

Environmental Governance Lab Brown Bag
Lunch — “Opposing Keystone XL and
Northern Gateway: Pipeline Resistance
Campaigns as Contentious Social
Movements”

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- I acknowledge the sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates.
- This land has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River.
- The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.
- Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and I am grateful to have the opportunity to work on this territory.

Purposes

1. To provide an outline on my proposed research questions and methodology
2. To discuss each, as well as case selection and general thoughts on implementing the project
3. I would particularly appreciate practical suggestions about how to carry out the proposed network analysis in terms of identifying and approaching research subjects and undertaking fieldwork

Background

- Me: UBC, Oxford, federal government, (stymied UofT divestment campaign?)
- Now 5th year PhD student
- Supervised by Andrea Olive and Kate Neville, with Peter Russell Joseph Carens as committee members
- This project grew in part from my experiences with the 2011 Keystone XL protests in Washington D.C.

KXL

- Proposed in 2006
- Hardisty, Alberta (200 km southeast of Calgary) to Nederland, Texas (130 km East of Houston) on the Gulf of Mexico
- 830,000 barrels per day
- Provoked a substantial and widely-noted resistance campaign
- 80,000 news stories on Google News mention it

NGP

- Proposed in 2008
- Bruderheim, Alberta (50 km northeast of Edmonton) to Kitimat, British Columbia (700 km northwest of Vancouver)
- 525,000 bpd
- Has featured in BC and federal electoral politics - and indigenous issues are central

Why KXL and NGP as comparative cases?

- Comparative value in considering different jurisdictions: Canadian and U.S. national processes, as well as states / provinces
- Each historical enough to allow some context, but current enough that interview subjects can be found
- Connect to theories in existing literature, especially in terms of institutional context and veto points
- Tankers publicly seen as relevant to NGP, not KXL

So what?

- The motivation behind this research project is less about what happens specifically to the proposed KXL and NGP projects
- It's more about how fossil fuel energy development is being contested with a new level of energy and determination because of what climate science has taught us
- This is raising the stakes - pipeline projects aren't just about who will suffer from spills - 99 young activists were arrested in Ottawa on Monday, protesting a pipeline in B.C.
- More importantly, big political changes are happening, with activist movements representing the leading edge. How do we reconcile theories of social justice with the environmentalist critique? How are the core beliefs of key activist actors changing?

Faith communities

- I was surprised to see the scale of faith group representation at the 2011 Keystone XL protests: church groups getting arrested together, prominent religious figures and monks arrested
- Churches have been heavily involved in divestment, as well as indigenous reconciliation (in part via TRC)
- Tightly linked and communicative community: well suited to a network analysis approach

Indigenous communities

- Perhaps the most important evolving relationship in climate politics is between environmental activists and indigenous peoples
- Motivated in part by the special legal status of indigenous peoples, including under Canadian constitutional law and UNDRIP
- Involves important normative challenges to environmentalism: especially to a historical form largely rooted in animal rights with little concern about culture or poverty

Research questions

- These questions [see <https://www.sindark.com/phd/thesis/proposal/Ilnyckyj-EGL-2-pager.pdf>] are essentially evaluating the anti-KXL and anti-NGP movements on three levels: in terms of the human geography and network between groups involved; their thinking on strategies and tactics; and the evolution and mutual interaction between core beliefs.

Epistemology

- It's a word that makes me nervous
- I feel I can comment more meaningfully on my intellectual philosophy
 - I think our ability to understand politics is a natural outgrowth of the study of history. That's not to suggest that one superseded the other, as history is clearly a central contemporary discipline.
 - What distinguishes the study of politics is largely political and normative motivations: we want to look at the events of history to identify useful patterns, and we want to study contemporary politics because it has consequences which we find normatively important

- Main consequences of this perspective:
 - An emphasis on collecting primary source historical materials, particularly first-hand accounts from people personally involved in political activity
 - A motivation (a) not only to document major axes of disagreement among climate change activists and interpret those disagreements in light of relevant literatures in politics, ethics, and other disciplines
 - but also (b) consider hypotheses about how the core beliefs of politically influential groups might be sufficiently aligned to achieve climate change mitigation outcomes compatible with a sub-2 °C warming scenario

Practicalities

1. There are several challenges involved in conducting this research ethically, and in keeping with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* - **respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice**
 1. **Belmont Report** (1978) respect for persons, beneficence, and justice
2. Will anyone want to talk to me?
3. Is it plausible to undertake a single research trip from Texas to the Haida Gwaii?
4. What suggestions do people have about identifying and approaching interview subjects?
5. Has anyone worked with large amounts of audio / transcripts? Advice?

Discussion