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Petro-Hegemony and the Carbon Rebellion: Strategies, Narratives, and Tactics
on the Frontlines of Climate Justice

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Global Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

Petro-Hegemony and the Carbon Rebellion: Strategies, Narratives, and Tactics on the Frontlines of Climate Justice

By Theodore F. LeQuesne

This dissertation explores the power of the fossil fuel industry and the strategies narratives and tactics climate justice activists in frontlines struggles to keep fossil fuels in the ground are using to challenge that power. It asks *how might the climate justice movement better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry and through that understanding develop strategies and tactics that can respond to it?* It deploys a Gramscian theoretical framework to assess, explore, and critique social movement and industry interventions in hegemonic power relations. It offers a rereading of hegemony and argues that rather than emphasizing relations of consent to the exclusion of other power relations, scholars and activists might understand hegemony as synthesizing and balancing relations of consent, coercion, and compliance. Counter-hegemonic social movement strategy must, therefore, intervene in each one of these power relations.

This reformulated version of hegemony is developed in and applied to community led struggles against the fossil fuel industry in the context of climate justice with two more concepts: petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion. Petro-hegemony synthesizes petro-culture, petro-capitalism, and the petro-state to organize interventions in relations of consent, compliance, and coercion, to maintain and advance the interests of fossil fuel industry. The carbon rebellion is the counter hegemonic formation through which the climate justice

movement could organize strategies and tactics that intervene in each of the hegemonic relations of power to challenge petro-hegemony. Between petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion exist three terrains of struggle, each characterized by a different relation of power. The dissertation argues that if climate justice activists are to counter petro-hegemony they must challenge the fossil fuel industry at different points of intervention existing on each one of these terrains.

The dissertation places this theoretical strategic framework in conversation with empirical field work and analysis in two case study sites: the First Nations-led resistance to the Trans Mountain tar sands pipeline in Coast Salish Territory, British Columbia, and a grassroots community uprising for climate and environmental justice in the wake of confrontation with Chevron and its plans to expand its oil refinery to process heavier crude oil in Richmond, California. The fieldwork included 10 weeks of participant action research, 27 key informant interviews, the curation of an online archive of over 1500 articles, Tweets, Facebook posts, videos and memes, and in-depth discourse analysis. Developing this theoretical framework in conversation with fieldwork yields three further conceptual categories that could advance counter hegemonic strategies for climate justice. These are intersectional populism, the spectrum of strategy, and aggregating to scale. This dissertation concludes that each of these conceptual advances are critical to facilitating the emergence and flourishing of carbon rebellion as a counter hegemonic formation capable of defeating petro-hegemony.

Key terms: Hegemony, Petro-Hegemony, Gramsci, Climate Justice Movement, Keep it in the ground, Blockadia, Carbon Rebellion, Social Movements, Energy Politics

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INTRODUCTION¹

On February 22nd, 2017, heavily armed police, security agents, and private contractors descended upon what remained of the Water Protectors and their encampment on the banks of the Cannon Ball River in traditional Sioux territory, just outside the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. Following what, by all estimates in the United States, must be considered the most energized, hopeful, organized, and sophisticated uprising for Indigenous sovereignty in a generation, the *Oceti Sakowin* camp was violently, brutally, and illegally evicted. The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), having received its final permits to bore beneath the river under the recently inaugurated Trump administration, was completed on stolen Sioux land. Fracked oil from North Dakota's Bakken Shale formation now flows under the river to refineries and transport hubs in Illinois, and onwards to the Gulf of Mexico and markets abroad. Meanwhile, in its last moments of defiant convulsion, the uprising disbanded and has diffused across the country. Like the seeds of a dandelion flower, which are blown apart and sail off on the wind, Standing Rock's Water Protectors have dispersed to settle and take root elsewhere, sowing resistances of their own wherever they land. "Standing Rock is everywhere now," said Native Organizer's Alliance director, Judith LeBlanc.²

¹ Some arguments and ideas developed in this dissertation have been previously articulated by the author in earlier publications. These articles are: LeQuesne, T. (2019). Petro-hegemony and the matrix of resistance: What can Standing Rock's Water Protectors teach us about organizing for climate justice in the United States?. *Environmental Sociology*, 5(2). Pp. 188-206 and LeQuesne, T. (2019). From Carbon Democracy to Carbon Rebellion: Confronting Petro-Hegemony on the Frontlines of Climate Justice. In *Journal of World Systems Research*, 25 (1). Pp. 15-27.

² Judith LeBlanc is the director of the Native Organizers Alliance and is a member of the Caddo Nation in Oklahoma. Her sentiment here is one that was shared by many participants following the uprising (Jaffe 2017).

To speak of victories and defeats, and for that matter of beginnings and ends, is almost always premature in the study of social movements. As the playwright William Faulkner famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” Similarly, Lakota prophecy, and their story of the Seventh Generation, reminds us that the decisions of today and yesterday may be buried for a lifetime only to reemerge decades, even generations, later as consequences, confluences, rewards and retribution. Three years after the intensity of the Water Protector’s battle at Standing Rock, we still do not know what the ultimate consequences of this confrontation will be. Nevertheless, it was a moment in a centuries-long struggle for decolonization that has had fundamental implications for another, interrelated, movement – the climate justice movement – and its campaigns to keep fossil fuels in the ground across North America. Standing Rock *is* everywhere now. Across the frontlines of what Naomi Klein calls Blockadia (2014), where communities are defending their rights, their land, their water, their democracy, their homes, and their climate against the fossil fuel industry’s insatiable advance, Standing Rock is invoked with a mix of awe, envy, hope, and caution. Some of these frontlines predate the confrontation at Standing Rock and some are its direct descendants, almost all of them look to what happened at Standing Rock as a pivotal moment in the climate justice movement’s development.

At one level, Standing Rock was a moment of struggle against colonial intrusion in a long history of struggle against colonial intrusion, dating back 500 years, in what is now the United States. At another level, the story of the uprising at Standing Rock can be compressed into an excited frenzy of events that unfolded over just a matter of months. Both stories can

be told well and accurately, and indeed, neither can really be understood without the other.³ For my part, as I recount the events that transpired there, I offer only a partial, situated, perspective stitched together from many other partial, situated perspectives. The uprising that was brewing in North Dakota caught my attention in August 2016. My Facebook feed was inundated the hashtags *#MniWiconi* and *#WaterIsLife* alongside images and videos of Indigenous men, women and children facing down security agents and police officers as they put their bodies in between the pipeline and the land and water they sought to protect. They called themselves the Water Protectors and they were about to capture the imaginations of millions of people around the world.

In April 2016, Energy Transfer Partners and their subsidiary, Dakota Access, had been granted permits for a 1,172-mile pipeline connecting the, until recently, booming Bakken Shale oil region to refineries to the east and markets abroad. The permit applications had been fast tracked and opponents argued that the environmental impact assessment had been inadequate and ignored Native peoples' claims that the pipeline would desecrate sacred sites and disturb burial lands. Moreover, after residents voiced concerns that a pipeline rupture could threaten the water supply of North Dakota's state capital, Bismarck, the pipeline was rerouted downstream of the city but just upstream of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. It then traversed land managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers and promised, but never relinquished, to the Sioux in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. Instead of intersecting the river

³ For an account that contextualizes the uprising at Standing Rock in a long history of anti-colonial resistance and Indigenous resurgence read Nick Estes' new book, *Our History is Our Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (2019). For an account that contextualizes the events at Standing Rock in climate justice read Kyle Powys Whyte's essay, *Why the Native American Pipeline Resistance in North Dakota is About Climate Justice* (2016). For a near comprehensive set of Indigenous perspectives on the events that transpired at Standing Rock see *The Standing Rock Syllabus* online.

north of Bismarck the pipeline would bore beneath the Standing Rock's Sioux's primary source of drinking water just upstream of the reservation. Bismarck is a community that is nearly 90% white, while Standing Rock is a Native American reservation and home to some of the most impoverished communities in the country.

Responding to this flagrant example of environmental racism and colonial expansion, Standing Rock youth activists first drew national attention to the pipeline by gathering together groups of runners who would take their message from the reservation to nearby states and, eventually, Washington D.C.. Meanwhile, Lakota activist and historian, Ladonna Brave Bull Allard, took to social media, posting a video imploring Native allies and people all over the country to come to Standing Rock and block the passage of the pipeline. With support from Indigenous Environmental Network organizers, she opened her land on the reservation to what became known as the Sacred Stone camp. Dozens, then hundreds, and later thousands, would heed the Standing Rock Sioux's call for support. So many people arrived, in fact, that by the summer several new camps had been established. The "big camp" just outside the boundaries of the reservation was called *Oceti Sakowin*, named after the Sioux Council of the Seven Fires, and at its height housed thousands of Indigenous Water Protectors and non-native allies. This would become the largest gathering and alliance of Indigenous nations and tribes in generations, perhaps ever.

By August 2016, the Water Protectors were leading daily blockades from the camps to obstruct the highway and prevent equipment reaching the DAPL construction site. These marches and demonstrations were led "in peace and prayer" by Sioux Elders and spiritual

leaders. Their message was simple, consistent, and deeply compelling: we are gathered peacefully and in prayer to protect the water and our sacred lands from the pipeline. In early August, some Water Protectors intensified the pressure on DAPL by locking themselves to construction equipment. Many were arrested and others were brutalized. In September, Indigenous women led a prayer walk to a sacred burial site that pipeline workers had bulldozed the day before. They were met with security contractors' attack dogs, pepper spray, and intimidated and harassed by armed police officers. Images and a *Democracy Now!* video documenting these attacks on unarmed women, men, and in some case children, all gathered in peace and prayer to protect the water, went viral online (2016). These images next to the hashtags *#WaterIsLife* and *#MniWiconi* were shared millions of times on social media. This broke through a dominant media blackout and instigated a major public backlash across the United States.

North Dakota's governor, Jack Dalrymple, declared a state of emergency following the backlash. He deployed the National Guard to surround the encampments and provide "safe" passage for the pipeline construction workers and equipment (Grueskin 2016). The clear demonstration of the alliance between Big Oil and state power only reinforced perceptions of their conjoined colonial ambitions and enflamed the situation further. More people joined the camps over the summer and fall of 2016. Those who could not attend physically sent resources and supplies and organized solidarity actions in their hometowns across the country. Supporters raised several million dollars for the camp's upkeep and legal defense fund, while celebrities like Mark Ruffalo and Shailene Woodly visited the camps and shared the story to new audiences.

The standoff intensified with lawsuits and counter lawsuits declaring the pipeline illegal, then being appealed and overturned, only for permits to be appealed again. Meanwhile, direct action and civil disobedience were met with ever-increasing police militarization, brutality, and punitive sentencing. Security agents from the FBI and the Morton County police department worked together with Dakota Access and its private security contractors, Tiger Swan, to repress the resistance, infiltrate it, and sow division from the inside (The Intercept 2017; Parrish 2017). The armored vehicles, surveillance helicopters, and riot police bearing shotguns and machine guns, firing off stun grenades, deploying “less than lethal” weapons, spraying Water Protectors with tear gas, and drenching them with water cannons in frigid conditions, offered scenes reminiscent of a warzone – which, by some accounts, is exactly what it was (Charger 2017). This imagery juxtaposed with the Water Protectors disciplined messaging, the clarity of the injustice being imposed upon them, and their commitment to non-violence rapidly eroded the pipeline’s perceived legitimacy.

In December 2016, then President Obama halted the pipeline and ordered the Army Corps of Engineers to redo the pipeline’s environmental impact assessment (CNN 2016). As many had predicted, the Water Protectors’ victory was reversed in January 2017, in one of the newly inaugurated President Trump’s very first presidential orders (Medina 2017). With many progressives and leftists still reeling following the Trump election, and many Indigenous leaders now divided over strategy, the camps were forcibly evicted in February 2017 (Democracy Now! 2017). Permanent structures activists had built in *Oceti Sakowin* over the

winter were bulldozed, those who had stayed at the camp and resisted were arrested, and an uprising that had filled so many with hope was brutally quashed.

But uprisings are rarely truly quashed. The Indigenous-led resistance has reignited or reinforced a sense of revolutionary empowerment amongst the thousands of Indigenous peoples who participated, and amongst Indigenous youth in particular. The uprising also brought together an unprecedented alliance of Indigenous communities, non-native allies, environmental justice activists, faith-based organizations, army veterans, ranchers, and more, to focus the country's attention on the history and politics of colonization, Indigenous sovereignty, climate justice, oil extraction, water, and energy. New relationships and bonds of solidarity were forged, strategies experimented with, and stories told and changed.

Meanwhile, many within the climate justice movement learned a new language and practices with which to articulate their purpose. In this way, the Water Protector's narrative interventions have fundamentally changed and challenged the dominant discourses of oil, energy, climate change, and colonialism in the United States. Three years later, climate justice activists are forging alliances with movements for Indigenous sovereignty, rights, and liberation on the frontlines of dozens of struggles, new and old. Together they are defending and protecting homes, climate, sacred lands, water, and democracy against colonialism, capitalist accumulation, environmental racism, dispossession, and pollution - all of which are embodied in the fossil fuel industry's reckless expansionism.

But this dissertation isn't about Standing Rock. Or at least, the confrontation that took place at Standing Rock is not the primary focus of this dissertation's contributions. Nevertheless, I

begin with Standing Rock because of the enormous implications it has had for my own activist experiences and how these have influenced the arguments and agenda advanced in the pages that follow. Even more so than the resistance to Keystone XL pipeline, the events at Standing Rock gave birth to a reinvigorated climate justice movement in the United States, and brought the protection of land, water, homes, and self-determination to the forefront of the movement's narratives and activism. The movement's "keep-it-in-the-ground" contingent that emerged almost a decade earlier was filled with new purpose and, in the intervening years, has developed into a sophisticated global network of frontlines communities defending their homes against fossil fuel extraction, transportation, and refining. All of these very much are the subject of my dissertation's intervention. Moreover, Standing Rock holds vital lessons for the climate justice movement about the power of the fossil fuel industry and the strategies, narratives, and tactics we might use to counter it. It is these lessons, and the influence Standing Rock has had on my own activism and theories of change, that set me on the path that led me to writing this dissertation.

Situating myself in this dissertation

I joined Standing Rock's Water Protectors in September 2016 and worked on fundraising and divestment solidarity campaigns where I live in Santa Barbara throughout the following fall. I had just finished my master's thesis when the uprising broke out on the floodplains of the Missouri River. The master's thesis had developed a Gramscian analysis of the communications strategies climate justice activists deploy to undermine the fossil fuel industry's "social license to operate," challenge its social legitimacy, and ultimately shift

consent away from the industry's operations. I studied two different campaigns and the narrative strategies each one used to revoke consent to the fossil fuel industry and articulate consent around alternative alignments of social actors and agendas instead. I had been a campus organizer for the fossil fuel divestment campaign, Fossil Free, and so fossil fuel divestment campaign became one of my case studies. This campaign reframed the climate narrative, emphasizing a story of "good guys and bad guys," and positioning the fossil fuel industry as the principal obstacles to achieving climate solutions. Our target, therefore, was not individual consumption habits but the industry and the role it has played in obstructing climate policy. Through divestment activism I also learned about activists in Richmond, California who had won a series of significant victories against the fossil fuel industry in their own neighborhoods. Since I first heard of them, I found their victories to be a fascinating example of climate justice activism and so developed a second case study around the narrative strategies these campaigners had employed.

By the time I arrived in Standing Rock, therefore, I had thought of myself as a seasoned climate justice activist, organizer, and scholar. Since I was very young, the threat climate change poses to the longevity of our species has dominated my political thought and action. Moreover, through college and student-activism, I came to see how this threat is stratified according to intersections of class, race, gender, identity, and privilege to produce climate injustice. Alongside the master's and fossil fuel divestment activism, I had participated in an anti-fracking protest camp in Balcombe near my hometown in the UK in 2013, helped bring students at my campus to the 400,000 strong People's Climate March in New York in 2014, and worked with international youth campaigners at the United Nations climate talks in

Poland 2013 and in Paris in 2015. Therefore, by 2016, the connections between keeping fossil fuels in the ground, environmental racism, defending Indigenous rights and sovereignty, protecting the water, and climate change articulated by the Water Protectors seemed obvious to me. However, none of my academic training nor activist experience prepared me for what I would learn from Standing Rock, how it would change my orientation towards achieving radical social change, and how much more profoundly it would force me to engage with the intersections of race, class, colonialism, gender, dispossession, violence and pollution that configure forms of domination and resistance on the frontlines of resource extraction.

Of course, I must hasten to add, it is not lost on me that as a relatively privileged young, white, male scholar, Standing Rock's significance to my own life and experiences means little in comparison to the significance of its interventions for frontlines, low income/underpaid, communities of color, the colonized, the racialized others, and the subaltern. Nevertheless, the implications it has had on my own theories of change which came to animate this dissertation's contributions to the theory and practice of climate justice activism cannot be overstated. It is for this reason that I begin this dissertation at Standing Rock and how it came to shape the research questions with which I embarked upon this project.

As a young activist, particularly as a participant in Occupy, and other campus-based campaigns I was involved in as an undergraduate, I was (and, to an extent, remain) deeply frustrated with friends and allies whose language, narratives, frames of reference, group

culture, and even dress code I believed were alienating large numbers of potential supporters and activists from the movement. I felt they had created self-referential spaces that prioritized group identity over collective action, excluding everyone but the most ideologically pure, and welcoming only those who could participate in what Johnathan Smucker calls “the life of the group” (2017).⁴ In Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning’s social movement manual, *Re:Imagining Change* (2011), I found the language to articulate these frustrations productively. It seemed to me that the language and interventions that these activists espoused did a great deal to “tell the story of the battle,” or reinforce the group’s sense of identity and righteousness, but little to “fight the battle of story” to challenge the discourses upon which systems of domination are premised. Meanwhile through the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci’s *Prison Notebook’s* I was making connections between the “story-based strategy” and the “battle of the story” for which Reinsborough and Canning advocated with what Gramsci called a “war of position” (1971). Gramsci’s work introduced me to hegemony and counter hegemony, and through these terms I learned a new language with which to understand how power operates and how it might be challenged, revoked, or realigned.

Both Reinsborough and Canning’s work and Gramsci’s advocated for a struggle over the discourses and cultural institutions through which we make meaning of the world around us and through which our consent to the ideas, institutions, and people who rule society is produced.⁵ Both also placed tremendous emphasis on building broad-based alliances across

⁴ The life of the group refers to the frames, language, norms, practices, rites, and culture that shape a social group’s identity. Later, I would be greatly influenced by Smucker’s writing and particularly *Hegemony How To* (2017) which deploys a Gramscian analysis to articulate many of the same frustrations with social movement spaces that I had experienced as a young activist.

⁵ I will provide a detailed discussion of how we might understand consent and its role as a relation of power in Chapter Two. Suffice it to say for now that consent is produced when the rule of a class, set of ideas,

society that reached far beyond traditional activist enclaves and isolated moments of uprising. I found all this deeply compelling. My master's thesis brought their arguments together and applied them to the climate justice movement's confrontations with the fossil fuel industry. I argued we might view the fossil fuel industry as a hegemonic force in society and that the climate justice movement, could organize itself into a counter hegemonic force to revoke consent to the industry (indeed, as my case studies illustrated, much of it already was doing just this). Through narrative interventions we could, in the language of the fossil fuel divestment movement, "revoke the industry's social license to operate." Inspired by the divestment movement, and these writings, I came to the understanding that in order to challenge the fossil fuel industry's hegemonic status in society, we needed to change the stories that produce consent to the industry and intervene in the cultural institutions that mediate them. In other words, if we could just change the story, we could win.

Of all the things I learned from participating in, and studying, the Water Protectors' interventions at Standing Rock, the most significant was coming to understand how much of what I'd written about, and acted upon as an organizer throughout my master's scholarship, was wrong – or, at least, only very partially right. While not even primarily an intervention in climate justice, the Water Protectors, it seemed to me, were telling one of the most compelling narratives ever told about climate justice. In narratives that combined anti-colonialism, the vitality of water, and the threat posed by the oil industry, they had successfully garnered support from millions of people across the country in a way that no climate justice campaign ever had. Combining the protection of the water and the land with

institutions, and so on, is accepted as common sense, is taken for granted, and goes unchallenged, and within a given society.

the cultural survival and resurgence of Indigenous peoples and broader concerns about the implications of further oil extraction for the climate, the Water Protectors fundamentally changed the story that maintained consent to the fossil fuel industry. DAPL saw its social license collapse across the country as audiences reassessed the role of oil in their lives, their own participation in colonialism, and broader threats the fossil fuel industry poses to the ecosystems upon which the longevity of our species depends. And yet, despite all this, the Water Protectors and the uprising at Standing Rock was still infiltrated, brutally repressed, and some activists still remain in jail as political prisoners (Parrish 2017; Charger 2017). The uprising, for all its successful interventions in discourse, was, at least in this moment, defeated.

Oil now flows beneath the River. We cannot know upon what timeline the full implications of the Standing Rock Sioux's confrontation with DAPL will manifest themselves, particularly with regards to decolonization and Indigenous liberation. But in so far as the immediate goals of the uprising are concerned, the pipeline was completed, oil is being pumped through it, and Indigenous tribal sovereignty has, once again, been undeniably violated. Despite winning the battle of the story, shifting relations of consent, and waging a highly sophisticated war of position, the Water Protectors could not halt the advance of the fossil fuel industry. To me, the Water Protectors' intervention therefore illustrated fundamental questions about the theories of change many within the climate justice movement still subscribe to, that I had been developing upon, and that had been guiding my academic and activist interventions. The colonial, state-sanctioned violence and coercion

upon which the industry had depended was almost entirely absent from the theory of change my master's thesis advanced.

Research questions and Gramscian polemics: Petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion

Like all good scholars, seeing my theoretical contributions fundamentally challenged by the empirical reality of the efficacy of this violence, I went back to the books with a new research question: *how might we, as the climate justice movement, better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry and through that understanding develop strategies and tactics that can respond to it?*⁶ My dissertation assesses this question through an exploration of the strategies, narratives and tactics activists are deploying against the fossil fuel industry on the frontlines of climate justice. The arguments and insights I have developed as I've explored this question are produced out of the interplay of theory and practice and fill the remainder of this dissertation. Moreover, through my participation in, and engagement with, the climate justice movement, these arguments do more to show how climate justice activists can learn from one another, and rearticulates, shares, and reflects the movement's ideas back to itself, rather than necessarily telling climate justice strategists anything they don't already know.

Since discovering Gramsci's concept, I have always found hegemony a particularly compelling account of the operations of power. Moreover, as Chapter Two and the following case studies contained in this dissertation will illustrate, I am convinced that hegemony is an

⁶ "Better understand" here refers to the ways in which we might complicate, nuance, and more accurately assess the power relations through which the fossil fuel industry operates and upon which it depends.

appropriate and valuable lens through which to understand the power relations the fossil fuel industry intervenes upon to maintain and advance its interests. However, as I went back to the books, and particularly to Gramscian theory, I found that I, along with many other scholars and activists, had not fully understood the extent of the Italian Marxist's conceptual contributions. While Gramsci's major intervention is to have explained how rulers, classes, ideas, and institutions become hegemonic by producing consent to their rule (in other words, how their rule becomes taken for granted as common sense), Gramsci never suggests that the production of consent is the only relation of power contained within the concept. Indeed, drawing on scholars like Raymond Williams (1971), Richard Day (2016), and Perry Anderson (1976), as well as Gramsci himself, this dissertation will argue that the concept of hegemony contains not one but three interrelated and interactive relations of power: consent, coercion, and, I add, *compliance*.

In this reading of hegemony, consent is primarily a cultural relation that refers to the ways common sense is mediated, and meaning is discursively articulated, to legitimize the rule of the hegemon. Coercion refers to the use of violence and force to discipline, repress and eliminate dissent which is made possible through the hegemon's access to the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence or physical force.⁷ Compliance is a term I add to Gramscian vocabulary. It is an economic relation of power characterized by the blurring of the lines between consent and coercion, where choice technically exists but is circumscribed by dependency on the benevolence of the hegemon. Thus, hegemony simultaneously combines cultural, political (state), and economic relations of power.

⁷ See Weber's *Politics as Vocation* (1919) on the state as defined by its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.

In this dissertation, I apply this approach to hegemony to the fossil fuel industry. *Petro-hegemony*, therefore, is the term I advance to better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry. Through petro-hegemony the fossil fuel industry organizes and intervenes in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance to maintain and extend its status and interests in a given society. These power relations are organized and intervened upon through three mediators of strategy. I argue the industry organizes strategies and tactics to intervene in relations of consent through petro-culture, interventions in relations of coercion are organized through the petro-state, while petro-capitalism organizes interventions in relations of compliance. Retroactively applying these power relations and their mediators to the industry's operations at Standing Rock, elsewhere I have argued conceptualizing petro-hegemony helps explain the fossil fuel industry's ultimately successful bid to build the Dakota Access Pipeline (see LeQuesne 2019).

While this rethinking of hegemony helps us understand the power relations upon which the industry depends, my research agenda also interrogates what the climate justice movement's response to petro-hegemony could look like. As a response to petro-hegemony, the movement may organize itself into a counter hegemonic force. I call the emergence of this counter hegemonic force *the carbon rebellion*. Mirroring petro-hegemony, the carbon rebellion framework contains three mediators: *a political culture of opposition and creation for climate justice* (or PCOC, see Foran 2016), *regimes of climate justice*, and *the economics of a just transition*. The movement's interventions in relations of consent are, or could be, organized through the PCOC, interventions in relations of coercion and the state are, or could

be, organized through regimes of climate justice, and interventions in relations of compliance are, or could be, organized through the economics of a just transition. *My fundamental contribution to the climate justice movement's many theories of change is to argue that counter hegemonic strategies to confront the fossil fuel industry should be organized to intervene in each of these three hegemonic relations of power.* In other words, we may challenge, counter, defeat, and replace the fossil fuel industry's hegemonic status only when we successfully intervene in and shift each of these three power relations in our favor. Many of the strategies, narratives and tactics we need to make these interventions have already been devised. My contribution, therefore, is a coherent framework through which we might organize and assess them.

This framework positions petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion as oppositional forces that in many ways mirror one another (although, yielding very different results). I suggest that in between carbon rebellion and petro-hegemony we should imagine three *terrains of struggle* upon which an almost innumerable quantity of *points of intervention* exist. Each terrain of struggle and its corresponding points of intervention is primarily (though not singularly) defined by a relation of power – either consent, coercion, or compliance. As such, consent defines the terrain of struggle and points of intervention existing between the PCOC and petro-culture, coercion defines the terrain of struggle between the petro-state and regimes of climate justice, and compliance defines the terrain of struggle we might imagine existing between petro-capitalism and the economics of a just transition. The counter hegemonic path to victory over the industry, therefore, depends upon the movement's ability to influence, capture, direct, eliminate, or shape different strategic points of intervention on each of these

terrains of struggle. The strategies and tactics organized through both petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion to intervene in a particular point of intervention would be primarily oriented towards the relation of power defining the terrain of struggle upon which the points of intervention in question exists.

The terrains of struggle and relations of power that characterize each of them are each distinction from one another, however they are not silos but are profoundly intertwined. As such, interventions in a relation of power on one terrain of struggle will almost inevitably have consequences for interventions in the other relations of power too and terrains of struggle too. If all this seems tremendously abstract, that's because it is. It is deliberately abstract so that the framework may be generalizable at one level but then deployed in a multiplicity of struggles and populated with the specificity of those deeply contextualized struggles accordingly. Placing the entire framework in two empirical case study examples, I bring the abstract and the contextual together with specific illustrations of different points of intervention and how industry agents and activists have devised tactics to engage with them.

Conceptual contributions to movement praxis

Remaining in the realm of the abstract a little while longer, however, this framework also leads to three more corollary arguments discussed in separate chapters through the dissertation. Exploring the relationship between petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion, I have developed three concepts that I argue could support the emergence and development of carbon rebellion and its counter hegemonic interventions against petro-hegemony. These are

intersectional populism, the *spectrum of strategy*, and *aggregating to scale*. Each of these respond to tensions, contradictions and challenges within counter hegemonic social movement strategy and seeks the means by which such tensions might be navigated. In the development of each concept I have made the case for synthesis and synergy across positions rather than privileging one over another or reinforcing divisions between them.

Intersectional populism

I advance the concept of intersectional populism to navigate strategic orientations favoring universalizing discourses and movement practices on the one hand, and those prioritizing particularism and difference on the other. Drawing upon Zoltán Grossman, Laclau and Mouffe, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins, I explore the relationship between populism, alliances, and intersectionality. Intersectional populism is my attempt at identifying discourses and movement practices that are both populist in the sense that they articulate a unified “we” against an external “enemy,” while also paying close attention to the relations of difference, privilege, and accountability that must exist within any articulation of the politically circumscribed “we.” I argue intersectional populism is vital to the articulation and construction of broad-based, diverse, inclusive and accountable alliances and alignments through which a political culture of opposition and creation may be forged.

The spectrum of strategy

The spectrum of strategy concept is developed through a discussion of the major tensions and debates over different orientations towards strategy and tactics that I identify in the climate justice movement. The debates I engage with are the role of the state in climate justice

strategy, the appropriate deployment of direct action, and the competing theories of change oriented towards either community organizing on the one hand and mass movement mobilizing on the other. The spectrum of strategy seeks to break the divisive binary of reformism and radicalism that can infiltrate these debates. Arguing that no tactic is inherently radical or inherently reformist, I temporarily eschew the terms in favor of a multiplicity of interventions aligned according to a spectrum ranging from non-confrontational to confrontational strategies. I suggest that shared commitment to a spectrum of strategy makes a diversity of tactics both possible and accountable. In turn, these provide greater scope for deploying different tactics that are able to engage with the full range of available points of intervention on different terrains of struggle.

Aggregating to scale

Lastly, I demonstrate how the size and scope of petro-hegemony and the broader modes of domination upon which it thrives, forces the climate justice movement to engage with the complexities of scale. I argue movements can grow in at least two ways: they can aggrandize to scale or they can aggregate to scale. Aggrandizement implies conquest, authoritarianism, and the development of a monolithic mass. In this manner, some movements grow out from a central hub that then absorbs more and more constituents and, in that way, one comes to represent all. I show that counter hegemonic movement strategy risks mirroring this model of scaling up. Instead, I argue for aggregation to scale. Aggregation to scale recognizes the multiplicity of nodes and hubs that make up a movement. Each node is an entity unto itself but movement leaders in each node forge connections with leaders in other nodes. Through these connections flows collective purpose, solidarity, shared principles and identity, but

without directives from a centralized authority. The aggregate of these nodes, and the connections between them, scales the movement. Here I bring together Adrienne Maree Brown's orientation towards "critical connection" (2017) and contrast it with Smucker's orientation towards critical mass (2017). I argue both critical connection and critical mass are necessary and suggest that it may be only through forging critical connections that we achieve critical mass. This formulation addresses an important critique of hegemonic politics from the anti-authoritarian and anarchist left and seeks to establish a counter hegemonic orientation that bridges preferences for leaderless and leaderful movements.

Defining the carbon rebellion

Before describing the methodological orientation and research philosophy that built this dissertation, I must make a final theoretical remark about the naming of the concept I decided to call carbon rebellion. It is not intended to invoke the recent rise to prominence of Extinction Rebellion in the climate movement. I developed the term before Extinction Rebellion made its debut and have insisted upon keeping it despite possible confusion. Carbon rebellion is a term specific to Blockadia and the frontlines of fossil fuel extraction, transportation and production. Extinction Rebellion, meanwhile, has captured international attention with direct action tactics, a broad tent approach to mass mobilizing, and impressive message discipline. Its target, however, is government legislation and policy.⁸ While

⁸ Moreover, the primacy Extinction Rebellion places on mass arrests over all other tactics, its troubling record of racially tone-deaf mobilizations and commitment to "apolitical" interventions, and its organizing philosophy premised on the argument that regime change may be achieved by mobilizing just 3.5% of a society's population, are all components of a strategic orientation that is antithetical to counter hegemonic politics. Nafeez Ahmed has written an excellent and constructive critique of Extinction Rebellion's theory of change titled [The Flawed Social Science Behind Extinction Rebellion's Change Strategy \(2019\)](#). Translating Ahmed's

strategies developed through the carbon rebellion framework may involve policy interventions, the purpose and scope of carbon rebellion is not limited to policy or government engagement. In addition, carbon rebellion is more a theoretical framework than the name of the movement or a campaign. Carbon rebellion would be a part of the climate justice movement's theory of change, but it is not intended as a name to replace the climate justice movement, nor is it intended to replace the climate justice movement's broader strategic interventions that take place outside the confines of resource frontiers and frontlines of resource extraction and production.

In making these remarks, I also wish to divorce the carbon rebellion from any association with carbon fundamentalism. Carbon fundamentalism is an orientation towards climate politics in which the primary, indeed only, objective of climate action is keeping carbon emissions out of the atmosphere (Dayaneni 2009). It fails to recognize the systemic roots of the climate crisis while depoliticizing the injustices and modes of domination embedded in climate disruption. This is precisely the approach to climate politics that this dissertation fundamentally rejects. Carbon rebellion is intended to invoke a rebellion of communities across the globe who are rising up against both the ideology and practice of extraction. We might call this the “keep-it-in-the-ground” contingent of the climate justice movement but in their efforts to keep fossil fuels in the ground, these frontlines communities are forging connections, shifting political orientations, pushing the boundaries of strategic comfort zones, and cultivating soil fertile for far deeper and more systemic rebellion against the

ideas into Gramscian terms, we might say Extinction Rebellion is fighting a war of maneuver without a war of position.

ideologies and practices that threaten the longevity of our species.⁹ Working through the carbon rebellion, climate justice activists come into confrontation with the modes of domination upon which petro-hegemony thrives and which make ecological collapse all but inevitable. This means that as they mobilize and organize against the fossil fuel industry, frontlines communities are encountering structural racism, settler colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism and the necessity of confronting systemic inequalities of all kinds. Thus, as Chapter Eight will explore in greater depth, carbon rebellion has truly revolutionary potential.

My research philosophy

As both a scholar and an activist, my research philosophy is grounded in three principals: 1) That all knowledge is situated, partial, and incomplete. 2) That my research must be useful, relevant, and accessible to the movement with which it is concerned. 3) That my research must be critical and rigorous but must not endanger the campaigns or people with whom I am working. Throughout the dissertation I place the experiences, knowledges, and voices of the campaigns in which I've worked at the heart of the arguments I develop, while remaining critically sensitive to the partial nature of their knowledge and my own.

⁹As a metaphor, therefore, carbon rebellion could also allude to carbon as one of the fundamental building blocks of all life rebelling against the denigration and destruction of life that fossil fuel expansion implies. I like to think of it as subtly invoking a rebellion in the name of the building blocks of life whose very molecules have been put into the service of the potential destruction of all life on earth. In this way we might think of a carbon rebellion as reclaiming carbon from the shackles of fossil fuel powered extractivism.

My research philosophy and commitment to scholar-activism owes an important debt to feminist interventions. Donna Haraway explains that we should challenge the “tempting dichotomy on the question of objectivity” (1988, 577). Her term, “situated knowledges,” abolishes the hierarchy of knowledge construction and the dominant “orderings of what can count as knowledge” that positivism in the social sciences seeks to impose. Meanwhile it leaves intact the possibility of knowledge production that is valuable precisely because it is partial, particular, and contextualized. As Haraway writes, “Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting subject and object” (1988, 583). Following Haraway’s position, scholar-activism can be rigorous and methodical without falling into the positivist “god trick” of “seeing everything from nowhere” (Haraway 1988, 581). My research approach has embraced the contextualized nature of knowledge and knowledge production. I believe acknowledging the contextualized nature of my own knowledge and research interests is a much more honest approach to research than to pretend that I have no interest or stake in its outcome. I am profoundly invested in what I am studying, and I am a part of this movement while I am studying it. I place myself in the text and at all times offer situated knowledge and partial perspective.

To the extent that it influences and inspires my writing, my readers should know my politics. I am anti-capitalist although there exists some diversity within the climate justice movement over what type of capitalism we collectively oppose. If there appears to be ambiguity about capitalism in this dissertation it is because that ambiguity is a reflection of the diversity of political orientations contained within the climate justice movement itself. I am anti-racist, as the climate justice movement must be. Despite recognizing much of the contradiction

existing between these positions, I am profoundly anti-authoritarian although not inherently anti-state – at least not in any short-term strategic sense. I am committed to decolonization and decolonial methodology, while still learning from a multiplicity of Indigenous perspectives about everything that that must entail in the context of researching and participating in the climate justice movement (Smith 1999). Finally, I am much more interested in defining myself by what I am for than by what I am against. I am for redistribution and decentralization of wealth and power. I am for a fair and just transition away from extractive economics and that prioritizes the experiences and leadership of frontlines communities and Indigenous peoples, along with workers who are employed in the fossil fuel industry and extractive economy today. I am for an energy system that is simultaneously decarbonized, decolonized, democratized, and decentralized. I believe another world is possible and I am for “pluriversal” politics and a world in which many worlds may exist (Escobar forthcoming). I am for democracy, self-governance, equity, dignity, solidarity and collective liberation from all modes of domination. Put simply, I am for climate justice.

Throughout this research and writing I have sought to recognize my own privileged positionality and the effects it has had on my conclusions and the relationships I have built with frontline activists. I am a foreign, white, male, middle class researcher and activist, and this undoubtedly shapes the way people communicate with me and how I respond. Moreover, as Laura Pulido suggests, scholar activists must not essentialize environmental racism nor fetishize communities on the frontlines (1996). There are complex and nuanced dynamics of identity, privilege and power that exist amongst activists in any frontline struggle. Both of the

case studies I explored contained their own internal hierarchies, privileges and power relationships. Just as I remained attuned to my own privilege, my research was also deeply attentive to the power dynamics within and between climate justice activists, the communities of which they are a part, and the industry against which they fight.

Finally, throughout this process, I remained committed to Participant Action Research (PAR) (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). In other words, my participation in the movement, my personal location within it, and my commitment to ensuring my research was, to the extent possible, developed in and through my participation in the movement also became resources of study and introspection. This level of engagement allows scholars to explore, describe and analyze social movements in unique and privileged ways that would be impossible for the detached, dispassionate researcher. PAR provides scholar activists with a powerful framework from which to devise methods and carry out research with integrity and rigor, while remaining active within, and accountable to, social movements. PAR places an emphasis on the emancipatory capacity of research methods, so it is common for researchers to foreground the voices and experience of the people within the communities in which their studies are situated, and to work *with* and not *on* those communities. The research strategies I derived from PAR made it possible for me to both participate in the campaigns I am studying, while learning from them and building knowledge alongside their members.

Methods

Applying this research philosophy to my methodological approach I devised a research agenda based upon empirical case study fieldwork in two case study sites. This involved participant action research, discourse analysis, online and offline archival research, key informant interviews, and profound engagement with activist and social movement theory through formal academic literature as well as activist manuals, handbooks, blogs, and zines. This research approach afforded me a great deal of flexibility in the range of resources available to me and the uses to which I put them. I have also placed all of these methods in conversation with one another to challenge and develop the ideas I drew from each one. In particular, I have sought to place theory and empirical study of, and participation in, movement practices in conversation with one another so that they might productively elucidate a contextualized yet generalizable framework that I hope to put in the services of scholars and activists alike.

While my methodological engagement with theory is incorporated into Chapter Two and descriptions of my case studies have earned a chapter each, I will describe my research process in a little more depth here. I had expected to use my case studies to “test” my theoretical interventions with empirical observations, but I found this was an overly simplified way of thinking about the relationship between the field and theory. Each has informed my engagement with the other. The theoretical interpretative framework I developed is as much constituted by my engagement with the field as it is by the literature I explore in Chapter 2. As such, the chapter that sets out my theoretical framework and engagement with the literature is produced in conversation with the ideas I explored and developed during my time in the field. Similarly, my case study chapters are the product of engagement with theory.

The divisions between chapters and methodologies are therefore somewhat artificial and maintained only for the sake of clarity and organization.

I spent ten weeks in two case study sites. The first was in city of Burnaby in Coast Salish Territory adjacent to the city of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. Here I studied the operations of petro-hegemony and the strategies, narrative and tactics that climate justice activists, led by First Nations campaigners, are using to halt the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline. The pipeline would transport diluted bitumen from Edmonton in Alberta to Burnaby and triple export capacity of Alberta's tar sands off the Pacific Coast. The second case study took me back to Richmond, California. With the same research objective, I explored petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion in the city and studied the process by which Chevron's hegemonic status had been challenged by an alliance of progressives and climate justice activists. Chevron operates a refinery in the city which remains the state of California's largest stationary source of Greenhouse Gases. Oil interests have controlled city politics for over 100 years this case is especially concerned with community resistance to Chevron's proposed refinery upgrades over the last 15 years. While both case studies provide ample evidence of the existence of petro-hegemony or the carbon rebellion, their purpose is to illustrate and complicate my understanding of this theoretical framework with empirical and practical examples.

In addition to my case study research in the field, I also built an online database of over 1500 news articles, opinion pieces, blog posts, Tweets and Facebook posts, memes and video clips that pertained to each case study field site. The campaigns and movements I studied continue

to develop in real time and so I needed to create a “living archive” that would allow me to maintain up-to-date contact with the field and the shifting dynamics shaping it. I used this database or archive for three purposes. Firstly, it provided the formal basis for analyzing the discursive interventions the fossil fuel industry and climate justice activists deployed to advance their respective agendas. Secondly, it offered essential secondary sources necessary for delving deeper into the nuances of the histories and politics of each case study site, as well as for staying up to date with developments on the ground when I left the field. And thirdly, I used it to inform the questions I would bring to my key informant interviewees. This helped me develop a recursive approach to interviews where I would use contemporary developments to open up questions that advanced my research agenda.

I interviewed 27 local movement leaders, strategists, activists, administrators, and politicians. My interviews were open ended and took the form of guided conversations, or what Burgess calls “conversations with a purpose” (1985). They ranged between 45 minutes and two hours and I transcribed them using Otter software. The purpose of these interviews was not to survey opinions or make generalizations about what movement leaders and strategist think, but rather to add depth and detail to my research and to challenge preconceived arguments I had developed before entering the field. These proved absolutely vital resource in elucidating and complicating my arguments throughout the dissertation and in bringing the voices and perspectives of movement leaders to the forefront of the chapters that follow.

Dissertation structure: what to expect

This dissertation's contributions are developed in four parts each of which contain two chapters. Part One introduces readers to my theoretical framework and the wide-ranging literature I have drawn upon to construct my arguments. It also provides readers with a brief insight into contemporary theories of climate justice, the current status of the climate justice movement, and explains why keeping fossil fuels in the ground on the frontlines of resource extraction has become a strategic necessity in the context of climate emergency. Part Two brings readers to the frontlines of my two case studies. Here I situate my research in Burnaby and Richmond's respective histories, geographies and politics, provide a narrativized timeline of the events under particular scrutiny, illustrate the operations of petro-hegemony, and raise the questions my fieldwork has challenged this dissertation to ask and explore. It is worth mentioning that where petro-hegemony dominates my contributions in Parts One and Two, Parts Three and Four explore the potential for the emergence and cultivation of the carbon rebellion, the organization of strategies and tactics that it implies, and the questions and tensions raised about the process through which it might develop. Specifically, Part Three identifies and categorizes the mobilizing and organizing strategies being deployed on the frontlines of the two case studies, while Part Four describes and engages with some of the major debates defining the movement's strategic orientations today. Below I provide a short description of what readers can expect from each chapter.

Chapter One offers a brief theoretical overview of climate justice(s) and introduces readers to the climate justice movement. It explores the revolutionary potential of climate justice and specifically the contingent of the movement working on keeping fossil fuels in the ground at their source. I explain why these campaigns are the focus of this study and place them in the

broader context of climate disruption and environmental politics. Building on Chapter One, Chapter Two provides readers with the theoretical framework and arguments this dissertation advances. Offering a deep examination of Gramscian theory, and engagement with Environmental Sociology, Political Ecology, Energy Studies, Social Movement Studies, and Critical Theory, as well as drawing upon public intellectuals and field manuals written by and for members of social movements, this chapter speaks and responds to the synthetic field in which I have placed my research agenda. Readers will note, I draw on insights from a wide range of interdisciplinary scholarship to lay the theoretical foundations upon which this dissertation rests. Thus, Chapter Two reviews the evidence through which my rereading of Gramscian hegemony is advanced and that petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion are premised upon.

Chapter Three situates my first case study in Burnaby, British Columbia. In doing so it locates the region as a strategic hub in the fossil fuel commodity chain, emphasizes the significance of settler colonial relations in the region, province and country, and describes the contemporary political, culture and economic contexts in which the fight over the Trans Mountain pipeline continues to unfold. It offers a situated narrative in which I describe a period of seven years over which the struggle to prevent the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline has taken place. This narrative brings readers into the intensity of the struggle and provides them with crucial details that allow us to better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry and the climate justice movement's response to it in the region. The chapter goes on to explore the operations of petro-hegemony in practice. It provides detailed accounts of the different points of intervention, relations of power, and strategies, narratives

and tactics the industry has deployed. It organizes these into the petro-hegemony framework. Finally, it raises questions that the case study evoked about the construction and maintenance of the carbon rebellion and that much of rest of the dissertation will engage with. Chapter Four follows the same format but contextualizes my case study in Richmond, California. The case study features a 15-year period over which climate justice activists and progressive have contested Chevron's plans to upgrade its refinery in the city. The case is a classic example of environmental injustice and racism. In particular, I situate Richmond in its history of racialized impoverishment and corruption, the consequences of neoliberalism and deindustrialization, and the role that Chevron's refinery has played in this history. Both cases, I argue, offer vital insights into the operations of petro-hegemony and how it might be defeated.

Chapters Five and Six should be read together because they offer accounts of the relationship between community organizing and mass mobilizing. Drawing on both case studies, they identify, categorize and assess the narratives, strategies, tactics climate justice activists have deployed in their respective campaigns. Chapter Five emphasizes narrative, alliance building and the possibility of intersectional populism. Here I argue that the populist counter hegemonic narratives that climate justice activists have shared are helping to articulate into alignment a broad "hegemonic bloc," through a political culture of opposition and creation (Foran, Grosse and Gray 2017). However, as a counter hegemonic strategy, populism risks, and indeed is premised upon, erasing particularisms and ignoring relations of difference, privilege and power within the "we" that it articulates. This forces us to problematize alliance building through the lens of accountability and intersectionality. Working with Zoltán

Grossman's book *Unlikely Alliances* (2017), Patricia Hill Collins "matrix of domination" (2012) and Kimberlé Crenshaw's coining of the term intersectionality (1990), I offer intersectional populism as one way we might navigate the tensions between universalism and particularism. While Chapter Five explores how climate justice activists organize communities into counter hegemonic alliances and intervene in relations of consent, Chapter Six focuses on the strategies and tactics climate justice campaigners use to intervene in all three power relations and specifically to mobilize communities against the industry. This chapter shows readers how we can organize and categorize these strategies, narratives and tactics into the carbon rebellion framework.

Chapter Six may neatly organize and categorize strategies into the carbon rebellion framework but, as Chapter Seven goes on to illustrate, these do not necessarily fit cohesively together outside the confines of theory. With an emphasis on potential for synthesis, Chapter Seven explores the deep strategic and politico-strategic divisions within the movement that threaten to render the realization of carbon rebellion all but impossible. In particular, I confront three debates: firstly, the role of the state in the climate justice movement's strategic repertoire, secondly the value and appropriateness of direct action as an intervention in petro-hegemony, and thirdly the division between preferences for mobilizing strategies, on the one hand, and organizing strategies, on the other. Working through each of these debates, this chapter asserts that there is potential for convergence and even synergy amongst their different positions. Introducing readers to the spectrum of strategy, I argue that strategic orientations tend to be premised upon political and experiential prejudices that we should respect, but also that tend to categorize strategies into either reformist or radical dispositions.

I argue that attributing these political values to strategy is partly responsible for divisions between strategic orientations. The spectrum of strategy organizes strategies not according to how radical or reformist they are, but around the extent to which they could be considered on spectrum from non-confrontational to confrontational. Attempting to break the radical-reformist binary, I illustrate the importance of a framework through which a diversity of tactics could actually bring activists together across strategic differences and intervene in a far larger array of points of intervention across all three terrains of struggle.

Chapter Eight engages with critical questions of scale. Questions of scale loom in the background of each of the preceding chapters but are not engaged with until this final chapter. Wrapped up in the complexities of scale are questions about the broader matrix of domination in which petro-hegemony operates and whether carbon rebellion is an adequate response to confronting that matrix. Thus, we are forced to again confront the revolutionary potential of carbon rebellion and keep-it-in-the-ground campaigns. Also embedded in this question is the possibility of relationships between different complimentary hegemonies, or layered hegemonies. Moreover, the fossil fuel industry itself is enormous in scope and scale. All of these considerations lead to the fundamental concern of the scale at which the climate justice movement's interventions are appropriate or even possible. I remain convinced that scaling the movement up is necessary to address the industry in a way that is commensurate with its size and scope, but this chapter problematizes the different processes by which scale may be achieved. Namely, I explore the difference between aggrandizing to scale and aggregation to scale. Again, searching for the possibility of synthesis across a broad spectrum of political strategy, in aggregation to scale I argue the movement may be able to scale up

through frontlines leadership while maintaining a democratic and accountable orientation towards its operations. I show that this depends upon the deliberate cultivation of what Adirenne Maree Brown calls critical connections, alongside a commitment counter hegemonic articulations and alignment across space and difference.

Lastly, I offer a short conclusion to this dissertation by demonstrating the logic connecting each chapter's main arguments to those before and after it. In doing so, I provide readers with a broader perspective on the dissertation and reflect upon its relevance to the field and to climate justice activists. Therefore, the conclusion will present a holistic account of petro-hegemony and how we might facilitate the emergence and flourishing of the carbon rebellion. In this way, I hope to illustrate the significance of this dissertation's contributions and the way in which each chapter provides tools and frameworks that scholars and activists alike can build upon and put to work in their own contexts.

Conclusion to the introduction

Standing Rock is everywhere now and that's why this dissertation matters. Across the world, communities are organizing and mobilizing against the expansion of the fossil fuel industry. They are doing so in the name of climate justice, but also in the name of democracy, sovereignty, self-determination, and for the sake of public health, water, land, homes and the ecosystems upon which our lives depend. Naomi Klein has called this new political landscape of contestation Blockadia (2014). As governments and leaders around the world fail to advance anything like the ambition required of addressing the climate crisis, let alone

addressing it in a just way, Blockadia's campaigns to keep fossil fuels in the ground are emerging as a crucial force holding back the recklessness of an industry that is prepared to extract and burn more fossil fuels than even the most conservative estimates say are safe to burn and maintain a stable climate. In this struggle, however, communities are recognizing that the fossil fuel industry is merely the physical embodiment of broader systems of violence, extraction, dispossession and domination through which the world's most marginalized people feel the impacts of fossil fuel pollution and climate disruption first and hardest. It is from these communities that the climate justice movement has emerged and whose leadership it must follow. My dissertation makes its intervention here, in Blockadia and on the frontlines of climate justice.

If we are to stand any chance of mitigating climate catastrophe, we must keep fossil fuels in the ground but we must do so in a way that advances a just transition away from the extractive systems of domination out of which climate crisis has emerged and with leadership from those most impacted. How we do so will require the minds and actions of millions. My dissertation is one small offering towards that effort. In its assessment of the power of the fossil fuel industry and the strategies, narratives, and tactics the climate justice movement could, and is, using to counter it, I hope to offer a framework of understanding activists and scholars can work with and build upon to keep fossil fuels in the ground and advance a revolutionary agenda in the name of climate justice. In my rereading of hegemony and the relations of consent, coercion and compliance, I hope to provoke serious thought and conversation about the adequacy of our theories of change and strategic orientations, while offering a productive channel through which we might map our power and the industry's.

And through concepts like intersectional populism, a spectrum of strategy, and aggregating to scale, I hope to facilitate and encourage the development of the carbon rebellion. If this dissertation is able to contribute even half of this ambitious program, then I believe it will be a valuable and significant intervention in the study, politics and practice of climate justice during what may be one of the most consequential moments in our collective struggle for a fairer, more democratic, more equitable, more just, and more sustainable future.

PART 1: THEORETICAL ENGAGEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Chapter 1 - Climate Justice, The Climate Justice Movement, and Keeping Fossil Fuels in the Ground

The climate justice movement has prioritized keeping fossil fuels in the ground as a critical intervention to prevent greenhouse gas emissions raising the planet's temperature by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. As global governance has failed to produce anything close to the ambition climate change mitigation requires, climate justice activists have found allies in frontlines struggles against the expansion of the fossil fuel industry. This has connected climate justice to local, place-based struggles to protect water, land, homes, self-determination, and public health, and to resist the colonial, gendered, classist and racialized ways in which climate change and the fossil fuel industry's operations impact already marginalized communities first and hardest. This development is promising an alternative to mainstream and hegemonic climate politics which depoliticizes the climate crisis, rendering it a technocratic problem rather than one of power, resources, and conflict.

In this chapter I navigate the different interpretations of climate justice that exist within the climate justice movement, indicate the approaches to climate justice upon which this dissertation is premised, and introduce readers to the keep-it-in-the-ground contingent of the movement operating on the frontlines of Blockadia. Exploring the climate science motivating this movement, I make the case that keeping the vast majority of known fossil fuels reserves in the ground is a fundamental, though necessarily incomplete, component of the struggle for

climate justice. I show that this movement is a translocal network, connected by shared principles and strategies of intervention, and that it is taking this fight to the fossil fuel industry around the globe. I argue that a large contingent of the climate justice movement has eschewed intervention at the annual United Nations climate talks and are taking climate politics into their own hands in frontlines struggles against the expansion of the fossil fuel industry. In framing the industry as the target of climate action, they are challenging dominant climate discourses and politics. Nevertheless, I problematize the keep-it-in-the-ground framing of intervention as one that risks replicating mainstream carbon fundamentalism. Responding to this risk, I argue that through their confrontations with the fossil fuel industry, communities and activists confront the systems of domination out of which the climate crisis has emerged. This exposure lays the groundwork for broader confrontation with these systems of domination. Finally, therefore, I explore the revolutionary potential of climate justice and the extent which revolutionary action in the name of climate justice may be cultivated in, and grow out of, the frontlines of Blockadia.

Climate Justice

Climate justice is at once a theoretical framework, a framing discourse, a distinct set of objectives and principles, and a loosely articulated collection of utopian visions for the future. With different meanings and different interpretations around the world, climate justice is also a contested concept. Compare these definitions for example:

“Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly. Climate

justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world's resources." – The Mary Robinson Foundation (2018)

"The heart of climate justice is the understanding that the urgent action needed to prevent climate change must be based on community-led solutions and the well-being of local communities, Indigenous Peoples and the global poor, as well as biodiversity and intact ecosystems." – Global Justice Ecology Project (2018)

"Frontline, community-based organizations have the solutions to the extractive industrial systems that are eroding human's primary means of existence on the planet. Nature and humans are interdependent. Effective climate crisis solutions honor human rights and the rights of nature. Localized democracies that champion community rights to energy, land, water, and food sovereignty are the best answers to combating exploitation. Shared leadership produces community wellbeing and the most innovative solutions to our climate crisis. Workers should be at the forefront of shaping new economies rooted in fairness, equity and ecological values." – Climate Justice Alliance (2019)

"Climate justice is a term used for framing global warming as an ethical and political issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature." – Wikipedia (2018)

Identifying "three different articulations of climate justice – those embodied in academic discourse, elite nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and grassroots movements,"

Schlosberg and Collins help make sense of these different approaches (2014, 1). The first articulation tends to concern questions of accountability, responsibility, and interrogating justice as philosophical category (See Shue 2014, for example). The second tends to focus on policy interventions, human rights, the rights of industrializing countries to develop, and market-based mechanisms aimed at decoupling fossil fuel emissions and economic development. The third, which in so far as market-based mechanisms are considered is antithetical to the second, emerged to address the perceived root causes of climate change. It presents the climate crisis as rooted in capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and colonialism. In many accounts, these systems of domination are embodied in the fossil fuel industry. A "just

transition” away from the fossil fuel economy and the systems of domination upon which it thrives is therefore necessary to avert climate catastrophe.

John Foran identifies a further distinction within this third articulation of climate justice.

Here grassroots movements may be classified into those advancing climate justice discourses and those advancing *radical* climate justice discourses. This difference usually hinges on whether capitalism *tout court* or specifically *neoliberal* capitalism is considered the focus of the movement’s revolutionary orientation (2016). This dissertation is positioned in the former camp but embraces and is profoundly relevant to those also occupying the latter. Meanwhile, Schlosberg and Collins concede there is in fact a great deal of overlap between the three articulations they identify and that these should be considered ideal types rather than fixed categories (2014). Nonetheless, their renderings help demonstrate the nuances and contestation of the term climate justice.

Climate justice, as I will use it, resonates most with what Schlosberg and Collins identify as the “grassroots movement articulation.” Throughout this chapter, however, I will also seek to challenge approaches articulating necessarily sutured distinctions between academic, NGO, and grassroots approaches climate justice. In this dissertation, then, climate justice is the recognition that climate disruption has systemic causes and is a crisis rooted in legacies of colonialism, racism, and (neoliberal) capitalism (Bond and Dorsey 2011; Bond 2012; Powys Whyte 2017; Klein 2014; Mann and Wainwright 2018). Climate justice asserts that the people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and fossil fuel production are often those least responsible for them (Tokar 2014; Harlan, Pellow, and Roberts 2015; Mohai,

Pellow and Roberts 2009). These people tend to be some of global society's most marginalized communities: Indigenous peoples – particularly Indigenous women – people of color, and low-income communities, as well as vast swathes of the global poor living in the Global South (Pellow 2012; Bond 2012; Powys Whyte 2017; Bullard and Wright 2012). Accordingly, there can be no *just* solutions to climate disruption that are derived from the dominant epistemologies, hierarchies, ideologies, narratives, and assumptions that produced the climate crisis or that replicate the systems of domination and exploitation from which it has emerged (Bond 2014; Foran 2016).

While some earlier iterations of climate justice favored some market-based mechanisms as climate solutions, like carbon pricing or a carbon-tax-and-dividend, more recently climate justice has tended to exclude these from its repertoire of *just solutions* (Gilbertson 2017). Very few within the climate justice movement believe that “techno-fixes” like geo-engineering and Carbon Capture Sequestration (CCS), and market mechanisms like Cap and Trade and carbon offsets, favored by establishment elites and dominant neoliberal paradigms can prevent climate chaos (ibid; Müller and Passakadis 2010; Fauset 2010; Lohmann 2011; Gilbertson 2017). Fewer, still, believe that such solutions will prevent climate chaos *and* emancipate their communities from environmental racism and inequality (Harlan, Pellow, and Roberts 2015; Bullard and Müller 2012). Just solutions to the climate crisis must, therefore, be advanced through a *just transition*, embodying an emancipatory departure away from the logic of extraction, “accumulation by dispossession,”¹⁰ contemporary relations of

¹⁰ For more on *accumulation by dispossession* see David Harvey's *The New Imperialism* (2003). Here Harvey also recognizes that accumulation by dispossession takes place through a combination of the power relations of coercion and consent.

power and distributions of wealth and resources (Brecher 2017; Rosemburg 2010; Climate Justice Alliance 2019; Healy and Barry 2017). In other words, achieving solutions to climate change, let alone *just* solutions, means radically reorganizing the logics of consumption, wealth and domination upon which society is currently predicated (Klein 2014; Anderson 2012; Urry 2011; Climate Justice Alliance 2019a). Moreover, just solutions must ensure that communities and workers dependent upon extractive industries are not abandoned to unemployment and destitution but are instead helping lead the transition to sustainable energy infrastructure.

A just transition addresses the historical responsibility and accountability for fossil fuel pollution internally within nations and externally between them. According to the Climate Justice Alliance, the economics of a just transition first arose out of collaboration between labor unions and environmental justice groups who recognized “the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet; and at the same time provide just pathways for workers to transition to other jobs.” The idea has been developed further to mean a transition that is “just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations” (Climate Justice Alliance 2019a). Elements of a just transition include leadership of communities on the frontlines of climate disruption and fossil fuel extraction, community ownership of sustainable energy production, some articulations of a Green New Deal, and climate solutions that would create millions of meaningful jobs, retrain workers to move out of the fossil fuel sector, invest in local economies and community’s own mitigation and adaptation strategies, supporting

democratic, healthy, regenerative communities, and a momentous shift in societal values around work, consumption, and leisure.

The US network of climate justice community organizers, the Climate Justice Alliance, has endorsed Senator Bernie Sanders' Green New Deal Plan because it contains many of these elements (Climate Justice Alliance 2019c). Similarly, in Canada, much of this political program is replicated in the Leap Manifesto (Leap Manifesto 2016). Meanwhile, Indigenous organizers and academics with The Red Nation have sought to critique and build upon the Green New Deal with a Red Deal which positions Indigenous peoples, experiences, and power at the forefront of a just transition ([Estes 2019](#); [Red Nation 2019](#)). In all its iterations, from policy prescriptions to presidential agendas to revolutionary projects, the just transition decarbonizes, democratizes, decentralizes and decolonizes energy and economy. Between nations, it is the richest and most industrialized countries that have benefited most from fossil fuel energy. Within and between nations, it is the richest and most powerful people, institutions and companies that have benefited the most from fossil fuel energy. In both cases these are the entities who must be forced to halt further fossil fuel extraction and to pay for a just transition. Climate justice, therefore, is a counter hegemonic and unashamedly utopian project for radical social change. It cannot be achieved without the most powerful, most diverse, most creative, most resilient social movement the world has ever seen (Foran 2016).

The Climate Justice Movement

The climate justice movement (CJM) is global and translocal, and is comprised of a vast network of movements, campaigns and organizations, encompassing many different ideologies, cultures, geographies, theories of change, and differences in members' access to wealth, privilege, and power (Routledge 2011; Tokar 2014). Nevertheless, the movement coheres, more or less, around the project outlined above, and many of its members have rallied around the slogan and sentiment "system change not climate change" (Bullard and Müller 2012). The movement has always sought to challenge a perceived depoliticization of climate change, in which the crisis is reduced simply to a question of market mechanisms, demand-side policy interventions, and technological solutions incentivizing energy transition (Kenis and Mathijs 2014). The movement has its roots in the environmental justice movement and the global justice movement. Its emergence as a global network with a coherent agenda has been traced back to the creation of the 2002 Bali Principles of Climate Justice (Bond 2014, Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Bali Principles 2002). From its very beginning, and by the very nature of what it signifies, climate justice has been a necessarily global concept. Emerging out of frustration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the annual climate negotiations, the Conference of the Parties (COP)'s, failure to meaningfully engage with questions of historical responsibility, reign in the influence of the fossil fuel industry, or recognize the ecological debt industrialized countries owe industrializing, formerly colonized, countries, the CJM has always been global in its scope and ambitions (Bond 2014).

Decoupling economic growth from fossil fuel energy has been the urgent question of the global political and business elites who claim to take climate change seriously (Anderson

2012; Li 2009; Peet, Robbins, and Watts 2011). The annual UN COPs are heavily influenced by neoliberal, market-based solutions that elites argue will decouple growth from emissions and bring about an era of sustainable capitalism (Bond 2014; An Eco Modernist Manifesto 2015; Paris Agreement 2015). The CJM considers these to be false solutions that don't address the structural inequalities in which climate change and ecological degradation are rooted (Bond 2014). As Princen, Manno and Martin conclude:

To presume that fossil fuels will stay in the ground as a by-product of rational environmental and energy policies is, to put it bluntly, politically deficient. It presumes that techno-rationalism – cost benefit analysis, efficacy measures, new technologies, designed markets – will eventually overcome the capacities of entrenched fossil fuel interests. It presumes a politics without power. (2015, 333)

Moreover, as the “political opportunity structures” (Tarrow 1998) available for civil society actors to engage in the negotiation process at the COPs to address these critiques have become increasingly circumscribed, much of the CJM has abandoned the negotiations as a legitimate arena of struggle (Foran 2016). The globalized CJM developed in the streets, in protests and rallies, and at parallel conferences held outside the conference halls of the COP meetings (Brecher 2017). Movement members now use the annual conferences as moments to mobilize discourses that cast doubt upon the legitimacy of the negotiation process, condemn the market solutions, carbon pricing, and techno-fixes, and, of course, to converge in one place to strategize and share knowledge across the global movement (Bullard and Müller 2012).

From the UN conferences, to the halls of statecraft, to municipal government, to our ideologies and our very bodies, the fossil fuel industry has responded to attempts to reign in fossil fuel emissions by shoring up its cultural and political legitimacy, influencing public

discourse with misinformation campaigns, buying and financing politician's obstruction of climate policy, and defaming climate scientists (Oreskes and Conway 2010; Mulvey et al. 2016). This has ensured that global governance and national legislation that might otherwise restrict the extraction and burning of fossil fuels remains weak or non-existent (Oreskes and Conway 2010; McKibben 2012). Thus, the industry has enjoyed cultural and political support as it continues exploring for, extracting and selling fossil fuel energy, despite the overwhelming evidence linking its activities directly to the effects of climate change (see Heede 2014; Ekwurzel et al. 2017). Meanwhile, an Oil Change International report, published in 2016, articulated the scientific case for keeping for keeping fossil fuels, and especially oil and gas, in the ground. It found that even if coal production were taken out of the equation, "the reserves in currently operating oil and gas fields alone... would take the world beyond 1.5°C" (Oil Change International 2016). In response to all this, the CJM has taken the fight over climate change to the fossil fuel industry, targeting its legitimizing narratives and its financial and political supporters.

Simultaneously, the global movement has gone (trans)local (Routledge 2011; Brecher 2017). While the climate crisis is a global phenomenon, climate justice can be fought over at many different scales. Place-based, local resistance has proven a particularly effective site of struggle. As climate justice has moved to confronting the fossil fuel industry on local frontlines around the world, Naomi Klein writes:

These place-based stands are stopping real climate crimes in progress. Seeing those successes, as well as the failures of top-down environmentalism, many young people concerned about climate change are taking a pass on the slick green groups and the big U.N. summits. Instead, they are flocking to the barricades of Blockadia. This is more than a change in strategy; it's a fundamental change in perspective. The

collective response to the climate crisis is changing from something that primarily takes place in closed-door policy and lobbying meetings into something alive and unpredictable and very much in the streets (and mountains, and farmers' fields, and forests). (2014, 254-255)

Klein's exploration of "Blockadia" describes the CJM's shifting geographical orientations between the local and the global, and the translocal, which has taken precedence as climate negotiations fail year after year to produce legally binding commitments to emissions reductions. Blockadia, as Klein explains, "is not a specific location on a map but rather a roving transnational conflict zone that is cropping up with increasing frequency and intensity wherever extractive projects are attempting to dig and drill, whether for open-pit mines, or gas fracking, or tar sands oil pipelines" (2014, 254). Blockadia exists where resistance to fossil fuel extraction, transportation, and refining exists. Seeking to politicize the climate crisis and advance climate justice by specifically targeting and curtailing the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure, a large contingent of the movement has adopted the slogan "Keep it in the ground." While the CJM operates in many different contexts and campaigns, it is this contingent of the climate justice movement, and its counter hegemonic activity in Blockadia, that are the primary focus of this dissertation's interventions. The frontlines of Blockadia, therefore, are the frontlines of climate justice referred to throughout the chapters that follow.

In the United States, the Keystone XL pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline became two highly visible examples of Keep-it-in-the-ground campaigning infused with Indigenous leadership and place-based struggle. But such activism is by no means limited to the North America. From Bolivia to Germany, from Nigeria to Bangladesh, from England to Australia, all around the world these zones of intense conflict and confrontation over energy resource extraction are multiplying and expanding. Klein writes that the frontlines of Blockadia seem

“more reminiscent of civil war than political protest” (2014, 257). These place-based struggles are connected to the global movement deploying climate change as a frame around which very different organizations and interests may coalesce, mobilizing support and resources (Grossman 2017). These local fights tend to be led by the people most affected by fossil fuel extraction and exposure to climate change: Indigenous peoples, communities of color, low-income communities, and particularly women (Klein 2014; Grossman 2017; Gaard 2015). Much of this activism has involved building alliances with other struggles over land rights, Indigenous sovereignty, labor practices, through emphasizing the intersections of race, class, and gender with resource extraction and pollution.

Why we must keep-it-in-the-ground

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report in 2018 claiming that the globe (writ large) had just 12 years left to implement emissions reductions that could limit global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid the most severe consequences of climate disruption (IPCC summary for policy makers, 2018). Six years earlier, 350.org cofounder, Bill McKibben, published his zeitgeist article, *Global Warming’s Terrifying New Math: Three simple numbers that add up to global catastrophe – and that make clear who the real enemy is* (2012), in which he framed global carbon dioxide emissions in terms of how much we have left to burn before exceeding 2 degrees Celsius. This article informed 350.org’s subsequent fossil fuel divestment campaign and climate activism and introduced audiences to our global “carbon budget.” Drawing on data from the Grantham Institute’s 2012 *Carbon Tracker Report* and an array of climate scientists’ carbon budget modeling,

McKibben argued that roughly 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must remain unburned if we are to have an 80% chance of staying below 2 degrees Celsius (see the update Carbon Tracker Report 2013). McKibben claimed that we then had about 565 gigatons¹¹ of carbon dioxide left in our carbon budget. But he also showed that fossil fuel reserves belonging to companies and nation-states at that time contained roughly 2,795 gigatons of carbon dioxide. In other words, in 2012 the fossil fuel industry (private and state-owned fossil fuel companies) owned five times more coal, oil, gas than even the most conservative scientific estimates said was safe to burn and maintain a stable climate.

Climate scientists at the Tyndall Centre and the Grantham Institute more or less concurred with McKibben's analysis, estimating that approximately 80% of fossil fuels existing in known fossil fuel reserves must remain unburned to avoid catastrophic climate change (Carbon Tracker 2013; Anderson 2012). The numbers have changed slightly with more recent data and more advanced climate modeling (Le Quéré et al. 2018). The IPCC 2018 Summary for Policy Makers' global carbon budget now allots the world 580 gigatons by mid-century for a 50% probability of staying below 1.5 degrees, and 420 gigatons of carbon dioxide for a 66% probability (IPCC 2018, section C1.3). As of November 2019, *The Guardian's "Carbon Countdown Clock"* suggested we have roughly 682 gigatons of carbon dioxide *equivalent* left to burn for "a good chance" of remaining below 2 degrees warming (Evershed 2017). At current rates of emissions, we will exceed the global carbon budget for 2 degrees in about 17 years. However, where 2 degrees had previously been considered the "safe" threshold of global warming in 2012, that number has been reduced to 1.5 degrees.

¹¹ One gigaton is equivalent to one billion tons.

The suggested “safety threshold” of both numbers has always been politically negotiated rather than scientifically determined.

The Paris Climate Agreement negotiated in 2015 saw all signatories agree that 1.5 degrees was a safer warming threshold and committed to limiting warming at 1.5 degrees as an “aspirational” goal. Incidentally, the Paris Climate Agreement does not include the words fossil fuels anywhere in the document. Meanwhile, discoveries of massive oil and gas deposits in Texas and Bahrain, and further investment in extreme extraction like fracking, cyclic steam injection, and tar sands mining have all increased the amount of fossil fuels countries and companies own in their reserves (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). While the Paris Agreement marked a rare breakthrough in global climate negotiations, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to emissions reductions to which each signatory will now voluntarily commit still place global warming on track for 3 degrees by 2100 ([Harvey 2016](#); [Climate Action Tracker 2019](#)). The Paris Climate Agreement was a failure of climate ambition and a betrayal of all those who are already experiencing the consequences of climate chaos. As of writing, the United Nations’ World Meteorological Organization has found greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere reached a record high in November 2019 and that there is “no sign of a slowdown, let alone decline” in emissions production (Carrington 2019a).

Nevertheless, in January 2019, climate scientists at the University of Manchester released a report suggesting that the globe’s 1.5 degrees target is still within reach but *only if an immediate halt is imposed upon the construction of all new fossil infrastructure and*

exploration, allowing current production to run down reserves as rapid advances are made towards energy transition (Carrington 2019b; Smith et al. 2019). Avoiding what Healy and Barry call “carbon lock-in,” a scenario in which the construction of fossil fuel infrastructure today locks in cheap access to fossil fuels for decades to come, entails halting the construction of any new fossil fuel infrastructure projects now (2018). According to them, fossil fuel infrastructure is much harder to take offline once it is up and running than it is not to build the infrastructure in the first place. Crucially, the climate science, the emissions modelling, and the threat of carbon lock-in all demonstrate that avoiding the most severe consequences of climate disruption means we must leave the vast majority of fossil fuels in the ground, unburned. With just 10 years left to cut emissions in half, we cannot afford to build out any new fossil fuel infrastructure. This places climate science and climate justice in direct confrontation with both the fossil fuel industry and also the energy sources that have driven modern capitalist development for the past two centuries.

While the CJM has maintained a focus on the fossil fuel industry since the 2002 Bali Principles, in the Global North McKibben’s article helped popularize these numbers and advanced the framing of the fossil fuel industry as the real enemy of climate action in 2012. Turning to Blockadia, large swathes of the CJM have mobilized around holding the industry accountable, preventing the further expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure, keeping fossil fuels in the ground, and advancing a just transition away from economies based on fossil fuel extraction (Brecher 2017). Throughout Blockadia, fossil fuel extraction zones, refineries, power plants, pipelines and transportation routes, as well as public discourses, courts and

policy, have all become sites of intense struggle and should be considered some of the major frontlines of climate justice activism (ibid).

Despite the growing significance of Blockadia and its implications for fossil fuel production, however, Cheon and Urpelainen note that flashpoint spectacles of struggle that single out specific fossil fuel projects around the world cannot be relied upon to arrest the global trend of rising greenhouse gas emissions (2018). It is clear that even the marked increase in activism against local fossil fuel expansion is hardly going to contain rising emissions on its own. Indeed, there is no doubt, even amongst Blockadia's climate justice activists, that keeping fossil fuels in the ground is at their source is just one small part of a much broader suite of interventions that both climate science and climate justice demand. Nevertheless, interventions in Blockadia are making the industry's expansionist ambition much harder to achieve and there is also little doubt within the movement that this should count for a very great deal. In July 2019, the Secretary General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) told reporters that climate activists were becoming the fossil fuel industry's greatest threat ([Watts 2019a](#)). Moreover, keep-it-in-the-ground activism certainly can have a significant impact on emissions with regards to specific projects like the tar sands in Alberta. For example, as activists make it harder for fossil fuel companies to dig, drill, extract, transport, and refine their product, investment in such projects may dry up. Not one of the five major tar sands pipelines proposed in the last 15 years has been built, ensuring much of Alberta's oil remains landlocked. This has stymied tar sands expansion and prevented significant increases in emissions.

Confronting Carbon Fundamentalism

Keep-it-in-the-ground activism and the multiplying sites of energy conflict in Blockadia have drawn attention to climate justice, but it is also important to question whether this kind of activism is too narrowly focused on carbon emissions and the fossil fuel industry. The keep-it-in-the-ground narrative and its focus on carbon emissions may displace a more systemic analysis of the crisis rooted in extractive economics, the legacies of colonialism, and enduring environmental racism. Environmental Sociologist, John Urry, writes that, “to slow down, let alone reverse, increasing carbon emissions and temperatures requires the reorganization of social life, nothing more and nothing less” (2011, 89). This cannot be achieved by fighting the fossil fuel industry alone. A theory of change that singles out the industry and fossil fuel infrastructure as the site of intervention in the broader politics of climate change may ignore the other strategies that are necessary to halt our freefall into ecological collapse. The question here, is how a keep-it-in-the-ground framing of the climate crisis can achieve the radical socioecological transformations that are necessary to address collapse, and, moreover, exceed the singular emphasis on carbon emissions found in mainstream climate politics.

It is true, strategies addressing the roots of the climate crisis must go far deeper and be far broader than confronting the fossil fuel industry alone. Indeed, at least as early as 2009, Gopal Dayaneni formerly of Movement Generation and the Climate Justice Alliance, was warning against a “carbon fundamentalist” framing of the climate crisis (2009). According to Dayaneni, carbon fundamentalism frames climate disruption as simply a question of

molecules of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the solution for which is to find ways of reducing emissions of those molecules and to take them out of the atmosphere. For Dayeneni carbon fundamentalism, where the single most important objective is reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, opens up space for the urgency of the crisis to give way to actions born of desperation, like geo-engineering or forcing Indigenous peoples off their land to make way for planting carbon sinks. It also depoliticizes the crisis, rendering it a technocratic question, rather than one of power and privilege (Kenis and Mathjis 2014). Targeting the fossil fuel industry as the source of emissions may reinforce carbon fundamentalism while ignoring the systems of domination that gave rise to the crisis in the first place. Climate change is not only, or even primarily, a question of technology and infrastructure, but one of politics and power. Even though, as Timothy Mitchell so presciently demonstrates, energy infrastructure can facilitate or obstruct particular forms of political action and agendas (2011), shifting energy inputs from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and “green development” alone cannot achieve climate justice (Chen 2013). Solar energy can be nearly as centralized, resource extractive, exploitative and profit-oriented as fossil fuels. As the CJM consolidates its power around breaking the fossil fuel industry’s influence, it must avoid not only carbon fundamentalism, but also ‘energy determinism.’ Energy sources do not predetermine the values and ideologies of society, their interaction with energy politics, however, may shape them.

All of this is to say that framing the fossil fuel industry as “the enemy” certainly politicizes and reframes climate change in discursive terms more favorable to the CJM’s agenda, but it can also suggest that averting climate catastrophe is simply a question of reigning in the

excesses of a single industry. Framing carbon and a single industry as the problem can place limits on our movement's political imagination and ambition. Thus, the revolutionary potential of climate justice may be diluted through the frames and narratives which position fossil fuel companies and carbon as the problem.

I do not disagree with this analysis and throughout this dissertation I will assert that keeping fossil fuels in the ground is just one of the many things the CJM emerged to do. The CJM's other operations include resisting carbon pricing, emissions trading and carbon offsets; developing the seeds of new economic relations in the shell of the old; experimentation with energy cooperatives and democratizing access to, and production of, energy; campaigning for reparations and restitution for climate induced damages, and demanding that ecological debts be recognized; working at the municipal level to persuade counties and cities to commit to sustainability policies that involve a just transition; suing governments for failure to act on climate; holding negotiators accountable at the United Nations; and working in solidarity with food sovereignty and food justice campaigns. All of these are vital components of the CJM's activism and not one of them, on their own, can achieve climate justice. Moreover, in their conflict with the fossil fuel industry, climate justice activists are addressing fossil fuel companies as the embodiment of the broader systems of domination out of which climate change has arisen. As such, keep-it-in-the-ground activism is teaching activists and communities about how fossil fuel extraction cannot be separated from the growth imperative, the profit motive, and structural inequalities of race, class, colonialism and gender. In this way, fighting the fossil fuel industry is becoming a form of community pedagogy that cultivates within constituents a recognition that the climate crisis cannot be

addressed without simultaneously confronting the broader systems of domination which allow the industry to thrive.

The Revolutionary Potential of Climate Justice in Blockadia

Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright's incisive new political theory outlines a set of four possible "climate futures" in their book *Climate Leviathan* (2018).¹² Their fourth future is called Climate X, with X intentionally standing in for an unknown or a variable. X would be informed by climate justice, would be anti-capitalist and opposed to addressing the climate crisis through consolidating power at the scale of a "planetary sovereign" (a global network of global governance institutions designed to enforce a world order). It would undo the oppressive logics of capital, of sovereignty, and of the nation-state. It would be premised on three guiding political principles: equality, inclusion and dignity of all, and solidarity "in composing a world of many worlds" (Mann and Wainwright 2018, 176). Beyond these principles, Climate X is necessarily undefined, but it is this world of many worlds, visions, and life ways that the CJM would build. Mann and Wainwright are under no illusions about the contradictions, scale, and indeed utopianism of such a project, but the CJM is itself unashamedly utopian. If anything, the authors are perhaps overly cautious and skeptical of the movement's ability to assert radical or revolutionary social change.

¹² Before turning to Climate X they outline three other climate futures. One future, Climate Leviathan, most closely resembles an extension of hegemonic neoliberal action on climate change. It will maintain a global capitalist regime, reinforcing, and reinforced by, a network of global governance institutions, a planetary sovereign, to enforce climate action through the commodification of every aspect of the "natural" world. Climate Behemoth, also capitalist but reacting against planetary sovereignty and climate action in favor of nationalist, religious or ethnic sovereignty, reflects the contemporary anti-globalization stance held in the global rise of far right movements and religious fundamentalism. Most likely arising in East Asia, the third climate future, Climate Mao, would be anti-capitalist but would also control climate action through consolidating power at the scale of planetary sovereignty.

Nevertheless, Mann and Wainwright do ask readers to consider whether we can “conceive of revolution(s) in the name of climate justice, and if so what do they look like?” They suggest that Naomi Klein and the campaigns she studies on the frontlines of Blockadia offer part of the answer. Arguing that “we can overcome the deadlock in the struggle between capitalism and climate justice *by building a global movement from “Blockadia”*” (2018, 9 emphasis added), the authors suggest that the campaigns currently seeking to keep fossil fuels in the ground may be where a revolution in the name of climate justice will emerge. They “strongly endorse this utopian vision of a movement from Blockadia, one that overturns fossil fuels and capitalist political economy in the name of a new relationship to community and the environment” (2018, 10). Framing the question and response in this way, Mann and Wainwright force us to ask *how we move from* resistance on the frontlines of keep-it-in-the-ground activism in Blockadia *to* a systemic assault on not just the fossil fuel industry but the structures, ideas, and conditions upon which global capitalist hegemony depends. In other words, if the impetus for Climate X is to be realized in Blockadia how does the movement carry climate justice out of Blockadia (or perhaps expand Blockadia) to encompass a much larger range of radical and revolutionary impulses with which to mount a global revolution in the name of dignity, solidarity, multiplicity, and equality?

Mann and Wainwright are decidedly vague, refusing to own a response, and suggesting instead that they are opening up the question rather than seeking to answer it. I too must hasten to add that the theorizing of revolutionary change on this scale is not under the purview of this dissertation. This dissertation is concerned with breaking the influence of the

fossil fuel industry, which, I argue is a necessary, but incomplete, condition of moving towards Climate X. The hegemony of the fossil fuel industry must be broken but in response to Mann and Wainwright's intervention, a question I will return to throughout the dissertation is *how, in the process of breaking the industry, climate justice might be realized*. Chapter Eight in particular takes up this question with its engagement with questions of scale. Here I argue that we can use concepts like carbon rebellion to push beyond the typically limited ways of imagining and defining carbon and resisting fossil fuels in a way that it is transformative in its imagery and possibilities. Working with Mann and Wainwright, I later show how resistance to the fossil fuel industry at the local scale is cultivating terrain fertile for revolutionary action against broader systems of domination.

As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, targeting the fossil fuel industry has proven a particularly effective mobilizing and organizing strategy that engages local communities in the global struggle for climate justice. Moreover, the fights in Blockadia can become proxies for resisting “accumulation by dispossession” and the very logic of extractivism while advancing the struggle for decolonization, racial justice, and equity. Standing Rock or the Keystone XL in the US, have become lighting rods for broader coalition building that confront the structures and belief-systems upon which legacies of colonialism, environmental racism, and extractivism are based. Where climate change and climate justice may be more abstract and less relevant to the everyday oppressions marginalized communities across the globe face, the encroachment of the fossil fuel industry and the localized impacts of its pollution can connect place-based struggles into a globalized attack on systems of oppression through which all these groups can work towards collective liberation. This is one of the

ways we might conceive of revolution in the name of climate justice emerging from Blockadia.

To conclude, then, climate justice strives for new political, economic, and social systems based upon dignity, solidarity, and equity for all. Halting the construction of all new fossil fuel projects is imperative if the most severe consequences of climate disruption are to be avoided. As the failures of global governance to reign in fossil fuel interests and advance ambitious climate legislation becomes increasingly obvious, more and more activists have developed climate justice interventions at the local scale in Blockadia. Here they are resisting the expansion of the fossil fuel industry while calling for a just transition away from the economies and ideologies of extraction that decolonizes, decarbonizes, democratizes, and decentralizes energy and that is led by communities on the frontlines.

Keeping fossil fuels in the ground is a crucial, but on its own incomplete, part of climate justice. Moreover, climate justice may well be a crucial, but on its own incomplete, part of bringing about the kind of radical socioecological transformation our very survival as a species depends upon. I do not pretend for a moment, that either keep-it-in-the-ground activism or climate justice are on their own able to galvanize the momentum required for such revolutionary action, but I do believe, and will show how, they can play significant roles in contributing to it. As such, this dissertation focuses on keep-in-the-ground campaigning in the US and Canada, not because this is necessarily the most important type of climate justice activism, but because these geographies are rapidly becoming vital nodes in the global supply of fossil fuels. They are also some of the most visceral and intense places to examine the

contradictions between “liberal democracy” and global capitalism, colonialism, and racism in struggles for climate justice that are binding communities together in what is likely our very last chance to hold the most devastating consequences of climate disruption at bay.

Chapter 2 – Interventions in Theory and Practice: Hegemony and Counter Hegemony in Blockadia

Introduction

Theory matters. There are those within social movement spaces who might disparage theory and theorists, but without theory there can be no strategy and there are no tactics – just wild, often desperate, reactions to external provocations. Theory organizes thought and action into intelligible systems of explanation, principles, strategies, and goals, ultimately providing our movements with direction, purpose and meaning. Moreover, theory is just as likely to be developed and acted upon outside the academy as within it. Social movements, formally or informally, operate according to theories of change. Campaigners and activists use theory to justify action, develop and align strategy and objectives, and execute tactics. Academic theory does not disqualify academics from membership of social movements, nor does membership of, and participation in, social movements disqualify activists from engaging in academic theory. In fact, it is to the people occupying the terrain intersecting theory and practice that the theoretical framework developed in these pages owes its greatest debt.

It is also true, however, that theory and theorists, social movement theory and theorists included, can be overly complicated, obfuscating, and inaccessible, rendering them largely useless to the movements in whose service they should be placed. Because it is true that theory matters and also true that far too much academic theory is too dense to be of much use to social movements, in this chapter I develop an intervention in understandings of power

and theories of change in language and a framework that is relevant and useful to social movement actors. For the sake of precision, I will also be using language specific to the academy but will define these terms clearly where I do. I have adopted the principles of the philosophy of praxis, an action-oriented intellectual tradition that inspired and has been inspired by the Marxist thinker and once-leader of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci. As he wrote “the philosophy of praxis is realized through the concrete study of past history through present activity to construct new history” (1971, 427). In other words, the making of a new world, is an intellectual *and* a pragmatic endeavor, requiring experience, reflection, study, and action. It is on the terrain existing at the intersection of theory and practice that my dissertation makes its intervention.

As an interdisciplinary scholar, trained in Global Studies, I draw upon a wide and diverse range of literature and fields. This chapter synthesizes insights from Environmental Sociology, Political Ecology, Energy Studies, Social Movement Studies, and Critical Theory, as well as from public intellectuals and field manuals written by and for members of social movements, to develop the theoretical foundations upon which this dissertation’s arguments rest. This chapter asserts four arguments, each one building on the next, to advance a logic of intervention that can supplement and adjust the Climate Justice Movement’s present theories of change, and particularly its engagements with the fossil fuel industry:

- 1) Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony contains within it three relations of power – consent, compliance, and coercion – that counter hegemonic actors must intervene in simultaneously to challenge and dismantle the hegemonic order.

- 2) It is theoretically and pragmatically valuable to understand struggles to keep fossil fuels in the ground and the power relations existing between the fossil fuel industry and the Climate Justice Movement in hegemonic terms.
- 3) If we are to understand the fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground in hegemonic terms, then we must do so paying attention to how the three relations of power incorporated under hegemony structure their own distinct terrains of struggle upon which activists and industry agents alike must intervene.
- 4) Paying attention to these distinct relations of power helps us see that upon each of the terrains of struggle, there exist many different points of intervention, each requiring different actors and diverse sets of tactics and strategy to engage with them.

Therefore, *to successfully challenge the fossil fuel industry's hegemony and keep fossil fuels in the ground, climate justice activists must devise strategies, advance narratives, and deploy tactics that are specifically tailored to each one of the three terrains of struggle.* This requires us to forge larger and more diverse coalitions across political and identity groups, embrace a diversity of strategies and a multiplicity of tactics, and critically address the different scales at which our activism takes place.

This chapter first introduces the term hegemony and explains its pivotal importance to the interventions and contributions my dissertation is offering. I discuss contemporary debates surrounding hegemony that span Critical Theory, (post)Marxist Theory, and Social Movement Studies, and demonstrate the value of combining three relations of power – consent, coercion, and compliance – under the term to truly grasp its significance as a theory

of power. Next, this chapter explores the ways the fossil fuel industry has been studied in Political Ecology, Energy Humanities, and Environmental Sociology literatures. It illustrates how these perspectives have informed my own, and where they diverge from mine. I apply my reconfigured approach to hegemony to understanding each of the relations of power upon which the fossil fuel industry depends and in which, I argue, counter hegemonic actors must seek to intervene. Here I introduce two key concepts: *petro-hegemony* and the *carbon rebellion*. I develop these two concepts into a framework for understanding the terrains of struggle and points of intervention that exist between the fossil fuel industry and its counter hegemonic challengers. Finally, this chapter assesses the limitations of the theoretical framework I've developed and suggests how other theoretical traditions and debates, might supplement, challenge or critically engage theories of hegemony. The chapter concludes with reflections on how the theoretical framework I've developed may be used to map relations of power and engage with debates about strategy which animate the climate justice movement today.

Rereading Hegemony

The contested interpretations of hegemony

Conceptualizing hegemony is fundamental to the theoretical interventions my dissertation makes. The climate justice movement is engaged in a counter hegemonic struggle, both against the hegemony of neoliberal solutions to the climate crisis and the hegemony of the fossil fuel industry. I use the term hegemony very deliberately to summon Antonio Gramsci's

insights into relations of power, rule, domination, and modes of resistance, that continue to shape social movement theory and strategy decades after his death. Gramsci's contributions to theorizing hegemony and social change can help interpret and advance the fight climate justice activists are now engaged in. Theories of hegemony are used to explore how the ideas and social groups that govern gain and maintain their position and how that position might be challenged, undone, and supplanted. Gramsci developed the term to analyze the power relations existing between the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, states, and ideas, in ways that challenged the orthodox Marxist materialism of the Communist Party and workers' movement in which he was deeply involved. Hegemony recognizes culture, narratives, and discourse as sites of social struggle, legitimacy, and movement building that are just as important as more material sites like government or the economic "means of production." Theorists of hegemony since Gramsci have helped move the concept out of its strictly Marxist context and placed it in the service of social movement theory and strategy across many different social struggles, including but not limited to, class struggle (Day 2016; Lacalu and Mouffe 2014; Ekers et al. 2013; Kenis and Mathjis 2014). My application of the term to the CJM and its campaigns to keep fossil fuels in the ground follows in this tradition.

While it was not Gramsci but Lenin who popularized the concept in Marxist social movement theory, Gramsci is credited with having developed and theorized hegemony in the terms that it is understood today. This allowed Marxists who followed to view the possibility of social change occurring outside of a singularly materialist lens. However, the incomplete and often cryptic nature of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, especially given his long internment, censorship, and death under the Italian fascist regime in the 1920s and 30s, (not

to mention some of the nuance of his work inevitably having been lost in its translation from Italian), has left his theoretical interventions open to a good degree of interpretation (Anderson 1976). This is particularly true of hegemony. In *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, Perry Anderson writes that, “The very range of the appeals now made to [Gramsci’s] authority, from the most contrasted sectors of the Left, suggests the limits of close study or comprehension of his ideas. The price of so ecumenical an admiration is necessarily ambiguity: multiple and incompatible interpretations of the themes of the *Prison Notebooks*” (1976, 1). Anderson argues that this ambiguity is partly attributable to the paradoxes that exist internally to Gramsci’s own writings in which, for example, “the words ‘State’, ‘civil society’, ‘political society’, ‘hegemony’, ‘domination’ or ‘direction’ all undergo a persistent slippage” (1976, 25). Thus, how hegemony operates and the specific relations of power it is comprised of are the subjects of great debate - a debate into which I now intervene.¹³

Much of what we believe we know about Gramsci’s work is derived from theorists that have acted as his interpreters and interlocutors, developing it in directions that advance their own theoretical agendas. Indeed, echoing Anderson, Chris Maisano writes that, “the incomplete nature of Gramsci’s prison writings has given rise to a vast industry of academic interpretation” (2017). Yet the development of this industry seems justified when, as Ekers

¹³ Anderson identifies three seemingly contradictory positions within Gramsci’s theorizing of the relations between state and civil society, hegemony and violence. First, hegemony is confined to the realm of civil society or culture and associated only with consent, while coercion and violence operate in the realm of the state. These are presented as opposites. Second, civil society and the state are said to balance one another with hegemony synthesizing the relations of coercion and consent. In the third, the state is said to absorb civil society and the synthesized coercion-consent version of hegemony, and the state along with its coercive capacity is again given primacy. Here the state and civil society are (problematically, Anderson notes) conflated. For a more complete account of the complicated paradoxes, slippages, messiness of interpretations, and contradictions in Gramsci’s writing see Anderson’s essay *Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* (1976).

and Loftus argue, “translating Gramsci requires bringing his writings to bear on “new” situations, albeit always containing a number of historical and geographical social currents,” and, moreover, that “engagements with Gramsci have been influenced by the concrete conditions in which scholar-activists have worked” (2013, 18, 23). In that process his writings are inevitably reinterpreted, transformed and put to new use. This is an industry to which I myself am contributing even while my own interpretations of Gramsci’s work have been challenged and changed a great deal. Taking all this ambiguity, the different research agendas, and variegated contexts of struggle, into account, I’ve engaged in a close reading of Quentin and Hoares’ translation of Gramsci’s writings (1971), as well as supplementary materials, and these form the theoretical foundations of my interventions in the debates concerning hegemony and social movement strategy.

Hegemony as consent

One of Gramsci’s most influential interlocutors, Raymond Williams, described hegemony as the extension of politics into daily life, into culture and into shaping what constitutes “common sense” in a given society. Hegemony circumscribes what is imaginable and considered possible. It is through shaping what is taken for granted as “common sense” that hegemony produces a population’s consent, and “rulers,” the ruling class, ruling institutions, the ruling elite, or ruling ideas, become “leaders,” or the leading class, institutions, elite, or ideas. Gramsci distinguished between “leadership” and “domination” where he considered leadership to entail gaining the active consent of a population, and domination to be the exercising, or threat of exercising, violence to maintain one’s position. Williams thus

interprets that Gramsci positioned consent and coercion as opposing relations of power, with consent and leadership captured under the term hegemony and coercion and violence contained by the concept of domination. He writes that, “Gramsci made a distinction between rule (*dominio*) and hegemony. Rule is expressed in directly political forms and in times of crisis by direct or effective coercion” (Williams 1977, 108). Hegemony, meanwhile, is the “more normal situation” produced through a “complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces” (ibid). Hegemony is thus a consensual power relation while domination is coercive. The concept views culture, distinguished from simply an expression of economic relations, as a terrain of struggle upon which revolutionaries must seek to make counter hegemonic interventions. Gramsci’s great innovation in the Marxist intellectual tradition, therefore, is to have established the foundations of “a Marxist theory of politics” (Hobsbawm 1977, 206).

Ernesto Laclau and Chantelle Mouffe adopt and extend this reading of Gramsci’s hegemony further in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985/2014). Here, countering hegemony becomes a project of intervening in, or structuring, “discursive conditions” which they argue helps to shape “common sense” and assert which ideas become hegemonic. In their reading, hegemony operates through culture and relies upon the structuring of discourses (or the narratives and symbols through which we make sense of the world) to gain consent. According to Laclau and Mouffe, therefore, the goal of counter hegemonic actors must be to identify and shape “the discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action, directed towards struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination” (2014, 137). Challengers must discursively “articulate” the “chains of

equivalence” across different social struggles and locate points of shared antagonism in hegemonic discourses around which new challenger alliances can cohere. Laclau and Mouffe’s most important innovation, however, is to have contextualized hegemony in contemporary democratic politics and extended it “beyond class struggle to anyone with a grievance against the existing order” (Day 2016, 188). Maisano writes that Laclau and Mouffe believed they were extending Gramsci’s theory to its logical conclusions: “a rejection of Marxism’s ostensible “class essentialism,” as well as its insistence that material conditions decisively shape popular consciousness” (2017). Class struggle is rendered just one link in the chain of equivalence. This move allows Laclau and Mouffe to emphasize the significance of discursive articulation of chains of equivalence across social struggles to mount counter hegemonic, broad-based, political coalitions against the existing hegemonic order.

Hegemony combines consent and coercion

Richard Day, meanwhile, historicizes what he identifies as “a shift in the understanding of hegemony, which came increasingly to be viewed as “cultural” and “consensual” in nature” (2016, 187). Both Williams’ and Laclau and Mouffe’s theorizing of hegemony follow this tradition and in doing so make a significant departure from Gramsci’s use of the term. Day argues that, particularly since Laclau and Mouffe’s adoption of the concept, hegemony’s coercive and materialist dimensions have been abandoned leaving scholars only with the cultural elements of hegemony when they apply it to social movement studies and strategies for radical social change (Day 2016). More orthodox Marxists have thus accused Laclau and

Mouffe's work of "liberal reformism" and of stepping away from radical engagement with class, the state and materialist relations of power (ibid).

Anderson is one of Laclau and Mouffe's harsher critics and charges that their particular reading of hegemony misses the intricate relationship that exists *between* consent and coercion that hegemony is supposed to denote. Anderson does concede, however, that Laclau and Mouffe's interpretation is due to what he calls the "antinomies" or seeming paradoxes and definitional slippages in Gramsci's writing. In the *Prison Notebooks*, readers can simultaneously find hegemony described simply as a relation of consent operating through civil society and culture which should be contrasted with coercion operating solely through the state; or as a balancing and synthesizing of consent and coercion to maintain the ruler's position; or as rule gained and maintained through an intricate relationship between consent and coercion in which consent plays the "dominant" role and coercion plays a "determinant" role.¹⁴ Thus, while Laclau and Mouffe offer significant contributions to theorizing hegemonic discourses and counter hegemonic articulations of interests, they also risk ignoring or obscuring the relationship between coercion and consent. A more holistic interpretation of Gramscian hegemony would balance and synthesize consent and coercion under the term. This constitution of hegemony could then be positioned in opposition to "domination," or rule through coercion alone.

Gramsci writes that "the "normal" exercise of hegemony... is characterized by the combination of force and consent which balance each other reciprocally" (1971, 80). As he

¹⁴ I will return to a more complete analysis of Anderson's distinction between "dominant" and "determinant" roles in later paragraphs.

explains, the constitution of hegemony is twofold: Firstly, “the “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life” *and secondly*, “the apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent”” (1971, 12). He goes on to write that the authority of a social group manifests itself in two ways: it “dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to “liquidate,” or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force;” however, that social group “must already exercise “leadership” before winning governmental power... It subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to “lead” as well” (Gramsci 1971, 57 -58). In other words, the coercive disciplining of those who do not consent is just as an important component of hegemony as consent is, while the ability to coerce dissenters requires some degree of consent within the broader community. When reading Gramsci, domination should indeed be held in contrast to hegemony, as Raymond Williams does, but this passage forces us to also recognize that hegemony consists of both leadership *and* domination, consent *and* coercion. Citing this same passage, Day contends that here “the disparate elements, meanings, and contexts of “hegemony” ... become fused into a self-conscious whole” (Day 2016, 186). Consent and coercion, and the simultaneously material-ideational relationship existing between them, co-constitute hegemony. The violence and coercion accompanying discourse and consent that is integral to Gramsci’s understanding of hegemony have, therefore, too often been abandoned, inoculating what is otherwise an essential theory of power and social movement strategy.

Consent and Coercion in the Wars of position and Maneuver

Gramsci's comparison of social movement strategy to military strategy throughout his *Prison Notebooks* also suggests at the continuous presence of both consent and coercion contained by hegemony.¹⁵ Having explained how hegemony is gained and maintained through culture and civil society, Gramsci was particularly attentive to the strategies available to revolutionaries with which they could engage in culture as at terrain of struggle against the bourgeoisie. This is captured in the differences he saw between waging a "war of position" and waging a "war of maneuver." Counter hegemony involved both. Waging a war of position entailed encouraging the populace to revoke their consent from the hegemonic ideas, institutions, elites, social group, or class. It is a cultural battle in which revolutionaries seek to gain footholds in the cultural institutions, symbols, and media through which populations make meaning of the world around them. In other words, the war of position entails capturing those institutions which mediate and reinforce the ideas taken for granted as "common sense" and which produce a population's consent to the ruling class. These might include newspapers, churches, sports teams, philanthropies, and so on. In wresting consent away from the hegemon, the war of position challenges the perceived legitimacy of the ideas, discourse and symbols that uphold the hegemon's authority. If successful, a war of position forces a crisis of legitimacy upon the hegemonic order such that its leadership is no longer considered legitimate.

¹⁵ It is also important to note here that the militaristic and masculinist terms in which hegemonic strategy is described may also limit our revolutionary imaginations and reproduce some of the very modes of domination the climate justice movement seeks to undo. Gramsci's deliberate use of militaristic terminology is partly derived from his attempts to avoid censorship while in prison, but it may also suggest at the patriarchal dominance of 1930s (and contemporary) intellectual society. As such, I adopt and use Gramsci's terminology with this caution in mind.

While Gramsci was still writing in terms of classes and states being the primary agents of social change, the war of position aligns with Laclau and Mouffe's discursive conditioning and involved developing a "historic bloc," or an alliance of social groups complete with a set of ideas and norms around which to forge a new consent and an alternative hegemony (1971). The war of maneuver, on the other hand, involves open conflict with the coercive apparatuses of the state and the ruling class, whether through elections, seizing the means of production, sabotage, or revolutionary insurrection. Anderson argues that authors following in Laclau and Mouffe's reading of hegemony have abandoned the war of maneuver altogether and have elevated the war of position to a status of singular strategic importance (Anderson 1976). While Gramsci's writing emphasizes the importance of waging the war of position, a singular focus on its strategic role in forging radical social change was not his intention.

Gramsci viewed waging a war of position as the necessary prelude to waging the war of maneuver. As he wrote "A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power)" (1971, 207). Reflecting on his own experiences with the failures of Communist insurrection in Italy, Gramsci believed one of their major errors was to have waged a war of maneuver without having first built the necessary alliances and support through a war of position (Ekers and Loftus 2013; Featherstone 2013). In his view, it was the failure of revolutionaries to draw together the peasants of the agricultural South and proletariats of the industrial North together in a historic bloc that saw workers' uprisings remain isolated and weak. A war of position had to be fought before an assault on the

Bourgeoisie and its government institutions could be won. Comparing trench warfare to the opening of political opportunities that crises in particular economic conjunctures may yield, he writes:

In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemies' entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defense which was still effective. (Gramsci 1971, 235)

Extending the metaphor to politics, Gramsci compares this “fierce artillery attack” to the direct confrontation with the state that revolutionaries may believe is necessary to take full advantage of a moment of economic crisis. They put up barricades, take over factories, occupy state buildings, call for general strikes, and arm themselves. In the excitement of the assault, however, they have forgotten that they have not yet forged far reaching alliances across much larger swathes of society, that they have not yet shifted discursive or cultural positions of enough people, and so they do not yet have the consent of the broader population, they are not yet “leading.” The state may then depend upon a “line of defense which was still effective,” the continuing consent of the majority of people shored up by the cultural institutions and apparatus that mediate “common sense,” to weather the assault and advance a counterattack.¹⁶

However, there are also instances in which the reverse is true. Gramsci was aware that fighting a war of position alone would not be enough to overthrow the hegemonic order.¹⁷

¹⁶ In later chapters, I will compare wars of maneuver and position to strategic orientations prioritizing mass mobilization (sharing elements in common with the war of maneuver) on the one hand, and community organizing (sharing elements in common with the war of position) on the other.

¹⁷ Indeed, given the extent to which Gramsci's definitional categories were subject to slippages it is not entirely clear if the excerpt above is referring to the state or civil society being the “line of defense that was still effective.” Either way around, I maintain that both are true.

Forcing a crisis of legitimacy on the hegemon does not necessarily lead to its demise. Challenger groups, having successfully shifted discursive conditions and undermined consent to the hegemon, may exalt in their victories. Yet they will often go on to find a second line of defense that is ready to respond with the full force of state-sanctioned coercion or physical force. If challengers are not prepared with strategies to engage with that second line of defense, winning a war of position may only prove a short-term victory. While it is often helpful to think of consent and coercion as distinct categories of power, Gramsci's writing demonstrates that the two are never truly separated, and that constructing theories of social change that hinge only upon analysis of one but not the other will yield an inherently incomplete analysis that ignores the relations between the two (Gramsci 1971).¹⁸ So when challengers force a crisis of legitimacy on the hegemon they should expect, and be prepared for, coercion in response. Similarly, when challengers launch an assault that depends upon coercive strategies alone, they should be prepared to lose quickly without gaining a position of leadership.

Privileging Consent in Crises of Legitimacy

Winning a war of position and forcing a crisis of legitimacy means the ruling class have to resort to coercion to restabilize their authority. As Gramsci famously explains:

If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer "leading" but only "dominant," exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe

¹⁸ Gramsci also writes that (cultural) hegemony is "protected by the armour of coercion" (Gramsci 1971, 263). This may be one of the examples that has led many scholars to decouple the consensual and cultural from the coercive and material constitution of hegemony. Based on my reading of the rest of Gramsci's work, however, what this actually suggests to me is that hegemony cannot exist or is severely weakened without coercion.

what they used to believe previously, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. (1971, 275-276)

How this crisis gets resolved is of crucial importance because the demise of the hegemon is by no means an inevitable conclusion. Winning the war of position, building alliances, and restructuring discursive conditions is just one component of counter hegemonic strategy.

Thus Gramsci goes on to pose two very important questions:

The problem is the following: can a rift between popular masses and ruling ideologies ... be "cured" by the simple exercise of force, preventing the new ideologies from imposing themselves? Will the interregnum, the crisis whose historically normal solution is blocked in this way, necessarily be resolved in favour of a restoration of the old? (1971, 276).

Gramsci is asking whether coercion will be enough for those in power to restore the old order after a crisis of legitimacy. Undoubtedly a successful war of position leaves the hegemonic order fundamentally changed and the common sense ideas that once upheld its legitimacy must be adjusted, while dissenters must be isolated and crushed. As such, with a combination of consent and coercion-based strategies, the ruling class may still re-stabilize its position through violence, buying it time to regain its former status with new allies and adjusted legitimizing narratives. Therefore, in the interregnum, in this moment of crisis, when the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born, counter hegemonic actors must act as midwives of the new, and while vital, this will require more than discursive strategies and cultural intervention alone. To ensure the old is not restored and the new can be born, challengers must advance strategies that engage not only in cultural politics but are able to withstand coercion, institutionalize their discursive victories, and prefigure new modes of organizing politics and economies. Hegemony contains relations of consent and coercion. Theorizing counter hegemonic strategies, therefore, requires us to analyze and account for the

relationship between consent and coercion and how we might intervene in both relations of power.

Consent, Coercion, and Compliance

Hegemony, in this reconstituted sense, balances and synthesizes the power relations of consent, through culture and civil society, and coercion, through the state and enforcement of laws. It may also help explain the relationship between these power relations. But Gramsci also gives us the tools with which to consider a third power relation that constitutes hegemony alongside coercion and consent. Gramsci is well known for his critique of orthodox Marxist economic determinism, but, as a Marxist, his theory never fully dispensed with the importance of materialism. In other words, he cannot dismiss the role that economic relations must play in the maintenance of hegemony. Writing that “hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised” and that although “hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic,” Gramsci alludes to a third relation of power contained within the concept (1971, 161). While abandoning economic determinism, hegemony, here, depends upon the subordinates’ economic interests being met.

Along with coercion, Laclau and Mouffe neglect a theorization of this material dimension of hegemony, arguing that social positions and interests are discursively and culturally constructed, rather than materially produced as a direct function of economic, material resources (Maisano 2017). Perry Anderson, however, places this dynamic back in Gramscian

terms arguing that “it is evident, in effect, that the whole range of directly *economic* constraints to which the exploited classes within capitalism are subjected cannot immediately be classified within either of the political categories of coercion or consent” (1976, 25 emphasis in original). He goes on to write:

The dualist analysis to which Gramsci’s notes typically tend does not permit an adequate treatment of economic constraints that act directly to enforce bourgeois class power: among others, the fear of unemployment or dismissal that can, in certain historical circumstances, produce a ‘silenced majority’ of obedient citizens and pliable voters among the exploited. *Such constraints involve neither the conviction of consent, nor the violence of coercion.* (Anderson 1976, 41 emphasis added)

As Gramsci suggests, hegemony is not only ethico-political but also economic in nature and presupposes, or is premised upon, the constraints that economic forces place upon subjects and their ability to dissent. Therefore, we also need to theorize a relation of power that exists between consent and coercion, which must necessarily also be encompassed under the concept of hegemony. I call this the relation of *compliance*. Citing Anderson’s same passage, Maisano explains that “What Marx called the “silent compulsion of economic relations” performs a disciplinary function somewhere between the poles of coercion and consent that define Gramsci’s theory of hegemony” (2017).¹⁹ This third relation, compliance, blurs the line between consent and coercion. It rests upon a dynamic of dependency that subordinates have developed upon the economic, material conditions in which they are situated and therefore are compelled, but not coerced, to comply with the hegemonic order. The hegemon may establish compliance by structuring economic conditions such that a community’s

¹⁹ In *Regimes of Dispossession* (2018) Michael Levien uses Marx’s term “economic compulsion” in a slightly different context to describe how the confluence of particular events produce particular economic situations in which people are compelled to submit to the domination of the market. Here economic conditions create a situation of dependency where the extent to which people are coerced or actively give consent is largely ambiguous. His theorizing of economic compulsion helped me developed compliance into a category of power.

choice to actively consent or dissent is circumscribed by dependency upon those economic conditions.

Privileging Coercion

Finally, Anderson draws his readers' attention to an important distinction Gramsci makes between "preponderant" and "fundamental" or between "dominant" and "determinant" relations of consent and coercion captured under hegemony. As Anderson writes:

If we revert to Gramsci's original problematic, *the normal structure of capitalist political power in bourgeois-democratic states is in effect simultaneously and indivisibly dominated by culture and determined by coercion...* The day-to-day system of bourgeois rule is thus based on the consent of the masses, in the form of the ideological belief that they exercise self-government in the representative State. At the same time, however, to forget the 'fundamental' or determinant role of violence within the power structure of contemporary capitalism in the final instance is to regress to reformism... (1976, 42 original emphasis).

The distinction Anderson articulates is a helpful one. However, its logical extension, and the crux of Anderson's thesis, suggests that in the last instance it is violence and not discourse or culture that ultimately drives social change. Coercion thus becomes both the determinant and the dominant relation of power captured by hegemony. We must challenge Anderson's position here because, even in the last instance, the maintenance of coercive and violent recourse requires enormous cultural resources and discursive investment. To some degree, the deployment of violence against dissenters or others often requires other parts of the population to accept the legitimacy of that violence. In other words, relations of coercion and consent must always co-constitute one another through hegemony. We cannot privilege one relation over the other. As such I revert to the position that hegemony is a synthesis and

balancing of consent and coercion against which we may position domination which is rule through coercion alone.

Different interlocutors have found one version of hegemony or another more or less compelling. Anderson's position is ultimately to assert coercion as history's driving force and to place this in the context of hegemony's multiple, variegated meanings. As Bruce Robbins summarizes Anderson's position:

One might have expected that in his criticisms of Gramsci and the Gramscians, a Marxist like Anderson would have shifted the emphasis back from the cultural superstructure to the economic base. But that's not what happens. What both books [The H-Word (2017) And Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci: Revised edition (2017)] set against culture and ideology is not economics but physical coercion: military force as a—perhaps even *the*—decisive component of power, hence as perhaps the determining factor in history. (2018)

The distinction Anderson makes between “determinant” and “dominant” understandings of the relationship between consent and coercion is compelling. However, this reading of Gramsci leads Anderson to his own somewhat paradoxical conclusions. Anderson suggests that by analyzing the relationship between consent and coercion, in which the former is considered as *dominant* and the latter as *determinant*, it becomes apparent that “coercion becomes both dominant and determinant in the supreme crisis” and so the “ultimate determinant of the power system [is] coercion” (1976, 44). By logical extension, then, Gramsci's theory of hegemony forces us to recognize the dominance of consent in Western capitalist democracies but also that, in the last instance, it is coercion that defines the trajectory of radical social change. In arguing this case Anderson creates a mirror image of the error for which he holds Laclau and Mouffe accountable (albeit not to quite such a degree), emphasizing one relation of power over and above the other. Where Laclau and

Mouffe's discussion of hegemony explains the intricate mechanics of the relation of consent, their analysis more or less discards an analysis of hegemony's material and coercive relations. Meanwhile, Anderson's reversal of the position, in which coercion is identified as the determining and decisive feature of hegemony overrides the very balance between consent and coercion Anderson argues Gramsci intended to communicate.

My Theoretical Interventions and Contributions to Gramscian Hegemony

The passage below is where I've found the relations of power Gramsci sought to describe under hegemony most clearly synthesized:

The "normal" exercise of hegemony is characterized by the combination of force and consent which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed in the so-called organs of public opinion... Between consent and force stands corruption or fraud (Gramsci 1971, 80).²⁰

As such, while I find Anderson's distinction between determinant and dominant features useful, I want to keep them in tension or balance so that we may understand how consent, coercion, and (I will add) compliance operate together, interact with one another as co-dependent support structures that uphold the hegemonic order. Rather than privileging one or the other of these power relations over another, I suggest we must be willing to abandon the attempt to force any one of these "drivers of history" on Gramsci. Instead let us recognize how Gramsci's work allows us to imaginatively synthesize economy, state, and culture

²⁰ Gramsci develops upon the question of fraud in his writings on American Fordism, which for the sake of brevity, I do not have the space to discuss. Suffice it to say that, Gramsci redevelops the concept of fraud into what he understood as the negotiation of economic interests and which he argued hegemony presupposes. This notion of fraud allows me to bring compliance fully into the concept of hegemony.

(along with compliance, consent, and coercion) as important terrains of struggle upon which to advance radical social change. In doing so, let us resist the temptation of devising a meta-narrative that asserts one or the other feature of hegemony as the driver of history and the key to social change. Instead of rejecting his ambiguity and seeking to fix meaning to what will always be a necessarily contested text, let us use the antinomies Gramsci's leaves us with to innovate and experiment with theories of social change in our own contexts for our own purposes.

Taking up this challenge, I move hegemony out of the specifically Marxist, class-based and state-oriented assumptions through which Gramsci's theory is mediated. Simultaneously, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, I develop the tools Gramsci gives us to draw together an economic understanding of hegemony that also contains the relation of compliance. This returns us to a version of hegemony closely aligned with passage above, such that it contains three relations of power, upon each of which counter hegemonic actors must develop strategies to intervene. Thus, hegemony is constituted and supported by three interlocking relations of power: consent, coercion, and compliance. A counter hegemonic theory of change must, therefore, include strategies that engage with each. As such, we requires strategies for a war of position that would engage in relations of consent, a war of maneuver for coercion, and for what I call a *war of economies* deployed to intervene in relations of compliance. Moving hegemony out of its strictly class and state-centric orientation, I will place all of these ideas in the service of climate justice activism and contribute to an analysis of the hegemonic status of the fossil fuel industry.

Translations in praxis: Movement strategy using these ideas

What do these dense, abstract, theoretical debates have to do with the strategies and theories of change currently being deployed amongst contemporary social movements? Quite a lot, as it would happen. Firstly, let's not forget that as a leader in the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci was himself deeply rooted in social movements. The influence of Gramsci's theoretical legacy, and the debates concerning hegemony, on social movement strategy can be traced within the pages of influential social movement handbooks and manuals written for and by activists. Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* is perhaps one of the most influential social movement handbooks to have been circulated in the United States. Generations of community organizers have learned from it and applied its rules. Alinsky's very first sentence in that book is "The revolutionary force today has two targets, moral as well as material" (1971, xiii). The idea is precisely the one captured in Gramsci's intervention in Marxist political strategy in which he shifts away from the singular focus on the material relations of power and forces us to consider culture too. Throughout the book, Alinsky uses the term "moral" to denote discursive, ideational, cultural, or the politics of consent. In similarly Gramscian terms, Alinsky argues that "Moral rationalization is indispensable at all times of action whether to justify the selection or the use of ends or means" (1971, 43). The community organizing tactics Alinsky describes are, in effect, an operationalization of the war of position. Even while Alinsky never explicitly references Gramsci, the model of community organizing Alinsky advocates and Gramsci's war of position share significant similarities.²¹ Alinsky's rules include intervention in the cultural institutions that influence

²¹ Think tanks and blogs representing the political right in the United States have, in characteristically hysterical fashion, traced a somewhat tenuous line from Gramsci's revolutionary strategy, to its adoption and

popular discourse, aligning different social agents into coherent alliances, and a highly populist approach to political activity.

Alinsky also writes that “one can lack any of the qualities of an organizer – with one exception – and still be effective and successful. The exception is the art of communication” (1971, 81). Reinsborough and Canning take this up in their own activist manual *Re:Imagining Change: How to use Story Based Strategy to win campaigns, build movements, and change the world* (2010/2017). Changing the story, they argue, is crucial to communicating radical social change and winning in the terrain of culture. Citing Gramsci directly, they write:

The power of hegemony is expressed through coercion and consent rather through armed force. This multifaceted cultural process limits the terms of debate to make ideas that challenge the status quo almost unthinkable. Hegemony operates in cultural stories that over time gain widespread acceptance and reinforce a dominant perspective or worldview. (Reinsborough and Canning 2010, 22-23)

Drawing on Gramsci, alongside a great deal more social movement literature and praxis, they translate successful discursive intervention into winning “the battle of the story,” or the struggle over narratives that shape and filter the norms, values, and meanings that are taken for granted within a given social milieu and inform “common sense.” Counter hegemony is a process of changing narratives to shift what is taken for granted as common sense. This

operationalizing by Alinsky, to the influence Alinsky had on both Hillary Clinton and Present Obama’s political theory, to make the case that Obama and Clinton are both closet communists in (albeit very heavy) disguise (Carlson 2017; Hultberg 2016; Ayotte 2012). Given the wildly divergent politics of Clinton and Obama as compared to Alinsky and Gramsci, the connection does indeed seem dubious. Nevertheless, it is very possible that Alinsky found inspiration in Gramsci’s writing, and it is true that he corresponded with Clinton, and helped devise the community organizing strategies Obama worked with as a community organizer in Chicago. Of course, it goes without saying that one can be inspired by a strategy without being indoctrinated by the political persuasion from which it emerged.

challenges the legitimacy of established elites and may wrest consent away from them to be forged instead around new stories. Their book illustrates the different tactics campaigners and activists will need to fight the battle of story and alter the discursive conditions through which people make sense of the world, and of what is or is not possible.

Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution (2012) is an edited volume containing contributions from dozens of social movement strategists, academics and activists, who offer insights into waging wars of position and maneuver. It also includes a section on what scholar-activist Stephen Duncombe, drawing on Stuart Hall, calls *cultural* hegemony. Of cultural hegemony Duncombe explains that “politics is not only fought out in state houses, workplaces, or on battlefields but also in the language we use, the stories we tell, and the images we conjure – in short the ways we make sense of the world.” In Duncombe’s interpretation, Gramsci understood that:

“You may be able to seize a factory or storm a palace, but unless this material power is backed up by a culture that reinforces the notion that what you are doing is good and beautiful and just and possible, then any gains on the economic, military and political fronts are likely to be short-lived.”

To this Duncombe adds an important caveat: “Gramsci never believed that cultural power alone was enough. The fight for cultural hegemony had to be part of an overall strategy that also incorporated struggles for political and economic power” (2012, 222-23). *Beautiful Trouble* presents key insights on tactics, theory, principles and case studies by activists for activists. Cultural hegemony is one of the theories the book’s editors suggests community organizers and change agents ought to know about. Here counter hegemony is considered to

be a solely cultural struggle with other forms of struggle being equally as important but existing outside of strictly hegemonic terms.

Jonathan Smucker's *Hegemony How To: A Road Map for Radicals* (2017) has been described as Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* for the 21st Century. Reflecting on the successes and failures of Occupy Wall Street, and drawing heavily upon Laclau and Mouffe's theories on populism and discourse, Smucker operationalizes an explicitly Gramscian account of power, strategy and social change. In Smucker's reading of Gramscian theory, populism is a vital ingredient to achieving revolutionary change. Smucker argues that, far too often, activists insulate themselves in their own political cultures, creating their own political identities and reference points. In doing so they fail to build and extend their politics across larger and more diverse swathes of society. Occupy's framing of the political moment with memes like "the 99%" were highly populist and had the potential to grow a historic bloc and materialize and politically institutional their discursive gains. Instead, he argues, members of Occupy replaced prioritizing strategy with an overemphasis on building the "lifeworld" of the activist groups. The movement became inward looking and insular, creating its own rituals and movement practices that established the terms of inclusion and exclusion from the group.²²

Opposed to this, Smucker argues that counter hegemonic agents must articulate "the We in politics" which can be mobilized into broad-based alliances spanning a multiplicity of

²² Smucker calls this the political identity paradox, in which members of social movements must share strong bonds, discourses and practices to build solidarity but these can simultaneously alienate and exclude other potential members from joining the organization (Smucker 2017). Failure to include more members can quickly turn a social movement that challenges power into a social club that cannot reach out to larger and more diverse publics.

interests and identities and cohere around popular and populist progressive messages. Story-based strategy is an important part of the process but Smucker, like Gramsci, is wary of a singular approach to counter hegemony. Smucker also interprets Gramsci's hegemony as a balance of consent and coercion. He explains that just as movements for radical social change have to learn how to intervene in the cultural terrain of struggle defined by consent, so too must they engage with the state, bureaucracy, and coercion. They must, in his words, translate the "symbolic victories" and gains they make on the cultural terrain into "institutional victories" through policy intervention, elections, legal rulings, and winning over the institutions and bureaucracies of the state. Moreover, he explicitly references the ever-present coercive dimension of hegemonic power writing that "When an underdog challenger wins a contest over meanings ... the challenged hegemon does not throw his arms up and walk away ... He musters whatever infrastructure he can to squash the threat to his power" (2017, 150). Smucker's reading of Gramsci is similar to my own here. Challenging the hegemon's consent and cultural legitimacy alone is not enough to topple it. Rather than consecutively, however, the war of position and the war of maneuver take place simultaneously, or at least activists and campaigners should be preparing for both at the same time.

Organizing Cools The Planet (2012), an activist manual specifically for community organizers working on climate justice campaigns, draws directly on insights from all these thinkers. Authors Hillary Moore and Joshua Kahn Russell quote Gramsci in the epigraph opening their introduction: "The challenge of modernity is to live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned." This is yet another allusion to Gramsci's influence over a

new generation of social movement strategists and campaigners and its relevance to the campaigns described in my case studies. The organizing strategies Moore and Kahn Russell discuss point towards crucial strategies that a war of position for climate justice could include.

Like *Organizing Cools the Planet*, Jeremy Brecher's *Against Doom: A Climate Insurgency Manual* (2017), lays out a theory of power, points of strategic intervention, and tactics for the Climate Justice Movement. Drawing more upon Gene Sharp's writings on Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Disobedience, the book is less obviously Gramscian in its outlook. However, it also contains important insights derived from a strain of Gramscian lineage, particularly its emphasis on consent and his understanding of power in relational rather than possessive terms. Take for example, Brecher's explanation of the power relation upon which elites depend and how to challenge it:

The powers that are responsible for climate change could not continue for a day without the acquiescence of those whose lives and future they are destroying. They are only able to continue with their destructive course because other enable or acquiesce in it... A movement can impose its will without weapons or violence if it can withdraw that cooperation from the powers that be. (2017, 22)

While neither references it directly, we can see a version of Gramsci's legacy here as Brecher applies Sharp's insights from *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* to climate justice campaigning (1973).²³ The objective of climate justice activists, as Brecher articulates it

²³ Chapter Six will discuss the relationship between counter hegemony and non-cooperation or civil disobedience in greater detail. Suffice it to say here that if we read Gramsci's insights into Brecher, and indeed Sharp's, arguments, then we may be looking at the version of hegemony that is more closely aligned with Laclau and Mouffe or Raymond Williams' interpretation as simply a consensual relation of power. At the same time, non-violent direct action is a highly effective coercive tool as well.

here, must be to remove broader society's consent from "the powers that are responsible for climate change" because the powers that be cannot continue to rule without the consent of those over whom they govern. For Brecher, power (he doesn't mention hegemony) is ultimately a relation of cooperation that may be undone by abandoning the relationship and refusing to continue cooperating. This understanding of power is mostly closely associated with the ways hegemony has been interpreted as a relation of consent alone.

As these selections make clear, Gramsci's influence upon social movement strategy and community organizing, even in the United States, has become extensive. In each of these social movement interpretations of Gramsci's political strategy – or at least political strategies in which Gramsci's influence can be seen – we find an emphasis on the importance of intervening in culture and discourse to contest the relation of consent and forge new allegiance around alternative "common sense" narratives. In addition, most, if not all, of these movement strategists recognize in some way that intervening in consent and culture alone is not enough to oust the ruling class, social groups, elites or ideas. Mirroring the discord in academic theory, some recognize that hegemony balances coercion and consent, synthesizing them into a complex relationship, while others view hegemony as pertaining solely to the relation of consent and should be contrasted with violence and coercion. While these all provide useful insights into the concrete tactical and strategic considerations involved in a war of position, few have really begun theorizing how social movements might combine these with the tactics and strategies pertinent to a war of maneuver, and fewer still to those relevant to a war of economies. We can productively synthesize insights of social movement theorists and strategists, inside and outside the academy, to better understand

hegemonic politics and strategy. However, we will need to do so paying close attention to their different interpretations of hegemony, the slippages between these interpretations, the dynamics they are able to capture and those they miss, and how all of these are manifested in the strategic praxis social movements operate with today.

Petro-Hegemony and the Oil Assemblage

Theorizing hegemony helps us understand the power relations upon which ruling elites and ideas depend and it helps us imagine the possible strategies by which those power relations may be undone, remade, and intervened upon. Theorizing hegemony should always allow us to both think about power and also to think about counter power. John Agnew encourages his readers to “see territory and sovereignty as both involving the exercise of putative powers that need not be restricted to the entities that we call state” and also to “include so-called private actors and political organizations other than state” in our analyses of power (Agnew 2010, 782). I suggest we do the same thing with hegemony. In removing it from its state-centric origins we can experiment with what theorizing hegemony, as applied to fossil fuel companies and the CJM, might reveal about both power and counter power in Blockadia. Understanding the fossil fuel industry’s power in terms of hegemony exposes how the relations of power upon which fossil fuel companies depends (coercion, compliance, and consent), operate through the state, economics, and culture. It may also indicate how climate just activists might intervene upon on, challenge, and counter these power relations.

The dimensions and geography of the fossil fuel industry can be mystifying. When I describe the “fossil fuel industry” I am generally referring to both private and state-owned fossil fuel companies, and particularly those primarily concerned with oil and gas resources. While the vast majority of fossil fuel reserves around the world are state-owned, involving “joint ventures” between private companies, field contractors, and the state, the resource infrastructures under consideration in this dissertation are either privately owned or have recently been bought by the state. According to Bridge and Le Billon, 80% of the world’s conventional oil and gas reserves are owned by states or otherwise lay outside of the control of the world’s largest private oil companies (2017). Fossil fuel companies and reserves in the United States and Canada, on the other hand, are much more likely to be privately owned than they are elsewhere even while, as Bridge and Le Billon explain, the boundaries between national and private companies are becoming increasingly fluid (2017). Exploring the many dimensions of the oil and gas industry, Appel, Mason and Watts write that “the scale and reach of the sector is in fact almost impossible to fully grasp, in part because of the difficulty of deciding on its circumference and limits” (2015, 5). This renders it particularly difficult to delineate where a study of the power of the fossil fuel industry should, or even could, begin and end. In other words, the scope and scale of the industry is ambiguous. As such, the objects of study in this analysis must necessarily be far-reaching and inclusive, meanwhile all researchers are at some point forced to choose what will and will not be excluded from their study.

Michael Watts has developed the invaluable concept of the “oil assemblage,” providing a useful framework to navigate this ambiguity (2014). The term oil assemblage is deployed to

capture the complexity of the entanglements of networks, institutions and infrastructure in which the oil and gas industry is situated. The oil assemblage encompasses national and transnational fossil fuel companies, governments, financial institutions, public relations firms, traders, investment funds, development agencies, contracting agencies and contractors, construction firms, oil fields, transportation routes, tribal chiefs, politicians and political initiatives, private and state security forces, insurgents, militias, as well as cultural and social organizations and programs like extra-curricular activities or community development initiatives (Watts 2014). All of these make up the life world of oil. The industry is the gravitational force drawing these constituents into an assemblage and its existence cannot be understood outside of the assemblage. The oil assemblage concept transforms what may seem – and often is – a disorderly sprawl into a highly dynamic network that supports and sustains the oil and gas industry.²⁴ Watts has also theorized what he calls “Oil frontiers,” to describes the politics, culture, economics and social context of the spaces in which oil extraction actually occurs. They are spaces of “violent accumulation working hand in hand with militarism and empire” (Appel, Mason, and Watts 2015, 11). The term brings into focus the “conditions of existence” upon which the “local operation” of the oil assemblage is made possible (Watts 2014, 194). In exploring hegemonic struggle to keep fossil fuels in the ground in Blockadia, the oil assemblage and frontier become essential reference points.

²⁴ I will use fossil fuel industry and oil and gas industry more or less interchangeably. This, of course excludes the coal industry from my analysis. The case studies visited in this dissertation concern oil and keeping oil in the ground. There are a great deal of resonances and similarities across the hegemonic status of coal companies, particularly in Appalachia, and petro-hegemony. While I will use examples of the coal industry’s hegemony in coal mining regions to bolster my analysis of petro-hegemony, it is important to remember that the coal industry and oil industry are ultimately very different forms of industrial activity. The three power relations and their corresponding fields remain the same but, as Timothy Mitchell points out, the coal and oil industries involve different fuel sources, different technologies, different economies, and often quite different political opportunities (2011).

Pipelines, railways and shipping routes connect oil frontiers through the oil assemblage to refineries, gas pumps, and factories. The industry itself is divided into three operational segments: upstream, midstream, and downstream (Bridge and Le Billon 2017). Sites of resource extraction constitute upstream operations, transportation and shipping are managed by midstream operations, and refining and end-use distribution fall under the category of downstream operations. Some companies specialize in particular operations. For example, some contractors focus on building pipelines and other transportation infrastructure, others specialize in management of extraction sites, while others might develop and operate the drilling equipment. The largest oil companies, however, have tended towards “vertical integration,” meaning the upstream, midstream, and downstream operations are all contained within one company.²⁵ Depending on pricing structures and profitability these vertically integrated companies may opt to contract with a pipeline company to ship their product and, of course, they will often sell their oil to other oil refineries. However, control of the entire supply chain has historically given the largest oil companies immense privileges to set prices and insulate themselves from price fluctuation or political instability (Yergin 1992). Generally speaking, if the price of oil is high then extraction companies are profitable while refineries do poorly, meanwhile if the price of oil is low then refineries are more profitable and extraction companies less so. If a company owns the oil it extracted, the route by which it will be transported, and the refinery in which it will be processed, then the company may remain relatively profitable regardless of the price of oil (Bridge and LeBillon 2017).²⁶

²⁵ Daniel Yergin’s epic, *The Prize*, documents in great detail the rise of Standard Oil and John D. Rockefeller’s attempt to construct one of the first vertically integrated oil companies in the United States.

²⁶ I will return to this dynamic throughout the dissertation because it particularly relevant to the escalation of pipeline politics in Canada.

Sites of extraction, transportation routes, and refineries have all become the frontlines of Blockadia as Indigenous peoples, climate justice campaigns, and local communities confront the invasion, pollution, or degradation of their homes and fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Pipeline and transportation infrastructure are particularly vulnerable targets for keep-it-in-the-ground activism because of the outsized impact stalling transportation can have on the industry within the broader oil assemblage (Grossman 2017; Cheon and Urpelainen 2018; Klein 2014). Similarly, their deployment at different points in the supply chain of oil may at specific times (for example corresponding to fluctuations in the price of oil or periods of oversupply) make particular counter hegemonic tactics more or less effective. The terms oil assemblage and oil frontier provide useful a topography of the industry and make possible an analysis of how the oil assemblage informs and shapes the relations of power upon which the industry depends. Meanwhile, understanding the structuring of the industry itself may allow campaigners to devise tactics most suitable to a specific segment of the supply chain. These are all vital insights for constructing a theory of the industry's hegemony.

It is becoming increasingly popular for scholars to describe the fossil fuel industry in terms of hegemony (see Huber 2013; Bell 2016; Haluza DeLay 2014; Haluza DeLay and Carter 2016; Adkin and Stares 2016; Kinder 2016). They explain how the fossil fuel industry produces consent to its activities and projects by shaping cultural norms, discourses, narratives, and embedding fossil fuels in our life worlds and epistemologies such that elements of our very identities are constituted by fossil fuels. Hegemony understood on these authors' terms, however, often mirrors the divorcing of consent from compliance and coercion I detailed in the previous section. The fossil fuel industry's hegemony is

circumscribed as a cultural phenomenon separate from its’ “dominance” through violence (Zalik 2015; Zalik 2011) or its ability to structure compliance (Gaventa 1980). Much of this work emerges from Cultural Studies, the Environmental Humanities, and a burgeoning “petro-cultures” subfield (see Barrett and Worden 2014; Szeman et al. 2015). Their intervention provides incredibly important insights into relations of consent. They demonstrate how cultural and discursive norms both legitimize and are comprised by fossil fuels. Moreover, they show how the industry, produces “social license” to operate, and embeds fossil fuel energy in our understandings of who we are (ibid; Bowles and Veltmeyer 2016). Their work comprises a crucial dimension of the literature on fossil fuels, and particularly oil, that for far too long went unrecognized and unnoticed. However, the petro-cultures field, as many petro-cultures scholars would be the first to acknowledge, does not, and does not seek to, explain or theorize other relations of power upon which oil and the industry depend. Associating the industry’s hegemony with the petro-culture literatures alone risks enforcing the same intellectual schism I identified within the literature on hegemony.

Instead, I argue, a more nuanced and holistic approach to a theory of the industry’s hegemony should synthesize consent, compliance, and coercion under the concept. This should pay close attention to the role each relation of power plays separately in supporting the industry, but also help us understand how the relationships between power relations maintain the industry’s hegemony. I suggest that we analyze the three power relations as they appear in three corresponding domains or mediators: the petro-state through which the industry intervenes in relations of coercion, petro-culture through which it shapes relations of consent, and petro-capitalism through which it conditions situations of compliance. The term

petro-hegemony, therefore, refers to the synthesis of petro-culture, petro-capitalism, and the petro-state and how strategies and tactics are operationalized through these domains or strategic mediators to intervene in relations of consent, compliance, and coercion to advance and maintain the fossil fuel industry's interests. I find this a useful lens of analysis for academics and movement strategists alike to study the relations of power upon which the industry depends and to develop strategic frameworks through which we might contest it with counter hegemonic strategies, narratives, and tactics.²⁷

Petro-culture

Imre Szeman et al. use the term petro-culture to highlight the extent to which oil is embedded in the narratives, morals, meanings, ideas, in a word, culture, of contemporary Western capitalist societies. Accordingly, contemporary consumer society is:

shaped by oil in physical and material ways, from the automobiles and highways we use to the plastics that permeate our food supply and built environments. Even more significantly, fossil fuels have also shaped our values, practices, habits, beliefs, and feelings. (Szeman et al. 2015, 9)

Stephanie LeMenager's *Living Oil* (2013), Imre Szeman's convening of the petro-cultures research group and their corresponding publication *After Oil* (2015), Matt Huber's *Lifeblood* (2013), and Barrett and Worden's edited volume *Oil Culture* (2014) have charted an important new field in the study of oil, industry, and power, fast becoming known as petro-

²⁷ I developed this term independently but later discovered that both Haluza-DeLay and Carter (2016) and Kinder (2016) have also used the term "petro-hegemony" to describe the industry's power. However, despite the significant advances their contributions make, neither capitalize on the term's conceptual potential. I am using petro-hegemony as a conceptual framework to better understand and think about the industry and resistance to it. Both texts use the term as a descriptor while I am developing it as a useful lens of analysis that encompasses a more holistic approach to the industry's hegemony.

cultures. Petro-culture (like petro-capitalism and the petro-state) aren't only fields or domains of study, however, they are mediators through which industry agents organize and deploy strategies to engage and intervene with these respective power relations. These ideas have laid the groundwork for a many more scholars to take up the study of petro-culture and explore its significance as a mediator of industry strategy through which fossil fuels and fossil fuel companies gains consent, social license, or legitimacy (Bowles and Veltmeyer 2016; Damluji 2015; Kinder 2016;). Recognizing the role oil discourses and identity construction play in maintaining the fossil fuel industry's hegemony is not particularly recent. Indeed, William Freudenburg, invoking an explicitly Gramscian perspective documented what he called "privileged accounts" to signify the way that environmentally and socially destructive industries mediate and shape dominant discourses around the perceived "necessity" of, and identification with, their product (Freudenburg 2005). Nevertheless, the field has burgeoned and is now filled with insights into how oil and the fossil fuel industry intervene in and shape consent through culture.

Fossil fuel companies deploy a large range of tactics to intervene in the relation of consent. They fund museum exhibits and the arts, sponsor education programs and sports teams, finance police and fire departments, fund local charities, and pump millions of dollars into public relations and advertising campaigns. Purchasing consent in this way is intended to reinforce discourses favorable to the industry and present it as benevolent and necessary. While throwing its money around may help reinforce discourses favorable to the industry, this isn't necessarily what establishes such discourses in the first place nor what makes them so compelling. These narratives are rooted in identity, community, and deeply held values. In

Fighting King Coal, Shannon E. Bell exposes the mechanisms through which the coal industry assembled consent to its operations in Appalachia for nearly a century. The industry has successfully constructed coal as integral to the Appalachian economy, to Appalachian identity, and to ideas of masculinity in local discourses. Active support for coal mining is deeply rooted in what it means to be a loyal member of Appalachian society, particularly amongst men (Bell 2016). Meanwhile the image of the coal miner is celebrated and aspired toward, even while coal mining jobs decline and the coal industry abandon workers to destitution. Some of these discourses are actively reinforced and developed through industry funded “Astroturf” organizations posing as grassroots interest groups, like Friends of Coal.

Randolph Haluza DeLay notes a similar phenomenon in Alberta and the Athabasca Tar Sands where public relations firms and oil company representatives, in coordination with the Canadian government, have “assembled consent” through efforts like the “Alberta is Energy” campaign. The campaign tries to tie provincial identity, notions of citizenship, and what it means to be an Albertan, to the interests of oil companies operating in the tar sands (Haluza DeLay 2014). Oil’s role in the construction of Albertan identity has become deeply embedded in the province’s culture. Haluza DeLay and Carter explain how “the oil industry has manipulated and heightened these cultural tendencies such that the hegemonic ‘common sense’ notion of Albertan identity has become intimately connected with energy” (2016, 458). Adkin and Stares argue this has developed around a discourse they call “neoliberal nativism” through which the industry and the provincial government construct Albertans as “a besieged people that must repeatedly defend its greatest source of wealth (oil and gas) from the grasping hands of governments representing the larger, urban populations of eastern

Canada”(Adkin and Stares 2016, 220).²⁸ As I observed while studying in British Columbia, this discourse presents Albertans as victims of federal overreach and pits them against ungrateful, yet oil-dependent, provincial neighbors. Meanwhile, the “I love Canadian Oil and Gas campaign,” and the “Rally for Resources,” two pro-industry, apparently grassroots initiatives, have performed an increasingly important role reinforcing discourses favorable to the industry.²⁹ These discourses culturally embed fossil fuel production’s benevolence in local communities, legitimize oil company operations, and equate challenges to the industry to an attack on all Albertans.³⁰

Looking beyond the industry and placing emphasis on oil itself, several authors argue that the discursive power of the oil industry is more deeply embedded in society than any public relations or Astroturf campaigns can account for. Emphasizing the cultural significance of the *product*, Matt Huber employs a “Gramscian-Foucauldian” approach to studying “the role of petroleum products in both powering and provisioning neoliberal forms of common sense” (Huber 2014, 228). He argues that neoliberal ideology and ways of life are predicated on the multiplicity of products that depend on oil extraction. Thus neoliberalism, both as ideology and economic formation, would not be possible without oil (Huber 2013). Frederick Buell,

²⁸ In Alberta there exists a deep resentment of provinces to the east and especially the federal government deciding what can and can’t be done with “Alberta’s oil.” Such resentment has periodically fueled fantasies of Alberta seceding from the rest of Canada so Albertans can govern themselves and their resources without interference. The oil industry will cynically exploit these sentiments and rile up Albertan separatism to suit its interests.

²⁹ The “I Love Canadian Oil and Gas” logo is now printed on both of Calgary’s hockey teams’ stadium’s ice hockey rinks. The Edmonton Oilers is the name of the Edmonton hockey team, Calgary’s rivals ([Romero 2019](#)).

³⁰ I focus mostly on oil and gas throughout my dissertation but draw upon Shannon E. Bell’s indispensable studies into the cultural politics of coal mining too because much of what she has found is transposable to the study of petro-hegemony. I also find John Gaventa’s account of the nearly 5 decades of the Coal industry’s power in Appalachia a highly compelling account of compliance that also contains transposable elements (1980).

looking back at the discourses that shaped settler expansion across what became the United States, delves even deeper, arguing that the very process of oil extraction is tied to expansionism and is constitutive of American Individualism (2014). In this way oil discourses are deeply embedded in mainstream American values, identity and nationhood. Daniel Worden extends this argument stating that “petroleum underlies the normative vision of family, work and social belonging” and shows that even the most intimate relations and values in American society are predicated on access to cheap, abundant oil (Worden 2014, 109). All of this matters because, as Szeman et al. argue, “Oil is so deeply and extensively embedded in our social, economic, and political structures and practices that imagining or enacting an alternative feels impossible” (2015, 16). Oil’s penetration into culture serves to construct oil and oil companies as indispensable, unassailable features of modern life in North America. Even while fossil fuel companies are publicly vilified, their product and thus the industry, are often unquestioningly considered inevitable, and this is one their greatest strengths (Coll 2012).

It is important to examine the extent to which the fossil fuel industry *deliberately* orchestrates strategies with which to manage and intervene in relations consent. We might contrast this with the extent to which consent to the industry and its products is reproduced spontaneously through the everyday discourses and expectations we have all formed around what energy can do for us.

This question remains unresolved question in the petro-cultures field. Szeman and many of his collaborators have taken a position that petro-culture is something all of us reproduce and

are (albeit unwittingly) complicit in (2015). Through our narratives about energy and oil we shape ourselves into “petro-subjects” (ibid). Authors like Haluza-DeLay (2014), Adkin and Stares (2016) and Bell (2016), however, demonstrate the lengths to which fossil fuel companies go to exploit these discourses to produce consent, social license and legitimacy. They show that consent to the industry is indeed carefully and deliberately orchestrated through the industry’s strategic interventions in this relation of power. It seems that the distinction between these two positions lies in whether we focus on the industry or the product. Where the industry is privileged as our object of analysis the mechanics of its consent-building projects are visible, whereas when oil-as-energy-resource is privileged, scholars have tended to affirm the organic and self-sustaining reproduction of consent to oil. I’ve found that while these oil discourses may develop organically through our cultural relationship to the product, they are reinforced and strategically weaponized many times over by the fossil fuel industry to produce consent. Thus, we might suggest at a mutually reinforcing relationship between spontaneity and orchestration in the (re)production of oil culture.

Petro-capitalism

Linking the co-dependency between fossil fuels and the development of capitalist societies, scholars have developed important insight in the field of petro-capitalism (Malm 2016). Angela Carter uses the term to “indicate just how dependent this political economic system is on fossil energy, particularly oil” (Carter 2014, 25). This dependency operates in different ways and at different scales. Research into the so called “oil curse” has sought to explain how

oil rich nations, particularly formerly colonized countries which have restructured their entire economies to extract and sell unrefined oil, paradoxically decreases standards of living and increases tendencies towards authoritarianism (Karl 1995; Collier 2010; Yergin 1992). In structuring their economies around this one lucrative product, countries become singularly dependent upon oil and are, therefore, highly sensitive to price fluctuation in the cost of a barrel of oil. This gives multinational oil companies and oil producers an inordinate degree of influence over the political economy of that region. The already blurred lines between states and industry become even more porous with governments turning their whole legislative and administrative capacity, bureaucracy, and, often times, monopoly on the legitimate use of force, over to the oil industry. The result, resource curse scholars argue, is often corruption, authoritarianism, and violence. As these lines are more or less erased, we see the rise of the “petro-state” which I will problematize in more detail in the following section.

The dependency that defines petro-capitalism operates at local and global scales too and the mechanics of this dynamic has not received as much attention as the resource curse. It is clear, however, that a *dynamic of dependency* endows the fossil fuel industry with an enormous amount of influence, ensuring compliance at the local, state, and global scale. Moreover, our society’s dependency on oil means that whether or not we consent to the industry’s operations, we certainly rely upon the industry for livelihoods, transport, food, heat, and all the other comforts associated with consumer capitalism. This dependency has particularly severe implications at the local scale and is often deliberately conditioned by fossil fuel companies. Indeed, Naomi Klein argues that the very destructiveness of the industry’s impacts on other

economic and environmental sources of livelihoods leaves communities with little choice but to submit to the fossil fuel industry:

This is the Catch-22 of the fossil fuel economy: precisely because these activities are so dirty and disruptive, they tend to weaken or even destroy other economic drivers: fish stocks are hurt by pollution, the scarred landscape becomes less attractive to tourists, and farmland becomes unhealthy. But rather than spark a popular backlash, this slow poisoning can end up strengthening the power of the fossil fuel companies because they end up being virtually the only game in town. (2014, 273)

Communities living in close proximity to fossil fuel infrastructure are often all too aware of the damage the industry's operations may be doing to their health and homes but remain dependent on that industry for employment, philanthropy, school funding and so on (Auyero and Swistun 2009). John Gaventa (1980) and later Bell (2016) document exactly this dynamic in their respective studies of Appalachian coal mining towns in the United States.

The "company town" has a long history and is associated with a large literature most thoroughly reviewed in Thomas G. Andrews' *Killing for Coal* (2008). The 19th and 20th century company towns of the United States represent one of the clearest examples of the techniques the industry used and uses to engineer a population's compliance. In two quite different conjunctures of Appalachian history Bell (2016) and Gaventa (1980) both explore why, knowing what people know about exploitation and environmental degradation for which coal companies are responsible in the region, communities don't rebel against them. Both explain that the answer corresponds, at least in part, to the legacy of a dynamic of dependency fossil fuel companies engineered through the development of company towns. Originally a strategy to discipline labor, coal companies would buy up most or all of the surrounding land, as well as all the shops, controlling entertainment venues and even churches. Workers were

paid in “scrips” or credits that were exchangeable only at the company stores, and the company owned the only stores in the company town. Whole communities came to depend upon the company for work, land use, religion, entertainment, and even groceries. Workers, or workers’ families, who demanded reforms would be blacklisted and barred from all of these venues, virtually guaranteeing social exclusion and destitution. The seeming omnipotence of the company, and the dependency everyone had upon it, often, though certainly with some very notable exceptions, succeeded in engineering a situation in which even if communities dissented, they could not actively resist. In these situations, the industry needed neither their consent nor to coerce them. Only their compliance mattered (Gaventa 1980). The legacies of this relationship exist to this day (Andrews 2008; Bell 2016).

Compliance and dependency operate at a macro scale as well. Canada is home to the world’s third largest oil reserves and the United States has consistently ranked amongst the top three largest oil and gas producers in the world (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). In 2018, Canada was the fourth largest producer and exporter of crude oil in the world (Natural Resources Canada 2019). In the US, the oil industry employs “four hundred thousand people in Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi” alone, which together generate “\$70 billion annually in economic value and \$20 billion annually in tax revenue and royalty payments to local, state, and federal governments” (Watts 2012, 456). In the Gulf of Mexico, “the total fixed capital in the Gulf oil complex is now valued at an estimated \$2 trillion” (ibid). In Alberta, “45 percent of the province’s jobs are in the oil and gas sector,” (Adkin 2016, 30). Meanwhile, the Bakken Shale formation in North Dakota could hold up to “five hundred billion barrels of oil equivalent” and “the global oil and gas industry is valued at several trillions of dollars”

(Appel, Mason, and Watts 2015, 2,5). According to Appel, Mason, and Watts, the total global value “of recoverable oil and gas is roughly \$160 trillion,” while “the fixed assets of the entire industry now total over \$40 trillion” and “over one million barrels of oil can be traded in a day” (2015, 19). These powerful numbers reveal how Marx’s “silent compulsion of the market” operates at the scale of states fostering a dynamic of dependency between the economic development of those states and the oil industry. These estimates also give some insight into the degree of disruption that halting fossil fuel operations would cause globally and also within local economies where thousands of jobs depend directly or indirectly on oil and gas extraction (ibid).

The extent to which oil and gas companies are embedded in local economies fosters a dynamic of dependency and reinforces relations of compliance. But the local can never really be disconnected from the global. The construction of oil infrastructure, investment in oil production, oil markets, and the manufacturing of demand for oil are all deeply entrenched in the global economy (Bridge and LeBillon 2017; Grewal 2014). The industry experiences intense boom and bust cycles, or periods of “exuberance and catastrophe,” as Buell puts it, that have enormous consequences for global political economy (Buell 2014). The oil market is global and is characterized by erratic fluctuation, where prices are subject not to the logic of supply and demand but to “a transnational corporate oligarchy (The Seven Sisters), a Third World cartel (OPEC), a First World consumer lobby (the International Energy Agency), and long-term contracts” (Appel, Mason, and Watts 2015, 8). Jane Guyer says that to make sense of oil prices, researchers would do better looking to the decisions these actors make rather than to market relations of supply and demand (Guyer 2015). Similarly, Bridge and LeBillon, show

that demand itself is often manufactured by fossil fuel companies, inflated by International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates and then reified by corresponding capital investment decisions (2017). Through all this, then, it is the (often international) investors and shareholders who tend to have an extraordinary amount of influence over local oil economies and the development of oil infrastructure (Carter 2014). In this way states, countries, communities form dependency not just on the oil company, or the product, but upon oil company shareholders and investment decisions, complying with industry's interests to attract investment of their capital.

The jobs associated with fossil fuel infrastructure and development often place unions in strategic, if fickle, alliances with fossil fuel companies (Haluzá-DeLay and Carter 2016). In the United States and Canada, some unions have become little more than another lobbying arm of the fossil fuel industry. Meanwhile, in some cases the associated tax revenue and oil severance taxes may attract supportive politicians. Seeking to turn oil wealth into political capital through "petropopulism," these politicians funnel oil revenue into public services and popular infrastructure projects (Watts 2014, 202). Both of these dynamics also condition dependency on oil revenue for vital public services.

Finally, feeding the "oil curse," the allure of attracting transnational capital investment in oil development leads many local, state, and national governments into becoming rentier-states, turning their economies over to the oil and gas industry in exchange for oil revenues and job growth (Adkin 2016; Mitchell 2011). Dependence on oil products, oil jobs, oil investment, oil extraction, oil growth, and oil infrastructure development makes rentier-states, and all of

us (obviously to varying degrees), vulnerable to fluctuations in the price of oil, while thriving oil economies can crash literally overnight (Appel, Mason, and Watts 2015). As a result, the price of oil, somewhat tenuously, is used to predict social unrest, intensification of conflict, and economic growth (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). The speed with which decisions made about oil at a global scale can impact local economies has only intensified. This has given the oil industry even more privileges and reinforced its influence over governance at global and local scales (ibid).

Petro-state

Oil frontiers and oil extraction almost always include collaboration between state and industry, obscuring the distinction between public and private interests. Describing what he calls “the resource-state nexus,” Gavin Bridge has explained how states deploy discourses to legitimize resource extraction, violence to securitize it, and subsidies to finance it (2014). These are some of the functions of the petro-state. This is particularly so in the case of “joint ventures” between states and companies, and when the state owns extraction industries, or at least has a large stake in them (Engler 2014). However, the relationships between private oil companies and government in the United States and Canada, and the extent which they collaborate in legitimizing projects, securitization, and subsidies, is well documented too (Zalik 2016, 2015; McBeath 2016; Haluza-DeLay 2014; Wilson 2014; Monaghan and Wallby 2017).

Laurie Adkin explains that, in the case of the Albertan government, “reliance upon oil and gas revenue... has driven bureaucratic restructuring, government investment priorities, public policy, political rights and representation, and citizenship” (2016, 13). The industry is able to intervene in relations of coercion through the petro-state. Such interventions may include the legitimizing and subsidizing of extraction, the legal enforcement of dispossession and land enclosure, the processes of who is included and excluded from the benefits of resource wealth, and the disciplining of dissent to secure oil frontiers. All of these are largely a function of state’s coercive capacities and ability to enforce laws and rules. Therefore, the concept of the petro-state for purposes of this dissertation refers specifically to governments that have, to a large degree, turned over their administrative, legislative, and law enforcement capacities to supporting the oil industry. Petro-states are ultimately prepared to extend their monopoly on the legitimate use of force to protect, enforce, and advance the industry’s interests.³¹

To delineate the petro-states field I bring together authors articulating the nexus of state and capital within the oil assemblage and the political influence of fossil fuel companies in and on governments, as well as those writing on the inherent, often state-sanctioned, violence, and regulatory and enforcement mechanisms through which fossil fuel extraction,

³¹ Here I’m calling on Max Weber’s famous formulation of the state defined as the entity within a social formation that has the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (See *Politics as Vocation*, 1919 – The Vocation Lectures, 2004). The state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, not to mention its increasing propensity towards contracting out that monopoly on violence to private companies, makes coercion the primary relation of power the industry exploits through the petro-state. Coercion needn’t just mean violence, however. With regards to the petro-state it can apply to situations wherever laws, legality, or legislation, are ultimately enforced through violence, surveillance, or direct repression. To complicate matters, coercive measures may be deployed by state and non-state actors alike without the necessary backing of violence. Non-violent direct action is a coercive tactic, for example. Moreover, while the state may have the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, this is not necessarily true of the legitimacy of coercion.

transportation, refining and emissions are facilitated. Following Adkin (2016) and Watts (2014) I've broadened the conceptual category of petro-states to include regions of, and indeed the current governing administrations of, the United States and Canada. In doing so, I've shifted the meaning of the term somewhat, such that we are not describing states that are exclusively dependent on oil for economic development. In this rendition, petro-states are all governing bureaucracies that find their interests inextricably aligned with those of the oil industry and use their enforcement capabilities to advance those interests.

I'm borrowing from Timothy Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy* to articulate this shift (2011). Mitchell explains that, through his study of the relationship between fossil fuels and democracy, "it became increasingly clear that carbon energy and modern democratic politics were tied intricately together." In the process, "rather than a study of democracy and oil" his research became a study of "democracy *as* oil" (2011, 5 original emphasis). Democracy and oil are fused in his concept of "Carbon Democracy." Fossil fuels have made contemporary power relations, and particularly the things modern democracies are expected to do, possible. As he extends this logic, therefore, "the leading industrialised countries are also oil states. Without the energy they derive from oil their current forms of political and economic life would not exist" (2011, 6). Contemporary democracies have come to "*count on*" oil, have taken fossil fuels for granted, in order to make promises and fulfil the expectations of their citizenry. Securing fossil fuel access is thus a strategically vital component of both domestic and geo-politics.

When modern democracies are unable to fulfil their citizens' expectations because of pressures on the fossil fuel economy, they face authority and legitimacy challenges that must be overcome. Fossil fuel infrastructures and their supply chains form an important part of a governments' ability to maintain the expectations of their citizens. As such, the interests of the state and of fossil fuel companies tend to align because the legitimacy of the state, and the ability of the state to manage its citizens' expectations, depends upon unlimited fossil fuel extraction (2011). The shared interests of states and industry therefore justify state-sanctioned coercion to attain and secure this "strategic asset." We can think of petro-hegemony often existing within and responding to the context of carbon democracy. It is, therefore, in conditions of carbon democracy that the fossil fuel industry's interventions in the workings of the state gain legitimacy. This helps explain how fossil fuel companies are able to capture institutions of the state and advance their interests in purportedly democratic governance systems.

The United States and Canada have become two examples of what Adkin calls "First World Petro-States" (2016). Yves Engler has documented the close collaboration between the Canadian government and tar sands representatives as they have tried to sell Alberta's oil abroad and decrease environmental regulations on oil imports to the European Union (Engler 2014). Haluza-DeLay, meanwhile, has described the collusion between the Canadian state and the industry as they seek to construct "positive representations of the tar sands in Alberta" (2014, 39). Moreover, throughout the oil assemblage and particularly in oil frontiers, when the industry is unable to establish or maintain consent to extraction, and compliance constrains only those directly dependent upon it, companies can often call upon

allies in government to coercively repress dissent (Klein 2014; Zalik 2016). While the state's legitimizing narrative, bureaucracy, and administrative and legislative capacities all facilitate extraction and production, they are all, ultimately, legally enforceable by the threat, or the actuality of, violence and coercion. As such, it is the threat, and actuality of, coercion and the state's ability to enforce rules favorable to the industry that defines the petro-state.

Liam Downey argues that "violence is one of several overlapping mechanisms that provide powerful actors with the means to prevail over others in conflicts over natural resources" (2015, 179). As sites of dispossession and exclusion, oil frontiers are characterized by conflict and coercion. They are spaces in which, according to Michael Watts, "formal rules are often elastic, and where states typically exercise a mix of despotic and coercive rather than wholly infrastructural power" (2014, 216). Oil frontiers are where the industry's coercive capabilities become most visible. The violence of the frontier is deeply inscribed in the history of colonialism in Northern America. Adkin writes that oil and gas development in Alberta "required the forcible imposition of a British colonial system of property rights and political institutions – including the reserve system – upon the indigenous inhabitants of the Dominion" (Adkin 2016, 31). Historically, and still today, frontiers are shaped by colonial discourses and the violence of dispossession. As Watts writes:

Frontiers have been associated with imperial or state-led commercial advance typically into geographical border zones in which populations are presumed (or constructed) to be scant or "primitive," property rights absent or unformed, and resources (land, minerals, forests) uncommercialized – in short, a zone of contact between "barbarism" and "civilization." (2014, 215)

The development of oil and gas economies is often combined with the violence of colonialism and dispossession, carried out, enforced, and legitimized through the petro-state

(Adkin 2016). Contestation and protest at the oil frontier is met with (often racialized and gendered) criminalization, violence and securitization (Willson 2014; Zalik 2015; McNeish and Logan 2012). The state enforces oil extraction, providing support from law enforcement and authorizing private security contractors in the name of “national security” (Zalik 2011). Monaghan and Wallby have documented the increasing surveillance and infiltration to which those opposing the development of oil infrastructure are being subjected. They demonstrate how the collaboration between governments and the oil industry is justified through discourses of “critical infrastructure” and appealing to the “national interest” (2017). Similarly, David Pellow identifies the deep co-dependence existing between state and capital through his study of the repression and surveillance of environmental activists in what he calls the “Green Scare” (2014). With increasing frequency, throughout the oil assemblage, and particularly in oil frontiers, we are seeing how those seeking to keep fossil fuels in the ground are being met with the violent repression that so defines what Naomi Klein’s calls Blockadia (2014).

Petro-hegemony

Petro-hegemony combines, synthesizes and organizes strategic interventions through petro-culture, petro-capitalism, and the petro-state to engage with relations of consent, coercion, and compliance which consolidates, maintains, and advances the interests of the fossil fuel industry. The industry’s strategies to produce consent include gaining footholds in culturally significant institutions, reinforcing favorable discourses, and embedding fossil fuels and fossil fuel development in our identities, habits, and life ways. It manufactures or exploits

conditions of compliance by fostering a dynamic of dependency upon both the product and the industry, requiring neither our consent nor coercion to manage potential dissent. In situations where it has failed to wholly secure either consent or compliance, the industry enforces its interests through the petro-state which may ultimately deploy coercive strategies to discipline and repress dissent. Together the petro-state, petro-culture, and petro-capitalism form a mutually reinforcing support structure upon which the industry's hegemony is upheld.

Climate justice activists may counter petro-hegemony by devising and deploying strategies that intervene in each of the relations power through which the industry's hegemony operates. Crucially, it is not enough for activists to deploy strategies that engage with just one or even two of these power relations. For as long as the industry has the broad consent of society, political and economic victories will be short-lived. For as long as the industry is able to effectively deploy coercion and the full force of the state, our movements will be curtailed and repressed. And for as long the vast majority of people depend upon the industry for lives and livelihoods, it will need neither to win our consent nor to coerce us into submission. Finally, we must always be looking at how each of these power relations influences the other; they do not exist in silos. To theorize the combined counter hegemonic strategies with which climate justice activists might address all three of these relations of power, I have developed a concept called the *Carbon Rebellion*.

Theorizing the Carbon Rebellion

A great deal has now been written about power and the fossil fuel industry. Far less has been written about *counter* power and the fossil fuel industry. In their edited volume, *Ending the Fossil Fuel Era*, Princen, Manno, and Martin write:

A politically sufficient approach [to ending the fossil fuel era], one attuned to the realities of the twenty-first century, begins... with explicit attention to multiple sources of power, some material (natural resources, weaponry, financial capital, for example), some ideational (growth is necessary and good), some overt (military and economic), some hidden (in writing the rules of the game and gaining access and dumping externalities on the marginalized). (2015, 334)

Developing a political strategy for keeping fossil fuels in the ground does indeed require us to pay close attention to multiple configurations of power – the material, the discursive, the hidden, and the overt that are simultaneously and continuously in play. Translated into Gramscian terms of hegemony, the carbon rebellion is an attempt at building a counter hegemonic strategic framework advancing exactly this analysis and praxis. As a counter hegemonic strategic framework, the carbon rebellion organizes our thinking and strategic action along the same three relations of power upon which petro-hegemony depends: consent, coercion, and compliance. These may be material and discursive, hidden, or overt configurations.

The carbon rebellion is the climate justice movement's counter hegemonic response to petro-hegemony. The carbon rebellion organizes the strategies, narratives, and tactics climate justice activists might deploy to intervene in relations of consent, coercion, compliance. Like petro-hegemony these interventions are organized by three mediators: the political culture of opposition and creation (consent), the economics of a just transition (compliance), and regimes of climate justice (coercion). Intervening in the relation of consent, the carbon

rebellion organizes strategies, narratives, and tactics for the war of position through what Foran, Grosse and Gray have called a *political culture of opposition and creation* for climate justice, or PCOC (2017). The *economics of a just transition* organizes and develops strategies to alter relations of compliance through the war of economies. Strategies organized to challenge relations of coercion are implemented through what I call *regimes of climate justice* to wage the war of maneuver.

Carbon rebellion exists in nascent forms in many fights to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Most campaigns will, to varying degrees and extents, seek to wrest consent from the fossil fuel industry, challenge and gain coercive capabilities to deploy against the industry, and intervene in relations of compliance. However, the deliberate and coordinated organization of interventions in all three relations of power has yet to emerge as a coherent strategic framework within the climate justice movement. Carbon rebellion may offer one such framework. Moreover, movement scholars and strategists have already made helpful inroads examining one or more of these three mediators of counter hegemonic intervention.

War of position: Political Culture of Opposition and Creation for Climate Justice

David Pellow writes that “many movements begin with a grievance or a critique, but what sustains them and pushes people out into the streets (or underground) is often a vision, a dream of something better” (2014, 1). According to Foran, Grosse and Gray, a political culture of opposition and creation does both. The concept “explores how people make political sense of the social settings that constrict and enable their lives, in ways that can

sometimes lead to the formation of strong social movements” but also how they articulate and cohere around “a positive vision of a better world, and an alternative to strive towards that might improve or replace what exists” (2017, 357). Forging a “historic bloc” for the 21st century, the PCOC can organize a collective, discursive articulation of what Smucker calls “the We in politics” when it deploys narratives and strategies that join wide ranging and diverse groups of people together in solidarity and common cause (2017).

Pushing the concept further, I argue the PCOC provides the foundation of social movements’ shared narratives and organizes the forging of a new “common sense” by linking chains of equivalence across social struggles. As such it articulates a counter hegemonic alignment of alliances opposed to the hegemonic order and advancing visions of alternatives. Yet, diverging from Gramsci, a PCOC for the 21st century must also be “pluriversal” rather than universal in its articulations of the possible and a “world of many worlds” (Escobar forthcoming). Through the PCOC movements may development coalitions large and diverse enough to mount a significant assault on the industry’s legitimacy. This requires strategies that intervene in and change public discourse. Reinsborough and Canning’s story-based strategy that dismantles the stories through which consent to fossil fuel companies is produced would be organized through the PCOC. More than this, however, new stories and discursive strategy must reconstitute consent around climate justice and its visions of alternatives. In this way the PCOC can force a crisis of legitimacy on the fossil fuel industry and opens up new political opportunities for climate justice activists.

The highly influential fossil fuel divestment movement articulated their discursive strategy in terms of removing the industry's "social license to operate" (McKibben 2012; Cheon and Urpelainen 2018). It was a narrative intervention that sought to delegitimize the industry and remove consent to it (LeQuesne 2016). The discourse of social license originally developed by extractive companies to persuade communities to accept fossil fuel infrastructure, "to get to yes," has been turned against the industry (Bowles and Veltmeyer 2014). Undermining the industry's social license, activists have targeted museums, industry donations to universities, and other public institutions the industry sponsors, to draw attention to new narratives that contest the industry's interventions in relations of consent. Greenpeace famously targeted the toy company LEGO for its relationship with Shell through a viral video campaign that ultimately saw LEGO publicly break ties with the oil company (Vaughan 2014).

What Kevin DeLuca calls "image politics" has become an increasingly important tactic to make discursive interventions that target the industry's social license and revoke public acceptance of its operations (1999). Garth Lenz's photographs of the destruction wrought in Alberta's tar sands, for example, have played a significant role in delegitimizing extraction there, particularly amongst those who do not live in Alberta (Davidson and Gismondi 2015). The spread of these images on social media saw the tar sands framed "Alberta's Mordor," a popular culture comparison to Sauron's hellscape in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (ibid). Marches, occupations, direct action and civil disobedience can also be powerful tactics with which to reframe and disseminate narratives to wrest consent away from the industry and align constituents through a PCOC (Reinsborough and Canning 2017).

In most cases, however, the legitimacy of fossil fuels, and the inevitability of their existence, is embedded in our very identities and value systems, facilitating and facilitated by neoliberalism, consumerism, and individualism (Huber 2013). Of course, then, communicating climate justice must delve much deeper into the discourses that shape common sense than public relations campaigns are necessarily able to achieve. Gaining influence within institutions that help mediate these value systems, like churches, schools, media outlets and so on, is an important part of the war of position. Yet on the frontlines of Blockadia, keep-it-in-the-ground campaigns' discursive interventions and narratives have to connect communities in their opposition to extraction and also their vision for alternatives (Steger and Milicevic 2014). These narratives play a crucial role in drawing together disparate and politically divergent social groups across lines that commonly divide them, creating newly blended political identities as they do so (ibid). Stories framing a community's connection to place, to home, against unsolicited intrusion from the industry can often help transcend these social divides (ibid; Grossman 2017). The discourses of the Green New Deal and a just transition are compelling ones, with similar potential to bridge social struggles and values. As populist, unifying framing narratives, they project progress, hope, and possibility all while centering a critique of the systems that produced the climate crisis (Brecher 2017).

Meanwhile, many Indigenous-led campaigns emphasize sovereignty, self-determination and rights in narratives that are connected to the continuing colonizing dynamics accompanying fossil fuel development on their territories (Powys Whyte 2016). Decolonizing narratives draw upon their originators' own life ways, values and experiences. One such narrative,

exemplified in the Lakota saying *Mitakuye-Oyasin*, translatable to “all our relations,” or we are all related and all beings are related, refuses the colonial logic of categorical distinction and seeks to renew Indigenous peoples’ relationships to land, place, and each other (LaDuke 1999). Similarly, discourses originating in some Indigenous epistemologies, particularly those of Ecuador and Bolivia, like *buen vivir* related to the *Quechua* concept *sumak kawsay*, or *the good life*, are being popularized amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and activists alike to articulate very different relationships to each other, the world, and the very notion of “resources” (Escobar 2015; Manno and Martin 2015). Narratives such as these are deliberately open-ended, providing more than one direction with which to reimagine ways of life beyond resource extraction, capitalism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy. The Standing Rock Sioux’s viral meme *Mni Wiconi*, “Water is Life,” captured a similar narrative. This viral meme framed the Water Protectors’ struggle incredibly effectively against colonialism, oil extraction, and impending ecosystem collapse (Dhillon and Estes 2017).

Despite important innovation in narrative strategy, neither the CJM nor its contingent of keep-it-in-the-ground campaigns have yet developed a PCOC that can organize a movement large, diverse, or strong enough to counter the fossil fuel industry’s hegemony. Many social struggles remain isolated from the movement. Crucially, the narratives organized through the CJM’s PCOC have, until recently, excluded the unions representing workers who depend upon the fossil fuel industry. The rhetoric of the just transition in which workers play a central role in developing the next energy economy has only just started to win some discursive ground amongst unions (Haluza DeLay and Carter 2016). For as long as rhetoric is unaccompanied by the material realization of this promise, however, the relation of

compliance will continue to stymie efforts to build the bigger political We. Therefore, a war of economies is also necessary.³²

A War of Economies: The Economics of a Just transition

Haluza DeLay and Carter affirm the importance of cultural intervention while recognizing, again in the Albertan context, that “effectively countering Alberta’s petro-capitalism will require rethinking the material processes of production and social reproduction *as well as* reimagining the cultural foundations and collective identities of Albertans beyond producers of energy” (2016, 457). In other words, the climate justice movement must seek to break dynamics of dependency all together to intervene in the relation of compliance. This means materializing, and not only promising, the economics of a just transition at far more ambitious scales. The policies packaged under the “Green New Deal” program that have so excited American politics in recent months are on the scale of ambition that could intervene in relation of compliance. Unless we are careful, however, a Green New Deal for all its potential, could end up reconstituting a dynamic of dependency away from the fossil fuel industry and onto the state. A truly liberating just transition must dramatically transform the dynamic of dependency away from institutions and organizations and into one of co-dependency on one another. Strategies developed through the economics of a just transition, therefore, need to wholly transform the dynamic of dependency and this is one of the reasons

³² In Chapters Five and Eight I will problematize the universalizing tendency of populist hegemonic alliance building by synthesizing it with particularism and Arturo Escobar’s pluriverse ideas to develop and problematize what I call *intersectional populism*.

why energy transition that simply replaces fossil fuels with wind and solar but leaves contemporary dynamics of dependency intact cannot be just.

Just transition can mean different things to different people and indeed it is supposed to. In fact, it may be unnecessary to think of just transitions in the plural precisely because any just transition must imply this plurality. The materialization of the concept will manifest itself differently in different geographic and socio-economic conjunctures. If it is not inclusive of a multiplicity of possibilities, then it is unlikely to be just. That said, a just transition must also contain within it some fixed meaning. According to the Climate Justice Alliance and the Our Power campaign, the just transition framework first arose out of collaboration between labor unions and environmental justice groups who recognized “the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet; and at the same time provide just pathways for workers to transition to other jobs.” The idea has been developed further to mean a transition that is “just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations” (Climate Justice Alliance 2019a). The Our Power campaign itself developed out of a coalition brought together through the Climate Justice Alliance and its understanding of a just transition necessarily reflects the multiple and divergent interests and stakes contained within that alliance. Democratizing, decentralizing, decolonizing, and decarbonizing our energy systems helpfully summarizes the concept. The just transition, if its rhetorical promises begin materializing, could well realize not only the red-green alliance between organized labor and environmentalists so many on the left long for, but also align these with Indigenous struggles and campaigns against environmental racism (Abramsky 2010; Princen, Manno, and Martin 2015). We

might also compare this framework to the revolutionary manifesto put forward in the Red Deal (Red Nation 2019).

The strategic orientation driving the war of economies is simple: Undermine the relation of compliance through which petro-hegemony maintains its status by changing the material/economic relations that condition communities' dependence upon the fossil fuel industry. The tactics, however, are much harder to realize. One of the tactical priorities must be wresting union support away from the fossil fuel industry. Another is surely socio-technical. Community Choice Energy in which communities can gain more direct control over energy supply and costs, for example, has the *potential* to advance a just transition. Harnessing the decentralizing potential of renewable energy to democratize its use and distribution helps transform the dependency dynamic. Transition Towns in the United Kingdom and the Our Power campaign in the US have both experimented with harnessing this socio-technical potential. Exploring examples of community-led energy projects in Scotland, Haggett and Aitken identify some of obstacles this approach has encountered and suggest at how they may be overcome (2015). Barriers often include startup costs and mobilization of resources, scaling projects up, and an unequal distribution of power, expertise, and commitment already existing within communities that undermine social cohesion, (ibid). There are, however, important success stories in which communities like the Black Mesa Water Coalition in the Navajo Nation has prevented the expansion of coal mining on their reservation and instead are developing a community controlled, employee owned, solar energy cooperative.

The question of just transition raises an important temporal conundrum: Does it come before or after petro-hegemony has been dismantled? On the one hand, a just transition is a necessary precursor to dismantling petro-hegemony because it is crucial to undoing the relation of compliance that so effectively upholds the industry's position. On the other, it is hard to imagine a just energy transition taking place at the scale necessary to undo the relation of compliance without first breaking the influence of the fossil fuel industry. Furthermore, achieving a just transition would suggest that there is no longer any need to break the industry's hegemony. Miya Yoshitani, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, explained to me that the just transition is simultaneously a movement goal and a strategy, and, as the word transition suggests, it is a process (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). It is a goal in so far as democratizing, decentralizing, decolonizing, and decarbonizing our energy systems is crucial part of achieving climate justice. It is a strategy in so far as striving towards these connects a whole range of interests and stakes and grows the movement. It is a process in that it needs to start as part of the war of economies, but its work will be far from over even after petro-hegemony has been dismantled.

Finally, the fossil fuel industry itself is also subject to a dynamic of dependency upon finance and capital. Climate justice activists can, and are, exploiting this vulnerability by targeting the flows of finance and investment that fossil fuel companies depend upon to expand their operations. Targeting banks and financial institutions, around the world, climate justice activists have met with some success convincing financiers to halt their investments in fossil

fuel projects. Direct action, secondary targeting³³, and divestment can all eventually run down the industry's access to capital as activists intensify conditions of risk and uncertainty associated with fossil fuel projects. This kind of activism drives potential investors away from investment in the industry and can have serious consequences for companies' ability to continue their projects (Healy and Barry 2018). As Stephen D'Arcy explains, however, these tactics must be deployed relentlessly, in an escalating trajectory, and grow the base of participation, if they are to be successful (2014).

War of Maneuver: Regimes of Climate Justice

Materializing the just transition and engaging in discursive interventions against the fossil fuel industry are pivotal forms of intervention. However, the industry's position as a vital support structure of global capitalism and state legitimacy means that if the climate justice movement poses a significant enough threat to it, its allies in the petro-state will unleash their coercive capacities to enforce their interests and to criminalize, discipline and repress dissent. Coercive state intervention is not a certainty but occurs with particular frequency where marginalized communities are resisting and when avenues for preventing infrastructure development through the "legitimate" state mechanisms, for example Environmental Impact Reviews and permitting processes, have been exhausted. Moreover, the state's ability to enforce rules and laws favorable to the industry make it an important target for climate justice activists. Where systematic coercion and violence is deployed, the CJM's campaigns will often, though not always, disintegrate. This does not mean, however, that our movement

³³ Secondary targeting means "attacking an adversary *indirectly* by trying to penalize businesses or politicians that support or collaborate with it" (D'Arcy 2014 original emphasis).

can abandon the state and coercive power as a terrain of struggle. It means it must turn coercion to its advantage, gain footholds within governing institutions, institutionalize political space for the movement to flourish, and curtail the state's ability to effectively deploy coercion against keep-it-in-the-ground campaigns.³⁴ Regimes of climate justice invoke the idea of "dual power" in which the movement is both orientated towards capturing and influencing the current institutions of the state while also developing counter institutions that may eventually replace the authority of the dominant ones (McKee 2014).

Reflecting on the violence and failure of 20th Century revolutions, the early 21st Century saw many radical activists and movement scholars cede the state as a terrain of struggle, emphasizing its inherent violence and corrupting influence on movements for emancipation (Foran 1997; Holloway 2002; Graeber 2009). Some turned to the ability of the growing alter-globalization movement to organize translocal and transnational resistance to global capitalism without positioning the state as a vehicle of change, or otherwise argued that non-capitalist, anti-authoritarian life ways had to be "prefigured" through collectively refusing to participate in capitalist accumulation, and enacting other life ways instead (Holloway 2010). Many also experimented with horizontal, consent-based, non-hierarchical decision-making structures and rejected other modes of governance in their own organizations as inherently corrupting and coercive (Smucker 2017; Day 2005). Abandoning structure and the state at this critical juncture was a mistake, even for those in our movement who mobilize for the ultimate dissolution of the state altogether. Pointing to the failure of Occupy Wall Street

³⁴ Here again I make a deliberate distinction between coercion and violence. Coercion applies to the whole range of tactics the petro-state can deploy to discipline dissent including surveillance, blackmail, courts, legislation, law enforcement, surveillance, incarceration (which arguably is a form of violence), and the threat of violence.

movement to institutionalize the discursive victories it won, Smucker argues the movement needed a clearer leadership structure and a plan to turn its values into an implementable program to make more substantial political inroads that could have paved the way for further gains with larger mobilizations (ibid).

I define coercion as forcing a party or social actor into taking position they would not take of their own volition along with the ability to enforce “the rules” to advance one’s own interests. There are those within the movement who conflate non-violence with opposition to all forms of coercion. Opposing violence as a political strategy is not the same as opposing coercion as a political strategy.³⁵ Indeed, deploying coercive tactics, including winning political office, may actually help climate justice activists curtail the state’s sanctioning of violent intervention on behalf of the fossil fuel industry.³⁶ Coercion is a relation of power the CJM must intervene in, and the state, and governance institutions more broadly, are arenas in which it must struggle. Capturing state institutions and turning their enforcement mechanisms on the fossil fuel industry is one way climate activists can intervene in relations of coercion. The state, and coercion as a terrain of struggle, is far from the only terrain must take place, and those within the movement who believe electoral politics, the court system, lobbying decision makers and so on, to be a corrupting influence can choose to wage their

³⁵ I will return to the question of non-violence as political strategy, and more broadly to the question of a diversity of tactics in the climate justice movement, in greater detail in Chapter Seven. Suffice it to say here that I think the conflation of coercion and violence needs to be undone and that while the state may have the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence it does not necessarily have the same monopoly on coercion. Strategic decisions involving the merits of non-violence versus violence, what may hegemonically be considered violence, and what forms of violence the movement considers unacceptable, are all contextual and subject to specific social, political and geographic conjunctures. How these decisions are made and debated matters a great deal to the cohesion of social movements.

³⁶ I consider winning political office a tactic that engages coercion because the authority of politicians ultimately rests upon coercion.

struggles on other, equally as important, terrains. However, preempting and responding to state sanctioned violence when it is deployed must be part of what our campaigns do. So too is deploying the coercive capabilities at climate justice movement's disposal against the fossil fuel industry.

Tactics that intervene in the relation of coercion includes forms of direct action like blockades of fossil fuel infrastructure, reclaiming Indigenous territory, sit-ins, and occupations. These all use coercion to get activists closer to their goals. These are coercive because they are forcing the opposition to take positions they would not otherwise take. Tactics responding to state sanctioned repression might include the critical development of organizational security culture (Pellow 2014), pleading the necessity defense in court (Brecher 2017), non-violent civil disobedience and the forcing of what Dr. King called a "moral crisis" (Kauffman 2017). It may also include, where necessary, physical defense against assaults by the police, or organizing community self-defense lessons. But coercive tactics can also include the imposition of legislation forcing companies to abide by particular regulations. Asserting rights or the use of the court system to hold fossil fuel companies accountable to the state's own laws is another form of coercion available to CJM activists (Brecher 2017; Thomas-Muller 2014).

Winning key elections and gaining footholds in political parties, city councils, in state and federal legislature, or appointing allies to planning and development commissions and departments, are all capabilities that ultimately rest upon coercion because they force the opposition into taking positions they would not otherwise take. These tactics take advantage

of specific political opportunity structures to advance and institutionalize discursive gains and enforce rules favorable to our own cause (Cheon and Urpelainen 2018). They can also be used to curtail state-violence and create space for campaigns to make political, cultural, and economic gains against the industry. The expansion of our notion of coercion brings all of these arenas into play in counter hegemonic struggles. Regimes of climate justice, therefore, include all the different modes by which the climate justice movement's agenda may be enforced democratically, accountability, and according to the movement's fundamental principles of dignity, solidarity, and equity. Regimes of climate justice may eventually offer the foundations for new politico-legal and judicial systems premised upon the principles of climate justice. By simultaneously challenging the fossil fuel industry's coercive capacities through the dominant, state institutions, while also developing counter institutions of governance and sovereignty that may one day replace the authority and legitimacy of the dominant ones, climate justice activists can operate according to a logic of dual power to develop new regimes governance that advance climate justice and hold fossil fuel companies to account.

Above I have described elements of a war of maneuver, war of position, and war of economies separately. In reality, these strategic interventions all rely on each other's success. Here I depart from Gramsci's assertion that they must be waged sequentially. As I will show empirically, for example, the war of maneuver relies upon simultaneous wars of position and economies. Similarly, strategic elements of the war of economies depend on a successful war of maneuver and also help fight the war of position. The movement's war of position can help legitimize tactics deployed in the war of maneuver but rely on promises materialized

through the war of economies. In addition, tactics like direct action or divestment, for example, can be deployed to intervene in more than one relation of power at the same time. No one organization or group needs to, or perhaps even can, intervene in all three relations of power, but the campaign or the coalition of organizations comprising the campaign, do need to make interventions on all three terrains. Placing petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion into this theoretical framework, below I have developed a schematic to demonstrate how these strategies and tactics might be organized and deployed to different terrains of struggle.

Terrains of Struggle and Points of Intervention

When petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion are positioned against each other as mirroring antagonistic forces, it becomes clear that the three domains or mediators of strategy pertaining to petro-hegemony correspond to the three mediators of strategy contained within the carbon rebellion. In other words, petro-culture corresponds to the PCOC, the petro-state corresponds to regimes of climate justice, and petro-capitalism corresponds to the economics of a just transition. Between each exists a *terrain of struggle* primarily defined by one of the three relations of power. These terrains are fought over either through the war of maneuver, the war of economies, or the war of position. Relations of coercion primarily define the terrain between the petro-state and the regimes of climate justice so here a war of maneuver is necessary; the relation of consent defines the terrain between petro-culture and the PCOC, necessitating a war of position; and the relation of compliance defines the terrain existing between petro-capitalism and the economics of a just transition, upon which the war of economies is advanced. While heuristically helpful to think of them as separated from one

another, these terrains of struggle are not actually isolated but exist in a highly dynamic and interwoven relationship with each other. Each terrain and corresponding relation of power have their own distinct characteristics and are irreducible to one another. Yet they are also all deeply entwined and porous such that tactical victories and defeats in the war of position will inevitably affect the strategy and tactics being advanced through the wars of economies and maneuver as well.

On each terrain of struggle there exist many different *points of intervention*. It is at these points of intervention that specific tactical interventions are deployed. For example, the British Museum accepting sponsorship from the oil company BP and in return posting BP's logo all over its exhibitions could be a point of intervention in petro-culture on the terrain defined by consent. The industry sponsors exhibitions to gain public acceptance and ultimately consent, and if climate justice activists want to challenge the industry's cultural acceptance, they can mount a discursive and cultural intervention, publicly demanding that the British Museum drop BP's sponsorship (as, indeed, they have). Because hegemony is inherently pervasive but never complete, a vast array of social spaces can be considered sites in which counter hegemonic struggle can take place. Defining hegemony as constituted by these three relations of power allows activists and academics alike to expand our notion of what might be considered a point of intervention, thereby multiplying the number of points of intervention upon which struggle can take place. This requires us to organize and innovate with a vast diversity of tactics and a multiplicity of strategies. Activists and campaigns can map out points of intervention across all these terrains of struggle to make strategic decisions about which tactics to deploy to engage with a specific relation of power. Different points of

intervention may be more or less significant, depending on local geographic, political, socio-economic and historical conjunctures as well as on the target's position within the oil assemblage. By mapping them out, however, campaigners can make strategic decisions about which points are most significant, how to tailor tactics to points of intervention on a specific terrain of struggle, and indeed, what victory or success on that terrain might mean and how it could be achieved.

Theoretical Limitations

Does hegemony work in colonial contexts? Can it be used to advance decolonization?

Gramsci developed the concept of hegemony in a specific geographic and historical conjuncture. Specifically, he was describing political shifts in the European early modern period (roughly the 17th to early 20th century), and responding to the 1930s crisis in global capitalism, the failure of the Communists and worker's movement to take advantage of it, and the rise of Italian fascism (Ekers and Loftus 2013). Yet the 21st Century struggles on the frontlines of Blockadia are more often than not defined by enduring dynamics of colonialism and dispossession and Indigenous movements to resist them (Powys Whyte 2016).

Ostensibly this conjuncture appears somewhat detached from the context in which Gramsci was writing. How then, might we understand hegemony in the context of climate justice struggles led by Indigenous peoples involving movements for decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty?

In *Dominance Without Hegemony*, subaltern scholar, Ranajit Guha, famously rejected attempts to understand British Colonial India and anti-colonial resistance in terms of hegemony (1997). As he argued, contrary to the development of liberal bourgeois rule in Europe, the British colonialists made no attempt to assimilate or change Indian civil society or universalize a ruling culture through which consent to their leadership could be reproduced. Guha suggests the British had no need to gain the consent of colonial subjects and instead they ruled with violence and coercion alone. Guha argues that unlike the development of the liberal bourgeois state in Europe which relied on consent, the colonial state is not hegemonic because its rule relies upon violence rather than persuasion (ibid). Colonialism is inherently violent so we should question what role, if any, may exist for consent-building projects in colonial contexts. Yet discourses and the apparatuses of civil society may not only maintain and extend colonialism but also justify its ideologies and its violence (Lezra 2014). Moreover, Guha's articulation of hegemony describes it as purely a relation of consent rather than a balancing of power relations, including violence. In adopting hegemony simply as a relation of consent, Guha also ignores how coercion was necessary to secure even the metropolitan Bourgeoisie's rule in 18th century Europe (Chibber 2013; Ali 2015; Crane 2013). Hegemony is required in both contexts while different proportions of consent and coercive strategies will likely be deployed in each. Violence under the colonial state is a more normal situation than under the liberal bourgeois state, but even that violence requires legitimacy and discursive structuring. If we understand hegemony as the balancing of consent and coercion (and compliance), then Guha's suggestion that hegemony does not exist in colonial contexts should be challenged.³⁷

³⁷ Guha's broader argument that it is violence that primarily defines colonial power relations remains a robust one.

Frantz Fanon is well known for articulating the extent to which violence is the colonizer's preferred tool of social control. Yet in *Black Skins, White Masks*, Fanon describes how colonial subjects psychologically internalized their position as seen through the eyes of the colonizer and not only consent to, but also carry out, their own subordination (1986). The development of this colonial consciousness could and should be considered a hegemonizing project that is deployed through the synthesizing of relations of consent and coercion. This has implications for counter hegemonic anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, reading Frantz Fanon and Gramsci together, Noaman Ali argues that anti-colonial, subaltern groups must break colonial consciousness through waging a war of position and gaining leadership even as they seek to take state power from the colonizers through a war of maneuver (2015). Contrary to Guha's assertion, Ali argues that hegemonic and counter hegemonic politics can be understood in anti-colonial struggle. Colonialism can be exerted hegemonically and challenged with counter hegemonic strategies. Meanwhile, colonialism can be hegemonic and can also be a context that shapes other hegemonic relations. For example, petro-hegemony exists within, thrives upon, shapes and is shaped by, a broader system of colonial dispossession in the United States and Canada. Thus, decolonization in Blockadia is not a metaphor but a material and a discursive process that also undermines petro-hegemony. It may also be advanced through the counter hegemonic wars of position, maneuver and economies against petro-hegemony.

The question of synthesizing consent coercion and compliance is further complicated in contemporary settler-colonial dynamics, for example in the United States and Canada.

Gramscian conceptions of consent must be deployed carefully when addressing Indigenous and Indigenous-led struggles because the term should not be conflated with the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, resurgence, and the demand that Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) be sought from Indigenous peoples in questions concerning their territory, land, culture, and life ways. Consent here is understood more in terms of legal rights or jurisdictional mandates than the colonized subject's willing acceptance of an authority's rule. Petro-hegemony often operates through existing relations of colonialism that facilitate the extraction of fossil fuel resources on Indigenous territories, particularly when Indigenous peoples living on that land do not provide their consent to extraction. The court system and recourse to legal rights, however, can be used against colonizers as Indigenous peoples assert their rights and title or sovereignty. For example, Indigenous peoples' right to FPIC, recognized in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), is invoked to coercively force extractive industries off of Indigenous peoples land or to seek restitution where those rights have been violated.³⁸ Contrarily, consent in these terms has more to do with a war of maneuver and engagement with the state than it does with a war of position.

Revisiting many of Fanon's insights in *Red Skins White Masks*, Glen Coulthard challenges Indigenous activists and scholars and allies to reject the "politics of recognition," or the legal, state-legitimized avenues through which Indigenous peoples may assert rights and recognition, as reinforcing settler-colonial oppression. He suggests that by accepting settler-

³⁸ The Canadian Parliament voted in favor a bill to align Canadian law with UNDRIP in 2018 but it died in the senate in June 2019 (Brake 2019). British Columbia became the first province to align provincial laws with UNDRIP in November 2019 (Little 2019).

colonial legal structures as strategic terrains to advance their interests Indigenous peoples continue to participate in their own domination and that a more revolutionary strategy would start with the returning to and developing their own systems of governance. Indigenous activist and 350.org campaigner, Clayton Thomas Müller on the other hand, argues that a rights-based intervention is one of the most successful strategies Indigenous peoples can deploy, at least in Canada, to force fossil fuel companies off their land (2014). Petro-hegemony can be vulnerable to legal action even as strategies are deployed through the petro-state to structure the legal and regulatory system in the industry's favor. As such a war of maneuver to curtail and shift coercive power will necessarily involve action through the courts and the state. Meanwhile Coulthard's case remains a compelling one providing a sobering example of why Indigenous-led struggles in Blockadia can never truly be won through the courts alone.³⁹ The conflict over strategies and how they might reproduce hegemonic relations, even as activists seek to overturn those relations, is a theme that recurs throughout this dissertation.

Hegemony's Universalizing and Authoritarian Tendencies

Some anarchist theorists and activists like David Graber (2004) and Richard Day (2005) have argued against engaging with the politics of counter hegemony. They suggest that hegemony, regardless of its political composition, is an inherently coercive and hierarchical configuration of power. They critique what they regard as its tendency towards universalism

³⁹ Of course, decolonization and indigenization go far beyond fights against the fossil fuel industry, but when these fights are led by Indigenous peoples as they assert their governance over their land they can and are advancing the cause of decolonization.

over plurality. Graeber suggests counter hegemony reproduces top-down hierarchical politics that erases differences between us for the sake of “unity” and so can only replicate authoritarian power dynamics (2005; 2009). In *Gramsci is Dead* (2005), Day identifies in contemporary social movement theories of change a mode of thought that he calls “the hegemony of hegemony.” Accordingly, counter hegemonic forces challenging the hegemonic order, even those with intentions of replacing the established “hegemony from above” with an alternative “hegemony from below,” unconsciously resubmit themselves to the logic of domination and authority (2005, 8). As Day puts it, the hegemony of hegemony takes as given “the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and *en masse*, across an entire national or supranational space” (ibid). Day studies elements of contemporary radical social movements that operate “*non*-hegemonically rather than *counter* hegemonically” (ibid). He looks at the social movements of the early 21st Century which have operated without hierarchy and prefigure the politics they want to achieve. These movements refuse engagement with the state and explicitly reject the logic of hegemony. They condemn it as a universalizing, totalitarian power structure that refuses particularity, difference, and thus emancipation for all. Thinking “outside the logic of integration,” Day argues these movements call for the proliferation of autonomous “minoritarian” spaces, embracing plurality and multiplicity over hegemony (2005, 206).

Jonathan Smucker’s *Hegemony How-To* is a vehement critique of this political outlook and one I am particularly drawn to. While he shares some sympathy with anarchism and was a prominent organizer with Occupy Wall Street, Smucker critiques prefigurative politics⁴⁰ as

⁴⁰ According to John Holloway prefigurative politics is “the idea that the struggle for a different society must create that society through its forms of struggle” (2010, 45). Inspired by the rise of prefigurative politics in global anti-capitalist movements, Holloway writes that prefigurative politics is where “instead of focusing our attention on the destruction of capitalism, we concentrate on building something else” (2010, 50). Smucker

politics without strategy. He argues that the anarchist tendency towards minoritarian spaces excludes potentially revolutionary agents from political activity because they are expected to know the codes, idioms and symbols of the in-group or be cast as unwelcome outsiders. Moreover, he argues, non-hierarchical organizing is fundamentally disorganized, incapable of articulating political demands, creates unaccountable leadership structures and is often undemocratic. ⁴¹

Occupy activist, Micah White, concurs. Reflecting on Occupy's prefigurative politics he argues that the movement was a strategic failure because it could offer no coherent demands, the decision making processes became incredibly inefficient and, as a result, the movement could never "move toward legitimate sovereignty, political negotiation, and a transfer of power" (2016, 38). For Smucker, disengaging with the structures of the state doesn't make coercive power go away, it just cedes a terrain of struggle to the adversary. Additionally, the argument that effective social change is most easily achievable through mass movement building is hardly an unfounded assumption amongst social movements but is empirically observable in episodes of radical social change throughout history. Giving up on consent building projects makes it much harder to build resistance to neoliberal capitalism on anything like the scale necessary for its undoing.

I will return to these particular arguments in Chapter Eight.

argues that there is a place for prefigurative politics in social movements but it cannot be allowed to replace strategic politics. The distinction between prefigurative and strategic politics is one first articulated in Wini Breins' *Community Organizing in the New Left* (1982).

⁴¹ See also Jo Freeman's *Tyranny of Structurelessness* essay for an excellent critique of the ways horizontalist social movement spaces make invisible, and so reproduce, existing power dynamics internal to the group, especially patriarchy, classism and racism, rather than dismantle them (1970).

Conclusion

The arguments made in this chapter, combined with the empirical observations throughout my case study research, raise three critical concerns facing the climate justice movement; namely, the politics of alliance building, the actual process of embracing a diversity of strategy and tactics, and the contradictions inherent to addressing the problem of scale. In this chapter I've argued that the conflicts occurring in Blockadia should be understood in hegemonic terms. I've argued for a rereading of hegemony in which the term serves us with an analysis of three relations of power, rather than simply privileging consent. Strategic engagement in relations of consent, compliance, and coercion is necessary if counter hegemonic climate justice activism is to keep fossil fuels in the ground and advance a just transition. The concept petro-hegemony is intended to draw our attention to the ways that the fossil fuel industry's interests are advanced and maintained through shaping and intervening in these power relations. Carbon rebellion, meanwhile, helps us consider how climate justice activists could organize and develop strategies to make interventions in the power relations upon which the industry depends. Together, these concepts build a framework which focuses our attention on the terrains of struggle and points of intervention activists and industry agents alike must engage with to advance their respective hegemonic aspirations. The radical synthesizing of power relations under hegemony makes visible the strengths and weaknesses of both the industry and its challengers. It also allows us to think differently about questions that social movement theorists and activists have asked for as long as there have been social movements. Finally, this chapter's intervention and contributions in the theory and practice

of hegemonic politics compels us to critically consider the fundamental questions of scale, alliances, and strategies.

The construction of a PCOC able to align different social struggles around consent to a new hegemony from below, while forcing a crisis of legitimacy on the fossil fuel industry, obliges us to tackle the question of alliance-building and winning consent directly. How do we build a social movement that is radically inclusive of a plurality of worldviews, theories of change, and peoples while simultaneously focused on breaking the fossil fuel industry legitimacy, removing its consent and forging consent around alternatives instead? I am hardly the first to engage with this question and I certainly won't be the last. However, the petro-hegemony/carbon rebellion framework may shine new light upon it. If we are able to synthesize activists' insights on alliance building with Gramscian theories of populism, alongside intersectionality theory's critiques of populism, we may be on the path towards developing alliances based upon a seemingly paradoxical hybrid of universalism and particularism (Grossman 2017). I call this *intersectional populism* (LeQuesne 2019). Drawing upon case study research and movement theory Chapter Five of this dissertation explores the extent to which campaigns in Blockadia are already developing intersectional populist interventions.

Closely tied to the question of alliance building, is that of the range of strategies and tactics our movement is willing and able to deploy. Because we must engage with all three terrains of struggle defined by the three relations of hegemonic power, I argue for a multiplicity of strategy and a vast diversity of tactics. Discussion of a diversity of tactics must mean a

willingness to use every tool available in the right combination, in the right place, and at the right time. However, some activists in Blockadia remain skeptical of one another's' strategic orientations and tactical decisions. Some may be too willing to work within state institutions, others may be fundamentally opposed to electoral politics. Some may define violence as property damage and property damage as a necessary strategic decision, while still others may decry all forms of violence as counterproductive. This skepticism is often constructive because it may force critical self-examination and assessment amongst activists.

Nevertheless, it can also divide movements into hopelessly small cliques that are unwillingly to work with one another. Accusations of reformism, dogmatism, conformism and purism create schisms in our movement and dissolve solidarity between us. Far too often these divisions can be exploited and the foundations of the movement begin to crumble. Embracing a diversity of tactics means developing within the movement an orientation towards strategy that can be inclusive of many different tactical and strategic approaches. This also requires movement leaders to commit to managing and coordinating these strategies together while also creating space for constructive critique. To this end I develop a concept called the spectrum of strategy in Chapter Seven.

As we confront the industry and find ourselves surrounded by, even complicit in, the oil assemblage, we must critically examine the appropriate scales at which counter hegemony can take place. There are different types of scale that need to be addressed here. As theorizing of petro-cultures, petro-state, and petro-capitalism all demonstrate, petro-hegemony infiltrates everything from our epistemologies to our museums, our governments to law enforcement agencies, our toothbrushes to our livelihoods. We must ask, therefore,

whether the movement has the capacity and resources to wage wars of position, economies, and maneuver not just simultaneously but at these multiple scales. Moreover, we must also confront cases where petro-hegemony may have been defeated at one scale but remains intact at another. This leads us to ask how counter hegemonic intervention may be successful at one scale but not another. In other words, how might activists exploit victory on one scale to gain victories on another? In addition, scale should be considered in terms of the size of the movement itself, particularly through problematizing whether the size of the movement is inherently linked to the likelihood of its ultimate victory. Questioning the modes by which local climate justice campaigns might scale up and out of Blockadia forces us to examine the extent to which they can do so while remaining democratic and accountable to the local frontlines from which this movement is forged.

Finally, questions of scale also lead to consideration of how activism in Blockadia might be cultivating critiques of the broader matrix of domination in which petro-hegemony operates. In other words, we should ask how fighting the fossil fuel industry might lay the groundwork for more revolutionary impetuses in the name of climate justice. This means exploring the ways that critiques of the fossil fuel industry may be mobilized into revolutionary action towards the kind of fundamental socioenvironmental transformation climate justice deems necessary. These are complicated questions with open-ended answers but, as Chapter Eight illustrates, mapping the terrains of struggle and points of intervention between petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion allows us to imaginatively engage with all of them.

To summarize, then, if we are to keep fossil fuels in the ground and advance a just transition in response to the climate crisis, then we must accept that we are engaged in a counter hegemonic struggle. Doing so in the terms I have argued for in this chapter means understanding how hegemony synthesizes and balances relations of consent, compliance, and coercion. Petro-hegemony intervenes in these relations with strategies operating through three distinct but interlocking mediators: the petro-state, petro-culture, and petro-capitalism. Meanwhile, the climate justice movement can, and is, organizing counter hegemonic responses through what I've called the carbon rebellion. These strategies require coordination. The carbon rebellion organizes counter hegemonic strategies and tactics through its own three corresponding mediators: regimes of climate justice, a PCOC for climate justice, and the economics of a just transition. Positioning petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion as antagonistic forces highlights the terrains of struggle and points of intervention which animate this theoretical framework. The task of the climate justice movement in its assault on the fossil fuel industry is to win struggles over these points of intervention to shift relations of consent, coercion and compliance in its favor. As these interventions are developed, we are forced to grapple with questions that have, and will continue to, challenge social movements for generations. These are the questions to which Parts Three and Four of this dissertation are dedicated.

PART 2: CASE STUDIES

Chapter 3 – The Climate Justice Movement in Burnaby, Coast Salish Territory, British Columbia, Canada

Prelude

I first learned of the climate justice movement's resistance to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project (TMX) in late 2014. The confrontation with the pipeline company has been geographically focused in Coast Salish Territory, and specifically in Burnaby – a formerly industrial city of roughly 232,000 people, adjacent to the city of Vancouver, in the greater region of metropolitan Vancouver, in what is now called British Columbia. Coast Salish Territory is the traditional homeland of numerous culturally connected but distinct First Nations that have lived there for thousands of years. The territory encompasses the coastal Puget Sound and Georgia Basin of Northwest Washington in the United States and Southwest British Columbia in Canada. In the fall of 2014, images and videos from the Battle of Burnaby Mountain, as it was later dubbed, started showing up on my Facebook news stream with increasing frequency and, as the confrontation intensified, increasing poignancy. At the time I knew next to nothing about the region, nor its history of social struggle, nor the emergence of a well-organized urban contingent of the climate justice movement. Yet, as the Battle of Burnaby Mountain intensified between September and late November, I learned a great deal about the region's legacy of colonial dispossession, its strategic importance in the growing network of tar sands transport infrastructure, and the efforts of climate justice activists and First Nations campaigners to shut this infrastructure

down. This particularly dramatic episode in the conflict with Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline started with lawsuits and counter lawsuits and culminated in mass arrests, numerous incidents of police violence and intimidation, and the deployment of the infamous \$5.6 million SLAPP (Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation) lawsuits that the company filed against prominent community members and campaigners opposed to the project.

Officially proposing the project in 2013, Kinder Morgan sought permits from Canada's National Energy Board (NEB)⁴² to twin its existing pipeline with a newer, larger one, along (what they suggested) was the same route as the original. The \$7.4 billion pipeline stretches from Edmonton in Alberta to the company's storage tank farm and marine terminal on Burnaby Mountain and the Burrard Inlet in Coast Salish Territory. After approval, construction was scheduled to begin in early 2017, with the pipeline coming online in 2019. The new pipeline would triple export capacity of diluted bitumen from the Alberta tar sands to the Pacific Coast and involve a seven-fold increase oil tanker traffic from the coast through the Burrard Inlet. It would also require the company to bore a tunnel beneath Burnaby Mountain and includes plans to expand the tank farm storage facility in a residential neighborhood on the Mountain. At the time, the Trans Mountain pipeline was "the company's most important project on the continent" according to the Kinder Morgan's chief executive in 2014 ([Prystupa 2014](#)). By 2018, however, the company had abandoned the project, selling it to the federal Canadian government for \$4.5 billion Canadian dollars.

⁴² The National Energy Board was renamed the Canadian Energy Regulator after the passage of Bill C69 in June 2019. Most activists still refer to it as the NEB and it plays an important role throughout this case study. It is responsible for regulating federal energy projects, especially pipelines, and particularly those that cross provincial borders.

As the size and implications of the pipeline became clear, groups of First Nations, grassroots activists, community organizations, and Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (ENGOS) began coalescing along the pipeline route to challenge the proposal. While the project worked its way through the permitting process and public hearings at the NEB (the NEB is a federal agency responsible for regulating and permitting energy infrastructure projects like pipelines), Kinder Morgan began cutting down trees near its tank farm and drilling boreholes to test the geology of the Mountain in the late summer and early fall of 2014. This sparked outrage amongst the growing opposition to the pipeline, particularly in Burnaby where 68% of residents opposed the project and the mayor argued the company had no right to begin construction work (Brugge and Embree 2018; [Moreau 2014](#)). While the city council appealed to the NEB and pursued legal action against the company, activists who had little reason to believe either of these would do much to stop Kinder Morgan, instead converged on the Mountain and set up a protest camp. From here, small groups of protestors frustrated company worker's attempts to cut down more trees and continue with their geological survey. These tactics forced workers to halt their activities and slowed down Kinder Morgan's progress throughout November 2014.

Ultimately, these disruptions lead Kinder Morgan to seek a court injunction against any protest occurring on or in close proximity to worksites. As the *National Observer*⁴³ reported, “the company claimed the protesters' snarls and intimidation tactics represented a form of

⁴³ The National Observer is a well-respected online newspaper that has published over 240 articles on the ongoing struggle against the Trans Mountain Pipeline and is highly regarded amongst many of the people on Burnaby's frontlines.

“assault”” and used this as evidence in court to argue for the injunction ([Prystupa 2014](#)). A viral social media campaign ridiculed this characterization of protestors with pipeline opponents sharing pictures of their best snarls under the hashtag #KMface (Hornick 2015). Nevertheless, the courts granted Kinder Morgan the injunction on November 17th. Immediately afterwards, up to 800 people rallied on the Mountain in defiance of the court order and many joined the protest camp (Prystupa 2014). For two days neither the police nor the company tried to enforce the injunction. Then, on the third day, beginning with an early morning police raid on the camp, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) began arresting all those violating the court order and intimidating those who refused to leave (Hornick 2015). This did not stop people from attending the protests or crossing the injunction zone. Kinder Morgan then filed a \$5.6 million lawsuit claiming damages against five of its most vocal opponents, including Simon Fraser University professors Stephen Collis and Lynne Quarmby.⁴⁴ Yet, the perception of the company’s outrageous misuse of legal action to stifle dissent only emboldened their opposition further.

Over the next week, up to 100 people, including Indigenous leaders, grassroots activists, local residents, university professors, families, and community members from the very young to very old, were arrested in acts of civil disobedience. The actions culminated with Grand Chief Stewart Philip of the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs crossing the injunction zone and being arrested on November 27th. On the day of his arrest, however, the court dropped all 100 charges against the protestors, on the grounds that Kinder Morgan had provided judges with the wrong geographic data delineating the boundaries of their desired

⁴⁴ Simon Fraser University sits atop Burnaby Mountain and, according to Burnaby’s fire chief, a fire at the tank farm could pose serious risks to its students and staff while cutting off the university’s only evacuation route.

injunction zone. The injunction was overturned, and the SLAPP suits later dropped. The company, no longer able to prevent protestors from interrupting its activities, gave up work on the Mountain stating it had got all the preliminary survey results it needed. The groups coalescing in opposition to the project declared a small victory and set their sights upon organizing their communities in preparation for the company's return.

After that, events seemed to go quiet and, at least from a social media perspective, the confrontation disappeared into a protracted regulatory permitting process. For two years I heard very little about the case. My academic and activist attentions turned back to the fossil fuel divestment movement at my university, to assessing the impacts of the upswelling of climate action following the People's Climate March of September 2014, to the victories being won by the Richmond Progressive Alliance and the city's community of climate justice activists, to the impending defeat of the Keystone XL pipeline, and to the upcoming Paris Climate Talks in late 2015. Then, during the uprising at Standing Rock in 2016, I began learning more about the many other Indigenous-led resistances to pipeline projects across the continent and, inspired by the incredible mobilization Standing Rock's Water Protectors had unleashed, I turned my attention specifically to resistance on the frontlines of the fossil fuel economy.

In December 2016, I travelled to the Unist'ot'en territory of the Wet'suwet'en Nation in Northern British Columbia to learn more about clan members' recent victory over the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. There, members of the Unist'ot'en clan have built a blockade preventing access to their lands to all visitors without the blockaders first granting

their free, prior, and informed consent. Enbridge's pipeline was proposed to transport tar sands oil from Alberta, through unceded Unist'ot'en territory, to an export hub in Kitimat on the Northwest coast of the province. The Unist'ot'en blockade, now more of a well-established cluster of houses and a healing center than what we would conventionally think of as blockade, is built on the path of four proposed oil and gas pipeline routes that would cut deep into their lands. These do not have the consent of the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs. It was while I was at the Unist'ot'en blockade that activists informed me about the state of struggle unfolding around the Trans Mountain pipeline to the south in Coast Salish Territory where the conflict appeared to be heating up again.

I learned that in November 2016, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had cancelled the Northern Gateway pipeline, following a powerful campaign involving a province-wide solidarity network, a strong coalition of grassroots activists, ENGOs, and First Nations campaigners, the Unist'ot'en blockade, and an ultimately successful First Nations led lawsuit in the Canadian Supreme Court.⁴⁵ While cancelling the Northern Gateway pipeline, however, the Prime Minister also approved two other tar sands pipelines: Enbridge's Line 3 Pipeline and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline. Disregarding years of community and First Nations' opposition throughout all the regulatory hearings, the NEB had approved permits for the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion's construction earlier in 2016. The Trudeau government followed the NEB's recommendation and gave Kinder Morgan federal approval. However, in the interlude between the Battle of Burnaby Mountain and the federal government's approval, communities along the path of the pipeline, and

⁴⁵ The court found that consultation with First Nations and the Environmental Impact Assessment had been inadequate.

especially in Burnaby, were organizing themselves to fight the company's construction plans. Meanwhile, ENGOs, municipalities and First Nations launched a lawsuit appealing the government's decision to approve pipeline permits. All of this set the stage for the intensity of the struggle I would come to observe and participate in as it developed in Burnaby in the spring and summer of 2018.

Introduction

The fight against the Trans Mountain pipeline is, as Bill McKibben described it at a gathering I attended in Vancouver, "one of the three or four most important struggles to keep fossil fuels in the world right now." The Alberta tar sands are home to the world's third largest oil reserves and the extraction and processing of tar sands oil is one of the most carbon and pollution intensive in the global oil economy (Adkin 2016). Canadian climate justice activists have developed a strategy to prevent the expansion of the world's third largest reserves by besieging the tar sands region, ensuring its oil remains landlocked, blockading its access to international markets, and starving the tar sands industry of capital and resources (Hoberg 2018; Haluza DeLay and Carter 2016). This has entailed blocking the construction of any new pipelines that could facilitate the expansion of the tar sands. As of writing, not a single one of the five major pipeline projects permitted since 2012 has been built⁴⁶ and, according

⁴⁶ Of the five interprovincial tar sands pipelines approved since 2012 (Keystone XL, Energy East, Trans Mountain Expansion, Northern Gateway and Line 3) not one has yet been built (Hoberg 2018). Trans Canada abandoned its Energy East pipeline project after it met firm resistance in Quebec in 2017. Northern Gateway's permits were overturned in court and later rejected by Trudeau. Keystone XL's permits were rejected by President Obama in 2015 only to be resuscitated by President Trump in 2017. It remains in a regulatory limbo. Line 3 stagnates and still has a number of regulatory hurdles to overcome as well as grassroots opposition to contend with. Trans Mountain has been kept on life support since the Canadian government bought it but is threatened by legal challenges and its future remains uncertain.

to conservative commentators, like former Canadian Finance Minister Joe Oliver, the tar sands industry itself now appears to be in dire peril (Oliver 2019). The climate justice movement's basic strategy seems to be taking a significant toll. This case study's exploration of the battle against the Trans Mountain pipeline is, therefore, an exceedingly valuable conjuncture through which to identify and analyze the relations of power and interventions on the terrains of struggle existing between petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion.

The following chapter situates my research in the particular conjuncture of struggle in Burnaby and narrativizes my own perspective on the timeline of struggle that unfolded over a seven-year period. It introduces some of the major dynamics, relationships, and actors that will appear throughout the dissertation and offers examples of petro-hegemony functioning in practice and the different terrains of struggle upon which it operates. Finally, it draws attention to the specific questions being asked on the frontlines, and reflects on how all of this shapes and is shaped by the specificities of the context in which they are taking place. Illustrating the operations of petro-hegemony is the theoretical emphasis of this chapter, while the emergence of the carbon rebellion framework occupies the rest of the dissertation. As such I leave it to the following chapters to theorize carbon rebellion in the conjunctures of my case studies and allow this chapter to focus on petro-hegemony.

As I suggested in the introduction to this dissertation, neither this case study nor the next seek to *prove* the existence of either petro-hegemony or the carbon rebellion. Rather I hope to illustrate the value of imposing this theoretical framework upon conjunctures of social struggle and demonstrate how doing so might lead us to, and through, questions of social

movement praxis, strategy, and radical social change. My methodological orientation throughout my field work has always been to understand myself and my interlocuters as situated in, and responsive to, our specific and respective subjectivities. Different people will tell different stories from different perspectives with different omissions, emphases, actors, and agendas. I do not pretend for a moment that the way I develop the story of what happened, and is happening, on this frontline is necessarily the right story or the only story. It is, however, an account that I believe is as honest, reflexive, and critical as I am able to produce. What follows, then, is a situated and partial perspective amongst many other situated and partial perspectives. It is one, however, that I hope can shine a unique and valuable, light upon power, strategy, alignment, and conjuncture, as I analyze them throughout these pages.

Situating the Site of Struggle in its Conjuncture

Of course, as we study conjunctures, we must remember there is no real beginning nor end to a case study and so the delineations of time in which the events I'm about to recount are circumscribed are almost entirely artificial. From the perspective of decolonial struggle, moreover, we might view this particular conflict as just one more battle in a long line of battles since colonizers settled the region, murdered, enclosed, and dispossessed its original inhabitants, and sought to erase their culture, governments, and identity. Coast Salish Territory has been continuously inhabited for at least 8000 years and, despite settlers' best efforts over the last century and half, the identity and culture of First Nations is indelible as it continues to inscribe the landscape, the politics, and the identity of the region. Moreover, the

recent resurgence in First Nations' assertions of cultural, economic and political self-determination through decolonial struggle, particularly since the Idle No More movement in 2013, has seen First Nations and Indigenous agency reshape Canadian political discourse (if not praxis). This resurgence is testimony to the resilience and ethic of resistance cultivated amongst many First Nations leaders and families across the country and which is particularly prominent in British Columbia. The Nations upon whose specific unceded territories this study took place are the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, the Musqueam Nation and Squamish Nation. For thousands of years they have maintained a profound, economic, cultural and spiritual relationship with, and responsibility to, this land, to the coast, and to the flora and fauna that inhabit them. It is the members of these Nations, along with members of the Coldwater Indian Band, Kwantlen First Nation, and many members of the bands of the Secwepemc Nation in the province's interior, that have led the resistance to the pipeline.

The official colonization of British Columbia's lower mainland began with the installation of military fortifications near what became the city of Victoria, on what is now called Vancouver Island, in 1843. Prior to contact with colonizers in 1773, First Nations traded up and down the coast sharing a rich and diverse cultural and political heritage across Coast Salish Territory and further afield. The Burrard Inlet, around which the Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish, and Musqueam Nations made their homes for millennia, is of particular economic and cultural significance. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation, or "the people of the inlet" for example, take their name and their origin stories from this body of water. These lands, like much of British Columbia, were never ceded to the British Empire or to the Canadian government through treaties or war. While all land settled upon by colonizers is stolen land,

the fact that this region is unceded is of particular importance with regards to the legal and jurisdictional rulings that inflect this case study.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, colonial encroachment proceeded in the following centuries, dispossessing First Nations of their land and carving it up to sell off to settlers, industrialists and agriculturalists. From this vantage point, then, the infiltration of the Trans Mountain pipeline into unceded First Nations territory without their consent can be understood as another instance of settler colonial dispossession and resistance to it.

Shortly after, and in some cases while, the region was settled by Europeans, migrants from India, South Asia, and China developed the cities of Vancouver and Burnaby, establishing a complicated, sometimes fraught, sometimes highly cosmopolitan, milieu of diverse cultures, ethnicities, ontologies, ethics, and identities. The population of the greater metropolitan Vancouver region, which includes the Vancouver, Burnaby, and three adjacent cities now numbers nearly 2.5 million people.

In situating ourselves, the question is not just when to start, but where to start. I hardly need to spend precious pages here with an account of Canadian history, political economy, or political culture, revisionist or otherwise. However, we cannot pretend that Burnaby and the broader metropolitan Vancouver region are abstracted from these either. As a hub of migration, a financial and industrial center, and a focal point of culture, tourism, and natural

⁴⁷ A landmark legal case, *Delgamuukw v The Queen*, at Canada's Supreme Court ruled that aboriginal title, and legal rights to the occupying their land, is not extinguished on territories that have never been ceded to the Canadian government or the British Empire. As Gallagher argues, the ruling "foretold the legal grounds by which natives [sic] would win time and time again throughout the next decade in the Canadian resources sector..." (2012, 37). It is on the legal basis set out by this ruling that opponents of Kinder Morgan won their own case at the Federal Court of Appeals in 2018.

beauty, this is a region that is deeply entwined with ongoing dynamics shaping Canada's identity, politics and national economy. Vancouver is also a hub for the headquarters and major offices of some of Canada's most lucrative forestry, mining, and resource extraction firms. Meanwhile, the industrialized urban centers of this region are strategically positioned in commodity chains that specialize in extracting raw material from the country's interior, as cheaply as possible, and exporting these to be refined, developed, and processed as value-added products abroad (much to the chagrin of many labor unions who would rather increase local jobs from adding value to Canada's raw materials domestically). In close proximity to industrial ports, the city of Burnaby developed as an export terminus for raw products, traditionally coal and lumber, but now oil and gas as well, and is the former site of five oil refineries. As these refineries closed down and processing raw products moved to countries with lower labor and environmental costs, Burnaby's economic drivers have shifted and the city now has little direct dependence on oil jobs and revenue. Nevertheless, home to several oil and gas companies' export terminal and storage facilities, the city retains an important strategic position within the Canadian, and indeed global, oil assemblage.

Both the cities of Vancouver and Burnaby are experiencing an affordable housing crisis and low-income communities are experiencing further marginalization from the racialized consequences of gentrification. Vancouver's community of homeless people, a large proportion of whom are Indigenous, is the largest in Canada. Successive city administrations have not been able to halt the rising costs of housing, nor stem the rising numbers of homeless people who have been forced out of their homes in the city or are otherwise drawn to the region for its welfare programs and more temperate climate. Affordable housing was

voter's number one priority in the both Burnaby and Vancouver's municipal elections in 2018 ([Fumano and Culbert 2018](#)). Candidates for city council and mayor all sought to out compete one another with their affordable housing plans. Kennedy Stewart, formerly a Member of Parliament, and who was arrested protesting the pipeline, was elected mayor of Vancouver running on a pledge to build more homes for low income communities. Many activists work on both issues of extractivism and affordable housing in the city. However, while offering vague references to these issues being rooted in the same systems of oppression, I did not observe activists articulating the intersections between climate justice, resource extraction, gentrification and affordable housing explicitly. I raise this parallel issue here because it is also shaping regional politics in a profound way and, particularly where climate solutions and fossil fuel alternatives are concerned, energy, health, transport and housing policy are all intimately linked.

We cannot disaggregate this case study from the context of oil extraction in the oil sands or “tar sands” of the neighboring province of Alberta. Alberta is home to the world's third largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). Though something of an uncomfortable and problematic stereotype, British Columbia is often discursively positioned as an equivalent to California's liberal, progressive and environmentalist image in the United States, while Alberta, in current premier Jason Kenney's own words, might be considered “the Texas of Canada.” Alberta is predominantly conservative and is the epicenter of Canada's oil economy. Alberta, and particularly its oil industry, contribute up to 17% of Canadian GDP (Levinson-King 2019). Yet, with just 10% of the share of seats in the Canadian Parliament, many Albertans feel their resource wealth is

exploited by the federal government while they are politically underrepresented in the national parliament (Adkin 2016).

Alberta and British Columbia are separated by the Rocky Mountains and a great deal of sometimes playful, often harmful, animosity is lobbed from one side of the mountain range to the other. Offering a suitable metaphor for the difficulties negotiating political differences between the two provinces, it is these mountains that the Trans Mountain pipeline would have to negotiate and traverse on its route from Edmonton to Burnaby.⁴⁸ Since the 1950s, successive Canadian governments have poured millions of dollars into subsidizing technological advances, tax incentives, and favorable royalty rates in an effort to develop Alberta's oil sands into economically attractive investment for private international oil companies. In the early 2000's and up until 2014, with the price of oil often fluctuating between \$70 and well over \$100 a barrel (peaking in 2008 and crashing in late 2014), international and Canadian oil companies flooded the tar sands with investment and boom towns like Fort McMurray exploded with an influx of thousands of workers seeking their fortune (Adkin 2016). Through all this, Alberta retains an image of itself as a "resource frontier" desiring self-determination but being plundered by federal government overreach (Appel, Mason and Watts 2015; Adkin and Carter 2016).

Seeking to stimulate the growth of the tar sands industry even further and turn Canada into "an energy superpower" (Taber 2006), former conservative Prime Minister, Stephen Harper,

⁴⁸ Edmonton is Alberta's capital city and its second largest after Calgary. Although located some 270 miles to the south of Fort McMurray and the epicenter of the tar sands, Edmonton is a hub of tar sands transport and storage infrastructure. Before being shipped through the Trans Mountain pipeline, tar sands oil must be transported from the Fort McMurray to Edmonton.

introduced legislation to gut environmental and regulatory standards, in what became the infamous passage of 2012's Bill C38. With the loosening of regulations, the decline of sources of conventional crude, and the price of oil finally making bitumen mining economically viable, it very much seemed that the era of the tar sands had arrived.

Nevertheless, as with every boom there comes a bust. The price of oil descended from an all-time high of \$150 per barrel before the recession in 2008 to a still reasonable \$100 in early 2014 and then crashed to \$50 by the end of that year. Investment slowed, workers (many of whom ended up in enormous debt) were laid off, and oil companies have slowly been abandoning the tar sands ever since. As tar sands oil prices rallied in the following years, many of these workers remained without jobs, while the industry itself preferred to contract with cheaper, ununionized migrant laborers on vulnerable work visa status⁴⁹. In October 2019, the price of Albertan oil, under the West Canadian Crude index, was just \$38.8 per barrel (Levinson-King 2019). While tar sands development has remained just about economically viable since 2016 (thanks largely to continued government subsidies), the product itself is landlocked and of an inferior quality to more desirable lighter sweet crude.⁵⁰

A combination of a lack of pipeline capacity, complications and costs of refining it, oversupply at the site of extraction and its inferior quality, means that dilbit is sold at a

⁴⁹ Rather than unite environmentalists with oil workers and migrants against tar sands companies, this dynamic has seen the emergence of, often quite thinly veiled, racist discourses about migrant communities “stealing Canadian jobs” in the oil sands (Walia 2014).

⁵⁰ Tar sands oil, or bitumen, is filled with impurities, contains a great deal of sulfur, and as the name suggests, has a particularly high viscosity (resistance to flow). To make it flow through pipelines, it must be chemically diluted to form a synthetic oil called dilbit. Processing dilbit and removing impurities requires refineries to upgrade their technology and equipment. Heavy sour crude is unrefined oil that has a higher density, is more viscous, tends to contain larger quantities of heavy metals and other impurities, and has high contents of sulfur. Light sweet crude is unrefined oil that is less sulfurous, less dense, and easier to refine. For more on the political, cultural and economic significance of the different chemical characteristics of oil and infrastructure see Matt Huber's *Lifeblood* (2013) and Bridge and LeBillon's *Oil* (2017).

discount to refineries in the United States (Allan 2018). As such, a driving narrative behind the importance of completing the Trans Mountain pipeline is that it must be built to get Canadian oil to international markets so it can be sold at a better price. This renders it a project of critical significance to the “national interest.” Meanwhile, industry representatives with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP) position Canadian oil as ethically superior to “foreign” oil and its extraction as adhering to the strictest environmental standards anywhere in the world. To emphasize the importance of building the pipeline, Canadian oil sands workers are characterized as victims of an unfair price discount with the US.

It is in this context then, that the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline has come to symbolize a promise of a return to Alberta’s boomtimes, a lifeline to Canadian oil workers, the Albertan economy, and Canada’s aspirations of becoming “an energy superpower.” As former Albertan premier, Rachel Notley, said in her criticism of new federal environmental legislation (Bill C 69) in 2018, “Albertans manage energy; that is an Albertan's birthright” ([CBC News 2018a](#)). Collectively, these narratives discursively align proud Canadians, beleaguered Albertan oil workers, and the oil industry together against intrusive, elitist and “anti-Canadian” environmentalists. They obscure, amongst other things, the fact that the price discount has little to do with where the oil is sold, that most oil sands workers are not originally from the oil sands region or even Alberta, that the oil industry is still earning massive profits while it lays off workers, that without First Nation’s consent and genuine consultation pipeline projects cannot be built, and that if Canada were to achieve its aspirations of becoming an “energy superpower” through developing the tar sands, any hope

of maintaining a stable climate can be waved goodbye. Nevertheless, these are compelling discourses and, if we are to trust polls as a proxy, they are shoring up the pipeline and the oil industry's social license across much of Canada. National polling over the past six years has seen support for the pipeline increase and opposition decline across the country.⁵¹

Back in Burnaby, where the pipeline terminates, these narratives hold less sway. On the one hand, Burnaby's economy has diversified since the closure of four of its five refineries. As such, direct dependency on jobs and revenue from the oil industry is not nearly as strong a pressure as it is in Alberta. Moreover, one reason these refineries closed was because oil companies prefer to transport tar sands abroad, particularly to the US, where it can be bought and refined at lower costs. This is one of the reasons the local chapter of UNIFOR, Canada's largest private sector union which includes many oil workers in its membership, publicly opposed the pipeline's construction. They argued it would bring few benefits to the local economy while certainly posing a threat to economic activity along the coast that many local jobs actually do depend upon (UNIFOR 2016). Indeed, according to former Mayor Corrigan, the city administration courted tar sands upstream producers and tried to persuade them to sell their oil to Burnaby's last remaining refinery (personal communication, June 12th, 2018).

⁵¹ According to Angus Reid polling, in February 2018 49% of Canadians supported the pipeline and 33% opposed it, while 48% of British Columbians supported and 40% opposed it ([Angus Reid 2018](#)). By June 2019, the number of pipeline supporters increased to 56%. 85% of Albertans supported it and 52% in British Columbia ([Gul 2019](#)). Meanwhile, in September 2019, 53% of Canadians supported the pipeline but 52% also said they would rather their provinces invest in renewable energy over non-renewables ([Angus Reid 2019](#)). It is important that we do not take these polls entirely at face value. As Dogwood Communications Director, Kai Nagata, told me, a much larger percentage of those polled oppose the pipeline when, for example, the polling questions emphasizes the increase of oil tankers and risks to the coast (personal communication, May 17th, 2018). Meanwhile another poll carried out in September ahead of the Canadian General Election in October found that climate change is amongst the top election concerns of most Canadians ([Wood 2019](#)). While this may seem to contradict polls indicating a majority of Canadians support the pipeline, it may also suggest that Trudeau's narrative of balancing the economy with the environment is a convincing one, or otherwise that the connection between climate change and building tar sands pipelines simply isn't very strong in most Canadian's minds.

The producers refused. Amongst some local unions, this has bred a good deal of resentment towards upstream tar sands companies and the midstream companies that facilitate the transport of oil through, but not to, the city.

Meanwhile, residents of Burnaby Mountain, where Kinder Morgan's storage tank farm is located, have not forgotten the consequences of a rupture of the original Trans Mountain pipeline in 2007 in their backyards. 250,000 liters of crude (66,000 gallons) spilled onto the streets, coating their neighborhood in noxious oil leading to the evacuation of 250 residents. 70,000 liters (18,500 gallons) poured into the Burrard Inlet posing a severe threat to the marine ecosystem (Hager 2012). Many residents fear that tripling the amount of oil being transported through the city would intensify the risk of further spills and their exposure to toxins. The tank farm itself would also have to be expanded to store this increased crude capacity before it gets loaded onto oil tankers at the marine terminal. The tank farm is already a source of air pollution, an expansion would see a large increase in air quality contaminants. According to Burnaby's fire department, this poses an unacceptable risk to residents, the conservation park, and the university that are all located on the Mountain (Moreau 2015).

In addition, the seven-fold increase in oil tankers shipping tar sands from Kinder Morgan's Westridge Marine Terminal would see up to 400 more ships a year navigating the intricate route through the Burrard Inlet and the Salish Sea. Not only would this increase the risk of tanker accidents and oil spills, it would also likely wipe out the already endangered Orca population. Coast Salish First Nations view the Orcas as relatives, and they are foundational

figures in their creation stories connecting First Peoples to the land and the sea. For most of the people living in closest proximity to the pipeline and its terminus, the economic, cultural, and health risks massively outweigh potential benefits of the pipeline. Moreover, benefits are perceived to accrue only to Albertans and particularly oil companies in the tar sands, while the costs are born by those living in the pipeline's path. Many are concerned about the pipeline's climate impacts, but the more immediate pressures framed in local narratives opposing the pipeline are public health, flawed consultation with First Nations, and the cultural and economic consequences of oil spills off the coast and in the Inlet. These concerns have given rise to grassroots community organizations like Burnaby Residents Opposed to Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE) and Pipe Up as well as the growth of organizations like Climate Convergence and 350 Vancouver.

Vancouver and Burnaby are also home to headquarters and major regional offices of several medium-sized to large ENGOs. These include offices of the Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace, Stand.earth, Dogwood, West Coast Environmental Law, amongst several others. Many of these organizations have deep roots in the region and some, like Stand.earth, emerged out of fights with logging companies, particularly during the Battle of Clayoquot Sound in the 1990s.⁵² The legacy of the protests at Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island remains strong

⁵² The Battle of Clayoquot Sound was an intense 15-year conflict between First Nations, environmentalists, the BC provincial government and logging companies in the Clayoquot Sound on West Coast of Vancouver Island. Logging companies wanted to clear cut an old growth forest in the region and were supported with considerable resources from the provincial government. Meanwhile the local community, environmentalists, and local First Nations opposed this style of logging. Their protests against it gained international media attention. Environmentalists built close allegiances with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation and Ahousaht First Nation. Over 900 people were arrested in what remains the largest instance of Civil Disobedience in Canadian history. Blockading logging roads and setting up camp in the forest, many of the tactics being deployed against Kinder Morgan were also practiced in the Clayoquot Sound nearly 30 years ago. The protests ended with a compromise between all sides in 1994 which gave local First Nations greater control over forest management but also saw parts of the forest environmentalists were protecting being cut down. Many activists describe Clayoquot Sound

both in a regional ethic of environmental consciousness and also in activists' strategic repertoires. The latter includes the use of blockades and development of alliances between First Nations and settler activists. It is not difficult, therefore, to also imagine why the Canadian Green Party finds its stronghold on Vancouver Island and the lower mainland. Furthermore, the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) is headquartered in Vancouver and has also been a significant leader in opposing to the pipeline. Led by Grand Chief Stewart Philip, UBCIC has set up an organization called the Coast Protectors through which they develop their strategies and align with others in their resistance to the pipeline. The cultural legacy of environmental activism and First Nations struggle in the region has helped formalize a professional cadre of environmental and social justice organizations which are intensely involved in coordinating resistance to Kinder Morgan.

Resistance to the pipeline is profoundly shaped by the influence of the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Squamish First Nations. The Burrard Inlet, Burnaby, Vancouver, and the broader metropolitan lower mainland region are their original homes and their culture is inextricably intertwined with their relationships to this place. This is not a fetishism of the "ecologically noble savage" genre (Hames 2007), but rather an alive, dynamic, relational and consequential engagement with the land and sea that has significant implications for the reasons for, and modes of, resistance found in the region. Following a referendum amongst the almost 600 strong membership of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, declaring their opposition to

protest in almost mythic terms as a golden age of activism. Others are critical of the role big ENGOs played in negotiating a compromise without grassroots activists' input (Vasey 2014). This is a dynamic that also plays out in Kinder Morgan protests. Tzaporah Burman, a lead organizer and architect of the Clayoquot Sound Protests is an influential player in the struggle against Kinder Morgan and helped co-found Stand.earth (Formerly ForestEthics).

the pipeline, the Nation's council set up the Sacred Trust Initiative to develop the strategies through which their administration would fight the pipeline. Meanwhile, the George family, prominent members of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, has a long history of anti-colonial resistance. Will George and Ta'ah Amy George set up Kwekwecnewtxw (pronounced Kwu-kwe-ow-tukh and which roughly translates to "a place to watch from"), or the Watch House, on Burnaby Mountain just outside Kinder Morgan's tank farm and directly on top of the pipeline's route.⁵³ Cedar George and Reuben George, also prominent members of the pipeline resistance, are more closely affiliated with the Tsleil-Waututh administration's strategy. Protect the Inlet was the name of the campsite and also of the coalitions of organizations that emerged alongside the Watch House to coordinate their strategy. Run by Coast Salish Indigenous leaders, including Will George, and with institutional support and resources from Greenpeace and Stand.earth organizers, the Protect the Inlet camp became a visible, physical and symbolic hub of anti-pipeline resistance in the city.

Before we finish situating ourselves, I want to outline the current political climate in which this struggle is positioned. After ten years of government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative Party, Canada elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2015. Trudeau was the star of a surprise underdog campaign which saw the Liberal Party move from third place before the race started to winning an overwhelming majority of seats for the Liberal Party by the election's end. The year before, Alberta had elected its first ever premier from the New Democratic Party (NDP) after decades of Conservative rule (think of a provincial premier in Canada as of similar status to a state governor in the US). This has been

⁵³ While good relations existed between the Watch House and the Tsleil-Waututh government, the Watch House was not officially a project of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

perceived as foreshadowing the tumultuous political shift away from the Conservative Party that would play out federally in the 2015 federal elections. The Liberals won 39% of the vote and 184 seats, the Conservatives came in second with 31% and 99 seats, the NDP which had been the second largest party came 3rd with 19% and 44 seats, the Bloc Québécois won 4% and gained 10 seats, and the Green Party garnered 3% of the vote and won one seat. At the time, the election signaled a dramatic shift in Canada's political trajectory.

In 2015, the Liberal Party ran to the left of the NDP, promising sweeping change on a range of progressive issues including bold action on climate change and environmental regulations (the Conservative government had not only gutted environmental regulation, but had also taken Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol and played an obstructionist role in climate talks at the UN). They also pledged to renew relationships with First Nations governments and to enshrine Indigenous peoples' right to free, prior, and informed consent in Canadian law. A third significant pledge was on voting reform. The Liberals promised that the next election would shift Canada's voting system away from a First Past the Post where parties winning less than 40% of the popular vote can win a majority of seats, to a system of Proportional Representation where parties are allocated the number of seats in Parliament proportional to their share of the popular vote.

There is a perception amongst some of the activists I interviewed that the Liberals always "run from the left but govern from the right." While many progressive and left-wing voters were inspired by Trudeau's promise of change, others voted for the Liberal Party strategically to force the Conservatives out of office. Rather like President Obama's tenure in the US, however, many progressive voters now feel betrayed, believing Prime Minister

Trudeau to have broken each one of his promises on voting reform, relationships with First Nations, and climate change. The Trans Mountain pipeline has reinforced the perception of Trudeau's duplicity and come to symbolize his betrayal of his voting base of young progressives.

Similar to the liberal mainstream of the US Democratic Party, the Canadian Liberal Party tends to take up moderate, centrist political positions, and promotes social and cultural freedoms, some social welfare, free markets, and a balanced economy. The NDP vacillates between socialist, leftwing and progressive political platforms to centrist ones often mirroring the Liberals. These are internal tensions within the party that often undermine its broader appeal. Jagmeet Singh, the NDP's new leader, has sought to shift the party to the left and diversify the constituencies to whom it appeals. The federal NDP officially opposes the pipeline expansion while Alberta's provincial NDP supports it. The Green Party, which surged in the polls from three to ten percent in the run up to the General Election, sought to take advantage of the NDP's divisions. However it is also subject a somewhat politically ambiguous agenda. Running under the slogan "not left, not right, forward," the Green Party under Elizabeth May's leadership has sought to appeal to more moderate voters disillusioned with Trudeau but unwilling to embrace the NDP. It must balance a younger, more left-wing, and racially diverse core of political operatives, with an overwhelmingly white, older, and liberal environmentalist base. Finally, in the past, the Conservative Party positioned itself as the party of fiscal responsibility, free markets, "traditional Canadian values," and stable governance. This began to change under Stephen Harper as the Party flirted with a more populist authoritarian agenda. Recently, under Andrew Scheer's new leadership, several

prominent members of the Party have wholeheartedly embraced populist conservative rhetoric. Provincial premiers like Jason Kenney (Alberta) and Doug Ford (Ontario) received a great deal of support as they moved the Party further to right, mimicking the political strategy advanced by President Donald Trump in the US.

Political ground has shifted in British Columbia since 2015 as well. In the 2017 provincial elections the Liberal Party led by Christy Clark won the largest share of votes but failed to maintain their majority of seats. Their minority government was brought down in a vote of no confidence which saw the John Horgan of NDP installed as premier and his administration propped up in an agreement with the Green Party. This Green Party-backed provincial NDP government opposes the Trans Mountain pipeline, while under Premier Rachel Notley's tenure in Alberta the NDP government was vehemently in favor of the pipeline. Premier Horgan came to power saying the government would use "every tool in the toolbox" to stop the pipeline.

Despite their fervent support for the pipeline, Notley's NDP lost the 2019 Alberta provincial election to the Conservatives under Jason Kenney. Premier Kenney ran on a rightwing populist agenda through which he targeted pipeline opponents and repeated conspiracy theories about "foreign funded radicals" and "anti-Canadian energy activists" inhibiting Alberta's prosperity. Many of these talking points are reflected in oil industry's own propaganda that it develops through the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and organizations CAPP uses to boost favorable tar sands discourses. During the election campaign, Notley and Kenney competed to outdo one another's public displays of support

for the industry. Kenney's willingness to rile up his base with populist attacks on environmentalists and peddling in conspiracy theories was clearly better received. Throughout the campaign Kenney promised to change the global narrative about the tar sands pushed rightwing pundit, Ezra Klein's, argument that Canada's oil is the most ethical in the world ([Turner 2019](#)).

Days after winning the Alberta provincial election, Kenney announced his administration would fulfill its election pledge and resource a government run "Energy War Room" to target "misinformation" from "anti-Albertan" and foreign funded interests ([Heydari 2019](#)). He promised to devote \$30 million to the project and it has been well received amongst the Albertan Conservative base. Some suggest the initiative is just political theater, others have pointed to the chilling effect could have on public participation and protest ([Amnesty International 2019](#)).

While making this announcement he was introduced to the stage by Robbie Picard, a self-appointed oil industry propagandist. Picard's, apparently grassroots organization, "Oilsands Strong," operates primarily on social media but also organizes rallies and marches in support of tar sands development along with other oil industry groups like Canada Action and Rally for Resources. These groups are some of the most vocal in spreading misinformation and targeting environmental activists. Their messages are amplified by corporate media and Conservative politicians like Kenney in Alberta, but they are also forging a discourse of conservative "energy populism" with significant implications for the broader Canadian political landscape.

I have described the federal and interprovincial political environments here to indicate that the Trans Mountain pipeline has become an issue of national significance, shifting political alignments, and representative of broader trends in Canadian political discourse and action. The pipeline's significance is not limited to Burnaby, or even the provincial dispute between Alberta and British Columbia, but rather to the trajectory of energy politics and its intersection with climate politics, First Nations rights and title, and workers concerns across Canada. These are the conditions in which petro-hegemony has thrived and through which the climate justice movement must navigate.

A Narrativized Timeline 2012 - 2019

I have circumscribed the unfolding trajectory of the pipeline fight in a specific set of dates to distill and communicate the most significant moments, relationships, and events that emerged out of, and continue to define, the conflict between climate justice activists and the proponents of the Trans Mountain pipeline. I've placed the story in the period between the passage of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Bill C38 in 2012 and the Canadian general election of October 2019. The case is very much a living archive and, as I suggested in this chapter's introduction, historicizing social struggle in a specific period is always a somewhat artificial and problematic process. However, I have deliberately chosen to narrativize this specific period because I think it allows us to view how developments in Canadian energy politics, First Nations relations, and federal elections direct, and are directed by, the conjunctures of this particular conflict. Moreover, this a period that is being significantly inscribed by Indigenous resurgence and the coalescing and realization of the

climate justice movement in North America. As such, placing the struggle in this period allows us to move between, and make sense of, the situated conjuncture, and the national and global context in which it is embedded, with greater ease than would a singular attention to the most dramatic moments of the struggle. While this dissertation devotes most attention to the spring and summer of 2018 when the conflict was at its most intense, the timeline this chapter narrates offers an important opportunity for us to understand how those moments of drama relate to prior events and shaped future ones.

I begin this story in 2012 for two reasons. The first, and most obvious, is that this was year that Kinder Morgan first floated its plan to twin its existing pipeline with a new one that would triple export capacity of tar sands off the Pacific Coast. The second reason, however, is that the incentive to build this pipeline was likely connected to the passage of Bill C38 in that same year, when the price of oil remained at well over \$100 a barrel. While we can't be certain that Kinder Morgan would have decided to build the pipeline without the bill's passage, it is true that this controversial omnibus legislation was intended to facilitate energy infrastructure permitting and turbocharge the already booming oil sands economy in Canada. Decided in a single vote, the bill made sweeping changes to a large number of Canadian laws including reducing oversight over the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), overhauling labor standards, and undermining environmental regulations. One of its most significant interventions was to place federal environmental impact assessments directly under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board, to expedite pipeline permitting, and to reduce public participation in the process.⁵⁴ Bill C38 helped set the scene for the impending

⁵⁴ Paradoxically, however, the bill's passage may also have been one of the major reasons why Kinder Morgan ended up abandoning the project and why the pipeline permits were quashed by the Federal Court of Appeals in

confrontation between Kinder Morgan and climate justice activists by gutting environmental regulations and fast-tracking consultation with First Nations. In the legal battle against Kinder Morgan and the NEB, the implications of this bill would prove significant.

The following year, in early 2013, Kinder Morgan officially applied to the NEB for permits to begin work on the Trans Mountain pipeline. The NEB began the review process, but it wasn't long before the implications of Bill C38 for environmental regulation became clear. Green Party MP, Elizabeth May, who was an expert intervener at the NEB's public hearings, told me that while the regulatory agency was always going to greenlight pipelines, prior to the 2012 it had worked with at least a veneer of legitimacy and respect for due process (personal communication, May 15th, 2018). In these hearings, according to May and many of the other activists who participated in them, the NEB wouldn't allow evidence to be cross examined, narrowly defined those who were considered "directly affected" and thus those who were allowed to provide evidence, and imposed strict time limits on the consultation and evidence gathering period of the review. The agency has long been accused of being entirely captured by the fossil fuel industry. However, May explained that the agency is not just subject to "corporate capture" but "corporate culture" where regulators see it as their job and duty to approve pipelines to stimulate economic growth. Deeply frustrated with the lack of adequate consultation throughout the process, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation contracted their own independent environmental review of the project. The report was published in 2015 and documents the risks the pipeline posed to the coast, the increase in tanker traffic, the

2018. The FCA quashed the pipeline permits citing failures in the consultation and environmental assessment process. By undercutting public participation, further neglecting First Nations rights and title, and limiting what constituted evidence that the NEB's review had to include, Bill 38 created the regulatory conditions the FCA ultimately deemed inadequate.

existential threat to the Orca population, community exposure to toxins, and rising greenhouse gas emissions. The Tsleil-Waututh government deemed these an unacceptable threat to their home, culture, community, and way of life ([Sacred Trust 2015a](#)).

2013 was also the year that the Idle No More movement gained national and international attention. Emerging in late 2012, led by Indigenous women, and originally forming in response to Prime Minister Harper's series of omnibus bills eroding Indigenous and First Nations rights and title, the movement became a broader expression of anti-colonial resistance and Indigenous and First Nations' resurgence. Through a series of direct actions that combined protest with ceremony and prayer (Fiskio 2017), Idle No More has played a significant role in shifting the discursive terrain and cultural narratives through which many Canadians made sense of colonial relations with First Nations. Idle No More helped draw mainstream attention to the ways in which resource extraction in Canada dispossesses native peoples of their land and disproportionately exposes them, particularly Indigenous women and girls, to violence and toxicity. In the following years, the resurgence and development of these frames would prove powerful tools in contesting pipeline infrastructure projects across the country.

Meanwhile, the NEB's review of Trans Mountain continued through 2014. It was during this review that Battle of Burnaby Mountain broke out. This skirmish was one the first instances in the confrontation with Kinder Morgan where grassroots activists, Indigenous activists, ENGOs and community members intervened together in the struggle outside of the "legitimate" channels of challenging the pipeline. The fight saw many of Idle No More's

frames invoked and placed First Nations' rights and title at the forefront of the pipeline opposition's narrative.

A series of significant political shifts moved attention away from Burnaby Mountain in 2015. Foreshadowing the Conservative Party's decisive defeat in the impending general election, Albertans forced the Conservatives out of office for the first time in 44 years and elected the NDP's Rachel Notley as premier of the province in 2015. Notley's election indicated that Albertans might, for the first time, be convinced to embrace federal climate legislation. Several months later, the Liberal Party, led by Justin Trudeau, ousted Stephen Harper's Conservative federal administration from government with promises of sweeping progressive reform. Following the Idle No More uprising, these reforms included an overhaul of federal government relations with First Nations governments and a Truth and Reconciliation Tour through which First Nations could bring to light centuries of colonial exploitation and settler Canadians could come to terms with the legacy and perpetuation of settler colonialism. Meanwhile, the Liberals also promised fundamental changes in environmental policy and pledged to undo Harper's assault on environmental regulation. Many ENGOs and progressives believed that these shifts would drastically alter Canada's political landscape, ushering in a post-Harper era of progressive, democratic governance. Even then, Elizabeth May believed they were being far too optimistic (personal communication, May 15th, 2018). She, and many others, would be proved right all too soon.

Reflecting on a meeting she had had with the Prime Minister just three days after his election in October 2015, May told me that during that early stage of his tenure, Trudeau's position

on energy and climate had not solidified and that he could have been convinced to make more ambitious commitments. Ahead of the Paris Climate Talks in December of that year, May urged ENGOs to intensify public pressure on Trudeau to make bolder pledges on energy and climate policy. She told me that in late 2015 ENGOs should have, and could have, pushed Trudeau much further on environmental legislation, energy policy and ambitious emissions targets. However, these large ENGOs were apparently unwilling to criticize the Liberal Party directly following their election victory. On the election trail, Trudeau had pledged to overhaul the regulatory process through which the Trans Mountain was being reviewed. In addition, many ENGOs lauded his leadership at the Paris Climate Talks, his declaration that “Canada is back,” and his administration’s push for a 1.5 degree rather than 2 degree Celsius global heating temperature threshold ([Fitz-Morris 2015](#)). However, May argues that their refusal to criticize Trudeau, who she knows reasonably well and still considers a friend (albeit one who made very bad decisions), led the Prime Minister to believe he could approve expansion of energy infrastructure without opposition from Canada’s largest environmental organizations. Her fears were confirmed when Trudeau ultimately did approve the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion following the NEB’s review and recommendation in 2016.

While announcing that his administration would reject permits for Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline (following the Federal Court of Appeals finding that the NEB review and consultation with first Nations was inadequate), Trudeau approved both the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline and Kinder Morgan’s Trans Mountain expansion pipeline, arguing that his administration could balance the environment and the economy ([Tasker 2016](#)). Later,

doubling down on this claim, Trudeau’s administration argued that the only way to impose a federal carbon tax that Alberta could sign on to was to approve the pipeline ([CBC News 2018b](#); [McSheffrey 2018](#)). May argues this is untrue because even if Alberta did not sign on to a carbon tax, the federal government could still impose one on the province.⁵⁵ Moreover, she told me that Kinder Morgan’s pipeline approval in 2016 was almost certainly the result of closed-door deals between the Prime Minister, the Liberal British Columbian Premier, Christy Clark, and NDP Albertan Premier Rachel Notley. In further meetings with the Trudeau administration in the months leading to the pipeline’s approval, May learned that the actual reason that Kinder Morgan got the Trans Mountain expansion approved was “Rachel needs a pipeline.”

The apparent reason Premier Notley needed a pipeline was to keep the Conservatives out of office in Alberta. The thinking here was that if Notley could get a pipeline built for Alberta where the Conservative Party had failed, she could bolster her chances of winning re-election – something that would benefit both the Liberals and NDP. Meanwhile, Premier Clark was in the process of making her decision on whether British Columbia would provide pipeline permits and a certificate of environmental approval. According to May, Clark announced her administration’s support for the pipeline following assurances that she could get federal support behind the controversial Site C hydroelectric dam in Northern British Columbia and two LNG (Liquified Natural Gas) installations: the Woodfibre processing and export facility on the Southwest coast and the Petronas export terminal in Kitimat, on the province’s Northwest coast. Apparently ignored in these backroom deals was the fact that even the

⁵⁵ Although the risks of doing so and inflaming latent separatist fantasies in Alberta would be great.

Trudeau administration had condemned the NEB review process as unable to adequately assess environmental impacts and carry out consultations with First Nations along the pipeline route. The NEB's failure to adequately consult, the Board's clear bias towards getting the project build, and its unwillingness to hear evidence from experts and directly affected communities led First Nations, municipalities, and ENGOs to launch a total of 14 appeals against the NEB's permits at the Federal Court of Appeals in late 2016 and early 2017.

In 2017, the story shifts away from federal politicking and instead depicts the growing movement in British Columbia and Burnaby. The British Columbian provincial elections in May 2017 mark one important turning point in the fight against the pipeline. Following Premier Clark's approval of the pipeline, the NDP, the Green Party, and many ENGOs and activists helped turn the project into an election "wedge issue" and mobilized voters against politicians who supported it. Campaigners drew attention to the Liberal's broken promises concerning environmental protections and First Nations relations after 15 years in government. Clark's Liberal Party lost their majority in the legislature but still won the most seats (43). While the NDP and Liberals gained roughly 40% of the vote share each, the NDP won 41 seats, 3 seats short of majority. The Green Party won 16% of the vote and gained 3 seats. Clark sought to form a minority government but lost a vote of no confidence. Shortly afterwards, the NDP and Greens forged a governing agreement and formed the next provincial government. NDP premier, John Horgan, and the Green Party came to power promising to "use every tool in the toolbox" to stop the pipeline ([Kane 2017](#)). In the meantime, the NEB had accepted Kinder Morgan's application to begin construction despite

the company not having had all the necessary permits approved. Enraging Burnaby locals and particularly the city council, the NEB also allowed Kinder Morgan to bypass Burnaby's municipal laws and start construction within the city limits. This was one of the first times the NEB's jurisdiction had been allowed to override municipal legislation.

In October 2017, the FCA amalgamated all 14 of the appeals against Kinder Morgan's permits into one case and heard the respective legal team's arguments throughout the following month. While the court cases were ongoing, construction began on Burnaby Mountain with Kinder Morgan clearing more trees and making preparations for the tank farm's expansion. During this period, organizations like Dogwood had been building a network of pipeline opposition and educating communities across British Columbia to hold a referendum against the pipeline. However, they changed their strategy to focus on peeling Liberal support away from the pipeline after the shock election of the Greens and NDP. Grassroots organizations like BROKE, 350 Vancouver, Climate Convergence and Pipe-Up were also educating and organizing their communities and had built up a significant base of supporters and activists, many of whom were prepared to participate in civil disobedience and direct action to stop the pipeline.

Other organizations focused on fundraising and resourcing the legal battle. Then, starting in November 2017, activists began setting up sporadic blockades at the Burnaby Mountain tank farm and its marine terminal. They have also targeted Trudeau, protesting at townhalls, speeches and his hotel on the occasions when he has visited the province. In the province's interior, Kanahus Manuel, an Indigenous leader in the pipeline resistance and member of the

Secwepemc Nation, was working with the Women's Warrior Society and a team of First Nations women to develop a strategic intervention that would become known as the Tiny House Warriors. Manuel says the Tiny House Warriors idea came to her when she was participating in the uprising at Standing Rock. Building tiny homes on top of the pipeline route, reclaiming First Nations territory, using the houses to provide homes for vulnerable indigenous women and children, and powering these homes on renewable energy, the Tiny House Warriors and have captured observers' attentions all around the world ([Beaumont 2018a](#)).

Early 2018 saw hostilities between pipeline proponents and opponents intensify. In January 2018, Horgan's administration announced it would explore and introduce legislation to implement a moratorium on increased transportation of diluted bitumen through the province. Rachel Notley responded saying that Alberta would sue British Columbia if this legislation were passed and argued that provincial governments had no authority to impede flows of goods between provincial borders. Somewhat undermining her point, she also introduced a ban on imports on British Columbian wine into Alberta in February 2018. Apparently, this resulted in a small surge in local wine consumption amongst British Columbia's pipeline opponents along with satirical social media commentary. Satire aside, the mounting hostility between the NDP premiers of Alberta and British Columbia had begun to threaten a constitutional crisis over provincial jurisdiction and federal mandate. Horgan softened his tone a little and instead launched a reference case in the British Columbian courts to explore whether a moratorium would be constitutionally legal. Notley quietly reversed the ban on wine imports. The modest ceasefire did not last long.

As activists set up the Mountain's first protest camp in early 2018, which they called Camp Cloud, directly outside Kinder Morgan's gates, and threatened an intensification of their blockades and direct action on the Mountain, Kinder Morgan once again requested an injunction against protestors interference at the tank farm and Westridge Marine Terminal sites. Kinder Morgan argued protestors had been causing the company financial harm and delays "nearly every day" since November ([Bains 2018](#)). While this is something of an exaggeration, the steady trickle of activists participating in blocking the facility gates certainly grew between November and March. The court granted the injunction in early March 2018. This gave Kinder Morgan police protection from any protestors who came within 50 meters of either site. The injunction zone was later revised down to five rather than 50 meters ([Waisman 2018a](#)). Just as it had in 2014, the injunction provoked a backlash in Burnaby with activists citing it as another example of a SLAPP suit to silence and intimidate protestors ([Stand.earth 2018a](#)).

The following day, on March 10th, up to 10,000 residents, Indigenous leaders, and activists marched to Burnaby Mountain pledging to "Protect the Inlet" and "Stop Kinder Morgan."⁵⁶ The march was led by members of the Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish First Nations and they addressed the crowd condemning the company's failure to gain their consent, the NEB's lack of transparency, the risks the project poses, and the ongoing relations of colonialism that produced the conflict. Meanwhile, starting at 10am, Will George, and members of Protect the

⁵⁶ Protect the Inlet claimed up to 10,000 people participated in the march, while corporate media outlets rounded numbers down to 8,000 or 5,000 ([Eagland 2018](#); [Waisman 2018b](#); [CBC News 2018e](#)). As Kai Nagata told me, corporate news media was also keen to devote almost half their coverage of the demonstration over to a counter protest of 200 pro-pipeline activists in downtown Vancouver (personal communication, May 17th, 2018).

Inlet, built the Watch House, Kwekweknewtxw, in a day long ceremony, directly outside the tank farm's fence line, and on top of the pipeline route. It became the symbol of Indigenous-led resistance to the pipeline. At the same time, a second camp, the Protect the Inlet camp, was built alongside the Watch House on a soccer pitch about 20 meters away from the tank farm fence.

In the following weeks activists initially flocked to the camp where organizers from Greenpeace and Stand.earth and Indigenous activists helped coordinate volunteers and maintain the campsite's upkeep. While the number of permanent residents at the camp quickly dwindled, dozens of community members, city residents, and activists continued journeying up the Mountain to blockade the tank farm gates in defiance of the injunction. Between March 17th and 24th over 170 people were arrested in daily acts of civil disobedience ([Protect the Inlet 2018](#)). On March 23rd MPs Elizabeth May and Kennedy Stewart were amongst those arrested, drawing a great deal of media attention back to the struggle ([Duran and Lye 2018](#)). These demonstrations continued with growing intensity and frequency. Then, on April 7th, the entire executive team of the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs, along with other First Nations leaders including Elder Ta'ah Amy George of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, as well as writer and activist Naomi Klein, and hundreds of protestors, carried out a day-long blockade of the gates ([Canadian Press 2018a](#)). This time Kinder Morgan refused to enforce the injunction and the blockaders eventually left without being arrested.

The next day, Kinder Morgan issued a pivotal ultimatum. Company officials announced that they would halt all “non-essential activities and related spending” on the pipeline

construction until May 31st 2018 ([Kinder Morgan 2018](#)). If they could not provide their shareholders with confidence that the project would be completed and that their investments would be rewarded, the company threatened to abandon the project altogether on May 31st. Richard Kean, CEO of Kinder Morgan Canada, said that the company needed more certainty and security from the federal government before it could commit further shareholder resources to the project. They attributed the lack of certainty to the British Columbian government's hostility towards the project and their inability to negotiate tensions between Horgan and Notley. Directly following the ultimatum, Rachel Notley said she would explore options to place sanctions on British Columbian goods and shut down all exports of Albertan oil to the province. However, many activists, as well as MP Kennedy Stewart, argued that it was protest and direct action rather than the provincial government that had forced Kinder Morgan shareholders to flinch ([City News 2018](#)).

Kinder Morgan officials argued the company's shareholders needed greater political certainty in the province and that only the federal government could offer such certainty. Thus, Kinder Morgan's ultimatum was largely directed towards the federal government. The May 31st date was ultimately threatening the Canadian government that if it could not provide Kinder Morgan with assurance that the pipeline would get built, then the company would walk away from a project that the Prime Minister had by this point, more or less, staked his political career on. The threat worked. Immediately after the announcement, Prime Minister Trudeau instructed his cabinet to begin negotiations with the company. Trudeau instructed his natural resources minister, Jim Carr to manage negotiations along with support from finance minister, Bill Morneau. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister cut short a diplomatic trip to Peru to

set up a meeting with John Horgan and Rachel Notley, presumably to see if they could cut a deal. Apparently Horgan wouldn't budge.

Speculation about the negotiations and the reasons for Kinder Morgan's announcement exploded and Premier Notley indicated interest in Alberta buying a stake in the pipeline to shore up investor confidence. Media interest shifted away from the protests and focused more attention on the negotiations and the hostilities between the British Columbian and Albertan premiers. However, demonstrations and arrests continued throughout April and the Watch House and Protect the Inlet remained a rallying point for climate justice activists. During this period, journalists at the National Observer uncovered evidence that the government had entered into consultations with First Nations in bad faith and that government ministers had put pressure on staff to "find a legally sound reason to say yes" to the pipeline before the consultations were concluded ([De Souza 2018a](#)). The Tsleil-Waututh legal team called for October's court hearings to be reopened so this evidence could be added to the record. This increased the widely held belief that the NEB hearings had been a "sham" and that First Nations rights' and title were being ignored.

While negotiations continued throughout the month of May, activists sought to intensify conditions of "risk and uncertainty," believing they could shake company shareholders' confidence and convince them to abandon the project. Judge Affleck was appointed to oversee Crown prosecutions of activists who participated in civil disobedience. Despite Affleck's court handing down harsher and harsher sentences for those breaking the injunction, by the end of the month the number of people arrested in civil disobedience had

reached well over 200. Blockades led in “peace and prayer” by First Nations activists at the marine terminal and tank farm took place twice a week, while direct action targeting the company’s other vulnerabilities occurred in a less regular pattern. Early in the month, Greenpeace activists scaled an enormous boring drill Kinder Morgan intended to use to bore a tunnel for the pipeline beneath the Mountain, drawing attention to the presence of drilling infrastructure in the city ([Greenpeace 2018a](#)).⁵⁷ Later in the month, activists carried out a blockade on the marine terminal from both land and sea to coincide with the Kinder Morgan’s Annual General Meeting in Texas. At the same time, First Nations leaders, including Reuben George of the Tsleil-Waututh and Chief Judy Wilson of the Neskonalith Indian Band and treasurer/secretary of UBCIC, traveled to Texas to address shareholders at the General Meeting and assured them that the pipeline would never get built ([Zussman 2018](#)). Their presence succeeded in convincing shareholder to demand greater transparency from the company’s executives on their environmental and human rights standards ([Beaumont 2018b](#)).

Back in Canada, halfway through the negotiations Trudeau’s administration offered to “indemnify” the company, or any company, against any politically-incurred risks it might sustain throughout the pipeline’s construction ([Reuters 2018](#)). In other words, the Canadian government would cover the costs of any delays that the company incurred as a result of the British Columbian government’s opposition. It appeared Kinder Morgan was not interested in indemnity. They wanted certainty that the pipeline would be completed. Certainty meant

⁵⁷ This direct action tactic was publicized across the campaign’s social media platforms and the presence of the drill in the city helped set the tone for the urgency of the protests that would continue through the following month.

security, and possibly physical coercive security, to keep pipeline opponents at bay. If the government was unwilling to provide that security, the company would walk. Negotiations between the company and the government continued without either making much headway. Protests and arrests continued throughout the month too and it seemed that not a day went by that the pipeline struggle wasn't in the media headlines. Finally, on May 28th, the parties came to an agreement. Kinder Morgan would abandon the pipeline ([Ip and Shaw 2018](#)). The Canadian government had agreed to buy it and all existing Trans Mountain infrastructure (including the original pipeline) from Kinder Morgan for \$4.5 billion ([Rabson 2018](#)).⁵⁸ Activists organized an emergency rally for the following day. Organizing the rally overnight, hundreds of protestors gathered in downtown Vancouver to celebrate their victory over Kinder Morgan and condemn the government's decision to buy the pipeline ([Lupick 2018a](#)). Despite their fury that the government would use public funds to bailout Kinder Morgan and complete the pipeline, First Nations leaders and activists declared that it did not matter who owned the pipeline, it still did not have their consent ([McKeen and Li 2018](#)). Campaigners defiantly pledged that the fight would continue until the pipeline was defeated.

Protests did indeed continue late into the summer and the Watch House and Protect the Inlet camp remained a hub around which resistance was organized. Throughout that summer, the Trudeau administration and Kinder Morgan officials finalized the bailout deal. Responsibility for the pipeline's construction was transferred over to a Crown Corporation: the Trans Mountain Corporation. With no other private company willing to take on the risks associated with finishing the project, the government announced it intended to sell the pipeline once

⁵⁸ Economist Robyn Allan ([2018b](#)) has argued that building the pipeline could cost the Canadian government as much as \$12 or even \$15 billion.

construction has been completed ([Ip and Shaw 2018](#)). Meanwhile, activists who had been arrested during protests in the spring started receiving their sentences handed down by Judge Affleck ([Fraser 2018](#)).⁵⁹ Sentences intensified as protests continued with some activists sentenced to between seven and thirty days in jail and others receiving fines of thousands of dollars ([Muma 2018](#)). While this only deepened resentment of the pipeline, media interest in the conflict seemed to be waning. To counteract this, in early July, twelve pipeline opponents, including Greenpeace organizers and Will George, climbed the Ironworkers Memorial Bridge spanning the Burrard Inlet. They rappelled off the bridge and suspended themselves in hammocks directly over the Inlet for more than 35 hours ([Lupick 2018b](#)). Suspended beneath the bridge, the activists prevented oil tankers leaving or reaching the marine terminal for two days.

A week later in the province's interior, in Secwepemc territory, Kanuhus Manuel and the Women's Warrior Society tested their Tiny House strategy. Moving the tiny homes onto a site that had once been a Secwepemc village, in what is now the North Thompson Provincial Park, the Tiny House Warriors occupied and began to reestablish the village and reclaimed their ancestral Secwepemc land on July 11th. Three Tiny Homes were placed on top of the pipeline's proposed route with a plan to construct more on site.⁶⁰ The Tiny House Warriors tied "red cloth all along the nearby highway to call attention to the danger of gender-based

⁵⁹ Affleck was widely perceived amongst activists as a conservative judge who was biased against protesters.

⁶⁰ In a press release the Women's Warrior Society, out of which the Tiny House Warriors emerges, wrote: "This pipeline violates our rights and endangers our lands and waters. To stop it, we're reclaiming our ancestral village and bringing our traditions back to life. If Trudeau wants to build this pipeline, he will need to empty this village a second time; in doing so, he would make continued colonization and cultural genocide part of his legacy of so-called reconciliation. Trudeau may have agreed to purchase this pipeline to make sure it gets built, but we're here to make sure that it doesn't." (2018) The Manuel family, like the Georges, have a long history of resisting settler colonialism and asserting First Nations' rights and title.

and sexual violence associated with pipeline construction “man camps” (Tiny House Warriors [2018](#)). One such man camp was planned to be built just a short away from the village ([Brake 2018](#)). Three days later the RCMP evicted the Tiny House Warriors, arrested Manuel and her sister, and took them into custody ([Canadian Press 2018b](#)). Their civil disobedience forced the Canadian government to publicly and physically (re)enact their colonial heritage of forcing First Nations peoples off of their "unceded, unsurrendered, Secwepemc territory" and revealed its continued complicity in reinforcing settler colonial domination ([CBC News 2018c](#)).

Kinder Morgan shareholders finalized the sale of the pipeline on August 30th in an almost unanimous vote to release control of their Canadian assets to the Canadian government ([Gibson 2018](#)). Then, later that same day, in a tremendous victory for all those opposing the pipeline, the Federal Court of Appeals quashed the pipeline permits. The FCA found that the NEB had failed in its duty to adequately consult First Nations along the pipeline route and that it had not carried out a full investigation into the impacts of oil spills on the coast ([Bryden 2018](#)). The FCA judges unanimously agreed that the NEB review had been so flawed that the Canadian government could not use it as grounds to approve the pipeline and so quashed the permits. All construction work was immediately, though only temporarily, suspended. As a result, the Canadian government was left on the hook for a multibillion-dollar pipeline that it could not build because its permits had been revoked. Meanwhile, Kinder Morgan’s Canadian offices closed down but not before its executives who had executed the deal were paid \$1.5 million each in bonuses ([CBC News 2018d](#)).⁶¹ In

⁶¹ It is worth mentioning here that Kinder Morgan is owned by former Enron executives who managed to get out of the company before the Enron scandal was exposed. They took Enron’s pipeline assets with them and

September 2018, the Trudeau administration announced it would redo the permitting review through an expedited NEB process rather than appealing the FCA's decision at the Supreme Court ([Canadian Press 2018c](#)). The pipeline was forced back into a review stage. Only then did activists on the Mountain dismantle the Protect the Inlet camp, readying themselves for the next stage of confrontation.

Prime Minister Trudeau instructed his newly appointed Resources minister, Amerjeet Sohi, to oversee the pipeline's progress. In the months that followed the NEB carried out a new review of the pipeline's impact, focusing on new consultations with First Nations and studying the impacts on marine ecology and coastal economy. The Board finished its review in February 2019 recommending the government reapprove the pipeline because it was "in the national interest" but acknowledging that it was "likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects" and would have detrimental impacts on First Nations cultural relations with the land ([Smith 2019](#)). Citing examples like the Board only accepting written public comments in the form of fax messages, opponents argued that the NEB's second review and consultation process had been just as flawed, inaccessible, and lacking in transparency as its previous iteration ([Kung 2018](#)).

In Alberta, frustrated by the pipeline's slow progress and facing an upcoming provincial election, Rachel Notley negotiated \$3.7 billion contracts with Canadian National Rail and Canadian Pacific Rail to lease 4400 railcars to reduce the backlog of oil building up in the tar

formed Kinder Morgan. As a result, there was a great deal of speculation that once they realized they couldn't get the pipeline built, Kinder Morgan executives essentially scammed the Canadian government into buying a pipeline the company knew it couldn't get built.

sands and ship more of it out of the province by rail ([Bellefontaine 2019](#)). The move was not enough to counter Jason Kenney's populist vitriol and claims that she had failed to protect Albertan's interests. He won the provincial election in April 2019 with 55% of the vote and immediately doubled down on his attacks on environmentalists.

At about the same time that the NEB announced its reapproval of the pipeline, a scandal that has since dogged the Trudeau administration broke into media spotlight. The SNC-Lavalin affair, as it became known, saw the Prime Minister's former Justice Minister and Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould (and the first Indigenous person to hold that office), resign from Cabinet amidst allegations that Trudeau had pressured her into abandoning the prosecution of corruption charges against the engineering firm SNC-Lavalin ([Gollom 2019](#)).⁶² The scandal pushed news of the pipeline out of the media headlines and for the next few months the pipeline struggle went relatively quiet.

In the meantime, although still largely eclipsed by the affair, the Liberal Party passed two pieces of legislation that sought to undo some of Stephen Harper's most egregious attacks on Canada's environmental regulations: Bill C69 and Bill C48. The former overhauled the regulatory system, again, and addressed several of the NEB's major failings (for example by renaming it the Canadian Energy Regulator), while the latter reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to a moratorium on oil tankers off British Columbia's Northwest coast. The legislation was almost hysterically resisted by CAPP and the industry's lobbyists,

⁶² For a full timeline of the SNC-Lavalin Affair see Global News' *Timeline: What's happened so far in the SNC-Lavalin affair* (2019): <https://globalnews.ca/news/5764442/snc-lavalin-timeline-breakdown/>

despite the new regulations remaining far weaker than they had been prior to Harper's administration ([Elliot 2019](#)). On June 18, 2019, in the same week that these bills passed Parliament and the Senate and the day after the Liberal government declared a national "Climate Emergency," Trudeau announced his government would again follow the NEB's recommendation and reapprove federal permits for the pipeline ([Tasker 2019a](#)).

In July, pipeline opponents (including the same First Nations, environmental organizations, and municipalities as before), launched their appeal of the pipeline's reapproval and, in early September 2019, the FCA agreed to hear First Nations cases while dismissing the environmental and municipal appeals ([MacMahon 2019](#)). Later in September, the Squamish Nation won a significant ruling at the British Columbian Supreme Court which overturned the former British Columbian Liberal administration's 2017 approval of pipeline permits and its environmental certificate ([Canadian Press 2019](#)). The current Green-NDP provincial government, which remains hostile to the pipeline, is now obliged to reconsider the previous Liberal administration's approval and review provincial permits for the pipeline. If the provincial government is willing to use this opportunity against the pipeline, this could hand pipeline opponents a significant political advantage and indicates yet more delay for the pipeline ahead. Since the fall 2019 General Election, however, Premier John Horgan has softened his tone on the Trans Mountain pipeline, reneging on his own election promises, and now seems to suggest the project is more or less inevitable ([Mason 2019](#)).

The General Election was held on October 21st, 2019. Throughout the election campaign the Liberals and Conservatives were polling at roughly 34% and 33% each. The NDP were

predicted to win 15% and the Green Party up to 10% ([CBC News 2019a](#)). Justin Trudeau was caught up in another scandal, this time for wearing blackface make-up on numerous occasions ([BBC 2019a](#)). Meanwhile, climate change emerged as one of voters' top priorities across the nation. This can largely be attributed to a response to the millions of young people across the world joining the global climate strikes earlier in the fall ([Taylor and Watts 2019](#); [Wood 2019](#)). The youth climate activist, Greta Thunberg, toured Canada during the election campaign, helping draw national media attention to the climate crisis and successfully framing the general election as a "climate election." Just three days before the polls opened, her presence at a rally in Edmonton, Alberta drew a crowd of up to 10,000 supporters ([Boles 2019](#)). This number of people rallying around climate change is unprecedented in Alberta ([Junker 2019](#)).⁶³

Organizations like 350 Canada and their #OurTime campaign supported parliamentary candidates in several key races who pledged to legislate for a Green New Deal if elected. Despite this, a broader climate justice strategy to take advantage of the election's climate framing did not avail itself in time. In the run up to voting day, all major political parties pledged to reduce or end subsidies for fossil fuel companies ([Rabson 2019](#)). During the campaign, the Liberal Party unveiled plans to pass a Just transition Act if reelected, while the federal NDP pledged \$15 billion for emissions reductions measures and investment in 300,000 "green jobs," ([Harris 2019](#); [Hoye 2019](#)). The Liberal Party also said it will use the revenue it gains from the pipeline to plant more trees, to which activists quickly pointed out

⁶³ The rally was met with a small counter protest organized by pro-oil and gas organizations in Alberta. Thunberg also joined the Fridays for the Future school strike in Vancouver a few days after the election. In a rally of up to 15,000 people, she spoke alongside First Nations' campaigners leading the fight against TMX.

that ending deforestation associated with the expansion of the tar sands would achieve the same goal with a lot less trouble ([Lowrie 2019](#)). With more focus on climate change than any previous election, the Trudeau government's purchase of the pipeline came under greater scrutiny. Nevertheless, the Liberals and the Canadian oil industry have successfully obscured the connection between the pipeline and climate emergency with assertions that tar sands can be extracted and transported sustainably, that Canada's oil is the most responsibly produced in the world, and that building the pipeline can balance economic concerns with environmental ones. As such, despite climate change emerging as amongst Canadian voters' top priorities, nationally pipeline politics seemed to have little bearing on how Canadians voted in the General Election. It remains unclear what climate justice campaigners could have done differently to change this outcome.

Ultimately, the election saw Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal Party return to office although in a minority government ([BBC 2019b](#)). The Liberals won 157 seats on 33% of the vote, the Conservatives won 121 seats on 34% of the vote, the Bloc Québécois saw a surprising surge in support and won 32 seats on 7% of the vote (the Bloc Québécois only runs candidates in Quebec and swept the province), the NDP won 24 seats on 16%, and the Greens won three seats on 6.5%. While Trudeau's approval of the pipeline came under greater scrutiny because of the election's focus on climate change, the connection between the pipeline and its climate consequences did not seem to sway a relevant number of voters away from the Liberals. In the last weeks prior to the election, there had been hopes amongst pipeline opponents that the vote would result in a minority Liberal government, forcing Trudeau to forge a governing agreement or coalition government with the NDP or Green

Party. The Greens said they would not support any minority government that would build the pipeline and Jagmeet Singh had told reporters that whether the NDP remained in opposition or in government they would continue to oppose the pipeline ([Thurton 2019](#)). A Liberal-Green or Liberal-NDP coalition government could well have spelled the end for the Trans Mountain pipeline. Following the election result, however, Prime Minister Trudeau made it clear that he would not seek any such alliance and that the completion of the pipeline would remain one of his administration's top priorities ([Curry and Walsh 2019](#)).

The General Election results in Alberta saw the Conservative Party regain enormous support across the province. Almost every Albertan riding is now represented in Parliament by a member of the Conservative Party. This is significant because it has rekindled longstanding resentment and feelings of Albertan cultural alienation and political isolation from the rest of Canada, particularly in the federal legislature. Since the election, some on the far right have been stoking these resentments and a great deal of media attention has been devoted to growing support for the Wexit, Western States Exit, movement which threatens Albertan secession from Canada ([Zhou 2019](#); [Bartko 2019](#)). Albertan Premier Jason Kenney has also flirted with growing resentment concerning the federal government's detachment from Albertan values and politics exploiting ([Levinson-King 2019](#)). Meanwhile, the Albertan Conservatives administration are imposing budget cuts arguing that the flagging oil economy in Alberta and federal overreach are to blame ([Leggett 2019](#)). We could read this as a tactic to rile up Albertans against an outside enemy that's hindering their oil economy. This allows the oil industry and the Conservatives to blame the Liberals for policies that have slowed development in the oil sands and limited pipeline capacity.

The oil industry itself has seized upon the opportunity. Indeed, following the election, Trudeau promised TMX would be built as a commitment to bridge the divides in the country. After this, CBC published an article entitled *Trudeau extends olive branch to Western Canada, vows to build Trans Mountain despite opposition* ([Tasker 2019b](#)). Another opinion piece published in the Globe and Mail accompanies the headline *The Trans Mountain Expansion is Nation-Building, Pure and Simple* ([Dodig 2019](#)).⁶⁴ As these headlines suggest, pro-pipeline discourses are increasingly framing its construction as a national unity project that can heal the divides revealed through the election.

Shortly after the election, activists renewed direct action tactics against the project. On November 5th, 2019, a group of youth climate activists, Greenpeace activists, Portland Rising Tide members, Mosquito Fleet, and First Nations campaigners, sailed out on kayaks to block shipments of pipeline equipment arriving into Washington (from where it will be transported by rail to Canada). They chained themselves to a pier on the Columbia River between Oregon and Port preventing the ship carrying equipment from docking, before being arrested ([Van der Voo 2019](#)). The Tsleil-Waututh nation, meanwhile, has appealed their case to the Supreme Court. They have argued that the Federal Court of Appeals' ruling on September 4th, which allowed six First Nations' appeals to proceed, nonetheless severely curtailed the grounds on which they would be allowed to present their case. They have argued these limitations are illegal and will take the case to the Canadian Supreme Court while continuing their lawsuit in the FCA ([Sacred Trust Initiative 2019](#)).

⁶⁴ The first line of this article reads; ““Canada’s energy sector is our country’s ‘family business.’”

As of writing, the Trans Mountain pipeline has not been defeated, although it has certainly suffered defeats. Moreover, as we've seen with the Trump administration offering Keystone XL a second lease on life, pipelines have a way of coming back from the dead. Pipeline opponents' attempts to rout shareholder confidence through a variety of tactics have proved successful. Yet attempts at delaying the pipeline to death have become less feasible since the government bought the pipeline. On the whole, governments are more vulnerable to the losing the electorate's confidence than to losing shareholders' confidence. The state's ownership of the project complicates the movement's interventions. On the other hand, First Nations' legal teams are quietly confident that the NEB's review and inadequate consultation process can be overturned again, regardless of who owns the pipeline (Kung 2018). On the other hand, the state's ownership of the pipeline provides the project with a great deal more coercive resources and support and is less susceptible to the regulatory delay tactics activists deployed against Kinder Morgan. Meanwhile, it seems certain that should construction begin in earnest on Burnaby Mountain or anywhere near the Tiny House Warriors, communities across the pipeline route will not hesitate to take direct action with the potential of First Nations-led protest camps and civil disobedience on a scale the campaign has not yet seen.

There was, and continues to be, a great deal of speculation as to why Kinder Morgan issued its pivotal ultimatum. It seems likely, however, that the company was all too aware that its project was running over budget and out of time. Following the legal hearings, executives may well have realized they would likely lose the lawsuit. The threat of already having sunk billions of dollars into a pipeline they couldn't build was very real. They needed an exit

strategy that wouldn't lose the company billions of dollars and that could maintain shareholder confidence. Meanwhile, continuously repeating the narrative that the pipeline had to be built because it was "in the national interest," the Trudeau administration backed itself into a position where any perceived failure to support the pipeline amounted to a betrayal of Canadian workers and the economy. Kinder Morgan and the oil industry took advantage of, and in many ways reinforced, these discursive conditions by framing a narrative in which hard working Albertans were the victims of an elite, foreign-funded, environmental lobby seeking to undermine their way of life.

The power of this narrative ensured two things: firstly, that the pipeline would continue to have a sponsor even if Kinder Morgan abandoned it; and secondly, that Kinder Morgan's exit could be blamed on the government's failure to resolve tensions between Notley and Horgan, rather than illustrating the company's own failure to gain First Nations consent, to recognize the costs involved in building a pipeline across the Rocky Mountains, and to submit itself to a rigorous review process. The pipeline, meanwhile, shifted from an economic concern to a political one. Thus, when Kinder Morgan's ultimatum came, short of the government agreeing to deploy military intervention to provide the security the company requested (this may sound drastic but mainstream conversations at the time certainly countenanced it), the government found itself in a position where, politically, it had little choice but to buy the pipeline.

Petro-Hegemony and the Trans Mountain Pipeline

In the following section, I illustrate how the theory of petro-hegemony I developed in Chapter Two helps us make sense of the power relations and terrains of struggle engrained in the empirical events I have recounted above. The three elements of petro-hegemony – petro-culture, petro-capitalism, and the petro-state – are all on full display in the Trans Mountain conflict. Moreover, the case study teaches us a great deal about how relations of consent, coercion and compliance are manipulated and intervened upon by the fossil fuel industry, as well as the importance of contextual specificity to understanding these interventions. The case study also illustrates some of the aspects of petro-hegemony that the theory on its own was unable to explain. Confronting these limitations has helped me develop the concept. For example, as the Canadian government ultimately nationalized the pipeline project, I had to extend the idea beyond its original application to individual private companies and instead understand it as a set of conditions produced, manipulated, and reinforced by an industry that is almost always simultaneously public and private. Moreover, observing petro-hegemony’s empirical interaction with the conditions in which it operates, like settler colonialism, I had to develop upon the relationship between the hegemonic relations of power contained under the term and those contained by the broader matrix of domination in which the concept is deployed. In turn, both these insights help us understand how the conditions arose in which the Canadian government was compelled to purchase the pipeline and claim it was doing so “in the national interest.” Below, I identify the means by which the industry operationalized interventions in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance, and how petro-hegemony was manifested in the case study.

Petro-culture and Consent

I identified three major narratives through which petro-culture produces consent to the industry's projects. These are petro-nationalism, petro-liberalism, and narratives of division, diversion and distraction. Each of these narrative categories has its own set of sub-narratives, some of which intersect and overlap with those belonging to other categories and some of which contradict or distract from them. The co-existence of complimentary and contradictory narratives actually helps maintain consent across a broader spectrum of social groupings as each is targeted at a different audience. These are discourses founded upon arguments that often fall apart when subjected to even the most cursory interrogation. Their factual accuracy does not matter, it is not the source of their potency. What matters is that they are packaged as stories, that they resonate with deeply engrained underlying values and belief-systems like fair play, racism, or national pride, and that they are repeated over and over again until they become common sense. Lastly, in terms of the venues from which they are issued, all of these discourses tended to operate at a national and provincial scale rather than locally in Burnaby or the metropolitan Vancouver region.

Petro-nationalist discourses position the pipeline as “critical infrastructure” that is in “the national interest.” Throughout the pipeline struggle, this sentiment and the term “national interest” has been repeated *ad infinitum* by Conservative and Liberal politicians ([Aiello 2018](#); [Austen 2019](#)), by corporate news media pundits ([Carmichael 2019](#)), by the NEB ([Morgan 2019](#)), by pro-oil industry campaigners ([Canada Action 2019a](#)), and by almost everyone in the comments sections of Twitter and Facebook feeds arguing in favor of the pipeline. It is a populist claim-making strategy which conflates the construction of the pipeline with national

prosperity, identity, and pride. The pipeline comes to symbolize these things. Claims on what constitutes the national interest narrativizes pipeline proponents as acting for the good of all Canadians and positions the pipeline as boon to all Canadians. Oil and resource extraction are articulated as activities Canadians should be proud to support as Canadians. The pipeline, therefore, is a piece of infrastructure that facilitates an awakening of Canadian pride and identity. However, it is not enough for Canadians to be proud of extraction, they must also be proud of the product itself and proud that the pipeline is transporting *Canadian* oil. Domestic, Canadian, oil, in contrasted against “inferior,” “dirty,” “foreign” oil extracted in abusive dictatorships like “Venezuela and Saudi Arabia” (See updates shared on the *Oil Sands Strong* Facebook page for example). Canada’s oil is “ethical oil.”⁶⁵ The implication, then, is that any attempt to prevent oil extraction in Canada is an endorsement of the despotic regimes from which Canada must otherwise import oil.⁶⁶ Accordingly, it is not just economically imperative that Canada develops its oil industry and associated infrastructure, it is ethically imperative too. Moreover, those opposing oil development in Alberta are discursively positioned as anti-Canadian hypocrites who would rather see Canada remain hooked on oil from places with lower regulations and rife with human rights abuses.

When Trudeau told a room full of oil executives that “No country would find 173 billion barrels of oil in the ground and leave them there”, he was invoking petro-nationalism ([CBC 2017](#)); when Canada’s Energy Citizens declares “Energy keeps Canada strong” they are

⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the economist Robyn Allan has written a series of excellent articles explaining why the Asian market narrative is a fantasy and why the oil industry benefits from the price discount because they tend to be transnational oil companies with offices in Canada and the US. See, for example, Allan’s articles *What massive increase in crude oil exports to China from B.C.?* (2019) and *Debunking the \$15 billion benefit myth around the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion* (2018c).

⁶⁶ Right wing talk show host, Ezra Levant, wrote a book called *Ethical Oil* (2010) detailing this argument and out of which many pipeline supporters have developed their talking points.

invoking petro-nationalism ([Energy Citizens 2019](#)); when Canada Action runs a social media ad campaign promoting resource extraction under the slogan “the world needs more Canada” they are invoking petro-nationalism ([Canada Action 2019b](#)); and when the NEB declares the pipeline must be built because it is “in the national interest” it is invoking petro-nationalism.

In addition to invocations of national pride, however, petro-nationalist discourses also frame a victim narrative depicting hard working Canadians as threatened by outside elites contriving to exploit “the people” out of a fair price for *their* resources. The often cited “price discount” exemplifies this. According to this story, Albertan oil is sold at a discount to American companies because Canada is unable to export *its* oil to markets abroad where it could fetch a higher price. Therefore, the pipeline must be built so that Canada can diversify its markets and get a better price for its oil in Asia. Those impeding the delivery of Canadian oil to those markets are again positioned as enemies of all Canadians and colluding with American elites, like the Rockefeller family, and American companies who apparently stand to gain from ensuring Alberta’s oil remains on the continent. (Again, the factual accuracy of this claims does not matter to their intended audiences). This is reminiscent of what Adkin and Stares identifies as “neoliberal nativism” (2016, 220). Referring to CAPP’s “Alberta is energy” ad campaign, meanwhile, Haluza DeLay and Carter have explained how the oil industry has engaged in a deliberate strategy of connecting notions of what it means to be an Albertan to the extraction and production of oil (2016). When Rachel Notley declared “Energy is an Albertan’s birthright” in a speech defending her support for the pipeline, she was participating in an industry-led strategy to tie the oil economy to Albertan identity.

When climate justice groups confront the oil economy, they are positioned as attacking the identity of all Albertans.

These narratives have coercive, and potentially violent, consequences. As Monaghan and Walby have pointed out, the “critical infrastructure discourse,” in which oil pipelines are deemed “critical” to the national interest, legitimize surveillance, dispossession, and the disciplining of dissent for “the good of the nation” (2017). It is an argument intended to end argument. For example, conservative Canadian senators urged Parliament to pass a bill officially declaring the “pipeline in the national interest” so that the government could apply more coercive pressure to get the pipeline built (Aiello 2018). Parallel to claiming what is in the national interest, the discourse also frames what is, and moreover *who* is, acting *against* the national interest. This dangerous rhetoric has established a populist “you’re either with us or against us” framing of Canadian energy politics. It positions all those opposed to the pipeline as “enemies” of the Canadian people. Out of this framing, conspiracy theories and spurious distortions of half-truths emerged. For example, the narrative that pipeline opponents are all “foreign-funded extremists” which took root in social media forums was provided with a veneer of legitimacy by the journalist Vivian Krause after her “investigations” found that American foundations had funded organizations like Greenpeace and Stand.earth (Krause 2019). While her so-called investigation could have turned up the same information with little more than a some cursory Google searches and a few phone calls (most of the organizations she targets post where they get their funding from online), Krause’s grandiose extrapolations based on her “findings” have been published widely across many centrist and conservative newspapers (Krause 2016; [The Narwhal 2019](#)).

As half-truths collapsed into widely shared conspiracy theory, pipeline opponents have increasingly been depicted as the pawns of American elite institutions who are intent upon destroying Canada's resource economy for their own economic gain. Throughout his election campaign in Alberta, Jason Kenney fanned the flames of this narrative promising to "spend \$30 million in taxpayer money to build what he described as a "fully staffed rapid response war room." The proposed energy war room would help Alberta's oil and gas industry counter what Kenney called lies from the "green left" (Owen 2019). Online, in the print media, and even in Parliament, pipeline opponents are called "anti-Canadian energy activists" funded by foreign interests and hypocritical elites instigating discord in Canada (De Souza 2018b). Meanwhile, the war room is now operational and one of its first interventions has been to create an online platform for loyal Canadians to report "Anti-Canadian" activities and activists (Turner 2019; Kutney 2019). While the war room may be housed in Alberta, it was provoked by the rhetoric developed in the Trans Mountain fight which transcends provincial borders. Moreover, lobbyists from the national news media conglomerate Postmedia, which operates the country's largest chain of newspapers, have indicated the company's willingness to work with the war room and facilitate its advertising campaigns (Owen 2019). As such, this war room and the rhetoric out of which it emerged has significant discursive implications for protest and the right to dissent in British Columbia too.

But the narrative does deeper damage still. It renders invisible the existence of First Nations anti-pipeline campaigners who are categorically not "foreign" and who, more often than not, are far less funded than wealthy NGOs. Taken all together, these discourses legitimize not

only state violence but also threats of racialized and misogynist violence against pipeline opponents carried out by rightwing militia-like thugs. Describing the discursive shift from fringe to mainstream conservative rhetoric around the pipeline protests, Kai Nagata writes “this toxic blend of racism, violent misogyny and death threats appears to be intensifying as the Trans Mountain pipeline debate drags on.” Those targeted by this volley of (mostly online) hate and harassment, which has been whipped up by Kenney’s Conservatives and those parroting the oil industry talking points, launch their death threats with particular viciousness at women and First Nations peoples (2019). This vitriol is deeply rooted in a matrix of white supremacy, colonial and masculinist fantasies of extraction on the frontier, alongside profound economic insecurity in Alberta’s oil sands (Adkin and Stares 2016; Wilson 2014). Playing upon very real fears and racial prejudice, it also provides a convenient narrative through which to make sense of the pipeline protests while maintaining consent to the industry as a protector of Albertan and Canadian identity. Industry front groups, and politicians like Kenney, are complicit in stoking these tensions. In this way petro-hegemony both exploits and reinforces a broader set of social conditions which include white supremacy and settler colonialism.⁶⁷

A secondary narrative, not quite as prominent amongst the Conservative talking points, but certainly a favorite within the Liberal Party and “moderate,” centrist corporate media outlets, is petro-liberalism. Petro-liberalism is couched in the language of reasonable compromise. It is most clearly articulated in the two sentences that directly followed Trudeau’s declaration that “No country would find 173 billion barrels of oil in the ground and leave them there.” As

⁶⁷ Drawing on examples like this, Chapter Eight explores how petro-hegemony shapes and shaped by the colonial contexts in which it operates.

he went on to say, “The resource will be developed. Our job is to ensure that this will be done responsibly, safely, and sustainably” ([CBC 2017](#)). In contrast to building pipelines “the Harper way” which overtly overrode First Nations’ treaties, rights and title, and ignored or dismantled environmental regulations, Trudeau and the Liberals promise to build pipelines “the liberal way” (which does roughly the same thing but pretends not to). According to the Liberal Party however, building pipelines the liberal way means doing so according to a strict regulatory framework with First Nations buy-in and in return for provincial support for federal climate policy.

Describing the project in terms of “the most exhaustive review of any pipeline in Canadian history,” petro-liberal discourses emphasize the notion that Canada’s regulatory framework is doing the job it needs to do in order to ensure the pipeline gets built but is built “responsibly, safely and sustainably” ([Brown and Parrish 2018](#)). The Liberal administration seeks to “balance the environment with the economy” by building out the Alberta tar sands while simultaneously investing in clean technology, green jobs, and emissions reductions through market instruments like carbon pricing. Prime Minister Trudeau has increasingly used the argument that in order to get Alberta to sign on to federal carbon pricing scheme, they needed a pipeline in return ([Kirby 2019](#)). The discursive compromise is understandably appealing. It suggests Canadians can have the best of both worlds: economic development at no environmental or social cost. Of course, this is just as much a fantasy as the myths contrived by Krause and Kenney. Nevertheless, it serves to align liberal and conservative political orientations around continued support for fossil fuel development across the country.

Running parallel to these narratives are liberal settlers' invocations of First Nations support for the pipeline. Pipeline supporters will cite the 33 bands and nations along the pipeline route that have declared their support for the pipeline (Hopper 2018). In addition, some members of First Nations are active in sharing the narrative that the pipeline can be built with First Nations' consent and that they have been adequately consulted (Cattaneo 2018). Others have themselves declared an interest in building their own pipeline. The recently proposed Eagle Spirit Pipeline, for example, would be owned by First Nations' business leaders and a large share of the profits would be reinvested in First Nations communities ([Morgan 2019b](#)). Other First Nations leaders and supporters of the Trans Mountain pipeline, like Chief Ernie Crey of the Cheam First Nation and Chief Nathan Matthew of the Simcw First Nation, have condemned environmental groups for "redwashing" pipeline opposition and engaging in "eco-colonialism" by conveniently ignoring the First Nations who have declared they want to see the pipeline built and believe their communities would benefit from it (Cattaneo 2018; Shore 2018; Henderson 2019).

Under the guise of balance, corporate media commentators from newspapers like the National Post and the Vancouver Sun amplify these differences to depict First Nations as evenly divided over the pipeline. While it is certainly true that, for a variety of reasons, many First Nations have declared support for the pipeline, and we must not deny their agency in having made those decisions, it is also true that the oil industry exploits these examples to illustrate their social license and demonstrate the hyperbole and hypocrisy of their opponents. This both undermines the pipeline opponents, who can then be accused of tokenizing First

Nations, and bolsters the industry's claims that the project can be built "responsibly, safely and sustainably" with "social license" from "key stakeholders."

Finally, there are a range of subnarratives that I categorize under the genre of "division, diversion, and distraction." These narratives helped shift discourse onto a terrain more friendly to the industry's terms and distract audiences from the claims made by pipeline opponents. Online, instances of diversion included climate change denial and recitations of all the products and comforts, and indeed ways of life, oil makes possible. Others emphasize the importance of tax revenue from the oil sands in maintaining the comforts and services Canadians have grown used to. For example, one of CAPP's front groups masking itself as a grassroots organization, Canada Energy Citizens, declares "Contributing more than \$105 billion to the provincial government over the past 10 years, the energy industry helps fund essential public services and build Alberta's communities" ([Energy Citizens 2019](#)).

Arguments that place a conditionality on welfare and government programs where public services to which Canadians are entitled could only be guaranteed in exchange for the development of the tar sands were also particular favorites of the Notley administration.

Accordingly, industry-friendly spokespeople will often imply that without the tax revenue the oil industry generates for Canada and Alberta, there would be no funding for public education, public safety, or welfare provisions. Provincial governments can continue earning revenue and rents from fossil fuel extraction but only if the pipeline is able to get the product to markets abroad.⁶⁸ This is a divisive narrative that also informs relations of compliance, and

⁶⁸ This is reminiscent of what Watts call "petropopulism," whereby politicians make promises of public services to their citizens, but these promises can only be upheld through maintaining the flow of oil revenue into government coffers (2014, 202). In this vein, Premier Jason Kenney introduced heavy budget cuts in Alberta following the 2019 General Election, arguing that continued federal hostility to Alberta's fossil fuel industry

positions pipeline opponents against people who depend upon public services, from fire and police departments to healthcare, to public schools, to welfare, to parks and recreation. It also distracts from the fact that the industry is one of the largest beneficiaries of government welfare in the form of subsidies, free advertising, and policing of dissent.

Meanwhile, the corporate media increasingly framing of the issue as “Notley versus Horgan” provides another example of division and distraction that suited Kinder Morgan’s interests. It divided the NDP and NDP supporters, it distracted from the other, arguably more serious, threats to the pipeline (including the lawsuits and civil disruption), and it allowed the company to blame the British Columbian government for the company’s own failure to get the pipeline built. In fact, Horgan’s administration became a very useful scapegoat as Kinder Morgan sought an exit strategy. They were able to place responsibility solely on the dispute between provincial governments and call upon Trudeau to resolve it. If he could not resolve it, which of course he couldn’t, the company could then claim the “political insecurity” in British Columbia made continued investment in the pipeline an unacceptable risk. Then, thanks to the narrative that the pipeline was in the national interest having been reinforced and repeated over and over again in the previous months, the broader industry had created the political cover, and indeed political pressure, necessary for Trudeau to bailout the Kinder Morgan and keep the pipeline project alive for industry’s needs at taxpayers’ expense. The combination of the distraction and the national interest narratives that both produced, and

meant Alberta was losing oil revenue and so the provincial government could no longer afford certain public services. The move was likely intended to stoke Albertan anger at federal overreach ([Global and Mail Editorial 2019](#)). At this time, Kenney also signed legislation introducing further corporate tax cuts ([Sanger 2019](#)).

were reproduced by, petro-culture, have maintained consent to the fossil fuel industry and its infrastructure even as Kinder Morgan itself failed to get the pipeline built.

The three narrative genres I identified in Canada – petro-nationalism, petro-liberalism, and diversion and distraction – are communicated through different venues, messengers, and institutions, and target different audiences. In this way they articulate into alignment a broad range of political ideologies, identities, and cultural constituents. Alongside politicians, one of the major venues through which petro-nationalism was communicated is through online astroturf groups ([Suzuki 2018](#)). The prominent Canadian environmentalist, David Suzuki, has been particularly outspoken about the dangers of astroturf organizations. According to him the term refers to “purported “grassroots” efforts that are actually funded and supported by industry and political entities” (ibid). Many will claim to be volunteer-run, politically independent, and only interested in combatting “the lies and misinformation against Alberta’s/Canada’s energy industry (See Robbie Picard’s Oil Sands Strong [Facebook page](#), for example). Their independence or relationship with formal industry groups is often deliberately obscured. While some genuinely are volunteer-run, they maintain deep ties to the industry with shared frames, narratives and talking points which industry operatives amplify ([Linnitt and Gutstein 2015](#)). In this case study, astroturf organizations like Oil Sands Strong, Rally for Resources, Canada Energy Citizens, and Canada Action have been some of the most vocal proponents of the pipeline, as well as sharing some of the most egregious distortions of “the facts” and peddling in outright conspiracy theory online. They have close

connections both to industry and Conservative party operatives (ibid; Gutstein 2018).⁶⁹ Together the groups have amassed hundreds of thousands of social media followers.

In addition to astroturfing, the industry's messages are broadcast through a friendly media environment largely shaped by the consolidation of media institutions into just a handful of Canadian media corporations. When asked about obstacles to their own narratives, the consolidation of media in Canada was one of the themes activists raised in interviews many times over. The industry also seeks to embed its image as a benevolent neighbor upon which "the Canadian way of life depends" through more conventional means like sponsorships and ad campaigns too. This strategy revealed itself when it backfired in Kinder Morgan's attempt to sponsor Kwantlen polytechnic in the British Columbian lower mainland. Its move was met with outrage and the college was forced to reject the money. Meanwhile, the Tyee revealed that Rachel Notley's administration spent more \$23 million on ad campaigns in support of the pipeline and targeting British Columbians with messages that their government was an impediment to Canadian progress ([Carney 2019](#); [CBC News 2019b](#)).

As these discourses are mediated through these points of intervention they infiltrate public discourses, they are picked up and repeated in public conversations, and as they are repeated they form part of the common sense through which the industry maintains consent. In this way petro-culture becomes entrenched, embodied, and taken for granted. It is true that Notley's ad campaigns, oil friendly corporate media, and astroturf groups do more to give

⁶⁹ For a more detailed account of the role think tanks and astroturf organizations have shaped Canadian energy and climate change narratives see Donald Gutstein's book, *The Big Stall: How Big Oil and Think Tanks are Blocking Action on Climate Change in Canada* (2018)

meaning to, direct, and reinforce petro-culture rather than directly produce it themselves. Yet, in the case study context, the impacts of all of these have been to reshape discursive conditions to the extent the federal government was obliged to buy the pipeline, that amongst many audiences the pipeline is divorced from the questions of climate change and First Nations consent, that dissent has been silenced and stigmatized, and the pipeline is itself perceived to be a “nation-building” project for the good of all Canadians ([Smith 2019](#)). These are the narratives climate justice activists have had to subvert and circumnavigate in their own efforts to wrest consent away from the fossil fuel industry.

Petro-State and Coercion

While in this case study the industry has poured a great deal of resources into securing “social license” and producing consent through petro-culture, there is also much evidence illustrating the mechanics by which it has infiltrated and manipulated coercive relations pertaining to the petro-state. I have grouped the different genres of coercive relations I identified into three categories for the sake of analysis and ease of communication. These three genres are the industry’s access to state institutions whose authority is ultimately enforceable through coercion; the industry’s ability to call directly upon the state’s coercive capacities through policing, surveillance, and physical repression; and online organizations with ties to the industry creating forums that incite (the threat of) violence against pipeline opponents to intimidate and silence them, and which representatives of the state either do little to curtail or tacitly endorse.

One way the industry has intervened in relations of coercion to get the pipeline built is through infiltrating and capturing state institutions that are able to enforce their rules through the state's "monopoly on the legitimate use of force." Its infiltration and influence over these institutions dates much further back than period circumscribed in timeline narrativized above. However, this pipeline conflict, and the period between 2012 and 2019, does illustrate some of most convincing examples of the industry's access to coercive resources through the petro-state. In the four years leading to the passage of Bill C38 in 2012, for example, industry lobbyists met with government officials on 2733 occasions ([Livesey 2018](#)). Not only did the legislation gut environmental regulations and oversight over government surveillance of protestors, it also gave the industry unprecedented access to the composition of the NEB. According to Elizabeth May, it was through this legislation that the industry's capture of the NEB was completed, (and, of course, the NEB is the federal regulatory agency responsible for permitting pipelines) (personal communication, May 15th, 2018). Extending its influence through lobbying, elections spending, and think tanks, Canada's oil industry has demonstrated its ability to shape legislation in its interests and block legislation against its interests. The legislation the industry is then able to shape is enforceable through the state's coercive resources and in this way the industry uses the state to enforce rules that advance its interests. Bill C38 and the corporate capture of the NEB are significant examples of this but are hardly outliers.

A more recent example evincing the extent to which the federal Canadian government is beholden to the oil industry was in its response to Kinder Morgan's spring ultimatum in 2018. Kinder Morgan executives called both Premier Notley and Resource Minister, Jim

Carr, on the phone directly to deliver the news. Upon hearing the company's announcement, Prime Minister Trudeau immediately set up meetings between the company and members of his cabinet to negotiate terms on which the company would be willing to continue its project. Similarly, immediately after being told of the ultimatum, Notley cancelled a trip to New York (to attend the New Energy Finance conference ironically enough) so she could provide Kinder Morgan with her full attention. A week later, as tensions escalated, Trudeau cut short a diplomatic trip to Peru so that he could demonstrate the government's commitment to getting the pipeline built by hosting a meeting between premiers Notley and Horgan ([Morgan 2018](#)). The ultimatum was received as though it were a national crisis requiring Canada's leaders to remain at home and devote all their attentions to it.

These governments' willingness to drop everything else in response to the call of a Texas based pipeline company illustrates the industry's influence over the state. Moreover, in its immediate willingness to negotiate on Kinder Morgan's terms, the federal government was prepared to override provincial mandate and jurisdiction, indemnify the company against any politically incurred risk, and, ultimately buy the pipeline outright. The federal government bailing out Kinder Morgan to ensure the pipeline would still be built indicates the extent to which the industry is able to rely on the state to support its projects even when individual companies no longer want, or are unable, to build them ([De Souza 2018c](#)). It also illustrates the enduring relationship between the state and capital and the porous boundaries that often exist between governments and industry where extraction of strategic resources is concerned. With the state now directly in control of the pipeline in order to prop up Alberta's tar sands

industry, we might also expect it to use more direct tactics of coercion as the government itself struggles to get the project built.

The deployment of physical repression, intimidation, and surveillance were not as overt as I had expected after witnessing the extent of their use on both the Standing Rock and Unist'ot'en frontlines. Policing of dissent was comparatively restrained, muted and, for the most part, remained de-escalated. In Gramscian terms, this may be because the pipeline continues to enjoy a degree of consent that Standing Rock's Water Protectors quickly eroded in the case of the Dakota Access Pipeline. As such, in this case for as long as the perception of the pipeline's social license and legitimacy remains relatively intact across the country, there may be little need for the petro-state to deploy overt violence against dissenters. Therefore, violent escalation on the part of the state could also have been perceived as an admission of weakness and uncertainty in the pipeline's social license. Moreover, the direct action tactics themselves have remained deescalated and have done little to provoke or legitimize a violent response. Restrained policing may also be a manifestation of building pipelines "the Liberal way," as opposed to the perception of "the Harper way" which included greater willingness to use force. None of this is to say, however, that dissent went undisciplined. Policing, intimidation and surveillance of dissent are certainly evinced in the struggle against the Trans Mountain pipeline.

One technique Kinder Morgan tried to use to intimidate and silence protest was requesting injunctions against activists through the court system. As a set of institutions that has been designed to protect private property, the law and the legal system are already predisposed

towards protecting industry over the rights of people to protect their homes. As such, Kinder Morgan was quite easily able to use court orders and injunctions to try to intimidate activists and prevent them from disrupting construction. The 2014 and 2018 injunctions were a coercive tool, ultimately enforceable through state violence, and deployed to protect the industry from pipeline opponents. The use of injunctions in this way is also legitimized and normalized to the extent that it appears entirely fair that the company would want protect its property from protestors. However, this tool kept the police at Kinder Morgan's side and allowed the company's operatives to deploy police and arrest or detain activists whenever they physically threatened the company's operations or entered the injunction zones. The police functioned as a wall between protestors and their target. However, through civil disobedience and the discursive interventions it afforded them, protestors used the police presence against the company by illustrating the extent to which Kinder Morgan relied upon law enforcement to defend itself from people who simply wanted to protect the land, water, and their homes.⁷⁰

Along with the injunction, Kinder Morgan used the court system to issue SLAPP suits against prominent activists. This was particularly the case on Burnaby Mountain in 2014. SLAPP suits tie activists up in legal bureaucracy, wasting their time and costing them enormous resources. Claiming \$5.4 million in damages from five local residents who helped organize protests on Kinder Morgan's worksites, SLAPP suits also work as a deterrent by threatening others who would engage in protest to stay away should they be caught up in

⁷⁰ As Chapter Six discusses, images of police forcing native peoples off their ancestral lands, and arresting elderly local residents and young climate activists, so that the pipeline company could continue its work helped expose the colonial and extractivist violence inherent to the project.

multi-million-dollar damages claims. As several interviewees suggested, the costs of the suits alone would be enough to make even the most committed activists think twice before organizing a protest. We must read this too as a form of intimidation deployed through the coercive institutions of the state to advance the industry's interests.

In addition to the courts and physical policing, surveillance has been a ubiquitous method of control and coercion used against pipeline protesters. Stephen Harper's sweeping reforms to the criminal justice system in 2012 made it much easier for intelligence agencies to target opponents of "critical infrastructure" like pipelines (Monaghan and Walby 2017). Since then, Monaghan and Walby have documented how the discourse of "critical infrastructure" has been used by CSIS and other intelligence agencies to legitimize an intensification of policing and surveillance of tar sands and pipeline opponents (ibid). Meanwhile, several Canadian politicians, especially Senator Doug Black, have sought to use the language of critical infrastructure and national interest in legislation that would force the federal government to deploy more repressive and coercive procedures against the Trans Mountain pipeline's opponents (Aiello 2018). Jason Kenney's energy war room which targets environmentalists on behalf of the oil industry has begun its attack on dissenters by using surveillance to gather names of prominent anti-Canadian and "Anti-Alberta" activists and publicly denouncing them. According to its online profile the war room will begin by investigating any group deemed to have "disseminated incomplete, misleading or false information about the Alberta oil and gas industry" and will host "public inquiries" if accusations prove fruitful ([Alberta.ca 2019](#)). While the war room is one of the most overt

examples of how the oil industry's ties to the state gains it access to the state's coercive resources, surveillance tends to operate in the shadows.

Referring to Canada's pipeline politics, Monaghan and Walby have demonstrated how intelligence agency reports are shared through a network of police, NEB, government and industry operatives. The RCMP has itself set up a Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Team to target opponents of tar sands infrastructure and anyone it deems a threat to that infrastructure. At the same time, the British Columbian police have established a new unit of police officers "dressed in grey wind breakers and polo shirts," called the Division Liaison Team who attend protests and whose purpose is to keep events de-escalated while gaining information from protestors by engaging them in seemingly polite conversation ([Fenton 2017](#)). I saw this team in action at several of the blockades I attended and whenever they were present, the protest organizers told us not to talk to them. These officers would engage in friendly conversation but could later use what they learned in casual conversation against protestors. To the extent that security culture was encouraged here, only trained and designated organizers would communicate with law enforcement. Surveillance and information gathering can be used against pipeline opponents in a number of ways, from keeping their names on registers of potential troublemakers to making indictments and securing convictions against them. These are all forms of coercion and activists were encouraged not to make the police's job any easier by accidentally sharing valuable information with them.

One of the main techniques surveillance agencies use is infiltration. They will send informants into activist spaces to gather information that can be used to indict activists and

increase sentences against them if they are arrested. Judge Affleck used evidence that Kinder Morgan had procured through private informers that had infiltrated anti-pipeline blockades to increase penalties for those breaking the court injunction and to justify strengthening the terms of the injunction ([Waisman 2018c](#)). Additionally, the police themselves were always accompanied by units whose sole purpose was to record with cameras, film and microphones, everything protestors said and did while participating in the blockades outside Kinder Morgan's gates. Some activists also told me that police had tried to bug the Watch House but were discovered in the midst of doing so and left before they could finish. Sheena Wilson has argued that the surveillance of tar sands opponents across Canada is a form of racialized and gendered violence where the targets are very often young Indigenous men (2014). This was also true of the targeting of the Watch House and Indigenous protestors who stayed there. The use of surveillance can help silence protest by intimidating those who would otherwise want to be involved but it can also sow discord and paranoia in activist spaces which paralyzes their work (Pellow 2014). In all its forms, surveillance is a genre of coercion that fossil fuel companies have access to through the petro-state and that can be used to intimidate, silence, and repress dissent.

Finally, as frustrations about the pipeline's delay are whipped up in conservative populist outrage, targeting of individual activists through misogynist and racialized hate speech online, and depictions of pipeline opponent's as "anti-Canadian extremists" in the corporate media, has seen a rise death threats and physical threats being made against activists on Facebook and Twitter. This is a dangerous development that many activists fear could escalate into rightwing thugs attacking pipeline activists. In an email to supporters, Dogwood

accused Kenney of leading a witch hunt through his war room: “Feeding his so-called investigation is a snitch line, where every Internet troll and conspiracy theorist can report their most-hated environmental and Indigenous activists for suspected “anti-oil” activities.” As they went on to explain “This may be political theatre, but it’s going to have real consequences for our friends and allies.” Needless to say, misogynist and racialized violence targeting outspoken pipeline opponents can also have a silencing effect on dissent.

When activists are facing physical threats to their safety from angry citizens for their opposition to the pipeline, and thus moderate or mediate their language, this can be considered a coercive tool in the industry’s toolbox as well. It is well known that extraction and mining companies linked to local militia and thugs operate with near impunity in the repression and assassination of environmental activists around the world (Watts 2015). Indeed, politically motivated assassinations of environmental activists have been on the rise worldwide, with number doubling over the last 15 years ([Watts 2019b](#)). While maintaining a distance so as to ensure plausible deniability, the outrage and hate speech oil companies are complicit in inciting is poses a physical threat to climate justice activists in Canada too. It is important to add here, that the violence inherent to colonial dispossession and extractivism are not new to Canada and have been experience by First Nations since colonizers arrived. Nevertheless, Amnesty International deemed the Alberta’s escalation of policing dissent to be a threat to human rights so egregious that it wrote to Jason Kenney publicly to call on him to ramp down the rhetoric and abandon his investigations ([Amnesty International 2019](#)).

Civil disobedience is a tactic that activists have used to reveal the violence implicit in the process of colonial dispossession. This is not revealed to those most impacted by that violence, they know all too well that forcing extractive infrastructure onto Indigenous lands is an inherently violent process. Instead, civil disobedience frames this violence to audiences who do not usually see or experience it, or who would otherwise take it for granted. As Chapter Six illustrates, activists have used the injunction, the threats to their physical safety, and the intimidation and surveillance they've experienced, to try to undermine the industry's social license and force it into a legitimacy crisis. Ultimately, however, the federal Liberal government's approach to pipeline building has given the pipeline protestors fewer instances of morally outrageous violence to frame. Thus, some activists I spoke with characterized the Liberal approach as one where pipeline opponents are allowed to protest, (and indeed their inalienable right to do so is coopted into the Liberal Party's rhetoric), so long as that protest doesn't actually disrupt business as usual. In other words, as soon as protest starts making an impact, that's when the movement will be met with repressive responses. This may help explain why policing of protestors has escalated even while the kind of police brutality we witnessed at Standing Rock has not yet been deployed.

Petro-Capitalism and Compliance

Relations of compliance and their reproduction through petro-capitalism were the hardest of petro-hegemony's three power relations to identify in British Columbia. This was partly because the British Columbian economy, while certainly an extraction-oriented one, is not directly dependent upon the production of tar sands. Meanwhile, Burnaby and Vancouver,

where the conflict has been most intense, are much more diversified economies than the traditional company towns that authors like John Gaventa describe (1980). These cities' economic wellbeing does not rely upon the tar sands or oil extraction companies, and certainly not on Kinder Morgan's pipeline. This is why local chapters of UNIFOR, Canada's largest private sector union, publicly denounced the pipeline. Nevertheless, where all out consent was not forthcoming, compliance certainly became a driving force in Alberta's pipeline politics.

The pipeline's representation as promise of a return to the boom times in a province whose political economy has been deliberately reconstructed around oil, and which has now been devastated by the boom and bust cycles of the oil economy, is enticing for those who have been out of work or suffered wage cuts since the crash in oil prices in 2015. Steve Bramwell, a former electrician who worked in the tar sands, told me about his former colleagues who were steeped in debt and "mortgaged to the hilt." Debt, he told me, creates a compliant population in Alberta (S. Bramwell, personal communication, May 24th, 2018). It is one that is unwilling to challenge the oil industry even after it laid off thousands of workers during the 2015 bust.⁷¹ Moreover, the lines between compliance and consent quickly blur as the oil industry, and pipeline companies in particular, position themselves as Alberta's only lifeline and route back to prosperity. The choice is a limited one, and circumscribed by the way oil industry has ensured it remains the only viable business in town, but it has also translated compliance and apathy into public support for pipeline building.

⁷¹ A combination of oversupply and price collapse led to over Albertan 100,000 workers losing their jobs and a severe economic recession ensued in the province.

Economic circumstances produced by colonial dispossession and extraction have created a dynamic of dependency amongst some First Nations governments as well (not dependency on the state as racist discourses often cast it, but rather dependency on the industry). There are roughly 120 First Nations along the route of the Trans Mountain pipeline. 33 of those in British Columbia have signed benefits agreements with Kinder Morgan and are represented by governments who are supportive of the pipeline ([Zussman 2018](#)).⁷² Benefits agreements are an instrument of compliance and Kinder Morgan has signed over \$300 million in contracts with First Nations along the pipeline route (Hopper 2018). Yet, one must be careful when arguing that all the First Nations governments that signed these benefits agreements did so simply out of dependency. It would be racist and paternalizing to depict these governments as operating without their own agency and simply responsive to economic need. They have made their calculations and came to their own decisions for which they take ownership. However, just like the Albertan workers steeped in debt, we cannot ignore the conditions in which these governments' decisions were made.

These are economic conditions produced by colonial dispossession and environmental degradation which make the oil industry, and a share in the pipeline's profits, the only business in town. Let us not forget, too, that the Chief and Council system is itself a colonial institution imposed on First Nations through the Indian Act and designed to make it easier for settlers to dispossess native peoples of their land. By replacing their hereditary chiefs and

⁷² A benefits agreement is an agreement between a company or government and an affected community where that community will receive a percentage of the profits and financial support from the company's project if they agree to allow that project to operate on their land and in their community. These tend to be negotiated behind closed doors and the details of each differs from agreement to agreement, but they can often include clauses that prohibit signatories from speaking out against the company publicly.

traditional systems of government with elected chiefs and council, settlers sought to streamline negotiations over land acquisition, dispossession, and encroachment (Coulthard 2014). As Kanahus Manuel argues, the chief and council system often ignores the fact that in the traditional laws of many First Nations the land and title is held in common trust amongst all members of the Nation, not elected representatives (Beaumont 2018a). In this way, however, colonialism, extractivism and dispossession are combined to produce conditions through which a dynamic of dependency upon oil revenue arises. Meanwhile, individual First Nations' governments operate in response to those conditions but also make their decisions according to their own political, economic and ideological orientations.

Eriel Deranger of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, and Executive Director of Indigenous Climate Action, wrote an important article exploring the contradictions and complications of First Nations governments signing up to support for the pipeline. In it she reflects upon being asked whether she felt betrayed by her Nation's Chief, Allan Adam, a formerly vocal opponent of tar sands expansion, and his statement in support of the pipeline. She answers with a "resounding no":

I said no because I didn't want to be baited into fighting my own people. This is bigger than what Chief Adam has just said or done. This is a symptom of the neo-colonial agenda. My community, just like the other Cree, Dene and Métis communities that have stepped up in support of this atrocious industry, have been forced into a corner through years of concerted pressure by oil and gas companies in collusion with government to accept the tar sands as our fate. ([Deranger 2018](#))

Her response invokes the conditions that colonialism has produced, and which have led her community's leaders, and many like them, to resign themselves to the expansion of the tar sands. The pressure from oil companies "in collusion with government" is one that produces

compliance. Her arguments are evocative of what calls Al Gedicks calls “the psychology of inevitability” in which communities resign themselves to the inevitability of extraction and seek to glean what benefits they can from it (1993). Deranger’s article reminds us that First Nations’ decisions about whether to support the pipeline are very much operating in the context of colonized lands in communities where economic desperation is real and where the choice between oil revenue and poverty is often an unambiguous one. She describes the situation succinctly: “We are economic hostages in our homeland.” This example illustrates another situation where the distinctions between compliance, coercion, and consent are blurred through the choices available to those decision makers being circumscribed and limited by the industry’s participation in colonial extraction. Together we can think of these conditions as a stark example of petro-capitalism.

Finally, I also observed examples of a dependency dynamic existing between Kinder Morgan and its access to capital. Indeed, like almost all publicly tradeable companies, maintaining shareholder confidence was a driving force behind many of the decisions Kinder Morgan executives ultimately made. Kinder Morgan executives were particularly concerned that they had sunk over a billion dollars of their shareholders’ money into a project that could not be built. They’re reputation as company that is perceived to be a secure and dependable investment was on the line. This proved far more important than whether or not the company got the pipeline project finished. Its reputation amongst shareholders is what ensures its access to capital, and thus its longevity. Moreover, if the project were starved of the capital necessary to complete it, it would fail anyway. The pipeline and the company depend upon access to investors’ capital, without which neither can survive. We can quite safely assume

this was critical to informing the company's ultimatum and its desperation to sell the pipeline to the government.

Activists sought to exploit this dependency dynamic by producing conditions of “risk and uncertainty” with a variety of tactics to scare off investors and starve the project of its life source. In one sense, they succeeded. Hostility towards the pipeline in British Columbia, the lawsuits, and the protests certainly provided more than enough reason for Kinder Morgan's shareholders to waiver. On the other hand, however, the government's subsequent purchase and nationalization of the pipeline as a result, means the pipeline is now less susceptible to the temperaments of private investors. To a large degree, state ownership has removed the pipeline's vulnerability to dependency on capital and thus activists' ability to target its sources of funding. As such, this example also illustrates the extent to which the category of compliance is always a somewhat indistinct or nebulous one. As the state has bought the pipeline, relations of compliance may soon become ones of coercion.

Conclusion: Questions for the Climate Justice Movement

This chapter's objective has been to situate the struggle against the Trans Mountain pipeline politically, temporally and geographically. In doing so, it has illustrated the operations of petro-hegemony as it functions in the midst of these conjunctures. By way of concluding this chapter, I explore the questions that situating petro-hegemony in the practical specifics of this struggle has raised for the climate justice movement, and I explain how these questions will be engaged with throughout the rest of the dissertation. In these last few paragraphs, then, I

will reflect upon how the events and theoretical analysis that this chapter has developed urge deeper investigation into a number of questions concerning the climate justice movement's strategies, tactics, and narratives. These are questions and challenges, along with those explored in the following case study in Richmond, that animate the remainder of this dissertation and I preview them below to demonstrate the process by which I encountered them through my case study research.

Using the master's tools

Audre Lorde famously said, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." Less well known is the sentence that directly followed this statement: "They [the master's tools] may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." I met several activists in Burnaby who viewed the courts and legal system, electoral politics, and the state as constituting "the master's tools" which should be refused and rejected. Others suggested that these are neither the tools of the oppressor nor the oppressed, they are neutral tools that both side can use to advance their respective agendas. Still others argue that these are indeed tools of the oppressor and yet may, nonetheless, be used to "temporarily beat him at his own game." This case study illustrates some of the tensions between these strategic orientations and offers insights into how they may be worked through amongst activists. The prominence of the Canadian legal system in this case study introduces us to this process. The court system has been strategically leveraged by both sides to defend or undermine First Nations' rights and title, but First Nations-led legal cases have been amongst the most powerful interventions against the

industry and incursions of the pipeline. Thus, many climate justice activists are having to contend with whether their engagement with the legal system is ultimately legitimizing settler colonial domination even while their legal victories are holding back the incursions of the fossil fuel industry.

Similarly, provincial electoral politics seemingly shifted the political landscape in climate justice activists' favor and provided them with powerful, if fickle, allies in the provincial government. But it also drew attention away from the climate justice narrative, emphasizing instead the hostilities between Alberta, British Columbia and the federal government. The movement's opponents have been able to reframe the pipeline narrative as one that helps pitch Canadians, and even Canadian politicians of the same party, against one another across provincial borders. Undoubtedly, the state, courts, and electoral politics proved themselves important points of intervention for the climate justice movement. Questions remain, however, about role of the elections, the state and the courts in the movement's broader envisionings of emancipatory radical social change. In other words, how can and should climate justice activists engage with these points of intervention in ways that win tangible victories in the present without undermining longer term revolutionary and emancipatory struggle? These questions are developed, explored and challenged in Chapter Seven.

Engaging petro-hegemony in specificity and at scale

Petro-hegemony does not exist in a vacuum. As this case study illustrates, it operates within, shapes, and adapts to, the specific configurations of the oil assemblage and the broader

social, cultural, geographic, and historical conditions in which both exist. The populist discourse of petro-nationalism, for example, exploits and reinforces pre-existing nationalist sentiments to embed petro-culture in Canadian common sense. Engraining petro-culture in Canadian and particularly Albertan identity is thus facilitated by appeals to national pride, fantasies of “energy supremacy,” and indeed the stark reality of white supremacy, while simultaneously erasing the country’s history of colonial domination. Interventions in relations of compliance, meanwhile, are aided by the legacy and continuation of colonial dispossession and extractivist degradation of Indigenous people’s lands. Thus, benefits agreements became a tool by which Kinder Morgan mediated compliance. Furthermore, the company’s ability to discount consultation with First Nations, ignore their concerns, and win court injunctions to coerce dissenters, are all assisted by the intersection of extractivist, capitalist, and colonial logics that infiltrate most of Canada’s state institutions. The passage of Bill C38 in 2012 exemplifies the intersection of these logics and how they both produce, and are reproduced by, petro-hegemony. Canada is a settler colonial state, and this is a condition to which petro-hegemony has adapted, that it emerges out of, that it has come to shape, and upon which it thrives.

Understanding both the conjunctural specificity of conditions in which petro-hegemony operates and also the magnitude of the global flows, processes, and dynamics in which it is embedded, requires climate justice activists to vigorously interrogate the question of scale. For example, we cannot abstract the pipeline from its strategic position within the global political economy of oil, nor, indeed, may we divorce Kinder Morgan from its position within the global oil assemblage. This means we must consider the scales at which

hegemony operates and the scales at which it should be intervened against. Scale here refers to the wider intersections of conditions of domination, what Collins a matrix of domination, that petro-hegemony exists within. It also includes the scale of the global oil assemblage and the scale of the commodity chains in which this particular oil source is embedded. But questions of scale also involve the scale to which the movement may be required to grow in order to address the respective magnitudes of the conditions upon which petro-hegemony thrives.

The details of this case study lead us to address scale through the following questions: If private infrastructure ventures can simply be nationalized by the federal government when they fail, then at what scale is it appropriate for activists to intervene? If an oil company is just one small part of the large oil assemblage, does it not make more sense for activists to target points of intervention within the broader assemblage? If the fossil fuel industry and petro-hegemony are just products of a broader matrix of domination, should not this matrix be the focus of our revolutionary attentions instead of individual oil companies, or indeed the fossil fuel industry? If we must intervene against the industry, the oil economy, and matrix of domination in which these are embedded, all at once, then to what scale is the movement required to grow if its interventions are to be commensurate with the scale of that which it intervenes against? In sum, at what scale is intervention desirable, appropriate or even possible for the climate justice movement? I take up these questions in Chapter Eight, devoting the entire chapter to exploring the different dimensions of scale.

Expanding the notion and purpose of the blockade

Blockades are becoming favorite tools of the climate justice movement and Indigenous-led campaigns to keep fossil fuels in the ground (Canning 2018). Naomi Klein's coining of the term Blockadia invokes this explicitly. In the confrontation with Kinder Morgan, however, one might be forgiven for thinking that blockades and escalation of direct action has played only a minor role in the pipeline saga. Indeed, when Klein and the leadership of the UBCIC stood together blocking the entrance to the tank farm, the company refused to enforce their injunction and clearly hoped to keep protests de-escalated and out of the news. In some ways they were successful. Policing rarely involved physical brutality and the blockades themselves, which only lasted for a few hours once or twice a week, often on weekends, functioned more as symbolic expression of resistance than a material impediment to Kinder Morgan's operations. At best, the direct material implications of the blockades seemed to be ones of minor inconvenience to the company. However, it is worth thinking about the strategic efficacy of the blockade in a broader sense too. This reveals more about the tactic and why activists have found it a useful tool in contesting petro-hegemony.

The blockades outside Kinder Morgan's gates can be thought of as a microcosmic representation of what the movement is doing on a much larger scale. They are besieging the tar sands industry at its most vulnerable points, finding chokeholds and bottlenecks in its supply chain, and thus limiting the industry's ability to get its product to markets. The movement's siege of the tar sands has been fundamental to preventing the construction of all five of the major tar sands pipeline permitted in the last seven years. Recognizing the strategically vital role pipelines play within the oil economy as well as their vulnerability to

intervention, climate justice activists have targeted these midstream operations in provinces where political opportunity structures are more favorable in order to halt upstream expansion of the tar sands in Alberta where those opportunity structures are less favorable (Hoberg 2018). These blockades have involved a strategy of intensifying conditions of risk and uncertainty to make investments in the oil economy less attractive. Meanwhile, the acts of civil disobedience outside Kinder Morgan's gates have sought to focus media attention on the climate justice movement's narrative and demonstrate the profound depths of resistance to the pipeline existing in the city. Despite all this, many activists did share concerns with me about the efficacy of the blockades when they didn't escalate and didn't disrupt business as usual for the company. Others, on the other hand, suggested the blockades were already going too far and were alienating potential supporters at a time when other strategies were proving more effective. These strategic differences animate climate justice interventions. I address the tensions over strategic purpose of the blockade and broader strategic differences within the movement in Chapters Six and Seven.

Alignment and narrative across difference

From First Nations, to ENGOs, to grassroots activists, this chapter identified a range of different actors working together and playing important roles within the campaign to stop Kinder Morgan's pipeline. The real differences between these groups, however, should encourage us to inquire into the process of constituting the relationships that were forged between Indigenous activists and settlers who considered themselves allies. This exploration leads us to question like, how, and to what extent, were ENGOs, grassroots climate justice

activists and First Nations campaigners able to work through histories of distrust and exploitation to operate in an alliance against Kinder Morgan? Alignment across difference is, at least in part, a question of narrative. The relationships and narratives I observed while investigating this case study raised questions about how narrative is used to align diverse constituents of a movement across their different experiences, degrees of privilege, identities, and positionalities. Just as the universalizing discourses of petro-nationalism developed alignment and consent to the industry, the movement also uses populist narratives to universalize its claims across a diverse array of social groups and identities. However, it must also pay close attention to the differences that universalizing and populist discourses ignore or erase. They must negotiate a complicated relationship between difference and unity in the narratives that build their movement. Narrative strategy is vital to intervening in and shifting discursive conditions that provide the fossil fuel industry with consent. How the movement constructs and broadcasts these narratives is a concern discussed throughout this dissertation. Chapter Five, in particular, explores the different narrative strategies climate justice activists have used to align their movement across difference and shift discursive conditions against the industry.

Points of intervention

Finally, assessment of petro-hegemony in this case study has illustrated how consent, coercion and compliance form a mutually reinforcing set of power relations. This shows us why climate justice activists must confront the industry on all three terrains of struggle. Moreover, the conjunctures in which these relations of power became observable also leads

us to consider the different ways specific points of intervention may be engaged. Points of intervention can be captured and coopted, manipulated and exploited, subverted and undermined, reinforced and empowered, removed and destroyed, or ignored and diverted. Points of intervention can be material (like the physical sites activists chose to blockade), they can be institutional (like the industry's capture of the NEB), they can be economic (like specific vulnerabilities in the oil commodity chain), they can be discursive (like the narratives both industry and activists use to shift relations of consent), they can be corporeal (as in the specific people and agents who have populated the narrative in this chapter), they can be political (like the legislation the oil industry sought to influence), and they can be social (like the relationships both sides seek to develop with shareholders, politicians, unions, journalists and so on). This chapter has indicated that activists and industry operatives choose to engage each point of intervention according to the specific characteristics of that point of intervention, the resources available to them, and the different theories of change they bring to their strategies.

Terrains of struggle are comprised of innumerable points of intervention. Depending on the specificities of the conjuncture and particular context of struggle, some of them are pivotal while others may be less relevant. In the context of combatting Kinder Morgan's pipeline, institutions, discourses, specific people, relationships, legislation, courts, regulatory agencies, have all proved important points of intervention distributed across terrains of struggle characterized by relations of consent, coercion, or compliance. How to judge between points of intervention, and moreover how to shape interventions such that they take on particular relevance or decisiveness is the art of the strategist. Yet, despite operating in the same

context of struggle, different activists perceived different points of intervention as more or less significant in their confrontations with the industry. These were based on different experiences, subjectivities, political orientations, and tactical preferences. These differences in strategic orientation lead to questions about how, and to what extent, interventions through the legal system, elections, and direct action could be synthesized to complement one another. The last question this case study raises, then, is how do movements comprised of numerous theories of change, political actors, and strategic orientations work across these differences to target all the decisive and pivotal points of intervention on all three of the terrains of struggle to topple petro-hegemony? This is a question of critical importance but one that a single chapter alone cannot hope to address and, as such, it is explored throughout each of the subsequent chapters in this dissertation.

To conclude, then, this chapter has placed petro-hegemony in the conjunctures of Canadian climate justice activists' confrontation with the Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain Expansion Pipeline. It first situated this struggle historically, geographically and politically, in the context of Canadian energy politics, ongoing settler colonialism, and the specificities of the focal point of grassroots struggle in Burnaby and Coast Salish Territory. It then illustrated the conditions in which petro-hegemony has operated and through which the pipeline was ultimately abandoned by Kinder Morgan, only to be nationalized by the Canadian government in 2018. It went on to narrate my own perspective on the seven-year period between 2012 and 2019 in which the struggle has so far played out. This narration offered insight into the ways that the industry and activists adapted and developed narratives, strategy and tactics to advance their respective agendas. This illustrated patterns and

dynamics that have shaped the pipeline fight throughout its duration. Finally, I explored the anatomy of petro-hegemony as a concept by placing it in direct conversation with my empirical case study observations. Here I demonstrated the different ways the industry intervened in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance and indicated the respective points of intervention upon which it deployed different strategies and tactics. Placing theory and practice in conversation has shaped the arguments made in both this case study chapter and the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two. This process ultimately led me to a series of critical questions for the climate justice movement concerning strategy, scale, narrative and alliances in the context of counter hegemonic intervention. It is to the investigation and analysis of these questions that this dissertation will turn in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 4 – Case Study 2: The Climate Justice Movement in Richmond, Contra Costa County, Ohlone Territory, California, The United States

Introduction

For over 100 years the city of Richmond, situated on the East Bay in the San Francisco Bay Area, has born witness to class struggle, movements for racial liberation, and environmental justice activism. However, since at least the 1970s the city has been primarily known for industrial decay, pollution, disinvestment, administrative corruption and neglect, poverty, drug and gang related violence, police brutality, and for having one of the highest rates of homicide in the United States. Together, the consequences of decades of neoliberalization, extractivism, and white supremacy, ravaged the city's communities, unraveling its social fabric and sowing alienation and despair. It is this story of the city, however, that the city's dynamic network of climate and social justice organizations are now seeking to change forever.

Over the last 15 years, grassroots activists in Richmond have been fundamentally reshaping the city's political landscape. City hall, once a passionless, administrative space, dominated by corrupt bureaucrats and corporate-backed city councilors, has been transformed into a vibrant political arena where solutions to the city's many problems are furiously debated. Here, hopeless cynicism has given way to animated confrontations between those calling for radical systemic change and reformist pragmatism. 2003 saw the formation of the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA) constituting a coalition of local residents to take on corporate power in city hall and run slates of city council candidates committed to empowering social movements and the city's inhabitants. Gayle McLaughlin was the first of the RPA candidates

to win office, in 2005, and went on to serve as city mayor between 2006 and 2014. In the years that followed, the RPA would win a majority of seats, and then a supermajority, on the city council, ousting decades of soulless corporate bureaucrats and ushering in an era of optimism and community empowerment. Meanwhile, the city's grassroots community organizations have forged a truly intersectional movement that bridges climate justice, food justice, racial justice, workers' rights, prison abolition, affordable housing and more, to challenge a matrix of domination that has privileged corporations over people and the environments upon which they depend since the city's conception. Transforming the city, this movement, in partnership with city council representatives, has won a series of stunning victories against corporate rule and is prefiguring community-led alternatives and solutions to the intersectional social crises facing the city.

Richmond grew up around, and in the shadow of, an oil refinery that would come to dominate its politics, economy, and culture for over a century. Standard Oil, John D. Rockefeller's historic oil monopoly, built the refinery in 1902. Following the monopoly's break up, Standard Oil California, later named Socal, took ownership of the refinery in 1911. After a series of mergers, Socal changed its name to Chevron in the 1980s and the refinery has been owned and operated by the Chevron Corporation ever since.⁷³ When it was built, the refinery was the largest in California and it remains amongst the largest in the United

⁷³ By the early 1900s, John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil held a monopoly over 91% of US oil production and 85% of oil sales. The monopoly was broken up into seven regional companies under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1911. These new companies were Standard Oil California (later Socal), Standard Oil Kentucky, Standard Oil of New York, Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of Indiana, The Standard Oil Company (Ohio), and the Ohio Oil Company. Several of these companies have since remerged, or were bought by other oil majors, to become constituents of Saudi Aramco, Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, and Chevron (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). Chevron was born out of Standard Oil California (Socal changed its name to Chevron in 1984) and came to operate Standard Oil's first Californian oil refinery, which was located in the city of Richmond (Chevron 2018). For a compelling account of Standard Oil's history see Daniel Yergin's *The Prize* (1992).

States to this day. Processing up to 250,000 barrels a day, it is also the state's single largest stationary source of greenhouse gas emissions. Making up to \$20 billion a year, the refinery accounted for 10% of Chevron's annual earnings in 2013 (Early 2017). 88% of greenhouse gas emissions in the city can be attributed to heavy industry, and "nearly all of that from the refinery" (McLaughlin 2018, 143). Meanwhile, grassroots environmental justice activists have long accused Chevron of degrading the health of local residents through emissions of localized toxic pollutants. Industrial pollution in the city has disproportionately impacted the city's low-income communities of color (Choy and Orozco 2009).

Echoing a common refrain amongst Richmond's climate and environmental justice activists, Gayle McLaughlin says that "for over 100 years Richmond was Chevron's company town." Its representatives dominated city council and the company funded churches, community organizations, schools and local public services. Occupying nearly 3000 acres, or 13% of Richmond's land (Rein 2012), and, employing 3,456 people in 2016,⁷⁴ Chevron remains the city's largest employer and contributes millions to the city's tax base ([City Facts 2019](#)). Thus, much of Richmond came to depend upon Chevron for everything from fixing church rooves to local employment to school funding. This afforded Chevron tremendous influence over the city, producing a corporate friendly business environment of deregulation and low taxation. Where the city rolled back public services to cut corporate tax rates and attract investment (often at Chevron's behest), Chevron's philanthropy came to replace them,

⁷⁴ Permanently employed workers at the refinery more likely number 1200 but the refinery contracted many more during its upgrade project between 2016 and 2018. Chevron does not publicize exactly how many people the refinery employs. It is also important to note here that just 5-10% of the refinery's employees are Richmond residents. Most others commute from the wealthier suburbs (McLaughlin 2018).

cementing its image as a benevolent and necessary neighbor. This dynamic only entrenched Chevron's hegemonic status in the city further.

Recently, however, as the RPA and grassroots campaigns have grown in strength, Chevron's local influence has been severely challenged. Since at least the 1980s, grassroots environmental justice organizations like West County Toxics Coalition (WCTC) and Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) organized Richmond residents to hold Chevron accountable for its toxic pollution of the city's primarily low-income, primarily black and brown, population. They slowly gained ground, winning small concessions from the company but arguably doing most to lay the foundations for the upswelling of a city-wide movement that would take on Chevron and win some 30 years later. Out of the ground that these organizations had cultivated, a local, powerful, and intersectional movement, demanding radical social change, emerged to confront Chevron when it proposed a one billion dollar "refinery modernization project" in 2006, and again in 2014. The still corporate dominated city council obligingly provided permits for the project in 2008 but these were later overturned after activists challenged them in court. The grassroots contestation of the refinery modernization or, as local activists see it "refinery expansion," that ensued sets the scene for the period of struggle described in this case study. Recounting the events during which Chevron's hegemony was undone, and a new intersectional political agenda with deep roots in climate justice, emerged to challenge it, this chapter explores the process by which petro-hegemony was won and lost in Richmond.

Choy and Orozco write that “Refinery towns, like other oil-affected communities, are classic battlegrounds for corporate control and environmental justice” (Choy and Orozco 2009, 45). Such battlegrounds make assertions and contestations of hegemony visible and render Richmond a significant site within the climate justice movement’s confrontation with petro-hegemony. Indeed, Richmond’s story has fascinated me since I first learned about it at a convergence of fossil fuel divestment student activists in Berkeley (just south of Richmond) in 2013. Since then, two questions have driven me to, and through, this research: How did Chevron remain so dominant for so long? And, moreover, how did a racially and economically marginalized company town, dominated by Big Oil for over 100 years, thrust itself into a social and economic resurgence premised upon environmental and climate justice? Two years ago, I wrote my master’s thesis examining one aspect of this question: namely, the communication strategies climate justice activists deployed to build alliances and shift discourses and relations of consent in the city. This dissertation returns to Richmond because I wanted to learn more about the community’s narrative interventions, but also to investigate all the other strategies and tactics climate justice activists have used to challenge the deeply entrenched hegemony of the fossil fuel industry in the city.

As did Chapter Three, this chapter situates Richmond in temporal, political and geographic conjunctures. It depicts a partial, unique, and situated perspective amongst many other perspectives on the elements of the story I personally have learned about and believe are relevant to understanding the assertions and contestations of power here. Situating Richmond, this chapter places Chevron and the fossil fuel industry’s hegemony in a broader context of racial capitalism (Robinson 1983), neoliberal austerity, industrial decline, and

environmental racism, as well as the identifying the decades-old roots from which resistance to all of these has emerged. I go on to narrativize a more specific timeline of struggle which sees the climate justice movement come of age as it intersects with a whole host of other movements and campaigns and develops along the trajectory of the Richmond Progressive Alliance's development. It also illustrates the timeline over which Chevron's hegemonic status in the city has been contested, and throughout which its influence has endured. I then explicitly identify the operations of petro-hegemony in the city and depict the industry's interventions in relations of consent, coercion and compliance. I conclude with the driving questions this case study raises and which the rest of the dissertation explores through its development and evaluation of the carbon rebellion.

Situating Richmond⁷⁵

Richmond, like much of the urbanized East Bay in Contra Costa County, was built on the Chochenyo territory of the Indigenous Ohlone tribe who have lived in the region for thousands of years. Although the Chochenyo language went extinct and it is only recently that efforts are being made to revitalize it, many of the Indigenous people native to this region are engaged in the resurgence and reclamation of their culture after centuries of dispossession, erasure, and genocide. According to historian, Gray Brechin, the Ohlone found the land upon which Richmond now sits "so rich in food that they had, over thousands of years, built a gigantic pile of mussel shells at the mouth of a creek there" (cited in Early

⁷⁵ One important account of the city's history that I draw upon throughout this section is developed in the book, *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money, and the Remaking of an American City* (2017). It tells the story of the Richmond Progressive Alliance and Chevron's influence in the city from the perspective of RPA activist and labor historian, Steve Early.

2017, 14). Spanish colonial dispossession forced the Ohlone off their land in a process that would make way for the industrialization and urbanization of the region that followed a century later. Spanish colonists coerced the Ohlone into the mission system in the 18th century. The Bay Area was densely populated for this period with over 15,000 native peoples speaking several distinct languages, and “living in more than 40 communities with well-defined territories” (Byrd and DeArmond 2019). The Spanish invaders built Mission Dolores in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1776 and garrisoned it with troops and missionaries to subdue local Native resistance around the Bay and force them into labor for the mission system (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Nevertheless, California’s Indigenous peoples long resisted Spanish imperialism and organized multiple rebellions against the missions. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes “without this resistance, there would be no descendants of the California Native peoples of the area colonized by the Spanish” (2014, 129).

Despite Spanish attempts at cultural extermination and genocide, Indigenous peoples in California hardly fared any better under the early years of US rule, after the Americans invaded and annexed the state from the Republic of Mexico in 1846.⁷⁶ The United States’ own colonialism promoted dispossession of the land and extermination of the people originally living upon it through the reservation system. This facilitated intensive resource extraction and a burgeoning export economy in the region. The industrialization of extraction and the dispossession of Indigenous people’s land would ultimately produce the conditions in which the city of Richmond emerged in the early 20th century. Through all this, Ohlone

⁷⁶ Indeed, the US settlement and occupation of California during what Dunbar-Ortiz calls “a true reign of terror” bore witness to the murder of over 100,000 California Native people over 25 years (2014, 129). By 1870, many of the remaining families were being rounded up and transported to reservations in Oklahoma and Oregon. Relatively few have since made their way back to the region.

culture and language persisted in the Bay Area and today Indigenous activists have sought to shape the regional climate justice movement's orientation towards decolonization in important ways.

Richmond is a working-class city of roughly 107,000 people and, despite the looming threat of gentrification, remains one of the last metropolitan hubs in the Bay Area where housing is (relatively) affordable. Median household income in the city is \$55,000. The city emerged with the introduction of two important industrialization projects to the region: Standard Oil's refinery which opened in 1905, and the terminus of the Santa Fe Railway line completed around the same time. Its location on the San Francisco Bay soon made Richmond an important hub of industrial activity, particularly manufacturing and import and export services. Richmond's history museum attests to the city's early industrial past and potential. Exhibits include a history of Chevron's refinery in Richmond and Art Nouveau posters from the early 20th century promoting investment in Richmond, advertising the emerging town as the "Pittsburgh of the West."

Capitalizing on its strategic location with an already established railway terminal and industrial ports, manufacturing and chemical companies flocked to the town (Early 2017). World War One saw the refinery's strategic importance grow through its contributions to the war effort. The region continued to develop throughout the early 20th century, as laborers from across the United States were enticed by the prospect of jobs in the rapidly industrializing city. The Great Depression did not hit Richmond quite as hard as it did many other industrial hubs across the US and, in the history Chevron tells about its refinery on its

own website, “the refinery made a significant contribution to the economic well-being of its employees and the City of Richmond by instituting a job-sharing program under which more than 3,000 workers, by sharing their work with others, were able to retain their jobs during the worst years of the Depression” ([Chevron 2019](#)). Ford built a motor vehicle assembly plant in the city in 1930 which also helped maintain employment throughout the Depression, but it had packed up shop by the late 1950s.⁷⁷

The New Deal and Second World War era saw the city’s population explode to 133,000. During the Second World War, the federal government contracted with the industrialist, Henry Kaiser, to build four naval shipyards in Richmond. Thousands of workers, many of whom were African Americans escaping Jim Crow laws and post-Depression poverty of the American South, were recruited into Kaiser’s labor force in Richmond. The workers in Kaiser’s shipyards built 747 warships and cargo vessels in less than four years (Early 2017).⁷⁸ These ships were fueled by the refinery’s oil, and, as exhibits in Richmond’s history museum can attest, much of Social’s propaganda at the time reflected the company’s contribution to the war effort. Meanwhile, the oil industry at large argued, not without some evidence, that it was oil that won the war for the Allies (Chevron 2019). By 1945 the city was home to 55 military-related factories and companies (Early 2017). The iconic symbol of women’s empowerment, Rosie the Riveter, originates from the burgeoning wartime factories in Richmond where women and African Americans were brought into blue collar factory

⁷⁷ According to Early, when Ford moved production to San Jose its white employees were able to transfer with the company, but its African American employees were forced to stay in Richmond because they were not allowed to buy or rent homes near the new factory.

⁷⁸ During this time Kaiser pioneered a group health coverage model and a healthcare plan for all its workers deducted from monthly pay. The model proved so successful that the company developed a whole new area of business in health insurance and became one of the largest Californian health insurance providers, Kaiser Permanente. Kaiser Permanente remains an important employer in the city (Early 2017).

jobs traditionally limited to white men.⁷⁹ Rosie remains an important symbol in Richmond's cultural landscape and has been appropriated to serve both Chevron and environmental justice activists' differing agendas. The refinery's influence over the city intensified in the post-war period and city officials eagerly cut corporate taxes and regulations to attract more industry to employ the city's burgeoning population. Its wartime image, and its ability to maintain employment rates throughout the Depression, won the refinery a great deal of social license. The company's contributions to philanthropy secured this social license. Meanwhile the company's control over city council grew and one Socal employee was even elected mayor of the city four times in a row (Wenkert et al. 1967).

In the years following the war, four more refineries were built around the Northeast Bay Area: the Philipps 66 refinery in Rodeo, Shell's refinery in Martinez, the Andeavor refinery also near Martinez, and Valero's refinery in Benicia. Along with Chevron's refinery in Richmond, together these five refineries can process up to 825,000 barrels of oil per day. More recently, Richmond and Oakland have become sites of other fossil fuel storage and export projects. The Levin train terminal in Richmond has stored and exported petcoke⁸⁰ from the Bay Area refineries for some time. It has recently started receiving rail shipments of coal from Utah and Colorado for export to Asia and up to one million metric tons of coal was shipped through Richmond in 2018 (Cagle 2019). Kinder Morgan also operates a rail depot in the city and trains carrying volatile fracked crude oil from the Bakken Shale formation in

⁷⁹ For a detailed account of the labor struggles that occurred against Chevron's management and other industrial workplaces in the city see Steve Early's *Refinery Town* (2017). These were often led by African Americans who had been excluded from local white-only unions.

⁸⁰ Petcoke is a byproduct of oil refining that can be burned like coal for fuel. It is a particularly carbon intensive and toxic pollutant and burning it is banned in the US. Refineries export it to Asian countries where regulations on burning petcoke are less stringent.

North Dakota through the city to this depot met with considerable community resistance in 2014 and 2015. As the United States has become the one of world's largest producers and exporters of oil and gas, (and fracking for natural gas has undercut the price of US coal), American fossil fuel companies are seeking markets abroad, particularly in Asia. This has opened up the Bay Area, and much of the Pacific Coast, to the development of fossil fuel export facilities.

Prior to the Second World War, Richmond was a majority white working-class community. Demographics shifted, however, as thousands of African Americans from across the United States were recruited to the city by the burgeoning war industry, especially Kaiser. Despite relatively better living and working conditions, discrimination, segregation and racist housing and employment policies in California maintained black Americans' status as an underclass until the Civil Rights era. White hostility towards black neighbors intensified in the years following the war and many whites protested when black families tried to move into all white neighborhoods. This racist hostility was legalized through battles over Richmond's public housing policy which forced African Americans out of public housing. The legacies of these racist policies continue to impact the city's now majority communities of color today. Racist housing policies of the 1950s ensured most of the city's black population lived in closest proximity to heavy industry. Many were confined to a neighborhood known as the "Iron Triangle." The area was named for the three railway lines that roughly demarcate the residential zone in the form of a triangle and which separates residential from industrial zones. During the 1980s, this neighborhood became infamous for some of the highest rates of impoverishment and crime in the city. The incorporated North Richmond area is also directly

downwind of many industrial projects including the refinery and remains home to much of the city's black community.

This pollution and its legacy come at a tremendous cost to public health and livelihoods. Despite winning some regulatory concessions from the Bay Area's five refineries over the last 30 years, "refinery communities are still at a significantly higher risk of dying from heart disease and strokes. The largest disparity is felt by the African-American populations" who are 150% more likely to die from these diseases than the Contra Costa County average ([Casanova, Diemoz, Lifshay, McKetney 2010](#); [Ferrari and Jalbert 2016](#)). In the city itself, the refinery and other industrial projects have been linked to rates of asthma amongst children and long-term residents well above the national average and disproportionately impacting Richmond's communities of color (Lopez et al. 2009). Exposure to toxins associated with oil refineries, like benzene, is also correlated with higher rates of cancer and threats to reproductive health. Environmental racism has produced a public health crisis in the city and saw the emergence of environmental justice community organizers in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dr. Henry Clark's West County Toxics Coalition was one of the first environmental justice groups in the region to hold heavy industry, and especially Chevron, accountable for the consequences of their pollution.⁸¹ This early iteration of the city's

⁸¹ Now an environmental justice veteran, Clark told me about growing up in North Richmond in the shadow of the refinery: "I grew up in the primarily Afro-American community of North Richmond which is adjacent to the Chevron refinery and other industrial operations. And just growing up as a kid and a teenager I was aware of the ways that the refinery and the industrial operations impacted me and my family, and my community, by experiencing these periodic fires and explosions...that would rock our house and community like we were caught in an earthquake – and in seeing the flowers and leaves on the trees burned to a crisp overnight from chemical exposure" (personal communication, July 6th, 2018). His desire to protect his community and hold those responsible to account led him to form the West County Toxics Coalition in the early 1980s.

environmental justice movement laid the foundations for the climate justice campaigns to come, and the RPA's victories on city council.

Systematic exclusion from decent housing, education, and employment saw racial tensions intensify in Richmond during the height of the Civil Rights era. These tensions escalated to their peak in 1968 after a series of riots destroyed much of the downtown area, which never recovered. Following these riots (which were instigated when a white police officer shot and nearly killed an unarmed black teenager), whites fled the city for housing in the suburbs. White flight led to capital flight gutting economic activity in downtown Richmond along MacDonald Avenue. Steve Early recounts how, following the destruction of the retail district in the midst of these riots, Chevron decided to build the Hilltop Shopping Mall on the site of a former Standard Oil storage tank farm (2017). The local shops that did reopen downtown couldn't compete with the low prices and convenience that the chain-stores at the mall offered. They shuttered their windows for good in the early 1970s.

Seeing an opportunity to mobilize black communities against white supremacy and particularly police brutality in Richmond, the Black Panthers had made Richmond an important stronghold in their struggle for black liberation in the 1960s. By the 1980s, as the white exodus continued, African Americans became the city's largest population. By 2002, Richmond "had a black mayor (and city manager)... every department head in the city, and so was the city council majority" (Early 2017, 28). Those hoping this would bring progressive, even emancipatory governance to the city after the optimism of the Civil Rights movement were disappointed. As Early puts it "a corporate backed African American

political machine, aligned with conservative, self-serving, and predominantly white police and firefighter unions, dominated city government” (ibid). The radicalism of the Black Panther Party was marginalized as many of the leaders in Richmond’s black community were co-opted by corporate interests.⁸²

In the last 20 years, demographics have radically shifted again. Today, roughly 80% of Richmond’s residents are people of color and 20% are first generation immigrants. Almost 40% of Richmond’s residents are Latinx, 26.5% are black or African American, and 14% are Asian and Pacific Islanders – represented in large part by the Laotian community ([City Facts 2019](#)). These shifting demographics have also seen a shift in political power within the city (Schafran and Feldstein 2013). The resurgence of black political progressivism alongside a multiracial alliance for environmental and climate justice, involving strong leadership from the city’s Laotian community, has produced a significant challenge to Richmond’s corporate friendly African American establishment (ibid; Shah 2011).

Demographics alone, however, do not explain the significant shifts in Richmond’s political landscape. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, Richmond was subjected to systematic disinvestment, industrial decline, capital flight, austerity, and administrative corruption. During this period “cronyism, corruption, and bureaucratic incompetence became deeply entrenched and much intertwined” (Early 2017, 28-29). Current city mayor, Tom Butt, says

⁸² It is important that we refuse essentialist or reductive narratives when exploring the demographic shifts of Richmond as a whole here. Richmond’s communities of color are not a united or homogenized entity, and they certainly do not act or speak with one voice. Indeed, deep ideological and experiential schisms exist, particularly between the wealthier, business-oriented residents and those living on the frontlines of poverty and environmental racism.

that at this time “the city was pretty much run by the business interests Chevron cultivated” (cited in Early 2017, 29). The consequences of corporate friendly tax and regulatory environment, the neoliberal rollback of government services across the country, and the legacy of toxic pollution led to widespread poverty, decaying social fabric, soaring rates of crime, and drug and gang related violence. The rate of AIDS transmission in Richmond was the highest in the Bay Area and decimated the community. Homicides took an annual death toll of 50 per year in the 1980s and peaked at 62 in 1991 (Early 2017, 38). The response of successive city councils was not to invest in the city’s residents and public services but rather to intensify policing of the very communities they were underserving. This led to police disproportionately targeting the city’s black and brown community and growing distrust between communities of color and the city’s police force. Allegations of police corruption and coverups throughout this time did little to instill much faith in the rule of law.

Administrative corruption and incompetence at city government came to a head in 2003 when then city manager, Isiah Turner “suddenly retired for “health reasons,” followed out the door by his financial director” (Early 2017, 39). Their departure revealed nearly two decades of financial mismanagement that took Richmond to the brink of bankruptcy when the city discovered that it had racked up a \$35million budget deficit. The immediate response to the city’s dire financial situation was austerity. What few government programs remained open were slashed and city employees were laid off. As Early writes “The city’s full-blown financial meltdown led to two hundred layoffs and budget cuts, which closed libraries, parks, some fire stations, and senior services” (ibid). While certainly a time of near despair, it was this moment of wretchedness that gave the city’s progressives and radicals the political

opening they required. Responding to these conditions, they would dramatically alter Richmond's political landscape, shift the dominant narratives that had maintained consent to Chevron and corporate interests for decades, and inspire a generation of activists to take power, democratize it, and redistribute it across the city.

The city's outrage, despair, hopes and a desire for radical political change would coalesce in the emergence of a multi-racial and ideologically diverse grassroots organization called the Richmond Progressive Alliance. Formed in 2003, the RPA "is simultaneously an electoral formation, a membership organization, a coalition of community groups, and a key coordinator of grassroots education and citizen mobilization" (Early 2017, 3). In many ways, its political form mirrors that of traditionally European and South American leftist hybrid of social-movement and political party. Its emergence as a political entity and strategy in Richmond is largely credited to the Argentinean political exile, and social and environmental justice activist, Juan Reardon. Reardon was largely responsible for bringing together some of the city's most prominent community organizers and activists, including Henry Clark, Andrés Soto, and Gayle McLaughlin, to found the RPA and develop its political program. With the support of local community organizations, the RPA would run progressive candidates to break up the Chevron-backed establishment on city council. It would also organize the community and building social movement pressure year-round to hold the council accountable to city residents' most pressing concerns. Moreover, in running a progressive slate of candidates, the Alliance would seek to minimize the chances of splitting the leftwing and progressive vote, thus thwarting conservative establishment councilors' attempts to divide and conquer their opponents.

As Early writes “RPA candidates have distinguished themselves by their refusal to accept business donations, while welcoming the support of progressive unions...RPA work with labor and community allies has created strong synergy between city hall leadership and grassroots organizations” (ibid). The movement-party form combines issue-based community organizing, education, and empowerment with mass mobilization around electoral politics. Though new to Richmond (perhaps with the exception of the Black Panther Party), and in recent decades something of a rarity in the United States, the movement-party formation has its roots in 20th communist and socialist politics, and in early 21st century Indigenous-leftist strategy in South America. The innovation of this model in Richmond has been its ability to hold together a multi-racial and ideologically diverse alliance of residents who nonetheless share a fundamental set of values across very different identities, strategic orientations, and distributions of wealth, power, and privilege. From its position as a counter hegemonic challenger to Chevron’s corporate hegemony, this alliance has helped shape much of the city’s changing political landscape. Gayle McLaughlin was elected mayor in 2006 and RPA slates of candidates went to form a city council majority in 2014 and a supermajority in 2016. The organization’s dual commitment to grassroots organizing and infiltrating city council with a progressive political agenda has made the RPA a significant political force in the city.

Despite, its significance, however, we should also recognize that the political situation that the RPA and Richmond’s grassroots climate and environmental justice organization have produced in the last decade are deeply rooted in the city’s history of social justice activism, as well as in the progressive and radical politics of the Bay Area more broadly. There is a

narrative amongst some of the city's activists which suggests that the progressive political trajectory Richmond seems set upon was instigated endogenously as a result of progressive activists migrating to the city in search of affordable housing in the Bay Area.⁸³ While it is certainly true that recent migration to the city has altered its political landscape, this narrative may also do a disservice to the decades of community organizing that cultivated the soil and sowed the seeds which ultimately made more recent political interventions possible.

Furthermore, the RPA, often quite justifiably, tends to occupy the forefront of narratives recounting the political shifts that have occurred in Richmond. However, its primary role in countering Chevron's hegemonic status has been to open up political opportunities and avenues of action through which other local climate and environmental justice campaigners are then themselves able to intervene in the relations of power upon which Chevron has depended. With links to the RPA's leadership, organizations like the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), CBE, Sunflower Alliance, WCTC, and initiatives like the Climate Justice Alliance's (CJA) Our Power campaign, have formed the backbone of

⁸³ This narrative was referenced by several prominent RPA activists in interviews and emerges in Steve Early's history and Gayle McLaughlin's memoir recounting the rise of the RPA. While certainly providing a partial explanation, this narrative is problematic on two fronts: firstly, (and neither McLaughlin nor Early necessarily do this), it threatens to erase decades of local community organizing which laid the groundwork for the interventions of activists to come. Secondly, with notable exceptions, many of these progressive newcomers in the last couple of decades have been white. Indeed, we cannot ignore the fact that forcing Chevron's influence out of city council has also entailed forcing conservative and corporate-friendly African American establishment councilors out of office (Schafran and Feldstein 2013). Schafran and Feldstein discuss the shifting racial politics of Richmond and its intersections with environmental justice. They argue that in the past decade the conservative black political establishment in Richmond was challenged by a multi-racial coalition reflecting the shifting demographics of the city and emergence of a younger generation of black political progressives and leftists. Bindi Shah, meanwhile, has demonstrated the particularly high political involvement of second-generation Laotian women in environmental justice activism. These women have played a significant role organizing their community and influencing the politics of environmental justice in the city. See *Laotian Daughters: Working toward Community, Belonging, and Environmental Justice* (2011). Together, these authors' arguments are helpful because they lead us away from a potentially problematic narrative positioning white progressives as "saviors" of the city, and instead illustrate political shifts that are both endogenous and exogenous. Moreover, it reminds us that the vast majority of migration to the city which help account for Richmond's current political trajectory has not been comprised of white Americans but of migrants from Laos, Mexico, and South America.

community organizing for a just transition and campaigning against fossil fuel infrastructure expansion.

As Schafran and Feldstein write, “political actors in the city are often part of larger county and regional organizations” (2013, 158). Similarly, Richmond’s most prominent environmental justice organizations and activists are not necessarily confined to the city but are often distributed across the Bay Area and the state. Indeed, many of these organizations run campaigns in regional and state-wide coalitions that spill out of the city’s borders. Moreover, just as the influence of climate justice organizations in the city is not confined to Richmond, neither is the fossil fuel industry in California. With fossil fuel export terminals, railway terminals, large storage facilities, deep water wharfs, and five refineries, Richmond and the Bay Area form a highly strategic node within the Californian, US, and continental oil assemblage.

President Obama’s reversal of the US crude export ban in 2015, President Trump’s administrative support for fossil fuel development and withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the fracking boom and associated price depression in coal, all saw the US become the largest producer of fossil fuels in the world in 2017 (it remains in the top three) as well as one of the largest net exporters of coal and value-added refined petroleum products (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). This increase in supply in the United States has incentivized industry efforts to get coal and oil products exported to Asian markets from the Pacific Coast. Meanwhile, despite its environmentalist image, and former Governor Brown’s aspirations towards climate leadership, California was the third highest oil producing state in the country

for decades, only falling to sixth highest in 2018 with over 169 million barrels produced in that year (Nikolewski 2018; Garside 2019). Governor Brown permitted over 21,000 new oil wells in California during his administration's tenure, the majority of which were sited in low income migrant communities and communities of color (Last Chance Alliance 2018). Oil production has been a dominant force in California's economy, culture and politics for almost as long as the state has been a member of the Union.

The legacy of the oil industry's dominance throughout California's history continues to this day. This was most recently evinced in 2017 with the passage of Governor Brown's landmark climate legislation, AB 398. The bill extended and expanded the state's cap and trade program while gutting local regulatory agencies' mandate to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. Climate justice activists condemned the legislation as a wish list for the oil industry. Refining and shipping fossil fuel products to and from markets around the world, the Bay Area is embedded in a statewide, national and global fossil fuel commodity chain. Recognizing the limitations of municipal activism against an opponent that operates globally, climate justice interventions in petro-hegemony in the Bay Area take place in Richmond but have also expanded to the Bay Area's other refineries and export facilities. Through regional and statewide coalitions, climate justice activists in the Bay Area are helping lead the fight for a just transition and against the fossil industry in Richmond and across California.

Narrativized timeline 2005 – 2019

In the following section I have delineated a period of roughly 15 years during which time Chevron and the fossil fuel industry saw their influence decline in Richmond. This timeline is noticeably longer than the one circumscribed in the previous case study, and also develops at a relatively slower pace. This period also depicts the rise of the RPA and its consolidation of power in the city. It also illustrates the RPA's recent defeats and challenges it has confronted as the organization has evolved. Alongside Chevron, city councilors, and the RPA, grassroots climate justice activists and their respective organizations are also key characters throughout this story. While much of their community organizing work has occurred quietly and unfolds in the background, ignoring its influence would be a mistake. As such, I highlight moments at which the city's vibrant culture of community organizing has erupted in mobilizations of hundreds of activists and residents to bring Chevron and the council to justice.

Inevitably, the story I narrate below overlooks details others might deem crucial, briskly outlines moments many in these campaigns believe might deserve more attention, and perhaps spends far too many words on events some may consider irrelevant. I do this in part because many others have told more detailed and comprehensive versions of the story before me (see for example Steve Early's *Refinery Town* (2017) and Gayle McLaughlin's *Winning Richmond* (2018)) and because I am recounting these events with a specific agenda. My agenda here is to draw reader's attention to what I argue are some of the most significant moments that illustrate Chevron's declining power in the city. Throughout the rest of the dissertation I refer back to these moments and demonstrate the mechanics by which the fossil

fuel industry's opponents were able to intervene in challenge the relations of power upon which Chevron has depended.

I start this story in late 2004 with the election of Gayle McLaughlin to city council.

McLaughlin and Andrés Soto were the first city activists to run on the RPA's slate. Juan Reardon managed McLaughlin's campaign following the formation of the RPA in 2003. Soto, who is also a long-term community organizer with CBE and helped found the RPA, told me he had got involved after he and his son had been beaten and verbally abused by Richmond police officers. Alongside environmental justice activism, Soto has organized around ending police corruption and violence and advocating for more stringent gun control laws. He had been viciously attacked in mailers and ads distributed by the Richmond Police Officer's Association and narrowly lost his election bid. McLaughlin, meanwhile, seemed to fly under the radar of the city establishment. Running on a platform of refusing corporate financing and ending Chevron's control over city politics, McLaughlin found that her message resonated with residents who were deeply frustrated with incompetence, corruption, and austerity politics promoted on the city council. Seeing the election as an opportunity to organize the community, McLaughlin hosted town halls and community gatherings where she crowdsourced policies directly from the city's residents. This approach further ingratiated her with the community, and she was able to position herself and the RPA as genuinely fighting for community empowerment and standing up for residents' concerns.

McLaughlin won her seat in November 2004. With her help, the city council moved swiftly to make some important administrative changes. Namely, they hired a new city manager and,

shortly afterwards, a new police chief. These two hires drastically altered the city's administrative culture. Though hardly radicals, both could be considered liberal reformers who made important progressive changes to the way the city was run and policed. Police Chief Chris Magnus institutionalized an ethic of community service and respect amongst his officers and sought to root out corruption in their ranks. Bill Lindsey, the new city manager, inherited the financial meltdown and deficits the former city administrators had left behind. Rather than pursuing austerity policies, however, he worked with the council to keep services open while bringing the city budget back under control. Working with RPA councilors and environmental justice activists, he would go on to play a crucial role in updating the city's General Plan. The Plan would guide all new land use policy with greater attention to public health, climate, energy, and environmental justice.

Throughout 2005, however, McLaughlin found herself ignored and sidelined by the majority of establishment, corporate-friendly councilmembers sitting alongside her. Arguing that she could more effectively set the tone for the city's political agenda in the position of city mayor, Reardon and early members of the RPA persuaded McLaughlin to run against the incumbent mayor, Irma Anderson, at the next election. Drawing upon the lessons of her 2004 bid, and continuing her community organizing approach to elections, McLaughlin defeated Anderson in 2006. Meanwhile, with McLaughlin's support climate justice organizers and activists rallied around a ballot measure, Measure T, that would have forced Chevron and other local heavy industries to increase their contribution to the tax city's base to help manage the city's financial crisis. The bill was poorly written, however, and included language that would also have impacted smaller local businesses more vulnerable to

increasing tax rates. The ballot measure was defeated in the same election that saw McLaughlin elected mayor, but the support both received indicated residents' growing frustration with Chevron and constituted an opening salvo in a new phase of the city's confrontation with the company. In late 2006 and early 2007 Chevron began its application to the city for permits to "modernize" its refinery. Its modernization plan constituted building a new hydrogen plant and upgrading its *hydocracking* equipment that would allow the refinery to process heavier crude oil with higher contents of sulfur and other impurities.

Throughout the next two years the scale and consequences of Chevron's refinery upgrade would reveal themselves as organizations like CBE, APEN, the Bay Area chapter of the Sierra Club, and many others, challenged the project throughout its Environmental Impact Review (EIR) process and public meetings. Together with the RPA, these organizations helped organize and mobilize the community against the refinery expansion, arguing it would intensify the community's exposure to toxic air pollution, vastly increase the refinery's greenhouse gas emissions, and that the EIR itself was misleading and inadequate. Packing city council meetings and public hearings, Richmond's residents voiced their overwhelming disapproval of the project. This period saw organizers with APEN successfully mobilize a particularly large number of Richmond's Laotian community against the project (Shah 2011). Investigations supported by CBE's senior scientist, Greg Karras, revealed that the refinery plans would increase greenhouse gas emissions by one million tons a year and that particulate matter associated with the heavier sour crude oil that the upgrades would allow the refinery to process had higher toxicity levels (Egelko 2014; Vignet 2013). Chevron, on the other hand, argued that the project would make the refinery safer, more efficient, and

would contribute over 1000 jobs to the local economy. The council, most of whom still received funding from Chevron, were swayed by the argument and, ignoring large public opposition, voted five to four in favor of refinery permits in 2008.

Having successfully mobilized much of the community against the project, organizers with CBE and other local environmental justice groups believed they had built enough political capital locally to launch and sustain a lawsuit to appeal the refinery permits. Arguing that Chevron had failed to produce an adequate EIR which honestly and thoroughly identified the consequences of the project (and that the city had therefore approved permits on the basis of a fundamentally flawed EIR), they filed an appeal in the county high court in September 2008 ([Earthjustice 2008](#)). Meanwhile, capitalizing on the rising animosity towards Chevron and its refinery “expansion” that had intensified in the months of public comment before the council approved permits, local organizers and the RPA decided to relaunch the Measure T ballot for November’s 2008 election. This time the measure avoided its previous iteration’s clumsy language and would have forced Chevron to increase its land use tax payments to the city. The city voted in favor of the measure as well as electing another member of the RPA, Jeff Ritterman, to city council. With two out seven councilmembers now representing the RPA, one of whom was the city mayor,⁸⁴ and a successful ballot measure victory under their belt, it seemed as though the city’s anti-Chevron progressives were gaining momentum (McLaughlin 2018). Chevron, however, refused to accept the ballot results and appealed the Measure T in court. A regional court found the measure to be illegal and overturned it as it

⁸⁴ In 2008 the total number of council seats was reduced from nine to seven.

did not align with California's statewide tax codes. Richmond's organizers appealed the decision to a higher court (Early 2017).

In the summer of 2009, Richmond's climate justice activists won their biggest victory yet against Chevron. Contra Costa Superior Court judge, Barbara Zuniga, found that the refinery's EIR was indeed inadequate and gave the company 60 days to stop work on the modernization project. In retaliation, Chevron refused to pay up the \$61 million in community benefits it had promised the city in return for the refinery upgrade, and it cut short contracts with construction workers it had employed to carry out the plans ([Baker 2009](#)). It also appealed the court's decision to California First District Court of Appeals. However, in April 2010, the court of appeals upheld the lower court's ruling ([Tam 2010](#)). The court agreed that "Chevron's environmental impact report for the expansion was unlawful because it failed to adequately analyze the oil company's likely plan to refine heavier, dirtier crude oil in Richmond" ([Gammon 2010](#)). Temporarily defeated and recognizing that the city council's new composition had become decidedly less favorable to its interests, Chevron was forced to abandon its modernization plans.

Simultaneously, and opening up another front of struggle, environmental justice activists had also appealed the court's overturning of Measure T and Chevron was fighting this battle in the courts at the same time. Tensions between Chevron, the city council, and the city organizers and activists intensified over the following months. The lawsuits, accompanied by months of tireless community organizing, were starting to erode the image of Chevron as a benevolent neighbor that the company had worked so hard to cultivate. As hostilities

escalated, and the city became increasingly polarized, activists mounted pressure on the council to force Chevron to pay a fairer share of taxes to the city. The political environment activists had created brought the council and Chevron officials to the negotiating table. However, the deal that was ultimately struck was a compromise many of the city's organizer's felt was far too favorable to Chevron. In exchange for dropping the city dropping the Measure T appeal and the city council agreeing to no new tax increases on Chevron for the next fifteen years, the company would agree pay the city \$114 million over those fifteen years. In addition, much of the revenue these additional payments would raise would be ringfenced for environmental, public health, and social mobility programs. While certainly not the kind of restitution most activists had been demanding, it was a compromise that ameliorated tensions, allowing organizers to regroup and take satisfaction in the fact that, for the first time in the city's history, citizens had won significant concessions from Chevron.

Riding high on anti-Chevron sentiment and what they framed as a victory for the power of local people against Chevron's greed, the RPA's Jovanka Beckles was elected to city council in late 2010. While the RPA's leadership, founders, and much of its base were a racially diverse group, the organization's public representatives had been overwhelmingly white. This was particularly problematic in a city where 80% of residents are people of color and establishment corporate backed councilmembers against which the RPA was pitted were almost all African Americans. Beckles became the RPA's first non-white elected representative and helped diversify the RPA's base of support. Today, all the of RPA's representatives on council are people of color and, as Mike Parker explained to me, its voter base is increasingly constituted by working class people of color (personal communication,

July 11th, 2018). Meanwhile, despite a “Chevron-funded smear campaign,” a concerted effort by her establishment opponents, and hit pieces written by her many enemies in the police and firefighter’s unions, McLaughlin was returned to the position of city mayor with 40% of the vote in a three-way race (Early 2017). With Beckles’ election, three of the seven city councilmembers represented the RPA. A fourth, Tom Butt, was an outspoken critic of Chevron but positioned himself as more moderate than the RPA slate and continues to accept corporate donations. This meant that in just five years (between 2005 and 2010), Chevron’s influence on council had plummeted and a majority of councilmembers were now aligned against the company’s interests.

The shift in the balance of power on council reflected broader trends in Richmond’s political culture and, over the next two years, the council and community organizers would work closely together. The local movement consolidated the influence it had gained with many movement members being appointed to city commissions and boards. Others were invited to participate in the development of the city’s new General Plan alongside the city manager. The General Plan was published in 2012 and was one of the first in the country to include a section on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions as they relate to city zoning and land use policy. It also included a “health in all policies” component which directed the city council to consider “health equity,” a bureaucratic codeword for environmental justice, in all its decision-making. Meanwhile, with the promise of the first installments of Chevron’s new payments, the council was able to begin supporting and incentivizing a whole range of community led, social justice initiatives. These included using eminent domain to prevent

banks foreclosing homes, keeping public spaces open, promoting food sovereignty, and investing in public transportation.

Another initiative that emerged at this time was the RPA's promotion of Measure N, which became known as the soda tax, and would have placed a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. Along with diseases related to industrial pollution, obesity related illnesses, including type two diabetes, take a significant toll on Richmond's public health. Measure N would have raised money for local hospitals to more effectively address what was becoming a public health crisis, while disincentivizing the consumption of one its leading causes: sugar-intensive drinks. As RPA strategist, Mike Parker told me, "we thought it was a no brainer." As he would later acknowledge, however, in the RPA's promotion of Measure N, they "made some big errors" (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). From these errors, the RPA's opponents were able to frame the tax as an overreach of the nanny-state and a racist and elitist attack on the city's low-income communities of color. As perennial RPA opponent and Chevron advocate, councilman Nat Bates, told the *New York Times*, the RPA were "using the black community to pass a measure for us without consulting us... We're tired of this Progressive Alliance coming in and telling us what to do. I've renamed them 'the Plantation Alliance'" (cited in Early 2017, 56). The tax became the 2012 election's "wedge issue" and, just as the RPA was in a position to route Chevron's influence from council, it had made an unforced error that would prove profoundly consequential.

On August 2012, Chevron's refinery erupted in fire and smoke. The explosion, as it was later discovered, was caused by a leak resulting from eroded pipes that had not been replaced

since the refinery was built over 100 years ago. The refinery was processing more sulfurous, heavy crude oil without the equipment despite not being granted permits to upgrade its pipes. Heavier sour crude is a more corrosive substance than the lighter sweet crude the refinery pipes had been designed to process. 19 refineries workers were almost killed in the explosion and toxic smoke blew downwind over the city, sending up to 15,000 people to hospital in need of medical attention. The city issued a “shelter in place” order and suggested residents tape shut their doors and windows (Early 2017). Two other major fires have occurred at the refinery in the last 20 years, one in 1999 and one in 2007, but 2012’s was by far the largest and most severe. As well as its adverse impacts on public health, Early reports the fire “caused a \$1.86 billion drop in the city’s assessed property values, reducing tax revenues from Chevron itself, other business, and homeowners.” The health and economic damages combined left Richmond reeling and reignited conflict between Chevron workers and the company bosses.

Chevron’s public relations response kicked into overdrive. As the city entered the 2012 election season, the company hired Sam Singer, a public relations damage control expert, to manage Chevron’s local image following the explosion. Apparently believing the best defense is an aggressive offense, Chevron and its allies went on the attack against the RPA. Measure N proved a gift they could not have anticipated. Between them Big Soda and Big Oil spent a combined \$3.7 million on the election. The soda companies, along with the police and fire unions, used their considerable resources to target and defame RPA candidates as racist elitists. Meanwhile, Chevron bolstered their own image as the city’s benevolent provider with philanthropic donations and thousands of glossy mailers, television ads, and

buying up almost all the city's billboards. The offensive worked. Despite the company being responsible for one of the worst environmental disasters the city has ever experienced, Chevron-backed candidates regained seats on the council while RPA candidates suffered heavy defeats. At a moment when anti-Chevron sentiment should have been at an all-time high, and those opposing Chevron's influence on city council could have won a landslide victory following the refinery fire, the movement's representation on city council was reduced to just two out of seven councilmembers. The overreach and mistakes of Measure N and its proponents had cost the RPA a crucial opportunity, with consequences that would play out over the next five years.

With momentum now on their side, throughout 2013, Chevron and its allies maintained their public relations blitz and sought to prime the community to accept updated and scaled down plans for the refinery's modernization before submitting renewed applications for permits to the council in 2014. With the help of Sam Singer's well-crafted and well-resourced propaganda campaign called Richmond Proud, Chevron argued its modernization plans would make the refinery "newer, safer, cleaner" ([Singer Associates 2017](#)).⁸⁵ Indeed they were even able to use the fire as a reason why the refinery needed to be upgraded. This was a compelling case even for those opposed to the refinery expansion – it was abundantly clear that the refinery's pipes needed replacing and Chevron's officials claimed the modernization plan would allow the company to upgrade some of the oldest pipes. Meanwhile, Richmond's climate justice organizations and the RPA were regrouping and rebuilding together.

⁸⁵ Singer Associates, Sam Singer's PR firm, continues to host several of their Richmond Proud ads and videos on their website under their "case studies" section. See Singer Associates (2017).

After much deliberation and good deal of pressure from organizations like CBE, the city council eventually agreed to sue Chevron for damages related to the fire in 2013 in a five-to-two vote ([Kanhema 2013](#)). In court Chevron pled no contest and agreed to pay the city \$2 million in damages ([CBS local 2013](#)). A Chemicals Safety Board report investigating the fire later found that Chevron had been processing heavier sour crude oil like tar sands which had rapidly corroded the pipes. Chevron was thus responsible for negligence in the upkeep and maintenance of pipes it knew were unfit for purpose ([NRDC 2014](#); [Chemical Safety Board 2015](#)).⁸⁶ The city filed another lawsuit claiming greater restitution in 2015. Lawsuits following the fire forced Chevron back to the negotiating table. This was the first time the city council sued Chevron and, despite the RPA's 2012 defeat, indicated a shifting political culture concerning Richmond's largest employer.

Learning from their electoral setbacks, 2013 saw the RPA and the local movement grow in sophistication and numbers. On August 6th, on the one-year anniversary of the refinery fire, climate justice activists organized the largest protests the city had even seen outside Chevron's gates. 2500 residents and Bay Area locals were in attendance (Early 2017). Elevating 350.org's "Summer Heat" campaign, hundreds of protesters blockaded the refinery gates and 210 were arrested engaging in civil disobedience. Mayor McLaughlin, Andrés Soto, and Henry Clark, and Bill McKibben were amongst the event's keynote speakers and all of them condemned Chevron's corruption, pollution of frontline communities, and the moral obscenity of expanding the refinery during a time of climate crisis. By 2013 it had

⁸⁶ Based on this evidence and the costs of the fire on the city far exceeding \$2 million Richmond had won from Chevron previously, a newly installed progressive city council launched another lawsuit against Chevron in 2015 in a unanimous vote. Again the company settled, this time agreeing to an additional \$5 million transfer of funds to the city ([Gartrell 2018](#)).

become quite clear that the company intended to submit a new application for its modernization project following its earlier defeat in the courts ([Rogers 2013](#); [Connolly 2011](#)). The protest at Chevron's gates galvanized the city's climate justice movement, infusing grassroots activists with renewed vigor, and instigated a year and half long campaign to take back city council, advance a just transition, and halt the refinery expansion. The protest also saw new climate justice grassroots organizations emerge. For example, the Bay Area-wide Sunflower Alliance was conceived at the refinery protest and has become an important grassroots organization targeting the fossil fuel industry in the Bay Area.

Chevron officially resubmitted its application for permits for an, apparently, scaled down version of its \$1 billion refinery modernization project in the spring of 2014 ([Samuel 2014](#)). Despite Chevron's electoral gains in 2012, the city council could not be guaranteed on to provide the votes the company needed. Moreover, with mounting pressure from the city's increasingly well-organized climate justice organizations, the company faced an uphill battle. With the Climate Justice Alliance choosing Richmond for one of its Our Power campaign pilot projects in 2013, Richmond's climate justice activists received (relatively) more national attention, organizational support and resources. Bringing the idea of a "just transition" to the forefront of movement activity, APEN and CBE became the anchor organizations of the Our Power campaign in Richmond and led the grassroots mobilization against Chevron through 2013 and 2014.

Moreover, evidence coming to light in 2014 that Kinder Morgan (the same Kinder Morgan building the pipeline in British Columbia) had been illegally transporting highly volatile

fracked crude from the North Dakota Bakken shale region into the city by railway further enraged city residents. The dangers involved in shipping crude-by-rail were well communicated and turned many against not just Chevron but the oil industry more generally ([Lim 2014](#)). A secondary climate justice campaign to ban so-called “bomb trains” from entering the city limits gained a great deal of traction. In September 2014, 100 residents rallied with CBE, APEN, and Gayle McLaughlin outside Kinder Morgan’s gates, with several risking arrest, to draw attention to the illegitimacy of the permits the company had received and to condemn the oil industry’s outsized influence over the regulatory system.

As anti-fossil fuel sentiment was again on the rise by mid 2014, CBE filed two suits in spring and early summer against Chevron, Kinder Morgan, and Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). The first accused the regulatory agency, BAAQMD, of having approved preliminary permits for Chevron to start work on the refinery modernization without the company having publicly submitted a draft EIR. The second accused the agency of quietly providing Kinder Morgan with permits to switch the product it was transporting into the city from ethanol to crude oil without announcing their application to the public or requiring a period of public comment ([Lin 2014](#); [Bay Area News Group 2014](#); [Rogers 2014a](#)). In the former case, Chevron and BAAQMD settled a deal in which the company agreed to submit to a public EIR before continuing with any more construction. The court dismissed the latter case on the grounds that the complaint had been submitted too late. The settlement under the former ruling ensured Richmond’s residents could participate in public oversight of the modernization permit applications. In the meantime, city organizers were pressuring the council to subject Chevron to numerous conditions in return for any permits

they might issue. (Surprisingly few activists lobbied for the refinery modernization to be rejected outright and fewer still have argued the refinery must be closed down). Throughout her tenure as mayor, McLaughlin had appointed many movement allies and RPA members to local boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was tasked with initial oversight of the refinery permitting procedure and, with RPA members at the helm, incorporated many climate justice activists' suggestions into the conditions Chevron would be required to meet.

The planning commission voted on the conditions it would impose at a contentious meeting on July 9th, 2014. Included in its recommendations were provisions demanding the project contributed to an overall reduction in the refinery's greenhouse emissions achieved through onsite mitigation rather than the original proposal of no *net* increase on the refinery's 2010 emissions baseline achieved through offsite carbon offsets. In addition, the Commission recommended that any Community Benefits Agreement between Chevron and the council should include financing for a local hospital that was on the brink of closure and that had been heavily impacted by cases of respiratory and pollution-related diseases.

Chevron project managers balked at the stringent conditions that would have been imposed in the Planning Commission's recommendations to city council. They lobbied, negotiated with, and cajoled the five non-RPA councilmembers to water down the conditions before approval. Vice Mayor Beckles and Mayor McLaughlin were sidelined in these negotiations. McLaughlin believed the decision to approve the project had been agreed to in closed-door negotiations before the recommendations had been voted on by council, possibly in violation

of the Brown Act (personal communication, July 18th, 2018).⁸⁷ On July 30th, the city council voted five-to-zero in favor of the project. McLaughlin and Beckles abstained from the vote, arguing that debate had been cut short. They believed many of the conditions ultimately agreed to significantly improved the project's impact on emissions and community welfare, but they also disapproved of the curtailment of debate on the issue and claimed that many of the more stringent conditions that the council had voted against were necessary amendments. Over 600 proponents and opponents of the project packed the council room for several hours during the debate and vote.

Ultimately, the council voted against the commission's most stringent conditions including an additional \$27 million for funding the hospital, commitments to contributing \$8 million every year until 2050 for community investments in green energy, demands that emissions be reduced onsite, a proposal to mitigate emissions of associated oil tanker tug boats, place covers on the refinery's storage tanks, and a radical overhaul the refinery's piping. However, in order to get Tom Butt and the two other decisive councilmembers, Jim Rogers and Jael Myrick, on board, Chevron had to agree to some important concessions. These included a \$90 million community benefits agreement up from the \$60 million Chevron had proposed (with \$35 million ringfenced for a scholarship program and several million more contributing to green jobs training programs), a commitment to upgrade a larger number of the refinery's oldest pipes, an independent refinery inspection program, and that the company would provide Richmond with land to build one of the largest urban solar installations in the state. Conditions also included limits on the amount of high sulfur crude the refinery can process

⁸⁷ The Brown Act is a California law intended to ensure that any ““congregation by a majority of a legislative body” is open to the public ([EAC 2019](#)).

and a cap on its greenhouse gas emissions. While reductions in some toxins associated with the project were addressed in the negotiations, others, like increasing levels of arsenic and hydrogen sulfide, were not.

Reflecting on the result, Mike Parker, who was the RPA's candidate for mayor at the time, echoed many environmental justice activists and the Planning Commission's recommendations, arguing that "While this project is far better for the residents of Richmond than the original project because of community pressure, the council lost an important opportunity to actually win a reduction of emissions and a safer refinery" (Rogers 2014b). Both opponents and detractors of the project claimed a partial victory and acknowledged partial defeat (ibid).

The vote cleared the major obstacles to Chevron's refinery upgrade, however it still had to convince the court to lift the injunction against further construction imposed by the judge's ruling in the 2008 and 2010 appeals against the project's permits. In fall of 2014, McLaughlin termed out as mayor and Mike Parker was the RPA's choice to replace her. Activists successfully framed the election as a referendum on Chevron's role in the city. However, after Tom Butt entered the race at the last minute and threatened to split the anti-Chevron vote, Parker dropped out of the race. (The RPA voted internally for Parker to stand down and keep the election's focus on Chevron). Despite disagreeing on numerous issues and Butt's refusal to reject corporate donations, the RPA ultimately rallied behind him against "Chevron's candidate," councilman Nat Bates.

The election drew national attention with Chevron alone spending over \$3 million on the city council race. Teaming up with their usual allies, the Richmond Police Officer's Associate, Chevron and the city's political establishment unleashed vicious attack ads and mailers against the RPA's candidates. Chevron had been in campaign mode since the 2012 refinery fire and had rolled out a two-year propaganda effort before 2014's election. During 2014's election season, however, Chevron ramped its efforts into overdrive. According to activist accounts, Chevron bought up every billboard in the city, intensified its philanthropic giving (even promoting the concessions it had been forced to make in the Community Benefits Agreement as indications of its generosity to the city), mobilized the building trade unions, and bombarded the city with television ads and mailers.

The RPA were massively outgunned and outspent. With considerable support from the city's climate justice organizers, they capitalized on the momentum they had mobilized during their confrontations with Chevron over the past four years. The RPA carried out an impressive ground game, motivating a large number of volunteers, knocking on thousands of doors, hosting community town halls, and broadcasting a powerful narrative that resonated across the city. Despite the enormous resources it poured into their campaigns, all of the candidates Chevron backed lost their races. Meanwhile the RPA won three seats and Butt was elected mayor. A clear anti-Chevron majority had been elected to Richmond's city council. In their post-election analysis, most activists argued that Chevron's media blitz had backfired spectacularly. The millions it had spent on glossy mailers, billboards and attack ads, and the size of its presence in the campaign, only proved the point Richmond's community organizers were making to the electorate: that corporate money had corrupted democratic

decision-making and needed to be ousted from office. In addition, activists noted the sheer motivation and size of their base of volunteers that they were able to mobilize in support of the RPA as a crucial counterweight to Chevron's money and the Police Association's slanderous allegations.

Throughout 2015 and 2016, the RPA worked with local organizers to legislate and implement a new progressive agenda in the city. The RPA's presence on council created political opportunities for city organizers to intensifying efforts towards building their own radical solutions to the many ills that had plagued the city for so long. The city council agreed, unanimously, to sue Chevron again for further damages and lost taxes due to the refinery fire and won a \$5 million settlement in 2015. Around the same time, however, the Contra Costa County Superior Court lifted the injunction on upgrade projects at Chevron's refinery and the last obstacle in between Chevron and its modernization program was removed. Construction started in 2016 and finished in 2018. With the struggle having been fought to its local limits in the city council, climate justice activists set their sights on further battles against Chevron at the regional level and specifically through the regional air quality regulator, BAAQMD. Forming a Bay Area-wide coalition, Richmond's climate justice activists joined activists from San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Rodeo, Martinez and elsewhere to try to impose further greenhouse gas and air contaminant restrictions on the Bay Area's five refineries. Specifically, they argued that BAAQMD should have to include greenhouse gases in its review of new permits and impose emissions caps in line with climate science. This was an ambitious, multi-year campaign that came very close to severely limiting Chevron's operations in Richmond.

Chevron retreated from city elections and slowly worked to repair its local image in the city. In 2016, the RPA won a supermajority on council, gaining five of the seven council seats. The priority issue for the community that year was affordable housing. As Richmond's residents and organizers have cleaned up their city and its image as a haven for crime, violence and pollution has dissipated, a new threat looms: gentrification. Spillover from the Bay Area tech boom which has seen housing prices across the Bay Area skyrocket. This has forced low income communities and communities of color out of their neighborhoods and now threatens one the Bay's last relatively affordable communities. Mirroring a dynamic across urban California, communities that have devoted years of work into making the neighborhoods livable and healthy have also made their neighborhoods more attractive to developers and gentrifiers. As Los Angeles environmental justice organizer, mark! Lopez, puts it "we did not clean up our neighborhood just so you could gentrify it." In response, the RPA has sought to implement rent control across the city but has met with concerted resistance from the current mayor, Tom Butt, landlord associations, and the housing developers' lobby. Housing organizer, RPA member and current Vice Mayor, Melvin Willis, has led the charge on council. Meanwhile, the relationship between Butt and the RPA has deteriorated significantly. In what appeared to be a messy compromise, the city council ultimately passed a somewhat convoluted form of rent control that has proved unpopular. While the council may be aligned in its opposition to Chevron, disputes over the relationship between development, land use policy, and affordable housing continue to divide the city.

In 2017, these divisions threatened even the internal coherence of the RPA itself ([Geluardi 2018a](#)). Plans for the development of Richmond's Point Molate has proved particularly divisive. A younger generation of primarily black and brown activists have been arguing in favor of a development project on one of Richmond's last green public spaces because it included provisions for socialized affordable, housing. The organization's older, white membership have pushed back saying that the space should be preserved with only the most sensitive development being allowed to take place. Citywide debates, particularly over rent control, have also divided the RPA's base of support with many of its former retired whiter voters now rejecting the organization. These tensions may be deliberately overstated in the local media, but they were certainly at the forefront of the minds of many of the activists I interviewed in 2018. These fights seemed to have distracted the RPA from its broader legislative agenda and the organization found it difficult to counter the narrative that despite RPA representatives holding the supermajority on council it was unable to actually implement much of the policy initiatives it had promised (*ibid*). It also faced accusations of having mishandled renewed allegations of police corruption, sexual abuse, and incompetence. Entering the city council election of 2018, the RPA found itself defending a record of relative inactivity and internal division.

Meanwhile, climate justice activists were on the verge of winning an important victory through BAAQMD. By the summer of 2017, they had successfully convinced the agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and impose emissions caps on refineries and industrial emitters across the Bay Area. This would have dealt a significant blow to Chevron's operations in the city but would have significantly reigned in on-site emissions. In July 2017,

however, then-Governor Brown's landmark climate change bill, AB 398, passed the California State Legislature with a two-thirds majority. The bill extended California's cap and trade system and its two-thirds majority ensured immunity from possible lawsuits claiming it constituted an illegal tax. Gaining two-thirds of the legislature's consent meant the bill included significant compromises at the behest of California's many oil industry-backed legislators. One such concession was that local regulatory agencies would no longer be allowed to regulate refinery greenhouse gas emissions and that most greenhouse gas emissions regulation would now be carried out through statewide the cap and trade and offsets program housed under the California Air Resources Board. As CBE's Julia May explained at the time:

The Cap & Trade extension was written by the oil industry, is even worse than the current failed program, includes preemptions from local action, gives away so many free credits we will never meet climate goals, and allows oil refineries to expand indefinitely with no program for Just transition to clean energy that is so desperately needed in EJ [environmental justice] communities." (Climate Hawks Vote [2017](#))

In what climate justice activists said was a direct response to their organizing in the Bay Area, AB 398 consisted of an oil industry-backed "wish list" that undermined more than three years of climate justice activism.

Additionally, at this time, climate justice activists, led in part by local Indigenous women, were putting pressure on BAAQMD and the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors to introduce regulation that would effectively ban the refining of tar sands in any one of the Bay's five refineries. Kicking off this initiative in 2016 with a healing walk to each of the refineries, Idle No More SF Bay, CBE, Stand.earth and local climate justice organizations have explicitly carried out this campaign in solidarity with the First Nations-led resistance to tar

sands mining in Canada, and particularly those fighting the Trans Mountain pipeline. Engaging in direct action outside Kinder Morgan's gates in Richmond in September 2017, local activist drew attention to the conditions in which tar sands is produced, the consequences of its transportation, and the impacts refining this heavy sour crude would have on public health in the Bay Area's refinery communities (Diablo Rising Tide 2017). Climate justice activists have also been targeting the Levin coal terminal in Richmond and are trying to halt emissions of toxic coal dust by urging the city council to regulate the transportation of coal-by-rail through the city. Finally, in early 2018, the city council voted to join a growing number of cities across California and the US in lawsuits against the fossil fuel industry's largest greenhouse gas contributors, including Chevron, claiming climate change related damages. The suit has been appealed to the US ninth circuit court ([Cagle 2019](#)).

The RPA's growing pains extended into 2018 and they were ultimately unable to maintain their majority on the city council in 2018's November election. Beckles gave up her council seat to run an ultimately unsuccessful campaign for State Assembly representing the East Bay. McLaughlin gave up her seat in 2017 to run for Lieutenant governor to bring Richmond's story to communities across California. Voting against McLaughlin long-term ally, Marylyn Langlois, the council nominated a younger Latina RPA member, Ada Recinos to take McLaughlin's seat. With one of their most prominent and popular members no longer representing the RPA on council and Beckles looking towards the state legislature, along with a growing perception of unhelpful intransigence on a range of issues, the RPA lost two seats and Melvin Willis lost his bid to replace Butt as Mayor.

The lack of any election wedge issues against or around which to unite the city's progressives also hurt the growing movement. The election thus became a referendum on the RPA's two-year performance, and they were punished for it. East Bay Times journalist, John Geluardi, also suggests that the internal divisions within the RPA produced somewhat lackluster support for its candidates amongst the organization and that RPA strategists overstretched their resources trying to run Beckles' campaign as well as the city council campaigns ([Geluardi 2018a](#)). With three out of seven councilors and a far more hostile environment on council, the RPA's ability to further consolidate the local movement's gains has been thrown into question. In particular, the future of the Levin-Richmond coal terminal which would have been all but inevitably cut short under the previous council appears to have been thrown a lifeline by 2019's council composition.

Nevertheless, the organization and local organizers from many of the city's grassroots groups are resilient and they have suffered setbacks before. The March for Climate Jobs and Justice in San Francisco over the summer of 2018, organized by the People's Climate Movement and hosted by a coalition of Bay Area-based climate justice organizations, infused the local climate justice movement with renewed and much needed vigor. It has set the tone for California's climate justice movement and their strategies for keeping fossil fuels in the ground, centering frontline community's solutions, and advancing a just transition under California's new governor Gavin Newsom. At the time of writing, Newsome appears somewhat more open to addressing climate change at both supply and demand sides of the equation. The era of his predecessor's emphatic focus on demand side policies while increasing supply by greenlighting thousands of new oil wells in the state seems at an end.

In 2019, the climate justice movement has consolidated at the regional level in the Bay Area. With the formation of the Protect the Bay Coalition, these organizations' focus has shifted to the Phillip's 66 refinery just North of Richmond in Rodeo. Like Chevron, Phillip's has submitted permit applications to expand its refinery to process heavier sour crude, most likely from the Canadian tar sands. The Protect the Bay Coalition is organizing residents across the Bay Area and is targeting BAAQMD to reject Phillip's permit application and to ban imports of tar sands into region. This is an exciting development that illustrates how the local movement is beginning to transcend the limits of the local and scale their activism up to match local, regional, national and global scales at which the fossil fuel industry's hegemony operates.

Petro-Hegemony in Richmond and the Bay Area

The last decade and a half of social struggle have exposed the operations of petro-hegemony in Richmond. This is, in part, why Richmond is such a productive site in which to determine and identify some of the specific mechanics by which petro-hegemony maintains and extends the agenda and influence of the fossil fuel industry. Examples of industry interventions in the relations of consent, coercion, and compliance are all demonstratable through this case study. Moreover, the extent to which the industry's hegemony has been challenged in Richmond, given the 100-year timespan during which petro-hegemony was embedded in the community, makes this case all the more remarkable. In the following section, I illustrate the different ways the fossil fuel industry, and particularly Chevron, intervened in relations of consent,

coercion, and compliance to establish its hegemony and then to defend it against social movement incursions.

This section reflects on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two, elucidating its arguments by way of empirical example and demonstrating how those empirical examples demanded further reflection and development of theory. As I did in Chapter Three, I also examine the ways petro-hegemony interacts with, shapes, and is shaped by the specificities of the context in which it operates. The intersections of institutionalized racism, capitalism, community disempowerment, centralized state power, and extraction are all conditions interwoven with the relations of consent, coercion, and compliance upon which Chevron came to depend. Climate justice activism in Richmond thus demonstrates how the inextricable entwinement of petro-hegemony with a broader matrix of domination requires climate justice activist to develop strategies that not only counter the hegemonic status of the fossil fuel industry but that also, necessarily, engage with the broader intersections of domination in which petro-hegemony thrives.

Petro-culture and consent

“Chevron has its tentacles all over this city,” RPA strategist, Mike Parker, told me (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). He was referring to the many ways Chevron has sought to intervene in relations of consent and maintain social license to its operation in Richmond. For decades, Chevron and Standard Oil’s presence and benevolence has been taken for granted and engrained as common sense amongst much of (although certainly not all) the city’s

population. As the timeline narrated above suggests, despite it having been engrained for over a century, consent has radically shifted away from Chevron in a relatively short period. However, it is important that we investigate how and why Chevron was able to maintain consent to its operations for so long despite the damage it was doing to the community. Steve Early writes that “For much of the twentieth century, Richmond refinery bosses and lobbyists were skillful in winning local hearts and minds... Chevron has employed more than a century’s worth of corporate paternalism, targeted philanthropy, slick publicity, and political patronage” (2017, 12). Documenting and identifying the specifics of these strategies, below I describe how Chevron, and Standard Oil/Socal before it, have entrenched consent in the city and sought to reinforce it when it was challenged.

While Chapter Three provided a macro perspective on the many different narrative interventions of petro-hegemony across two Canadian provinces, Chevron’s discursive strategy in Richmond is necessarily narrower and more targeted to the specificities of the city context. Indeed, it has really relied on just one discourse, what I call “the benevolent neighbor” discourse. While this discourse is shared, repeated, and reinforced in a multiplicity of forms, its argument remains the same: Chevron is a necessary, compassionate, and altruistic neighbor without which Richmond would not be Richmond, and without which there would be no Richmond. Thus, Richmond’s identity and city pride are tied to the benevolence and patronage of the refinery’s owner and city’s largest employer, Chevron. From the city’s museum of history, to the refinery website, to Richmond High School’s mascot, to long-term Chevron allies, and to its most vehement opponents, it is almost impossible to avoid the narrative that the refinery and the city grew up together, that their

fates are entwined, and that without the Chevron's goodwill Richmond would collapse. The ubiquity of this narrative is partly because it is absolutely true; the refinery became operational the same year Richmond was incorporated and the city has historically been an industrial powerhouse fuelled by the refinery. But it is also because, for over 100 years, Chevron and Socal worked hard to sow and cultivate these ideas in community consciousness. With repetition in different discursive forms and reinforcement through different techniques of intervention, the discourse that without the refinery there would be no Richmond becomes common sense.

The city's history museum, both as a cultural artifact and mediator of discourse itself, and as a place where the history Chevron tells about its relation to the town is on full display, is a helpful place to begin unraveling this 100-year-old narrative. One early 20th century Socal flyer in the history museum proudly declares "Richmond is our middle name" and wishes the local newspaper, the Richmond Independent, a happy 30th birthday. Using the newspaper's birthday as an opportunity to remind audiences of the company's contributions to "better living for everybody," Socal states its pleasure in sharing "with the Richmond Independent its satisfaction in having reached another milestone in its service to the community" (Richmond History Museum, Wall Exhibit). Close ties between the company and local journalists would continue to develop throughout the 20th century. Industry propaganda from the 1940s and 50s in the museum proudly implies that oil produced in Richmond's refinery helped win the Second World War for the Allies. Oil, leadership of the free world, and pride in the city's participation in the war effort are brought together here under Socal's banner. In later promotional material I found in the museum's archives, Chevron advertises its

commitment to community safety publicizing its \$25,000 donation to the Richmond Police Department to purchase new security cameras for the city in 2012 ([Rogers 2012](#)).⁸⁸ Most recently, I noted examples of Chevron’s “pinkwashing” where it flies the Rainbow flag just below its own logo at the refinery during Pride week and advertises its commitment to its LGBT refinery workers.⁸⁹ Framing the consistency in Chevron’s service and contribution to the community, these examples illustrate the continuity in the oil company’s narrative in Richmond over one hundred years of change.

We must also consider the vehicles through which Chevron’s operatives have intervened in and shaped relations of consent to their advantage. Much of Chevron’s narrative is shared and reinforced through what Early calls “calculated community mindedness” (2017, 15). Chevron strategically deploys corporate philanthropy, sponsorships, creates astroturf organizations, and infiltrates local media, to reinforce their “benevolent neighbor” discourse. The vehicles through which Chevron amplifies its narrative matter. When Chevron donates to the police department, it is reinforcing a narrative that it cares about the community’s safety and wellbeing; when it sponsors school programs or scholarships it says it cares about the community’s education and social mobility; when it provides donations for a church roof or a faith group, it demonstrate that it is invested in the community’s spiritual welfare; and

⁸⁸ This example also indicates the close relationship between the Richmond Police Department and Chevron, as well as the surveillance state and the oil industry, that I will explore in greater detail in the following section.

⁸⁹ Perhaps illustrating the calculated nature of Chevron Pride, a Chevron-backed councilmember and one the company’s most vehement supporters on city council, Corky Boozé, consistently launched homophobic attacks against his fellow councilmember and Chevron opponent, Jovanka Beckles. Chevron appears to have paid these incidents little attention (Early 2017). Indeed, Early quotes Mayor Tom Butt’s as having said that “virtually all the local organizations that routinely and repeatedly legitimize what Boozé and Bates do are beneficiaries of Chevron, as are Bates and Booze themselves... What all of these individuals who disrupt city council meetings and spew homophobic and xenophobic hate have in common is that they routinely criticize the RPA, the mayor, and Jovanka Beckles while extolling the virtues of Chevron” (quoted in Early 2017, 100).

when it funds a “breath mobile” to provide children with free asthma checks it says it cares the community’s health.⁹⁰ Activists were keen to add that organizations receiving funding are expected to keep any criticisms they may have of the company to themselves. As John Gaventa illustrates in his assessment of company towns (1980), all of this “calculated community mindedness” advances the notion that Chevron is a benefactor while silencing potential criticism.

The 4Richmond Coalition is a nonprofit organization which includes “officials from the West Contra Costa School District, Richmond Chamber of Commerce and police union” and is funded by Chevron. Chevron’s officer for policy, Government and Public Affairs, Joe Lorenz, sits on 4Richmond’s board of directors while its membership is comprised of local community philanthropists and leaders. The organization declares that it is “dedicated to promoting jobs, health, safety and educational opportunities for Richmond residents” and that “Working together with all community members, we seek to actively transform the city we call home.” 4Richmond is almost entirely funded by Chevron. As evinced on their, now-defunct, website, 4Richmond extends “it’s sincere gratitude to Chevron for continuing its longstanding, generous support of [their] work” (4Richmond, 2016). According to journalist, Robert Rogers, Chevron-backed councilman, Nat Bates, hoped that the coalition would not only be a “ philanthropic force, but a “watchdog” that could “counter” the direction of City

⁹⁰ Of course, as RPA member Diana Wear explained to me, “Chevron gives a fair amount of money to the community and many of us do appreciate it. At the same time, they do it in dribs and drabs... it doesn't cure or really resolve a situation... One example was when they did the breath mobiles for the kids with asthma. It was just enough money to give them their posters, and billboards, and their publicity, but it was never enough to really address the issues... They weren't willing to do what was required of cleaning up their refinery for cleaner air” (personal communication, July 6th, 2018). The irony embedded in this last example is particularly cruel but seems lost on the company.

Hall, which has been led in recent years by progressives who take a hardline against the oil giant” (Rogers 2012). Meanwhile, Andrés Soto told me that through 4Richmond, Chevron has “created a permanent presence in Richmond for distributing cash and organizing events.” 4Richmond not only amplifies Chevron’s narrative across a citywide platform but also brings together, what we might call, the representatives of the community’s moral compass. Faith leaders, police officers, philanthropists, and the directors of different charities are all brought together by the coalition and so become a community that shares and repeat the narrative of Chevron’s benevolence to their own diverse sets of audiences.

As well as 4Richmond, Chevron has funded many other mediators of community discourse and common sense, including the Richmond Standard and Radio Free Richmond. The Richmond Standard is an online community news website edited and staffed by Mike Aldax, who, according to Steve Early, is a “senior account manager at Singer Associates” – the same Singer Associates that Chevron hired to manage the public relations fallout following the 2012 refinery explosion (2017, 114). The direct ties between Chevron and the news site are not necessarily obscured. A disclaimer on their *About* page says “This news website is brought to you by Chevron Richmond. We aim to provide Richmond residents with important information about what’s going on in the community, and to provide a voice for Chevron Richmond on civic issues” (Richmond Standard 2016). Doing just that, one of their pages, entitled “Richmond Refinery Speaks” is intended “for the Chevron Richmond Refinery to share its news and views on issues important to the company and the Richmond, CA community” (ibid.).

Scrolling through the website, the benevolent neighbor narrative is interwoven with other local news relevant to the community including sports updates, profiles of public personas, feel-good volunteering efforts, upcoming social events, and lifestyle tips. A quick read through archived news articles yields, for example, a piece entitled “Why the Election Mattered” – referring to the 2014 local election in which all the Chevron backed candidates were defeated – where Chevron defends its unprecedented political spending on Richmond’s election (Richmond Standard 2014). In a rather revealing piece, another article, entitled “Chevron and Richmond: a century of partnership” written by Chevron’s company historian exclaims that “For the past century, Chevron has been part of Richmond’s social and economic fabric” (Harper 2018). Indeed, this is precisely the point of these strategies. Chevron doesn’t just want to be seen as a local employer but as part of the community deeply embedded in Richmond’s very identity.

Admittedly, the *Richmond Standard* actually fills an important niche that was abandoned at a time when local newsrooms have been losing readers and have had to make budget cuts. The *Richmond Standard* has come to replace the role of local news sources as small local newspaper outlets have closed shop (Carroll 2014). It provides the community with local information you can’t necessarily find elsewhere in the local news milieu. However, Early argues that both the *Richmond Standard* and *Radio Free Richmond* are “designed to look like independent sources of information about municipal affairs” while being criticized “as an audacious attempt to disguise propaganda as news and manipulate public opinion” (2017, 113; Carroll 2014). It is not clear whether the *Standard* is a widely read resource. Despite being an essentially “one-man operation,” however, it is certainly well resourced and a

prolific publisher. Clearly Chevron's public relations advisors believe the outlet remains a valuable investment.

Chevron's interventions into what constituted common sense in Richmond, and which shaped the discourses through which residents have made meaning out of their surroundings, were seeded over a long period of time. Election seasons, on the other hand, have increasingly been defined by fast-paced media blasts where the city is blanketed in corporate propaganda as Chevron fires off dozens of carefully framed messages intended to target the deep-rooted narratives it has cultivated for over a century. As such, the frames that are intended to bring the industry's "benevolent neighbor" narrative to the forefront of audiences' minds are most visible during election seasons. This is particularly so when Chevron has felt its interests are threatened. The Richmond Proud campaign, following the 2012 refinery explosion, and leading into the company's renewed efforts to get its modernization project permitted, illustrates the content of some of these frames.

Richmond Proud was a public relations campaign run by Singer Associates that tied residents' pride in their community to the modernization project for a "newer, cleaner, safer" refinery. In one televised ad the campaign ran in 2013 and 2014 the gravelly voice of a confident male narrator reassures viewers over images of Richmond's diverse neighborhoods and smiling community members, cast in an array of charming domestic and social situations:

We might have different backgrounds, we might have different points of view, but whoever we are, whichever of Richmond's neighborhoods we live in, we have two

things in common: we're all proud of the city that we share and we'll all share in the benefits of a newer, safer, cleaner refinery. ([Singer Associates 2017](#))

Emphasizing safety and security, the clip closes with a scene of firefighter standing proudly at the fire station in front of his emergency vehicle. According to Singer Associates, these ads were intended to “showcase why residents are Richmond Proud and to build support for a newer, safer and cleaner refinery.” These ads “aired on television and generated community pride in Richmond, where Chevron has operated a refinery for over 100 years” (ibid).

Framing variants of the same message, Chevron bought up all of the city billboards, ran television ads, sent out thousands of mailers. All of this was carried out with the objective of building pride in the city and connecting that sense of pride to what the refinery has made possible. Many of the leaders of community organizations Chevron has funded had their faces posted up on Chevron's billboards too, endorsing this message. All of them encouraged the whole city, across their differences, to share in what a “newer, safer, cleaner” refinery could offer them. Implying the necessity of modernizing the refinery following the 2012 fire, Chevron appeals to values such as safety, clean air, and newness held across the city. The images of the firefighter, a church group, and kids playing soccer invoke the many aspects of community life the refinery has made possible through Chevron's generosity. Chevron's video clips thank the thousands of community members who have already endorsed the modernization “newer, cleaner, safer” project, again reinforcing its images as a courteous, benevolent neighbor.

Meanwhile, following the tense negotiations over the terms upon which the refinery project would be accepted by the council, Chevron turned its attention to ensuring that the next time it would have to negotiate with the city it would do so with councilmembers more favorable

to the company's interests. In association with Moving Forward, Chevron's campaign expenditure committee, the company spent \$3 million dollars in the election campaign of fall 2014. Together with the police and firefighters' unions, Moving Forward poured money into bolstering pro-Chevron candidates' campaigns and spent heavily on attack ads against the RPA's candidates. Candidates running with the help of Chevron's money extolled the virtues of the company, again reminding potential voters of Chevron's generosity, its community service, and its contribution to the local economy, all without which Richmond would suffer greatly. Attack ads and mailers depicted the RPA's candidates as radical and unhinged, potentially dangerous threats to the city, to its identity, and to its way of doing things. While Chevron was able to build just enough support for its modernization project to be approved in the summer of 2014, the RPA successfully made the election about Chevron's inordinate influence over the city's politics. Its political spending only reinforced this argument and every candidate it supported lost their campaigns.

Despite these compelling examples, the mechanisms by which consent to the industry was developed over time go deeper than slick public relations campaigns and targeted philanthropy. Perhaps the most poignant illustration of the depths to which petro-culture is embedded in community consciousness is Richmond High's School team mascot: The Oilers. As Soto describes it "the mascot on the side of the football field or in the gym for basketball games is a guy dressed up as an oil can, a funnel on top and painted in the school colors of red and navy blue." A mascot, of course, is a source of pride, affinity and charm. The necessity, inevitability, and benevolence of oil and the ways of life it makes possible are realized in the refinery and in Chevron's service to the community. These virtues are

explicitly recognized in the high school mascot. Entrenched discourses and consent are mediated through the different institutions and mechanisms described above but, as Raymond Williams reminds us, they are also embodied and arise in feelings and affect as much as they may be identified in explicit argument (1971). This has ultimately been the source of Chevron's discursive hegemony and the strength of petro-culture in the city. The narrative that without the refinery there would be no Richmond triggers an *affective* response amongst its audiences based on a sense that values and lifeways stand to be defended and won.

Finally, the "benevolent neighbor discourse" is not just compelling because it can be demonstrated with clear evidence of Chevron's community service and generosity, but also because of its ubiquity. As Mayor Butt puts it "there's no where you can go to escape the Chevron logo... they just infiltrate everything that is going on in the community" (quoted in Early 2017; [Rowan and Tobias 2014](#)). Repetition is an important tool Chevron has used to entrench its narrative in the city. The narrative that the refinery has been good for Richmond wins hearts and minds by framing Chevron's long historical relationship with the city, and thus the seeming inevitability of its presence in the city into the future. As a symbol of continuity in the community and framing itself as a part of Richmond's identity, the refinery becomes a source of community pride and a reliable benefactor that supported the community throughout its city's difficult past.

This narrative's corollary is that those who oppose Chevron must also be opposed to the betterment of the community and ethic of community service for which the company so clearly stands.⁹¹ Those who oppose Chevron and its refinery, therefore, are not really part of

⁹¹ This discourse seems to be more convincing when the refinery isn't on fire and threatening to cover the entire city in toxic smoke. In all seriousness though, it's a narrative that works in the context of what Rob Nixon calls

the Richmond because they don't understand what Chevron has done for them. This is a sentiment that has been explicitly invoked by councilman Nat Bates and other Chevron allies (Early 2017). As such, those who would ungratefully attack Chevron are also attacking everything Chevron has made possible in the city. Chevron's opponents may then be cast as dangerous threats to the city's social fabric and social services. This final example was a trope the city's fire and police unions deployed in their own attack ads on Martinez and McLaughlin. Thus, the benevolent neighbor narrative, and its "dangerous ingrates" corollary, may appear in different forms and are mediated by different actors and institutions, but in all its forms the underlying features have remained consistent and compelling for decades.

The petro-state and coercion

While Chevron's narrative interventions have certainly resonated with a large swathe of Richmond's residents and discursive conditions favored the company's interests for over a century, there have been plenty of people (particularly those living in closest proximity to the refinery's pollution), who were, and remain, unconvinced. Indeed, with the rise of the RPA and the growing potency of climate justice organizations' own narrative interventions, Chevron has also relied upon relations of coercion to maintain its hegemonic status. This is most clearly demonstrable in Chevron's control, and later its attempts to retain control over, city council. The company's relationship, and tacit alliance, with the police officer's union in Richmond has been crucial to this project. The fossil fuel industry's coercive capabilities are also bolstered throughout the region in its capture of other state institutions

"slow violence" (2011) where the effects of racialized toxicity and community poisoning are gradual and the refinery is able to cast doubt on any implication it may have had in the cause of such violence.

and regulatory agencies. Traditionally, with tremendous influence over the California state legislature and the Governor's office, the industry has also been able to exert pressure on state legislators to approve or reject legislation to enshrine its interests in legally enforceable laws. In these four ways, then, the industry's coercive capabilities are observable in Richmond.

While the threat of force exists, and the industry has certainly sought to maintain control over state institutions that can deploy violence, the direct use of violence for coercive purposes was more or less absent in this case study. This is partly because the tactics deployed by Chevron's opponents cannot be framed to legitimize a violent response (and probably even by the industry's standards do not merit violence). But it is also because the industry's control over city council and other state institutions have been enough to force the community into accepting particular conditions without explicit recourse to violence.⁹² This case study illustrates quite powerfully, therefore, that the absence of violence does not necessarily imply the absence of coercion. The industry's ability to capture institutions that can enforce its interests if necessary, tends to be sufficiently coercive. The industry's interventions in relations of coercion are documented below.

The relationship between Chevron and state institutions with coercive capabilities is most clearly observable in the company's decades-long control over city council. According to Gayle McLaughlin, and indeed all of the climate justice activists I talked to in Richmond,

⁹² In other words, the industry certainly retains the capabilities of violence through its influence over state institutions but this capacity, or the mere threat of violence, is usually enough to exert its force. Nevertheless, this remains, to my mind, a coercive relationship.

Chevron “controlled council for 100 years.” As McLaughlin explains, this is evident in the fact that “in the past, all of the candidates and office holders were funded by Chevron” (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Throughout the city’s history, leftists and progressives did contest Chevron’s control of the council, both in public protest and elections, but were almost always defeated or coopted (McLaughlin 2018). These defeats bred a sentiment of bitter resignation and cynicism amongst the city’s activists. As McLaughlin argues, “they thought... [there was] nothing we could do, you know, you can't fight City Hall” (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Submission to the simple belief that “you can’t fight City Hall,” enshrined even amongst those who vehemently dissented from Chevron’s rule, was enough for the company to force its will on the city’s residents for decades. Once City Hall had decided on Chevron’s behalf and in the interests of the city’s corporate establishment, residents and dissenters felt there was little more that could be done in the city. According to this narrative, moreover, with a notoriously brutal and racist police force to enforce whatever the city council decided, most dissenters would harbor their disempowered resentments quietly and impotently. In other words, with the enforcement of local institutions of the state rallied behind it, the company’s overwhelming dominance appeared so obvious and inevitable that resistance seemed futile. Preclusive submission to the insurmountable force of one’s adversary is absolutely a relation of coercion and, indeed, is the most common form in which the functioning of the petro-state is observable.

By 2005, however, cynicism, resignation and the belief that Chevron was an insurmountable force in the city's politics had begun to thaw.⁹³ This was partly because shifting demographics in the city meant Chevron's cooptation of much of the city's black establishment and community leaders held less potency. They failed to gain the same kind of influence over the Latinx and Laotian community leadership. Meanwhile, the election of Gayle McLaughlin to city council, who had cultivated support across a diverse constituency of frustrated residents in the city, inspired Chevron's opponents with cautious optimism. The growing threat to its control of city council over the next ten years would see Chevron employ more aggressive strategies to try to regain its hegemonic position.

Increasingly, especially while fighting off proposed tax hikes and advancing its modernization project, it would spend heavily on influencing election results and provide support for city council candidates who shared its interests. Indicating the extent to which company officials understood the significance of their control of city council, Chevron considerably increased its political spending in response to the growing threat of its opposition. As Soto told me, Chevron "used to spend \$100,000 to \$150,000 on an election, but over time that went up. By 2010 they were spending \$1 million dollars then \$1.25 million in 2012." In the 2014 election it more than doubled its spending, pouring up to \$3 million into regaining its influence on council. This amounted to the company spending the equivalent of \$180 per ballot cast in 2014. These numbers attracted national and international

⁹³ This is perhaps where the new migrations to Richmond did make an important difference and has some explanatory power. People like Gayle McLaughlin and Juan Reardon, and indeed many of the first and second generation migrant families who had moved to the city in the 1990s and 2000s, had not experienced Chevron's dominance or the defeats progressives had suffered in the city for nearly as long as Richmond's lifelong residents (Shah 2011). They brought with them a cautious optimism that many radicals in the city had long abandoned.

attention as they are almost unprecedented in city council races, let alone ones in a city the size of Richmond (Rowan and Tobias 2014).

One of the company's most outspoken supporters, and one of the RPA's most vehement critics, is councilman Nat Bates. Bates has been mayor of the city twice (in 1971 and again in 1976) and ran for mayor again in 2014 and again in 2018, though he lost both bids. A stalwart on city council, he was first elected in 1967 and has served as a councilmember in most of the intervening years. In his own words, Bates believes "heavy industry and Richmond are bound together in marriage" (quoted in McLaughlin 2018,130). According to Steve Early "Bates has always been a firm believer in the city's largest taxpayer and employer. What's good for Chevron is, in his view, good for the community" (2017, 101-102). Bates has defended this relationship with the company pointing to the funding that Chevron has devoted to "youth sports, programs for seniors and nonprofit organizations that operate in the city" (Johnson 2014). Bates further asserted his close ties with the company, telling Early that "Chevron has been under attack by the RPA... and they going to protect their turf... You better bet Chevron is going to favor someone with more sensitivity and compassion for what they're trying to do" (2017, 103). Accordingly, "Local refinery management reciprocated with generous financial backing for Bates' many successful campaigns for city council since 1967" (ibid). Investing in relationship with councilmembers like Bates used to be enough for Chevron to ensure its interests were shared by the city council. In this way it shored up access to the coercive enforcement capacities of local state institutions.

Meanwhile, Chevron also dominated the “Council of Industries and the Chamber of Commerce, two old-guard establishments that are at the center of the conservative black-white pro-business coalition” (Schafran and Feldstein 2013, 164). These institutions are often able to place a great deal of pressure on the city council and the administration of City Hall. Through a network of influential community leaders, economic interest groups, the police and firefighters’ unions, and city councilors themselves, Chevron has sought to maintain its access to the coercive apparatuses of local state institutions as challenger groups have gained greater influence in Richmond.

One vehicle through which Chevron has funneled its campaign spending is Moving Forward. While individual donations to election campaigns may not exceed \$2500 in Richmond, the Supreme Court’s Citizens United ruling in 2010 certainly reminds us that corporate interests can spend unlimited money on influencing election outcomes without donating to a specific candidate. Moving Forward was essentially a Chevron funded Political Action Committee operating under the guise of a coalition of concerned community members and leaders. Of Moving Forward’s \$3 million budget, \$5000 came from the police and firefighters’ union each and the rest was funded by Chevron ([Rowan 2014](#)). Through this organization, Chevron and its public safety union allies sponsored election campaigns in 2012 and 2014. In 2014, they sponsored four election candidates: Nat Bates, Donna Powers, Charles Ramsey, and Al Martinez. They also funded a campaign of defamation and opposition to RPA candidates, Gayle Martinez, Jovanka Beckles, and Eduardo Martinez. Their increased campaigns spending following the fire in 2012, combined with the finances provided by soda companies opposing the soda tax, reached \$3.5 million. This was enough to reduce the anti-Chevron caucus, with the RPA winning just two seats in 2012. Thus, when Chevron came to the

council's negotiating table in the summer of 2014 to get its modernization project approved, it was able to negotiate with representatives more favorable to its cause. Despite massive political spending in November's 2014 election, however, Chevron was not able to repeat the success of 2012 and all the candidates it sponsored lost their races.

Chevron's close relationship with the Richmond Police Officer's Association (RPOA) is another source of its coercive capabilities. "The police are attack dogs for Chevron" is a sentiment Andrés Soto is fond of reciting in interviews and, as he went on to tell me, in his estimation "police departments are paramilitary organizations" (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Meanwhile, alongside their "calculated community mindedness," Early notes that throughout the refinery's history, and particularly during past labor conflicts in the city, refinery owners have found "a little picket line repression was helpful too" (2017, 12). While, Chevron has not had to unleash their so-called attack dogs to deploy physical violence against dissenters, it has used them and their status as heroic defenders of public safety to viciously attack its opponents in the council chamber and throughout election campaigns. The RPOA is an important ally as it has traditionally held a great deal of influence over city council and is able to use its social license and reputation against its opponents. Moreover, Chevron is able to provide for the police and not just through philanthropic donations. As Soto explains, "they worked on behalf of Chevron because Chevron's people [on council] then gave them what they wanted on their pension salaries." Thus, both the police and fire associations worked with Chevron because Chevron-backed candidates would give them what they wanted in terms of pension and salary.

As Soto went on to explain “we always expect them [The RPOA] to do the dirty work” for Chevron. Indeed, McLaughlin believes that during her 2010 reelection bid, the RPOA even hired private investigators to look into her past and used her record of mental health related illnesses and former bankruptcy to tell the community she was not fit to govern (McLaughlin 2018). While I was in Richmond, the RPOA seemed to have been caught orchestrating a hit piece against RPA councilmember Eduardo Martinez claiming he had been suspected of driving under the influence after he reported having been robbed at gunpoint ([Geluardi 2018b](#)).⁹⁴ As Martinez later told me, “Chevron and the Richmond Officers Police Association work hand in hand, they’re like twin brothers” (personal communication, July 9th, 2018). In coordination with the RPOA, Chevron has mastered the use of intimidation tactics and uses these to attack their opponents and align the council with their interests.

Despite their common interests, however, Mike Parker argues the relationship between the police and the Chevron officials is not the result of some grand conspiracy to keep Richmond under control - and it would be disingenuous, or at least naïve, to suggest otherwise (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Rather, Chevron and the police union share a common enemy in the RPA, and in the left more broadly. While the relationship between the police department and Gayle McLaughlin was friendly under police chief Chris Magnus’ tenure, the same could not be said for the relationship between the RPOA and the RPA. They perceive the city’s progressive as having gone too far in holding police officers accountable, following up on accusations corruptions, racism, and attempts to reduce officer’s pensions. As such it is

⁹⁴ In an article investigating the claims against Martinez, Geluardi suggests that since Chief Magnus’ departure, the RPOA has been working to reassert its authority over the police department, attacking Magnus’ allies and undoing many of the former Chief’s progressive reforms (2018b).

the existence of a shared enemy that has reinforced the police union's role as Chevron's attack dogs. Moreover, to draw on Bourdieu here, police officers share in an establishment "habitus" of which community leaders, police union officials, and Chevron managers are all a part (1977). Soto suggested that because they operate in the same circles, attend the same functions, and, crucially have a shared set of values, they made natural allies. This, more than the possible existence of a covert agreement between law enforcement and Chevron, helps explain why the oil company and the RPOA tend to work "hand in hand." It also helps us better understand that the petro-state is just as much constituted by a set of informal relationships, unspoken understanding, shared values, social networks, and tacit agreements as it is by any direct expressions of allegiance between state and capital.⁹⁵

Where Chevron has lost influence on city council, and its relationship with law enforcement officials are unable to intimidate city councilors and other opponents into taking up positions advantageous to Chevron's interests, the company has also worked through the courts at the regional scale. It primarily uses the court system and lawsuits as a form of intimidation to ward off its opponent's more ambitious assaults. It is not afraid to deploy these against the

⁹⁵ I would add here that this is an instance where the work of Pierre Bourdieu is complementary to Gramsci's and applies a helpful corrective to the Gramscian tendency to see conspiracy and collusion in all relationships between state and capital. Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, a "socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures," that organically reproduces social relationships, interests, values and domination, helps us understand these relationships (1977, 76). *Habitus*, as Bourdieu writes, is the "source of strategies without being the product of genuine strategic intention" (1977, 73). Representatives of the RPOA, of Chevron, of city council, and of local charities may all sit on the same boards or attend the same social functions and events. The alignment of Chevron and the RPOA's interests is not a conspiracy or even a premeditated strategic relationship but rather a product of a *habitus* developed through relationships between people who share social spaces and so come to share common frames of reference, values, and perspectives - what Bourdieu calls social and cultural capital. These shape their common "dispositions." The relationship performs the function of a strategy through which the company has controlled the city but, as Bourdieu puts it, the alignment of their interests may also represent a form of "conductorless orchestration," emerging out of a set of dispositions that happen to mesh together (1977, 80). On the relationship between Bourdieu and Gramsci's contributions, see also Michael Buroway (2008).

city council either. As Parker told me, filing suits and threatening to file suits against the city, tying up officials with administration and bureaucracy, Chevron has used its “army of lawyers” to try to intimidate city officials into submission (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Activists, and even the city council, are almost always out resourced and outgunned up against the enormous resources of litigation Chevron is able to deploy should it need. For example, throughout Chevron’s negotiations with city council over refinery permits in 2014, the company maintained the threat of filing a cumbersome lawsuit against the city for overreaching its mandate (Early 2017). This intimidation tactic kept negotiators at the table and willing to work with the company.

Parker provided another example of this strategy, explaining that during the 2008 and 2010 Measure T fights with Chevron through which community organizers were trying to get Chevron to pay a fairer share of city taxes, Chevron avoided doing so by overwhelming the County Tax Assessor’s office with litigation. As Parker understood it, Chevron officials appealed to the tax assessors’ office to halt the city’s new tax laws. The assessors’ office carried out the hearing and found that “not only did Chevron not deserve a [tax] reduction, they actually should be paying much more [in taxes]” so they recommended that Chevron owed more and should pay the city a larger amount in taxes. According to Parker, “Chevron went ballistic and went to court and essentially totally tied up the assessor's office” (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). In 2012 Chevron appealed the recommendation in court. However, the office stood little chance against the resources and number of lawyers Chevron brought to the hearings and ultimately capitulated. Instead, the tax assessor’s office worked out a settlement with Chevron. As Parker concludes, “the assessor's office felt...it had no

choice. You can't use all your lawyers and then still be outmatched and do nothing else about the rest of the county..." (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Chevron's tax avoidance strategy here was simply to overwhelm its opponents with a lawsuit that would take up all their time and resources and so force them into capitulation out of court. A pattern is discernable here where Chevron has no need of recourse to overt coercion because most of its opponents simply capitulate in the face of what seems an overwhelmingly better resourced adversary. Thus, the threat of this overwhelming force tends to be more than enough for Chevron to advance its interests through less obviously coercive means.⁹⁶

If not overwhelming understaffed and under resourced regulatory agencies and tax offices, Chevron, and the fossil fuel industry more generally in the region, have sought to capture them and staff them with officials more friendly to their interests. One such example is BAAQMD. As Janet Johnson of Sunflower Alliance told me, BAAQMD is "another captive agency, in that the membership are elected officials but ... [it] actually ends up being very tightly controlled" (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Bay Area climate justice activists have been targeting BAAQMD on a variety of issues for more than a decade. Before the passage of AB 398, BAAQMD had more regulatory teeth and authority over the Bay Area's refineries, particularly their emissions that impact air quality. In earlier campaigns, activists tried to get the agency to impose flaring restrictions on refineries and more stringent regulations on emissions of toxins. Their successes were limited. In 2014 CBE sued BAAQMD on two counts, firstly claiming that the agency had permitted the transportation of

⁹⁶ In *Rules for Radicals*, the first of Saul Alinsky thirteen rules is that "power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have" (1970). Where the opponents' power is perceived as overwhelmingly, it is unlikely to meet with much resistance.

oil by rail into the city without a public hearing and secondly for allowing Chevron to start work on the refinery modernization without appropriate permits. Both instances illustrated the extent to which BAAQMD was prepared to work in the industry's interests, despite clearly operating in defiance of California's environmental laws

Then, following the city council's approval of the refinery's modernization permits, climate justice activists shifted their strategic focus away from the council almost entirely. Instead, they focused on pressuring BAAQMD into imposing stricter emissions caps on particulate matter and greenhouse gases from the Bay Area's refineries. For years, despite a sophisticated campaign and a large coalition of groups bringing evidence of the refinery emissions' impacts on public health to public hearings, BAAQMD refused to be persuaded. They eventually agreed to cap greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 but this was thwarted following the passage of AB 398. More recently, the newly formed Protect the Bay coalition has tried to persuade BAAQMD to reject permits for Phillip's refinery application to expand its wharf – part of what activists are calling a “piecemeal” refinery upgrade. Again, BAAQMD officials have been deeply resistant to imposing the necessary regulations and fulfilling their own mandate of regulating air quality in the Bay Area. Activists argued that the industry's influence over regulatory agencies and state institutions like BAAQMD is illustrated in the constant delaying of taking regulatory action through these institutions. As Janet told me “They are masters at kicking the can down the road. I mean, this is there, this is their total MO” (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Thus, another way the fossil fuel companies operate through the petro-state is to limit the implementation and enforcement of regulations that would otherwise coerce the industry into taking action contrary to its

interests. Meanwhile, it may also use these agencies to implement and enforce legal standards that advance its interests.

Finally, where regional regulatory agencies act in defiance of the industry's interests, as BAAQMD ultimately did in 2017, the industry may fall back upon statewide or national institutions to enforce its interests. In this case, the fossil fuel industry's advocacy group in California, the Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA), successfully lobbied for provisions to be included in Governor Brown's Cap and Trade Bill which would "Give ARB [the Air Resources Board] exclusive jurisdiction over GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions in the state" (Aronoff 2017). In other words, the California Air Resources Board would become the only regulator of greenhouse gas emissions through the California wide cap and trade program, removing the power of regional agencies to regulate emissions on their own terms. The passage of AB 398 undermined more than three years of advocacy and campaigning for BAAQMD to regulate greenhouse gas emissions at the precise moment that the agency was prepared to do so.

The oil industry's influence in California has been enshrined over decades in ways very similar to how it gained hegemonic status in Richmond. Its ability to gut regulatory agencies enforcement mechanisms to its advantage is just one example of the implications of its statewide influence. Moreover, as California has indeed promoted climate leadership, the industry has ensured such leadership does little to challenge its operations in the state. In the months leading up to the passage of Brown's cap and trade bill for example, the oil industry spent more than \$16 million lobbying in Sacramento, most of this was spent by WSPA and

Chevron. During the 2015-2016 legislative session, the oil industry spent \$36 million, more than it ever has before, lobbying in California ([Bacher 2017](#); [Malkern 2017](#)). The return on its political investments were high and have afforded the industry tremendous scope to shape Californian environmental and climate policy across the state.

The industry's coercive capabilities may have been curtailed at the municipal scale in Richmond but they remain potent at regional and statewide scales. This suggests we must pay close attention to the operations of the industry at *multiple scales* of petro-state. Under Governor Jerry Brown and most legislative assemblies prior to 2018, the petro-state in California flourished. It remains to be seen whether Governor Newsom and a new set of state legislators will defy this trend. Nevertheless, in so far as state institutions responsible for holding the fossil fuel industry accountable are concerned, whether they are regulatory agencies municipal governments, or indeed the Governor's office, these have all failed to protect Californians from the industry's excesses. The ability of the industry to enforce its interests across multiple scales of state institutions remains more or less unchallenged. Meanwhile, despite (and perhaps because of) the absence of overt violence deployed by the industry, this case illustrates the more subtle and banal forms of coercion by which the industry enforces and advances its interests through the petro-state.

Petro-capitalism and compliance

More than coercion and consent, compliance has been the most prevalent relation of power observable in Richmond. As Chapters Two and Three have demonstrated, compliance is an

economic relation of power that rests upon a dynamic of dependency. It exists between, and often blends with, relations of consent and coercion. Compliance in Richmond, however, is more potent and distinguishable than either coercion or consent because the dependency dynamic is so palpably a constraint on what is deemed possible in the city. Historically, the refinery was, and remains, the city's largest employer and the refinery's contributions to the city's tax base has helped make City Hall's provision of essential public services possible. This dependency on jobs and revenue places constraints on the ambition of the city council and local activists in their dealings with the refinery. Similarly, Chevron's philanthropy and community service is not just a tool for shoring up consent. These resources have historically played a significant role in providing and funding services that local government has neglected. Finally, the Community Benefits Agreement that Chevron and city councilmembers ultimately negotiated in return for modernization permits was clearly an instrument used to intervene in relations of compliance to advance the refinery upgrade. Through its provisions of jobs and revenue, the strategic deployment of Community Benefits Agreements, and the replacement of municipal services with Chevron-funded services, the oil company has helped develop a dynamic of dependency on the refinery, fostering relations of compliance in Richmond.

Threatening to hold jobs and taxes hostage is Chevron's most potent weapon in the city. Chevron's refinery in Richmond currently employs about 1600 people and about 25% of Richmond's city budget is dependent on the tax revenue Chevron contributes. Chevron refuses to publicize exactly how many people the refinery permanently employs but, by its own estimates, from 2016 – 2018 it employed another 1200 temporary construction workers

and contractors to carry out the modernization project (McLaughlin 2018). A City Hall factsheet suggests that the refinery employed up to 3,456 people in 2016 (City Facts 2019). Through taxes, employment, and charitable giving, Chevron claims to have contributed \$500 million to the city economy and services between 2009 and 2012 alone (Early 2017). Although these numbers are likely something of an exaggeration, Chevron's presence certainly does contribute vital resources to the city's economy. The company's perceived importance to the local economy is one reason why city decision-makers did so little to hold Chevron accountable for so long. Indeed, as McLaughlin puts, it:

While most people in our Richmond community were aware of the health and environmental damage caused by Chevron's refinery, a majority of the City Council, along with some sectors of the community, held tight to the idea that they would overlook the environmental impact, because this mega-corporation is central to our local economy. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

Despite, knowing about the consequences of the refinery on public health, its contributions to the economy were deemed far more significant. These are the kind of calculations a dependency dynamic will foster within a community.

While Chevron's threats to pack up the refinery and move elsewhere should the city's business environment become overwhelmingly hostile are mostly hollow,⁹⁷ the company can and has held current jobs, new employment opportunities and tax revenue hostage to advance its interests. For example, following the court's decision to overturn the project permits in 2010, Chevron slashed jobs and cancelled contracts with construction workers it had

⁹⁷ These threats are hollow because, despite regulations and conditions applied by the council, the refinery remains profitable, the costs of relocation are enormous, the refinery's current location highly strategic and makes it competitive, and there a very few cities in California today that would welcome a new refinery in their neighborhoods.

employed to carry out the project (in fairness, without permits there is little these workers could have been employed to do anyway). This provoked anger amongst local unions and labor associations, but this anger was directed against Chevron's opponents not Chevron itself. Perceptions of Chevron's historical importance to the city's economic development are deliberately exaggerated by the company and its supporters. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the significance of both the reality and perceptions of its contributions to the local economy and relations of compliance. Chevron remains the city's largest employer, although most of its employees no longer live in Richmond (McLaughlin 2018).

McLaughlin explains that the promises of jobs divided local building trade unions, some of whom wanted the company to file a more complete EIR and comply with safer regulatory standards for workers, and others who were enticed by the promise of employment.

Historically, many of these unions have had a somewhat fraught relationship with the company, particularly in disputes over wages and safety standards. During the modernization project's first iteration McLaughlin says that many of the refinery's union members and local building trade unions worked closely with local environmental justice activists forming a "Blue-Green Alliance." Together they opposed the project, calling for a more thorough environmental impact assessment and more stringent safety standards.

However, Chevron and the national leadership of these local union chapters cut a deal where the national unions agreed "not to oppose the project in return for a guarantee of union jobs throughout the project's construction" (McLaughlin 2018, 139). This maneuver successfully broke up the early alliance and divisions returned to the well-worn "jobs versus the

environment” framing that so benefits the industry. McLaughlin, who comes from a union background, recalls this being the first time she was pitted against unionists and describes the discomfort of having former allies turn on her in the public hearings and city council meetings. Clearly most of the unions knew the risks associated with the refinery and yet felt compelled to side with Chevron’s project when the company offered employment and a means of making a living. The potency of communities’ dependency on jobs to make a living is one of the easiest ways the industry intervenes in relations of compliance.

Along with employment, the community has developed a dependency on Chevron for tax revenue. Previous city councils had “proved unable to provide any real solutions for Richmond, precisely because they lacked the political independence required to put the interests of the community first. The councils instead built up a financial dependency on Chevron over the decades” (McLaughlin 2018, 34). Public safety services like the police and fire departments, local schools, the municipal library, public swimming pools and so on, all depend upon tax revenue to which Chevron is an overwhelming contributor (despite many legitimate arguments that it does not pay enough in taxes). Whenever Chevron’s interests are challenged, however, its representatives and its supporters will remind opponents of the services the company’s contribution to the city tax base make possible. Without Chevron’s contributions to the city’s tax base, Richmond could not offer any such services and would be forced to make painful budget cuts or otherwise privatize the few remaining public institutions in the city. Nat Bates and his allies on council will urge the company’s detractors not to scare away the company, but rather to be grateful for what it has made possible. Chevron’s officials, meanwhile, may not really be willing to leave the city, but as it

demonstrated when it overwhelmed the tax assessors' office in litigation, it is more than capable of bringing enormous legal resources down upon the city to resist paying its share of taxes.

In addition to friendly city councilmembers extolling its virtues, Chevron's contribution to city taxes genuinely constrains the demands and ambition of the local climate justice activists. At a time when much of climate justice movement would be calling for a refinery of this scale to be rapidly phased out and closed down due to its considerable contribution to greenhouse gases, most activists in Richmond are begrudgingly resigned to accepting the refinery's presence in the city. The city may be diversifying its economy but without alternative sources of revenue on the scale of what Chevron is able to provide most activists have had to recognize that, at least for the present, the refinery isn't going anywhere.⁹⁸

Similarly, Chevron cultivates and feeds this dynamic of dependency by directly contributing resources to services people in Richmond depend upon but that the municipal government has withdrawn from after decades of privatization and budget cuts. Providing funding for community centers, for example, Chevron is perceived as a contributor to, rather than a threat to, the city's social fabric. Supporting scholarships and afterschool programs, Chevron is perceived as working with the local government to care for young people at risk of social alienation and economic stagnation. Resourcing homelessness charities like the Bay Area

⁹⁸ I had an interesting conversation with Andrés Soto about this and he was one of the few climate justice activists in the city who is seriously thinking about what it would like to just the refinery down through a just transition (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). He suggested that with support from local organizers, the city could force Chevron to pay into closure bonds to pay for the decommissioning and cleanup of the refinery site. He argued that weaning the city off Chevron would require even greater to commitment to a just transition which Chevron would have to pay for (and I would add, considerable external resources).

Rescue Mission, supporting housing charities, and funding lunches for children who cannot afford them through the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program, Chevron is providing services that after decades of neoliberal cuts and privatization local governments are not providing themselves ([Chevron 2012](#)). These are services residents come to depend upon and without which life would be much harder. Over decades of neoliberal cuts, rollback and privatization of government services, Chevron has taken over the role government is supposed to play with charitable giving and corporate philanthropy.

It is crucial to remember here, that much of the rollback of government services in Richmond has been a result of the domination of municipal, statewide and national legislatures by corporate interests. Additionally, the crumbling social fabric and economic blight to which Richmond was subjected were exacerbated by Chevron's decision to build a shopping mall just as Richmond's downtown shopping area was recovering from a series of riots and white flight. Competition with this mall proved near impossible and much of the downtown economy dried up as a result. This further impoverished the community and created the conditions in which dependency would thrive. Thus Chevron, Chevron-backed councilors and establishment elites helped legislate the very policies which led to the rollback of government services and economic desperation in the first place. They could then take advantage of these conditions to take over the services previously provided by local government and foster dependency on the company's goodwill. This is an important part of how the fossil fuel industry creates situations of dependency on its benevolence and how the relation of compliance gets conditioned.

Finally, one of the tools Chevron has used to intervene in and exploit relations of compliance is the Community Benefits Agreement. In return for the modernization permits, Chevron ultimately agreed to pay the city \$90 million in community benefits. \$35 million was ringfenced for a scholarship program to provide all graduating high school seniors with a \$1000 grant to help pay for college tuition. The rest of the money is being directed towards city led sustainability and decarbonization projects. These have included programs to train young people in the renewable energy sector and to develop a renewable energy economy in the city. In the agreement Chevron also donated several acres of land for a solar farm run by the Community Choice Energy Aggregate, Marin County Energy.

Just like the services people come to depend upon, these agreements become tools of compliance because decades of corporate rule has dispossessed the city of a great deal of community wealth. Bankrupting the city and its residents through years of neoliberalism and then offering to pay a small amount of that wealth back only when it is advantageous to a corporation's interests may be a flagrant instance of injustice, but it also a significant assertion of hegemonic power through the relation of compliance. This is because the conditions of underfunding it has partially helped create constrain the choices available to the city's residents and the company's opponents. Thus, when Chevron offers millions of dollars to improve living conditions in the city, it is very difficult for residents to turn them down. As this case illustrates, members of the city council capitulated to Chevron over the modernization program, in part, because Chevron had first reduced the city into a situation of dependency so that it had little choice but to accept the benefits Chevron offers. As conditions are constrained by the company, benefits agreements are used to intervene in

relations of compliance by providing dependent communities with a source of desperately needed revenue.

In sum, Chevron's long history as Richmond's economic powerhouse and primary benefactor has made it very difficult for some residents to imagine a Richmond without Chevron. This reinforces what Gedicks calls a "psychology of inevitability" (1993). This is a disposition where even most climate justice activists cannot countenance the possibility of closing down the refinery any time soon. Compliance thrives in situations of economic desperation where few other economic opportunities exist. This has very much been the case in Richmond (although it is changing now). Thus, a combination of neoliberalism, white supremacy, and austerity politics at the turn of the millennia, which gutted the city's economic base and unraveled social fabric, have given rise to a dynamic of dependency. Along with dependency on jobs and tax revenue, the Community Benefits Agreement reinforced relations of compliance even when the community is fully aware of the risks the refinery poses. Nevertheless, with Chevron now paying a fairer share of taxes and with the support of the benefits agreement, the city is investing in diversifying its economy and perhaps, in this way, is finding a way out of dependence. However, only a just transition with leadership from Richmond's frontlines communities can ensure the community is able to break its dependency on the industry and reconstitute its dependence on corporations into a form of community interdependence.

Conclusion: Questions for the Climate Justice Movement

This chapter has situated the climate justice movement's confrontation with Chevron in Richmond in the city's history, geography, and contemporary political landscape. It has illustrated how the consequences and confluences of neoliberal disinvestment and deindustrialization, white supremacy and structural racism, corruption, and environmental injustice allowed petro-hegemony to thrive. The fossil fuel industry has developed a strategic hub for processing, exporting and importing fossil fuels in Richmond, and the Bay Area more generally. Refineries along the East Bay are retooling and upgrading their technology to process lower quality but potentially lucrative crude oil. For much of the last decade the frontlines of the fight to halt the import of heavier dirtier crude into the Bay Area has been in Richmond where activists sought to impose strict conditions on Chevron's refinery modernization project. The project was ultimately permitted but at far greater cost to Chevron than it had originally anticipated. In the process the company has lost its 100-year control over the city's politics, economy and culture. In the process, Richmond is shrugging off its history of dispossession as its residents confront corporate power through movement vehicles like the local environmental organizations and Richmond Progressive Alliance. As a result, the story of an impoverished, destitute, and dangerous city is one that Richmond's residents and activists are actively resisting and rewriting.

While much of the rest of this dissertation looks into the specific strategies climate justice activists developed to win significant counter hegemonic victories against the company, in this chapter I provided a narrativized timeline to highlight the fifteen-year period over which Chevron's hegemonic status has been successfully dismantled. I then demonstrated how Chevron and the broader fossil fuel industry developed and maintained hegemonic status in

the city for so long. Exploring the different relations of power contained by hegemony, I investigated the mechanics by which interventions in consent, coercion, and compliance have maintained and advanced Chevron's hegemony in Richmond. As I did Chapter Three, and by way of concluding this chapter, I want to draw readers' attention to four questions and observations that I encountered through this case study and which animate the conversations about the composition of the carbon rebellion in the chapters to come. Some of these overlap with the questions I encountered in my research in British Columbia while others are specific to what I learned in Richmond. Together, these questions and observations concern the role of the state in climate justice strategy, the relationship between organizing and mobilizing strategies, the politics of accountability and the relationship between unity and difference in movement building discourses, and finally confronting the limits of the local through the question of scale. Below I highlight how different elements of this chapter and their relation to the framework developed in Chapter Two have given rise to these questions.

The role of the state in climate justice strategy

The role of the state in climate justice strategies is a crucial question being debated within the movement and the Richmond case provides a useful lens through which to assess it. Activists in Richmond have relied upon institutions of the state to deploy coercive power against the industry and hold it to account. This includes the strategic use of lawsuits, building movement infrastructure with the intention and capabilities of winning elections, and working through regulatory agencies to impose restrictions on the refinery's excesses. While we cannot doubt the fact that activists have met with some success through these institutions,

there is also always a danger that their political perspectives, strategies and tactics come to be coopted, deradicalized and neutralized through this form of engagement. Seeking electoral office, for example, often requires certain compromises in strategic orientations and values that others in the movement may not be willing to make. Working through the courts, meanwhile, may exclude many activists without the expertise, time, or resources to fight drawn out legal battles. On the other hand, as many activists explained to me, they are not unaware of these risks, rather they have sought to develop a democratic and accountable relationship between grassroots movements and the movement allies they get elected to city council. One example this case offered was the process of capturing state resources in order to create more opportunities for grassroots movements to assert themselves and their consolidate victories. In Chapters Six and Seven, I further explore the possibility of synergy between capturing state resources and how these might be funneled towards the climate justice movement whose members might then use them to prefigure just climate solutions outside the frameworks of state and capital.

The relationship mobilizing and organizing

This case study also illustrates an important tension within social movements over strategic preferences for community *organizing* on the one hand and *mobilizing* in the other. In general terms we might think of organizing strategies as those which build and grow social movements with close attention to the specificities of local context to create social change over time. Mobilizing strategies are more oriented to the rapid generation of political pressure through mass action and harnessing semi-spontaneous uprisings. Different schools

of social movement theory place different emphasis on each of these. Chapters Five and Six are loosely organized around organizing strategies in the former and mobilizing strategies in the latter. However, Richmond's activists indicate the importance of combining mobilizing with organizing strategies. One example is the RPA's commitment to community organizing in between election cycles which was combined with fast-paced mass mobilization during election seasons. Additionally, observing the timeline of struggle as it has unfolded over fifteen years, patterns of organizing and mobilizing periods became observable in the city. For example, for two- or three-year periods at a time it might seem that activism had gone quiet when in actual fact these were the periods during which more resources were being devoted to the patient, quotidian work of community organizing. Then, seemingly all of a sudden, excited and frenzied periods of action would erupt in apparent spontaneity. However, these moments are in fact connected and could be made to operate cyclically. The moments of mass mobilization and activity are made possible by the months and years of community organizing that take place between them. Meanwhile, the moments of mass mobilization infuse community organizations with new energy and new members. In Chapter Seven, therefore, I examine the relationship between organizing and mobilizing in greater depth and demonstrate how mobilizing and organizing strategies may complement one another as they are deployed in a cyclical manner.

Accountability and the relationship between unity in difference

The internal constitution and structure of the RPA and its relationship to other environmental and climate justice organization in Richmond raise important questions about alliance

building and accountability across different relations of privilege and politics. On the one hand, the RPA provides important lessons for how activists across a broadly leftist spectrum of radicals and reformers might work together in a commitment to what George Lakey calls “revolutionary reforms.” By this he means an accumulation of reforms to a system that then open up the possibility of revolutionary action and further radical social change. Activists’ ability to work across strategic and political difference rather than descending into impotent purist factionalism is to be commended. However, these alliances are rarely without friction and come at a cost. In particular, this is true where differences are distributed not just across ideology but across intersections of race, class, gender and other relations of material privilege. RPA activists certainly encountered these tensions and they have sometimes threatened the alliance’s longevity. Yet, RPA activists have also been working to establish clearer accountability structures that are more cognizant of intersectional oppressions and privilege within the movement. Negotiating the relationship between unity and difference is necessary both in everyday movement practice but also in the narratives and discourses of alignment that activists have used to broaden their base and develop alliances across social struggles. Narratives that build alliances often erase important relations of difference. Thus, through an exploration of a term I call *intersectional populism*, I problematize the process of alliance building, practices of accountability and trust, and the relationship between narratives of universalism and particularism in Chapter Five. In Chapter Seven, meanwhile, I discuss the possibility of a spectrum of strategy and how it may be used to coordinate differences between strategic orientations within the movement.

Scale and the limits of the local.

Finally, this case study very clearly illustrates the limits of localized community struggle in the face of an industry's whose operations exist far beyond the local context. This case provides examples of how the industry's hegemony exists at multiple scales and how it may use its influence at the regional or national scale to compensate for its loss of hegemonic status at a local scale. The industry's influence over the passage of AB 398 is one important instance of this dynamic. Moreover, it indicates that activism at the local scale alone is not enough to counter the hegemonic status of an industry that operates at multiple scales. As such the movement must engage with questions of at which scale its interventions may be most strategic, and moreover, the scale to which the movement itself must, and can, grow to combat the global proportions of the fossil fuel industry.

Furthermore, this case demonstrates the ways petro-hegemony shapes and is shaped by its interactions with neoliberalism, class, and structural racism. It showed how different power relations interact with intersectional forces of oppression within Patricia Hill Collins' "matrix of domination." Confronting both the global proportions of the industry and the broader, revolutionary, scope of action needed to dismantle the matrix of domination, the climate justice movement must consider the manner in which it scales up. Here questions of scale intersect with questions of democracy, accountability, strategy, ideology and the revolutionary potential of this movement. I take up these questions in Chapter Eight by comparing the process of aggrandizement to scale and aggregation to scale.

To conclude, then, this chapter has provided practical examples of the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two and illustrations of the ways petro-hegemony operates in contextualized specificity. Both the case study chapters and Chapter Two have been constructed in conversation with one another. Thus, much of the framework theorized in Chapter Two emerges out of, and has been adapted and evolved in conversation with, my field research and observations from the frontlines of climate justice movement. Together, these three chapters offer insight into the theoretical and empirical functioning of petro-hegemony. The following four chapters examine different dimensions of the counter hegemonic response to petro-hegemony – the emergence of the carbon rebellion. This chapter has indicated some of the interventions climate justice activists used against Chevron, the following chapters organize these into the carbon rebellion framework to assess their strengths and limitations and explore the different questions they raise. I have offered these case study chapters not as the definitive history of struggle in either context, nor as evidence of the existence of petro-hegemony, but rather to illustrate theory in relation to practice and provide readers with an understanding of the social conjunctures in which my study into the operations of petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion has been carried out. While I use this framework to generalize my findings through the rest of the dissertation, it is the specifics of the struggles I have described that makes all the difference in this investigation into the strategies, tactics, and narratives of petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion on the frontlines of climate justice.

PART 3: ORGANIZING AND MOBILIZING THROUGH THE CARBON REBELLION

Chapter 5 – Building Blockadia: The counter hegemonic politics of alliances, alignment and discourse on the frontlines of climate justice

A social movement is a shared story – Patrick Reinsborough

To change everything, we need everyone – The People’s Climate March

Introduction

If the climate justice movement is to shift relations of consent away from the fossil fuel industry and around a vision of climate justice instead, it must engage in the process of aligning diverse interests, actors and social struggles into broad-based alliances that are able to contest and replace the industry’s hegemonic status. This chapter explores the role that narrative and communications strategy play in contesting the fossil fuel industry’s legitimacy, winning support for climate justice, and developing alliances across social difference. Along with discourse, however, it also examines the material dimension of alliances centering movement practices of accountability and the forging of solidarity through realizing shared material interests. In so doing, I avoid a singular emphasis on either the discursive or the material dimensions of solidarity and argue both are critical and inextricable. In less abstract terms, I explore the process of aligning diverse social groups through the political cultures of opposition and creation developed in the case studies described in the previous two chapters (Foran, Grosse, and Gray 2017). As such, much of this chapter’s contribution to the dissertation concerns community organizing and the

strategies, narratives, and tactics, climate justice activists use to organize their communities into alignment against the industry.

This chapter responds to Gramscian insights into waging the war of position, forging a historic bloc, articulating chains of equivalence, and how these have informed a recent surge in climate populism (Bosworth 2018; see also Laclau and Mouffe 2014; Smucker 2017).

Through the PCOC, I argue that populist unifying discourses and stories play an essential role in building movements, holding alliances together, and reproducing what Rick Fantasia calls a “Culture of Solidarity” (1988). However, with Fantasia, I argue that alliances and solidarity rest upon more than discourse, and that our analyses of their construction should also consider shared material and economic interests, the praxis of accountability, and the bonds that are wrought through collective action. Movements that are able to respond to material interests and provide for day-to-day material needs, services and livelihoods, across social struggles, can build trust and accountability with the communities they seek align and organize. I will argue that a just transition may be able to help achieve this. Moreover, drawing upon Zoltán Grossman, I seek to amend the ways that populist discourses, and counter hegemonic intervention, often revolve around *a politics of the universal*, erasing material and historical power dynamics, privilege, difference, and the particular (2017). I introduce the term *intersectional populism* with which scholars and activists may negotiate the intricate tensions between the politics of universalism and the particular to address deep internal differences while maintaining an externally cohesive populist front.

If we recognize that social movements are, among other things, a shared story, then one of the most important activities movement builders can do is extend their stories to encompass the values, interests, and struggles of larger and more diverse constituencies. Reinsborough and Canning's "story-based strategy," changing the stories we use to interpret and make meaning out of the world around us, plays a crucial role in building alliances across identity groups and social struggles to grow social movements (2010). Discursive intervention is, therefore, a fundamental component of contesting petro-hegemony. Through developing their own PCOC, climate justice activists are waging a war of position against the fossil fuel industry, undermining its social legitimacy, and aligning consent to alternative social formations. Their most persuasive discourses tend to capture populist framings of connection to land, public health, corruption of democracy, just transition, and the articulation of a clear external enemy. However, populist narratives that seek to unite constituencies across difference often erase those differences and subtly, or not so subtly, reinforce existing dynamics of privilege and power. As such, I argue for an *intersectional* populism that aligns people across difference based upon their exposures to overlapping systems of oppression in which the fossil fuel industry is implicated. Discursively articulating intersectional populism is one thing, practicing it is quite another. Exploring intersectional populism in campaign praxis, I reinforce Moore and Kahn Russell's claim that collaboration across difference depends upon *active* accountability that confronts, challenges and ultimately dismantles historical and material dynamics of power and privilege (2011). This includes the materialization of a just transition beyond rhetorical promises and visions of climate justice futures that can foster *translocal* solidarity to grow the movement.

Drawing upon empirical Participant Action Research in Blockadia and the praxis of the campaign case studies, combined with the theoretical framework I developed in Chapter 1, I explore this chapter's arguments in four parts corresponding to four major themes. First, I analyze the discursive strategies and narrative interventions that these campaigns are deploying to grow the movement. Here I illustrate the efficacy of populist climate discourses and the points of intervention campaigners have exploited to fight the battle of the story. Second, I problematize the universalizing tendency of hegemonic and populist political strategy through the lens of intersectionality. I demonstrate the ways these campaigns are experimenting with intersectional populism to reach larger and more diverse audiences while remaining attuned to material, cultural, and historical particularities. Third, I explore the role of accountability and leadership in maintaining and reproducing alliances. Finally, I examine the ways alliances grow the movement through realizing, defending and advancing different potential constituents' material interests. This section also analyzes the ways material interests and narrative intervention might be combined to develop translocal climate justice solidarities beyond the contextualized confines of place-based struggle. I conclude with reflections on the significance of this chapter's interventions, their pertinence to wars of position, and how they may help us grow a PCOC for climate justice large enough to combat petro-hegemony at the different social scales it pervades.

Part 1 – Building a populist alliance against the fossil fuel industry: story and framing

Growing the movement through alliance building is a cultural intervention in relations of consent. It involves persuasion, discursive strategy, the construction of a PCOC, and what the

Center for Story-based Strategy calls “narrative power analysis” to unravel our opponents’ stories while developing our own (Reinsborough and Canning 2010). In Gramscian terms this means fighting and winning the war of position by articulating into alignment popular consent to an alternative hegemony (Haluzá DeLay and Carter 2016). A PCOC for climate justice is developed in the process of wresting consent away from petro-hegemony and around alternatives instead. As campaigners intervene in relations of consent, and successfully “change the story” in Blockadia, we can map the different points of intervention and discursive strategies that are already undermining the fossil fuel industry’s social license and forging a new consensus. As more people share and find themselves included in the stories climate justice campaigners tell, they ally themselves through the PCOC. The PCOC then encompasses more worldviews, struggles, and identities. New identities reflecting the values and interests of the different constituencies of the movement are developed and the movement grows and evolves – at least in theory. In practice, the process can be fraught with tension and is often undermined by internal divisions, alienating practices, and refusal to engage with particularity. The infighting and consistent failure of the Left to cohere around theories of change, visions of alternatives, or leadership models is well rehearsed. Nevertheless, the cultural politics of alignment cannot be abandoned, obliging us to engage with the strengths and limitations of different models of alliance building.

Laclau and Mouffe’s addition to Gramscian hegemony, in which they seek to “identify the discursive conditions for the emergence of a collective action, directed towards struggling against inequalities and challenging relations of subordination” provides valuable insight into how discursive intervention may be used to build counter hegemonic alliances across social

struggles and identities (2014, 137). Social movements must restructure “discursive conditions” by “articulating chains of equivalence” between struggles and identities. Discursively joining these individual struggles together, demonstrating their common ground and common enemies to articulate a new common sense, provides the basis of populist intervention in hegemonic politics. Fundamental to this praxis is the understanding that people are more receptive to meaning than truth. Narrative and discourse are the tools we use to interpret information and make meaning from it. Grounding these ideas in movement experience and praxis, Reinsborough and Canning explain how the process of articulation and alignment rests upon narrative intervention, or changing the stories we use to interpret and make meaning out of the world around us. As they write “stories are the threads of human life and fabric of human cultures” and therefore have immense political power (2017, 23). Movement actors can change the stories we use to make meaning and that shape common sense and thereby align many more interests, identities, and groups together in a populist rejection of the hegemonic order. Laclau and Mouffe understand counter hegemony as a populist endeavor in which discursive intervention aligns disparate groups into a united alliance that may take collective action (2014).

Poor communication and the tendency to earnestly explain “the facts” without delivering them in narrative form often stymie activist efforts to grow social movements, develop alliances with other social struggles, and establish common ground with broader constituencies of society. As Reinsborough and Canning write, “Too often progressives think that just because their story is factually true, it will be meaningful to our audiences, and therefore build our power. But the reality is just the opposite: if a story is meaningful to

people they will believe it is true” (2017, 24). Activists are good at telling each other “the story of the battle,” or narratives that mobilize an already active base, but often fail to fight “the battle of the story,” deploying narratives that persuade broader publics by challenging underlying assumptions, meeting people where they’re at, and “outcompeting opposing narratives” (ibid, 54). Fighting the battle of the story helps structure “information in a way that reaches and convinces people who are not already active supporters” (ibid, 59). The battle of the story communicates new meanings and challenges dominant discourses so that people come to identify more with the new stories than the old ones and consider themselves part of the social movement’s story.

Critiquing those who only tell the story of the battle, Jonathan Smucker identifies a dilemma in social movement spaces that he calls the *Political Identity Paradox*. He finds that “while political groups require a strong internal identity to foster the commitment needed for effective political struggle this same cohesion tends to isolate the group” (2017, 96).

Camaraderie, solidarity, ideological commitment, and expressing group identity form the basis of cohesion and resilience necessary for collective action. They can also alienate people outside the group. This isolation produces, and is produced by, activist enclaves that are more concerned with expressing activist identity and credibility than actively engaging with hegemonic power relations. These isolated groups tend to be defined by “the story of the righteous few” into which only the “purest” political expressions of radicalism are allowed to enter (2017, 94). These groups establish their own rituals, norms, and reference points that exclude outsiders. This internal ordering becomes a barrier to entry and is the opposite of populist counter hegemonic politics. Often activists’ appearance, language, and framing

stories “inoculate” broader social constituencies from engaging with their message, preventing them from winning wars of position or fighting the battle of the story. Willingness to open up these spaces with story-based strategy that can unify groups across different identities and politics, can help grow the movement and break down exclusionary practices.

To avoid political isolation, discursive interventions need to be deployed with intended audiences in mind. The 2014 People’s Climate March that brought over a million people into the streets around the world was famously organized under the slogan “to change everything, we need everyone.”⁹⁹ While rhetorically effective it is, as the organizers were aware, also untrue. The CJM doesn’t need everyone and we certainly won’t win everyone’s support, but we do need to persuade and engage many more constituencies than currently compose the movement. Reflecting on organizing around the People’s Climate March, 350.org strategist, Cam Fenton, argues that the climate justice movement must movement beyond the “big tent” approach to movement building. He argues that rather than looking up at the ceiling of the big tent and what unites the movement over our heads, for example climate change, we should look down at the ground beneath our feet and think about the shared connections between struggles. As Fenton puts it:

There needs to be enough room to move that the tent itself can be relocated through conflict, disagreement, negotiation and shared strategizing. Without this, the big tent will stagnate rapidly, accepting the lowest common denominator of agreement among

⁹⁹ The People’s Climate March was an attempt to reach larger audiences by redefining the dominant narratives positioning climate change as an isolated environmental problem. The 400,000 strong march in New York was led by frontlines communities under the banner “Frontlines of Crisis, Forefront of Change” signaling a shift in the climate movement’s framing away from polar bears and melting glaciers towards more immediate impacts on people. However, given how broadly inclusive the march was, and the organizer’s refusal to name their opponents, there is some debate as to whether it constitutes a march for mainstream “climate action” or a march for “climate justice.” See Smucker and Premo’s article *What’s Wrong with the Radical Critique of the People’s Climate March* (2014) for more on this debate.

the groups in the tent rather than unifying around demands that are in line with the scale of change that we really need. (Fenton 2015)

In this way communication and alignment strategies might come to prioritize *connection* over *unity*. This means movements of movements cannot define themselves by the lowest common denomination they share in common, but rather must seek to forge what Adrienne Maree Brown calls critical connections across their differences (2017). I will return to this argument in later sections of this chapter and in Chapter Eight, but I preview it here as a caveat to the arguments about movement building that follow.

Prioritizing connection over unity, effective communication strategists can construct messages, develop narratives, and create “movement moments” that resonate with many different constituencies to help grow alliances and build the movement. One way of targeting different audiences is through the “Spectrum of Allies” (Moore and Kahn Russell 2011).

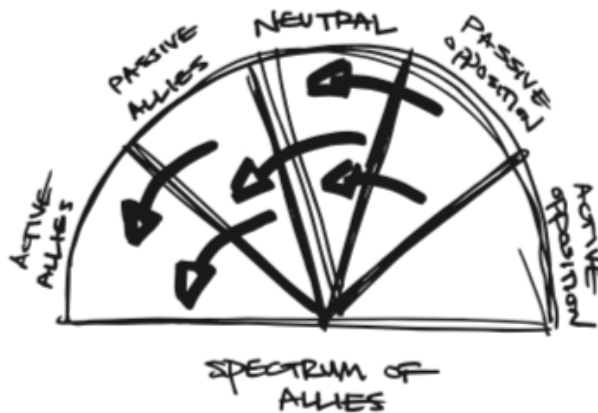


Diagram from Moore and Kahn Russell's *Organizing Cools the Planet* 2011

The Spectrum of Allies distills audiences into five categories and then subdivides them into more specific constituencies. The five categories are *Active Allies* who already support the movement and actively mobilize and organize with it, *Passive Allies* who support the movement but don't necessarily act on that support, *Neutrals* who either haven't heard about

the issues or are unaffected and disinterested by them, *Passive Opponents* who oppose the movement but don't act on their opposition, and *Active Opponents* who counter the movement's agenda and advance or defend their own agendas against it. Rather than wasting resources on trying to persuade the Active Opposition to join the Active Allies, campaigners should seek to move each group one category over to the left. The goal is to shrink the number of Neutrals, Passive Opponents, and Active Opponents, while growing the number of Active and Passive Allies. This gives communicators a better sense of their discursive intervention's objectives so they can design specific interventions that move Passive Allies into Active Allies or they can seek to move Neutrals into the Passive Allies' camp. Connecting with specific audiences' values, cultural reference points, and interests, or "meeting them where they are at," helps communicators develop stories that include new constituencies into the movement rather than alienate or drive them away.

Story-based strategy can frame information according to which constituency along the Spectrum of Allies activists are targeting. Frames are mental structures we use to interpret and process information or to focus and organize our attention. Framing is about triggering those mental structures using language, key words, or imagery that conjures a particular story or meaning in the minds of an audience. Facts without frames are rarely persuasive. As George Lakoff writes, facts must be "framed appropriately if they are to be an effective part of public discourse" (2014, 154). Frames "operate as pre-existing narrative lenses in our minds" (Reinsborough and Canning 2010, 121). Reinsborough and Canning explain that "since an audience's existing stories will filter new facts or information, change agents need to offer a new story" (2010, 46). New stories and reframing narratives expose and

undermine assumptions contained in dominant stories and frame the movement's facts couched in values more likely to persuade their audiences (Reinsborough and Canning 2010). Therefore, (re)framing narratives need to engage with shared values, interests, and cultural reference points. Meanwhile, campaigners can use specific points of intervention and movement moments with which to elevate their narrative and draw attention to the inconsistencies of their opponent's narratives. (Re)framing narratives become counter hegemonic tools when they are used in the war of position to challenge hegemonic narratives that provide the bases of consent, and forge alignment around an alternative narrative instead. These forms of discursive intervention shift the discursive conditions upon which consent to the hegemonic order rests and can articulate into allegiance a larger range of constituencies to oppose the hegemon.

Images and imagery are another crucial framing tool climate justice activists have at their disposal (DeLuca 1999). Indeed, "show don't tell" is important lesson developed through story-based strategy. Activist manuals suggest that rather than telling a neutral or passive audience that 'capitalism and the fossil fuel industry are evil and are at the heart of the climate crisis,' it may be more effective to illustrate this narrative with actions at different points of intervention which reveal these truths in a visceral, experiential way. Telling audiences these truths may trigger frames that inoculate them from engaging with, or lead them to dismiss, the message. Allowing the imagery to do the talking is often less likely to trigger those frames and may lead audiences into being more receptive to the message. Communications strategists and organizers suggest creating moments that demonstrate these truths with imagery that audiences can use to make meaning of them (Reinsborough and

Canning 2017; Alinsky 1970; Smucker 2017). Garth Lenz's photography of the scale of destruction wrought through tar sands extraction that have been shared virally online are good example of the ways imagery can undermine the social license of fossil fuel companies. Targeting specific points of intervention, like the gates of a refinery, a museum sponsored by an oil company, or the waterways through which oil tankers would traverse, allows campaigners to combine narrative and imagery to persuade larger and more diverse constituencies of their facts. Similarly, the construction of the Watch House outside Kinder Morgan's tank farm on Burnaby Mountain created imagery that directs audiences' attention to the conflict in the story and demonstrate who "the bad guy" is.

Studying the mobilizing and organizing discourses deployed in British Columbia, Richmond, and indeed at Standing Rock, reveals some clear trends in climate justice narratives, frames, and favored points of intervention. In all three cases campaigners deployed image politics, targeted new constituencies, undermined the narratives through which petro-hegemony maintains consent, and aligned different social struggles together through a PCOC for climate justice. Their narratives built upon populist discourses and universalizing politics in which "the community" or "the people" is positioned against an enemy or clearly named threat like "Big Oil," Chevron, the Dakota Access Pipeline, or Kinder Morgan. In all these cases the local community's health, resources, land, air, water, culture, self-determination and identity are identified as being in need of protection against outside dangers. This produces an "us vs. them" narrative and articulates into alignment a common identification with what Smucker calls "the We" in politics (2017).

In Richmond, for example, universalizing discourses framed the fight over Chevron's refinery upgrade in terms of public health and corruption of local democracy. Moreover, the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA) and the Our Power campaign captured public imaginaries with an emphasis on the city's regeneration through a just transition away from dependency on Chevron. Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions have played a secondary rhetorical role but are rarely centered in campaigners' narratives. During this struggle, city council elections, particularly the 2014 election, were points of discursive intervention that the RPA and Our Power campaigners captured and framed. This helped construct the impact of Chevron's refinery on the community as the election's 'wedge issue,' as RPA strategist Mike Parker explained. Meanwhile, Gayle McLaughlin emphasized the discursive impact the RPA's refusal of corporate money has had on city politics. Not only does it position candidates who do take campaign money from Chevron as being corrupted, but it also endows those who do not take this money with authenticity and genuine concern for the city's welfare. Articulating a polarizing "us vs. them" narrative, the 2014 election was successfully framed around corruption of local democracy and as a referendum on Chevron's influence on city council. Chevron obliged activists by reinforcing this frame and spending over \$3 million buying up every billboard in the city, sending out thousands of glossy mailers, and attacking RPA candidates in waves of television ads.

That same year witnessed Richmond's largest ever march and scene of civil disobedience on the one-year anniversary of the refinery fire. The demonstration focused discursive attention on the health implications of the Chevron's refinery and provided a point of intervention from which Our Power, the RPA, and other environmental justice activists could emphasize

the company's irresponsible approach to the health and livelihoods of the people of Richmond in the run up to the 2014 election. In addition, the Our Power narrative responded to Chevron's emphasis on the jobs and revenue it provided the city with a focus on the Just transition alternatives like solar cooperatives being experimented with in the city. This tapped into the growing sense that Richmond was emerging from difficult times and moving into a brighter future. Campaigners built narratives around these frames that wrested consent away from Chevron and developed consent around the visions of alternatives that Our Power and the RPA articulated.

While my interviews revealed climate change to be one of the primary motivations for activists' involvement in Keep-it-in-the-ground campaigns, rhetorically the fights are mostly defined by localized environmental and social justice concerns. With regards to the Trans Mountain pipeline fight in B.C., Dogwood's communication director, Kai Nagata, explained that climate change is not a frame that has activated large constituencies beyond those who are already involved in the fight (personal communication, May 17th, 2018).¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Dogwood's research and practice over the past 20 years suggests that their audiences "respond in a deeper and more lasting way to narratives around self-determination than around harm to the environment." Emphasizing the pipeline's local impacts, BROKE, 350 Vancouver and Protect the Inlet (PTI) activists staged a series of "die-ins" outside the tank farm where the pipeline would terminate to draw attention to the hazardous materials being transported through the city and the potential health impacts of fires or other accidents occurring at the facility. These die-ins's imagery implied a populist narrative about threats

¹⁰⁰ Kai later told me that this has started to change as the climate crisis increasingly framed the Canadian elections in 2019 and with the influence of the youth climate strikes throughout that same year.

the company posed to a clearly defined “public’s” health. Localizing frames emphasizing impacts at the pipeline terminus in Burnaby have been used to connect broader critiques of the pipeline, like climate or colonialism, to the community’s own points of reference and interests. According to Kai, communications strategists are increasingly recognizing that “the future is going to be local in terms of politics and in terms of how you reach people, who you have credibility with, and in terms of crafting policy solutions.” This helps explain why Burnaby’s activists’ stories framed the fight against Kinder Morgan in terms of the pipeline’s local implications rather than on the more global terrain of climate politics and fossil fuel supply chains. It is a paradox that populist climate justice narratives rarely center climate change.

Populist narratives that unite a group around an articulation the “We” in politics, and defined against a “them,” often take on universalizing resonances in order to extend the sense of “We” as far as possible in order to build alliances across as many constituencies as possible. A universalized version of “us” positioned against a monolithic “them” is a hallmark of populist politics on the Left and the Right. This is because populist narratives help build and share the kind of collective identity, vision, and purpose defined against an outside “other” upon which movements thrive. Standing Rock’s meme #WaterIsLife became what Laclau calls “a floating signifier”¹⁰¹ that established the “We” to which people of many political orientations, settlers and Indigenous peoples alike, could attach meaning. The statement

¹⁰¹ Ernesto Laclau’s floating signifiers are politically ambiguous discursive interventions that contain enough meaning to rally committed constituents but remain vague enough to allow people of many different political identities to attach their own meaning to them. They become powerful discursive tools when people of many different identities and politics can identify and rally around them. They are often associated with populist politics because of the politically vague cross-sectoral alignments they can produce. Occupy Wall Street’s “We are the 99%” is a good example, as was President Obama and his “Yes We Can” rhetoric (Smucker 2017).

itself, water is life, couldn't be more universal. Water forms the building blocks of life, without it not one of us could survive - it is the most common of common grounds. The viral images of police brutality being deployed upon the Water Protectors focus attention on a very clear "them." The violence used against unarmed Indigenous peoples and their allies shocked audiences, and in particular forced non-natives to confront whether they were an "Us" or a "Them." The images, narrative, and framing also moved many Neutrals into Passive Allies and Passive Allies into Active ones. Standing Rock's intervention demonstrated how, framing fights with the fossil fuel industry around public health, self-determination, water, and land, in other words establishing what we have in common, develops a larger us and a clearer them. Narratives that articulate what Grossman calls a common sense of place, common sense of purpose, and common understanding (2017), help articulate a new common sense, and so lay the foundations for counter hegemonic alliance building and political culture of opposition and creation.

Narrative is amongst the movement's most potent tools in waging the war of position against petro-hegemony. However, one may develop the most attractive narrative in the world, but it is worth very little if there is no way for an audience to receive it. As such, there are different points of intervention on the terrain of struggle defined by relations of consent that climate justice activists and the industry must fight over to mediate their discourses and win the war of position. These specific points of intervention are the cultural institutions, moments, and events through which discourse and common sense is mediated. By mapping our cultural landscape, it is possible to identify points of intervention where petro-culture may be vulnerable and where the narrative may be shifted. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* focused on

schools and churches that his Communist comrades could capture from Bourgeois hegemony and use these to mediate a new common sense that aligned broader constituencies of Italian society into a historic bloc. Religious institutions, schools, and universities are prime points of intervention but to these we must add mass and mainstream media, corporate news media, social media (including hashtags and memes), alternative media, museums, art galleries, sports teams, as well as community barbeques, town festivals, and so on (Duncombe 2014). Petro-culture can operate through all of these and much of the movement's cultural work must be to expunge its influence from them. Moreover, through capturing these media the movement also advances its own narratives and discursive interventions.

These platforms from which to mediate narratives are not level playing fields and tend to be heavily skewed in favor of the fossil fuel industry. Those with more resources tend to have greater access and influence over mainstream sites of mediation (Quiroz 2013). As much of the Left knows all too well, many of these institutions, particularly the corporate news media, are hostile to our politics and will often distort our messages, undermine our messengers, and erase our stories. As Kai Nagata told me of his experience working in Canada's corporate media:

When all of your reporters are afraid of losing their job and all of your advertizing revenue comes from, oh say government and fossil fuel companies, not to mention real estate developers and auto dealerships, the incentive for individual journalists to stick their head out and try to present a counterintuitive or alternate narrative is very low. (personal communication, May 17th, 2018)

These pressures, alongside the concentration of media in the hands of just a few companies that have an interest in maintaining the status quo, places the movement's narrative interventions at a disadvantage. Training activists in communications techniques that work

within the norms and confines of these institutions is important, despite these imbalances. At the Protect the Inlet Camp and at Standing Rock, for example, who was allowed to tell the story was carefully controlled, there was very disciplined messaging, and spokespeople stayed “on message.” However, for the time being the CJM is unlikely to capture major corporate news outlets away from industry framings and interests.

There are other points of intervention in which movement and industry are more evenly matched. College campuses and some religious institutions, social media outlets, viral images, memes, video clips and hashtags are all points of intervention that climate justice activists are often able to influence to contest Petro-culture. Indeed, as Lakota journalist and activist, John Bigelow, explained of his media work at Standing Rock: “We can establish our own voices now in media, we don’t have to depend on mainstream media to carry our songs and to carry our stories. Technology has levelled that playing field for us so that we can stand up and explain what *Mni Wiconi* means to the world” (2017). While the point is fast becoming cliché, it is clear that social media, and particularly the use of viral images and livestreaming, are now key tools through which to upend dominant media narratives. When campaigners are able to influence all these different points of intervention, they gain a legitimizing base from which to project their populist narratives and align more constituencies into allegiance.

Part 2: Negotiating the Universal and the Particular through Intersectional Populism

The task of counter hegemonic actors, as Laclau and Mouffe see it, is to discursively articulate the chains of equivalence between different irreducible political identities such that

they recognize their common cause and around which they may align to articulate a new common sense and take collective action against their common adversary. If this is to be one of the ways activists establish a PCOC through the carbon rebellion, then we must pay close attention to the mechanics by which it might be achieved.

Populist discourses draw into alignment an articulation of “us” or “the people” and of “them,” the excluded outsider that threatens “us.” One of the major differences between progressive and reactionary populism is the process by which constituencies are either included or excluded from the articulation of “us.” Where reactionary populism relies on race, ethnicity, religion, or nationhood to articulate cohesion around a particular definition of “the people,” progressive populism tends instead towards an articulation of shared interests, “the community” and the inclusion of all peoples across racial, class, religious and national identities and interests against “the rich,” “the 1%”, corporations, and so on (Laclau 2005; Smucker 2017). Both reactionary and progressive populism positions its articulation of “the people” against a perceived “elite,” although progressives’ claims that their politics will challenge the elites are arguably more authentic. Populism, particularly in times of hegemonic legitimacy crisis, becomes a potent discourse as the old ways of articulating identity, interests, and political possibility are challenged and competing claims on “the people” emerge to take their place. Climate justice campaigners are experimenting with populist rhetoric that unites large and diverse constituencies against the fossil fuel industry to keep fossil fuels in the ground, arrest climate change, and advance a just transition (Bosworth 2018). This unity, however, entails an erasure of important differences in privilege, resources, culture, identities, and histories of oppression. Indeed, erasure of difference is

inherent to, and to a certain extent seems to be the very purpose of, populism. Ignoring the tendency towards erasure contained within populist discourses and strategy can sow the seeds of division and resentment which lead alliances to crumble from within.

Kai Bosworth, writing on the populist discourses that brought Native and rural white settler communities together against the Keystone XL pipeline, explains how protection of land and resentment of outside corporate interests overriding local ones helped establish the “Cowboy-Indian Alliance” that has posed a significant threat to the completion of the pipeline (2018). “The land” was the populist frame that brought these different constituencies together, but it also had the potential to erase cultural differences and the legacy of colonial exploitation existing between them. Connection to the land meant different things to the white settler landowners and Native communities. The frame’s ambiguity allowed relative cohesion between the groups but, as Bosworth writes, “because a critique of racial capitalism and settler colonialism was actively occluded by such a vague reference to land, populist resistance remained liberal and multicultural in character” (2018, 19). We know that there can be no just solutions to the climate crisis that do not address settler colonialism and racial capitalism. The question remains, then, how can anti-capitalism and decolonization in the context of climate justice be populist?

I found instances of populist discourses that raised similar questions in my own case studies. Petro-culture in Richmond, for example, has embedded Chevron deep in the city’s history and identity. The company presents itself as a benevolent neighbor without which the city could not exist. Activists seeking to disarticulate Chevron’s benevolence from the city’s

imaginary have focused on its corruption of local democracy and reclaiming democracy for “the community.” As McLaughlin told me of the RPA’s communications strategy, “we found that our prevailing message, or the message that really bound us together, was that we were corporate free, that the organization did not take corporate money, and that any candidates that we endorsed... had to vow not to take corporate money” (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Populist discourses that emphasized corporate corruption and reclaiming local democracy have certainly helped unite the community across difference but also risked a somewhat colorblind approach to how the impacts of corporate control of city politics are structured along lines of race and class. McLaughlin and the RPA certainly recognized that the refinery’s pollution disproportionately affects the health of the city’s low-income communities of color, but the democracy frame doesn’t necessarily capture this unless explicitly tied to who is impacted first and hardest by the corruption of democracy. As I’ll show later, Our Power campaigners worked hard to ensure narratives about corruption of democracy framed a broader discourse emphasizing environmental racism.

In British Columbia, populist narratives about protecting the province from the intrusion of a foreign (Texas-based) pipeline company that threatened the beloved coastline and coastal economy arguably facilitated the election of the Green Party-backed NDP government to office in 2017. Dogwood’s Director of Organizing, Laura Benson suggests that Premier Horgan’s stake in opposing Kinder Morgan’s pipeline is less about environmental concerns or First Nations’ rights and title and more about “standing up for BC” particularly when, as she notes, Kinder Morgan’s pipeline “became this bizarre rhetorical national political debate” (personal communication, May 18th, 2018). Standing up for British Columbians against a

Texan oil company became one of the dominant frames in corporate media accounts. It is a populist narrative in so far as it claims to represent all British Columbians' interests and defines these against a foreign or outside threat. Meanwhile, Horgan's high-profile opposition to the pipeline on these terms has bolstered a reductionist media narrative in which the struggle is largely presented as a disagreement between the British Columbia and Alberta provincial governments with British Columbians selfishly undermining Canada's national interest. This narrative has often erased First Nations' stake and leadership in the fight in most corporate media representations, especially with regards to Kinder Morgan's failure to adequately consult with First Nations or gain their free, prior, and informed consent. The fact that the pipeline extension would be built on unceded First Nations' territory - legally recognized as such by the Supreme Court of Canada – is also invisibilized or obscured. While standing up for British Columbians remains a productive unifying frame, it hides one of the most significant motivations for First Nation's leadership in the campaign, namely asserting First Nations' culture, rights and title on unceded territory against colonial intrusion.

In his analysis of place-based environmental alliance-building between Native and non-Native communities, Zoltán Grossman identifies two, often competing, social movement narratives tending towards either *universalism* or *particularism*. Drawing upon Laclau, Grossman understands particularism as an assertion of “the particular differences between racial/ethnic groups or other groups based on gender, sexual preference and other social identities” (2017, 10-11) Meanwhile, universalism “asserts common ground or the similarities between groups that claim inherent differences” (ibid). Populist narratives tend to

universalize a set of shared interests across the social constituency identified as “we” or “us”. Emphasizing common ground, these narratives articulate common sense or consensus around which constituents imagine their own role and stake in the social movement’s story. Universalizing discourses therefore play a decisive role in developing and growing counter hegemonic alliances. Particularism, on the other hand, is often associated with identity politics and might be considered antithetical to counter hegemonic projects because of a perceived rejection of common ground and consensus. Identity politics recognizes the distinctiveness of particular marginalized groups where the group’s identity is leveraged to make political claims for greater representation, participation, and self-determination. An assertion of difference is also an assertion, and sometimes privileging, of a particular identity, stake or history, and a call for autonomy or self-determination. As Smucker points out, particularism can be a trap into which activists fall when they prioritize the performance of the identity of the group over strategic engagement with hegemonic power relations (2017).

Explaining the dangers of each, Grossman demonstrates how “particularist movements face the risk of local isolation and failure to confront national or global systems that are the ultimate source of their problems,” while “universalist movements face the risk of abstracting or homogenizing local differences and locking in inequalities within a “unified” society” (2017, 12-13). Particularism is often dismissed as divisive identity politics, antithetical to alliance building or establishing counter hegemonic consensus while universalizing discourses are extolled for their ability to construct unity across difference (ibid). Through what I’ve termed *intersectional populism*, however, I want to argue that a synthesis of particularism and universalism is, in fact, a much more productive approach to counter

hegemonic alliance building than is prioritizing one or the other tendency on their own. Successful alliance-building must reject the negative tendencies of each while embracing and synthesizing the constructive components of both. This may also help circumnavigate the Political Identity Paradox Smucker describes as a limitation to growing social movements.

Grossman devotes his book to a study of how the competing tendencies between universalism and particularism might be negotiated and synthesized. Building upon his analysis and placing it in conversation with intersectionality theorists Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990), I've observed campaigns negotiating universalist-particularist tensions through the discourse and praxis of intersectional populism. The theory and practice of intersectionality is often, negatively and unfairly, associated with the divisive elements of particularist narratives emerging from identity politics (Hancock 2011).

Intersectionality explains how different oppressive forces intersect with identities or social categories to produce different intensities and experiences of oppression. On the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality and so on, an individual can experience multiple intersecting oppressive forces at once like class inequality, structural racism, and patriarchy. The specific experience of oppression is unique to those identities occupying the intersection of these multiple and combined oppressive forces. Intersectionality's connection to identity politics and particularism is therefore quite clear: the specificity of oppression based on, for example, the intersections of race, class, and gender, necessarily produces a distinctive set of political claims, forms of representation, and modes of political action and praxis.

Patricia Hill Collins explains the ways intersectional identity groupings politically mobilize the particularity of their experience to make claims, gain representation, and establish the distinctive nature of their position within what she calls a matrix of domination (1990). Yet she also critiques how intersectionality may be interpreted as a method for quantifying and ranking oppressions. Constituencies might add up the number of oppressive forces they experience to privilege the perspectives and politics of those who rank highest (1990). This ranking of oppression is often referred to as playing “the Oppression Olympics” in social movement spaces. It can lead to a divisive political praxis of silencing and establish perverse hierarchies that “thwarts rather than facilitates democratic deliberation and political solidarity within and between politically relevant categories of difference” (Hancock 2011, 4). Collins argues for an “interlocking” instead of an “additive” approach to intersectionality (2012). As she writes, “The significance of seeing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression is that such an approach fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions” (2012, 228). By presenting these systems of oppressions as interlocking within a “matrix of domination” she demonstrates different ways to think inclusively about oppressions. In other words, rather than ranking oppressions, intersectionality can be used to connect groups across and in response to systems of oppression. The matrix of domination makes visible the common sources, or matrix inputs, from which intersecting oppressive forces emanate. This moves praxis beyond a crude and potentially divisive ranking of oppression and instead forms the basis of solidarity across multiple oppressions from which collective action may be taken to address common sources of domination (Hancock 2011).

The matrix of domination simultaneously enables conceptualizing the distinctiveness and specificity of exposure to multiple intersecting oppressions as well as the interactions, connections, and relationships *between* different oppressive forces and differently oppressed groups. Collins uses the phrase “intersectionality as critical praxis” which “sheds light on the doing of social justice work” as a way to understand how social movements use intersectionality to build solidarity across social struggles against different-but-connected systems of oppression (2015, 16). Intersectionality as critical praxis engages the matrix of domination to identify the common sources of domination and suggests at how collective action might confront those common sources. It forces us to recognize common adversaries and common ground between social struggles, while paying closer attention to the interplay between unity and difference that an intersectional response to domination rests upon. This praxis goes deeper than simply identifying a common adversary and mobilizing against it, however. It is about recognizing that, as Audre Lord famously said, “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” It recognizes that our struggles against systems of oppression intersect and are interrelated. The climate justice movement is developing multilayered alliances, discourses, and tactics, based upon the configuration and articulation into alignment of different social identities that cohere around addressing the multiple interconnected systems of oppression from which climate injustice emerges.

Intersectional populism is a discourse and a praxis that balances and synthesizes the particularism defined by unique exposure to intersecting oppressions, while also universalizing struggle by articulating into alignment an “us” - comprised of the different

particular groups facing different oppressive forces - against a “them,” or the common sources from which these oppressive forces emanate like the drivers of capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism and so on. Intersectional populism as a discourse advances the understanding that oppressions are connected but differentiated and stratified by gradation and degree. Intersectional populism as praxis revolves around the assertion of differences that can’t be set aside but must be “worked through” between movement constituents. Meanwhile, alliances built upon intersectional populism are only possible if there is an understanding that the constituent struggles within the movement are differentiated along particularist lines, corresponding to histories and dynamics of power, privilege and marginalization that must be addressed rather than “put aside.” Only then can constituents truly be accountable for their own roles in dismantling oppressive or marginalizing movement practices and truly consider one another as allies. Therefore, intersectional populism isn’t just about connection across difference, but connection based upon difference. The ability to articulate common ground against a common threat, and reach new audiences where they are at, while simultaneously working to dismantle internal differences in power and privilege defines intersectional populism.

Synthesizing universalism and particularism through intersectional populism is strategic not only because it helps forge a PCOC for climate justice, but also because it can mobilize unique positions or advantages held by certain movement constituencies to the whole movement’s benefit. Doing so has to be reciprocal rather than extractive or exploitative, however. For example, Grossman explains how the Native/non-native environmental alliances he studies have “creatively negotiated the tensions between particularity and

universality and [have] attempted to interweave *them by identifying Native self-determination as a way to protect the land and water for everyone*” (Grossman 2017, 13). Here, Native self-determination, or asserting rights and title, articulated as particular, helps advance the climate justice movement’s interests as a whole e.g. protecting the land and water. Fighting for the liberation of particular constituencies of the broader movement must be seen as advancing the interests of the broader movement and not a distraction from them.¹⁰² I’ve observed examples in my own research where nascent versions of intersectional populism resting upon opposition to the matrix of domination in which the fossil fuel industry is implicated, are aligning broad and diverse groups into a counterhegemonic PCOC for climate justice.

In their confrontation with Kinder Morgan’s pipeline proposal, First Nations and Indigenous activists, grassroots community organizations, and NGO groups seem to have worked through some of their historic tensions and developed sturdier alliances that encompass a wide range of identities, stakes, and political orientations. The praxis and discourse of intersectional populism developed within the movement may help explain why these groups have been work through these deep rooted antagonisms. Many of these groups articulate populist alignment through connection to place, common sense of place, and the need to protect it. Indeed, the messaging around protection is even framed through different organization’s names like Protect the Inlet, Our Sacred Trust, Coast Protectors, and the creation of the Watch House to alert the community to danger. These Indigenous-led initiatives advanced an invitation to all those who cared about their home to defend it from

¹⁰² We must also engage with how struggles are presented as universal or particular in the first place. Why is Indigenous peoples struggle for self-determination a particular interest, while protecting water and land a universal one? Who gets to decide what is particular and what is universal? These are questions the movement must confront as it advances intersectional populism.

intrusion. At the same time, they also required newcomers and movement constituents to understand whose unceded land they are living on and seeking to protect. As several older white grassroots activists told me, they have had to learn that protecting the land from intrusion must also involve recognizing whose land it is in the first place.

Asserting their rights and title to the land, Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Squamish First Nations have positioned their culture and unique connection to place at the forefront of the campaign's communications. First Nations leaders place themselves at the head of the marches and often speak first at rallies and meetings. Moreover, the protest/protection camps like Protect the Inlet are run according to Indigenous protocols and are considered a form of prayer. The land and coast remain a universalizing frame that unites the community across their particularisms. However, the discourses and movement praxis positioning First Nations, and particularly women, as the leaders of the campaign, because of their unique relationship to the land, has helped demonstrate why the intersecting forces of climate change, patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism that must be resisted simultaneously.

Despite important strides in developing intersectional populism, some intersections are still excluded from the narratives and praxis of climate justice activists' resistance to the Trans Mountain pipeline. As Greenpeace organizer, Mary Lovell, reminded me, while alliances between predominantly white environmentalists and First Nations activists are decolonizing white environmentalist paradigms and discourses, the connections between Vancouver's anti-racist organizations, immigrants' rights organizations and the Environmental NGOs or grassroots groups opposing the pipeline haven't yet been clearly articulated. Nor have, for

example, the farm workers movement in the lower mainland and anti-pipeline activists had much connection. Intersectional populism forces activists to consider not only how to work with immediate allies with obvious shared stakes, but also to build connections to other campaigns and movements and articulate their inherent interconnectivity. Climate justice activists, for example, still need to do more to demonstrate the connections between migrant rights, tar sands extraction, and climate change in the lower mainland (Walia and Kahn Russell 2014). Similarly, some connections have been made between the unions that organize Burnaby's refinery workers (and these workers did indeed oppose the pipeline), but a clearer articulation synthesizing universal interests with particularist ones must go deeper to establish a culture of solidarity between workers and keep-it-in-the-ground activists. Building these connections through narrative strategy at different points of intervention in the war of position will help the climate justice movement grow a much larger, more diverse and more resilient PCOC.

Moving from Burnaby to Richmond, democracy as a populist frame opened up a narrative about the intersections of race, class, and the environment to broader audiences. By articulating these intersections, climate justice activists have helped organize powerful community-led grassroots campaigns to take back control of city hall from corporate influence. The Our Power campaign has helped lead this initiative by emphasizing leading characters in the narrative being told that other people in Richmond can relate to. As RPA and climate justice activists sought to take back control of city hall, Our Power positioned Richmond's low-income communities of color at the forefront of the narrative. While frontlines communities' heightened exposure to pollution and toxins from the refinery is an

important part of their story, even more essential is the role they are playing in taking back control of, and revitalizing, the city. Through grassroots leadership in just transition projects like community owned solar power, urban gardening and food sovereignty, or training former oil workers and young people in the development of the city's renewable energy infrastructure, community members are demanding ownership of the just transition and the trajectory their city will take. Here reclaiming democracy doesn't just mean winning city hall, it means taking control of decisions that affect the community's lives directly.

Our Power doesn't just tell audiences about grassroots and frontlines leadership, it shows them. At the Our Power convergence in Richmond in 2014, organizers put together a series of short videos in which members of the Richmond community explained their stake in the fight. In one example, Mey Saechao, a member of APEN's community network, tells a story that would be familiar to many of Richmond's residents:

I have lived in Richmond for thirty years and since 2005 my illnesses have gotten worse. I live very close to the Chevron rail so if there was an explosion I would be the first to one to go... After the Chevron explosion in 2012 I tried but I didn't get the treatment I really needed.... Why can't they leave dirty oil where it is? Here it harms and kills us... I am happy to be part of this movement so my children and grandchildren can have green jobs and healthier lives." ([Saechao 2014](#))

Stephanie Hervey, also a resident of Richmond and a member of Communities for a Better Environment, recounts how she started working on climate justice and just transition initiatives:

When I got to Richmond and there was an explosion at Chevron, that's when I realized that I had to do something about this, that I was not going to sit by and allow some big corporation to just pollute the air and walk away without remedy and without accountability and so that's when I started to get involved with Communities for a Better Environment... This Our Power campaign...it's helping us realize who we

really are when we come together. It gives us the opportunity to talk amongst each other about solutions... We need to feel confident that we have the answers within ourselves, that we don't need anyone to tell us how to do this, we are in the front lines but we have a vision and so we also have a solution. ([Hervey 2014](#))

In her story, Hervey highlights how she helped develop a community-owned garden in what is being called Richmond's "Green Way" or Green Zone that is designed to protect Richmond's low-income communities from food insecurity and pollution, foster community relationships, and enhance food sovereignty. The imagery of the actual transitions being deployed are leveraged in these narratives to develop the belief that alternatives are possible and already exist.

The Our Power stories were then developed into shorter video clips and photos coupled with quotations from their testimonies that could be reproduced and shared across the social media via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Mey Saechao is depicted with a quote from her testimony superimposed on the photo: "We live everyday on the frontlines of the climate crisis – with illness and danger of explosions... I am happy to be part of this new journey so my children and grandchildren can live a better, healthier life" (ibid.). Stephanie Hervey stands beside her quote: "We have the expertise and people power to create a sustainable future. We won't wait, we are moving ahead and making a switch to a path where policy makers and corporations will soon follow" (ibid.). Experiencing the intersection of race, gender, pollution, and capitalist exploitation, low income people of color, particularly women of color, lead this movement and are positioned as protagonists at the forefront of the narrative and imagery Our Power shares. In both instances, the videos and images never needed to directly say 'we are anti-capitalist,' instead, through their imagery and language,

they positioned the consequences of racial capitalism as experiences much of the community could relate to and so accept their broader message.

While these communities are disproportionately impacted by Chevron's pollution, their stories and vision are ones that transcend their unique intersections. Activists concerned with addressing each intersecting force, for example people resisting pollution, or capitalist exploitation, or racism, may find common ground. They serve as examples of a discourse that brings people together around what they have in common while recognizing and working through what sets them apart by foregrounding the stories of those most impacted. In this way, developing shared narratives which center, and are told by frontlines communities, is a political intervention and also a pedagogical act. The rhetoric around the just transition in Richmond has developed through these examples of intersectional populism. The transition can connect people across struggles against capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and pollution but not without the leadership of and accountability to those most impacted at the intersections of these oppressions.

Narrative interventions in Richmond and Burnaby provide significant insights into the act of story changing, but it is Standing Rock's Water Protectors and their story-based strategy that provides some of the most coherent example of intersectional populism. This intervention was captured in the two versions of the Water Protector's viral meme "Water is Life" in English and *Mni Wiconi* in Lakota. Drawing upon intersecting oppressive forces, their story was both universalizing – water *is* life (there probably isn't an idea more universal and viscerally understood than that all life depends on water) – and particular to the Indigenous

identity and experiences of the Sioux – as expressed through *Mni Wiconi*, indicating that this was an Indigenous-led struggle for self-determination and a resurgence of Indigenous culture.

As Jaskiran Dhillon and Nick Estes write:

Mni Wiconi embodies the strength and wisdom of ancestral anticolonial struggles imprinted on the land and Mni Sose [the Missouri River]. It is also situated in the power and leadership of Indigenous youth and Indigenous women, who are foregrounding the way that colonialism functions through race, class, gender, and sexuality to create interlocking systems of oppression. (2016)

Mni Wiconi articulated these interlocking systems of oppression seeking to align groups along these intersections while refusing possible cooptation by settler-allies. The Water Protectors discursively navigated the complicated relationship between universalism and particularism. In most social media posts *Mni Wiconi* and Water is Life would often appear side by side helping advance intersectional populism. Moreover, on several occasions the phrase was used to connect the ongoing lead pollution of water in Flint Michigan, disproportionately impacting the city's majority African American community, and the fight to protect water at Standing Rock. From this particular intervention campaigners in the Movement for Black Lives issued a statement of support for the activists at Standing Rock, pledging their solidarity and several representatives joined the *Oceti Sakowin* camp ([Black Lives Matter 2016](#)).

Intersectional populism helps synthesize and balance universal and particularist tendencies within social movements. It aligns different social constituencies and struggles into alliances by emphasizing an inclusive, populist assertion of common ground while positioning the people most impacted at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression as the movement leaders. Each individual system of oppression brings different people into the movement.

Intersectionality thus allows us to see the connections between these oppressive forces. Intersectional populism develops a unifying and inclusive discourse in which people with quite different political orientations and identities can identify their own stake while asserting the leadership and accountability to the communities most marginalized by intersecting systems of oppression. Intersectional populist interventions fundamentally assert that your involvement in the movement must entail a willingness to engage in the liberation of your comrades against a threat that impacts all of you. When these discourses are deployed in different points of intervention with different audience in mind on the terrain of struggle defined by consent, they can help climate justice activists win the war of position by articulating common enemies and alignment around a common cause. This develops deeper and more resilient connection based on the understanding and willingness to work through the politics of privilege and intersectionality.

Part 3: Accountability and Leadership

Alliance building and growing the movement relies upon telling more inclusive stories, presenting more compelling characters, communicating with broader and more diverse audiences, and changing the discourses through which people make meaning out of the world around them. However, discourse on its own is not enough to build and maintain the trust, accountability, and leadership necessary for the deep, resilient relationships upon which all social movements thrive. Maintaining alliances requires the hard work of establishing accountability and relationship building for which there are no shortcuts. Solidarity and accountability are active relationships developed through movement practices, not just

discursive articulations of shared values. Here, then, we may think of intersectional populism as both a discourse and a praxis.

Partly because of their preoccupation with class as the privileged point of antagonism within capitalism, and partly because of their own biographies and contexts, Gramsci and many Gramscian scholars have not fully engaged with the question of accountability (Ekers et al.'s edited volume *Gramsci: Space, Nature, Politics* (2013) indicates this trend is changing).

While alliances across difference are of fundamental concern to Gramscians, the role of accountability and the maintenance of social relationships between different constituents of alliances have received less critical examination.¹⁰³ Even in their reflections on the role of “leadership” or “the organic intellectual,” Gramscians haven’t yet paid close enough attention to the maintenance and social reproduction of alliances through accountability and relationships within the movement (again Eker’s et al. offer an important exception).

Instead, it is black feminist thought, for example Adrienne Maree Brown’s *Emergent Strategy*, that has developed these ideas most coherently (2017). If climate justice activists are to articulate consensus around the movement and its vision, then practicing accountability and taking time to develop relationships between all the constituents, is the glue holding that holds the consensus together. Maree Brown has argued that “critical relationships” or “critical connection” as opposed to “critical mass” is the key to the success of social

¹⁰³ Jonathan Smucker is one of the few Gramscian scholars who does engage with the question of social relationships and dynamics of privilege within social movements. However, even here, his purpose is more to warn readers against prioritizing group culture and “the life of the group” over strategic intervention in hegemonic power relations, than it is to investigate the significance of the relationships to social movement alliances (2017).

movements. She urges readers to “move at the speed of trust.” Smucker’s intervention, which in many respects can be contrasted with Maree Brown’s, provides a great deal of insight about building critical mass but less about developing critical relationships and trust. I believe we need both and that their combination is critical to winning wars of position. Reflection on conversations and observations through my case studies illustrate some of the successes and limitations of climate justice activists’ attempts to practice accountability, build trust and develop leadership to grow the movement.

Accountability and the Politics of Privilege

The discourse and praxis of accountability in social movement spaces is often alienating, reflecting the Oppression Olympics and competition over who is the most “woke” or whose expression of activist identity is most authentic, that Smucker (2017) and Hancock (2011) warn activists against. At best, this version of accountability can identify relationships of privilege and encourage those who often take up a lot of space in social movement spaces, usually straight white men, to step back, listen, and learn. This is valuable and can help undo dynamics of marginalization and privilege within the movement. But it can also tend towards participants silencing themselves either out of defensiveness or fear of saying the wrong thing (Moore and Kahn Russell 2011).¹⁰⁴ At its worst, it reinforces unacknowledged hierarchies or otherwise alienates potential newcomers because they don’t believe they have the right language or cultural references to be able to participate or be respected in the group. As Moore and Kahn Russell write of accountability in social movement praxis: “that

¹⁰⁴ The defensive or disbelieving response many white people exhibit when they are confronted with ideas that challenge their notions of race and racism is what Robin Di Angelo (2018) calls “white fragility.”

conversation can feel like a field of landmines [and]... in a field of landmines, it's intimidating to take risks and to innovate" (2011, 31). Instead, developing on Moore and Kahn Russell, we can make a helpful distinction between *inactive accountability* and *active accountability* (2011). Inactive accountability is the practice of just doing what you're told and "not stepping on anyone's toes" (ibid, 34). Active accountability, on the other hand, is reciprocal and cyclical and is practiced intentionally with the purpose of establishing relationships in which collaboration is possible. Collaboration is the goal and accountability is a means of achieving it. Active accountability is a more productive, inclusive, and I would argue emancipatory, praxis than inactive accountability.¹⁰⁵ As I develop examples from my case studies, I will demonstrate instances of unaccountability, inactive accountability and active accountability.

In both Burnaby and Richmond, many of the grassroots community organizations contesting petro-hegemony were primarily, although certainly not exclusively, organized by older or retired white progressive men and women. This was true of the RPA and the Sunflower Alliance in Richmond and of BROKE and Pipe Up in Burnaby. Younger activists and activists of color often think of older white people with resources as being most resistant to changing power relations, and generally this tends to hold true. However, in organizing with frontlines communities (communities whose intersectional exposure to the impacts of

¹⁰⁵ To be clear, none of this is to suggest that straight white men whose privilege is most pronounced in dominant society should feel justified in taking up as much space as they often do. Active accountability is hard work and will often make people with relatively more privilege feel uncomfortable. Indeed, active accountability is inherently an uncomfortable and discomfoting process because it is intended to undo dominant paradigms and practices that activists bring with them into movement spaces, some of which activists don't even know they have. However, as newcomers join the movement, they may need community and empathy as they are learning difficult lessons. The praxis of "calling in" rather than "calling out" is a constructive rather than destructive approach to active accountability.

pollution, racism, inequality, and marginalization intensified their experiences of oppression), the older retired activists learned more about what accountability and privilege meant in the movement. As Pipe Up member, Michael Hale, explained to me:

I think the challenge for me, and this is probably in common with most people that have gone along a similar journey, was to check my privilege at the door sort of thing, you know, and that means being aware of it. And like a fish swimming in the water, you don't know the water that you're swimming in, it's just there. So realizing what privilege is and then overcoming the denial...that's quite a process. I've seen it with a lot of my colleagues at Pipe Up. And so we're kind of educating each other constantly and checking each other constantly and it's led to some interesting snafus, you know, and learning. (personal communication, October 9th, 2018)

Hale's particular experience of developing active accountability was derived from building relationships between Pipe Up activists and the Kwantlen First Nation in the lower mainland outside Metropolitan Vancouver. As many Pipe Up members learned more about their relative privilege and the continuing role colonialization has played in the conflict with Trans Mountain, they were able to build an alliance based on reciprocity in which white settler allies learned how to be accountable to First Nations leadership. As Hale suggests, the process was not without its "snafus" and is often discomfiting and deliberately "unsettling."¹⁰⁶ However, through recognizing First Nations leadership and practicing active accountability, this alliance of activists forced the local college, Kwantlen Polytechnic, to refuse funding from Kinder Morgan. Campaigners from the Kwantlen Nation told the college they would rescind its right to use their name if the college administration accepted what amounted to Kinder Morgan's bribe. The Kwantlen's unique position in this alliance allowed

¹⁰⁶ See *Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations* (Snelgrove, Dhalmoon and Cornassel 2014). As the authors suggest, the process of coming to terms with settler colonialism as a settler is supposed to be unsettling in all senses of the term, it could hardly be otherwise.

them to make this argument and convince the campus administration to reject the funding (Mendoza 2015). Hale explained how recognizing the Kwantlen's leadership and stake in this campaign helped the alliance win a small victory against Kinder Morgan. Hale's rendition of the story provides an example of an older generation of white climate justice campaigners grappling with the politics of privilege, practicing active accountability, and recognizing the ways that First Nations leadership advanced their campaign objectives.

I observed another example illustrating similar dynamics when a group of roughly 30 activists from BROKE, 350 Vancouver, Climate Convergence, along with the PTI organizers, met up at the PTI camp to plan last minute logistics for a die-in action that would take place the following morning. All those who are considered allies at the PTI camp must understand that Indigenous leadership is to be followed on site and their protocols are to be obeyed. All of us gathered that day, including the PTI organizers, were non-Indigenous. Indeed, the demographic was largely consistent with most of the grassroots groups I'd worked with: primarily over 60 and primarily white men and women (apart from the PTI organizers who were both younger and identified as gender non-binary).

The meeting went smoothly, until one disgruntled member asked why his life-size effigy of the Grim Reaper had been excluded from the die-in's visual props. The PTI organizers explained that the camp's First Nations' Elders believed the Western symbol and associations with Death would set the wrong tone at the action, despite it being a die-in. Clearly unsatisfied, the man who built the effigy wanted to know more about the decision-making process that seemed to him to be taking place without the group's input. This agitated quite a

few people and the sense of discomfort was palpable. The man was upset by what to him may have seemed like an undemocratic decision-making process and called on the PTI organizers to be more transparent about the way decisions were made. However, several of the older women then interrupted the confrontation and calmly explained to him the importance of following First Nations protocol on First Nations territory and how doing so was part of being an ally on unceded territory and was crucial to advancing the camp's purpose of asserting First Nations' rights and title. Perhaps the man was responding to gendered or ageist prejudice, but it was nonetheless a remarkable moment to witness people of this older generation explain privilege and solidarity with First Nations to each other in a way that deescalated the situation and convinced this man to reverse his position.

This otherwise somewhat minor event illustrates a good deal about the ways these older participants in the movement have been trained in allyship and how effectively they were then able to share their learning with their peers. Moreover, it exhibited a moment in which settler allies were productively calling each other in rather than demonstrate solidarity with First Nations activists - none of whom were at the meeting - rather than claiming moral superiority or point-scoring against each other's activist credibility. I raised this moment in an interview with Susanne from BROKE (who was also at the training) and she explained how quite a lot of members have been trained in allyship. Working under Indigenous leadership has forced them to do a lot of learning, listening, and reconsidering. This is a small part of the transformative praxis necessary for decolonizing relationships within the movement. However, while she emphasized the importance of following First Nations leadership, she also voiced some frustration at topics that, to her, were presented by younger

organizers as being taboo subjects. She told me that she and her peers need to talk about tensions around race, colonialism, and identity in order to understand them, rather than just being told how to behave (S. Jackson, personal communication, May 24th, 2018). This dynamic is hardly unique to Burnaby and it is crucial to decolonization that allies are able to have these profoundly *unsettling* conversations with one another in order to move from inactive to active accountability.¹⁰⁷ Only the negotiation and renegotiation of the terms in which these alignments are narrated will lead to the fundamental transformation in relationships required of alliances for climate justice.

Accountability must exist not only between individual members or demographics of the movement but between constituent organizations and organizational forms too. Historically, alliances between large environmental NGOs (ENGOS), grassroots community activists, and First Nations in British Columbia have been fraught (Vasey 2014). Many of the ENGOS have, often rightly, been accused of selling out radical activist groups, grassroots and frontline community organizations, and First Nations, and are called out for preferring to publicize compromise with corporations in the interests of appealing to funders. Meanwhile, some grassroots groups have been highly suspicious of, some might say paranoid about, engagement with any larger organizational bureaucracies and “professionalized” activism that do not share their political orientation or theories of change (ibid). In addition, some First Nations activists and leaders criticize the ways in which ENGOS remain highly colonized institutions that ‘talk-the-talk,’ often by tokenizing colonial oppression of First

¹⁰⁷ It is also necessary to understand that some Indigenous activists may be tired of explaining these politics to newcomers or find the process too painful. Having settler allies learn to educate each other to the extent possible may often be the most appropriate pedagogical approach.

Nations and cherry-picking or scouting for First Nations spokespeople, but rarely taking leadership from or being accountable to First Nations interests (Fuller 2019). As Mike Simpson has documented, the alliances forged against the Trans Mountain pipeline are not an exception. His own interviews with PTI activists suggest that some ENGOs' practices continue to reinforce colonial and oppressive dynamics at the Watch House and PTI camp, even as they claim to be in solidarity with First Nations (Simpson 2019). Clearly, tensions between all these organizations and organizational forms do still exist amongst activists confronting the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Mary Lovel was especially critical of the movement's failure to build broader coalitions between different organizations, political orientations and social struggles. In particular, many ENGOs still haven't fully developed a relationship of reciprocal and active accountability with frontline communities. Echoing, Maree Brown's insights into critical relationships, Mary told me that some ENGOs are participating in what she called "extractive organizing," which she defined as "organizing on an issue that you're not very familiar with, and... essentially mobilizing mass numbers of people, but not actually doing the harder emotional labor of building community strength and power." When these ENGOs seek to mobilize large numbers of people into taking action but fail to build meaningful relationships with people already on the frontlines, they lose the trust of those communities and accountability between the frontlines and the ENGOs breaks down. Moreover, while Mary acknowledged that "the movement against Trans Mountain has done a lot of work on decolonization and on understanding Indigenous rights," she also said it "hasn't done nearly as much work on racial and broader social justice and showing up for people who are most

impacted by climate change in a meaningful way.” She explained that there are migrant justice, racial justice, and farm workers’ rights movements in Vancouver and the lower mainland that many climate justice activists haven’t yet organized with, articulated common ground with, or aligned interests with. This, so far unrealized, potential for even broader based alliance building between social and climate justice organizations and groups in the region also suggests that climate justice activists must be seeking to develop relationships and accountability beyond those already established with First Nations and Indigenous activists.

Despite clear instances of the limitations of alliance building in British Columbia, my research does suggest climate justice activists are making progress in advancing active accountability – at least when compared to Vasey’s critiques of earlier environmentalist campaigning in the region (2014). Funneling resources and trained organizers to the frontlines of the struggle Greenpeace and Stand.org, for example, supported the Watch House and PTI camp with more than empty rhetoric. Indeed, the PTI camp was where many important relationships were developed and civil disobedience blockades at the tank farm gates became the sites at which the fruits of the relationship-building accountability and trust were made visible. The camp hosted members of many different political identities and strategic orientations who all agreed to the protocols established by the Indigenous leadership. The biweekly tank farm and marine terminal blockades always featured prayer and ceremony, reminding all participants that their struggle was not just one of environmental or climate protection but of defending and advancing First Nations’ rights and title. Meanwhile, members of BROKE, 350 Vancouver and Pipe Up, have all demonstrated

ways in which they are taking leadership from First Nations and confronting the politics of privilege without reverting to defensiveness and inactive accountability, or simply saying “just tell us what to do.”

Moreover, as several organizers were keen to explain, they believed that one of their greatest accomplishments was bringing together many different political identities and strategic orientations into a coherent coalition advancing different but coordinated strategies.

Dogwood worked on broader electoral strategies but was invited to run workshops at the PTI camp too. BROKE, 350 Vancouver, PTI and Pipe Up organized blockades and rallies at the Kinder Morgan pipeline terminus. These were supported by groups like Stand.earth and Greenpeace. Greenpeace also played an important role coordinating direct actions requiring more technical expertise. Events hosted by 350 Canada featuring environmentalist headliners like Bill McKibben raised money for legal defense funds for activists arrested in civil disobedience actions or blockading the tank farm gates. Climate Convergence, which emerged to bring an explicitly anti-capitalist critique into the local movement, also sought to decolonize their praxis while sharing spaces and strategies with more liberal activists to organize some of the campaign’s largest rallies and marches in downtown Vancouver. The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs kept the focus on the First Nations-led struggle in the media. The Tsleil-Waututh government contracted West Coast Environmental Law to advise and help construct the legal strategy, while the RAVEN Trust and Pull Together coalition raised money around the province for the costs of litigating against Kinder Morgan and the Canadian government. Without at least some accountability between the groups it is unlikely such coordination could have been achieved.

Despite involving quite different demographics, accountability amongst Richmond's climate justice activists looked similar to Burnaby's but involved the added nuance of what happens when some members of the movement gained a degree of institutional power, in this case on the city council. Many of my conversations with activists and council members about accountability in Richmond focused on how city councilors, backed by the RPA, remained accountable to the organization, how the RPA leadership in turn remained accountable to its membership, and how the organization as a whole remained accountable to other allied environmental and social justice organizations in the city. An inside-outside strategy in which some activists or campaigners seek roles within dominant institutions while others push those same institutions from the outside, almost inevitably yields the potential for imbalances of power and consequent barriers to accountability within the movement. Examples from Richmond demonstrate how activists were challenged by these dynamics and how they have sought to overcome them.

Dr. Henry Clark helped form the West County Toxics Coalition in the 1980s and was one of the original members of the Richmond Progressive Alliance. He has spent decades holding Chevron and other industrial polluters' responsible for their pollution but has recently been engaged in internal fights with the local environmental justice community and the RPA. He believes the RPA's approach to local politics, with the backing of environmental justice groups, has become just as undemocratic and dogmatic as the corporate sponsored officials they're replacing: "what's their end goal?" he asked, "do they just want to be RPA on the council forever?!" (H. Clark, personal communication, July 6th, 2018). According to Clark,

the RPA lacked accountability to the community and were operating for power's sake alone. Rifts have also developed between Clark and other environmental justice organizations, with some members of the latter accusing him of selling out to Chevron – an accusation he himself told me about and one he vehemently denies. These divisions seemed to escalate at the same time that the city council was engaged in negotiations with Chevron.

Indeed, some of the clearest instances of Richmond's climate justice activists confronting questions of accountability emerge in activist's reflections on the negotiations between Chevron and the city council that took place in 2010 and again in 2014. The product of these negotiations was that the city council voted in favor of Chevron's refinery expansion and continuing operations in exchange for increasing its share of taxes and signing a Community Benefits Agreement. Many activists believed the council should have demanded more from Chevron and levelled harsh criticism at the incumbent city councilors (Early 2017). In both instances RPA councilmembers were outnumbered and believed they played their hand as well as they could within the constraints of positioning themselves against a majority of councilmembers favoring a deal on Chevron's terms. However, these votes opened up important questions about the extent to which RPA-backed city councilors were expected to vote in line with RPA policy, and more broadly the local movement's agenda, versus making decisions independently of the RPA. The debate, whenever I raised it with RPA activists, was framed in terms of accountability.

Councilman Eduardo Martinez told me that accountability to the movement was about honoring the values he had been elected to represent: “[the community] can trust me by

looking at my voting record. They see what I've done, and either I walk the walk or I don't, and if I don't they can't trust me and if I do they can, so that's the accountability" (E.

Martinez, personal communication, July 9th, 2018). McLaughlin added that a distinction had to be drawn between decisions that RPA councilmembers could make independently and those that were of "fundamental concern" and required alignment with the RPA's agenda:

The elected officials who are part of this movement have to be in line with these fundamental concerns. And so how does one hold them accountable? Well, in terms of the RPA...if the elected official that has been endorsed by the RPA is not standing with the community on these fundamental issues, they will not get endorsed again... But it can be kind of uncertain at times, what are the issues of fundamental concern? ...That's something that the RPA is grappling with right now. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

The power differentials between the RPA "electeds" and the RPA organizers that helped get them elected are cause for tension over accountability that have yet to be resolved. This is particularly true in terms of alignment over where compromise is permissible and where red lines must be drawn. Nonetheless, both former Mayor McLaughlin and Councilman Martinez emphasized the extent to which they encouraged activists and community members to work with them to co-produce policy and mobilize the community in support of these policies (E. Martinez, personal communication, July 9th, 2018). They saw the combination of policy coproduction and community mobilization as a crucial component of maintaining accountability between elected officials and the broader movement in the city.

The question of accountability once asked, however, also led activists to voice their opinions about accountability internally, within the RPA, and between the RPA and the broader movement in Richmond. Diana, an RPA steering committee member, told me that when she first joined the group she was particularly concerned about the impact the organizational

structure was having on maintaining accountability between different constituents of the organization. When she joined the Steering Committee she argued for implementing a code of conduct and spending more time on what she called “process.” As she told me:

I come from a long tradition of faith justice communities and it's really interesting the amount of time we would spend on process and how we treat one another, but oftentimes we [didn't] get off those conversations in order to do things. And then [what] I find in political groups [is] they're so quick to get things done, they forget about how to treat each other.” (personal communication, July 6th, 2018).

Here she invokes the tension between Smucker's model of activism and Maree Browns' in which one group emphasizes relationships to the detriment of action and the other emphasizes action to build critical mass to the detriment of critical relationships. She explained that the threat to the group's internal cohesion was not irreconcilable political differences but “egos.” Process for Diana was about building relationships, creating structures, and developing a group dynamic that would mitigate divisions stemming from what she identified as egotism.¹⁰⁸ Accountability was therefore deeply connected to process and required more structure and bureaucracy than the what she argued the largely horizontalist orientation of the organization was then able to provide. Conversely, Bk, the RPA's current co-chair, suggested that it was its structure that made the organization accountable in the first place (personal communication, July 17th, 2018). RPA is a

¹⁰⁸ It is worth mentioning here that Diana left the RPA for a year following our interview. Diana later told me that, at the end of 2018, a number of very active members left the RPA over the issue of “unseemly behavior” mostly on behalf of one member whose angry outbursts through email and in person meetings became too much. This individual's naming, blaming, and shaming, in particular against two City Council members who voted against RPA positions, rose to a fever level. Diana left, as did two (and later a third) other prominent RPA members. Others had left previously because of this member's behavior. By October 2019 the RPA Steering Committee decided to oust this member from the Steering Committee and they put it to the Membership to vote on at the end of October, who ratified the decision. Since then, Diana and the other three members have all decided to return to the RPA. For her, the issue was always that the organization needed to treat all people with dignity and respect and that she could not remain in the organization while this unseemly behavior was allowed to continue on the RPA's Steering Committee (D. Wear, personal communication, December 10th, 2019).

membership-based organization and members vote on all major decisions, and these decisions are scrutinized by the membership and the local media. As she explained: “I think that accountability comes from knowing we're always under scrutiny and also a being membership organization.” Like many groups within the movement, the RPA is not alone in navigating the tensions between horizontalism and structure or bureaucracy. Yet, it seems that despite these tensions, and challenges most members do remain authentically and ideologically committed to being held accountable to the community and to the organizations’ membership.

Finally, activists discussed accountability in terms of developing relationships between the RPA and other local social and climate justice organizations. Diana explained to me that one of the RPA’s major goals when she joined the group was to deepen their commitment to inclusivity and diversity. They were aware that many of the constituents of the core team and steering committee did not reflect or necessarily represent Richmond’s communities of color. While most of the city council candidates RPA has supported have been people of color, the early team of organizers were mostly older white retirees. One way the RPA had already been addressing representation was by inviting members of Richmond’s other grassroots social and environmental justice campaigns onto the RPA steering committee - indeed several, like Andrés Soto with Communities for a Better Environment and Henry Clark with East Coast Environmental Toxics Coalition, were instrumental in the early development of the organization. However, Diana argued that simply inviting these organizations to the table wasn’t enough, commitments had to be made to deepening the relationships between these communities. This rested upon the RPA demonstrating active accountability. The RPA

standing behind Jovanka Beckles against racist and homophobic attacks during her election campaign and time as a council woman impressed Bk who, like Beckles, is a queer black woman:

The RPA, none of whom seemed to be, (at least that I could see), black queer folks... still presented a message of inclusiveness that stood out for me, watching Beckles and watching the RPA support her. So being able to see a very small group stand up for a person who seemed to be nothing like them, I thought that that was pretty powerful. And we talk about, you know, identity politics sometimes, and... I don't think we need to lead with that but I think it's important that when we're with this organization that doesn't look like the average person in Richmond, it's very important that people are able to see that the RPA actually does stand up and fight for people who aren't like them. (Personal communication, July 17th, 2018).

Even though most of the RPA didn't look like her, showing up to these fights and challenging racist and homophobic attacks meant Bk felt like the RPA's activists were walking the talk. This led her to take more interest in the RPA and ultimately take up her position as co-chair. While anecdotal, this example reinforces an important lesson about active accountability which is that this praxis is not just about educating, listening, learning about privilege but involves actively seeking to dismantle systems of oppression and "showing up" for the struggles other members of your group are fighting. Again, while not without its limitations, the RPA's commitment to accountability and relationship building appears authentic and indeed authenticity has always been the RPA's major appeal. Indeed, very public indications that this commitment was coming under pressure was one reason why the RPA ended up losing seats in the 2018 elections (Geluardi 2018b).

Active accountability, therefore, is about doing the hard work of learning from and honestly educating your allies and comrades about how power dynamics within the group can reinforce marginalization and acting to dismantle them, while ensuring this education

happens in a way and in an environment that remains open and welcoming so that collaboration across difference remains possible. It is also about showing up for different constituents' struggles, building trust, and developing the critical relationships necessary to hold alliances together as they grow and contest petro-hegemony. The war of position cannot be won and the alliances will not last without the constituents who are forging the new consensus and building a PCOC for climate justice maintaining critical relationships of active accountability with and amongst each other.

Leadership

The question of leadership and whose leadership should be followed deeply informs accountability and its relevance to relationship building and coalition politics. However, this is a particularly difficult question when uneven dynamics of power, privilege and identity are contained and must be challenged within counter hegemonic alliances. Moreover, there are three different types of leadership that are deeply interconnected in counter hegemonic climate justice politics. The first is moral or intellectual leadership that Gramsci argues is ultimately what the War of position is fought over. There is also frontlines leadership and the ethico-political question of who *should* lead or guide the climate justice movement. Finally, we must engage with leadership development through community organizing, growing the infrastructural capability or competency to lead, and asking who can and is able to lead. Connecting these three types of leadership is a complicated but vital activity that is often overlooked in the scholarship and praxis of each.

Gramsci and Gramscians have had a great deal to say about leadership, its pertinence to counterhegemonic consensus building, and how subaltern groups come to “lead” through a War of position. But they have not always addressed the uneven dynamics of privilege and power that engagement with leadership should encompass. Leadership, in Gramscian terms, is mostly discussed as moral or intellectual leadership around which consensus across social difference is forged and from which revolutionary action can emerge. For Gramsci, the proletariat or working class would be the moral/intellectual leaders of any anti-capitalist revolution against the bourgeoisie, because only they were the ones who could articulate alignment and thus consensus across different social categories.¹⁰⁹ Of course, one of Laclau and Mouffe’s innovations in their theorizing of hegemony was to displace class as “the privileged point of rupture” and instead argue for articulating the chains of equivalence between different irreducible “subject positions.” Their intervention complicates the notion of leadership in counter hegemonic strategy and forces us to question who leads the movement and how it should be led. Moore and Kahn Russell address leadership in this way. Engaging with who should lead, they respond that the constituencies on the climate justice movement’s frontlines, those with most at stake, must be understood as the movements’ leaders. In other words, those most impacted by colonial, gendered, capitalist and racist oppression and taking action to disrupt these forces, are the ones whose direction the movement should take.

Meanwhile, other social movement theorists, like Marshall Ganz (2010) or Harie Han (2014) for example, have interpreted leadership in quite a different sense. Too often the question of

¹⁰⁹ Gramsci, like many Communists of his time, was particularly concerned with forging alliances between the working class in Italy’s Northern regions and the rural peasantry in Southern Italy (See Featherstone 2013).

who *should* lead overwhelms theorizing of who *can* or who is *willing* and *able* to lead. With a focus on agency, these authors have devoted critical attention to how individual leaders within social movement organizations are developed and reproduced. For Ganz leadership means “accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual “part” of the work, but also for the collective “whole”” (2010, 1). Leadership here is about ability and willingness and these can be developed through organizing. Leadership is understood here as an orientation, skill or characteristic rather than political position. Interrogating these three approaches to leadership in my own findings from Blockadia yields important insights about the role relational organizing and accountability play in counterhegemonic alliance building. I began this chapter by illustrating the communication strategies being deployed in the struggle over intellectual and moral leadership in the Gramscian sense, so I will focus the conversation below on these two other types of leadership, before connecting them back to Gramsci’s notion of leadership.

The complexity of the question of leadership in the climate justice movement became apparent to me at Standing Rock, particularly in the Winter of 2016, after then President Obama issued an executive order halting the pipeline’s progress until a full Environmental Impact Statement had been completed. Following the announcement, the Standing Rock Sioux tribal chairman, Chief Dave Archambault III, thanked all non-Sioux allies for their support but called on them to pack up and leave the camps arguing the pipeline no longer posed a significant threat (Archambault 2016). Other Indigenous leaders, Elders, and youth activists, called on allies to stay through the winter and urged more people to join and

continue defending the camps (Charger 2017). Arguing that President-elect, Donald Trump, would quickly reverse President Obama's ruling and that the court system could not be relied upon to protect them against violations of rights and treaties, these activists condemned Archambault's trust in these colonial institutions. Observing the debate unfold on social media I was unsure about whose leadership to follow. I wanted to be a "good ally" and take direction from frontline communities, but the frontlines in question did not, and rarely do, speak with one voice. Even before this more public division, it was rarely clear (nor could it have been) whether tribal Elders, the Standing Rock Sioux chief and council, Indigenous Environmental Network organizers, or grassroots activists were setting strategy and leading the campaign. However, based on the terms of the debate I was unsure whether or not I should return to Standing Rock and defy the tribal government or whether I should have stayed home and ignored allies' calls to bolster the camp's numbers.¹¹⁰

Moore and Kahn Russell write that:

Communities do not speak from one commanding voice. They're messy and full of people who don't always agree. One way to effectively navigate these tensions is to seek guidance from political leadership. Political leadership can take shape in a group of people, or perhaps a few organizations that are trusted by, (and most often from and accountable to) their community. (2011, 30)

The first sentence holds a crucial lesson for allies, particularly those with positionalities similar to my own: leadership is messy, and all communities are complicated. As Moore and Kahn Russell go on to argue, though, "all too often activists simply seek out groups within a

¹¹⁰ In the end the weather conditions made getting to Standing Rock over the winter much harder and I decided to visit another pipeline blockade I'd been following in British Columbia at the Unist'ot'en camp on unceded Wetsuweten territory instead. It was only later that I would discover that equally fraught tensions over leadership existed there too, with the elected representatives of the Wet'suwet'en endorsing new pipelines and the hereditary chiefs and local clans opposing them.

community that affirm what they previously wanted to do anyway.” Fuller calls this “scouting,” where activists (and indeed academics) look for an Indigenous person who shares their view in order to claim they’ve been accountable to frontlines communities and can then proceed with their agenda (2019). However, acknowledging the necessarily unsatisfactory nature of their answer, Moore and Kahn Russell explain that solutions to this complexity “come from collaborative, shared work. The more you get to know and understand that environment, the powers at play, and the people on all sides, the more effective you’ll be” (2011, 31). Accordingly, understanding and being embedded in the context, listening and learning, makes it much clearer, at least as an ally, whose leadership one should be following. This is ultimately why relational organizing is such an important component of counter hegemonic alliance building that is led by and accountable to the frontlines.

The question of leadership, however, is further complicated in organizing contexts involving First Nations and Indigenous activists because allies must recognize they are not just working amongst differing social and cultural constituencies but often altogether a different government and governance structures. In British Columbia, for example, the Watch House and the Protect the Inlet Camp weren’t officially a project of, or endorsed by, either the Tsleil-Waututh Nation or the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs. The camp and Watch House were established according to Coast Salish Indigenous customs and protocol and were led by members of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation but acting in solidarity with, and taking direction from, Indigenous leaders there, didn’t necessarily mean activists were acting in solidarity with and taking leadership from the Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

Eugene Kung, a lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law, explained to me that as a lawyer contracted by the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, he felt his primary duty was to the Nation and not necessarily to the Watch House organizers, despite having many friends amongst them and a good deal of communication with them (personal communication, October 5th, 2018). He said that the Watch House was often conflated with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation in the minds of well-meaning activists and environmental organizations who wanted to demonstrate their solidarity with First Nations against the pipeline. However, the legal strategy, taking Kinder Morgan and the Canadian government to court, was the Nation's preferred mode of intervention. Eugene explained that there were some concerns about how the Watch House and PTI might impact that strategy and the media representations of the Nation as a whole. Meanwhile, some Indigenous activists did not trust the court system regarding it as a colonial instrument of domination and believed direct action and asserting title over the land by reclaiming it was the better strategy. However, media representations and allies' narratives sometimes conflated the goals and strategies of the Nation with the goals of the PTI camp or First Nations or "Indigenous people" tout court. Yet for better or worse the Nation is the recognized form of government and representation and, as Eugene explained, "they also have an interest in ensuring that rules are followed and that laws are followed" (personal communication, October 5th, 2018) Additionally, they have other priorities that may superseded defeating the pipeline. How environmental activists decided whether to prioritize the leadership of the Nation or the Indigenous-led PTI camp, or indeed Indigenous activists at Camp Cloud, complicates the notion of frontlines leadership that is so engrained in climate justice activism.

While the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and PTI organizers were often in communication, shared many of the same goals, and are committed to defeating the pipeline, they were not the same entity and did not always speak with the same voice or endorse the same strategies. In this particular case, their differences did not appear to be a source of significant disruption within the movement, at least publicly. But complicating the idea that allies should just follow the constituency in questions' political representatives does raise questions about whose leadership was actually being followed and whether ENGOs and grassroots organizations claimed to be following Indigenous leadership by choosing whichever group aligned most closely with their agenda. Conversely, uncritically taking direction from the chief and council or a First Nations' government is not without its own problems either. As Coulthard has pointed out, in Canada these governments representing the Nation are a product of the Indian Act which helped dismantle and outlaw Indigenous peoples' original governance structures (2014). The extent to which these governments can be considered legitimate from the point of view of a strategy for decolonization is therefore contested. As Eugene explains of pipeline opposition on unceded territory, the Canadian and provincial governments and corporations want to engage with the imposed chief and council system "because it's easier to talk to one or two elected chiefs as representatives [but] I think there's a wide range amongst Indigenous communities in terms of how and whether that reflects the community" (personal communication, October 5th, 2018). In the case of the Tsleil-Waututh, however, rejection of the pipeline was unanimously agreed upon in a referendum of the Nation's membership.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ This is not always so straight forward. Further north in British Columbia, members of the Unist'ot'en clan of the Wetsuweten Nation have reoccupied their land and have been blocking pipeline routes for over a decade. They have the support of the hereditary chiefs whose legitimacy is derived from pre-colonial governance system but are opposed by the elected representatives of the Nation (Democracy Now! 2019).

Moreover, taking leadership from some First Nations does not necessarily mean taking leadership from all First Nations. Some First Nations governments in British Columbia and Alberta support the construction of more pipelines to transport tar sands and natural gas. Despite their stated commitment to Indigenous rights and title, most environmental organizations and climate justice activists (myself included) could not honestly claim to be in solidarity with these Nations or take leadership from them. As such, it becomes necessary for climate justice activists to examine why they have aligned their interests specifically with those of Indigenous allies whose positions they support. This critical self-examination is important but doesn't necessarily mean non-Indigenous climate justice activists are cynically picking and choosing which Indigenous people they are in allegiance with. This should be contrasted with the more cynical practice of scouting.

Corporate media commentators and fossil fuel companies are often quick to exaggerate and enflame internal differences between Indigenous peoples and divide alliances between climate justice activists and Indigenous peoples ([Hopper 2018](#)). Many First Nations' governments have signed benefits agreements with Kinder Morgan and endorsed pipeline projects out of economic necessity. Some have proposed building their own pipeline from the Alberta tar sands to the coast and others have considered buying a stake in the Trans Mountain pipeline ([CBC Radio 2019](#); [Canadian Press 2018d](#)). At least one chief has accused environmentalist organizations of "red-washing" their campaigns by claiming to be in solidarity with Indigenous communities but are in fact engaged in "eco-colonialism" and through their environmentalism are ignoring Indigenous peoples' agency and rights (Shore

2018; Hopper 2018). These attacks, while often disingenuous, still pose complicated questions for non-Indigenous climate justice activists about the extent to which they are willing to, and the extent to which they should, take direction from frontlines leadership. Leadership from the frontlines can provide moral clarity but it is also important to critically examine who is leading and why they have either been positioned or positioned themselves as movement leaders.

Different leadership models, leadership development and capabilities are a crucial concern to counter hegemonic movement building. Of the leadership models in the campaign against the Kinder Morgan pipeline Mary told me, “it feels [like] there's a few, sort of, thought leaders that have a lot of resources that then make a lot of decisions, instead of a broad-based collective power.” Mary critiqued some ENGO’s models of leadership in which the people within the movement that have more resources, contacts, and influence are the ones whose voices are heard and have most weight. Contrasting this with her own commitment to broad-based collective power leadership models, Mary suggested that the ENGO-led approach to the campaign wasn’t producing the kind of political realignment around climate justice many activists involved wanted to see emerge out of the struggle.

Susanne, on the other hand, voiced frustrations about the non-hierarchical, horizontalist decision-making models in anti-pipeline organizations she’d worked with, saying it was often inefficient and “chaotic.” She was in favor of broad-based collective power but also argued that they needed structure: “you need democracy, you need people to be able to talk, but you need to control and order, and somebody bringing it all together too” (S. Jackson, personal

communication, May 24th, 2018). She commended BROKE saying “it’s very democratic but it’s also structured, you know, so you can’t go off on a rant for 20 minutes, that’s not going to happen, but you can speak... There’s no sort of boss... so there’s not [a] specific person, but there’s definitely a sort of core, and I would defer to them.” Susanne was also mostly positive about the leadership dynamics between grassroots organizations and the ENGOs because of the resources ENGOs were able to leverage to support grassroots campaigners:

Then you have got the NGOs who are actually paid and ... they're helpful and they're good... I find what they're really good at [is] getting and consolidating information, disseminating information... As a grassroots person, you don't have the resources and the ability to do that. And, I find in terms of leading a lot of the marches and stuff like that, they're more facilitators than the actual driving forces behind them. (personal communication, May 24th, 2018)

Ironically, Mary was a paid organizer with Greenpeace and was more critical of the relationship between ENGOs and grassroots, while Susanne was a core member and volunteer with the grassroots organization, BROKE, and was generally supportive of the ENGOs leadership model. Conversations with many different organizers and activists in both case study sites often illustrated these contrasting positions, with some preferring decentralized broad-based decision making and others arguing for more structure and clearer chains of decision-making. The tension between competing leadership models, best understood in terms of horizontalism and hierarchy or bureaucracy, is hardly unique to these case studies or even the broader climate justice movement. It has been most hotly debated in conversations about the purported successes and failures of the so-called leaderless model deployed by Occupy Wall Street in 2011 (Smucker 2017; White 2017). Distinguishing between leader^{less} models and leader^{ful} models is productive here.¹¹² Allowing for the

¹¹² I’ve not been able to track down who coined this distinction.

flexibility, empowerment, and movement ownership so crucial to the horizontalist approach but ensuring structure, coordination, and accountability that tempt so many towards hierarchical organizing, the leaderful model captures the best of both orientations.

Fundamentally, it rejects the notion that leadership is a zero-sum game – if someone has it, someone else doesn't – and instead encourages us to expand our understanding of leadership to see its manifestation in a multitude of ways and forms.

Leadership, particularly in the leaderful model, is something that can be developed through community organizing. With training and competency anyone can become a movement leader in a whole variety of forms. Developing grassroots community leadership is a vital role for community organizers to perform. Community organizing around climate justice in Richmond has relied upon leadership development amongst grassroots actors. For example, leadership development is the foundation of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network's (APEN) work in the city. As APEN executive director, Miya Yoshitani told me, "the heart of our strategies is really around organizing and deep leadership development" (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). Leadership development to Miya meant "demystifying how change happens and really making sure that people have an opportunity to kind of live and experience where they're part of change, and that their understanding of power is transformed" (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). A community organizer's role is to help community members see themselves as leaders. It's when constituents see themselves as part of creating the vision for change is that they start to see themselves as a leader. Ensuring activists have ownership over part of the decision-making process and strategy setting is therefore crucial to leadership development according to Miya.

Echoing much of Hahri Han's research on leadership development and membership retention in social movements (2014), Miya explained that the development of community leadership is a science and an art. Fundamentally, the science or mechanics of leadership is based in creating and providing opportunities for constituents to take ownership over the process:

In order to develop leaders, you need to provide space for them to be able to make decisions, to be able to be engaged in something that they care about, that's interesting to them, you need to be able to make room for them to feel a sense of ownership over what's happening...you actually have to have something for someone to experience. Identifying a problem, identifying a solution, fighting for that solution, building power for that, and winning, and that's the thing... that keeps people engaged and wanting to come back and experience more of that and learn more from that, and become... more self-activated in that process...[Leaders] connect with other people, they really want to be part of something, and ... it's not about whether or not they can do good public speaking... but, you know, do they see themselves as being part of what's going on to get their community, friends and family, neighbors, engaged in a change that's going to improve all their lives. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

Echoing Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), this model of leadership is about preparing people to make decisions autonomously and to feel empowered with their own sense of agency and ability to make change. Without leadership development in frontlines communities and without frontlines communities leading, counter hegemonic struggle for climate justice may, despite the best of intentions, reproduce the kind of power dynamics and marginalization Mary critiqued. Some might argue that such an approach still contains within it a paternalistic or abstract orientation toward "the community" that must be taught how to lead, but in a society in which many frontline communities have been systematically disempowered and conditioned to believe that their disempowerment is inevitable, re-empowerment must be learned and should come from organizers within their community. I think this leadership model is closer to what Mary had in mind when she described broad-

based collective power but also retains the structure and coordination that Susanne believed was necessary. Ultimately, a leadership model oriented towards broad-based collective power and decision-making also requires competency and training in how to lead.

How, then, do we connect the three categories of leadership that I identified in opening this section? What is the relationship between frontlines leadership, leadership development and advancing moral or intellectual leadership? While often overlooked in the literature on counterhegemony, combining these three forms of leadership is fundamental to the praxis of counterhegemonic alliance building and, as such, the war of position must encompass and combine these three types of leadership. This challenges us to think critically about what kind of a world the leading voices guiding our alliances are producing - and might be reproducing. As an alternative hegemonic consensus is established, the question of frontlines leadership makes us examine who gets to, and who is able to, influence that alternative hegemony and who is excluded from the process. Leadership can provide moral and intellectual clarity, structure and vision around which constituents can cohere, but can also silence, invisibilize, and oppress. If those waging wars of position cannot see these different sides of leadership as they seek to build a new consensus and grow alliances, they may either reproduce the very marginalization they are seeking to overturn, or they may render their movements ineffective, immobilized and without direction. If these alliances are reproducing a world in which many of their constituents will remain oppressed or marginalized, they will likely fracture and fail.

But, questions of leadership capabilities and whose leadership is to be followed aren't just a reaction to the potential of fractured alliances, they are also fundamental to proactively challenging petro-hegemony on the terrain of consent. Activists, organizers, and leaders, must be ready for moments in which their advances on the terrain of consent have forced a legitimacy crisis in petro-hegemony. Advancing moral and intellectual leadership must therefore be accompanied by the development of community leaders ready to take advantage of crisis and translate symbolic or discursive victories into institutional intervention (Smucker 2017). Frontlines community leaders need to be developed in order to seize opportunities yielded through the war of position. Miya explained this logic to me in terms grounded in advancing a Just transition in Richmond as petro-hegemony and broader neoliberal hegemony have experienced legitimacy crisis:

We were kind of built for this moment, it's like...groups who have been organizing on the front lines, in frontline communities, in most impacted, heavily impacted communities, have spent years, you know, decades, actually innovating solutions to both organizing a methodology, like how to build power, but also the actual things that we want, the tangible things that we want to win... it's going to be hard fought for sure. It's not like it's an automatic thing, but there will be...a swing in the other direction, and we need to be prepared for what we do with that, how far can we push, how deep can we go, you know. I feel like, that's where the urgency comes in, for me. It's like, we have to demand much more out of our wins than we have in the past been able to do... And that's part of what I feel like, is ... so important, to having something like the economics of a just transition, because it gives you a pathway and a direction that we are... starting to align around. And so that there's a point of readiness for when that turn happens. And without that kind of a framework, we don't have...the ability to say, like, "well, here are the things that are most important to fight for in this moment." (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

Frontlines leadership is therefore fundamental to alignment around a counter hegemonic program and to advancing that program at key movement moments. Miya, like many of the activists I interviewed, identifies the economics of a just transition as the counter hegemonic program available to climate justice activists. Having the Just transition outlined, framed and

narrativized by frontline communities for frontline communities is thus a crucial way in which all three forms of leadership identified in these pages are combined. The Just transition may become a frame of reference that can be deployed leading up to and in the moments of hegemonic legitimacy crisis.

Part 4: Realizing Material Interests and Translocal Solidarity

“Just transition is just an invitation to a fancy funeral,” [Rich Trumka](#), president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)

Alignment against petro-hegemony and around counter hegemonic alternatives like a just transition rests upon more than narrative, more than accountability, and more than leadership, although all of these are fundamental components to winning a war of position. However, even discourses developed out of intersectional populism will inevitably run up against the reality that people and activists are living unequal and often spatially segregated lives with distinct historical and contemporary experiences. When the climate justice movement is able to offer material redistributions of wealth and power in the present, for example by providing for the livelihoods of the communities it seeks to organize, they will enter the lives and lifeworlds of many more potential movement members. This means that the practice of accountability within movements is not enough to counter the material differences and inequalities within communities that climate justice activists seek to organize. Therefore, alignment must also be founded upon the realization of material interests which means we

must pay close attention not only to the war of position but also the war of economies and the breaking of the dynamic of dependency upon which compliance rests.¹¹³ I use the word *realization* both in the sense of coming to a common understanding of where shared material interests exist, but also in the sense of making real, actualizing, materializing and fighting for those interests. The war of economies, and the economics of a just transition, may therefore, prove critical to winning the war of position.

The promises of the just transition cannot remain just promises, they must materialize and be prefigured if they are to convince potential allies, particularly in the labor movement, that a transition away from fossil fuel-based economies will not leave them in poverty, without work or dignity. Moreover, the place based common interests articulated through intersectional populism, such as land, water, air, and self-determination, are all material interests too. Workers' rights and protection of the land and water are not ideological commitments but material interests. Too often the former is considered an urgent material interest and the latter an ideological luxury.¹¹⁴ These are both urgent material interests and must be negotiated. This insight matters, because, as Fantasia observes, alignment, alliances and solidarity, are not just (or he argues even primarily) founded upon prior commitment to specific political ideology or a particular discursive orientation but through struggle over

¹¹³ In this way, counter hegemonic action on the terrain defined by a War of Economies has direct implications for the War of position and the process of alignment.

¹¹⁴ East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice in Los Angeles have reframed this false distinction where the argument in favor of further development in their community has so often been "we're just trying to put food on our table, we just trying to eat" and East Yard activists responded "well, we're just trying to breath." Their interests are material and irreducible to who provides the better argument. In some ways, however, the reframing reinforces a jobs versus the environment narrative which is why material interests must be negotiated rather than superseding one another.

interests: “Solidarity is created and expressed by the process of mutual association” (1988, 11).

To be clear, Fantasia is not suggesting that consciousness of solidarity, ideology, and narrative don’t matter, but he is saying these most successfully forge alignment across difference through the process of struggle where shared material interests are realized. He cites Gordon Marshall who argues that:

An overemphasis on class imagery at the expense of class action can perhaps be attributed to the widely held belief among academic observers that it is somehow necessary for men and women to encompass society intellectually before they can attempt to change it. This premise is not confirmed by the history of class action on either a revolutionary or on a more modest scale... Consciousness is generated in and changed by social action... Experience has shown that it is the relationship between attitudes and actions that are important and that these can only be studied contextually. (Gordon Marshall, cited in Fantasia 1988, 8)

It is, therefore, studying the relationship between action and attitude, material struggle and narrative struggle, that can help us understand the process of developing solidarity and counter hegemonic alignment.

Echoing Fantasia, Gedicks and Grossman write that environmental justice alliances are strongest “where livelihoods rather than environmental consciousness are at the forefront of environmental movements” (2004, 200). By and large, my cases reinforced this argument. I’ve found that alliances in Blockadia are formed between people who recognize they are facing common material threats to their way of life, be it climate change, water pollution, air quality contamination, self-determination, or economic livelihoods, or indeed the intersection of all of these. While I certainly contest Fantasia’s somewhat overzealous displacement of narrative and its relationship to ideology as secondary to social struggle, the evidence I

gathered suggests that the movement's commitment to recognizing and struggling over the material interests of its constituents must be just as strong as its commitment to discursively articulating those struggles into counter hegemonic alignment.¹¹⁵

Grossman argues that the most resilient alliances rest on a shared sense of place, purpose, and understanding (2017). Climate change was rarely the leading frame used to mobilize or align communities in Richmond, Burnaby, or indeed at Standing Rock. These alliances occur around place-based struggles because the localized and more immediate threat to material interest is what brought people together – it was through struggle around these issues that counter hegemonic narratives made sense and took hold. This may explain why climate change, though certainly urgent, is not the frame that aligns groups in place-based struggle. However, I also want to challenge the notion that just because it rests upon the realization of material interests, solidarity can only be place-based and only aligned through localized NIMBYism.¹¹⁶ Necessarily, in fact, counter hegemonic alignment cannot be limited to the local so frames and material interests that transcend the local, that build translocal and transnational solidarity, are crucial (Routledge 2011; Tegelberg and Roosvall 2015).

Analysis of my case studies has crystalized these thoughts into three claims: Firstly, that the just transition is a strategy as well as a goal and must therefore be prefigured in the present;

¹¹⁵ Hegemonic alignment between corporate elites and segments of the white working class in the US around an ideological commitment to white supremacy or patriarchy may be considered an exception (During the 2016 Presidential Election, some commenters rather paternalistically suggested that white working class demographics are voting against their economic interests when they endorsed Donald Trump's racism and misogyny), but I think these aren't just ideological commitments, they're also about maintaining white, male social status and the access to cultural, social or economic capital these entail.

¹¹⁶ NIMBY stands for Not in My Back Yard. See article on transition from NIMBY to NOPE (Not on Planet Earth).

secondly, that realizing material interests is not isolated to labor and if a just transition is to develop counter hegemonic alignment it must absorb and be informed by but also extend beyond the concerns of labor; and thirdly, that realizing material interests tends to prioritize alignment around place-struggle but if it is to build a counter hegemonic alliance against petro-hegemony at grander scales, the climate justice movement must recognize, defend and claim material interests translocally and transnationally too. Moreover, as the term “transition,” suggests, the aspirations of the just transition are not to achieve any one end or outcome but rather a permanent space of social transformation and regeneration. Radical social change in the same of climate justice, therefore, implies a continual process of transition and transformation. The revolution is never truly over.

Movement Generation coined the phrase “transition is inevitable, justice is not.” It is a core principle in the climate justice movement that the transition away from fossil fuels cannot leave former oil workers and working people dependent on the industry behind – indeed, ideally these constituents would be some of the people leading the movement. Transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewables without addressing any of its underlying and systemic roots reproduces marginalization and injustice. It is also strategically counterproductive and threatens the possibility of broad-based counter hegemonic alignment across struggles, including organized labor. As Miya Yoshitani puts it, “you're never going to get there...you're [never] going to inspire enough people to be involved if it's not going to be good for them” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). Therefore, the just transition is a strategy of continually striving for alignment of constituencies around alternatives and not just an end or a goal. For this reason, Miya, APEN, and the Our Power campaign have

invested a great deal in supporting workers affected by energy transition. For example, Miya told me about their support for local autoworkers who had been organizing for better conditions and were fired when their factory was converted into a TESLA plant. Miya explained that she “wanted to make sure that we did a public thing about that, because it is about how we're creating a framework for just transition that, if we have exploited workers in a sustainable economy, that is not...a future for the economy that actually works” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). Many of the plant’s worker are Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants and so the intersection of energy, climate, racial, and immigrant justice informed this alignment of interests here.

As climate justice activists have long argued, addressing marginalization and oppressions is not a distraction from, but absolutely integral to, addressing climate change and fossil fuel expansion (Pellow 2018). As Miya told me, we are not going to build the alliances and support the movement needs unless we address these material concerns too:

The more we try to get to our climate goals while ignoring inequality, the further we get away from being able to, to get to those numeric climate goals...The more we try to build this around, build our approach to climate on, on inequality, the, the longer it's going to take. And so these arguments about timing and urgency are always so frustrating to me. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

In this vein, she described the just transition as “a populist approach that is necessary to get the public support that's needed.” This particular conversation took place in the build up to the Rise for Jobs, Justice, and Climate march in San Francisco that APEN, amongst many others, was helping organize. Miya wanted to ensure the march’s messaging maintained this populist orientation. She saw it as an opportunity to

speaking directly to communities and to reframe climate in a way that a broad swath of communities, frontline communities, working families, normal people in general feel like they see themselves inside of that vision, inside of that frame. They see the best interests of their kids and future generations and their actual, like, daily needs right now for jobs, clean air, health, housing, healthcare. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

The just transition is understood in explicitly populist terms revolving around local material interests which are crucial to counter hegemonic alliance building.

Despite the rhetoric, however, the extent to which unions and much of the labor movement have found these promises and this vision persuasive is limited at best. Thomas, a union member, labor activist and a core member of Climate Convergence in Burnaby, argued that massive labor opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline would have been a game changer:

if workers decide to play a key role in this, it'll be decisive. If oil workers or oil related workers start to speak up, to organize, start to demand changes, and in some cases, refuse to participate, that would change it immediately. So it makes it really important. And I would say that's the challenge that we haven't been able to meet yet. (personal communication, September 28th, 2018)

Moreover, as Thomas went on to explain, it's not as though the outreach to workers isn't being engaged with. He said that it's clear that most of the construction jobs from the project would not be unionized labor and that most of the refinery work that provided well paid union jobs in the oil sector has been outsourced to the United States. This fact saw the Burnaby chapter of UNIFOR, Canada's largest private sector union representing thousands of energy workers, express their opposition to the pipeline ([UNIFOR 950](#)). The president of this union, which represented the last oil refinery in Burnaby, even spoke at rallies against the pipeline precisely because the oil would not end up in Burnaby's refinery. In addition, Thomas argued that efforts to wrest workers support away from the industry have also focused on how the oil industry literally left workers hanging, as the suicide rate in the

Albertan tar sands has spiked during periods of recession and workers are laid off. The question we must ask then, is why hasn't the rhetoric of the just transition, in which workers material interests are made central, aligned large enough portions of unions and the labor movement against the industry and around a democratized and sustainable energy economy instead?

The reasons are numerous and, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate, must include the significance of consent to the industry forged through petro-culture. However, another clear reason is petro-capitalism and the role of compliance. As Steve Bramwell, a member of BROKE and a union activist from the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, explained of his time working in the tar sands:

When I talked to the guys on the jobs, they're all mortgaged to the hilt, and they got brand new pickup trucks and all this stuff and kids, and there's guys making 10 grand a month and if they miss a few days work, they can't make their payments. That's the situation they're in, well that's not a healthy situation for bargaining or anything you know. This is now, with the idiotic housing blow up we've had, the housing bubble we've had in Canada, there's so many people in debt that they're running as fast as they can to stay in the same place. (personal communication, May 24th, 2018).

Debt has fueled economic dependency on the industry in both Alberta and, though to a much lesser degree, British Columbia ([Bergot 2018](#)). If the promises and vision of the Just transition remain just that, promises and vision, then quite often it may not much matter how intellectually persuasive they are. Indebted populations are often compliant ones. As such, without actually materializing the jobs, income, and revenue promised by petro-capitalism, and without addressing the drivers of compliance, the just transition strategy is unlikely to bring indebted fossil fuel workers into the movements' ranks. While the jobs, income, and revenue that petro-capitalism promises are under threat, particularly in the tar sands, but also

through automation of extraction sites and refineries like those in Richmond, and due to competition with renewable energy, they remain a source of income that for the time being exists in the urgency of the present. Therefore, if the just transition is to be a counter hegemonic strategy for aligning environmentalists and the labor movement examples of the existence and possibility well-paid, democratized green jobs need to be prefigured and materialized in the present. Reflecting on this point, Miya told me “it's so essential to have examples of the infrastructure that we're talking about in people's neighborhoods, [so] that people can actually see and experience that part of it” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). Indeed, it is in Richmond that some of the most salient examples of the just transition is being prefigured and challenging the dependency much of the community has had upon Chevron’s refinery.

It’s not just livelihoods and economic material interests that must be realized through a Just transition, however. Connection to the land as a source of identity as well as sustenance, the ability to breath unpolluted air and drink uncontaminated water are also material interest that align Indigenous activists, white environmentalists, and frontlines environmental justice communities. Andrés Soto, an organizer with Richmond’s Communities for a Better Environment, suggested that a just transition must encompass the whole city because “the refinery sector is not that labor intensive and so while the Just transition for the workers will be important, it's really also the just transition for cities like Richmond... what is their financial strategy post refinery?” (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). The just transition must be made to do more than transition former fossil fuel industry workers into a democratized, decarbonized, and decentralized energy economy. As the Climate Justice Alliance understands it:

Just transition strategies were first forged by labor unions and environmental justice groups, rooted in low-income communities of color, who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet; and at the same time provide just pathways for workers to transition to other jobs... Building on these histories, members of the Climate Justice Alliance, many of whom are rooted in the environmental justice movement, have adapted the definition of Just transition to represent a host of strategies to transition whole communities to build thriving economies that provide dignified, productive and ecologically sustainable livelihoods; democratic governance and ecological resilience. (CJA 2019b)

Alliances developed around a Just transition of this sort will require that different material interests be negotiated and balanced. The land and water are material interests just as much as jobs and tax revenue or self-determination are. Moreover, these interests and the identities that form around them are not fixed or static. Therefore, alignment around a Just transition will necessarily, involve synthesis and through this process the production of new political identities and collective will. David Featherstone identifies in Gramsci's writing, "an insistent sense of struggle as generative of new forms of identity and political practice" (2013, 65). Through the articulation of new alignments and struggle for a Just transition we are likely to see the formation of new political identities and the generation of a new collective political will. We cannot know what these will look like before they emerge, but as we think about its formation, it is essential that identities and interests are not constructed as static or fixed.

Finally, we must engage with translocal solidarities that extend beyond place-based material priorities. If, as Fantasia and Grossman suggest, solidarity and alliances in these struggles are founded upon material, contextualized and place-based concerns, how can they be generalized or become translocal? This was also one of Gramsci's major concerns in his work on Aspects of The Southern Question (Featherstone 2013). However, like Fantasia and

Grossman, alliances for Gramsci, in his case between the peasantry of southern Italy and the working class of the north, remained contingent upon specific conjunctures of place and history (Karriem 2013). Similarly, focusing on the material interests and populist framings that align, organize, and mobilize communities against petro-hegemony at the local scales that I've discussed so far, may distract us from the creation of a translocal Political Culture of Opposition and Creation that must grow out of place-based and frontline community-led struggle in Blockadia. The question lingers, therefore, how do place-based counter hegemonic alignments become translocal and transnational? I will leave the complexities of scale to Chapter Six, but as the current chapter is about growing the movement through building alliances, I feel some obligation to discuss how climate justice activists are developing translocal geographies of solidarity (Routledge 2011). Some clues lay in thinking about how the interests and framings deployed in the local contexts I've studied could be generalized or universalized.

The drivers of climate disruption and climate justice are the obvious frames to draw these contextualized struggles into translocal alignment. As I've indicated several times, however, most activists in Richmond, Burnaby, and Standing Rock didn't articulate their struggles first and foremost in terms of climate change. They're confrontation with key drivers of climate disruption (the fossil fuel industry) certainly renders them vital constituents of the climate justice movement, but climate connects them to other place-based struggles only on an intellectual level, not a visceral or necessarily affective level. I am tempted, therefore, to return to water and Standing Rock where the focus on water protection combined materialist and cultural imperatives with narrative intervention to universalize the struggle. When Ladonna Brave Bull Allard and the first Water Protectors erected the Sacred Stone Camp,

they called for support across the nation asking “everyone who lives on or near the Missouri River and its tributaries, everyone who farms or ranches in the local area, and everyone who cares about clean air and clean drinking water [to] stand with us” (Allard quoted in Grossman 2017, 189). Water doesn’t have to be place-bound. Indeed, if we think of it in terms of its hydrological cycles, water is never place-bound. As Naomi Klein writes, “interconnected bodies of water ... are arteries of life, flowing together to bind... disparate communities in common purpose” (2014, 298). She argues that “what has emerged in the movement against extreme extraction is less an anti-fossil fuels movement than a pro-water movement” (2014, 297). Standing Rock’s Water Protectors and their emphasis on the water, therefore, provide lessons about transforming place-based struggles into translocal ones.

Water was crucial to the alignment of interests across space and which rippled out across the country from Standing Rock. Protecting the water was not only a symbolic or rhetorical intervention, it was a cultural and material imperative that aligned different groups into a counter hegemonic PCOC that posed a significant challenge to petro-hegemony. Across the border, in Burnaby, banners, slogans and rhetoric directly drew upon Standing Rock’s articulation of the terms of struggle: “Water is Life.” Many activists there saw themselves as deeply connected to the Standing Rock uprising. Taking up the name Coast Protectors, some activists mirrored the framing of protection advanced by Standing Rock’s Water Protectors.

Meanwhile in Richmond, Idle No More SF Bay activist, Pennie Opal Plant, told me about the role water plays in Indigenous-led mobilizations throughout the Bay Area, particularly in contextualizing their healing walks as both ceremony and an alliance building tool: “we started each walk with a prayer ceremony and prayers for the water because all these fossil

fuel projects are along the water and at each resting place that we stopped we would invite allies or you know other folks to share what they were doing and how people could plug in, so it was a way of broadening the movement” (P. Opal Plant, personal communication, July 19th, 2018). Describing the healing walks she and Idle No More SF Bay would lead, Pennie went on to make the connection between Standing Rock and alliance building between Indigenous and non-Native climate justice activists in the Bay Area:

the majority of people that walked with us were not Native Americans... we estimated there was over 1100 walkers, and some of those people went to several walks. But that's a lot of people that were, [that] had never been around Indigenous people, our protocols, how we operate with prayer, how strong that is to follow Indigenous women's leadership. And then when Standing Rock happened, a lot of those people went to Standing Rock, and they were already familiar with how native people do things. (personal communication, July 19th, 2018).

The healing walks, led by Indigenous women and framed in terms of water protection, prepared non-native climate justice activists for acting in alliance with the Standing Rock Sioux’s Water Protectors. It seems that water is an interest that can make this movement translocal but we must also make sure that a demand as apparently modest as water protection does not dilute the movement’s radicalism. Rather, it must be understood that for everyone to enjoy something as simple as clean water, radical social change is necessary.

Water is not the only connection Pennie made to the broader climate justice movement. Oil connected the geographies of Richmond, Standing Rock, and Burnaby too. Oil, like water, it is not place bound, as it is commodified it is transported through global supply chains from sites of extraction through transportation networks to sites of refining and processing, to consumers around the world. Resistance at sites of strategic vulnerability in oil infrastructure across its supply chain, what Hoffman calls “segmented localism” (2012 cited in Haluza

DeLay and Carter 2016, 464), has the potential to build transnational solidarity and connect place-based struggle throughout Blockadia. Fracked crude oil from the Bakken fields of North Dakota, the same ones from which DAPL transports its oil, has also been transported to Richmond's Chevron refinery by train and was vehemently resisted in Richmond.

Meanwhile, as we know from Chapters 2 and 3, much of the oil that would be pumped through the Trans Mountain pipeline from the Alberta's tar sands would end up in the refineries around the Bay Area. These place-based struggles have all informed each other.

Pennie told me about the tactics and narratives shared between organizers in Burnaby and those in Richmond (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). . Demonstrating their solidarity with Trans Mountain pipeline opponents in British Columbia, activists in Richmond took non-violent direct action and blockaded a Kinder Morgan terminal.

Indigenous activist Isabella Zizi of Idle No More SF Bay and Stand.earth told local reporters:

It's important for me to stand up today for my Indigenous brothers and sisters of the First Nations. This crude tar sands oil will not just be affecting those up in Canada. It will likely be transported to the West Coast and potentially to here in my hometown of Richmond. Our lands, our waterways and our air needs are constantly being overlooked by these industries. We, as indigenous people, cannot and should not be swept under the rug. If any of these elements are harmed, all life will suffer the consequences. (Diablo Rising Tide 2017)

Meanwhile, the contemporary Philipps 66 refinery expansion proposals in Rodeo just North of Richmond, that would facilitate the refinery's processing of tar sands from Alberta have also experiences vehement opposition. Pennie told permitting officials to expect a Standing Rock style response if they permitted the expansion. As she said to me "I have told them in the public hearing part that if this is permitted, that Phillips 66 will be our Standing Rock, and that we will have an encampment and that we will blockade and that we will refuse to allow tar sands to come through our Bay" (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). Bay

Area climate justice and Indigenous activists have explicitly invoked their solidarity with the opponents of the Trans Mountain pipeline at permitting hearings for the Phillips 66 refinery expansion. Pennie told me that when they finished their testimony at one of the Bay Area Air Quality Management hearings, activists left the room singing the women's warrior song that comes from the Secwepemc Nation that I myself had heard sung at almost every action I attended in Burnaby (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). The song was a gift from First Nations activists in British Columbia to activists in the Bay Area. Later, John Gioia from the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors told Pennie he would visit the tar sands and pipeline opponents in Canada.¹¹⁷ Pennie also connected regional opposition to oil infrastructure to Indigenous-led campaigns in the Ecuadorian Amazon and to water rights in New Zealand. A great deal of the oil drilled in Ecuador ends up in the Chevron refinery and activists in both countries have visited each other in solidarity. Of her time in New Zealand, Pennie explained, "Standing Rock is everywhere... when we were in Aotearoa, I've been there twice in the last year and a half, Standing Rock there was a huge big deal, everybody wanted to know about Standing Rock" (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). I have found that shared experience of fighting oil and protecting water connected activists in translocal solidarity across Blockadia far more viscerally than did climate change.

Yet water and oil are both very easy things to rally for and against. Much harder are visions of the world or other possible worlds in which, for example, water does not need protecting because it is no longer threatened. What vision of a future or futures can hold climate justice

¹¹⁷ And indeed, Supervisor Gioia did visit both the Alberta Tar Sands and anti-pipeline campaigners in BC. He later presented at a panel in Richmond with Cedar George and Charlene Alleck, two prominent First Nations anti-pipeline campaigners he had met in BC, to speak on the matter.

activists together across their differences and grow the movement? At an abstract, intellectual level, all climate justice futures must involve collective liberation but what this actually means in practice, and in terms of recognizing and negotiating different material interests, is a point of contention to be negotiated at the frontlines. I've found that the economics of a just transition, and the many just transitions necessarily contained within it, is the most articulate and articulated response to this question amongst climate justice activists. If the Just transition is to be made translocal, it must be context specific and versatile but must also mean something specific across localities. As I've discussed, however, elements of the Just transition must also be materially realized and more substantially prefigured in the present before its potential for alignment across difference can be fulfilled.

In the meantime, the resurgence of the Green New Deal in the United States contains elements of a Just transition within it and has great possibility for aligning constituents around a counter hegemonic alternative. It's popularity and national reach demonstrate its potential as a unifying frame. However, it is worth mentioning that many Green New Deals exist – progressive ones, radical ones, and mainstream technocratic ones – and that each one constitutes different degrees of compromise between the capitalist elites and the state with climate justice activists.¹¹⁸ A fight over its meaning and the suit of policies it may ultimately include will be necessary. At the same time, the prominent rise of the Extinction Rebellion and its demands that national governments declare a Climate Emergency has also aligned thousands of people in the UK with Scotland and Wales national governments and then the UK parliament declaring a Climate Emergency in the weeks following Extinction's Rebellion's mass direct action campaign ([Cowburn 2019](#)). What a declaration of Climate

¹¹⁸ Some of whom, on both sides, find any such compromise totally unpalatable.

Emergency will actually entail and what it legitimates, however, is (perhaps deliberately) even less politically defined than a Green New Deal. Such political ambiguity may help build movements, but it leaves political trajectories ill-defined, unsatisfying, and thus open to state and capitalist cooptation. As intersectional populist narratives combine with the realization of material interest to become translocal articulations of alignment, they will have to strike a complex balance between specificity and ambiguity.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have identified and discussed the different elements of alliance building necessary for growing the climate justice movement. My overarching thesis has been that narrative is a crucial but on its own, a necessarily incomplete, component of growing social movements. I have contextualized this conversation in terms of a Gramscian War of position and the process of wresting consent away from petro-hegemony. I have illustrated the different dimensions and considerations relevant to alignment around counter hegemonic alternatives and have sought to analyze and, where possible synthesize, key debates on movement building in social movement theory and praxis. The evidence gathered from my case studies and participation action research has informed and illustrated my arguments throughout the chapter and, combined with analysis of social movement theory, led me to six key components of growing movements and alliance building. These were narrative and framing, intersectional populism, active accountability, leadership, the realization of material interests, and translocal solidarity.

The arguments I presented pertained to each of these six components of movement building. I demonstrated the ways narrative can be strategically deployed to shift discursive conditions and align new constituents into a political culture of opposition and creation against petro-hegemony. My case studies illuminated the art and science of story-based strategy and explored the frames and narratives that have helped universalize struggles to reach larger and more diverse audiences. Introducing intersectional populism as a movement building discourse, I sought to fuse a common divide in movement literature and praxis by bringing intersectionality into conversation with populism. The strategic advantage of doing so lies in its being able to negotiate tensions between universalizing discourses emphasizing social cohesion on the one hand, and particularist ones emphasizing social distinction on the other. I suggested this relationship will grow movements in ways that are accountable to the diversity of their constituents.

Moving the conversation beyond discursive intervention, I engaged with the development of active accountability as the bond that holds discursive alignment together. I showed how members of the campaigns I've studied have learned more about what active accountability can do for their alliances and how they've sought to negotiate tensions that emerge based on relations of privilege through the praxis of active accountability. Then I positioned three different types of leadership next to one another – Gramscian intellectual and moral leadership, models of frontlines leadership, and leadership development – to draw out the ways these should be connected to advance a War of position. Next, I argued that realizing the material interests of constituents such as jobs, land, water and self-determination all had to be prefigured in the present through the economics of a just transition if they are to be

persuasive to those as of yet unconvinced by the movement's promises. Finally, I reflected upon how local campaigns against fossil fuel infrastructure might take on translocal resonances and suggested that while oil and water can unite translocal constituencies around something to protect and something to fight against, we need visions like a Just transition, that translocal campaigns can mobilize together for.

Combining lessons from each of the six elements I identified will help grow a climate justice movement that is capable of challenging petro-hegemony and aligning constituents around counter hegemonic alternatives, while also seeking to ensure forms of marginalization and oppression activists inevitably bring into the movement are not reproduced through its praxis. This chapter, and particularly the wisdom shared by the interviewees and interlocutors I bring to bear on these complex questions, are a significant contribution to Gramscian and populist literature, intersectionality theory, and theories of social movement building. The contribution I want to pay closest attention to is that of synthesis. Rather than making the case for why one approach to movement building may be stronger than another, or why my theory of alignment works better than anyone else's, I've instead tried to demonstrate the most useful and insightful elements of each and then synthesize them into something more productive than either on their own could offer. I combined universalism and particularism to create intersectional populism. I complemented narrative strategy with accountability, leadership and material interests to strengthen interventions in the war of position, and I illustrated the benefits of combining critical mass and critical relationships. To that end I hope the insights I have produced will also be useful to all those engaged in the actual work

of aligning broader swathes of society into a political culture of opposition and creation large and powerful enough to win the war of position.

Despite the inroads I believe my contributions have made in the chapter, there remain several unanswered questions. Throughout the chapter I hinted at, but never confronted, the question and the questioning of scale. Specifically, we must examine the extent to which intersectional populism and are able to scale up beyond the familiarity of the local. I have not yet, in any substantial way, identified the frames and interests that can inform translocal solidarity without losing their meaning, or how to address the need for translocal narratives that balance political ambiguity with uncompromising specificity. Chapter Eight, however, will explore the processes by which movements might scale up and out of Blockadia while maintaining relationships of accountability and democracy. Chapter Eight will also explore the critiques leveled at hegemonic politics from the anarchist and autonomist left. Here I examine non-hegemony and pluriversal articulations of climate justice futures. Finally, this chapter also led me to question how climate justice campaigns within Blockadia are connected and grow with or alongside climate interventions that are not part of Blockadia, like the Sunrise Movement and Extinction Rebellion. Again, Chapter Eight will explore these possibilities in the context of scale. Each of these questions will be developed upon through the rest of this dissertation, but I hope that the conversations, debates and arguments I've engaged with throughout this chapter have inspired, encouraged, and challenged readers as we develop our strategies to confront petro-hegemony together.

Chapter 6 - Mobilizing Strategies and Tactics Through the Carbon Rebellion

"What can we do today, so that tomorrow we can do what we are unable to do today?" – Paulo Freire¹¹⁹

Introduction

The frontlines of climate justice contain a great collection of logics of intervention and theories of change from which a wide range of strategies and a diversity of tactics are derived. Some activists rely on strategies that physically obstruct the supply chains of capital, infrastructure and labor upon which fossil fuel development depends. Others place more emphasis on working through regulatory frameworks to delay construction. Deploying story-based strategy, many activists seek to change the narratives through which energy and environment are understood thereby revoking consent to the fossil fuel industry's operations, while others devote their efforts to lobbying for or against particular legislation and engaging with courts or lawsuits. Some have focused their efforts on organizing and mobilizing communities around winning local elections that place movement candidates in elected office. Meanwhile, many Native and First Nations activists are committed to prefiguring a resurgence in Indigenous cultures, customs, and governance by reclaiming their lands, asserting sovereignty over them, and defending their rights and title through the courts.

Attempts to align this diverse array of tactics are emerging according to a logic of dual power in which activists develop strategies to confront the dominant structures and institutions as they currently exist, while simultaneously prefiguring alternative institutions and practices

¹¹⁹ Moore and Kahn Russell attribute this quotation to Freire in *Organizing Cools the Planet*. It is an excellent example of the question strategy should force us to ask.

that will ultimately replace those dominant ones. Despite growing interest in strategic cohesion through logics of intervention like dual power, the movement has yet to align all the different strategies and tactics it is deploying in a coordinated challenge to the power relations upon which petro-hegemony depends. To this end, I offer the carbon rebellion as a framework for organizing action that allows activists to plan and coordinate mutually reinforcing tactics on points of intervention in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance.

While the strategies and tactics explored in Chapter 5 mostly pertained to narrative, alliance building, and the kinds relationships and leadership development more commonly associated with community *organizing*, this chapter identifies strategies and tactics that pertain to social movement *mobilizing* (while of course recognizing that there is a great deal of overlap between the two). The climate justice movement draws upon a long and colorful history of social movement mobilizing throughout North America. In this chapter, I assess the different strategies and tactics climate justice campaigners deployed in Burnaby and Richmond, critically analyze their strengths and limitations in terms of their ability to intervene in relations of consent, coercion, or compliance, and finally develop on the ways in which these strategic interventions can be made legible to the theory of hegemony developed in Chapter 1.

Reading these interventions in terms of hegemonic struggle illustrates how a particular tactic may be interpreted as advancing either a war of position, war of maneuver, or war of economies. This in turn reveals the different points of intervention existing on each of the different terrains of struggle climate justice activists must engage with to contest petro-

hegemony. Meanwhile, the concept of hegemony can expand our notion of what counts as a site of struggle and so multiply the number of points of intervention upon which social struggle can be conceived. Accordingly, the carbon rebellion framework helps us assess which tactics are most appropriate for each terrain of struggle and to ensuring tactics are engaging all the different points of intervention that exist upon them.

Chapter 6 is developed in two parts. Part One identifies and analyzes all of the different strategies and tactics I was able to observe in both case studies. Here, tactics are assessed under different categories of strategy. For example, direct action may be considered a category of strategy, while civil disobedience, or blockades, are tactics that I analyze under that broader category of strategy. Part One preempts some of the debates about strategic orientations that will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Seven. For the most part, however, this section seeks to explain how the strategies and tactics I observed work and the functions each one performs. Part Two then develops the carbon rebellion framework and illustrates how different tactics are more or less appropriate for different points of intervention on the three different hegemonic terrains of struggle. Consequently, I explore how the great diversity of tactics currently being deployed across a range of different strategic orientations might be aligned, organized, and coordinated so that this diversity plays to the movements' advantage, rather than serving as a basis for division and mistrust. I argue that the carbon rebellion is a concept and framework that allows us to see which points of intervention are being engaged with and which are not, which terrains of struggle are being privileged and which require more attention, and which tactics are appropriate to engage with each point of intervention. Finally, I demonstrate how a diversity of tactics can be

coordinated through the carbon rebellion to reinforce interventions in each of the relations of consent, coercion and compliance.

Part 1: Identifying the Strategies, Narratives, and Tactics of Mobilization

Tactics and strategies ranged from the spectacular to the quotidian on the frontlines of climate justice. This was certainly true for both Richmond and Burnaby. However, to speak in crude and general terms, strategic orientations in Richmond have revolved around community organizing and building up local organizational infrastructure, local council electoral politics, lobbying, and working through legal or procedural frameworks. Story-based strategy has played a vital role informing all of these strategies. While, in British Columbia, and particularly in Burnaby, strategic orientations fluctuated between different phases of organizing and mobilizing, and the central role First Nations governments and Indigenous activists have played in the struggle has opened up a larger range of strategic opportunities not necessarily available to activists in Richmond. The strategies deployed against the Trans Mountain pipeline included pursuing legal and regulatory avenues, performance politics, direct action, “land defense,” civil disobedience, alliance and infrastructure building, and in some cases close attention to local and provincial elections. Given the significant overlaps and differences between the two case studies, I order this section according to each category of strategic intervention and then analyze corresponding tactics as they have been deployed in their respective campaign contexts.

Contestation through Regulatory Frameworks

The seemingly most banal and yet most entrenched strategy I encountered in both Burnaby and Richmond was engagement with the regulatory frameworks existing at each site. While at first glance the regulatory framework may seem a somewhat underwhelming place to start discussing social movement strategy, the ways in which activists turn these frameworks to their advantage, particularly under conditions of the corporate capture of regulatory agencies, are important. Fossil fuel development, like almost any other form of infrastructure development, is subject to regulation which sets the standards for what infrastructure developers are allowed to do and the conditions under which they are allowed to operate. From federal, to provincial/state, to local government, different interest groups fight over the regulations and conditions under which industry may operate (McBeath 2016). The model for regulatory frameworks that include environmental oversight emerged in the aftermath of the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill and has, somewhat problematically, been exported to different parts of the world since then (Spezio 2018; Barandiarán 2018). While Canadian and US regulatory systems obviously aren't the same, we can make some generalizations about how both operate and how activists intervene upon them.

In general, industry lobbyists will often seek to dilute the regulatory burden governments impose upon them, while oppositional interest groups will seek to strengthen those regulations (McBeath 2016). With regulations and standards in place, developers are required to attain permits to prove they have met the regulatory standards necessary to begin operations and to promise they will operate under the conditions set by the regulations. The permits are issued by various government bureaucracies and agencies from the local to the

federal level. Regulatory agencies are mandated to provide governmental, and supposedly independent, oversight over the implementation of, and compliance with, these regulations. They also set the terms of the permits and enforce them. Amongst other evidence, developers must submit environmental, social, and cultural impact analyses to the regulatory agencies who then use these to make recommendations about whether the project in question should be permitted. Regulatory agencies are also required to open up these analyses for public comment and to host public hearings on whether or not affected communities approve of the project. Once issued, permits operate as a contract between the regulator and the regulated. If a company fails to meet regulatory standards, they will not be given permits. If they violate the conditions under which they promise to operate, they may be sued for damages and the permits can be rescinded. At least in theory. In practice, whether or not industry projects are given permits, or whether those permits should be revoked, is a site of intense conflict between activists, regulatory agencies, politicians, and industry advocates.

Regulatory agencies are often subject to corporate capture, meaning many of the agency's staff members are unduly influenced by, under pressure from, or formerly employed by the industry they are regulating (McBeath 2016). As former Executive Director of Sierra Club Canada and current Green Party Member of Parliament, Elizabeth May, told me, Canada's National Energy Board (NEB), one of the primary agencies dealing with permits for the Trans Mountain pipeline, is very much subject to corporate capture by the fossil fuel industry (personal communication, May 15th, 2018). One of the NEB's members famously withdraw his participation from the agency, citing the extent to which its mission had been captured and perverted by the fossil fuel industry ([Hager 2014](#)). Similarly a great deal of evidence

suggests that in the US federal agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency, California state agencies like the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the Division of Oil Gas and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR), and local agencies like the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) which has oversight over air quality in Richmond, are all also heavily influenced by the interests of the fossil fuel industry (McBeath 2016; Aronoff 2017; [Lu 2018](#); [CBS SF Bay Area 2019](#); [Willon 2019](#)).

Given perceptions of the profound corruption within regulatory agencies, there is, understandably, some debate amongst campaigners and activists as to whether engagement with these institutions is strategic at all. Some of my interlocutors argued that these institutions are inherently and deliberately structured along colonial and extractivist logics and so engagement with them is not only pointless but self-defeating. This is an argument I will address directly in Chapter Seven. Nevertheless, many others viewed interventions in the regulatory system as a necessary and strategic approach to halting or slowing down the fossil fuel industry's expansion. The strategic orientations of some climate justice organizations and activists suggest that the regulatory system is genuinely able to contain and restrain the fossil fuel industry. Others, however, recognize these agencies' inherent corruption but have instead approached engagement with regulatory frameworks as a platform from which to narrativize the threats posed by the industry and organize community-based opposition. Activists also use regulatory frameworks to intensify the regulatory burden companies must endure if they wish to develop projects in a particular community. The strategy here is to develop regulations that make it too costly, or otherwise impossible, for companies to continue their plans. As examples from both case studies suggest, intervention in the

regulatory system can be a crucial but often incomplete component of engaging with the petro-state as one a point of intervention on the terrain of struggle defined by coercion. These examples also demonstrate the different theories of change that overlap in the deployment of tactics intended to engage regulatory frameworks.

Intensifying refineries' regulatory burden is one approach climate justice activists in Richmond and around the Bay Area believed they could use to curtail the industry's expansion. For several years after Richmond's city council permitted Chevron's refinery expansion, Communities for a Better Environment, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Sunflower Alliance, and Idle No More SF Bay (all members of the BAAQMD Alliance), targeted BAAQMD, calling on them to more stringently regulate Bay Area refineries' greenhouse gas emissions. Their efforts almost saw the agency sign an agreement to establish a new rule that would have made it much harder for Chevron to process heavier and dirtier crude oil with higher carbon intensity, essentially defeating the purpose of its refinery upgrade plan. In 2017, however, AB398, then California Governor Brown's Cap and Trade Bill, passed the California Assembly containing a clause restricting local air districts' and regulatory agencies' ability to regulate stationary sources of greenhouse gas emissions, thus thwarting climate justice activists' efforts. Indeed, many activists in Richmond believe the oil industry lobbied for this item to be included in the bill as a direct response to their successful lobbying of BAAQMD (Aronoff 2017).

Bay Area activists are now developing a similar tactic with the Richmond Levin Terminal. This time, however, they are calling on the air district to regulate coal dust blown into the

community from cargo trains entering the export terminal and the containers in which the coal is stored at the terminal. They are demanding that the coal dust covers be paid for at the industry's expense. As Sunflower Alliance activist, Jean Tepperman told me "The hope is that if they were required to do a lot of expensive stuff, they would say never mind. I mean we don't really want them ... to be exporting coal and covering it, we really want to not export coal. This is just a form of harassment" (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). This example suggests that even where there is little doubt that the regulatory framework is heavily influenced by fossil fuel companies, there are still loopholes and regulations activists may be able to exploit to "harass" fossil fuel companies into abandoning their projects.¹²⁰

Regulatory proceedings offer opportunities for activists to intervene upon the permitting stage of infrastructure development. Permitting agencies and government bureaucracies are obliged to give communities an opportunity to comment on the impacts of development and the findings of environmental impact analyses. Because these are supposed to inform the permitting agents' decision to permit or deny a project, they often become a site of contestation between activists and the company requesting permits. Campaigners will devote considerable resources to organizing communities to attend public hearings and write public comments which provide an opportunity to share narratives and information about fossil fuel industry's projects (Hoberg 2018). This kind of activism also constitutes low bar for entry into the movement for community members who may never have considered themselves activists or "political" until presented with a direct threat to their water, landscapes, or

¹²⁰ If your campaign strategy is to harass the industry into submission through the coercive tactics available through the state, you would still have to confront petro-culture. Otherwise those regulations will be easily overturned later (Woodly 2015). This is why campaigns need a diversity of tactics that are deployed to each specific terrain of struggle.

agricultural resources. These spaces can also be coopted by activists to share stories and solidarity across the climate justice movement. Pennie Opal Plant provided a good example of this in her recounting of the time when Bay Area activists sang the warrior women's song gifted to them by Secwepemc First Nations activists as they left the BAAQMD hearing (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). I have also observed how public hearings can become sites at which individuals come to recognize themselves as being part of a movement. Attending public hearings is not just about the regulatory process itself but can become movement building opportunities.

To varying degrees within the US and Canada, companies are also obliged to consult with Indigenous and First Nations governments whose communities and land would be directly impacted by one of their projects. Decades of First Nations-led struggle in Canada have strengthened the obligations of Canadian regulatory framework to consult with First Nations governments. These obligations are more potent than those found in the regulatory frameworks in the United States. This is not to say the Canadian regulatory system is more responsive to Indigenous people's sovereignty than regulatory systems the US. Indeed, a 2019 government report commissioned by the Trudeau administration found the state of Canada complicit in "race-based genocide" against Indigenous women partly for the failure of the regulatory system to take Indigenous peoples' concerns seriously ([BBC 2019](#)). In the United States and Canada, the regulatory frameworks operate according to intensely colonial logics. However, for reasons too complex to begin unraveling here, First Nations have had more success claiming accountability from the Canadian state than Indigenous peoples in the US. The Tsleil-Waututh, Squamish and Musqueam Nations' governments, along with the

Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, have used this to their advantage, demonstrating the extent to which the NEB and Kinder Morgan failed in their duty to adequately consult with them during the pipeline's permitting phase. This failure provided the grounds for the lawsuit that halted pipeline construction in August 2018.

Meanwhile, the NEB hearings on the pipeline themselves became a forum through which First Nations activists asserted their rights and title. Several interviewees told me about occasions on which First Nations activists would turn the public hearings on the pipeline into spaces for ceremony, where they would offer prayers, dance, and speak to NEB staff in their traditional languages. These were intended to draw attention to the ways the regulatory institutions are colonized, and remain colonizing frameworks, operating on unceded First Nations territory. These moments of cooptation were also an attempt to shift the balance of power away from the NEB officials. As Eugene Kung recounts of one hearing:

I can remember a moment in the National Energy Board [hearings] during what they call the Aboriginal oral testimony phase where Gabriel George, who's a Tsleil-Waututh member, cultural leader, told a story... one of the stories that makes Tsleil-Waututh law...and he told it and spoke in his language and at the end of the story, as is often the case, he stood up and he sang a song, and the whole room of about 80 people, mostly Tsleil-Waututh, all stood up together, and many started singing. And I was watching very carefully the panelists, the non-indigenous government-appointed panelists or NEB appointed panelists, whose courtroom we were in, right...it was their space, it was their show and then, all of a sudden, it just flipped. And to see the discomfort... "do we stand to? What do we do? We want to be respectful." ... There was something very palpable in the air ... reclaiming the space was very powerful. (personal communication, October 5th, 2018)

Eugene is describing something similar to the process of "unsettling" settler colonialism in which the assumptions engrained in colonial norms and colonizing institutions were revealed and challenged through reclaiming space (Snelgrove, Dhamoon and Corntassel 2014). First

Nations leaders claimed the space from the colonizers and turned the power dynamic around in a moment that reified their assertion of rights and title.

Similarly, finding Kinder Morgan's environmental impact assessment to be inadequate, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation commissioned their own independent report, under their own laws, and according to the principles of free, prior and informed consent. The report documented many more of the impacts of transporting diluted bitumen to and through their traditional territories ([Sacred Trust 2015b](#)). This was a way of delegitimizing the inadequacy of the consultation process and Kinder Morgan's report, and again asserting their own jurisdiction over their territory. First Nations claiming and holding these regulatory institutions on their own terms not only advanced the narrative that Kinder Morgan's pipeline and the Canadian government were continuing the legacy of colonialism, but they were material assertions of First Nations rights and title on unceded territory in which activists physically and vocally took over these spaces. In this way, the public hearing component of the regulatory framework can become one of the focal points around which to rally and mobilize community members and through which to advance movement narratives.

Finally, participation in the regulatory framework can help set the stage for subsequent lawsuits or to legitimize an escalation of tactics, laying the narrative groundwork for direct action or civil disobedience. As the "legitimate" political opportunity structures (i.e. regulatory proceedings, public hearings and public comments) for concerns to be genuinely registered and included in regulatory assessments are closed down or eroded, litigation and/or direct action become the only available options for activists seeking to oppose these

projects (Hoberg 2018; Haluza-Delay and Carter 2016). Pipeline opponents arrested in civil disobedience actions, or appearing in court after their arrests, would consistently reference the failure of the regulatory system to adequately register their opposition or argue that it was “rigged,” leaving them with little choice but to escalate ([De Souza 2018a](#); [Waisman 2018d](#); [Waisman 2018e](#); [National Observer 2018](#)). Eugene explained that the failures of the regulatory system to adequately consult First Nations and carry out an adequate environmental impact assessment were the grounds on which the lawsuits against Kinder Morgan and the NEB were heard (personal communication, October 5th, 2018). Showing that project opponents participated in the regulatory proceedings in good faith but were ultimately ignored helps legitimize and narrativize an escalation in strategy and accompany tactics.

Strategic Engagement in the Judicial System

Lawsuits and court cases are another strategy primarily relating to coercion and targeting the petro-state. Obstructing fossil fuel development through the courts has had mixed results in both case studies. For example, the Canadian Federal Court of Appeals (FCA) dealt the Trans Mountain pipeline one of its heaviest blows, finding that Kinder Morgan, the NEB and the Canadian government, had failed in their duties to adequately consult with First Nations and to carry out an adequate an environmental impact assessment of associated marine tanker traffic ([De Souza and Meyer 2018](#)). On August 30th, 2018, three months after the federal government announced it would buy the project from Kinder Morgan, the FCA “quashed” the pipeline permits, calling the parts of the consultation process “unacceptably flawed” and stating that Canada “fell short of the standard prescribed by the jurisprudence of the Supreme

Court” (Kung 2018). The government was ordered to halt construction and the NEB mandated to redo the consultation process and aspects of the environmental impact assessment. This has postponed the project by at least another year. Similarly, permits for the first iteration of Chevron’s refinery upgrade were overturned in a lawsuit against the city council’s approval of the project in 2008. The court found that project’s the environmental impact review concealed the amount of pollutants the refinery expansion would emit (McLaughlin 2018). Chevron was forced to revise the project and resubmit its application several years later.

Other lawsuits have been less successful, however. In May 2019, British Columbia’s provincial government lost an important court case that would have provided another legal avenue for halting the project by allowing the provincial government to regulate the contents of pipelines in the province. Meanwhile, Chevron, and what many activists referred to as its “army of lawyers” have pursued an effective strategy of attrition. Mike Parker told me about how Chevron wears down opponents with its vastly superior resources and intimidation of understaffed agencies tasked with keeping the company accountable (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Lawsuits can be an appropriate and often necessary strategic intervention in coercive relations, but they are a high risk, high reward approach, requiring large amounts of resources to which activists often have little access.

One of the reasons court cases against the industry remain a popular strategy, despite their inconsistent track record, is their ability to delay infrastructure projects, sometimes indefinitely. Lawsuits may not necessarily result in court victories for the movement or halt

the projects forever, but they can slow them down and cost fossil fuel companies a great deal of resources. This frustrates fossil fuel development and extends the period between companies receiving regulatory permits to begin construction and the actual deployment of construction equipment on the ground. These delay tactics are significant because they can contribute to an overall environment of risk and uncertainty, persuading many investors, and as the case of Kinder Morgan demonstrates, company executives, to abandon their investment. Eugene described how the court cases against Kinder Morgan, in conjunction with a range of other strategies, had intensified a political climate in British Columbia in which the company and its investors grew increasingly anxious about the viability of their investment (personal communication, October 5th, 2018). Indeed, Kinder Morgan's decision to abandon the project and sell it to the Canadian government saw the company's share prices increase and Kinder Morgan Canada's two executives receive large bonuses ([BNN Bloomberg 2018](#); [Bakx 2018](#)). This suggests at the extent to which investors were glad to rid themselves of any responsibility for a project that they clearly believed could not be built. The fact that the court of appeals ruled against the pipeline proponents in August 2018 confirms investors had good reason for their anxiety.

Legal intervention often depends upon whether or not evidence of a violation of rights can be demonstrated. First Nations in Canada, and indeed federally recognized tribal nations in the United States, are entitled to unique rights. These can be a powerful legal tool through which Indigenous activists are able to assert their claims to their traditional lands against the interests of fossil fuel companies in the courts. Noting this, Clayton Thomas Müller, formerly an organizer with Indigenous Environmental Network and now with 350.org, introduces

what he and his colleagues call “The Native Rights-Based Strategic Framework (2014). As he explains, “with our unique priority rights – the fiduciary obligation governments have to Native Americans, defined by our sacred treaties, trust relationships and other unique legal instruments – Native-Americans have an important tool” (2014, 249). This tool, and these unique rights, are what Thomas Müller and others have developed into the strategy they call the Native Rights-Based Strategic Framework.

The Native Rights-Based Strategic Framework’s ability to hold the petro-state accountable means that, as Thomas Müller argues, First Nations and Native Americans activists play a pivotal and in the leadership of the climate justice movement. If activists working to keep fossil fuels in the ground want to be leverage these unique rights, they must simultaneously embrace the movement for decolonization and Indigenous resurgence. Thus, First Nations and Indigenous activists bring powerful tools into the movement to which settler and non-native activists do not have access themselves. These tools, however, come with price. As Glen Coulthard argues, rights must still be recognized through the colonial state and the colonial court system and thus legitimize the colonial state as the arbiter of rights and recognition (2014). As Chapter Seven will demonstrates some activists believe this tradeoff undermines anti-colonial movements by reifying colonial and settler state authority.

Nevertheless, court cases have met with particular success in Canada where aboriginal rights and First Nations rights and title have been enshrined in the Canadian constitution since 1982.¹²¹ While there is certainly debate about the extent to which these rights carry much

¹²¹ See Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.: Section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982 (ICTI 2014).

weight in Canada's provincial and Federal governments, legal scholar, Bill Gallagher documents a "winning streak" of over 150 cases in which Canada's Supreme Court has ruled in favor of First Nations and against companies, provincial governments, and the Federal government, seeking to extract resources on First Nations territory without adequate attention to their rights (2012).¹²² Enduring colonial logics with which the agency is inscribed, as well as the corporate capture of the NEB help explain why the agency so often permits development projects without adequate consultation and the consent of the First Nations upon whose land the projects would be developed. Their failure to adequately consult and gain consent, however, leaves the industry vulnerable to lawsuits and explains why even when the industry received permits these are often invalidated by the courts.

In waiving these projects through without rigorous oversight, regulatory agencies may actually make it harder for projects to get built. As Eugene Kung explains of the NEB's consultation process:

As long as it's being viewed through this lens of colonial contempt, and trying to do the minimum, they will repeatedly end up back in court because ... what they're aiming for is the floor... if they want to avoid continuing ending up back in court, even if they win sometimes, they need to aim higher than the floor. They need to do more than whatever they perceive the legal minimum to be. And time and time again this approach has resulted in a misjudgment of where the floor is. (personal communication, October 5th, 2018)

Aiming for the legal minimum has consistently seen corporate captured regulatory agencies and extraction companies lose under Canadian legal system. In an opinion piece written before our interview, Eugene argued that "Aiming for higher than the minimum means that the starting point of consultation should be the recognition of the inherent rights, never

¹²² Gallagher updated this number to 250 wins on his blog in 2017, (Gallagher 2017).

extinguished by Canadian law, for Indigenous peoples to make decisions about what happens to their homelands and territories. It means implementing UNDRIP and respecting free, prior and informed consent” (Kung 2018). Adequate consultation means being prepared to have the project rejected in the process but, for most developers, consultation is disparaged as just another legal hurdle before getting projects built. Paradoxically, therefore, the enduring “colonial contempt” for First Nations’ rights and title that Eugene identifies as being embedded in the regulatory system, provided Trans Mountain opponents with the arguments they needed to win their court case and delay the project.

Climate justice activists in Richmond have not had the same opportunities to work with these legal instruments. This is partly because First Nations leadership played a more prominent role in Burnaby than Indigenous climate justice activism has in Richmond. Moreover, as RPA strategist Mike Parker reminded me, activists have had access to very few legal avenues through which they could reign in Chevron’s excesses:

We have very few tools to work with, I mean the only tool we really have, dealing with a company like Chevron, is CEQA [the California Environmental Quality Act] and building permits and... given court suits and stuff, Chevron has enough lawyers that even in these processes, they have the advantage. So we have to have pretty strong community mobilization in order to basically get those things used. (personal communication, July 11th, 2018)

Even when local ENGOs and climate justice groups were able to deploy these legal interventions by providing evidence of violations of CEQA, building permits or zoning laws, they have often been hopelessly outnumbered and out resourced when they have taken on Chevron’s lawyers.

Nevertheless, on several occasions, local organizations have taken the company to court or persuaded the city of Richmond to do so. The most notable instance of their winning one of these cases was in 2008 when the Contra Costa Superior Court ordered that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Chevron's refinery upgrade to be rescinded with the judge stating that "the EIR fails as an informational document because the project description is unclear and inconsistent as to whether the project will or will not enable Chevron to process a heavier crude slate than it is currently processing" ([Earthjustice 2009](#)). The city also sued Chevron for damages and gross negligence after the 2012 refinery fire and was awarded \$5 million in 2018 ([Gartrell 2018](#)). This came on top of a further \$2 million Chevron was forced to pay in fines and restitution in 2013. Lawsuits and the courts can be a highly strategic point of intervention in relations of coercion. If activists win lawsuits against the fossil fuel industry, they can use the coercive enforcement capabilities of the state to keep the industry in check or hold it accountable when it breaks the law.¹²³ However, legal intervention is an expensive approach that tends to be heavily stacked in favor of those with more resources.

Electoral and Legislative Strategy

There is not space in this chapter, nor in this dissertation, to draw attention to all of the injustices and deficiencies built into both the US and Canadian electoral systems, but neither is it my intention to do so. Instead, I want to illustrate some of the major reasons why climate justice activists are skeptical of electoral and legislative strategy and how, despite their

¹²³ The city of Richmond has also joined nine other California cities suing oil companies for climate change related damages and clean up ([Cliff 2018](#)).

skepticism, they have found ways to win certain strategic advantages in this point of intervention. I locate electoral politics as a point of intervention existing on the terrain of struggle defined by coercion because, as an intervention in petro-hegemony, it is most relevant to the state's ability to enforce a political agenda. However, strategic engagement with legislation and electoral politics is hardly limited to coercive relations alone. Such strategies must inevitably also influence terrains defined by relations of consent and compliance. While strategic engagements with regulatory frameworks and legal interventions also resonate across all three terrains of struggle, they are most clearly an attempt to shift relations of coercion and enforcement. Electoral and legislative strategy certainly involves gaining access to, or limiting, the state's enforcement and coercive capacities, but their implications for interventions on the terrains of consent and compliance are so significant that we could think of this particular point of intervention existing on all three terrains simultaneously.

Drawing on decades of social movement experience – not to mention a history largely defined by disappointments in electoral strategy – many in the climate justice movement are wary of engagement with, or otherwise hostile towards, electoral politics. As Green Party Member of Parliament, Elizabeth May explained to me, the First Past the Post Electoral system in Canada has created conditions in which the electorate feels obliged to “vote strategically” rather than necessarily in accordance with their values (personal communication, May 15th, 2018). Voters who would support more radical climate policy will often instead vote for the Liberal Party with the rationale of keeping the Conservative Party out of office. Without much but rhetoric distinguishing the Liberals from the

Conservatives in terms of climate policy (let alone climate justice), and the positions of the NDP in state of almost perpetual flux, the Green Party has sought to capture the votes of those disaffected in an electoral system stacked against them.¹²⁴ Recently, the NDP and the Green Party have been competing to earn the votes of disaffected Liberals following Prime Minister Trudeau's failure to follow through on promises he'd made on radical climate action and repairing relations with First Nations. Yet the Canadian Green Party, too, is not without its own contradictions. Balancing a generation of more conservative environmentalism with a younger generation of climate and environmental justice advocates, the Canadian Greens' commitment to climate justice as a political project appears ambiguous at best.¹²⁵ Moreover, it officially rejects left wing politics and instead embraces the politically empty slogan: "Not left. Not right. Forward together." This apparent ideological ambiguity has also alienated many within the climate justice movement in Canada. The failures of the electoral system and the parties operating within it, particularly at the federal level, to adequately represent a platform of climate justice means some in the movement have abandoned electoral politics and legislation altogether.

¹²⁴ Traditionally positioning itself as a party representing the labor movement, the New Democratic Party has been caught in an intense conflict over the implications of embracing more radical climate policies for workers and particularly the large union support it receives. Their annual party conference in 2016 saw this tension explode in a debate over whether the party would adopt Naomi Klein's *Leap Manifesto* (Rodriguez 2016). The debate descended into mutually destructive accusations of job killers and environment killers. The Party's current leader, Jagmeet Singh, has put forward an impressive climate platform akin to elements of the Green New Deal in the US and called for a swift managed decline of tar sands operations. Alberta's former NDP premier, Rachel Notley, meanwhile, was one of the leading proponents of the Trans Mountain pipeline while the British Columbian NDP premier, is one of its prominent political opponents.

¹²⁵ This tension was on display at the annual Canadian Green Party Conference that I attended in British Columbia. Keynote speakers included Grand Chief Stewart Philip and several anti-pipeline activists expressing their commitment to climate justice and decolonization, followed by Professor Thomas Homer Dixon who explicitly called upon the Party to reject the Leap Manifesto and the document's orientation towards a politics of revolutionary climate justice. All speakers received standing ovations but from different sections of the audience. Philip ultimately endorsed Jagmeet Singh and the NDP in 2019's General Election.

In the United States, meanwhile, the dominance of the two mainstream parties ensure climate justice is marginalized and dismissed. The centrist moderation of mainstream Democratic Party politicians and the outright climate change denial of the Republican Party constitute a politics of “the lesser of two evils” where the solutions presented in the climate justice movement are considered too radical to be engaged with seriously. Moreover, at the federal and state level, the effective exclusion of third-parties representing a platform for climate justice from real participation in the electoral process, means that the Green Party (which in the United States certainly is more clearly committed to climate justice as a political project), socialist parties, and others, are hopelessly isolated. Moreover, the fossil fuel industry maintains an immensely influential lobbying force in both Californian Democratic and Republican Parties, donating vast sums of money to both parties’ campaign funds (McBeath 2016; [Seidman and Connor 2018](#); [Bollag 2019](#)). Electoral politics in the US, even more so than Canada, tends to be a venue in which the climate justice movement is vastly outnumbered, outspent, and under resourced. Understandably, therefore, some climate justice activists argue that the movements’ limited resources would be better invested in engagement with points of intervention where victories are more easily won.

Yet, despite climate justice activists’ legitimate critiques of the electoral systems in both countries, many also understand that elections are a point of intervention that cannot be surrendered to the fossil fuel industry. The success of the Richmond Progressive Alliance’s populist electoral insurgency against the fossil fuel industry, and the political establishment over which it has been so influential, suggests that, at least at the municipal level, victories against the industry can be won and new political programs institutionalized and enforced.

The RPA emerged to wrest control of the city council away from Chevron and corporate influence without splitting the progressive vote. In the past, well-meaning but ill-prepared progressive candidates would run against each other, and the city's corporate-backed political establishment, but would divide the progressive vote amongst themselves to the advantage of establishment incumbents (Early 2017). Since 2003, the RPA's response has been to run an alliance of candidates from the Green Party, progressive Democrats, various socialist parties, and independents, on a slate that the RPA would select and endorse. Their model, as RPA co-founder and strategist Juan Reardon articulates, is based on the following idea:

If you are going to run, run by organizing. Organize by running. Rather than being a 'lone ranger' who tries to gather support from a few unions and organizations to run for office, the RPA model views running for office as a way to educate and develop anti-corporate consciousness— a way to create a long term progressive local organization that will remain in place long after the election is over. (2018)

The RPA uses elections as specific moments to mobilize Richmond around progressive issues for longer term struggles. Meanwhile during election seasons, it uses organizing techniques to turn out the vote and get their slate of candidates elected. Parker told me this model is influenced by the European Leftist mass parties' model of the 20th century (and I'd add contemporary Leftist South American parties). According to Parker this model of electoral intervention "combines being a political party with a social movement" (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). The movement-party model isn't necessarily new, although it has certainly had to be reborn in the United. Indeed, as Parker suggests, the model has roots in the parties that represented workers' movement in 20th century Europe and across the US. The RPA's great innovation has not been its model of political intervention but rather its ability to hold together traditionally fractured left and progressive wing of

politics in an alliance that brings diverse constituencies together across political ideologies and relations of privilege, class, race, and identity. This model has thrived in South America and helped build the Pink Tide that brought leftwing and indigenous alliances to power across the continent. With populist insurgencies in mainstream political parties, or the emergence of new populist parties emerging out of social movements, this model is being re-innovated in the Global North in what Micah White identifies as the hybrid *movement-party* (2016).

As Reardon explains, the movement-party uses organizing strategies to win elections and uses elections as opportunities to educate and build the movement. In Richmond, RPA councilmembers consider themselves part of the local movement and believe they are accountable to that movement. Former mayor, Gayle McLaughlin, told me that:

You need both the people sitting at the dais who are truly supporting the people in the city versus the corporate donors, and you also need a local movement so that the representatives sitting at the dais have a movement to converge with ... and have that local movement pressure the other elected officials... who are doing the bidding of the corporations. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

With movement-party candidates sitting on city council willing to resist Chevron's influence, implement just transition programs, and appoint officials more supportive of climate justice activism, the local movement has gained access to institutional tools through which to advance their political program. The movement-party hybrid has been re-invented and evolved in Richmond over the past decade, but it is important to remember that the Black Panther Party, with its own movement-party model, has roots in Richmond from which local activists also draw inspiration (Early 2017). Moreover, as equal parts movement and party,

the RPA's electoral success has to be understood in the context of the organizing and mobilizing efforts led by local climate, environmental, and social justice grassroots organizations. Many of these organizations' members, like Andrés Soto of CBE, were part of the RPA's founding team, and many others have sat on the RPA's steering committee at different times. The RPA is not intended to be just another party machine with a social movement base. Rather, it is constituted by, and for the most part is accountable to, its members and local grassroots organizations comprising the city's broader movement ecology.

Using elections to organize the community helps instigate and publicize shifting political orientations in the city, even when RPA-backed candidates don't necessarily win their election campaigns. Running a slate of allied candidates allows the local movement to crystalize the issues around which common ground exists and voice what the local movement stands for. Rather like branding itself, the RPA has sought to gain recognition by having the community associate the RPA with a very clear political program and set of values that doesn't change despite shifting priorities from election to election. To give one example, Mike Parker emphasizes the importance of the RPA finding a "wedge issue" for each election season that allows it to assert its values and define them against those of their opponents:

We're very big on trying to find for each election what we call a wedge issue, an issue that is sort of the defining issue of the election. So people know, as in 2016, if you're for rent control, you vote for the RPA. If you're against it, you vote for somebody else. In 2014, if you want to stand up to Chevron, you're for the RPA. If you want to capitulate to Chevron, you vote for somebody else... 2012 it was the soda tax. (personal communication, July 11th, 2018)

Wedge issues, as framing theorist George Lakoff explains, are “stand-ins for the whole of a moral system,” through which systemic critiques and demands for an alternative may be framed (2014, 148). Ideally, a wedge issue frames and defines the political contest around the movement’s values, on terms advantageous to the broader movement’s goals, and shifts discursive conditions against their opponent. Chevron’s role in the community has provided the RPA with a powerful wedge issue and a signifier embodying a broader critique of corporate capture of politics undermining the community’s ability to govern itself. The wedge issues RPA selects are drawn out of the concerns that most concern the city’s residents which are gathered from town halls and community meetings. As such, these remain embedded in the city’s political landscape for years after the election season is over. In Richmond, wedge issues like the refinery’s toxic pollution, how much tax Chevron should pay, and the degree to which the company is able to influence city politics, have provided the frames through which new narrative interventions can be used to organize and align a broader movement around climate justice.

Organizing the community in order to win elections has required both RPA-backed councilmembers and RPA activists to demonstrate a deep commitment to addressing these wedge issues in between election seasons. The movement-party strategy is intended to keep the wedge issues on which the election was or will be fought in the community’s consciousness long before or after the election occurs. This means the community must remain activated and mobilized in between elections. As McLaughlin explains:

What you see happening is that people get excited about elections and then what happens [with] the election is you either win it... and then people say, “Okay, now I don't have to worry, I got some good representatives in.” Or you lose it, and you're

disappointed and you say, “Okay, well, you know, I’ll wait till the next election season comes and maybe I’ll activate then.” I think we saw it a little bit happening at first with the RPA, and we didn’t want it to happen that way though so... we made sure that we kept the community charged, and we did this by mobilizing on issues... You stand for issues during the election, and then, after the election happens, and if you win, then you have to act on the issues that you stood for, and bring the community in a mobilized fashion to support those issues. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

RPA has depended on long-term relationships with different community leaders and supporting different organizations’ campaigns in the city to keep citizens mobilized between elections. Condemning Chevron’s influence over city politics helped many RPA candidates get elected. Once elected, they worked with the movement that got them into office to hold the company accountable and to implement policies that would make the city greener, cleaner and safer – all the while trying to hold gentrification at bay. This has meant using their influence in local government to support local organizations, like APEN, CBE, ACCE, RYSE, and others, who do much of the day-to-day community organizing and run campaigns in Richmond. As such, the success of the movement-party model has not only been in the election of movement candidates to city council, but also that these elections and the movement’s elected councilmembers have been able to create new opportunities for organizing and supporting the movement’s infrastructure.

With RPA leadership on city council, particularly under McLaughlin’s terms as mayor, local climate justice activists had strong support in their campaigns against Chevron, taking the company to court, getting the company to pay a fairer share of taxes, and delaying the expansion of the refinery. While it is true that local government’s authority and mandate in municipalities across the United States has diminished, as federal and state oversight have

grown,¹²⁶ one of the powers local government and particularly mayors still have is the appointment of allies to different government commissions and boards. As Steve Early described, McLaughlin's appointment of climate justice activists and movement members to the city's planning commission ensured far more scrutiny over Chevron's refinery expansion application and the inclusion of much more rigorous environmental and public health standards in the plan (2017). Current mayor, Tom Butt, has also used this power to appoint his more politically moderate allies and, as some RPA members allege, deny RPA associated applications for these positions.¹²⁷ Recognizing the influence available to those sitting on such commissions, RPA and allied organizations have hosted trainings and workshops for members guiding them through the application process and how to best use these positions.

RPA appointments of movement members to these boards also increased institutional support for the development of early just transition programs like more sustainable and accessible public transport, the growth of urban gardens and food sovereignty, community choice energy, solar energy training programs, and locally owned cooperatives. Council support for these programs has shifted the landscape of economic and political possibility whereby climate justice solutions can be experiment with and practiced in the city with access to local government resources. One of the most significant examples of institutionalizing this support was in the updating of the city's General Plan.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ See Steve Early's introduction to *Refinery Town* (2017) for an important history of municipal reform in Richmond and across the US.

¹²⁷ As Butt's antipathy for the RPA has intensified, RPA steering committee member, Diana Wear, also suggested that movement members seeking appointment to these commissions may want to distance themselves from the RPA in their applications (personal communication, July 6th, 2018).

¹²⁸ Every city in California is, by law, required to adopt and maintain a General Plan. The General Plan is legal document guiding city administrators on the city's future development goals. It contains at least seven core elements including Housing, Transportation, Noise, Open Space, Conservation, Safety and Land Use. The land use element is often the most significant one, providing what Richmond city manager, Bill Lindsey, described

New policies, programs and projects have been developed out of the General Plan mandate. In particular, the Plan’s Health and Wellness element led to an initiative the city council adopted called “health in all policies.” Through this initiative councilors, administrators, and regulators are required to factor community “health equity” into their decision making with regards to all new development projects (again here we see “public health” leveraged as a floating signifier to stand in for concerns of climate and environmental justice).¹²⁹ Former city manager, Bill Lindsey, explained that this was “tested when we were processing a modernization project for the Chevron refinery” (personal communication, July 16th, 2018). The Climate and Energy element, meanwhile, is intended to incentivize more resources and government support for community choice energy, public transport, and solar power job skills training, while reducing the city’s dependency on Chevron’s economic influence. Meanwhile, combining health in all policies with objectives contained in the Climate and Energy Element, the city’s Climate Action Plan, published in 2016, is an ambitious program committed to:

[building] resiliency to climate change impacts through actions focused on transitioning to renewable energy, strengthening critical transportation infrastructure,

as “the city’s land use constitution” between the city council, administration, citizens and industry (personal communication, July 16th, 2018). Legally, all future development in the city should fit into the general goals or blueprint set out by the different elements of the General Plan. Starting in 2005, Richmond administrators and councilmembers began a rewrite of the entire plan which was ultimately released in 2012. The plan contained 15 elements including, for the first time in California, an element on Energy and Climate Change, as well as a new element on Health and Wellness.

¹²⁹ The Richmond city council website explains that “Health in All Policies, or “healthy public policy,” is based on the idea that health starts with where people live, work, learn, and play, and that community health is influenced by more than individual choices. One’s physical and social environments, along with local government decisions and actions that shape these environments, have an impact on health outcomes” (City of Richmond 2015). We may justifiably infer from this highly depoliticized technocratic explanation, at least some acknowledgment of the founding premises upon which environmental justice rests.

creating safe and affordable housing, enhancing local jobs and wages, creating healthy local food systems, and protecting natural resources and habitat. ([RCAP 2016](#))

As more RPA candidates joined McLaughlin on city council over the course the General Plan's composition, local activists were able to have a great deal more influence over its contents and shape future city development policy. Lindsey told me that outreach to the Richmond community had been unprecedented and he seemed to genuinely believe this outreach had meaningfully adopted many community leaders' suggestions. Gaining access to the forums in which the General Plan was developed through the RPA's influence on council was an important strategic maneuver to shape the construction of a legal document local activists can now use to challenge future development projects or demand the city uphold its commitments made in the Climate Action Plan. Indeed, activists could conceivably now use the General Plan's health in all policies initiative to demand more oversight over the Levin Terminal project, and the city itself can point to their General Plan to justify permitting decisions if taken to court over rejecting further fossil fuel development.

Finally, movement councilors have used what authority they have to support activism on intersecting issues from reigning in corruption and police brutality that was endemic to the local Police Association, to passing rent control measures to ensure Richmond's residents are able to enjoy and the fruits of cleaning up their city, to a whole range of other progressive issues profoundly interwoven with climate justice. When operating at its best, RPA is a movement vehicle through which activists may gain influence over city council. This has opened up many strategic opportunities for activists to claim institutional support, enforce accountability from Chevron, and translate their symbolic victories into policy ones. While

local government has limited mandate and authority, Chevron's agents certainly thought the city council was influential enough to spend \$3 million on Richmond's city election in 2014. By refusing to surrender electoral politics and local legislation to Chevron, activists have often been able to turn local government against the company and make modest but important gains converting a climate justice program into policy. So far, and remarkably, the movement-party model has not replicated Robert Michels' so-called "Iron Law of Oligarchy."¹³⁰ From my observations, elected movement members do, for the most part, remain accountable to the local movement and to the community at large.

Richmond provides salient examples of how climate justice activists engage with local government, legislation and electioneering as points of intervention against the petro-state. However, climate justice activists certainly engage with electoral politics and legislation in their confrontation with the Trans Mountain pipeline too. The electoral victory of parties who ran explicitly in opposition to the pipeline opened up new strategic avenues for contesting the project in British Columbia. While the previous Liberal provincial government had supported the pipeline, they were ousted in 2017 in an election upset that saw a Green Party-backed-NDP government take control of the British Columbian legislative assembly. They came to power promising to "use every tool in the toolbox" to defeat the pipeline project ([Kane 2017](#)). Kinder Morgan invoked the change of government as one reason why it no longer believed it could get the pipeline built. While regime change has not necessarily seen the provincial government make broader commitments to prioritizing climate justice policies, the

¹³⁰ Michels argued that any organization, no matter how democratic its original philosophy and intention may have been, inevitably tends toward rule by an oligarchical elite as it professionalizes and becomes more bureaucratic.

government and legislature's opposition to the pipeline means activists have gained some influential allies and tools with which to delay the pipeline.¹³¹ Additionally, they no longer have to focus as much of their resources on confronting a hostile provincial government.

As the federal government's support for the pipeline has intensified, culminating with its outright purchase of the project, organizations like 350 Canada, Dogwood, the Justin Trudeau Brigade, and others, developed a strategy and a variety of tactics to peel Liberal voters' support away Liberal party politicians. Strategy consultant and current 350 Canada campaigns manager, Amara Possian, suggested that Trudeau's support for the pipeline could cost him the October 2019 federal election. She argued that the Prime Minister's support for the pipeline has alienated the very constituency that the Liberal Party's 2015 campaign relied upon to win office: youth, progressives and those voting strategically to oust the Conservative Harper government (Possian 2018). Prior to the government purchasing the pipeline, 350 Canada organized local 350.org chapters around the country to target Liberal MPs in vulnerable swing seats, calling on them to publicly reject the pipeline buyout or risk losing their voter base. For the most part, however, it seems the Liberals closed ranks and couldn't be picked off.

¹³¹ As Chapter 2 illustrated, the NDP government in British Columbia has not been supportive of a broader climate justice agenda. They remain committed to a construction of pipeline through Wet'suwet'en territory carrying fracked gas to a new LNG facility on the North west coast of the province. The NDP provincial government has also continued to support the controversial Site C hydroelectric dam in the North of the province. Moreover, as Chapter 4 suggested, the British Columbian NDP's highly public opposition to the pipeline has been something of a double-edged sword as corporate media narratives increasingly framed resistance to the pipeline as provincial confrontation between Alberta and BC and their two NDP premiers. On the other hand, the new administration's anti-SLAPP legislation has helped curtail some the industry's access to coercive resources in the province. SLAPP stands for Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. Kinder Morgan had filed several SLAPP suits targeting activists and claiming millions of dollars in damages after protests in 2014.

While it is not clear whether this strategy achieved its desired objective, targeting MPs across the country has had the advantage of spreading opposition to the pipeline and building the resistance across Canada. For example, on one 350 Canada webinar with local chapters, campaigners said they'd targeted over a third of the Liberal MP caucus with over 60 actions outside their offices. Just five days after the government announced the pipeline buyout, pipeline opponents across Canada held a Day of Action at their respective MPs' offices. The actions drew attention to the sense of betrayal many Liberal voters felt the government's support for the pipeline represented ([Ball 2018](#)).¹³² Opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline is particularly strong in Quebec, a province long known for guarding its jurisdiction against federal oversight. Quebec is an especially important province in election mathematics as the Party that wins the majority in Quebec tends to be the able to form the next government. Federal elections provide the movement with an excellent opportunity to put pressure on vulnerable candidates and spread opposition to petro-hegemony beyond localized sites of extraction, transportation, and refining.

Nevertheless, as the 2019 fall General Election would prove, broadening the campaign's scope to target Liberal MPs wherever their seats were vulnerable did not intensify pressure on the Prime Minister to the extent that the Party would change its position. Despite climate change emerging as a top election priority, this did not translate into broader opposition the Liberal Party's position on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Along with the pipeline and climate

¹³² For national context, the federal Liberal Party gained a parliamentary majority with roughly 40% of the popular vote across Canada in 2015. In the October 2019 General Election, they won 33% of the vote and 157 seats (13 short of a majority). The Conservatives won 34% but fewer seats, up from 31% in 2015. The Green Party's polling before the election increased from 3.5% to 11%, however settled back at 6.5%, winning the party three seats in the election. The federal NDP's dropped from 20% in 2015 to 17% in 2019 ([CBC News 2019d](#)).

change other major election priorities included affordable housing and corruption accusations which dominated the headlines in the last weeks before the General Election. Indeed, by all indicators, Prime Minister Trudeau seemed to believe that appealing to conservative voters with promises to get the pipeline built is the more prudent reelection strategy than appealing to progressives. Meanwhile, as the Liberal's popularity declined (perhaps more likely in response to a wider perception of the Party's broken promises, the recent Lavulin-SNC scandal and images of the Prime Minister wearing blackface than, directly because of the pipeline) progressive voters were split between the NDP, the Green Party and, in Quebec, the Bloc Quebecois. After a series of very public broken promises and scandals, the election returned the Liberals to power but this time in a minority government.

The tactics climate justice activists use to engage with electoral politics range from lobbying, petitioning, and canvassing to direct action targeting elected representatives, to running for office themselves. The different strategic orientations have included targeting representatives in vulnerable seats to peel political support away from fossil fuel projects, running movement candidates through a movement-party hybrid to force the industry's influence out of local government, taking advantage of relationships with elected allies to curtail the industry's coercive power, and unleashing the resources of state institutions to support just transitions. The specific strategy and tactics activists use to engage with this point of intervention inevitably depends upon the political opportunity structures and context in which they are operating. However, despite legitimate suspicion of engaging with legislative and electoral politics, most climate justice activists have decided not to surrender this point of intervention to the fossil fuel industry and have, in many cases, been rewarded for their decision.

Direct Action in Burnaby and Richmond

Direct action has been a stalwart component of social movement strategies for as long as there have been social movements to practice them. Activist, and author of *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism*, L.A. Kauffman, explains that direct action “can refer to a huge variety of efforts to create change outside the established mechanisms of government” (2017, x). The array of direct action tactics is indeed expansive. Traditionally they have included mass marches, sit ins, banner drops, blockades, lockdowns, occupations, strikes, action camps or protest camps that claim or defend land, sabotage¹³³, and civil disobedience. While these tactical genres are some of the most common in activist repertoires, direct action tactics are often creative, innovative, and adapt these more traditional iterations into a multiplicity of variants manifesting in imaginative and surprising tactical formations. Direct action, as the term implies, sees individuals and groups take direct control of political intervention and deploy specific action that challenges, disrupts, opens up, shuts down, prevents, advances, creates, or illuminates different dynamics of power (Kahn Russell 2012). As Kahn Russell writes in *Beautiful Trouble* “Direct action means that we take collective action to change our circumstances without handing our power to a middle-person” (2012, 32). The Ruckus Society defines direct action as “the strategic use of immediately effective acts to achieve a political or social end and challenge an unjust power dynamic” (Ruckus Society in Moore and Kahn Russell 2011, 51). Direct action tactics can be

¹³³ Stephen D’Arcy prefers the more technical term, “community-based, public interest infrastructure disassembly” or what we might call “strategic infrastructure disassembly” for short (2014, 289). Debates continue to rage within the movement about whether sabotage is ever strategic and the extent to which it departs from nonviolent to violent direct action.

spectacular or subtle and they can be carried out *en-masse* or by small decentralized “affinity groups.”¹³⁴

Direct action can be deployed either as a tactic or a strategy. Where direct action is deployed as one tactic within a broader strategic framework, its impact tends to be symbolic or expressive. Where direct action is the strategy, the intent and impact should be instrumental as well as expressive.¹³⁵ When direct action is the campaign’s strategy, the corresponding tactics must follow the logic of that strategy. Whether strategic or tactical, direct action should always tell the movement’s story through its form, genre, and the point of intervention it targets. Stephen D’Arcy writes that effective direct action tactics “have to be implemented *relentlessly*, on an *escalating* trajectory, with an *ever-broadening base* of support” (2014, 289). These criteria articulate at least one metric by which the efficacy of direct action may be judged. To this Kauffman explains that direct action tactics are increasingly being infused with intersectional analysis that is more conscious of who is and isn’t able to participate in different tactics and where and when direct action is appropriate (2017). Examples from

¹³⁴ Affinity groups, as explains Kauffman, are “small assemblages of roughly five to fifteen people who take part in an action jointly, planning their participation collectively” (2017, 14). Murray Bookchin, who borrowed the term from anti-fascist guerilla groups in the Spanish Civil War, wrote that affinity groups are constituted by people who “were drawn together not by residence, not even by occupation, but on the basis of affinity: friendship, individual trust, background, history,” Kauffman explains that “affinity groups reflected both anarchist ideals of free association and military needs for security...because affinity groups were small and formed only by people who knew each other well, they were difficult to infiltrate or uncover... they acted autonomously with no central command.” Despite their emergence in a situation of incredible violence, the affinity group is now an important feature of nonviolent direct action (2017, 15).

¹³⁵ Moore and Kahn Russel make a distinction between expressive and instrumental tactics. As they put it, “A tactic is *instrumental* to the degree that there is a specific quantifiable objective you are trying to achieve with it. For example, maybe we want to blockade a port that is shipping out weapons to kill people in the Middle East. We have a specific economic impact on our target, and a way to evaluate success. A tactic is *expressive* inasmuch as it expresses one’s worldview, values, and identity. A mass march in response to an injustice can fall into this category. It may be useful for exciting our base, building networks and capacity, or creating a media spectacle, but usually do not have a concrete SMART goal that we can point to and say, “We achieved this specific change as a result of this tactic”” (2011, 51).

these case studies demonstrate that the use of direct action tactics can and should complement, supplement, support, and sometimes replace, action taken through the supposedly legitimate channels of political intervention, like lobbying elected officials, election campaigns, legislation, lawsuits, regulatory frameworks, or petition gathering.

While direct action tactics and strategy have been deployed throughout the campaign against the Trans Mountain Pipeline, they have been used only sparingly to intervene in petro-hegemony in Richmond. This was partly because opposition to petro-hegemony was taking place in different movement moments. While I was in Richmond, climate justice activists were in a period of self-evaluation, assessing the different points of intervention to engage with next, and developing the wedge issues the November 2018 local elections would be fought over. Meanwhile, while I was conducting field work in Burnaby and throughout the lower mainland, activists were in the midst of intense mobilization and escalation. These different movement moments illuminate much about when and where direct action tactics are appropriate and how they can complement other interventions.

Burnaby:

Beginning with 10,000 people marching against the pipeline on Burnaby Mountain, and coinciding with the construction of the Watch House in March, organizers and campaigners escalated their intervention with a series of direct action tactics throughout the spring and summer of 2018. The NEB approved the pipeline's permits in December 2017 only to have the newly elected provincial government pledge it would do all in its power to stop the

pipeline. As such, the mobilization escalated in a wave of actions at the precise point that Kinder Morgan's project seemed to be most vulnerable. At their peak, campaigners were deploying direct action events between two and three times a week. From March to September, and throughout this period of escalation, the Watch House and Protect the Inlet camp on Burnaby Mountain represented an intensification of Indigenous-led oppositional tactics. Camp Cloud emerged on the mountain several weeks prior to the Watch House and PTI camp and remained in place until it was evicted after the city council ordered its removal, several weeks before the court quashed the permits. The emergence and disappearance of both camps provides helpful bookends for this particular period of escalation during which Kinder Morgan abandoned the pipeline, the Canadian government buying the pipeline, and finally the project's permits being quashed two months later.

The primary form of direct action deployed during this period was a combination of civil disobedience and blockading the gates of either Kinder Morgan's tank farm just a few hundred feet away from the PTI camp, or the company's West Ridge Marine Terminal on the opposite side of Burnaby Mountain. Every Saturday, and on some weekdays, these blockades would last between two and five hours, preventing vehicles from getting in or out of worksites. The blockades were always accompanied with ceremony and prayer according to Coast Salish First Nations' customs, and Indigenous elders would ensure the spiritual and ceremonial tone endured throughout the action. These events also featured a series of speakers, protest songs, imaginative banners and posters, a large canopy tent to protect from rain or sun, some folding chairs and often a picnic table with snacks and water. Attendance varied, with some Saturday actions drawing up to 250 participants, but numbers usually

settling at around 60 or 70 attendees. Participants would block the entrance until the police arrived, at which point those willing to risk arrest would sit down directly in front of the gates and refuse to move while everyone else took up positions just outside of Kinder Morgan's injunction zone. From here they would sing and offer support and solidarity for those taking part in civil disobedience. The police would then read out the terms of the injunction and give those remaining in front the gates 10 to 20 minutes to read it themselves. Before arresting them, police officers would often spend several minutes trying to persuade protestors not to participate in civil disobedience.

The weekly actions were intended to keep a media spotlight on the climate justice campaigners' narrative and framing of the struggle because the corporate media was increasingly framing the fight as a provincial contest between competing premiers: John Horgan versus Rachel Notley. Blockading the gates was an opportunity to recapture the narrative while providing an outlet for activists to register and provoke moral outrage directly and publicly. Advancing the narrative and registering moral outrage meant ensuring Indigenous leadership and speakers were at the forefront of messaging, that residents of Burnaby mountain could express their concerns about the hazards the pipeline and tank farm posed to their community, and that those being arrested were able to explain their reasons for taking "bold action." Local news outlets, documentary makers and bloggers would often attend to record the actions. However, reporters from larger corporate news outlets would only attend when an action promised to feature a relatively well know speaker, a theme or spectacle likely to attract a larger crowd, or a high-profile arrest.

The arrests of MPs Elizabeth May and Kennedy Stewart, on March 23rd, focused media attention back on Burnaby Mountain and climate justice activists' direct action at the gates. Two weeks later, the entire leadership of the Union of British Columbian Indian Chiefs, including Grand Chief Stewart Philip, as well as author and activist Naomi Klein, blockaded the gates. This also increased the media profile of the gate blockades. On this occasion, however, Kinder Morgan officials quite sensibly refused to allow the situation to escalate and law enforcement never showed up to arrest anyone. A day later, on April 8th, the company announced it would halt all unessential spending on the project until it had the political certainty that the pipeline could proceed without interference from the provincial government or activists. Whether the blockades directly influenced the company's decision to withdraw spending is the subject of intense debate. However, it is clear that the attention they received intensified discursive perceptions of risk and uncertainty associated with the company's ability to get the pipeline in the ground.¹³⁶

Despite some instrumental objectives, direct action and the blockades on Burnaby Mountain primarily performed expressive or discursive roles. Blocking the gates for several hours a week may have cost the company a relatively small amount of time and money, but the rolling weekend blockades didn't actually do much to delay and interrupt the daily flows of

¹³⁶ As well as a narrative intervention, civil disobedience and the weekly blockades were a tactic within a broader strategy of mounting pressure on Kinder Morgan by maintaining and escalating conditions of risk and uncertainty such that their project appeared untenable to investors and the company leadership. For example, one of the longest blockades which saw the Westridge Marine Terminal besieged on land and by several "kayactivists" paddling in from the Burrard Inlet to close off the sea entrance coincided with Kinder Morgan's Annual General Meeting where Tsleil-Waututh leaders addressed investors telling them that their pipeline would never be built. (Amassing dozens of people paddling kayaks out to block oil tankers and blockade has become a popular tactic amongst coastal communities resisting fossil fuel infrastructure expansion.)

capital, resources, and labor upon which the pipeline's construction depended.¹³⁷ Instead, direct action was mostly a discursive interruption in narrative flows, seeking to provoke a crisis of legitimacy and moral authority. Provoking a legitimacy crisis for the company and its supporters in the federal government might be considered an instrumental objective, but its effect is cumulative, and the discursive impacts of the blockades might not be observable for months, if not years.

Civil disobedience is a particular type of direct action in which adherents break the law to demonstrate that that law is unjust (Kauffman 2017). Direct action, on the other hand, may well break laws to achieve particular ends, but breaking the law is not necessarily its intent. When those engaging in civil disobedience deliberately break an unjust law, and thereby provoke the state to enforce its unjust law, they accept that they will endure the coercive (often violent) repercussions of said provocation nonviolently. In doing so they seek to force what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called a "moral crisis," or a crisis of moral authority and legitimacy on those who would enforce an unjust law. Civil disobedience can be used to force a choice point or "decision dilemma" in which the authority in question must either accede to the campaign's demands or deploy coercion against the campaigners but risk losing their legitimacy. Civil disobedience has become one of the most common tactics deployed in Blockadia.

¹³⁷ Activists noted that police presence would be far more intense when blockades happened on weekdays when work could actually be interrupted, while weekend actions were often more festive and less intensely confrontational.

As a symbolic or narrative intervention intended to provoke moral outrage, civil disobedience and the blockades at the gates comprised a very carefully orchestrated spectacle. Younger organizers from Stand.earth and volunteers with Protect the Inlet would often act as action marshals, while Indigenous Elders ensured the tone and energy of the action remained peaceful and in prayer. The marshals, recognizable as figures of authority in their high visibility vests, were stage managers for the action, and were largely responsible for maintaining control of the narrative and the action itself. The orchestration of these spectacles required a great deal of discipline from participants, including message discipline. To this end, actions always included a pre-determined set of spokespeople who knew how to stay “on message” and were capable of dealing with difficult questions from journalists and reporters. All the other participants were encouraged to decline media interviews and instead direct reporters to these spokespeople. While maintaining message and action discipline may seem quite draconian, operating in a hostile media environment means it is often necessary to reduce the chances of activists’ being misrepresented and having their words distorted to reflect the movement in general.

Meanwhile, all those taking “bold action,” or those prepared to risk arrest through civil disobedience, would be required to participate in a nonviolent direct action (NVDA) training before participating in the blockades. Above all, these short trainings were about managing participants’ expectations, thinking in advance about how to respond in unexpected and potentially dangerous scenarios, and how to keep the action “deescalated” and thus controllable. While civil disobedience was a deliberate form of escalation, *unplanned* escalation could see the activists quickly lose control of the action and the narrative, with

police potentially provoking violence. One of the most often repeated pieces of advice at the NVDA trainings was “don’t talk to the police.” According to campaigners, the police are trained to gather information from participants by appearing friendly and chatty but can use that information to identify and indict protestors later on. Indeed, the RCMP’s use of audio/visual recording devices was ubiquitous at all these actions. After being arrested activists tended to be processed by police on site and then allowed to leave with the promise that they would appear before the judge at court to begin legal proceedings on a certain date. After being released, members of a local legal collective would then give arrestees a briefing about their legal options and offer to advise activists through the legal proceedings. Ensuring that those taking bold action had all the legal support necessary was a crucial part of maintain the blockades, nurturing an ethic of responsibility within the movement, and caring for those submitted themselves to arrest.

Usually, one of the lead organizers would act as a police liaison. Providing a buffer between action participants and police officers, the liaison would manage relations with law enforcement, ensuring officers remained calm while keeping track of police activity and intent. The blockades in the 2018 spring and summer escalations rarely saw police escalate enforcement tactics beyond surveillance, relatively minor intimidation, and strapping activists who refused to move of their own accord into a metal cart and wheeling them away.¹³⁸ The machine guns, tear gas, armored vehicles and riot gear so pervasive at Standing Rock were entirely absent outside Kinder Morgan’s gates. Indeed, the police seemed to be as

¹³⁸ According to former Mayor of Burnaby, Derek Corrigan, policing of escalation on Burnaby Mountain in 2014 was far more repressive because it included a lot of law enforcement officers from other counties who were unnecessarily anxious about the threat of so-called eco-terrorism (personal communication, June 12th, 2018).

much a part of the orchestrated media moment as were the protesters. On one occasion officers were even invited into the prayer circle outside the gates and participated in passing around a prayer pipe during the action's opening ceremony. The role of the police in these performances can be read both as a necessary compromise on the part of the protestors but also as being deliberately used by protestors to heighten the narrative drama and discursive framing of the pipeline as a militaristic and colonial invasion of unceded First Nations territory. In this way, the police are tolerated by protestors because they can be made to stand in for the systems of domination that animate their narrative strategy and persuade audiences of their moral high ground. The intended audience of this particular action were Liberal Party voters who might be persuaded to revoke their support for the Party given Trudeau's pipeline policies. Thus we might view the welcoming of police officers into the prayer circle as a naïve gesture of goodwill but it could also be read as strategically framing the "reasonableness" of the protestors to liberal audiences who believe in "dialogue" and "listening to all sides."¹³⁹

Over 200 people were arrested in the waves of escalation in Burnaby between March and September. To keep the escalation going through the summer, usually just three or four people would be arrested at each blockade action. As more and more people were arrested at the gates, prosecutors sought harsher penalties to dissuade further action. Several activists were sentenced to spend between five and fifteen days in jail, while fines increased from \$500 to \$3000. Rather than use intimidation on site, law enforcement's strategy seemed to be

¹³⁹ Of course, we must also entertain the likelihood here that this particular instance was a moment of improvisation on the part the protest organizers, and therefore, an example of the kind of political fluidity that makes protest as performance not only possible but compelling.

to rely upon Crown prosecutors, and Kinder Morgan's lawyers, to petition the court handling all the civil disobedience cases for steadily intensifying legal consequences for activists who took direct action. This only escalated the actions further, with many activists outraged at what they saw as blatant intimidation of dissent. Attending "court support" actions was a crucial part of demonstrating solidarity with those who took bold action and maintaining movement morale. Court support actions usually involved a rally or street theatre outside the courthouse where those who had been arrested were obliged to appear before the judge. After the rally everyone would go into the court and watch the proceedings from the spectators' gallery. Court support rallies were also opportunities for narrative intervention, and they could feature up to 150 supporters at a time in the spectators' gallery.

While stage managing these blockades allows organizers and campaigners to maintain control of the narrative, ensure escalation unfolds on their terms, and provide arrestees with legal and moral support, the action itself is rendered totally predictable and so is easily controllable by law enforcement. Critics of civil disobedience, particularly amongst the anarchist Left, often accuse the large NGOs orchestrating these tactics of turning direct action into cheap photo opportunities and of relegating them to the domain of *protest* rather than of *resistance* (CrimeThInc 2017; Kauffman 2017). Some also argue that civil disobedience accepts and reinforces the legitimacy of the state to make and enforce rules or otherwise assumes that activists' claims made through civil disobedience are being made upon a democratic system that doesn't actually exist (Collis 2014; White 2017). Others, meanwhile, raise concerns that non-violent direct action, and especially civil disobedience, is too passive a response to the systemic violence they are confronting (Kauffman 2017; Engler

and Engler 2017). Civil disobedience, therefore, is not without critics from within the movement.

Yet, Gene Sharp, a preeminent theorist of non-violent direct action, argues that non-violence is anything but passive: “As a technique... nonviolent action is not passive. It is *not* inaction. It is *action* that is nonviolent” (2005, 248). Sharp explains that by refusing to engage with the opponent on their own terms, i.e. violence, activists are able to undermine their opponent’s moral authority and so use their opponent’s deployment of violence against them. Many examples of non-violent direct action throughout history reinforce Sharp’s position.

However, when the forms of escalation remain so carefully deescalated, or indeed passive, and the violent response of the state is therefore underwhelming or remains invisible, as it did in Burnaby, activists may find it difficult to claim the moral authority civil disobedience should afford them. Moreover, when activists’ spontaneity and self-expression is so carefully managed, the spectacle of civil disobedience itself may lose moral potency. A delicate balance between spontaneity and orchestration seems to be vital to the success of nonviolent direct action.

Recalling the failure of a US Civil Rights campaign in Albany, Georgia and the later success of “Project C” in Birmingham, Alabama, 350 Canada campaigner, Cam Fenton, suggests that aggressive policing is a necessary ingredient of civil disobedience that dramatizes the injustice and creates the spectacle that undermines the opponent’s legitimacy (Fenton 2017). He argues that one of the differences defining the success of the Birmingham campaign and the failure of the Albany campaign was in how each was policed and the extent to which

campaigners were able to produce a moral crisis out of the conditions they created. The Albany police chief, Laurie Pritchett, ordered his deputies to exercise restraint and arrests were made with relatively mild charges. This kept the campaign out of headline news, didn't produce a national moral crisis, and meant activists were unable to continue their escalation. Police chief, Bull Connor, in Birmingham, on the other hand, unleashed intense violence on campaigners from the very beginning of the campaign. Images of children being brutalized by police, teargas, and attack dogs were quickly shared across all the national newspapers and created conditions of national moral outrage. Out of these conditions, the Birmingham campaign was able to continue a principled escalation with a great deal of public support, while revoking their opponent's moral authority.

In his 2017 article Fenton applies this lesson to strategic targeting and principled escalation against Kinder Morgan in British Columbia. He explains that, by late 2017, pipeline opponents had not yet produced the kind of moral crisis necessary to shift the political landscape in their favor. Moreover, the RCMP in British Columbia had established a unit of officers whose role it was to keep escalations out of the headlines called the Division Liaison Team (DLT). As Fenton writes, "Dressed in grey windbreakers and polo-shirts, this team exists to "work with all groups that are planning and executing events so that they are able to fulfill their objectives in the safest manner for everyone." Their goal is straight out of the Pritchett playbook: Squash the drama" (2017). The DLT attended all of the actions I witnessed outside Kinder Morgan's gates. Lenient and low energy policing of the blockades in 2018 did, with a few important exceptions, "squash the drama" and often kept the arrests, and thus the movement's narrative, out of mainstream media headlines.

Of course, one thing Fenton does not account for is how difficult it is for social movements to actually gauge the impacts of their interventions on public sentiment. Beyond polls, which are often expensive, and focus groups, which also require a certain degree of expertise and resources, it is very hard for social movement actors to say that their particular intervention produced a specific moment of moral crisis. As scholars, we must also be wary of the possibility of false causality. Just because activists acted does not mean their action produced the particular changes we are identifying. Moral crisis, therefore, is not a given or automatic response to civil disobedience. This situation is produced by conditions both within and outside of activists control. Therefore, we may be able to examine the interventions within activists' control and suggest at how they produce moral crisis or other political conditions, but we also have to look at the other forms of political conditioning taking place that activists have no influence over. As such it is the confluence of what activists can and cannot control that we should look to understand the orchestration of moral crisis and social legitimacy. This echoes many of the ideas developed through Adrienne Maree Brown's concept of emergence whereby agents of social change act with greater fluidity and use improvisation to respond to conditions as they find them (2017). On Burnaby Mountain, however, direct action and civil disobedience were carefully crafted to the extent that there was often only a little room for improvisation and tactical flexibility.

The organizations orchestrating direct action on Burnaby Mountain placed a premium on keeping their tactics under control so that the mounting escalation could unfold on the campaigners' timeline and on their terms. However, this made it harder to produce the kind

of moral crisis that civil disobedience is intended to provoke. Comparing policing of this protest to Standing Rock demonstrates the different consequences of either overwhelming or underwhelming state violence on protest. The violence deployed against Water Protectors at Standing Rock was overwhelming. While it did provoke a crisis in legitimacy, it was ultimately that same colonial violence and state coercion that sowed division, broke up the camps, evicted *Oceti Sakowin*, and ultimately diffused further escalation. Meanwhile, escalation in Burnaby, in 2018, remained relatively muted. As such, the state's response was underwhelming and the campaign either didn't want to, or wasn't able to, provoke the same kind of mass moral crisis that law enforcement's response to the Standing Rock Sioux's occupation of their own land had produced. Thus, civil disobedience seems to depend upon just the right amount of violence being used against its adherents, not so much that movement is crushed but enough that it produces a situation of moral outrage and a crisis of legitimacy.

While civil disobedience and the gate blockades were the most prominent direct action tactics and carried out with greatest regularity, the Protect the Inlet camp should also be understood as a form of long-term direct action. The camp and the Watch House were an assertion of Indigenous leadership in the campaign and provided a space for action trainings, meetings, and education. The Watch House was built in one day out of a single tree in accordance with Indigenous Coast Salish Peoples' customs. It was erected just 20 feet from Kinder Morgan's tank farm fence line and on top of the pipeline route. Claiming, occupying and defending land on unceded Tsleil-Waututh territory on Burnaby Mountain, the Watch House frames the campaign as an assertion of First Nations' rights and title and a resurgence

of Indigenous cultural practice. It comprises a “spiritual resistance” against the pipeline’s threat to Indigenous Coast Salish culture and self-determination.

The Watch House itself was a place for reflection and prayer and was often occupied by Indigenous leaders and allies. Built on top of the pipeline route, the Watch House physically blocks the pipeline from reaching its destination. This means that either the Watch House must be destroyed, or the pipeline route must be altered if the project is to be completed. The visual, symbolic, and material impact of destroying a place of ceremony and prayer on unceded territory to build the pipeline, without local Indigenous consent, roots this struggle in a context that weaves anti-colonialism and resistance to fossil fuels together. Moreover, the permanent presence of the Watch House and its positioning adjacent to the tank farm fence line identifies and physically points towards the enemy. As its website explains, the Watch House is a defensive structure, protecting Coast Salish territory from outside intrusion:

A Watch House, (“Kwekwecnewtxw” or “a place to watch from” in the *henqeminem* language, used by members of the Coast Salish Peoples) is grounded in the culture and spirituality of the Coast Salish Peoples. It is a traditional structure they have used for tens of thousands of years to watch for enemies on their territories and protect their communities from danger.

The Watch House framed the pipeline resistance in terms of an invasion of sovereignty and a violation of rights and title that British Columbia’s First Nations have been fighting for against the state of Canada for generations.

The PTI camp, built in a soccer field adjacent to the Watch House, became a focal point for campaigners and media reporters. It was a hub where activists could meet and share stories

while demonstrating solidarity with Indigenous allies who were physically claiming and protecting their land. Like the Watch House, the camp was also run according to protocols set by Coast Salish Indigenous leadership. Will George of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation oversaw the camp and the Watch House and was its main spokesperson. Allied campaigners with Stand.earth and Greenpeace, along with many volunteers, were responsible for maintaining the camp upkeep and training new volunteers. As a physical site of resistance, the camp was intended to help local in Burnaby residents' minds where the pipeline would be and the physical presence of the company in their city. It was also a place where the values of the campaign could be clarified and articulated, where actions could be planned, new relationships built, and solidarity forged. As such it was not just a space of opposition but also creativity that sought to prefigure more just relationships between participants. Organizers were committed to ensuring the space remained welcoming and open to all, so long as those who stayed agreed to follow the camp protocols.

Meanwhile, in Secwepemc territory, the Tiny House Warriors, led by Kanahus Manuel, have been building ten tiny houses that “will be placed strategically along the 518 km Trans Mountain pipeline route to assert Secwepemc Law and jurisdiction and block access to this pipeline.” In the same way that building the pipeline would require Canadian authorities to dismantle the Watch House, so too would it require evicting the tiny houses. In both cases building the pipeline forces the Canadian government to destroy and dismantle symbols of solutions rooted in climate justice and Indigenous self-governance. As the Tiny House Warriors' website asserts:

We are going big, by going small, by building these Tiny Houses, we are asserting our collective Secwepemc responsibility and jurisdiction to our lands and waters. Each tiny house will provide housing to Secwepemc families facing a housing crisis due to deliberate colonial impoverishment. Each home will eventually be installed with off-the-grid solar power. The Tiny House Warrior movement will be the start of re-establishing village sites and asserting our authority over our unceded Territories.

This innovative form of direct action both prefigures solutions to the climate crisis that are rooted in an intersectional and anti-colonial paradigm, but also forces the Canadian government to destroy the symbolic representation of that paradigm in order to get the pipeline built. Like the Watch House, this direct action intervention provokes a moral crisis, prefigures climate justice solutions, while physically obstructing the pipeline's path.

Land defense of this sort in Burnaby was not without its skeptics, however. Some campaigners thought that land defense and direct action was premature. Laura Benson, meanwhile, suggested the camp was more like a "small, isolated, vanguard instead of the predicted big wave of thousands of people" (personal communication, May 18th, 2018). She understood the PTI camp as a harbinger of the kind of escalation that might be necessary in the future, but that direct action should be reserved as tactic of last resort after all other avenues had been exhausted. Similarly, while supporting the activists' right to take direct action, some members of the Tsleil-Waututh leadership were careful to maintain a degree distance between the Nation's government and the camp. They worried that associating with this kind of tactic might jeopardize their lawsuit.

Other less-escalated direct action tactics against Kinder Morgan and Trans Mountain involved demonstrations, rallies, and marches. These bring the movement together and express public resistance to the pipeline. Such demonstrations have taken place on land and

at sea. On several occasions, First Nations leaders, Indigenous campaigners and allies have launched flotillas comprising dozens of vessels and hundreds of activists into the Burrard Inlet, sometimes sailing out to surround Kinder Morgan's Westridge Marine Terminal and drawing attention to the threat the project poses to the coastline. One march I attended specifically targeted the different banks financing Kinder Morgan and led activists to rallies outside each of these banks in Vancouver's financial district. Calling on them to divest from the pipeline these actions are an example of what Stephen D'Arcy calls secondary targeting. Here activists target the institutions, legitimizing agents, and resources their opponent is dependent upon rather than the opponent itself (2014). This action was an intervention not only in narrative and relations of consent but also targeted banks as a point of intervention in relations of compliance.

Greenpeace campaigners led other notable instances of direct action intending to keep national attention on opposition to the pipeline with spectacles demonstrating the threat the pipeline posed to the local community. On one occasion they tracked the movement of a massive boring drill being transported to Burnaby. They scaled the drilling equipment making the presence of pipeline infrastructure even more visible and viscerally felt in the city. Sat astride the drill two Greenpeace activists, livestreamed the action which was shared across social media and later picked up by local news outlets. On another occasion, 12 Greenpeace activists and volunteers, including Will George, staged an "aerial bridge blockade," with seven of them repelling down the Ironworks Memorial Bridge and setting up hammocks in which they spent over 40 hours. Hanging beneath the bridge they blocked marine traffic and claimed to have stalled one of the oil tankers anchored at Kinder Morgan's

marine terminal from leaving for the duration for their action. They flew 7 enormous flags designed by 7 Indigenous artists, symbolizing Indigenous-led resistance, cultural resurgence, and protection of the water ([Greenpeace 2018b](#)). Police officers removed and arrested the protestors, but charges were later dropped. The purpose of both actions appears to have been to use the spectacle to keep attention focused on the pipeline opposition and its narrative while intensifying pressure on the federal government.

Richmond:

In contrast to Burnaby Mountain, direct action to confront petro-hegemony in Richmond has been used quite rarely. While Richmond activists have led marches and rallies outside Chevron's gates, their broader strategic orientations have tended to focus on community organizing around regulatory agencies and mobilizing around election campaigns during election seasons. Steve Nadel of the Sunflower Alliance told me that direct action to shut down fossil fuel infrastructure isn't a strategic priority amongst most activists focused on fossil fuel infrastructure in Richmond and the Bay Area. As he puts it:

Our targets here are already established fossil fuel facilities. Direct action in terms of actual civil disobedience - trying to shut things down - is not a real top priority strategy... We're not gonna shut down one of the refineries and we're not going to do a campaign that's focused on shutting [them] down... (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

Instead, as Steve explained, activists have generally focused on working with public institutions and regulatory agencies to force them to strengthen legal standards and hold polluting companies accountable to those standards. In addition, they've worked through these agencies and authorities to pressure them to refuse all new fossil fuel infrastructure

permits. As such, many activists in the region have emphasized the need to prevent further expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in the region rather than shut down projects that are already operational. Nevertheless, some, like CBE's Andrés Soto, have argued more enthusiastically for decommissioning Chevron's refinery and the other refineries over the coming decade (personal communication, July 11th, 2018).

Steve suggested that because activists are trying to force these agencies to protect public health, they're working with public officials and regulators to get them on their side. Direct action isn't necessarily a helpful intervention while activists are still working to build positive relationships with public officials. He qualified this sentiment, explaining that he believed direct action was an important tool but that in the current phase of their interventions through BAAQMD it wouldn't have been appropriate or strategic (S. Nadel, personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Where the political opportunity structures available in regulatory agencies and local government have not been entirely closed off, Richmond's climate justice activists have found it prudent to work through them not against them. While direct action "on the outside" can sometimes support activist negotiations with public officials "on the inside," winning influence in city hall has meant climate justice activists have less cause to escalate against their institutional targets with this kind of pressure.

Meanwhile, Jean Tepperman, also of Sunflower Alliance, ¹⁴⁰ argued that sporadic and relatively low stakes direct action events wouldn't be enough to effectively shut down a

¹⁴⁰ I interviewed Sunflower Alliance activists, Steve Nadel, Jean Tepperman, and Janet Johnson, together, which allowed them to build on and challenge one another's ideas (personal communication, July 18th, 2018).

refinery anyway. According to her, unless direct action, and specifically civil disobedience, is used on a massive scale, over a longer period of time, to physically disrupt operations and business as usual, then it's just another form of propaganda, or an expressive tactic:

With small numbers of people civil disobedience is not really stopping them. It's just a form of propaganda. It's good to do as part of building a movement, but it's not decisive. I think some people think, "oh, civil disobedience, you know, direct action is really stopping them." [But] direct action isn't really stopping them. Unless you have it on a large enough scale for over a long enough period of time, it's just a fancy demonstration. And so sometimes that kind of fancy demonstration is helpful. But it's not like this is real power... To really interfere with their activities it's a huge, huge thing... You have to have numbers, you have to have big enough numbers to sustain it over a long enough period of time so it's actually inconvenient [otherwise]... it's just a little demonstration. It's propaganda.¹⁴¹ (J. Tepperman, personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

There have been occasions on which climate justice activists found that direct action events and civil disobedience aided narrative intervention, or what Jean calls propaganda. As one-off tactical interventions, however, these have not, to borrow Stephen D'Arcy's formulation, been deployed in an escalating trajectory, relentlessly over a long period of time, or with large numbers of people while growing the base of support (2014).

Building on Jean's argument, Steve explained that if direct action is to have a measurable, instrumental, impact beyond propaganda or narrative intervention, then it must be deployed as a strategy rather than a tactic. In other words, deploying direct action as a strategy means that tactics and strategic choices are derived from a logic of intervention guided by the premise that sustained disruption of the target's operations will force the target into

¹⁴¹ Neither Steve nor Jean distinguished between civil disobedience and direct action in this interview. Using the terms interchangeably, I interpreted their conflation to be referring to what Steve described as "shutting things down" (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Shutting things down can of course be part of civil disobedience actions or it can be a particular type of direct action, but of course it doesn't cover the whole range of direct action tactics.

submitting to the campaign's demands. As such all the tactics of the campaign are carried out to intensify disruption, build numbers of participants, and sustain the action. As Steve clarifies:

I've done a lot of direct action organizing, and for me, to summarize what Jean was saying, direct action is a strategy not a tactic... When you do it as a tactic, it is a one-off PR piece. If you want to have an [impact]... you're making a strategic choice that that's how you're organizing, and that's how you're gonna do it long term, and that's how you're going to mobilize, build alliances, and so on... So you [bring] all these movements together and [turn] out thousands of people... and so it's a sustained campaign, and you have a very specific goal, and you're going to achieve that goal through organizing repetitive direct actions and building support for those. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

Based on these testimonies, and my own observations and archival research, it seems fair to surmise that where direct action has been used in Richmond to challenge the industry's power, it has been deployed as a tactical intervention in narrative, not as a strategy. There are, however, three important instances of direct action that climate justice activists organized after the Chevron refinery fire in 2012 and which demonstrate direct action's tactical significance in confronting petro-hegemony in the city. These were a march to, and civil disobedience outside, Chevron's gates one year after the refinery fire, a day of civil disobedience blocking the gates to Kinder Morgan's railyard in Richmond to protest the transportation of fracked Bakken crude oil into the city, and a lockdown outside the Kinder Morgan's facility in solidarity with climate justice activist in British Columbia. In addition, Pennie Opal Plant, of Idle No More SF Bay, has repeatedly told BAAQMD officials that if they approve Phillips 66's refinery expansions in Rodeo, they should expect a direct action "Standing Rock style response" (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). This demonstrates how many of Richmond activists are not ideologically opposed to direct action but believe it is only appropriate and strategic under specific conditions.

The march to Chevron's gates in August 2013 was attended by over 2500 people and included 350.org's Bill McKibben and then Mayor McLaughlin amongst its lineup of speakers. In addition, it featured one the largest acts of civil disobedience in Richmond's history. The march commemorated the one-year anniversary of the 2012 refinery explosion. It also promoted 350.org's Summer Heat series of direct action and mass civil disobedience protests in which thousands of activists risked arrest across the country to demand the federal government keep fossil fuels in the ground and commit to stronger climate policy ([Ostrander 2013](#)). As one of the series' first actions, the event framed Summer Heat in terms of climate justice, placing communities most impacted by fossil fuel extraction and leading the transition away from fossil fuels at the heart of the narrative. Moreover, as a prelude to the intense struggle for city hall that would take place in November of 2014, activists with local climate justice organizations and the RPA used the event to condemn Chevron's influence over city politics and the disproportionate impact its pollution has had on Richmond's communities of color.

Blocking Chevron's gates for several hours, 210 people were arrested after refusing police orders to leave the site. They were cheered on by thousands of supporters. The arrests and blockade were symbolic rather than instrumental, in that they did little to halt Chevron's immediate operations or shut down the refinery for any significant period of time. However, the event helped refocus the local media spotlight on Chevron's contributions to local air pollution, to greenhouse gases, the refinery's status as California's largest stationary source of greenhouse cases, and, of course, the refinery fire itself. As such, the event provided a

strategic opportunity for climate justice activists and the RPA to intervene in local discourse and begin framing the terms of the next city council election around Chevron's impact on the city. These frames helped develop a compelling narrative about Chevron's corruption of city politics into the 2014 election's wedge issue. This instance of direct action was used to support intervention against Chevron's influence through electoral politics, providing an illustration of how direct action tactics can be used to complement less confrontational ones.

In interviews and media sources, many activists remarked on the police conduct of the day. Steve Early sites the restrained, and even friendly, policing as an example of the police department's changing attitude towards protest under the newly appointed Police Chief, Chris Magnus (2017). Indeed, one media source quotes Magnus as having described the event as "A very successful protest," in which "People made their point and conducted themselves in a thoughtful way." Of the protestors, he apparently went on to say "they are part of our constituency... We don't work for Chevron. We work for the community." ([350 Bay Area 2013](#)). Early describes how police officers would shake hands with protesters and treat them with great respect following Magnus' lead. We might cynically read this as a policing strategy rather similar to Burnaby's in which law enforcement is simply seeking to "squash the drama." However, many Richmond activists believe Magnus' intent was genuine and welcomed the new policing style relative to the more heavy-handed approach of the previous decades (Early 2017). At the very least, the Police Chief's deliberate distancing of law enforcement from Chevron's interests certainly contrasts markedly to the friendly relations between Chevron and the Richmond Police Officers' Association.

Another salient example of direct action that Richmond activists participated in was against Kinder Morgan's presence in the city in September 2014. Kinder Morgan operates a train depot in the city which supplies local refineries and factories in the Bay Area. In this case, activists were shut out of the regulatory process after BAAQMD officials quietly approved Kinder Morgan's application to switch the product it was transporting from ethanol to fracked oil from the Bakken fields in the Dakotas. By the time activists found out that Kinder Morgan had been given permits, it was too late for them to take legal action. Following a rally of 100 residents at the depot gates in May, local activists, including Andrés Soto from CBE, organized direct action in September of the same year arguing they had been shut out of the regulatory process. Contending that BAAQMD broke the law in modifying the existing permit, a dozen or so activists risked arrest by chaining themselves to Kinder Morgan's gates. Police were onsite but made no arrests and, judging from the archives, the action received very little media coverage. The collapse in oil prices later in 2015 saw Kinder Morgan halt shipments of Bakken crude to Richmond and activists focus their attention on the broader issue of fossil fuel shipments into the city. Nevertheless, the September action is significant because it demonstrates activists' willingness to take direct action where they perceived the legal avenues to have been closed off. This suggests that the relative scarcity of direct action events in Richmond is less about an ideological opposition to escalated tactics and more about whether or not they are perceived to be strategically appropriate.

As a one-off tactical intervention, the action itself contributed to the broader city-wide efforts to ban so called "bomb trains" from the city. In a press release following the action, Megan Zapanta of APEN explains why residents risked arrest:

I work with Richmond residents who already struggle with cancer, asthma and other devastating health impacts of pollution. Now they are living with bomb-trains full of explosive Bakken crude oil driving through their neighborhoods. By allowing this to happen, BAAQMD is failing to protect us and choosing Kinder Morgan's profits over our safety.

Demonstrating activists' willingness to risk arrest this action strengthened their bargaining position and publicly questioned BAAQMD's legitimacy. In an Al Jazeera feature piece on Richmond residents' confrontation with new oil-by-rail shipments, APEN member Lipo Chanthanasak, who lived in oil trains' "blast-zone" radius, explained that "this community has already suffered Chevron for over a hundred years, and now we have to be concerned about [Kinder Morgan] shipping and storing crude oil here" ([Lim 2014](#)). Media coverage of this broader struggle against oil-by-rail featured many similar accounts in which Kinder Morgan's oil shipments into the city were framed as an additional burden or threat the oil industry already poses to Richmond's residents. Taken together, city-wide efforts to ban bomb trains were crucial in framing the narrative of Big Oil's outsized influence over city politics.

In July 2017 activists from Idle No More SF Bay, CBE, and Diablo Rising Tide returned to Kinder Morgan's facility and again blockaded the railyard gates – this time to demonstrate solidarity with opponents of the Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline in British Columbia. Using U-Locks to attach themselves to the gates and each other, they sought to draw attention to the direct connection between the oil being pumped out of the Alberta Tar sands, the threat this pipeline posed to First Nations sovereignty along the pipeline route and coastline, and the fact that this oil would likely be refined in Bay Area refineries ([Diablo](#)

[Rising Tide 2017](#)).¹⁴² The activists remained locked down for several hours and two of the twelve participants were arrested ([Kirkwood 2017](#)). The action received relatively more media coverage than in 2014, probably because of the arrests but also reflecting the growing influence anti-fossil fuel activists have had on the media agenda since 2014. As Bay Area refineries have sought to upgrade their refineries to process heavier sour crude like tar sands oil, activists formed the Protect the Bay Coalition to prevent further refinery expansions in 2019. Direct action at Kinder Morgan's gates in 2017 was a preamble to this coalition and made a narrative intervention where other forms of action probably wouldn't have been as effective because the issue had received very little media attention.

The logic underlying nonviolent direct action in both Burnaby and Richmond resonates with Gramscian insights on legitimacy crisis and contesting moral leadership. As nonviolence theorist, Gene Sharp, writes:

When people refuse their cooperation, withhold their help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance and cooperation which any government or hierarchical system requires. If they do this in sufficient numbers for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power. This is the basic political assumption of nonviolent action. (2005, 247-248)

¹⁴² As Idle No More SF Bay activist, Isabella Zizi explained in one press release: "It's important for me to stand up today for my indigenous brothers and sisters of the First Nations... This crude tar sands oil will not just be affecting those up in Canada. It will likely be transported to the West Coast and potentially to here in my hometown of Richmond." Andrés Soto was also one of the campaigners who again chained themselves to the gates. In his statement to reporters he emphasized the impacts the transportation of tar sands to the Bay Area would have on those already exposed to extreme air pollution from the refineries: "We are already over-taxed when it comes to pollution in our community and toxins in our bodies... Kinder Morgan doesn't care about their workers. They're making them sacrifice their health and the health of their families in order to put food on the table. We demand clean jobs for our community. We refuse tar sands oil" ([Diablo Rising Tide 2017](#)).

The argument is easily translatable into traditional Gramscian terms: Nonviolent direct action can provoke a crisis of legitimacy through which people's consent to the opponent's rule is revoked. When they revoke their consent, that system will no longer have power. Yet, as Chapter Two demonstrated, when the hegemon's consent is revoked and its legitimacy is thrust into crisis, the hegemon does not back down but deploys coercive and violent means to crush its challengers. Contemporary examples from Occupy to Standing Rock demonstrate that even where nonviolent direct action is able to amplify the movement's narrative and force a crisis of legitimacy upon the hegemonic opponent, so long as the hegemon maintains control of coercive capacity, its defeat is hardly guaranteed. Micah White argues that this is one of the reasons why the assumptions underlying contemporary protest and nonviolent direct action are flawed (2016). Direct action in both case studies has primarily operated as an intervention in relations of consent and, as such, leaves other terrains of struggle relatively untouched. When direct action is deployed as a strategy to try to force the industry into submission, its coercive dimension is revealed as well.

Each of the instances of direct action I've identified in these case studies sought to challenge consent to the industry through their framing and form. Provoking a crisis in the industry's moral leadership, these actions provide helpful examples of how activists can contest relations of consent. Yet none of these examples directly disrupted the everyday operations of the companies they targeted, let alone shut them down. They were not relentless, did not operate on an escalatory trajectory, and were not participated in by sufficient numbers of people for long enough. This is less a failure of the movement and more because these actions weren't intended to do any of these things. They were symbolic and expressive

tactical interventions, designed to chip away at the industry's social license by grabbing media headlines and challenging the dominant narratives the industry depends upon. Finally, these examples illustrate how direct action can complement and support tactical interventions against other points of intervention on other terrains of struggle. For example, civil disobedience in Richmond helped reinforce the narrative around Chevron's political corruption which the RPA could then use as a wedge issue in the 2014 city election. Meanwhile, the civil disobedience, action camp and Watch House in Burnaby added to the overall conditions of risk and uncertainty that forced Kinder Morgan to abandon the project. Thus, climate justice activists are demonstrating important innovations in how tactics can be codeveloped and coordinated to engage all three of the terrains of struggle upon which petro-hegemony must be fought.

Performance Politics

Many of the tactics that I've described above contained elements of performance politics within them. In his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Dr. King wrote that "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue so that it can no longer be ignored" ([King 1963](#)). Performance politics, and particularly the performance of protest, is one way to dramatize dissent to injustice so that the issue can no longer be ignored. The orchestration of civil disobedience outside Chevron and Kinder Morgan's respective facility gates in both case studies certainly resembled a kind of performance through protest. Activists performed their political commitment as a public

spectacle framed to a particular audience with a particular message to dramatize and draw attention to their dissent by risking arrest. Yet resistance through performance took was not just limited to civil disobedience. It has included street theatre, ceremony and prayer, camp protocols, and social rituals. Micah White writes that in many contemporary formations “protests are collective rituals organized by civilian agents of change in a bid to transform the social reality and shift the legal regime” (2016, 64). Performing them through ceremony and ritual can help activists breathe life into the political relations they want to emerge while expressing resistance to those they would defeat. In this way, new kinds of political and cultural relationships can be literally performed into being.

L.A. Kauffman says that the most strategic forms of direct action are ones in which the message is incorporated into the action so that the action itself always presents a symbolic or discursive intervention. The ubiquitous use of livestream technology used to share real-time footage of dissent and the activists’ contestation of petro-hegemony through social media is helping them make these discursive interventions. This is particularly true where hostile media environments tend to present dissent in a negative light. One of the teachings of story-based strategy activism is “show don’t tell” (Reinsborough and Canning 2017). As these protests are shared online and garner hundreds, and often thousands of views, activists’ performance can reach larger audiences by showing their story rather than telling it. Performance is also a way of circumventing hostile ideological predispositions. Performance tells a story and through that story an audiences’ hostile frames may not necessarily be triggered as they see themselves represented in the story. Street theatre, for example the die-ins outside the tank farm gates dramatizing the threat of toxic exposure and explosions posed

to residents of Burnaby Mountain, didn't need to say capitalism is evil and Kinder Morgan is extending colonial jurisdiction over unceded Indigenous territory while placing profit over people's safety, it showed it through the performance. The performance speaks for itself and can be received by audiences without triggering frames that may alienate them.

The "Healing Walks" Pennie Opal Plant and Idle No More SF Bay led through the different Bay Area refineries provide a helpful example of how performance through ceremony can contribute to broadening the representation of who and what is at stake, and thereby exacerbate legitimacy crisis.¹⁴³ Pennie explained that these helped link different Blockadia struggles together in their participants' minds:

It was four walks over a period of four years that connected one fossil fuel impacted community to another along what we called "the refinery corridor," and which wasn't really part of the lexicon here in the Bay Area until we started using that [language]. We began to notice that it was showing up in government reports and in newspaper articles and things like that. And they were led by Indigenous people in prayer, deeply in prayer... And we started each walk with a prayer ceremony and prayers for the water because all these fossil fuel projects are along the water and at each resting place that we stopped we would invite... other folks to share what they were doing and how people could plug in. So it was a way of broadening the movement... And so it helped our community members along the refinery corridor really understand that this is not just us the fossil fuel industries is impacting, it's also happening all around the world and its leading to not only the health effects on the sacred system of life, but also the climate that we need to exist. (personal communication, July 19th, 2018)

Pennie estimated that roughly 1100 people participated in these healing walks, many of whom came to see themselves as part of a broader movement and in solidarity with Indigenous frontlines struggles through their participation. Pennie also explained that 350.org funded prominent Indigenous activists from Alaska to Ecuador to speak at and participate in

¹⁴³ Healing Walks have been an important component of frontlines Indigenous resistance to fossil fuel companies in the Bay Area, in the Athabasca tar sands, the Keystone XL pipeline and the Dakota Access Pipeline.

the walks as well (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). Through their participation new solidarities emerge and one part of the movement's cognizance of another part of the movement expands. Meanwhile, performance scholar, Janet Fiskio, suggests that through these performances "the conjunction of state and capitalist violence [is] revealed by the expressive forms employed by Idle No More" (2017, 8). In this unveiling the industry's social license is challenged. As such, performance is an important mode of intervention in power relations, particularly against petro-culture, that can shift dominant narratives and help forge new solidarities.

Nonetheless, performance politics also has its limitations. Sharing reflections on what he believed to be the shortcomings of the Occupy Wall Street movement, White says that it was partly the flawed assumptions guiding nonviolent direct action, and precisely its limitations as mere performance, that meant the movement could not translate its discursive victories into institutional ones:

We maintained a theatrical view of activism that treats public space as the stage for a political spectacle. We assumed that the United States would be unable to use force against non-violent democracy protestors without eventually capitulating to our demands because the eyes of the international community would be on our political performance. (2016, 25)

According to White, nonviolent direct action and the political spectacle it produces is no longer, if it ever was, able to create sufficient conditions of moral crisis such that the hegemon is not able to respond with violence. The hegemon may still be able to deploy coercion against its challengers without losing moral leadership. Meanwhile, activists got so caught up in expressing their identity and performing the political relations they want to see emerge that they did not seek to confront state institutions or broaden the movement and

make it accessible to newcomers (see also Smucker 2017). As such, White claims that performance and symbolic, narrative interventions are not enough to force the opponent into capitulation. White's intervention should make us question the implications of protest that only contains a symbolic or narrative dimension.

White's point is a valid one, but it also misses the other forms of resistance performance politics is able to produce. In Burnaby, for example, one of the songs that regulars at the blockades came to know very well was adapted from a song sung by political prisoners resisting South African apartheid. Here it was sung to encourage arrestees as they were taken away to be processed by the police: "Courage/ my friend/ you are not alone/ we will/ walk with you/ and sing your spirit home." On Burnaby Mountain, songs in the languages of British Columbian First Nations were always sung, drums beat, sage was always burned, ancestors invoked through prayer, and ceremonies performed during civil disobedience actions at the gates. Indeed, song, ceremony, and prayer were all crucial for developing bonds of solidarity and human connection at the blockades. Performance was not necessarily just about framing a narrative to an audience, it was about cultivating relationships, expressing identity, and for Indigenous activists, asserting their culture, rights, and title to the land. White's critique of performance politics ignores these.

Similarly, the Healing Walks Idle No More SF Bay led between the Bay Area refineries were, as Janet Fiskio articulates, expressive forms that "combine cultural practices, direct action, and social media" (2017, 1). As such, we miss a great deal if we only understand indigenous led- ceremony at sites of protest in terms of protest. As Fiskio reflects:

It is important to note that the term "protest" is not sufficient, because these performances are not only acts of resistance. These demonstrations draw on expressive forms, such as dancing, singing, and drumming, practices that create and support Indigenous community, sovereignty, and continuance, and thus exceed the context of settler colonialism. (2017, 3)

Placing their performances in the context of their cultural practices, Indigenous spiritual leadership in these frontline struggles demonstrates both an authentic commitment to the resurgence of their cultures through ceremony and prayer, while at the same time the performance of ceremony through protest carries out strategic intervention in discursive relations as well. The optics of arresting people carrying out their ceremonies and prayer on their unceded territories can provoke the kind of moral crisis activists are seeking to produce. Ceremony, then, is an act of resistance and self-defense but also an assertion of identity that exists outside what we may traditionally understand as resistance.

Moreover, Fiskio explains that the Idle No More protest performances under her own analysis are “constructive as well as resistant” and that “like literature and art, round dances, and other actions, function not only as critique and resistance, but also as active constructions of Indigenous space, meaning, and community that enable continuance” (2017, 9). I observed a powerful example of this at the Vancouver courthouse during a court support action. One Indigenous woman appearing before the judge spoke in her own native language as a performance subverting the authority of the colonial courts and resisting its coercion, while asserting First Nations rights and title on their territories. Meanwhile an Elder was passing around prayer ties (small packages of cloth containing ashes from the sacred fire he’d prayed over) in the court which evoked another reminder of the illegitimacy of the colonial court system on unceded lands. These subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, subversive

performances in the context of the colonial court both contest and delegitimize its authority and articulate a resurgence of Indigenous culture and authority. Therefore, while performance politics in the case of direct action may not be producing the kind of moral crises activists might hope they would, they do serve other equally important purposes in the context of solidarity building and decolonization.

Dual Power and Prefigurative Politics

As both seek to perform new social relations into being, performance politics and prefigurative politics share a great deal in common. In his reflections on anti-capitalist struggle, John Holloway explains that in prefigurative politics “the struggle for a different society must create that society through its forms of struggle” and, moreover, that activist attention should be concentrated not upon the destruction of capitalism but on “the building of something else” (2010, 50). As Holloway clarifies “This certainly does not mean... that we cease to struggle against capitalism, but that, as far as possible, we take the initiative, we set the agenda, we make it clear that it is capitalism struggling against us, our lives, our projects, our humanity” (2010, 45). Francesca Polletta, meanwhile, explains that “the label prefigurative has remained popular as a way to describe movement groups whose internal structure is characterized by a minimal division of labor, decentralized authority, and an egalitarian ethos, and whose decision making is direct and consensus oriented” (2002, 6). Thus, prefigurative politics undoes dominant power relations by imagining and practicing a way of being that exists outside of those relations.

Meanwhile, in so far as prefigurative politics may be a strategic intervention in petro-hegemony, it should contribute to the development of dual power.¹⁴⁴ Dual power seeks to fundamentally shift dominant social relations through simultaneously engaging with existing regimes of governance, while establishing alternative institutions that build the political reality that will ultimately replace those dominant institutions. As Yates McKee explains, dual power includes the “forging of alliances and supporting demands on the existing institutions—elected officials, public agencies, universities, workplaces, banks, corporations, museums—while at the same time developing self-organized counter-institutions” (2014). As such, dual power combines prefigurative politics and the preforming of an alternative political reality into being with direct contestation of dominant power structures and the political reality as it currently exists. Several of the interventions activists made in Burnaby and Richmond reflect this important combination of prefigurative and oppositional strategy and tactics.

Examining social reproduction at protest camps like Protect the Inlet provides illustrations of how the people who participate in them seek to redefine power dynamics and address privilege between activists in their own organizational forms and norms, while also countering the broader power relations upon which petro-hegemony depends. In one particularly rich conversation with activists at the PTI camp on Burnaby Mountain we explored the question “Who will do the movement’s dishes?” We discussed the gendered relations internal to land defense camps like this one and how often women took on, or were

¹⁴⁴ Dual power has a long legacy of influence in leftist political strategy. Since Vladimir Lenin’s popularization of the term during the 1917 Russian revolution, dual power has undergone several iterations and has been put to use in many different political projects (Marxists Internet Archive 2005).

expected to take on, the additional labor of preparing camp meals, cleaning the camp, and washing the dishes. To address this, men are encouraged, and often asked first, to prepare meals, clean, and to do the washing up. However, we also discussed why doing dishes is rarely perceived as revolutionary work or activism in the first place, and what kinds of theories of change stem from the assumptions that render its significance illegible. Where theories of change rest upon narratives of a revolutionary leader, usually a man, and a small cadre of dedicated agents, usually men, all of the other components of making a revolution are ignored. As such, the reproduction and maintenance of the camp is rarely even legible as part of a revolutionary strategy. Prefigurative politics places the micro-politics of these internal relations at the forefront of its theory of change suggesting that radical social change must be embodied through the form of intervention if it is to arise at all.

In their assertions of Indigenous jurisdiction and First Nations' rights and title, the Watch House and the PTI camp prefigured a decolonizing paradigm. Through the claiming and occupation of land on their unceded territories, Tseil-Waututh activists and their allies created a space in which decolonization was prefigured through a set of norms, practices, and ceremony. Taking the land back, governing it, and protecting it, moves decolonization beyond metaphor and into a physical confrontation with colonial power relations. At its most tangible, however, this meant visitors to the camp agreed to follow the protocols established by Coast Salish leadership and were answerable to that leadership in this space. In addition, visitors were included in cultural practices like tending the sacred fire, setting aside food at mealtimes to place in the fire and make prayers to ancestors, respecting Elders and listening

without interrupting them, or ensuring that Elders were the first to get food when common meals were prepared.

Invitation to participate in these customs was part of prefiguring a resurgence in Indigenous cultural practices on their territories that wasn't just confined to their reserve lands.

Meanwhile, claiming this land on Burnaby Mountain illustrated the narrative that the Tsleil-Waututh continue to have jurisdiction over their territories and that obtaining their consent is necessary before projects can be permitted. This prefigured a political reality in which governments actually do seek Indigenous peoples' free, prior and informed consent regarding activity on their unceded territories. Prefiguring resurgence of culture and governance through land defense-style interventions and performing these into existence creates what John Holloway calls a "crack" in logic of colonial dispossession by expressing alternatives to it. It also helped audiences understand pipeline construction without First Nations' consent as an act of colonial dispossession that threatens the resurgence of Indigenous cultures and systems of governance.

These examples do not necessarily suggest such experiments were always successful in undoing unjust power dynamics internal or external to the camp. Unjust power dynamics have not been fully banished from these spaces and, so long as oppressive power structures exist outside these enclaves, prefiguring alternative social relations will always remain a performance of a desired reality rather than a mainstream norm. However, emphasis here should be placed upon how the experimentation with dismantling oppressive power dynamics in intimate space took place. Furthermore, as activists experiment with disrupting

oppressive power dynamics by prefiguring alternatives within their communities and intimate relationships, they may strengthen bonds of solidarity within the group. Experimentation, moreover, implies that activists are figuring out for themselves what kinds of relationship norms and practices perpetuate or hide oppressive dynamics and which ones successfully banish them. These are necessary for building the kind counter hegemonic alliances that put intersectional populism into practice.

Prefigurative politics isn't just about experimenting with alternative relationships within activist groups, it can also disrupt petro-hegemony directly. The Tiny House Warriors, for example, are deploying an intervention that prefigures a just transition and decolonizing solutions to the climate crisis that also directly disrupts the pipelines' construction. Their decentralized solar powered tiny houses, providing homes for Indigenous women, children, and survivors of abuse and violence to heal from trauma, prefigure a compelling example of the kind of decolonizing and intersectional solutions combating the climate crisis requires. Simultaneously, these homes will be placed directly in the pipeline's route on Secwepemc territory. These physical constructions will force a decision dilemma on the Canadian government which has publicly pledged to build more accountable relationships with First Nations and take meaningful climate action: do they evict the homes, essentially destroying symbols of climate action and Indigenous healing and resurgence to build the pipeline, or do they let these symbols endure and reroute the pipeline costing more money, time, and political capital? In this way the Tiny House Warriors' intervention operates according to a logic of dual power because it both engages with dominant existing institutions, i.e.

confronting the colonial Canadian state, while also prefiguring alternative solutions existing outside the logic of the colonial state.¹⁴⁵

Activism in Richmond illustrates quite a different approach to dual power that nonetheless manifests itself in interventions against dominant institutions alongside the simultaneous construction of alternatives. Once movement candidates were elected to city council, they could exercise their ability to appoint movement allies to local advisory boards and commissions. This has meant more resources and support from local government are available to local activists. Funneling these resources from local government, particularly funds from Chevron's increased taxes and community benefits agreement, to the people prefiguring just solutions, activists have learned how to use the hybrid movement-party formation to extend their influence on city council to support local just transition initiatives. Their intervention has developed a synergy between tactics that confront the dominant institutions and those that are prefiguring alternative solutions. Having successfully challenged Chevron's control over city council, Richmond's climate justice activists have since been in a position to consolidate their victories by creating conditions in which just transition initiatives can flourish.

¹⁴⁵ Water Protectors at Standing Rock began a similar project where they began building permanent structures at Oceti Sakowin symbolizing just solutions and decolonization. A livestream video shared on Facebook and Twitter shows how these symbols were bulldozed by the police when they evicted the camps in February 2017. The Unist'ot'en activists building permanent structures that run on renewable energy, including a healing center for trauma survivors, on their territory in the path of proposed pipelines is another example. Activists from the Ponca nation have planted seeds and intend to grow crops in the path of the Keystone XL pipeline and a group of nuns have constructed a solar power chapel in its path too. Because of its simultaneously discursive and material intervention this tactic is becoming increasingly popular.

Councilmember Eduardo Martinez explained that RPA legislators hadn't necessarily innovated any new just transition solutions in the city but that they had helped create the space for those solutions to emerge. As he puts it:

I don't think the RPA actually did a lot of things but we created the avenues for other people do things. Like Rich City Rides, you know, fantastic organization that is promoting bicycle ridership, and that came as an outgrowth of the pedestrian and bicycle policies that we that we promoted. Urban Tilth, another great organization that promotes urban farming... that's in conjunction with the health in all policies that we have in Richmond. (E. Martinez, personal communication, July 9th, 2018).

Similarly, former city councilmember, Jovanka Beckels, explained that “legislators don't have all the answers... that's why it's so important to collaborate with organizations that are doing the work” ([ReelNews 2018](#)). With councilmembers like Beckles, Recinos, Martinez, McLaughlin, Willis and others, all of whom came from community organizing backgrounds and several of whom were part of organizations leading just transition initiatives in the city, the RPA's majority on council created the space for collaboration between local government and the city's activists prefiguring alternatives to Chevron and petro-capitalism. In this way, the movement has captured some institutional support for just transition initiatives while remaining relatively independent of state institutions. Some of these programs have explicitly received council support, some won support through campaigns targeting friendly city councilmembers, but all have benefitted from the creation of political conditions on council that have enabled them to thrive. Even after the RPA's council majority was lost in 2018, these initiatives continue to build the foundations for a city that is no longer dependent upon the revenue and jobs Chevron provides. Crucially, this kind of intervention offers an excellent illustration of the emerging synergy between the constituent elements of dual power, whereby activists capture the resources of the current institutions on the one hand and

then redirect those resource towards prefiguring just solutions and alternatives on the other (LeQuesne 2019).

Many of the just transition initiatives being prefigured in Richmond emerged out residents' concerns articulated in town halls and community meetings hosted by both the RPA and members of the Our Power campaign. Affordable Housing, public health, and policing often emerge as people's top concerns. These townhalls do more than survey the city and crowdsource campaigns and policy, however. They establish yet another kind of dual power by providing a forum for Richmond's residents to coalesce around a set of key concerns, policy and campaign goals, and a broader vision to transform the city. Here the promise of the "Our Power" campaign is made real, as these town halls actually do create the space for the community's concerns to be taken up by local organizations and brought directly to city council. This model envisions, prefigures and builds upon a city politics that is more democratic and accountable to the city's population. To a large degree then, through these townhalls, agenda setting is moved away from top down NGOs and the city council and instead emerges out of the conversations and debates that arise from people interacting with one another in these public spaces.

Despite its transformative potential, prefigurative politics has a major limitation. Participants can get so caught up in performing the creation and nurturing of the world they want to build, that they fail to engage with and confront hegemonic power relations in the world that still exists (Smucker 2017). L.A. Kauffman explains that prefigurative politics entails "both a major time commitment and full immersion in an alternative world with its own culture,

lingo, and practices” (2017, 59). As Smucker argues, groups that only engage with prefiguring the world they want to see can become inward looking, self-referential, and unable to welcome newcomers into the world they’ve already built for themselves (2017). Indeed, social movement theorist, Wini Breins, goes as far as to make a categorical distinction between strategic politics and prefigurative politics, suggesting that prefigurative politics cannot be strategic for the very reason that it refuses to engage with dominant institutions as they currently exist (1980).

Gramsci was also critical of the kind of utopianism espoused in what we today call prefigurative politics. Smucker suggests Gramsci would not have considered prefigurative politics to be politics at all but rather “specific wills which are incapable of relating means to end, and hence are not even wills, but idle whims, dreams, [and] longings.” (Smucker 2017, 112). As such, prefigurative politics is either ambivalent about engagement with power or eschews it altogether. Its relevance to counter hegemonic strategy is therefore limited. However, I would suggest that prefigurative politics actually can provide a logic of intervention for counter hegemonic strategy if and when it is accompanied by strategies and tactics that operate synergistically to confront the world as it is while developing the world as it could be. To this end, activist and movement scholar, Ben Manksi identifies the possibility of a “synthetic prefigurative-strategic politics” (2015, 11). The productive and positive synergy and synthesis between prefigurative and strategic politics is most helpfully understood in terms of dual power. Dual power’s orientation towards continuing engagement with dominant institutions while also developing the counter institutions that will ultimately replace them, positions it as an excellent framework through which to articulate the synthesis

of the strategic and the prefigurative. The examples analyzed in this section illustrate how dual power is a logic of intervention that has come to shape many of the strategies and tactics that the climate justice movement now carries out. As I will demonstrate in the next section, dual power is a precursor to the alignment and coordination of strategies made possible through the carbon rebellion.

Part 2: The Carbon Rebellion

The strategies and tactics identified and analyzed throughout this chapter have been deployed by different groups with different theories of change to achieve different objectives. As such, the extent to which they are already coordinated and intended to work together varies from organization to organization, and from point of intervention to point of intervention.

Moreover, individually, these tactics represent quite a conventional repertoire of social movement interventions and hardly seem commensurate with the scale of the power relations they are intended to address. Nevertheless, when this diversity of tactics and strategic orientations are brought together and organized deliberately, the foundations of a counter hegemonic strategy to confront petro-hegemony is revealed. Carbon rebellion is a framework for intervention that allows us to imagine how the strategies and tactics described in this chapter could be aligned and coordinated to engage different points of intervention and alter relations of consent, coercion, and compliance on all three terrains of struggle. As a concept, then, the carbon rebellion helps us comprehend how these tactics and strategies either already are, or could be, organized into a counter hegemonic response to petro-hegemony.

Moving from a loosely and unevenly coordinated multiplicity of tactics and strategic orientations to a diverse yet coordinated set of interventions that target points of intervention on each terrain of struggle is the process through which the climate justice movement's strategies and tactics may be organized into the carbon rebellion. In the following section, I demonstrate how different tactics respond to, or engage with, different points of intervention on different terrains of struggle defined by relations of consent, coercion, or compliance. Doing so demonstrates the points of intervention the movement's current strategic repertoire is best suited to engage with and which terrains of struggle are privileged or overlooked by these different strategic orientations. I also illustrate how the tactics and strategies identified above may be organized into the counter hegemonic formation of the carbon rebellion. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how we might develop a strategic framework out of the tactics and strategies already being deployed to confront the fossil fuel industry in Blockadia into a counter hegemonic alignment that aspires towards the movements' own hegemonic leadership and is capable of deposing petro-hegemony.

Waging the War of position: Interventions in relations of consent

The campaign strategies and associated tactics I identified in Burnaby and Richmond are most advanced in their waging of the war of position on the terrain of struggle defined by relations of consent. In both case studies, climate justice activists have successfully targeted different points of intervention with story-based strategies to change the narratives that maintain consent to the industry's operations and develop counter narratives that align the movement. While these are mostly represented in local and regional victories, they do,

nevertheless, illustrate some of the most important points of intervention to target in the war of position, as well as some of the tactics that may be deployed to win on that terrain struggle. Conventionally, these points of intervention include independent and corporate news media, social media platforms, faith-based organizations, schools and colleges, unions, and the intermediaries of popular culture.¹⁴⁶ However, climate justice activists in these case studies have also claimed elections, public hearings, banks, shareholder meetings, public space, college campuses, and the sites at which the industry's operations are actually conducted, as other points of intervention through which to wrest consent away from the industry.

Activists use these points of intervention as highly public opportunities to contest the fossil fuel industry's dominant narratives and publicize their own counter narratives. Much of their success here has depended upon a commitment to story-based strategy, deliberately crafted messages that resonate with their intended audiences, and disciplined messaging with carefully selected, and well-trained, spokespeople. The tactics advancing this strategy include civil disobedience outside Kinder Morgan's tank farm gates, street theatre, mass marches and targeted direct actions, land defense camps, and press conferences and rallies. They also involved harnessing publicity around elections to develop wedge issues that resonate with their respective communities, regular public meetings and town halls hosted by community organizations, and canvassing or petitioning to build the base of awareness, support and

¹⁴⁶ For this last example we could think of Shailene Woodley and Mark Ruffalo publicizing the confrontation at Standing Rock or *Teen Vogue* running stories on the Kinder Morgan's pipeline. See this article on *popcrush.com* about Hollywood actors' solidarity with Standing Rock <https://popcrush.com/shailene-woodley-celebrities-support-standing-rock-sioux-dakota-access-pipeline/> and this article by Tsleil-Waututh youth activist Kayah George in *Teen Vogue*: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/kinder-morgans-trans-mountain-expansion-oil-pipeline-indigenous-op-ed>

participation. In addition, activists have gained influence in cultural institutions like local churches, city celebrations and festivals, and built alliances with educators and students on college campuses. These tactics and their respective points of intervention are all designed to change the narrative and discursive conditions through which their audiences understand colonialism, environmental injustice, energy, and climate change so that new meanings may emerge and be articulated into a counter hegemonic alignment.¹⁴⁷

The movements' access to independent and alterative news media, particularly in British Columbia through popular news websites like *The Narwhal*, *The Tyee* and *The National Observer*, has also been a crucial tool through which activists have been able to share their narrative, particularly online (O'Keefe, Hackett and Gunster, 2019). Together, these sources attract hundreds of thousands of unique website visitors each month. Journalists from independent news outlets were often present at the PTI camp and friendly with many of the activists. They also consistently covered civil disobedience at the tank farm gates on Burnaby Mountain, picking up the movements' frames and contributing to its discursive interventions. Some would also take high quality livestream videos that were viewed and shared thousands of times online. In addition, they would often run stories countering the corporate media and industry narratives about the necessity of the pipeline and its promises of tax revenue, jobs, adequate consultation and record of sustainability. According to communications scholars at Simon Fraser University, these alternative and independent media sources are far more trusted than the center-right leaning corporate media outlets in Vancouver and Burnaby

¹⁴⁷ On a larger scale, fossil fuel divestment campaigns at universities, banks, churches and public pension funds have also contributed to a shift in the framing of climate change towards a narrative that positions the fossil fuel industry at the center of the issue. However, fossil fuel divestment tends to be a strategy that takes place away from the frontlines and oil frontiers.

(ibid). Maintaining close relationships with reporters that work with these independent media outlets has been important to ensuring there are friendly outlets and venues through which the movements' narratives can enter public discourses.¹⁴⁸ As they are shared, understood, and practiced these discourses become embodied in every day consciousness and common sense.

Finally, community organizing is also a fundamental strategy to challenge and shift relations of consent in Blockadia. Community organizing strategies have included the development of anchor organizations that coordinate coalitions of activists and groups from a range of different political and strategic orientations, alliance building across different social struggles, town halls and public meetings, and leadership development through, for example, APEN's youth leadership training programs. Using elections to organize their community, activists in Richmond have crowd sourced their political platforms by, for, and with, their community. In Burnaby, members of grassroots community organization have devoted a great deal of time and resources to knocking on doors and canvassing their neighborhoods to shift the terms upon which the pipeline project is understood. Meanwhile populist intersectional alliances are being articulated and aligning larger constituents of the community into a counter hegemonic bloc. Developing leaders and communicators for and from the community they are organizing is one of the major components of what Saul Alinsky called "meeting people where they're at." The slow, painstaking work of meeting people where they're at – both literally at their homes, or supermarkets, or places of worship, or schools, but also where their values, political consciousness, and cultural reference points

¹⁴⁸ Of course, the extent to which these independent outlets are preaching to choir means the movements' narrative does not always reach beyond an activist echo chamber. Hence the need for many different media through which to broadcast messages.

are at – and communicating and alliance building accordingly is crucial to waging the war of position and articulating counter hegemonic alignments around a new common sense. In this sense, the points of intervention available on the war of position are numerous but also highly context specific.

Waging the War of maneuver: Interventions in relations of coercion

While waging the war of position - and unfortunately sometimes without a war of position – climate justice activists have also been waging a war of maneuver. Their war of maneuver has involved struggle over points of intervention through the direct use of coercion to achieve local campaign objectives. It has also involved winning struggles over key institutions that would afford the movement some coercive power to hold the fossil fuel industry in check, curtail the industry’s own use of coercion, and institutionalize or consolidate the movements’ victories. The degree, intensity, and ambition of the war of maneuver is, or at least should be, directly related to the extent to which the war of position has challenged the legitimacy of the hegemon and developed a new consensus. Thus, as more points of interventions are fought over and won through the war of position, more points of intervention on the terrain of struggle defined by coercion become available. Points of intervention available through the case study campaigns’ respective wars of maneuver have so far included the judicial system, regulatory frameworks, Chevron’s refinery gates, the Trans Mountain tank farm gates, city council meetings, and lobbying of potentially responsive decision makers. Elections are also an important point of intervention in both wars of maneuver and position. Through local electoral successes in Richmond, and Burnaby and Vancouver, activists have sought to

consolidate and institutionalize opposition to the fossil fuel industry and enforce regulations on the industry through (admittedly, quite limited) coercive power.

As the movement wins the contest over consent, not only do more points of intervention become available in the war of maneuver, but the tactics activists use can escalate without alienating the movement's base of support and participation. Therefore, in these case studies, the tactics deployed in the war of maneuver were more or less representative of the extent to which gains had been made in the war of position. Indeed, almost all tactics deployed in the war of maneuver require at least some advances to already have been made through the war of position. Even tactics that may not seem particularly confrontational require a degree of consent if their impact is to be sustained. For example, lobbying to intensify the regulatory burden on both Chevron and Kinder Morgan, or lawsuits to challenge the legality of the permitting processes associated with each project, may seem like tactics that require little cultural legitimacy. However, if institutional victories are to endure, then as Deva Woodly makes clear, they require not only changes in policy or judicial rulings, but a shift in overall discursive conditions that will prevent their being overturned in the future (2015).¹⁴⁹ The tactics and strategic orientations identified in this chapter illustrate this relationship, and this relationship, in turn, helps explain why tactics in the war of maneuver associated with each campaign have been relatively deescalated so far.

¹⁴⁹ In Richmond, discursive conditions have shifted to such a degree that it is hard to imagine institutional restrictions imposed on Chevron being relaxed (at least locally). Indeed, despite the RPA losing seats in the last election, discursive conditions have shifted to the extent that Chevron's influence has not been reinstated on the council. Meanwhile, although the war of position may be being won in Burnaby and possibly British Columbia, climate justice activists have not wrested consent from the industry throughout the rest of Canada. Because the Trans Mountain pipeline court case was heard at the federal level, at the Federal Court of Appeals of Canada, the quashing of the pipeline permits was more easily circumvented by the Federal Liberal government which calculated that support for the industry was greater throughout other Canadian provinces where the Liberal Party needs votes, and thus it was politically expedient to buy and repermit the pipeline in 2019.

Most strategic engagements in these campaigns' war of maneuver intervene in institutions of the state to capture or harness their coercive capacity in order to force the fossil fuel industry into capitulation – or at least, force it to take positions it would not take voluntarily.

Richmond's city council became one crucial point of intervention on this terrain of struggle.

Forcing Chevron's influence off the Richmond city council through the RPA's hybrid movement-party took years of community organization and waging a war of position.

However, these victories are being consolidated and institutionalized through a war of maneuver. This has forced Chevron to pay a larger share of the taxes it owes the community, compromise on the scale and scope of its refinery upgrade, and agree to increased accountability and monitoring. Tactics in the war of maneuver have included appointing movement allies to local boards and commissions, passing legislation that intensifies the regulatory burden on fossil fuel infrastructure in the city, and lobbying councilmembers friendly to the movement to unleash city resources to support energy transition. In Canada, meanwhile, the Native Rights-Based Strategic Framework has made use of First Nations rights and title through the court system to force the industry to delay or cancel pipeline construction and comply with regulatory frameworks. Indeed, so effective were the legal interventions here that Kinder Morgan likely viewed them as an unsurmountable obstacle to getting the pipeline built and thus abandoned the project. The war of maneuver, in this case, however, was mostly limited to struggle over the coercive apparatuses of state institutions and how they can be used to enforce rules on the industry.

While most climate justice strategies in the war of maneuver are oriented towards capturing or harnessing coercive capabilities of state institutions, campaigners may also use coercion directly to force their targets into positions they would not otherwise take. The use of the blockade to claim space and prevent construction is a coercive strategy, for example. Industry operatives must then choose between calling on the petro-state and its ability to deploy state sanctioned violence and coercion, negotiation and compromise, or abandoning its project altogether. Using these tactics can force the industry into delaying construction, canceling it, or complying with regulatory frameworks. The blockades and civil disobedience in both Richmond and Burnaby have so far served primarily symbolic purposes (and thus, as a tactic, are more suited to the war of position) while creating conditions of uncertainty and risk. If these tactics were to escalate and physically delay pipeline construction, however, they would also become coercive tactics deployed in a war of maneuver.

Finally, once activists are engaged in a war of maneuver, they are likely to provoke the industry into deploying coercive capabilities through the petro-state. These coercive tactics will be brought down upon the movement to crush them. In Burnaby and Richmond, tactics deployed in their respective wars of maneuver have not yet provoked heavy handed police responses. As such, the resources of the petro-state have been used to litigate and legislate against activists' protest methods, delegitimize them, and in some cases spy on or infiltrate their organizations. Yet, the physical policing of protest has remained relatively mild. Comparing this to the petro-state response at Standing Rock, with its intensely militarized policing, intimidation, sabotage, and surveillance, it becomes apparent that the degree of

force and violence deployed against activists engaged in the war of maneuver is directly related to the extent to which activists coercive interventions are perceived as a threat to the industry's operations. This is a rather obvious point, but it means that where the movements' coercive tactics escalate to a scale and scope that they are perceived to pose an existential threat to the industry's operations, activists must be ready and prepared for the force and intimidation the petro-state will likely use to try and crush them. Preparation here, can mean practicing security culture, operating through affinity groups, maintaining a well-organized system of jail support for activists who are arrested, providing legal aid, capturing state institutions that can limit the petro-state coercive capabilities, and ensuring that each act of violence against movement participants further erodes the legitimacy of the industry.

Waging the War of Economies: Interventions in relations of compliance

The third terrain of struggle climate justice activists must engage with is defined by the relation of compliance. Remember that this power relation rests upon a dynamic of dependency such that dependence upon underlying economic conditions (often conditioned by the industry) renders particular communities both unable, and potentially unwilling, to resist the fossil fuel industry. The industry itself will often take advantage of this dependency, particularly amongst fossil fuel workers and the unions that are supposed to represent them, to pitch unions against climate justice activists and frame the well-worn jobs versus the environment narrative. It has used a similar strategy seeking to divide First Nations in Canada. However, the industry is also subject to a dynamic of dependency, and thus also operates according to relations compliance. It is dependent upon finance,

investment, and continuing access to capital. Therefore, under petro-capitalism, banks and other large investors are the industry's lifeline. As such, the industry's own compliance may be produced through influencing the capitalist class' investment decisions. Taking both dependencies into account, the way that climate justice activists can intervene in relations of compliance is twofold: firstly, they must help break the dynamic of dependency communities have upon the tax revenue, philanthropy, and jobs that fossil fuel companies provide, and secondly, they must seek to cut off access to capital and investment that the industry depends upon. The way that climate justice activists engage with points of intervention on this terrain of struggle will vary depending upon which of these two approaches they are pursuing.

Points of intervention in the war of economies include banks, investment funds, unions, government policy and legislation, philanthropies and foundations, refineries, transportation routes, construction zones, subcontractors, and social programs. Strategies to engage with these points of intervention include advancing energy democracy, divestment, prefigurative politics, dual power, secondary targeting and conditioning perceptions of risk and uncertainty associated with a particular project amongst its financiers. Their associated tactics involve building relationships with unions and the labor movement to demand unionized green job guarantees, implementing community choice energy, establishing energy cooperatives, capturing the agenda for implementation of local, statewide and national Green New Deal legislation, supporting job retraining programs, policy that guarantees fossil fuel workers the ability to take early retirement and a full pension, and funneling state resources to context specific just transition initiatives.¹⁵⁰ Many of these interventions don't resemble tactics in the

¹⁵⁰ As relationships between labor and the climate justice movement are solidified, other points of intervention like factories, refineries, and construction sites may become available and intervened through tactics like work

traditional sense of the term and yet perform the function of challenging relations of compliance and moving campaigns closer to their objectives on this terrain of struggle. If these tactics are to follow the principles of climate justice then they must be achieved through a just transition framework in which energy systems are decolonized, decentralized, democratized, and decarbonized.

One of the major components of a just transition strategy that would break the dynamic of dependency on the industry is building closer relationships with the labor movement and unions representing workers most impacted by energy transition. Unions are far from monolithic entities, even in the oil industry. Unfortunately, however, their leadership, particularly in the building trade unions like pipefitters, electrical workers, boilermakers etc., are often closely allied with the oil industry. The climate justice movements' relationships with unions have been mixed in both Burnaby and Richmond. As recently as July 2019, for example, fossil fuel industry operatives turned out dozens of workers to a planning commission hearing to oppose plans to regulate the export of coal from the Levin export terminal in Richmond's city limits ([No Coal in Oakland 2019](#)). However, many activists in the RPA have union backgrounds and consider themselves allies to the labor movement (Early 2017). Mayor McLaughlin recounted how, during the disputes over Chevron's refinery upgrade, she found herself positioned against local unions and workers for the first time in her activist career (2018).

stoppages and strikes. The movement currently seems a long way away from being able to make these kinds of interventions but they should remain something to aspire towards nonetheless.

Richmond city council has also supported numerous just transition initiatives proposed by local activists, including jobs training for renewable energy installation, energy cooperatives, community choice energy, subsidized solar installation, more spending on public transport infrastructure and bike paths, and, its health in all policies initiative (ibid). As more and more refinery workers have left Richmond for the wealthier neighboring towns and suburbs, Chevron's argument that it is the city's largest private employer has lost currency. However, the city continues to depend on tax revenue from the refinery, leading many, including many activists I interviewed, to argue they don't want the refinery to close down, they just want it to be more stringently regulated. Despite important innovations in just transition strategy, dependency on the refinery's tax revenue lingers.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, in Burnaby, the local chapter of the largest private sector union in Canada (which represents many oil sands and refinery workers) spoke out against Kinder Morgan's pipeline because the oil it transported would simply be moved through the city to be refined abroad rather than in Burnaby's last ailing refinery. Although tar sands production has increased, four of the five refineries in Burnaby have closed down. As such there is a good deal of resentment amongst local building trade unions about the oil being transported through their city. Despite this, climate justice activists are so far offering relatively few just transition initiatives in Burnaby and British Columbia. This means the industry continues to speak for all workers when it makes claims about the pipeline being in the "national interest"

¹⁵¹ CBE campaigner, Andrés Soto, was the most vocal in his enthusiasm for closing down the refinery. In one interview, he proposed imposing a closure bond on Chevron so the company would pay the council for the cost of cleaning up and decommissioning the refinery when it does close (personal communication, July 11th, 2018). Indeed, decommissioning fossil fuel infrastructure, paid for through instruments like closure bonds, could play an important role in maintaining employment through the transition away from fossil fuels. However, this has not gained much traction amongst other activists in the city yet.

and providing jobs and revenue. The cities of Vancouver and Burnaby have passed relatively ambitious legislation to decarbonize their respective economies, but the extent to which these do so in a way that would challenge relations of compliance is less obvious. Moreover, contrary to their image of environmental and social consciousness, British Columbia's provincial government is currently doubling down on other fossil fuel industry projects, supporting plans to develop a fracked gas pipeline and export terminal in the north of the province. Rather than advancing energy transition, the British Columbian NDP remains committed to locking in more fossil fuel infrastructure. Finally, the geography of the pipeline crossing provincial borders means that just transition initiatives are also necessary at the federal level or at least along the entirety of the pipeline route, not just in Burnaby. Relations of compliance, and dependency on the industry, remains a particularly difficult terrain of struggle for the movement to intervene upon.

Secondary targeting, and particularly divestment are major strategic avenues through which fossil fuel companies' access to finance can be challenged. While the global fossil fuel divestment movement is an intervention in narrative, revoking the industry's "social license to operate," and so is an intervention more suited to the war of position, targeting banks and investors to divest from specific oil companies, and specific fossil fuel projects, can also be used to interrupt the dynamic of dependency the industry has upon access to capital. This intervention can be effectively combined with direct action to intensify the perception of conditions of risk and uncertainty amongst investors such that they perceive continued investment in a project as too great a financial risk.¹⁵² Shaking investor confidence, and

¹⁵² In the confrontation with the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock, for example, divestment from Energy Transfer Partners and Sunoco was an important tool that placed a good deal of pressure on the banks

indeed Kinder Morgan's confidence, was an important strategy in the effort to get banks to divest from the pipeline and force Kinder Morgan to abandon it. The weekly displays of civil disobedience, the provincial governments' continued hostility, and the likelihood of losing the court case were enough for Kinder Morgan to divest from its own project. However, this is a tactic that is less likely to work now that the state has bought the pipeline and is not subject to the same financial pressures as private companies are.

The tactics deployed in the war of economies are not always legible as tactics in a counter hegemonic theoretical framework. Nevertheless, it does appear that it is on this terrain of struggle that the movements' tactics are least developed and most in need of innovation. Moreover, breaking the dependency communities have upon fossil fuel companies should not simply mean forming dependency on renewable energy companies instead, but rather establishing conditions of mutual or inter-dependency such that communities come to depend upon one another rather than on any particular industry. Nascent just transition initiatives illustrate a commitment to decentralized, decolonized, decarbonized, and democratized energy transition that promotes interdependency. Meanwhile, in both the US and Canada, the Green New Deal is gaining traction as a nation-wide top down policy agenda that could also break dynamics of dependency on fossil fuels.

The Green New Deal has gained a great deal of support amongst contingents of the climate justice movement but is viewed with some suspicion by others. National coalitions like the

investing the project to cut their support for it. Several large banks and investment funds, including the University of California, did. One of the most intense pressures on DAPL's construction. Divestment was also an intervention that activists across the country could use to build solidarity with the fight in their local communities and so helped spread resistance across the country.

Climate Justice Alliance, for example, have withheld their endorsement of the agenda on the grounds that the proposals have not been inclusive enough of grassroots and bottom up solutions. There is a danger that the Green New Deal in its current form will break dependency on the industry only to reformulate it around the state and capitalist climate solutions. However, there remains an opportunity for more radical contingents of the movement to capture the Green New Deal narrative, the policy agenda, and the process of its implementation at local, state, and national levels. Doing so could unleash enormous resources that local communities could harness and use to innovate their own context specific interventions and energy transitions in the war of economies. As such the Green New Deal could be one of the most important interventions the movement has to deploy tactics on this terrain of struggle, but these must be implemented according to the principles of climate justice and the economics of a just transition.

Coordinating the Carbon Rebellion

A great diversity of tactics and strategic orientations are necessary to confront petro-hegemony on all three terrains of hegemonic struggle. The diversity of interventions climate justice activists deployed is represented in the examples provided throughout this chapter. In Chapter Two, I proposed the carbon rebellion as a strategic framework through which activists might think about organizing a large diversity of counter hegemonic interventions into a flexible but coordinated alignment, capable of engaging with relations of consent, coercion and compliance, on each of their respective terrains of struggle. I suggested that the economics of a just transition could be the vehicle through which tactics are deployed in the

war of economies, the development of a political culture of opposition and creation would align tactics through the war of position is waged, and tactics would be developed through a regime of resilience to wage the war of maneuver. The climate justice movements' strategies, narratives and tactics are not currently organized through the carbon rebellion framework or necessarily understood in terms of hegemonic contestation. This section illustrates how they could be.

For the most part, the activists I interviewed didn't appear to have a sense of the terrains of struggle upon which their tactics are deployed or how their strategies can be interpreted in terms of hegemonic struggle. What many do have, is a strong belief that their tactics should engage with culture and narrative, should confront governments and the state, and that they need to address the economics of energy transition. In other words, they were well aware that the climate justice movement needs to engage with "culture," "politics," and "the economy," even if these weren't interpreted as terrains upon which hegemonic relations of power are fought over. Using the carbon rebellion framework, I have interpreted these struggles over power in hegemonic terms and, in doing so, seek to demonstrate how the diversity of tactics being deployed in Blockadia could be organized and coordinated into an overarching strategic orientation that responds to petro-hegemony's three relations of power.

Organizing strategy and tactics in this way makes visible the interventions that are being prioritized and those which are being ignored. It allows us to map out the different points of intervention upon which struggle needs to take place. And it helps us make decisions about which tactics are most appropriate for engagement with each point of intervention. Thus, the

carbon rebellion is not only a descriptor of a repertoire of movement praxis, but also an analytical framework that activists can use to assess and map our own power, and plan and coordinate interventions across a whole range of tactical and strategic orientations.

Categorizing tactical interventions according to the different terrains of struggle upon which they are most relevant is not intended to silo strategic orientations or interventions from one another. Indeed, these terrains are actually porous, intertwined and resonate with each other. As such, some tactics and strategies can be deployed on more than one terrain of struggle at the same time. For example, civil disobedience or land defense is an intervention that can help advance the war of position but can also be deployed in the war of maneuver to achieve a different set of objectives. Moreover, tactics deployed on one terrain of struggle can be done so with the deliberate intention of supporting tactics that are deployed on another terrain of struggle. Thus, winning influence on city council relies upon tactics deployed in the war of position, advances tactical interventions in the war of maneuver, and can reinforce tactics carried out in the war of economies. Allowing us to see how different tactics deployed on different terrains of struggle will interact with one another is one of the major strengths of coordinating and organizing them through the carbon rebellion.

Activists can use the carbon rebellion framework to map out points of intervention, identify which points of intervention are or are not being engaged, make decisions about which tactics are appropriate for a particular terrain and point of intervention, and coordinate tactics across terrains of struggle so they reinforce one another. This may sound simple enough but coordinating a diversity of tactics in a coalition of actors with very different strategic

orientations, political analyses, and stakes, can be incredibly difficult. In Chapter Seven, I develop one approach that may help activists align a diversity of tactics into a coordinated set of strategies, which I call the spectrum of strategy. Ultimately both a spectrum of strategy and the ability to coordinate a diversity of tactics rests upon commitment to deep relationships, building trust, and willingness to disagree and learn existing between different movement constituents.

Following the theory articulated in Chapter Two, to combat petro-hegemony climate justice activists must wage a war of position, a war of maneuver and a war of economies. As this chapter illustrates, many of the tactics and strategies that pertain to each terrain of struggle already exist and are being deployed, while others still need to be innovated. However, despite coalitions developing around the coordination of different strategies, the broad diversity of tactics that the movement is deploying has not yet been organized or coordinated in any formal or theoretical way. The carbon rebellion is a framework that seeks to bring our tactics together so that climate justice activists may deliberately coordinate their strategies and tactics to engage with petro-hegemony on all three terrains of struggle. The deliberate and coordinated, yet flexible and expansive, organization of these tactics is necessary because it can ensure that activists are deploying interventions that engage with each relation of power, it allows them to deploy the tactics that are most appropriate to each terrain of struggle and their corresponding points of intervention, and it allows them to align and take advantage of a whole range of theories of change and strategic orientations that already exist within the movement. This framework for action organizes counter hegemonic intervention by engaging with relations of consent, coercion, and compliance and recognizing that

different tactics and different strategies on different points of intervention are appropriate for each engagement.

Conclusion

The strategies, narratives, and tactics deployed on the frontlines of Blockadia campaigns in Richmond and Burnaby are numerous and diverse. Strategies have included community organizing, direct action and land defense, electoral strategy, lobbying, legal strategy, intensifying regulatory burden, story-based strategy, dual power, prefigurative politics, and performance politics. Meanwhile, their corresponding tactics have engaged many different points of intervention and won important victories against petro-hegemony. While the strategic repertoires in both case studies remain quite conventional, instances of their being deployed in tandem to work together are emerging. This is an exciting and important development in the climate justice movement and may help align different constituents around a diversity of tactics. Dual power has presented itself as one of the most important logics through which combinations of these interventions are already being experimented with. The carbon rebellion extends this logic to counter hegemonic intervention across all the relations of power upon which the fossil fuel industry maintains and extends its interests.

Counter hegemonic intervention organized through the carbon rebellion framework can challenge petro-hegemony in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance on all three of their respective terrains of struggle. The campaigns of Blockadia under consideration in this dissertation have made their most significant gains through story-based strategy and narrative

intervention in relations of consent. Some of these gains have been institutionalized and consolidated through confronting the petro-state and deploying coercive tactics or gaining influence over state institutions' coercive capabilities (for example winning influence over the Richmond city council). In other cases, however, (such as the FCA ruling) activists have managed to gain some influence over coercive apparatus without winning broader consent. In these latter instances, the campaigners' victories appear much less certain. Meanwhile, interventions in relations of compliance are only just emerging and are so far underdeveloped. This is a terrain of struggle that desperately requires activists' attention through strategies and tactics advancing the materialization of a just transition.

I have by no means offered an exhaustive list of all the possible strategies and tactics available to climate justice activists. Rather, I have described and problematized those I identified in operation on the frontlines in my case study research. Different contexts of struggle will inevitably reveal different points of intervention and different strategies and tactics. Moreover, the carbon rebellion framework can be used to identify not only which strategies and tactics are being deployed in struggle but also those which are missing. As exploration of the terrain of struggle defined by compliance revealed, interventions through the war of economies have not yet been developed with anything like the consistency or ambition necessary to win against the industry on this terrain. This allows us to see that further innovation and development of strategic engagement in relations of compliance and its associated points of intervention are necessary. It may also be the case that there are some examples of dissent that do not immediately register as counter hegemonic strategy within the carbon rebellion framework. Examples of the complicated relationships between prayer,

ceremony, protest and performance explored in this chapter offer some illustration of this point. Therefore, we must not let this framework dictate what counts as strategy and what does not, but rather use it to complement and complicate our notions of strategic intervention.

The carbon rebellion offers activists with a generalizable and cohesive framework through which to develop innovative coordination of tactics and strategies which can be contextualized in the specific conjunctures of different individual frontlines struggles. These individual contexts will populate the framework with specific points of intervention existing across all three terrains of struggle that activists must intervene in and defeat the industry. However, if these tactics and strategies are to be coordinated and organized through the carbon rebellion, then we must first address some of the major schisms and debates over strategy that currently divide the climate justice movement into, sometimes tense, factionalism. In the next chapter I address some of these debates, identify possibilities for synthesis and synergy between them, and advance a concept I call the spectrum of strategy which I believe will be critical to the formation and cohesion of the carbon rebellion.

PART 4: DEBATES, QUESTIONS, AND SYNERGIES

Chapter 7 - Schisms, Synthesis and Synergy: Towards a Spectrum of Strategy

“Tsleil-Waututh Nation are the people of the inlet and it is our sacred obligation to protect the water. In our varied opposition to Kinder Morgan, we are many people paddling different canoes in the same direction” – Tsleil-Waututh Chief, Maureen Thomas.¹⁵³

Introduction

In February 2018, the Tsleil-Waututh Nation’s Sacred Trust initiative tasked with coordinating the Nation’s opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline issued a statement articulating their position on constituents of the local movement’s engagement in direct action. The epigraph above is an excerpt from their statement written by Tsleil-Waututh Chief, Maureen Thomas. I have introduced this chapter with their statement because it exemplifies the ethic of unity in difference that is necessary for opponents of petro-hegemony who espouse quite different strategic orientations, and practice a large diversity of tactics, to agree upon a vision and shared direction despite their differences. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation’s Chief and Council were committed to legal intervention through the judicial system, and most of the Nations’ decision makers have remained unwilling to engage in the civil disobedience or direct action throughout the campaign. Yet, Thomas’ statement reflects an openness to the many different strategic and tactical interventions it takes to confront colonialism and the fossil fuel industry. “We are many people paddling different

¹⁵³ Placing the excerpt in its original context, Thomas’ statement read: “We respect that all residents and TWN members have the right to voice their concerns and act according to their own beliefs and while direct action has played a vital role in moments of important social change, Tsleil-Waututh Nation Chief and Council are focused on the legal challenge that is currently being considered by the Federal Court of Appeals. Tsleil-Waututh Nation are the People of the Inlet and it is our sacred obligation to protect the water. In our varied opposition to Kinder Morgan, we are many people paddling different canoes in the same direction.” The full statement can be found online on the Sacred Trust webpage: <https://twnsacredtrust.ca/statement-tsleil-waututh-nation-sacred-trust-on-direct-action/>

canoes in the same direction” captures this sentiment perfectly and, in general terms, climate justice activists throughout Blockadia would benefit from carrying this ethos with them into their disputes over strategy and tactics.

This chapter elaborates on the major tensions, debates and schisms that exist between the different strategic orientations and tactical preferences identified and analyzed in Chapter 6. The purpose of this chapter is not to prescribe one tactic, strategy or theory of change over another. Quite on the contrary, following a theme developed throughout this dissertation, this chapter explores the potential for the synthesis and alignment of strategic orientations across quite different logics of intervention. It also acknowledges the deep-rooted antagonisms and, often justifiable, suspicion different constituents of the movement have towards one another’s strategic orientations. While remaining honest about the challenges these divisions pose and the difficulty of overcoming them, this chapter asserts that there is potential for convergence and even synergy amongst this diversity. I intervene upon three major arguments about strategy within the climate justice movement. These are, firstly, the extent to which the state or state institutions should, and plausibly can be, engaged with, worked through, ignored, or bypassed; secondly, when, where, and in which social contexts, direct action is an appropriate mode of intervention; and thirdly, whether community organizing or mass movement mobilization should be the strategic priority of activists in Blockadia. These often fraught disputes are primarily rooted in the different stakes actors have, or believe they have, in dominant institutions, versus perceptions of the extent to which these institutions exclude activists from participation. As such debates over strategy are as much about

political expression, ideology, and experiences of domination, as they are about the actual appropriateness of different tactics.

I pose these debates as responses to three respective questions. Working through each of these questions I seek to reconcile some of the schisms between strategic orientations that often divides opponents of petro-hegemony. Arguing that there is a great deal of potential for alignment and synergy between these positions, while respecting the reasons such profound divides continue to produce friction between different activists, I illustrate how the differences between their positions may be synthesized to produce more powerful strategic analysis and a more holistic approach to counter hegemony. This process also affirms that the friction between opposing strategic orientations can be dialectical or generative, producing new strategic orientations and frameworks out of their contradictions. The successful coordination of tactics that can intervene on relations of consent, coercion, and compliance through the carbon rebellion will depend upon the extent to which activists are able to embrace not only a diversity of tactics but also a spectrum of strategy.

The spectrum of strategy helps us understand the tactics deploy Blockadia in more inclusive terms. Following Naomi Klein's direction, this chapter expands the notion of the blockade to encompass a large spectrum of strategic interventions that may be subsumed by the concept of, and praxis in, *Blockadia* (2014). *Blockadia* is, therefore, a space in which the multiplicity of interventions oriented towards halting the development of fossil fuels and advancing a just transition, may be considered in terms of enacting a blockade. Thus "blockading" the industry can refer to the whole range of tactics and strategies I observed on the frontlines.

This leads me to cautiously refuse the divisive politico-strategic dichotomy of radicalism versus reformism that can be pervasive in social movement spaces (Lakey 1976). This dichotomy conflates strategy with ideology such that activists come to identify with one another along lines of ideological commitment to one or another strategic orientation (Smucker 2017). Reformist strategy is then associated with politically moderate ideology which contradicts the climate justice movement's political analysis, while so-called radical tactics are associated with a more systemic analysis of the climate crisis, so radical tactics are assumed to necessarily address the roots of the problem.

Yet, if we examine the actual performance of these interventions, it becomes clear that no tactic or strategy is inherently reformist or inherently radical. While political ideology and strategy can never truly exist in isolation from one another, analyzing strategic intervention according to the political-ideological binary of "reformist" or "radical" fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of tactics necessary for intervention in hegemonic power relations. This insight will drive my analysis of the three debates explored throughout this chapter.

Before engaging with these debates, however, I first want to explain how I will be differentiating between terms like strategy, tactics, strategic orientation and logics of intervention. In this chapter, each term has a distinct and specific meaning that are intended to help clarify concepts while allowing the discussion to unfold organically. *Strategy*, therefore, is a plan of operations designed to achieve an intended goal, which often responds to, or seeks to preempt, the operations of an opponent or adversarial force. Strategy is derived from a theory of change or selected theories of change, while tactics are derived from

strategy. *Tactics* are the individual actions taken to advance a general plan of operations, or to respond to an adversary's actions and plan of operations. Strategy organizes tactics into a coherent plan and tactics follow that plan. A *strategic* action, therefore, is one that puts into motion a series of operations or actions that advance the stated objectives of the organization or individual in question. Some forms of intervention can either be a strategy or a tactic depending whether they are deployed as singular, one-off, actions in a series of other individual actions (a tactic), or whether they set the framework for a planned series of corresponding operations and actions (a strategy). Strategy, and corresponding tactics, can be developed according to which terrain of struggle and points of intervention they are intended to influence. However, it should also be noted that strategy and tactics can influence more than one terrain of struggle, and their corresponding relations of power, at a time.

A *theory of change* is a mental map or narrative identifying the different conditions (and their relationships to one another) that one believes are necessary in order for social change to occur. A theory of change informs which strategies are preferred, when and whether ends justify means, the manifestation of particular tactics in particular contexts, and the extent to which a goal, action, or target is perceived to be realistic, radical, or reformist. Different theories of change may overlap and complement one another, or they may contradict each other. Actors may draw upon multiple overlapping theories of change at once. *Logic of intervention* is a concept I use to connect a specific theory (or theories) of change to a specific strategy (or set of strategies), and those specific strategies to a particular set of tactics. This allows us to follow a logic of intervention beginning at a theory of change, flowing through strategic decisions, and manifesting in a particular set of tactics. Thus,

tactical decisions become more easily legible when matched with strategic preferences which are derived from an identifiable theory of change.

While all of this remains a rather regimented interpretation of the differences between theory, strategy and tactics, - in which tactics are subordinated to strategy, and strategy to theory – it is a helpful schema for analyzing the relationships between the concepts as they tend to be deployed, and for illustrating their distinctions in common parlance. Nevertheless, I will try to resist some of the rigidity and order I've imposed on these categories by employing Adrienne Maree Brown's concept of *Emergent Strategy*. In emergent strategy, plans are always flexible, and tactics are always fluid and adaptable because they emerge out of interaction with the specific relationships and contextualized conditions in which they are operating (2017). Here tactics are not necessarily subordinate to strategy but responsive, taking on a life of their own which is never entirely predictable or governable. Indeed, we could think of each of these categories existing in a dynamic relationship with one another, which choreographs and organizes counter hegemonic intervention while allowing space for fluidity and critical improvisation (Lipsitz and Rose 2014). Furthermore, the difference between emergent strategy and the regimented categorization laid out in the paragraph above may suggest at how different theories of change come to define the conceptual tools we use to explain and interpret radical social change. As such, throughout the chapter, I will be transparent about the ways my theory of change has been developed by, and has also informed my analysis of, the debates over strategies and tactics I observed and participated in in my field research.

Two more terms I will use throughout this chapter are *strategic orientation* and *politico-strategic orientation*. When I refer to an organization, campaign, or individual's strategic orientation, I am invoking their general disposition or relationship to one or another type of strategy. The term politico-strategic orientation adds another layer to this categorization by demonstrating how an individual, campaign, or organization's political and ideological commitments influence their relationship to a particular strategy, narrative, or tactic. In other words, politico-strategic orientation is intended to demonstrate discernable instances in which ideology and perception of "stakes" in the system shape what is understood as strategic and unstrategic. To reiterate, no strategy or tactic is devoid of political ideology, and no social movement theory or strategist can perform what Donna Haraway (1988) calls the "god-trick" and claim an objective, apolitical view of strategy. However, it is sometimes quite clear when politics or ideology have had a large degree of influence over whether or not a strategy is adopted or tactical decision executed, particularly in instances where a different strategy or tactic might have been more appropriate. I distinguish between strategic orientation and politico-strategic orientation simply to draw our attention to the fact that strategic decisions are often made based upon the extent to which they reflect a political position or identity rather than on whether they are actually strategic. This allows for a more candid discussion of the limitations and potential for alignment across different logics of intervention.

*Engaging the state: Are the institutions of the state appropriate points of intervention on which climate justice activists can and should challenge petro-hegemony?*¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ To clarify, although there are some overlaps, this debate is not necessarily one that invokes Mann and Wainwright's distinction between Climate Mao and Climate X, where Climate Mao presents the state in the

One of the major differences between different strategic orientations within the climate justice movement, and agents of social change in general, is whether, how, and the extent to which, our strategic and tactical focus should engage with the institutions of the state. By engagement with “institutions of the state” I specifically mean engagement with regulatory frameworks and agencies, judicial bodies, legislative bodies, policy and legislation, elections, city boards and commissions, and the coercive policing and disciplinary forces through which their authority is ultimately upheld. State institutions are, therefore, those institutions whose mandate is legally enforceable through coercion and, where necessary, violence. Moreover, by “engagement” I mean the deployment of strategy, tactics, and movement resources in these institutions as points of intervention on the terrain of struggle in which the war of maneuver takes place. Engagement can include a vast array of interventions, from participation in elections to lobbying elected officials, from attending public hearings to launching lawsuits, and from forming self-defense cadres to establishing security culture within activist organizations. Finally, the question of engaging the state not only involves whether it should be engaged but also *how* it can be engaged.

In the next few paragraphs I’ll present the climate justice activists’ cases for and against different types of engagement with the state. Meanwhile, I will advance the thesis that state institutions are not only offer appropriate points of intervention, but abandoning them

hands of the anti-capitalist left as the solution to the climate crisis and Climate X is an vowedly anti-authoritarian and anti-planetary sovereignty approach to climate futures (Mann and Wainwright’s four categories of possible climate futures are outlined in *Climate Leviathan* (2018)). I would place the movement emerging in Blockadia squarely in under the category of Climate X. Thus, the debate is between members of the climate justice movement who believe the state may offer some tools our movement can capture to challenge the fossil fuel industry, and those who believe our interventions must be independent of, autonomous of, and in the long run, a threat to, state sovereignty.

surrenders a terrain of struggle to the fossil fuel industry without a fight. Doing so makes it harder to institutionalize our movement's discursive gains, coerce industry agents into taking actions against their will, and navigate our responses to petro-state violence and surveillance. Yet I also sympathize with those who are suspicious of the state and argue that we must remain wary of the reformist, and sometimes authoritarian, tendencies of the those who maintain a stake in the state. It is vital that we acknowledge many of the reasons why activists turned away from the state to inform instructions as to how our movement may engage state institutions while remaining accountable, anti-authoritarian, democratic, nonviolent, and radical.

Ceding the state to the fossil fuel industry surrenders a terrain of struggle upon which the climate justice movement can make significant gains and consolidate discursive victories through coercive power. Smucker makes an important distinction between *symbolic* and *institutional* contests within counter hegemonic political strategy. Symbolic contest is the struggle over the meanings, narratives and culture that inform common sense (akin to Gramsci's war of position), while the institutional contest is the struggle over the institutional capabilities, including and extending beyond, state power (mirroring Gramsci's war of maneuver). As he writes, "if we, political challengers, win an uphill struggle over meanings and narratives...we have to extend the hegemonic contest beyond symbols, narratives, and meanings, and to move into the terrain of institutions, policies, and consolidation" (2017, 149). Accordingly, political challengers must be comfortable with using coercive power against our opponents to consolidate our discursive victories in the state and other

institutions.¹⁵⁵ Smucker explains that there are many on the social justice Left who are very happy to engage in the symbolic contest but who oppose engagement with institutional contest on principle, or are otherwise ambivalent about consolidating victories in state institutions. The case studies under analysis in this chapter, however, illustrate campaigns engaged in both symbolic and institutional contest where activists have made simultaneous interventions in narrative and meaning as well as sought to coerce the industry to the extent possible through lawsuits, regulatory action, elections, legislation, and the Native Rights-Based Strategic Framework.

Yet, as Smucker certainly acknowledges, those who oppose engagement with the state through institutional contest do so on principles rooted in compelling arguments. For one, as David Pellow explains in *Total Liberation*, antistatist currents, and particularly the anarchist environmental left, argue that the state cannot be divorced from its intended purpose of imposing violence to enshrine dominant racial, colonial, gendered, interspecies, and class orders (2014).¹⁵⁶ To work through state institutions, and moreover to consolidate power within them, means accepting the inherent authoritarianism of the state and its coercive apparatuses, even while one may oppose the orders these uphold.

¹⁵⁵ As Smucker elaborates: “Most of us know full well that “power concedes nothing without a demand.” Yet social movements do sometimes get confused – or are in denial – about the fact that raising such a demand effectively amounts to an act of *coercion*.” (2017, 135).

¹⁵⁶ Pellow elaborates upon the environmental anarchist position on the state thusly: “If modern state formation is necessarily authoritarian, monopolistic, speciesist/dominionist, and heteropatriarchal, anarchism is, in opposition, supportive of values and practices that enable freedom and egalitarianism for all beings – human, nonhuman, and ecosystemic.” Its values are explicitly antistate because the state is fundamentally at odds with securing freedom and egalitarianism for all. This is the articulation of leftist environmental anarchist politics that I am using when I refer to anarchist currents and tendencies in the climate justice movement.

In addition, the state is perceived as entirely incapable of exerting its authority to halt environmental destruction. As Pellow writes, “antistatist politics fit comfortably into radical ecological movement discourses because so much of the history of mainstream environmental movements has involved a reliance on the state to prevent harm to ecosystems. That hope has been met by repeated betrayal and disappointment” (2014, 99). The contention here is not only that the movement *should not* work through state institutions to halt socio-ecological destruction, but also that it *cannot* work through them because the state is an instrument wholly incapable of addressing social-ecological destruction.

Meanwhile, Indigenous scholars Glen Coulthard (2014) and Audra Simpson (2014) have powerfully argued against Indigenous peoples seeking rights-based recognition through colonial institutions like the court system, regulatory framework and the settler state end up legitimizing the settler state and assimilating themselves into settler colonialism. They’ve explained that working through these institutions reinforces and reifies settler colonialism which is counterproductive to any decolonizing strategy. From this view, a decolonial, radical, and emancipatory climate justice movement that engages in electoral politics and colonial judicial systems is contradicting its commitment to some of its foundational principles. Few of the professional campaigners and organizers I formerly interviewed actually expressed this view, but in informal conversations with some activists at the PTI camp, and in other activist spaces in the Bay Area, I encountered a deep skepticism of the state and its institutions.

Is it possible to keep these very valid points in mind while cautiously engaging state institutions nonetheless, or does the (perhaps inherently) authoritarian character of the modern state necessarily mean any engagement with it is corrupting and counterproductive to our movement? We can justifiably consider many amongst the anarchist environmental left that Pellow interviews to be the precise audience at whom Smucker's provocation is targeted. Given that these constituents comprise a large number of the people who operate on the frontlines of Blockadia, we have to take this critique of engagement with the state seriously, or risk alienating a committed contingent of the climate justice movement.

It is true that the regulatory, legislative, judicial and coercive apparatuses of the state have far more often been used to advance domination and ecological destruction than curtail it. Moreover, seeking rights-based recognition from the colonial state certainly does mean Indigenous peoples can become complicit in surrendering elements of their own self-determination and self-governance. It is also true, however, that, in both the case studies, activists have deployed strategies to capture local government and win advantages in the judicial system that have placed coercive pressure on the fossil fuel industry to halt or change its operations. These absolutely did delay pipeline construction and significantly altered the upgrade of the Chevron refinery (to the extent that regulatory action has, for the meantime, more or less barred the refinery from processing tar sands from Canada). On their own, and deployed only at the local scale, it is likely that interventions such as these will only ever delay and alter projects. However, when they are combined with other tactics, they could obstruct fossil fuel infrastructure indefinitely. Therefore, it is at least demonstrable that capturing the coercive capacities of state institutions can alter, delay, and potentially halt

fossil fuel development. The question remains, should we capture these points of intervention?

There exists a tendency towards reformism¹⁵⁷ and compromise amongst many mainstream environmental organizations that work closely with state institutions that many amongst the more radical contingents of the climate justice movement find difficult to tolerate. This tendency, as the Engler brothers suggest, is both ideological and structural. For example, such organizations have “just enough at stake – relationships with mainstream politicians, financial obligations to members, collective bargaining contracts – to make them fear lawsuits and political backlash when it comes to sustained civil disobedience” (2017, 28). The Englers cite labor movement strategist, Stephen Lerner, who says that, in particular, large nonprofits have become “just big enough – and just connected enough to the political and economic power structure – to be constrained from leading the kinds of activities that are needed” (ibid). This, as Vasey argues, has led to larger mainstream NGOs being accused of selling out frontline communities and operating according to the logic of an “NGO-Industrial complex.” As such, the perception of reformist tendencies amongst mainstream NGOs is the source of deep-rooted division between the environmental and environmental justice movements (2014). Nonprofits providing movements with legal assistance, electoral strategists, and with relationships to state institutions tend to (but in the case studies under consideration did not necessarily) advocate for less confrontational strategies. Through their participation in state institutions they gain enough of a stake in the dominant system that

¹⁵⁷ I said I would not be making distinctions based on reformist vs. radical strategic orientations within the climate justice movement but here I make an exception because I am not convinced that organizations that are prepared to make the kind of compromises these organizations are belong in the climate justice movement.

more direct confrontation becomes perceived as unstrategic. This is how and why critics left tend to view operating through the state as inherently corrupting of values and prone to inadequate, often counterproductive, compromise.

Despite these valid criticisms, I find that a sweeping and unnuanced condemnation of the state as *inherently* and *necessarily* corrupting of movement goals and principles is inappropriate and unhelpful. This is because, as these case study interventions suggest, climate justice activists are perfectly capable of maintaining an insightful critique of the state and its corrupting influence, and remaining accountable to the broader movement, while also finding strategic points of intervention to target vulnerabilities in petro-hegemony. Activists demonstrated this on numerous occasions. For example, the RPA members I interviewed didn't necessarily share the anarchist critiques of the state, but they were certainly profoundly cognizant of the importance of accountability and transparency between RPA-backed city councilmembers, the RPA itself, and the community. How that accountability should be manifested was the subject of intense debate within the group but, at least in my estimation, their commitment to accountability was a foundational value shared in common.

Moreover, crowdsourcing policy and issue-based campaigns directly from community town halls and public meetings and then institutionalizing these through contesting local governance has created conditions in which residents of Richmond can develop just solutions to the city's problems for themselves with access to resources from local government.

Meanwhile capturing local government allowed the local movement to reign in Chevron's excessive influence over decision-making, force it to pay more taxes, and agree to

concessions it would never have submitted to voluntarily. These interventions illustrate what sociologist and activist, George Lakey, described as “reforms, which, if they can be achieved, involve such a shift in power that they can fairly be called “revolutionary reforms”” (1976, 5-6). Revolutionary reforms allow movements to gain footholds, take up new positions, and shift institutional and discursive conditions in a way that makes longer term revolutionary objectives more achievable. They are an excellent example of how the climate justice movement currently leverages state intuitions to advance its more revolutionary objectives.

Similarly, the legal intervention against the Trans Mountain pipeline delayed the project for over a year. Even after the pipeline was bought by the Canadian government, intervention through judicial institutions of the state has undeniably helped prevent the project’s completion. The quotidian invasions of First Nations sovereignty without consent has not been stopped, but this particular case of colonial incursion has been held at bay by using the unique rights and tools available to Canada’s First Nations that they fought to be included in the colonial court system decades earlier. These unique legal tools available to native peoples can be used against colonial intervention through the settler colonial state. Both examples show that whether or not climate justice activists can and should intervene in the institutions of the state is not nearly as unambiguous as either side of the debate might suggest.

The state is a coercive entity with violent capabilities and a surveillance infrastructure beyond anything the climate justice movement can match. Through the petro-state, these capabilities are placed at the disposal of fossil fuel companies and can, and often are, used to repress environmental and climate justice activist. As resistance to DAPL at Standing Rock

so clearly demonstrated, if the petro-state's violent intimidation, surveillance, and sabotage of anti-fossil fuel activists cannot be curtailed, moments of mass mobilization can be brutally crushed. Gaining influence within, or access to, state institutions may be one way to stop these coercive tools from being deployed against activists. The case studies under consideration in this chapter show that the policing and repression of environmental activists can be exposed and alleviated through capturing or gaining advantages in state institutions. For example, in British Columbia, one of the more effective uses of movement allies in the provincial government has been to ban the industry's use of SLAPP suits against activists.

Stephen Collis, an activist and academic who was targeted by a SLAPP suit during the confrontation on Burnaby Mountain in 2014, explains these were used to intimidate activists into capitulation:

Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation -- or SLAPPs -- are lawsuits brought against group of citizens, usually alleging that the group has committed defamation, trespass, or some other civil wrong, which have the effect of curtailing political engagement over a public issue. These lawsuits generally involve damage claims and requests for injunctive relief, and place a chill on public engagement. The impact of a such lawsuit, when brought by a major corporation and claiming millions of dollars in damages, cannot be overestimated. The prospect of losing one's house would test the political mettle of anyone. (2015, 34)

In response to Kinder Morgan's use of state intimidation on Burnaby Mountain in 2014, and under pressure from environmental organizations, politicians friendly to the movement under the newly elected Green Party-backed-NDP provincial government introduced and unanimously adopted anti-SLAPP legislation in March 2019 ([Jones 2019](#)). This legislation prevents oil companies from intimidating its opponents through frivolous but expensive legal proceedings. Similarly, Burnaby's mayor and city councilors who oppose the pipeline, are

continuing to refuse pay for the costs of the RCMP's policing of the protests on Burnaby Mountain. As former mayor, Derek Corrigan told me, "we keep telling them over and over again, well, it's like getting blood from a stone because you're not getting it, you know, so we want to make clear all this money's on you, and if you keep spending money like a drunken sailor... you're going to be the ones who have to absorb it" (personal communication, June 12th, 2018). The current mayor of Vancouver, former MP Kennedy Stewart, was arrested outside the Kinder Morgan tank farm prior to his mayoral election and the current mayor of Burnaby continues to oppose the pipeline.

In Richmond, meanwhile, RPA city councilmembers have consistently challenged the entrenched interests of the Richmond Police Officers' Association (RPOA), which Andrés Soto dubbed "attack dogs for Chevron." There is little evidence to suggest that Chevron officials ever coordinated with the local police to repress dissent, however, it clear that the RPOA and Chevron shared political enemies and the RPOA would consistently send out attack ads on RPA members during elections. Steve Early describes how the policing of dissent has changed under the RPA as Richmond's, then-new now-retired, police chief instituted reforms that were intended to be more respectful of the public's right to protest (2017). Of course, none of these interventions actually dismantle the violent, colonial, and authoritarian tendencies of the state, but they are not necessarily intended to. What they do achieve is the ability to manage and curtail the petro-state's coercive capacities and give activists some institutional cover and support while they make interventions against petro-hegemony across all three terrains of struggle.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the way to prevent (petro-)state repression is not to seek advantages within state institutions but to resist the state by implementing security culture within organizations, providing support for political prisoners, or otherwise blocking the advances of law enforcement, and when necessary learning to physically defend yourself (Pellow 2014).¹⁵⁸ No doubt, there are times and contexts where these are appropriate and there are times and contexts when such tactics are inappropriate. Indeed, all tactics require a time and a place, a context in which to operate most effectively. When we learn more about how context shapes what tactics are or are not appropriate, we may open up our strategic repertoires to greater tactical improvisation and flexibility. This comes with experience it is also challenging. It is often difficult to read a particular context and know exactly what is and is not appropriate, let alone finding agreement on collective readings of what is appropriate. For example, practicing security culture has gained particular resonance amongst some of the younger, more confrontational contingents of the climate justice movement. Security culture at its simplest means being cognizant of the fact that movements are often subject to infiltration by law enforcement and therefore taking precautions to protect you and your colleagues from incrimination (ibid). These precautions might include encryption technology, only participating in direct action through affinity groups, staying silent about participation in direct actions except with your affinity group, and remaining cautious of newcomers. Taking such precautions, it is argued, can protect movements from state repression.

¹⁵⁸ As Pellow suggests, in environmental activism, these practices tend to be more prevalent amongst the autonomous cells and affinity groups of the Animal Liberation Front, Earth Liberation Front, and Earth First! These groups are more open to tactics like sabotage and property destruction and would therefore require greater levels of anonymity and self-defense (2014). However, some of these currents have bled into frontlines activism in Blockadia, particularly amongst some contingents at Standing Rock, with security culture being especially prevalent.

While security culture may be necessary amongst affinity groups participating in smaller, clandestine operations, it is inappropriate, and probably impossible, for mass mobilization and mass action of the sort more commonly found in the climate justice movement.

Moreover, security culture can lead to internal paranoia and division within organizations as constituents second guess whether or not they can trust the person they're talking to. Trust is a crucial component of movement building, but security culture necessarily involves withholding trust. It also limits the potential size of organizations as the attitude of cautiousness undoubtedly alienates newcomers. One activist, who gave a detailed and nuanced account of the strengths and limitations of security culture in Vancouver and Burnaby, suggested that while security culture can be vital to ensuring certain direct action tactics aren't prevented before they can even occur, they had also seen examples of security culture being used as a gatekeeping tool to assert an individual's power and authority in social movement spaces.

In his pioneering research on the history of police infiltration of environmental and social justice organizations in the UK, Connor Woodman suggests that "Instead of attempting to halt infiltration at a group level, our strategy should be two-fold: a) campaign for infiltration and surveillance to be outlawed at a national level, and b) organize on as open, deep, and broad a basis as possible" (2018). In response to the ubiquity of the surveillance state and its vastly superior resources, this practice of radical transparency would "render infiltration redundant." As such practicing security culture and learning self-defense is appropriate for affinity groups carrying out disruptive but relatively small-scale tactics, but they are hardly a

realistic response to the scale and superiority of state infiltration and repression of environmental activist groups and mobilizations. Paradoxically, curtailing state violence by gaining some advantages in state institutions may be the most appropriate strategy.

To conclude this conversation, I would argue that the different constituents of the climate justice movement need to arrive at an understanding that while the state is violent, authoritarian, tends towards compromise or moderation, and can corrupt social movement principles, it is at the same time possible to intervene in and capture state institutions that can help activists consolidate victories, curtail repression, and deploy coercive capacities against the fossil fuel industry without conceding the radical principles of climate justice. For all constituents of the movement, from the autonomists and anarchists to the reformers, this may mean that what matters most is whether the *vision of change and justice* being articulated is one that relies mostly or entirely on state institutions bringing about that change or whether state institutions are perceived as just some of the many points of intervention existing on a larger terrain of struggle. If our engagement in state institutions is presented as being limited and surgically precise interventions on a much longer pathway to change, then it could both refuse state dominance while working with and through the state towards a more revolutionary and emancipatory agenda. The different constituents of the movement do not have to align on the nuances of their precise ideological or political relationship to the state but enduring trust, accountability and solidarity amongst them will depend upon their coming to some kind of agreement concerning their strategic orientations to the state. As such, there seems to be little reason why these different perspectives cannot be synthesized to produce a

cogent and nuanced set of norms for activists who view engagement with the state institutions as strategic but are also aware of the state's fundamental limitations.

The Value of Direct Action: When is direct action an appropriate intervention in petro-hegemony?

Most, if not all, strategic orientations contained within the climate justice movement would likely agree that direct action can be a useful intervention in the power relations that uphold the fossil fuel industry. Less harmonious, however, are the diversity of perspectives concerning *when* direct action is an appropriate and valuable intervention. There are some organizations and activists who view direct action only as a tool of last resort, to be deployed when all other options have run out. There are others whose organizational capacity is built around supporting and carrying out direct action tactics, pursuing a belief that only direct action achieves campaign objectives. And, of course, there exists a great deal of variance between these positions.

This section's argument is developed primarily with illustrations from Burnaby because this is where the disagreements over direct action tactics and strategy were most visible. In Burnaby, I observed and recorded activists' arguments that, on the one hand, their campaign should deploy more confrontational direct action tactics or "turn up the heat," and, on the other, that direct action was "vanguardist," jeopardized other strategic interventions, and that it should only be used once less confrontational interventions had been exhausted. While

presenting the different dimensions of these arguments below, I advance three corollary arguments.

First, I argue that while direct action is often a crucial component of social movement activity, it requires legitimizing. This legitimacy, however, can be built through the action itself rather than necessarily waiting for “the right conditions” to emerge. Second, I argue that activists would benefit from a shared framework for evaluating the conditions in which direct action could be considered appropriate. While context clearly matters when assessing whether direct action strategy should be deployed, the terms upon which that context is judged varies according to different activists’ ideological commitments, experiences and perceptions of personal stakes. I show how we might evaluate the conditions for whether direct action is appropriate based upon whether or not those conditions will allow for the emergence of Stephen D’Arcy’s three requirements of direct action (that its tactics are relentless, that they are deployed in an escalatory trajectory, and that they grow the base of participation and support) (2014).¹⁵⁹ Thirdly, and finally, I argue that if direct action can be legitimized and the conditions in which it would be deployed satisfy D’Arcy’s three criteria, then it is not only appropriate but can also support and supplement other strategic interventions, particularly, and most relevantly to Burnaby, through the judiciary system.

In reflections on his own involvement in activism against Kinder Morgan’s pipeline during the standoff at Burnaby Mountain in 2014, activist, poet, and academic, Stephen Collis,

¹⁵⁹ Note here the distinction between direct action strategy and direct action tactics. This section focuses the conversation on when conditions for direct action as a strategy are appropriate rather than when one off direct actions tactics are appropriate.

describes the failure of different groups favoring different tactics to work together. He explains that there were three factions on Burnaby Mountain during the 2014 standoff: the professionalized NGO campaigners and First Nations representatives, volunteer organizations comprised primarily of local retirees and nearby residents, and grassroots leftist/anarchist autonomously organized groups of younger Indigenous and settler activists. Below he describes the relationship between the local residents' organizations and the autonomous grassroots groups:

The first group [the local residents organizations] was anxious about the second group's direct action focus, worried that more "radical" tactics like occupations and blockades would wind up losing the support of the "general public," and felt that, tactically, a more moderate approach, loosely affiliated with the City of Burnaby, was most likely to succeed under these circumstances. The second group, in turn, felt that the first group's tactics would take too much time, that Kinder Morgan would waltz in to do its work despite popular opposition and the attempts of the City of Burnaby to stop them... and that, contrary to the first group's worries, the "general public" would be galvanized and motivated by the actions of protestors on the ground, giving their all to stop the pipeline. (2015, 26)

Meanwhile, the third group, the professional NGOs and First Nations representatives, either preferred to stay clear of direct action tactics, or otherwise sought to coordinate and orchestrate them in a precise, targeted, and controllable way. In the few years since the 2014 confrontation on Burnaby Mountain, these three groups seem to have resolved some of their differences, but tensions certainly do remain.

By 2018, BROKE and other residents' groups were participating in direct action tactics like die-ins, disruptive street theatre, and attending the blockades at the gates. As Susanne from BROKE told me of her thoughts about the differences between strategic orientations, "I've got a very general acceptance that there's a wide variety of people and methods and ideas, but

I'm definitely no violence. If you want to do violence, I'm not interested in an action anywhere near you"¹⁶⁰ (personal communication, May 24th, 2018). She added that there were other organizations who deployed tactics that were "a little bit outside of [her] comfort zone" but that she'd be willing to support them. As she put it, "I'm not a, you know, in your face and get arrested and make a big noise [person]... I'll help you do that, but I don't necessarily want to be doing that" (S. Jackson, personal communication, May 24th, 2018). Susanne's comments suggested that some of the tactical divisions that existed in 2014 had been ameliorated. However, even in 2018, Camp Cloud, which hosted many of the autonomist anarchist activists, was situated just a few hundred feet away from the PTI camp on Burnaby Mountain, and illustrated a continuing divide between politico-strategic orientations amongst different practitioners of direct action about *how* direct action should be deployed. Relations between Camp Cloud and PTI varied between an agreement to treat one another as good neighbors, agreeing to disagree but maintaining friendly relations, and outright resentment. During the 2018 mobilizations, some interviewees would comment on the differences between Camp Cloud and PTI to allude to the broader politico-strategic divides about direct action within the movement, while others were cautious of all direct tactics at this stage in the campaign.

As Collis' observations allude to, one of the major arguments those who are more cautious of direct action will often offer is that such tactics haven't yet been legitimized amongst "the general public" and so the time to deploy them just isn't right yet. Without legitimizing direct

¹⁶⁰ Different activists mean slightly different things when they use the term "violence." Here I interpreted Susanne's understanding of violence as physical harm to people and physical damage to property that is deployed to achieve movement goals.

action, the tactics will end up alienating audiences and shrink or limit the campaign's base of participation and support. The argument makes a good deal of sense because counter hegemonic mass movements seeking to build a new consensus should be ensuring that they are growing rather than shrinking their base of support. One of the easiest ways for direct action tactics to be legitimized is for campaigners to demonstrate that they had no other choice but to use them. For example, when the legal political opportunity structures through which activists and the community at large can register dissent and make demands are closed off to them, activists can legitimately claim that they had no choice but to escalate their tactics.

Unfortunately, "the time just not being right" can be an argument that is extended indefinitely because it is often very difficult to know whether direct action will be perceived as legitimate until it happens. Additionally, different groups have different stakes in, and levels of access to, those political opportunity structures, and therefore, different perceptions of when they've been excluded from the legal political opportunity structures. As such, "the time not being right" can become a de facto rejection of direct action tactics even if it is not officially recognized as one. Activists on all sides of this debate place a high premium on the ability to demonstrate the legitimacy of direct action tactics, and legitimacy clearly matters. Yet, amongst several interviewees there existed an assumption that activists must *wait* for the right conditions before direct action could be perceived as legitimate. It is this indefinite "waiting" for the right conditions that frustrates many who believe escalation is more immediately necessary. They argue that activists can also *create* the "right conditions"

through their form of direct action where the action itself provides activists with a platform through which to legitimize it and attract more participants whilst it is happening.

In this light, the 2018 camps, civil disobedience, and blockades on Burnaby Mountain can be read in two ways. On the one hand, they emerged after the 2017 provincial election had demonstrated a great deal of opposition to the pipeline throughout British Columbia, the NEB had been thoroughly delegitimized and Kinder Morgan was struggling to adjust to a new political environment. Therefore, we might assume that across different groups' varying politico-strategic orientations the time did indeed appear right for direct action. On the other hand, the timing being right and direct action having been perceived as legitimate may only appear so in retrospect. In other words, maybe it is only after the fact that we perceive direct action as having been a legitimate intervention all along. This means activists would have produced the legitimizing narrative for direct action through its form of intervention and whilst it was being deployed. In this case, as Collis puts it, "the "general public" [is] galvanized and motivated by the actions of protestors on the ground" (2015, 26). This suggests that activists do not always need to wait for the "right conditions" to emerge before taking direct action but can, instead, produce those condition through their action.

It is difficult to say which perspective is more accurate given the multitude of examples and counter examples on both sides. And, moreover, given how one probably influences the other. However, what this case does suggest is that the argument that "the time just isn't right" is flawed in part because through carefully and strategically orchestrated direct action the right time can, at least sometimes, be produced through direct action itself. Thus, one of

the conditions by which to judge the appropriateness of direct action rests upon an assessment of whether direct action strategy will be able to legitimize itself in the moment, and/or when the contextual conditions provide direct action tactics with legitimacy.

Legitimacy is relevant to all three of D'Arcy's criteria because without the perception of legitimacy direct action cannot grow the base of participation, cannot be deployed relentlessly or escalate further.

Yet, organizer's with groups like Dogwood continued to voice concern about escalating direct action tactics in 2018 period. Dogwood's communications director, Kai Nagata, reflecting on national polls demonstrating a decline in public support for pipeline opponents, questioned whether the adoption of civil disobedience and direct action may have been responsible:

You've probably noticed this shift in the polling in the last few months. I don't know yet why, I haven't done a deep dive, but I would note that this has coincided with Protect the Inlet, and the more public examples of civil disobedience, and the resulting counter campaign in the media locally and nationally to paint protesters as being unreasonable and unwilling to compromise, as lawbreakers. I don't know how much of that is connected and how much of it is coincidence, because there's a whole backdrop of other very expensive and effective campaign work that's being undertaken by the government and by the fossil fuel companies. But basically, there's a correlation that I've seen in the last few months between direct action and shrinking public support. So that's troubling, I don't know what to make of it. I hope we can do some sort of a post-mortem as a movement to see whether those are connected.
(personal communication, May 17th, 2018)

It's important to note that Kai posed this correlation as a question not a statement of fact, but posing the question nonetheless suggests that some campaigners thought it at least possible

that direct action and escalation on Burnaby Mountain was giving the discursive advantage to their adversaries.¹⁶¹

Laura Benson, Dogwood's director of organizing, articulated similar concerns about civil disobedience:

They have sort of gotten started ahead of time, and from Dogwood's perspective, I think we've continued to be at the point where like "well, we haven't exhausted everything else," right, so there still are other tactics and strategies that are viable for people to be working on and so it still hasn't quite gotten to that point. (personal communication, May 18th, 2018)

Laura's suggestion that civil disobedience was premature because other tools had not been exhausted is an excellent example of a strategic orientation that places a premium on legitimizing direct action *before* it occurs.

Reflecting on whether she, personally, would take part in civil disobedience, Laura said "It just doesn't seem like the time is right yet... because once you're arrested, then you're charged, you're facing criminal charges and you can't go back and do it again. So, when are you going to use your chance to put your body on the line? I don't know, there's still lots to do!" However, Laura added that there was an important contrast to be made between the 2018 round of escalation and the confrontation on Burnaby Mountain in 2014. She explained that compared to the 2018 blockades of the gates, direct action in 2014 "seemed to garner a

¹⁶¹ Kai later told me that while "it was hard to make the case in March 2018 that all other possible avenues of resistance had been exhausted" in order to justify civil disobedience, this is not necessarily the case just over a year later. The Trudeau government's response to the pipeline permits being overturned in court and its further commitment to the pipeline following the fall election in 2019 has closed political opportunity structures that had been available previously. Winning the appeals case is one of the steps Dogwood campaigners believed needed to be carried out before turning to civil disobedience. Again, this illustrates how different readings of the context of struggle can legitimize or justify direct action and civil disobedience at different times.

lot of public support... the polling then was really very favorable towards the people who were taking action” (personal communication, May 18th, 2018). One of differences between these movement moments was in the policing of the protest, and another was that new political opportunity structures for engagement in the democratic system were perceived by some to have opened up after the 2017 provincial election. Both Kai and Laura’s comments did not suggest an opposition to direct action and those participating in it general, but instead placed their caution in the context of the specificities of the movement moment. Neither, it seemed, believed that in this moment, relentless and escalatory, action that grew the movement’s base of support would be possible.

Clearly, legitimacy matters. However, by emphasizing the perception of direct action’s legitimacy over its instrumental function we may confuse the difference between expressive direct action and an instrumental direct action. When a tactic is expressive, its purpose is changing narratives and growing the movement’s base of support, thus its perceived legitimacy is a crucial component of the action. When the action’s function is also, or primarily, instrumental, however, its objectives are also to physically disrupt, halt, or change the opponent’s activities. For example, direct action in the form of blockades at the Trans Mountain tank farm gates was primarily expressive in that it sought to shift discursive conditions against the industry. Direct action in this instance would have become an instrumental intervention if it had also sought to physically obstruct the flows of labor, capital, and infrastructure into and out of the tank farm that made building the pipeline possible. The strategy, therefore, becomes one of physically disrupting the flow of materials upon which the company depends to force it into submission. The question then, is whether

this kind of strategy is also contingent upon perceptions of legitimacy or whether I would argue that it does because for a strategy of this sort to force the company into submission the tactics must follow D’Arcy’s criteria: they must escalate, they must grow the base of participation, and they must be deployed relentlessly. It is very difficult to imagine a scenario in which activists could meet any of these three criteria without also winning legitimacy at the very least within the community in which it would be deployed.¹⁶²

Most activists that I interviewed would agree that the legitimacy of direct action strategy depends upon the context and conditions in which it would be deployed. However, finding alignment on how to judge whether those conditions are appropriate for direct action is much harder. This is because ideology, stakes in the system, and politico-strategic preferences tend to influence how we read the conditions we’re judging. It may help, therefore, to agree on some very basic criteria upon which we might evaluate whether conditions are appropriate for the deployment of direct action. Whether direct action is able to be deployed “relentlessly,” on an “escalating trajectory,” and grow the movement’s “base of participation” and support are indicators of whether or not the strategy is appropriate (D’Arcy 2014, 289). Of course, the impact of direct action is contingent on a whole range of other factors too (many outside activists’ control).

D’Arcy measures provides us with some fundamental criteria with which to assess whether conditions are appropriate for direct action. Evaluating the appropriateness of direct action

¹⁶² Even instrumental direct action interventions that do not require large numbers of participants must still have at least some public support, otherwise they can be very easily repressed and their tactics will alienate potential allies.

then becomes a question of whether conditions are currently, or potentially, suitable for direct action to be deployed relentlessly, on an escalating trajectory, while growing the base of support and participation. If they are, or if activists can make them so, then direct action could be an appropriate strategy. If conditions cannot be produced that would allow activists to deploy direct action relentlessly, on an escalating trajectory, and growing its base of participation, then direct action as an instrumental strategy probably isn't appropriate (although as an expressive tactic, it still could be). However, as we use "legitimacy" and the ability of direct action to build the movement's base of participation and support, we should also be wary of how appeals to the base of support could limit our political imaginations and moderate our interventions. Using legitimacy as a measure for a tactic's perceived appropriateness may risk of watering down the possibilities of proposing a more radical vision and set of interventions for the movement where the base of support is assumed to be less radical, or more reformist and conservative than the activists carrying out these tactics.

We might avoid this scenario by considering not *whether* the tactic may or may not be perceived as legitimate, but rather how we might produce conditions that increase the chances that it *will* be perceived as legitimate. In other words, activists can politicize and educate the base of support so that it accepts radical tactics, rather than tailoring and moderating their tactics to fit within the worldviews of a more moderate or docile movement base. We also should not assume that the base necessarily will be more moderate than those deploying these tactics. Therefore, I want to emphasize here the

extent to which activists can produce conditions that legitimize direct action rather than simply waiting on conditions to change before engaging in direct action.¹⁶³

Direct action on Burnaby Mountain in 2018 remained symbolic and largely expressive as opposed to instrumental. Thomas explained that this had begun a conversation about whether it was worth getting arrested during symbolic actions. As he characterized the conversation:

There have been almost 250 arrests, and a lot of those have been arrests which people would understand more as symbolic. They've been at the site of the Kinder Morgan tank farm, but they haven't been really arrests that have stopped work and cost the company money... So there's been a conversation about how has that been worthwhile, and what's been the most useful? ... Most of those arrests have been organized by Protect The Inlet ... and they'll go speak to their strategic interest in keeping Kinder Morgan in public discourse in the media, and how useful those arrests are, and how powerful it is for people to demonstrate how committed [they] are... And being part of the media narrative is very important. And then there's been another sector of people who said, like, "if you're gonna get arrested, it has to have a more direct financial consequences on the company in the immediate sense..." (T. Davies, personal communication, September 28th, 2018)

Here Thomas suggests that the organizations coordinating direct action at the gates were primarily focused on using media interest in arrests to keep a national spotlight on the movement's narrative. The symbolism and performance involved in the blockades would create media spectacles that helped achieve this objective.

These rolling blockades, it is worth noting, were relentless (occurring every weekend for several months) and maintained a large enough base of support to keep up moral and participation in civil disobedience throughout the summer, despite (and perhaps partly

¹⁶³ This is true to a Gramscian theory of change which suggests we must gain legitimacy through waging a war of position before we deploy our coercive assaults on the hegemon. The war of position is all about how we create conditions of legitimacy that allow us to make more radical interventions. To this, I would add, why not think about how we can gain legitimacy *while* we make these more radical interventions.

because of) intensifying legal repercussions. However, they were not particularly escalatory and, as such, the actions usually stopped short of directly interfering with the tank farm's daily operations. While, the weekly arrests of climate justice activists throughout the spring and summer of 2018 did keep some media focus on their narrative, their inability to produce a moral crisis led some interviewees to question whether the campaign escalation had gone far enough.

Some activists, like those Thomas identified as wanting the blockades to have had more direct financial consequences for the company, believed direct action needed to escalate to be more disruptive and actually prevent work from happening at the tank farm or disrupt business as usual in the city. As an excerpt from one anonymous interviewee illustrates:

There's ways to solve problems that aren't conventional and I think these groups should be using these kind of ways... I think everybody should get their old beat up cars and just go park them on the Lions Gate Bridge and chain them all together and all these bankers and brokers wouldn't be able to get to work from West Vancouver...or spread roofing nails across the bridge in the morning. And then you'd hear all kinds whining and screaming you know. And some of these people are innocent bystanders, well so what, get involved or get lost, you know... I think any time is right for escalation.

Later the interviewee added:

I think [the pipeline opponents] should be getting in the way, right away. Frustrating everything, you know. I don't know where all these [Kinder Morgan] workers park their cars but at four o'clock or five o'clock everyone just drives in there and jams the parking lot so they can't get out. Or you fill the parking lot in the morning so they got no place to park.

If tactics such as those this interviewee suggested could have been deployed relentlessly, on an escalating trajectory, while growing the base of support and participation, then they could well have delayed pipeline construction and cost the Kinder Morgan time and resources.

They would likely also have been met with a much heavier police response, which might have provoked the kind of moral outrage and drama necessary to shift consent away from the industry. However, the constant escalation of such tactics cannot be relentless if they do not grow the base of support because, sooner or later, the action will run out of participants as it becomes more and more heavily policed. While conditions in Burnaby at the time meant that expressive and less disruptive direct action tactics were perceived as legitimate, at least amongst the local community, (and so could maintain and grow the base of participation), it is not at all obvious that the direct action tactics could have maintained legitimacy had they escalated to the extent of impacting these so called “innocent bystanders.” Indeed, those skeptical of more disruptive tactics believed they would certainly provoke moral outrage but that it would be aimed at the protestors not the police or the industry, and would shrink their base rather than grow it.

One way relentless and escalatory direct action strategy can grow the base of support and participation, particularly through civil disobedience, is where the repressive policing of participants produces moral outrage and potentially a crisis of legitimacy in the hegemonic order. While direct action and confrontation with a particularly violent police force did produce moral outrage and public support for the movement in 2014, the same could not be said for Burnaby Mountain in 2018 where policing was relatively milder and “squashed the drama.” However, there are other ways that expressive direct action tactics can intervene in dominant narratives that don’t rely on producing a moral crisis. The Watch House, civil disobedience, and direct action spectacles like Greenpeace scaling Kinder Morgan’s boring drill or its aerial bridge blockade, all sought to keep media attention on the activists’

narrative, brought First Nations and Indigenous leadership to the forefront of the debate, and contributed to a discourse of risk and uncertainty around whether the pipeline would ever get built. All of these either contributed to Kinder Morgan's ultimate decision to abandon the project or previewed the reasons why the Federal Court of Appeals quashed the pipeline permits. In this way, direct action can supplement and support a whole range of other strategic interventions.

Those who were skeptical of the value and appropriateness of direct action would reference the ongoing court cases and political lobbying as being more likely to succeed, and that these tools were far from being exhausted. Others voiced concern that participation in direct action could threaten these other tactics on other points of intervention. Eugene explained that some Tsleil-Waututh government representatives were concerned that the Watch House being associated with Tsleil-Waututh Nation would jeopardize their legal intervention and the ongoing court case at the FCA. Indeed, casual observation would suggest that it has been legal intervention through the Federal Court of Appeals (FCA), not direct action, that has done the most to delay the pipeline's construction (personal communication, October 5th, 2018). However, other activists and campaigners were keen to challenge this perspective. Of the court proceedings' significance to the campaign, Thomas from Climate Convergence, said:

I don't think there's gonna be a court victory that's going to stop this and I think that's something that people are learning... I think it's like a general political awareness that people build as they see failure and as they see things that... they were told would be able to serve them and like serve justice [fail to do so]. So I think [legal intervention] is important to accompany the movement and be part of that process. *And* [that we] always make sure that we are building independent organizations that

are still able to do the work, and that we don't put all of our eggs in that basket. (T. Davies, personal communication, September 28th, 2018)

Thomas suggested that the colonial court system wasn't powerful enough to hold the Canadian government accountable and delay the pipeline forever, so other, more direct, forms of intervention through the development of a dual power approach, would be necessary to stop the pipeline in the longer term.

Similarly, Mary Lovell suggested that direct action could prevent companies from continuing their construction while its representatives are in court. She saw court cases and direct action as potentially complementing one another. As she put it:

I think that land defense is totally necessary beyond court cases and that they do go hand in hand... because your average person might not understand land defense without accompanying court cases. So [imagine] you're talking to a stranger on the street... about the pipeline construction, if you can't tell that person the pipeline is illegal, and that you've tried every single legal avenue they consider, land defense [may seem] too extreme. But if they've heard and seen all of the different court challenges that are coming forward about it, then they understand that people have gotten to that point that they need to stand up and fight to defend the land, because they've tried every avenue available to them... I also think that land defense adds an element of political uncertainty that will continually delay projects that then allows them to actually be heard in court... And that's one of the things that companies very often do, is they'll start construction even before they have their result of a project in order to show that they've already sunk costs into it. (M. Lovell, personal communication, September 25th, 2018)

Mary identified a synergy between land defense and court cases suggesting that the court cases can help audiences less familiar with the struggle make sense of why land defense is necessary. The court cases can help legitimize land defense and the narratives of their proponents in a colonized social system. They can also demonstrate that campaigners have tried all the different legal avenues but as these have been closed off, land defense and directly impeding the pipeline becomes the only option left to stopping it. Meanwhile, land

defense actions can slow down or halt infrastructure construction while the court proceedings take place, thus countering what Al Gedicks calls a “psychology of inevitability” in which extractive industries seek to build as much of their infrastructure as possible to spread the perception that the project’s completion is inevitable both in courts and amongst the public (1993).

The different readings of the situation raise the important, but almost impossibly intractable, question of whether direct action was at all useful to the campaign when the impact of legal intervention apparently eclipsed those of other strategies. In other words, with the benefit of hindsight, we might well ask what was the point of having over two hundred people arrested and devoting large amounts of movement resources to the encampment on Burnaby Mountain when the impact of FCA’s decision to quash the permits seems so much more convincing? Direct action tactics were intended to, and did, make a narrative intervention which built momentum and helped turn public discourses against Kinder Morgan. But did this narrative matter? Most of the campaigners I interviewed argued that it absolutely did because the pipeline itself is not just a material threat, but symbolic of the continuation of colonial relationships with First Nations and climate injustice. Deployed against this symbol, direct action, civil disobedience, and the Watch House all help grow a movement that is about confronting more than just one pipeline.

Eugene, who was on the legal team that brought the case to the FCA, put the relationship between protest and legal intervention this way:

I don't think anyone would say that the legal case alone is what beat Kinder Morgan... And to that extent, the land defense and the media attention that it generates, and the focus can help to create an outlet for... people who may not be able to directly participate in the legal challenges is very valuable. (personal communication, October 5th, 2018)

As such, direct action is an important way of bringing more people into the movement who do not necessarily have the technical expertise be able to participate in the legal challenge or access to other political opportunity structures. Direct action can be a movement building tool, which legal intervention on its own could not do. Moreover, direct action's narrative intervention can actually support and complement legal intervention. Mary explained that legal intervention through the courts can help people understand why First Nations rights and title had to be defended through claiming and protecting unceded land by building structures on it (M. Lovell, personal communication, September 25th, 2018). As she suggested, seeing First Nations rights and title upheld in courts might help legitimize direct action and land defense for "moderate" people who are more cautious of taking supposedly "illegal" action of claiming and protecting unceded territories. The inverse of Mary's argument could also be true, where the very public and highly publicized act of asserting rights and title through land defense helps develop and spread a discourse that allows people to make meaning out of the, often very obscure, legal procedures.

Eugene explained that in Canadian law the courts first recognized Aboriginal title and control of their unceded in the Delgamuukw decision of the 1990s. This legal recognition was crystalized in the 2014 Tsilhqot'in case. However, these legal rulings are still not widely understood in Canada and so, as Eugene puts it "we're kind of in this place now where there's a theoretical recognition but not the application" of these rulings(personal communication,

October 5th, 2018). Campaigns have to shift cultural attitudes so that legal ruling are supported with greater cultural legitimacy. Many arrestees and blockade narratives would cite UNDRIP's clause on Indigenous people's right free, prior, and informed consent to justify their actions to media reporters. In this way, direct action, and particularly civil disobedience, has played an important role in shifting these narratives to reinforce legal rulings with cultural legitimacy. In *The Politics of Common Sense*, Deva Woodly shows that social movement campaigns that win institutional battles but fail to win over dominant discourses and narratives will often see their institutional victories overturned by higher courts or after the election of political opponents (2015).¹⁶⁴ However, when discursive victories have been won alongside institutional ones, it is much less politically safe to overturn the institutional victories. Direct action tactics have helped win cultural and discursive ground so that the longevity of institutional victories may be secured.

Finally, it is tempting to argue that civil disobedience and continuous public protest might have had some influence over the FCA's ruling in 2018. Unfortunately, however, without actually being able to ask the judges, it is impossible to say whether the court would have ruled otherwise had direct action and public protest not been part of the equation. On this matter Eugene said:

I think if you ask the judge, they would say [protest] does not [influence their decisions]... They are looking only at the legal arguments before them and the record

¹⁶⁴ Woodly demonstrates her argument with two case study campaigns: Marriage Equality and Raising the Minimum Wage. She shows that even as LGBTQ+ activists consistently lost battles through political and legal institutions they were gradually winning cultural and discursive ground. When the Supreme Court finally legalized gay marriage in 2015, the cultural landscape had shifted such that most conservative attempts to overturn the ruling have been abandoned. The labor movement's fight for raising the minimum wage, on the other hand, has seen many policy victories at the municipal and state level but has not managed to shift cultural conditions such that those policy victories are politically irreversible even when their opponents take office.

before them. But that said, especially with cases like this... the law is not a static thing...especially in Canada, the Supreme Court has acknowledged it's a living tree... I think the impact of popular movements is hard to measure. But it's certainly not nothing. (personal communication, October 5th, 2018)

Eugene's comments acknowledge that judges and judiciary systems do not exist in political isolation, as much as official discourses might have us believe otherwise. This suggests we could at least consider the extent to which court rulings, judges, and their staff, are influenced by the political conditions and discourses direct action produces.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, legal professionals are as much contributors to and receptors of public discourses as anyone else. If direct action is able to influence the discursive milieu to which legal professionals are party, then we could reasonably believe that, if tailored and deployed deliberately to shape the particular set of discursive conditions in which legal professional operate, direct action interventions could more effectively influence legal rulings. Of course, this remains speculative, but activists at the Climate Disobedience Center in the United States are experimenting with these very questions today.

¹⁶⁵ Jack Balkin writes that "Law, and especially constitutional law, is grounded in judgments by legal professionals about what is reasonable: these judgments include what legal professionals think is obviously correct, clearly wrong, or is a matter of dispute on which reasonable minds can disagree. But what people think is reasonable depends in part on what they think that other people think" (2012). It follows, then, that culture and public discourse play a fundamental role in shaping what legal professionals believe to be "reasonable." Where activists are able to influence the discourses to which legal professionals are party, they may be able to influence decisions under legal consideration. Legal scholars have become increasingly interested in the influence "virtual briefings" may be having over decisions made at the Supreme Court of the United States (Fisher and Orr Larsen, forthcoming). Virtual briefings are arguments about ongoing court cases that are articulated through, blog posts, podcasts, and tweets, and other social media platforms that judges might be likely to read and are published online by legal experts or others with a stake in the courts' ultimate ruling. Organizations with a stake in a particular ruling will seek to have their virtual briefings enter into the online discursive milieu which they believe the judge or the courts' clerks may participate in. In this way they hope to have some influence over a judges' decision making process. In theory, it may be possible for climate justice campaigners to use the attention direct action and civil disobedience can garner to allow their arguments to infiltrate the discursive reference points through which legal professional make meaning out of the world. Some climate justice activists, like Tim DeChristopher and the Climate Disobedience Center, have begun this process by pleading guilty to direct action related charges but in terms of the "Necessity Defense."

Direct action may be deemed appropriate and valuable when the surrounding social conditions in which it would be deployed allows tactics to be relentless, escalate, and grow the base of participation and support. Direct action does not necessarily need to wait for these conditions to arise organically because activists can, in some scenarios, produce those conditions through the actual deployment of direct action tactics. Legitimacy is a crucial consideration when assessing the value and appropriateness of direct action because the perception of their legitimacy is one of the key conditions of direct action tactics being able to escalate relentlessly while growing their base. It is important to note here that direct action tactics do not necessarily require a majority of “the general public” to perceive their interventions as legitimate, but they do need to have broad enough appeal that they help draw people into participation rather than alienating people from it. Through civil disobedience, movements can win public support by producing moral crises and outrage at heavy handed policing while pointing to unjust laws that uphold an unjust social system. However, the provocation of moral crisis is not the only way direct action tactics intervene in petro-hegemony. They can bring new participants into the movement, legitimize and make sense of other forms of more institutional intervention, confront symbols of domination and injustice in ways that win public support and attention, and can change dominant narratives. Furthermore, direct action can be combined and coordinated with tactics on other points of intervention to support and complement a variety of strategic orientations. In particular, activism in Burnaby against the Kinder Morgan pipeline demonstrates how direct action could be deployed in conjunction with ongoing legal battles. These insights lay the groundwork for greater collaboration and coordination across a range of different organizations’ and activists’ strategic preferences.

Community Organizing Vs. Movement Mobilizing

Most, if not all, of the strategies and tactics I've identified in this chapter are oriented towards campaigning and mobilization rather than community organizing. Meanwhile many of the discursive interventions and alliance building strategies detailed in Chapter Five fall more neatly into the category of community organizing. Engler and Engler argue that a schism between organizing and mobilizing exists within the theory and praxis of social movements. On the one hand, there are those who follow Saul Alinsky's legacy, modelling slow, painstaking relationship and leadership development, along with the construction of organizational infrastructure through community organizing at the local level. On the other hand, are those who subscribe to "the disruptive power of mass mobilization that coalesce quickly, draw in participants not previously involved in organizing, and leave established elites scrambling to adjust to a new political reality" (2017, 32). The mass mobilization orientation, exemplified in the writings of sociologist, Frances Fox Piven, positions moments of "disruption" led by mass movements as crucial to challenging established social orderings.

Campaigning straddles both organizing and mobilizing as both traditions rely on a campaign-based model of social change. Traditionally, the campaigns organizers select tend to be small, local, and easily winnable, and are used to build the community's consciousness of their own power. Campaigning in the mobilization model usually depends upon mass action, are more ambitious in scope, transcend local communities, and strategically target particular state institutions, corporations, or influential people. Despite campaigning being an important

component of both organizing and mobilizing, some activists will make a distinction between *organizers* and *campaigners*. Campaigners tend to be associated with Fox Piven's mobilization model, while organizers follow in Alinsky's tradition. Increasingly the lines between the two are being blurred.

Meanwhile, Gramsci's distinction between a war of position and a war of maneuver indicates the different tactical and temporal phases of counter hegemonic action. During the war of position, revolutionary actors seek to capture institutions and mediate cultural interventions to shift consent away from the hegemonic order, forcing it into a crisis of legitimacy. A new hegemonic alignment is then realized, and the war of maneuver can be fought with a large base of supporters to confront, and potentially overthrow, the coercive agents of the hegemonic order. With the coercive and consensual instruments of hegemonic power fought over and won, a new hegemonic ordering can be established. ¹⁶⁶

Though hardly a perfect transplant, we could understand the distinction between organizing and mobilizing in a similar sense. Organizing, would, therefore, pertain to periods in which social movements are being grown, relationships developed, institutions captured, dominant narratives changed, leadership built, and common sense challenged and reconstituted around alternative visions. This is the period in which John Foran's political culture of opposition and creation is constructed (2016). Conditions are then ready for mobilization to create disruption, confront coercive apparatuses, institutionalize discursive victories, win demands, and, ultimately, for an alternative alignment to become hegemonic. In so far as it allows us to

¹⁶⁶ This formulation continues to exclude the war of economies but as commitment to dual power and strategic prefigurative intervention grows, we might imagine a war of economies existing in both phases of struggle.

contextualize mobilizing and organizing in different phases of hegemonic struggle, the comparison is productive. But it is also somewhat unsatisfying because the phases of revolutionary action that Gramsci argues for in *The Prison Notebooks* do not neatly map onto the relationship between organizing and mobilizing. While the respective tactical differences between them may mirror the wars of position and maneuver, organizing and mobilizing are not bound to the same temporal logic. Nevertheless, transposing the synergy Gramsci articulates between the war of position and maneuver to the relationship between organizing and mobilizing is highly valuable. Just as the tactics and strategy of a war of position creates the conditions in which the tactics and strategy pertaining to a war of maneuver can thrive, so too could the synergy between mobilizing and organizing produce mutually reinforcing conditions for radical social change.

Professionalized NGOs and grassroots organizations reify the distinction between organizing and mobilizing through their praxis, and even pride themselves on following either Alinsky's lineage or the movement mobilization theory of change. Different climate justice organizations will often prioritize either mobilizing or organizing, sometimes at the expense of the other. These differing strategic orientations can produce conflict over tactics, the consequences and longevity of interventions, the allocation of resources, the development of movement infrastructure, and the role of - and accountability to - frontlines communities. The significance of this division lead Engler and Engler to write that "the future of social change...may well involve integrating these approaches – figuring out how the strengths of both structure and mass protest can be used in tandem – so that outbreaks of widespread revolt complement long-term organizing" (ibid).

Examples of both the tensions and synthesis of organizing and mobilizing are observable in the climate justice movement. In the case studies, the synergy of organizing and mobilizing traditions is emergent but must be nurtured and encouraged to flourish by overcoming the deep-rooted suspicion that exists between each theory of change. Both Richmond and Burnaby provide examples of community organizing and movement mobilizing. However, activism in Burnaby certainly had a focus on mobilization, while activism in Richmond demonstrated a greater commitment to organizing. Drawing on the case studies, I'll suggest at how organizing and mobilizing could be synthesized into a cyclical model of changemaking where long-term organizing reinforces outbreaks of revolt and such outbreaks in turn funnel resources and participants towards community organizing efforts.

The foundation of community organizing strategies rests upon building long term relationships within the community and developing the organizational infrastructure that can turn those relationships into community leadership strong enough to challenge the interests of entrenched elites. Chapter Five already illustrated many of the organizing, leadership development, and alliance building strategies that I observed in the Burnaby and Richmond cases. These have been deployed through organizing community members to attend public forums, hearings, and council meetings, working with progressive church groups, canvassing and community education, story-based strategy, and reinforcing or creating new organizations that can train new community leaders. These organizations don't always have to be confrontational, but they should contribute to the development of relationships, community consciousness, and community resilience. Richmond city councilmember,

Eduardo Martinez, for example, was particularly excited about the idea of organizing RPA-affiliated recreational groups that host soccer tournaments and game nights (personal communication, July 9th, 2018). Here participants didn't have to talk about the issues impacting the community but could nonetheless build the kind of relationships necessary for the development of a resilient political culture of opposition and creation.

In Richmond, community organizing takes precedence in the periods between city council elections, while mobilizing around election campaigns, helping RPA candidates run, and deploying more visible tactics to elevate wedge issues is more prominent during election seasons. Nevertheless, the RPA's movement-party model of running candidates to organize the community and organizing the community so that candidates can run and win, necessitates a permanent commitment to both organizing and mobilizing. Indeed, the RPA would likely never have won election campaigns for city council without over a decade of community organizing by other local grassroots organizations and the RPA itself.

Community organizing made community mobilizations around election campaigns possible. However, mobilizations around election campaigns have also supported community organizing. During periods of electioneering and campaign mobilization, the election wedge issues that will define the political landscape of the next administration are developed and shared across the community. These issues, like holding Chevron accountable for tax evasion and pollution, or combatting gentrification, are then taken up in community organizing campaigns to ensure city councilmembers fulfill their campaign promises after elections have been won. The campaign mobilizations that see movement allies elected to city council

reinforces community organizing efforts as city resources or support for community organizations are made available to them.

Organizing and mobilizing operated according to a cyclical logic in Burnaby too – although the general theory of change there has favored mobilization over organizing. Between the mobilizations in 2014 and 2018, community organizers in the British Columbian lower mainland directed resources towards the strengthening of relationships between First Nations, professional NGOs, and grassroots community groups, as well as the development of resilient and self-sustaining community organizations that could educate and empower residents in Burnaby and across the pipeline route.

Grassroots volunteer organizations included Climate Convergence, the Coast Protectors, BROKE and Pipe-Up. When mobilization gathered momentum again in 2018, these organizations, along with many others, had successfully organized their communities such that sustained mobilization and mass action was possible throughout the spring and summer of that year. The relationship building, education, and leadership development of the previous four years had a direct impact on the longevity and sustainability of mass action interventions, ensured participants remained accountable to First Nations and frontlines communities, and helped legitimize the disruptions. Yet, as Engler and Engler, suggest, organizing can get in the way of mobilizing, just as mobilizing can have negative consequences for organizing. In Burnaby, therefore, community organizing and accountability to frontlines groups also reigned in some of the more disruptive mobilizing tactics other activists believed were necessary to halt the pipeline's construction. This was a

source of tension that community organizing throughout the following year would have to address after the mass mobilizations had subsided.

While in Richmond, I observed a particular set of circumstances that exemplified the tensions, and potential for synergy, between organizing and mobilizing traditions. During the summer of 2018, many climate justice activists in the Bay Area were devoting a great deal of resources towards a mass march that would coincide with then-Governor Brown's Global Climate Action Summit (GCAS) in early September, just across the Bay from Richmond in San Francisco. Rise for Climate, Jobs, and Justice, as the march was dubbed, was intended to reframe California's mainstream reputation as an environmental and climate leader. Drawing attention, instead, to the enduring influence and consequences of the oil industry over California politics, the march positioned the just transition and a focus on jobs as an alternative narrative and vision. The demands were "racial and economic justice, an end to fossil fuel production, and a just transition to 100% renewable energy that supports workers and communities" ([Rise for Climate 2018](#)). It was organized by a diverse coalition of climate and social justice NGOs and Bay Area based organizations including 350.org, the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), APEN, the Sierra Club, Idle No More SF Bay, and two local chapters of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). It was hosted under the auspices of the People's Climate Movement.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the summer of 2018, campaigners planned the march with a large contingent of local volunteer support.

¹⁶⁷ The People's Climate Movement is a U.S. based broad coalition of environmental organizations, unions and grassroots climate justice groups. As they state on their website: "The Peoples Climate Movement uses two key strategies to demand bold action on climate change: mass mobilization and movement alignment. By mobilizing massive numbers of people on the ground; finding alignment with partners under the banner of climate, jobs, and justice; and lifting up our core priorities of economic and racial justice, we build the power required to win real and lasting climate policy on the federal, state, and local level." (See People's Climate Movement 2018).

The march attracted roughly 30,000 participants, gained a reasonable amount of media coverage on the day, and provided an important space for alignment around the issues that define the climate justice movement (Hernández 2018). Before the march, a contingent of activists, led by a coalition of Californian environmental justice organizations and South American Indigenous opponents of REDD+, blocked the GCAS conference center doors for roughly two hours.

The march itself was arranged into different blocks representing both the diversity and unity of the movement. Leading the march were representatives of Indigenous and frontlines communities most impacted by climate change, fossil fuel extraction, and neoliberal market-based climate solutions. The march concluded with participants being invited to contribute to an enormous street mural at the Civic Center Plaza. The march's reframing narrative in the corporate media was somewhat overshadowed, however, by former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's pithy comment to the GCAS audience that "only in America could you have environmentalists protesting an environmental conference" (Sengupta 2018). However, the march did help articulate diverse social struggles into alignment, demonstrated an alternative narrative to the neoliberal greenwashing emerging out of GCAS, and, most significantly, received the endorsement of several influential local unions despite its insistence on maintaining "keep-it-in-the-ground" rhetoric.

The impact of one march, particularly one of relatively moderate size where the narrative is broadcast but distorted by corporate media, is hard to measure. As such, deliberating over whether or not the march was “worth it” in terms of its return on expenditure of resources and attention is probably a waste of time. Nevertheless, in the buildup to the march I was personally concerned that the, relatively speaking, enormous resources, volunteer capacity, and time being devoted to what I perceived as “yet another march” would have been better invested in community organizing capacity and local Bay Area campaigns against fossil fuel refining and transport infrastructure. Both the campaigners and organizers I interviewed, however, offered more nuanced perspectives.

Rather than reframing GCAS’ climate narrative for Jerry Brown’s audience, which she didn’t think was possible anyway, Miya Yoshitani, saw the march as an opportunity to organize and align communities that the climate justice movement has so far failed to reach. Indeed, Miya did not view the march as a distraction from community organizing but as a moment that, in her words, could “speak directly to communities and reframe climate in a way that a broad swath of communities, frontline communities, working families, normal people in general, feel like they see themselves inside of that vision, inside of that frame.” The march could “bring a whole bunch of people who've been excluded from both the solutions and the conversation about climate into power” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). APEN’s strategic orientation has tended to focus on local campaigns and community organizing rather than mass mobilization, but for Miya the march offered an opportunity to build capacity for community organizing. People who learned about it and participated in it would then “go out and talk to their neighbors” and “vote those values” or “join future actions and mobilizations

that broaden the swell of people in California.” With the march’s focus on jobs and justice, Miya also saw it as “an opportunity for frontline base building, power building organizations, community-based organizations, to show up with, and for, workers” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). The mass mobilization could, therefore, help align climate justice community organizers and organizations with the labor movement and provide a basis from which further organizing between these groups could take place.

The march was endorsed by several local chapters of major unions as well as two AFL-CIO affiliated labor councils, the San Francisco Central Labor Council and Alameda Labor Council, who together represent 285 local unions and 235,000 union members. Steve, Janet, and Jean of Sunflower Alliance believed this was a significant breakthrough because one the march’s demands was a commitment no new fossil fuel development in California which major unions had previously vehemently resisted, and elsewhere in California still do. According to Steve, the endorsements of the march were symbolic gestures, but the symbolism mattered and could support community organizing and further mobilizing in the future (personal communication, July 18th, 2018).

Meanwhile, as Jean explained, the overall strategic approach to combating climate change is to shift the cultural and discursive conditions through which meaning is attached to it. Community organizing is fundamental to that strategy but marches and mass mobilization, and the emotional intensity it can harness, are vital too:

The underlying strategic goal is to change the Zeitgeist. And I think that big marches have a role in that, I think symbolic direct actions have a role in it, I think patient day to day organizing, and sitting in farmers markets has a role in it... But you can do all

the patient day to day organizing in the world and if there are not times of major inspirational moments, it's not going to work. You need both of those levels all the time. And I think big marches like this are very helpful in helping to create that kind of vibe. If you spend all your time doing that and didn't do anything else, that would be a problem, as it would be a problem if you spent all your time doing patient block organizing...I gotta plug my book...called *This is an Uprising* by these two brothers named Engler. That's what their book says: you got to have both of those levels. You got to have the emotional inspirational stuff and the building stuff... You know, God willing, we can figure out how to coordinate them. (personal communication, July 18th, 2018)

For Jean, having read Engler and Engler's book, creating social changes required both the "inspirational stuff," which I interpreted as mass mobilization, and the "building stuff," which I took to mean community organizing, and these need to be coordinated somehow (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Her statement, however, already illustrates some ways in which activists are thinking about coordinating mass mobilization and community organizing. Reflecting on the 400,000-person strong People's Climate March in 2014, Jean believed that marches have the ability to inject energy and inspiration into the movement. As she put it, "the 2014 March really had an impact in helping give the climate movement a shot in the arm in New York" (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Placing this idea in the context of the 2018 Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice march, Jean and Janet articulated the potential for mass mobilization to revitalize community organizing, providing communities with moments of intense energy and excitement that can be harnessed to build local organization's capacity and shift the discursive conditions community members draw upon to make meaning of the climate crisis (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). Thus, the return on the resources spent on mass mobilization can be invested directly into community organizing. If campaigners and organizers can more deliberately build this relationship into their respective strategies and tactics, they may find coordination and synergy across their respective theories of change is possible.

While Miya and Jean illustrate how mass mobilization can support and reinforce community organizing, Mary explained how community organizing could support and reinforce periods of mass mobilizations. About a month after the FCA quashed Trans Mountain's permits, Mary and I discussed what would happen to the local movement next. Mary explained that after the intensity of the mobilization, activists needed to "take a breath," and then reflect, re-strategize and refocus, as well as make time for building or repairing relationships at a slower pace:

Even within taking this break, a lot of people are still pushing to try to do a lot more mobilization which ... because they believe that there needs to be a steady drumbeat of mobilization... For me, personally, I feel that you have to withdraw in order to re-strategize and then move forward...it's like a gathering of power when you take that time to reflect. (M. Lovell, personal communication, September 25th, 2018)

The temptation to continuously mobilize and escalate can be very strong, particularly when the urgency of the climate crisis is so dire, when momentum seems to be on your side, and in this case, the pipeline project appeared to be vulnerable to further mass action. Reflecting on this, however, Mary suggested that the model of constant growth and escalation of the movement mirrors the very economic system and ideology of perpetual economic growth and expansion that so many climate justice activists are in this struggle to resist:

What happens [to a movement] when energy will always build and then wane and then build again? ... And what do you do during the times in which you actually need to be restoring as a movement? Or is it always a constant climb? Because it feels like a lot of people push for a constant climb. When really, as any person who watches nature knows, there's winters, you know. So that's something ... I've been trying to wrap my mind around, both personally and as an organizer. How do we actually continue to share collective power, but not always be building? It sort of reminds me of the same economic system that we live with - of this theory of inevitable and increasing growth - that is just not physically possible for anything on the planet. (personal communication, September 25th, 2018)

Constant mobilization, without periods organization, investment in relationships and time for reflection wears down the movement's ability mobilize and draw down its resources without replenishing them. Just like the economic system Mary suggested it mirrors, this is entirely unsustainable. Despite community organizing itself being exhausting, painstaking work, we can think of it, then, as a necessary process of restoring movement energy, building the base, and developing the movement's ability to carry out and intensify mass action and disruption.

Mobilization without relief may also come at the cost of wearing down movement relationships that need time to be renewed and nurtured. Reminiscent of Adrienne Maree Brown's invocation to build critical relationships over critical mass, and her argument that movements move at the speed of relationships (2017), Mary explained that during the intensity of mobilizing, relationships are often sacrificed:

It's very intense too because when you're in the height of mobilizing, then it's like everything goes to chaos. And people wind up like not being intentional and slow about their relationships, versus a lot of the people that I've known that have been organizing for decades, somehow figure out how to get past that and not get sucked into every hurricane of mass mobilization... (personal communication, September 25th, 2018)

Mary suggested that the interregnum between the 2018 mobilization and when next period of mobilization takes off could be used for "doing a lot more intentional outreach, just going and having a coffee with someone from, for example, Black Lives Matter Vancouver, or all these different people that work on racial justice or migrant justice in Vancouver" (M. Lovell, personal communication, September 25th, 2018). In Mary's estimation, mass mobilization needed to be supported by deeper, more intersectional relationships with other social justice struggles to build a broader set of movement allies. This meant activists had to

be committed to showing up to and for each other's fights. Creating the infrastructure to ensure this alliance building happens in an accountable way takes organizing and organizations. As such, a larger, more intersectional, and resilient period of mass mobilizations in the future will depend upon deeper commitments to relationship building and leadership development in the months and years before it. Thus, not only must community organizing rely upon moments of mass mobilization for the excitement, resources, and energy they can infuse into the work, but mass, successive, resilient and intersectional mobilization depends upon deep commitment to alliances and relationship building, organization infrastructure, and leadership development.

Engler and Engler write that “for as long as people have experimented with building movements around strategic nonviolence, they have grappled with a dilemma: how to reconcile the explosive short-term potential of disruptive power with the need to sustain resistance to meet long term goals” (2017, 62). In an attempt to reconcile these, the Engler brothers offer a hybrid called “momentum-based organizing,” which draws upon the experiences of social movements that have combined diffuse networks of activists operating without official hierarchy (but nonetheless maintaining strict guidelines for norms and conduct) organizing over the long term, with organizations capable of engineering and sustaining mass uprising (as opposed to simply capitalizing on spontaneous but short-lived explosions of discontent). The combination of structure and organization with fluidity and mass disruption has been experimented with by social movements from Serbia to the United States to Hong Kong and the Engler brother's articulation of this hybrid is an important contribution to social movement theory and practice. Nonetheless, as they concede, the

hybrid model is rarely able to harness, institutionalize and consolidate victories won through their orchestrated uprisings. What is emerging in the climate justice movement, and other contemporary social movements, however, seems to push the hybrid model towards this goal.

A synergistic cyclical relationship between organizing and mobilizing in which community organizing harnesses the energy and inspiration of mass mobilization and funnels these into community organizations, while mobilization is made larger, more resilient, more radical, and more accountable through community organizing, is slowly evolving on the frontlines of Blockadia. Forgiving, for a moment, the language of the extraction-based economy, we could think of organizing as growing the movements' capital, while mobilizing is about spending, or ideally investing, that capital, to gain a larger return which is then directed towards further organizing, which then allows us to invest even more in the next round of mobilization, which in turn funnels more participants, resources, and energy back into community organizing, and so on. In this relationship, each theory of change provides the foundations of support and conditions of escalation for the other.

This cyclical model of organizing and mobilizing, integrated into a counter hegemonic strategy, may help institutionalize victories that can ultimately overthrow established hegemonic orders. The orchestration of mass mobilization creates conditions in which resources and support can be funneled towards community organizations which can then capture particular institutions, like city councils, and unleash more resources for community organizers. These organizers can then do a great deal more work to lay the foundations for the next round of more escalated mobilization which could, in theory, grow the capacity of

community organizations and their ability to consolidate power in more influential institutions. The cycles of mobilizing and organizing would grow with each turn as the interventions of each provide more fertile conditions for the other.

Finally, then, in this formulation, mobilizing would create the conditions and opportunities to organize and grow the movement, while community organizing would create more opportunities for escalation and larger, more diverse and better resourced mobilizations. Operating in a cyclical fashion, each round of mobilizing reinforces the following round of community organizing and community organizing in turn facilitates further mobilizations. It is also crucial that this cyclical relationship isn't just growing for the sake of growth but that, as Smucker puts it is, "aspiring hegemonic" so that movement victories shift discursive conditions which can be consolidated and institutionalized (2017). In other words, the goal of each round of mobilizing and organizing is to bring the movement closer to achieving hegemony. Considering the similarities between wars of maneuver and position with periods of mobilizing and organizing, we could use this idea to move the wars of maneuver and position out of the strict linear temporal relationship in which Gramsci places them and into a cyclical relationship where each builds upon the gains made by the other. It is highly unlikely that just one cycle of a war of position and war of maneuver would topple the current hegemonic order and establish a new one. However, successive cycles that increasingly grow in strength, numbers, and ability to escalate, with their vision and alignment of tactics and strategy oriented towards a building a new hegemonic order, perhaps could.

Thus, the distinction scholars and activists make between the tactics and strategies pertaining to the respective traditions of organizing and mobilizing is a helpful one so collapsing the categories into one theory of change could be counterproductive. However, reifying the tensions between the two traditions carries its own dangers and limits the availability of avenues for intervention. Therefore, a hybrid that harnesses the synergy between mobilizing and organizing, such that they are able to build on one another's interventions, could be a crucial innovation in wars of position, maneuver and counter hegemonic strategy. This synergy must be developed deliberately with organizers and mobilizers cooperating with, and learning from, one another's theories of change. Just such a hybrid is emergent on the frontlines of the climate justice movement.

Towards a spectrum of strategy

This chapter has engaged with some of the major divisions and debates within social movement theory and strategy that emerged on frontlines struggles against petro-hegemony. However, examples from both Burnaby and Richmond also illustrate the potential for, and emergence of, reconciliation, synthesis, and even synergy, between the different positions articulated in these disputes. Rather than argue the case for one side or the other, I have tried to reconcile these different positions such that, at least theoretically, the most advantageous insights of all sides may be harnessed and synthesized. The work of synthesis is not intended to gloss over the very real tensions and contradictions that exist between these approaches. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate where common ground lays and, even more importantly, to articulate the ways in which the synthesis of organizing and mobilizing, direct and indirect

action, and state and antistate strategic orientations actually reinforce our interventions and empowers our movement.

All of this, however, is far easier theorized than practiced and, indeed, just because the potential for synthesis exists doesn't necessarily mean it will exist. In this final section, therefore, I offer another concept, the *spectrum of strategy*, as one theoretical framework through which we might put the reconciliation and synthesis of the different positions articulated in these debates into practice. Collis writes that a diversity of tactics allows movement actors to deploy a range of interventions “from the more non-confrontational and indirect forms of action to the more confrontational and direct forms of action” (2015, 29). A spectrum of strategy, then, organizes this diversity in a way that movements can coordinate tactical interventions across different groups and activists' politico-strategic orientations. Developing coordinated and deliberate interventions according to a spectrum of strategy requires a deep commitment to articulating common ground within the movement, and to listening to and respecting a diversity of political differences and tactical orientations. The development of relationships of trust and accountability is therefore crucial to the successful deployment of a spectrum of strategy. There are no shortcuts to this kind of alignment but overcoming the factional divisions over strategy within social movements is one of the crucial questions change makers must be asking today. I offer the spectrum of strategy as one contribution to the answer.

The spectrum of strategy aligns a diverse array of tactics and tactical preferences not according to a dichotomous, binary categorization of “radical” versus “reformist” politico-

strategic orientations, but rather according to a spectrum of possible actions that may be direct or indirect, ranging between non-confrontational and confrontational interventions.¹⁶⁸ By eschewing the dominant framing of tactical interventions as either “radical” or “reformist,” and instead placing all possible tactics along spectrum, I seek to remove some of the ideological or political baggage we often attach to one or another tactic or strategy.¹⁶⁹ Therefore, the deployment of apparently radical tactics shouldn’t necessarily imply, or be an expression of, a more radical or revolutionary political philosophy. Similarly, the choice of apparently reformist tactics shouldn’t necessarily indicate more reformist or moderate political commitments. One can deploy tactics that are considered reformist while remaining ideologically committed to revolution, just as one can be politically reformist but employ radical tactics. As such, the distinction we often make between reformist and radical tactics can be an unhelpful one that reifies the divides in social movement and fractures it into political factions based on the strategies we choose.

Instead, arranging tactics according to a spectrum of confrontational to non-confrontational actions allows movements to organize a diversity of tactics into a coordinated and deliberate set of interventions with different organizations and groups taking on different roles and challenging power relations on a wide range of different points of intervention. It allows us to

¹⁶⁸ Tactics we often think of as radical might include blockades, occupations, sabotage, and general disruption to business as usual. While, tactics that are often considered reformist tend to include participation in elections, marches, lobbying, legal action, participation in regulatory frameworks, and, sometimes, civil disobedience.

¹⁶⁹ No strategic orientation can ever be totally devoid of ideological commitments, nor should it be. Principles should always guide strategy. If our strategy and our principles are not aligned then our action is not getting us closer to our objectives and so is not strategic. This does not legitimize a puritanical or dogmatic approach to strategy, wherein any divergence from one’s political orientation is considered an unacceptable corruption of principles. Quite the opposite is true. By establishing shared vision and shared values within the group taking action, one can employ a strategy or tactic that may depart somewhat from the specifics of any individual’s political or ideological position while remaining true to the stated objectives of the group.

move fluidly across a whole range of tactics without boxing ourselves into a specific political position. It also allows different organizations to occupy strategic niches, operating according to their organizational expertise and political comfort zone alongside others operating according to their own expertise and politics. This is crucial to movements because it opens up a much larger range of possible interventions and the ability to coordinate them deliberately across difference.

Ultimately, the tactics movements agree upon will be contingent upon their constituents' values and the multidimensional contexts of social struggle. Therefore, the first step towards employing a spectrum of strategy is to encourage and facilitate conversations between activists of very different strategic orientations. These will provide the foundations for honest appraisal of values and analysis of the context of struggle that are both shared and disputed between activists and organizations. This means participants acknowledging the disagreements, tensions and debates that cannot be resolved but also sharing a commitment to finding common ground so that a spectrum of strategy can be developed between them. The product of such conversations could be anything from agreements simply to refrain from criticizing one another's tactics in public, to the deliberate collaboration and coordination of confrontational and non-confrontational tactics.

The fact that open communication and respectful conversation between these constituents is a necessary precursor to their coordinated action may seem obvious, and even easy. But getting these factions with deep rooted resentment and divides to actually converse with one another, let alone acknowledge the value in one another's work, is, of course, very difficult. This is

partly because of what Stephen Collis describes as the “unevenness” of democracy. In other words, whether one prefers confrontational or nonconfrontational tactics will often depend upon the stake participants hold in current democratic institutions. If one believes they are able to influence these nominally democratic institutions, they are more likely to choose nonconfrontational tactics (Pellow 2014; Collis 2015). If they have been systematically excluded from those institutions and believe they are unable to influence them through persuasion, they will likely select more confrontational tactics. Depending on geography, political landscapes, and relations of privilege, different members of the climate justice movement will inevitably have different stakes and experiences which inform their relationships to the established democratic institutions and available political opportunity structures.

The unevenness in the experiences of democratic participation is one of the foundations of tension between politico-strategic orientations. As Collis writes:

Life in a contemporary democracy is a constant negotiation with those parts of the democratic system that seem redeemable and (at least in principle or potentially) just, and those parts of it which seem to be beyond repair, or chronically unjust. And this essential *unevenness* is reflected spatially, across democracies, as well as (and indeed especially) according to the specific position and experience of communities and individuals within democracies. (2015, 28)

This insight helps explain why the conversations about values and vision must occur before the deployment of a spectrum of strategy can be realized. Collis goes on to explain that a diversity of tactics is only a useful component of social movement strategy “when it involves a basic *respect for difference* – difference of experience, contextual difference that shapes a given community’s choice of action – and clear *communication* about those differences and

the different tactical choices they lead to” (ibid). This is hard work, and there can be no shortcuts, but the conversations establishing respect and communication are absolutely crucial.

Furthermore, as David Graeber writes, from an anarchist perspective direct action “is a form of action in which means and ends become, effectively, indistinguishable; a way of actively engaging with the world to bring about change, in which the form of the action – or at least, the organization of the action – is itself a model for the change one wishes to bring about” (2009, 210). As such, developing commitments to a diversity of tactics across politico-strategic orientation can be further complicated in situations where the form of action or praxis *is* the ideology to which its adherents espouse. In these cases, it may be incredibly difficult to divorce tactical preferences from the ideological commitments they are intended to perform and prefigure.¹⁷⁰ Graeber concedes, however, that embracing a diversity of tactics doesn’t mean “anything goes.” There are always “tacit understandings,” sometimes explicit agreements, amongst activists about what is acceptable and appropriate within a particular context (2009, 222-223). Therefore, the coordination of a diversity of tactics inevitably depends upon relationships developed and critical connections developed through movement building and community organizing.

Emerging from such conversations may be agreements on the extent to which different organizations are willing and able to work with one another, or to embrace a diversity of tactics while remaining committed each organizations’ own strategic niche, or , or simply

¹⁷⁰ From this perspective, then, it is quite clear why the stage management and orchestration of civil disobedience for the purposes of publicity receive such criticism from the anarchist left.

agreeing to disagree but to keep those disagreements out of the media spotlight (deploying tactics according to spectrum of strategy may not always be possible). The spectrum of strategy is an important precursor to embracing a diversity of tactics. But those tactics need to be organized and coordinated if the impact of their intervention is to be maximized. A diversity of tactics is not, as some might suggest, an “anything goes” approach to strategy (Graeber 2009). Thus, the deployment of a spectrum of strategy means that different tactics are coordinated in deliberate conjunction with one another, with agreements on when and where their deployment is appropriate.

Collis suggests that a commitment to dual power is one way such tactics might be coordinated:

It can help to map diversity of tactics onto the idea of dual power. A dual power movement is one which pursues two seemingly contradictory paths at once: one aimed at short term “re- forms” or adjustments to the current system, using the existing channels a democracy affords, and one aimed at the longer term goal of building a “new society in the shell of the old” (as the IWW [International Workers of the World] used to say). ... So we need diverse social movements, where some are working the tools of short term and limited change, while others are working towards systemic change at a very deep level. And we need to acknowledge and respect these different goals and their attendant tactics and actions.” (2015, 32)

Dual power is an important starting point because it provides two different avenues of change that can work together to win short term, though possibly short-lived victories, that facilitate the development of longer-term revolutionary strategy. Moreover, it is an approach to coordinating tactics that activists in Burnaby and Richmond demonstrated they are already experimenting with. However, dual power alone isn't enough to coordinate the whole range of tactics available to different organizations and movement members. Dual power only really refers to tactics oriented towards engaging current institutions on the one hand and

prefiguring solutions and alternative institutions on the other. Of course, there is a vast range of tactical interventions that exist outside of either prefigurative politics or institutional intervention. Therefore, dual power alone cannot encompass the entire potential held within a spectrum of strategy. A spectrum of strategy can be developed to deploy tactics that advance dual power but also tactics that engage with points of intervention on all terrains of struggle and points of intervention that do not pertain to capturing or reforming dominant institutions or developing counter institutions. As such, dual power is one way to organize a diversity of tactics but a spectrum of strategy is a broader category that allows for the carbon rebellion's coordinated intervention across all the points of intervention on all three terrains of struggle.

Through petro-hegemony the fossil fuel industry unleashes an enormous range of tactics to engage with all three relations of power across all three terrains of struggle. The climate justice movement must do the same. If we limit ourselves to a set of tactics that only engage the state through elections, or only seeks to shift culture through direct action, or only fights the war of economies through financial divestment, we may end up ignoring one terrain of struggle entirely or deploying tactics that are entirely inappropriate to it. Arranging our tactical interventions along a spectrum from nonconfrontational to confrontational rather than dividing ourselves into radical to reformist actors, we can invite a large diversity of actions and activists into contesting petro-hegemony.

The carbon rebellion must, therefore, insist upon the development of a spectrum of strategies that allow activists to deploy whatever tactics their points of intervention requires. Only with a spectrum of strategy and a diversity of tactics can our movement compete with the fossil

fuel industry's influence across terrains of consent, coercion, and compliance. To combat petro-capitalism, we need prefigurative tactics that build the just transition and establish the material certainty of energy justice in the present; to challenge petro-culture, we need interventions ranging from newspaper editorials, to community organizing, to civil disobedience; and to dismantle the petro-state, we need tactics that allow activists to curtail the industry's coercive capacities, while democratizing these intuitions, funneling resources to frontlines communities and establishing conditions for community's self-governance. Embracing and coordinating these interventions across terrains of struggle necessitates the development of a spectrum of strategies and its commitment to relationships and trust across politico-strategic differences.

Finally, the spectrum of strategy is only as strong as the relationships upon which it is based. Having argued that no tactic is inherently reformist or revolutionary, I use the spectrum of strategy to reframe our approach to radical social change by asking in what context is a confrontational tactic appropriate or inappropriate and similarly in what context is a non-confrontational tactic appropriate or inappropriate. This is useful in so far as it allows us to facilitate conversations about embracing a diversity of tactics depending upon the degree to which a given situation calls for a non-confrontational tactic versus a confrontational one and vice versa. The spectrum of strategy seeks to hold us accountable to our political or ideological prejudices which often lead us to preferring one tactic over another without adequately assessing what the situation requires. In doing so, we open up the imaginations of groups devising interventions with the possibility that all tactics could be potentially useful. The process of aligning strategic orientations then becomes one of selecting which ones amongst this enormous scope of possibilities are most contextually appropriate. None of this

is to suggest that simply by ordering all of these interventions along a spectrum activists will miraculously agree upon a diversity of tactics. Rather, the spectrum of strategy provides us with a conceptual tool that we can use to work through strategic disagreements and complexities without resorting to accusations of reformism or radicalism.

Conclusion

To conclude, the debates articulated throughout this chapter are not as intractable as they may at first seem. I've shown how, in theory, the most useful components of these different debates can be synthesized. However, their resolution, reconciliation, and activists' willingness to work alongside one another despite differing strategic orientations will, in practice, require a commitment to what Adrienne Maree Brown's calls critical relationships. Meanwhile, we may still need critical mass¹⁷¹ to actually carry many of the tactics organized through a spectrum of strategy. The next chapter, with its thematic focus on different questions of scale, will engage the relationship between critical relationships and critical mass in the context of counter hegemonic strategy. Yet, the spectrum of strategy is offered here as a loose theoretical framework around which more practical approaches to strategic alignment may be developed. It provides us with a way of delinking ideology from tactics while remaining attuned to the importance of experiences and principles when selecting different interventions. This chapter has discussed the debates surrounding engagement with the state, the appropriate contexts in which to use direct action, and the potentially synergistic relationship between organizing and mobilizing. The spectrum of strategy provides insights

¹⁷¹ See this review of Brown's book for more on critical relationships and critical mass:
<https://libromance.com/2018/01/11/from-critical-mass-to-critical-relationships-with-adrienne-maree-brown/>

into how a diversity of tactics harnessed through the synthesis of each of these debates might be developed, deliberated upon, and coordinated to intervene in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance.

The chapter has also illustrated how a large range of strategic orientations and interventions, both confrontational and nonconfrontational, might be considered in terms of enacting a blockade on the fossil fuel industry. By understanding all of tactics and strategies currently being deployed in Blockadia as collectively complicit in the success of blockading the fossil fuel industry, the spectrum of strategy moves the three debates articulated above beyond tired and cynical accusations of reformism and radicalism. Instead of dichotomy or oppositional binary, I have suggested that the interventions I've observed are more accurately understood as being deployed according to a spectrum of strategy defined in degree and gradation of confrontational and non-confrontational strategies and tactics. Blockading the fossil fuel industry and confronting petro-hegemony, I have argued, necessitates a range of confrontational and non-confrontational approaches and all are significant features of activism in Blockadia.

Finally, my argument throughout this chapter has not necessarily been intended to build bridges between politically radical and politically moderate agents and actors addressing climate change. The climate justice movement is not a space for the politically moderate, and, indeed, when it comes to confronting the climate crisis, I remain, politically committed to defeating those who demand moderation, not compromising with them. Instead, I have made these arguments for synthesis and synergy to encourage activists and scholars of

climate justice to develop or maintain an open orientation towards a large diversity of tactics, aligned along a spectrum of strategy, through which our collective vision, or collection of visions, may be realized. Operating according to a spectrum of strategy allows climate justice activists to innovate with a diversity of tactics and explore how these might reinforce one another, align or complement one another's' interventions, and fight petro-hegemony on all the different points of intervention in which it is so pervasive.

Chapter 8 - Building Out of Blockadia: Scaling Up the Climate Justice Movement

What has changed in recent years is largely a matter of scale, which is itself a reflection of the dizzying ambitions of the extractive project at this point in history. The rise of Blockadia is, in many ways, simply the flip side of the carbon boom. – Naomi Klein 2014, 267

In July 2017, the California Legislative Assembly approved the controversial renewal of California’s “landmark” climate policy, the extension of the statewide cap and trade program. The bill, AB 398, was hailed in many mainstream media outlets as the most comprehensive and ambitious legislation to combat climate change passed in any state in the United States to date ([Murphy 2017a](#); [Mason and Megerian 2017](#)). It was also praised as an instance of “rare bipartisanship” between Republican and Democratic Party legislators (*ibid*). Dubbed then-Governor Jerry Brown’s flagship climate change policy, Brown was tireless in his efforts to win the bill the two-thirds majority it required to ensure its immunity from hostile lawsuits from conservative activists. Amongst conservative critics the plan was vilified as a thinly veiled, and potentially illegal, job-killing tax on industry ([Murphy 2017b](#)). The bill was also divisive amongst California’s many different environmental organizations. Larger and more moderate ENGOs like the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Environmental California, and the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) endorsed the bill ([NRDC 2017](#)), while grassroots climate justice networks like the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) and the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), as well as several larger climate organizations, including the Sierra Club and 350.org, condemned it vehemently ([Johnson 2017](#); [CEJA 2017](#)).

AB 398 particularly enraged Richmond’s community of environmental justice organizers.

After years of lobbying and organizing, activists in Richmond were, by the summer of 2017,

on the verge of convincing BAAQMD to use its regulatory powers to limit Chevron's greenhouse gas emissions and associated particulate matter at the refinery. The agency's powers to do so were revoked under the new legislation and years of organizers' work to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from the Bay Area refineries were thwarted when the bill was signed into law. The significance of the bill's passage to this chapter is the illustration it provides of the different scales at which petro-hegemony operates through the global oil assemblage. From the perspective it provides, we can grasp the ways in which activism in Blockadia must exceed the localized blockades of oil frontiers to confront, not only petro-hegemony, but the entirety of the matrix of domination (Collins 2012) in which petro-hegemony is embedded and out of which the climate crisis has arisen. Using this case study example, and several others, this chapter problematizes different dimensions and questions of scale and their relation to counter hegemonic struggle.

The California Legislative Assembly passed the state's first cap and trade program, AB 32, in 2006 under former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The bill passed with a simple majority and the Governor signed it into law with a pledge to review the program's progress and a vote on whether or not to extend it by 2020 (Megerian 2017).¹⁷² The legislation was always vulnerable to lawsuits, however, because many conservative think tanks, lobbyists, and politicians argued it constituted an illegal tax hike on heavy industry (Murphy 2017a).

¹⁷² In theory, the program incentivizes industrial decarbonization by implementing an annually declining statewide cap on emissions and supply of carbon credits which polluting companies are required to purchase or trade for the right to emit a certain amount of greenhouse gas. The state holds annual auctions selling off carbon credits with the idea that as the cap decreases, fewer credits will be sold off and so their value will steadily increase. As credits become scarcer and more expensive, companies will feel the incentive to reduce emissions instead of paying for more credits. If a company buys credits but doesn't need to use them it can sell those credits to another company that is likely to produce more emissions. Meanwhile, the revenue raised through the state auctions is ringfenced for state spending on "climate solutions" like improved public transport. The second iteration of this program passed in 2017 looks very similar to first.

According to a 1978 amendment to the state's constitution, raising taxes in California requires approval from two-thirds of both the state Assembly and state Senate. Throughout its first iteration, whether or not the program constituted a covert tax on industry was the subject of intense legal and political controversy. Seeking to extend the cap and trade program, and win a safer two thirds majority to ensure its legal longevity, Governor Brown championed the legislation and took it upon his administration to guide the bill through the state legislature in 2017. He was ultimately successful, winning in a 55-21 vote in the state Assembly and 28-12 in the state Senate. However, the process of gaining a two-thirds of the legislature required compromises with Democrats and Republicans who maintained close ties with California's oil and gas industry. As a result, the bill that passed was an even more diluted version of the previous program, with promises to allow the extension of freely allocated carbon credits to fossil fuel companies until at least 2030 (CEJA 2017).

Climate justice activists argued that the bill reproduced, almost word for word, the Western States Petroleum Association's (WSPA) "wish list" for the state's climate change policies and have consistently cited Jerry Brown's own close relationship with California's oil industry in their criticisms of the bill (Aronoff 2017).¹⁷³ Condemning the legislation's failure to actually stop greenhouse gas emissions at their source and keep fossil fuels in the ground, or to protect communities from air pollution associated with greenhouse gas emissions, climate justice activists pledged to resist AB 398's passage.¹⁷⁴ With few statewide

¹⁷³ WSPA is the fossil fuel industry's main lobbying association. In 2016 and 2017 it contributed more in campaign spending and lobbying than any other lobbying group in California. Chevron's political spending came a close second. In 2018, WSPA's political spending was only outmatched by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) after the utility company faced immense pressure for its alleged responsibility faulty equipment leading the largest wildfires California has ever seen (Bacher 2019).

¹⁷⁴ While the state's overall greenhouse gas emissions have declined since 2009 (mostly in the electricity generation and transportation sectors), emissions in the industrial sector, which accounts for the oil and gas

institutions or resources, and relatively little statewide organizational capacity, however, local campaigns and climate justice organizations were heavily outspent and outmatched in the state legislature. As one concession to environmental justice organizations who argued that cap and trade would do nothing to prevent the continued air pollution of their communities at the source of emissions, the Assembly passed a companion bill, AB 617. AB 617 was aimed at strengthening the monitoring of greenhouse gas and particulate matter emissions at their source and improving air quality in frontlines environmental justice communities. The companion bill brought Democratic assembly members representing environmental justice communities in line with the cap and trade program. While climate justice activists welcome increased monitoring and emissions transparency, few believe the tradeoff was justified.

Crucially, AB 398 contained controversial articles that removed local and regional regulatory agencies' jurisdiction over local sources of greenhouse gas emissions. These were largely perceived as the bill's greatest betrayal of environmental justice communities. Following the bills' passage, activists participated in a lockdown outside the Kinder Morgan's gates in Richmond. Their press release explained that AB 398 "blocks the ability of local air quality agencies from establishing rules limiting greenhouse gases and opens up the door for refining

industry, have fluctuated between one and three percent above and below their 2009 levels ([Roberts 2019](#)). This suggests that in the dozen years since cap and trade was introduced, it has had little to no impact on industrial sector emissions. Indeed, Morello Frosch et al. argue that California's refinery emissions from have actually increased under the cap and trade program (2017). The oil and gas industry was only fully included in the program in 2012 and emissions are projected to decrease as the state-wide cap on emissions falls, and carbon credits become more expensive. However, for as long as credits are freely allocated to the industry, any dramatic drop in oil and gas sector emissions, particularly over the critical next ten years, remains unlikely (Cullenward and Coghlan 2016; Haya 2019). The free allocation of credits is intended to prevent heavy industry from leaving California for states with less stringent regulations but is widely criticized as counterproductive amongst energy experts and activists (ibid).

tar sands crude in Richmond, which would worsen air pollution in surrounding communities” (Diablo Rising Tide 2017). Perversely, in other words, Chevron and the other Bay Area refineries could actually increase their emissions under the cap and trade program because they could refine more polluting heavy oils like tar sands imported from Canada, as long as they paid for the credits to do so.¹⁷⁵ As Andrés Soto says:

Thanks to California’s brand new cap and trade climate bill, AB 398, it’s now extremely likely that this very terminal we are blocking will be a destination point for the tar sands oil that would be piped in by Trans Mountain... AB 398 is an abomination and a threat to environmental justice worldwide. (Ibid)

Highlighting the different scales at which petro-hegemony operates, and indeed the global and local dimensions of the oil assemblage through which petro-hegemony manifests itself, Soto articulates the connection between air pollution from Bay Area refineries, California state legislation on cap and trade, and oil infrastructure development in Canada. Through provisions outlawing most local and regional regulations on refinery emissions at their source, cap and trade could actually incentivize the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline in British Columbia and the further development of tar sands mining in Alberta by ensuring a market for the product continues to exist in California. According to the Energy Information Administration, of the five Bay Area refineries four have doubled the processing of heavy sour crude from Canada between 2016 and 2018 (EIA.gov 2019).¹⁷⁶ The necessary

¹⁷⁵ And, of course, many credits are still allocated freely to fossil fuel companies which means that, even on its own terms, the state is ultimately subsidizing the import of tar sands to refineries in California. As such, there exists very little incentive for refinery owners in the Bay Area not to import Canadian heavy crude from an emissions intensity perspective.

¹⁷⁶ Chevron’s Richmond refinery increased Canadian heavy sour crude imports 80,000 barrels in 2016 to 322,000 in 2018; imports to the Philipps 66 refinery in Rodeo increased from 1,052,000 barrels in 2016 to 2,362,000 in 2018; Shell’s Martinez refinery increased imports of Canadian heavy sour from 1,336,000 barrels to 2,411,000 over the same period; Marathon also in Martinez didn’t import Canadian sour crude in 2016 but imported 264,000 barrels in 2018. Valero’s refinery in Benicia was the only one to decrease imports, from 892,000 barrels to 328,000. Meanwhile total imports of Canadian heavy sour crude to the US have increased from 388,000,000 barrels in 2009 to 920,282,000 in 2018, 14 million of which arrived to Californian refineries

incentives for reducing source emissions from tar sands refining under the cap and trade program simply aren't in place. Without local regulatory agencies' ability to regulate emissions at the source, California's refineries will remain a profitable market for heavier crude oil, not only from Canadian tar sands but extreme energy extraction all around the world. According to local activists, Bay Area refineries are upgrading their facilities to process heavier crude for precisely this reason ([Sunflower Alliance 2018a](#)).

I have offered the description of the implications of this particular legislation in such detailed relief as an introduction to, and because of its implications for, questions of scale with which activists in Blockadia must inevitably contend. This example makes visible the global dimensions of the oil assemblage touching down in the local through interconnected infrastructure upgrades in both Burnaby and Richmond. It also makes clear that contesting petro-hegemony at the scale of the local or regional alone simply isn't enough to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Moreover, it illustrates the broader systems of domination in which petro-hegemony is itself embedded and why activists cannot ignore these in their efforts to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Mann and Wainwright ask their readers to consider how revolutionary potential in the name of climate justice that could overthrow the matrix of domination (which they call "Climate Leviathan"), could be cultivated in Blockadia. Echoing Mann and Wainwright's reflections on the conditions in which "Climate X" might be realized (2018), the critical question of this chapter are, therefore, *how do we build a movement from within, but out of and exceeding, Blockadia?* And, moreover, *how do we do*

in 2018. 1.9 million arrived in the five Bay Area refineries in 2009 while 5.6 million barrels of Canadian sour crude arrived in the Bay Area refineries in 2018. These numbers all indicate the increase in tar sands refining in California and the current failures of California climate policy to prevent it. These numbers are publicly available through the US Energy Information Administration website: www.EIA.gov/petroleum/imports/browser

so in a way that both exceeds the scale of the local to address the scale of the oil assemblage and the matrix of domination with which it is entwined, while remaining democratically oriented and accountable to the local frontlines? Richmond and Bay Area climate justice activists' experiences with these very questions are particularly illustrative but are by no means exceptions for activism in and out of Blockadia.

In Richmond, climate justice activists have found they must move between the different “nested scales” in which petro-hegemony exists (Lefebvre 1989). From expunging Chevron's influence over the common sense micro-politics of city culture, to the contestation of the company's relationship with city council, to lobbying regional regulatory agencies, to challenging state-wide climate policy, to the city's strategic positioning in the “thin green wall” along the Western coast of North America (which is preventing fossil fuel exports from the interior reaching markets in Asia), climate activists in Richmond are having to contend with petro-hegemony as it operates at scales of the local, state, national and global context. Mirroring the global archipelago constituting Michael Watts' “oil assemblage” I described in Chapter 2 (2014), activism across the archipelago of local community resistance to fossil fuels that constitutes Blockadia must also be able to operate on multiple scales all at once (Collis 2015; Klein 2014).

California's cap and trade bill is exemplary of how and why the movement must address petro-hegemony at different scales. Having quickly discovered the limits of municipal government and its jurisdiction over Chevron's refinery, Richmond's activists brought their campaign to another industry captured state institution, the Bay Area Air Quality

Management District (BAAQMD). Challenging the oil industry’s regulatory capture of this agency, climate justice organizations worked through a regional Bay Area coalition, the BAAQMD Network, to force the agency to impose emissions regulations on the Bay Area’s refineries. These regulations would have severely limited the refineries’ ability to process heavier crude oil with higher emissions intensity,¹⁷⁷ like tar sands and diluted bitumen. As the story goes, literally the day before the agency put pen to paper and implemented the new regulations, Governor Brown’s AB 398 passed the legislature and was signed into law. The law prohibits local regulatory agencies like air districts from imposing local specific regulations on emissions from refineries, an article largely seen as one of the oil and gas industry’s top lobbying priorities (Aronoff 2017).¹⁷⁸ Outraged, activists later argued that the industry lobbied for the provision to be included in the bill as a direct response to how close the BAAQMD Network came to imposing a significant increase in regulatory burden on California’s refineries. The provision has moved most emissions regulation outside the remit of local regulatory agencies and is now almost entirely overseen by the state through the cap and trade program.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Emissions intensity refers to the relative contribution to global warming different types of crude oil are capable of when refined. Heavy sour crude has a particularly high greenhouse gas emissions intensity and is also associated with higher toxic heavy metal content and other fine particulate matter (NRDC 2014).

¹⁷⁸ The official reason for this provision is that local jurisdiction over emissions would clash and potentially contradict the statewide caps and increase uncertainty in the industry.

¹⁷⁹ As Soto was quick to remind me, however, from limitations on permits for refinery facilities upgrades to more stringent standards for emissions of particulate matter threatening public health there are other regulatory actions BAAQMD could take to discourage refining heavy crudes in the region. (Increase in emissions of particulate matter is closely associated with crude oils with higher emissions greenhouse gas emissions intensity but are not regulated under cap and trade. Regulations on particulate matter emissions would also likely decrease greenhouse gas emissions). Meanwhile, Jean explained that BAAQMD are experts in “kicking the can down the road” and have consistently argued that this kind of regulatory action is also outside their remit (personal communication, July 18th, 2018).

Miya Yoshitani at APEN cited this specific example as having had a significant impact on her organization's development of a state-policy arm, and, more generally, to a commitment amongst Californian environmental justice organizations to developing statewide organizational capacity through networks of local grassroots organizations like CEJA (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). The 2018 Brown's Last Chance, now called the Last Chance Alliance, is another recent example of a statewide coalition of climate justice organizations, many on the frontlines of fossil fuel extraction and refining, seeking to consolidate their collective strength at a statewide scale. Similarly, Gayle McLaughlin, recognizing the limits of local government, ran for Lieutenant Governor in 2018 with the purpose of sharing the lessons of the Richmond Progressive Alliance across the state and developing a California Progressive Alliance through a network of local municipal organizing initiatives. Despite moves towards scaling their efforts up and out of Blockadia, early analysis suggests at significant constraints on climate justice organizing at the scale of the state and beyond. Nevertheless, recent years have seen the organizational infrastructure of the climate justice movement in California begin prioritizing institutionalization and consolidation of networks at a statewide scale. These are now working through some of these constraints.

Climate change is an inherently global crisis. Thus, emerging out of the global convergences of activists outside the annual UN climate talks, the climate justice movement has always also been a global phenomenon. From its founding questions of the climate debt owed by industrialized countries to industrializing and formerly colonized ones, to the resurgence of white nationalism capitalizing on resentment of (in part) climate-driven immigration, the

concerns of climate justice can never be isolated at the local scale – they are inherently global. This is just as true for frontlines keep-it-in-the-ground activism, where the drivers of climate change connect the movement across space, as it is for activism outside the United Nations climate talks, where the movement is connected through coming together in one place. As such, climate justice activists across the global supply chain of fossil fuels are forging “translocal solidarities” to contest strategic chokepoints in the transportation and processing of the commodity through a strategy called “segmented localism” (Routledge 2011; Haluza-DeLay and Carter 2016, 464). Accordingly, as the political economy and associated infrastructure of tar sands oil is exposed, organizations in the Bay Area, the British Columbian lower mainland, and in the heart of the Alberta tar sands, are developing loosely coordinated strategic interventions that target different geographic locations of vulnerability in the industry’s supply chain. Relationships are being rekindled and strengthened across the Blockadia’s archipelago to contend with the porosity of borders to capital and stymie the transport and production of oil. As such, the movement cannot eschew intervention at the scale of global supply commodity chains and international political economy.

In British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California, campaigns against fossil fuel infrastructure have shared similar frames, stories, and are consistently working in alliances that encompass constituents reaching far beyond the proverbial choir. Naomi Klein argues that the carbon boom in North America has exposed many more communities to the impacts of fossil fuel production in the last ten years (Klein 2014). Consequently, communities in proximity to proposed infrastructure upgrades or transport routes have come together to interrupt the commodity supply chain through their local communities. In doing so, these

communities are developing regional relationships that cross state and provincial borders to forge translocal solidarities that in some ways transcend place-based struggle (ibid). Out of these relationships a “thin green wall” from the coast of the Pacific Northwest all the way down the coast of Southern California is growing to block the transportation of fossil fuels from interior states and provinces to refineries on the Pacific Coast and markets in Asia (Grossman 2017). This blockade on transport and refining infrastructure along the continent’s Western Seaboard transcends nation and state borders and constitutes a significant impediment to the export fossil fuels off the West Coast. Finally, and particularly from the perspective of Indigenous movement leaders in the Pacific Northwest where Coast Salish Territories spans both sides of the border between what are now called British Columbia and Washington, the movement must also contend with the artificial nature of these borders. As such, climate justice, and the alliances it articulates into alignment, are forcing activists to rethink their relationships to borders and, indeed to the modern conception of the nation-state (ibid; Mann and Wainwright 2018).

Meanwhile, the opposition to cap and trade amongst organizers in Richmond has resonances not only between individual nation-states but also at the scale of global climate governance. Climate justice activists’ analysis of cap and trade is tied to a political critique of climate solutions that are rooted in a matrix of domination constituting intersectional relationships of colonialism, extractivism, capitalism, and environmental racism, and out of which, it is argued, the climate crisis emerged. Resistance to the false solutions derived from this matrix is most often articulated at the global gathering of climate justice activists at the UNFCCC’s annual Conference of the Parties (COPs). The hegemonic status of carbon trading, carbon

offsets, market-based solutions, and the concomitant faith in the ingenuity of the market to innovate “technofixes,” is contested in the streets outside the United Nations gatherings.

The articulations of climate justice and resistance to neoliberal climate solutions at this global scale percolate out into local frontlines anti-fossil fuels activism. However, these same articulations also absorb the experiences of frontlines communities around the world, who are confronting both extraction and false solutions, which are expressed in critical activist discourse in the global arena provided through the UN climate talks (Bond 2014). This forges a synthesis of different global and local articulations of climate justice that overlap but are remain unique to their local contexts. (This indicates, perhaps, the possibility of a counter hegemonic articulation of climate justice that draws together the distinct experiences and knowledges over local confrontations around the world, or what I will later call *pluriversal hegemony*). The “It Takes Roots Coalition” has, for example, brought together climate justice activist frontlines communities across the United States (including several from Richmond) to participate in workshops, coalition-building, and demonstrations outside the COPs alongside frontlines activists hailing from environmental justice struggles all around the world (It Takes Roots 2019). Through these networks, resistance to cap and trade, which has long been at the forefront of climate justice confrontation at the UN, is then rearticulated at the local scale, for example in Richmond. The critiques of neoliberal climate solutions contain, therefore, simultaneously global and local inflections. This dynamic illustrates how the climate justice movement can legitimately be called a global movement that is comprised of many local movements geographically dispersed across the world.

Questions of scale and contestation are not just geographic, however. They are also temporal, historically and politically situated with profound ideological and strategic implications for the movement's theories of change. The extent to which combating petro-hegemony is implicated in confrontation with the larger matrix of domination in which it is embedded means we must engage in critical analysis of the scope of the movement's intervention, its targets, and its purpose. This means asking, for example, difficult questions about the scale at which the movement should consolidate its power. Overthrowing petro-hegemony is the beginning, not the end, of the climate justice movement's ambition. However, accepting this massively broadens the scope and scale of resistance that we must expect of the theories of change and strategies currently targeting petro-hegemony. If these are to rise to the monumental challenge of global revolution in the name of climate justice, which is ultimately where this line of thought leads, then we must consider how activism against the industry throughout Blockadia can lay the foundations for this broader assault. This also means that it is incumbent upon academics and activists alike to consider the different scales at which the climate justice movement's political intervention is appropriate and can, or even should, be organized.¹⁸⁰ In other words, if the political analysis of the global climate justice movement is one that requires us to look beyond carbon in the atmosphere or in the ground, and towards the matrix of domination that allows petro-hegemony to operate in the first place, then at what scale is it appropriate, or even possible, for the climate justice movement to challenge the hegemony of that matrix? This question is vital to climate justice activism precisely

¹⁸⁰ It is crucial to remember here that the climate justice movement is by no means alone in its confrontation with these systems of oppression. Contemporary movements intersect with climate justice but they have also developed their own strategies and theories of change that seek to dismantle white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, and so on. We must learn from these and from the generations of scholars and activists that have devoted themselves to these questions before us.

because it is from this very matrix that neoliberalism's racist and colonial false solutions, like cap and trade, geoengineering, and carbon offsets, emerge.

To articulate the complexity of these questions another way, we might say that, from the perspective of climate justice, false solutions to climate change reinforce the primacy of the market, the promise of extraction-fueled infinite growth, and the alienation of human beings from the ecosystems in which we exist. Climate policies, like California's cap and trade program, can also reinforce dynamics of colonial dispossession and accumulation that force Indigenous peoples off their land or otherwise undermines their ontological relationships to it (Glibertson 2017; Bond 2014; Tokar 2014). Thus, examples of neoliberal climate policies interacting with frontlines struggle against petro-hegemony indicates the extent to which the struggles on the frontlines of Blockadia are entwined with and inextricable from the intersectional matrix of domination in which petro-hegemony thrives. Richmond's experiences with cap and trade are just one instance illustrating this broader trend. Out of Blockadia, then, a broader strategy for upending the inequities and injustices inherent to capitalism, racism, colonialism, patriarchy and all of the systemic roots of ecological crisis, must be developed through confrontation with fossil fuel industry. If the assault on petro-hegemony is to yield "a global revolution in the name of climate justice," as Mann and Wainwright say it must, then we have to examine how activism and activists may move through, out of, and perhaps expand, Blockadia to develop the groundwork for an assault on the systemic roots of the crisis that go far beyond keeping fossil fuels in the ground. This opens up yet another scale towards which the climate justice movement and keep-it-in-the-ground activism must be attentive.

There are multiple ways in which we might interpret scale. I understand scale through Sallie Marston's broad formulation of the term as the "level at which relevant processes operate" that, to varying degrees, socially produced (Martson 2000, cited in McCarthy 2005).

Throughout this dissertation I have encountered questions of scale in terms of policy, infrastructure, geography, alliances, movement building, theories of change, and political philosophy, but, until now, I have not engaged with them with anything like the rigor they deserve. They are all of vital consequence to any analysis of (counter) hegemony and so it is to each of these that I will devote this final chapter. Specifically, I will problematize them through analysis of three dimensions of scale. Firstly, the chapter engages the situated, conjunctural nature of petro-hegemony, how it operates at different scales throughout the oil assemblage, the difficulty of isolating "the local" as a unit of strategic analysis, and how petro-hegemony is entwined with a matrix of domination which is itself a hegemonic order that must be dismantled. I offer the concept of "layered hegemonies" as one way we might begin thinking about the relationship between hegemonies and counter hegemonies at different scales.

Secondly, I critically examine the, often quite justifiable, argument that size equals power. Recognizing the enormity of the crisis and the dominance of our opponents, climate justice activists will often argue that it is only through building a mass movement of movements that our efforts will be commensurate with the scale of the fossil fuel industry and the matrix of domination in which it operates (Foran 2016). Here I assess the unit of the *mass* movement as an adequate approach to counter hegemonic strategy. I also question whether hegemony is

itself an appropriate set of power relations towards which we should aspire. Scale and hegemony are brought together in this discussion through problematizing the argument that critical *mass* (i.e. the size of the movement) is a fundamental precondition to achieving climate justice. I engage with Richard Day, Arturo Escobar, Jonathan Smucker and Adrienne Maree Brown to explore whether operating at the scales of hegemony is inherently oppressive and whether a movement's aspirations towards becoming a "mass" hegemonic entity reproduces the very dynamics of domination we are seeking to abolish. I return to debates between strategic orientations that prioritize *critical mass* versus those that prioritize *critical connections* and draw on the synthesizing work articulated in Chapter Seven to problematize the *mass* movement. From this perspective, I argue that only a hegemony that articulates a world of many worlds, drawing on what Escobar calls a "pluriversal" perspective, can ensure counter hegemonic insurgency does not replicate the modes of domination embedded in current hegemonic orderings.

Thirdly, and finally, I explore how climate justice activists are themselves encountering the task of building a counter hegemonic movement commensurate with the scale of petro-hegemony and the systems of domination in which it is embedded. I outline a distinction between *aggrandizement to scale* and *aggregation to scale*. The former, I suggest, replicates a hierarchical, monolithic approach to counter hegemony. The latter, I hope, indicates one way activists can develop counter hegemonic networks premised upon the commitment to a world of many worlds. I argue that this is both a strategic and principled approach to scaling up to meet the crisis. Here I draw on the work of Gramscian scholars, Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, and Mark Purcell's attempts to bring these theoretical traditions together. I then

place this theory in conjunctures of my case study research. This chapter offers only suggestions and is deliberately reserved in its argumentation because the scope of any one of the questions under analysis throughout these final pages would require a dissertation each. Nevertheless, through my field research it became abundantly clear that any assessment of the strategies being deployed to contest petro-hegemony would be woefully incomplete without some attention paid to questions of scale. Moreover, I believe it would be irresponsible to finish this dissertation without considering the ways in which climate justice activists might build a movement out of Blockadia that confronts not only petro-hegemony but the entire matrix of domination out of which the climate crisis has arisen. As such, hinting at directions and teasing out problems we may encounter as the movement moves through Blockadia is all I offer in these final pages.

Part One: Layered Hegemonies

Throughout this dissertation, I have explored the operations of hegemony and counter hegemony through very specific local and place-based conjunctures. This conjunctural analysis is a very effective way to illustrate the relations of power comprising petro-hegemony as they touch down in the local. However, it is also something of an abstraction because the local place-based conjuncture is never really separated from the flows and power relations existing within, above, and around it. Invoking Gramsci, Escobar writes that conjunctural analysis allows us to explore the broader “organic crisis,” or the “planetary crisis, civilizational crisis, or a crisis of climate, energy, poverty and inequality, and meaning” in which we currently find ourselves. Through place-based and deeply

contextualized investigation we may assess “the particular forces and sites of tension, antagonism and contradictions at which this type of crisis manifests itself, and how they are, and might be, variously articulated by diverse political forces.” Thus, for Escobar, conjunctural analysis “illuminate[s] the spaces within which a counter-hegemonic struggle might emerge” (forthcoming, 10). However, if we explore the conjunctural as though it were abstracted from the broader context that it is shaped by, and in which it exists, then the question of at what scale the praxis of counter hegemony is appropriate can go untheorized. In other words, by overemphasizing the local we may ignore the matrix of flows and relations within which the local exists and out of which it is comprised. As we explore the operations of petro-hegemony and develop counter hegemonic strategies through conjunctural analysis, we need to ensure these ideas are not isolated to, and only make sense within, the abstracted unit of “the local.”

Michael Watt’s oil assemblage helps us identify the different scales at which petro-hegemony operates because it allows our analysis, and praxis, to move, almost seamlessly, between conjunctural specificity and the broader context in which that conjuncture has developed. The assemblage brings together all the different institutions, flows, actors, infrastructures, and organizations (and the connections between them) through which the functioning of petro-hegemony may be observed and analyzed. Attention to the oil assemblage illuminates how petro-hegemony is both situated within, and emerges out of, the different constituent parts that comprise the assemblage. In particular, attention to the different parts of the oil assemblage allows us to better understand the industry’s ability to intervene in and shape the relations of consent, coercion and compliance. As such, the different scales at which petro-

hegemony operates through these constituent parts becomes visible through the lens of the oil assemblage.

These power relations “touch down” in the local, in what Watts calls the “oil frontier,” and, because oil frontiers tend to be the sites of greatest conflict and contestation, it is at the scale of the local that these power relations are most easily observed. However, we must not allow this emphasis on the local and the frontier to obscure the ways in which the industry’s hegemony operates at other scales. Moreover, this means this means points of intervention must be engaged with against petro-hegemony throughout the constituent parts of the global oil assemblage, from scales of local, to regional, to state, to national, to global. Finally, intervention through the carbon rebellion in Blockadia may successfully overturn the relations of power upon which petro-hegemony depends and establish an alternative hegemony at a local or regional scale but could well remain intact at the scale of the state, province or nation. To varying degrees and in different ways, this has been a dynamic I observed in both Burnaby and Richmond.

Activism through the carbon rebellion must remain attuned to how the global oil assemblage and petro-hegemony are themselves locked into, and dependent upon broader dynamics, flows, institutions, actors, and organizations that comprise a hegemonic intersectional matrix of domination. This matrix is constituted by the confluence of structural racism, patriarchy, colonialism and extractivism that also exists across multiple scales. These too must be targets of counter hegemonic climate justice activism if the climate crisis is to be addressed through activism in Blockadia in any kind of just way. This matrix of domination is at the root of

climate injustice and, just like the oil assemblage, permeates, but far exceeds, the confines of localized oil frontiers. Thus Petro-hegemony's hegemonic status necessarily depends upon the hegemonic status of this matrix of domination. As such, counter hegemonic intervention through the carbon rebellion cannot be fully realized unless interventions are also made against this broader matrix of domination. Therefore, frontlines campaigns must also consider the implications of their strategic interventions against the fossil fuel industry for combating this matrix of domination through and beyond the localized limits of Blockadia. To make sense of how these hegemonies operate at different scales, how they interact with one another, and how we might begin to think of resisting them at different scales, I develop a concept called "layered hegemonies." I explain this concept by way of examples in the section that follows.

It is helpful to think of the oil assemblage as consisting of a globally expansive archipelago of institutions, organizations, actors, and infrastructures, and the flows existing between them. As Watts explains, it encompasses the oil companies themselves, municipal, tribal, state, and global governance bodies, law enforcement agencies, private security firms, financial institutions, regulatory agencies, non-governmental organizations, public relations companies, "astro-turf" groups, cultural institutions, construction companies and contractors, physical extraction, transportation and refining infrastructure, and the flows of capital, materials, labor, and discourses that connect them. Meanwhile, oil frontiers exist at sites of upstream extraction, midstream transportation routes, and downstream processing and refining operations (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). We can map all of this onto the terrains of struggle existing between the carbon rebellion and petro-hegemony. Consequently, the

concept of the oil assemblage can also help us identify different points of intervention in relations of consent, compliance, and coercion and how they emerge at scales exceeding the local.

These power relations work through, and emerge out of, the oil assemblage from the micropolitics of the discursive construction of common sense to the geopolitics of global governance. The oil industry's capture of regulatory agencies, described in both case study sites, offers one example of how the industry harnesses relations of coercion through the oil assemblage. The industry's relationship with law enforcement and private security companies is another connection within the oil assemblage that allows the industry to deploy coercive tactics at the local scale. Exploring the flows between oil companies and public relations firms or cultural institutions (e.g. museum sponsorships) can help us identify the discourses through which consent to the industry is developed. Additionally, attention to the flows of investment between financial institutions and fossil fuel companies can help activists devise interventions in relations of compliance through, for example, a strategy of secondary targeting and divestment. The physical and metaphorical blockades constituting Blockadia and constitute interruptions in some of the flows of labor, capital materials and discourses within the oil assemblage that the functioning of petro-hegemony depends upon.

We must consider, however, that the actors, institutions, organizations, and flows between them, that constitute the oil assemblage and allow petro-hegemony to function sometimes exist outside of, or are otherwise invisible, on the local frontlines of Blockadia. Indeed, if petro-hegemony is never truly confined to the local scale, we must also look to the

connections, actors, and institutions that allow petro-hegemony to function at grander scales. With regards to the example offered in this chapter's introduction, for instance, the oil industry's influence over much of the California Legislative Assembly brought the Legislative Assembly into the oil assemblage through connections existing at a scale above Richmond's municipal government. Yet, as AB 398's passage illustrates, the industry's influence over the Legislative Assembly, in turn, has had consequences for Richmond, whereby the bill's passage stymied local efforts to regulate Bay Area refinery emissions. This means that Richmond's activists have had to challenge petro-hegemony not only at the municipal scale but at the scale of the state. It should go without saying, then, that action at one scale has consequences for other scales in which petro-hegemony operates. Meanwhile, the hegemonic status of carbon trading and neoliberal climate solutions globally, means that even as state and national governments take action on climate change, their policies will do little to directly impose limits on the extraction, transport and burning of fossil fuels.

Amongst many in the climate justice movement, this calls into question the legitimacy of the state as an arena through which climate solutions could ever be achieved. Nevertheless, it is necessary for climate justice activists engaged in frontlines struggles to also be involved in contesting, or making connections with those challenging, the hegemonic status of neoliberal climate solutions at a global scale – for example, by sending delegations of climate justice activists to build networks at the annual UN climate talks.

Petro-hegemony can be challenged and overturned at one scale while remaining potent and intact at another. Two prominent examples from my case studies help illustrate this point. The first, as I elaborated upon in this chapter's introduction, is the passage of AB 398. The

fossil fuel industry, and specifically Chevron's, hegemonic influence in Richmond has been subject to a coordinated assault for nearly two decades and, as its hegemony has been challenged, aspiring counter hegemonic forces are ascendant in the city. This doesn't necessarily say much about the industry's hegemonic status throughout the rest of California, however. Indeed, while the discourses and practices of California's oil and gas industry have come under increasing scrutiny in the state, the industry remains a highly influential force in state politics, culture and economy.¹⁸¹ It was precisely this hegemonic influence that ensured the California's flagship climate change policies have done relatively little to curtail (and have arguably reinforced) the industry's ability to continue extracting, transporting and refining fossil fuels in the state. Despite significant interventions from the climate justice movement, hegemonic climate change discourses remain focused on individual rather systemic responsibility. This ensures climate policies incentivize change at the demand side of the equation but ignores the supply-side. This dynamic is a product of petro-hegemony's enduring potency across the state, and particularly within governing bodies at local, regional, and state levels. Hegemonic climate discourses promoted by California's oil and gas industry are a threat to the efficacy of local struggles because, as AB 398 illustrated, state policy can often trump the jurisdiction and authority of local and regional decision-makers. To address this, climate justice activists from frontlines Blockadia struggles must be, and are, engaging with points of intervention at scales exceeding the local.

¹⁸¹ Even though consent to the industry has come under increasing pressure in California, through campaigns like the fossil fuel divestment movement and a growing awareness of the industry's disproportionate responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions, the industry's influence over political decision-making is still overwhelming ([McKibben 2018](#)). This is perhaps nowhere better evinced than in the fact that during Governor Jerry Brown's tenure more than 21,000 new oil and gas wells were given permits and 77% of them were located in low income communities and communities of color (the Governor, it should be remembered, made climate change a fundamental component of his policy platform in a state with a global reputation for environmental awareness) ([Center for Biological Diversity 2018](#); [Cart 2018](#); [Milman 2018](#)).

I observed another illustration of this point in Canada where opponents of the Trans Mountain pipeline successfully sued the government, the NEB and Kinder Morgan in the Federal Court of Appeals. Through the federal court system, they were able to halt the construction of the pipeline for over a year and the likelihood of defeat in the courts could well have been decisive in Kinder Morgan's decision to abandon the pipeline. However, this shift in relations of coercion at the federal level, (whereby the courts became a significant point of intervention for climate justice activists) was not accompanied by a shift in relations of consent or compliance, nationally. As such, the FCA's quashing of the pipeline permits only stalled the project but did not stop it. Indeed, across much of Canada the industry retains a strong hold over the discourses that maintain consent to its projects and operations. In particular, the industry's discourse of the pipeline being built "in the national interest," parroted over and over again by allies in government and the corporate media meant that even though the FCA quashed the pipeline permits in a coercive intervention against the industry, the pipeline still has national consent.

The pipeline is vehemently opposed in much of British Columbia yet vehemently supported in much of Alberta. Moreover, support for the pipeline is strong not just in Alberta but in other key provinces where the Liberal Party must fend off Conservative attempts to win their voters. Indeed, following the courts' ruling, across Canada, the Federal Canadian government enjoyed significant political cover as it carried out new environmental impact assessments and consultations to get the project back on track. This illustrates the importance of engaging in relations of consent at a grander scale when national or federal governments

have jurisdiction that supersedes provincial or local authority. Even when an oil company is forced to abandon its projects and interventions in relations of power are successful locally, petro-hegemony, the industry, and its projects, are not necessarily defeated at grander scales. As we saw in Canada, when the pipeline faced an existential threaten, the state simply bought it, took on the political and economic risk associated with it, and is now in a stronger position to get the project finished than Kinder Morgan ever was. Engaging in points of intervention in relations of power on these grander scales is therefore crucial to defeating petro-hegemony beyond the limits of the local.

In addition to the different interlocking and interrelated scales at which the relationships between institutions and organizations within the oil assemblage advance petro-hegemony, we must also pay close attention to the physical infrastructures that are connected within the oil assemblage through flows of capital and commodities. Smooth connections between these infrastructures are critical to the political economy of fossil fuels. Analyzing these connections offers us another way of thinking about how petro-hegemony is developed across geographic scales. Moreover, viewing the oil assemblage from this perspective allows us to see how intervention at the local level may be most strategic where it disrupts vital nodes that make the political economy of oil possible. This means confronting petro-hegemony at a local scale so that the flow of commodities and capital that make the functioning of the industry possible may be disrupted on a wider scale. Opponents of the oil industry can address the enormity of the oil assemblage by breaking up the industry's operations into its constituent pieces and disrupting each of these at a local scale. This strategy is called "segmented localism" (Haluzá DeLay and Carter 2016, 464). In the cases I

studied, for example, the flow of tar sands oil, or dilbit, from the site of extraction through pipelines, along railways, or on boats, to sites of refining and production, can be thought of as linking together different constituent parts of the oil assemblage. Severing the links between these sites by blockading transportation routes or preventing refineries from processing the raw product can prove a highly disruptive intervention in the political economy of the tar sands.

Bitumen extracted from the Alberta tar sands is turned into dilbit as it is chemically diluted to decrease its viscosity so that it can flow through pipelines more easily. The Trans Mountain pipeline was officially proposed to transport dilbit from landlocked Alberta to markets in Asia. However, this oil will more likely end up in refineries along the West Coast of the United States (Allan 2018a). All but one of the five oil refineries in Burnaby have shut down because they do not have the equipment to process heavy sour crude like dilbit and are not importing enough oil to make them profitable. Meanwhile, Bridge and LeBillon explain that one of the greatest challenges facing the oil industry right now is that their oil refineries are “in the wrong place as the center of demand shifts to Asia” (2017, 61). Even so, the demand for oil in Asia remains set upon light sweet crude rather than heavy sour because most of their refineries still aren’t equipped with the technology to process heavier sulfurous crude. Thus, dilbit and tar sands are not in particularly high demand in Asia (Wilt 2018).

Meanwhile, refineries that do have the technology can make a lot of money by importing cheap dilbit from Canada, processing it, and turning it into a lucrative array of oil products (Bridge and LeBillon 2017). As such, tar sands oil is most likely to be imported by refineries that already have, or are currently seeking to upgrade, their technology to process heavy

sulfurous crude. It is to the refineries on the West Coast of the US, including in the Bay Area, therefore, that the oil running through the Trans Mountain pipeline would most likely be transported ([Greenpeace 2018c](#); Sunflower Alliance 2018; [Bennet 2016](#); [Goldberg 2017](#); [Gafni 2013](#)). Imports of Canadian heavy sour crude to the five Bay Area refineries more than doubled between 2016 and 2018 (EIA.gov 2019). These imports would very likely increase further if the Trans Mountain pipeline were built. In this way, frontlines struggle in Richmond and Burnaby are intimately connected across the vast geography of the oil assemblage.

Data from the US Energy Information Association shows that while Chevron's Richmond refinery has only imported heavy sulfurous crude from Canada on two occasions (80,000 barrels in 2016 and 322,000 barrels in 2018), other Bay Area refineries like the Phillips 66 refinery in Rodeo and the Shell refinery in Martinez import tar sands on a more regular basis (*ibid*). Meanwhile, heavier more sulfurous crude oils, particularly when mixed with diluents to form dilbit, are more volatile and especially corrosive to refinery infrastructure and pipelines. The 2012 explosion and fire at the Chevron refinery was a result of corroded pipes and the data shows that it was importing heavier sour crude to refine at this time. Reports after the fire suggest that it is quite likely, that corrosion from the refinery's shift to importing heavier sour crude (though not necessarily Canadian tar sands) was a significant factor leading to the explosion in 2012 ([NRDC 2014](#); [Chemical Safety Board 2015](#)). Both Chevron and Phillips 66 have, or are in the process of applying for, permits to upgrade the technology in their refineries to process heavier crude. Additionally, these oil companies that often own upstream and downstream assets, sell heavy sour crude across the border to US

refineries at a discount because of its poor quality and higher processing costs ([Allan 2018a](#)). As such, US refineries have a particular incentive to purchase cheaper crude from across the border and refine it into a whole range of lucrative products. These developments, alone, should indicate that the Bay Area refineries are preparing to process heavier sour crude, much of it likely from the tar sands, as supplies of lighter sweet crude become more expensive and harder to find (Bridge and LeBillon 2017).

Meanwhile, as George Gonzales has explained, securing the United States' access to Canadian tar sands is increasingly becoming a question of geopolitical stability for US geopolitical strategists (2016). Gonzales argues that increasing imports of oil from its allied neighbor to the north to US refineries (instead of relying upon supplies from the Middle East or South America) strengthens the US's position in an increasingly unstable global political economy of oil. This is another reason we can expect much of the tar sands that would be transported through any one of proposed pipelines out of Alberta to end up in US refineries like those in the Bay Area. These geopolitical and the technical considerations, and the characteristics of the product itself, are all vital to understanding the functioning of petro-hegemony at different scales. These are made visible through observing the connections within the oil assemblage. We must also be viewing them as potential points of intervention. For example, learning about the characteristic of the product, whether it's corrosive, volatile, particularly toxic, highly valued or in short supply can help activists make strategic decisions about where the industry may vulnerable and which points of intervention to select in the oil assemblage. As such, fighting specific companies' applications for permits to upgrade

refineries to process a particular type of oil or intervening in company's requests to transport dilbit in local contexts can help disrupt the global supply of the world's most polluting oils.

Isolating Richmond's position within the oil assemblage maybe analytically useful but it may also ignore the extent to which Richmond's fossil fuel industry is embedded in the regional industry which is itself a nexus for the global supply and transportation of fossil fuels. From the Levine coal terminal, to Kinder Morgan's import and export shipping hub, to Chevron's refinery, to crude and coal being transported through the city by rail, fossil fuel infrastructure in Richmond cannot be disarticulated from the brooder political economy in which it exists. As such, it is very difficult to view the oil assemblage from the perspective of the city alone. Moreover, fossil fuel infrastructure in the city is inextricably intertwined with fossil fuel infrastructure throughout the Bay Area. We ignore these interconnections at our peril because observing how the oil assemblage is geographically interconnected through the location of infrastructure and flows of its product can also allow us to imagine ways in which alliances and solidarities across space, and which are not singularly limited to the local may emerge. These coordinated alignments can disrupt the different constituent parts fossil fuel infrastructure upon which the functioning of the industry depends. In fact, Naomi Klein has argued that the global spread of fossil fuel infrastructure is a key driver in the emergence of alliances and solidarities across vastly different communities in very different places that would never have considered themselves part of the same movement otherwise (2014).¹⁸²

¹⁸² For example, with regards to tar sands pipelines, Klein writes: "Beginning in northern Alberta, in a region where the worst impacts are being felt by Indigenous people, and often ending in places where the worst health impacts are felt by urban communities of color, these pipelines pass a whole lot of other places in between. After all, the same piece of infrastructure will travel through multiple states or provinces (or both); through the watersheds of big cities and tiny towns; through farmlands and fishing rivers; through more lands claimed by Indigenous people and through land occupied by the upper middle class. And despite their huge differences, everyone along the route is up against a common threat and therefore are potential allies. In the 1990s, it was

Thus, the very spread and scale of the industry, and local resistances to it, is connecting people into an expansive, even global, movement against petro-hegemony.

Refineries are localized bottlenecks and transportations routes are translocal chokepoints in the global oil commodity chain. These are, therefore, vital nodes within the oil assemblage that activists can put pressure on to disrupt the supply of fossil fuels and ultimately keep fossil fuels in the ground. Activists across the Trans Mountain pipeline route and particularly in Burnaby, alongside activists in Richmond, are preempting expansion of tar sands infrastructure upstream (in the sites of extraction) by opposing the development of downstream refineries and midstream transportation routes. This is following a broader trend on the continents Western Seaboard. From the Northern coast of British Columbia down along the coast of the Pacific North West and all the way to export hubs in Los Angeles, what Zoltán Grossman calls a “thin green wall” is being built to halt the export of fossil fuels from interior provinces to the coast and from the coast to markets abroad (2017). This thin green wall, comprised of an archipelago of local frontlines of Blockadia, spans the Western seaboard from the Kitimat in northern British Columbia to Los Angeles in Southern California. It is helping address the vast geography and enormous scale of petro-hegemony as it operates through the global oil assemblage. The metaphor is yet another illustration of how the oil assemblage is a vital concept that allows us to view, connect, and resist the fossil fuel industry across multiple scales.

trade deals that brought huge and unlikely coalitions together; today it is fossil fuel infrastructure” (2014, 272). In this way, the way the oil assemblage touches down in many different locals is actually helping build the movement.

All of the above being accounted for, even this green wall of local struggles on oil frontiers disrupting and interrupting the flow of oil from the interior to the coast currently being developed on an enormous scale will not be commensurate with the size and reach of petro-hegemony if activists on the ground ignore the hegemonic matrix of domination consisting of extractivism, capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism and racism in which both the functioning of the global oil assemblage and the power relations of petro-hegemony are deeply intertwined and upon which they depend. This matrix operates at the scale of the global, the intermediary, the local, the body and the psyche. It is far more expansive than petro-hegemony all the while providing the social foundations upon which petro-hegemony can thrive. As such, while petro-hegemony is embedded in the oil assemblage and the assemblage makes visible the ways different interventions and disruption in the relations of power composing petro-hegemony can be achieved, it is the matrix of domination that permeates and shapes all of these relations. In other words, petro-hegemony cannot exist outside the parameters of a fundamentally racist, colonial, patriarchal, capitalist and extractivist society. Moreover, the climate crisis itself is a product of this matrix of domination and just solutions to the crisis will not be forthcoming unless our response to the crisis also contributes to a counter hegemonic strategy to overthrow the hegemonic matrix of domination. This means that keep in the ground activists have to embrace intersectionality and the confluence of social struggles through a movement of movements if their activism is to be carried out in the name of climate justice. In this way, we should consider how one hegemony may exist within, be shaped by, and facilitate the operations of, a broader hegemony that encompasses it.

Of course, by definition two or more *competing* hegemonic forces cannot both be hegemonic in the same place at the same time. What I am describing, however is one *complementary* hegemony existing within another which are, together, mutually reinforcing. In hegemonic competition, only one force can be hegemonic while the others are counter hegemonic or aspiring hegemonic forces. Yet, when complementary and mutually reinforcing hegemonic forces are layered over one another, they not only coexist but infiltrate and permeate one another. Thus, petro-hegemony is suffused with the intersectional forces of colonialism, patriarchy, racism, capitalism and extractivism. It is precisely thanks to these that so many of us take the oil industry's operations for granted, that the oil industry is able to force projects on Indigenous peoples without their consent and with the sanctioning of the state, that fossil fuel projects are predominantly located in communities of color, that particularly Indigenous women's relation to the land is disrupted through fossil fuel extraction and pollution, that the so-called "natural world" is treated as endless source for plunder and extraction, and that hegemonic notions of masculinity, modernity, progress and rationality are so often bound to resource extraction which itself integral to the discourses through which petro-culture manufactures consent (Barrett and Worden 2014; Huber 2013; Bell 2016; Wilson 2014; Powys Whyte 2016).

It is helpful, therefore, to think of the matrix of domination as a hegemonic complex in which petro-hegemony is able to exist. Moreover, the very solutions to the climate crisis stemming from this hegemonic matrix are ones that further entrench its hegemony and leave the fossil fuel industry unchallenged. As such, it is not only the direct assault on the fossil fuel industry and challenging petro-hegemony that must be undertaken in Blockadia, but also the

development of strategies and discourses that undermine the social context in which petro-hegemony has been able to flourish. This means keep it the ground activism needs to address this hegemonic matrix of domination through its intervention against the fossil fuel industry, while remaining focused on the specific targets of the movement within the oil assemblage.

Audra Simpson's concept of "nested sovereignties" is instructive in terms of how we might challenge "nested" or "layered" hegemonies (2014). She documents the ways Mohawk activists sought to disrupt the sovereignties of the US and Canadian nation-states on Mohawk territory spanning the border between the two countries. By asserting their own sovereignty through a whole range of interventions, Simpson illustrates the consequences of intervention at one scale of sovereignty for the broader context in which that sovereignty is able to operate. Most significantly, she shows how political intervention asserting Indigenous sovereignty at one scale could be developed into a strategy that helps unravel notions of the sovereignty US and Canadian nation-states at another scale. Here Mohawk activists deployed specific and targeted interventions at the local scale that sought to unravel the logic upon which settler nation-state sovereignty depends. In a similar way, climate justice activists can move through their resistance to petro-hegemony on local frontlines of Blockadia to a confrontation with broader systems of oppression. For example, activists could choose specific points of intervention and develop strategies and discourses to engage with them that simultaneously counter the power relations upon which petro-hegemony depends while also unravelling the broader matrix of domination in which petro-hegemony exists.¹⁸³ Just as

¹⁸³ One example that seems immediately obvious to me is the use of the Native Rights Based Strategic Framework that simultaneously asserts Indigenous peoples' rights and claims over their territories and could therefore be considered an intervention against a colonial system of oppression while the framework simultaneously serves to force fossil fuel companies to adhere to Indigenous peoples' right to free prior and

Simpson documents the questions Mohawk activists had to face as they considered ways to confront these “nested sovereignties,” so too must climate justice activists consider how we confront the *layering* of hegemonies at different scales.

In a similar sense, Wainwright and Mann’s invocation to build revolutionary power in the name of climate justice from Blockadia towards the establishment of what they call Climate X (what I would understand as a social context in which the ideas of climate justice have become hegemonic) is helpful. As they write, “the immediate challenge is one of cultivation, of working the material and ideological ground in which these movements can bloom as rapidly as possible and in their full multiplicity...” (2018, 178). In their argument, the cultivation of the material and ideological ground in which a revolutionary movement can bloom starts in Blockadia. It is in Blockadia, therefore, that the seeds of revolutionary action in the name of climate justice are sown, cultivated, and nurtured. Through our praxis and activism against the fossil fuel industry in Blockadia we might realize our revolutionary potential to overthrow the hegemonic matrix of domination and assert Climate X in its place. Thus, the process of addressing the layering of different scales of hegemonic power must, at least in part, begin at the local. This process starts with questions of how the strategies, narrative and tactics deployed through local confrontation in Blockadia may developed to simultaneously cultivate the material and ideological ground necessary for a wider confrontation with the matrix of domination in which the roots of the twin global crisis of inequality and ecological collapse are embedded.

informed consent with regards to settler activities taking place on their territories. Another example might be activists capturing state institutions through elections in order to prevent fossil fuel companies winning permits to expand their operations, while also using their position in these institutions to funnel resources towards other activists developing climate solutions that transcend capitalism and extractivist economics.

I offer the concept of layered hegemonies to help us understand how the hegemonic power relations of consent, coercion and compliance shared between petro-hegemony and the matrix of domination are connected, suffused within one another, and serve to reproduce one another. When we see the ways that hegemonic contexts may be layered over one another and reinforce one another, we may also be able to view vulnerabilities and contradictions between their layers. This may help theorists and activists identify and target specific points of intervention that interrupt the dynamic of mutual reinforcement that exists between relations of consent, coercion and compliance at these different scales. Moreover, just as layered hegemonies overlap and reinforce one another, so too must the layers of counter hegemony. Thus, we are obliged to consider how the tactics and strategies we deploy on points of intervention against petro-hegemony undermine or reinforce the hegemony of the matrix of domination. Recognizing that activism at the scale of frontlines in Blockadia may help cultivate the terrain for a broader assault on points of intervention within the matrix of domination is crucial to how we develop strategies that not only undermine the fossil fuel industry but also advance climate justice. The question remains, however, what are the scales at which intervention is appropriate and possible for the climate justice movement and how do we achieve that kind of scale? This will be addressed in the following section.

Part Two: Problematizing Critical Mass

Given the enormity of the challenges and forces aligned against the climate justice movement, it is tempting to argue that the only response that could possibly be

commensurate with size and scale of our adversaries is a social movement of equal or greater size and scale. Remember, for example, Naomi Klein's injunction: "to change everything we need everyone." Similarly, if the scale of the crisis goes far beyond just keeping fossil fuels in the ground, then the movement must also commit itself to countering the even more pervasive hegemonic relations of power maintaining the matrix of domination. It may seem obvious, therefore, that we need to build a movement far larger, far more interconnected, and far more diverse than the one currently developing in the, still relatively isolated, frontlines of Blockadia. Indeed, the assumption embedded throughout this dissertation has been that in order to confront petro-hegemony the climate justice movement needs to grow, needs to gain the consent of far broader constituency of society, and that it needs to "scale up." In other words, it needs to consolidate its power and demands at a greater scale. Moreover, within counter hegemonic social movement strategy itself there seems to be an implicit axiom that size necessarily equals power. The more people who join the movement, the more to can achieve, and thus the greater the threat will be to the legitimacy of hegemon. In fact, size, growth, and achieving critical mass, seem, necessarily, to be of such fundamental concern to counter hegemonic strategy that it is often all too easy to forget to examine the assumptions underpinning them with anything like the critical rigor they merit.

Having articulated just how massive and pervasive the challenges we face are, and the different scales at which they operate, it seems clear that intervention on scales that exceed the local is necessary. This means scaling up our movements so that they can operate at local, regional, national, and global scales. However, there are problems in scaling up movements and consolidating power at greater scales that we would do well to consider if we are not to

repeat the mistakes of so many movements that have come before (McCarthy 2005). This section argues that embedded within hegemonic strategy is an impetus towards scale and that this impetus, if unexamined, can lead us to ignore anti-democratic, authoritarian, and potentially self-destructive, components of counter hegemonic and aspiring hegemonic intervention. In doing so, I'll explore whether counter hegemonic strategy is necessarily destined to replicate the very modes of domination we want to abolish, or whether we can conceive of ways in which social movements may become hegemonic without replicating these modes of domination.

From Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, to Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* to Smucker's *Hegemony How To* we find that the assumption fundamental to counter hegemonic strategy is the impetus to grow, to gain consent, to build the movement, and to consolidate that movement's power at scale. Moreover, this is considered a democratic rather than vanguardist approach to social change because it requires the organizing, alignment and consent of a vast social bloc that other forms of revolutionary insurrection ignore. Thus, social movements must grow to a size and scale that is commensurate with that of our opponents. Ostensibly, this assumption seems quite reasonable: in order to become hegemonic and in order to counter the hegemonic status of their adversaries, social movements must wrest general public consent away from the hegemon and realign that consent around an alternative. When the movements discourses have become common sense, when its political agenda is enforceable through laws or other coercive apparatus, and when its social form has become almost inextricably entangled in the economic and social relationships the functions of society depends upon, we can say a social movement has

achieved hegemonic status. According to theorists of hegemonic strategy, this requires popular and populist intervention through mass participation, mass action, and, therefore, a mass movement. In more familiar terms, it is only through mass collective action that we can assert our power on a scale that is commensurate with that of our adversaries.

In *Gramsci is Dead*, however, Richard Day argues this orientation towards *critical mass* can lead social movements into the arms of authoritarian, anti-democratic, and, at the very least, vanguardist, social movement praxis (2005). He critiques “the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and *en masse*, across an entire national or supranational space” (2005, 8). Moreover, in the very aspiration towards hegemony through achieving critical mass, there exists a movement towards erasure, homogenization, and universalism that is the antithesis of emancipatory radical social change. This resonates with the critiques of universalizing populist discourses I explored in Chapter Five. He accuses Gramsci and those following in his theoretical lineage of having done little to move beyond Leninism, state-centrism, and the centralization of power in the hands of elite political actors. Day later writes, “since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the theory and practice of non-hegemonic (Day 2004) or prefigurative (Graeber 2004) modes of struggling for social change have gained traction in the radical scene.” (Day 2016, 189). Observing the strategies and tactics of the so-called “newest” social movements in which autonomism, anarchism, anti-statism, decentralization and horizontalism have all heavily influenced movement praxis, Day contrasts how these are formed around “non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments” compared to those of hegemonic politics (2005, 9). Thus, he suggests that

hegemony may be an inadequate lens through which to understand the movement praxis of, particularly anarchist and autonomous, activists. Achieving hegemonic status is counterproductive and antithetical to their goals.

David Graeber makes a similar point in his ethnography of direct action in the anti-, or rather alter-, globalization movement of the 1990s and early 2000s (2009). From the autonomous self-organization of the Zapatistas to the horizontalist affinity groups organized around the World Trade Organization summits, Graeber argues that the model of the mass movement making demands on the state, and ultimately seeking to replace state power, is fundamentally at odds with the ideological commitments and praxis of the new social movements.

Identifying the deep suspicion of “the mass,” its potential for vanguardist elitism, and the erasures of difference the term conveys, thinkers like Graeber and Day have shown why activists within the “newest” social movements have rejected aspirations towards hegemony (Day 2016; 2005; Graeber 2009).¹⁸⁴

Day explains that the goal of those seeking to radically transform the world is not hegemony but the spread of smaller self-determined and self-organized social groupings brought together on the basis affinity through place-based struggle and sharing an expansive sense of solidarity across space with thousands of other social struggles (2005). As one reviewer of Day’s argument puts it “The political task is not to increase a mass of subjects via conversion

¹⁸⁴ As Day writes “Proponents of non-hegemonic modes of social change do not deny the existence of currently hegemonic structures and systems, indeed they know these exist and are quite wary of their interventions. But rather than trying to take over the structures of power, prefigurative actors seek to render them redundant and ward off their reemergence” (2016, 189). Here, as described in Chapter Seven, we see the convergence of non-hegemonic and prefigurative modes of intervention on the one hand, distinguished against hegemonic politics on the other.

but to make spaces more minoritarian and proliferate more of the minoritarian spaces” (Bratich 2007, 169). These authors have illustrated that the ways smaller groupings of activists, working together on the basis of affinity, seek to prefigure the world they want into being through their praxis. Their argument is that these are the groups most able to bring about revolutionary emancipatory change. As the discussion in Chapter Seven evinced, this seems to be precisely the opposite of the strategic approach Smucker and most Gramscians espouse.

Nevertheless, these activists’ “anti-mass” or non-hegemonic position articulated by Day is an important response to the potentially authoritarian and homogenizing consequences of counter hegemonic politics. Moreover, they draw attention to argument that, as authors JK Gibson Graham, suggest “the judgment that size and extensiveness are coincident with power is not simply a rational calculation in our view but also a discursive choice and emotional commitment (JK Gibson Graham 2002, 51 cited in Escobar forthcoming, 21). In other words, intervention at the scale of mass politics and mass movements, which are aligned through universalizing narratives that are developed out of counter hegemonic strategy assumes, in a rather masculinist sense, that size inherently equals power. This assumption is rooted in discursive and ideological paradigms emerging out of “modernist and masculinist political thinking, that ineluctably disempowers the local and place-based by locating the decisive power to change things on the global.” As Escobar writes, this kind of thinking depends “on the ontological assumption of the existence of a One-World world, one real, and one possible” (Escobar forthcoming, 21). As such, it ignores how hegemonic politics’ orientation

towards “the mass” comes at the expense of the revolutionary potential of the autonomous, the local, the place-based, the particular, and the diffuse.

Moving the conversation beyond the confines of the modern Western cannon, but certainly raising similar critiques, Arturo Escobar has argued that all theories of change, revolutionary or otherwise, that trace their roots back to European and Anglo-American thought since the Enlightenment, including Gramsci’s, falls subject to a “dual ontology” in which subjects and objects are considered as binary and distinct. Instead, Escobar describes an ontological politics derived out of the worldviews of subaltern, particularly Indigenous, groups all around the world. By this he means an understanding of the world developed in which there are no distinguishable subjects and objects, just the relationships and interconnections between things. This is an ontology derived from deep attention to the relationality of all things to one another.

Out of this ontology emerges what Escobar calls the pluriversal perspective. The pluriversal perspective and pluriversal politics asserts that “another possible is possible” (forthcoming). In other words, we must embrace the multitude of worldviews that make up the social world. This is an embrace of the world of many worlds that radicals and autonomist groups have long sought to articulate. With its roots in modernist dual ontology, hegemonic politics assumes there are different social units that exist outside of their relationships to one another and have to be articulated together before the relationships between them can emerge. Pluriversal politics turns this formulation around, instead suggesting that the political dynamic we must pay attention to is the relationship itself, not an abstract account of the

individual parts of which it is apparently constituted. As Escobar explains, “In radical ontological politics, by contrast, there are no intrinsically existing entities to be found, since nothing preexists the relations that constitute it; in other words, reality is relational through and through” (forthcoming, 13). The pluriversal perspective posits that nothing exists outside of the relationships to one another, all things exist in relationship all the time, thus the relationship is the crucial dynamic under analysis. Therefore, pluriversal politics is about understanding how relationships cannot be reduced to singular constituent parts but rather how these relationships may produce a world of many worlds.

We might think of pluriversal politics as entirely antithetical to counter hegemony. For example, the term hegemony is supposed to indicate the moral authority and leadership of a specific set of norms, practices, ideas, discourses which are, as I’ve argued, backed up through relations of consent, coercion and compliance. These become universalized as they are accepted as an uncontested, common sense, conditions. It is true that hegemony must continuously remake itself to sustain its longevity, however, the revolutionary goal of aspiring hegemonic actors is to take the position of the hegemon and to have their hegemony be remade over and over again. From this perspective, revolutionary work is finished when the revolutionaries become the hegemon. Achieving and consolidating the movement’s ability to reproduce its hegemony is the end goal of revolutionary action. From a pluriversal perspective, on the other hand, revolutionary work is never finished. It is always in the making, always partial, and there are always other possibles/possibilities. This characteristic of hegemonic strategy reveals a potentially fundamental shortcoming in the ability of hegemonic politics to achieve its emancipatory potential. Pluriversal politics, is a

commitment to and a rejection the universalism and the very grand narratives out of which Gramsci's theoretical insights and political strategy are derived. It therefore seems far more suited to the kind of proliferation of minoritarian spaces and the prefigurative horizontalist politics that Day and Graeber describe.

Despite seemingly obvious contradictions, we should question the extent to which the analyses offered by Day, Escobar, and Graeber suggest that the counter hegemonic political strategy, with all its assumptions about scale, critical mass, and modernity, is simply incompatible with a subaltern emancipatory politics capable of addressing the roots of our planetary crises. These authors certainly identify the significant risks of engaging in hegemonic politics. Moreover, it is true that this risk is greatly intensified if we do not explore the assumption that "the mass movement" is the appropriate scale at which to take the fight to our opponents. However, I would argue that the presence of such risks does not inherently mean that we should eschew the politics of scaling up or that hegemonic politics is necessarily authoritarian. Rather, their critiques should encourage us subject the assumptions buried in counter hegemonic strategy to critical examination, and, if possible, rework counter hegemony into a pluriversal perspective through the discursive and material cultivation of revolutionary potential taking place in Blockadia.

In his later work, Day concedes that "it could be said that those who want to work hegemonically are displaying an autonomous orientation towards those with whom they must articulate to achieve their aims" and that because of this "hegemony and autonomy are locked in an intimate embrace and that each cannot do without the other" (2016, 189). In

other words, because hegemonic articulation must inevitably seek to align a whole range different, often autonomous, groups and communities through their difference, in order to build a movement of movements, radical actors aspiring towards hegemony must necessarily maintain and reinforce the distinctive identities and worldviews of those communities, while also presenting a popular and populist alliance. This reflects a great deal of the conversation in Chapter Five in which I demonstrated how discourses of intersectional populism are being developed through a synthesis of the universal and the particular. Placing his arguments in conversation with Yannis Stravakakis who asks “Instead of erecting a wall between horizontalism and hegemonic processes... wouldn’t it be more productive to study their irreducible interpenetration, the opportunities and the challenges it creates? (2014, 121),” Day responds that “yes, indeed, I think it would” (2016, 190).¹⁸⁵ I am of the same opinion and, like Day, argue that while counter hegemonic and autonomous politics are not always theoretically compatible, each one can be deployed strategically to address the specificities of conjuncture in which it is deployed. Escobar’s theorizing of the connections between counter hegemonic and pluriversal politics is instructive in this regard.

I cite these deeply theoretical debates in such detail above because they have fundamental consequences for the question of at which scale intervention against petro-hegemony, and the matrix of domination with which is interwoven, is appropriate. Should we address them at the scale of a mass, translocal, and transnational movement of movements or at the unit of

¹⁸⁵ For a more detailed conversation about false binary between horizontalist and hegemonic political strategy and possible synergies between them also see James McCarthy’s *Scale, Sovereignty and Strategy in Environmental Governance* (2005).

the prefigurative, self-organized, autonomous diffuse networks of affinity groups? Day and Escobar have both puzzled over similar questions.

While Escobar is certainly critical of revolutionary theory and strategy with roots in the modern Western cannon, and thus forces us to question the appropriateness of counter hegemonic strategy to subaltern struggle, let us not forget that it is the World Social Forum's famous meme "another world is possible" from which Escobar derives his reformulation "another possible is possible." This is significant because the World Social Forum's claim "another world is possible" was a direct and deliberately counter hegemonic response to the hegemonic TINA doctrine (There Is No Alternative) in the days when the hegemony of neoliberalism seemed at its greatest. Indeed, invoking this counter hegemonic articulation, Escobar is particularly interested in exploring whether Leftist political strategies emerging out of modernist dual ontology might nonetheless have some compatibility or synergy with pluriversal politics. His work suggests that in the case of counter hegemony and the pluriversal there is some potential for synergy. It is worth quoting him in full:

In their practice many social movements blur the boundaries between counter-hegemonic and ontological politics. Drawing on Audrey Lorde's (1984) well-known provocation ("The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"), one might say that counter-hegemonic politics is that which uses the masters' tools to push radical demands forward, to the system's breaking point if possible. This might involve modernist practices such as claiming rights, using legal instruments ... negotiating political rights with the State, etc. Strategies of this sort make counter-hegemonic use of hegemonic tools with varying degrees of effectiveness... For these strategies to move along pluriversal politics, nevertheless, they need to take on an explicit political ontological character... while much can be done to advance these causes through the counter-hegemonic use of hegemonic tools, they also require an explicit ontological framing that advances the principles of interdependence and relationality. (Escobar forthcoming, 18)

Thus, the social movements Escobar describes move between pluriversal and hegemonic political strategies. However, just as my discussion of intersectional populism suggested in Chapter Five, aligning hegemonic and pluriversal strategies will require a deep commitment to the difference in identities, worldviews, communities and range of possibles constituting a mass movement. If we want a pluriversal hegemony, we must, as Escobar writes, insist that “each person, group, or community has to find its own way to engage with these axes, such as the re-localization of activities, the re-communalization of social life, and the depatriarchalization and decolonization of existence, in ways appropriate to their own location” (forthcoming, 8). Nevertheless, it is possible, at least in theory, to countenance a hegemony that articulates a world of many worlds, a pluriversal hegemony. Indeed, to take the argument further, suffusing counter hegemonic politics with a pluriversal perspective may, in fact, be crucial to refuting the homogenizing and universalizing tendencies of counter hegemonic politics and mass movement strategy while retaining the advantages of mass collective action.

A pluriversal hegemonic project that is able to develop a mass movement out of Blockadia while also countering the homogenizing, and potentially authoritarian tendencies of hegemonic politics would depend upon the reconciliation of two positions that are far too often articulated as oppositional. On the one hand, are political strategies orientated towards the development of “critical mass.” In Gramscian terms, this follows the logic that organizing and mobilizing millions of people into a mass movement through a war of position is the only response commensurate with the scale and influence of the hegemon. Having done so, the movement institutionalizes and consolidates consent and gains hegemonic status through

a war of maneuver. The strategies derived from this theory of change are clearly articulated in Jonathan Smucker's *Hegemony How To* (2017) and have informed some of the key arguments made in this dissertation. His book is a defense of mass movements and building collective power against the anti-authoritarian autonomous currents of the Left that he argues have eschewed engagement with power. On the other hand, are political interventions and a theory of change which prioritizes "critical connections," or critical relationships over critical mass. This orientation is best articulated in Adrienne Maree Brown's *Emergent Strategy*. One of the purposes of her book is to encourage activists to "move at the speed of trust." As she says, "We need each other. I love the idea of shifting from "mile wide inch deep" movements to "inch wide mile deep" movements that schism the existing paradigm" (2017,). Strategies developed from this perspective are orientated towards generating deep interpersonal and intercommunal relationships developed through a praxis of principled accountability, responsibility and trust within and between social groups seeking radical social change.

Smucker certainly agrees that relationships, connection, and identity are fundamental to social movements. As he writes "There can be no serious social movement... without a corresponding serious group identity; a sense of solidarity and cohesion that encourages core member to contribute an exceptional level of commitment..." (2017, 96). However, as he goes on to explain, too much emphasis on the identity and relationships within the group can undermine movement building. As he argues, "The stronger the identity and cohesion of the group the more likely its members are to become alienated from other groups and from society as a whole" (ibid). This highlights what Smucker calls the political identity paradox or the idea that "while political groups require strong internal identity to foster the

commitment needed for effective political struggle, this same cohesion tends to isolate the group. And isolated groups are hard-pressed to achieve political goals” (ibid). He argues that these positions are in tension with one another, stating that “a group that focuses only on instrumental goals and neglects the well-being of its members will likely burn out its core while repelling potential newcomers,” meanwhile, “groups [that] become content to functionally operate as little more than therapy, [lose] interest in questions of political efficacy and strategy” (Smucker 2017, 80). Thus, a commitment to relationships should not distract from a movement’s instrumental goals.

For Maree Brown, however, relationships or connection *is* an instrumental goal. According to her, the very point of relationship building and a commitment to critical connections is to break out of political isolation. Too often, we think of group identity and the relationships that go into developing solidarity as a barrier to broadening our movement. Maree Brown suggests, instead, that it is through making connections and relationships that our collective strength may be realized. Maree Brown identifies the consequences of a singular orientation towards achieving critical mass as including burnout, distrust, fragmentation, and reproducing the very modes of domination our movements oppose. The quality of a connection is what makes it critical and this is crucial to social transformation because relationships determine the strength of our movements.

Smucker certainly believes relationships are a vital component of social movements too, and Maree Brown certainly would not suggest that collective action is anything other than imperative. Indeed, I argue that we should resist the temptation to read these two movement

intellectuals against one another and instead read them together, understanding how each compliments the other's intervention. Therefore, cultivating the material and ideological ground of Blockadia must involve the combination of critical connections and critical mass.

This is a movement praxis that recognizes that achieving a sustainable, democratic and resilient critical mass depends upon a commitment to critical connections. It also means remaining wary of over indulgence in what Smucker calls "the life of the group" and a singular attention to the relationships prefiguring the world we want at the expense of political and strategic engagement with the powers that be.¹⁸⁶ Instead of movements that are "inch deep and mile wide" or "mile deep and inch wide," why not strive towards the construction of movements that are mile deep *and* mile wide. This is not the contradiction it is often presented as. Rather, we can develop a movement praxis by which critical connections form the foundations of critical mass. Indeed, a pluriversal hegemony would depend upon resilient, accountable and democratic structure and culture infused into critical mass through the development of critical relationships. In this way counter hegemonic action could theoretically scale up without imposing homogeneity or reproducing domination. I later illustrate the mechanics of such a project through contrasting metaphors of *aggrandizement to scale* and *aggregation to scale*.

¹⁸⁶ This means developing internal strategies that both eschew insularity and embrace an outwards orientation, whilst also maintain group cohesion and solidarity. Smucker provides some direction here, writing that in order "to prevent insularity and encapsulation in our social movements and organizations, core members have to take responsibility for ensuring collective rituals and alternative narratives are oriented to connect with broader bases of society" (2017, 85). This is one of the tasks to which counter hegemonic actors must devote themselves. The other, however, is to actually represent the differences in our movement more honestly.

My assessment of intersectional populism in Chapter Five provided some insight into how pluriversal hegemony may be developed at the local scale. However, we must question whether the critical connections intersectional populism requires are possible across struggles that are not local and place-based, where differences are more likely to be divisive. This means engaging with how intersectional populism at the local scale might be transformed into a pluriversal hegemonic alignment that transcends the local. We are, therefore, approaching the possibility of pluriversal, translocal, transnational solidarities across space and across difference. Stefan Kipfer's summary of Gramsci's project as one that fundamentally addresses the question of solidarity across space and difference is helpful here:

Gramsci presented communist hegemony as an uncertain and open-ended project to build a new historic bloc that articulates short-term with longer-term revolutionary horizons while transforming the multiscale spatial divides (within and between regions, between and across national divides) that traverse the relations between sociopolitical forces. A war of movement and a war of position, communist hegemony represented a modern form of cosmopolitanism within which the national is of strategic importance even as it is built upon both sub national alliances and transnational allegiances. (2013, 86)

One of the central questions driving my dissertation has been, given Gramsci's project, why have we, on the progressive Left, so often failed to realize broad based alignment, a critical cosmopolitanism, across space and difference? Reasons are multiple and complicated. To simplify, however, on the one hand, we might cite the profoundly tragic (and comical) stereotype, characteristic of the Left that we continually factionalize and divide into smaller and smaller articulations of our own purist interpretation of justice. This is the tendency Smucker chastises. On the other hand, it is also the case that despite Gramsci's and Gramscian's concern with alliances across difference, counter hegemonic projects and

alignments have not paid enough attention to how the very real differences that exist between different constituents of social movements, based on relations of class, gender, race, and particularity, are held in tension or negotiated (Short 2013). Developers of counter hegemonic strategy and theory have not devoted enough thought to the ways cultivating deep rooted relationships and connections form the foundations of counter hegemonic alignment. This is where Maree Brown's insights are so crucial. However, while Maree Brown and Smucker help us think more carefully about collective action and connection across difference, we need also need to think more carefully about collective action and connection across space. Addressing the question of scaling up across space where Part Three will make this chapter's major contribution.

To conclude Part Two, then, fusing the insights of critical mass with critical connections is fundamental to addressing the complexities of scaling up in a pluriversal hegemonic politics. Thus, critical mass, building movements at scale and connecting them across scale, is not necessarily authoritarian or anti-democratic if it relies upon a deep commitment to critical connections. Out of this, I believe, we might construct a translocal, pluriversal hegemonic alignment. The final section of this chapter explores what this might look like in practice and asks not *whether* movements should grow but *how* they might grow.

Part Three: Aggregating to Scale

In Part One of this chapter I examined the different scales at which hegemonic forces operate. I provided example of how we can best understand the interaction between these

different scales through a concept I called layered hegemonies. I argued that in recognizing the layers of hegemonic forces against which the climate justice movement is positioned, it can be tempting to assume that the only way to address a crisis of this scale is to grow and expand a social movement that is commensurate with the scale of our adversaries. However, Part Two then problematized notions of “scaling up” by exploring the ways that growing a counter hegemonic movement, and engaging in hegemonic politics at all, can reinforce totalitarian or authoritarian modes of domination within social movements. In response, I provided some theoretical examples of how the authoritarian tendencies of scaling up may be resisted through a deep commitment to both critical mass *and* critical connections.

In this final section, however, I will push the argument further by explaining how social movements that very often rely upon place-based populist discourses to mobilize constituents could, in some ways, deterritorialize alliances, forging a counter hegemonic alignment that isn't just situated in place but exists across geographic space. Paying close attention to the autonomist and anarchist arguments raised by Day and Graeber and the significance of critical connections Maree Brown identifies, I consider a mode of scaling movements up called *aggregating to scale*. I argue this mode helps us eschew many of the authoritarian tendencies that anarchists and autonomists recognize in hegemonic politics while continuing to allow us to make strategic intervention in hegemony's relations of power and develop broad alignment around visions of alternatives. I contrast this with a mode of scaling up called *aggrandizing to scale* which I argue retains authoritarian and expansionist tendencies. A movement that aggregates to scale through the emergence and cultivation of critical connections is one that can both launch an assault on petro-hegemony across translocal

networks while also establishing the foundations within Blockadia to confront the hegemony of the matrix of domination (and possibly replace it with an explicitly anti-totalitarian pluriversal hegemony). Rather like the aggregation of different groups into a movement, these are arguments derived from theories of change that do not necessarily fit neatly together and, as such, must be held together in productive tension rather than uncritically fused into a singular whole.

Building a counter hegemonic movement across space and difference that is capable of addressing the crisis in terms commensurate with its scale while resisting authoritarian tendencies of hegemonic politics requires us to cultivate the critical connections between disparate groups into a hegemonic alignment without those groups losing their distinctiveness and individuality. However, as Kipfer reminds us, “Gramsci recognized that hegemonic politics required much more than a recombination of “autonomous” social forces ... in an additive and instrumental project of coalition building. Linking [them] required a transformation of both” (2013, 95). The critical connections between groups through hegemonic alignment necessarily changes some of the identity of those groups and simultaneously the identity of the alignment.

Gramsci positioned solidarities, which we might also understand in terms of critical connections, as “integral to the generation of collective political wills” (Featherstone 2013, 68). Out of these connections emerges a transformation of the identities of the constituent parts into a hegemonic alignment. Remembering that Gramsci developed hegemony in the context of alignment across space, and particularly the divide between Italy’s rural peasantry

of the South and the working class of the industrialized North, Kipfer explains that “Gramsci argued that a national hegemonic project must itself be grounded in spatially differentiated constellation of subnational (but transnationally articulated) political forces” (2013, 91). Even as we reconsider the significance of the nation state in an intensely globalized world, alignment across space remains an integral component of hegemonic praxis.

Counter hegemonic alignment is what I’ve argued the climate justice movement is doing to scale up across space and difference. However, such an alignment can be developed in different ways. Two modes of scaling up that I’ve identified are aggrandizing to scale and aggregating to scale. Aggrandizing to scale is an expansionist and growth-oriented approach. Rather like an amoeba, it starts from a single point source and expands outwards as it encompasses, envelopes, speaks for, and comes to lead all the oppositional forces it interacts with. In this formation there is a single, centralized leadership and bureaucracy, and decisions are made through a hierarchical chain of command. The incentive of different constituent parts allowing themselves to be enveloped by such a formation is that with its size, and fusing of the many into a singular whole, the potential for actually overthrowing the current hegemonic order is increased.

Aggregating to scale is the opposite. Rather like the rhizomatic formations Deleuze and Guattari describe in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987),¹⁸⁷ the process of aggregating to scale unfolds as a multitude of source points (what Deleuze might call machines) send out shoots or tendrils that come into contact with one another and form critical connections tying one

¹⁸⁷ Though with some fundamental differences too, as I shall explain later.

group to the other, without the unfolding structuring a clear beginning or end. Unlike the rhizome, however, aggregating to scale is not entirely organic or emergent. It requires leadership, strategy and forethought and means very deliberately cultivating critical connections within, across and between frontlines. It is carried out in a way that connects different struggles and different constituents into a broader movement with a clearly articulated critique of the current hegemonic order and an enticing, but necessarily ambiguous, vision of a world of many worlds to replace it. More than simply adding up all these different oppositional social forces and combining them as autonomous units into a purely utilitarian coalition, aggregating to scale depends upon critical relationships cultivating the fundamental agreement that each group is its own autonomous, self-determining entity. Meanwhile, as Gramsci reminds us, each group must also be willing to accept that through alignment some of its characteristics will change, just as the group's introduction into the alignment will also transform the identity of that alignment. It is in the careful balancing of these two dynamics that critical connection and commitment to relationships based on consent is so important.

Aggregating to scale is clearly a more democratic and empowering approach to movement building and alignment than aggrandizement. However, it still requires clear leadership, strategic engagement with the relations of power through which hegemony is exercised, and an intention to replace the current hegemony with a new hegemonic ordering. These are all things autonomists and anarchists like Day and Graeber remain critical of. Nevertheless, the leadership model employed is not one of top-down-hierarchy, but the leaderful approach expressed through the leadership development strategies I explored in Chapter Five. As I

suggested Chapter Five, it is through the development of a leaderful movement that leaders from each node within this aggregation are able to begin forging the connections between them. Meanwhile, as Chapter Seven has argued, successfully engaging on all three terrains of struggle to contest hegemony depends upon agreement around a diversity of tactics and a spectrum of strategy. This agreement can only be forged through critical connection, relationships, accountability, flexibility and critical improvisation.

Assessing how the critical connections necessary for alignment could exist across space, the idea of aggregating to scale allows us to, at least partially, deterritorialize the theorizing of counter hegemonic alliances. Here, again, Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the rhizome is useful. A rhizome, as Mark Purcell helpfully elucidates, "is a network that is both acentered and nonhierarchical. Each element links to all others horizontally, on an equal footing. There is no "general," no central or more important body that commands the network" (2011, 7). Imagining counter hegemonic alignment occurring through the critical connections made within the rhizomatic structure of a movement of movements illuminates how a network of very different agents and organizations might coalesce to confront petro-hegemony, despite their spatial separation. These networks find one another and are forged together out of necessity as they confront the different spatialized and multiscale points of intervention on different terrains of struggle. In the oil assemblage, for example, activists in Richmond and Bay Area have formed a rhizomatic connection with those in Burnaby and British Columbia as they each engage different components of the industry's global reach. Out of these necessarily spatialized confrontations, the different actors on each frontline are now undoubtedly part of the same movement. They have articulated themselves together and

through the critical relationships forming between them (of which I will provide examples shortly) they are forging a resilient, flexible, connection that grows the movement.

In bringing Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic theory of connection together with Gramsci's hegemonic alignment, I am drawing on the insights of Mark Purcell (2011).¹⁸⁸ Purcell seeks "an approach to radical politics that values both 1) the post-Marxist neo-Gramscianism of Laclau and Mouffe, which embraces hegemony as a political project ... and 2) the relatively more anarchist/autonomist thought of Deleuze and Guattari ... which aims at a non-hegemonic politics" (ibid, 1). He accuses Day and Graeber of having imposed an unhelpful schism between non-hegemonic and hegemonic political projects in which Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome is placed on one side of the debate and Gramsci's hegemonic alignment on the other. Their preference for non-hegemonic politics, withdrawing engagement from any of the relations of power through which hegemony is exercised, and instead prefiguring horizontalist relationships through logics of affinity, can be traced back to the anarchist and autonomist tendencies of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy.¹⁸⁹ Deleuze and Guattari are themselves deeply suspicious of mass politics. As Purcell writes, "one place that non-hegemonic politics is manifested is in their insistence that there is "no becoming majoritarian." That is, [Deleuze and Guattari] reject any project to become the norm, to occupy the dominant center of society" (ibid, 2). Of course, rejecting the notion of becoming the majority is the antithesis of counter hegemonic political strategy. Despite their

¹⁸⁸ Purcell's argument is a direct response to Richard Day's book *Gramsci is Dead* (2005) in an essay he titled *Gramsci is Not Dead* (2011).

¹⁸⁹ Similarly, with their emphasis on the emergence of political action and strategy through the connections made out of a movement's rhizomatic formation, Deleuze and Guattari have a lot in common with Maree Brown's *Emergent Strategy*, while clearly Smucker is more closely allied to Gramsci in *Hegemony How To*.

differences, however, Purcell argues that there is far more to be gained from bringing the non-hegemonic and the hegemonic political strategies together in productive tension than in keeping them apart.

In particular, Purcell thinks there is great potential in forging Gramsci's hegemonic politics with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic politics to help think through strategies of alignment. As he writes "there is an important overlap between Gramsci and Deleuze and Guattari on this question of connections, of mobilized groups connecting up with each other to sustain and advance their project" (2011, 7). Purcell suggests we may bring these ideas together through something he calls *networks of equivalence* which is his own attempt to "imagine how a diverse proliferation of struggles can hold together in productive tension, to work in concert without being reduced to a single, unified movement" (ibid). This brings hegemonic and non-hegemonic politics together:

With Gramsci, [networks of equivalence] pursue systemic political change through broad coalitional movements. However, they do not seek to establish a new order, a new system of domination that replaces the neoliberal one with a 'better,' socialist one. With Deleuze and Guattari, they insist on autonomy and hope to ward off both domination and totalization, by the state or any other entity. (Purcell 2011, 8)

Here, the constituent parts of a movement are not "reduced to unity" and thus a totalizing account of politics but "neither do they remain entirely self-contained and autonomous" (ibid). Purcell argues for a both/and rather than an either/or approach to hegemonic and non-hegemonic politics. In this way, we could imagine the relationship between hegemony and non-hegemonic politics existing in a dynamic choreography that refuses binary or linear interpretations. As activists and academics engage with it to draw ideas and constituents together, this relationship must always be considered complex, porous, layered, flexible and

improvisational. Following Stephen Collis (2014), we might return to the idea of dual power as one way to bring both sides of the argument into productive tension. Nevertheless, the term dual power may limit us to the binary relationships that the relationships demands we escape. To understand this relationship fully we need terminology that transcends binaries.

I've borrowed Purcell's network of equivalence idea and adapted it into the concept I called aggregation to scale. Aggregation to scale is a more deliberately hegemonic project, however. While it follows a similar logic to the networks of equivalence, it neither abandons majoritarian politics nor the attempt to build a new, better order. Instead, it seeks an approach to majoritarianism that contains within it an inherent critique of the shortcomings of majoritarian politics. Despite all the very real risks associated with totalitarianism that Deleuze and Guattari, Graeber and Day are so concerned about, I do not see how movements can make radical social change without ultimately claiming and establishing a new order. New orders seem inevitable whether we want them or not. Indeed, if the proliferation of minoritarian spaces and the worlds they prefigure were to become normalized, as surely even Day and Graeber must hope they will be, then they would all be contained by a new order that they have shaped. It is not the existence of an order that we should problematize but rather the contents of it and how these become incorporated into our theories of change.

A new hegemonic order could well be one that encourages the flourishing of a pluriversal perspective and is able to encompass a world of many worlds. Moreover, while plans and visions are developed to help birth a new order, they can still make space for, be guided by, what Maree Brown calls *emergence*, or "the way small interactions and connections create

complex systems that become ecosystems and societies” (2017, 3). These, too, would be new orders of sorts and any new ordering that followed a logic of pluriversal hegemony would have to emerge out of such connections. Yet, we need political leadership, a leaderful movement, across this rhizome-like formation to help make the connections and build the coalitions and develop, or nurture the emergence, of strategies to confront the current hegemonic structures. Indeed, Maree Brown explains that emergent strategy is the *intentional* cultivation of these connections to make change. The critical connections cultivated through rhizomatic formations are vital to resilient, accountable, and democratic counter hegemonic alignments that exist not only in place but across space. Thus, in my engagement with Smucker, Gramsci, Day, Purcell, Deleuze and Guattari, and Maree Brown, I’ve sought to bring together counter hegemony, critical connections, and the rhizomatic form, to think through deterritorializing counter hegemonic alignment while maintaining a democratic and anti-authoritarian movement.

Although most, if not all, of the theorists I’ve engaged with here are activists in their own right and are drawing upon their own participation and experiences in movements for radical social change, so far this conversation has been deeply theoretical. However, I now want to ground the abstraction I’ve described as *deterritorializing counter hegemonic alignments through critical connection in rhizomatic formations* in the conjunctures of my own case study research. The significance of deterritorialized alliances was made clear to me through Zoltán Grossman’s book *Unlikely Alliances*. Despite his emphasis on place-based allegiances, he identifies the metaphor of the “thin green wall” as a very real set of alliances existing across space. We can think of this as a translocal counter hegemonic alignment

against petro-hegemony. Through a strategy of segmented localism in response to the vast, spatialized expanse of interconnecting fossil fuel infrastructure, activists throughout climate justice movement are already making critical connections across space in a rhizomatic formation. These emergent translocal solidarities are able to coordinate assaults on different points of intervention in petro-hegemony, throughout the global oil assemblage, while maintaining frontlines leadership and attention to local specificities. In this way the so called thin green wall blocking the transport of fossil fuels to and along the continent's Western seaboard is an excellent example of the movement aggregating frontiers of Blockadia to scale up their counter hegemonic resistance.

To confront the scale of the fossil fuel industry's reach, scaling up alliances across space is a necessity in the climate justice movement. As APEN's Miya Yoshitani explained, this is something activists in Richmond learned after they found themselves unable to defeat Chevron's upgrade at both the scale of regulation through the city council and the scale of regional agencies:

Some of the things that we were trying to get out of our demands with Chevron – in particular [regulating] particulate pollution and greenhouse gases [that was] part of their project and that would have helped prevent things like Bakken crude and tar sands from being processed in Richmond – when we tried to win those things, and lost some of that, not all of them, but some of that in that fight, we then went to try to do [the same] on a regional level, instead of a regulatory level. And then lost that because on a state level, the oil lobby was very effective at killing the progress that we were making on a regional level, [through] the Air Management District. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018).

To impose greater regulatory burden on the Bay Area refineries, Richmond's climate justice activists and their regional allies have tried shifting from one point of intervention to the next, across different scales of the oil assemblage. In legal theory and international relations

this is called venue shopping or forum shopping (Busch 2007). Miya described that process as “testing all the different arenas of struggle” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). This process has seen APEN devote a great deal more resources to developing coalitions and networks of allies on a regional and statewide scale.¹⁹⁰

Miya explained that in the context of the climate crisis, winning against Chevron in Richmond must ultimately mean shutting down the refinery. However, in the context of climate justice, winning must also mean doing so in a way and on a timeline “that is just for the communities and the workers.” Drawing on activists’ experience in Richmond, Miya suggested that such a victory could not be won in Richmond alone and would require complimentary state and federal transformations:

Building that base of power, changing the local politics so much and literally being able to shift the politics of the city council, that's all been really critical and important... But we know we're not going to win without complimentary state policy that's driven by the lessons that we've learned locally in Richmond... So being able to build power with other groups around the state who are experiencing very similar realities on a local level, and bringing those total forces to bear at a state level, we need that in order to actually win what we need to win in Richmond. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

Miya identified serious limitations to activism at the local scale, particularly when confronting an industry as large and powerful as the fossil fuel industry. All of this means

¹⁹⁰ Similarly, Gayle McLaughlin sought to share the lessons of the Richmond Progressive Alliance in communities up and down the state during her run for California’s Lieutenant Governor in 2018. Employing the same organize to run, run to organize philosophy in her statewide candidacy, McLaughlin helped nurture the critical connections necessary for scaling up the movement. Out of this has emerged over a dozen new local alliances and an attempt to build a California Progressive Alliance (CPA). The CPA would be “a statewide, non-partisan network of all the local alliances and other corporate-free progressives groups in California.” As Gayle told me, her run was primarily about building connections and relationship amongst progressives across the state: “I really want to keep all the wonderful relationships that I built statewide going, and build even more. As an organizer, this is key to making real progressive change” (personal communication, July 18th, 2018).

that, for organization like APEN, building coalitions of local frontline struggles against fossil fuel infrastructure across the state is a crucial part of countering petro-hegemony. According to Miya:

That's why we've put so much effort into building out new strategies of state organizing, state policy work, and state electoral work and built our own C4¹⁹¹...because without that there's no way that we get to the point where we're actually closing down the refinery, having a just transition for Richmond, where the local economy has transitioned in a way that actually meets real needs for local people... I don't know if we'll ever be a national organization, but I know we have to build power there as well because I don't think that the change that's necessary is possible without a transformation of the federal government too. (personal communication, July 12th, 2018)

For climate justice activists, however, this does not mean formalizing a statewide hierarchical, bureaucracy to tell local organizations where and when they need to ramp up the pressure. Miya argued that leadership and strategy had to come from the local frontlines. Meanwhile, decisions made at a statewide scale would have to be made through the lens and participation of different local activists. She argued that one of the fundamental failures of the larger, more powerful and better resourced ENGOs has been that they have no roots in local organizing and on the ground struggle. As she told me, their detachment from the local “is part of why they never win ... they don't get it right because they're not actually attached to how things happen on the ground, and what's actually really needed, and what works both strategy-wise, and solution and infrastructure-wise” (personal communication, July 12th, 2018). For Miya, one of the key takeaways from organizing in Richmond was that even as the movement has scaled up and leaders have formed statewide coalitions, statewide campaigns are “still grounded in local organizing, in the realities of people who are living in

¹⁹¹ Under the US Internal Revenue Service rules, a 501c3 non-profit organization may not engage in electoral and partisan activities or support politicians' campaigns, while a 501c4 may do political and legislative work like lobbying but may not advocate for specific political candidates.

Richmond, and who are fence line communities and who are on the frontlines of local struggle.” Here, I think, Miya articulates a strong argument for aggregating movements to scale rather than aggrandizement. Two examples of statewide and national coalitions that APEN contributes to are the Climate Justice Alliance (which spearheads the Our Power Campaign) and the California Environmental Justice Alliance. These maintain an organizational bureaucracy and employ their own staff but are all comprised of local frontlines organizations and are held together through a shared narrative and vision rather than strict hierarchy or division of labor.

Narrative can be a powerful tool not just for articulating alignments, as Chapter Five demonstrated, but also for scaling them up across space. Reflecting on his work supporting the Our Power campaign’s story-based strategy, Patrick Reinsborough told me that:

The Our Power campaign is fundamentally trying to address scale by having a shared narrative rather than necessarily having shared organization or shared bureaucracy, as often happens with national coalitions... I think one of the great powers of narrative for scaling organizing is that the right narrative can provide a unity that doesn't compromise the diversity of all of the different folks who are choosing to share it and be a part of it. (personal communication, September 26th, 2018)

This suggests narratives, like those premised upon intersectional populism, are not necessarily place-bound but can connect and align movements across space. Moreover, excited by 350.org’s ability to connect over 150 locally organized affiliated group in the US by “lock[ing] in some core meaning of their core memes and then release[ing] them and allow[ing] people to self-organize around them,” Patrick recently joined the organization to experiment with scaling up nationwide organizing through narrative intervention (personal

communication, September 26th, 2018).¹⁹² The right narrative allows for cohesion across different groups in different geographies without compromising particularity. As Patrick explained, such an articulation would be “like a common headline with as many different sub-headlines for different audiences and constituencies and communities as are needed to represent the authenticity of their experience of their struggles into a shared narrative that can invite, hopefully, millions more people,” because, according to him, “this is the scale we need to get to” (personal communication, September 26th, 2018). Theoretically, then, if that narrative were to become a hegemonic one, we could consider it to be pluriversal to the extent that it is able to represent the worldviews and visions of possibles of the multiplicity of its constituents. Narrative is thus a crucially important part of how movements might aggregate local organizations and actors to scale up across wider geographies.

One of the key narratives that has aligned frontlines in the so called thin green wall and has helped deterritorialize alliances is obviously that of keeping fossil fuels in the ground to halt climate breakdown.¹⁹³ However, as Patrick told me, the climate narrative is “also a way of framing the issue that allows lots of other social forces to engage, to build the actual political

¹⁹² Patrick is not uncritical of the simplified, universalizing tendencies of 350.org’s narrative. As he told me: “I’ve watched 350 since the beginning and seeing the power of how it has scaled, there’s tensions and complexities there...and most of that is sort of a [tension between] breadth versus depth...The original 350 narrative went pretty far and wide, because it was very focused on what, now, more and more people recognize is carbon fundamentalism... simplifying the whole story of the systemic crisis on our planet, the history that led up to it, and the changes that we need to make in order to address it, into this one number, 350 dot org, this one planetary boundary. That’s not a bad way to tell the story, in some ways, but 350 has taken a long time to become the kind of organization that could tell a more holistic story” (personal communication, September 26th, 2018).

¹⁹³ It is worth noting here that the keep-it-in-the-ground framing is far from universally appreciated, even in the climate movement. For example, as Jean, Steve, and Janet told me, during the San Francisco March for Climate Jobs and Justice in 2018, the People’s Climate Movement national committee (which has organized that last few mass People’s Climate Marches) was very concerned that the Californian activists’ demands to keep fossil fuels in the ground could antagonize potential allies in the labor movement (personal communication, July 18th, 2018). The march’s dual emphasis on jobs and climate justice, however, saw union chapters across the Bay Area pledge their support for it. This indicates that where keep-it-in-the-ground is a leading frame, it must be accompanied by equally important demands for investment in alternative sources of livelihoods.

and economic power, necessary to take on the fossil fuel industry” (personal communication, September 26th, 2018). I’ve described many of the place-bound alliance building narratives I encountered in the movement in Chapter Five. However, to understand how a rhizomatic movement might be aligned across space through narrative, we need to pay attention to the way a set of memes, meanings, or visions, are “locked in,” while also allowing constituent groups to self-organize and to develop strategies appropriate to their context. One example of this was the song-sharing between the Secwepemc and Bay Area Activists I described in previous chapters. The warrior women’s song that was sung at almost every direct action event I witnessed in British Columbia was shared with activists seeking to prevent BAAQMD’s approval of permits for the expansion of Phillips 66’s Rodeo Refinery. Pennie Opal Plant from Idle No More SF Bay told me that in singing this song as they left the hearing room, the one hundred or so activists involved were very deliberately making the connection between their opposition to tar sands refining in the Bay Area and the frontlines of struggle in British Columbia (personal communication, July 19th, 2018). By articulating their solidarity with First Nations currently fighting the Trans Mountain pipeline through resisting a shared adversary, these activists have strengthened the critical connections between their two frontlines.

In addition to expressing solidarity through shared symbols and songs, or through engagement with the regulatory system, activists in the Bay Area also blockaded Kinder Morgan’s train depot in Richmond on at least two occasions for several hours. Their press releases framed climate change, health implications impacting local residents, and asserting

Indigenous sovereignty, as shared reasons for the frontlines in Burnaby and Richmond connecting their struggles to confront a common enemy.

Despite the importance of narrative, these critical connections are not just discursive, or comprised of narratives alone, nor are they born out of simple moral obligation. They are developed in the knowledge that the relationships that exist between things matters and, thus, out of the strategic imperative of fighting the industry in its upstream, midstream and downstream operations. The activists who blockaded Kinder Morgan's gates in Richmond did so not just out of an ethical or ideological commitment to movement allies in British Columbia, but to draw attention to the dangers of tar sands refining locally in the Bay Area. The connections linking Burnaby to Richmond, Richmond to the Bakken oil fields of the Dakotas, or Richmond to Standing Rock through the development of Bakken shale economy, are articulated strategically to align the movement across the continent. As Naomi Klein writes:

The various toxic threats these communities are up against seem to be awakening impulses that are universal, even primal—whether it's the fierce drive to protect children from harm, or a deep connection to land that had been previously suppressed. And though reported in the mainstream press as isolated protests against specific projects, these sites of resistance increasingly see themselves as part of a global movement... Social media in particular has allowed geographically isolated communities to tell their stories to the world, and for those stories, in turn, to become part of a transnational narrative about resistance to a common ecological crisis. (2014, 262)

While these impulses may well be universal, their articulation into alignment across scale has also paid close attention to difference and particularity. Yet, as Klein goes on to explain, the alignments forged in particular places across the geography of the oil assemblage are also about strategic interventions where the industry is vulnerable:

What these campaigns are discovering is that while it's next to impossible to win a direct fight against the fossil fuel companies on their home turf, the chances of victory greatly increase when the battleground extends into a territory where the industry is significantly weaker—places where nonextractive ways of life still flourish and where residents (and politicians) are less addicted to petro and coal dollars. (2014, 277).

Out of these connections frontlines communities are aggregating the movement to scale. Through resistance to the same global infrastructure, their alignment against fossil fuels throughout the commodity chain manifests itself as a material and strategic interest that connects these frontlines together.

All this might suggest that the forging of these connections is easy when in actual fact they take a great deal of work and successful alignment is never guaranteed. While the connections formed through Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome seem to occur organically in their theorizing, a hegemonic alignment in which constituents aggregate themselves together to scale needs to be cultivated and nurtured by movement leaders at different nodes of the network. Grassroots leaders can often play this role like they do in the Climate Justice Alliance. However, in the cases I studied, organizations like Greenpeace, Stand.earth, and 350.org (all of which have a strong presence in both the Bay Area and the Vancouver region) have also been important actors facilitating the connections between these two frontlines. For example, Stand.earth has helped facilitate meetings between Tsleil-Waututh campaigners and activists in the Bay Area. Such meetings have included press conferences, panels and workshops for community members to attend and learn more about the connections between the frontlines.

In September 2018, Stand.earth organized a panel with Tsleil-Waututh campaigner Cedar George, Idle No More and Stand.earth activist, Isabella Zizi , Sunflower Alliance member, Shoshana Wechsler, Tsleil-Waututh Councilor and Chair of the Sacred Trust, Charlene Aleck, Contra Costa County Supervisor and BAAQMD member, John Gioia, and Idle No More's Pennie Opal Plant. The panelists explained the importance of confronting the industry at all stages of the supply chain, shared experiences from their local contexts, and articulated the connections between their struggles in terms of climate injustice and the systemic roots of the crisis. The following day, Idle No More SF Bay and Indigenous Women of the Americas led a prayer walk and teach in with Tsleil-Waututh campaigners at the Philips 66 refinery in Rodeo to educate the community about the connections between their frontlines ([Stand.earth 2018](#)).

The relationship between activists in the Bay Area and British Columbia has also been used strategically to put more pressure on BAAQMD. For example, in November 2018, Stand.earth's International Programs Direct, Tzeborah Berman, Charlene Aleck, and Pennie Opal Plant presented to a BAAQMD hearing together on the specific dangers associated with refining tar sands and diluted bitumen as well as the broader implications of expanding markets for tar sands ([Stand.earth 2018b](#)). Both the panel and the hearing were livestreamed by Stand.earth and shared on social media. In instances like this the connections between these frontlines are strengthened and articulated publicly as alignments within the broader movement for climate justice. Behind the scenes, these convergences help activists coordinate their strategies to target different points of intervention according to where in the

oil assemblage they are each situated. These examples also demonstrate how connections don't necessarily just happen but require cultivation and leadership.

Finally, following direct action events in 2017 and the growing awareness of the connections between the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline in Canada to refinery upgrades and increased tanker traffic in the Bay Area in 2018, a regional Bay Area network has emerged called the Protect the Bay Coalition. After two years of campaigners demonstrating the connections between tar sands extraction in Alberta to its transportation through British Columbia to shipping it down the West Coast to the Bay Area refineries, grassroots activists in the Bay Area are prioritizing resistance to tar sands. This coalition of organizations developed out of the growing concerns that refineries are upgrading their equipment specifically to process tar sands from Canada and other heavy sour crude sources. The coalition, comprised of several organizations including Communities for a Better Environment, Sunflower Alliance, Idle No More, and Stand.earth, formed in 2019 determined, "to prevent the expansion of the Phillips 66 refinery and marine terminal in Rodeo that would allow it to import toxic crude oils like tar sands from Canada." As they say on their website, "We will NOT allow our community to be poisoned any more than it already has been by increasing the amount of tar sands refined in our communities" (Protect the Bay 2019). This example is particularly significant because it demonstrates how the rhizomatic connection between Burnaby and Richmond created an offshoot of its own in the form of a new regional coalition.

As Naomi Klein says, the flipside of the growing threat of the carbon boom in North America, and especially the threat tar sands pose to communities along the commodity chain, is that against the expansion of upstream, midstream, and downstream operations a burgeoning and increasingly interconnected movement of local movements is being articulated into alignment. Just like place-based alliances, critical connections across space are developed out of more than ideological and discursive commitments and are rooted in material and strategic interests. The strategic logic connecting Burnaby and Richmond is quite simple: if activists in Burnaby can prevent the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline, communities in Richmond won't have to deal with the burden of increased exposure to toxins from upgraded refineries processing more toxic crude. Meanwhile, if activists in the Bay Area can prevent refineries from expanding to process heavier crude, they will cut off an important market for diluted bitumen imports. This damages the economic prospects of the tar sands, rendering tar sands extraction a less attractive investment, and giving anti-tar sands activists in Canada more strategic leverage. Together, alignment across midstream and downstream interventions contribute to a strategy of segmented localism in which Albertan tar sands may be kept in the ground at the site of extraction, as the industry's supply lines are disrupted, transportation routes intercepted, and markets for its produce are closed down. Isolating the industry in this way, activists may be able to keep vast reserves of some the world's most carbon intensive oil in the ground and unburned, thus contributing to global efforts to arrest climate catastrophe. The question, now, is: how does the process of aggregating these frontiers to scale the movement up cultivate the material and ideological terrain for a broader confrontation with the matrix of domination with which petro-hegemony is so deeply entwined?

From the examples provided above, we can see the emergence of a climate justice movement that is not fixed in Blockadia but is, rather, moving through Blockadia and articulating a pluriversal alignment of a movement of movements. As it moves through these frontlines, I argue, the movement is sowing the seeds and cultivating the material and ideological terrain for a counter hegemonic assault on the matrix of domination. Yet, in their reflections on the potential emergence of Climate X¹⁹⁴ as a counter hegemonic response to Climate Leviathan, Mann and Wainwright provocatively, and I would add mostly unfairly, argue that the climate justice movement is not nearly as radical as its constituents might like to think it is:

As fervently as we might demand “system change not climate change,” we have yet to really elaborate – let alone in a democratic or broad-based manner – what “system change” looks like beyond the absence of fossil fuels. Indeed, most of the time, the tacit assumption is that “system change” means a green, renewable based capitalism. We find ourselves focused almost entirely on environmental “bad guy” capitalists like mining or petroleum corporations, as if without them things would be mostly acceptable ...” (2018, 170-171)

Their provocation is one I’ve left unanswered throughout much of the dissertation, but I should now rise to it.

On the one hand, their critique could well be levelled at my own contribution to climate justice scholarship and activism. The arguments in these pages have specifically concerned interventions against the “bad guy capitalists” represented by fossil fuel industry on the

¹⁹⁴ As a reminder, Climate X would be born out of a global revolution made in the name of climate justice. Because they don’t know what exactly it could look like, Mann and Wainwright say X is the most appropriate denominator to describe this new world. “Climate X is worldly and open, and affirms the autonomous dignity of all. It must be a movement of the community of all – including the excluded – that affirms climate justice and popular freedoms against capital and planetary sovereignty.” They go on to explain that the founding principles of Climate X are equality, dignity, solidarity but question whether “that planet is imaginable, let alone realizable?” (2018, 180).

frontlines of Blockadia. Moreover, I have provided only relatively vague suggestions of visions of futures around which the movement could articulate a broad, deep, and pluriversal alignment. However, this lack of precision does not indicate the absence of visions of system change, but rather the multiplicity of visions on Blockadia's frontlines. Indeed, local struggles against mining and petroleum corporations around the globe see communities come together and in doing so, they imagine the worlds they want to see. Other worlds are made possible through this act of coming together. Invariably, these worlds are not simply what we have now but with the absence of fossil fuels. Just transitions are specific to the contexts in which they are being fought over, and, in each of these frontlines, organizers and campaigners help develop community consciousness of the many other worlds that possible. These visions, including a multiplicity of just transitions, go far beyond the embrace of "renewable capitalism" of which Mann and Wainwright have accused the movement. In fact, without actually engaging with frontlines activists in their theoretical debates, Mann and Wainwright have missed this point almost entirely. As such, while they call for a movement that cultivates the material and ideological terrain to develop revolutionary potential in the name of climate justice, their argument ignores the ways climate justice activists are already doing exactly this in their confrontations with the fossil fuel industry in Blockadia.

Through activism in Blockadia, climate justice activists can be, or otherwise are, developing the discursive interventions, narrative alignments, and strategic tools necessary for a broad-based counter hegemonic assault on the matrix of domination. By organizing communities to confront petro-hegemony in many different points of intervention and on different terrains of struggle, organizers are providing onramps for a wider community consciousness of the

systemic roots of the climate crisis. Through these interventions they are illustrating why the fossil fuel industry is merely a symptom of the matrix of domination. In challenging this symptom, however, activists are laying the groundwork for a more systematic confrontation with the hegemonic confluence of extractivism, capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and racism. Confrontation with the industry thus becomes symbolic of these systemic critiques but is not substituted for them. Almost all of the activists I talked to demonstrated deep awareness that while the industry symbolized, thrived upon, and indeed exacerbated environmental racism, patriarchal relations to the land, extractivist ideology, and settler colonial arrogance, none of these would necessarily go away simply by shutting down refineries or rescinding pipeline permits. Time and again, the economics of a just transition was invoked as a crucial component of the confrontation with the fossil fuel industry precisely because activists were profoundly aware of the deeper systemic roots of their struggles that couldn't be addressed by shutting down the fossil fuel industry alone. In fact, this understanding is what formed the foundations of many of their commitments to alliance building across a multiplicity of social struggles and was built into the messages activists would deploy on the frontlines.

As most frontlines activists would argue, the struggles against the fossil fuel industry are inherently connected to struggles against racism, colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, and extractivism. In addition, Naomi Klein writes that activism in Blockadia is fostering community desires for self-determination, deeper democracy, and community control over shared resources:

Resistance to high-risk extreme extraction is building a global, grassroots, and broad-based network the likes of which the environmental movement has rarely seen. And perhaps this phenomenon shouldn't even be referred to as an environmental movement at all, since it is primarily driven by a desire for a deeper form of democracy, one that provides communities with real control over those resources that are most critical to collective survival—the health of the water, air, and soil. (2014, 254)

While Mann and Wainwright are still debating whether or not the climate justice movement is radical or not, or whether Klein herself is opposed to all forms of capitalism or just neoliberal capitalism, the movement is laying the groundwork for a counter hegemonic and systemic assault on the matrix of domination. The expansion of Blockadia is mobilizing a consciousness in which the protection of water, health, air and soil, are closely entwined with the desires for community self-determination and deeper democracy. This desire sets up each of these communities in direct conflict with the matrix of domination. Thus, the ideological and material terrain is cultivated as communities mobilize themselves in response to the threats to health, water, climate, air and soil posed by the fossil fuel industry. Organizers and campaigners help forge the critical connections between and within communities to provoke recognition of how exposure to these threats is stratified according to conjunctures within the matrix. In this way, resistance to fossil fuels also becomes the call for decolonialization, smashing the patriarchy, abolishing structural racism, and overthrowing capitalist extractivism.

Not only do communities build a certain consciousness through activism in Blockadia, they also learn to develop and execute strategies to challenge relations of consent, coercion, and compliance, and engage with different points of intervention. This means that in their confrontation, and transformation through engagement with, petro-hegemony they are

becoming equipped with skills and, potentially an analysis of power relations, that will allow them to fight against the matrix of domination too. Moreover, through interventions on particular points of intervention, activists are able to address multiple layers of hegemonic power. For example, by shifting discursive conditions against the fossil fuel industry, in many cases, activists are also disrupting the discursive conditions the matrix of domination itself depends upon. Similarly, by winning court rulings in favor of Indigenous and First Nations' right to self-determination on their territories, the Native Rights Based Strategic Framework helps set precedents to halt the encroachment of colonizing forces. Thus, through activism in Blockadia, communities are coming to terms with the systemic roots of petro-hegemony and the climate crisis. In doing so they are developing complimentary strategies that may help them intervene upon the relations of power petro-hegemony depends on but also in the relations of power that maintain the matrix of domination's hegemonic status.

All that being said, connecting up the different frontlines of Blockadia and cultivating revolutionary potential through them will not be enough to overthrow the matrix of domination. In order to aggregate to a scale that it is able to challenge the full reach of petro-hegemony and the matrix of domination, the movement must not just connect the frontlines of Blockadia, but build out of Blockadia, or perhaps build Blockadia out. By this I mean the movement must be, and in some cases very much is, cultivating critical connections between frontlines climate justice activism, climate justice activism behind the frontlines, and all the social struggles climate breakdown inevitably touches. Examples of activism and political engagement that takes place behind the frontlines might include Fossil Free and the global fossil fuel divestment campaign, Sunrise Movement and it's targeting of elected officials,

Extinction Rebellion's disruptive tactics to force governments to declare and act on climate emergency, the youth climate strikes, climate liability lawsuits against the industry, and the rise of the Green New Deal.

In addition, there are many electoral campaigns with which climate justice activists must decide whether or not they want to engage. For example, the Canadian Green Party's growing popularity and the emphasis on ambitious climate policy in the run up to the 2019 election helped place climate breakdown at the forefront of Canadian political discourses. Capitalizing on this opening, climate justice activists tried to use these elections to force the national conversation in the direction climate justice, First Nations' self-determination, and the country's relationship to fossil fuel extraction. Yet in doing so, they also risked reinforcing the legitimacy of the Canadian state as the source of final authority and decision-making power. Similarly, thanks in large part to youth activists with the Sunrise Movement, climate change is finally receiving significant attention in the Democratic Party Primaries in the US. In his run for the presidency Senator Bernie Sanders has offered a radical climate plan that aligns closely with the Green New Deal and learns from the mistakes of the project's earlier drafts. This plan would see massive state-led investment in energy transition, commits to full decarbonization of the economy on a timeline in line with what climate science demands, and promises to create 20 million new green jobs ([Berniesanders.com](https://www.berniesanders.com) 2019). Some climate justice activists view this is precisely the kind of radical action plan that is needed. But again, we must question how endorsements of this plan positions climate justice activists with regards to their relationship with the hegemony of state sovereignty and state-led solutions.

Party politics and the Green New Deal at the scale of the nation state could be considered very much in terms of aggrandizing to scale rather than aggregating to scale. They are in danger of institutionalizing top-down, one size fits all climate solutions, that are unaccountable to the movement and are led by institutions of the state that few within the radical contingents of the movement have much reason to trust. In some ways, these approaches reflect the organizations that promote them. For example, the centralization of decision-making power in the Sunrise Movement's organizational model mirrors that of many large bureaucratic ENGOs, although admittedly the introduction of local Sunrise chapters may have helped decentralize some decision making more recently. Similarly, the purpose of winning power through the state in party election campaigns would be to impose a set of policies and to have that imposition backed up with the coercive authority of the state. These are models of social change many within the movement are critical of.

All of this is to say that making the critical connections between frontlines climate justice leaders skeptical of consolidating the movement at the scale of the state and national organization seeking to do exactly this is rife with contradictions and complexities that climate justice activists must negotiate. Developing connections between frontline activists and their counterparts behind the frontlines is a challenging process because there are fundamental differences in organizational philosophy and theories of change. Rather than putting aside their differences, however, the question is whether they are able to engage with each other, coordinate together, and act and move with one another, despite their differences, or whether the contradictions are so great that cooperation is impossible. Again, a great deal

can be learned from Adrienne Maree Brown's emphasis on critical connections and relationships here.

Many of the debates about organizational philosophy, consolidation at scale, and theories of change are reflected through the climate justice movement's complicated relationship with the Green New Deal. The program may be one of the most powerful strategic interventions we currently have to intervene in relations of compliance. Strategies on in the war of economies are currently where interventions through the carbon rebellion framework are least forthcoming. A nationwide mobilization facilitated by the enormous resources at the US government's disposal to shift the economic base away from fossil fuels would totally upend the dynamic of dependency the fossil fuel industry currently enjoys. Intervention in the war of economies will require resources of this magnitude whether they are decentralized or otherwise. For this reason, however, many climate justice activists have been very supportive of the Green New Deal. Nevertheless, this state-led program could easily see dependency simply reinvented and reformed around the state and massive centralized renewable energy projects instead. In terms of climate justice, shifting dependency from one source of overwhelming authority to another is hardly a solution. Indeed, while agreeing with much of its contents, the Climate Justice Alliance refused to endorse Alexandria Ocasio Cortez' Green New Deal resolution, in part, for its failures to engage with and incorporate frontlines activists ([Climate Justice Alliance 2018](#)). In addition, Mann and Wainwright are very critical of Green New Deal solutions because they argue that, just like Roosevelt's original New Deal, the program is ultimately intended to save capitalism, the nation-state, and the modes of domination that rest upon them, at a time when these are in greatest crisis (2018). These

debates indicate the deep contradictions within the movement over how it scales up and at what scale climate solutions should be introduced.

All this being said, there are ways that the dynamic of dependency that the Green New Deal addresses could be reformed around interdependence within and between communities, as opposed to dependence on the state or corporations. Infusing the Green New Deal with grassroots, frontlines leadership and the just transition's principles of decarbonization, decolonization, democratization and decentralizing of energy and power could see a much larger degree of community self-determination built into the program. If climate justice activists are prepared to fight for the most radical possible interpretation of the Green New Deal, they may be able to shift its orientation away from a reformist agenda and infuse it with revolutionary potential.

The Green New Deal is a floating signifier, an empty category to which different people and politicians have attached their own meanings, hopes, desires, agendas and policy. Moreover, as the Climate Justice Alliance now argues, some of these have the potential to unleash enormous resources for frontlines' grassroots leaders to capture and develop their own context specific solutions in accordance with the economics of a just transition (2019b). The Green New Deal is not going away, indeed it has captured public attention and support in a way that arguably few climate policies ever have. As such, the program's meaning, resources, and the policies it includes must be fought over and won by the climate justice movement. We might consider this approach to the Green New Deal as a form of dual power in which the resources of the state are unleashed which can then be claimed by non-state

actors seeking to prefigure and advance just solutions that transcend capitalism and the state. For example, among many other contributions, Sanders' plan includes a \$40 billion Climate Justice Resiliency Fund for frontline communities "to recover from, and prepare for, the climate impacts... and providing those frontline and fenceline communities a just transition including real jobs, resilient infrastructure, economic development" ([Berniesanders.com](https://www.berniesanders.com) 2019). This, along with much more intentional inclusion of frontline leaders in the drafting of the policy, was amongst the key reasons the Climate Justice Alliance ultimately endorsed Sanders' Green New Deal ([Climate Justice Alliance 2019c](#)). Of course, as of writing, we have no idea whether this plan will ever be realized in policy but the fact that it has moved from the political fringe to the mainstream in such a short space of time is reason enough for engaging with its implications for expanding Blockadia in these final pages.

Clearly then, one way we might make interventions at the national scale accountable to frontlines communities, and simultaneously able to resist the centralization and bureaucratization so many attempts to consolidate movements at scale fall victim to, is to ensure that frontlines leadership is infused throughout these organizations and solutions. This process could follow a logic similar to that of the kind dual power intervention I described taking place in Richmond. Through winning local office, resources from local government were channeled towards climate justice activist organizations developing just solutions that depended neither upon the state nor any particular industry. A similar approach could transform the Green New Deal and many other progressive climate solutions that follow a logic of aggrandizing to scale into a program that follows a logic of aggregation to scale and pluriversal hegemonic projects. Meanwhile, we must remember that neither the Green New

Deal nor any state-led, top down climate solutions, are a silver bullet in defeating either petro-hegemony or the matrix of domination. They must be considered part of the spectrum of strategy through which we might counter these hegemonic forces. In this way, activists who want nothing to do with the state can focus their attention on other points of intervention through strategies, tactics, and organizations they are more aligned with. It would be a huge mistake, however, for the entire climate justice movement to ignore or reject engagement at this scale outright.

Finally, I have explored the debates around the Green New Deal here not just because it is relevant and timely, and certainly not because I think it is the only solution at scale that exists, but because it provides an important lens through which to think through how contingents of a movement of movements can address deeply held differences without disintegrating into ideological factionalism. The Green New Deal debate illustrates the complexities of building the movement out of Blockadia and, indeed, expanding the terrain on which Blockadia exists to make the connections necessary for a movement that is aggregating to scale. There will be principled, potentially irresolvable, disagreements over the scale at which the movement's power is consolidated and solutions advanced. The point isn't that we're all going to get along without tension but rather to develop relationships which, despite those ongoing disagreements, allow us to work together nonetheless. Ideas like dual power, the spectrum of strategy, and a diversity of points of intervention available through the carbon rebellion framework may be crucial to the negotiation of these relationships and could prove vital to further confrontation with the matrix of domination.

Conclusion

I introduced this chapter on the strategies, complexities and contradictions of the radical politics of scale through an account of climate justice activists' experiences with addressing scale in Richmond. Specifically, I explored the reaction to the passage of Governor Brown's flagship climate change legislation, AB 398 in 2017. This statewide bill not only disrupted activists' attempts to regulate Bay Area refineries through regional agencies, but also demonstrated the hegemonic status of neoliberal climate solutions that emerge out of, and reinforce, a global matrix of domination configured through the confluence of structural racism, capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Moreover, exposing the connections between oil infrastructure development in British Columbia and the Bay Area, activists showed how the bill will likely incentivize the expansion of a market for Canada's tar sands oil in California. This example thus drew our attention to the ways the expanse of fossil fuel infrastructure, contained within the global oil assemblage, is connecting frontlines struggles across space. Drawing on these lessons, I argued that the passage of this bill illustrates how the hegemonic influence of California's fossil fuel industry far exceeds the scale of local frontlines, and has been embedded in the state's broader economic, political and cultural terrains. This example highlighted the ways that frontline activists are strategizing around the different scales at which mutually reinforcing hegemonies exist. In doing so, it to set the scene for this chapter's main interventions. These were developed through exploration of three key ideas: layered hegemonies, problematizing critical mass, and aggregating to scale.

In Part One, I offered the concept of “layered hegemonies” as one way we might think about the relationship between hegemonies and counter hegemonies at different scales. I suggested that these hegemonic forces are inscribed within, compliment and reinforce one another, and that tactical enagement in specific points of intervention could challenge relations of consent, coercion and compliance shared between these layers. I then demonstrated how counter hegemonic agents confront the layering of hegemonic forces by growing their movements to a size, or to critical mass, so that they can engage with points of intervention on a full range of scales. Part Two, however, also problematized the assumption that achieving critical mass is an inherently emancipatory and democratic approach to radical social change. Exploring the tensions between horizontalist, non-majoritarian political strategies and counter hegemonic theories of change, I detailed the importance of combining critical connection and critical mass. I was not prepared to abandon majoritarian political strategy nor the aspiration towards scaling up our movements, however. As such, again searching for the potential of synthesis and synergy across strategic orientations towards scale, Part Three examined how activists in both case studies sought to connect their movements across space and difference in horizontal rhizomatic formations that nonetheless aspired towards hegemonic status. I suggested that an orientation towards aggregating to scale, rather than aggrandizement to scale, may facilitate the fluidity of connections and emergence within networks of movements, while still advancing leadership and coordination across them. I argued that this can allow us to engage in counter hegemony while also resisting some of the more totalitarian and anti-democratic tendencies of hegemonic politics. Through this process we might envision a pluriversal hegemony in which the next hegemonic order creates the

conditions necessary for a flourishing and thriving of many possibles, and a multiplicity of worldviews, towards which the principles of climate justice necessarily lead.

Finally, this chapter plays an important role in the broader interventions made throughout this dissertation. It has confronted a fundamental critique in my positioning of the climate justice movement's strategic goals. Through concepts like the carbon rebellion, I could be accused of framing climate justice simply in terms of keeping carbon in the ground and advancing a singular focus on "bad guy capitalists." This singular focus on the fossil fuel industry fails to account for the systemic roots of the climate crisis which are combined and operate through a hegemonic matrix of domination. However, I have always believed that the fossil fuel industry is just one actor, and petro-hegemony just one force, on a much larger landscape of revolutionary struggle for climate justice. Nevertheless, this chapter has sought to clarify the relationship between countering petro-hegemony and the broader task of overthrowing the hegemonic matrix of domination in terms of multiscale political strategy. Moving through, between, and out of the frontlines of Blockadia, I argued that the climate justice movement is developing the critical connections and the forging critical mass necessary for countering petro-hegemony. Meanwhile through their confrontations with petro-hegemony, activism in Blockadia is also cultivating the material and ideological terrain necessary for overthrowing the matrix of domination and establishing a pluriversal hegemony. In this way, then, we might imagine a movement that, as it aggregates to scale, is laying the foundations of a global revolution in the name of climate justice, for which, as Mann and Wainwright remind us, there is no historical precedent.

CONCLUSION

The climate crisis is terrifying, urgent, and brutally unjust. As the climate justice movement has so clearly articulated, however, our response to this crisis is also an opportunity to radically transform the systems of domination and extraction out of which the threat of climate collapse has emerged. Advancing a just transition away from the extractive economy and the ideas that perpetuate it, communities on the frontlines of resource extraction and climate disruption are leading with climate solutions that would not only rein in fossil fuel production and emissions but bring about fairer, more democratic, and more equitable ways of living. There is absolutely no guarantee that these efforts will be rewarded or that the climate crisis can be mitigated below catastrophic levels. Indeed, on most days the trajectory of climate (in)action portends the coming of a world of intensifying insecurity, violence, authoritarianism and ecological collapse. Moreover, a certain level of climate disruption and its consequences are “locked in” and their effects are already being felt, particularly by those least responsible and most vulnerable. Nevertheless, the degree and extent of those consequences, and our collective response to them, remain, only just, within our control. But time is clearly running out.

There is no “arc of the moral universe” that inherently “bends towards justice” and, as Naomi Klein and so many others have taught us, no one is coming to save us but ourselves. Keeping fossil fuels in the ground has emerged as a moral imperative and a vital strategy to avert climate breakdown. However, neither governments nor the fossil fuel industry are going to act upon this imperative with anything like the ambition, or on anything like timeline, climate

science and basic moral decency demands. It cannot be achieved without a mass movement of movements, more powerful and sophisticated than any we have seen before. As Gramsci reminds us, then, we must approach this situation with *pessimism of the intellect* and *optimism of the will*. In other words, we must be uncompromising in our assessment of the scale of this crisis and the structures and forces that stand in our way. Meanwhile, pessimism quickly descends into cynicism which in turn justifies inertia. Climate cynicism is even more cowardly and dangerous than climate denial. Optimism of the will is an antidote to despair that must be cultivated, but which can mobilize millions and inspire us to do things that may seem impossible today. Therefore, we must look for reasons to hope and then to act on that hope, as slim as it may seem. Rebecca Solnit puts it well:

Hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. It is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency. Hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal... To hope is to give yourself to the future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable. (2010, 29)

In some ways this dissertation has been an unashamed search for, and defense of, this kind of *active* hope. The campaigns and communities organizing on the frontlines of Blockadia that I have visited, despite all the challenges they've faced, offer reasons for hope and should inspire us to act. My dissertation is driven by both pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will. In petro-hegemony I have offered an unflinching account of the structures and forces against which we must align ourselves. Through the carbon rebellion and my study of the climate justice movement's strategies, narratives, and tactics, meanwhile, I hope to have offered a framework that may help guide our action as we confront the systemic roots of the climate crisis. These have nourished an optimism of the will.

This dissertation has studied power, strategy, and social movements. I embarked upon this endeavor knowing that much of what I believed previously about all three was wrong, or only partially right. As such, this dissertation has been an attempt to get more right and less wrong, starting by asking different questions. Through this dissertation, I have investigated relations of power as they pertain to the fossil fuel industry and the climate justice movement. In doing so, I have explored the strategies, narratives and tactics that are being deployed to intervene in these power relations. The questions driving my research and its contributions can be distilled into a relatively simple formulation: *how might we, as the climate justice movement, better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry and, through that understanding, develop strategies and tactics that can respond to it?* The answers, as I've shown, are complex and nuanced. I have not tried to identify, devise, or advocate for a 'winning strategy,' a game changing tactic, or the precise narrative that will organize and mobilize millions around our cause. In part this is because I have no reason to believe a single strategy, tactic, or narrative will ever be sufficient to produce the kind of radical social change that we need. It is also because climate justice activists are already very good at devising strategy, developing narratives, and deploying tactics. Instead, my contribution has been to develop a framework of understanding that organizes these strategies, narratives, and tactics into interventions in specific relations of power which scholars and activist alike might use to map and coordinate engagement with hegemonic relations of power.

I have theorized, developed, challenged, complicated, and advanced this framework over the course of each of the previous chapters. In concluding this dissertation, I want to demonstrate

how the arguments and ideas discussed in each chapter build upon one another to provide a holistic view of petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion. I want to demonstrate how this framework might be used and developed, contextualized and complexified. And, I want to show how the emergence of the carbon rebellion could be facilitated, encouraged, and cultivated on the frontlines of climate justice through concepts like intersectional populism, the spectrum of strategy, and aggregating to scale.

I started this dissertation with an account of climate justice, its revolutionary potential, and the imperative of keeping fossils in the ground and of focusing on the supply and production side of fossil fuel emissions. I argued that the climate justice movement's keep-it-in-the-ground contingent is one significant aspect of the movement's broader purpose. Through this discussion, I made a case for why the fossil fuel industry remains one of the paramount obstacles to climate action and climate justice and, therefore, why it must be defeated if climate justice is to be achieved. I also added a condition to this assertion which was that while the industry may be a paramount obstacle to achieving climate justice, removing the industry from the equation alone will not be enough to achieve climate justice. I argued that through confrontation with the industry, climate justice activists may cultivate a political terrain with further revolutionary potential. Nevertheless, this dissertation set out with the fossil fuel industry well and truly in its crosshairs. Understanding how its power operates, and thus how its power may be challenged, has been the primary concern related in these pages.

Seeking further insight into the operations of power I turned to Gramsci and in particular a rereading of his theory of hegemony. Here I came to understand power not as a unified thing one possesses but as a set of relationships shaped by different social actors' ability to make interventions in them. Through profound engagement with theoretical approaches to hegemony I advanced the case that in developing the term as a conceptual category, Gramsci intended for hegemony to indicate the simultaneous combination and relationship between the power relations of consent and coercion. I contended that theories of hegemony that emphasize consent to the exclusion of coercion are unable to offer us a holistic account of the maintenance, advancement, and contestation of hegemonic status. Delving deeper into Gramscian and Marxist thought, I added a third, primarily economic, relation of power that I argued must also necessarily be contained within the category of hegemony: compliance. Compliance blurs relations of consent and coercion and is founded on a dynamic of economic dependency upon conditions produced by the hegemon. In this rendition of hegemonic theory, consent defines the terrain of culture and civil society, coercion the terrain of the state and the enforcement of rules, and compliance defines the economic terrain. As such, hegemony contains within it three interrelated and interactive power relations: consent, coercion, and compliance. Counter hegemonic strategy must engage with all three. I believe this on its own may be a valuable addition to scholars' and activists' engagement with power. This rereading is intended to provoke conversation and debates concerning power and may be applicable in a wide variety of social struggles, not limited to climate justice.

Applying this revised account of hegemony and counter hegemony to the fossil fuel industry and the climate justice movement, I developed a theoretical framework through which we

might better understand and organize strategic interventions in each of the three hegemonic relations of power. Petro-hegemony, therefore, is the term I used to explain how the fossil fuel industry maintains and extends its interests by intervening in and shaping relations of consent, coercion, and compliance. Drawing on a wide range of literature and providing examples from each, I argued we could think of the industry mediating and organizing strategies to intervene in relations of consent through petro-culture, relations of coercion through the petro-state, and relations of compliance through petro-capitalism. Thus, petro-culture, petro-capitalism, and the petro-state are the constituent mediators of petro-hegemony. With examples from the literature and my two case studies I argued that this is one highly productive way of thinking about the power of the fossil fuel industry and offered it as an important contribution to theories of corporate hegemony and socioecological studies of the fossil fuel industry.

Gramscian scholarship doesn't just account for the power of the hegemon however, it also provides lessons for counter hegemonic, or as Jonathan Smucker calls them, "aspiring hegemonic" actors. To assess the strategies, tactics, and narratives the climate justice movement can leverage in response to this understanding of the industry's power, I positioned the climate justice movement as a counter hegemonic force and illustrated what this would mean for its interventions against the industry. In this way I developed the carbon rebellion framework as the mirror opposite of petro-hegemony. Activists can organize, deploy and assess their strategies through the carbon rebellion. Like petro-hegemony we can imagine interventions through the carbon rebellion as both contributing to the development of, and being organized by, three mediators: a political culture of opposition and creation for

climate justice (PCOC) through which interventions in relations of consent and alignment of interests are carried out, regimes of climate justice, through which the movement intervenes in relations of coercion, and the economics of a just transition, through which the movement can break the dynamic of dependency upon which relations of compliance are premised.

The carbon rebellion's PCOC corresponds to petro-culture under petro-hegemony, the regimes of climate justice correspond to the petro-state, and the economics of a just transition correspond to petro-capitalism. Between each of these mediators exists a terrain of struggle defined by either coercion, consent, or compliance, along with a vast array of corresponding points of intervention. Through these mediators the industry's agents and climate justice activists' advance strategies, narratives, and tactics to capture, infiltrate, challenge, remove, influence, and claim points of intervention. To overthrow petro-hegemony, climate justice activists engage in each terrain of struggle and claim victories over the most strategic points of intervention on each terrain.

Petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion is ultimately the answer I provide to how we might understand the industry's power and how, through that understanding, the climate justice movement could respond to it. I explored, challenged, and illustrated different dimensions of this argument through two case studies: Climate justice activism against the fossil fuel industry in Richmond, California and Burnaby, British Columbia. These case studies proved to be ripe with examples of the industry's interventions through the petro-state, petro-culture, and petro-capitalism. They also yielded crucial illustrations of the strategies, narratives and tactics climate justice activists are deploying against the industry. Identifying these

interventions in later chapters, I showed how they might be organized into the carbon rebellion framework. Nevertheless, the case studies offered only limited examples of this coordination and coherence across strategies already in operation. As such, I argued that we might understand the carbon rebellion as emergent in nascent forms but requiring deliberate cultivation and nourishment to facilitate its development and allow it to thrive on the frontlines of Blockadia.

Placing this theoretical framework in contexts of environmental racism, settler colonialism, neoliberal accumulation and dispossession, as well as relations of privilege and power within the movement, necessarily complicated and challenged these ideas in significant ways.

Encountering the messy realities of struggle on the frontlines, I came across disputes that climate justice activists must engage with productively, work through together, and where possible, resolve, if the carbon rebellion is to be realized. In this way, the case studies led me to several crucial questions about how the carbon rebellion might be organized and developed into a counter hegemonic formation in Blockadia, and what the implications of building such a force could be. Through an assessment of organizing and mobilizing strategies and an exploration of key debates over strategy and politics in the movement, the remainder of the dissertation engaged with vital questions about the formation and implications of counter hegemonic climate justice strategy in detail. In each instance I was looking for the potential of synthesis and synergy across divisions while doing justice to the value and authenticity of different arguments, as well as the distinct experiences upon which they are premised. I developed three concepts that help us move through these debates and

towards the counter hegemonic formation of carbon rebellion. These are intersectional populism, the spectrum of strategy, and aggregating to scale.

Chapter Five described the organizing strategies deployed in Richmond and Burnaby to articulate into alignment a broad and diverse alliance of interests and actors against fossil fuel projects and for climate justice. Drawing upon social movement literature, much of it written by activists, I analyzed these strategies according their discursive implications and the extent to which they fostered relationships of accountability and trust between the constituents of the campaigns I studied. I found that the discursive interventions in both case studies have invoked progressive populist rhetoric to align their respective communities through an “us versus them” narrative. In both cases, the *us* was broadly circumscribed and inclusive of a large diversity of peoples and social struggles. This was defined against an invasive or threatening *them*, in the form of the fossil fuel industry (particularly Chevron and Kinder Morgan) and their allies in government. This produced a universalizing narrative in which the entire community was framed as a cohesive unit positioned against fossil fuel projects. Emphasizing the centrality of race, class, gender and colonialism within these campaigns, I noted the importance of particularist discourses and relations of difference and privilege that such universalizing narratives erase or obscure. The tensions between particularist discourses, emphasizing very real differences and the primacy of identity, and universalizing discourses, that can build larger movements but risk remaining unaccountable to internal differences and relations of privilege, threaten the emergence of carbon rebellion. I worked through these tensions developing the term *intersectional populism*.

Drawing upon intersectionality theory and Collins' "matrix of domination," I argued that intersectionality cannot be reduced to the divisive pathologies of which identity politics is often accused. Instead, I worked with Collins (2012), Grossman (2017), Smucker (2017), and others, to reinforce intersectionality as a crucial movement building concept. I argued that intersectionality can articulate common ground across intersections of oppressive forces while remaining accountable to how the impacts of the fossil fuel economy are structured and stratified according to the interrelations of race, class, gender, and colonialism. In this way, discourses and movement practice inscribed with intersectional populism are able to both articulate common cause and a broad and cohesive "we" against an externalize "other," whilst foregrounding the lived experiences of, and positioning as movement leaders, those who are most marginalized by the interlocking matrix of domination that has brought the movement together. A resilient, accountable, and broad-based political culture of opposition and creation is fundamental to the formation of the carbon rebellion. Through the PCOC, I argued that a commitment to intersectional populism can help us produce a counter hegemonic alignment and alliance whose strength and numbers rest upon relations of accountability and trust. To this argument I also added the significance of materializing and not just articulating shared interests in order to forge solidarity with other social struggles. I demonstrated how the economics of a just transition could be part of that process.

Another set of deep divides these case studies identified within the climate justice movement concern debates over competing strategic orientations, and politico-strategic orientations, which currently make the formation and interventions of the carbon rebellion much more difficult. The carbon rebellion framework advances the idea that engagement with the full

range of points of intervention across all three terrains of struggle forms the foundations of counter hegemonic struggle. As such, a large and diverse array of tactics, narratives, and strategies are required to engage with all the available points of intervention on all three terrains of struggle. In other words, if our political or ideological commitments limit the range of tactics and strategies necessary to engage with the full range of available points of intervention, before we've even assessed what the situation requires, then we limit our counter hegemonic potential and hinder the development of the carbon rebellion. I explored how strategic prejudices, what I called politico-strategic orientations, limit the range of tactical interventions we could be advancing. I argued that in synthesizing, and where possible synergizing, the positions on different sides of these debates, we might contribute to the development of a spectrum of strategy.

I developed the spectrum of strategy concept to think about how a movement containing a large array of values, politics, experiences, and strategic preferences could, nonetheless, come to embrace a diversity of tactics. I argued that the spectrum of strategy helps us break out of a divisive binary that categorizes tactical interventions as either reformist or radical and instead places them all on a spectrum of confrontational to non-confrontational intervention. I developed this idea out of the potential for synthesis I discover in my assessment of each of the movement's three major strategic schisms: the role of the state in climate justice activism, the appropriateness of direct action, and preferences for either organizing or mobilizing strategies.

In debates concerning the role of the state in climate justice strategy, I sought to synthesize anti-authoritarian concerns with movement strategies that engage institutions of the state. The concepts of dual power and revolutionary reforms (Lahey 1976) were helpful here. They illustrated ways of engaging the state that do not inherently involve capitulating to its inevitability nor compromising on deeply held movement principles. In my discussion of the debate between organizing and mobilizing strategies, I argued that not only are both important but that the combination of the two is vital to advancing counter hegemonic strategy through the carbon rebellion. Working with the Engler brothers (2017), I show how mobilizing and organizing strategies have been synergized into a cyclical relationship that they call momentum-based organizing. Necessarily, this opened up a larger range of strategies and tactics available to the whole movement. Thirdly, in my assessment of debates over the appropriate use of direct action tactics, I argued that direct action may be considered appropriate and valuable when the surrounding social conditions in which it would be deployed allows tactics to be deployed relentlessly, escalate, and grow the movement's base of participation and support. This moved the debate over whether or not direct action may be considered appropriate away from investment different actors may have in maintaining relationships with elites or remaining true to political principles, and towards assessment of how the conditions on the ground might legitimize or delegitimize direct action.¹⁹⁵ Though synthesizing and synergizing positions held on all sides of these debates, the spectrum of strategy draws a multiplicity of strategies into carbon rebellion, makes commitments to a

¹⁹⁵ I added two caveats here. One was to recognize the extent to which almost all strategic preferences are inflected with political prejudices. The other was to invite readers to think broadly about how direct action could be legitimized and grow the base of support rather than allow the necessity of legitimizing direct action justify capitulation to a potentially more conservative base.

diversity of tactics possible, and, crucially, multiplies the number of points of intervention available to movement engagement.

The theoretical framework developed in these pages, combined with the conjunctural conditions I observed in both case studies, obliged me to thoroughly engage with questions of scale. These considerations proved to be of paramount importance to the construction, development, and revolutionary potential of carbon rebellion. I interpreted and analyzed scale in different ways. Firstly, working with Michael Watts' oil assemblage concept, I acknowledged the multiple scales at which the fossil fuel industry operates (2014). Fossil fuels and the fossil fuel industry simultaneously permeate our lives, politics, economy, and culture, at the bodily, local, regional, national and global scale. With examples from the California-statewide, context and the Canadian context, I showed that petro-hegemony may be defeated or overthrown at local and even regional scales, while remaining relatively intact at the national or statewide scale. This forces climate justice activists to consider interventions that address petro-hegemony beyond the confines of the local and to transcend the slogan, "think global, act local."

Secondly, the industry and petro-hegemony do not exist in isolation but interact with, shape, and are shaped by, the broader social structures, forces and conditions in which they operate. As such, petro-hegemony comes to thrive upon, depend upon, and shape, a wider matrix of domination structured by settler colonialism, structural racism, class, patriarchy, extractivism, and the violence that these inflict. Here, I suggested at the possibility of a layering of hegemonies in which hegemonies of different social forces complement and

thrive upon one another. Thus, we might consider how, following the logic of intersectionality out of which Collins' matrix of domination emerged, hegemonic white supremacy exists within and inscribes hegemonic neoliberalism and, therefore, how petro-hegemony exists within, makes possible, and thrives upon both white supremacy and neoliberalism. The layering of hegemonies means activists must engage with how their strategies, narratives, and tactics might be oriented towards the intersectional and multiscale characteristics of hegemonic domination.

The first and second interpretations and engagements with scale necessarily lead to the third: the scale at which carbon rebellion must confront petro-hegemony and the matrix of domination in which it is embedded. I encountered questions about the scale of the movement itself and the extent to which it can, and even necessarily should, scale up to a size commensurate with the forces and structures it opposes. I sought to engage with the revolutionary potential of carbon rebellion by showing how activism opposing the expansion of the fossil fuel industry is exposing movement constituents to the broader matrix of domination in which the industry operates. This means the carbon rebellion's intervention cannot be limited to petro-hegemony if petro-hegemony is to be overthrown. Thus, in order to contribute to what Mann and Wainwright call a global revolution in the name of climate justice, carbon rebellion must be developing revolutionary consciousness on the frontlines of Blockadia and scale this up and out of Blockadia.

This led me to consider how the climate justice movement and its counter hegemonic interventions might be scaled up through the carbon rebellion framework without replicating

the systems of hierarchy, domination, and authoritarianism embedded in contemporary, and all previous, hegemonic orderings and alignments. I placed theoretical insights on hegemony in conversation with anarchist and autonomist theory that is deeply critical of hegemonic politics and counter hegemonic engagement. Here I challenged assumptions within counter hegemonic political strategy about scaling up movements but remained committed to counter hegemonic strategy and the carbon rebellion as a framework of intervention. I argued that there is a tendency in hegemonic political strategy to aggrandize to scale but that a truly emancipatory and anti-authoritarian counter hegemonic strategy must resist this tendency in favor of an approach I called aggregating to scale.

Aggrandizing to scale is an approach to growing social movement that replicates authoritarian tendencies, erodes accountability, and relies upon centralized leadership in its organizational structure. In this model a movement grows out of a central hub or core and its constituents or members are absorbed into its orbit. The model promises a clear chain of command, an apparently efficient bureaucracy, common purpose and direction, and strength in numbers. Yet, embedded in its organizing logic is a drive towards conquest and expansionism for the sake of expansionism. These logics are likely to replicate some of the very modes of domination against which constituents of the movement are fighting. Drawing on Purcell (2011), Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and Adrienne Maree Brown (2017), I proposed a model of counter hegemonic movement building that is premised upon connection between different hubs and nodes of the movement. The movement's growth is measured in the number and quality of the connections between struggles, peoples, and organizations of which it is comprised. I called this aggregating to scale. The role of

movement leaders is to forge connections between struggles and to articulate alignment and solidarity. Each constituent part of the movement retains its own identity and remains an entity unto itself rather than being absorbed into a monolithic formation. Nevertheless, in forging connections with others to form a mass movement, aggregating to scale also requires that each constituent part of the movement's identity is changed in the process of alignment.

My contribution here was to fuse orientations towards critical mass and critical connection, orientations towards hegemonic and non-hegemonic politics, together in organizing model that aligns a broad and diverse coalition of constituents while allowing those constituents to retain their individuality and autonomy. In this way, I have argued for a counter hegemonic politics that achieves critical mass through the cultivation of critical relationships. Drawing Adrienne Maree Brown and Jonathan Smucker's ideas together, I have argued for connection over unity as the foundation of counter hegemonic intervention. Through such connection, the carbon rebellion might cultivate the seeds of broader revolutionary action.

This dissertation has developed a theoretical framework through which to better understand the power of the fossil fuel industry and the climate justice movement's response to it.

Building this theoretical framework out of and in conversation with empirical case study research forced the framework to respond to several critical challenges. In responding to these challenges, I demonstrated obstacles to the formation of the carbon rebellion on the frontlines of Blockadia as well as suggesting conceptual and practical approaches that might allow use to navigate those obstacles. Through interventions in Environmental Sociology, Political Ecology, Energy Studies, Social Movement Studies, Critical Theory, and many

other fields my interdisciplinary training in Global Studies has allow me to access, I have offered innovative approaches to thinking about power, hegemony and counter hegemony, climate justice, social movements, energy, and the role of the fossil fuel industry in our society. As such, I believe that at the very least these pages will provoke thought, debate, and, I hope, action. The ideas explored in these pages are also intended as practical contributions to climate justice activists devising strategies to confront the fossil fuel industry and dismantle the matrix of domination upon which it thrives.

As we confront the climate crisis in what may well be one of the most consequential decades in human history, I offer this dissertation as a modest contribution to the struggle for a fairer, more just, more equitable, more democratic, and more sustainable society. I do so genuinely believing that the ideas and arguments developed throughout these pages have consequences. Moreover, building upon the work and ideas of hundreds of others, I believe I have distilled a set of arguments that scholars and activists alike may now critique, build upon, and develop in many different directions. A great deal more is left to be said and explored with regards to the rereading of hegemony that I offer, and not just amongst scholars interested in the politics of climate justice. I have left the interactions or relationships between relations of consent, coercion, and compliance largely untheorized but believe further investigation into how one relation of power influences another in different conditions is vital. The relationship between hegemonic configurations of power and other approaches to power are largely excluded from this dissertation but offer a critical avenue of further exploration. Furthermore, the relationship between hegemonies and the possibility of layered hegemonies is an idea I've advocated for but did not fully explore within the parameters circumscribed by my research

agenda. This is another avenue of possible further investigation. Similarly, while I argued that the carbon rebellion can and must cultivate the seeds of revolutionary action on the frontlines of Blockadia, a great deal more attention could be paid to precisely how it does so in its confrontations with the fossil fuel industry.

To conclude this dissertation, then, it is my sincerest hope that the ideas and arguments developed in these pages will provide scholars and activists alike with a clearer assessment of the path ahead and an interpretative framework with which to navigate it. Indeed, I intend to translate this work into tools and resources that can be shared and taught in workshops and trainings with communities already taking the fight to the fossil fuel industry. These ideas have been developed in generalized theoretical forms but with a deliberate focus on how they might also be contextualized within the specificities of different frontlines struggles. The framework I have developed, petro-hegemony and the carbon rebellion, and the questions I have worked through in each of these chapters provide readers with an innovative, and I believe, important, account of power as well as a set of concepts with which to map it. But this framework is not just glorified power mapping tool, although it certainly is that. It is also an apparatus through which activists might assess their own interventions in relations of consent, coercion, and compliance to develop a holistic approach to challenging the fossil fuel industry's hegemonic status strategically and decisively. I offer these ideas as part of a theory of change amongst many other theories of change. They are not intended to replace, but to complement, the knowledge and vital action climate justice campaigners, organizers and activists are already engaged in. Finally, I offer these contributions to thought and action because they have inspired me with hope and evidence that "another world is not only

possible,” but as Arundhati Roy has so poignantly put it, “she is on her way.” If nothing else, then, this dissertation is a defense of hope and an invitation to act upon it.

Welcome to the carbon rebellion.

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