U of T case better suited for use as general background than for use as a formal case study.

5 Methods

A key uncertainty is how feasible it will be to interview large numbers of activists and acquire documents or other information on the functioning of campus fossil fuel divestment campaigns. The total amount of information available (especially interviews with key organizers and university officials) will likely establish whether an approach including process tracing would be feasible.[40],[41]

---

[40]Grietens, *Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*, p. 67.
[41]Bennett, "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Approach".

Bibliography

References

Bennett, Andrew. "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Approach". In: *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*. Ed. by Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Berman, Tzeporah and Mark Leiren-Young. *This Crazy Time: Living Our Environmental Challenge*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2012.

Bernstein, Steven. *The Compromise of Liberal Environmentalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Clapp, Jennifer and Peter Dauvergne. *Paths to a Green World: The Political Economy of the Global Environment*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011.

Dauvergne, Peter. *Environmentalism of the Rich*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016.

Freeman, Jo. *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*. 1970. URL: http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm.

Goldstone, Jack A. "The weakness of organization: A new look at Gamson's The Strategy of Social Protest". In: *American Journal of Sociology* (1980), pp. 1017–1042.

Grady-Benson, Jessica and Brinda Sarathy. "Fossil fuel divestment in US higher education: student-led organising for climate justice". In: *Local Environment* 21.6 (2016), pp. 661–681.

Grietens, Sheena Chestnut. *Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Hadden, Jennifer. *Networks in Contention: The Divisive Politics of Climate Change*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

King Martin Luther, Jr. "Non-violence and Social Change". In: *The Lost Massey Lectures: Recovered Classics from Five Great Thinkers*. Ed. by Bernie Lucht. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003.

Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014.

McCarthy, Shawn. *McGill University board rejects fossil-fuel divestment initiative*. 2016. URL: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/mcgill-university-board-rejects-fossil-fuel-divestment-initiative/article29370273/.

McKibben, Bill. *Global Warming's Terrifying New Math*. 2012. URL: http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719.

Michels, Robert. *Political Parties*. New York: Free Press, 1966.

Nazemi, Katherine and Leon Lin. *MIT will not divest, announces climate change 'action plan' with key role for industry partners*. 2015. URL: http://tech.mit.edu/V135/N28/climate.html.

Reuters. *Exxon revises down oil and gas reserves by 3.3 billion barrels.* 2017. URL: http://www.cnbc.com/2017/02/23/exxon-revises-down-oil-and-gas-reserves-by-33-billion-barrels.html.

Simard, Alice-Anne. *Laval makes history with fossil fuel divestment: How did they do it?* 2017. URL: https://ricochet.media/en/1688/laval-makes-history-with-fossil-fuel-divestment-how-did-they-do-it.

Smith, Miriam. *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada, Second Edition.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Stephenson, Wen. *Other Universities Are Divesting From Fossil Fuels—but Harvard Is Doubling Down on Them.* 2016. URL: https://www.thenation.com/article/other-universities-are-divesting-from-fossil-fuels-but-harvard-is-doubling-down-on-them/.

swarthmore.edu. *Divestment Debates.* 2017. URL: http://www.swarthmore.edu/environmental-studies/divestment-debates.

Toronto350.org. *The Fossil Fuel Industry and the Case for Divestment: Update.* Toronto: Asquith Press, 2015. URL: http://www.uoftfacultydivest.com/files/fossil-fuel-divest-new.pdf.

White, Micah. *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution.* Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2016.